

RELIGION AND CULTURE: AN EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

Culture and religion may be conduct and control of our human life. It can bring people together for co-operation and lead their social life. Culture defines the social forces within a community involving its conventions for behaviour forms of entertainment that keep the community together like music, dancing and so on. Religion defines how the community members interpret their role in the universe based on the local culture, so that different religious rise out of different cultures. These two terms (Religion and culture) focus on the critical study of culture with specific attention to the position of religion within modernity. The aim of this paper is to show that, the theoretical basis of religion and culture is informed not only by the western philosophical tradition but also by a broader range of intellectual traditions, incorporating the perspectives of ethnography, critical theory and contemporary cultural criticism and their relation.

KEYWORDS: Culture, Religion, Relation

INTRODUCTION

Culture defines the social forces within a community involving its convention for behaviour, ranging from food preparation techniques to forms of entertainment that keep the community together like music or dancing, to dating rituals, and so on. On the other hand, Religion defines how the community members interpret their role in the universe with this teaching based on the local culture, so different religions rise out of different cultures. Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and art.

Religion may be defined as a code of life, a system of thought which analyses man's life and society from the historical, social, ethical, cultural and spiritual perspectives. Not only that, religion is a comprehensive thought system of life and the world. On the other hand, culture representatives the material and the spiritual works, customs and traditions, a group of man and women behaviour in a particular society. Culture also includes the environment, history, literature, art religion, ethics, aesthetics, psychology and group behaviour. Culture signifies the social heritage of a particular people. The culture personality focus is one that reminds us that the pattern of any culture basically determines the broad contours of individual personalities, and that these in turn give evidence of the culture pattern and tend to strive for its perpetuation.

'Culture' and 'Religion' have a close relation to each other. Both have significant meanings and objects from their convention. These two terms could be said to be manifestations of that reality which lies beyond the appearances with which mankind seems currently content to deal.¹ Religion and Culture are usually considered as both supplementary and complementary to each other. A good and true religion helps us establish and develop a good culture, on the contrary a good culture equally may help establish and develop a good religion. I mentioned here that, we may speak about Bengalee culture, its impact on the culture of Bangladesh and habituating its people to the religion of immediacy and mysticism for a long long period. To state the matter in a practical manner, religion requires us to put away everything that we have for some reason or other put upon ourselves and that does not belong to us.

Religion and culture are usually considered as both supplementary and complementary to each other. To begin with, we may speak about Zen Buddhism and Japanese culture. It's impact on the culture of Japan was direct and all-embracing habituating its people to the religion of immediacy and mysticism for a period of eight hundred years.² Zen's influence on the oriental mind as a whole suggests the need for purity and transparency of the inner experience discoverable in all works of life under the inspiration of Zen religion.³ Most people in contemporary Japan adhere to and in their life and society Buddha's ethical and humanist teachings. Remaining devoted to their religious ideals and values the Japanese have these days adopted Western, Scientific knowledge and technological knowhow to make their culture more sophisticated and radiant.

The birth of Hinduism in the Indian subcontinent preceded the birth of both Moses and Jesus Christ. Hinduism is apparently a polytheistic and idolatrous faith, and the early Vedic religion was mostly conservative and otherworldly. Hinduism or Vedic religion underwent change and transformation to meet the needs of modern and recent times. S.C. Roy's remarks seem thoughtful when he holds that religion disciplines the lower nature of man to raise him to higher level. He also believes that religion thus marks the beginning of ethics and sciences. He further holds that religion encourages its followers to transcend the religion of the sensibles and to have a ideal beauty with a view to moulding the materials of the natural world after the pattern of the Perfection.⁴

The prophet of Islam started his religious mission with submission to Allah, the only Lord of the universe. The unity of Allah and the equality of men were the main teachings of Islam. These were aimed at discarding idolatry and polytheism and eradicating discrimination among men and men and between caste and creed.⁵ Islam also reaches that the unity of Allah implies the unity of men and that there exists a common brotherhood among all human beings in the world.

Religion like Hindu and Islam study nature and the cosmos from both practical and utilitarian needs. Because nature as a whole our daily needs and provisions. Nature may further be studied to discover its essence and to understand its function in different realms like the biological, the cosmological and so on. Islam has not confined itself to the theological domain. With the introduction of Kalam and Logical reasoning the mutakallimun (theologians) devoted themselves to the study of philosophy and science to understand nature and society.⁶ As a result, man's faith and religion, life and culture have become richer in the recent world.

People's who believe in the right ideal and who adopt the real in their life, work in a way which helps them grow both externally and internally, both materially and spiritually and finally they aspire to adorn themselves with their Lord's attributes of truth, beauty, goodness and justice only to make their life and culture richer and more glorious. Of our prophet (Sm.) and the other four caliphs, we may refer to Islam and its culture and civilization under their leadership. Emperor Ashok may be remembered in so far as the glorification and humanization of Buddhism and its culture are concerned.⁷

It is however, necessary that followers of different faiths must themselves fully submit to their Lords and work sincerely and collectively, free from jealousy and hostility, hatred and selfishness cannot gain anything substantive in life; rather these might even destroy one's religion and culture, and progress and civilization.⁸ It is very consistent to analyze the Freudian and the Marxist views on religion. Traditionally, religion respects the belief that God, man and religion are far more than our constructed human models take them to be.⁹ But Freud holds the view that religion is the product of man's weakness, fear, anxiety, wish and hopes and aspirations. The Freudians claim that men's religion is merely the projection of his wish-world and the God's men worship are wish-beings, and products and creations of their imaginations.¹⁰

On the other hand, Karl Marks holds that religion is an ineffective instrument for the improvement of man and society. In Marx's dialectical materialist philosophy religion has been replaced by a mechanistic collectivism, derived from a materialist interpretation of history which over comes man's estrangement from real existence. The Marxists further hold that, since religion nurtures the life of illusion and fiction, and creates social disharmony, it is not a satisfactory concern of man; consequently its relation to culture must be terminated.¹¹

Above the discussion it is very clear that, all great faiths have been some common values and ideals, and aims and some objectives. These are truth and justice, equality and brotherhood, co-operation and welfare, and mutual love and respect which may turn religions into more effective thought-systems of life, and make our culture more radiant. Religions, mainly teach our peace and amity, love and brotherhood, humanity and modesty, and unity and benevolence. History of religion, however, shows that wars and conflicts took place in human society because of religious differences. One may, therefore, naturally ask: why do wars and conflicts occur in the name of religion? In our opinion war and conflict, instead of peace of amity, take place among different religious groups when they claim absolute superiority of their respective faiths, disregard other's faiths, lack of knowledge and tolerance and work out of pride and ignorance. These may be avoided to a great extent, if not eliminated, if different religious groups show respect and tolerance to one another. We also believe that knowledge of others religious and rational behaviour can help us avoid misunderstanding and conflict and make religion and culture more meaningful and enlightened.

At the end, it may be said that the culture has a fundamentally positive trust, as a whole, it is ambivalent. It contains both elements that are positive and negative, humanizing and dehumanizing. We have to realize that culture is created and recreated by people for the purpose of making life in society more human. Anything that hinders this purpose must be used. Similarly, Religion is concerned with our search for meaning. We try to answer the fundamental questions of human life by placing them against the horizon of the ultimate and the unseen. It is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence.

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