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# Magnificat



A NEWS-LETTER FROM CBCI COUNCIL FOR WOMEN

May - July 2018

Volume - XXIV | Issue No. 3



Sr. Talisha Nadukudiyil SD  
Secretary, CBCI Council for Women



EDITORIAL

## Save our boys to save our girls

These days we are extremely shocked and appalled by the manner in which incidents of gender oppression are taking place in our society. The sexual exploitation of women and even girls is the worst form of oppression. The gruesome rape and murder of an eight year old girl in Kathua and a similar incident in Unnao have shaken the conscience of all people of India. Public protests have been held in every major city condemning the inhuman rape and brutal murder of the young girl.

It is heartening to know that an ordinance has been passed to allow the courts to award death penalty to those convicted of raping girls under 12 years. How far this would prevent the crimes against innocent children and will protect them, one has to wait and see. Unfortunately, our country has witnessed too many cases where justice has failed to prevail. The lawyers of Kathua district court had come out in to the streets in defense of one of the culprits. This is what would make an ordinary citizen skeptical about new ordinances and laws.

Another very important fact is that the Kathua rape is not the norm; most cases of child abuse take place within our homes and in our neighbourhoods. Many cases are not reported because the rapists are often close relatives. The victims grow up with fear and shame if the parents do not reach out to them.

After the Nirbhaya case, Laws had been changed. But mindsets had not. The dialogue of Mr Amitabh Bachchan in the movie **PINK** is most relevant in today's Indian Society: "**We should save our boys not our girls; because if we save our boys, our girls will also be saved**". From childhood itself boys are made strong and girls weak. Boys are brought up with a sense of superiority over girls. Instead they should be taught family and social values. It is not enough to celebrate girl children with slogans like 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'. We need to develop a consciousness in boys that the girls are not just their opposite gender. They are not an object of satisfaction or to abuse but they are their sisters who are born with as much intellectual and emotional qualities as they are. The basic human respect for one another should be inculcated in both boys and girls from childhood itself.

As we grow and change, so do our society & environment by which our children are greatly influenced. Life is more for merrymaking and enjoyment for them. It is here that we elders have to instill spiritual and moral values in them to build a just and violence-free society. Being Catholics, we are bound to build up and inculcate Jesus' attitude for a Gender just society ❄



## PAYING HOMAGE

*The CBCI Council for Women is ever grateful to beloved Archbishop Abraham Viruthakulangara for his supportive and encouraging attitude towards women and his love and fatherly concern which he always showed to us.*

*Beloved Archbishop, May God reward all your good works and may you enjoy the eternal bliss with the Lord!*

## CBCI Council for Women - Reaching out to the Marginalized

### *The Lord is Kind and Just!*

In October 2017, a National delegation of 22 members from the CBCI Council for Women made a visit to Kandhamal under the leadership of Most Rev Jacob Mar Barnabas, Chairperson of the Council. The group was taken up by the remarkable courage and tolerance shown by the people to withstand the odd situations and dangerous circumstances. The visitation could build a deep rapport with the victims especially women. It is the fundamental duty of the Church to care for each other and be agents promoting the dignity of Women and Children.

After the visit, the team reflected and planned out actions on the basis of what they have seen and witnessed. As a follow up of the visitation, the Office was able to receive contributions from various individuals and women groups. It is a matter of joy for all of us to initiate the proposed plan systematically and effectively.

Sr. Talisha Nadukudiyil SD, the National Secretary, made a follow up visit from 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2018.

• On 20th April, Sr. Talisha along with Sr. Bibiana

and Sr. Pancracia visited the coaching centre where two SD sisters are providing basic education for students of mixed community from Class I-X. Fr. Madan, the Director of Jan Vikas, also joined us at the Centre. The children are very happy and enthusiastic to receive the coaching and are trying their best to make use of this privilege. The sisters expressed their satisfaction and joy to be engaged in helping out the children of the violence affected families.

• On the 21st of April 2018, a tailoring training program centre was inaugurated for the women of Ambedkar Nagar community, Raikia, Kandhamal. The centre was blessed by His Grace Most Rev John Barwa SVD, the Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, and inaugurated by Sr. Talisha Nadukudiyil SD. It was attended by Rev. Fr. Pradrash Naik, Vicar General, Sr. Bibiana Barla HM, Regional Secretary of Odisha, Sr. Pancracia, Diocesan Women Secretary, Rev Fr. Udoyonath Biso, Director of Pastoral Centre Konjamindi, Rev Fr. Ashok Singh, Assistant Director of Jan Vikas Social Work Centre, Fr. Pradeep Behera,

Sisters, Parents, Youth and Children. There was a short cultural program performed by the people including traditional song and dance. The delegates and guests were welcomed so delightfully and with much joy. It was indeed blessed moments gifted by God, where we could witness his Love and providence.

At the program, we provided 10 tailoring machines including the material kits. 10 women had already been selected earlier to undergo the tailoring training. Mr. Masesh Digal will train the women for a period of 3 months. After the completion of this current batch, the next batch will follow.

• We have also handed over certain amount as cash for the education of Girls as well as for the necessary needs of the community.

• Clothes sent by the members of our Women Council were distributed to the deserved families and children by Sr. Pancracia and Community. We thank wholeheartedly Sr. Pancracia and Fr. Madan for their active involvement and support in implementing the action plans of CBCI Council for Women ❖

*God loves a Cheerful giver. Words are truly not enough to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed in kind and cash and made this initiative a success. Still there is a lot to do, so we expect from the people of goodwill for their continued prayer, support and cooperation to do more for the marginalized and the victims of Kandhamal violence as member of the Catholic family and as a follower of Christ.*



## The invincible: A disabled woman's relentless fight for accessibility



Never give up -- these were the simple yet profound words that kept **Virali Modi**, 26, fighting on after a deadly bout of malaria, contracted during her visit to India, had her comatose for weeks and left her paraplegic and wheelchair-bound at the age of 14. In coma for 23 days, she miraculously opened her eyes on the day the doctors decided to remove her life-support and has not stopped since then, fighting for her rights -- and those of other disabled people.

"I'm a disabled woman from Mumbai who loves to travel. I've been groped and manhandled three separate times by porters who were helping me board the train because Indian trains are not wheelchair accessible." "I've had to wear a diaper because I couldn't use the train's lavatory. My fight is to ensure human dignity for the disabled," Virali wrote in a public petition about a year ago that caught the attention of tens of thousands of netizens across the country, including Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi, who responded to Virali, assuring accessibility in trains.

Addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu, her brutally honest petition on the platform change.org shared her ordeal as a disabled person on an Indian train. "Most disabled people are restricted to their homes because our roads, public transport and infrastructure are not wheelchair-friendly. It is difficult for them to go anywhere without assistance" Virali told IANS in an interview. While her campaign "My Train Too" garnered massive support in the digital world with over 200,000 people standing by her, not much translated into reality until she took matters into her own hands. "Some railway officials together, with the help of a few NGOs, have set up portable ramps and foldable wheelchairs at railway stations in Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Ernakulam in Kerala, and Chennai and Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu". These ramps and wheelchairs enabled the wheelchair-bound to board the train and access the train toilets with minimum or almost no additional help.

With the help of Railway officials Mumbai station made accessible to the disabled without any government help. If the Government helps, so much could have been done. "In India there are at least 26 million disabled people (according to the Ministry of Statistics data, 2016) and Indian Railways cannot continue to treat the disabled as "pieces of luggage", she resolved. "My mother (Pallavi Modi) stood by me in my fight, along with thousands of people who actually wanted to achieve this" Currently working with Mumbai-based

travel portal Enable Travel that curates holidays for disabled people, Virali dismisses any alternative terms for the disabled like "differently-abled" or "divyang" (divine body), a term used by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. These terms are regressive and insensitive. Why do Indians mask the disability?

The Prime Minister's "Accessible India" campaign in 2015 did not do much universal accessibility in the country. Our struggles have been the same, she asserted.

"The accessible infrastructure in the US made me so independent -- I was comfortable going anywhere on my own in comparison to the inadequate infrastructure in India" said Virali, who holds dual citizenship of India and the US.

Virali is now a motivational speaker around the world, through which she emphasises on never giving up hope in life. "I was always keen on modelling and acting. But I realised that my wheelchair is seen as a hindrance by many. But I overcame my fears to be the runner-up at the Miss Wheelchair India in 2014." The stigma around disability in the country is "shattering, but very slowly", she added. "People are becoming aware that the disabled are fighting for their rights. But without mainstream media portraying it, we can't expect much to change. Why there are no disabled actors in our films?" she asked. She emphasised the need to sensitize children in schools about disabilities. "I will keep raising my voice till I can contribute to making the country fully accessible," resolved Virali ❖

(UCAN News, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2018)

## INVITING NOMINATIONS FOR GIRL CHILD AWARD

*Greetings of Peace from CBCI Council for Women, New Delhi!*

The CBCI Council for Women extends its gratitude to all the Bishops, Priests and Women Leaders for their contributions towards women empowerment and inclusion of women in the Church.

Following its first of a kind award, the CBCI Council for Women, as an act of encouragement and support for socially impactful acts of Girls, has decided to introduce a new category of award for girl children under the age of 18, on or before July 15th 2018. This award is to acknowledge and honour those girls who have shown outstanding/unique contribution towards the Church and society in any of the following ways:

• demonstrated brave acts in moments of grave danger

• offered her voluntary help in performing rescue mission in times of disaster

• involved/influenced the families or community towards social development to prevent and stop Child Labour, Child Marriage or Trafficking etc.

• volunteered for outreach programs and inculcated a spirit of Christian love and charity  
Consequently, we request each Region to propose names (with your priority clearly marked) of deserving Catholic Girls from your Region to the National Office of the CBCI Council for Women, New Delhi latest by 15th of July 2018. Nomination of each candidate for the Award must be unanimously approved and officially attested by the office bearers of Regional Women Council or the Regional Bishops' Council. No self-nomination will be entertained. In the absence of a Regional Secretary, we request the

corresponding Regional Council of Bishops to help the Regional Chairperson in finding suitable candidates.

The submissions will be reviewed by the volunteer committee. The selected girls will be awarded at a program on Girl Child day. Please note the nomination must include: 1) Resume of the Nominee with the age proof, 2) Two passport-size photos 3) Contact details of the nominee 4) Recommendation or support letter from the Parish Priest OR School authority 5. a) 500-words letter explaining how she has made the outstanding contribution b) Describe how her unique act has impacted

So, we humbly request and welcome each Region and Diocese in making our initiative a success to appreciate and encourage such positive acts and endeavors -

*Most Rev Jacob Mar Barnabas* Chairperson  
*Sr. Talisha Nadukudiyil, SD* Secretary



## A quota for women: This is one big idea awaiting implementation by the Government

For nearly a quarter of a century, every union government till the present one has unsuccessfully attempted to enact a women's reservation bill for quotas in Parliament and state assemblies. The governments of Prime Ministers HD Deve Gowda, AB Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh each introduced the bill once or more, except I.K. Gujral's United Front Government.

As the Modi government's first term enters its last lap, the issue is again gaining traction. Will he give it a shot as well? What are the bill's merits and, just as relevant, its political viability?

Though reservations in India have had a mixed track record, a source of contentious politics, they have also played a role in challenging age old social barriers. Nevertheless, pleas to modify reservations, such as limiting it to one generation of beneficiaries, rigidly excluding the more affluent "creamy layer" among them, and exclusion from highly technical disciplines, are all worthy of debate.

The status of women in India, who as a category far surpass the numbers of any other group facing discrimination, continues to lag well behind global norms. From the womb onwards, women still have it rough. Despite anti-sex selection laws, and some improvement in recent years, the gender ratio remains skewed with fewer female than male births.

Indian women's lives are burdened by low literacy (59% vs a national average of 74%); even lower levels of financial inclusion (42% vs developed countries' averages approaching 100%); and shockingly low participation in the workforce (only 28% compared to even South Asian neighbour Bangladesh's 45%). Similarly, the percentage of women elected to Lok Sabha,

at just under 12%, is about half the global average of 23%.

However, the share of women legislators is not necessarily correlated to a nation's gender equity. Consider three examples from developed, Western democracies, in other words the types of nations generally hailed for relatively better, if not quite equal, status of women. The US has only 19% women in its lower house, the UK 30%, and Sweden 45%.

Sweden is the only one of those three nations with a law promoting women in politics, but by regulating *parties* rather than parliament. Its 1971 law, when its share of women legislators was 14%, stipulates a women's quota of 40% of all party candidatures. This is an alternative also mooted by some in India, with a 33% quota of party tickets.

That is not to say quotas for women in state and national elections would by itself be a panacea for gender rights. In fact, starting from freedom fighter Sarojini Naidu till now, several prominent women have spoken against it. And many activists give equal or more emphasis to other building blocks of gender equity, especially to boost women's participation in the workforce. That approach is also supported by studies which indicate a strong correlation between more working women and better gender equity.

Programmes like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign championed by the PM, as well as a growing number of individual success stories, are also gradually stigmatising discrimination. The latter include women fighter pilots, auto rickshaw drivers, sporting stars, CEOs, entrepreneurs and many more. However, attitudinal changes in society take a



long time. So, notwithstanding governmental programmes and individual successes, a sharp improvement in the medium term will require additional intervention.

Quotas for women in local body elections have been in place for years. Observing the impact of that on the ground is eye opening. On the one hand, many a woman sarpanch or Zilla Parishad member is just a rubber stamp, with a male relative wielding the real authority. I have personally witnessed, on the other hand, several such elected women come into their own, handling the hurly burly of politics themselves, and with aplomb. Such women are influencing others, and changing societal attitudes.

That is why I believe quotas for women could be transformational for India's politics, society and economy, especially if the proposed sunset clause after 15 years could actually be hardwired. Some sceptics worry that that would not be the case, as with other reservations, but even then, the impact of higher numbers of women in Parliament and assemblies would have an overwhelmingly positive impact.

The rationale apart, the political will for it has never been enough to overcome opposition. Women's Quota Bill also should get a wide campaign and such from all quarters like PM Modi's Swachh Bharat Programme. Then maybe this Bill will get passed in the Parliament.

Despite the fact that it is UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi who has again spoken up for it, this government has a demonstrated track record of pushing through, and thus gaining credit for, big ideas that had been gridlocked for decades. ❖

(Times of India)

## Prostitution is torture: Pope Francis

Rome: Pope Francis asked forgiveness Monday for all Christians who buy sex from women, saying men who frequent prostitutes are criminals with a "sick mentality" who think that women exist to be exploited.

"This isn't making love. This is torturing a woman. Let's not confuse the terms," Francis insisted.

The pope made the comments during an intimate, four-hour-long listening session with 300 young people who were invited by the Vatican to Rome this week to help church leaders learn what kids these days think about the Catholic Church.

It's a preparatory meeting for a big synod of bishops in October on helping young people find their vocations in life. Francis has insisted that young adults — Catholic and not — be integral in the process informing the otherwise all-male, celibate and rather old church hierarchy about the future of the church.

"Young people must be taken seriously," he said.

He got an earful when he opened the meeting by urging the young people to speak with courage, without shame or "anesthesia" to dull the truth.

Nicholas Lopez, a college campus minister



from Texas, told Francis that young people today face racism, poverty and gang violence, as well as "unjust immigration laws that threaten

to split children from families."

Angela Markas from Australia told Francis young people want debate in the church about sexuality, same-sex attraction and the role of women. And Blessing Okoedion, from Nigeria, asked Francis how the church could allow Catholics to be clients for the many Nigerian women in Italy like her, who are forced to be sex slaves by the traffickers who got them here.

"I ask myself, and I ask you: Is the male

chauvinistic church able to truthfully ask itself about this high demand by clients?" she asked.

Francis, who has made the fight against human trafficking and modern-day sex slaves a priority of his pontificate, urged young people to take up the fight against trafficking and forced prostitution. "This is one of the battles that I ask you young people to do, for the dignity of women," he said. He said forced prostitution was born of a "sick mentality" that no form of

feminism has managed to rid from society, one that thinks that "women are to be exploited."

Speaking to Okoedion, who was forced into prostitution but escaped, Francis concluded: "I want to take advantage of this moment, because you talked about baptized and Christians, to ask your forgiveness, from society and all the Catholics who do this criminal act." ❖

(NBC News)



Recently one of my colleagues shared with me an incident that happened nearly twenty five years back when she was only eight years old. She was living in a remote village one had to walk about one kilometer through the woods of rubber trees and mango trees to reach another house. They had to walk about three to four kilometer to go to school and church. To go to Church and School, children grouped together and walk. Once she had to go back home alone after Catechism. As she was walking home through the rubber trees, a middle aged man who was her neighbour joined her and told her, he will accompany her home. She happily agreed as she knew him and started walking along with him holding his hands. After a short distance he deviated the route with the excuse of picking mango fruits. When they reached an area filled with thick shrubs he hugged her tightly and said "We will play like this". She sensed some danger in that hug and quickly got rid of his hands, she ran away screaming. The man luckily did not follow her; she says that it might be because he saw someone coming towards them from a long distance.

This story portrayed that sexual harassment against children has always existed. Very rarely these incidents come to light as children are scared to speak about it. As of late, the number

of sexual harassment cases has increased tremendously. Not only a girl child is a victim to sexual abuse but studies show that one in four girls and one in eight boys are sexually abused before the age of 18 each year. Sexual abuse is just one among different forms of child abuse. Child abuse can be physical, emotional, verbal or sexual harassment. Physical, verbal or sexual abuse results in emotional abuse also. In spite of the fact that a ton of kids experience the ill effects of these kinds of misuse, very few are reported. Actually it is shocking to realize that a child is not safe even in his/her mother's womb. Insecurity of a child begins in his/her mother's womb. How many babies are being killed while inside the womb? People claim various reasons for the act, some because it is a female baby, some as it is an illegitimate baby or an unexpected baby and certain others just because they don't want to take responsibilities. Another form of abuse most prevalent is the neglect towards the female child. They are not given proper education, nutritious food and are made to do household works. Worse when the girl child has a male sibling, the parents would adore him more than her. Here the girl child is being emotionally abused. The mental agony of the girl child is not realized by such parents. This problem can be reduced to a great extent

by properly educating the parents on these matters.

Another greater problem children face is sexual harassment from relatives and neighbours. A child should never be left alone with a relative even if he/she is a very close relative. They should be alert when children go out to the neighbourhoods. It is almost impossible to identify a wolf in a sheep's clothing. A close monitoring should be always there for small children. The grownups should sensitize them no one should be allowed to touch their body parts unnecessarily. And they should be trained to be bold enough to say a sharp 'NO' to such behaviour by anyone. This will help them to protect themselves to a great extent. Another painful and terrifying fact is that our children are not safe even in schools. They are being bullied, harassed physically, emotionally, verbally and sexually and most horrific of all, they are being killed. Nowadays large number of incidents is being reported. Authorities should take necessary steps to identify the culprits and should make sure that these people are punished properly. Also, parents should make some time to spend with children and listen to their stories about school life. Make them feel free to talk everything that happened in school. This helps not only in strengthening the parent-child bond but also foresee and trace out any hidden danger that can come across their child.

Finally, above all, prayer is the most important weapon at hand to keep our children safe from all dangers. Entrust our children to Mother Mary and she will protect our children as she took care of baby Jesus.



Contrary to popular perception, the Quran prescribes an elaborate procedure for divorce.

The way nikah halala is practised is an invention by unscrupulous qazis to circumscribe the carefully structured procedure for divorce and remarriage.

Of late issues concerning Muslim women seem to be constantly on the boil and the personal laws of Muslims tend to get projected as patriarchal and gender-unjust. It is ironic that Muslim laws laid down in the seventh century that were progressive and far ahead of its time (rendered marriages contractual,

## SPREAD AWARENESS TO SAFEGUARD MUSLIM WOMEN



provided for conditions to be written into the contract and granted women property rights) is now projected as the most anti-women system. Unjust practices which have no basis in the Quran tend to get projected as an integral part of Islamic law, feeding into the global framework of Islamophobia.

Seven months after declaring instant triple talaq unconstitutional, the Supreme Court is once again called upon to examine the constitutional validity of practices such as nikah halala and polygamy. Admitting the petitions filed by BJP leader and advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey and others, the court issued notices to the Centre and the Law Commission seeking their expert opinion.

While both polygamy and nikah halala are

anti-women practices, they need to be seen separately. Here I will try to examine the context of nikah halala and its Quranic validity.

Contrary to popular perception, the Quran prescribes an elaborate procedure for divorce. The first time a man divorces his wife, he is entitled, without any formalities, to reunite with her during the waiting period of three lunar months. But after three months, when the divorce becomes final, the couple has a choice of entering into a fresh marriage contract, with a fresh mehr. Subsequently, if differences crop up between them and the husband pronounces the second talaq, he is still entitled, without any formalities, to reunite with her during her waiting period. Again, if the waiting period lapses and the divorce becomes final, the couple can contract a fresh marriage with a fresh mehr.

Thereafter, if the husband again pronounces talaq, it becomes an irrevocable talaq as it indicates a total breakdown of the relationship. The Quran prescribes that "if a husband divorces his wife (irrevocably), he cannot, after that, remarry her until after she has married another husband and he has divorced her. In that case, there is no blame on either of them if they reunite."

This was done to emphasise the sanctity of marriage and the enormity of ending it for frivolous reasons. This clause was meant for the protection of women, to convey that she is not a plaything or a doormat, and to save her from the humiliation at the hands of a cruel husband who torments her through constant talaq and remarriage.

After the third pronouncement of talaq, the divorced wife would not have to wait indefinitely for her husband to take her back. Since the marriage tie is broken permanently, she would be free to remarry. This was deemed as a punishment for the husband as she would no longer be available to him. The option of remarrying her was available only if her second marriage breaks down too, and the wife consents to reuniting with her former husband.

The presumption for this was that a couple which goes through the cumbersome long-drawn procedure of marriage-divorce-remarriage-divorce-reremarriage-divorce would not be wish to reunite again as their decision to dissolve the marriage would be a well-thought one.

The way nikah halala is practised is an invention by unscrupulous qazis to circumscribe the carefully structured procedure for divorce and remarriage. When clerics ruled that even a mere utterance of the word talaq three times, even in jest or in a drunken state, the marriage

breaks down, and halala has to be performed to absolve the man of his sin of hasty divorce.

This is purely a man-made procedure which is humiliating to women where the qazi could mint money by arranging a temporary husband or could even step in himself as a proxy.

In the Shamim Ara ruling in 2002 and the Constitution Bench ruling of 2017, the Supreme Court has clearly invalidated the practice of instant and arbitrary triple talaq and therefore, if the marriage exists, there is no question of performing nikah al-tahleel or nikah halala.

In the case of Nazma Biwi versus State of Odisha in 2005, 26-year-old Nazma Biwi's husband Sheikh Sher Mohammed pronounced instant triple talaq in an inebriated state, but later, realising his mistake, he repented and decided to continue living with his wife and three children.

It was a war between two NGOs in Bhadrak, Odisha, one supporting the couple's right to cohabit again, and the other holding the position that the wife must perform the halala before reuniting with her husband. Nazma Bibi flatly refused. Even the NHRC and NCW could not intervene on behalf of the couple. With the help of the NGO, they managed to escape the mobs and knock at the doors of the court. The family court gave a verdict that their marriage was valid. But since their safety was at stake, they approached the Supreme Court, which directed the Odisha government to provide police protection to the couple. "No one can force them to live separately. An impression seems to be created that mobs have a right to take the law into their hands and the police will not intervene because it is supposedly a religious matter", ruled a bench of Justices Ruma Pal, C.K. Thakker and Markandey Katju in 2005.

The Nazma Bibi case highlights that if the woman is firm and has the support of an NGO, she does not need to bow to the pressure of the local qazi and can continue to live with her husband. The issue of the validity of nikah halala has already been decided through this ruling. I wonder if the petitioners have referred to this order ::

**Audrey D'Mello**  
(The writer is the Director of Majlis, an NGO that aims to protect the legal rights of women)



Preethi Herman

The only Indian to be shortlisted amongst the 20 individuals working in the civic and social sector for a prestigious fellowship from former US president Barack Obama's foundation is a woman named **Preethi Herman** – who currently serves as Global Executive Director of Change.org.

20,000 applications streamed in from 191 countries for this coveted programme, Preethi's credentials and experience won her a spot in the first edition of the Obama Foundation Fellowship. The announcement was made yesterday, stating that the 19 others selected for

## THE ONLY INDIAN SELECTED FOR OBAMA FOUNDATION'S FIRST FELLOWSHIP

the programme hail from countries like the US, the UK, the Philippines, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mali, Rwanda, Hungary, Greece and South Africa – and also include one Indian-origin man from the US, Navdeep Kang.

Hailing from a small town called Gudalur near Ooty in Tamil Nadu, Preethi was born to a middle-class family and had also spent some time working with the tribals of Orissa and Dalit communities of Karnataka, before joining Change.org.

She has won many laurels in the past – including being named one of the 25 women transforming India as part of the #WomenTransform initiative by the Niti Aayog, MyGov.in and the United Nations.

An article on the official website of the Obama Foundation describes the nature of the programme, and the reason these candidates were shortlisted amongst their peers:

"These Obama Foundation Fellows are powerful examples of the many pathways we can take to improve our communities. These civic leaders bring a variety of disciplines and skill sets to their work – including community organizing, healthcare, technology, and the arts – and they apply those talents to a range of missions, from empowering parents and teachers to improve our schools, to ensuring

deaf children have equal access to literacy tools, to bringing trauma-informed care to the criminal justice system and refugee camps, to working with partners across the healthcare system to treat addiction collaboratively.

These leaders are working hand-in-hand with their communities to build better futures. They understand that creating change often requires reaching out across the lines that divide us. And their successes to date show how collaborative, community-driven work can lead to strong, imaginative, and long-lasting solutions – even on some of our most intractable and polarizing problems," reads an excerpt.

Preethi's blurb in the site reads that she is "equipping a new movement of female leaders to engage their communities in addressing India's toughest problems."

This fellowship is part of Obama's effort to fulfill his topmost post-presidency goal – crafting the next pedigree of worldwide leaders. During his visit to India in December last year, he had said in his speech, "The single most important thing I want to focus on is the next generation of leadership. That's the central goal of the foundation." ::

(YourStory.com, 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2018)

## TRAINING ON CBCI GUIDELINES TO DEAL WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE & POCSO

The CBCI Council for Women had promulgated '**CBCI Guidelines to deal with Sexual Harassment at Workplace**' on 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2018. Following its release, the office has been actively circulating the guidelines to Institutions, Dioceses and Major

Superiors of Religious Congregations etc. On the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2018, the Office conducted a training program on the **Guidelines Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO)** at Pala, Kerala. The training was organized for the Regional Secretaries and Core

team members.  
**7<sup>th</sup> April, 2018**

In the first Session, Sr. Deepika Kizhakkemiyalil, Regional Secretary of North East, gave a background of the National and International laws and conventions that led to the drafting of the Government Act on SHW, 2013. She compared the ways in which Christianity, Islam and Hinduism reinforced the secondary status of women. She highlighted 3 key cases that led to the change in law in India and explained the Indian response through the Constitution of India and the Indian Penal Code. She concluded with the Catholic Social teachings.

Sr. Talisha covered the 'CBCI Guidelines to deal with Sexual Harassment at Workplace', 2017. She explained in detail, each section of the Guidelines giving various relatable examples which helped the group in understanding it better. At the end of her session, the group had a practical group discussion where they were given cases to identify as *quid pro quo* or *hostile environment*. This helped the group to analyze cases as ICC members.





Regarding the formulation of the Guidelines, Bishop Barnabas said that the Church had gone beyond the civil law and included Men and Transgender in the Guidelines. He made some clarifications as a Moral Theologian and suggested that the Regional Secretaries also be given some basic training in moral theology to understand the Guidelines and to deal the perpetrators better.

Later, the participants were joined by Bishop Mathew Arackal, one of the member Bishops and Bishop Joseph Kallarangatt of the hosting Diocese, Pala. Bishop Joseph spoke about the importance of the Women's Commission. He mentioned the women in the Bible and the importance Jesus gave to women despite the way they were treated in those times.

The last session of the day was the **meeting of the Core team** with Bishop Barnabas and Bishop Mathew Arackal. Sr. Talisha opened the meeting and there was a discussion on the following:

- Contributions received from individuals and Regions.
- The coming up Inauguration of Tailoring Training Centre, at Kandhamal, where 10 sewing machines will be provided.
- Coaching of Children at Kandhamal by SD sisters which is already in progress.

- One of the participants called Kandhamal a witness of faith.

Bishop Arackal shared his views on the need and importance of maintaining good relations with people of all faiths so that there is harmony. He said that in the 19 years that he had been in the CBCI he had never seen any bishop take up the cause of women like Bishop Barnabas. He also shared that there are many dioceses that are facing problems. He said that like we helped Kandhamal we should also have projects to help others. In tribal areas women lead the families and take the major part of the responsibility. He said he was ready to help the Council in whatever way possible. Bishop Barnabas thanked him and spoke about his work among the tribals, like the Peerumedu Development Society.

- Pursuing the Nominations for Girl Child Award, for which the letter was circulated in February 2018

- Implementation of Gender Policy.

- ▶ Sr. Deepika shared about the way she had evaluated it in her Region. She got a result of 50-60% of implementation.

- ▶ Ms Arokia Mary from Tamil Nadu also explained her experiences in a School in Chennai.

- ▶ Dr. Astrid shared about the interest in the GP by women in the US and Europe. She stressed

the importance of getting regional reports for documenting the second phase of the GP. It would remain as part of the "her-story" of the Church in India and serve as a model for the universal Church. She also offered a questionnaire which could be reworked and circulated to the secretaries to be passed on to the Diocesan levels. Bishop Barnabas, Sr. Talisha, Sr. Lilly and Dr. Astrid would work on this.

- Venue for the National Meeting to be held on 29<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2018.

- ▶ Some members have been assigned to confirm the location in their respective Region. The places suggested were Goa, Mangalore, Vishakapatnam and Bangalore.

- Implementation of 'CBCI Guidelines to deal with Sexual Harassment at workplace'.

- ▶ It was decided that to start with, every Diocese should have a Complaints Committee and the Regional Secretary should be a member. Bishop Barnabas said that the CBCI was taking it very seriously. Awareness sessions should be arranged at various levels.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair and a hymn of thanksgiving.

**8<sup>th</sup> April, 2018**

The morning sessions were taken by Adv. Jose Abraham, a practicing lawyer of the Supreme Court on **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act- 2012 (POCSO)**.

The group had a valuable session where they were able to learn of various terms, rights, steps and proceedings. Adv. Jose Abraham gave a thorough explanation of the Act followed by an interactive session where the participants clarified their reservations in an efficient way.

It was an informative and well-designed workshop which could prepare the participants to deal with such cases in future.

The training came to a successful end followed by lunch and visit to Holy Shrines of St. Alphonsa and St. Kuriakose Alias Chavara ☩



International Syro Malabar Mathurvedi Senate Meeting held on 26th April at St. Thomas Mount Kakknad

## REGIONAL MEETINGS 2018



MP Regional Meeting held at Sagar Pastoral Centre on 24.03.2018



Odisha Regional meeting held at Sambalpur on 27th & 28th February, 2018



# CELEBRATING THE JOY OF WOMANHOOD :



Ajmer, Rajasthan



Ajmer, Rajasthan



Guwahati, Assam



Guwahati, Assam



Wirur, Andhra Pradesh



Jamshedpur, Jharkhand



Jamshedpur, Jharkhand

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Durgapur, West Bengal



Durgapur, West Bengal



Kolkata, West Bengal



Baruipur, West Bengal



Kolkata, West Bengal



Baruipur, West Bengal

**CELEBRATING THE JOY OF WOMANHOOD :**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**



*Kothamangalam, Kerala*



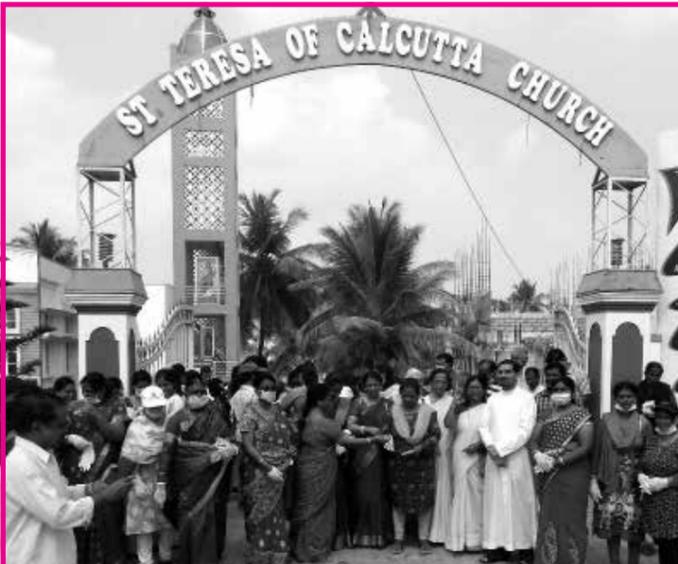
*Neyyattinkara, Kerala*



*Thrissur, Kerala*



*Trichy, Tamil Nadu*



*Mysore, Karnataka*



*Cleanliness drive by Mother Teresa Womens Cell, Mysore*



*Sambalpur, Odisha*



*Sambalpur, Odisha*



*Kandhamal District, Odisha*



*Kandhamal District, Odisha*



*Berhampur, Odisha*



*Berhampur, Odisha*



CELEBRATING THE JOY OF WOMANHOOD : INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Faridabad



IWD March in Delhi



Delhi Archdiocese



Kandua, Madhya Pradesh



Kadapa, Madhya Pradesh



Sagar, Madhya Pradesh



Kadapa, Madhya Pradesh



Sagar, Madhya Pradesh



Womens Day Celebration at CBCI Center

“MEN TREAT US LIKE WE AREN'T HUMAN”  
INDIAN GIRLS LEARN TO FIGHT BACK



The schoolgirls ran into the auditorium, shouting, “Let’s go, let’s go,” in Hindi as they ushered one another into single-file lines. Some adjusted the big, red bows that held their braids together, part of their school uniform. Then they crouched into defensive postures, fists ready.

“Oss!” they yelled — a karate greeting combining the Japanese words for push and persevere.

They bowed slightly to their mentors before unleashing a series of punches, karate chops and kicks, interspersed with occasional giggles, whispers and sheepish smiles.

“Do not laugh!” Police Constable Renu, who like many Indians goes by one name, called from the stage above them, her white T-shirt emblazoned with “Respect Women” on the back.

“Do you think they will laugh when they attack you?” she asked. “You must strike back with anger.”

The girls stifled their smiles, their fists pummeling the air faster, with more determination. This was their seventh self-defense class, and they were feeling confident enough, many of them said, to do the unthinkable: stand up for themselves. Constable Renu has been teaching this free, 10-day course hosted by the New Delhi police — a combination of karate, taekwondo and judo moves — for the past eight years in the city’s public schools and universities. The initiative, with classes taught by several female officers, also includes summer and winter camps for women, and a course called “gender sensitization for boys,” a lawyer-led course that teaches men how to help women in trouble and how to be more respectful to them in public spaces. It’s about making them “feel responsible

towards girls and women,” Constable Renu said. Commuters in a women-only subway car in New Delhi in January.

Booked solid for the next six months, Constable Renu said she has never been busier, as anxiety among women and girls grows with a stream of news headlines describing brutal assaults across the country, including recent national outrage after an 8-year-old girl was kidnapped, gang raped and murdered.

Since a 23-year-old woman, Jyoti Pandey Singh, was beaten, gang raped and fatally injured while riding a bus in the capital in 2012, women here have been on edge. That attack prompted intense soul-searching and a fierce public debate about an issue that, though long pervasive, was seldom addressed. It also gave many women the courage to come forward and demand justice in such assaults, rather than suffer in silence, too ashamed to speak up.

On a recent Tuesday morning, at the Navjeevan Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya school, widely known as NSKV, Constable Renu led about 180 girls, aged 11 to 17, through possible scenarios of men grabbing them from behind as they walked down the street, striking a blow to their heads or lunging for their necks. In each case, the girls responded with the moves they had been taught to deflect such attacks — grunting, kicking and punching in unison.

“The first move we teach them in the class is how to make a full-throated cry for help when they are attacked,” Constable Renu said, explaining that the girls tend to be reserved, making it hard for them to make the ruckus needed to alert others that they are in distress.

“To be able to make such a sound is empowering in itself,” she said.

A newcomer to New Delhi, I have been struck by the caution I’ve been advised to exercise, and the grim warnings issued. A few weeks ago, I took my young son to a public park, watching as he gravitated to a young boy who was being tended to by his grandparents, visiting from Kolkata. They spoke about their frequent trips to the capital to visit their daughter and her children.

An Indian housewife, Suresh, took part in the training camp.

The classes, taught by several female officers, include summer and winter camps for women.

“Thank god we have grandsons — Delhi is no place for a young girl,” the grandfather said, his wife nodding in agreement. The sentiment struck me not as sexist, but as one of genuine fear, as they listed their concerns and nightmare scenarios.

Back in the classroom, Mona Shamsheer, a 16-year-old student, showed me her favorite move as she crouched into a sumo-squat, a two-fisted punch to the gut. “I like it because it’s good for my height,” she said. Anxiety among women and girls has grown with a stream of news headlines describing brutal assaults



across India.

“For an uppercut punch, I’d have to jump like this,” she chuckled, as her small frame, no more than 5 feet tall, leapt into the air to strike an imaginary attacker.

Since her older sister was assaulted while walking alone in their neighborhood last year, Mona said, she had not felt safe on the streets until this month, when her school offered the self-defense course.

“At this time, girls aren’t safe,” she said. “Men treat us like we aren’t human.”

But she added, a clenched fist grinding into the palm of her open hand, “this gives me confidence.”

“At this time, girls aren’t safe,” one student said ❖

(New York Times, 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2018)



## औरत हूँ, मिसाल हूँ।

जंग सीमा पर नहीं, इस जिंदगी में,  
न जाने कितनी बार लड़ी मैंने,  
सख्त फौसले लेकर, खुद अपनी ही तकदीर,  
बदल डाली मैंने,  
गुसीबतों के तूफ़ानों में, अपनों के लिए,  
खुद को अटल खड़ा रखा मैंने।  
अपने आने, अपनों को रखा मैंने।  
औरत हूँ, मिसाल हूँ।  
खुद को, अपने ही हाथों तराशा मैंने,  
गुश्किलों को हराने का, जज़्बा रखा मैंने,  
अहन शक्ति से अपनी, हर तकलीफ सही मैंने,  
अन्यास के आने, पर, कभी हथियार नहीं डाले मैंने,  
गुस्काण के पीछे, न जाने अपने कितने गम छुपाए मैंने।  
औरत हूँ, मिसाल हूँ।  
काँटों पे चलकर, गुकाम हासिल किए मैंने,  
लहू बहाकर, सितारों में जगह बनाई मैंने,  
काबिलियत का अपना, लोहा मनवाया मैंने,  
क्या कर सकती हूँ, वक्त आने पर जतला दिया मैंने,  
औरत हूँ, मिसाल हूँ।  
कठिनाइयों के भँवर में भी, धीरज नहीं खोया मैंने,  
अपमान सहकर भी, शालीनता नहीं छोड़ी मैंने,  
त्याग में भी अपना ही, अनोखा सुख पाया मैंने,  
भीड़ में भी, अकेलेपन का दर्द भोगा मैंने।  
औरत हूँ, मिसाल हूँ।  
कम शब्द, खूबी है मेरी,  
गोम सा दिल, पहचान है मेरी,  
फौलादी इरादे, ताकत है मेरी,  
मदद को तैयार, बाँहें हैं मेरी,  
औरत हूँ, मिसाल हूँ।

अलका रोजेरियो  
नयी दिल्ली



स्वर्गीय सिस्टर जोयेल एच. सी.

“ पुनरुत्थान और जीवन मैं हूँ । जो मुझमें विश्वास करता है,  
वह मरने पर भी जीवित रहेगा।”

यो. 11.25

सिस्टर जोयेल पटना महा धर्मप्रांत काथलिक महिला संघ की भूतपूर्व डायरेक्टर थीं। वर्ष 2010 से 2016 तक, 6 वर्ष उन्होंने काथलिक महिलाओं के लिए सेवा कार्य किया।

वे स्वभाव से विनम्र और हँसमुख थीं। कुछ भी बोलने के बाद वे मुस्कुरा देती थीं। उनकी मुस्कान से पता चलता था कि वे बेहद दयालु थीं। सच्चाई, शांति और न्यायप्रियता उनके प्रमुख गुण थे। काम के मामले में वे ईमानदार थीं।

उन्होंने महिलाओं के उत्थान के लिए काफी उम्मीदें जगाईं। विशेषकर गाँव की महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण में प्रेरणादायक रहीं। ईसाई व गैर ईसाई सभी महिलाओं को उन्होंने प्रेरणा दी। वे हमेशा यही चाहती थी कि गाँव की महिलाएँ अपने पैरों पर खड़ी हों, गाँव की बेटियाँ आगे बढ़ें। जेल में भी वे महिलाओं के लिए कार्य करती थीं।

वे काथलिक महिला संघ, पटना में दो प्रोजेक्ट चलाती थीं। उनके साथ दो सुपरवाइजर और 25 एनिमेटर्स काम करते थे। ये सब उनके नज़दीकी सहायक थे। सबके साथ उनका रहन-सहन काफी अच्छा रहा। एनिमेटर्स को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए वे अपने साथ उन्हें हज़ारीबाग व छपरा भी ले गईं। साथ ही साथ मशरूम की ट्रेनिंग भी उन्हें दानापुर में दिलवाई जिससे ये सभी एनिमेटर्स गाँव की महिलाओं को आगे बढ़ा सके। उनका मकसद साकार भी हुआ। व्यक्तिगत रूप से मुझे (निर्मला वीरेंद्र) को नेशनल कांग्रेस में केरल, शिलांग भ्रमण करने का उन्होंने एक अच्छा अवसर दिया। इससे हमें महिला सशक्तिकरण में काफी बल मिला और मेरा जीने का हौंसला बुलंद हुआ। प्रभु उनकी

आत्मा को शांति प्रदान करे।

धार्मिक तौर पर भी काथलिक महिलाओं के लिए वे समय-समय पर सेमिनार व धार्मिक गोष्ठियाँ आयोजित करती रहती थीं जिससे हमारी खीरस्तीय महिलाएँ अपने प्रभु विश्वास में दृढ़ बनी रहें। उनके ये सारे कार्य सराहनीय थे।

सि. जोयेल लगभग दो वर्षों से कैंसर से पीड़ित थीं। दिनांक 10 जनवरी, 2018 को 8 बजे रात्रि में वे अनंत निद्रा में लीन हो गईं।

अंत में वर्तमान काथलिक महिला संघ की डायरेक्टर सि. जेन एस.सी.एन., सभी एनिमेटर्स, सुपरवाइजर्स तथा सभी महिलाओं की ओर से सि. जोयेल को शत शत नमन करती हूँ।

आपके सुंदर जीवन, सुखमय जीवन व शांतिमय जीवन के लिए ईश्वर को धन्यवाद देते हुए प्रभु से प्रार्थना करती हूँ कि आपकी आत्मा को परम शांति मिले।

“प्रभु मैं अपनी आत्मा को  
तेरी ओर मुखातिब करती हूँ  
हे मेरे प्रभु, मेरे ईश्वर  
सदा अनंत काल तक।”



fueyky oljanz  
काथलिक चर्च मोकामा  
पटना

## INVITING NOMINATIONS FOR GIRL CHILDREN!

The CBCI Council for Women invites nominations for Girl Children under 18, for their outstanding contributions to the Church and Society.

The last date of receiving nominations is **15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018.**

Kindly find deserving Girl children in your Parish/Diocese/Region and send the details to the National Office, New Delhi.

For more details, refer page 3.

### Address

CBCI Council for Women, CBCI Centre, 1 Ashok Place,  
New Delhi-110001

☎ 8750483867/ 9868618613 ✉ comwomenCBCI@gmail.com

f CbcI Councilwomen 🌐 www.CBCI.in

### Layout and design:

Manna Media Hub, New Delhi

☎ +919811997706 ✉ info@mannaediahub.com

### Printed at:

Innovative Press, New Delhi

✉ innodelhi2014@gmail.com