

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of religion continues to develop in this era of globalization. Muslim scholars like Ibn Hazm and Al-Biruni have pioneered the effort and significantly contributed works and methodologies in the study of religion. However, Western scholars started their contributions in the study of religion later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As a result of such contributions, the modern Western scholars have introduced a number of methodologies in the study of religion. Consequently, there are debates between Western scholars and Muslim scholars concerning the concept of study of religion.

Ninian Smart, a Western scholar, and Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi, a Muslim scholar are prolific scholars in study of religion on 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both of them have written a lot of treatises regarding study of religion. Their writings like *The World's Religion* by Ninian Smart and *Izhar Al-Haq* by Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi, are the favourite references among contemporary Western and Muslim scholars.

Hence, this research aims to identify the differences and similarities of Ninian Smart's and Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi's methodologies in the study of religion. Based on a qualitative analysis on the books, *The World's Religions* and *Izhar Al-Haq*, it can be concluded that their methodologies are influenced by the authenticity of intellectuals.

As one of the modern pioneers in the study of religion, Ninian Smart has rejected Christian exclusivism or salvation through Christ alone. He has acknowledged the existence of other world religions and has respected their wisdom traditions. Ninian Smart became interested in non-Christianity when he was sent by the British Army to Ceylon, known as Sri Lanka later. For his contributions in the study of religion, six universities like University of Kelaniya have given him an academic award.

Ninian Smart advocates the disciplined and relevant phenomenology of religion because his methodologies in study of religion are descriptions of religious phenomena comprehensively and systematically as well as free of ideological and religious presuppositions. This is to avoid the study of religion from any bias and prejudice. Ninian Smart's explanations on other religions are based on facts and free from judgement as he never defends or refutes any religion.

Meanwhile, Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi is one of the Muslim reformists who confronted Christian proselytism towards Muslim. He was respected by the Mecca community due to his being a prominent religious scholar and he was honoured by the Mufti of Mecca, Sheikh Ahmad Zaini Dahlan. His scholarship is not limited in the field, even extensive in the modern education system as he was the founder of the *Madrasah Al-Saulatiyyah* in Saudi Arabia.

Basics of Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi's methodology are a combination of the religious scripture and rationality or science. However, the principle of justice is an essential element in these basics. Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi accepted description and judgement in study of religion and the both are based on the empirical facts, textual facts, historical facts and scholars' opinions in study of religion.

However, this research found that Ninian Smart and Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi are similarly concerned with data authenticity and intellectual honesty. Data authenticity is necessary for the study of religion as data is collected from real religious phenomena. The collection of authentic data aims to demonstrate the nature of religions. Critical thinking and increasing scientific content in the research are a result of the authentic data. Inauthentic data are not allowed in research because it generates incorrect understanding.

Ninian Smart and Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi do not apply personal perceptions in the study of religion. Conversely, statements of both scholars are based on data from sacred books and religious followers' perspectives. But, the interpretation of data is different as Ninian Smart asserts the data in the form of description and Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi states data in the form of judgment.

Therefore, intellectual honesty is an essential component of the methodologies of both Ninian Smart and Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi. Intellectual honesty refers to honesty in the collection, analysis, and relaying of ideas. A researcher is being intellectually honest when he knows the truth, states the truth and vice versa. Ninian Smart and Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi make statements after coming to an understanding of a religion.

From the researcher's perspective, the methodologies of Ninian Smart and Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi are fair and unbiased. This is because their statements are supported by authentic data. Ninian Smart's methodology is neutral. He developed objectivity through the conception of the seven dimensions of religion. The researcher acknowledges the seven dimensions of religion to be a systematic approach in analysing aspects of other religions.

Nevertheless, the researcher disagrees regarding the unity of religions by Ninian Smart. Ninian Smart assumes the unity of religions to be a solution in order to achieve harmony between religions. The researcher refutes this due to it being an intervention in the religious process. Intervention causes confusion on religious phenomena and the authenticity of religious teachings is disturbed. In the researcher's perspective, interfaith dialogue is a solution to achieve harmony between religions.

Meanwhile, assertiveness is an essential element in the methodology of Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi as he faces internal and external threats. However, arguments prepared by Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi are based on data acknowledged by religious followers. He interprets data in debate and works. The researcher argues that Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi is a wise scholar due to his utilization of the debate approach that is appropriate to the current situation.

Nevertheless, the researcher generally refuses debate as a solution to achieve harmony between religions because debate is about winning. Debate seeks a conclusion that ratifies one party by looking for weaknesses in another party. A debater entails listening to find flaws and make counter arguments rather than to understand and find agreement. Conversely, interfaith dialogue seeks new options by exploring common good between two or more parties.

The researcher agrees that prejudice is not allowed in the study of religion since it is a first impression that has been passed before the religion has been subject to study. Conversely, the researcher disagrees that judgement and evaluation are not necessary in the study of religion as evaluation must be based on observed evidence. An unbiased research generates a judgement that is just and a fair evaluation.

The methodologies of Ninian Smart and Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi can be emulated in order to improve the understanding of religious studies thus, overcome conflict among religions of the world. Respect for differences is a critical point in the study of religion since respect is grounded in the belief that two parties or more have the pieces of the answer and together, can craft a solution.

Thus, this research recommends further study and analysis concerning the suitability of the seven dimensions of religion by Ninian Smart into the Muslim methodology in the study of religion. Further research is an opportunity to identify gaps to improve and strengthen new principles in the methodologies of Western and Muslim scholars in the study of religion.

Meanwhile, the researcher suggests a review regarding the methodology of debate by Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi as he is an inspiration to modern and contemporary Muslim scholars in the study of religion. A review would allow future scholars to understand the previous approach hence, create a new approach in accordance with current issues and situations.

An analysis on the concepts of religious tolerance is recommended by the researcher as interactions between religions and religious diversity bring about new opportunities and challenges to religious relations. However, the biggest challenge is to highlight the principle of “harmony without union” and to learn to respect differences.