

Religious Studies

At the end of this lesson, students are going to learn:

1. What is meant by religion, comparative religions and religious studies?
2. What are the main categories of religious studies?
3. What are the main topics of these studies?
4. What are the main methods used by scientists in this field?
5. What importance religion has in our lives?
6. What is its importance and relation to language studies?

The Definition of Religion :

- Religion (from old French. "*religion*" "religious community," from Latin. *religionem* (nom. religio) "respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods," "obligation, the bond between man and the gods")
- Religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence.
- Many religions have narratives, symbols, and sacred histories that aim to explain the meaning of life and/or to explain the origin of life or the Universe.

The Definition of comparative religions

- It is the study which makes a comparison between religions in order to overcome many problems including civilization conflict (The Clash of Civilizations).
- The comparative study of religions is an academic discipline which has been developed within Christian theology faculties, and it has a tendency to force widely differing phenomena into a kind of strait-jacket cut to a Christian pattern.
- It is devoted to the study of religion in general and specific world religions in particular, investigating such dimensions of religion as scripture and myth, experience, belief, ritual, ethics, institutions, and material culture.

The Definition of Religious Studies:

- Religious studies, also known as the study of religion, is an academic field devoted to research into religious beliefs, behaviours, and institutions.
- Religious studies draw upon multiple academic disciplines including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and the history of religions.

Categories of Religious Studies :

The studies of religion are divided into three main categories:

1. *World religions*, a term which refers to transcultural, international faiths;
2. *Indigenous religions*, refer to smaller, culture-specific or nation-specific religious groups.
3. *New religious movements*, refer to recently developed faiths.

The Main Topics of Religious Studies

- Religious studies are perceived as *a more objective and academically sound means of understanding how religions ‘work’ within the societies where believers live.*
- The religion is regarded as *a system*, as it were, through which *believers construct the ways they perceive the world and their place within it.*

The Main Methods Used by Scientists of Religion

- A number of methodologies are used in Religious Studies. It *describes, compares, interprets, and explains religion, emphasizing systematic, historically based, and cross-cultural perspectives.*
- Religious studies take a *more scientific and objective approach* independent of any particular religious viewpoint.

The Importance of Religious Studies in Our Lives

- Religious Studies investigate the most basic components of human society and culture.
- The key to understanding the fundamental motivations for the behaviour of human groups lies in the knowledge of religious beliefs and practices.
- As jobs and world cultures become increasingly diverse, knowledge about other religions and cultures enables people to communicate effectively on the basis of knowledge rather than stereotypes.

Language and Religion

For many people all over the world, religion is indispensable, without which they cannot continue their lives and existences. Religion can be extensively influential in a community. It can affect all parts and aspects of society, from lifestyle, science, education, and behaviour to ethics. The religious faith of the people strengthens the community to resist their needs and changes.

The topic of ‘language and religion’ is relatively new to sociolinguistics and the systematic development of ‘language and religion as a field of sociolinguistic study only really started to come about in the past decade. Religion is important in sociolinguistics as a factor of relevance to the study of language variation, shift, maintenance, policy and planning.

It is commonly known that translations of holy scriptures triggered and influenced processes of standardization in many languages. That certainly was the case for Bible translations in the European realm. Language and religion have a significant relationship among people. Language is at the service of religion.