

Editorial

CORRUPTION

Corruption has always existed, but what hurts the society today is its growth and extent. Corruption is the deadliest cancer afflicting our society. Corruption is the biggest block to development and is the main reason for the continuing poverty in different parts of the world. No social or economic stratum is free from corruption. Corruption has questioned the very relevance and existence of democracy: All are equal, but some are unjustly privileged, and some manage to manipulate everything in their favour.

To understand the extent of corruption, have a look at the Indian scenario in the recent years. With the economic boom, corruption also has soared to new heights. A few examples of scams in 2010:¹ *Commonwealth Games scam*: Corruption involved: Rs.8000 crores.

Adarsh Housing Society Scam: A group of flats were constructed in Mumbai violating all regulations; constructed for the widows and veterans of the Kargil war (May-July, 1999, between India and Pakistan), but actually went to politicians, bureaucrats and army officers. Corruption involved: hundreds of crores of rupees.

2G Spectrum Scam: Mother of all scams! The loss of income due to underpricing of licences and favouring of select private companies in the selling of 2G Spectrum licence: Rs.275000 crores!

Besides these: Hasan Ali Khan, a stud farm owner, is undergoing investigation for tax evasion of Rs. 50000 crores. Two former ministers of Karnataka state, the Reddy brothers, are accused of illegal mining worth Rs. 50000 crores (at least!). The unaccounted money deposited in foreign banks by Indian nationals is more than Rs. 7000000 crores, belonging mainly to politicians, bureaucrats and rich businessmen. Judiciary is also

¹ Please note: 1 crore= 10 million rupees; 1 rupee= .0225 US dollars.

not free from corruption charges. There are a number of corruption charges against K.G. Balakrishnan, former Chief Justice of India.

Perhaps, no country in this world is free from corruption. But, as a rule, the poor countries are more affected by corruption. According to the United Nations, the global price-tag for corruption every year comes to \$1.6 trillion. "When you ask African bishops to identify their top social priority, the answer is often not what many Westerners might expect. They usually don't begin with HIV/AIDS, or the arms trade, or debt relief, even though they're all important concerns. Instead, they usually start with the struggle against corruption, because they see it as the deadliest cancer afflicting their societies."² As a result, millions and millions of ordinary people live in utter desperation, being denied their basic rights, justice and dignified life.

Corruption and lack of good governance lead to a sense of meaninglessness and desperation, threatening social stability and peaceful life. In the recent months/years we have witnessed that in different parts of the world. In spite of the problems caused by the agitation against governments and structures, recent developments also give us the hope that the corrupt cannot continue forever their exploitation. People will not tolerate it for eternity. The 'Jasmine Revolution' in the Middle East, 'Occupy Wall Street', the anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare and team³ in India give us the hope that a new and more transparent society is not an utopian idea.

Is religion free from corruption? Is the Church free from corruption? Even without presenting any statistical data, we would answer that it is not. Reports on corruption by religious leaders and religious institutions come often. Reports of corruption and lack of transparency in the financial transactions of some of the top Catholic institutions have occupied the headlines of newspapers even in the recent times. Moreover, another form of corruption has been shaking the strongholds of the Church for the last few decades – sexual abuse of minors by the clergy. Sexual abuse, besides being a case of sexual immorality, is considered to be an abuse of power, a typical case of corruption.

We believe in a God of justice. Belief in a just God demands a commitment to ensure justice for all. Rejecting corruption in its

² John L. Allen, Jr., "A Global Case for Good Government in the Church," in *National Catholic Reporter*, 25-06-2010, www.ncronline.org, accessed on 11-07-2010.

³ I do not ignore the accusations against the members of Hazare's team or against Hazare himself. In spite of all these, Hazare and his team have given a new hope to people who are desperate due to the corruption of the leaders and bureaucrats.

diverse forms is the first step towards establishing a just society. Without sincere attempts to establish a just society, belief in a just God becomes lifeless. Moreover, sense of desperation and helplessness in the face of corruption is not a Christian response. That corruption has existed from time immemorial should not lead us to a passive resignation. If we believe in a God of justice, who is active in history, it is our duty to commit to a corruption-free and just society.

The current issue of *Asian Horizons* approaches the problem of corruption from different perspectives. Conrad K. Sangma, a young promising Indian politician, considers the malaise of corruption as one of the serious obstacles that democracy has to face. Referring to the Indian context, in his article, "Corruption: The Malaise of Democracy," he points out the need of overcoming corruption for the success of democracy. "Kakistocracy: The Rule of the Unprincipled, Unethical and Unqualified," by Ronnie V. Amorado, digs deep into the untold middle- and high-level corruption stories from a lens of a betrayal theory for theoretical abstraction, as well as generates meaningful insights for anticorruption initiatives through a citizenship-based country strategy for Mindanao and the Philippines. Jojo M. Fung describes corruption as multilevel, complex and amorphous in nature, operative in the public and private sectors, in countries of the South and the North. His article, "The Menace of Corruption: An Accursed Malaise and Systemic Evil," argues that the Church has to consider corruption as a structural sin and shows that the Church's strategic responses in terms of collaborative monitoring and evidence-based diplomacy will go a long way in bringing about open governance in nations and international institutions alike. In his article, "Complementary Aspects between Compliance and Ethics: Ethical and Christian Perspectives," Stephan Rothlin argues that exclusive focus on compliance remains questionable as it is unlikely to have a decisive impact on human behaviour. Analysing corruption in the Chinese context, he also points out that insights from Christian tradition can be helpful. John Karuvelil's article, "Institutionalising Ill-Health: Corruption and Healthcare in India," discusses corruption, one of the maladies that ails the public health care system in India. The article raises some of the ethical implications of corruption in health care, especially in the areas of the common good, participation, poverty, human rights and justice.

"Corruption-Free Churches: Theological and Institutional Steps," by Christoph Stückelberger points out that corruption in Churches is widespread, but corruption-free Churches are possible and essential for the credibility of the Church and of the Gospel. Theological steps

as well as structural means are to be taken to rediscover the biblical notion of accountability, deal with property as God's stewards, renew leadership models with control of power and to deepen the partnership models. In "The Root Cause of Widespread Corruption in sub-Saharan post-colonial Nation-States" Jean-Marie Hyacinthe Quenum, based on biblical reflection on corruption, shows that Christians are called to build a corruption free society by helping people to be righteous and honest through their transformative relationships with God's perfect image, Jesus Christ the New Man in whom the whole world is saved from evil and corruption. Joy Philip Kakkannattu, in his article "Old Testament Prophets and the Call for a Corruption Free Society," says that "the prophetic vision of a corruption free society is essentially related to the prophets' understanding of true religion." Analysing the prophets' call for justice, he underscores that it is a religion that seeks God not only in worship, but also in doing justice with a preferential option for the weak and marginalized. A. Alangaram, beginning with the context of corruption in India, shows that God's Reign begins with the inner revolution of metanoia aimed at creating a corruption free society. His article, "A Corruption Free Society, A new Way of God's Reign in our midst" argues that corruption is a stumbling block for the arrival of the Kingdom of God among our midst and offers insights into ways of overcoming corruption.

"Forgiveness of Sins without Jesus" by Aaron Milavec attempts to expose how the preaching of the Gospel has been uprooted from the salvation history of Israel and suggests how the forgiveness of sins takes place not due to the death of Jesus but despite it. Joseph Xavier's "Journey of Faith: Biblical-Ecclesial Trajectory," in the background of Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* announcing the Year of Faith, brings to light the idea of faith in the bible and in the teachings of the Church. In his article, "A Critical Look at Moral Relativism," Kuriyan Joseph argues that though there is no one way of judging a human act, we have to counter relativism by affirming that there is a common human nature and there is a common light called reason.

Corruption, though it is widespread in the society, does not call us to an attitude of helplessness. Commitment to create a corruption free society is integral to our commitment to realise the Kingdom of God. Corruption-free Churches and Corruption-free society are possible.

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