RELIGIOUS STUDIES


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HARMONY AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Abstract. The article describes the connections and differences between the concepts of religious studies and religious education. It has been analyzed that religious studies and religious education are separate forms of approach to the study of religion and the methods used in this regard. The views of representatives of the field of religious studies and religious education on the understanding of universe are interpreted through mental and artistic examples.

Keywords: religious studies, religious education, socio-spiritual life, Qur’an, Islamic values, madrassa, imam, mudarris, rabbi, guru, bhikhu.

Socio-spiritual life, the harmony of national and democratic development is closely linked with the spiritual image of the nation, especially the younger generation, the way of thinking, skills and knowledge in the assimilation of national, religious, universal values. Indeed, an objective, scientific study of religion, the study of it as a holistic social phenomenon, allows for a systematic analysis of its current state and issues related to religion, and to determine its prospects.

People are encouraged to study religion for a variety of reasons. When it comes to this, it should not be overlooked that there are important differences between theology and religious education. Typically, this difference depends on the subject and object to which the approach chosen for the study of religion belongs.

Religious education takes many different forms, and this concept is often applied to the actions of a representative of a religion to learn a particular belief in his or her religion. For example, a young Muslim child attends a madrassa and is
taught the rules of reciting the Qur’an and Islamic values. Also, a young Jewish child attends a special class which is organized under the synagogue where boys are taught certain information from the Torah until they reach puberty (Bar-Mitsva). Similarly, Hindu’s child attends a traditional religious school that retains ancient methods for learning Vedic songs. In this form, a young man of Buddhist faith spends a few months in the temple as a disciple-monk in order to understand the truths of his religion. In all these examples, the instructions to the applicant seeking religious education are provided by a religious expert – an imam (or mudarris) in Islam, a rabbi in Judaism, a guru in Hinduism, and a bhikhu in Buddhism. In these processes, the task of the specialist is to dispel the doubts about religion in the students and to form in them a strong faith and a strong love for religious teachings.

Another aspect of religious education is that from the moment one enters into believing in a religious tradition, inclusive (general) and exclusive (different) characters are formed in the believer. Under the influence of religious education, a religious person develops feelings of loyalty, devotion and love for his religious community, as well as a feeling of «alienation» from other religions. For example, while a religious person learns about Jainism from a Jain teacher, he also learns the differences between Jainism and other religions in between lessons. Furthermore, when a representative of a religion embarks on the study of different religions, he rarely relies on logic-science and objectivity in this regard, but often puts forward his own religious views as an acceptable approach. Admittedly, in certain cases, these courses and teachings help the student to receive relevant and similar information about other religious traditions, to form a spirit of tolerance towards other religions, to establish inter-religious dialogue. However, in many cases, religious education or its institutions serve as an incentive for a believer to form a critical attitude towards other religions, to defend his or her religious beliefs in discussions with members of other religions, and to be active in religious propaganda.

In contrast, a researcher in the field of religious studies, on the other hand, acts in a scientific and objective way in the study of all aspects of religion (or religions). A theologian working in this field is required to conduct his work outside of religious beliefs and traditions and to remain in a neutral position in a healthy sense.
In turn, the application of complete neutrality and objectivity in the study of religions makes it possible to identify areas that have not been sufficiently beneficial for the perfect mastery of one’s religious experience. Religious experience is an infinite set of emotional feelings through which mental processes such as sadness, joy, love, or dependence are experienced. Worldviews in some religions include belief in angels, demons, evil spirits, gods, animal patrons, ancestral spirits, and so on. In addition to believing in the above concepts, there are also beliefs about eternity - heaven, hell, the parallel world system, the underworld, and so on. Of course, it is difficult for a religious studies scholar to study such concepts through an experiment or test. However, although these concepts are considered to be «beyond the realm of reason,» their study is an important task for the religious studies scholar. For example, if a person listens to a story, reads a novel, watches a play, sees a movie, he temporarily forgets a certain level of suspicion and involuntarily enters the story or event in the movie. Indeed, this aspect is a characteristic feature of works of art. Trying such a situation is also important for the religious studies scholar to temporarily stop doubts and hesitations in order to feel the experience the believer is experiencing, and to enter the world he is studying, which will help him to study the chosen topic in depth.

Some argue that such a subjective approach to religion is inappropriate because, if the researcher is religious, it harms his or her beliefs, and if he or she is non-religious, he or she will express a superficial or hypocritical attitude toward religion by such behavior. However, it is possible to cite practical examples against this consideration, which (examples) show that the above idea is exaggerated. For example, it would be wrong to say that a fan of the movie «Lord of the Rings» or the novel «Harry Potter», animated by witches, wizards, dragons and other similar characters, has entered that world. In fact, it is preferable to take a different approach to this issue.

As Goethe, the German philosopher who advocated the study of different religions, put it a man who knew one language knew nothing. If we turn this idea into a thema, really, the study of different religions helps man to enrich
understanding of own religion in general. Just as it is far from the truth to say that a person harms the characteristics of his mother tongue by learning other languages, it is also inappropriate to say that learning a person from other religions interferes with his personal beliefs. On the contrary, it can be said that this situation helps to take a deeper look at the existing problems.

Given that all works of art are based not only on fabricated episodes, but also on the content reality, the theologian should not accept all religious teachings and traditions as fantasy, even if they do not belong to any religion. Because a Christian, a Muslim, a Jain, even a shaman firmly believes that his religious view is true. Therefore, the religious studies scholar should approach all aspects of his research topic on the basis of appropriate attention and scientific analysis, not with a hateful attitude towards different religious views. Indeed, religions are considered to represent the highest values and truths for their believer. The religious studies scholar, on the other hand, will have to study and explain «what they are important to the believer» without confirming or discriminating against any religious belief. Consequently, views such as «that human life depends on good deeds leading to heaven or hell, that human beings are surrounded by supernatural beings, and that there are restrictions on certain foods and beverages in life» may seem fantasy to some critics. But, at the same time, it is important that the religious studies scholar does not overlook the fact that these religious beliefs serve as a means for a large number of people to survive, survive and perish.

In religious studies, it doesn’t take to be a Buddhist to study a religion, such as Buddhism, but to go into it and understand its teachings and main idea, which helps to understand why millions of people are following its path. However, the goal of religious studies is not for the researcher or scientist to find a religion that suits him or her as a result of his or her studies. In the study of world religions, a delicate balance must be struck between drawing conclusions about their positive aspects and an objective analysis of reality.

The study of different religious views inevitably expands and changes the researcher’s worldview. Someone takes on new terms and different approaches to the human psyche and the reality of existence. In these respects, religious studies
differs from religious education in that the latter focuses on nurturing and strengthening a particular worldview and related value system, while in religious studies the researcher is encouraged to expand his or her views on the concepts of religion and man.

References: