

DEEN AND Religion

Introduction:

The distinction between "religion" and "deen" holds significant theological and philosophical implications within the context of Islamic thought. While the two terms are often used interchangeably, they carry distinct meanings. The term "deen" is often used to refer to the revealed scripture and divine way of life in Islam, consisting of not only beliefs but also a holistic framework guiding one's actions, morality, and spirituality. This concept of deen is deeply rooted in Quran, where in Surah Al-Ma'ida, it is stated,

"This day I have perfected for you your religion (deen) and completed my favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion." (5:3) ↓
- Quranic Perspective

In contrast, "Religion" is a broader term that encompasses various belief systems and faiths. The Quran acknowledges the existence of different religions in Surah Al-Hajj, stating,

"For every religion, we have appointed rites which they perform." (22:67)

2- Exploring the term "DEEN"

The term "Deen" is multifaceted, in Arabic it means to "attain supremacy / dominion status".

Another meaning is "way or the manner".

In religious context it means "way of life".

In context of Islam, "deen" represents the

- Hadith Reference

الدِّينُ النِّصِيحَةُ

"The deen is advice" (Sahih Muslim, 55)

Complete way of life based on Islamic principles and teachings. "Deen" is deeply contextual, as it adapts to various aspects of life, including worship, ethics, social conduct, and personal spirituality.

3. What is Religion?

This term comes from the Latin word "Religio / Religare" meaning "To make followers / To subjugate".

While contextually, religion means "subjugation of a supernatural power, deity or God."

Scholars from various fields have also offered different definitions of religion based on their perspectives such as:

① Emil Durkheim viewed it as a unified system of beliefs and practices centered around sacred elements.

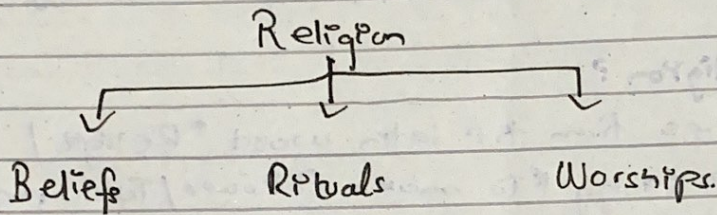
Karl Marx regarded it as a form of social control & comfort. Edward Taylor described it as "to believe in spiritualism is called religion".

In Islamic perspective, Ibn Taymiyyah defined religion as "knowledge of God, His Prophet, and the obligatory and prohibited matters to act upon". While Dr. Israr Ahmed viewed it as a combination of three things (faith, rituals and social functions).

⇒ Tends to focus more on religious doctrines and observances. Not encompasses the entirety of life.

• Scholarly Views

"Religion often tends to be limited to a particular set of beliefs and rituals."
- Karen Armstrong



3- Why Islam is called "Deen"?

- ⇒ Islam is the complete code of life
- ⇒ Islam includes the teachings regarding all socio-political-economic dimensions.
- ⇒ It encompasses entirety of one's life.
- ⇒ It provides a holistic and all-encompassing way of living for its followers, guiding them in matters of faith and life choices

• Quranic Reference

يا ايها الذين ءامنوا ادخلوا في السلم كافة
ولا تتبعوا خطوات الشيطان انه لكم عدو مبين
(Al-Baqarah, 208)

"O believers! Enter into Islam wholeheartedly and do not follow Satan's footsteps. Surely he is your sworn enemy"

In this verse, Allah encourages believers to embrace Islam wholly and completely. It emphasizes that Islam is not meant to be practiced selectively but should encompass every aspect of a believer's life.

4- The Holistic Approach of Deen: Guarding every corner of life

Deen, in its essence, is a comprehensive and all-encompassing way of life that provides guidance for every aspect of individual's existence. It goes beyond mere religious rituals and beliefs. Its message is real and practical for it is composed of all human actions, from social, moral, economical, political to spiritual dimensions, it covers everything. So we can postulate that deen is a complete code of life.

A Quranic verse that exemplifies the holistic nature of deen is found in Surah Al-An'am,

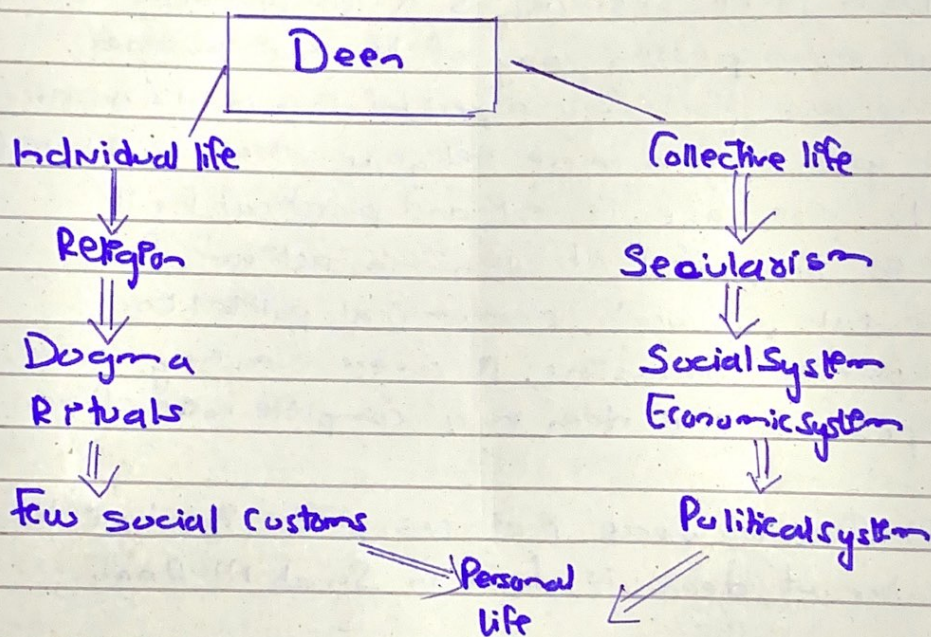
قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ

(Al-An'am, 162)

"Say, indeed, my prayer, ~~my rites of~~ sacrifice, my worship and my death are for Allah, Lord of the worlds."

This highlights that a believer's life is devoted to Allah in its entirety. It includes acts of worship, also extends to one's way of living and even approach to death. Deen is not confined to ~~death~~ rituals alone; it includes all aspects of existence.

Deen covers entire life as depicted in following chart.



5. Deen vs. Religion

(unpacking the Difference)

1. Deen: More than just a Religion
 "Deen", is often translated as "Religion", holds a broader and more profound

meaning in Islam. It encompasses a comprehensive way of life that goes beyond the traditional understanding of religion as set of beliefs and rituals. Here's how "deen" differs from "religion".

1. Integration of Faith And Action

Deen emphasizes the integration of faith and action. It encourages believers to translate their beliefs into deeds that reflect their commitment to Allah Almighty and ethical values in all areas of life.

Religion encompasses beliefs and rituals, the emphasis on integrating faith into daily actions, that varies among different religions.

2. Way of life

Deen considers all of life as an opportunity for worship and moral living. It provides guidance for various aspects of daily existence, from personal relationships to economic transactions.

Religion often focuses on specific religious practices, places of worship, and rituals, which may not extend to all aspects of life.

4. Ethical Framework

Deen places strong emphasis on ethics and moral conduct.

It provides principles for honesty, kindness, justice, and compassion that extend to interactions with people.

For example:

Surah Al-Hujrat highlights the importance of not mocking or ridiculing others.

"O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule (another) people, perhaps they maybe better than them."

(49:11)

~~While~~ Ethics are an important component of many religions, the depth and specificity of ethical guidelines can vary from religious tradition to another.

For example:

Some critics contend that there are variations with "secular humanism", that this doesn't provide a universally accepted, detailed ethical code contrasting with deen, which provides comprehensive ethical guidelines based on religious texts.

5. Social Justice

Deen includes a call for social justice and equity. It urges believers to be mindful of the needs of less fortunate and work towards the betterment of the community as a whole.

Social justice principles are present in religious teachings, but the degree to which they are emphasized differs among religions.

In Surah Al-Baqarah (2:267) there is guidance on giving to those in need:

"O you who have believed, spend from the good things which you have earned"

⇒ In Islam, there's the concept of "Zakat", which is a form of almsgiving or charity. Giving Zakat is not ^{just} a financial obligation, it is seen as a way to purify one's wealth and attain spiritual fulfillment by helping those in need.

In many religions, charitable giving and concern for poor are important values, but they may not have a structured and mandatory system as Zakat in Islam.

6. Divine Connection

Deen emphasizes a direct and personal connection between individuals and divine. It encourages believers to establish a profound and deep connection with the divine through acts of worship & moral conduct

Religion can encompass various belief systems, and the nature of relationship with the divine can vary. In some religions there may be intermediaries or specific rituals that mediate the connection with divine

7. Universal Applicability

Deen stresses the universal applicability of its principles and values which are relevant to individuals and societies worldwide, regardless of cultural or geographical differences. It acknowledges and respects cultural diversity while maintaining a core set of beliefs & values that transcend cultural boundaries.

Quranic verse (49:13) emphasizes the diversity of cultures and tribes:

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male & female and made you people and tribes that you may know one another".

Religious practices and interpretations may adapt to local customs and traditions, resulting in variations that reflect specific cultural and regional contexts.

Critical Analysis

A renowned Islamic scholar, Sayyid Hassan Nasr made a critical assessment on Difference between deen and religion and stated that,

"Deen is the totality of the way of life intended by the creator for man, encompasses not only worship, but also morality, law, social

behavior, and even artistic and intellectual activities. Religion, on the other hand, tends to consist of a more limited concepts related to worship and rituals.

Conclusion:-

Deen is a complete code of life that encompasses faith, personal conduct and social matters. While religion is a ~~con~~limited to specific faiths, traditions and rituals.