

Fundamentalism

In today's world, Fundamentalism is a concept whose reach and relevance is a hotly debated topic. Usually fundamentalism is closely associated with religious beliefs and it's the most visible of all manifestations of fundamentalism.

In India, fundamentalism can take many forms with religion being at its core. What are its types and what are its implications in India and how is it different from communalism?

These questions will be answered in this article. The information from this article will be useful in IAS Exam

Definition of Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is defined as a tendency among certain groups - more often, but not being exclusively - in religious terms, to strictly and literally follow certain specific scriptures, dogmas or ideologies with a strong importance of maintaining ingroup and outgroup distinctions.

Fundamentalists emphasize on purity and have a strong desire to return to previous ideals which they believe its members have strayed from. Rejection of diversity of opinion as applied to these established "fundamentals" and their accepted interpretation within the group often results from this tendency.

Entirely depending on the context at hand "fundamentalism" is a pejorative term rather than being a neutral characterization. It comes with a set of its own negative connotations that its own adherents will hesitate to associate with.

Origin of Fundamentalism

The origin concept of "fundamentalism" was found in a set of four-volume books published in 1909 - "The Fundamentals". Published by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Now the Biola University) between 1909 and 1920, these books appealed to Christians to affirm certain fundamental doctrines in Christianity. It would come to represent the "Fundamentalist Modernist controversy" that would rage in the late 19th century within the Protestant churches of the United states and continued through the 1920s.

Soon it came to be associated with a particular segment of evangelical Protestantism, who set themselves apart from the separatist approach towards modernity and towards other Christians who would not agree with their views. It would also apply to other religious groups both within and without, who would stick to only certain beliefs while completely disregarding other views.

What is the rationale behind Fundamentalism?

As mentioned earlier, fundamentalism refers to religious beliefs. Most forms of religious fundamentalism have similar traits. Religious fundamentalists believe that their sacred books and scriptures are the literal word of God. Since, scriptures themselves are seen as something that is without any errors, fundamentalists believed that no one has the right to change them or disagree with it as they believe that God made these scriptures for His followers and thus no mistakes can be found in them.

Fundamentalists also commonly believe that their way of life and treasured truths are under attack by the forces of secularism and liberalism.

Fundamentalists believed that their cause will have cosmic importance. They see themselves as protectors of a way of life and a distinctive doctrine. Community, comprehensively centered upon a clearly defined religious way of life in all of its aspects, is the promise of fundamentalist movements.

Types of Fundamentalisms

There are two types of Fundamentalism

1. Religious Fundamentalism
2. Non-religious Fundamentalism.

The forms of religious fundamentalism are as follows:

1. Christian Fundamentalism
2. Islamic Fundamentalism
3. Buddhist Fundamentalism
4. Sikh and Hindu Fundamentalism
5. Jewish Fundamentalism

Non-religious fundamentalism

It should be noted that any intoreleant philosophy, which sees itself being the ultimate truth, is referred to as fundamentalism, regardless of religious affiliation and beliefs. An example of this is when Albania, under communist rule during the Cold War, declared itself an "atheist state", it was seen by many as a form of "fundamnetalist atheism"

In France, the imposition of restrictions on public display of religion has been labeled by some as "secular fundamentalism." The very idea of fundamentalism is about the idea of purity and is self-applied rather than a counter culture principle.

What is the difference between Fundamentalism and Communalism?

Fundamentalism has gained wide currency in the contemporary world and it refers to a variety of norms, values, attitudes which either judge the fundamentalists or condemn them outright. This word is sometimes used in place of communalism. However, there is subtle difference between the two in below aspects:

While communalism is all about political or economic interests of a particular community, fundamentalism is enforcement of sectarianism with all rigidity for political mobilisation of a community for the power-goals of its elite.

While communalism is the exploitation of sentiments of a religion-based community for a secular goal, fundamentalism is enforcing narrow sectarian practices for strengthening religious orthodoxy as well as achieving political power.

Thus, there is a very thin line that differentiates fundamentalism with communalism. However, in today's context, both are political instruments and try to mobilize people on religious grounds.

Frequently Asked Question about Fundamentalism

What is an example of fundamentalism?

The most well-known fundamentalist denominations in the United States are the Assemblies of God, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Seventh-Day Adventists. Organizations such as these often become politically active, and support the conservative political "right," including groups like the Moral Majority.

What are fundamentalist beliefs?

Religious fundamentalists believe in the superiority of their religious teachings, and in a strict division between righteous people and evildoers. This belief system regulates religious thoughts, but also all conceptions regarding the self, others, and the world

