

GLOBALIZATION – THREAT TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Dr. J. Xavier Ilango
St Paul's Seminary, Tiruchirapalli

The dream of an ordinary Indian today is often nothing more than to have two square meals per day, a shelter to rest peacefully after toiling for hours together and a decent dress to cover oneself. If an average person in Indian society can dream of possessing only such basic necessities of life, then what does it signify? There are millions and millions who are deprived of even the basic life sustenance and they feel life is impossible for them. Their present and future look so bleak. In this age of globalization their world is not that of affluence but of impoverishment. Their struggles are not to get the maximum from the global consumer market but to fight for the minimum to sustain their lives and to escape the unethical inroads of consumerism in their lives. The struggles of the millions for survival is the undesired result of globalization. The success of globalization is in covering up everything in the name of unlimited affluence and service to the whole globe. "Globalization has thrown a huge blanket of lie to cover up the actual situation of dehumanization and exclusion. As a process of exclusion and disintegration – contrary to the impression of unity it projects – globalization is at the root of many human right violations."¹ Our allegation begins here with the victims' point of view taking the center stage. Violation of human rights has become a common phenomenon. Despite the fact that the causes of violating human

¹ Felix Wilfred, "Asia and Human Rights in the Age of Globalization," *Vaiharai* Vol.5:1 (March 2000) 35.

rights vary from context to context, globalization stands to be the unique source that subtly victimizes millions and yet goes unnoticed. Our aim is to uncover such lies that cover up so many realities of dehumanization and to find alternatives that ensure human dignity.

ECONOMIC INVASIONS²

The economic aspect of globalization implies the movements of goods, capital and labor across national boundaries. This movement of goods across national boundaries is called as international trade. International trade is quite competitive and this is not as free as the trade within a nation. Though every nation tries to restrict the goods that flow from other countries, closing the local market totally to foreign nations may not create a healthy situation in the local market. The quality of production and the prices can be affected by such a policy. Only by opening up national boundaries to global competition, more goods and better options will be available to the consumer. Such an integration of the local market with the global economy is identified as globalization. "For many people globalization means precisely that – opening up of national boundaries and thus integrating national economies to the global economy."³

The advantages of capital flowing from other countries to a particular local market are many. 1) Foreign capital will bring in resources; 2) The economic growth will be promoted by new technology and expertise; 3) The local consumers will have the option of varied goods to choose from; 4) This will lead to international competition in the market and the efficiency in production will increase. Such advantages have to be understood only in the context of the nature of the foreign capital. If the foreign capital is under a private corporation, it will not have sufficient public accountability. One who controls the capital desires to extract the maximum return from his capital. Every TNC invades the third world nations and invests at its own will with the

² We would enumerate the evils of capital invading the free market internationally and try to point out the number of human right violations that are engendered thereby. A specific reference can be made with regard to the Indian context.

³ C. T. Kurien, "Globalization – What is it About?" *Integral Liberation*, Vol. 1:3 (September 1997) 135.

expectation of maximum profit without public accountability.⁴ There are new avenues that open up possibilities of multiplying the capital without entering into production. This disproves the myth of globalization that foreign investments increase productivity in the local market. What really happens in the national and international trade is mere speculative transaction of capital, buying and selling of national currencies to the advantage of the investors.⁵ Thus few TNCs control the whole of international trade and determine the prices of the world market.

Few TNCs controlling the world market may create an impression that wherever these companies invest there is growth and affluence. However, the needs of the masses can very easily be overlooked with a view to safeguard the interests of the foreign investors. The priorities of production in any country are determined by private agencies outside the country that hold very little responsibility towards the common good. The country is wide open for a flow of goods from other countries and the local manufacturers and laborers are severely affected by such a process. Many fear that the unexpected consequences of globalization have victimized and marginalized millions of people in many third world countries.

When Arundhati Roy exposes the dehumanizing dimension of globalization, she highlights the worst effects of globalization on the marginalized and the economy of India. According to her analysis, the globalized market is more competitive and monopolistic than the classical capital market. This implies further deterioration of the condition of the dalits and women in the social sector. Dalits and tribals and more specifically women who come under the agrarian labor economy form the major group that lives below the poverty line. They are forced into cash crop farming that

⁴ "In pursuit of maximization of profit, transnational capital is pushing through an increasingly 'borderless world'. It is apparent that the movement of capital travels across the globe, thereby establishing its supernatural character and emerges as the dominant socio-economic cultural force. Therefore the engines that are driving the globalization process are the transnational corporations. About 400 transnational corporations own two-thirds of the world's fixed assets and control 70 percent of world trade." I. John Mohan Razu, "Towards an Understanding of the Phenomenon of Globalization: An Attempt," Seminar Paper on Globalization, Tumkur, 1997.

⁵ C. T. Kurien, "Globalization," 137-138.

is highly mechanized and technologically advanced. In a country where there is excess of labor force, high-tech farming is counter-productive. For, the native labor skills lose the market value and the life of the laborers become miserable. Loss of job is not only restricted to the industrial sector but also to the agrarian sector on which 70% of India's population relies. Small and marginal landholders are alienated from their own lands because their lands are bought for non-agricultural purposes and corporate farming. Many farmers lost their livelihood without any other alternative for survival. When some of these farmers migrate to cities in search of job opportunities, they become unskilled laborers, which means a further marginalization of these people.⁶

The consequences of structural adjustment program (SAP) on women have serious implications for our right understanding of human rights. The market-oriented economy of the global market has serious consequences for women.⁷ Their access to basic needs of livelihood such as food and shelter is affected. Health-care facilities and education are available to them only to the minimum. Women who have the most important social responsibilities of fulfilling the duty of reproduction, nurturing the young ones and meeting all the demands of the household needs, find life unbearable with the condition created by the present structure. An increase in consumerism and materialism results from the direct influence of media and culture. Visual media tend to fulfill the needs of the consumer culture by representing women indecently and they are converted to commodities of the consumers. Many women lose their jobs due to the SAP policies and they are forced

⁶ Arundhati Roy Choudhury, "Globalization and Accentuation of Inequalities", *Social Action*, Vol. 49:3 (July-September 1999) 264-265. See also Victor Louis Anthuvan, "Globalization - Disturbing Facts and Shocking Insights", *Vaiharai*, Vol.5:1 (March 2000) 6-18. He discusses with detailed statistics how the globalized market increases the divide between the rich and the poor and how the Indian economy is drained by a decline in the trade and the consequences of these realities on the lives of the ordinary people.

⁷ "Structural adjustment refers to the restructuring of the economy in accordance with certain long-term goals, and should be distinguished from short-term stabilization attempts. The Indian SAP gives greater primacy to unfettered market forces to make the country more competitive externally". In fact the priorities of SAP in a country such as India should be more on provision of basic needs and services to the whole population. James David and John Desrochers, eds. *Dimensions of Globalization*, Bangalore: Centre for Social Action, 1998, 149.

to accept low paid jobs. The overarching concern of multiplying the capital takes precedence over the basic rights of women. "The government of India has admitted that with the adoption of SAPs, there is a feminization of poverty, at least in the current phase of reforms. The feminization of poverty virtually means that many more of the poor are women. The marginalization of women is further increasing."⁸

The aforesaid problems of laborers, farmers and women in the Indian situation reflect the marginalization of the millions leading to a deprivation of food, shelter, employment etc. The denial of such basic needs of life raises a serious question, whether they enjoy their right to life or not?

RIGHT TO LIFE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

We find the Constitution of India guaranteeing the fundamental right to life. "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law."⁹ The implication of this right is further explicated by the interpretation of the Supreme Court:

The sweep of the right to life conferred by Art. 21 is wide and far-reaching. It does not mean merely that life cannot be merely extinguished or taken away... that is but one aspect of the right to life. An equally important facet of that right is the right to livelihood because no person can live without the means of livelihood. If the right to livelihood is not treated as part of the constitutional right to life, the easiest way of depriving a person of his right to life would be to deprive him of his means of livelihood... That, which alone makes it possible to live, leave aside what makes a life livable, must be deemed to be an integral component of the right to life...¹⁰

⁸ James David and John Desrochers, *Dimensions of Globalization*, 150. Mary, "Globalization and Feminization of Poverty," *Vaiharai*, Vol. 5: 1 (March 2000) 20-33.

⁹ Raja Mutthirulandi, *Human Rights : The Constitution and Statutory Institutions of India*, Tiruchirappalli: Soorya Pathippagam, 1998, 20.

¹⁰ Jasvir Singh, Poverty, Human Rights and Minimum Wages," *Integral Liberation*, Vol. 1:4 (December 1997) 213.

The right to life presupposes certain privileges and conditions that will ensure human life with dignity and honor. It does not mean mere existence. Human life should not be a constant struggle between life and death. Since right to life includes the satisfaction of the three basic needs – food, clothing and shelter any civilized society should ensure all the three things to every member of the society. The equal availability of such needs to every one will guarantee physical, mental and intellectual growth of every person. "The right to life is secured only when a person is assured of all facilities to develop himself and is freed from restrictions which inhibit his growth... It implies the right to food, water, decent environment, education, medical care and shelter. These are basic human rights known to any civilized society."¹¹ Our apprehension is that the Indian society and many other societies are so thoroughly impoverished by the economic process of the global market that the marginalized are deprived of the satisfaction of even the basic needs that is required to develop themselves as human persons. Let us apply this right to life to the living conditions of the marginalized groups such as laborers, farmers and women and deduce the kind of human right violation they undergo every day.

VIOLATED RIGHTS OF THE MARGINALIZED

The first category of the marginalized that we take into our analysis is laborers. Laborers are entitled to some basic rights. The first and foremost is their right to work. "This right follows from man's right and obligation of self preservation, of support for his dependants, and from his calling to cooperate with God in the plan of creation."¹² The basic right of the laborer is linked to his self-sustenance and that of his dependants. His claim to work as a basic right is nothing but a claim to live as a human being with all the basic needs of life. "It is the duty of society... to help its citizens find opportunities for adequate employment."¹³ When the society

¹¹ Jasvir Singh, "Poverty, Human Rights," 213-214.

¹² Karl H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, Vol. II, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India 1996, 641.

¹³ *Vat. II, Church in the Modern World*, 67.

is unable to provide employment, then it has the duty to assist its unemployed.

Another important right of a laborer is his entitlement to a just wage. "It should also be noted that the justice of a socio-economic system and, in each case, its just functioning, deserve in the final analysis to be evaluated by the way in which one's work is properly remunerated in the system."¹⁴ Just wage signifies the right amount that is sufficient to fulfill the bodily needs of a worker his wife and children. This would also include a laborer's right to protection and social security. A human being "has the right to be looked after in the event of ill health, disability stemming from his work, widowhood, old age, enforced unemployment or whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood."¹⁵

If we presume that the aforesaid rights ought to be protected in order to ensure a life of dignity to the laborers then we can identify where their rights are violated severely. "More specifically, globalization and SAPs lead to several problems in the formal/organized sector: closures of enterprises, retrenchment of permanent personnel with/without proper benefits, non-payment on schedule of statutory wages, non-payment of minimum wages, and inability of trade unions to mobilise workers for effective action."¹⁶ Many groups are very vulnerable especially when the young workers face the policy of 'last come first go principle'. They lose the job immediately. When a company replaces seasoned permanent workers with new workers with a view to ensure cost-cutting on salaries and other social security benefits, and the workers under sub-contracting get flexible wages and loss of social security benefits, we identify explicit violation of human rights. The worker is neither considered as a human being nor a person

¹⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 19. This encyclical argues for a just wage on the principle of the common use of goods. This ethical principle claims that private property does not offer absolute ownership to the beholder. When the common good demands, one must be ready to forego his ownership. I think that the principle of global market runs contrary to such claims of common good.

¹⁵ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 11.

¹⁶ Noel Rebello, "Present-Day Challenges and Action Imperatives," in David and Desrochers, *Dimensions of Globalization*, 89-90.

with human dignity. He is reduced to the level of mere work force to enhance the increase of capital and the profit of the owner. His existence is reduced to the level of an object in the process of production that basic human qualities become unrealizable. They tend to ignore their moral worth and daily life becomes most burdensome to them and to their dependants. Many workers who fail to find any means of sustenance resort to suicide and other self-destructive measures such as drugs and alcohol. The system of global market preoccupies itself with the maximum profit and minimum concern for the rights of the individual who are exploited and impoverished to the core. Left to it, the system will continue to violate the rights of the laborers to the maximum and it is a moral challenge to find alternative means to safeguard their basic rights.

The next group that encounters the direct victimization of globalization is the farmers. Recent policies of the government in India have shaken the very basis of the life of the farmers. Forced to take up the cultivation of cash crops, the rural peasants are the ones who directly undergo violation of human rights. We can categorize the rural peasants into five. While the rich farmers join the upper echelons of the society, small, marginal, tenants and landless agricultural laborers are the categories that sell their manual labor to earn their livelihood.

Their life has already been at stake for generations together and these peasants form majority within the agricultural community. Now the advent of globalization escalates their problems and aggravates the ill effects in the life of the working peasants.¹⁷

The main aspects through which violation of human rights is experienced can be charted out here. Land has become an income-generating source catering to the need of the global market. It is no more a source of traditional farming but it is converted into a profit-oriented industry in order to cultivate export-oriented crops. Rich entrepreneurs buy acres of lands from poor farmers to serve the above purpose. Marginal farmers are forced to sell the small lands in their hands and they easily attain the status of landless

¹⁷ Vincent, "The Impact of Globalization on Agricultural Laborers," Seminar Paper on Globalization, 39.

agricultural laborers. Alienation from one's own land is certainly the robbing of one's own personal identity and belonging to a particular place. It is just like uprooting a deep-rooted tree from its original soil and planting it in an alien soil.

Farmers alienated from their own lands become wanderers in search of daily wage. Before the process of globalization, the lands sold by marginal farmers went into the hands of the local rich farmers. Employment opportunities were still open in these lands. The lands going into the hands of rich capitalists and the mechanization of cultivation have left the poor peasants in the streets jobless. Creative application of their talents as farmers ceased to exist because they were forced to do the same kind of cultivation of a few crops such as Casurino, Tamarind, Mango, Cashewnut etc. The farmers lose their basic right to work and earn a just wage and thus their very life is endangered.

Rural sector having very few job opportunities forces the jobless peasants to migrate to cities. They settle in slums and take to menial jobs. Life in the slums definitely whisks away the minimum dignity they enjoyed in their own villages. Losing their dignity, they are ready to offer their service for a small wage. Many compete with one another to take such jobs. The final result would be the availability of cheap labor in the market that lends the poor peasants for easy exploitation.

Exploitation encountered by women in the present global structure is quite obvious. Structural exploitation perpetrates further violation of human rights. This has become the prime concern of many feminist movements today. Gender continues to be the basis in all societies for the division of labor, allocation of rights and responsibilities. Women's survival and security is threatened by the inequalities created on the basis of gender. Gender inequality has to be looked into seriously because that remains the main source of human right violation. The cultural milieu of every community accentuates already existing inequality and the economic disparity between the rich and the poor in the global economy strengthens the gender inequality further. Gender equity issues are to be understood in relation to the rights now enjoyed by men. If gender equality has to become a concrete reality human dignity should be assured to every woman transcending socio-religious and cultural barriers. Gender discrimination and denial of human rights to women are closely linked with one another and this is ideologically supported and justified by culture and religion. As far as we accept gender-specified roles in our

society women are bound to suffer further ignominies and entitlement to lesser rights. The need of the hour is to have a new vision on human rights. All human rights are indispensably linked to the protection of women's rights because without promoting the rights of half the humanity we are doing great injustice to the whole humanity. Global economic structure has to be restructured in such a way that the twice-marginalized women will get their right opportunities to develop themselves as human persons.¹⁸

CULTURAL MONOPOLY AND VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Cultural monopoly is nothing but a means to dominate all the third-world countries by making them to accept as common the culture of the first world. By creating a cultural hegemony over many countries a ground is prepared in the indigenous minds to accept the dominance of corporate capital without much resistance. The active presence of the capitalist culture in the third world countries certainly brainwashes the local people and creates an ideology that is most conducive to the vested interests of the corporate owners. As K. N. Panikkar observes,

It would be useful to draw upon the insights provided by Antonio Gramsci in his analysis of culture and politics, to understand this phenomenon of cultural domination through globalization. Particularly useful is Gramsci's concept of 'common sense', 'the uncritical and largely unconscious way in which a person perceives the world.' The cultural, social and political behavior of each individual and group is influenced by this common sense. Gramsci argues that leading groups in society try to transcend a particular form of common sense and to create another which is close to their

¹⁸ Indhrani Sridharan, "Practising Human Rights: A Feminist Perspective," in Chiranjivi J. Nirmal, ed. **Human Rights in India: Historical, Social and Political Perspectives**, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, 91-101.

conception of the world. The forces of globalization and their compradors in India are precisely engaged in such a task.¹⁹

He further elucidates two important consequences of such a cultural imperialism: i. Appropriation and commodification of indigenous culture ii. Creating a communal consciousness. Appropriation of indigenous cultures had a specific purpose in the past. Dominant groups of the society enter the terrain of popular culture and appropriate it in order to bring the masses into their own world-view and pattern of thinking. Any force of resistance against such domination inherent in the popular cultural forms is easily diluted and distorted by the commodification of the same. The cultural monopoly strengthens communal consciousness in the people. In their inability to withstand the cultural onslaught of the globalized market, they uncritically swallow the cultural values of the West. This seems to give them a new identity. However, they are very easily disillusioned about the new identity wrapped on them and enter into a cultural crisis. To come out of such a crisis, they take refuge in religious fundamentalism and other superstitious practices. These measures leave them vulnerable in the hands of the dominant groups.²⁰

There are other serious consequences from cultural imperialism that challenge some of the basic rights of the common man. As Petras identifies, i. Uprooting and dividing people ii. Creating a collective amnesia and iii. Creating a submissive consciousness are the three important consequences.²¹ By exporting cultural commodities they shape the popular consciousness of the people. People are dissociated from their cultural roots, traditions of solidarity and a new identity of individuality is forced on them. The cult of individuality takes precedence over the solidarity with

¹⁹ "The existing cultural common sense in India has evolved from its historical experience and is drawn from a variety of sources. It is heterogeneous in character and plural in manifestation. The social and cultural practices and behaviour which admit of diversity reflect these qualities. Unlike the capitalist West, there is no standardization." Uni-polar affirmation and assertion of cultural aspects will certainly lead to cultural domination of one over the other." K. N. Panikkar, "Globalization and Culture," *Voices from the Third World*, Vol. XX: 2 (December 1997) 53.

²⁰ K. N. Panikkar, "Globalization," 55-57.

²¹ James Petras, "Globalization as Cultural Imperialism," in James David and Desrochers, *Dimensions of Globalization*, 114.

the community. Each individual strives to attain his goals and the other becomes the competitive enemy hindering the growth of the individual. Dehumanization and mass killings by pro-capitalist governments are given a low profile in the media. However, revolutionaries against anti-people governments are caricatured as adversaries of the people. Thus a collective amnesia is artificially created amidst the ordinary people. Cultural imperialism plays havoc in the consciousness of the oppressed classes. The values and symbols promoted by the capitalists thwart the uprising of the affected classes collectively. Cultural imperialism reigns supreme by its conquest of the consciousness of the oppressed and makes them yield to the dictates of the oppressors consciously or unconsciously.²²

What kind of human rights violations take place in the cultural realm? If we analyze the pattern and motives of cultural imperialism, then we can draw practical conclusions so as to identify the type of violations that affect the people. The subtle mechanism of cultural imperialism is to invade the minds of the people through cultural symbols and systems and modify their lifestyle according to the expectations of the global market. It is a violation of personal freedom. Personal freedom is violated in so far as the consciousness of the people is altered without their conscious approval. They are led to a new world-view, different pattern of thinking and relating with others, a change in their lifestyle and many such things happen in their lives. An unconscious submission of their freedom to the forces of global market takes place gradually. They lose their personal freedom to such an extent that they voluntarily submit themselves to be exploited by others. They lose their power to resist the dominant forces that enslave them. Cultural enslavement certainly converts people into objects to serve the vested interests of the dominant group. The right alternatives should be proposed to safeguard the cultural rights of the people so that nobody is deprived of his personal freedom to develop himself as he likes and accept a pattern of life that he chooses.

²² James Petras, "Globalization as Cultural Imperialism," 115.

POLITICAL INTRUSION AND VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Political life of a nation should be fashioned and directed towards the well being of every citizen of that country. If this is not the vital aspect of any political governance, the validity of that governance has to be questioned. But today political institutions and political discourses both at the national and international levels are thoroughly influenced by the global market. The rapid movement of capital in the global market and its other factors in many ways pressure governments to adjust their policies according to the need of the market, TNCs and Banks. "As a result, the very nature and role of government is being changed in morally troubling ways. Public policy increasingly becomes the servant of market demands, with little or no regard for other values. This goes to the point of government making highly irregular arrangements with powerful private interests that benefit the latter."²³ When the TNCs and Banks impose terms and conditions on policies of the third world governments, it has serious consequences on the debt of the nation. Whether it is a first world nation or third world nation, government's preference in giving concessions at all levels is to the big corporate companies. In turn they support and influence a political party in elections and other policy decisions. Receiving support from the TNCs and others adversely affect the governance of the state because policies that promote the well being of the common people are undermined in order to promote the vested interest of the TNCs.

New colonization is an undesired phenomenon that has significant implications for the autonomy of the state and its common good. The rapid mobility of the capital in the global market disciplines the decision-makers of the state. In order to avoid the flight of the capital decisions regarding taxation, social policy is tailored according to the needs of the corporate world. As a result all sectors of labor lose their bargaining power, social potency and political power. In this way the nation state is slowly losing its autonomy in regulating its own affairs both internally and externally. It is mainly due to the restructuring of the order of the nation state under the global order that is taking place today.

²³ Thomas R. Rourke, "Contemporary Globalization: An Ethical and Anthropological Evaluation," *Communio* 27 (Fall 2000) 497-498.

We can understand that "the world is on the threshold of a major transition in the political regulation of economic activity, from a primarily national to a primarily global form of regulation... Under the pressure of multilateral agencies, global firms and global and regional free trade agreements, nation-states increasingly surrender the organizational and ideological initiative to transnational forces. In short, nation-states face a form of colonization distinct from previous forms."²⁴ Present colonization is not that of territories but that of the regulators of the state. Under the guise of liberalization a systematic colonization is unleashed over the third world countries essentially by capital. Thus even the relative autonomy enjoyed by the governments few decades ago is subtly stolen away from them.

What would be the result of the loss of autonomy on the part of the nation-state? It would lead to the direct violation of the political rights of the masses. The political rights of the working class and other weaker sections of the society are undermined. The state that should have the commitment towards its masses evades such responsibilities and surrenders its political power in the hands of the capitalist forces.²⁵ It is contrary to the democratic tradition where the state derives its power from its masses. When the state shirks off its important duty to the masses the consequences are three; "first a weakening of the working class vis-à-vis capitalist, second a considerable centralization of capital and a strengthening of financial interests relative to manufacturing interest within the capital class themselves."²⁶ Thus the political rights and interests of the people are surrendered to the dictates of the private capital. Thus globalization undermines not only the common good but also the power of the political authority to promote the same.

²⁴ Ninan Koshy, "The Political Dimensions and Implications of Globalization," *Voices from the Third World*, Vol. XX: 2 (December 1997) 28-29.

²⁵ "Nowhere has the transformation of the government away from service of the common good to service of private interests been more striking than in the Third World. For the last two decades, Third World governments, in what can only be called a whole sale loss of sovereignty, have made virtually all public policy subject to the demands of foreign creditors: public spending, taxation, wages, valuation of currency, education, public health, and programs for literacy and nutrition." Thomas R. Rourke, "Contemporary Globalization," 499.

²⁶ Ninan Koshy, "The Political Dimensions," 33.

Another aspect of the renewed colonization is the unequal power sharing that unleashes so many issues of injustice both at the national and international levels. Most of the third world countries are under a debt trap and paying interests alone bleeds the poor countries. The capitalists of the third world also join hands with those of the first world and the policies they make overburden the masses in the form of taxes and hiked prices. The poor masses are not politically empowered to challenge the unjust system and its policy makers. In the Indian context, the state that has to be just tends to be a law and order state. Its concern for the social and economic justice withers away easily as it confronts the demands of the global market. Its public responsibility and accountability are reduced to the minimum as it preoccupies with serving the rich elite of the nation. In a way the political governance becomes partial, unjust and undemocratic. We identify here an inordinate power of capitalism's market dynamics that has failed to address issues such as unemployment, extremes of wealth and income etc. As a result the political power of globalization continues to violate human rights in every respect possible.

The rights of power can only be understood on the basis of respect for the objective inviolable rights of the human person. The common good that authority in the State serves is brought to full realization only when all the citizens are sure of their rights. The lack of this leads to the dissolution of the society, opposition by citizens to authority, or a situation of oppression, intimidation, violence, and terrorism, of which many examples have been provided by the totalitarianisms of this century. Thus the principle of human rights is of profound concern to the area of social justice and is the measure by which it can be tested in the life of political bodies.²⁷

It is quite obvious that the political governance of individual nations is so much manipulated that the basic rights of so many millions are easily ignored. As the policies of nations reflect the mind of corporate owners, vital rights such as education, health care, subsidized food material, clean potable water and so many other rights of the masses are comfortably sidelined. The common good of the populace has no direct moral link with the political

²⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 17.

power. If the political power that rules the people cannot assure the inviolable rights of its people, then the authority of such a power has to be challenged. Political bodies of the third world nations have to be urged to see the urgency of ensuring the political rights of the citizens and nations. Honoring the dignity and autonomy of the individuals depends very much on the political sovereignty enjoyed by a nation. Only by creating a healthy power sharing in the national and international levels, we can advance the common good of every nation and assure basic rights of every individual.²⁸

MORAL ASSESSMENT

Catholic social teaching declares unequivocally that modern societies have to govern themselves on the basis of human rights. Human rights belong to a person just because he is human and therefore they are inalienable. The dignity of the human person becomes the basis for the entitlement of human rights. One has to realize his dignity in the community with the rights and privileges offered by the same. As we are created in the likeness and image of God, as our humanity is recreated by the redemptive work of Christ, we are invited to realize the fuller humanity through our daily lives. Our participation in the divine mysteries places our rights on a theological ground.²⁹

In the context of global market reducing so many millions to the condition of dispensable objects, it is worth noting the invitation of the church to give special preference to the rights of the poor. "In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect for the poor and the special situation they have in the society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others."³⁰ When the affluent enjoy all the rights it should not be done at the cost of the rights of others. In no way they are entitled

²⁸ Bani Borgohain, *Human Rights: Social Justice and Political Challenge*, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 1999, 41-67. The author identifies political and cultural reasons for the violation of human rights. Third world nations that have gained independence from colonization are still struggling under different internal problems. New colonization through the global market aggravates and strengthens the already existing undesired political conditions of many nations.

²⁹ Milburn Thompson, *Justice and Peace: A Christian Primer*, New York: Orbis Books, 1999, 94.

³⁰ Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 23.

to rob off others dignity in order to establish their own human existence. The rich of the global market should realize that they are dehumanizing themselves by denying human rights to so many in this globe. Their salvation is buried in the unjust global market where they comfortably bury the rights and lives of so many laborers, poor peasants and women. The call of the kingdom is for conversion to restructure the global market in such a way so as to ensure the availability of the basic needs of life to everyone on this earth.

Cultural imperialism of the global first world continues to curb the proper expressions of so many indigenous cultures and their identities. As a supportive system of the unjust global market it unleashes values and principles that are highly destructive of the human. The illiterate masses of the third world become victims of this cultural monopoly and their uncritical acceptance of the globalized culture distort their consciousness. As a result they become objects in the hands of the powerful instead of being subjects who live their life meaningfully. Unless individual nations take serious measures to avert such undesired results, this would be the easiest way to surrender one's own dignity and self-worth. "The state's function in the sphere of culture consists in the protection of cultural values against any threat of misuse and oppression, as well as in their promotion to the end that all citizens be enabled to share in them."³¹ The cultural rights of the masses have to be respected. Only in such a social atmosphere of cultural freedom integral development of the human person will be possible.³²

Political sovereignty of a nation state is vital in safeguarding the common good of the nation. The global order threatens the sovereignty and democratic structures of the day.

The Church values the democratic system in as much as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of

³¹ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, Vol. II, 578.

³² "People or nations too have a right to their own full development which, while including the economic and social aspects, should also include individual cultural identity and openness to the transcendent." Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 33.

electing and holding accountable those who govern them and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate.³³

When democratic structures are not promoted iniquitous power relations will thrive in the political governance of the nations. Unequal power sharing seems to be the political order of the day both nationally and internationally. Centralization of power will certainly be a source of human right violations. We should envisage new political structures that project the common good of the people as its main agenda and promoting the overall development of the people as its prime concern.

CONCLUSION

We are perturbed to see a world that is after building human communities in the wrong way. The created world and its resources seem to be the private property of a few. Power structures of the world blindly support such ownership and promote the interests of these few rich of the world. The powerless poor of the world are destined to enjoy ignominies and denial of every right that belongs to them by the very fact of being human. What should be our moral response today? Thomson proposes the following three principles to be the guidelines to promote human rights:

- "1. The needs of poor take priority over the wants of the rich.
2. The freedom of the the dominated takes priority over the liberty of the powerful.
3. The participation of the marginalized groups takes priority over the preservation of an order that excludes them."³⁴

If these priorities become the basic options of the whole human community, rights of the poor will be respected with utmost care. It would be a state of life where equal opportunities will be enjoyed by all and there may not be a need to fight for individual rights. It is our moral responsibility to promote such a state of life so that God's Kingdom can be realized here and now.

³³ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 46.

³⁴ Milburn Thomson, *Justice and Peace*, 96.