The love of money is the root of all evil (1.Tim 6:10).

There are enough resources in the world for the need of all, but not for the greed of all.

M.K. Gandhi

You cannot consume beyond your appetite. The other half of the loaf belongs to the other person, and there should remain a little bread for the chance guest.

Khalil Gibran

The Human Development Report of 2013 by the United Nations carries the title *The Rise of the South*. It states that about 40 countries of the South whose development index was low in 1990 have shown remarkable improvement in human development in 2012; highlighted in particular are the cases of India, China and Brazil. However, this story of the “Rise of the South” could be misleading if we do not attend to ground realities which exhibit a range of inequalities that raise many questions about those countries which have achieved a level of development that has defied predictions. Inequality is the most crucial issue to be confronted as it jeopardizes any development they may have achieved. The undeniable fact is that about one billion people in the South live in extreme poverty, struggling to meet the bare necessities of life: food, clean water, shelter, basic health care and basic education. This state of affairs is due to persisting inequalities of which income inequality is only one of many, all of which are intertwined.

In this contribution, I shall try to analyze the connection between neoliberal economy and the phenomenal growth of inequalities in our global world, with reference to the South, and especially to Asia. In the second part we shall study some of the ways and strategies that need to be put in place,
so that inequalities are contained and we are able to move towards a global situation of greater equality, justice and harmony. In the final part, which is relatively short, we shall discuss on how religions could provide resources today for the project of a more equitable world.

**Part I: A World of Inequalities**

*The Case of Asia*

Inequalities are of different kinds and each one has its own specific contours in each society, depending on its culture, tradition, history, etc. But what appears to be universal today is that in every society, money, market and competition are reinforcing these traditional inequalities in terms of gender, caste, ethnicity, education etc. Economic inequality has led to new forms of social inequality and asymmetry in political power.

Since the fast economic development of Asia has become the talk of the global world, let us begin by examining the case of this continent which is going through liberal economic transformation with its consequences in social, political and cultural fields.

In Asia, there is economic growth, but no poverty reduction. There does not seem to be any correlation between these two realities, resulting in a situation full of contradictions. China’s colossal economy stands on political feet of clay. Taken up by the glamour of liberal economy and the goodies in the market, democracy seems to be the last thing Chinese youth are attracted to. Moreover, the pursuit of a crass liberal economy has led to serious violations of human rights, land-alienation, suppression of minorities, and gross disparity among the various Chinese regions and populations.

India, on the other hand, has not used the opportunities offered by its democratic political system (the largest democracy in the world) to overcome inequality and pursue the wellbeing of all its citizens. The democratic system is corrupted by liberal and capitalist forces. India, which has pursued a liberal economy since the 1990s, has economic growth, but the poor are deprived of their basic needs and their rights. Against many parameters of development, India trails far behind Bangladesh where there is greater equity in growth and development.

This discrepancy between growth and poverty in Asia, and in the global world at large, could be illustrated by drawing on the concept of the Human Poverty Index (HPI) introduced by UNDP in 1997.\(^2\) There is not only the human

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