

3. Understanding

Difference between Din and religion (20):
Introduction

1. Ans:

The difference between Din and religion is of paramount importance. Contemporary scholar, Dr. Israr points out that religion - translated as Mazhab - was historically used for the Fiqhi schools in Islam, such as Maliki mazhab, Hanafi mazhab. However, overtime people started using it for Islam. Thus, contemporary scholars like Mawdudi, Allama Iqbal, Sayyid Qutb and Dr. Khurshid have highlighted the difference between both terms.

In essence, religion is a restricted term with a narrower meaning. It is used in a specific way such as for defining personal relation between man and God. However, Din is a wider term that encompasses entire code of life. It provides a comprehensive system of life that contains a political, economic and social system.

The term used for Islam by Quran is Din, as used in 5:3

الدين عند الله الاسلام

"Indeed, the Din in the sight of Allah is Islam" (5:3)

2. Literal meaning and historical evolution of term "Religion"

Religion has its roots in Latin word "religio" that was described by Julius Caesar to mean "obligation of an oath".

More apt meaning comes from Cicero who used it to describe ~~obligation of an oath~~ worship of Gods. A well known and accepted definition comes from Edward Tylor who defines it as "a belief in spiritual beings".

2.1 The concept and purpose of "religion"

Religion, in comparison to Din, is used in a narrower sense. Its purpose and scope is limited.

Durkheim simply defined it from social perspective that its purpose is "social cohesion" and it provides a means of communication.

William James gave the concept pertaining to belief and defined it as

"a belief that there exists a supreme being and our good lies in adjusting ourselves thereto".

2.2 Composite factors of "religion"

Dr Issac opines that religion comprises of following three factors

- a) Faiths
- b) Rituals
- c) Social functions.

2.3 The absence of term "Mazhab" in primary Islamic text

The term "Mazhab" itself is absent in both Quran and hadith. Rather the term used for Islam by Quran is Din and appears 79 times in Quran.

"إِنَّمَا كُنْتُ مَكْمُولًا لَكُمْ دِينًا"
 "I have Perfected for you, your Din"

2.

3. Understanding the term "Din"

Din is used for entire way of life. It covers both public and private life, individual and societal life and contains a complete political, economic and social system.

According to Dr. Israr the composite factors of Din are:

- a) Faiths
- b) Rituals
- c) Social Functions
- d) Political and legal system
- e) Financial system
- f) Social system.

~~3.~~

3.1) Use of Din in Quranic context

Mawdudi in his book "Four basic Quranic terms" explains the meaning

of Din as used in Quran. According to Mawdudi it appears in Quran in following context:

~~a) Servitude~~

- a) Sovereignty and supreme authority.
- b) Servitude and obedience.

As used in Surah Zumar

"Indeed we have sent down Quran to you [O Muhammad] so worship Allah sincere to him in Din."

- a) System of thought and action established by such authority.
"For you is your Din, for me, my Din" (109:6)

d) Judgment pronounced by such authority.

"As used by Quran for Judgment day (Qul p. 9.)"

"and what do you know of Day of Din"

3.2 Wider scope of Din vis-a-vis religion.

Mawdudi in his book "Towards Understanding Islam" points to following verse to argue that Din is complete way of life.

"and said pharaoh, 'leave me to slay Musa and let him call upon his Rabb for I am afraid that he might change your Din.'" (12:40)

"Mawdudi argues that ~~pharaoh~~

Pharaoh not only feared a change in religion but he feared a revolution in socio-political system of his time.

4. Particular differences between Din and religion

4.1 Religion is a subjective experience with restricted meaning. Din is a complete code of life and objective reality.

Religion has a narrowed scope compared to Din. Din is a complete code of life where man submits to Allah's commands in all aspects as Quran says

"Say: Verily my prayer, my sacrifice, my life is for Allah, the lord of all worlds"

4.2 Purpose of religion is personal salvation while purpose of Din is both personal salvation and progress of humanity.

Din's scope goes beyond personal salvation. It covers both *huqooq ul ilah* and *huqooq Allah*. For example

the economic system of Islam promotes circulation of wealth for progress of society

"So that the wealth may not circulate solely among rich among you"

4.3 Religion does not provide guidance in all aspects of life; Din does.

Religion leaves mankind in darkness in most aspects of life. It has been observed that human intellect is often overshadowed by instincts and passions. However, Din provides guidance in all aspects of life.

"We have certainly set forth every (kind of) lesson in this Quran"

4.4 Din motivates to rise against injustice; Religion historically has been used to oppress people.

Religion, as observed throughout history, has been used to oppress people such as used in medieval times through the doctrine of "Divine right to rule". Din has always motivated the weak to rise against injustice.

"Allah loves not that evil should be raised in public except where injustice has been done" (Quran)

4.5 Religion demands blind following; Din encourages use of reason.

Throughout history, the priests of various religions suppressed the use of reason. However, Din encourages the use of reason. The Quran states:

"Whoever has been given wisdom is given great good" and also encourages to use reason to understand Allah's command as it says that meaning of revelation becomes manifest to those "who have knowledge" (Quran).

4.6 Religion is ever evolving and changing while Din is immutable and for all times.

Many religions of world perished because they became outdated. They were either too flexible or too rigid. However, Islam is perfectly balanced and the allowance of ijtihad equips it to deal with issues of all times. The Prophet (SAW) himself encouraged Muadh Bin Jabal when he said that he would "strive" with reason to form judgment if a matter is absent in Quran or Sunnah. (Sunan Tirmazi)

4.7 Religion is compatible with secularism while Din has its own system.

Religion does not provide a political system, and in absence of such system tyranny can take place. Iqbal rightly criticized this when he said

"Statehood divorced from Din leads to Changaizi (Changis rule) / Though it may be democracy or monarchy"

Conclusion: Implication of linking Din to religion.

Reducing ~~religion~~ Din to religion have had grave implications for entire Muslim world. Indeed, the British dominated India by attacking Muslim identity and through their attempts to exclude Muslims from socio-political set up. The din was subjugated. Label aptly describe the situation

"Since the dera in India is allowed to prostrate / He ~~is~~ foolishly thinks it implies Freedom"