

CONFRONTING THE MORAL CRISIS IN THE WORLD, IN ME!

-Fr. M.K.George, SJ

Polls say that the People of the United States of America will not hesitate to elect a declared felon to be their President. In India, 'as many as 251 (46 per cent) of the 543 newly elected Lok Sabha members have criminal cases registered against them and 27 of them have been convicted' (Association of Democratic Reforms, Jun 6, 2024). None of those who voted seemed to have any qualm of conscience. Take many other countries in the world and the situation is no different.

There is a severe moral crisis in the world today. And, we are all part of it.

The moral mangroves

In an insightful article titled, 'How America has lost its mooring?' Thomas L. Friedman uses the imagery of mangroves. Mangroves are tropical plants that are adapted to loose, wet soils, salt water and are periodically submerged by tides. They do a huge service to the earth. 'Mangrove forests capture massive amounts of carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, and then trap and store them in their carbon-rich flooded soils for millennia. This is an important ecosystem service as we face climate change'. Increasing destruction of mangroves is hurting the earth. Floods are an obvious example.

Friedman says, 'In nature, as in Society, when you lose your mangroves, you get flooding with lots of mud'. He identifies the moral mangroves that we are losing: First, the mangrove of shame. More and more people, especially leaders have no shame in doing the most immoral actions. Second, the mangrove of civility. In the recent Indian elections, most of our political leaders threw civility to the wind. Abusive hate speeches were heard all over during the campaign. A third moral mangrove is that of religious observance. More and more people are leaving religious practices and religious faith. The net result is there are lesser moral controls. Then there is the mangrove of healthy local newspapers. Now, all over the world, media is controlled by corporate business interests and as clearly manifested in Indian elections, the mainstream media had become spokespersons for divisive tendencies.

Most religions have a crisis of moral leadership. No religion is an exception. Interests of money, power and even sex are controlling many religious leaderships. As a result, there are two major tragic consequences. One, people are losing interest in religions. Second, in western surveys the percentages of 'NONES' (those not belonging to any religion) is on great increase. For instance, in 2027-19, Europe recorded a non-affiliation rate of 30.2 per cent against an average of non-European countries of 21 per cent. Current numbers will be much higher. Net result, a whole tradition of moral controls are missing.

The impact on Society, nature and the future

When a Society fails to live morally and ethically, the impact on the people and nature are huge and the very sustainability of humanity is at stake. As Martin Scorsese, the filmmaker observed, 'When a Society is not based on a moral foundation or spiritual foundation, then the corruption sets in easily.' Profit over humans, and power over service become the reality. Killing thousands of children and women in the name of war is neglected.

I too am responsible!

It is easy to blame our political and religious leaders for the moral rot we are in. However, we forget that each of us have a role in redeeming the situation. It is when I, as an individual dare to live in accordance with moral principles that I will have the moral courage to question my leaders. Remember, Jesus our Master, lived an intensely moral life so he could challenge the corrupt leadership of his times.

Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us, 'If we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover these precious values - that all reality hinges on moral foundations and that all reality has spiritual control.'



Fr. M.K. George, formerly Principal of Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum, is currently General Counsellor to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus in Rome. He can be contacted at gmutholil@gmail.com