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Religious Attachment and Social Development in the Web of Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract:

Religious attachment has had considerable influence upon development in many nations of the world. There have always been considerations that societies would modernize to accept other people's religion, however, this has not been realized as technological and social development, and other indicators of modernization have made many people to feel loss in social settings. Many have had to accept alienation and self defence as the major means of finding solace much that individual religious group or denomination become vital means of socialization, which has been against development particularly in Nigeria. The cases of extreme religious actions particularly in the North East and the Southern Kaduna State, Nigeria have been found to be anti-development. This has equally tended to be a threat to democracy because the claims of fundamental human rights on every platform including religion have not helped to grow or develop Nigeria. Consequently, attempt to develop the nation by changing laws, morality, social norms and political configurations has been found to be a difficult task to achieve in the contemporary Nigeria. This paper therefore examines the place of Religious attachment on Social Development in the democratic Nigeria while it recommends the maintenance of religious pluralism with caution to facilitate National development.

Keywords: Religion, attachment, social development, democracy, human rights

1. Background

Religion refers to a belief in something divine that influences a person's perception of the world. In the developing world all aspects of life are more or less tied together, and religion is present in all aspects, public as well as private. From primitive tribal beliefs to modern organized religion, the history of man's search for answers is as diverse and varied as the many faiths that have existed. Ever since the history of mankind began, man has been practicing different forms of worship and piety. There is no nation on the earth unattached to a religion and performing its rites in one-way or another. This is because piety is an instinct, a natural feeling deeply rooted in man's being. It can neither be hushed, nor muted in an individual's conscience, nor can the human conscience be prevented from sensing it, or going towards it.

Man as social entity has tendencies to relate with fellow man and worship as a form of reverence. However, it is a common happening to see diversity of religious beliefs. Every believer has hope and aspiration of good fortune in what or who his beliefs. The expectation therefore, is that it will bring the good for the people. Religion exerts a profound influence on all societies and many of the world's peoples. Throughout history, it has proven to be the primary force for social progress, motivating individuals to develop spiritual qualities, and empowering them to sacrifice for their fellow human-beings and to contribute to the betterment of their communities. Those universal spiritual principles which lie at the heart of religion -- tolerance, compassion, love, justice, humility, sacrifice, trustworthiness, dedication to the well-being of others, and unity -- are the foundations of progressive civilization.

The role of religion is central to an understanding of international development. Traditionally, development studies focused on the causes of poverty, and religion was viewed as detrimental to progress. More recently, however, this negative consensus has broken down, partly due to the widespread failure of secular development programmes to achieve poverty reduction and end inequality and injustice. Religion is now seen as a potentially crucial to the achievement of developmental aims (Haynes, 2007).

2. Theoretical Perspective

Social development theory of Leo Vygotsky primarily explains that socialization affects the learning process in an individual. It tries to explain consciousness or awareness as the result of socialization (David, 2014). The study of Religion and Social problems also works as a prism through many other central problems in life. Where Governments and economies function poorly, sects often become major suppliers of social services, political action, and coercive force. Their success as providers is much more due to the advantages of their organizational structure than it is to their theology. Religious militancy is most effectively controlled through a combination of policies that raise the direct costs of violence, foster religious competition, improve social services, and encourage private enterprise (Iannaccone and Berman, 2006). The concept of religion is not culturally universal rather emerged under particular historical and political conditions in the Modern Post-Reformation era. Religion according to Fitzgerald (2003) is an ideologically motivated social construction. He

opined that religions around the World is not a discovery but instead the product of an expansionist Europe. Others (Smith, 1962, Dubuisson, 2003) argued that religion is a modern western invention that sought a vocabulary for distinguishing its own modern, rational culture from those it sought to label backward and superstitious, and towards this end it invented and developed the label "secular". Fitzgerald's goal is to deconstruct "religion," to dissolve both the concept and the academic field of Religious Studies that emerged to manage it. Religion in Nigeria in the face of the expected usefulness has been found to have developed an in balance in the face of the troubles that are today associated with it.

3. Man and His Religion

It is established that Man is the worshipper of God-the supernatural. However, it has been found that there are times they fight for or on behalf of the ALL POWERFUL GOD leading to killing of individuals in opposition to their religious believe or faith. This is a common phenomenon, but could anyone have the right to take other people's lives deliberately in the name of religion? Conscience as faculty of the human mind responsible for different capabilities or abilities which human being attempt to exhibit. It is the inner sense of right or wrong in moral choice that a person makes. The place of conscience in religion has become a serious matter as it is used to act very onus manners. Properties are found destroyed for example in the Southern Kaduna on the name fighting for supremacy one religion over the other. Despite the constitutional allowance for freedom of religion the quest for mine is "better" has become a common issue that has made rivalry very dangerous.

Religious Attachment has particularly showed in the unfinished battle of the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East Nigeria which started like an unnoticed child's play had had its toll on the innocent people. When the government would have taken serious action against this enemy of the people, the continued preaching of freedom of association in the name of democracy hampered such actions until it became a serious monster to the nation and the international organization. Evidences abound about the fact that religious attachments have eroded the spirit of love preached by every known religion, inform of hate speeches and its likes. This has not augured well for the good expected of a nation like Nigeria experiencing a seventeen-year of consecutive democracy. The situation around the various States of Nigeria has been precarious, as black spot areas have continued to increase instead much that lives are loss on regular basis.

States in the northern Nigeria have had it in a very hard way. According to Shettima Kashim, the Governor of Borno State, Nigeria in October 2017, Two million, One hundred and fourteen thousand (2,114,000) were internally displaced as at December of 2016, with Five hundred and thirty seven thousand, eight hundred and fifteen (537,815) in separate camps at Muna and Customs House, both in Maiduguri while by February 2017, One hundred thousand (100000) persons had been killed. This is the highest ever recorded in the country as a product of insurgency.

The situation in the Southern Kaduna and Taraba States are not far from the scenario in the North East Nigeria. There have been killings of innocent people on the difference of religious beliefs. Religious attachment has therefore become one big challenge facing Nigeria democracy at every of their national life. It is evidenced in the divides among political parties and related associations.

4. Religion and Development

Ekpendu and Audu (2016) have conceived Religion as system of social unity commonly understood as group of beliefs or attitudes concerning an object, person, unseen or imaginary being, or system of thought considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine or highest truth, and the moral codes, practices, values institutions, and rituals associated with such belief or system of thought. Religious is not a panacea, but aspects of it can complement as well as motivate development: it can obstruct or undermine it. The avenues by which religion influences development activities in different faiths and regions are haunting in their complexity. Religious people and institutions can incite, model hierarchy, oppose empowerment, deflect advocacy, absorb funding and cast aspersions on service delivery (Alkire, 2014)

Individual attachment to religious belief has high correlate with development or otherwise. Consequently, Alkire argued that Religious faith may open an independent route to serenity and meaning whether one is in prison or in penury or suffering illness or exclusion or bereavement or other troubles. Thus, religion may contribute directly to a person's flourishing or contentedness, and comprise a dimension of human well-being. There is increasing research evidence (George, Ellison, and Larson 2009) that religious involvement is associated cross-sectional and prospectively with better physical health, better mental health, and longer survival which are signs of development. These relationships remain substantial in size and statistically significant with other risk and protective factors for morbidity and mortality statistically controlled.

Religious practices most times go in the way of democracy as everyone acts by his or her faith. Only in very few places is religion made a matter of compulsion and where it happens, it is the state religion that is embraced willy lilly. It stands alongside and complements other aspects of human flourishing that are intrinsically valued –such as safety, health, knowledge, meaningful work and play, self-direction, culture and the like. The modern idea of developing Africa essentially dates to be years after 1945. From the start, ideas about development generally overlooked the role of religion, or assumed that religion would be relegated to a matter of private belief in Africa as secular States gained strength and confidence, or even saw religion as an obstacle to development (Ellis and Haar, 2004).

Religion is of great importance in Africa in that most people engage in some form of religious practice from time to time, and many profess membership of some formal religious organization, traditional, Muslim, Christian or otherwise. Every religion preaches peace and love which are attributes of development as no society would grow without such. In the face of this, are the extremists who are always ready to cross the boundary of religious tenet towards achieving their mind and desires. This has the tendencies of deterring the course of progress-development. Therefore, Religion and

development have often been intimately interwoven for good or ill. Thus, according to the United Nation Development Programme (2004), if development aims to expand the freedoms people value and have reason to value, and if religion is so valued, then religious freedoms should be parts of development, alongside tolerance and democratic practices. In Nigeria there has been religious fanaticism that has brought about serious clashes in form of violence. Such violence had had negative consequences on the developmental efforts of the country; the religious organizations are not spared.

Some individuals are so much attached to their religion that social relationship is forced to the background. This is one way for the demonstration of ignorance. Therefore, Baha'u'llah (1994) opined that the perversion of religion has been a primary cause of social disintegration, intolerance, hatred, sexism, poverty, oppression and warfare down through the ages. Corruption and Misuse of religious authority has being the root of most intractable problems particularly in Nigeria. Religion disputes have left a bloody mark on the history of most peoples and territories. Some disputes have broken out between factions of one religion or of one particular religious organization. Others have pitted the followers of entire religion against one another. Dambisa in 2010 claimed that most African countries are confronted with major developmental challenges orbiting on leadership, corruption, insecurity of varied degrees like kidnappings, terrorism child industry.

5. Conclusion

Religion has been found in Nigeria to be characterized by functional and dysfunctional morals (Ekpendu and Audu, 2016). It has been established that religious attachment has not facilitated the harmonious relationship expected from those who should live by what they preach or belief; this has continually hindered in small way the development of the Nation. Evidently, there has been destruction of properties, Man hours loss, victims are killed and/or maimed while Governments properties are not spared in persistence conflicts.

Religion as a moral building channel should by every standard promote the developmental programme of the Government in a manner that sentiments and divisible actions that could negate such developments are discouraged, particularly in a democratic setting when and where everyone should have right to live and worship his/her belief without fear or intimidation. It is only in an atmosphere of peace among the citizens that development is promoted for the good of all irrespective of religious inclination; it is a mark of democratic tenet. Tolerance too would be required from religious leaders so that the led can learn from their acts, this would involve the Councils of the various religious organizations through which the message would spread faster. Government must be prepared to nip in bud actions that are capable of fueling conflict in every community.

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