

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL VALUES ON RELIGIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the influence of cultural values on religions in Nigeria. Cultural values are the totality of the lifestyle of a group of people within a particular location, it is the accepted or acceptable way of doing things in a society, which encompasses their societal norms and values of a people. The religions, the supreme belief of an unseen God, deity or order in the control of moral affairs of men in the society. This believe of a being above or unseen controls the inner or inward behaviour of men in the society, with the hope of reward to either encourage people to act in conformity to the dictates of societal norms and values. Keywords: Cultural Values and Religions.

Introduction

The uniqueness of religion as a phenomenon of human concern lies in the fact that unlike other spheres of human concern, everybody is interested in Religion, be "a believer" to whom his faith is a matter of ultimate concern or a person who thinks he does not believe and cannot believe in the supernatural rulership of the universe.

Influence of cultural values on religions in Nigeria stems from the fact that the culture of the people norms and values are not human invention or product of society but the fruit of religion. They exist as a result of the sanctions and demand of God, divinities or deities and the Nigerian values are essential components of our socio – cultural system.

Religion according to Madu (1996) is an institutionalized system of symbols beliefs, values and practices focused on questions of ultimate meaning. Adogbo (2000) opined that religion as a feeling of absolute dependence on the supernatural being.

On the other hand, cultural values according to Ubrurhe (2000) are values as beliefs, standards, ideals about desirable or undesirable behaviour.

Values in culture are the most general component of social action. They are found in every culture. They are necessary for the fostering of group existence, harmony and the promotion of group welfare.

Norms and values are attributes of the cultural system. Both are part and parcel of the non – material culture of the society. Though values are more abstract and general in nature than norms, both complement one another. Ademilokum (1990).

In other words, where there are identified values, there must also be rules or regulations (norms) guiding their realization. Norms are usually divided into two. This is based on the strength of sanction it carries. The obligatory norms usually have harsh sanctions for their violations. They are referred to as mores. The mores are the "must do" of the society. All members of the society must conform to them or face disapproval and sanctions. Okumagba (2000).

Mores are regarded as essentially good for the group survival. Taking another's life and incestuous relationship are prohibited in Nigerian society. The

Nigerian society is not made up of human beings alone but the dead and other supernatural forces are essentially parts of the society. These supernatural forces are not, and cannot be, inhibited from coming into, and going out from, the society. They guide man's activities; they reward the obedient as well as punish the culprits. Ejiogu (2000).

Influence of Cultural Values on Religions

Sogolo (1993) opined that cultural values like mores may be taken to mean a set of institutionalized ideals which guide and direct the patterns of life of Nigerians. For example, whenever a woman commits adultery, it is believed that the ancestors will expose her by afflicting her with sickness. It is also true when a man commits adultery or steals something, he will be afflicted with sickness also. Cultural values therefore are goal – oriented because they point to a desired goal, which actions are geared towards ensuring good behavioural conduct, upon which the expectation of every individual and community is hinged. Individual actions are mirrored through the approved society's values upon which the test for justification is based. This makes an action a desired one. The question of moral justification provides us with the notion of ultimate value. The society may or may not actually or consciously recognize it, yet it is a part of its cultural value. Igboin (2011)

According to Igboin (2011), posits that the sacredness of human life is of utmost importance. The respect and dignity accorded human life cannot be over – emphasized. Respect for human spreads beyond the confines of nuclear family; it is on this premise that the sacrosanct of human life is predicated on religions in Nigeria. In this case, the notion of human value is intrinsically linked with a wide range of brotherhood in Nigeria and it goes beyond that of Western understanding. The cultural values prohibit the taking of another man's life either by force, fighting or by any means possible. It is on this platform that religions in Nigeria predicates that taking another man's is a crime against God and man.

Incestuous relationship and all forms of immorality is frowned at, condemned in the culture of the people of a society, no religion embraces such act, religions have gone beyond mere discussions, they are part of the dictates of individuals way of making heaven. The religions in Nigeria see these cultural values as necessary ingredients to draw the road map of a morally sound society. These are age long standard of living tested over time.

Igboin (2011), avers that the marriage rites are according to society's cultural values which the religions does not tamper with. Every marital issue is based on the custom and traditions of the society. Religion derives its content from the cultural values of the people. Thus, issues relating to marriage are handled through the way of life of the people in the society.

Recommendations

The cultural values of any society are like the cultural content that nourishes the curriculum content of any education system, that is why it is often said that education is the transmission of the cultural values of the society, the society, the cultural values must be looked at and draw inferences from to stand on a sound footing.

Cultural values that are geared towards ensuring high level of moral standard in the society should be upheld and transmitted through religious practices, which to me, is the vehicle for the propagation of cultural values in Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the discourse so far, it has been revealed that cultural values influences religions in Nigeria. The paper states the potentiality of religions to propagate the cultural values that are in conformity with high moral standard. Every player in the religious sector should therefore be available to promote the teaching of moral values of our culture to maintain sanity in the society.

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