

International Seminar on

Understanding Globalization in a Cross-Cultural Setting

Organized by Jamia Millia Islamia in collaboration with York University, Canada

18-19 February, 2014

Much has been written and critiqued about the term ‘Globalization’ in contemporary times. Despite all the creative energies invested, the term continues to generate heated debates among scholars, policy analysts, and civil society agencies regarding its implications. It has been interpreted in many ways, sometimes in contrasting ways, and has generated varied responses. Today, the term ‘globalization’ has been added to the vocabulary of Social sciences and allied disciplines. However, teaching ‘globalisation’ is a challenging task as the concept and practice is split between ideology and science. In a transdisciplinary framework, it is caught in a double movement of standardization and differentiation.

Further, much of the literature available refers to globalization in a particular socio-cultural context, rarely is an effort made to analyze and understand the term and its inflection in different cultural settings. Thus, there is a need for making sense of globalization in a cross cultural setting.

One of the major challenges one faces while engaging in cross-cultural comparisons of globalization processes involves defining the parameters for comparison. The proposed seminar intends to address this limitation. While these settings may not readily lend themselves to comparison and the nature of inflection may have unintended consequences, making sense of the meaning in different cultural settings would be a starting point to analyze the magnitude and dimension of its operation.

The contemporary process of globalization opens new frontiers and poses new questions to the old ones related to foundational terms such as ‘democracy’ and ‘citizenship’ and our conventional understanding of communities, cultures and policies. While old institutions are in decline and new institutions are reconfigured, the idea is not merely to engage with emerging constellations but to think through the past and map the areas of comfort and discomfort. Rapid social transformation is witnessed in all spheres of society, be it economic, political or cultural. Hence, there is a need to capture various shades of experiences in economic, political and social life.

Our guiding assumption is that theories, concepts and notions that arise in one national or regional situation are not necessarily applicable to another. Although many ideals and values have become universal, however, there is a theoretical suspect endowed with the vocation of universal application without prior testing or critical verification. To dispel any misunderstanding, we hasten to distance our self from two of the implications usually

associated with such a statement. First, the method implied by this assumption, far from adopting any form of national or cultural essentialism, leads us primarily to engage in a historical critical and comparative approach to globalization. Second, the mere fact that ideas, concepts and notions are conceived and propagated by international institutions and declared “global” does not, by itself, render them any more universal. Likewise, the claim to “globality” does not bestow on such notions and concepts any semblance of innocence.

The proposed two days International Seminar would address these queries from an interdisciplinary concern.