

# CONTEMPORARY ISSUES OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN UZBEKISTAN

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*Abstract: The paper deals with the actual problems, major directions and development trends of the field of Religious Studies in Uzbekistan. It is clear that the youths have become the main target of different destructive ideas in the period of globalization. The paper focuses on the prevention of these threats and formation of a spiritual immunity against them as well as on the improvement of healthy lifestyle and respect towards national and universal values in souls and minds of the youths in order to prevent a gap to be appeared in their spiritual world. National and religious values have developed for better in Uzbekistan recent years. A special attention has been paid on the deep study and analysis of the religious-educational heritage of ancestors and continuation of their scientific traditions worthily. It was explained that the fact that increase of an interest towards a religion gives a chance to solve the modern complicated issues providing a harmonization of problems in society, thoughts about the solution of them, secular and religious values. Thousands of sects such as Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and other religions were emerged in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The paper emphasizes a possibility to suppose that such kind of processes may be continued in the future. A special attention was paid on the formation of a critical and conscious approach in the youths towards religious news for choosing an objective way in the cyberspace and using the system of the modern information and communication technologies.*

*Keywords: Religious Studies, religious, Uzbekistan, Islam, Christianity, state and religion, world religions, religious tolerance, confessions, new religious movements, society and religion, religious community, popular culture, process of globalization, religion in the cyberspace.*

The last three years have been rich in great changes and upheavals in the life of our country. At the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev conducted a large-scale work on the restoration and development of our religious values. Along with other areas, much attention is paid to scientific, creative, and religious education. In particular, the historical decree Of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to radically improve the activities of the religious and educational sphere" dated April 16, 2018, opened the door to many opportunities. In the new era of our development, religious and national values were further developed, special attention was paid to the in-depth study and analysis of the religious and educational heritage of our ancestors, a worthy continuation of their scientific traditions.

Theology aims to give students a general theoretical understanding of the role of religions in the lives of individuals in the modern era, to enrich their understanding of the relationship between the state and religion, the idea of inter-religious tolerance and culture. At the same time, the region affects the social, spiritual, and spiritual influence of religion on society, primitive religious ideas, teachings of national and world religions, the essence of religion and its role in various historical stages of human society, and the importance of religious values in the spiritual development of society. it also focuses on highlighting the

nature of negative vices, such as the relationship between religion, extremism and fanaticism under the guise of religion, and the formation of ideological immunity against them.

Within the framework of the subject "Religion", several interrelated issues are systematically covered in the higher education system of the Republic. In particular, "Relations of the state with religion and religious organizations in Uzbekistan", "Religions of Central Asia", "Islam and its foundations", "Sects and trends in Islam", "Missionary and proselytism: history and modernity, methods of propaganda", "Religious extremism". and terrorism: ideology and practice, counter-strategy, "New religious movements and sects" and "the Religious factor in cyberspace" [Theology, 2019: 286].

It is well known that in the context of globalization, young people remain the main target of various destructive ideas. As a result, the future of the country - the youth - is already becoming a manatee that serves the interests of certain groups and States, political forces. Such negative developments can be observed in the processes that have taken place in some Arab countries. It is necessary to pay special attention to the prevention of such situations, the formation of their spiritual immunity, a healthy lifestyle in the hearts and minds of our youth, a sense of respect for national and national values [Nizametdinov N., 2019: 45].

Proposal of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly on September 19, 2017, to adopt a special resolution entitled "Education and religious tolerance" aimed at promoting tolerance and mutual respect, ensuring freedom of religion, protecting the rights of believers and preventing discrimination? [Mirziyoyev Sh., 2017: 1] is also a clear expression of the fact that solidarity between different religions is considered an issue of international significance in our country.

The relationship between religion and the state has always been relevant. These relations, which have taken on different content and forms at different times, are reflected in the fact that in the conditions of independent Uzbekistan, freedom of conscience is fully guaranteed on a constitutional basis, creating appropriate conditions for the activities of religious organizations. The fact that there is legal liability for violation of legislation in this area also shows the essence of these relations. The topic "state Relations with religion and religious organizations in Uzbekistan" helps to understand such issues. Relations between the state and religion in Uzbekistan are based on a separatist model in its essence, content and legal basis, i.e. separation of religion from the state, religious education from secondary schools, and freedom of conscience and religious tolerance. The roots of Uzbek tolerance, ethnic, cultural, and religious tolerance of our people, which are the source of our spiritual awakening today, go back to the distant past. Along with many other peoples, Jews lived in Central Asia for many years. In the works of medieval scholars such as Abu Rayhan Beruni, Abu Ishaq Istahri, Abu said Gardizi, Abu Jafar Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari, Ibn Khordadbeh, as well as in the diaries of famous travelers such as Benjamin Tudelsky, Ibn Batuta, Seymour Mundlebill, and Seymour Mendlville, you Can get historical information about [Alimova M., Nigmatullaev I., 2019: 32].

One of the General trends in the modern world is related to the secularization of education. However, this process should be understood not as the exclusion of religion from the sphere of education, but as the distribution of responsibility for educational processes, each of which has its characteristics. Religious education in Uzbekistan is an activity aimed at the systematic delivery of religious knowledge, values, lifestyle, and understanding of the world to students by people with special professional training. The development of the religious education system in our country at the level of modern requirements is one of the strategic tasks in achieving our noble goals, such as the correct formation of religious consciousness and culture of our people, and the protection of the younger generation from the influence of religious movements. Indeed, education, including religious education and

upbringing, is one of the main conditions for human perfection and development of the nation.

The process of strengthening the stability of the religious situation in Uzbekistan is also taking place in a difficult socio-political environment. The political and legal conditions developed by our state and the culture of tolerance of our people serve as a solid foundation for the development of a healthy inter-religious dialogue, as well as the development of comprehensive relations with various countries based on common religious beliefs. However, due to careful state policy aimed at regulating religious life, the harmony of interests in the system of relations between religion, society, and the state is ensured.

Uzbekistan is a secular state, and in our country religion is separated from the state, as stated in article 61 of the Constitution of our country: "Religious organizations and associations are separated from the state and are equal before the law. The state does not interfere in the activities of religious associations."

This idea is also enshrined in article 5 Of the law on freedom of conscience and religious organizations, which also states that religion is separate from the state and that no religion or religious beliefs may be subject to any privileges or restrictions for others. This means that in our country the state does not interfere in religious affairs, and religion does not interfere in state affairs (except, of course, in cases provided for by law).

This is based on the need for the state to promote mutual reconciliation and respect between citizens of different religions and non-believers, prevent possible conflicts and tensions between them, promote peace and harmony between religions, Organizations are responsible for the fact that the state does not impose any obligations on them, does not interfere in their activities that do not contradict the law [Alidzhanova L., 2019: 508].

Religion is closely connected with the spiritual world of mankind and has always been with it in public life. Islam, the religion of the peoples of Central Asia, also served to form high human qualities. Having sufficient knowledge and skills about the true nature of the various sects and trends that have emerged in the religion of Islam will help you correctly distinguish the differences and differences between these religions.

People with weak faith often live by following or imitating others. Depending on the circumstances, they sometimes turn in this direction. Such religious weakness negatively affects the maturity of an empty person. If faith is limited by fanaticism, racism, nationalism, and narrow political and economic interests, it serves to destabilize, destabilize, and restrain development. It is important to distinguish between destructive, deceptive, misleading, false "beliefs" with beliefs and beliefs that lead to progress, freedom. Islam, the sacred faith of the Uzbek people, also served to form high human qualities. Thanks to him, our people have survived for thousands of years with a rich spirituality and heritage, identity. In the field of theology, Islam and its foundations are thoroughly analyzed. In particular, the science of Kalam (Aqidah), its essence, faith and its conditions, related concepts, representatives of the Kalam school [Akilov S., 2019: 64], the emergence of currents and currents in Islam, jurisprudence schools: Hanafi, Maliki, the emergence of Shafi'ites and herbalism, as well as the problem of sectarianism from views that undermine the unity of Muslims today [Tulepov A., 2014: 536].

The reality is that young people become an active social force and become the main object of various ideological influences and pressures. This takes into account that they are the most mobile layer of society, which is not yet experienced enough, is subject to external influences, and at the same time. A study of the efforts made by missionaries of various religious sects shows that, unfortunately, the goals set out in these plans are being achieved, although gradually. This requires systematic measures to prevent missionary work and proselytism in our country, especially to prevent young people from falling into the trap of such harmful currents. To successfully solve this problem, it is important to regularly

acquaint the younger generation with the current changes in the field of religion in our country, created by opportunities [Ochildiev A., Najmiddinov J., 2017: 198].

At the same time, taking into account their interests, level of knowledge and differentiated approach, one of the urgent tasks today is to help young people acquire knowledge about religion, including about Islam, which our peoples have believed in for centuries, and about the foundations of national and religious traditions. Such knowledge must be objective, accurately, and fully reflect reality, and by its very nature be inextricably linked to the interests of the motherland and the nation. One of the main conditions for the formation of immunity against it is that our youth has an objective and sufficient knowledge of the essence of missionary work [Rakhimzhanov D., 2019: 18].

"Religious extremism and terrorism: ideology and practice, strategies to combat it" is another relevant area of religious research, which emphasizes the importance of religion in establishing a dialogue between different peoples, uniting them spiritually and spiritually, encouraging them to fight together against oppression and violence. Although the roots of such events as extremism and terrorism go far back, they have never posed such a threat to social stability and development as they do today.

To increase the secular, scientific and moral potential of the population, especially our youth, to strengthen their sense of loyalty to the independence of the country, national and spiritual, universal values, to prevent any manifestations of religious fanaticism in our society, to strengthen the socio-spiritual and political environment in our country. To strengthen the foundations of the state, several government decisions have been adopted and appropriate measures are being taken. This shows its positive results. Besides, the specific legal mechanism for combating religious extremism and terrorism in Uzbekistan is unique in ensuring the country's peace and security by guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of citizens, improving the system of religious education, regulating the production and distribution of religious materials, and preventing various religious conflicts.

In the world, colorful, sometimes completely contradictory worldviews, political, national, religious trends, inter-religious and interfaith disputes sometimes go beyond the scope of debate, which leads to bloody clashes, mass killings, and countless tragedies. The topic "New religious movements and sects" provides a detailed analysis of various religious movements, the activities of their movements, and the ideas they promote [Saidzhalolov S., 2019: 364].

Whether you belong to Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, or any other religion, people experience almost the same emotions. The current period is also characterized by the spread of religious sects and the emergence of new ones. This process is reflected in the observance of certain policies and legal practices in the world community concerning sects or new religious movements. Peter antes, Vice-President of the International Association for the history of religions, and Rainer Flesch, Professor at the University of Hanover, today published a pamphlet entitled "Die Religion der Gegenwart: Geschichte und Glauben" ("New religions: history and beliefs"). in addition to the generally accepted world religions, new religious sects and communities are reported [Antes P., 2001: 304]. Scientists consider new religions (especially more than 200 in Korea and more than 250 in Japan), religious communities and sects that have appeared in the world in recent years as the product of modernization processes and not only. The processes of differentiation and individualization in society are reflected both in the religious system and in the methods of searching for individuality, accepting, and understanding the essence of the content of sacred and divine concepts. Although the foundations of civil society have been established to some extent in many developed countries, the process of further improvement continues. The concept of civil society is based on the idea of human freedom, its manifestation in all manifestations and relations. In particular, it includes the ability to participate in political life in the political

sphere, equality in the legal sphere, Association in the social sphere, freedom of conscience in the religious sphere, cultural diversity in the cultural sphere, equality and tolerance of peoples, race in inter-ethnic and inter-racial relations. It is recognized that in the field of ideological diversity, pluralism, migration - the free choice of human housing, in the field of spiritual education-humanism, liberalism, and the development of equal competition of ideas [Isakdzhanov R., 2019: 54].

In multicultural societies where pluralism exists, these processes are accelerated, and the traditional objects of faith in society, the content of divine concepts, begin to acquire their dignity, their value in a different way. Moreover, although these new religious views lead to the disintegration of society, they themselves raise the alarm about the "universal truth" or the only sacred truth that unites the peoples of the world. Therefore, they promote their ideas and demands, such as the unification and harmonization of religion and science, religion and politics, religion and education, religion and art, and so on. New religions, as a result of the acculturation process that leads to a new system of different religious views, consider themselves capable of uniting all mankind, taking into account their artificial origin, and not contributing to the development of their original religion. It is believed that construction can be achieved [Kakhkharova M. M., 2019: 682].

According to experts, in the second half of the twentieth century, hundreds of sects arose within Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and other religions. This makes it possible to predict that such processes may continue in the future.

In the most General sense, a sect refers to a group of adherents of a particular religious, political, or philosophical view, while a "religious sect" is defined as a group operating under the banner of a religion that contradicts the official beliefs of a particular religion or has no connection with existing religions or denominations. Today there are many sects belonging to both directions. According to experts, their number is about 5000 [Theology, 2019: 286].

History has shown that in a society undergoing deep socio-political changes, various religious communities or sects have emerged that claim to know the "only right way" of development, the "only way to salvation" if the situation in society is negative. In Uzbekistan, also in the early 1990s, some "converts" with a certain degree of charisma and organizational skills and high self-confidence began to spread their ideas to others. As a result, several informal religious communities were formed in the Republic. There are almost no people with special religious education among their members [Hasanboev O., 2014: 93].

With this in mind, experts estimate that there are more than 1,000 religious denominations in the world today. This is not the case in Islam. No country in the sect Hanafi is not an individual, and the other sects are not registered as a separate denomination. For example, although there are several Shia communities in Uzbekistan, they do not consider themselves a separate religious denomination.

Religion as an integral part of society has always been one of the normative factors that serve to socialize people, organize and regulate their way of life. This role of religion is determined by its historical features [Alidzhanova L., 2020: 1]. After all, religion, first of all, has absorbed universal moral norms and made them mandatory rules of behavior for all; secondly, it has helped people to live together; thirdly, it has strengthened people's trust and allowed them to overcome life's trials, problems and difficulties; fourth, it helped to preserve and transmit universal and spiritual values from generation to generation, and thus had a great impact on the development of culture.

We can say that the growing interest in religion today is a reflection of the processes of globalization. Indeed, globalization not only makes the world more cohesive and integrated, but also lays the Foundation for deepening the desire for self-realization at the level of Nations and societies that are seen as separate products. These processes, in turn, lead to increased attention to understanding the essence of religion, which is an integral part of

human spirituality, and its place in human and social life. At the same time, it should be noted that the growing interest in religion is due to the problems facing human society today, the search for ways to solve them, the desire to find complete answers to today's complex and complex questions that ensure the harmony of secular and religious values. must.

The topic of "the religion Factor in cyberspace" also deserves attention, as it allows young people to choose an objective path in cyberspace and use modern information and communication technologies to form a critical and informed approach to the various information they receive. It is necessary to raise the culture of the younger generation to use modern information technologies, protect them from ideas of immorality, violence, spiritual depravity under the guise of "mass culture", strengthen the ideological immunity in their hearts and minds against the influence of destructive ideas through the Internet. this is one of the most pressing issues of the day.

It is no coincidence that the XXI century is recognized as the information age. It is known that cyberspace is a "virtual" shared set of computer networks around the world. This term was used in the 1984 novel *Neuromancer* by William Gibson and is now used to describe the global information space. In cyberspace, telephone conversations, "chats", various online discussions, and computer communication are held. Modern means of accessing virtual reality include: mobile phones with Internet access; online games with remote control; video devices; software that allows you to use offline. Such tools, by creating access to cyberspace, mean that the risks in this space are incredibly high. It should be noted that manifestations of religious processes in cyberspace are manifested in the following forms: communication, information, education, experience, practice, missionary work, marketing, healing, etc. [Abdullayeva M. 2018: 2].

The possibilities of the Internet allow people to communicate and connect to social networks to exchange ideas for a specific purpose. Among the communities that were initially formed were non-traditional Internet groups such as Wiccans and neo-pagans. According to a study conducted by Heidi Campbell Christian communities, people become members of online communities to communicate. A number of scientists raised important questions related to the nature of virtual communication. It was recognized as simply an "illusion of social life" or a tool that leads to the improvement of communities in the "Autonomous" world [Tulepov A., 2016: 672].

Leading religious organizations also note that there is a growing need for computerized information among members and non-members. "Bloggers" or "blogs" that distribute electronic religious information are an important aspect of computerized communication in the dissemination of religious information. Podcasts, MR3 players from the site, audio programs uploaded to i-Pods, in particular, lectures are gaining popularity. Previously rare, unusual Scriptures and subsequent information are now available not only to the General public, but also to anyone who can download and study websites. Computer media develops a wide range of methods for treating and solving diseases. Gurus, evangelists, and counselors can send a prayer prayer to psychics or find answers to religious and practical problems. Many are attracted by the anonymity of the appeal and the participation of a strong religious leader [Abdullayeva M. Z., 2019: 43].

The processes described above show how deeply the Internet has penetrated into our daily lives. It is important to build a healthy immune system in young people when using information flows, teach them the positive aspects, and inform them about the negative consequences. In most countries of the world there are that many sites and networks are filtered in large amounts of money. Of course, it is very difficult to protect people from dangerous threats from various forces in the Internet world using prohibitions or filtering tools. Therefore, socio-political processes taking place in different regions of the world deepen the sense of conflict, organize spiritual and educational work against all kinds of

threats in accordance with modern requirements, especially for the younger generation. In short, it is more important than ever to mobilize all our forces and capabilities to protect our family, which is sacred to one of us, from the influence of foreign ideas under the guise of religion, in which "the struggle against thought, against ideas, against ignorance, against enlightenment".

The issues discussed are undoubtedly complex and multifaceted. Teaching religion on the basis of modern views and a new approach to solving problems is a requirement of the time. This approach helps to form a culture of religious tolerance among students, a correct view of religion, and education of highly spiritual personnel for society.

At a time when inter-ethnic, ethnic and religious conflicts, internal and regional conflicts are growing in various countries of the world, the exemplary experience of Uzbekistan, where spiritual heights and religious tolerance have long been established, can be successfully used to overcome them. This is the experience of peoples of different religions living in peace and harmony in a multi-ethnic state.

In the current conditions, it is obvious that the process of globalization has become an extremely acute tool of ideological influence, serving the interests of various political forces and centers. From this point of view, protecting the spiritual world of our people from such threats, revealing the essence of the processes taking place in the international arena in these very difficult times, and getting an objective and independent opinion about them, has become the most urgent task today. Today, everyone should look at life in an open, realistic and alert way, correctly assess the growing spiritual threats and dangers in the world and beyond, and draw appropriate conclusions and lessons from them. After all, everyone, especially the younger generation, should not allow one-sided and false perception of this complex and dangerous life and its cruel games.

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