



**FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE: B.A.LL.B 204**

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# Lecture- 18



## LECTURE 18:

Fundamentalism is the first of our three concepts and it stresses the infallibility of a scripture (e.g. the Bible, Adi Granths, the Gita or the Quran) in all matters of faith and doctrine. The believer accepts it as a literal historical record. The result is that a militant stand is taken by the followers often preceded or followed by a desire for a separate homeland. At times, this too is taken as a prophecy in the scriptures. Fundamentalism thus separates a certain community from the mainstream. However, society, by its various arms (the police, army and so on), attempts to suppress or eliminate the fundamentalists. This is especially so when they begin acting outside of the law. Communalism is associated with eruption of violence and riots, these conflagrations may not have any particular aim or goal (apart from communal ascendancy or supremacy). Fundamentalism however is an organised all-encompassing movement which aims at promotion of societal goals specifically in the light of religious enshrinements. Operational strategy includes peaceful as well as war-life uses and movements. Communalism While discussing the nature of politics in the new states of Africa and Asia, Clifford Geertz, an American anthropologist, wrote, "When we speak of communalism in India, we refer to religious contrasts, when we speak of it in Malaya we are mainly concerned with racial ones, and in the Congo with tribal ones". Here the significant link is between communal and political loyalties. Thus, when we talk of India, we are talking mainly of religion based oppositions. Communalism has been described as a sectarian exploitation of social traditions as a medium of political mobilization. This is done to punish the interests of the entrenched groups. Thus, communalism is an ideology used to fulfil socio-economic-political hopes of a community or social groups. It requires proposals and programmes to ensure its very existence. These become active in phases of social change. Communalism arose in India during its colonial phase. Communal politics based its strategies on religion and tradition. The interpretation of history is for purposes of mobilisation. Communal organisations have little room for democracy. Secondly, they may also involve racist contrasts and perpetrate the same. They consider egalitarianism as abnormal and support patriarchy as a familial and social norm. Communalism is therefore a 1. belief system 2. social phenomenon. Communalism arises out of a belief system, and assumes great solidarity within a community which is not always true. We find that there are often intercommunity quarrels. Further, the protagonists of communalism hold a particular view of history and take care to point out that a community has been identified with common sufferings and goals as a whole. The exclusiveness of the community is stressed vis a vis other community, and it is therefore considered logical to fight for one's rights in a literal way. Communalism in India has, as noted earlier, a colonial legacy wherein the rulers (Britishers) used religious contrasts, existing among the different communities to their advantage by giving them prominence. After Independence economic modernization of India expanded economic opportunities but not enough to curb unhealthy competitiveness. Job sharing among the different communities from a smaller pool of opportunities in causing much heartburn. Independence from the colonial power unleashed a horrendous communal holocaust, caused by the partition of the country into two parts on the eve of Independence in 1947.

### ASPECTS OF FUNDAMENTALISM

Fundamentalism as a concept was first used in 1910-1915 when anonymous authors published 12 volumes of literature called them 'The Fundamentals'. In the early 20s the print media used this word with reference to conservative protestant groups in North America. These groups were concerned about liberal interpretations of the Bible. Alarmed by this the conservatives insisted on some "fundamentals" of faith. These included belief in the virgin birth, divinity, the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ – and the infallibility of the scripture. As mentioned these and other fundamentals were published in 12 pamphlets called The Fundamentals between 1910-1915. Thus began the specialised usage of the concept of "fundamentalism". Thus a fundamental movement is one which takes infallibility of a scripture as a basic issue and as a guide to life. Some fundamentalists add that there is no need to even interpret the scripture as meaning in it is self-evident. This often amounts to intolerance of any form of disagreement or dissent. Thus there is an apprehension that fundamentalists are narrow minded, and bigoted. T.N. Madan has pointed out that

the word Fundamentalism has gained wide currency in the contemporary world. According to him it refers to a variety of norms, values, attitudes which either judge the fundamentalists or condemn them outright. This word is sometimes erroneously used in place of communalism. In fact the word fundamentalism has become a blanket term. That is to say that various fundamental movements across the world 'are actually not identical but differ in various ways. But they are linked by a 'family' resemblance. Fundamentalist movements are of a collective character. They are often led by charismatic leaders who are usually men. Thus the 1979 Iranian movement was led by Ayatollah Khomeini, and the recent Sikh fundamentalist upsurge by Sant Bhindranwale (Madan, *ibid*). Fundamentalism leaders need not be religious leaders. Thus Maulana Maududi, founder of the Jamati Islami in India was a journalist. K.B. Hedgewar, founder of the Rashtriya Sewak Sangh was a physician. The fundamentalists are a practical people and try to purge the way of life of all impurities (religiously speaking). They reject all corrupt lifestyles. An example of this is Dayanands critique of the traditional, superstition filled way of life. Thus Maududi characterised the present Muslim way of life as 'ignorant' and Bhindranwale talked of the 'fallen' Sikhs who shave off their beards, cut their hair and do not observe the traditional Sikh way of life. Thus fundamental movements are not only about religious beliefs and practices, but lifestyles generally.