

CORRUPTION
AND THE
CULTURE OF THE CROSS

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Corruption is curable. It has been cured without a dictatorial government, without an Islamic-type system of instant and brutal justice.

The rule of the British East India Company began in Bengal, in 1757, with Robert Clive and his Council members taking huge bribes from the puppet he installed as the Nawab. The Company's servants had come to India to make money. Their leaders' act encouraged them to turn their government into "a gang of public robbers". Later, when Clive tried to curb corruption, two hundred British officers ganged up to eliminate him. He was saved by the loyalty of his Indian soldiers. Once Clive's iron hand was removed, the British rule in India degenerated into "the rule of an evil genie". Its corruption destroyed Bengal's economy and became a factor in the death of several million people in the famine of 1769-70. Amazingly, however, the cross of Jesus Christ did what an army General could not do: It transformed the government in India. In 1947, independent India and Pakistan received clean, although not perfect, administrations. What has been done once can be done again.

The story of this remarkable moral transformation of Indian Government is being published in a forthcoming volume. This essay is a call to the Indian Church to repent of what Dr. Schaeffer calls "spiritual adultery". Indian Christians, the bride of Christ, far too often live as Satan's mistresses, producing the devil's offspring ("fruit") – death. This is an appeal to the Church to be what it is called to be – the "bride of Christ": bring forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit, giving birth to a quality of holiness that is beyond natural human ability.

This essay, in other words, has a limited and practical objective. It avoids many aspects that an academic thesis would discuss. For example,

- The essay takes the fact of corruption for granted, because an official Commission of the Government of India has already acknowledged that a "nexus of criminals, politicians and civil servants" is once again turning the Indian State into a gang of public robbers.
- The essay does not attempt to offer a universally acceptable definition of corruption, because all such definitions depend on prior philosophical assumptions.
- The current intellectual mood undermines social reform because it declares cultures to be non-comparable. People do, in fact love their culture passionately, because it is often their life's meaning. The *Hindutva* movement in India is a serious attempt today to help Indians find their identity via their culture. It goes to the extent of making "Mother India" a goddess. The nineteenth century India, however, has already demonstrated that Indians, like all other human beings, are also capable of critiquing and reforming their culture. This essay makes a distinction between respecting cultures as an expression of human creativity and deifying or exalting them as a sacred cow. It is unable to venerate culture because corruption is often rooted in the wellspring of a culture. That is to say, corruption is socially accepted in my culture; bribing is called *Shishtachar* (etiquette) in Hindi, because corruption comes naturally to us. It does not make us feel ashamed and guilty, it is a part of our nature – the way our culture understands socio-economic relationships.
- Therefore, while administrative, legal, political and economic mechanisms are important, this essay assumes that the battle against corruption is a battle for cultural transformation. Our challenge is to go beyond tinkering with policies and political machinery. We have to penetrate deeper spiritual levels.

- The essay assumes that it is not merely our political moves that have failed to check corruption. The various forms of spirituality being practiced in India since independence – Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jain, Neo-Buddhist, tribal, *et cetera* – have all failed to be effective antidotes to corruption. Let us begin with two snapshots.

SNAPSHOT # 1: SPIRITUALITY AS NAVAL GAZING

A friend of mine once took me to the home of a Revenue Officer. It was Tuesday evening and the officer had been on a regular religious fast the whole day. After the day's work he was in his *puja* room, meditating and worshipping his idol. His wife treated us to tea as she told us that he does not allow anything to interfere with his religious practices. The Officer came out of the *puja*, serene and dignified. He began by calmly demanding a bribe of Rs. 2000 for signing a paper that was his duty to sign. It almost seemed that he thought that the gods had honored his fast and sent us to him in answer to his prayers!

My friend believed that his work would not get done unless he appeased the Officer. He had neither the time, nor the energy to fight. If he fought, the Officer would just refer the matter to a higher officer, which would mean more delay, and perhaps a bigger bribe.

Perplexed by his spirituality, I asked the Officer what exactly did he do when he worshipped. "I practice different forms of yoga," said the Officer, pleased with the fact that I was interested in his spiritual life. He pointed to a nineteenth century miniature on the wall, an adaptation of "Anantsayi Vishnu", a painting of the universe coming out of a lotus emerging from Lord Krishna's naval, and continued, "today, I worshipped Lord Krishna and meditated on my naval."

This spirituality of "Naval Gazing", of "Going Within", obviously did not enable the gentleman to rise above his greedy heart. It did not inspire him to love his neighbor as himself. It did not equip him with an ability to critique his culture. Could it be that his spirituality gave him the strength to be so unabashedly corrupt? I left his home with a deep desire that he would find a spirituality not of "Going Within" but rather of "Transformation Within" that would enable him to confront the evil outside.

SNAPSHOT # 2: "THE GOOD SHEPHERD GIVES BRIBES FOR HIS SHEEP"

A devout evangelical Christian leader said that he would neither take a bribe, nor give it for his personal convenience. However, "I run an orphanage. My children cannot get water unless I bribe. Do you expect me to see them die of thirst? I'm not that cruel. For their sake, I have no option but to bribe."

"Sir," I replied, "The least I must say is that you are rewriting the Scriptures that you claim to live by."

"What do you mean?"

"Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep' (John 10:11), you are implying that 'a good shepherd gives bribes for his sheep.' The Public Servants who are extorting bribes from you might actually make a donation to your orphanage. But they need to be convinced that you are really serving the needy. Some Indian Christians keep orphans as hostages to extort money from the ignorant, albeit generous, Western donors. The Public Servants may be

assuming that you too are using the orphans to make money. Therefore, they feel justified in wanting a share in your loot.”

“So, what do you propose I do?”

“Sir, first you need to realize that what you consider to be your weakness is in fact your strength. Those orphan children are your source of power that most of us do not possess. What do you think will happen if you took them out on the streets clanging empty buckets and jugs? What if you took them door to door, shop to shop asking people to donate a glass of water? What if you then went to the local press and asked the editor if your children could use their bathroom? He might then send a few journalists to accompany you to the residence of the District Magistrate. You would need to tell him that you’re sure that he would not like dirty children in his district, so could your children take a shower with the hosepipe that waters his lawn? Assure him that it would cost him nothing, his lawn would still be watered.”

“And then?”

“Well, just ask your children to play and pray in his garden until the DM calls the Deputy Director of the Water Works Department. Then, in front of the journalists, you could confess to the Director that you are a weak person, you do not have a strong enough heart to rob the orphans of their meager resources. You could tell him that if he wants their money he would need to hire criminals to break into your office and to kill you. Then he can take all the money that he wants. Tell him that you do not have the courage to take the money that belongs to the sheep and give it to the wolves. You could confess that the Scriptures bind you. They say that the “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself pure from being polluted by the world” (James 1: 27).

“The Public Servants who rob might end up donating money to your orphanage if they could see that you are not using but serving the orphans.”

CORRUPTION – ITS CHARACTER & CONSEQUENCES

I tried to explain to the Christian leader why the battle against corruption is worth risking one’s life for. “Don’t your children need more than water? How are they going to get good education, jobs, promotions, houses, bank loans, contracts, . . . or, just water, electricity or cooking gas? They might work diligently. But those who can bribe would always get ahead of them. It is a great to build an orphanage. It is wonderful to build the lives of these young citizens. But for their sake don’t you also need to build a nation in which they would be able to live with dignity and pride?”

That goal today calls for an all-out battle against corruption, because:

1. Corruption turns every institution upside down on its head.

From 1987-97 our family lived in Landour, Mussoorie (U.P.), 7000 feet above the sea level. Below us, in the Doon valley, is the famous city of Dehradun. The Ganges and Yamuna, premier rivers of northern India, come down to the plains from the Himalayan glaciers on both sides of Dehradun, east and west. Between the two great rivers are dozens of water springs and waterfalls. As their water flows downstream into the Doon Valley, some of it runs right through the city. Should Dehradun then ever lack water?

The “rain god” does not need to be appeased, since the water supply does not depend on the mercy of the monsoon. No reservoir is needed since the rivers are snow-fed. No capital-intensive technology is required, for the water does not have to be pumped into Dehradun. It needs merely to be filtered and piped. Yet, a few summers ago, some of my dear friends – good “spirit-filled” Christians – “had to” spend Rs. 30,000 to get water for their summer programs.

Guests and participants had arrived but there was no water in the taps. My friends went to the Water-works Department and paid the required fee for a tanker to haul water. The tanker did not turn up. They went back to complain. The boss called-up the driver and abused him in front of them. The driver explained that he was on his way when he had a flat tire. The water leaked out by the time the tire was repaired. By then it was time to deliver water to the local politician!

The boss requested my friends to go home, assuring that the tanker would follow. An elderly guard caught up with them, as they were getting into their car, “You seem to be new here,” he whispered, “complaining won’t help. Even if you accompany the tanker, it won’t get to you. It may have an accident. It’s very inauspicious. It never delivers water unless appeased. Don’t be fooled by the boss’s drama, even the gods above get their share.”

Why is there a water shortage in Dehradun every summer – just when you need it the most? The answer is simple: why do gods turn inauspicious to you every now and then? The shortage is intended to remind you of the existence of the gods. You tend to forget them unless they inflict some pain on you. If there is water in your taps, the political bosses, the managers and the staff at the Water Department get only their salaries. When you don't have water, they get salaries plus . . . (huge) bribes. Thus, ensuring that your taps don't have water is one of the interests of the Water Department.

Likewise, it is in the interest of the Telecom Department to make sure that you don’t get the phone for which you have paid, . . . until you have appeased the appropriate authorities. If you already have the phone, then the interest of the Dept. is to make sure that it stops working few times a year. For if it works they get only their salaries.

What serves the interest of the schoolteachers; including many teachers in the Christian schools? Their interest is to ensure that your child does not do well in the class, so that you hire them for after-school tutoring. If the school bans the teachers themselves from giving private tutoring, then the teachers always have a sister-in-law who needs extra income.

Have you been in a town where the roads were under repair continuously, twelve months a year, and every year, but they are never repaired? Why do they need repairs every year? The appropriate question is – what serves the interest of the Public Works Department and their contractors? What is in the interest of the Electricity Department? What does a police officer want in his area: crime or no crime?

At the moment of writing, the Central Bureau of Investigation is raiding premier Government hospitals in New Delhi because they (reportedly) buy and dispense spurious and sub-standard medicine in exchange for bribes. The hospitals exist to fight for life. But today’s headlines remind one of the dreadful scandal a few years ago, when the hospitals in Delhi killed many patients by administering adulterated glucose in I. V. bottles.

Corruption turns every institution upside down. Do you think that the investigating agencies will succeed in prosecuting the corrupt hospital officials? Successful prosecution serves the interest of the

agencies, but what serves the personal interest of the agents? If culprits are prosecuted the agents get only their salaries. The prosecutors will get much more than salaries if the culprits are allowed to go scot-free. What would the press gain if it kept the issue alive in public memory by dogged perseverance? The journalists and the editors might gain more than salaries if they make sufficient noise to shame the culprits into appeasing them. We can be grateful that the Indian press still has people whose fearless integrity we can respect. Yet, here is what one of our most respected editors observed as early as 1970:

“Is the Indian Press really ailing?” I, for one, have no doubt that it is. I am of the view that in the last 21 years since Independence, the Indian Press has remained stagnant and lost its idealism, and in the process, its soul. . .

Our Press has turned routineer and, therefore, unenterprising. The crusading spirit and zeal for public causes that distinguished the pre-Independence Press of the country are conspicuous by their absence in our present day newspapers. . . . Our editorial columns, while being furiously critical on safe subjects, are generally timid or impervious to issues that matter. Spiritual values have been displaced by crass commercial considerations – which is also partly responsible for the lack of enterprise and purposefulness in the editorial and news policy, and content of the newspapers. [D. R. Mankekar, *What Ails The Indian Press? Diagnosis and Remedies* (Somaiya publications private ltd. New Delhi, 1970) pp.8-9]

I am not saying that the entire press, or every institution, or every Indian politician or officer is corrupt. The point I am making is that corruption turns every institution from servant into master. The corrupt societies don't even produce such institutions in the first place. The Moguls specialized in building mausoleums, gardens and forts, not water systems, hospitals, universities or the press. A culture that produces these is a product of a spirituality that generates civility. To expect these institutions to continue to perform their functions is to expect a bulb to keep giving light even after the power plant has stopped generating electricity.

The institutions that have been turned upside down then turn our national resources into a curse. Nigeria is one of the richest nations in Africa in terms of oil reserves. Yet, corruption has ensured that on a normal day a car owner may have to wait in a mile long queue to fill his tank. One of my most horrendous regular experiences in India is taking an early morning bus at the Jhansi station for Chhatarpur. In a bus that should seat 30 people, they would attempt to pack eighty. The Passengers and conductors would quarrel for an hour when you are sleepy. Why can't we have more buses? The bus owners want scarcity – fewer buses – to make the extra money they have to pay to the Road Transport Authorities. Who gets cursed? The population – the “sovereign” citizens of India – India's greatest natural resource! We are told that there would be no scarcity of seats if instead of giving birth the mothers start aborting babies.

2. Corruption enslaves and destroys by undermining the value of work and individual merit.

Not too long ago the national conscience was shaken by the news of a politician in New Delhi who murdered his wife and tried to dispose off her body by burning it in the outdoor tandoor (oven) of a five-star hotel. That is, in a public place, within walking distance of the Parliament House! What motivated the murder? It was reported that he had been using his wife to appease the top brass of the Congress Party's leadership to get himself into the Parliament. He was infuriated when he began to suspect that his wife might use sex not to make him our nation's leader but to become one herself.

If a budding politician knows that it is not a track record of social service, not a vision for the nation, but such bribes that will make him the Gandhi-Nehru party's candidate for Parliament, then why should he bother developing personal merit? What must an employee – say an Army officer – do to get his promotion? What would be the most effective way for a Ph. D. scholar to get her doctorate? In short, corruption ensures that the nation will only have mediocre men and women as our leaders and administrators. Those who value merit and hard work would prefer to find personal fulfillment by building up other nations that still put premium on those values.

Modern democracy was intended to be a meritocracy – a competition in excellence in service, where competence is placed above connections. People were expected to elect rulers on the basis of their record of service. Rulers were to appoint officers on the basis of their merit, on the basis of 'what' they know, not 'whom' they know. Democracy was to be a system that made nepotism submit to measurable standards of ability and performance. Corruption has created a culture that enables a person to attain advantages, opportunities, contracts, offices and promotions on the basis of caste-and family-connections, influence, money, conspiracies and force.

The above is bad enough. Our disease, however, is far more serious. Democracy was meant to be a liberating system. Corruption enslaves, offsetting the advantages of democracy. Why would that husband in Delhi ask his wife to violate her honor to make him a politician? I began to understand something of the nature of our national disease when I worked in the national headquarters of two of our national parties. Virtually all our "democratic" parties are beginning to resemble the pre-mogul Muslim dynasties that ruled Delhi. Some of which were called "slave" dynasties. The rulers allowed only slaves to come near power. The slaves became closer to the throne than the sons, because often they were recruited as boys for (homosexual) sex. The most trusted slaves were the most slavish slaves – those who accepted the greatest violation of their human dignity *and* remained loyal.

Islam ruled much of India for seven hundred years, and Islam has a law that is believed to be divine, therefore greater than the kings. Yet, no Muslim ruler ever established a system of rule of law. Why? Because, even the Moguls could only tolerate "slaves". Didn't they have plenty of Nawabs? Of course, they did. But they allowed neither development of hereditary power among the Nawabs, (similar to the European aristocracy) nor a Church which could in time effectively check on the corruption of central power by insisting on the rule of just law. The Mogul Nawabs could never do what the British aristocracy did: force King John of England to grant the right of *Habeas Corpus* – no imprisonment without trial – thereby, controlling arbitrary abuse of power. Although the Nawabs lived in great opulence, they were totally dependent on the whims of the emperor. They could not pass on their wealth to their children unless willing to risk revolting. In due time, the corruption of the mighty empire in Delhi – the unbridled power of the central rulers – destroyed it, paving the way first for dozens of petty, feuding states followed by British rule. A corrupt empire could not withstand tiny, but dedicated, armies.

Is the history readying to repeat itself? Currently, in 1998, there are 40 parties in the second successive hung Parliament – the tails (small parties) wag the dogs. Why this fragmentation and mushrooming in the number of political parties? Politicians would stay in their party if they had the freedom to function with dignity in confidence that merit would be rewarded. Fragmentation takes place because the central leaders cannot trust regional satraps, who, when humiliated too much, leave the parent party to start their own "Private Limited Party." Only the slaves, not leaders, can survive in the bigger parties.

The culture of slavery flows down. The slaves oppress and trample upon the dignity of those below them. For centuries the upper castes men humiliated the lower castes by stripping their women and

parading them naked in public. Now it is the politically powerful “Dalits” in Uttar Pradesh that are beginning to humiliate their own women in a similar fashion. We shouldn’t need prophets to tell us the fruit and logic of a corrupt political system – the rule of authoritarian rulers, with slaves as satraps, who can exercise no check on the abuse of power by their leaders.

3. Corruption is the antithesis of freedom

There is no dearth of experts who tell us that India should emulate the Chinese economic miracle. Independent India tried to combine political freedom (democracy) with command economy (socialism). “Communist” China, in contrast, has in recent years combined political authoritarianism (party dictatorship) with economic liberalism (capitalism). China, they say, has fared better.

What the experts take for granted is the fact of corruption. China and India are equally corrupt. China’s advantage is that in a more authoritarian structure one has fewer gods to appease. Political freedom makes our democracy similar to our polytheism, where there are 330 million deities needing appeasement. Unless appeased, even a god’s guard (i.e. an officer’s clerk) could become inauspicious and destroy an excellent economic project.

Some of India’s most eminent champions of freedom have come around to the view that we can no longer afford a (corrupt) freedom that makes us waste untold man-hours and man-days in Government offices. Time is money. No one knows that better than our (un)civil servants and politicians. That is precisely why they work slowly – to rob the nation.

The abundance of natural resources, favorable climate, a battalion of highly educated and skilled young people, cheap labor and transportation, could make India one of the greatest economic powers in the world. The goal appears to be only a dream because the squandering of time due to corruption blunts the edge of our competitive advantage.

Ray’s telephone stopped working. He went to the telephone department and requested that the fault be rectified. The Sub-divisional Officer promised to send a lineman. No one came for a week. Ray went back, the officer apologized and promised prompt service. Nothing happened. Ray, my “naïve” Christian friend, finally ‘got the message’, but instead of paying the bribe he made the “mistake” of praying. He asked God whether or not he should bribe. He had had major surgery and could not exert himself much. He was re-building his house and badly needed the phone. The prayer didn’t repair the phone, but he found spiritual strength to refuse the bribe. For over fifty working days, every day Ray sent a man with a letter to the Telephone Department. That meant a half-day’s salary for a man for over 50 days. Every letter was numbered. Finally, even the greedy gods were shamed.

Some would, no doubt, argue that giving a little bribe would have been more cost-effective than this waste of time and money. At first glance, that is true. But the overall economic price that we pay for corruption as a community is stupendous. The Asian Development Bank estimates that corruption pushes up the price of our goods and services by 20% - 100%. This makes us economically so non-competitive that many experts are willing to trade our freedom for a curb on corruption.

Later, we will return to some practical suggestions how Ray’s lonely struggle could have become a blessing to the whole community, without becoming a burden that would have crushed those of us who are spiritually weaker. The relevant point at this stage is this: corruption is the antithesis

of the idea of a free (non-coercive) economy that grew out of the European Reformation's return to a biblical spirituality. If I give you my book and take your money in exchange, I do not rob you, because I return value for value in a free (non-coercive) exchange of value. Corruption, in contrast, involves abusing one's power to harass, coerce or deceive others (individuals, institutions or the State) to acquire value (money, service, goods, ideas, time, property, or honor) without returning proportionate value to them. This point is a key principle in this essay.

It would help us understand why biblical spirituality gave birth to modern economic and political freedoms. The principle of no taxation without consent of the people (through their Parliament) became a firm feature of the Protestant states in Europe, because even the Church and the kings were to be bound by the principle of returning value for value. (This principle also underlay the value standards in medieval guilds in Europe.) Taxes had to be justified. The rulers, whether ecclesiastical or political, had to return value for what they took from the people. Both the Church and the State had to get their budgets approved and accounts audited. Corruption, in contrast, is stealing. As a society degenerates, corruption becomes daylight robbery. The Bible then calls it, "the Dominion of darkness" (Colossians 1:13), and "the Kingdom of Satan" (Luke 4:5-6 etc.).

4. Corruption violates our dignity as human beings.

The motto of the *Republic* of the United States of America, printed on every dollar bill, is "In God we trust." The American republic saw God, not man, as the ultimate sovereign. For it was based on the theological assumptions that although man (both male and female) is God's image, because of sin everyone is capable of depravity. In contrast, the Indian republic was built, self-consciously, on the intellectual assumptions of the Enlightenment's God-less Humanism. Man, i.e. the citizen, was declared to be the ultimate sovereign, because it was deemed that there is no God. At least any knowable God was presumed to be non-existent.

Nothing has violated the dignity of the sovereign of the Indian Republic more than the corruption of the Indian State. Our ministers (political and religious) and civil servants should be our role models. They ought to uphold the dignity of the "sovereign" citizens of our "Republic". However, in being corrupt they treat us with contempt and force us to stand before them with folded hands, to touch their feet, if not to actually prostrate ourselves at their feet. We have to "minister" to their greed, before they will do their duty.

A small grocer in a village in Rajasthan had a monthly income of Rs. 1200. The village-chief, the contractor of the red-sandstone mines, was the richest man of the village. The grocer requested the chief's son to first pay the long pending debt of Rs. 120 before taking the next packet of cigarettes on credit. The son returned with his father and brother who pounced on the grocer, beat him and dragged him to the mine. Then, out of sheer mercy, they decided not to kill him. Instead, they put a thick needle through his nose, tied a string and paraded him through the village saying, "You must know that you are only a beast. You must live as a beast." Was this an isolated incident? By no means: every officer and politician who extorts bribes from helpless citizens makes exactly the same statement, every day, in every city in India. When you are forced to bribe, you cease being a free citizen. You accept the status of a domesticated beast, working and earning for others, not for yourself.

5. Corruption, like blackmail, grows as a cancerous malignancy.

Unless opposed, corruption, like cancer, grows by its very nature. You are constructing a building, you have bought the material, hired the architect, the equipment, the masons and the

laborers. Now you have to have the water. Every minute without water is a loss. You have to bribe. The problem is that your willingness to bribe one department raises the expectations of every other department. After all, you also need the services of the sanitary department, the electricity department and the telephone department. Compromising with corruption in one sphere saps your moral energy to take on the other departments. Since you have had to spend your hard-earned money in bribing, you naturally want to recover it as well when you have the opportunity . . . whether it is an opportunity to take bribes, commissions or gifts, or in misuse of official property, time or money. Corruption thus spreads into all areas of life – so that not just our politicians but also our prophets (the press) and the priests (including some bishops) are corrupted.

One of the most moving pictures in a newspaper in the summer of 1998 was that of two young children clinging to their grandfather, asking, "“Why is mummy sleeping in the middle of the day, in the middle of the living room, all covered in white?”" She had just killed herself because she learnt from the newspaper that the men who had kidnapped her husband ten days ago had been arrested the previous day. They confessed to having killed the merchant the day they kidnapped him for ransom. They had thrown his body in the river. The newspaper said that during the preceding six months 120 cases of kidnapping of merchants and industrialists had been reported to the police in the state of Bihar. Mr. George Fernandes, our Union Minister for Defense, publicly alleged that often the ransom price for the hostages was being settled between the kidnappers and the families at the residence of the Chief Minister!

Suppose you were able to talk to one of the kidnappers: what do you think he would say in his self-defense?

I would not be surprised if he told you that he is doing nothing different than what his rival does every day. If the kidnapper had won the previous election, the businessmen would have come to him voluntarily and given the money. Then he wouldn't need to use overt force. He would simply use the authority of his position to get the money. But now these businessmen go to his rival, who won the election, and pay him. The kidnapper will ask you to just wait till the next election. If he makes enough money now, he would win and then he would not need to use these dangerous tactics to extort money. The kidnapper's argument, in other words, would be that he does nothing different than what an average politician does – at least in his state.

What are the consequences of such corruption? In spite of that moving picture, the newspaper story seemed less concerned with the tragedy of the family than with the fact that Bihar was beginning to witness a flight of capital and capitalists to safer states.

A more sobering consideration is that corruption also grows in terms of what it demands. The people that can lay their hands on your pocket will eventually lay them on your daughters, wives and on your person too. It is not unusual for the police, for example, to begin by taking commissions from criminals. Then to become bold enough to demand money from the victims who go to lodge a report; then, in order to extract bribes, to lock-up innocent people. Finally, if not appeased, they have been known to murder our young men in fake "encounters", describing them as "terrorists". A Superintendent of Police threatened to do that to me in Chhatarpur.

6. Corruption hurts the poor and brutalizes our character.

The "powerful" find a corrupt society to be a boon. The honest people, on the other hand, perceive that honest/hard work is a disadvantage. The people who pay their electricity bills

honestly discover that they are also paying for those dishonest neighbors who bribe the Linemen and steal electricity. The poor learn that the bribes blind the eyes of the rulers and judges to their disadvantage. They cannot get justice on the basis of the righteousness of their case. A poor student cannot get into a technical college or find a job on the basis of his hard work and ability. Corruption ensures that poor and rich do not have a level playing field in the arena of opportunity and jobs. When the scales are tilted unfairly in favor of the affluent, the disadvantaged begin to detest the system and demand “reservations” of the “quota-system” for themselves.

Corruption brutalizes our national character. From 1976-83 my wife and I lived and worked in the backward villages of Chhatarpur district, in Madhya Pradesh. Some of the stories we heard were hair-raising. Our taxes pay a civil surgeon to perform free surgery on poor patients. But we would hear that a Civil Surgeon cut open a woman’s stomach, and then informed the husband, “this is a very complicated surgery, it will cost Rs. 10,000.” The poor man, who had already spent all his savings on the medical quacks before coming for surgery, ran around to borrow money. But not very far, for the professional moneylenders were already there in front of the hospital. Eager to “help” at exorbitant interest rates. The quacks and surgeons shared the same culture, they were different only in their skills, not in their ethic.

How does the nurse – the “Christian” nurse – behave who is paid from our taxes to render the post-operative care? She extracts her pound of flesh from the misery of the poor family. She follows in the footsteps of her Civil Surgeon, not her Lord. The nursing-attendant, the ward-maid, and the sweeper follow in their turn, turning corruption into a culture. They better be paid their tips, otherwise the poor woman who came with one disease may return with the germs of ten more.

We live in a land where Swami Vivekananda taught that man is God, not a sinner. Yet, our character has been so brutalized that in the nation’s capital itself, husbands and in-laws would humiliate, torture, and even burn to death one bride a day, in order to extract more dowry from her helpless parents. What happens when one of our celebrated “joint”-families burns their new daughter-in-law? They do not merely commit a murder. They bully a million parents to pay the extortion fee (dowry) for their daughter’s protection. Having extorted the protection fee from helpless brides, the families then willingly pay the weekly protection fee (*hafta*) to the police, political activists and criminals to run their business.

7. Corruption is not merely an anti-national activity. It is sin against God.

The press frequently discusses many aspects of corruption. It hurts the poor and it takes its toll on the national economy. Let alone the global investors, even non-resident Indians prefer not to invest their capital and their expertise in India. It takes a heavy toll on the character of our youth, on their future and on our nation’s image abroad. Corruption weakens the nation by dividing it into two camps – the powerful exploiters and the powerless exploited who can do nothing but hate the "system". The exploiters disregard their neighbor's need and merit in favour of their family's greed – that is nepotism. Corruption destroys patriotism. Initially it puts the love for money or power above the love for one’s neighbor. But then it goes on to put the love of money above the love for one’s bride. It even kills unborn and newborn daughters. If one cannot love one’s neighbor, wife and daughter more than money, how then can one love the nation more than money?

Corruption compromises our national security. When the ministers and the Prime Ministers buy guns (remember Bofors?) and submarines for the Defense establishment on the basis of personal kickbacks, they cannot but buy sub-standard products, risking the lives of our soldiers and the

security of our nation. Clive won the battle of Plassey and colonized Bengal partly because he was able to bribe some powerful Indians. It is for this reason that Mr. T.N. Seshan, our ex-Election Commissioner concluded in his book, *The Degeneration of India*, "India is terminally sick."

All patriotic Indians need to unite against corruption in as much as it is an evil that hurts all Indians and the Indian nation. But why should one put national interest above one's own interest? One could argue that one's enlightened self-interest is inseparable from his national interest. *But why should I allow you to define what is my interest?* Indeed, the ultimate reason for opposing corruption goes deeper than a concern for the nation. The following rationale is totally unacceptable to the postmodern mind set. Therefore, later in this essay we will need to look at the evidence for moral absolutes which most people today reject *a priori*. For now, please allow me to just state my position that corruption has to be opposed because it is sin.

Sin is a rebellion against God before it is an offense against man, nature or nation. Corruption violates the law of love for God and love for our neighbors. It is a direct violation of at least two of the moral absolutes of the Ten Commandments. God says, "Thou shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to thy neighbor" (Exodus 20: 17). Yet all corruption is rooted in covetousness. God commands, "Thou shall not steal" (Exodus 20: 15). Corruption equals daylight robbery.

True spirituality is the antidote to corruption because, as Dr. Schaeffer points out, the heart of true spirituality is to not covet against God and to not covet against our neighbor. True spirituality is to trust God enough in all circumstances to be able to thank Him.

II. CORRUPTION - ITS CAUSES

1. Roots of corruption go deeper than politico-economic systems.

It is true that Pandit Nehru's socialism that ushered in the "license-permit Raj" played a decisive role in the rapid growth of corruption. It expanded the Government far too rapidly. Consequently, more officers were recruited than could be trained in the high moral tradition of the Indian Civil Services that had been created by the British Evangelicals. Socialism also centralized too much power in the hands of the politicians and administrators. Because corruption has flourished more in socialist societies than in the capitalistic societies, it is tempting for many Indians to think that capitalism is inherently a moralizing force. That is a simplistic reasoning.

Limiting the power of the State, which capitalism does, is indeed some help. If the State did not have the monopoly, if private companies were free to compete with each other in selling telephones to us, we would not need to bribe anyone to have a phone installed. The companies would chase us to get their phone installed today and let us pay later. Private schools usually do teach better. However, even the private schools (including "Christian" schools) are not able to eradicate the problem of teachers coercing parents to pay for private tuitions. The financial scams of the brief liberalization era in India (remember Harshad Mehta?) already demonstrate that capitalism by itself does not arrest corruption, except in some limited areas. Japan is a better refutation of the idea that capitalism can eradicate corruption.

Capitalism encourages pursuit of self-interest. It seeks to harness the energies generated by self-interest for social good. Compared with socialism the idea has been a phenomenal success in realizing its social goals. However, it did not succeed because Capitalism is inherently a moralizing ideology. By itself, without an external moral force Capitalism aggravates the problem of

covetousness and greed. In order to succeed, the capitalist economic system needs a cultural force that would continuously nurture the moral muscles of a society.

Czechoslovakia is a good case study. After liberating itself from the USSR and Marxism, it tried Free Market Economy of Capitalism as the panacea. It soon discovered that in two generations Marxist atheism had so destroyed the moral fiber of society that citizens could not bear the responsibility of freedom. External freedom works for social good only when the free citizens are controlled by internal moral restraints. Czechoslovakia fell apart. The experts told us that its disintegration was rooted in an ethnic divide. But why are some societies unable to live with ethnic diversity? Ethnicity – tribal, racial, linguistic, religious or caste identities – becomes destructive when it replaces justice (rooted in morality) as the basic organizing principle of a society.

Japan illustrates the dynamism that Capitalism introduces in an economy. Japan had an advantage over the atheistic societies of Eastern Europe in that its culture had been shaped by an ethical religion – Shintoism. Yet, while Shintoism may have served the ethical needs of a traditional, authoritarian Japan, it has clearly failed in coping with the ethical challenges of an urbanized, industrial, democratic state. Corruption has become a chronic cause of political instability at the highest levels in Japan. They have to throw out their Prime Ministers every so often. And, as we know, corruption often flows from the top down.

Economically, at this moment, some people still consider Japan to be a success story. The euphoria, however, has already waned. Caution, if not cynicism, has begun to set in. What can be said with certainty is that it is wrong to think that corruption is caused by the socialist system and that capitalism will cure it. The role of the economic systems is secondary. Social Scientists make it the primary factor only because their training does not equip them to have a deeper perspective. Many micro-level religious monasteries, orders and communities operate effectively without private property, on strict socialist principles. They demonstrate that given proper spirituality even socialism can work. Without it, on the other hand, even some Swiss business houses are beginning to hire voodoo practitioners to cast spells on their rivals. These Post-Christian Swiss capitalists might soon learn what Indians already know – hiring politicians and criminals to fight economic battles is more efficient than hiring witchdoctors.

The Lord Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24).

Our problem in India is deeper. Instead of trying to serve two masters (God and money), we believe we have the right to make money our one and only God. If I am free to make a stone my God, why can't I make Lakshmi (goddess of wealth) or my "Tarazu" (weighing scale) my Deity? The chapter, "Idolatry: Essence and Consequences" in my book *Missionary Conspiracy: Letters to a Postmodern Hindu*, demonstrates that both St. Paul and St. Augustine, careful observers of the Roman world, knew that it was idolatry that led to the moral degeneration of the Roman world (Romans 1: 18-32). For if human beings have to create their gods, they will have to create their morality too. And if the human heart is depraved, so will be the morality that it creates.

2. Corruption is rooted in our sin of covetousness.

I would agree with critics that we need a book on true spirituality that is more contextual for Indian readers than Dr. Schaeffer's book. Dr. Schaeffer wrote in the context of the western youth revolt of the 1960s. Why then am I promoting this book? The answers will become obvious as

you read. Indian readers will definitely gain more were the book written specifically in the Indian context. However, there are important insights to be gained from a classic statement of European Protestant spirituality. It was this spirituality that birthed the economic idea that contemporary India is seeking to imbibe – Capitalism. Our market economy will remain superficial or “virtual” without a transformation of the cultural soil.

The Revenue Officer who took Rs. 2000 from my friend reminds me of another “friend” in Chhatarpur, the late, Sri Ram Singh, son of a famous robber, who inherited his father’s gang. (Ram Singh and I became “friends” after I heard that his gang was planning to raid our farm. I decided to seize the initiative, go to his den and confront him face to face. His gang, armed to the teeth, was stunned to see me walk in to their den. My straightforward question, “why are you planning to raid us?” made him too ashamed to look into my eyes. Some years later, we were in police custody together when he had been brought to Chhatarpur from Jabalpur jail for a murder trial and I was under arrest, charged with attempting to convert a Hindu employee of ours at gunpoint. (We had in fact terminated this employee’s services because he attacked a colleague with an axe and nearly killed him. A politician and the police used him to get at me.) After Ram Singh was acquitted, I had a few meals in his home. One of his gangsters became my co-worker. Ram Singh told me that he respected me because I was a “also” a religious person. He invited me to a temple he had built and said that he and his father never committed a planned crime without first worshipping their deity. And after a successful crime – such as robbing or kidnapping a merchant or looting a market – they always offered sacrifices to their deity, and at times built fresh temples!

Of course Ram Singh was not a typical Hindu. Yet, he is a good representative of the culture of corruption I am discussing, just as a practicing homosexual Bishop is the ultimate expression of a “Liberal” humanistic, relativistic Christianity. Ram Singh is important for my argument because our culture treated him as a VIP. The then Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, a candidate for India’s Prime Ministership, sent the Superintendent of Police to escort Ram Singh to his hotel suite in Khajuraho. He encouraged Ram Singh – a gangster who would routinely extort money from businessmen by threatening to kidnap their sons – to run for the State Assembly as an independent candidate. The Chief Minister assured Ram Singh that he had a fair chance of winning popular vote in that district in the cow-belt. If he won, he could be made a member of the Congress Party. Then he wouldn’t need to rob individuals. He would become a respectable person. He could live well by robbing the State.

The devout Revenue Officer and Ram Singh shared a common understanding of spirituality. They forced me to ask, why are we Indians able to break the 10th commandment, "Thou shall not covet", without a sense of guilt? There are many reasons. One of them is that although Buddha did see “Desire” as the source of evil, as a culture, we Indians understand evil in terms of *Karma*, or action. Covetousness is not a deed (karma) but an attitude. It is an attitude reflecting a lack of the knowledge of God, lack of faith in our loving and caring heavenly Father, lack of contentment and gratitude. Sin, thus, is internal – in our hearts – before it manifests in outward deeds.

Not only most Indians but even the folk spirituality in Japan sees prayer or true spirituality as *mannat* or "penance" – an attempt to bribe God. It seeks to twist God's arm to get material blessing. We do not see true spirituality as "Godliness with contentment" (1 Timothy 6:6) which results in worship, praise and thanksgiving – the opposite of covetousness. These two understandings of spirituality have practical consequences.

At this moment India is being attracted to capitalism mainly on pragmatic grounds and under pressure from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. However, unless we see

economic reality through the classical biblical grid (presented here by Dr. Schaeffer) India is unlikely to see what Adam Smith perceived – the morality of Capitalism. Smith was a moral philosopher before he was an Economist. He published the theory of Moral Sentiments in 1759. The *Wealth of the Nations* came out only in 1776. Every entrepreneur knows that in order to succeed in economic competition he must have the co-operation and goodwill of as many people as possible. This calls for relationships based on trust and trustworthiness. But is one's trustworthiness a matter of pragmatic consideration or principle? Pragmatic loyalty can never be fully trusted. Unless the Capitalistic system is planted in the soil of true spirituality the capitalistic competition will degenerate into exploitation and social strife.

The issue of social strife can be grasped easily if you go out on a street in Delhi and look at the back of three-wheeler taxis, trucks, tempos, or on houses under construction. You will see shoes hanging upside down, ferocious demons sticking their red tongue at you, and a mantra, *Buri nazar walle tera muh kala* (May your face be blackened, you with evil eye). These are signs that we are already a culture in which one's neighbor is expected to envy, and routinely cast an evil eye on his neighbor's property, business and children. You may dismiss the "Evil Eye" and black magic as superstitions. However, you cannot overlook the fact that as a culture we do not limit economic competition to the economic sphere. It is already "normal" to settle economic rivalries with anything from bribes to black magic to caste and communal riots. In our culture economic competition is not a matter of competing to render greater value in goods, services and ideas. By officially sanctioning competition in this cultural climate, Capitalism will only worsen social relationships. The biblical vision of *True Spirituality*, articulated here by Dr. Schaeffer, is needed in our culture to help us sever competition from covetousness, which is sin.

3. *Our covetousness is magnified by modern materialistic Consumerism.*

Consumption is not unspiritual in itself. If you have one kind of flower in your garden, do try and get 1000 more varieties. If you read only one kind of book, do buy books on 101 subjects. You *should* "Live Life King-Size" – abundantly. Our problem is *materialistic* consumerism which evaluates life by the things that you possess, or are possessed by.

Our primary love must be for God and for our neighbor. We must judge every society by how it treats God's image – people. Corruption abuses people; we must pursue generosity not extortion. Materialistic consumerism feeds our greed and blinds our eyes. So instead of winning people's affection, we try to squeeze out their wealth for ourselves. Karl Marx's fear that capitalism would create hell was not baseless. Given the fact that human beings are *persons*, and personality transcends material realm, by definition, a human being cannot be fulfilled by materialism.

One trouble with the traditional Indian spirituality has been that it has perceived the material realm as somehow unreal, *Maya*, the dream of Brahma meditating on his naval. One trouble with the evangelical spirituality of the twentieth century has been that it too became otherworldly, irrelevant for this life. Dr. Schaeffer presents the classical interpretation of biblical spirituality, which sees the material universe as real and good. As articulated in his book *Pollution and the Death of Man*, he saw spirituality as stewardship and the enjoyment of creation. To create material wealth and to advance as scientific, industrial and information culture requires rejecting our traditional low view of material reality. The battle against corruption, on the other hand, calls for a spiritual vision that goes beyond materialistic consumerism.

4. *Corruption is rooted in a false idea that power is a passport to personal privilege – i.e., to lord over others.*

The late Mr. N. T. Rama Rao was a film-actor who played mythical gods in Telugu films. His popularity catapulted him into the Chief-ministership of Andhra Pradesh and he, more than any other politician, brought astrology back into the public life of India. Mr. Rama Rao alienated his senior colleagues when he began to govern as though he was not a team leader, but a god. So, when he had to go out of India for a medical need, the Congress Party tempted his estranged followers to rebel against him. His party split and he lost his position and power. The electorate voted him back into power a second time. I was then the National Convenor of the Peasant Commission of the Janata Party. One day some members of Parliament from Andhra Pradesh came to our office in 7, Jantar Mantar Road, New Delhi. They reported that soon after becoming Chief-minister, Mr. Rama Rao summoned the Legislators of his party, washed his feet in a basin of water, and made them drink it as an oath of loyalty to him. If the story is true, they took the oath, but couldn't keep it for long. The party split again.

One fine morning, after Mr. Rama Rao became the Chief-minister for the third time, he stopped going to office because his astrologers and Vastu-shastries told him that the previous calamities had occurred because the entrance to the Chief-minister's office faced a direction where the stars were inauspicious for him. The national press reported that nine residential houses had to be demolished and a new road and gate built before he would go to his office. Within a few months of these new arrangements his son and the computer-savvy son-in-law, Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu, the present Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, led a medieval-style revolt against him. They successfully ousted him from office. The poor man died of a heart attack.

Mr. Rama Rao's spiritual-guides-cum-astrologers explained that this calamity overtook him because there are ten planets, the astrologers know nine of them and had taken care to appease each of them. "Even the best of us doesn't know the tenth planet", they said, and "this tragedy is the influence of the tenth planet."

Sometime after this event I was speaking in a public meeting in Hyderabad. I said, "The politically powerful spiritual preceptors of this city may be correct, Mr. Rama Rao's misfortune may have been caused by the gods that have favored the ambitious rebels. My question is – why should gods be inauspicious to a poor chap? Wasn't he doing well to his people? He was selling rice for Rs. 2 per kilo to the poor. He had banned alcohol. He had promised saris to the poor girls when they marry. The down-trodden people loved him and voted for him, why then should gods be inauspicious to him?"

The answer, of course, is that our gods do not have to have a reason to be cross with us. It is their nature to harass and oppress innocent citizens to extort appeasement from them. One day it is Saturn who is inauspicious to you, the next day it is Venus. One week it is Mars, another month it is yet another deity that extorts appeasement. It was not from a missionary but from Nirad Chaudhuri's autobiography that I first understood that the Indian character was venal, because our gods were venal (easily bribed & corrupted). Chaudhuri said that the atmosphere of a police station in India was but a reflection of the atmosphere in our temples. Those were harsh words in the 1950s and Chaudhuri was banished from India. Nothing could be more academically and politically unpopular today than to repeat the same assertion. I am repeating it because we need to understand why the nineteenth century battle against political and administrative corruption succeeded in India.

No one would quarrel with those who hate British colonial rule in India. A historian's difficulty is that that is the only period in our entire history when corruption was successfully checked. So those who want to learn any lessons from historical precedence have no option but to look at that phase. The battle for political reform that Charles Grant, one of the first Evangelicals in India, began

succeeded because it was based on the story of a different God. This God used his power in human history, not to oppress and extort, but to serve, to wash the feet of his disciples, and to give his own life on the cross of Calvary to deliver us from the power of sin. William Carey, who later took the battle for India's regeneration from a reform of the state to a reform of the people, also worked on the dictum that a people could not be better than their gods.

5. Corruption is facilitated by our Moral Relativism.

India's traditional beliefs in Karma & Reincarnation, and Non-Dualism or Absolute Monism (*Adwaita*) had destroyed the philosophical foundations for moral absolutes much before the contemporary western, postmodern assault on morality. Whatever morality (*Dharma*) we had was relative to our caste and stage in life. That is, morality for a Brahmin was different from morality for a Shudra; for men from that of women. Even for a Brahmin, morality was relative to his stage of life. It meant one thing during the stage of Brahmcharya and something else during Grahastha-ashram (married life), Sannyas, or Vanprastha ashram. Because a real moral law did not exist, morality had to be *externally defined* by the priest, and *externally enforced* by the Kshatriyas or the rulers. The moral vacuum of the present moment comes from the weakening of the traditional caste-system that has removed even those relative moralizing influences. The traditional notion of *Maryada* carries no weight now. For modern India cannot simultaneously deny a special prestige to the Upper Castes and also expect them to fulfil the role they played earlier.

It should be evident that Non-Dualism (*Adwaita*) or Monism had no choice but to deny any final distinction between Good and Evil. Both had to be manifestations of the same divine reality. Some words however, are necessary to help us understand that far from providing a basis for morality our beliefs in Karma and reincarnation undermine the foundations of morality.

For a while in Mussoorie we had an American Hindu as our neighbor, researching for a Ph. D. on *Ramayana*. His daughter was studying with our daughter and he looked after her as a "single-parent". So Ruth, my wife, who worked in the same school, often looked after the girl. One day, our friend's cook eloped with some money. Studies became very hard for him, as it took a half-day just to go and buy groceries – He couldn't afford gadgets such as a deep freeze and microwave. He looked around for another cook, but that was the tourist season when hotels paid premium wages.

One day Ruth ran into his servant. She confronted him and he responded very politely. Impressed by his contriteness she sent a note to our friend suggesting that he hire him again. This would help him recover his money and lighten his load. Unfortunately our friend had an American sense of justice. He was furious and came home to protest. Ruth was not there, so I had to listen. "What does your wife mean that I should hire this fellow? He is not a cook, but a crook. He stole *this* from me and *that* from someone else. It is not a job that this fellow deserves but jail. The least we must do is to join hands and ensure that no one employs him on the hill-side."

I saw his point, but couldn't reconcile it with the enthusiasm he had earlier displayed for beliefs in *karma* and re-incarnation. I had just come back from a trip and, given the load of work piled up, didn't want to get dragged into his campaign. So, playing the devil's advocate I asked my friend, whether he would consider the possibility that he had stolen some money in his previous life from this same man? Could the cook, therefore, have taken back what was his?

Instantly my American friend was transformed into a philosophic Hindu. He scratched his head gently, and said slowly, "Maybe. Maybe *not* in my previous life, but maybe, in *this* life I had cheated someone of Rs. 150. So it has gone from me. So, I guess, I shouldn't be murmuring. What happened

to me is not injustice but justice. So I suppose I shouldn't be complaining. The cosmos is a perfectly just system. When we do bad, bad happens to us."

Charles Grant, who became a Member of Parliament and chairman of the East India Company, played the most important role in the moral transformation of the British rule in India. In the earlier part of his career in Malda (Bengal) in the 1770s and early 1780s, Grant witnessed the bands of sannyasis (religious ascetics) who came in hordes of hundreds and thousands, to loot and plunder. The Indian soldiers in the British army refused to fight against these religious robbers because to oppose sannyasis was sacrilegious. Cultural practices such as these forced Grant to begin the campaign for giving to India a philosophical basis for moral absolutes. This was a mission that aimed at a religio-philosophic-moral transformation of India, via evangelization. It was Grant's campaign that succeeded in his friend Wilberforce's parliamentary victory in 1813 for missions and education.

The Indian State, once again, has fallen into the hands of robbers. It is substantially because secular education is as incapable of giving strong moral foundations to society as traditional Hinduism. Modernistic education at least paid lip service to morality, because Enlightenment Modernism assumed (rather arrogantly) that the human mind could know morality without Revelation. But, as we shall see below, the academic world now knows that it does not know and that it *cannot* know whether moral laws are real laws. Postmodernism, therefore, dismisses all morality as cultural or personal preferences. Homosexuality is as moral as heterosexuality. Marriage is as moral as free-sex. Saving lives is as moral as taking life – through abortion, euthanasia or Sati. Self-sacrifice is as moral as greed. The wisdom of our age says that specific acts can be illegal, but neither acts nor attitudes can be judged as *immoral*. Relativism of the contemporary intellectual climate has effectively derailed the struggle for India's transformation via evangelization. The anti-theistic intellectual climate of our day assumes that a personal God does not exist, therefore, He cannot give us a revelation of his character and law. Nor can He hold mankind accountable. Moral values, at best, are personal preferences. This climate is very conducive to corruption. For, if values are ours, then they can only be relative. Because they are mine, I am free to bend them when it suits me.

Relativism cannot reform a culture. It can only opt for social engineering – for a strong state using law and brutal force to contain corruption. It is an option that has been tried throughout the twentieth century and has been demonstrated to be counter-productive.

6. Corruption thrives when we cease to fear God.

Later we will discuss whether we should, or should not, fear God. Here we are concerned with the consequences of a lack of fear of God. Political correctness is to affirm that all religious beliefs are equally valid. However, it is foolish to deny that there is a fundamental difference between the belief that the human soul is *accountable to* God and the belief that the human soul *is* God. The idea of human accountability to God leads us to fear the one from whose eyes nothing is hidden, and before whose judgement throne all of us will have to stand one day.

Forgetting is the function of the conscious mind. Our subconscious mind keeps a track of all that we think, desire, say and do. Under hypnosis much of it can be played back even now. What if one day our subconscious mind will be the "book" that is laid bare before the judgement seat of God? None of us can claim that we have not broken God's moral law. As Dr. Schaeffer said, the human problem, according to biblical spirituality, is not that we have guilt feelings, but that we are actually guilty. Each of us knows the moral laws that we have violated. We know that if finally we do stand before our Judge, we will stand as condemned sinners – condemned by our own consciences.

The opposite idea that the human soul is God, and as such cannot possibly sin, prevents us from taking sin seriously and taking responsibility for our moral choices. An individual who believes that he is God cannot also be “God-fearing”.

If we continue to be accountable to God, then the consequences of the fear of God, or its lack, obviously, will have a profound bearing on our “after-life” or eternal destiny. But in any case, the idea has practical implications for this life. For example, there are two ways to economic prosperity: trade or exploitation. In trading we barter value for goods, services or ideas. That is, we trade value for value. This means that everyone in society works hard to produce marketable goods or quality services. Such a society prospers. It is wise.

Corruption, as we said earlier, is exploitation in that the powerful extract value from unwilling but powerless people or institutions, without returning proportionate value. The giver works hard to earn money but gives his hard earned wealth to the taker, who is a bully. This takes away the joy and reduces the value of work. In a corrupt society, people pursue power, not diligent work. Therefore, the products and services of a corrupt society become necessarily sub-standard. Civility is the first casualty in a corrupt society. Then life itself is threatened.

Twelve years ago I had no problem buying medical insurance in Delhi. Now, in Mussoorie, the insurance agents politely ignore my repeated requests for medical insurance. Obviously, the insurance companies no longer trust their own agents, the Indian doctors or patients. The Companies know that medical insurance will drive them into bankruptcy, as money disappears into the pockets of their agents, and doctors cure “patients” who were not sick to begin with.

Corruption is forceful or deceitful extortion of what belongs to others. People cease loving and trusting one another. Social relationships, therefore, cannot be built on liberating trust. Society becomes vulnerable to political manipulation. It disintegrates and then has to depend on oppressive force for its continued existence. This is folly.

The Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom." (Proverbs 3:20) The folly of corruption grows because we do not realize that there is a God who will ultimately judge how we have treated one another, especially the weak and the powerless.

7. Our social oppression and religious fatalism make it hard for us to fight corruption.

Our mythology is full of heroes who performed great austerities and became powerful enough to threaten gods. Our history has heroes, such as Rana Sanga, Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose who fought against the Mogul and British empires. But why don't we have the stories of heroes who launched successful campaigns against corruption? It is hard to find many examples in our history, if we look before the unsuccessful campaigns of Sri Jayaprakash Narayan and V. P. Singh in our own days.

In contrast, consider a twenty-year-old Christian young man – Charles Trevelyan in the early nineteenth century. He is remembered for playing the most important role in turning the pioneering educational efforts of William Carey, Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Alexander Duff into the education revolution of the nineteenth century. Again, it was Trevelyan who argued courageously and successfully that English education must prepare India for her political freedom. Trevelyan arrived in India in the 1820s as a junior civil servant, without a godfather in the East India Company or in the British Parliament. He received his first posting under the veteran British Resident in Delhi. In

today's terms, he was a politically unconnected young IAS officer, fresh out of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy in Mussoorie, posted as an assistant to a cabinet minister.

Can we imagine our young officer discovering corruption in high places, exposing the Minister, braving all opposition, and persisting until the minister is impeached? Trevelyan did exactly that. He was warned that everyone does what his boss was doing. He was told that no one in the Company would dare to support his campaign. Yet he fought to the end.

Why is it so hard to imagine that an Indian young man could have the moral courage to endanger his life – or at least his career – in his fight against corruption? I have already suggested that by relativizing morality, Hinduism and postmodernism take away the philosophical foundations on which an individual must stand if he is to take great personal risks in a context where to battle against corruption means to battle against criminals who control State power. Here it needs to be pointed out that we do not have a tradition of heroes such as Trevelyan, because the moralizing principle in India – *Dharma* – itself undermines the possibility of individual moral heroism.

By not teaching unequivocally that a Holy God governs the universe, and that we will have to give an account of our lives to Him, Hindu philosophy first undermines the possibility of internal moral dynamism. Then, naturally, it needs to have our *Dharma* (moral duty) defined and enforced externally through the caste-system and family. This necessarily weakens our sense of individual responsibility and heroism. For example, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra Arjuna did not want to kill his cousins, uncles and teachers. Lord Krishna teaches that Arjuna did not have the freedom to raise a conscientious objection against the war. As a Kshatriya he was bound by his duty to fight. We do not have a history of heroic opposition to corruption because as a culture we believe that *Akela chana bhar nahin jhonkta hai* (The oven is not heated for a single grain). Thus, caste, which was meant to be a moralizing agent, robbed us of moral dynamism, individual responsibility and a sense of individual significance.

This problem is compounded by our beliefs in Karma, Reincarnation, Astrology, Numerology, Palmistry, *vastu-shastra*, Spiritism *et cetera*, that conspire to create a Fatalism which paralyses us from confident action against all forms of social evil. Our task becomes hopeless when our cyclical view of history makes a mockery of the very idea of a struggle for reform. If the cosmos is predetermined to start as the golden age of *Satyuga*, only to degenerate into the darkness of *Kaliyuga*, then, indeed, there is no sense in fighting for a better tomorrow.

III. CORRUPTION – AND THE CULTURE OF THE CROSS

1. The cross and culture

A decade or so ago it was fashionable in India to believe that societies are forever evolving and improving, and that process can be enhanced through education. Not many people adhere to that myth any more. Certainly, no one would seriously argue that the state – the problem – could reform itself through state-run education. The Communist states, such as the USSR, had complete control over education. Muslim nations, such as Iran under Ayatollah Khoemeni, have controlled education just as the RSS would like to “use” education in India to promote “Hindu nationalism”. The Communist and the Muslim experience ought to serve as warnings: “Education” may cause degeneration more easily than regeneration, and in the process it discredits utopian ideologies. The outcome of education depends on what is taught.

A growing number of Indians now think that India cannot be reformed without a revolution. They want us to surrender our freedom to a dictator, who (they hope) will make India as clean as Singapore. If they have a right to point to a “foreign” country, so I assume, I have that right as well. Revolutions do not usually lead to reforms, just as weeding does not equal gardening. Corruption is not rooted in individual leaders, institutions or the state. Therefore, dethroning leaders or smashing “the system”, by itself, does not do lasting good. Evil is rooted in our hearts and minds (Mark 7:21). Therefore, ultimately it is our inner life – our assumptions, values, worldview, desires, emotion, attitudes and relationships – that need to be reformed.

Early nineteenth century Christians strove to reform India because they knew that corruption can be overcome. I have described the corruption that prevailed in the eighteenth century England in my book *Missionary Conspiracy: Letters to a Postmodern Hindu*. British society was as evil and as ripe for a revolution as the French society had been. England escaped the horrors of a bloody revolution because the spiritual revival under John Wesley and George Whitfield transformed the nation. In *True Spirituality*, Dr. Schaeffer expounds that same message of “substantial healing” that reformed England and other nations, including the Indian government (although not the Indian masses).

Obviously, the task of nation building requires more than preaching. After Wesley, politicians, such as William Wilberforce, consciously applied biblical spirituality to politics and public life. That carried forward the task of national renewal. This brief essay cannot recount the story of England’s spiritual rebirth. Several excellent studies, such as Ian Bradley’s, *The Call to Seriousness*, are available. I am alluding to that part of history merely to remind the reader that for Dr. Schaeffer, true spirituality was not about pious platitudes. It was about the Lordship of Christ over all of life. The book *True Spirituality* is a meditation on the Bible’s teaching on spirituality. In this he goes to the heart of the matter. In other books Dr. Schaeffer has expounded the cultural consequences of this spirituality. This introduction is not a summary of what he wrote. It is an extension of his teaching, applying it to the area of corruption. Many Christians look upon the cross, exclusively as a passport to heaven. The question of the Lordship of Christ over this life is not a part of their concern. In reality though the cross is the emblem of a Christian culture. St. Paul says that it is possible for a person to be “saved” by faith in the work of Christ on the cross, and yet live as the enemy of the cross (Philippians 3: 18).

Obviously, there cannot be one universal Christian culture. In each historic setting a Christian community must evolve its own culture. Christians must accept all the good that already exists in their context, refine in the fire of the Word of God what is not good in their culture, and add to it the riches drawn from the cross of Christ. Unfortunately, most of Indian Christianity is still imitative of the West. It is not authentic. As it matures it will necessarily look different than a pale reflection of Western Christianity – whether Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox. However, in as much as it has the “yeast” of the kingdom of God (Matthew 13:33), it must work fearlessly to transform India.

In *A Christian Manifesto* Dr. Schaeffer pointed out that although England had been evangelized earlier, its Christianization really began with the generation that wrote the *Magna Carta* (1215). Henry de Bracton, England’s most famous judge in that period, who systematized English Common Law (the basis of the modern India’s law), expounded the meaning of the cross. He argued that the cross implies that God wants justice and mercy, not brute force, to rule on earth. It was possible for God, said de Bracton, to use his power to destroy Satan and his works. Instead, He used the cross to deal with Satan. The cross thus symbolizes the means God uses to redeem mankind from sin – including from corruption. The cross makes it impossible for a Christian culture to evolve in a direction similar to Islamic cultures – where corruption can only be dealt with by brute force. Imran Khan, Pakistan’s star Cricketer-turned-politician, is a recent example. During the latest elections he

pledged that if his party were voted to power, as Prime Minister, he would hang corrupt people on poles in public squares! That is a typical Muslim response to evil, because Islam rejects the savior who went to the pole himself in order to regenerate us.

It may be possible for an Indian dictator to use corruption as an excuse to destroy “Westminster” democracy and start hanging his opponents on poles. But that would only be a passing phase. Before the British, for seven hundred years, Islamic invaders with tiny armies had no problem subjugating divided India. The British did not have a desire to take over India from the Moguls. The Marathas did. Some of the Marathas were brave and able, but they could not unite the Hindus against the Muslims or against the British. The British, in contrast, succeeded in winning the support of the Hindus, much before Raja Rammohun Roy all the way up to Mahatma Gandhi. This is an aspect of colonial history that Indian historians have tried to cover up. But in a forthcoming volume from the Oxford University Press, one of the most important authorities on the Indian history today, Professor Robert Frykenberg, demonstrates that the British Raj was an Indian Raj. It was desired, financed, manned and defended by the Indians themselves. Mahatma Gandhi too urged Indians during the First World War to defend the British Raj. He launched the “Quit India” movement only in 1942. That is another story that I have looked at in *India: the grand experiment*. The relevant point here is that the Marathas failed in uniting Hindus because they attempted to rule by force. The British succeeded because, although many of them abused power, the Church was able to bring the British military might under the spiritual power of the cross. It was this factor that forced even Bankim Chandra Chatterjee – the author of *Anand Math* which birthed “Hindu nationalism” – to prefer the British rule to the “Sannyasin” rule – the Hindu heroes of his novel.

In their attempt to unify Hindus by the sword, the Marathas turned most Hindus against themselves. The British Raj grew beyond Bengal, substantially because most Hindus preferred the British justice (that is, de Bracton’s culture of the cross) to the Marathas’ might. Now the *Hindutva* is attempting to force a unity on India on the basis of a uniform “Hindu culture”, rather than on justice – i.e. the culture of the cross. If history is any guide, it too will fail to usher in the *Ram Rajya*. The *Hindutva* is more likely to bring about a return of the Mogul Raj.

As I have demonstrated in *India: The Grand Experiment*, it was the culture of the cross that brought “substantial healing” for India as a nation. In further considering the social results of the cross below, I am not ignoring the implications of the cross for our individual lives and relationships. Dr. Schaeffer has covered that ground. I am building on his foundation.

2. The cross and morals

Moral relativism is a basic feature – a genetic weakness – of the Indian culture. Corruption is growing because the virus of Postmodernism is inflaming our congenital weakness. The cross is the antidote for this disease. Let us make an effort to understand:

Given the Western commitment to freedom of speech, why has it become so difficult, if not impossible, for a person to speak against homosexuality or sexual permissiveness on a university campus in the West? This is because Postmodernism involves a militant commitment to moral relativism. Self-conscious Postmodernists are not necessarily immoral people. They happen to understand better than others that from the start, the modernist hope of finding objective moral norms (without God) was naïve. The philosophers now know that they cannot know if morality is real. They assume (and are fanatic about their assumption) that “morality” is nothing but society’s attempt to repress individual freedom. Postmodernists, therefore, fight to liberate individuals from this repression. They want every individual to have the freedom to choose his or her own “life-style”.

Homosexuality, for them, is not “immoral,” it is an “alternative life-style,” as valid as the heterosexual life-style.

Postmodernists insist that we don’t even know if anyone makes a “free” choice at all. To assume “free-will” is to open the door to a belief in soul or spirit. Perhaps we are only bodies. That would imply that all our choices are chemically, genetically, biologically, psychologically, or sociologically determined. In that case, how can anyone be “morally responsible”? Perhaps, we just do what we are conditioned to do. Homosexuality, then, is merely a matter of an individual’s “sexual orientation.”

Although we all keep making value judgements – both aesthetic and moral; and although our consciences keep bothering us, the reality is that if we stop looking within us, moral law is observable neither in the universe nor in society. For example, is adultery immoral? What happens if you commit that “sin”? Suppose you are a governor in a state in the USA and you commit adultery. What will happen to you? Well, you may simply get promoted to the White House and attract more women! Is it immoral to commit murder? What happens to the politicians who murder their rivals and enemies? Well, (if they are powerful enough) in most countries they become kings, or at least, Chief-Ministers, Prime Ministers, Presidents or Dictators. The more people they kill, the more powerful they get. How can you, then, believe that there is a real moral law that transcends human legislation? If moral law exists, shouldn’t there be consequences for breaking it? How can you believe in a “moral law,” for which no observable, empirical basis exists?

This intellectual problem that the academic world has faced during the last century or so is not unique. It was an acute problem for the Jewish prophets in the Old Testament too. They saw visions and prophesied that God would uphold his moral law and punish the wicked . . . but nothing happened! The people began to mock God and his prophets, “He [God] will do nothing! No harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine. The prophets are but wind and the word is not in them” (Jeremiah 5: 12-13). The mockery turned into a proverb, “The days go by and every vision comes to nothing” (Ezekiel 12:22). Naturally the people began to doubt if God even existed. Corruption, consequently, grew uncontrollably. The Psalmist lamented:

The fool says in his heart,
“there is no God.”
They are corrupt,
their deeds are evil;
there is no one who does well. . . .
[or] who seek[s] God.
All have turned aside,
they have together become corrupt;
there is no one who does good,
not even one. (Psalm 14:1-3)

Corruption grew in Judah and crushed the poor and the weak because God did not seem to intervene. The corrupt kept growing in their affluence, power and ruthless violence. The righteous suffered and began to wonder aloud if it was useless to be righteous. They had no intellectual basis for persisting in moral uprightness which brought only misery:

But as for me, my feet had almost slipped [into sin];
I had nearly lost my foothold.
For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

They have no struggles;
their bones are healthy and strong.
They are free from the burdens common to man;
they are not plagued by human ills.
Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
From their callous hearts comes iniquity;
the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.
They scoff, and speak with malice;
in their arrogance they threaten oppression. . . .
They say, 'How can God know?
Does the Most High have knowledge?'
This is what the wicked are like –
always carefree, they increase in wealth.
Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure;
in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.
(Psalm 73:1-13)

Prophets, such as Habakkuk, took their people's complaints to God: "Why don't you see? Why don't you do something about the all-pervasive violence, wickedness, corruption and injustice?" (Hab. 1:2-4)

God responded by saying that he was going to uphold his moral law. He was raising up the Babylonians, the most "ruthless and impetuous people . . . feared and dreaded . . . a law unto themselves . . . [who] promote their own honor . . . whose strength is their god." (Hab. 1: 5-11). These Babylonians, God said, would execute His judgement upon Judah's wickedness. They will plunder, destroy, kill and enslave that corrupt nation. This judgement, since, it had been repeatedly predicted by several prophets, was going to serve as empirical evidence that God does uphold his law; he does punish sin.

The prophets now had a second problem on their hands. If the all-knowing and all-powerful God really holds us accountable, and if He would actually uphold his moral law and punish the guilty, then what hope could mankind have? After all our own conscience testifies against us. None of us is sinless. The Jewish prophets had a deeper problem. Their whole nation had become sinful. How could God both judge sinners and also fulfil his promises to bless their nation and make it a blessing to all the nations of the earth?

God revealed to the Prophet Isaiah how he was going to resolve this problem – the conflict between his desire to bless Israel and his need to punish a corrupt nation. Seven hundred years before Jesus actually went to the cross, God said to Isaiah that his anointed servant, the Messiah, would take the punishment of his nation's (and world's) sin upon himself:

"He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”
(Isaiah 53: 3-6)

John the Baptist had already told the disciples that Jesus was the predicted, “Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) But Christ’s disciples had not understood. So, on the night before he was crucified, Jesus explained to his disciples the meaning of his coming crucifixion. Expounding the familiar symbolism of the Jewish Passover, where a lamb’s blood saved the Jewish first-born in Egypt on the night of their deliverance from slavery, Jesus said to them that his blood was going to be shed on the cross for the remission of their sins (Matthew 26: 28). Jesus’ statement, like John’s before him, must have sounded like theological mumbo-jumbo to them. The meaning of their statements, however, became clear over the weekend – when they actually saw him crucified, dead and then resurrected back to life.

As Jesus hung upon the cross, on the first Good Friday, just outside the walls of Jerusalem, his disciples and every one else could see that it was the sin of the world that was hanging on that cross. It was not the justice of mankind that was displayed on the cross. Both his judges, Pilate and Herod, admitted that Jesus had committed no offense that called for his execution. Every one knew that Jesus was being crucified because of the envy, jealousy, fears and hypocrisy of the socio-religious and political leaders of his day. Everyone could see that what was hanging on the cross was the greed of his betrayer, the lies of false witnesses, and the moral cowardice of the masses, the disciples and the Governor that could not resist injustice and oppression. What hung upon the cross was not the nobility of the human heart but our sin – the brutality, oppression and terror upon which the kingdoms of this world, the kingdom of Satan, have been founded.

The crucifixion, of course, shattered the disciples. As far as they were concerned, it was all finished. Their hopes were gone. Jesus had been another false Messiah; too weak to overcome the evil that rules our kingdoms. So, on the third day when Jesus rose again from the dead, his disciples could not believe it, even when he stood before them, talking and eating. Apostle Thomas, who later came to India, was absent when the rest of the disciples first met the risen Christ. He did not accept their word when they told him that Jesus had risen. His theory was that dead people do not come back to life. “I won’t believe this nonsense about the resurrection” he said, “unless I can verify it empirically, by putting my fingers in the holes where they hammered the nails, and my hand in his side pierced by that spear.” Soon enough Jesus came to them while Thomas was still skeptical. He invited Thomas to put his fingers and his hand in the holes in his hands and side. Thomas had to choose between his theory that dead people do not rise and the fact that stood before him. He had to decide what is ultimately real: death or God. The scales fell from the apostle’s eyes. The lights turned on (John 20: 24-31).

If the person who died before their eyes for their sin was the same person standing before them; if Jesus had actually been raised from the dead by God, then here was the final empirical evidence that moral law is real. God judges sin. They had seen sin of the world hanging on the cross with their own naked eyes. The risen Christ before their eyes was visible, was a proof that we continue to be accountable to God beyond death. Choosing righteousness, and suffering for it is not foolishness. It is

not heroism attempted for world's applause. Christ's resurrection is a proof that God rewards righteousness with the resurrected life.

The cross resolves the philosophical dilemma of the Hebrew prophets. God *is* holy. Moral law *is* real. God *will* judge (and has judged) sin. But the holy God does not need to destroy sinners, for Jesus Christ has taken the sin of the world upon himself. Forgiveness is possible. Our conscience need not condemn us, for our Judge offers forgiveness. Thanks to the cross of Christ, we now have a firm basis – empirical, historical and philosophical – for affirming moral absolutes, without that same moral law condemning us.

The cross is not another religious idea. It is good news – the Gospel. It is the only available force today that can withstand and push back the unprecedented cyclonic storm of moral relativism that is sweeping the globe with devastating ferocity. Modernized Hinduism that began with Raja Rammohun Roy was bearable. The Postmodern Hinduism, championed in our day by gods such as Rajneesh, is “Relativism squared” – that is, it is traditional Hindu moral relativism, reinforced by postmodernism. Without the cross, our society is doomed, for we have no alternative foundations whatsoever for affirming moral absolutes, for calling corruption by its name – sin.

The cross, of course, does not merely provide a philosophical framework for moral absolutes, for calling sin, “sin”. It also *delivers* us from sin. How? I encourage the reader to persevere reading *True Spirituality*. Dr. Schaeffer addresses this “how?”

3. The cross and power

Another defining feature of Indian culture – a feature that Hindu India shares in common with the Muslim world – is our inability to handle power with meekness and justice, for the good of others. This inability turns democratic competition into corruption. The cross, as we shall see, makes service the true source of power. It turns democracy into meritocracy – a competition in excellence in service. Our corruption, as we said earlier, has created a culture that enables a person to attain advantages, opportunities, contracts, offices and promotions on the basis of caste-connections, influence, bribes, conspiracies, crime and force. Without the cross we can have the form of democracy but not its soul. The cross is a symbol of the sublimation of power.

Imagine this scenario: Christ is arrested, falsely accused, and unjustly condemned. The Roman soldiers are dragging him outside Jerusalem to crucify him. After mocking him as the “king of the Jews”, they begin to mock the impotence of the Jewish race itself. The mobs that had gathered in Jerusalem for the festival are following him, wailing loudly. Some women cry out, condemning their men folk for their cowardice in the face of the audacity of the Roman authorities to humiliate their most prominent public figure. People were seething with rage. They had not forgotten Herod's cowardly act of secretly beheading John the Baptist – their other prophet. John's disciples had been waiting for an opportune moment to take revenge. Some of them had forged an alliance with the zealots who were recruiting and arming comrades during the festival.

The Roman centurion, in charge of the crucifixion was the same officer whose servant Jesus had earlier healed. He was double-minded, unsure whether to hang Jesus or save him. Highly respected Jews, such as Nicodemus and Joseph, are publicly condemning their colleagues for conspiring with the Romans to murder their own prophet. So, just when his enemies thought that they had won, Jesus, sensing the groundswell of public opinion in his favor springs a dramatic surprise. On a narrow bend he makes a daring escape. The crowds go ecstatic. The soldiers attempt to chase Christ, but are met with a volley of stones. As they attack the crowd, including unarmed women, the Jewish

temple guards switch sides. The zealots turn the mutiny into a battle for liberation. Within minutes the palaces of Pilate, Herod and the Chief-Priest go up in flames. The three of them are hung upon the three crosses on Golgotha. The Revolution is a spectacular success. The Jews are free. Jesus, son of Joseph, age 33, becomes the first Jewish king for the whole of Israel after almost a thousand years. He proves greater than his illustrious forefathers, David and Solomon. His disciples control the new regime. After all it was they, not me, who expected the story to end this way.

And, if that had been the Gospel of Jesus Christ, even India would have accepted him as a great hero, a liberator, savior of the Jews. The script matches our world's worldview. That is how we would have scripted the Gospel story.

What happened instead is mind-boggling. While the disciples were debating who would be the greatest in the new kingdom, Jesus stood up from the table, took off his robe, took a towel and a basin of water and started washing the feet of his disciples. As they were trying to understand what was going on, Jesus said that the problem with the kingdoms of this world is that their rulers make them drink the water in which they have washed their feet. He has come to establish a kingdom in which he who ministers (serves) would be the greatest. Before the message had fully penetrated their minds, Jesus dropped another bombshell. He was not headed, he said, for a throne with a golden crown on his head. That very night he was going to be arrested and crucified, mocked with a crown of thorns on his head, for he had come to serve to the extent of giving his own life for the salvation of the world. His disciples, if they wanted his kingdom, had to walk in his footsteps. The power he wanted them to have was not the power to lord over the others, the power to exploit and oppress, but the power to sacrifice themselves for others.

St. Paul gave this classic summary of the nature of the kingdom of God; the power God wants us to have; the culture of the cross; the antidote to corruption and exploitation:

“. . . be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

“Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

“And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death –
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:5-11).

The cross makes Lord Jesus Christ the anti-thesis of gods who demand sacrifice. He sacrifices himself; not for his *bhai-bhatijas* (brothers-nephews), but for us, who were rebels – his enemies! The cross is the power to choose humility, to become a minister, a servant, not to one's clan, but to one's neighbors, including one's enemies.

Is this exposition of the cross a repetition of some ancient idealistic religious discourse, or is it a discussion of a kingdom that is present now? Is it an aspect of Christianity that is “Western”, or must it be invited to transform Indian culture?

As a 13-year-old boy I once cycled many miles to hear Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister. Panditji's opening statement was moving:

“My countrymen,” he said, “I have come to address you as your ‘First Servant’, for that is what the term ‘Prime Minister’ literally means.”

I don't remember Panditji talking about Jesus on that occasion. For that reason, many in the audience may not have understood what exactly he was talking about, or from where he got that definition of democratic leadership. However, even as a young boy I could see that the ancient cross had not lost its power to transform our world. Corruption is growing today because the gods who at present define our understanding of power, demand sacrifices from their devotees.

No historian would deny that without the cross, India would not have had (and cannot continue to honor) service professions such as nursing. Without the story of the cross under-girding our culture we cannot make our university degrees, admissions in our technical colleges and government jobs, promotions in services and elections to public offices matters of merit – evidence of Indians giving their best to India. Without the cross our degrees and positions of power will degenerate into symbols of our corruption.

Pandit Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, is often blamed for destroying inner party democracy within the Indian National Congress and for setting the tone for the degeneration of Indian democracy. The problem, in fact, is much deeper. Indira Gandhi's predecessor, Lal Bahadur Shastri had died in office. Many senior leaders in the Congress coveted that top post. To preempt the chances of their rivals, some of the leaders promoted Indira Gandhi as a consensus candidate, because she appeared weak and manageable. Her weakness became her asset. But, having accepted her as the leader, would they submit to her leadership? Would they play as principled teammates, and allow her to complete her term? Can she trust her colleagues, her Parliamentary Party leader, and the leadership of the national party? Or, would some of them conspire against her? Would they use their position to split her party? Could they join hands with rival parties and capture power for themselves?

Even the most committed Indira-hater would have to agree that it is not Indira Gandhi but our conspiratorial character that has undermined inner-party democracy in every political party. No leader can trust his teammates and lead as the first servant among equals. *Is our problem political, or is it cultural?*

I have seen the problem that every leader of every political party faces in every group – social or religious. Leaders become authoritarian and concentrate all power in their own hands, because those who “lose” the competition for democratic power become conspiratorial. Our culture does not give us spiritual resources to lose with dignity, to remain submitted to the sovereign God and to wait for him to exalt us.

Two Professors apply to become Principal of their college. One is selected. Would the other become a loyal supporter? Or, would he become the perennial source of the teachers' strike, non-teaching staff's strike and the students' union led strike? When the Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences is arrested taking a bribe of Rs. 25,000 from a supplier, we automatically feel sympathetic towards him: "Everyone takes bribe, poor fellow got caught because he is a victim of the political rivalries in AIIMS. He was not clever enough."

Four men want to become the leader of a religious group. One of them wins the election. Would the other three strengthen his leadership? Or, would they do everything that they can to undermine him?

Sikhism is the most democratic of all Indian religious traditions. Yet the never-ending rivalry of the Sikh religious leaders has made a mockery of their glorious vision. It also became a principal factor behind some of the greatest traumas that independent India has faced. Other religions, including the Indian churches are not too far behind the Sikhs in destroying the democratic structures that they received.

Post-Christian America is degenerating morally. Yet, there are some things we can still learn from it. For example, Rev. Jesse Jackson, a leader of the Democratic Party in America, wants to be his party's candidate for the election to the Presidentship of America. He enters the arena in the "Primaries" – in the inner-party election of the candidate – as a rival to Governor Bill Clinton. He loses the primaries. When the real battle begins between his party's candidate Bill Clinton, and the Republican George Bush, would Jackson support Bill Clinton, or would he subtly ensure that their candidate loses? If Clinton wins against President Bush, four years later, it will be harder for Jesse Jackson to take him on again in the Primaries. If Rev. Jackson were an Indian, he would (normally) work against his own party. His reasoning would be that he might have a chance, if Clinton loses to President Bush. That is our culture. You have to be on your guard, otherwise soon you will be a victim of conspiracies by your friends and teammates, by the very people whom you have loved, promoted and supported.

So, why has the "world's largest democracy" in India become a vast jungle of authoritarian leaders surrounded by sycophants or conspiratorial followers? The answer is that the Gospel of the cross came to us but we have preferred the script where the hero hatches a conspiracy to escape the cross and overcome with the sword. The cross is power. But it is the power of faith, the power of knowing the sovereign God enough to trust Him and, therefore, to surrender to Him and wait for his vindication. The cross is the power to put principle above power.

4. The cross and civility

A corrupt society, as described above, is the opposite of a civil society. Civility is not a matter of organizational form of society, but of its heart. It is a matter of recognizing each person's worth and rights, and giving to them what is their due as individual persons. Corruption denies to some, what is due to them, and gives to others what they do not deserve.

As an Asian Christian theologian I am expected to denounce "Western Individualism" and extol the "Asian values of family and community". The Western Individualism certainly deserves condemnation. But so does "Eastern" communitarianism that violates the dignity, significance and freedom of the individual human persons. All forms of corruption, as we have seen, violate human dignity. A weakening of the idea of individual significance makes it hard to initiate action for reform.

Let us compare the scene at the domestic terminal of Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi on any given morning with the scene at a bus stop in London. You expect to see the most educated and sophisticated Indians at the airport, and the “working class” people at the bus stop in London. The Europeans are individualists, we Indians are supposed to be respectful towards the others in the community. Surprisingly, however, it is the Western individualists who would spontaneously form a queue – even if it is after a hard day’s work, when they are anxious to get home, while we Indians push, shove and try to jump the queue. The folks in the West would even allow someone with special needs to go ahead of them. A parallel scene at the Inter State Bus Terminal at Kashmiri Gate, or in a cinema house, will be so bad that a self-respecting Indian would prefer not to even go there. What makes the difference?

Before looking at the factor that makes the difference, let us first look at another real life example. Earlier I described how a civil surgeon in Madhya Pradesh might first cut open the stomach of a sick woman, before demanding a bribe from her poor husband. The professionals giving post-operative care would later extract their pounds of flesh from the misery of the family. What happens if the same woman is taken to a mission hospital in a rural town, run by a “Western individualist?” I know of situations, where the patient needed blood, but the members of the celebrated “Asian family” would refuse to donate their blood for the poor woman. Neither her sons, nor her husband would give their blood for her. What does the individualistic American surgeon do? He donates his own blood before performing the surgery!

Of course that is comparing the worst of India with the best of the West, and that is unfair. But I’ve done that only after comparing the cream of Indians at New Delhi airport, with the common folk at a London bus stop! When a hundred members of a Hindu joint family come together, say for a wedding, the mutual relationships can indeed be very beautiful. Everyone knows where each stands in relation to the other, to whom they have to give respect and from whom they are entitled to receive it. Human relationships, however, become chaotic the moment the same people step out of the known social orbit. Then, usually, it is often each one for himself, unless, it is thought to be prudent to “oblige” someone, for a future need. If we deny ourselves for someone, usually, it is not because of his or her special need, but because of his or her special importance. Normally, in our culture, the strong do not serve the weak. The weak are required to serve the socially strong.

Secularization has caused the “self-reliance” of Western individualism to degenerate into selfishness. Consequently, it is very difficult now to even talk about individualism, without connoting selfishness. The cross of Jesus Christ, however, symbolizes radical individualism. It implies both Christ’s rejection *of* and Christ’s rejection *by* the world – that is, by his own culture. To take up one’s cross means to have the strength to stand alone, to reject and to accept rejection. St. Paul, who faced persistent persecution by the world and finally changed the world, said that he would boast of the cross through which he is dead to the world and the world is dead to him (Galatians 6:14). Paul’s fiercest enemies were the Jews – his own people, who saw him as the greatest threat to their culture.

The individualism that the cross symbolizes is not only radical, but also radically different than what the term now means. Far from self-centeredness, the cross represents an individual’s rejection of the world, including his caste and family, in favor of surrender to God. Jesus said that in order to be his disciple, a person must make his loyalty to his family secondary, deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him. (Matthew 10:20)

Neither Jesus’ family, nor his disciples wanted him to go to the cross. Before his arrest, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus himself prayed, “Father, if it were possible, take away this cup (the cross) from me.” But then he added, “Not my will, but yours be done.” (Mt 26:39). A person cannot reform his

community unless he is willing to transcend his community, by surrendering to God alone. Thus, the cross does symbolize individualism – a rejection of one’s family and community. But not self-centerdness, for it is a surrender to God. Moreover, the cross is not only an individual’s self-giving to God, it is his self-giving to God for others. During the “Last Supper”, a few hours before his arrest, Jesus explained to his disciples that in choosing the cross, he was giving his body to be broken for them. He took the Passover bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying that it symbolized his body. As bread gives life when it is broken and eaten, so would his body. Likewise, he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to them to drink, saying that this was his blood, which was about to be shed for the forgiveness of their sins.

The cross, thus, is simultaneously a rejection of the world, and also a giving of oneself to God for the world, to serve the world’s real interest. This makes the cross the source of civility: of affirming every individual’s worth, of preferring others before oneself, of winning with sacrificial love, rather than with the sword.

Although traditionally, the Hindu pantheon of gods does not include Jesus Christ as an incarnation of God, in principle Hinduism does not preclude that possibility. Islam, on the other hand, rejects that Jesus was God, or that he died on the cross. When questioned, I always ask my Muslim friends, “In rejecting the divinity of Christ, are you saying that God is not powerful enough to come to this earth, or are you saying that he is not compassionate enough to come?”

Obviously, it is hard to believe in an almighty, compassionate God and deny the possibility that he can come to this earth to save us. The Muslims reject incarnation on the ground that such a step does not befit the majesty of God. Can God become a dog, or a tomato?

Suppose the queen of a nation is visiting India. As her caravan is passing through a street in New Delhi, she spots a sick and scrawny child of a leprosy patient. She stops the caravan, steps out of the car and picks up the child and kisses and hugs him. This would indeed be against the normal protocol, but would it undermine her majesty? Or, would it affirm the dignity of the child? Suppose the queen goes on to donate her blood for that child? What would that say to the rest of the world?

Could the queen give her blood for a dog? She might be willing, but their bloods would not match. The Renaissance theologians who gave birth to the Western Humanism would have argued that God could not become a dog because the dog is not God’s image. That is not to say that the animals have no dignity. Every work of art reflects the glory of its creator. But the child of an artist is his image in a way that his art can never be. God could become man because the human beings are made “persons” – His image! Far from lowering the majesty of God, that understanding of incarnation and the cross gave birth to the high view of the human person that has been the unique contribution of the Western civilization to the rest of the world.

I go on to ask my Muslim friends: “Suppose one of my daughters rejects all my teachings, instructions and commands and gets into some bad company. She gets caught into a whirlpool of her own making and begins to sink. Her life is in danger. What would I do? Would I merely send more instructions and commands by e-mails and faxes, or would I, at some stage go myself, and do whatever I can to save her – even if it means giving up my own life?

“If I, as a selfish, sinful individual can choose that, why do you think that God can’t be more compassionate? Don’t you understand the implications of rejecting the cross?”

When you reject the cross, you reject the philosophical basis for affirming the unique value of human beings. You imply that while human beings are important enough for God to send prophets to them with commands and instructions, they are not important enough for God to come himself for their salvation.

Muslims are fond of saying that none of the Islamic states today, are Islamic. Islam ruled most of India for seven hundred years before the British. None of the Muslim states or dynasties was able to initiate building a society, where powerless citizens come first. Why? One reason is that by denying the cross on principle, Islam forecloses the possibility of putting individual human beings first. Just as every corrupt act is a practical denial of human worth, the cross is an intensely practical demonstration of the worth of every individual.

My Muslim friends invariably turn around and ask: “What about the Crusades?”

They forget that the Crusades represent the Islamization of Western Christendom. Islamic civilization was superior to the European civilization at the beginning of the second millennium (A. D.). Europe then looked up to the Islamic world and received many things from them, including the idea of using the sword to spread religion. The idea was rejected only when Europe returned to the Bible and accepted John Locke’s argument that a person cannot be a follower of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and at the same time use force to convert someone. Jesus’ method was the cross not the sword. He and his apostles won followers through self-sacrificing love, through arguments and through a demonstration of God’s power to bless. Thus, historically speaking, the cross is the source of tradition of tolerance as public policy— and tolerance is meaningful as a concept and practice only where real disagreement exists.

The above is neither to say that all Christians are tolerant, nor to suggest that no one who denies the cross can practice tolerance. The Buddhist emperor Ashoka and the Mogul emperor Akbar tried to make tolerance a feature of Indian governments. Their experiments, however, ended with them. The tolerance they introduce did not continue as a feature of Indian culture. It could not co-exist with caste. Civility cannot be a matter merely of legislation or policy. It has to be a matter of core principles of one’s worldview. It has to be rooted in the nature of ultimate reality – one’s God.

Many thoughtful Hindus are drawn towards the Relativists’ propaganda that makes tolerance synonymous with Relativism. Nothing can be more ironic. Paul Johnson’s study of the twentieth century entitled, *Modern Times*, is a massive demonstration that modern Relativism was a root-cause of the loss of tolerance in this century – in the fascist world, as well as in the communist world. By denying truth, Relativism is left with no option but to make force the basis of society. An Indian, however, does not need a Paul Johnson to point that out. Our whole culture is a testimony to that fact. The philosophical relativism of Hinduism resulted in the social absolutism of Indian society where individual rights were denied in favor of family, caste and tradition.

India must reject Western individualism, but it must allow the cross to liberate individuals. The cross calls us to surrender ourselves not to our castes and communities, but to God, for our neighbors. The cross is the ultimate antidote to covetousness and selfishness. It means more than being content with what we have. It means giving up our very lives for others.

5. The cross and suffering

Corruption and justice, both require force to sustain them. Is force then the ultimate arbiter? In most societies, in most periods of history, indeed it is.

Those committed to relativism have no choice, but to make force the ultimate arbiter of conflicts of interests. For the Relativists – especially the postmodern types – there is no such thing as “principles.” Human beings are driven only by *interests*, which they rationalize as *principles*. We do use arguments, but only to defend our interests, which we camouflage as “principles.” Ultimately, therefore, what matters, is not which principles are more reasonable (i.e., who has better arguments), but who has greater force. Democracy is a political system that was birthed by the “Modern” biblical mindset that began with the European Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. This worldview assumed that the universe was a moral system and that the human mind could know what was right. The Postmodern mind rejects those ideas, and therefore cannot possibly sustain a political system that requires a commitment to objective justice and righteousness.

However, moral absolutes, by themselves, are inadequate. Islam has them. But the Islamic civilizations have not been able to get out of the closed circle of power driven politics. Why? The answer is that Islam does not have the cross. That is not to say that no Muslim ruler has ever been just, but to affirm that no Muslim ruler has ever been able to establish a durable political system in which the highest political power is under the rule of righteous law. Force remains supreme in Islamic societies. It is up to the individual ruler whether he uses his power more frequently for good or for evil. The Islamic press cannot critique, Islamic courts cannot overrule, and the masses cannot veto even the most vicious Muslim rulers. Power stays above principles. Historically, the record of Hindu, Chinese and Japanese rulers was generally worse, because they did not even have an objective law against which their rule could be judged.

The cross breaks through the closed circle. It puts a commitment to principles above the love or fear of power. A “commitment to principles” could, of course, mean a heartless legalism. The cross escapes that because the supreme “principle” that the cross represents is love for God and for one’s neighbors.

Corruption, i.e., the kingdom of Satan, survives by fear, the fear of being shamed; the fear of physical suffering; and most supremely, the fear of death. The cross takes the weapon of the kingdom of Satan, and turns it against Satan. The New Testament explains: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” (Hebrews 2: 14-15)

Although I am generally using the word “suffering” to include shame, persecution and martyrdom, it is helpful to look at how each of them contributes to corruption and is dealt with by the cross. First, *shame*:

Many social scientists have pointed out a basic difference between Western civilizations that were shaped by the preaching of the cross and non-Western civilizations. Traditionally, the consciousness of guilt has been a driving factor in the West. The non-Western world, by and large, has been more concerned with shame. In his *Apology for Promoting Christianity in India* in India (1812) Claudius Buchanan told a heart-rending story that illustrates the power of shame in Indian culture. A widow of Vaucha-ramu, a Brahmin, had to commit Sati with her dead husband at Mujilupur, South of Calcutta. The cremation got delayed until sunset. The smoke and the heat made the widow change her mind. She managed to wriggle out of the funeral pyre and hid in the bushes. When the smoke had cleared, the mourners saw that there was only one body on the pyre. A (wo)manhunt began. The son found his mother and began to drag her to the fire. She cried and begged with the young man who owed his life to her, to please let her live. The son replied that if she lived, he would be shamed in his caste and that would be worse than death. So it is better for her to die!

Sati, of course, was banned in 1829. But the culture of shame continues. At this very moment, in 1998, I am involved in a counseling situation. A 30-year-old highly educated Hindu young man wants to marry a beautiful, equally well educated, 28-year-old young woman. Both are single and have very good jobs. The boy's educated and affluent family has already abducted him once. They abused him and kept him locked up for four days, and are threatening to kill the girl and her parents. Why? Not because of animosity, but because for the boy to have a love-marriage outside his community is to bring shame on the family. The sin and crime of murder are less heinous in our culture than social shame. What does this distorted outlook and social corruption have to do with economic corruption?

Why would a typical Indian family pay a huge dowry to marry their daughter to a Government officer? Is it not because he has the power and plenty of opportunity to abuse his position to extract bribes? To take a bribe and pervert justice does not bother us, but for the son-in-law to get caught would be a matter of shame. Purity is more a matter of external rituals and appearance, than a matter of heart. Given a choice, would not the family reject an equally good young man who did not have the power to extract bribes? Wouldn't the family be ashamed of marrying their daughter into a relatively poor, although principled, home?

Agreed, that we do not have many young heroes who have the spiritual resources to prefer the shame of relative poverty to the sinfulness of corruption, but don't you see that we cannot fight corruption without first dealing with this shame driven social milieu? We condemn Western individualism and boast of our family and community orientation. In reality, it is our individualistic pursuit of wealth, at the cost of the community's need for social ethics that makes us a poor nation. Unfortunately even those theologians who talk the most about the poor, and against the "Prosperity Gospel", do not understand the paradox Jesus taught: *Prosperity comes to a culture which has strong individuals who can choose the shame of poverty, by putting righteousness above wealth.* "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness then all these things will be added unto you." (Matt 6:33 etc.)

A reliance on Western Bible teachers does harm us in many ways. One of these is that, because the West has little problem with shame they neither remember, nor teach, how the cross liberated Christendom from the oppressive culture of shame. Although the Western exposition of the cross often sees it as Jesus taking our guilt upon him, the Gospel story says more. Here is how Luke explains how the cross was as much about shame as about sin:

"The men who were guarding Jesus began *mocking* and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, 'Prophesy! Who hit you?' And they said many other *insulting* things to him." (Lk. 22: 63-65)

"Then Herod and his soldiers *ridiculed* and *mocked* him. Dressing him in an elegant robe they sent him back to Pilate."

"The people stood watching [Jesus on the cross], and the rulers *sneered* at him. They said, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen one.'

"The soldiers also came up and *mocked* him . . . There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. One of the criminals who hung there, hurled *insults* at him: 'aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us.'" (Lk. 23: 11, 35, 36, 38, 39)

The cross is the ultimate expression of an Asian culture using shame to coerce one its members to fall in line, to conform to its code. The New Testament says that in enduring the cross, Jesus turned

his culture's weapon of shame against his culture, he "scorned" or "despised" its shame. (Hebrews 12:2). He refused to be ashamed of what they wanted him to be ashamed of. Instead, he made them ashamed of what they ought to have been ashamed of.

Why can't we get rid of corruption, in spite of all the solid pragmatic reasons that we have looked at? Why does the darkness of the kingdom of Satan survive? The ancient disease of corruption persists because like the ancient Babylonians we still seek our own honor. We love the praise of men rather than God's approval. Therefore, we do not choose the cross, the antidote to this disease. Jesus said to his corrupt generation:

"I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God." (John 5: 41-44)

We live in a moment of history when by rejecting the Gospel the Western world has also lost its earlier self-confidence and its drive to "civilize" the world. Not just the *Hindutva* movement, but also the West, including the Christian West is exerting immense pressure to make us conform to our indigenous cultures. But our culture of corruption is the culture of darkness, the kingdom of Satan. We should be ashamed of a desire to conform to the image of the postmodern West. But should we be ashamed of following Christ? In order to change his world, Jesus deliberately rejected his family's culture of conformity, in order to find honor from the world:

"After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea . . . But when the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world . . . Jesus told them, 'The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the Feast. . . . However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. . . . Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach . . . 'My teaching is not my own, it comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.'" (John 7: 1-19)

We Indians love Jesus' "golden" rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do to you". So usually we become nice to others and oblige them, only if we sense that some day we might need favors from them. However, a more radical feature of Jesus' ethic that India needs to appropriate is, to deny oneself. Jesus said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. . . . If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:23-26)

What did Jesus mean by denying oneself and taking up our cross daily? The *Naga Sadhus* (naked ascetics) deny every thing to themselves, including clothes. However, one thing they are fiercely attached to is their honor. They literally kill each other for the honor of being the first to take the holy dip in the Kumbh Melas. One of the central meanings of denying oneself is to turn a weapon of the kingdom of Satan against that kingdom. Instead of seeking honor for ourselves we must choose to

accept rejection, shame and humiliation. The cross calls us to step out of the culture that uses shame to make us conform. We are to follow Jesus:

“Who also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the *disgrace* he bore.” (Hebrews 13:12-13)

The power to inflict physical pain is a *second form of suffering* that sustains corruption. My friend Ram Singh was in jail, yet he was able to extort as much money as he needed from the merchants in Chhatarpur. I was amazed to see a merchant come to the prison cell, touch Ram Singh’s feet and give him money, so that he could pay his lawyers’ fee. One of Ram Singh’s gangsters in my cell, who later became my co-worker, explained the secret. “Remember the bomb last month that exploded in that shop [less than a hundred yards from the police station]? The owner had refused to pay the amount we had demanded. The cyclist who threw the bomb is the one who requested this man to help pay the lawyers’ fee. Now we don’t need to threaten anyone. People give even without asking.”

Recently, a friend remarked that pick pocketing had drastically reduced in Bombay. A shopkeeper explained that only the *modus operandi* had changed. Those who used to pick pockets now come as political activists and request donations for their party. Then they go and party in five-star hotels!

Some years ago, Mr. Ram Jethmalani, an eminent lawyer and at present a Union Minister said in a public lecture in New Delhi, that every police officer in Punjab had become a multi-millionaire, since the law gave special powers to the Punjab police to detain suspected terrorists without trial. A police officer needs to kill only one young man in a fake “encounter” to extort ransom from a thousand families. This is not to say that India no longer has any good politicians or officers. But it is to affirm the unpleasant truth that our culture of corruption is obliterating the distinction between criminals, police, politicians and religious leaders! The Punjab problem went out of hand when the Sikh leaders allowed murderers to turn their most sacred temple into a permanent base for criminal terrorism. The press has named the criminals whom the BJP – the champion of Hindu cultural nationalism – has made ministers. Likewise a pastor in Bangalore said to me that the Bishop of the Church of South India sent two jeep loads of criminals to beat him up! His story may or may not have been true, but I had no good reason to doubt its probability. In a north-Indian city, such as Indore (M.P.), from where some of my roots come, that behavior from a Bishop would be a familiar part of our culture. However, I was sad to hear that a sophisticated city such as Bangalore had finally caught up with North India. I didn’t investigate the pastor’s story as I had already seen several newspaper reports that made his allegation credible. The relevant question is, should the pastor respond with three jeep-loads of gangsters? That course of action would cost him nothing. The militant outfits of other religions would gladly oblige the pastor, as long as he can convince the press that his “supporters” were Christians, or at least brought by Christians. Or, alternatively, should the pastor prostrate at the Bishop’s feet and become his sycophant, until an opportunity presents itself to strike back effectively? That would also be a culturally predictable response.

But are those the only alternatives? You are not wrong if you are saying to yourself that it is unrealistic to expect a pastor neither to counter crime with crime, nor to bow his knees before evil, but to stand firmly for justice and to take the consequences of that stand. That is indeed the way of the cross. And, I totally agree that to walk this way is impossible without the supernatural power to die to self and to be alive unto God. This is where Dr. Schaeffer’s exposition of true spirituality as the basic necessity for a moral regeneration of India comes in. My pastor friend ought to be grateful for his Bishop who has given him an opportunity to learn spirituality that he could not learn in his course in seminary. India has no hope of finding deliverance from criminal-rulers, without our pastors coming to terms with the supernatural nature of Christian spirituality. The Western Church

often reduces the Holy Spirit to a matter of personal ecstasy, or at best, of emotional catharsis and physical healing. In the New Testament one of the transformations that the Holy Spirit brought about in the disciples was to strengthen them to take up their cross in a confrontation with the kingdom of Satan. In the garden of Gethsamne they fled from persecution. The Holy Spirit turned them into martyrs – those who live unto God.

As we saw in Hebrews 2: 14-15, the fear of death is the *third* and the ultimate weapon of the kingdom of Satan. The contemporary Western exposition of the cross fails to notice that the cross does more than delivering us from our sin and its consequences. Jesus died and rose again so that, “by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” Hindu leaders, such as Swami Vivekananda, found the western Gospel to be obnoxiously cheap, because its beginning and end appears to be that Jesus died so that Christians can get a free ride to heaven. Did Jesus ask us to pray that we might go to heaven, or that the kingdom of heaven might come on this earth?

The cross is the way into the kingdom of heaven because it makes death – the ultimate weapon of the kingdom of Satan – impotent. The Jews could not have arrested Jesus, let alone kill him during the Passover festival. The crowds that followed him enthusiastically were his buffer during the day. The soldiers that were sent to arrest him returned saying that it was impossible to arrest him without causing riots. At night Jesus did not sleep in a building that could be raided. A group of soldiers marching with torches cannot find a small group in a garden on a mountain. The soldiers would be visible; the darkness would be a cover for Jesus and his disciples. Ram Singh's father, the most famous dacoit (bandit) in our area, dogged police for three decades, as he went about robbing, extorting people and building temples.

Jesus said, no one could take his life from him, he was laying it down voluntarily. (John 10: 14-18) Obviously a merchant does not have the advantages that Jesus had. He cannot hide his shop from the cyclist who would hurl a bomb into it. Is it wiser for the merchant to submit to extortion or to die? After all, it is really his customers who eventually pay. Since he cannot fight the criminals-turned-politicians, wouldn't it be wiser for him to make friends with them and use their power to settle scores with his business rivals? It certainly would be, but then the Indian economy and quality of life, would, forever, remain substandard.

There is no dearth of “Christian” theologians who argue that it is narrow mindedness to claim that Jesus is the “only way”. My problem is that I honestly do not see any other exit for us. Like Peter, I have to say that Jesus “alone has the words of eternal life” (John 6: 68) and that “there is no other name under heaven, given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) The message of the cross, the invitation to die, *is* foolishness. But, as Paul says, the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man. (1 Corinthians 1: 25)

The point about the cross is that Jesus waived the advantages that he had to save his life, in favor of doing his Father's will for him to go to the cross. Choosing cross, thus, is a matter of knowing God enough to trust him. Eternal life is to know God, not just to go to heaven. (John 17: 3) As Dr. Schaeffer expounds, the heart of the biblical spirituality is that “The just shall live by faith”. (Galatians 3: 11) A faith that is willing to choose the cross is the power “that overcomes the world.” (1 John 5: 4)

Without the Resurrection, it would be a hopeless task to inspire people to choose the cross. If death is the unpredictable but final reality, then James Cameron, the director of the superhit movie, *Titanic*, is absolutely right: the present moment is all that we have; to deny ourselves is foolishness. *Titanic* is a

glorious achievement of the technological revolution in the West, but that revolution could not have even begun on the basis of Cameron's philosophy. To deny ourselves, to save, to invest in the future, whether we live to enjoy it or not, are amongst the basic ingredients of the traditional economic wisdom of the west. Christ's disciples, such as St. Thomas, could deny themselves, come to India and choose martyrdom because, having met with the risen Christ, they knew first hand that death was not the end. Jesus had overcome it.

Jesus' death and resurrection freed his disciples from the fear of death, making Satan's ultimate weapon redundant. The cross is not a commitment to abstract moral absolutes. It means to trust and obey the living God, our Father, the giver of life. No individual is more powerful than one who has ceased to fear death. He walks with his coffin over his head, that is, with his cross on his shoulders. The trapeze artists are able to perform their wonderful feats at fearsome heights, because they know that if they fall, the net below them would save them. The resurrection gives us a robust spirituality because it plays a similar role in Christian life. The Eternal life is not a selfish enjoyment of heaven; it is a life of conflict and triumph here on this earth, a spirituality that turns the world upside down.

6. *The cross and community*

The foregoing exposition of the cross could give an impression that the cross is a matter of individual heroism: The daring individual, unafraid of death, commits himself or herself to moral principles and takes on a corrupt system. That would clearly be inadequate. The cross has triumphed because it succeeded in creating a voluntary community of disciples – the Church. That is why *True Spirituality* involves “substantial healing” in the area of human relationships. The cross is the anti-thesis of the Hindu ideal of a spiritual person who renounces community in pursuit of *self*-realization. Most “holy” saints are often those who are so immersed in themselves that they do not even talk to those who visit them in their caves. Some Christians do seem to think that the only purpose of Jesus' death was to take their souls into the bliss of heaven. But is Jesus seeking individual souls or a bride – the Church? Jesus' body was broken to make his disciples into one body, his Church; his washing of the disciples' feet was meant to teach them to serve one another; Jesus' last prayer for his disciples was that they may be one (John 17: 21).

Corruption is a social issue; and, community problems usually do not have individualistic solutions. Suppose our village is infected with malaria. We learn that the mosquitoes that breed in stagnant waters spread malaria. Can you be safe from malaria if you clean up your backyard and do not allow mosquitoes to breed there? Obviously not! Your safety is dependent on an organized, united effort by the whole community. So it is with corruption. An individual's determination to make 50 trips to the telephone department for a minor repair would achieve little unless a community is created that shares his values and is stirred up by his voluntary suffering. His suffering can become a blessing to everyone if it moves us out of our apathy.

We do have to come to the cross as individuals. It does call us to assume moral responsibility for our own choices. Just as Jesus died when he became sin for us, so shall we suffer unless we repent. Repentance means to take individual responsibility for our sins and to accept God's grace for our salvation. It is right to be concerned with the flaws in our society, but the cross calls us, first of all, to come to terms with our own flaws and transgressions. We (human beings) are more important to God than our social structures. Although He made us in his Triune image, for family and community, (Genesis 1: 27) Jesus said that ultimately each of us would have to stand before God as individuals. (Matthew 25:31-46)

To repent is to ask for forgiveness for the sins that we have committed. We must go on to receive God's Holy Spirit so that we may live by his law – not by our private values. God's law, however, is summed up in the command to love God with all our being, and our neighbor as our selves. Repentance towards God, therefore, involves getting right with our neighbors. We find forgiveness for our sins because of Christ's righteousness, not ours. However, the proof of forgiveness is that we forgive others who sin against us. Jesus went to the extent of saying that we will not be forgiven; our worship and sacrifices will not be accepted, unless we first forgive others and get reconciled with our brothers and sisters. (Matthew 5: 23-24; 6: 14-15)

Becoming a community implies going beyond forgiving one another. John explains the community creating power of the cross:

“ This is how we know who the children of Children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Any one who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brothers. . . . This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear Children let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” (1 John 3: 10-18)

The battle against corruption calls us to carry our cross, to become a community by a willingness to “carry each other's burdens, . . . [which] fulfills the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

7. The cross and conflict

Why is the power of darkness growing in India? One reason, as we saw earlier, is that far too many people confuse spirituality with “Going Within” or with spiritism, astrology, numerology, palmistry, and fatalistic resignation to karma, fate or destiny – *Kaliyuga* (The dark age that ushers in the end). But as we shall see, what many Indians, including Christians, call “spirituality” is in fact a denial even of our humanity. Jesus asked us to pray that God's kingdom may come and His will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. In contrast, our prayers never seem to go beyond a desire to go to heaven and have a comfortable life here.

The cross is a radical refusal to compromise with the evils of the social *status quo*. It is a costly confrontation with corruption. Jesus said that the world hates him because he testifies that what it does is evil. (John 7: 7). Although he is the “prince of peace,” Jesus is a peacemaker, not a peace lover. A peace lover stays away from conflicts. The peacemaker gets involved in unjust, oppressive situations. As I have shown in my book *Truth and Social Reform*, a peacemaker is necessarily a troublemaker. He disturbs an oppressive social system in order to make “all things new.” Jesus said, “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism [cross] to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed. Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.” (Luke 12: 49-51)

To compromise with corruption is to enslave ourselves. It is to build a society where we are not even free to be honest. The cross is not a passive acceptance of evil, but a fearless opposition to evil – and of taking the consequences of that opposition.

Why is an acceptance of the evil *status quo* a violation of our humanity?

I often ask my audience: “Suppose you have returned home late. Your home is dark. What is the first thing you would do?”

“We’ll turn on the light,” is the usual reply.

“But you’re in Mussoorie, and there’s no power.”

“We’ll light a candle.”

“But you’ve forgotten to buy matches.”

“Well, we’ll just go to sleep.”

“What if the lights don’t come on the whole of the next day, and you face the prospect of spending another night in darkness? Suppose there has been a *bandh*, and the city is in curfew. The markets are closed.”

“We’ll try and borrow matches, or else get two stones, or sticks to get a spark to start a fire.”

“Good! Now imagine that it is your dog, which goes ahead of you into your dark house. What will it do?”

“Nothing. It’ll just find its place and lie down.”

My final question is: “Why is it that you do something or the other to create light, but your dog does not?”

Normally I find that very few people give a satisfactory answer, to the last question. The correct answer is that we make light, because while we are made in the image of the Creator who made light, our dog is not. Animals are not creative in the sense that they do not create culture and history.

The first chapter of the Old Testament tells us what it means for God and us to be creative. God is not limited by what is. The existing realities do not determine his boundaries. He is the Creator. That means that he transcends what is. He imagines what ought to be and creates it. He saw darkness, but was not limited by it. He proceeded to create light. (Genesis 1:2-3)

What is true in the physical sphere is equally true in the social sphere. The New Testament begins a description of Christ’s ministry with the declaration that “the people living in great darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the shadow of death a light has dawned.” (Matthew 4: 16). Jesus’ audience had their lamps, but Jesus declared, “I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8: 12) Jesus went on to promise his disciples that if they follow him, their lives too would become lights of the world. (Matthew 5: 14)

Because we are creative, neither our homes, nor our society need to remain in darkness. Neither the physical darkness, nor the socio-spiritual darkness is invincible. God does not accept our moral-spiritual darkness as final, nor should we. Jesus came as the light to transform our lives to become lights of this world. True spirituality is to become light. It is by burning itself out on the cross that Jesus became the light of the world. To accept the darkness of the social *status quo* is to deny our humanness as creative creatures. It is to disobey God’s call to us to be “light”; “to expose the works of darkness” (Ephesians 5: 11); “to live as the children of light.” (Ephesians 5: 8)

A clash of darkness and light is unavoidable. The cross, like every other war is a bloody and costly affair. The only thing worse than a war is to be in a war and to not know that you are in a war, for then your doom is assured. A Church that chooses not to fight corruption will definitely be destroyed by it.

One of my brothers said to me, “Do not go to the Christian hospital?”

“Why?”

“I went there. They gave me a course of antibiotics. Nothing happened. So I went to Dr. . . . he gave me the same antibiotic and it worked. Obviously the Christian hospital is buying and dispensing spurious drugs.”

I met the Medical Superintendent of that evangelical hospital, in our usual Tuesday night Bible Study in his home. I told him exactly what my brother had said. The Doctor responded, “You know, your brother may be right. I have been wondering myself: why my treatment does not work and why we keep losing patients. This could be the explanation. Some of the our officers must be buying medicines in exchange for kickbacks.”

What happens when a religious institution spends Rs. 20,000 as a bribe? The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Christian organization is a “man of God”. He does not want to dirty his hands. So he asks the administrator to do the dirty job. But how do you account for Rs. 20,000? The administrator has to ask the accountant and the cashier to make false vouchers. The CEO has to sign them. The auditor, who knows that these vouchers are false has to accept them, the Board of Governors and the Members of the Society – all “men and women of God” – have to approve an audit report that they know is false. The international donor agencies know that they cannot trust the Indian audit reports, but they have to keep financing the institution.

The administrator is not necessarily known as a great man of God. So a rumor starts, and is believed, that he did not give Rs. 20,000. Actually he gave only Rs. 10,000 in bribes, and used the rest to buy a VCR as an anniversary gift for his wife! So, the next time round, the CEO decides to do the dirty job himself. Of course, to try and save “the Lord’s money.” After all, didn’t he take the responsibility when he signed the fake vouchers?

Now the administrator’s honor has been violated. If the CEO has not actually deprived him of the extra income, he is, at least, suspicious of the administrator’s integrity. The administrator’s wife, therefore, starts to gossip against the CEO – that “he bribes; he makes false vouchers; he may be pocketing the money. Who knows how much money he raises for himself when he goes abroad? He may even have a secret Swiss account!” Soon the other staff, who may have personal, administrative or policy-related grudges against the institution, join the chorus against the CEO.

In due time the CEO ceases to be looked upon as a “man of God.” He is only a “great fund-raiser” and a “persuasive speaker.” The CEO realizes that he has lost his spiritual authority. The only authority he is left with is administrative and economic. He also learns that if he signs on a voucher, no one – neither the auditor, nor the Board, nor the Society – would question it. So, one day his wife wants to fly to Bombay to meet her sister who is returning from the Middle-East; without any hassle, the CEO approves the expense as the institution’s public-relations trip. In any case, his wife had already been using the institution’s phone to talk to her family all over the world. Those who were earlier gossiping, now have solid evidence of corruption. The organizational battles then degenerate into personal conflicts for power, destroying the organization itself.

The moral of the story is that it is not possible for a Christian institution to exist in a culture of corruption and to ignore it. When Marxism, or evolutionism, are in the air they invariably penetrate our churches. If sexual revolution and divorce are in the air then they too come into our homes and institutions, often uninvited. When corruption becomes a part of the air we breathe, it cannot be kept at a safe distance. Corruption cannot be ignored as something that is the “world’s problem”, not ours’. It would be simplistic to reason that we cannot get involved because the battle against corruption is not a part of the aims, objectives, and by-laws of our churches and institutions. Is it a part of your Church’s constitution to bribe?

We no longer have the luxury of ignoring the issue and shoving it under the rug. Our choice is to either fight corruption, or be destroyed by it. The cross calls us to conflict, but not merely as individuals, but to become a community that is in conflict. As I have discussed in *Truth and Social Reform*, when Jesus announced his intention to create a Church for the very first time, he made it clear that his church would be a community in conflict:

“ I will build my church . . . and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16: 18)

Why would the forces of death fight against Christ’s community? The answer is that the Church was meant to be a community that cares for the sheep, the helpless lambs. The wolves are happy when the poor sheep are without a shepherd. They hate it when a good shepherd appears on the scene. Jesus said that a good shepherd has to lay down his life for the sheep. When the wolves come, does the good shepherd lie down on the ground and invite the wolves to eat him? No, he lays down his life because he resists the wolves, defending the sheep to the point of laying down his life.

Does the phrase “and the gates of hell will not prevail against” the Church connote a passive, defensive action? By no means! Gates are not weapons of offense, but of defense. Jesus did not say that the forces of evil would attack the gates of the Church, but will not succeed in entering the Church. The word picture Jesus paints is that his Church will be an offensive force morally; it would take the battle to the enemy’s gate, and those gates will not be able to withstand the onslaught of Christ’s *ecclesia*.

“But how can we really fight corruption?”

Let us imagine the following scenario: A city has several dozen churches with excellent leadership – godly, dedicated, self-sacrificing, enterprising, competent and learned. Many of them run large programs and also have a sense of community. Several of these leaders already meet together for regular prayer breakfasts.

Imagine that these Christian leaders and Pastors resolve to launch a united prayerful offensive against corruption. They call all Christian leaders for a day’s seminar on corruption; three different opinions emerge during the discussion. A fortnight later, they spend three evenings during which they look at each of the viewpoints carefully. They pray and study the Bible. They begin to see some dimensions of Christian discipleship that they had never seen before. The group splits. Some leaders of the “bride of Christ” decide that it is too dangerous to live in Satan’s kingdom and refuse to serve as his mistress. Other faction, fully aware of their weakness, vulnerability and previous failures, are humble enough to modify their understanding of Christian spirituality. The second party comes to a consensus that they would be faithful to their Lord.

They prepare a booklet and then call all concerned Christians to come together to study the issue. Pastors begin to study the scriptures with new eyes and speak on the subject of corruption. They

equip laymen to use corruption as an entry point for a discussion about true spirituality. Christians in that city begin to pray for our nation. Special seminars are conducted on true spirituality and corruption. A two-week campaign is launched, after two hundred Christians, who are conscientious about their walk with God, have been trained to discuss and debate corruption.

Some institutional leaders who have become too trapped in corruption pooh-pooh and even actively oppose the campaign. They become the mouthpiece of “the accuser of our brothers” – the Devil (Revelation 12: 10). They attempt to dig up the past failures, real or alleged, of those who are seeking to walk in the light now. But the faithful ones are undeterred. They repent of the earlier sins and meekly bear the humiliation of trumped up allegations. They make changes in the priorities of their churches and institutions to enable teams of volunteers to go to schools, colleges, parks and other public places, singing, performing skits and teaching what they have learned. They sell literature and make corruption an issue of citywide conversation. Christians begin to write about their concern in local newspapers and magazines.

Then come a few public rallies to which all people are invited. The speakers, singers and actors perform short plays. The Christian community publicly repents for its participation in corruption in the past. It seeks to get right with God. Many people resolve to walk with God and support one another when they face problems that are too difficult for them individually. An anti-corruption cell is set up. It has a team, led by a full time volunteer, a retired professor and a pastor. A Christian family or an institution offers them a room for their office. They develop or procure literature, and through regular Bible studies promote an understanding of true spirituality that we have discussed. They start building relationships with the local authorities and with the press at the local and national level, informally networking with similar groups that are being formed in various cities in India. Now we are ready for action.

The electricity department demands a bribe before giving a new connection to the Christian hospital few miles away. The hospital informs the cell. The cell speaks to the appropriate authorities. Nothing happens. It asks a journalist to write a story on the hospital and its problem with the electricity department. The story appears, but nothing moves. The cell then takes the matter to the Christian forums that had promised to support all those who want to live holy lives. They agree that if the electric connection were not given within two days they would close down their institution and march to the office of the District magistrate, requesting action. The children in Christian schools begin to look forward to the following day when, instead of studying, they will be marching on the street – asking their parents and elders to stop being corrupt.

The local and the national media begin to notice this new spiritual vitality. Each new battle with a department, e.g., water, telephone, police, income tax, brings new allies. Christians begin to participate creatively in structural issues that the community faces – issues that cause problems, such as water shortages. They begin to interact with the intellectual and social life of the community. Individuals and groups from other religious communities join hands with Christians. In the context of a common concern and action, they become open to study the biblical understanding of spirituality.

It is quite possible for such a battle against corruption to deteriorate into shallow activism. That has sometimes happened with the campaign against abortion that Dr. Schaeffer helped initiate in the west. Shallow activism is a hallmark of an age that does not believe in truth. A stark example of this is in the film, *The City of Joy*. Doctor William Carey started a reform movement in Bengal in the early nineteenth century because he initiated a clash of ideas. The Doctor in the *City of Joy* has no ideas. His fight against social evils, therefore, is purely reactionary and existential. It creates no

lasting ripples. At the end of the twentieth century, the existential reality in the real “City of Joy” is captured by the following newspaper story:

“PHONE COMES ALIVE AFTER DEATH

FROM AVIJIT NANDI MAZUMDAR

Howrah, April 16:

In death he achieved what he could not in life: making the telephone at his home work.

The day after he committed suicide to protest corruption among telephone staff, the telephone at Suhrid Ganguly’s Dharamtalla Lane residence in Howrah began working today.

The bribe the staff had demanded when they came to repair the line last Saturday had not been given. The price was higher.

Twenty-two-year-old Suhrid could have been a successful engineer. Instead, he chose to take his life, unable to cope with the corruption that is so much a part of our lives.

‘We are living in such a system where it is difficult to live...My family is not responsible for my death. It’s me and the system (corruption) who are responsible and those who practice it, they are responsible. To compromise with principles is a part of death,’ he wrote in one of the two lengthy suicide notes he left behind for his mother and the police.

Howrah’s superintendent of police, Surajit Kar Purakayastha, said the two telecom employees named and described by Suhrid in the notes were arrested on charges of corruption and abetment to suicide.”

Individually we are as weak as Suhrid to fight corruption. The battle, therefore, has to be a community effort. Before Suhrid could fight corruption he needed to help build a community that is committed to supporting him live a holy life. The campaign against corruption cannot be successful as long as faith is privatized. The campaign has to be focussed on a recovery of true spirituality in a community setting, in a Church, in the public arena. The battle would need the enthusiasm and idealism of the youth. But it cannot succeed unless rooted in a credible worldview. The intellectual emptiness of Postmodernism can only lead to tragic despair such as Suhrid’s.

What would happen if our actions were rooted both in community and in careful reflection? What if they were genuinely directed against false ideas and evil practices, not against specific individuals, institutions and political parties? We would begin a transformation of our culture if we challenged not merely corrupt acts, but distorted beliefs. We would then initiate a ferment that would be comparable to what happened when the Gospel entered the public arena in Bengal in the early 1800s. At that time the planting of the Gospel’s seed in India began her regeneration. It will do so again. What will bring “substantial healing” to India? Is it “Economic Liberalization” and the “Structural Reforms,” imposed by the international moneylenders? Prophet Isaiah predicted that it is from the wounds of Christ that the healing would come for the nations (Isaiah 53:5).

