



People must not only hear about the kingdom of GOD, but must see it in actual operation, on a small scale perhaps and in imperfect form, but a real demonstration nevertheless.

— Pandita Ramabai —



Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922)

Ramabai was born as the sixth child to Anant Shastri Dongre and Lakshmbai. Her father earned his living by rendering Vedic recitals in temples, teaching and narrating Puranas in public platform and other similar activities as performed by a devout Brahmin. The family lived under severe economic strain. With famine sweeping the region the economic hardship increased. It was in this condition, when Ramabai was just 16 that her father passed away. Within few days her mother too passed away under the continued strain of starvation and the emotional trauma of having lost her husband. Even her elder sister died of cholera within a short time leaving behind only her brother and herself, since her other siblings have died in early years. But before her parents died she has mastered Sanskrit at the feet of her parent.

For years she led an intellectual nomadic life with her brother. In 1878 when Ramabai was 20 she reached Calcutta with her brother. It was here that Ramabai was honoured with the title 'Pandita' by Calcutta University for her learning in Sanskrit. Tragedy, however, struck her again when her brother Srinivas succumbed to Cholera in 1880. Shortly Pandita Ramabai married her brother's friend Bipen Behari Das, a lawyer from a non-Brahmin background. Worse was to come when her husband died of cholera two years later leaving her with their daughter Manorama.

When she was 25, she travelled to England to study medicine. There she got converted to christianity and got baptised in the Church of England. Three years later she travelled to the US where she spent two years publicising her plan to open a home for Hindu widows in India.

In 1889, when she was 34, she started a widow's home called Sharada Sadan in Bombay which was eventually shifted to Pune and came to be known as Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission. She spoke out against gambling, drinking and other social evils that destroyed homes. She had acquired a fighting spirit from her parent which aided her as she went about encouraging widow's remarriage despite opposition from conservative Brahmin. Her father had faced social boycott for having insisted on educating his wife when such practice was considered an anathema. Just as she led an independent life she taught women to be independent and confident. Pandita Ramabai also introduced kindergarten system of education to India for the first time.

In 1882 she started one Arya Mahila Samaj for the cause of women's education. She also wrote two books: Stri Dharma Niti in 1882 and The High Caste Hindu Women in 1887. The former representing a reformist approach to Hindu womanhood and the latter a critique of the deplorable condition of Hindu widows. She went on to suggest, in Lok Stithi, that Hindi should be enriched and developed by incorporating from other language wherever necessary. Her contribution to literature would be incomplete if her work in translating Bible to Marathi from original Hebrew and Greek is not given due recognition. The way she withstood personal loss, the manner in which she critiqued Hindu religious traditions that legitimized patriarchal oppression and her long quest for the truth which she found in Christ Jesus are some lessons one can learn from her life. In 1989 the Government of India in recognition of her contribution to the advancement of Indian women issued a commemorative stamp.

In honour of her scholarship and contribution towards social transformation, TRACI has a Pt. Ramabai Study Group that brings together Christian scholars from various disciplines to share their work and enrich one another's learning. We pray and hope to take this endeavour into greater height in the coming days.

- Dr *Jeremiah Amai Veino Duomai* (Post Doc., Delhi University), leads the Pt. Ramabai Study group and is a working member of TRACI.



UPCOMING EVENTS



THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND
COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE

Theological Students
Internship Programme 2020
22 APRIL - 18 MAY

TRACI's **Theological Students Internship Programme 2020**, will be held from **22nd April to 18th May** at the TRACI Centre, New Delhi. We do have students register from all the main seminaries in India. Seek your prayers.



Current Trends & Church Engagement: the third consultation on the topic will be held at CMS College, Kottayam, Kerala on the 7th March. Solicit your prayers.

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TRACI MISSION : "Facilitating integrated response and transformative engagements through theological reflections on contemporary and relevant issues, by communities of followers of Jesus Christ".

ROLE OF MEDIA IN DEMOCRACY : PRESENT SCENARIO AND CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

On the 18th of January, TRACI organised the reflection meeting on the theme 'Role of Media in Democracy'. Ms. Priscilla Jebaraj, Deputy Editor, The Hindu was the resource person for the same. At the outset, she clarified the understanding of the term 'media' from its broad usage, and limited her sharing primarily focussing on news media.

The discussion started off by looking at different ways of consuming news and the different topics that we have read in the past two days. She then led us to discuss the primary role of media in democracy and other purposes of media. The primary role of media is such that it acts as the 4th pillar of democracy (though not accorded officially) by telling us about what is happening in the three pillars of the democracy, namely, judiciary, executive and legislative. She also emphasised that while the Indian Constitution does not employ the term freedom of speech directly to media, it's rather the freedom of the individual writers who have the right of expression. Some of the other purposes of media which we discussed are; media as watchdog, asking questions at press conferences, building pressure, amplifying the questions of others, intellectuals, citizens and public, developing opinions, exposing injustices, act as the first draft of history, etc.



The other focus of the discussion was how to see the role of media from a **Christian perspective**. The speaker shared from her personal experience taking us back to some scripture portions in the Bible (Jeremiah 29:7, Ezekiel 13:10, Ephesian 5:10,11) where we could reflect on our role as primary citizens of the kingdom of God. For example, Jeremiah 29:7 commends us to seek the peace and prosperity of the city, and to pray for the city. Here the chief role of media is to

know **what to pray for** the city. There were also some questions raised during the **Q & A** session such as: Is media objective? How do we come to know and believe the facts? Should Christians be political? Is there a pressure as Christian journalists?

The speaker suggests that one need not necessarily focus on the political aspect of news but one can also read other news like economics news (cases of inflation, unemployment), local news, etc so that we can relate to what is happening around us and do something out of it. The speaker also suggests that we read actual reports of people's voices, read regularly and read variety of news with wider perspective. Along with these, one can also share, contribute and write opinions in one's area of expertise. The speaker concludes that truth is absolute at the heart of a Christian and it is important to see things through a Christian lens.

- Reported by Samzeila Seneca, Research Scholar, Delhi University.

CHRISTIAN MIND SERIES IS BACK

The timely TRACI publication CMS (Christian Mind Series) is back ! CMS is the TRACI venture to promote Christian thinking and understanding. Our Christian vocation today calls for a critical dialogue between the Word and the world. In our media-dominated age, the world is too much with us. We derive most, if not all, of our insights from such sources. We are thus totally immersed in the surrounding or emerging culture and are conditioned by it. There is a great need hence, to develop a Christian counterculture.

So starting from this year, we plan to bring back the CMS Series. The first article is on the **'Responses to the Socio-Political Context as Acts of Faith'**

The central focus of this article is on the practical aspects of a life of faith and not on faith as a belief system. It is about the faith that is required as we encounter life and its challenges each day. Barring a few exceptions, much of the church teaching encourages a spirituality, which is individualistic, and a theology that prioritizes a very inward looking and self-absorbed journey. While personal salvation and piety are of great importance, such a focus has contributed partially to the neglect of the fact that Biblical narratives evolve from real life contexts and there are far greater prospects for application than what is generally derived. By and large we have limited our takeaways from the Scripture. Therefore, it is important for us to ask the following questions. Would our credible responses to the current contexts that we find ourselves in be factored as faith? Is our faith independent of such underpinnings?

Continue to read as Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob, brings the relevance of God's word for God's world. And much more it speaks for our times.

Read from TRACI website:
<http://traci.in/2020/02/responses-to-our-socio-political-context-as-acts-of-faith/>

Or else, you can download as pdf from:
traci.in/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Responses-to-our-Socio-Political-Context-As-Acts-of-Faith.pdf

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