Peyote Religion

Introduction

‘Peyotism’, is a religion of several Native North Americans communities whereby hallucinogenic peyote is used as a sacramental food. This is the most prevalent aboriginal existing within Native American religion. Peyotism religion teaches an ethical canon just like those of the monotheistic values. The peyote practice lasts from sundown to dawn and is generally held in Plains. The custom has four major elements which are prayers, singing, contemplation and eating the sacramental peyote. The religion most likely is believed to have originated from the Kiowa in Oklahoma around the year 1890 and it was believed to imitate the influence caused by traditional Peyote use among Meso-American communities such as the Huichol. In 1918, many Peyotists were brought together as the Native American Church. The Peyote religion is a medico-religious cult (White, 2000).

Since the arrival in the new world of the Europeans, ‘Peyote’ has provoked controversy persecution and suppressions. ‘Peyote’ is a small, spineless cactus like plant. The plant is believed to have been used by the North Americans are likely to have been using the plant for spiritual purposes. It is found primarily in the Chihuahua desert and in the states of Coahuila, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, and San Luis Potosi among the shrubs. The plant is a hallucinogenic and is commonly used in the rituals of the Native American Church. Peyote buds are commonly chewed for a more intense experience, but they can also be used in the brewing of tea for a milder effect (Davies, 2001).

Despite medical and cultural evidence to support the religious use of peyote as both safe and moral, Peyotists have been the targets of numerous organized efforts to prevent their use of the substance. This controversy between the use and the impact of the plant to the people has brought along a divided opinion towards the plant. Despite serious safety concerns, peyote is used for treatments, as the Native American community believes the plant has medicinal value as they use it in curing of fever, bone fractures, wounds, rheumatism, and snakebite. Peyote plant is also used as a recreational drug because it can cause hallucinations. However, despite the use by the Native Americans, peyote is illegal in the United States (Davies, 2001). Some of its side effects include causing nausea and vomiting, anxiety, paranoia, fear, and emotional instability. It can also raise blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration rate. Changes in vision, drooling, headache, dizziness,and drowsiness may also occur. Although it is rarely fatal, peyote can cause homicidal, psychotic, or suicidal behavior related to the hallucinations. It is also a stimulant and it is highly discouraged by doctors especially during surgery. It's also discouraging during pregnancy and breastfeeding. This divided opinion behind the plant has along brought divided contribution into the healthcare sector, whether for the plant to be allowed or not (Maroukis, 2005).

Practices: some of the common practices when using the plant include, chewing peyote buds and drinking peyote tea, which are central practices of the Native American Church. These rituals commonly last all night, often starting Saturday night and running all the night and in turn ending in the Sunday morning. Other practices include: Singing, drumming, scripture reading, dancing, prayer, and the sharing of spiritual ideas which are all commonly included as well (Swan, 1999).

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