

Locating the self between national and global

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Abstract How does one begin to define the global identity? How does globalization offers a sense of identity, a sense of belonging, to an individual, in particular a non-westerner? Has globalization given a new identity to the erstwhile-colonized subject, who had been holding on tightly to the idea of nationalism that offered him an identity—passport into the world? My paper explores the contestation of identity—culturally—in the globalized world. It argues that cultural identity remains in a flux, whatever may the context be. From the period of colonialism to that when nation was regarded as the foremost structure of collective identity, which then defined the self, and finally in the era that we call as the modern or the postmodern period, or even globalization, identity is pushed toward liminality.

Keywords Identity · Culture · Global · Liminal · National

It goes without saying that globalization majorly involves assimilation of cultures. What had started as a revolution in communication and trade has resulted in transcending the geographical barriers to reach cultural transactions that are closer to human existence and consciousness. However, it is also true that globalization has accentuated interdependence and intersection of cultures and economies. And now, the cultural and subjective dimensions of globalization are drawing much attention among the intellectuals and thinkers.

While globalization, by and large, has definite advantages in terms of transactions of varied nature, such as

social, commercial, and educational, it seems to have certain debilitating impact on human condition in terms of the individual's identity in critical space defined by geographical, cultural, and social parameters. As the global courses strike the edge of the "self," the new trajectories of interpretations and understandings open up, leading to further interrogations. The quest is pushed further, the horizon moves away. In other words, when we try to explain the "self" in terms of difference, hence in terms of the "other," defining identity is possible even though it is not a complete, absolute, and unified self-identity. The "other," as argued by postmodernist, becomes essential to define the "self" and, to an extent, a part of the "self." Also, the "self" is not a single unit that could be described in linear terms. As part of defining, recognition is important because a self-conscious being can become what it is only through another self-conscious being awareness about him. Here, the other again becomes a mirror for the self, and the existence of the self becomes being-for-another. An identity, thus, becomes a play of the "self" and the "other."

In a globalized world, when we speak of the identity of an individual at the conceptual level, the same encompasses a variety of identities that may intersect lines that mark several sub-boundaries of numberless identities. For this reason, identities can no more be articulated in and through a straightjacketed conceptual framework of "absolute identity" that never changes and is permanently fixed. An alternative to such an "absolute identity" has become imminent in the present times of globalization than any other in the past and hence needs to be conceived and articulated in order to infuse some kind of unity, without lapsing into the ubiquitous "absolute identity." Such an alternative identity will at once involve both "identity" and "difference" and thus may be named either as "distributed" or "assorted" identity, or both, with a "unified sense of identity."

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