

BIRUNI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RELIGION

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ABSTRACT: Abū al-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Bīrūnī is a pioneer in the study of comparative religion. He born 5 September 973 in Kath of Khwarezm and died 13 December 1048 in Ghazni. This artical focuses Al-Biruni's Contribution to Comparative Religion which is one of the outstanding achievement of his thought. Our study is informative and suggestive, especially based on his two famous books `kitab al-athar` (999) and `kitab al-hind` (1030). He wrote Kitab al-Athar mainly to satisfy his curiosity as to why different people used different cylindrical systems. And also clarify why certain nations preferred certain times and events for their festivals and commemoration days. In addition, this book pays great attention to festivals of various civilizations. On the other hand, Kitab al-Hind (1030) is based on his journey to Hind while Mahmud (998-1030) was setting up his political institutions in northern India. He provides in this book a detailed account of Indian life, religions, languages, and cultures and includes many observations on geography. Both Kitab al-Hind and Kitab al-Athar also include material on other religious communities, primarily the Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians. Although Biruni's knowledge of Hind's civilization grew rapidly while he served Mahmud in northern India. Al-Biruni classifies Indian religions according to the religious outlooks found in Hindu texts or sayings of Hindu philosophers/theologians and in the attitudes of ordinary people in a popular context. He suggests five inportent elements to understand its people's religious life. these are : the main Indian language (Sanskrit), major religious treatises, religious attitudes, their customs, and the Hindus' attitudes toward others. Al-Biruni divides Hindus into an educated and an uneducated class. He describes the educated as monotheistic, believing that God is one, eternal, and omnipotent and eschewing all forms of idol worship. He recognizes that uneducated Hindus worshipped a multiplicity of idols yet points out that even some Muslims (such as the Jabiriyya) have adopted anthropomorphic concepts of God. He collected a lot of data about Buddhish cosmology from Abu Sahl `Abd al-Mun`im ibn `Ali ibn Nuh al-Tiflisi Zurqan, and Abu al-`Abbas al-Iranshahr. Biruni studied more about Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Manichaeism Greek religion, Judaism, Christianity, Sabeans, Khawarizmians, Arabian paganism and Islam. He explain religions objectively and tried hard to understand them on their own terms. Biruni expresses his thought in three Methods. Phenomenological Method, Dialogical Method and Comparative Method. In order to those methods we have tried to express his religious view elaborately.

key word : Biruni, comparative religion, Kitab al-Hind, Kitab al-Athar, Hinduism, Monotheism, polytheism, methods, philosophy.

Introduction: Mediaeval Muslim age, a period of philosophical development this began in the 2nd century AH of the Islamic calendar (early 9th century CE) and ended until the 6th century AH (late 12th century CE). The period was known as the Islamic Golden Age. During this time, Indian, Asyriac, Iranian and Greek knowledge was translated into Arabic. These translations became a wellspring for scientific advances, by scientists from the Islamic

