

MENACE OF CULTISM IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: MANIFESTATION OF NATIONAL DECADENCE

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Abstract

One of the greatest social crimes which is very rampant in Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics all over the Country is cultism. It is a social menace which is not restricted to only the institutions of higher learning but that which is a common phenomenon that characterizes the entire society - the secondary schools are not left behind. Viewed from the sociological angle, educational system performs the principal role of transmitting the cultural values of society as well as promotes social change through the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. It was revealed that the cause of the reign of terror on campuses cannot be divorced from the proliferation of cults which compete for dominance, recognition and exhibition of wits and vigour. Rather than seek the solution to campus terrorism within the fundamentals of societal decadence, it should be seen as a normal development in a competitive world, especially when the desired goals are aesthetic. This study sets out to examine the causes and menace of cultism and their negative impact on our educational institutions. The socializing agencies relationship and other motivational issues are identified as the fundamental and causative factors in the society. Students are product of their environments. The family, the school, the peer group and the larger society cannot escape the blame over the negative comportment of the students. The study proffers solutions based on the theory that it is what we sowed that we reap in the youths. To combat cultism on campuses therefore, there is a need for serious overhauling of the primary socializing agencies of the society.

Keywords: Cultism, Social Crimes, Secret Societies, Socializing Agencies, National Decadence

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian society has, wittingly or unwittingly, provided an enabling environment for all forms of crises and crimes, among which is the problem of campus secret cults. A lot of scholars and writers (Oloruntimehin, 1984; Abati, 1994), agree that there is in Nigeria today a general state of anomie or normlessness. The argument of these scholars and writers is that the Nigerian society has replaced honour with dishonour as a standard attitude. Vanity has become a popular commodity. Those who therefore get involved in various forms of criminal behaviour have accepted the societal goal of success. But since the opportunity to achieve the goal by legitimate or institutional means is not easily accessible to all, they yield to the urge to achieve the goal by the use of illegitimate means.

The growth and activities of campus secret cults have been commonplace because of the open display of power and the use of violence (Abati, 1994; and Udeni, 1994). Today, the Nigerian society has adopted violence as a convenient means of conflict resolution. Assassins now stalk the land like law enforcement agents; armed robbers have also become public heroes. Our youth who watch all these also resort to violence in order to achieve their goals.

In most tertiary institution in the country today, we experience different negative activities of these cult groups. The activities create tensions and anxiety in the academic communities because of their nature. These include rape, robbery, burglary, stealing, disruption of academic programmes, maiming, extermination of life. Thus, cultism has more or less become an integral part of our academic culture. Cults are the network of arrangement perfectly organized in a way that give room for the spread of the activities across campuses.

Cult members have graduated from the age of male attacks on both sexes to the era of female attacks on

male and female victims. Their activities negate societal values, besides destroying innocent lives at will. It is against this backdrop that cultism has become a phenomenal bane of our educational institutions. But why are cults springing up? Is there a common feature of this phenomenon? What are the reasons for students' involvement in cultism and how are we to tackle this malaise? These are some of the questions addressed by the paper.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Cultism can be approached from the perspective of either "Secret Cult" or "Secret Society" for the purpose of this work, Secret Cult shall be adopted. Daraul (1961) for instance gave two reasons why it has not been easy for scholars and writers to successfully provide a satisfactory definition of a secret cult. One, there are many variants surrounding the central fact of the existence of the society so much that what will identify one cult will not fit another. Two, not all secret societies are entirely secret. For instance, there are secret societies whose members may be known (as in the case of the Rosicrucian) that is, may be stated publicly; There are some features generally associated with secret cults. These include: (a) exclusivity of membership, and (b) the use of signs, passwords, and similar materials; group objective; and shared experience of rituals and beliefs (especially, the myth of the society).

According to Ogunbameru (1997), a secret cult is defined to mean any form of organization whose activities are not only exclusively kept away from the knowledge of others but such activities are carried out at odd hours of the day, and they often clash with the accepted norms and values of everyday life. Cultic activities are sometimes laden with blood which may be the blood of an animal or that of human being (Ogunade, 2002).

Thus, a secret cult is an exclusive social group consisting of individuals with a common attitude to life. It is a group of people with shared experience, accepted beliefs and group objectives. It appears like a system of religious worship where members remain loyal and fully committed to the ideals, values and objectives of the group. As a result, members find it extremely difficult, if not impossible to quit after they have gone through initiation rites. Thus, cultism may be viewed as a system of beliefs binding together people of the same interest for the purpose of promoting and defending the common pursuit.

In this respect, the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, section 35 (4) a and b bans and defines a secret society or as association; (a) whose meetings or other activities are held in secret; and (b) whose members are under oath, obligation or other threat to promote the interest of its members or to aid one another under all circumstance without due regard to merit, fair play or justice, to the detriment of the legitimate expectation of those who are not members.

The word "secret" denotes the way the activities of these cults are run; the activities are concealed, covered, covert, disguised, hidden, shrouded, undisclosed, unknown, behind close door or in camera. The main ingredient of all these qualifications is that the activities are not known to those who are not members of the cults.

SECRET CULTS AND SOCIETY

The existence of secret cults all over the world, according to Ogunbameru (1997), is not a recent phenomenon. There is good reason to believe that many of the early secret cults in the world were originally founded as benevolent associations for laudable and objective purpose. Chesveaux (1971), for instance, claims that in China, secret societies have always played an extremely important part in the life of the Chinese. The influence and ramifications according to Chesveaux, extended to every branch of Chinese life, especially politics, religion, commerce, trade unions and the criminal underworld. More specifically, their activities in China in the past included the organization of opposition to the government; the formation of self-protection; units against robbery gangs among others.

In Nigeria, especially among the Yoruba speaking group, there existed in the past according to Fadipe (1970) the Ogboni secret society which was associated with the making of legislation and administration. The *Osu* (name given to *Ogboni* among the Ijebu and the Egba) was the Council of state. Today, the Ogboni has been deprived of its initial political functions and importance, owing partly to colonization and modernization, but it still survives purely for its social functions and cultural interest.

EMERGENCE OF SECRET CULTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

The Pioneer Secret Cult - the Pyrates confraternity at the University of Ibadan an was founded in 1952 by Professor Wole Soyinka and his colleagues whose goals and objectives as reported by Akinuli (1990) were: (a) to fight colonial mentality at that time; (b) to help establish a system whereby discipline, orderliness and orientation to wards laudable national objectives could be planted in the mind of University Students and; (c) to fight against corruption, tribalism and elitism.

The Pyrates Confraternity was thus the only registered student organization until 1980 when Yaba College of Technology rationalized that new clubs should be registered. Today, there are over 40 clubs in various tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The development of splinter groups arising from internal crises among the clubs contributed more to the emergence of many secret cults in Nigerian tertiary, institutions today. The death and decline of virile and legitimate student unionism which led to the struggle for supremacy among the clubs contributed also to this ugly development.

Manifesting merely as confrontational rivalries among contending groups in the middle and late 1980s recent history tends to ascribe the resurgence of violent cults in Nigerian institution of higher learning to the introduction of vigilante groups under the Babangida administration which were said to have abducted, tortured and detained activist students who did not see eye to eye with school authorities thereby prompting the hounded and molested groups to regroup and arm themselves underground to stave off the threat of abduction.

To compound the problems, Decree 47 of 1989 promulgated by the Federal Government to give the Governing councils of tertiary institutions the right to proscribe any society acting against national interest did not help matters as the cults have, by the day, perfected new survival strategies and developed a culture of violence that continues to threaten the Ivory Towers in Nigeria. Today, in addition to the Pyrate Confraternity, as reported by many scholars, the following secret cults exist in Nigeria higher institutions: Buccaneers, Maplates, Blood Suckers, Black Cat, Eiye Confraternity, Vikings Fraternity, Mafia, Red Devils, Black Berret, Green Berret, Trojan Horse, Neo-Black Movement, Musketeers, Black Axe, Temple of Eden Fraternity, Mafioso, Osiri, Burkina Fasso Revolution, Mgbamagba Brothers, Scorpion, Dragon, Panama Pyrate Confraternity, Airwords, Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Amazons, Barracudas, and Walrus among others.

Unbridled rivalry, followed almost always with violent clashes among different cult members have always resulted in death of innocent persons in the campus community. This rivalry is usually based on the following reasons; (a) the struggle to influence the decision making machinery of the student union; (b) the attempt-to protect individual cult members from what they call *injustice* from members of other cults; and (c) the fight over female counterparts.

THE CULT AS A SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND PROBLEM

People are basically divided in their economic interests and cultural ideals. Even, if there are no divisions, some politics will develop wherever there are organizations in which some people have authority that others must obey. This often leads to a struggle between those in power and those interested in greater freedom from control. This perhaps is the circumstance in which cults emerged in our society, particularly the campuses.

In the case of the Pyrate Confraternity, it came out to resist colonial domination, engender reforms, stimulate political awareness, encourage students harmony and evolve a university culture. What propelled the formation was the arrogant determination of the then university administrators to impose white values on the students. It was not created to oppress or terrorize other students. Similarly, the Eiye confraternity, as reported by Adelola (1997), was formed to resist oppression, secure and protect members rights, aid financially handicapped students, seek academic assistance and promote brotherhood. In essence, the aims of these clubs are not significantly different from other social clubs though the mode of execution might vary from club to club, circumstance to circumstance, issues to issues, and personality to personality. This is not unusual.

Like any other organizations, these cults are not haphazard in their organization. They have constitutions, procedures for operation, initiation and there are expected norms, which dictate cult members' duties and responsibilities, cult-cult relations and cult-societal relations. They have their own hierarchies, which vary from cult to cult in titles and nomenclature but in all cases, titles wear a pseudo-military garb mostly in the type of cap-beret.

The cause of the reign of terror on campuses cannot be divorced from the proliferation of cults which compete for dominance, recognition and exhibition of wits and vigour. Rather than seek the solution to campus terrorism within the fundamentals of societal decadence, it should be seen as a normal development in a competitive world, especially when the desired goals are aesthetic. But because commentators and analysts conceive campus cults as inimical to the social fabric, one cannot but attempt an analysis from their perspectives, that is, to see campus cult as a social problem.

A social problem convulses the entire fabric of the society. It is a problem because it is phenomenally intolerable to the social whole. The normal course of events, patterns of relationship and the goals and values are threatened; the dimension of structural dislocation may vary but the commonality of all social problems is that it is an abnormal growth which inevitably creates pressure such that other members of the society as a whole cannot but groan under the yoke of foreseen or imagined strain. It is a stressful situation, which ordinarily qualifies to be described as a deviant culture. The problematic situation may have its own normative pattern, but such normative pattern is antithetical to social health. Thus, it is contended that to the extent that campus cults are outgrowths of the institutional systems, an attempt to dislocate the very tenets of campus activities, calling attention to themselves from students, staff, society, and forming an object of discussions and consideration, campus cults ordinarily qualifies for the status of a social problem.

With the intensity of campus cults activities, there is a growing fear that the society is rapidly nurturing a new generation of gangsters. Even if positively is intended, the fact that the majority of people are uneasy as a result of campus cults is an assurance that cults are dreaded. To the extent that cult activities remain imagined, guesses can only be made; the secret is mysterious and, therefore, unapproachable; its fears cannot but be of that dimension that can make sporadic reactions attendant upon the unknown disruptive.

The threat to peace is central to the issue of perceiving cults as a social problem. While cults have their own organizations aimed at achieving specific purposes, cult-cult relationships could become conclusive such as to create an eruption within the society. As distinct groups, cult rivalries often create a pandemonium that dovetails beyond the precincts of the cults themselves.

REASONS FOR STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN CULTISM

Many reasons may be adduced for youths' involvement in secret cults in educational institutions. Some of the causal factors may be itemized and discussed briefly as follows:

The Collapse of the Family Institution: It can hardly be denied that pupils are a product of their homes. The home remains a predominant factor in the shaping of behavioural tendencies. The first reason why youths are actively involved in secret cults cannot be divorced from the social breakdown in the homes, most especially the destruction of once upheld sacred cultural values such as moral uprightness, fear of elders and love of fellow men. In many places, the home has witnessed disintegration as communal living, strong family ties and parental control have broken down almost irretrievably. The home, which is the basic unit of society, is constantly under assault. Of course, the result of more broken homes is an inevitable increase in social vices.

Influence of Peer Group: The society breeds cultism through the peer groups. Like family, peer group is another agent of socialization. In fact, peer group plays an important role in the socialization process of a child. Whenever the group meets, incidentally each and every one of them comes from different families. The education received from their families would be put to play with the members of the group and from this, the peer group would produce the child with the character that would be put to use in the public.

Search for Power: Power struggle in the society is another bait behind the promotion of secret societies. It is the prevalent impression that if one does not belong to any secret society, that one could not make it in life. This idea is extended to all spheres of human endeavour, be it judicial, political, social, civil service or even academics. Some students are usually restless on the campus since what has been operating in their minds is that without being members of secret societies one could not make it in life.

Support Offered by School Administrators: Some school administrators are sometimes behind some students joining campus cults in order to satisfy their whims and caprices. These students are used as spies and thugs in order to achieve their selfish interests. These set of students fan the embers of cultism on campus. When some of these school administrators have some skeletons in their cupboards and they do not

want the secret to be unveiled, campus cult members are clandestinely recruited to unleash terror on the campus. These campus cult members are secretly financed and even promised undeserved grades in their various departments.

Foreign Influence: The current reign of campus secret cults can also be linked with foreign influence (Udeni, 1994) Udeni is of the view that foreign influence as demonstrated in horror films like "First Order 'Demon lovers', "In the name of God", "The House on Skull Hill", etc. which show scenes of bizarre cult violence and esoteric practices that go a long way to influence the activities of cult members on campuses.

Influence of Larger Society: Another factor that has been recognized as reason for youths' involvement in cultism is attributable to the pervasive and corrupting influence of the larger society. Youngsters now conform to tough and embarrassing patterns [of speech, dress and behaviour, transmitted by a decadent society.

There have been noticeable nasty changes in societal values. Talcott Parsons, a prominent American sociology had submitted that culture is "transmitted, learned and shared". The obvious result is that: "Our campuses have turned to brothels, patronized by pot-bellied Godfathers called Aristos. You cannot differentiate between female undergraduates and prostitutes, cult members and political thugs or armed robbers. Sporadic shootings, maiming and killing are experienced on a daily basis on our campuses. Campuses are no more citadels of academic excellence but slaughter slabs for cultists and unsound mind who operate as tin gods above the law of the nation, aided and abetted by security operatives. There is decreasing moral values as home training, respect for traditional values and ethic, among our youths is vanishing". The foregoing is a succinct summary of the breakdown in our societal values

Creation of Fear: Some students' aim of joining campus cults is to create fears in the minds of their colleagues. No student who hears of the evil machinations of campus cults would dare their anger. That is why they get away with whatever evil perpetrated by them on campus. The campus authorities too are at their mercy always. An attempt to engage them in a duel may cause disruption of academic calendar for the session; and when the bubbles burst, the school administrator may be blamed for ineptitude in running the institution. The implication of this is that such an institution may be tagged as a citadel of crises, and this could negate the idea that a good leader manifests most during crisis. A nonentity could hold the helm when the sea is calm. Leadership entails good management of crisis.

Acquisition of Wealth: The desire to run after the mundane things of life contributes immensely towards students interest in joining campus cults. The students who are living affluent lives would like an insurance for their lifestyle and they are ready to smash or clear anything on their way if their objectives on campus cults are not to .be accomplished because they would have been enmeshed in the practice of cultism. They would like to protect their interest in the secret societies to which they belong. They are the ones who try to monopolise rights, privileges, or social advantages at the expense of merit and the quest for academic success at all cost. Those of them who are academically wanting are ready to go to any length in procuring stability for cultism.

Undue Protection: Student members of the campus secret cults work vehemently for undue protection on the campus. Not that alone, they want preferential treatment for their members. Other students who are not members of the cults are regarded as buffoons who should not be cared for. That is why they exploit all avenues to have their interest unduly protected. As commanders of terror, they are ready to meet force with force if there is any threat to their locus standi.

Terrorism: If there is any enticement that propels some students to join campus secret cults, it is terror that the members unleashed on innocent students who are not members. Some of these members of the campus secret cults take joy in terrorizing other non-members of secret cults, especially female students. This terrorism is used mostly when there is rivalry over a female student between members and non-members of secret cults.

Effects of Home Video and the Internet: Furthermore, the arrival of the Home Video and the Internet has contributed immensely to both behavioural and social change amongst the youths. Once youths are addicted to wrong influences, it becomes absolutely difficult for trainers and their rules or regulations to make meaningful impact on the young lives.

It is to be noted that when youths have unrestricted access and exposures to films and the Internet they

acquire vast knowledge and experience, thereby widening their horizon. Much energy is expended by them in delinquency; very little is left for classroom learning and the school is unable to fulfill its sociological function of transmitting knowledge and transforming lives through the impartation of good moral and cultural values.

Intelligence Network of Cults: These groups have very good intelligence network. According to AH (1999) Campus Secret Cults easily break into the rank and file of the law enforcement agents who easily give away useful information strategically mapped out for dealing with them. They are able to do this because of the greed and insincerity of the law enforcement agency.

Legal Inadequacies: It is often stated that Cultism is a difficult offence to prosecute because it has not gotten the backing of the law. This being so, its growth has become so easy as members of cult groups expelled have found themselves back into the campuses on the orders of the courts.

The Nigeria Factor: Many of the cult groups grow in strength and number because of the Nigerian factor. The decadence in the society where affluent grand patrons and those in powerful positions have made the job of the police difficult. Once these members are identified after an atrocity and sent to the police, phone calls from various quarters come in for their release.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of reactions of 120 parents/lecturers interviewed is done below:

Table 1: Reactions of respondents to the killing of students by Cult Groups?

| Responses | No | % |
|---------------------|-----|-----|
| Seriously Disturbed | 108 | 90 |
| Indifferent | 12 | 10 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

The table shows the respondents' reactions to the question that "what is your reaction(s) to some previous reports that certain students were killed during bloody clashes between rival cult groups"?

Precisely, 90 percent of the respondent (108 parents) said that they were seriously disturbed by the rate at which cult members kill one another. Fifteen of them (that is, 12,5%) claimed ignorance of the violent activities of cult groups in their own school days. The remaining 105 stressed that during their own time the worst punishment any cult group ever meted out to any person was mere beating. They insisted that the dimensions of today's cultic practice in our campuses were not the intention of the founding fathers. They will hope something reasonable would be done to check these dangerous trends.

Also, a small fraction (10%) of the respondents showed indifference to the question. It was discovered on further enquiry that this form of response was due to the fact that they held the belief that newspaper reports in Nigeria are often sensational. Hence, not all cult related reports could be true as far as they were concerned. Moreover, none of their close relatives has been affected by the cult violence.

Table 2: Opinion of the Respondents as the feeling of cult members towards the writing of the Paper.

| Responses | No | % |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|
| They will not feel offended | 102 | 85 |
| They will feel offended | 9 | 7.5 |
| I don't know how they can feel | 9 | 7.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

Of all the people interviewed, 85% claimed that they do not think that cult members will feel offended by the paper. They stated that the approach was good since the writer's intention was to reform and avoid violence, especially all acts leading to termination of lives. One other reason they gave was that the writer was not

referring to a particular group. The 102 respondents stressed that cult members should rather appreciate and commend the effort.

The table further indicates that only 7.5% of the respondents said that cult members will feel that the writer is against them by writing this paper. Three people (7.5) out of the respondents were undecided.

Table 3: Reaction(s) of Parents if their Children Involved in Campus Cultism

| Responses | NO | % |
|---|-----|-----|
| Either son or daughter will be disowned | 30 | 25 |
| I will feel embarrassed | 42 | 35 |
| I will employ divine intervention | 48 | 40 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

From the table, it is observed that 25% the respondents claimed that they would disown their sons or daughters, should they discover that they later have joined the cults. This reaction shows how bitter parents could be if their children are found with the cults.

Moreover, 35% of the respondents said that they would feel embarrassed if their children were discovered to have joined the cult. According to them, this embarrassment would arise because it would be difficult for them to prove to the public that they are not members themselves. This dilemma, the respondents reasoned, might lead some people to distance themselves from the families of the children involved. A considerable number of the respondents (40%) stated that they would resort to prayer for God's help.

Table 4: Suggested Solutions to Campus Cultism

| Responses | No | % |
|---|-----|------|
| To disown cultic children | 18 | 15 |
| To apprehend them for prosecution | 24 | 20 |
| . Tell them to know the implications of | 15 | 12.5 |
| their actions if they kill. To reform and rehabilitate them | 63 | 52.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

The table above gives the summary of suggested solutions to campus cultism. The table indicates that 15% of the respondents favoured disowning cultic sons/ daughters. They reasoned that if they abandon the cultic sons/daughters, he/she might corrupt the other siblings or introduce them to cultism. This indicates how dreadful they consider cultic menace to be. Also, 20% of the respondents favoured the arrest, prosecution and jailing of cult culprits in accordance with the law.

However, 12.5% of the total number of respondents held a contrary opinion, they maintained that cult members should be told the implication of their actions, since those who kill by the sword should also die by the sword. The submission of this group of respondents may not be unconnected with the violent dimensions which cultic practice has assumed in recent times.

In this respect 52.5% of the respondents suggested that parents who have cultic sons/daughters should get closer to them and try to reform them, instead of disowning, jailing or killing them. They suggested that cultists should not only be reformed, they should also be rehabilitated. They reasoned that even killing armed robbers has not removed armed robbery from our society.

Table 5: Measures by the Parents to Prevent Children from Joining Secret Cults

| Responses | No | % |
|---|----|------|
| Good interpersonal relationship within the family | 30 | 25 |
| Constant intimacy with the child | 21 | 22.5 |

| | | |
|--|-----|------|
| Showing interest in the kind of friends they keep | 27 | 22.5 |
| Considering the aftermath before divorce or separation | 36 | 30 |
| <i>Total</i> | 120 | 100 |

In the table, 30 (25%) respondents were of the opinion that parents can prevent their wards from joining campus secret cult by establishing a good interpersonal relationship within the family, while 22.5% believed that constant intimacy with the child can go a long way to prevent him or her. There should also be thorough monitoring of the children to know the kind of friends they keep since bad company corrupts good manner. 36 respondents, which represent 30%, said that before a parent decides on a divorce or separation, he/she should think of the aftermath.

Judging from the foregoing, a combination of the above responses will surely keep children away from cult groups

Table 6: How Lecturers can Discourage their Students from Involving in Campus Secret Cults.

| Responses | No | % |
|---|-----|------|
| To live above board and show good examples | 30 | 25 |
| To stay away from secret cult groups | 33 | 27.5 |
| To serve as impartial judges and advisers | 27 | 22.5 |
| To guide and nurture the students very well | 30 | 25 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

Out of the total respondents, 25% (30) believed that part of the roles of a lecturer is to live above board and show good examples at all times. 27.5% declared that lecturers should stay away from secret cult groups and avoid serving as their patrons and that they should be completely neutral. 22.5% said they should serve as impartial judges and advisers to the students whenever they are called upon to do so.

The lecturers according to another 25% of the respondents, should guide, train and nurture the students into responsible ladies and gentlemen, and equally be seen as "loco parentis" to the students. The combination of the above will greatly assist the students to become responsible individuals in the society.

PANACEA FOR STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN CULTISM

Young minds are malleable, and the environment is the totality of the influences, which sharpen, and dictates their line of action, behavioural attitudes and lifestyle. Incidentally, sharpened attitude of the tender age invariably determine, future lifestyle, ambition and opportunities of these youths.

The first panacea to deviance among students is a strong parent/guardian's control. The home is the foundation of all exhibited character. According to Ijaodola (1999), the powerful tool is the power of example. An adage was quoted as saying that; "he who give good advice builds with one hand. He who offers wise counsel and good example builds with both hands. He who gives good counsel but bad example builds with one hand and tears down with the other"

The home is the best environment for instilling discipline and moral values.

Moreover, efforts should be geared towards raising the awareness of the developmental crises of youths. Youths are a peculiar group passing through time of rapid growth and development. They are neither children nor adults. They are generally emotionally unstable. Their impressions are unreliable and could lead to wrong decisions, wrong friendships, wrong affiliations and wrong choice of career. The search for individuality and fame lure many youths into copying and following the example of popular adults as their heroes. With the recent rise in love for pleasure, materialism and the increase in divorce rate, it is not surprising that many youths are resorting to drugs, cultism, lewdness and other incident behavior for comfort. Parents, teachers and guardians are the necessary pivot in balancing the excesses of youth and giving them proper direction in life. Together they form the fulcrum for restraint. It should be noted that unrestrained youths will vent their frustrations in "thuggery" armed banditry, sexual promiscuity, and exploration of the spirit realms through cults and occultism.

The parents/teachers' forum in educational institutions must serve its purpose of building cultural values, preparing the youth for challenges they are likely to be exposed to and circumventing unethical behaviour. They must be seen as bridging the gap between the home and the larger society. Many students are too

quickly detached from parent control and by the time they are admitted into higher institutions they are so much in a hurry to feign adulthood even though they are no more than big children. Many undergraduates, for example, are known to have their imagination so blurred as not to appreciate the facts and realities of life that can make them more stable and at peace with themselves and their neighbours.

One way of discouraging cultism among students is through the guidance and counselling efforts to be put in place in educational institutions. The tertiary institutions must particularly be vigorously involved in this exercise. Many students come to school without proper parenting and they are in need of counsellors who must guide them rightly before they succumb to the wrong influence of peers. All aspects of youth life must be covered in counseling, ranging from their domestic responsibilities, social expectations, finance, religious or spiritual inclinations to academics and career. It is suggested, as part of school curriculum, that youths be assigned to counsellors and made to undergo periodic counselling, not willingly, but as part of the mandatory requirement in addition to their academic work. This will give room for effective monitoring of their development.

Anti-cult groups in which many youths will be directly involved has also been suggested. This is another way of tapping their robust energy. It is the belief that cultists can best be investigated, apprehended and reprimanded through the efforts of their right-thinking peers, especially those who were former kingpins of secret cults. These efforts may yield some positive results.

Teachers, lecturers and education instructors must realize their unique role in the formative years of the youths. They must not become wrong influences for those who are involved in cultism but also for those who serve as godfathers or who abuse the youth for their own selfish ends. Similarly, the movie industry producers must realize that they are not only a mirror of the society but teachers of moral and social values. More censors should be mounted to regulate the movie industry as well as check the exposure of youths to corrupting influences on the Internet.

Furthermore, efforts should be made to generate more interest in academic work. Hardwork should be encouraged and rewarded to stimulate academic excellence. Students should be protected from influences that promote a wanton display of wealth and affluence. The society has to condemn cultism, secret societies and occultist groupings in strong terms. As long as they are linked with the degeneration of the students and criminal conduct they should be outlawed in educational institutions and in the larger society.

Lastly, there should be more motivation for students involvement in recreation activities. Youths are found to be passionate lovers of sports. Often times, they are in need of those who will set them to pursue the right priorities instead of chasing frivolities. Where they are given the right focus, they become an asset to their communities. They are goal-getters when they meet the right motivator. However, in the pursuit of their academics, youths are full of so much energy that cannot be easily bottled up. This has to be expressed in a form of conventional recreation for which the facilities must be readily available at hand. Otherwise they are diverted to some unwholesome and diabolical plan of their own. Our education of the youths must be holistic as to give due attention to the mental, the physical and even the spiritual development. Ethicists and religious men should be involved in the moral instruction of students.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A look at our educational institutions reveals that activities of cultists are ubiquitous but invincible. Campus cultism came into being around 1952 as a form of reaction against officialdom. But, in later days, personal ambition of cult leaders, campus politics, management interference, clash of interests, population explosion and increase in number of higher institutions brought about splinter groups and cult proliferation.

The rate of youth involvement in cultism in our educational institution is so alarming and has become a matter of serious concern to parents, educators, government as well as non-government agencies. Cultism connotes a phenomenon which, among other things, involves peer groupings, studentship allegiance or strong friendship or bonding of youths who operate under the cover of secrecy and darkness to carry out some perceived interests of their members. These cults are terrible, dreadful, powerful and the friends must be checked.

The prevalence of cults cannot be completely divorced from the moral decline in the family, school and larger society. Economic pressures have compounded the problem and heightened the neglect of parenting and

youth development with the result those youths are exposed too early to many challenges which they are not properly prepared for. The solutions proffered here are suggestive of an overhauling of our educational system through social engineering, law reform and proper instruction of students so as to dissuade their involvement in secret cults. Our educational institutions must gear towards fulfilling their primary and social responsibility, which is the transforming of the society through the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.

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