

# The Commodification of Hinduism in Praxis of Capitalism Culture in the Postmodern Era

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<p><b>ARTICLE HISTORY</b></p> <p>Accepted: October, 16<sup>th</sup> 2018          Revised: October, 24<sup>th</sup> 2018          Published: November, 5<sup>th</sup> 2018</p>	<p><b>ABSTRACT</b></p> <p>Postmodern era is marked by social and economic changes that developed into a capitalistic economy throughout the world. Capitalism dominates and has implications for all aspects of life including religion. Capitalism has influenced paradigm and ways of human religion today. Ideally, religion has a sacred dimension, but capitalism makes profane of the sacredness of religion. Capitalism creates unclear boundaries between sacred and profane in religion. One form of capitalism is commodification. Commodification is a way of capitalism to carry out the accumulation of its capital goals or as a process of changing the value of a function or to become an exchange rate. One of commodification impact is the triumph of the market which has implications for the rise of public consumerism. Consumerism that occurs in the commodification of Hinduism refers to cultural products such as trends and fashions that are in demand by the market, for example, canning or penjor. Community consumerism indirectly has implications to reduce the sacred value of means of worship, to reduce sradha and religious costs and to loss of socio-religious values in society which usually arise through ritual activities such as ngayah, to make banten/canang or penjor. Religion is thrown culturally from its core position in power institution of capitalist society. The administrated community is characterized by a thin network of regulatory institutions that organized and filled human activities. Unwittingly this situation has given rise to reality of hedonistic mobs, consumerism and privatized leisure. This puts religion as a social superstructure which is no longer an autonomous entity that is vacuum from social interactions outside. Even entities 'outside religion' can dictate (change) religion so that religion continues to change following of shifting of economic structure and cultural structure.</p>
<p><b>KEYWORDS</b></p> <p>Commodification          Consumerism          Capitalism          Profanization          Postmodern</p>	

## **INTRODUCTION**

Changes that occurred in this era covered various essential aspects of life. Changes originated in the development of science & technology. And then, led to social and economic changes that eventually developed into a capitalistic economy that ruled the world and led to what is now known as globalization. Capitalism carries a new direction in which industry dominates almost all aspects of life. The impact of the changes in this age because of the influence of capitalism which is so broad and complex and tends to be unpredictable. That raises concerns in various essential aspects of life, especially religious life.

Clergies recognize that changes in life are an inevitable outcome from the development of civilization history. Religion as a social phenomenon is a part of society that is affected by this flow of change. Then, there are various dynamic attitudes in religious life today. Religion in society is something that unites both thought and action. In religion, all of the comprehensive answers of essential core questions that humanity always faces are codified in very significant forms of credo for its adherents including rituals and ceremonies giving emotional ties to every individual who carries out them. Creed, rite, and tradition have become a congregation perpetuated by generations. Religion creates common bonds including social obligations that help unite society. Implementation of faith is as a preserver of sacred values so that these values can be consistent with changes that always occur in society.

In sociologically views and reality of life, religion will always come into contact with the fulfillment of human life such as physical, social, economic and political as well as integrative needs concerning matters that are very important in other human beings (Utama, 2013: 3). In this aspect, capitalism begins to penetrate the realm of religiosity. Capitalism produces commodities and understands desires within the framework of the products which is produced & related to attributes of religion.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

Referring to the opinion of Max Weber (1864-1920), in his book translated by Talcott Parson *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* in 1958, religion was credited with giving birth to the most spectacular social change in human civilization history. Max Weber assumed that capitalism originated from a Protestant ethic that taught to live frugally, diligently work, discipline as a form of worship to God. Weber

defines the spirit of capitalism as a habit that supports the rational pursuit of economic gain (Weber, 2006: 65-66). But Weber's opinion on religion as a motor of social change is precisely inversely proportional to the current situation. Religion (primarily) through its theological instruments must pursue "novelty" patterns of social interaction. Capitalism, which was once born by the spirit of faith, now no longer requires religious support.

So, in this case, there are several opinions about the relationship between religion and social change. The first opinion is that religion changes are flowing human interaction conditions which are placing that religion is as a social superstructure. Religion is not an autonomous entity that is vacuum from social interactions outside it. Even though 'nonreligion' entity might dictate religion changes. Religion continues to change following an economic structure shifting and cultural structure. Karen Armstrong also uses the term God (God) in A History of God to describe how religion continues to change dialectically with its nature and social structure.

The commodification theory of religion by Kitiarsa argues that commodification means turning religion into goods that can be sold, bringing it into various scales and ways of market transactions (Kitiarsa, 2008: 12). In relation with that, characteristics of religious commodification are. First, sold goods are religious symbols. Second, the commodification of religion is bound to profit motives. The market provides a variety of consumer goods by what is needed and or desired by consumers. Market triumphs result in people experiencing commercialization and commodification that cover all aspects of their lives (Morison, 2012). In fact, it is not surprising that "... symbols with religious nuances that are considered sacred even though they cannot be separated from the pull of commercialization and commodification" (Ibrahim, 2007: 162).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Religion continues to change following an economic structure shifting and cultural structure. Religion through its theological instruments must pursue "novelty" patterns of social interaction. Capitalism, which was once born by the spirit of religion, now no longer requires religious support. According to Weber secularization brings a lot of consequences to the decline of religious beliefs with the advancement of capitalism. In turn, religion is no longer relevant, with a maturity of capitalist industrial production. It appears that in the market there is domination between human relations in

the pursuit of profit as a goal, which is a symbol of self-alienation under capitalism. Therefore, money decreases all human values into quantitative values of exchange. Thus, capitalism has a universalizing nature, which exposes the features of traditional cultures and gives birth to "moral money." Capitalism actually gives birth to unclear boundaries between sacred and profane in religion. Ideally, religion has a sacred dimension, but capitalism makes sacredness of faith to be sacrilegious, in an active market system. Capitalism has influenced the paradigm and ways of human religion today. A form of capitalism is commodification. Commodification, according to Vincent Mosco is described as a way of capitalism by bringing an accumulation of capital goals or can be said as changing of function value or to become an exchange rate.

Current phenomenon is that people tend to buy ceremonial facilities rather than to make their own. Canning and penjor for example, cleaning which has been prepared and produced by themselves as a form of bhakti to Hyang Widhi is no longer done. Likewise, penjor usually made ahead of Galungan is more often done by buying. Practical issues and lack of time are primary reasons that people are buying it instead of making it by themselves. Commodification that uses religious symbols according to Weber as a form of social action carried out by the owners of capital to modify and produce goods and services in this case in the way of religious symbols is a rational instrumental action that takes into account effectiveness and efficiency.

Referred to the commodification of religion, goods or services offered by using religious symbols, have a motive to seek profit, and closely related to market and consumerism because market provides a variety of consumer goods by what is needed by the community or desired by consumers. Market triumphs cause people to experience commercialization behavior or like to shop. Consumerism occurred in the commodification of Hinduism refers to cultural products such as trends and fashions that are in demand in the market. The existence of this commodification cannot be separated from the influence of postmodern society characteristics. Postmodern society is a society that wants to get the essence of human nature in an all-pragmatic and practical atmosphere. Formal education also contributes to the improvement of society's mindset so that Balinese are trapped in cultural polarization, namely traditionality and modernity - like something that is actual and contemporary, in contrast to the old one (Wolton, 2007: 340). Doing cleaning is a symbol of traditionality, while

commodification of canning is a symbol of modernity. As a result, Balinese who position themselves as modern humans prefer to buy bottling rather than to make cleaning in relation with modernity. This View shows that socio-religious values have begun to erode in a society which usually arises through ritual activities such as to make cleaning, to make penjor, etc. Ngayah as a form of religious function application should play an essential role in giving strength to force so that it supports and strengthens customs. Even cultivation has begun to be eroded by effects of religious commodification.

Another implication of consumerism culture as a result of commodification is to reduce the sacred value of means prayer. Purchasing cleaning is not easy, considering the idea Kitiarsa (2013: 996-998) that ritual equipment is scarcity and turned into an economic good that is hard to find, so that requires perpetrators to provide materials ritual/Penjor by themselves. The raw material for canning / penjor is not necessarily available in the surrounding environment, so that ritual actors must buy it in the market. This resulted is effected to raise other capital forces to provide ritual equipment which is called the market. Market ideology is reflected on the consideration to make your symbols, offerings or Penjor considered impractical, inefficient, and ineffective or generally called troublesome. In that case, ritual equipment is bought in the market where the seller or the maker is mostly not a Hindu who sometimes does not understand to maintain the sanctity value of the facility. Market or religious market ideology is increasingly institutionalized in Balinese society (Maguiere, 2004). Market ideology related to consumerism among others signed by the fact that all the objectives, activities or relationships dominated by selling and purchasing (Ritzer, 2012). According to Abdullah (2007: 119) as a result of a market ideology that market culture relies on price concept and transaction practice which becomes dominant and uncontrolled expansion.

Referring to Villarino's opinion that globalization which is based on market ideology and integrated with consumerism, not only results in humans being tied to buying and selling in meeting their needs but also gives new habits, namely "what is owned is exhibited openly, even proud of" as well as to make penjor. Penjor is an essential requirement ahead of Galungan. People are competing to buy good, lively, artistic penjor even sometimes it doesn't matter how much it costs as long as penjor can give a sense of satisfaction and pride to the owner. Penjor which should be made by themselves as a form of love and gratitude to Hyang Widhi becomes just a commodity

that must be present during the ceremony. This is what shows human characteristics in the era of consumer society, not only stuck in buying-selling and symbolic value but also adheres to spectacle culture. Thus humans arise that embrace spectacle culture so that what they have is not only useful but also suggestive or sign value, which is helpful to show one's prestige in society (Villarino, 2011: 19).

Based on these theories, a paradigm is built that globalization which is based on market ideology not only produces people who deify money, but also humans who are bound to consumerism. Commodification in religion leads society to become a consumer society. Society not only consumes something based on use value, but also consumes other than to spend use value also because of its symbolic value (social status, prestige, and prestige), namely self-image (Piliang, 2006: 179). Efforts to fulfill their needs and or to desire to play in an arena, namely the market. Their game involves various actors using and or competing for diverse capital, namely economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. Actors who can accumulate more capital are in the upper class and simultaneously control the lower level. This mastery is ideologically legitimated so that a power relationship is hegemonic. It can be explained that objects dominate humans economically because as commodities, objects are attached to social relations that are not subordinated from humans, then humans can regulate and control things legally because in their capacity as owners. They are actually the personification of the subject which is abstract, impersonal and legal, the subject of pure social relations "(Pashukanis in Turner, 2012: 329).

But there is also a justification that is revealed to accept this. Griffin called it a transition from philosophical materialism to materialism as a religious way of life. Griffin in his description explained that humans do not stop being religious simply because they do not believe in an object of traditional religious beliefs. There is still a basic religious impulse that desire to live in harmony with the basic power of the universe (Giffin, 2005: 85). Ceremonial equipment such as canang and penjor obtained through buying do not become a measure that community is not a religious community. With this idea, the commodification of canang / penjor is not only due to the encouragement of religious values, but symbolic values or sign values. This idea becomes stronger, if it is associated with the opinion of Kitiarsa (2013) about the characteristics of religious commodification, namely, first, goods sold are religious symbols. Second, the commodification of religion is bound to profit motives. The

market provides a variety of consumer goods by what is needed and or desired by consumers. Market triumphs result in people experiencing commercialization and commodification that cover all aspects of their lives (Morison, 2012). With this fact, it is not surprising that "... symbols with religious nuances that are considered sacred even though they cannot be separated from the pull of commercialization and commodification" (Ibrahim, 2007: 162).

Strengthening market ideology results in the social capital which emphasizes social reciprocity and solidarity based on collectivism ideology to weaken, whereas individualism becomes increasingly strong in Balinese society. As a result, collaborating on collectivism is no longer considered a social policy in the context of investing in social capital but is regarded as a social and economic burden that impedes progress.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In a capitalist society, religion is culturally thrown from its core position in the ruling institution. The administrated community is characterized by a thin network of regulatory institutions that organized and filled human activities. Compensation for this matter can be chosen in reality of hedonistic masses, consumerism and privatized leisure. It places religion as a social superstructure. Religion is not an autonomous entity which is vacuum from the social interaction outside it and even entity "outside of religion" may dictate religion changes so that religion continues to change following in shifting of economic structure and cultural structure. Expansion of capitalism economic system has resulted in people who are always thinking about goods and services can be sold to get money. Enjoyment of ideology in the market ideology is more secular or relies on the fulfillment of very interesting worldly desires.

On the contrary, the offering of world religions leads to a balanced fulfillment of spiritual and physical pleasures. The impact of capitalism has been seen in the realm of religion. Religion is no longer a purely sacred realm but has begun to experience change towards profane in line with the changing times promoted by capitalism.

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