

THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION AND GLOBALISATION ON RELIGION

INTRODUCTION

Let us begin this chapter with a question that it aims to answer. How does the people migrating from one place to another become a carrier of the process of religious globalization as in how do they involve themselves in globalizing their religious beliefs and practices? They do so when they show forward their practices, beliefs, values in various spheres be it cultural, social, political or even economic, in different parts of the world. This process of religious globalization that is adaptation of the migrant to a new culture or faith, or his sharing and expressing of his own religious views are de territorialized partly since it cannot be explained in terms of the characteristics of just one territory. If we do so, we will not get enough satisfying answers in regard to why these practices and beliefs are acquired, being performed or held on to. Hence, while trying to explain any transnational processes we have to first need to understand how such processes reflect the nature of many other regions that are connected with this process. These religious beliefs become carriers of the process of globalization when these beliefs and practices express relations with individuals following the same religions and other ethnic groups in a new place or other places.

CULTURAL HOMOGENEITY OR HETEROGENEITY

There is a question that comes up regarding the above mentioned expressing of religious belief. Does the expressing of religious beliefs or practices in transnational areas lead to cultural homogeneity or cultural heterogeneity?

- Cultural homogeneity is said to occur when the culture of one region is adapted in another region without being much affected by the new surroundings. .
- Cultural homogenization results in sharing similar faiths and beliefs by co-religionist living in different areas of the world.
- Hence, cultural homogenizations results in extending the boundaries transnationally and this results in the re arrangement of the location of these cultural boundaries. Lehman (2002) believes that it results in the rapid growth of new and reformulated boundaries in the different spheres of our society that is culture, ethnicity, religion or language. The significant elements of culture however remain unchanged. This results in higher cultural diversity in the area of immigration. This also leads to high interaction and connectivity across nations.
- Cultural heterogeneity occurs when migration results in change in culture and formation of new cultural forms taking characteristics of the new culture and also cultures of other regions via which the migration has occurred leading to the formation of a hybrid culture.
- Cultural heterogeneity leads to the growth of diversity in existing religious beliefs and practices by changing the follower's belief when he encounters another follower or another culture.
- Cultural hybridization helps us in understanding how concurrent validity can be given to elements from different cultures.

- Followers of a religion may add new elements from another culture and may also transform their culture by rearranging their own elements.

In order to understand how migration can transform beliefs and practices one should agree that religion is actually transformed by its broader context as it shows interest in the non religious elements in the beginning. People could migrate due to his/her particular goal. This goal could be to lead a better life economically and socially. They might migrate in various different directions depending on their goals and access to the resources. No doubt migration results in the spreading of religions but also does religion facilitate migration by sending people to various countries to work on their religious projects.

RELIGIOUS GLOBALIZATION

Lehman (2002) explains that there are two types of religious globalization owing to the religious, economical, cultural and political differences. They are:

1. Fundamentalist

This type of religious globalization aims to extend cultural homogeneity. Here, we may refer to the belief in their holy text or the personality of a religious leader which may be a reason why they would not bring changes to their beliefs and practices despite a new culture. A key point to be understood here is that it does establish itself to a new culture but does not acknowledge it.

2. Cosmopolitan

This type of religious globalization aims at less emphasized differences in power between their new culture of the place to where they have migrated and the culture post migration. It gives away a lot of recognition to the new culture of the region of their migration. According to Lehman, the most important feature of this type is that it generates discourses on the relations between original culture and the new one.

THE MIGRANT RELIGION AND THE DIFFERENTIATION ISSUE

Some migrants may use their own religion to differentiate themselves from these new cultures emphasizing on the 'essence' of their religion. The people who have migrated start establishing their own religious and cultural communities in their new region. It is the religious organizations that are first established in the new area of residence whenever migration takes place. These religious organizations act as support groups and bring about unity of its members. In 1880's,

the Trustees of Islamic Community was formed by the Muslims when they migrated to Hong Kong from India. This community acts as a way through which they can seek support and also make demands of their necessity and bring about solidarity in the followers. Thus religion plays an important role in the individual's identity who might not have migrated for religious reasons. Lesser integration with the new culture results in the increase in the significance of migrant's religion as they show pride in their own culture leading to cultural homogeneity. It is seen that the migrants are religiously more involved as religion helps them lessen the feeling of being alienated or discriminated. Vertovec (2000) believes that the migrant religion becomes a type of vehicle through which one expresses nostalgia of his life pre migration and religion acts a substitute for their homeland. Migrants might use the strategy of maintaining ones religious beliefs and practices in order to gain benefits that could be social, cultural or even political. The benefits could be trust, work, friends, manpower and finance. Silliman (1998) made an observation that Sephardic Jewish traders in Asia with simple business made transactions and lived with co religionists and kept themselves within their own culture and hardly mixed up into the majority culture. They were dependant on other Sephardic networks for all their social or economic needs. Even for their business trips abroad, when they needed to travel throughout British Empire in Asia, they resided in each other's house like a family sharing meals and celebrating their own culture and identity. Caroline Pluss (2005) has carried out a research on Jain diamond traders residing in Hong Kong from India. It was revealed that the common sharing of the same religious identity helped in building networks of trust that is really important for the success of the trade.

The migrants are of the view that religious connections over the globe make route for migration and this is likely to bring about movements between places and giving migrants ways to maintain their religious affiliation. In Boston and Ireland the Catholic Church provided representation and protection of Irish immigrants living in America and Irish immigrants who returned to Ireland from America. The Catholic Church was a meeting point for the Irish immigrants in the US (Levitt 2004: 7-8).

Pluralism in ethnicity and multicultural policies in areas of immigration encourages migrants to formulate religious and ethnic identities with strong roots lying in their original place of residence.

THE CHANGING OF MIGRANT RELIGION WITH MULTI-LOCAL IDENTIFICATIONS

When an individual migrates, he/she does not only transfer their religious beliefs from their old place to the new one but also bring changes in them as they get affected by the new area of residence. This results in the religious characteristics of these migrants becoming multi-local. This is where cultural hybridization takes place.

The questions that are raised when an individual migrates to a new area is likely to brings changes in the migrants religion. Let us take for example the question that arises for every Muslim immigrant to non Islamic societies. How shall they take part in a society and its culture which their religion does not legitimize? The Muslims may resort to staying aloof and isolated

from the dominant culture of that area or thinking about the dominant culture in a new different way so as to selectively co operate with some of the non Islamic cultures. This involvement is likely to result in formation of a new religious identity that seems to partially adopt some aspects of the dominant culture. Migration can result in new religious forms as for example Muslims search for new Islamic banking forms when they find some changes in the financial market that might be not appreciating to Islamic principles (Van der Veer: 2002)

It is also seen that when some aspects of one's own religion is quite offensive to the culture of the new area of residence, the migrants disregard those elements of their own religion. However, they keep their religions and maintain the core elements.

Despite the contradictions in cultures, some individuals may also adopt some of the practices brought in to their area by the migrants if they see that the adoption of these practices could be a means to realize their ends. This is one of the reasons why the Chinese of Hong Kong adopted Christianity as they could not find salvation in their own culture (Pluss 1999). Some of them even joined the church because it could help them get a university education in the USA.

There are many factors as to why and how religious migrants may adapt their religions to new circumstances. They are the individual's age, gender, ethnicity, and area of origin, religion, types of religious organizations, socio-economic status and features of the host society.

WHAT KIND OF RELIGIOUS GLOBALIZATION: COSMOPOLITAN OR ANTI COSMOPOLITAN?

One of the most important questions raised is that to which extent does such globalization increase cosmopolitanism within a religious tradition. This means to what extent it is open towards other cultures leading to cultural heterogeneity. When the followers of a religion realize that the essence of their religion is fading, they tend to limit themselves from adapting the elements of the new culture. This could lead to schism with religious followers wanting to save their fading cultures and beliefs. The adherents are quite alert when it comes to accepting changes in their beliefs since religion is concerned with salvation. Adaptation of new cultures at a high rate could lead to the dissolution of one's original religion.

The internet helps in working towards the democratization of definitions of religious beliefs and practices. The individuals use the internet to broadcast their religion and also to access information about the religion. However the spread of religious messages through such platforms are not only democratic. Jews and Sindhis residing at Gibraltar seem to be affected a lot by how the upper strata of their community define the groups' religious identity in a relation to how they choose images and definitions of religion from the matter available at and through various types of media.

To understand the type of cultural hybridization that might be constructed to gain followers from other cultures, we could well take the example of missionary work. The goals of the various religious movements keep changing depending on the needs of the different places. For example Vishav Hindu Parishad, a revivalist movement originated in India has different aims in USA.

Religion seeks to continue including new followers from other cultures, but adding aspects of other cultures is unlikely to give such new adaptations the same degree of validity as one's own religion.

In the context of the issue of maintaining one's own culture even at a new area of residence without any change it is necessary to understand that any query into the globalization of religion needs to take in the fact that its belief in the supernatural and stressing on the importance to build a community of its followers may lead to transnationalisation by encouraging extra territorial identities.

It would not be wrong to suggest that syncretism, hybridization and cosmopolitanism are important features in the transnationalisation of religion. However, the ideologies of each religion are themselves essential elements that shall impede the level to which they can adapt to new cultures without themselves stopping to exist.

CONCLUSION:

The transnationalisation of religion is not just a process of cultural homogenization. Instead it leads to the forming of different localized versions of 'somewhat imprecise "global model" of beliefs, rituals and religious organization' (Van der Veer, 2001). The migrants religion needs to provide ways for the believers to continue differentiating them from the new culture and should also answer life questions in changed atmosphere. Hence, it is likely that migrant will bring changes even in little amount in their religion, faith and beliefs once they are in new surroundings. Migrants may include aspects of other cultures in their own faith for different reasons. These reasons may be religious or materialistic. The transnationalising of religion includes different directions and flows by which definitions of the religion move from one culture to another. It does not emerge from just one single point as it involves various places and diverse religions. It works towards an increase in cultural heterogeneity even though it is not always in a cosmopolitan way. Religious migrants may alternate between holding different values so as to involve themselves in identity politics accordingly depending on different social interactions and experimenting with different values while not fully accepting the new values and culture.

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