

Bethel Bible College

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EDITORIAL

"Come to the Circle and tell your story
Come sing and share the world inside you
Come to the circle your friends are waiting
To listen and share their stories "
(Song from WDP 2017 Resource material)

The rhythms of the song echoed throughout the world as Christian women gathered in different countries to reflect faith in action as they commemorated World Day of Prayer 2017 on first week of March. The theme 2017 of the World Day of Prayer was 'Am I being Unfair to You'. The hustle and the bustle continued as throughout the world women commemorated International Women's Day on March 8th 2017.

March is a month for advocacy for women's rights to life and dignity. The UN declared theme of 'International Women Day 2017' is 'Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030' and the IWD campaign was 'Be Bold for Change'. NCCI gave a clarion call to member churches to create women and family friendly workplace, re-look into its polices, promote inclusive work ethics and nurture spirituality of gender justice.

NCCI invited young theologians and feminist men, women, leaders, scholars to pen down their thoughts and theological reflections for the NCCI Review for the month of March 2017.

Ms. Moumita Biswas Executive Secretary of NCCI – Women's Concerns of National Program Commission in a Bible study on 'The Story of A Mother Who Wanted to Have Life in Its Fullness' shares about promoting sexual health of women which is most neglected in the country.

Ms. Ngalaton N. Hungyo a young feminist theologian serving as intern of Dalit, Tribal , Adivasi Concerns of National Program Commission of NCCI in her Bible Study on ' Re-reading Genesis 16 with Implications to Surrogacy Practice in India' contextualizes Hagar's plight and phenomenon of surrogacy in the present context which is leading to exploitation of women and the womb and also trafficking of women and girls .

Rev. Bharat Raj Patta a Dalit and feminist Theologian chose the periscope II Kings 5:1-14 to write a Bible study how a nameless captive little girl introduces Naman to Elisha and paves the way of his healing. He shares how this young girl was forced into child labour, was uprooted from her home yet sprouted for her liberation through his master liberation.

Mr. Thangminlun Vaiphei an young indigenous theologian brings a new twist in his reflection on Re-reading of 2 Samuel 13:1-22 where he shares that Tamar was trafficked by her own brother Amnon who plotted her rape for his own political gain.

Ms. Hungreiphy ZAS a young Tangkhul Naga Baptist Theologian from Manipur serving as intern in Women's Concern's of National Program Commission of NCCI reflected on the Inclusive Image of 'God of Love and Justice' through exegetical study of Deutro-Isaiah 42:14.

Dr. Bendanglemla Longkumer, Lecturer of the Department of Christian Theology of Leonard Theological College in her article ' Inclusivity and Accessibility in Our Theological Making: Disability Perspective' weaves inclusive theology urging the ecclesia to understand the power of people with disability and embrace them in body of Christ.

Rev. Samarendra Nayak a renowned Baptist leader and pastor from Orissa in his article on 'Partnership in Ministry' which was presented during Women's Leadership Meeting of All India Baptist Women's Fellowship on November 2016 emphasized on the need of men- women partnership to promote gender equality and inclusive ministry.

This NCCI Review also contains 'Recommendation to Promote Women's Ordination' as proposed by Baptist Women's Fellowship, News about Increase of 'Maternity Leave' from 12 weeks to 26 weeks in India. NCCI invites churches and Christian institutions to change its maternity leave policies. There is also a new brief on Chalo Nagpur Women's March. As the women in US and other parts of the world gave a call for WOMEN'S STRIKE on IWD 2017 in India women participated in historic 'Chalo Nagpur March!'- women's action for justice and peace against the forces of hatred, inequality, fascism and dominance' on 10th March 2017 in Nagpur, participated by 30000 women from all over India.

As you go through these articles we invite you to join NCCI in promoting the campaign 365 Days Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence: Make it Happen Now!!! and join us in our pilgrimage to end gender based violence and also build inclusive communities.

Shanti! Shalom! Salam!

- Ms. Moumita Biswas

Executive Secretary, Women Concern,
National Programme Commission, NCCI



BIBLE STUDIES

THE STORY OF A MOTHER WHO WANTED TO HAVE LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS Mark 5:25-34

We must have read and heard the story of the hemorrhaging woman in the Bible many times. But let us re-read and analyze this story once again on Mother's Day. Let us understand the story from the perspective of a mother's sexual and reproductive health justice issue and well being promoted by Jesus. Mark 5:25 reveals to us that there was this mother or a woman whose sexual or reproductive health was not well. This mother was suffering and hemorrhaging for twelve years. She went to many doctors but could not be healed. Imagine what will be the health condition of this mother who is suffering for twelve years, bleeding all the time. How uncomfortable and unbearable this disease must have been for her. She must have been very fatigued, suffering from anemia because of losing so much of blood, she might have been suffering from infection and there is possibility that she was very weak and frail.

According to Jewish law (Leviticus 12:1-8; 15:19-30) because of her bleeding the woman was unclean which prohibits her from regular fellowship with others and worship of God. We have to agree that prolonged disease not only created physical discomfort and pain but the taboo and discrimination attached to this disease sanctioned by Jewish law must have created psychological trauma for her also.

Let us imagine the sufferings this mother might have faced. Definitely her conjugal life with her husband under such circumstances might not have been that happy and satisfying. Who knows, maybe she was ridiculed, or faced violence because of her inability to satisfy her spouse. Maybe her spouse was fed up of her and took another wife. Her own children might have also looked down at her and felt ashamed of heart. Maybe she was considered as a burden and nagging mother every time she requested for money to go to local doctors. Since she was considered polluted, maybe she was not allowed to stay in the same house with other family members but a given space near the stable or backyard of her home. Since she was considered polluted maybe she was not even allowed to continue household chores and hence she was considered not productive.

May be her family members even deprived her share of food as she was a burden and useless to the family. May be this mother and woman suffered in pain silently and cried. May be she hated her body. May be she cursed herself being born as woman. There are many possibilities if we want to identify and feel her pain. All these things are not written in the Bible. But to understand the pain of this woman we need to put ourselves in her shoes. The Courageous Mother Disobeying the Unjust law to be healed Despite her sickness and vulnerability, this bleeding mother was a remarkable woman. She was desperate to get healed. She was bold and a daring mother who she did not want to just suffer and accept her situation as her fate. May be she did not want to indulge in self pity cursing her own fate or seeking healing in heaven after death. She took a risk, and very great risk. Her own unique spirituality prompted her to break the law. Her faith in God of love allowed her to touch the Rabbi and take risk to be healed. In other words she asserted her rights to come to the Rabbi (Jesus), to touch him, to seek healing, even though Jewish laws forbid her to do so. According to the Jewish laws of ritual on purity she should not have even ventured out into the crowd. In that sense with her physical condition of impurity in Jewish society her action was a crime. Who Touched Me? - Jesus Breaking the Silence & Promoting Women's Sexual and Reproductive.

Health Rights:

When the woman touched Jesus He knew someone had touched His clothes and power went away from Him. Jesus wanted to know who touched Him. In fact when Jesus insisted He wanted to know and his disciples answered (vs. 31) "You see the people crowding against you and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" (vs.32). But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it". We need to intrigue our own conscience and mind and raise certain pertinent questions: Many people in the crowd might have touched Jesus to seek healing then why did Jesus insist on his disciples to find out who touched Him? Why was it so important to Him? Why Jesus kept on searching for the person who touched Him? Jesus was Son of God performing so many miracles. It might not have been impossible for him to understand who touched Him and why? He could have kept quiet, his purpose was served, power went away from him, and the woman was healed immediately. The story could have ended here. But it did not. This story reveals that Jesus wanted to break the silence. He defied the unjust Jewish law, as mentioned in book of Leviticus that oppressed women because of their sexuality or issue concerning sexual and reproductive health.

- He wanted to let the suffering mother or woman know he understands her pain, even being a man.
- He removed the taboo of purity and pollution that society attaches with women's sexual and reproductive health.
- Through the act of healing Jesus publicly proclaimed that women and mothers have the right to life in its fullness.
- Jesus through his action of healing and His question to his disciples "who touched me", reminds us that it is the duty of our society to acknowledge that women do suffer due to diseases concerning their sexual or reproductive health. It is the duty of society to acknowledge that such diseases need immediate attention and healing, and not neglect, violence, or discrimination.
- Jesus acknowledged the courage and faith of this mother even in her brokenness and sickness when He said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

The story also narrates that the woman revealed her own identity to Jesus. This mother or woman could have run away. Being a Jewish woman she was well aware of the consequences of breaking Jewish laws as written in Torah (Jewish scripture) . May be she would have been stoned to death or ridiculed further in public. But the woman did not choose to run away. She also participated with her courage and faith to facilitate Jesus to promote Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and promote mother's right to life in its fullness. So this mother and Jesus were partners in Jesus' ministry. Men and women partnership essential over come violence on women.

Contextualizing the Story:

Even today in Indian society women suffer silently with issues regarding their sexual or reproductive health. In both urban and rural scenario women are still considered impure because of their body and monthly cycle. In many homes, women during her monthly cycle, are not allowed to enter the kitchen, sit and eat with the rest of the family or worship.

Scripture is used to legitimize such discrimination. There are idioms in our society which are very common which are conditioned in our mind from childhood to discriminate women because of her monthly cycle. For example "If a woman or girl touches a pickle or jam bottle during her monthly flow, the pickle or the jam gets spoiled and rotten."

This reveals there is nexus between culture, norms and religion that perpetuates violence on woman. Our complex socio-cultural web, conditioned women to suffer silently and internalize their pain. Millions of mothers in our country have no access to proper maternal health care facilities.

Million of mothers are deprived of food since their childhood suffering from anemia resulting in high mortality rate during child birth. Women, living below poverty level suffer due to unhygienic conditions, lack of sanitary facilities and lack of access towards proper health care facilities. Even urban women suffer as they are conditioned to be care givers and neglect their own health. The philosophy of self-denial, sacrifice, self-effacement and service by mothers is regarded as virtue in Indian society. The rigid societal hierarchies have conditioned them to sublimate themselves. In our Indian society priority is not given to create awareness and share information about women's sexual and reproductive health issues and rights.

Mother's Day provides us the opportunity to break the silence regarding the neglect of Indian women's reproductive and sexual health issues. It is time to proclaim that our sexuality is gift of God and mothers do have the right to life in its fullness. It is the sacred duty of the church to engage in mission to promote health, healing and wholeness of mothers as Jesus did.

Ms. Moumita Biswas
Executive Secretary
 All India Council of Christian Women-NCCI



Rereading 'Genesis 16' WITH IMPLICATIONS TO SURROGACY PRACTICE IN INDIA

Introduction

Human trafficking is fast becoming a common trade in the contemporary context. Commoditization of the human body, especially of women, has drawn a lot of attention in the past decade. Traffickers used to traffic young girls and women for prostitution in the past. Now, they are being trafficked for reproductive purposes; they are used as raw materials by the reproduction industry in the form of surrogacy.

In light of this current issue, we will reread 'Genesis 16' in its social and religious context, keeping in mind Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's hermeneutics of suspicion and imagination to reread the text. Attention will also be given to a case study which reveals the evils of current surrogacy practice in India. Our task is to argue that rereading 'Genesis 16', which tells the story of Hagar, has serious implication for the Indian Church.

A case study

Recently, the story of a thirteen years old girl was reported in the 'Hindustan Times'. Her name is Pulmani (name changed). She hails from Jharkhand. It was told that she was lured to Delhi by an agent with the promise of a job. Initially, she worked as a domestic helper in one of the rich man's house. But gradually, she was forced to be a surrogate mother. She delivered six children altogether during this time of ordeal. Fortunately, she was rescued by some human rights activist and they helped her return to her village in Jharkhand. Currently, she seeks justice through the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in Gumla. As she recalls, she has no idea who bought her babies or became of them. She said, "They treated me like a money minting machine. My will never matter to them, all they wanted was me to deliver babies for them."¹

The case of Pulmani is one of the many cases of contemporary surrogacy in India. One can assume that she still bears the scars of the ordeal that she went through that captive phase.

¹ <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/trafficked-tribal-girls-forced-to-conceive-deliver-babies-for-sale/story-KEbZAB2au7Gyw9aspupTEI.html> (27.2.2017)

Rereading 'Genesis 16'

If we look at the Bible, we will find a similar situation in the life of Hagar. The story of Sarah and Hagar is perhaps not new to us.² However, if we take a closer look at their story, we will find something that we may have taken it for granted.

Sarah's husband, Abraham, was promised a nation (Genesis 15:5). But she was barren. So she was desperate to get that promise fulfilled; it is also likely that she was desperate to have a child of her own. And in order to fulfil the promise or get her desire, she used Hagar as a surrogate mother.

Note may be made that this desperation to have a child has a deep bond with Rabbinic Judaism and the Jewish society.

In the Jewish law, the position of a barren woman is not secure. The Jewish considers procreation as a blessing from God (cf. Gen. 1:28; Ps. 127:3-5). It is one of the main purposes of marriage; to have offspring of a man is considered a pride in the Jewish writings (Talmudic discussions). Most of the rabbis affirm that the obligation to procreate is limited to man i.e. a man is under the obligation to fulfil the commandment to procreate. So to fulfil this obligation a man will do anything. 'Rabbah 71:5' remarks that having children assure a wife's position in her home.³ The Midrash acknowledges the domestic suffering of childless women: "it is children who assure a wife's position in her home". Barrenness was also seen as a curse and a punishment (Lev. 20:20–21; Jer. 22:30; MK 27b). For example, Abimelech and his wives were punished because of barrenness (Gen. 20:17-18); and so was Michal, Saul's daughter and David's wife (II Sam. 6:23).⁴

Such view on women's barrenness results in enduring shame and reproach by the women in general. They are deemed unworthy for disappointing their husband both at home and in the society. For example, Rebecca, Rachel,

² The word name "Hagar" means 'stranger', while "Sarah" may be a short version of 'Umm-sarra', meaning 'the great mother is queen'. <http://www.womeninthebible.net/women-bible-old-new-testaments/hagar/> (1.3.2017)

³ Infertile Wife in Rabbinic Judaism by Judith R. Baskin, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/infertile-wife-in-rabbinic-judaism> (28.2017)

⁴ <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/barrenness-and-fertility> (2.3.2017)

Samson's mother, Hannah, and the Shunamite woman were all barren at first. And in their life, we see their agony, their prayers to have child.

If we look at the account of 'Genesis 16' we will find that Sarah makes a smart move. Keeping in mind the circumstances that she had to endure, she makes a decision to pick a surrogate from amongst her slave. This is likely to fulfil Abraham's obligation and to secure her position.⁵

Here, there might be various reasons why Hagar was chosen to be the surrogate mother. Firstly, Hagar was an Egyptian slave girl i.e. she belonged to Sarah like a property. She was not from Abraham's tribe. Hence, it is probable that Sarah picked her making sure that none will side her or speak on her behalf, if something should go wrong. Secondly, there is a possibility that there was more than one slave in the house of Abraham. Among them, Hagar must have stood out being the only Egyptian tribe; she came from a land that was socially and politically advanced and possessed cities, temples and elaborate burial sites; her life style must have been more sophisticated than others. So Sarah must have decided to appoint her to be the surrogate mother. Thirdly, the story of Hagar took place during the late Bronze Age between 2000 and 1550BC, corresponding to the Middle Kingdom period in Egyptian history. In Hebrew lore, Hagar is said to be the daughter of Pharaoh. Some believe Hagar was Pharaoh Sister, some said half sister or cousin, or even perhaps his daughter. The king married many women, usually as part of political alliances and Hagar may have been one of the daughter of these affiliations.⁶ There is a possibility that Sarah acquired Hagar as part of the generous bride-price paid to her husband Abraham by Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20). Sarah being a witty woman would not pick up a random girl to bore a child for her. Rather, she will make sure to pick the right girl. Sarah knew it well that Hagar comes from a rich or from a royal bloodline.⁷

⁵ Infertile Wife in Rabbinic Judaism by Judith R. Baskin, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/infertile-wife-in-rabbinic-judaism> (28.2017)

⁶ Savina J. Teubal, Ancient Sisterhood the Lost Traditions of Hagar and Sarah (Athens: Swallow Press, 1990), 46.

⁷ Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave, by Elizabeth Fletcher. <http://www.womeninthebible.net/women-bible-old-new-testaments/hagar/> (2.3.2017)

Now, if we look at the text of ‘Genesis 16’, we will find that Hagar was addressed as a girl. She was probably young and has not reached an age to be called as woman. One might argue that she was probably a teenager. In the narrative, we see no conversation between Sarah and Hagar. Sarah did not seek Hagar’s opinion. Rather, Hagar is treated like Sarah’s property. She is given away to her husband to make baby for her. Abraham response to Sarah makes this point clear, “Your slave-girl is in your power, do to her as you please” (Gen. 16: 6). Hagar has no choice but to sleep with an eighty-five years old man. There is no suggestion that Abraham has sex with Hagar only once. But one can assume that she had sexual relations with Abraham until she conceived.⁸

But the irony of this narrative is this: when Hagar conceived and Sarah was jealous. She imagined or notices a change of behaviour in Hagar. This makes Sarah very uncomfortable. One can imagine that the pregnant girl must have received more attention as she is carrying the child of her master. This makes Sarah think that Hagar is trying to take her share. Thus Sarah complained to Abraham that Hagar looked at her with contempt.⁹

Here we see insecurity. Sarah knew well the positions of the slaves. Yet she was insecure of her position thinking that she is being lowered in the eyes of Hagar. This unexpected twist provides an occasion for mutuality and equality between two females. But it is to be noted as Hagar is still the slave of Sarah. Sarah now deals harshly with Hagar. Unbearable of the harsh treatment, Hagar fled from the house of bondage to the wilderness. While on the run, Hagar met the angel of the Lord by a spring of water on the way to Shur, a region at the Egyptian border. Here, the angel told her to return and submit to her mistress.¹⁰

Phyllis Trible suggests that, “These two imperatives return and submit to suffering, bring a divine word of fear to an abused. They also strike at the heart of Exodus faith. Inexplicably, the God who later, seeing (r’ḥ) the suffering (‘oni) of a slave people, come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians (Ex. 3:7-8) here identifies with the oppressor and orders a

⁸ Savina J. Teubal, Ancient Sisterhood the Lost Traditions of Hagar and Sarah (Athens: Swallow Press, 1990), 54.

⁹ ibid, 54.

¹⁰ ibid, 54.

servant to return not only to bondage but also to affliction. Thus, the ambiguity present at the beginning of this episode finds its resolution in the approval of affliction.”¹¹ The angel of the Lord gives blessings not only to Hagar but also to her unborn baby.

Contemporary twist – Others like Hagar and Pulmani

Studies suggest that the number of women involve in surrogacy is increasing every year.¹² There are many reasons to this unfortunate situation. But one of the key reasons is the economical injustice of the country; it is to be found that the poor are becoming poorer while rich are becoming richer. There is also the issue of the legalization of surrogacy in India making the situation of women worse.

Hagar’s oppression depicts the struggle of many women today who are trapped in human trafficking for surrogacy. These women are all powerless; they come from lower class/caste in the society; they are all are economically poor.

Here are some similarities between the stories of Hagar and Pulmani. First, Hagar is a faithful maid of Sarah but was exploited for someone else’s benefit and interest. Pulmani was not aware about the agendas behind her being lured to Delhi for job. But she was to be exploited for the benefit of others – bearing babies for unknown individuals. Second, Hagar was not aware of what lies ahead when she became a slave of Sarah. Pulmani definitely did not foresee the gruesome events that were to be unfolded. Third, Pulmani and Hagar cried out for help but their cries remain unheard. By the time the help arrived, damage has already been done. Fourth, they were both exploited and treated like a property. Hagar was trapped in the house of Sarah. And Pulmani was trapped in the house of a rich man.

Thinking it through

There are writings which tell the story of similar incidents like that of Hagar. Even in the present context, there are those who support surrogacy,

¹¹ Phyllis Trible, Texts of terror, <http://www.jeankimhome.com/Documents/Resources-Commentaries/TRIBLE-TERROR.pdf> (4.2.2017)

¹² <http://paa2015.princeton.edu/uploads/152404> (22.3.2017)

including our government. The Bible does not forbid the use of a surrogate parent or it is silent.

A case such as this raises many ethical questions. It raises the question of whether it is ethically right or not. One can also ask whether it is ethically right to blindfold someone and trap them for one's own benefit? Is it right to treat one human being as a property? As a church, is it ethically right to support surrogacy or be silent about it?

Here are a few more notes on the story of Hagar. We learn from Hagar's story that using a surrogate parent has the prospect of causing pain, heartache, confusion, and several other unhealthy circumstances.¹³ One prime concern was the difficulty for Hagar to give away her child to Sarah when the baby was born. This is to be noted. Even in today's context, surrogate mother discovers that giving away their child (despite financial compensation) can cause immeasurable pain. It is because of the bond formed between the pregnant mother and the child she is carrying; the bonding began long before the child is due.

Hagar as a slave in bondage flees away in the wilderness. God heard the voice of Hagar in the wilderness, her tears were seen by God and God liberated her. There are many women/girls in our midst who are crying, shedding tears to be liberated from such bondage. The God who stands with Hagar, the God who stands with the oppressed, downtrodden has installed the Church to continue God's mission in the world. Are we as a church finding against such injustice or are we justifying such act?

Conclusion

Our case study tells a disturbing story – an evil practice that the government endorses, individuals are ignorant of, and Church is silent about. The story of Hagar as recorded in 'Genesis 16' conveys a story that is disturbing if it is read in light of the Judaism law and the Jewish society.

When we compare the life of Hagar and Pulmani there is much similarities in their life. They are representative of the voiceless souls crying out in the wilderness longing for their voices to be heard.

¹³ What does the Bible say about being or using a surrogate mother?
<https://www.gotquestions.org/surrogate-mother.html> (4.2.2017)

Our contemporary context suggests that there are more people like Hagar and Pulmani. And the situation of these women demands our attention-response. The Church can no longer be silent after hearing the voice of these helpless women. With that note, perhaps, it is appropriate to end this write-up with a quote from Trible: "All we who are heirs of Sarah and Abraham, by flesh and spirit, must answer for the horror in Hagar's story. To neglect the theological challenge Hagar presents is to falsify faith".¹⁴

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¹⁴ Phyllis Trible, Texts of terror, <http://www.jeankimhome.com/Documents/Resources-Commentaries/TRIBLE-TERROR.pdf> (4.2.2017)

UPROOTED YET SPROUTED
Re-reading 2 Kings 5: 1-14

In the recent past, there was a news that two young ones, a brother and a sister of age 13 and 14 went to attend visa interview at a US Consulate. Both were uneducated, and when asked what's the reason for their visit to the US, they said that they are going to serve as domestic helpers in their master's home. Both were denied visas. On the other hand, there is a campaign that's on in cities which says, whenever children come begging at busy traffic signals, instead of offering them some money, take their photos and post them on social media, for most of these children are trafficked and were forced into begging by a racket that exploits children. And there were instances that the children then were recognized by their parents and helped in reaching them to their own homes. Both these incidents expose the growing forced child labour in India where children are kidnapped and trafficked, forcing them to cross their boundaries.

In an ILO's report, India and China suffered from the highest incidence of child labour. Out of 240 million children caught up in child labour, 180 million children are caught in the worst forms of child labour that include child prostitution and trafficking. Experiences across the world reveal that children and young ones are among the most vulnerable ones. Andhra Pradesh in India, is the state with highest number of child labour. Most of them are school drop-outs and are taken captive into the bonded labour, and their humiliations knew no bounds. These children work for meager wages with poor hygiene facilities. Unfortunately working as labourers has become hereditary. Who will take care of these children? When rest of their friends of their age are going to school and are enjoying their childhood, these children are forced to carry huge rocks, and are exploited of their childhood. Who will listen to their cries? Who are responsible for their tears? In such a context, what is the response of faith and faith communities?

The periscope from II Kings 5:1-14, is a story which is a well-known story right from our childhood. NRSV titles it as "the healing of Naaman". The other epithets to this passage are "power demonstration narrative" according to Devries and "historical narrative" according to Eissefeldt. For most of us it is Elisha, who is the hero of this passage, or the mighty Naaman the centre of attraction in this passage. For most others, it is Naaman, who

takes the centre stage of this story, for he received healing and transformation in his life. But there is another powerful character in this story, the nameless, the unknown captive, young girl who introduces Elisha to Naaman and paves the way for liberation. But this little young girl, though brought as captive by the mighty captain Naaman, but still becomes the channel of liberation. This young girl was forced into child labour who has been uprooted from her home and context, yet sprouted for liberation.

To further understand this, I would like to divide this passage into three sub-sections:

1. Deeply rooted in faith
2. Uprooted from culture
3. Sprouted in liberation

1. Deeply Rooted in Faith:

Until the young little girl was brought captive from her own land, nation Israel, this young girl had her grooming and nurture in her home and land. She should have had a strong faith nurture at her home or in other words she should have been a very good Sunday school student. Her deep-rooted faith was reflected in a foreign land. In verses 2 and 3, her deep faith is manifested.

Her confidence in the prophet Elisha, the man of God to heal depicts the deep faith she had in the God she trusted and in the prophet, she has known. Her deep faith is revealed by her belief that, "God is the healer of any disease, and heals anyone, irrespective of any region and any status, "even the oppressor". The faith of this little girl is worth commending, for her epistemology of God is revelatory and pedagogical. It is revelatory because, her faith projects that God can heal anyone, for healing comes from God to all people. Her faith is pedagogical, because it teaches us that knowledge of God and knowledge about God comes from the powerless little young girl, whose name was in nobody's memory. This calls the faith communities to learn from margins, for they are called to locate the divine among those on the margins.

Her deep faith is also seen in her concern for her oppressor, Naaman, who brought her as a captive. Naaman, with all his power and pride, would have brutally attacked all her people during the war, and would have brought her forcefully to her home to work as a domestic helper. Yet this young girl's

deep faith taught her to love her enemy as herself. When there was a need in her master's house, a sickness that is troubling her master, she did not want to take revenge on her oppressor, but was kind enough and made herself as the channel of liberation. This shows her deep commitment and faith in her God. She makes her faith practical by her becoming a channel and paved way for Namaan towards Jordon for healing.

Her deep faith in her God is seen in her service to her master's wife. The young girl could have been arrogant and adamant to her master's wife. But knowing the dis-easiness her mistress was undergoing because of her husband Naaman's disease, and the distress her mistress would have been suffering for being childless due to Naaman's disease, her faith deep-rooted faith has taught her to support those that are broken. In such a situation, the young girl's deep faith made her to be a comforter to her oppressor mistress.

Thus, this young girl demonstrated her deeply rooted her faith, and such a faith made her to participate in her oppressor's liberation.

2. Uprooted from her Locality:

Imagine this young girl with her strong faith, I bet would have become a prophetess, or would have grown to become a responsible citizen of her country, if she would not have been taken away as a captive to a foreign country. Namaan and his attack shattered all her dreams and pursuits for a beautiful life.

This young girl of faith was uprooted from her family, her school, her friends, her relatives, her land and from her culture. In verse 2, it says, in one of their raids, the Armaneans had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel. This young girl would have been smart, good looking and so the conquerors taken her captive and forced her to work as a domestic helper in the commander's house. When she was uprooted forcefully, imagine this little girl, she was totally cut off from her sentiments, her emotions, her culture, her home, her family, her friends, her faith and that would have affected the wholistic growth of this child. The young girl was made a stranger in that foreign land.

When all the friends of this young girl were going to school, she was forced to work as a child labourer. When all her friends at home were playing, she has to work as a domestic helper. Having been uprooted from her land, this

young girl was oppressed in every sphere of life. She would have lost her name, which their parents have given, and I think that's the reason, there is no mention of a name to her. Or the writer of this passage did not deem it to mention her name, for she is a captive, a child and a domestic help, and what merit does it stand if she had a name or no name. By the erasing of her name, by this selective amnesia of forgetting her name, the colonial episteme of power is in affect here, for those on the margins are pushed to be 'no-people.' The young girl's identity is totally shattered. She would have been a poor girl, and her life as a captive, as a forced child labourer would have been made her much poorer. This little girl has to forego her childhood, and was exploited.

But for the invaders, and for the logic of empire, the life of this little girl did not matter. All that mattered was their strength and power and to make slaves and oppress them. For her being uprooted, this little girl was denied life and life in all its fullness. She was made a slave, a bonded labourer and a 'no people' in this stranger's land. She was just made an object and could not see the person in her. The Hebrew root for the word 'raids' means "to cut" or "penetrate"; and these Armanian troops' raiding was to cut and separate the people from their families and their land. This young girl's family was raided and she was uprooted from her culture. She is oppressed and all her visions for a bright future were shattered. The young girl was uprooted from her culture.

3. Sprouted in Liberation

This young girl though uprooted, but because of her deep-rooted faith in God, sprouted in and for liberation. The young girl though was oppressed by the commander master, never thought of taking revenge on him. With her faith, yet strong faith, the young girl became a channel for liberation to her master, thus a participant in the mission of God. Healing comes from margins, for mission is from margins.

Naaman, with all his power and strength would have visited all the hospitals in the country for treatment. All the well-known physicians would have attended to him for the kind of power he enjoyed in his country. But still there was no cure. Added to his disease, his dis-easiness made him much more depressed. The young girl noticed the hopeless condition of the commander and did not curse, "Better this cruel master suffer and die with this disease". She did not think eye for an eye or tooth for a tooth. But

empathized with her master, and showed the way towards healing. One should also commend her courage. A slave girl has no space to advice or suggest to her mistress and master. But her confidence in her God made her to be courageous. Imagine if Naaman rejected to dip in the river of Jordan, and would have returned unhealed, I am afraid, this young girl would have been hanged to death. Here one should also notice the role of the servants of Naaman in verse 13, who convinced him and became channels of healing. Thus, both the young girl and the servants who were oppressed championed liberation and healing to their master Naaman. The young girl with her strong conviction in God, and by her strong belief that God can heal anyone, made her to sprout and blossom liberation to her oppressor.

The passage is silent about what happened to this young girl after Naaman's healing. If Naaman would have had received total liberation, I think he would have released the young girl and sent her to join her family and land, for the mission from margins envision liberation for all and justice for all. Thus the young woman, though uprooted but yet sprouted and became a catalyst in liberating her master.

Relevance:

What is the relevance of this reflection for us as individuals and as a community? I believe, this reflection has a challenging relevance for us today. Primarily I want to draw out three main lessons for us from this passage:

1. A Call towards an Inclusive Faith:

The young girl's faith in God is a challenge to all of us. We should strengthen our faith. Most often our faith is conditioned and yet at times very narrow. We need to be committed to our calling, and it is our faith in God, which should make us to participate in the struggles of the people. We need to guard against exclusivism, we tend to be with. As P.D. Devanandam says, "it is my faith, which makes me to participate in nation building". So, our faith should be strengthened so that we can be in solidarity with the oppressed. Therefore, let us pledge to strengthen our faith and reflect our commitment in God, in all our endeavours. Let us be challenged that locate the divine among the powerless people, including children, and forced migrants and refugees.

2. A Call towards Eradicating the Child Labour and Liberate the Bonded labour:

While slavery persists in our age in various forms, the bonded labour system is considered to be one of the most virulent and the most prevalent contemporary forms of slavery. Besides grinding poverty, unemployment and such other factors, the socio-cultural factors like the abominable caste system etc. are responsible for the perpetuation of this scourge. It is high time for us today to abolish child labour and bonded labour, and make children to enjoy life. With Jesus Christ, as our strength and example let us take up this mission of liberation. Especially the empowerment of girl child is the need of the day, for there is a high rate of drop-outs from schools among girls. Swami Agnivesh, the Chairperson of Bonded Labour Liberation Front (BLLF) says, "If we do not eradicate child servitude today, we will be responsible for perpetuating poverty, abject misery and sickness of millions of adults in the world". Therefore, let us abolish child labour and say no to the bonded labour. The Church should take up this challenge seriously, and should join hands with other networking like-minded partners. If at all today's children be tomorrow's citizens, let us strive to abolish child labour in India.

3. A Call towards a De-Constructive Hermeneutics:

Dalit theology and a theology of the oppressed, on the one hand critiques the normalization of status quo that are oppressive and on the other hand calls on churches to engage in a deconstructive hermeneutics that would seek the confession and repentance of the powerful in paving way for the removal of systemic and structural practices of caste and all such forms.

The young girl's theology can be a starting point in this endeavour. Her act is an affirmation that healing or liberation comes from God to all people without any reservations, even to the oppressors. If Jesus' critique of the social structures of his day or even Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Educate, Agitate and Organise can be one methodological dimension in this pursuit, on the other hand, the young girl's love for the oppressor and even the servants of

Naaman and this girl's courage to tell about liberation to the oppressor can also be the other methodological dimension in developing a theology of liberation in 21st century.

As oppressed communities, I think it is not a virtue to take revenge on the oppressor, but calling the oppressor to accountability is a method of liberation, and become channels of liberation. Jesus' love for all and the conscientisation to the oppressor like in Luke 19:1-10, can serve as the guidelines in constructing a liberation theology for all. I know this is not sufficient, but let us all work to develop a liberation theology for all. I think this is the greatest challenge for us all as a theological community.

Towards that end, may the Spirit of Liberation accompany us to achieve and work towards the extension of God's kingdom here on earth, where justice and equality becomes a reality. Amen.

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TRAFFICKING OF TAMAR BY AMNON

Re-reading of 2 Samuel 13:1-22

A conventional reading of the Biblical text, 2 Samuel 13:1-22 may lead us to have ill feelings on Amnon, the first born of David (cf. 13:21b), who raped his sister Tamar in the palace of King David. However, looking into the whole story and the context, it could be seen as a political game played among David's sons. Looking into the whole context, it is likely that Absolom plays a political game to take over the David's kingship. It could be that, Amnon (the first born of David) love towards Tamar is used to destroy him and take over his position as David's heir. Jonadab a friend of Amnon, a crafty man (cf. 2 Sam. 13:3-5) suggested Amnon the way how to brought Tamar into his house so as to fulfill his desires. Though the Bible does not mention Absolom and Jonadab's relation, it could be that the incidence is the plan of Absolom and Jonadab to find a reason/way to kill Amnon, so that Absolom might become a king. Innocent Tamar was used to destroy Amnon's reputation. This supposition is found justifiable in how Absolom became a king in the later part of the story. How cruel Absolom was in taking over his father David's throne and murder the people and rape the women including David's concubines. If Absolom was against violence over women (to the extent of killing Amnon for raping his sister Tamar), he would have never committed such crimes by him.

Looking the text in a socio-political lens, we observe in those days, women were used as an object to achieve one's goal. In the passage innocent girl Tamar, Absalom's sister was trafficked by Amnon through the suggestion of Jonadab and she was sexually abused . She was raped and dehumanized. Even today similar cases are found in many societies, where women are being sold by the parents or relatives for financial gain. There are even cases, where women are being used to win the political game by hiring a woman to destroy the reputation of the ruling politicians by exposing the sexual scene to the public by the opponent groups. It is a high time for the

church to engage in advocacy and spiritual formation to end culture of rape, violence against women . It's time to break the silence about violence women face within their family in hands of their own loved ones .The church also needs to stand firm to protect and safeguard the dignity of women.

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Inclusive Image of God of Love and Justice as Mother

*- Hungreiphy Zas**

Introduction

Being an indigenous or tribal woman from Tangkhul Naga tribe I am bound by the traditions, cultures, and taboos. In our tribal culture land reveals our identity. But being a woman as per the tribal laws I have no rights to property and land of my ancestors even though I am eldest in my family. Though I am educated and I try to conscientize my parents about equal rights to both male and female children and assert for my rights to own property. However customary laws cannot be broken even if parents try to defy the law their decision may not be accepted by our tribal community.

In Tangkhul community men are still decision maker's head of tribes. Women despite their leadership qualities are not recognized as leaders or decision makers either of their home or community. They are compelled and conditioned to adhere to stereotype gender roles of our patriarchal community. The women folk in our community are just satisfied with traditional roles, they are not aware of their human rights so they do not bother to challenge patriarchal leadership roles. In fact they often maintain, protect and pass on such laws to carry such legacy.

Even though I am educated and the first theologically trained woman in my family and in my own local church yet I am compelled to adhere to patriarchal rules and norms of my tribal community. In fact if women like me want to claim and assert our rights or decisions we are labelled as 'over smart', 'outspoken' and 'uncultured women' and are looked down by our society.

My theological education has intrigued me to realize that unless our mindset is changed we cannot be liberated from shackles of patriarchal laws and customs. Our spirituality plays a crucial role to break and change unjust laws and protect and promote laws that affirms life , peace justice . Majority of people in the Tangkhul tribe has embraced Christianity promoted by the western missionaries. It is true that western missionaries have promoted

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education especially girls education in India which also has benefited Tangkhuls and other tribal people. However the theology promoted by them also was very patriarchal which further reinforced the patriarchal culture, norms and belief of Tangkhuls.

In order to purge some of these patriarchal norms, cultures and laws of Tangkhul it is crucial to inculcate spirituality of gender justice and justice. In this article an attempt has been made to do an exegetical Study of the Concept "Justice" (Mispah) from the Select Text of Deutro-Isaiah to portray the image of God of love and justice as Mother. This is because it is very important to de-construct the image of God only as warrior and father God. God can be loving father also loving mother, loving parent, and beyond.

An Exegetical Survey: Exegetical Study of the Concept "Justice" (Mispah) from the Select Text of Deutro-Isaiah

Justice often has the meaning "what is right and proper, righteousness." The concept of justice in Deutro-Isaiah stands as an absolute entity, almost "world order," "the God given norm to ensure a well-ordered society." Proper conduct in all spheres is to be done in mispah or in conformity with mispah.¹ Deutro-Isaiah deals with God declaring His/Her deity towards the world by delivering Israel from Babylon. Especially God is seen with ability to predict the future and to deliver Israel from exile. Thus pain and suffering, hope, restoration and salvation are some of the important messages conveyed in Deutro-Isaiah.² In the midst of all the anxiety and conflict, Deutro-Isaiah brings a message of comfort and reassurance and above all a message of justice and hope to this uncertain and vulnerable people.³

Three times in Second Isaiah and once in third Isaiah God is compared to a woman. The Lord is like a woman in travail (Isa 42:14; 45:10), like a woman very conscious of her sucking child (49:15), and like a mother comforting her child (66:13). The context of Isa 42:14 is an exhortation to praise the Lord for

¹ *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. ix, edited by G. Johan Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990):92.

² Tekayaba Walling, "'God': She who is in Deutro-Isaiah", in *Samskriti* Vol. 12 (MP: School of Research LTC, 2007): 48.

³ Anthony R. Ceresko, *The Old Testament A Liberative Perspective* (Bangalore: St. Pauls, 2009), 315.

what God is about to do on behalf of the people. Within the patriarchal culture which produced the verses, a warrior's victory was life-giving. Often Yahweh is depicted as acting like a mighty man, like a man of war who stirs up his fury and shows himself mighty against the enemy (Isa 42:13), but rarely is God described as acting like a woman about to bring forth new life. Yet God does proclaim, "I will cry out like a woman in travail, I will gasp and pant" (Isa 42:14). The two verses thus complement one another. God acts like a woman about to become a mother.⁴ Mispah is explained as a guiding principle that should be adhered to by the people. This can be seen as the power of a judge, a king in juridical context and attribute God as a mother or female God in which it is the act of God's love and grace and not as a law enforcing people to obey by order.

Exegetical Study of the Text

1. Isaiah 42:14

Isaiah 42:14: For a long time i have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in travail, I will grasp and pant.

Long time is 'from eternity'. 'God is like a woman with child, the child being the "new things" that are about to appear. God has been eager and impatient for the day when the child will be born, but like every child it has had to wait until its time.⁵

In this verse God speaks of battle that s/he will fight for his/her people. Here the figure of a woman in labour is added to the picture of the warrior. Many commentators support the view that it is appropriate to refer to God as "mother". On the other hand scholars like John N. Oswalt opines that the writer Deutero-Isaiah has no intention to think of God as a mother or woman in travail for giving birth; instead it talks about the labour as referring to cry of attack and the "Pang and Gasp" to God's judgment.⁶

⁴ Alice L. Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress press, 1988), 172-173.

⁵ Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 324.

⁶ John N. Oswalt, *The Book Of Isaiah Chapters 40-66* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 125-126.

Duhm opines that textual portrayal of 'God being pregnant, carrying, and the scene of gasps and pangs in giving birth out from her womb' are just the metaphorical usage along with the feminine form to describe how God is carrying the burden and suffers with the sinful nature of the Israelites. But scholars on the other hand are of the view that such suffering of gasps and pangs of giving birth can never be used in cases of men. Thus, one of the most powerful phrases to attribute God as a mother or female God is the image of a woman who gasps and pangs to bring forth a child of her womb into the world.⁷

According to Schreiner Hebrew word mispah which means "bringing forth (children)" explains God's relationship with human thus making clear that God is like a human mother a female God.⁸ Thus Yahweh caused to bring forth humanity through opening of the womb as in ordinary procreation. As a result, in this verse second Isaiah transmits the image of God as screaming, gasping, panting and straining to bring forth new life which Virginia Ramey Mollenkott⁹ puts in her own words as: "Powerfully, God's anguish at the human failure to embody justice is captured in the image of a woman writhing, unable to catch her breath in the pain of her travail. This image makes God seem very present alongside all those who are oppressed by the turmoil and suffering of this our world in which the blind are safely led their darkness turning into light."¹⁰

2. Theological Summary on the Concept "Justice":

The image of a mother conveyed in the blessing straddles being like God on the other hand- a person who is aware, active and faithful- and, on the other, being helpless and weak, one whose primary responsibilities are so vague they can only be described as "work for their families." In the text for the mother the first sentence leads quite naturally to a description of God's love for her/his children which the mother actualizes. "You compare your own love... to the love of mother..." instead, the quality changes, spelling out the

⁷ Tekayaba Walling, op. cit., 49.

⁸ Schreiner, "mispah", TDOT, vol. VI, op. Cit., 80-81.

⁹ Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *The Divine Feminine: The Biblical Image of God as Female* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 15.

¹⁰ Tekayaba Walling, Op. Cit., 50.

mother's need to comfort and joy rather than enumerating her gifts or responsibilities. Here the female assumes a passive role, the male an active one.¹¹ The female is invisible, supportive to the male, in which the image of God demands dominion over the women. Thus, the struggle of women to free themselves from imprisoning dominance, stereotypical imaging and patriarchal structures continues.

Mothering as a social input is a crucial factor in humanizing society and creating the ground for production of life and for all the wider network of society and culture. Patriarchy has tried to curtail and appropriate this power and has had to create all the paraphernalia of rape threats and need for "protection" of women to achieve it. Despite all this, the family in some ways has protected women's capacity to give life. Often this has been used to keep women out of their important pursuits and the attempt to conquer public life has often blinded us for the hidden power and security we left behind and which often enough we had to disown in order to venture out and become whole.¹² The phenomenon of co-optation of women into communal organizations is an attempt on the part of women to conquer public life without having to give up the securities which the patriarchal family has offered them.¹³

Isaiah had done justice in employing God as Mother in the midst of Israelites suffering under the bondage of Babylonians. However, God should not be limited to such metaphors attributes like that of parenthood (God as Mother or Father) bearing, breast-feeding, caring, and nurturing, but God is to be pictured as God who is not bounded by sex as God being the one who tries to shape and fulfil the life of His/her suckling and creations as portrayed by Deutro-Isaiah.¹⁴

¹¹ Janet Walton, *Ecclesiastical and Feminist Blessing*, In *The Power of Naming* by Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza (London: SCM, 1995), 66.

¹² Gabriel Dietrich, "Women And Religious Identities In India After Ayodhya", in *Women Re-Shaping Theology Introducing Women's Studies in Theological Education in India*, compiled by LalrinawmiRalte (Bangalore/Delhi: UTC/ISPCK, 2004), 36-37.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Tekayaba Walling, op. cit., 58.

Summary and Conclusion

The patriarchal nature of the bible and that of the society and the church ignores the women's experience, speaks of God in male language, and sustains women's powerlessness in society and church. It legitimizes women's social and ecclesiastical subordination and second-class status as well as male dominance and violence against women, especially against those caught in patriarchal marriage relationships.¹⁵ The Christian faith and revelation are always intertwined with the cultural, political, and social contexts, and we can no longer neatly separate biblical revelation from its cultural expression.¹⁶

A cultural imperialism stereotype oppressed groups and at the same time makes them invisible. "Women" are not perceived as human persons in their specific particularity but always seen as "women". Throughout the centuries women have not been allowed to speak in public, to preach, or to have access to the academy. Women are still prohibited from ordination, preaching and official teaching in many churches.¹⁷ Thus, the spiritual authority of women-church rests on the experience of God's sustaining grace and liberating presence in the midst of our struggles for justice, freedom, and wholeness of all. It rest not simply on the "experience of women" but on the experience of women struggling for liberation from patriarchal oppression. The potential of women is strictly limited.



¹⁵ Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Bread not stone: The challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 9.

¹⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her word: Feminist Interpretation in context* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1998), 29-31.

Inclusivity and Accessibility in our Theological Making: Disability Perspective - Bendanglemla Longkumer*

1. Introduction

Generally, people with disability are treated as second-class citizens and are deprived of their right to education, employment, and social, economic and political opportunities as well. As a result they are marginalized, isolated and the most horrific truth is that they are discriminated in many ways. Socially they are stigmatized, religiously they are considered as cursed people and culturally they are looked down as people who are disgraced, cursed. One may be dismayed at the failure of getting a satisfactory answer over what is disability- from religion which shows that there is no sufficient answer to disability. Ironically, the explanation on disability is often stated as a punishment, a test of faith, sins of the fathers visited upon the children, an act of God and so on. By providing such answers, Christianity along with other religions has often been the source of destructive stereotypes about people with disability.

One cannot arrive at a definite definition/explanation on disability because of its diverse nature. It has been defined in different ways which reflects different interests and understandings depending on who may have been defining it.¹ One cannot narrow down the understanding of disability as medical problem but broaden it by looking into the social and cultural problems they experience. That will enable the church to become accessible and also develop an inclusive theology.

2. Accessible Church

Having said this, it is noteworthy that conversations on disability are being carried forward worldwide. Deliberations from different perspectives point to the fact that it is not just concerning some particular church but it should be the conversation of the life and health of the church. It should be

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¹ Arne Fritzson and Samuel Kabue, *Interpreting Disability: A Church of All and for All* (Geneva: Risk Book, 2004), viii.

reflected as the health concern of the church. It is not just the healthy who are being called God's children, fit to pray and do ministry. Rather the church should strive to fulfill the WCC interim theological statement: "A Church of All and For All". This in fact is the challenge before us because the churches in its entirety are yet to fully become inclusive and accessible to people with disability. The traditional concept of the church as *ekklesia, qahal* which means assembly of the people is being deviated with the double standard hierarchical system. The motive of the church as a worshipping community where everyone irrespective of who or what they are can come and be part of the body of church is pushed aside with its stereotypical attitude particularly to the term "disability". Right from the church structure to its teaching/preaching, doctrinal interpretations to ministerial practices, churches are not being accommodative to persons with disability. The contemporary church should read and reread the Parable of the banquet (Matt 22:1-14) where people from different walks of life with different life conditions are invited to partake in the communion. No matter how the invitation was send or what was the condition of the invitation, but what matters here is that each of them received their share of partaking in the communion, equally.

3. Inclusive Theology

Course on disability under the Senate of Serampore is slowly progressing with very limited resources for theological reflection on disability. The reason is because theology was understood as a discourse of perfection by able bodied. To be in God's ministry is understood to be for the perfects, which inevitably is an understanding inherited from the Biblical concept of sacrifice that whatever you give unto God should be without blemish, imperfection and bodily deformity. Having such were excluded from priesthood, rendering animals without blemish has to be offered for sacrifice, Christ offered himself "without blemish" which was acceptable to God, the Christian church as justified in Christ is "without blemish" (Lev. 21:17-23; 22:19-25; 1 Peter 1:19; Eph. 5:27). In effect there is an understanding to give to the Lord's service the best individual. But theology being faith articulated from a given context should consider the experience of the disabled to generate a theology of disability.

3.1 The Understanding of Perfection in Creation

The Christian doctrine of creation has to be put under scanner which is stigmatizing and oppressive. One sees God the creator who intricately

orchestrates every item of this creation is created perfectly.² The term perfect is just a human construct which results to look at creation with hierarchical terms. Much of the idea of perfection in the Christian understanding came from the Old Testament concept of sacrifice/service to the perfect God. The sacrificial element has to be with no physical defects of any kind, deformed or stunted (Lev 22:17-25). Another notion holds disability as a mark of impurity or with blemish that disqualifies one from temple services (Lev 21:18-21). The definition of perfection may vary in the sense that each view things from different perspective and hence our perceptions should not lead to devalue the person who have different appearance. On a closer look to the doctrine of creation, the genesis account declares that God saw the created order good. Being created good doesn't mean that it is perfect, therefore the purpose and appropriateness of each creation should be seen.

3.2 Created in the Image of God

It could certainly be argued that Gen1:26-27 is the cornerstone upon which the doctrine of the image of God in human is built. This also challenges us to question on the traditional interpretation of being created in the image of God and also affirming the personhood. There arises the question on what should be the determining factor of personhood? Is personhood to be found in the essence of personality? Or determined by the characteristics declared/expected by society to be which comprise humanness? Besides varied explanations or discourses on this idea, what Feinberg has written sheds light on our understanding of what created in the image of God means: The image of God constitutes all that differentiates man (sic) from the lower creation. It does not refer to corporeality or immortality. It has in mind the will, freedom of choice, self consciousness, self-transcendence, self determination, rationality, morality and spirituality of man (sic). The ability to know and love God must stand forth prominently in any attempt to ascertain precisely what the image of God is.³

One can therefore arrive at the fact that human life in itself is the presence of the image of God. Different entities of humankind are God's intention in

² Gordon Cowans, "Towards a Liberatory Theology of Disability: Humanity in Creation and the Image of God" in *Disabled God Amidst Broken People: Doing Theology from Disability Perspective*, edited by Wati Longchar and Gordon Cowans (Manila: ATESEA, 2007), 42.

³ Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Image of God", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129.515 (July 1972): 246.

creation and this challenges the traditional understanding of 'created in the image of God' that sidelines the disabled, who are among the most under-represented citizens, from being created 'perfect'. The notion that people with disability are weaklings, fragile that needed to be handled with great care has to change. Rather they should be looked at as partners of God's mission and together confess one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph 4:5-6). Everyone belongs to the one body of Christ, and each of you is a separate and necessary part of it, (1 Cor 12:27) must challenge the church's approach to the people with disability. Is the church considering them as equal partners in God's mission and giving enough care to those who need special attention? With this question, we must affirm all people as created in the image of God, and therefore each person has intrinsic value not based on what s/he can do but on who s/he is. Each member of Christ's body must be considered as essential for healthy church.

3.3. Disability as a Result of Sin

Another important Christian tradition that influenced people's attitude is the doctrine of sin. The traditional understanding of sin is 'missing the mark'. This triggers the crucial question, how Christian understanding of sin affects the people with disability? As hinted earlier the dominant Christian view of disability is that it is the result of sin. Similarly, the disciples began to question to Jesus when they came across the man who was born blind, whether this was because of his own sins or his parent (John 9). Even in the modern society and churches such attitude is dominant and thus resulting to isolation, exclusion, discrimination and stigmatization. Our society and churches are rooted in the traditional understanding of the perfection of creation and therefore people with disability are treated poorly, as inferior beings. Some parents are ashamed of such birth and hence keep them confined in their rooms. To avoid embarrassment they never allow them to socialize rather lock them or even bind them up in chains.⁴ The presence of disabled people should be looked at as precious gifts and not as a burden. We must look at what is their role and responsibility in building our community? And what do they teach us? Failure to do so would mean our disability to so many challenges, and beauty of life, which in fact is defacing our capacity to relate and to live.

⁴ *The Hitavada*, 8th July, 2015 issue, published a twelve year old boy, being chained in his home. He was mentally challenged and so to prevent him from escaping from his home when his family members were out for work.

4. To be Inclusive and Accessible

1. The churches need to be open to everyone who reflects the image of God in various ways, not on the basis of beauty, perfect and so on. There is a commonality in every human being and that is 'created in the image of God'.
2. The church should be ready to discard the stereotypical attitude to the disabled rather create a church of all and for all, where people with disability find space in the fold. In doing so, the church structure itself need to be renovated in such a way that the disabled would feel being welcome to the church.
3. The church should also fulfill her call that is not to be served but to serve. Hence the challenge to church leadership is affirming and ministering to those with disabilities while encouraging congregational acceptance. Thus fulfilling God's commission to preach the gospel to "every creature" (Mark 16:15).
4. It should become the agent/facilitator of God's healing for the world in every aspect.
5. The church as facilitator should empower its congregation to help themselves. Because in Gal 5:13, God teaches us to serve one another with love. In this the church should be not only active but proactive.
6. In our community the voice of those in the margins are not heard. The church should be the voice of the voiceless, while advocating holistic ministry.
7. It should advocate justice for those who are pushed to the margins because of their powerlessness and voicelessness. To advocate justice means not only initiating on their behalf but to get involved and work with them. By doing so the church not only ensures the space they share in the life of the church but it shows that their well-being is also taken care of.
8. Thereby it must work to inform people to be sensitive toward the needs and support for the people with disability and safeguard their rights.
9. People with disability must be encouraged to pen down their experiences to enlarge/increase our resources for theological deliberations.



Partnership in the Ministry

- Samaresh Nayak*

I have been asked to share about the Partnership in ministry in a women's meeting and very likely the expectation is to hear about a Man's or a male perspective in the understanding of 'Partnership' and to see if the women are satisfied and agree with such understanding. In the last 'India Mission Coordination Committee' at Kolkata in April 2016, we had some discussion about the programs to be organized in different regional level. One of the participants, a lady shared a concern that in our women's meetings we would also like to have the men or husbands to be present to listen to the women perspective and understand their problems and concerns. I believe that is certainly one of the solutions if the men need to understand from the women perspective. But, would that all solve the issue? Probably 'Not'. The issue is deeply rooted with human history, socio-cultural and religious practices. The issues connected with the rise of several liberation theologies of twentieth century, impact of modernization and quest for equality by all the oppressed groups also have impacted over the Christian theology including of "Feminist Theology". The Feminist Theology has gone far ahead in describing and limiting God to a feminine gender as a challenge to the patriarchal characterization of God. The Feminist Theology recognizes the Patriarchal socio-religious structure of the scripture (Bible) is root of the unjust social system in Christianity. Though the Feminist Theology has mostly been limited to the seminary studies, theological debates, symposiums or seminars, it did provoke the understanding of both men and women to some extent. However, the Feminist Theology has its own limitations of being to theological studies in which there may be less than one percent men and women are engaged, limited to specific religious group and sect and doesn't have influence outside of its periphery.

The issue that needs to be addressed through this session, why there are no equal opportunities for the women to minister in the church in comparison to the men? Why there are distinct responsibilities for the men and women in the church? Should the women not to be ordained as men and minister in the churches as pastors?

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We need to look into the issue historically, socially, biblically or theologically and practically. Dealing with a male dominated social structure it is also important to study the norms of the society how these norms have influenced over the system, structure and religious life of the community and in particular our own faith. There are mainly three basic elements through which our social structure is built or influenced;

1. Law that is adopted in the society
2. Religious scriptures
3. Socio-cultural traditions

In most of the cases all above three are interrelated and interdependent. Considering the Christian understanding of 'Patriarchy', it is important to know that how the above three have influenced the Church, our religious traditions and as well as shaped our understanding of the role of men and women in the Church. The 'Pentateuch' by Moses is not only the religious scripture of the Israelites, but also was the law for the Jewish community and thereby set the social norms for the Jewish Society. The traditions continued over them both as religious scripture, but also as law for their society. Lets' briefly look into the summary of the Jewish law over women and few others cultures of the East that co-existed about the time the origin of the church;

- a. **A summary of Hebraic Laws related to women:**
 - i. Marriage was called "taking a wife"
 - ii. It involved sexual intercourse
 - iii. Marriage and children were necessary to have a fulfilled life. A childless woman could call herself a mother by giving her maid-servant to her husband as a second wife (assuming, of course, the maid-servant did indeed produce a child).
 - iv. A widow had the right to marry her husband's brother if he lived in the same town.
 - v. Polygamy was permitted but uncommon.
 - vi. Divorce was easy for a man and impossible for a woman.
 - vii. Childlessness was the most common reason for divorce
 - viii. The woman moved to the husband's home and family
 - ix. While the husband was clearly the boss, each expected love from the other and a wife had the legal right to support.

b. Other contemporary practices:

- i. Among the other civilizations those which were pre-existed or co-existed during the time of Judaism were the Akkadians, Hittites, Assyrians and Persians also held patriarchal social position of men with superiority and women were inferior.
- ii. The ancient Sumerians, Egyptians and later Hellenistic societies had different perspective of Women in their societies. About the 3rd millennium B.C. the Sumerians held the position of women almost equal to men. For example the women used to own and control over the properties. They were educated and were allowed to take more than one husband. But, about the 2nd millennium B.C. the Sumerian men were able to take over the supremacy over the women. However, they Sumerian Period died out and the patriarchal structure returned in the East.

The status of Egyptian Women were high in the society and their legal rights were equal with men towards the last 3 millennial B.C. Marriages were monogamous and by mutual consent; women had equal rights over inheritance and they also had equal political power as few women also ruled as Pharaoh. The Egyptian influence of freedom, education and equality of women in the society continued to have impact over the Hellenistic period. With the establishment of Roman Empire and the matrimonial relationship with Cleopatra the last Pharaoh of Egypt, first by Julius Caesar and later by Mark Antony the Egyptian culture did influence the Romans. With the widespread of Roman Empire in the East, it was a Patriarchal society and in the west it was more liberal and practiced women equality.

The Jewish society, a patriarchal society, rejected the equality of women in the society, religious community as well as in leadership, whereas, the Romans in the West (Europe) had completely different views of the women in the society. There were a number of female goddesses whom the Greeks worshipped. The women also held leadership positions in the society and were considered more to be equal.

Historical Perspective of Women in the Church:

The Church that came into existence with a conflict sociological context of Hebrew Orthodoxy and Roman Liberalism held differences towards each other. As a matter of fact the founders of the church as a community of believers, the Apostles, majority of the first Christians were either a Jew or had some Jewish connection. There are very few Hellenistic converts whose

names are mentioned in the Bible who held leadership of the Church. The disciples of Jesus Christ were all belonging to the Jewish community. They were spread in Asia, Europe and Africa. It is obvious that the disciples would carry their Jewish background to a new establishment, which was church. First of all, wherever the disciples preached or shared about Jesus Christ they always related Jesus Christ to the Jewish scripture to which we know as Old Testament. Secondly, it was either a local synagogue or a Jewish home used for gospel sharing and later some of these were transformed to the house church. However, these new set-ups were opened for the Greeks to come in. In some cases the Greeks were also circumcised in order to be a member of the local church as there must have been oppositions from the Hebrews for them being considered as unclean.

In Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthian church where it is found that "Women should remain silent in the church" (1st Cor. 14:34) was to one of the churches in Europe, halfway between Athens and Sparta. During this time it lays at the crossroad of the trade from East and West, Africa, Asia, Italy and Spain. Seamen, Merchants, mostly Gentile came from everywhere. They came along with their sins. The Jews were also there and they had their synagogue. Many of them refused to hear the gospel (Acts 18:1-4). Similarly, Apostles Paul's letter to Timothy concerning the Church at Ephesus again repeats the same advice of "Women should remain silent in the church ...Not to exercise authority over man ... (1 Tim 2:11-15). Ephesus which is modern days Turkey and another city of the West also suffered much of the false teaching (Acts 20:17, 29-30). Timothy's role was mostly to guard from the false teachings. Both of these Apostle Paul's letter deals with heresies and had their contextual background of the West.

Understanding Partnership: A Biblical View

While considering the issue of 'Partnership' one can't eliminate the element of equality. Partnership deriving from old 13th century word refers to "joint owner", "joint heir" or even "part holder". The word 'partnership' in the modern times is used mostly referring to the corporate understanding where it is a legal form of business operation between two or more individuals who share management and profit.

Biblical view of 'Partnership' begins with God's creation of first Man and the first Woman. The concern of partnership was initiated by God himself as He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him a help meet for him" (Gen 2:18). The word meet or 'chenego' literary means, "as before Him" or "Correspondent to Him" means man's own counterpart,

suitable to his nature and need, one like himself in shape, constitution and disposition, a second self. Secondly, man was formed to be social. Man being created in the image of God he needed to converse not only with His creator but also with his equal. The elements of that partnership are;

- i. Man and woman are both created in the same and equal image of God. There is no mention of gender here of the image of God, rather refers to the spiritual image of God.
- ii. Both man and woman had equal opportunity to dialogue and communicate with God.
- iii. Had equal dominion over the created world.

The Biblical view of Partnership is further observed in Gods' redemptive plan. The redemption doesn't distinct with gender, color or any division (John 1:12-13, Romans 8:14-17, 2nd Cor. 5:17, Galatians 3:26-28).

The Partnership is further seen in the church or in the community. The spirit of the Lord came upon both men and women on the Pentecost day and the gift of the Spirit which is to equip and empower the church also doesn't have any distinctiveness of men and women. (Acts Ch. 2, 1st Cor. 12). Men and women are also further called to develop their spiritual gifts and to use them as stewards (1 Peter 4:10,11).

Role of the Women in Society, Church and the Mission in India:

The Indian socio-religious culture is also one that of a patriarchal structure. India being a Hindu country with most of the Indian mindsets accustomed to the patriarchal society. The Church that is being established in India also carries the Patriarchal image of God is accepted by the communities similarly with most of the other cultures. However, there have been great women of faith in the universal church and as well as Christianity in India in particular who provoke our thinking of God's active involvement in a non-hierarchical society. Starting with the great women of faith in the Bible like Deborah the Prophetess, Hanna the prayer Warrior, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Phoebe the deaconess in Cenchrea, Lois and Eunice the grandmother and mother of Timothy, Priscila the tentmaker, Lydia the business women and many more. There are also other great women of faith in history such as; Ann Judson wife of Adoniram Judson, Mary Slessors the missionary to cannibals, Susanna Wesley mother of Methodism, Mother Teresa, Pandita Ramabai, Ida Scudder and yet many more. We all have many great women of faith in our time and history.

Position of Women in the Church: A vision for way forward

It is undoubtedly agreed that there have been clear distinction in the church and the church is Patriarchal in nature. But, God hasn't made the church in the same way. Church is the body of Christ that brings men and women together to supplement and complement one another.

Often it is not easy to eliminate a structure that has been part of the religious and legal system. For example the caste issue in India that is deeply rooted in the socio-religious structure in the Indian society as well as in the hindu/vedic legal system. There has been ongoing struggle of liberation from this structural evil. Similarly, it is also not easy to change the patriarchal interpretation and practices in our Churches which have made their positions firm.

The Indian Socio-Political structure understanding the unjust social system made provisions for reservation for the women in leadership. The job opportunities both in public and private sectors have equal opportunities for both men and women to be employed. The Right To Education (RTE) Act also give equal importance or even more for the girl child education. India has already had its Prime Minister and President as women and there are Lok Sabha Speakers as well. These are some of the opportunities created to make an equal and just society and the church just cannot ignore about this. Since the patriarchy has influenced the scripture that had developed its time and context, the words of the scripture needs to be reinterpreted and see its relevancy to create a perfect society and community of believers. There needs to be proper recognition and exercise of all human beings, their spiritual gifts and talents in the body of Christ.

As one of the most important element the Baptists distinctiveness clearly spells out the "Universal Priesthood" or the Priesthood of all the Believers" that all the believers are called to be priests (1st Peter 2:9 based on Exodus 19:5-6), this includes both men and women. God has called even women to be Priests in the church and the Church needs to open up the opportunities for the same.

The question is, what are the practical steps to be taken for the church to consider women as equal with men in ministry? How can the 'India Mission Coordination Committee' implement the India Mission Summit Resolution for the Women concerns?



RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S ORDINATION

NCCI's All India Council of Christian Women Journeying with All India Baptist Fellowship to Promote Women's Ordination

All India Baptist Fellowship organized a Women's Forum from 25-27 November 2016 in Chandipur, Odisha to discuss about the role of women in Church and strategize to promote women's ordination. 25 key women leaders from 12 Baptist Conventions from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and North Eastern states attended this Forum. There were women leaders also in this Forum who are ordained. According to Mrs Katie Longkumer- Development Consultant of Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) and Rev Narola Coordinator of this Forum, "This is an historic event in All India Baptist Fellowship in its journey to promote partnership of women in ministry."

According to Ms. Tingneilhing Kipgen, Women Secretary of Manipur Baptist Convention, and an Executive Committee Member of NCCI, 'There are many theologically trained women within the Baptist Church who are engaged in ministry. Some Baptist Churches in India have started ordaining women. However the greatest challenge women face in Indian churches is that once they are married, they have to move to their husband's place and leave their home church where they are employed. This phenomenon leads to the end of women's ordained ministry as most of the time later on they do not find scope or space to be accommodated in other churches. Moreover, our Indian society is based on patriarchal ideologies which define gender roles where women, especially after marriage are expected to prioritize the family. Since ministerial work demands more time and does not have fixed working hours or no properly defined work hours within a week, women struggle to balance between home and ministerial work and there is immense work load and pressure. It is in such context that churches should really look into its policies to promote and retain women in ministry.'

Some Recommendations to promote Women's Ordination From the Baptist Women's Leadership Meeting

- More theological Scholarships for women interested in engaging in ordained or Church ministry.

- Ownership of churches of theologically trained women.
- Constitutional provisions and implementation of church policies to employ theologically trained women in churches and Dioceses, & maintain gender balance in employment of clergy.
- Spiritual formation with consideration of gender equality, gender justice and discipleship of equals of congregations and church leaders.
- Breaking the silence from Pulpit through deconstructing patriarchal theology that undermines women as second sex, and promoting theology that acknowledges women as part of the body of Christ.
- Creating and implementing Sunday School Curriculum to nurture children from childhood with sensitivity regarding gender equality and gender justice at home, church and in society.
- Churches making efforts to redefine role of ordained women accepting their reproductive, child-nurturing roles and policies that promote safety of women. (E.g. An ordained woman in the Indian Context should not be given duty to visit houses or congregation members in late evenings and should not have to return home alone in public transport in cities and villages where it is not safe for women).
- Maternity leave for six months for women.



NEWS & CAMPAIGN

MATERNITY LEAVE INCREASES FROM 12 WEEKS TO 26 WEEKS IN INDIA

“Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030” was the IWD theme of UN. As the world commemorated IWD in India on March 8, 2017, the Lok Sabha, on 9th March, 2017, passed amendments to the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, increasing the period of maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, which is over six months.

With this, India has become the country with the third highest Maternity Leave, Canada and Norway grant 50 weeks and 44 weeks respectively as paid maternity leave. The Rajya Sabha had passed it in August last year. (source: www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, accessed on 12 March 2017)

Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi said this was a major step towards empowering women. “I am very, very happy we have made history today. This will help thousands of women and produce much healthier children. We have been working on it for a long time,” she said.

The World Health Organization recommends that every child should be breastfed within an hour of birth and given only breast milk for their first six months of life. Breastfeeding should ideally continue up to the age of two, along with complementary food. In India, proper breastfeeding could reduce thousands of child deaths and episodes of diarrhoea and pneumonia annually.

Mrs Maneka Gandhi further states that “After giving birth, a woman’s body needs to heal over a period of time. It is a very stressful time for the mother, who should be with the child. Moreover the Bill has its roots in malnutrition, as breast feeding the child is recommended which is not possible unless the mother is in physical proximity of the child.”

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 protects the employment of a woman during the time of her maternity and entitles her to full paid absence from work to take care of her child. Among other things, the bill provides for 12 weeks of maternity leave to a woman who legally adopts a child under three months of age and a commissioning mother (defined as a biological mother) who uses her egg to have a surrogate child.

The bill also requires every establishment with 50 or more employees to provide creche facilities within a prescribed distance. The woman will be allowed four visits to the creche a day. This will include her interval for rest. It has also made a provision under which an employer can permit a woman to work from home, if the nature of work assigned permits.

Labour Minister Bandaru Dattatreya said that the amendments were “progressive” in nature and would have “positive impact” on women participation and improve their “work life balance”. It would be expected of the employer to inform women about the maternity benefits at the time of employment. He appreciated the role of some states like Tamil Nadu which are providing more benefits over and above what is mandated in the central statutes. (www.business.standard.com, accessed on 12th March 2017)

However there are certain short comings of the amended law passed by the Parliament. It excludes women from the unorganized sector. Any woman working in agricultural, commercial or industrial establishments or shops with 10 persons or more is entitled to benefits under the Act. This leaves out many women who work from home – for instance, to roll bidis – or work at very small establishments, often without a fixed employer. “These women are left out and need the salary support,” said Jasodhara Dasgupta of Sahayog, a non-profit organization that works for the health rights of women in Lucknow. “They cannot keep the baby at home alone and go back to work.” If a woman does not have a fixed employer, it should not mean that the woman is not entitled to benefit”, Dasgupta said. (source: www.scroll.in, accessed on 12 March 2017)

According to Dipa Sinha, a Right to Food Campaigner “If a woman has two or more children, the maternity benefits remain just 12 weeks. This penalizes women who have more children. Women who have more than two children do not necessarily choose to get pregnant. Many have no reproductive rights, or have no access to contraception.” (Source: www.scroll.in accessed on 12 March 2017)

Moumita Biswas, NCCI Executive Secretary – Women’s Concerns, states “National Council of Churches in India has been engaged in advocacy for promoting maternal, sexual, reproductive health justice and rights of women and supporting pro-women work ethics. Unable to bear the stress of balancing professional life with nurturing the baby, women leave their

jobs. 25 percent women leave their jobs after delivery in India in the organized sector. This amendment helps us to move a step forward. We need to engage in advocacy for bringing in more amendments. It is the duty of prophetic churches in engaging in advocacy for rights of women in unorganized sector also."

Reported by

Moumita Biswas,
Executive Secretary – Womens Concerns,
National Programme Commission, NCCI



CHALO NAGPUR MARCH!
Women's Action for Justice and Peace
Against the Forces of Hatred, Inequality, Fascism and Dominance

'Nagpur Chalo March' gathered more than 3000 women from different parts of India on 10th March 2017 in Indora Maidan, Nagpur. Women from Dalit, adivasi, bahujan and minority communities, women from different faiths disabled, queer women, transgender people, sex workers, nomadic tribeswomen, students and many others discriminated against on the basis of caste, class, religion, community, sexuality, gender, disability, occupation or age came together to raise their voices against the forces of communal, brahmanical, feudal, casteist, capitalist patriarchy on 10th of March 2017.

International Women's Day on March 8th 2017 geared up women different parts of the world to protest against fascism, racism, discrimination, intolerance, hatred. Fascism is increasing in the world today which is fueling heinous crimes and breeding culture of violence. There are countless cases of heinous gendered and sexual crimes by dominant castes upon Dalit girls and women of minority communities in India. Women's and girls' bodies have become battlefields where caste and communal wars of hatred are being fought. Rape has become an instrument to revenge, creating terror and shaming communities.

This is a historic event in the Women's Movement in India as it commemorated the 120th Death Anniversary of Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule, renowned Indian woman teacher, poet, writer of the 19th Century. She was the leading champion of women's rights, who sounded a clarion call against

Brahmanical casteist patriarchy in the 19th century. Savitribai Phule made efforts to educate shudras (low caste people) and women, and exposing the hollowness of the Manusmriti, religious texts and Brahmanical social practices. Savitribai boycotted traditional restrictions imposed on women, and set them on the path to freedom. She intrigued society and women to raise voices for justice, friendship, peace, freedom, equality and dignity.

The National Council of Churches in India promotes the 365 Days Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence: Make it Happen Now!!! Campaign to end the culture of gender based violence within our own homes, communities and societies.



365 DAYS ZERO TOLERANCE TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: MAKE IT HAPPEN NOW is a campaign launched by All India Council of Christian Women (AICCW) which is the women's wing of National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) in response to the increasing Gender based violence in India.

The campaign was inaugurated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Taranath S. Sagar, President of NCCI during its Executive Committee meeting in Bangalore on 27th February 2015. "Prophetic church cannot remain silent when our daughters and mothers are being raped, when our roads are becoming unsafe for our daughters to go to school, when our indigenous sisters are trafficked and displaced from their home as forests are bought by multi-national Companies, when our children are sold for a sack of rice, when women are battered by their loved ones at home, or burnt for dowry, or our daughters are deprived of food and education" asserts Dr. Saramma Varghese, President of AICCW. "We have chosen International Women's Day to promote this campaign" states Dr. Varghese.



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