

Editorial

Covid-19: Ethical Challenges

The outbreak of novel Corona virus (SARS-CoV-2) has created a global crisis that has an impact on everyday lives of citizens: how we approach education, work, healthcare, religious practices and even death. It is no exaggeration to claim that Covid-19 was an extraordinary event that permeated every aspect of human flourishing and brought an ordeal to billions of people around the globe. India also witnessed the agony and untold misery caused to the most vulnerable.

Thousands of migrants walked back home for days without food and water during the lockdown, their blistered soles accuse our conscience of our indifference. Those who earned daily wages were facing hunger and starvation due to the lockdown. The healthcare system was overwhelmed by the large number of patients seeking interventions—the frantic search for an ICU bed and the frenzied hunt for an oxygen cylinder to those who were gasping for life are all too vividly etched in our memory. Post-Covid trauma and fear of death was a common phenomenon. In addition, the loss of employment, the enormous financial strain on families has cost the ability to aspire for a better tomorrow. Social distance has caused innumerable psychological problems among the elderly and the young.

Many who died could not be given a funeral by loved ones, those who lost their dear ones are unable to bring closure without being able to grieve and bury the dead. Cemeteries and crematoriums were overflowing with bodies. The stark scene of the unburied and partially cremated bodies floating on the holy Ganges haunts the national consciousness. There were many who lit a candle of hope amidst the despair and hopelessness by reaching out with much needed relief. The Church in India was in the forefront of bringing aid and healthcare.

In the midst of this monstrous crisis the Association of Moral Theologians of India (AMTI) hosted an online annual conference on

“Covid-19: Ethical Challenges.” The conference was organised under the leadership of Shaji George Kochuthara, President of AMTI along with the team, Vimala Chenginimattam, Augustine Kallely and Thomas Parayil in collaboration with the members of the Academic Committee George Kodithottam, Christopher Vimalraj, Francis Chittuparambil and Dominic Vechoor. This issue is a collection of the papers presented online on 15, 22 & 29 October 2020 at the conference.

The Conference deliberated on numerous challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic including those on Bioethics, migration, gender, life in the Church and Democracy. There were two international speakers. Following the presentations and discussions the speakers were requested where necessary, to update and to expand their papers for publication. This issue contains nine papers including the presidential address.

Shaji George Kochuthara in the presidential address makes an overview of the topics at hand evaluating the impact of the pandemic on the migrant workers, women and children, democracy and theology. Francis Chittuparambil makes an ethical evaluation of the care of the elderly, allocation of resources and vaccination ethics. Rahul Sima exposes the challenges in medical research and the discriminations that are inherent in a time when resources are scarce and ethical violations are abundant in the rush to secure a cure or vaccine. Scaria Kanniyakonil makes an ethical evaluation of ‘Biochip Implant’ which could be used to detect early onset of Covid-19 infection. Paulachan Kochappilly writes about the plight of migrant workers in India and the denial of their right to life, livelihood and human dignity. Mary Mee-Yin Yuen examines the impact of Covid-19 on migrant workers world-wide. Metti Amritham exposes the discrimination faced by women and children during the pandemic, the response of the Church and theological implications for the future. Sahayaraj Stanley uncovers the effect of the pandemic on the life of the Church, theology and spirituality with the implications for the post-pandemic Church. James Keenan has clearly identified the actual difference between a true democracy and authoritarian regimes in handling the Covid-19 crisis. Civil liberties, transparency and accountability contribute to a good provision of public health.

The editors are grateful to the authors for their careful study, research and meticulous scientific papers. A special word of thanks to *Asian Horizons* for publishing these papers as a special issue.

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Editors