



**ORISUN:
JOURNAL OF RELIGION
AND
HUMAN VALUES**

Volumes 5 & 7

2007 - 2008

**ORISUN:
JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND HUMAN VALUES**

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EQUALITY OF MEN IN JAINISM: RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY.

**BY
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Introduction

Religion has been central to the historical development of virtually every culture, norm, value, politics and public policy. Thus, Religion has played intricate and pivotal role in shaping the history of the people and the culture it has come across. When we examine almost every aspect of life or social activity of the people, we discover that religion is actively involved in all respect. By and large, religious values have always been part of human principles and policies aimed at fostering the essence of human life and community. Worthy of note is the fact that these religious values are anchored on the inviolate dignity and fundamental worth of every individual human life. Not only that, these religious values, far from being a nuisance in this process are seen as a rich source of renewal and empowerment which Jainism; one of the world's living religions seems to be promoting with vigour and vitality. Jainism, a protest religion of Indian origin attacked the excesses of Hinduism-the oldest Indian religion. Mahavira, the founder of Jainism diametrically opposed caste system, sacrifice and power of the Vedas. He established a religion of pacifism and harmlessness where life taking, blood-letting and social stratification are completely abhorred. This doctrine of the equality of men has since been entrenched in the Universal Declaration of Human Right of the United Nations in 1948. In the same vein, this Human Right Declaration has found a pride of place in the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. To this end, history verifies that the fundamental human rights are not the specifics but the foundations upon which human dignity at his best are based via the constitution. It is therefore the intention of this paper to bring to the fore the account of Jainism as a religion and its doctrine of the equality of men.

Its relevance in contemporary Nigerian society would be tersely explored with a bird's eye view.

Jainism: An Overview

Jainism as a religion started off as a protest and reformatory movement but soon found itself as new-brand religion, with the teachings of its founder, Mahavira (599-527). The founder of Jainism was born in 599 BCE. He was the second son of a rajah Prince and was named Vardhamana but was later universally referred to by the honorific title of Mahavira (great hero), (Umejesi 1997:5). Much was not known about his educational background, but it was gathered that he married at his early age and the product of that union was a daughter. As a prince, he lived a luxurious and palatial life. It was recorded that numerous nurses attended to Mahavira. Supporting this assertion, Muller (1910:192-193) writes:

Mahavira was attended to by five nurses: a nurse to keep him clean, one to dress him, one to play with him, one to carry him, being transferred from one lap of one nurse to that of another.

McDowell and Stewart (1982:35) assert that when his parents eventually died, Mahavira decided at the age of thirty to live a life of ascetic, that is, a life of self-denial consequent upon the social ills in Indian society. He vowed to deny himself pleasure of life, care of his life and not to speak to anyone for twelve years. The foregoing informed his religious vocation. This religious and experiential vocation came in the form of material renunciation. Umejesi (1997:5) attests firmly to the fact that

He swore to endure with equanimity and calamity that might come from divine powers, from animals or from human beings. He sets out alone; for the first year and a half continued to wear clothes but thereafter he was naked ascetic, wandering naked across the plains and into the villages of central India, in search of release from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

Sequel to the above, Mahavira denied himself of palatial comfort and abandoned the care of his entire body as a result of his ascetic belief and religious conviction. Mahavira sought salvation from the wheel of birth, death and rebirth through self-denial. In fact, he was accustomed to say "Harmlessness is the only religion" which means that there is the outright condemnation of sacrificism in earlier Hinduism. Mahavira subsequently wandered for twelve years until he reached the level of enlightenment at the age of forty-two. Max Muller (1910:36) again states how he attained the position of enlightenment. Mahavira was

In a squatting position... exposing himself to the heat of the sun... with knees high and the head low, in deep meditation, in the midst of abstract meditation, he reached Nirvana, the complete and full, the unobstructed, infinite absolute (Kevala)

Favoured by the fact that he gained enlightenment and control of both the world and his own body, Mahavira stopped living abruptly as a solitary ascetic for that of a leader of men and teacher of monks (Umejesi 1997:6).

Mahavira had copious disciples running over three millions, and prominently gained favoured with kings. For the first thirty years, his preaching was attended to with extra ordinary success, until his death of voluntary starvation at the age of seventy-two in 527 BCE. Umejesi (1997:7) graphically presented the night venerable Mahavira the conqueror died as cited from the *Sacred Books of the East*:

In that night in which the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira died... a great confusion and noise was originated by many descending and ascending gods.

Until the death of Mahavira, the conqueror, he had over 14,000 monks in his brotherhood (Rawlings 1981:36). Thus, his disciples were known as the *Jains* – the conquerors, while Jina established the religion. It thus became the first personally founded Indian religion: a religion of protest and reform.

It must be stressed that Jainism did not appear from a religious gap.

But Jainism started off as a heretical movement within Hinduism, but now can only be described as a distinct religion with reference to Hinduism. Corroborating this assertion, A.C. Bouquet (1962:130-131) writes:

Jainism is obvious deduction in thought and practice from the abandonment of naïve polytheism. Jainism is a kind of religion based upon the acceptance of the *Samkhya* system, but venerating a limited group of noble selves, who have achieved perfection and bliss... involving a denial of the reality of the world, has glaciated the major part of India, and conditions the ordinary thought of Hindus to this very day.

Doctrines of Jainism

As a religion of protest and reform, Jainism has its distinctive doctrines, which separate it from the excesses of Hinduism. It has been earlier observed that Jainism obviously repudiated sacrificism, caste system and the power of the *vedas*. The founder of Jainism, Mahavira replaced them with his own social beliefs and religious teachings. Thus, in his beliefs, he firmly held on to the doctrine of *Ahimsa*- non-violence as a replacement for sacrificism. Every monk must take the five great vows: to injure no creature, to speak the truth, to abstain from stealing, to renounce all worldly foods, and to practice continence. Of the great vow, the first was obviously considered the greatest and Mahavira elevated pacifism to the level of religion. The vow for *Ahimsa* is set in this paradigm.

Sir, I renounce all killing of living beings, whether movable or immovable. Nor shall I myself kill living beings nor cause others to do it or consent to it. As long as I live I confess and blame be and I exempt myself of these sins, in mind, speech and body (Umejesi 1997:8).

Due to this doctrine of non-violence, the Jains become vegetarians and cannot be farmers, butchers, and fishermen or take up any work that

clearly involves life taking and bloodletting. Today the Jains take up corporate job and they are lawyers, industrialists, merchants, bankers and teachers. Later, Hinduism, adopted non-violence and Mahatma Gandhi used it as his political technique for the acquisition of Indian independence from Britain in 1947 (Umejesi: 1996). The doctrine of *Ahimsa* has also acquired a spiritual, political and economic relevance among the Hindus and Jains.

Moreover, Mahavira, in the place of Vedas introduced the theory of the relativity of knowledge. Knowledge occupies a pride of place among the Jains as means of final liberation. In fact, he attacked with energy the absolute truth of the *Vedas* by depicting that knowledge of final liberation is relative and partial. No absolute way of truth that leads to final salvation. Achieving liberation, Mahavira stated that one's own effort is a pre-requisite to attaining salvation. The Jains held that the *Vedas* "were neither sacred nor unique. By this teaching, they negated and rejected all means of salvation as prescribed in the various phases of Hinduism" (Stroup 1968:99). By extension, he snuffed out the plea that a person needs the help of a friend on high. To him, God does not exist; therefore salvation can be sought and got within.

On the doctrine of Karma; the law of cause and effect, Mahavira rejected the rigidity and restriction, for within Hinduism its rule is absolute and too rigid. This enabled him to reduce it to the barest minimum the rigidity, rigour and to find a pragmatic approach of release from it (Umejesi, 1997:9).

It is a known fact that Hinduism taught caste system. Of a truth, Hinduism is marked by caste system, an outlook that tends to view all truth and aspect of the principal doctrine of the *Vedic* religion. Perhaps, in the period of Mahavira, this social stratification was still rising in greater proportion, much to the distress and disdain of the people. It is worth mentioning that Hinduism is class-bound. The first are the Brahmins, priestly caste which is the highest, followed by the Katriyas, the warrior caste, Vaisyas: the merchants, bankers, and the Sudrahs: the low caste, the untouchables and the pariahs. As a matter of fact, the first three caste designations are occupied by the Aryans- the fair skinned people; the emigrants, and the last caste designation is thus occupied by the Dravidians-

the aboriginal inhabitants of the indo- valley whom were subdued by the Aryans who rigorously separated them as a result of colour(Umejesi 1996). Josh McDowell and D. Stewart (1982:37) agree that the priestly caste that is the highest, as a result of the solidifying caste system, was clearly becoming the most influential group in Indian life. However, Mahavira was a member of the warrior caste. This caste system actually had much effect as the priesthood became dominant in the Indian society, and a good deal of the impact of early Jainism was in sharp contrast and in diametric opposition to the prominence of the priestly caste. Hence he preached the doctrine of the equality of men, where he stoutly believed the worth of all individuals. Jainism has had an influence higher than its size.

Summarily, these doctrines of Jainism shun any claims to truth, absolutism and exclusivity. The most popular scripture of the *Jains* is *Angas*. Above all, all these were targeted against the excesses of Hinduism. Mahavira, having fired a shot at Hinduism with his attendant success, broke the chord and the next major reformer was Gautama.Siddhartha-the founder of Buddhism.

The Doctrine of the Equality of Men

Sequel to the above, the caste system is the framework that holds together the Hindu society, giving it a vague, indefinable, but wrongly felt unity. Despite the absence of a central authority and the presence of an infinite gamut of races and traditions, caste sours unprecedentedly (Umejesi 1996). With the passage of time the caste became hereditary, rigid and tyrannical. Its disadvantages superceded its advantages and to the greater part of the population, it obviously became an intolerable problem. To the sudrahs, caste was nothing short of slavery because it was bound up with religion. Consequently, Mahavira in contact with western culture was against the institution itself which he thought has many good points to command, but against the abuses and injustices committed in its name (Umejesi 1996). Be that as it may, Mahavira had benefited immensely to a considerable extent from the institution. Stroup (1968:37) states "But he was strongly democratic, believing in the worth of all individuals. He taught the importance of a casteless society."

Mahavira advocated the abolition of the caste system and proposed a religion where all men would be free and equal. He equally claimed to have received a divine instruction to establish a religion beneficial to humanity (Umejesi 1997:9). The constitution of independent India abolished the caste as far as its political and civil effects are concerned, declaring it a crime to discriminate against individual person in public on the basis of caste.

A wide range of opinions have expressed that the phenomenon of caste system has a divine approval. This is so because in the Hindu society, caste system is inclusive. The caste difference is obvious glaringly at the extent of the purity and impurity. Apart from the religious sanction, economic and socio-political elements are believed by sociologists (Salawu 2003:172) to have come together to define and limit positions and life situation in the caste system. Thus, caste system is an inherited social hierarchy and a closed system which deprives mobility. In the same vein, Omoregbe (1995:92) argues that caste is one of the types of social stratification which ensures that people are arranged and regimented into various categories in a society on the basis of certain characteristics such as wealth, power, privileges, descent, occupation, education and standard of living.

From the historical experiences of most societies in the world, India stands out to be the most developed caste society which has, in fact, spanned for centuries. Omoregbe (1995:93) further buttresses that caste system is determined by the circumstances of birth and family ties rather than what one is able to attain in life on his own. Thus, children are born into their parents' caste and they must marry within their caste. In fact, there is no inter-caste marriage. In extreme cases, schools, housing, hospitals and other facilities are segregated.

It is obvious arising from the foregoing that in Hindu society men do not have equal privileges which enabled Mahavira based on divine command to declare and entrench the doctrine of the equality of men. The doctrine does not discriminate against the bourgeois and proletariat in the society. An exegesis of the doctrine of the equality of men has regard both to the fact of diversity or inequality and the demand of fairness. This equality demands that irrespective of the class, status, everybody in bound and

leap is equal in fact and indeed in any substantial measure. Oderinde et al (2000:24) are apposite when they explain that:

Privileges of wealth or position should confer neither advantages nor disadvantages in the operation of the law... there should be opportunity for equal right to develop to the fullest capacity and to make use of one's talents and opportunities to achieve one's goals.

It is in tandem with the above that Mahavira affirmed that there is no regard for persons. Put differently, everybody must at all cost be respected. Partiality must be shunned in the course of equity. Preferential treatment should not be given to the rich, famous, powerful and influential at the expense of the voiceless of the untouchable or pollutants in the Indian surrounding. Mahavira often declared caste system as a crime against the worth of individual persons, having recognized the fact that rightful demand for equality of privileges is a pre-requisite for casteless and classless society which is distasteful and inimical to the past abuses and privileges. No wonder, these fundamental human rights were ovationously accepted in the "Universal Declaration of Human Right of the United Nations in 1948, and nations of the world have been urged to enshrine the doctrine of the equality of men in their constitutions" (Umejeji 1997:7)

As a matter of fact, Alamu (2005:250) asserts that these fundamental human rights are those entitlements or rights which are universally identified as irrefrangible rights and privileges which nobody can tamper with. Of a truth, these rights are needed by men to have peace, to develop their potentials and to enjoy rhapsodically self-actualization. These therefore are indispensable in a civilized society. It is trite to note these natural privileges are the will of heaven. Thus, the constitution only guarantees these natural privileges and wills.

In the system of liberal equality, Omoregbe (1993:272) aptly argues that positions of opportunities are not just open in a formal sense, but that all should have a fair chance to attain them. This fair chance works to the advantage of the minorities. In his *Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1972:29) asserts that there is inequality in the society and in this circumstance, the

most moral and acceptable course of action is not to do anything that will worsen the already unfavourable condition of the minorities that is the poor, outcast, the underprivileged, expect it is going to improve the lot of the underprivileged. Once, these fundamental rights of the individual members are recognized in the state, then the essence of human life is honoured as a value which all individual members of the *Civitas* share irrespective of age, ethics, social position, physical build-up, illness and other contingencies surrounding human birth. Dzurgba (2001:84) admits also that the essence of human life should not only be treated respectfully as a value in itself, but also that human beings ought to be granted equal right to and protection of their own lives. In this sense, individual members have a justifiable claim of ownership, usage or entitlement which must be recognized and respected on a legal or a moral ground.

Relevance in Contemporary Nigerian Society

It must be recalled that the doctrine of the equality of men declared by Mahavira had been enshrined and espoused in the Universal Declaration of Human Right of the United Nations. As a rule, the list of fundamental human rights as produced by UNO in its constitution has been entrenched in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution as follows:

- i. Right to life
 - ii. Right to dignity of human person
 - iii. Right to fair hearing
 - iv. Right personal liberty
 - v. Right to private and family life
 - vi. Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
 - vii. Right to freedom of expression and press
 - viii. Right to peaceful assemble and association
 - ix. Right to freedom of movement; and
 - x. Right to freedom from discrimination
- (Constitution of the Federal Republic Nigeria, 1999).

It is to be recognized that there are restrictions in the area of defence, public safety, public morality, public health and the period of emergency.

This declaration which finds expression in the 1979 Nigerian constitution is to prevent a violation of human right as preached by Mahavira against caste and capitalist systems. It is true that the constitution does not confer on the individual members the human rights, rather the constitution recognizes these fundamental human rights. Because what provides human right for a person is the fact the he is a human being. So, the outright denial of a person's human right portends failure to take cognizance of the fact that he is a human being.

Azelama (2002:166) sees this when he states that "the culture of various societies of the world contain indicators of consciousness of these rights". History is replete with the available statistics of the present crystallization of the human rights. As observed by Azelama,(2002:167) the present situation of human rights as a concept was aided by perception of injustice suffered by individual members during wars, which stoke the various conflagrations such as ethnic, religion, politics, marginalization and among others. Condemnation of such injustice and the global zeal to prevent it in various circumstances attracted the attention of international law as it developed. It also led to inward looking across states of the world. A need for internal and international arrangement became necessary in order to prevent encroachment on human rights. This act led to Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenants of Human Rights. They both recognize human rights as inseparable from human dignity and as indispensable for justice, freedom and peace in every society. The Vienna declaration and the programme of action were inputs to the 1993 conference of human rights. At that conference as observed by Azelama (2002:167) representatives of the various states declared that human rights of individuals regardless of their status are pivotal and must be respected. These human rights are entrenched for the total-well being and the common good of the individuals. Perhaps, it is for the good of the entire society that the fundamental human rights are enforceable. It is assertive that equality of man and justice which are indices of conscious awareness find recognition, placements, entrenchment and interpretation of the human rights in the Nigerian constitution.

Without equivocation, the right to life, dignity of human person and right to freedom from discrimination must be respected at all time despite

the restrictions and clauses. It is not proper to subject human beings to torture, inhuman treatment and degradation; all in the toga of cultural, social and religious beliefs. The individual members of the society have the right of freedom from slavery or servitude which must be canvassed for appropriately. It is also clear that:

A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria... to disabilities or restrictions (Constitution, 1999:23-24).

The privileges offered by this portion in the Nigerian constitution must be sustained. Circumstances of one's birth do not suffice in this regard to warrant injustice and inequality.

Gyekye (1996:150-151) subscribing to the concept of human rights posits that human dignity, intrinsic value, and moral worth generate a notion of moral rights that, as derived ultimately from the creator, as well as belonging fundamentally to every human being as a creature of God, could be linked with the notion of innate rights. The concept of human dignity compels the recognition of rights, not only in an individualistic but also in a communal context. By implication, the natural membership of the human individuals in a community cannot rob them of their dignity, intrinsic value, a fundamental and inalienable attribute they possess as human beings.

Ehusani (1996:42) explicitly expresses that life is the ultimate reality and meaning which has its origin, sustenance and end in the Supreme Being. Human life, deriving as it is from the Supreme Being, having its fulfillment and supreme value and dignity in the Creator, he says that is inviolable and certain fundamental rights are enjoyed by him. In the traditional Nigerian world view, human life was so immensely valued, and so jealously guarded that those who threatened life were ruthlessly dealt with. The foregoing supports the fact that God values all people and that this value has to be expressed in the ways in which they are treated by their fellow human beings. Again, this value extends to even distribution of

national resources to the total well-being of God's creatures. This accounts for the value and quality attached to life and human existence.

An Evaluation

Suffice it to say that Mahavira, the founder of Jainism opened the floodgate of the onslaughts on this caste system. Not only that, the Indian constitution of 1947 abolished the caste system thereby seeing every individual member, as harijans-the people of God. Mahatma Ghandi vis-à-vis his effort at reforming Indians was not enough to put away the caste system (Umejesi 1996).

The Indians see the caste system as the only natural way of solving life's challenges. It is a fact in Indian society that the caste system fortified by the religious doctrine of Karma- cause and effect, has millions of people locked up in perpetual poverty, inequality and injustice. Caste organization has permeated into occupational training. The concept of division of labour and comparative advantage is openly encouraged by this principle. It is interesting if not sad to note that the caste structure has resulted in widely different sets of moral standards within the social organism. Obviously, the severity and continuous hardships have implications on the physical, social, psychological and educational disadvantages suffered by the Indians. Yet, in addition to actual social hardship, there is now evidence that the relative differences, that is, the inequalities, between different sections of the population, add to the disadvantages. For instance, the marriage, funeral customs, oath, food, drink, clothings, occupation and among others are obviously spelt out, adhered to and are binding upon its members. The horizontal social structures of the caste system have given Indian religion an internal harmony which it has been unable to find in doctrinal or in ritual practices (Erinsho 2005:90).

In actual fact, the caste system suggests the originally distinction which arose between the fair-skinned Aryans and the dark Dravidians whom the Aryans subdued. The, Dravidians were admitted into the Hindu fold but rigorously kept apart till date.

Added to this is the fact that in spite of the fierce and excessive attack received by caste system on the basis of religion as a result of the incursion of Christianity and western culture, it remains inveterate in the

Indian society for it is as old as the religion itself. Umejiesi (1996) depicts that:

Caste is an institution that has 25 century of life behind it, and cannot disappear over night by the stroke of a pen and it may take several generations before its millennium dies down.

In fact, in discussing the caste system of India today, therefore, we are not only tackling one of the most notorious examples of Asian backwardness and oppression, but we are also dealing with the structural blueprint for Asian societies from Sri Lanka to Indonesia, as well as touching on one of the causes of the ethnic conflict in Fiji. The received view might be summarised by saying that caste is essentially a racial category, discernible in the literary residue and social solidification of the Aryan conquest of the Dravidians of ancient India (John D'Arcy May 1996:89).

In Nigeria today, the issue of inequality and injustice almost has divine approval despite the enormous call for equal privileges. In practice, men are hardly ever equal because it is a universal phenomenon. Today's Nigeria accounts for inequality in all the facets of life, because there is a sharp division between the wealthy and the poor in the society. Today's Nigeria has quickened her pace so much that today inequalities are even more marked and pronounced especially between the rich and the poor. Today's Nigeria recognizes human frames void of flesh and skeleton glued together by nothing but the will to live. The sanctuary of equality and justice has been violated, harassed, humiliated and pauperized. People's right have been abused, misused, manipulated and dehumanized with crass selfishness, political bigotry, primordial greed and insensitivities. People's fundamental human rights as enunciated by Ehusani (2002:2) "are regularly harassed, infringed, arrested and violated by brutal law-enforcement agents".

Not only that, in today's Nigeria, rights are being trampled upon and freedom is being thrown to the wind. Both the privileges of being a human individual and life of dignity are fair share of natural will of heaven. However, in the Nigerian society, human rights almost become abused, infringed and violated. In fact, the society is reminiscent of the Orwellian

Animal Farm where people are being turned at will; a classic case of man's inhumanity to man. As a matter of fact, people's thoughts are censored by the punitive dictates of the time, absence of rule of law and truth is twisted in the pejorative clatter of nasty propaganda, coupled with the paranoid insecurity which cannot insure the paradisiacal tomorrow of the individual members. To this end, all animals are not equal in fact and indeed.

It is preposterous to state that some Igbo ethnic groups in Nigeria have caste called *Osu*. *Osu* caste is regarded as an outcast or "people in the market place". The word *Osu* means a slave, by extension, the property of a god. An *Osu* has no chance of regaining his or her freedom. In simple language, a non-*Osu* is totally forbidden from marrying an *Osu* otherwise the former automatically becomes one if he or she does. Indeed, it is the common saying among the Igbo not to marry any of them, because they are vestiges of misfortune (Erinosho 2005:90). Despite the fact that Nnamdi Azikiwe (of the blessed memory), other Catholic and Pentecostal Priests clamoured for and are still clamouring for total halt, the phenomenon is still strong among the people.

Perhaps, the Nigerian state has deprived some individuals of these human rights. Albeit, the modern societies are generally characterized by social stratification, the Nigerian system, going by the events, is still reminiscent of deprivation because sincerity in the implementation of the rule of law is conspicuously absent. Bob Holman (1997:125-129) argues that both wealthy radicals and Economic Right would not advocate for a classless society. For instance, the wealthy radicals in the society champion the creed of individual selfishness and thus prevent the spread of the value of mutuality and of the spirit of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. In fact, they favour a system based on greed which favours them rather than one based on altruism which favours all people. Of course, greedy materialism is a feature of today society. The moral dishonesty of the wealthy radicals is that they perpetuate this feature while attempting to give the appearance that they are on the side of the poor. On the other hand, Economic Right dislikes the readiness of egalitarians to use the state to promote equality. It is diametrically opposed to equality but it has a deep suspicion of using state resources, particularly money raised by income tax, even to alleviate

poverty. However, one of the oddities of the Economic Right is that their objections to state action are most voiced against the poor as well as to leave means of production to free market. Contrary to the above, a society that is characterized by citizens and sense of justice must create wealth and all means of life as socialists and share them equally among the citizenry in order to avoid the disadvantages of inequality. It is hoped that in the nearby future, through sincere political and economic will, implementation of the Universal Human Declaration, enforcement of appropriate law regarding human rights and freedom would be entrenched. Moreover, state policies to boost employment cannot only take workers off the dole, but also can put them in a position where their work and spending contributes to strong economy and the common good. This moral injunction coupled with a just society begets an equal and sound economy as the present unpleasant social grouping in India and Nigeria will change for good.

Conclusion

This paper has revealed the doctrine of the equality of men in Indian society vis-à-vis its relevance in the present-day Nigeria. It is quite significant to note the Indian society still subscribes to the concept of caste despite the outlaw and vertical mobility of the downtrodden castes with regard to administrative and political positions. Also, in the Nigerian society, men are hardly equal because of the irrelevance of the masses and the reason for abuses, violation of rights and among others. This stark division makes some people to argue that class system as a phenomenon has heaven's mandate.

Despite the foregoing, it is true to recognize that fundamental human rights are the will of heaven which must be practiced and bound on everybody. Abuses of human life and dignity as well as discrimination are product of narrow-mindedness, ignorance and insensitivities to humanity. The acceptance and immutable appreciation of the essence of human life, dignity and rights would bring to the fore the paradigm shift from ascription to achievement platform as the basis. Perhaps, egalitarian and casteless society did exist in the primitive communal societies and served humanity

devotedly for a million years (Toyor 2001:32). This same communal concept void of bourgeois thought should be brought to contemporary societies where great confidence and a power of dedication would stimulate attention to human rights. To this end, this attention must include viable economy, education and opportunities generally for the masses, gazing freedom as the rule. Hence, fundamental human rights as recognized and interpreted are rights to dignity, non-exploitation; humane conscience and justice must experience recognition. Thus, justice is the basic structure in which the essentials of social institutions evenly distribute fundamental rights and duties, and also determine the division of advantages from social co-operation. Not only that, equality is a legitimate aim for all hence the citizens are influenced by mutuality and there is a widespread desire for greater equality than the public, through its democratic processes, is entitled to advance it through the market and state intervention. These would do for a start.

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