



**TRACI**  
**Reflections**  
 Theological Research And  
 Communication Institute

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: AN ISSUE THAT CHURCH CANNOT IGNORE**

Violence against women is one of the most invisible concerns despite one in three women across the world are subjected to some form of violence at least once in their lifetime. Those in the immediate vicinity of these hapless women constantly overlook this serious violation of rights and freedom.

One may assume that the prevalence of violence against women among Christians is less but unfortunately the facts and data reveal otherwise. Over a third of Indian Christian women face violence of different forms. And a lack of a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes violence exacerbates the situation further. When most of the unfortunate experiences of women are dismissed as non-issues the question of addressing any of them does not even arise. So over 80% of the Indian Christian women suffer in silence.

TRACI's recently concluded study titled "Violence against Women in Indian Christian Families: An Inquiry into the Response of the Church" was an effort to understand the reasons for the persistence of violence against women in Indian Christian families and to map the response of the church to the issue. The critical gaps that exist in how we understand violence and the actions currently taken against violence provide the direction for an engagement with the church which will contribute towards gender justice and eliminate gender-based violence against women.

Fear of repercussion, shame and loss of honour, lack of financial independence, the lack of safe space for women to speak up, suffering quietly as being a sign of spirituality and the kind of biblical teaching the church imparts are a few of the reasons why Christian women suffer violence silently. Though any of these reasons cannot be justified, one is also aware that the culture that we are part of also contributes to the situation. However, what lies beyond one's comprehension is how the word of God is used to condone or encourage violence. The gospel that is meant to set people free is twisted and corrupted to keep women in oppressive situations. This is an irony in our identity as children of God.

The women who suffer also feel a deep sense of alienation in spaces that should embrace them and lovingly and securely hold them. Many members maintain their distance, avoid talking about it, pretend as though everything is fine and probably may even alert their husbands about the women who talk about it. As a family of God's people our common identity comes into question. Is it just a wonderful concept to have and describe the church with no practical realities or implications? Particularly for those in troubled relationships having a large and loving family that rallies around them, looks after them and comes to their aid in different ways will be a defining difference that the church of God can make.

Domestic violence does not qualify as a serious issue in most of the churches or in fact is not an issue at all. It is mostly treated as a minor private matter. Sermons, teachings in the church, discussions in the committees mostly do not address the issue of violence against women. In a leadership space that is predominantly occupied by men it is but natural and expected that women's concerns are peripheral or non-existent. So domestic violence not being addressed and dealt with is an integral outcome of the structural constitution of the church. What is required is a deep cathartic action that will enable the church to equally

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## **Themes In Missionary Ethnographies: A Presentation at the Pt. Ramabai Group Meeting**

**(A TRACI University Student's Initiative)**

The Pandita Ramabai Group, a University Students' Initiative of TRACI held their monthly meeting on the 14th of January, 2022. The session saw a presentation led by Anna Jacob, a part of a larger research where she looked closely at the language of the mission encounter in Travancore from various perspectives. Anna discussed some of the themes from two missionary ethnographies, Samuel Mateer's *Land of Charity* (1878), and *Native Life in Travancore* (1883). And she writes, "The questions in my mind were- what is the missionary vision? How do they approach the natural and social world they encounter in Travancore? What is the language that the missionary archive uses to understand this world and make sense of it?"

One of the recurring themes in Mateer's work is that of the 'Protestant Modern' or the 'Christian modern'. There is a clear sense of linear time and Travancore is seen to be moving from darkness and superstition into civilization and enlightenment, and scientific rationalism, with the new Protestant churches as vanguards of this movement.

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focus on the responsibilities that it cannot choose to ignore. It is time we quit making superficial changes, which have not yielded any substantial results. If zero tolerance for violence against women is a strong commitment for the church of God then efforts to achieve it should automatically follow.

Violence against women is a moral issue and just as sinful and depraved as every other sin that the church counts as condemnable. The church cannot afford to shield or encourage perpetrators of violence by its silence. The seriousness with which it is dealt with is an indication of both the understanding of God's word and the position of women among the Christians. May God enable our churches, fellowship groups and communities to become safe spaces where women who are broken and suffering find relief and refuge, are accepted and affirmed and are embraced and empowered to live free and confident lives to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

May justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream for our women who experience violence!

**Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob (Director Research, TRACI)**

#### ...Pt. Ramabai Group

At the same time, the mission has a troubled relationship with certain aspects of modernity. Young caste Hindu students who studied in mission or government institutions with their exposure to western science and rationalist literature were becoming increasingly sceptical and questioned, among other things, Christianity and the missionary project itself.

Another prominently recurring theme is the tension between the 'temporal' and the 'spiritual'. There is an anxiety in everyday missionary reports to reiterate that the missionary project is a spiritual one, where the aim is to preach the gospel, and yet in a sprawling ethnographic work like this, the scope of the missionary project is enlarged to include all of society – the economy, politics, technology, education, and so on."

**Anna Jacob, PhD Scholar,  
Department of History  
University of Delhi**

#### TRACI ONLINE COURSE: FAITH AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Theological Research and Communication Institute (TRACI) has initiated an 8 week course module (6<sup>th</sup> March to 14<sup>th</sup> May 2022) on "Faith and Active Citizenship." The entire course will be facilitated online through the Zoom platform and will involve interactive teaching to encourage in-depth study and discussion.

At TRACI, our aim is to engage with and discuss issues pertinent to our existence. Amidst the decaying political culture, this course has been created to equip Christians and the church with the knowledge and awareness that will encourage participation.

The bedrock of our engagement should flow from a commitment to Kingdom values and a passion to fulfill the vision of Shalom in our world. We offer these courses to usher in a counter cultural model and narrative that Christians and the church can infuse into political engagement and discourse.

#### DO LOOK FORWARD TO THE UPCOMING PROGRAMMES

- **March 6<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> May 2022:** Online Course: Faith and Active Citizenship
- **April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022, 6.30pm :** TRACI ONLINE LECTURE **Rev. Dr. Christopher J. H. Wright**



#### TRACI MONTHLY REFLECTIONS

(January-February 2022)

#### Climate Change and Creation Care

TRACI's monthly Reflection was held on the January 29<sup>th</sup> on the theme, "Climate Change and Creation Care." The panelists for the session included Mr. Mathew John and Dr. Anita Varghese from Keystone Foundation, Ms. Lalbiakhui Rokhum (Kuki), from EFICOR, and Mr. Isaac Gergan from Art For Change.

Mr. John and Dr. Varghese introduced to us the concept of climate change and the interaction of ecological systems, with a special focus on anthropogenic disasters that have severely affected marginalized and disadvantaged communities more than others. Ms. Lalbiakhui Rokhum provided insights into the scriptural call for creation care and Mr. Gergan shared different models of engagement that can be adapted to ensure that responses to climate change are transparent, relevant, informational and fair. To care for creation is to ensure that all communities are cared for.

#### Violence Against Women in Indian Christian families: An Inquiry into the Response of the Church

TRACI's recently concluded research titled "Violence Against Women in Indian Christian Families: An Inquiry into the Response of the Church" was presented on 26<sup>th</sup> February as part of the monthly reflection.

Mr. Lozaanba Khumbah and Dr. Bonnie Miriam TRACI's in-house research team presented and lead the discussion. The online webinar saw an attendance of nearly a 100 people.

Rev. Thomas Jacob, current Presbyterian-in-charge at St. Stephen's Church in Bandra, Mumbai responded to the findings and analysis of the research findings. He found the research valuable for the church and implementing some of the suggestions from the research can make a difference to women who experience violence. The interactive session following the main discussion had the audience participating enthusiastically. Such a research, although the first by the TRACI community, we hope will prove to be a blessing to the Church and the people of God.

#### INDIAN ACCOUNT

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#### FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION ACCOUNT

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A/c. No. : 40081602741 (FCRA Savings Account)  
IFSC Code : SBIN0000691  
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