

# Special aspects of communication in a multi-religious space of modern society

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the peculiarities of communication in modern society. The following spheres of a religious discourse functioning are defined: communication in church, communication in small religious groups, communication of the person with God. Besides, each religion has its system of values. The system of values of each religion is not a stable phenomenon and can change with the change of society. Communication in a multi-religious society has some peculiarities. In order to overcome difficulties during communication in multi-religious space of modern society, it is important to know and consider the values of people professing this religion.

## 1. Introduction

The aim of the article is to investigate some aspects of communication in a multi-religious space of modern society.

Some questions raised in the article have been considered in the research of scholars studying problems of communication (O.V. Issers, V.I. Karasik, G.G. Pocheptsov, V.V. Krasnykh), questions of culture (A.I. Arnoldov, A.K. Bayburin, A.A. Gorelov, P.S. Gurevich, V.N. Toporov, A.L. Krober, C. Kluckhohn, L.A. White), linguists (N.D. Arutyunova, A. Wezsbitska, E.M. Vereschagin, V.I. Karasik, V.A. Maslova), scientists conducting religious studies (V.I. Garadzha, I.A. Ilyin, A. Donnini, K.G. Dowson, V.V. Kasevich, Y.A. Kimley, R.L. Johnstone, R.R. Marrett).

## 2. Materials and Methods

The following methods have been used to conduct research: semantic analysis, discourse-analysis, informants' survey, method of cultural meanings' analysis.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The term "religion" is of Latin origin. It was introduced to culture by Cicero who derived this term from the polysemantic verb *relegere* – "to go, to return, to think over, to read again, to behold, to be afraid". His interpretation of religion boiled down to God-fearing, fear and overcoming fear with the help of the thoughtful system of honouring the higher powers. One of the recognized definitions of religion belongs to R. Johnstone who defined religion as "a system of beliefs and rituals with the help of which a group of people

explains and reacts on what they find supernatural and sacred" [1].

Italian researcher of religion A. Donini pays attention to the fact that relations between a man and nature, which had been established from time immemorial, had always had double character: reigning of mighty nature over a helpless person on the one hand and influence of a person on the nature on the other [2].

But there is also point of view according to which religion can't be drawn only from the helplessness of a man; according to Y.A. Levada "functions of religion must be presented in juxtaposition not with natural needs of a man but with the needs of historically particular social systems" [3].

Nowadays the interest in religion is great. The world of religion covers a wide range of phenomena, it includes religious communities of people, religious subjects, institutes and organizations, traditions and rituals, religious ideology and culture [4]. All the elements of the field of religion in one way or another are mediated by a discourse, are reflected in a discourse, are implemented through a discourse, they either make a subject of communication (its referential aspect) or act as elements of a pragmatic context, pragmatic presuppositions.

In a narrow sense religious discourse can be considered as a set of speech acts used in the religious sphere. In a broad sense we can interpret it as a set of certain actions focused on a person's inclusion in faith and also a set of speech acts complexes accompanying the process of interaction between the communicants, including the text fragments used in the course of religious communication [5].

Speaking about a public institute relating to religious discourse, first of all, church is distinguished as its main social institute. However, borders of religious discourse are far beyond church; the restriction of religious discourse only with frames of the temple can

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considerably narrow and intensely distort the essence of such a multidimensional phenomenon as religious discourse [6]. Religious discourse is a complex and multilateral phenomenon.

Religion unites people of different countries and cultures. Culture represents a global system, rather complicated “natural-artificial” formation. On the one hand, culture represents a living organism, because it reproduces itself, assimilates and processes the nature and surrounding world, reacts in a particular way to the impact of other cultures. On the other hand, culture presents a result of people’s activity which consists in aspiration to support traditions, to improve life and to confront traditions of destruction which can take place, etc.

“In the structure of linguistic personality a particular place is occupied by values - the most fundamental characteristics of culture, the highest reference points of behaviour” [7].

Religious culture presents a “set of methods and techniques of provision and implementation of human being which are realized during religious activity the center of which is a cult” [8]. With such approach all cultural values are formed within religious consciousness. Having arisen on a particular cultural basis religion and religious consciousness influence greatly both on the world culture in general and on the culture of particular nation.

From the very start, the main role of religion was to give human norms and values absolute and stable character. “A man is a religious creature in his nature and human soul can’t stand any emptiness in religious sphere.... Only superhuman principle constructs the very idea of a man” [9].

All elements of religion are closely related to culture, part of which they represent.

The question about co-relation of religion and culture cannot be resolved unequivocally. Some scholars are of the opinion that culture and religion exist independently though in some aspects culture can influence on religion. According to the opinion of others, culture is a consequence of religion – “culture presents lateral shoots of the cult” [10]. We share point of view of the researches who treat culture as a wider notion while religion is one of its constituent parts.

In contrast to culture in general, religious culture is a totality of methods and techniques of providing and exercising faith which are realized in the process of religious activity, the center of which presents a cult.

Religious consciousness is inextricably linked with the belief in the supernatural. And first of all what is linked with the belief in the supernatural is religious ideas, dogmas, myths. Besides, each religion includes doctrinal, dogmatic or mythological elements which comprise the basis of religious consciousness.

Contributing to the formation of the nations, formation and strengthening of states (though in some circumstances the same religion can lead to the division of the nation), religion plays cultural and social role in the life of the society.

The language of religion is characterized by the patterns of compositional decisions, interactivity, appellate character, richness of speech resources. “Religious texts must be organized in such a way that people who believe in God would except them as holy ones, perceiving preaching which they include and trying to follow them in their life” [11].

Thus, religious consciousness and the definite religious philosophy which functions in the definite society, predetermines and forms the culture of a particular society. Religion helps to support and develop cultural traditions; presents moral guidelines of behavior, formulates the main values of a particular cultural society; stabilizes spiritual life of the members of society; levels the significance of claims for creature comforts, denies their importance and gives priority to the comforts of the future life.

Religious consciousness as a whole has a number of characteristic features, they are: animism and animatism (recognition that man and everything alive have soul as well as faith in the animate nature), availability of faith (special psychological condition of confidence in the righteousness of chosen aim and possibility to reach it), belief in supernatural (confidence in real existence of the higher powers, “mysterious beginning” which can either punish a person if he doesn’t behave properly or encourage, reward him if he follows set rules), imagery and emotionality (in religious consciousness function black stone images, its important component comprise religious feelings which having arisen once become a human need; besides, it is typical of the religious discourse to relive various emotions, among them are “fear of God”, “love to God”, “sense of sinfulness and humility”, “compassion for neighbour”, “hope of reward”), symbolism and allegory (any religious system has its own system of symbols which lose their meaning outside the system; symbolism is didactic in character, through an image or combination of images it helps to convey ethical and moral concepts allegorically), combination of adequate and non-adequate (in any religious concept we can find provisions which correspond to the real world picture, and on the other hand some religious provisions can seem to be illegal and non-adequate, though the central component of any religion is faith and so a man mustn’t try to explain anything); dialogue character (a word has great power in religious consciousness, it concerns both semantic content and degree of influence on a person; belief in the existence of supernatural powers presumes faith and desire to interact with God and supernatural powers; in the religious space there unfolds a dialogue of a man with God and with another man), availability of moral and ethical norms and requirements (it is characteristic of religious consciousness to include absolute moral truths and particular ethical criteria for evaluation; religious morality is always connected with the dogmas of the definite creed and includes moral instruction which can’t be found in the systems of non-religious morality), messianism (desire and readiness to spread your views and convictions among people who don’t practice this religion and are not able to operate mechanisms of this religious consciousness).

Religious consciousness has two levels of realizations – everyday and conceptual. Everyday religious consciousness is presented in the form of images, impressions, stereotypes, mood and feelings, habits, traditions which reflect conditions of human life. Rational, emotional and volitional elements can be found on this level and the dominant role is played by emotions. Religious consciousness on a conceptual level presents a specially worked out, systematized aggregate of notions, ideas, principles and concepts. It includes: 1) teaching about God (gods), world, nature, society and man which is developed by specialists; 2) interpretation of different aspects of social life (economy, politics, legal sphere, morality, art) which is worked out in accordance with the principals of religious world outlook, i.e. religious-ethical, religious-political, religious-legal, religious-ethnic and religious-aesthetic concepts; 3) religious philosophy.

Different religious systems produce different influence on the society in which they function. Christianity, for example, played a great role in the formation of European culture. Biblical images and plots have been used in literature, art and sculpture during many centuries. Biblical idioms, short and capacious concepts (*a heavy cross, to carry the cross, Calvary, road to Calvary, the traitor Judas, kiss of Judas, etc.*) have been put into base of moral concepts and assessments. Dogmas and statements about obedience, patience, retribution in the other world form the idea of inevitability as well the idea that order reigning in the world was sent down from above.

Unlike Christian, Buddhist culture is associated with the preaching of social harmony, equality and nonviolent existence. Prudence, confidence and restraint are the main features of Buddhist ethics, which teaches: "the Decoration of a person is wisdom, the decoration of wisdom is calmness, the decoration of calmness is courage, the decoration of courage is softness". The basic principles of Buddhist worldview are formulated as follows: to prevent and suppress evil, to do and maintain good. Buddhism tries to find special psychic powers of a man which allow him to control physical forces and special spiritual practices, penetrating and trying to uncover the secrets of the universe.

The peculiarity of Muslim culture is the unity of basic religious values and strict regulations of everyday human behaviour. It is interesting to note that the distinctive feature of Islamic culture is almost complete absence of fine art. This is a consequence of the ban that this religion imposes on the image of a man, animals and everything divine. For the same reason the Muslim world is almost devoid of theater, and instead of paintings or statues Islamic artists have long developed the ornamental art of arabesques, artistic calligraphy, as well as Muslim religious or Palace architecture (famous Taj Mahal).

It is possible to allocate a number of subtypes of religious communication depending on the type of the situation where it takes place, and, respectively, the peculiarities of the communicants' relationship. The church as a public institute is a constant element in the consciousness of believers (at least, in the consciousness

of traditional religion adherents), but the real place of updating and realization of a religious discourse is not always the temple space. We consider it possible to allocate the following spheres of a religious discourse functioning.

Communication in church as the main religious institute. In this case, it is possible to speak about the process of communication where a big circle of people is involved and which is limited both in literal and figurative sense, by the frames (walls) of church. Communication in church differs highly by a cliché, ritualization and theatricality. In such a communication, there is an accurate differentiation of roles between the participants of communication as well as a long distance. Communication in church considerably differs from an ordinary communication, though as well as in any other communication, it is possible to allocate the addresser and the addressee as the directly contacting, interacting parties (however, their characteristics and character of the roles will be a little peculiar). All the church communication limited by the frames of a temple can be considered as an intermediate component, the binding beginning between the world of believers and the certain ideal beginning – God.

Communication in small religious groups – a form of religious discourse functioning where a process of communication takes place not in the temple, but out of it. It is possible to allocate a number of subtypes of such communication. To the first subtype we refer communication of believers among themselves as free communication, not restricted by the frames of a church ritual and rigid religious norms (for example, discussion of the most topical issues and problems) [12].

Communication of the person with God – cases when believer does not need intermediaries to address to God. The most striking example of such communication is the prayer. It is possible to allocate a collective prayer when requests, entreaties are said by the medium in the temple and repeated by the gathered believers, and an individual prayer that is formed in the consciousness of a specific believer and may not be realized verbally for "presentation" to God.

Thus, wherever religious discourse develops, one of its main objectives can be formulated as follows: to express expectations, entreaties, hopes of the believing person, to find spiritual feed, support (either from the followers of the same faith or from God). Development and forms of the a religious discourse existence are defined by its purposes: a) to get support from God; b) to purify soul; c) to appeal neighbors for faith and repentance; d) to approve believers in faith and virtue; e) to realize the belonging to this or that faith through a ritual.

As a rule, there are no problems in respect of language barriers and the choice of expressive language means while speaking to God. Merely, problems can arise at internal, psychological obstacles while expressing the expectations, which the person should overcome ("fight with himself"). Also, as a rule, there are no serious problems in church communication as far as the process of communication is developed between the representatives of one linguoculture. Problems can

arise during communication in the space of a modern society. It is well-known that modern society is multi religious. This very factor creates certain difficulties. The latter by their nature are included neither in the language category nor in the psychological category. Anyway mentioning the psychological and language aspect of the question, similar difficulties arise because people in contact can belong to various religious cultures. In this case, certain religious values and the need of their account in the process of interaction with the representatives of different religious cultures come to the fore [13].

Faith, good (kindness), love, mercy, modesty, forgiveness, purity of customs divine (God) can be referred to the main Christian values - they represent central concepts forming a conceptual base of Christianity and transferring its originality in comparison to other world religions. A number of Christian values have kept their importance throughout the millennia, such as life, good (kindness), the truth, love. Some notions keeping the status of "value", at this stage of social development fade into the background, remaining significant just for a certain social group. At the present stage of social development, the most stable are values connected with basic concepts – life, the truth, good. Moreover, the significance of basic Christian values is different for the representatives of various age groups and people with different degree of a churchiness. For believers (churched people), practically all Christian values have reached our days in an invariable state, keeping their significance. The group which can be marked as "not churched" considers such values as life, good, the truth, compassion; for them such values as God (divine), faith, mercy, poverty (neglect of material benefits), modesty, suffering, humility, forgiveness, purity of customs have no valuable importance. As for the distribution of valuable priorities in various age groups, "young people (the youth)" refer to values such things as life, good (kindness), the truth. All other mentioned concepts have not shown a valuable marking code. Middle-aged people referred to values such concepts as God (divine), faith, life, good (kindness), the truth, mercy, compassion. The elderly referred practically all considered concepts to values. A valuable marking code was given to the concepts "life", "good (kindness)", "truth" by all categories of respondents. Thus, such Christian categories as life, good (kindness), and the truth keep inherent value throughout many millennia. With the society and culture development, the awareness of internal essence of the specified concepts may change, but their reference to the number of values remains. For example, such emotionally-coloured notion as love also belongs to the category of values.

However, different groups of informants mention the importance of different semantic plans of this value. The components "love to another (friend, enemy)" and "love to the Lord" are most significant in the valuable aspect for believers and also for people of senior age group; the component "love to oneself" has shown the maximum importance for people of younger age and not churched people (not believers) [14].

#### 4. Conclusion

Modern Christianity considers as values such concepts as patriotism and freedom, which are of particular importance at the present stage of social development. Besides, family values (family, love and fidelity, care of children and elderly people) come to the forefront.

Among basic values of Islam are faith, life, freedom, justice, knowledge (reason), family, property, which make a valuable base of this belief system. Unlike traditional, the values of modern Islam can be subdivided into three groups: necessity values (life, faith, family, children, and prosperity); values of convenience (material items); values of specifications/luxury (things creating additional comfort). Today such values as faith and God, home and family, freedom are included into the system of values. At the same time historically developed, traditional values of Islam (justice, knowledge) continue to remain relevant in modern society. All the values, which are historically created and put in the religious concept of Islam continue to remain relevant in modern culture, keeping their valuable significance. The order of their ranging has changed a little. If in the traditional Islamic religious culture values settled down as follows (according to their importance): faith and God, life, freedom, justice, family, knowledge acquisition, property; then in a modern society the first positions are given to faith and God, home and family, freedom. However, concepts of justice, truth/knowledge (knowledge acquisition) still keep their value.

The specifics of the values of Buddhism are explained by the features of philosophy of this religious doctrine. If in Christianity and Islam the values are "perceived", concrete, then Buddhism distinguishes as values some categories which predetermine life of a Buddhist doctrine follower. Values of Buddhism are set within the following eight groups: right outlook of a person, right determination (intentions), right speech, right behavior (actions), healthy way of life, right efforts, right attention, and right concentration. Unlike values of Christianity and Islam, Buddhism values are based on the requirements to a person, his life and behavior. However, one should not think that Buddhism does not pay attention to moral and ethical values. As well as other world religions, Buddhism refers to values such concepts as generosity, humility, the truth, wisdom, moral purity, patience, determination, improvement, modesty, bashfulness, etc. Buddhism defines these concepts as "moral virtues". These "virtues" are included in the groups of values considered above. Thus, the right outlooks assume that a person possesses concentration, "heartfelt wisdom"; the right intentions – generosity; the right speech – wisdom, sincerity; the right behavior – humility, moral purity, modesty; healthy way of life – faith, tolerance; the right efforts – self-improvement; the right attention – wisdom and concentration on due, ability to differentiate the truth and a lie, the good and the evil; the right concentration – concentrated contemplation. Thus, moral values allocated in other religions are "wrapped" in Buddhism in more complicated philosophical concepts. It proves that

Buddhism can be interpreted not only as religion, but also as a deep philosophical doctrine.

At the present stage of society's development, Buddhism values have undergone some changes. Nowadays Buddhism refers to values such things as mind purification and wisdom development, compassion and law of karma and rebirth.

Accounting of the values of this or that religion is necessary for the effective and productive process of communication in the space of a modern society.

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