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 MENANCE OF CULTISM IN BAYELSA.

Cultism is no new word to our society, though formed with the sole aim of good, has now turned a nuisance to the society. A cult may be defined as “a group of people who come together to achieve a common goal”, in lay man terms.

The first cult group in Nigeria, can be traced to Pyrates Confraternity (National Association of Sea Dogs) and was founded by Wole Soyinka, Nobel Laurete and some others in the University of Ibadan in 1952. Pyrates confraternity was just like a fraternity house for people to voice out their opinions. Their aims were: to end tribalism, colonial mentality and revive age of chivalry but all that was long forgotten towards the end of 1960’s in which we saw the gradual change of the cult groups and the forming of more cult associations which strayed from Wole Soyinka’s reason for the creation of cult group.

Cultism in Bayelsa State is no new topic, the two cult groups: Bobos (Debam) and the Greenlanders have been a cause of terror in Bayelsa State, specifically in its state capital (Yenagoa). The two cult groups are said to be fighting for supremacy and causing loss of lives and properties in recent years. Again during this period of lockdown, the two cult groups have once more started their fight for supremacy successfully making people live in fear alongside the fear of the corona virus pandemic.

On Monday 15th of June 2020, 8 persons were recorded dead due to the feud between the two cult groups. “my area is no longer safe, my pikin and I live in fear now” one Mrs Deinyefa staying in Biogbolo axis called the Bayelsa radio (Peoples FM, Voice of the Niger Delta) to complain.

So many calls have come in all complaining of the cult groups terriorizing the area. Tombia, Biogbolo, down Yenagoa, Amarata, Okaka, Obele, Sandfill road and Azikoro road are seen to be the targeted spots for this cult feud over the years making the place inhabitable for the residents of those areas, always sleeping with one eye open due to the gunshots which causes them to be paralysed by fear of dying.

 The causes of cultism is the same everywhere; and one can say parental negligence, is one of the key factors as home is the first place a child begins its development: and when the love a child is meant to get in the home is absent he may be propelled to find it outside falling into the hands of cultists who may initiate him into their groups after little to no persuasion.

Home background is also a determinant. The way a person is brought up sometimes affects the kind of person he or she grows to become. If a child grows up in a house where the parents belong to one cult or the other, the child is likely to join a cult of his own later in life since he would see it as a normal way of living. Peer group influence has also caused an increase in the number of cultists. The need to feel among and not be left out; “show me your friend and I will tell you who you are” this adage has proved itself true beyond all doubts as the crowd in which we associate highly influences our actions, if you hang around cultists you are more than likely to be a cultist too.

 The effects of cultism cannot be overemphasised, the main being loss of lives and properties. So many innocent lives have being ended due to being at the wrong place leaving their families to mourn their deaths and leaving the family one family member short. Properties are also lost as burning of places and items are also done during their fight over supremacy. There is also a high level of student dropout as youngsters who are involved in cultism are mostly rusticated.

Cultism if not tackled, will continue to eat down into every part of the society affecting individuals, families, schools, religious setting and the society at large. Here are some ways to curb the menace of cultism in the society.

Public awareness against cultism; awareness of the effects of cultism need to be broadcast in schools, religious gatherings and all social gathering to enlighten people of what cultism is. Workshops, lectures, talks and campaigns should also be done of the dangers associated with cultism not leaving out the children in primary school.

Discipline should be enforced by parents on their children and wards; like the saying goes “charity begins at home”. The necessary morals and values should be inculcated into the children to help reduce the chances of joining a cult.

Government laws should be strictly adhered to. The jail term of twenty (20) years imprisonment for joining a cult should be strictly enforced so people would stop taking cultism lightly and saying the government can’t do anything to them, they are covered and the likes.

Just as we preach about what we love, the zeal with which we talk of what we love so we should also preach of cultism: its causes, effects and solutions so we can have a better tomorrow.