

The Olalere murder case

IN a clearly mean and beastly case of ritual killing, one Afeez Olalere, apparently a budding fraudster and ritual killer, has confessed to the police in Lagos State that he murdered his younger brother for demonic ritual in order to prop up his dwindling *Yahoo* (advanced fee fraud) business. What is even more intriguing and depressing about the horrific incident was the revelation by the suspect that his mother was the propelling force behind the ghoulish and dastardly act which she believed would make his illegal business to thrive and flourish. The sordid narrative was that the mother of the suspect, who is also the mother of the victim, took the suspect to a herbalist who recommended the sacrifice of human life in order for his *Yahoo* business to experience a positive growth trajectory, and that the one to be sacrificed must be his sibling. It was this same mother that allegedly suggested that her 21-year-old son be used and she reportedly procured and laced the victim's food with a poison which killed the deceased within the space of 20 minutes.

The suspect thereafter cut the relevant body parts prescribed by the herbalist for the ritual. And it was while the two felons were ferrying the dismembered remains of the deceased to a cemetery for burial that the police apprehended them. In other words, this strange and weird mother was not just an ignorant accomplice in the vicious and treacherously cowardly act of ritual killing of her own child, she allegedly participated actively and even emboldened the main suspect to execute the hideous act. It was horrendous and unbelievable. The question on the lips of every decent citizen is this: has the country got to such a base level that mothers now kill their own sons for moneymaking rituals? And in the instant case, for an illegal and morally reprehensible *Yahoo* business to thrive? It is really saddening how character and moral values have become so warped and twisted that behaviours and conduct that call for the interrogation of the sanity of their authors are now commonplace.

The Nigerian society seems to be inexorably embracing extreme animal instincts: young men are killing their female friends for moneymaking rituals, some fathers are sleeping with their daughters to achieve the same ignoble end, and, of course, parents are now killing their children, all in the vaulting quests for riches without breaking a sweat! There is no denying the fact that the country's economy is tottering and that its adverse consequences on citizens' welfare and survival are dire. Nonetheless, that cannot explain away the recourse to bestial, criminal, ungodly and patently cruel activities under the guise of struggling to hold out or subsist. Truth be told, as grave as the economic situation of the coun-

try is, the perpetrators of the horrid act of ritual killings surely have alternatives but they simply decide to make a choice that badly degrades humanity. It is most unfortunate.

The proliferation of ritualists (people engaged in occult manipulations to make money) in this clime is becoming really concerning and alarming. Virtually on a daily basis, the media space is suffused with news of one form of ritual killing or the other. And those are the ones that are reported as ritual killings: a lot go unreported and the victims are just declared missing if or when their relations approach the police. The fact that the security agencies have yet to fashion out a proactive mechanism based on intelligence to stop the ritual killers in their tracks and apprehend them before carrying out their nefarious activities is a big issue. Often, culprits are arrested only after irreversible damage has been done. Many are also of the view that since some unscrupulous persons seem to persist in the criminal and uncivilised act of ritual murder with reckless abandon, it can only mean that they have reckoned that their chances of being caught and punished are quite low. The security agencies should, therefore, sit up and craft pragmatic strategies to stymie the alarming spate of ritual killings in the society.

Ironically, as obsessed as some persons are with rituals that involve the shedding of human blood in order to get rich, the richest people in the world are not ritualists. Indeed, how many ritualists are on Forbes' rich list? None. Yet, some unscrupulous and ignorant persons have continued to commit the heinous crime, taking huge risks with the lives of others and carrying on as if the outcome would automatically place them on the same pedestal as Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates or Aliko Dangote, people who toil day and night, applying their intellect and talents to earn legitimate incomes and create wealth without debasing humanity.

We urge the police to launch a thorough inquiry into the Olalere murder incident, diligently prosecute the culprits in the law court, and make public the outcome in order to deter would-be killers. It is imperative and helpful to reiterate that in addition to applying the instrument of deterrence, there is the need to put a comprehensive value reorientation and moral rearmament in intense advocacy, focusing on reenacting the time-tested system where morality, character, good name and reputation were the shared values of citizens that were highly esteemed by the society. The society must consciously and deliberately put a plug on the aberration of today where societal respect, honour and recognition are largely predicated on affluence, regardless of the source, in churches, mosques, palaces and even in official circles.