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Voices of Women

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The Bible
Through A Woman’s Lens

JESUS, HeForShe

With Emma Watson’s passionate speech at the UN Headquarters kick-starting the HeForShe Campaign on September 20, 2014, there has been an upsurge in the recent appeals to men and from men to join the movement for gender equality. Today we are particularly aware that gender equality is no mere women’s concern but a human concern that equally affects men as well, albeit in a much more subtle manner. Unlike men come out vociferously and support the cause, urban men charge their attitudes towards women, under the delusion that they follow men, whereas marriage is seen and believed to be a status symbol. Even women and the weaker sections of the society will continue to be at the receiving end of violence and oppression. So can we say, Jesus stands the way also in this.

With great insight Dorothy Sayers says this about Jesus, “They (women) had never known a man like this Man – there has never been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never talked down or patronized ... who took their questions and arguments seriously, who never flapped out their skirts, never urged them to be feminine or joined at them for being female, who had no use for guilt and no unspoken dignity to defend, who took as he found them and was completely unself-conscious. Both in his teachings and his attitudes, Jesus reached out to women as persons who were equally worthy as men in his saving activity.

Much unlike the given context of the time, we see in the Gospels that Jesus treated women with incredible respect. In living as he did, he filled those foundational needs, for us to be healthy and to be able to grow as persons. The first is a need to belong. We all need to know and feel that we are wanted, accepted, cared for and enjoyed for who we are. The second is a need of examples where Jesus lived by the tenets he taught and told us. Jesus did not only make theoretical points but also of course the Holy Scriptures.

“Women, I do not condemn you. Go, sin no more!” The Samaritan woman, who was also a sort of public sinner, lost herself worthy of her offense hopefully to a great prophet, but is seriously interested and engaged in a theological discussion. This experience is so powerful that she becomes the apostle and messenger of the good news, even Jesus who was the promised messiah. Similarly the most important Good News of our faith, Jesus is the first introduced to a group of disciple women rather than the official apostles, the leaders of the Church.

We have the example of Jesus’ daughter who again was considered dead and therefore it would have been quite unclear to touch a corpse. But, Jesus had his daughter by her hand, knapsack her addressing her, “Little girl, I did not you, Arise!” In fact, in a culture where touching and treating women was forbidden, Jesus unceasingly touched a number of other women too, like the Peter’s mother-in-law and the touching woman, offering each one a sense of belongingness as an essential daughter of God.

Second, the need to feel competent. We all need to know that we can do something, contribute, and accomplish. Jesus gave perfect option for this and his commitment for their empowerment and liberation is a stairway example of this. In a culture where women were forbidden from studying. The Torah and no respectable robbe was never allow to a woman in public. Jesus had a number of women as his disciples and he wisely accepted their services, friendship and contribution, he did not shy away from holding a crucial debate with a Synagogue woman, ultimately counseling defeat and granting not only her request, but also the full-blown praise of “Woman, great in your faith”.

THE BIBLE

Through A Woman’s Lens

LIVING WITH A FEMINIST

It is natural for a Hindu to see God as Woman. Aditya Shakti, Mahakal, Shakti, etc. When I was married Astid, feminism and its nuances were quite new to me. Of course, I was aware of inequality between men and women, and the second rung that women occupied on the ladder. But I was also witness to the sexist transformation that our society was going through, reaping the increasing number of bright women colleagues in schools, colleges and at work places. So when I first saw Astid writing about and fighting for gender equality, I was a bit surprised at her determination, understanding, courage and the changes that did not seem to affect her directly.

She was the first woman, thanks to Bishop Bosco Pinto who asked her in to address the campus at a CBS meeting. She was passionate plus to end the violence against women. She touched a chord in their hearts and a Women’s Desk and later Women’s Commission became a reality. Reluctantly at home or outside she challenged people to change their views and pushed for equality of human beings regardless of their gender. What was a theoretical truth for her became a reality in our home. When I was a young boy I asked, “Why do you allow your wife to work?” and I was surprised at the question why. Why not? When Astid and I, both working professionals, started our home and family I understood the complexities of this question. A man does not need a woman’s permission to work. This was just the flip of the script to all the deep rooted prejudices and limitations that a male dominated society has imposed on women.

Being aware of gender discrimination and being gender-impartial in our behavior are two different things. The transition from being gender-impartial in our mind to bringing it into day to day activity is not as easy as one would wish to believe.

JOURNEY TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

During the last three decades, there has been a phenomenal growth in the number of groups and individuals working towards gender equality. In this current phase of the movement, thousands of grassroots groups have achieved leadership in their townships. Many of the issues faced by women today have their roots in the past. The rich history of the women’s movement can provide insights into many contemporary problems. Successful strategies for the future cannot be built without a strong foundation in understanding the past.

18th Century Social Reform Movement

The 18th Century Social Reform Movement, commanded by women’s Rights Movement in the post 1975 period have brought to the fore a wide range of issues on gender equality. There have been various ideological studies in the women’s movement, and women’s organizations have an array of programs, segregated from men.

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Do we need to go far for a lesson in encouraging men to take the cause of women and gender equality?

 cómo acharmos??

In the last few years, there has been an increasing number of applications of science to problems in gender equality. This has led to the development of new technologies and methods for achieving these goals. The most recent example is the use of genetic engineering to create male and female offspring. This technology has been used to create a number of offspring with different traits. The use of genetic engineering has also been used to create offspring with specific health conditions.

The use of genetic engineering has been controversial. Some people believe that it is a good thing because it allows people to create offspring with specific health conditions. Others believe that it is a bad thing because it goes against the natural order of things. The use of genetic engineering is likely to continue, but it will be important to consider the potential consequences before it is used on a large scale.
opportunites, equal treatment and equal remuneration for similar work, conforming the glass ceiling in their career advancement and raising the bar for socio-economic and political achievements. Women’s issues have to be fought on a day to day basis. Thus not only new, old ideologies, new morality and new egalitarian relations between men and women can be evolved.

The above discussion shows that the overall situation of women’s participation in various fields of India is not encouraging. Gender inequalities, particularly in the areas of access to education, employment, and political representation are significant. Female participation is extremely low due to various socio-cultural factors. The discrimination faced by women in the workplace and the lack of women’s representation in political decision-making processes is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed.

In India, young girls and women are naturally redundant and want to see changes towards gender equality. Many of them are taking up various initiatives and fighting for their rights. However, the fight for women’s rights is still ongoing, and there are many challenges ahead.

In conclusion, the struggle for women’s rights is ongoing. Despite the challenges, women are making progress, and it is crucial to continue supporting their efforts for a gender-equal future.
A compilation of various Women Cell activities. If you wish your women’s cell report to feature, please email Karim蛐蛐@gmail.com.

ANANDI DEARNER

St. Basils, Ambala Cell members reached out and empowered several women:
- A widow of another faith, with three children - financially and emotionally by way of payment of children’s fees, house repair, medical aid and counseling wherever she lost confidence in handling certain situations by herself.
- A physically challenged woman was assisted by her alcoholic husband, to the point of being shown out of her home and left to fend for herself. She was given to them and all her needs were provided till such time, she could deal with her situation. She was also encouraged to weather the storm. She and her son took courage to return home, where there is a new challenge for them.
- A widowed mother, constantly being mentally tortured by her son and daughter-in-law, was counseled from time to time, and the men were advised to treat her aged mother with love and care, - Gorelli D’Silva & Thesha Joseph

BANDRA DEARNER

St. Peter’s, Bandra Dec 13th 2014 - Christmas Cakes, with 21 “Brides” of 5th and 6th were distributed which were highly appreciated.

Feb 8th 15: Reading the Bible through a Women’s group of 12th and 10th students. Interesting and informative, it was an interactive evening.

Feb 15th: Our Lady of Lourdes - Ward Haat. Rosary was conducted by the Women’s Cell at the 5th Church. Over a hundred were present, which shows the great faith and devotion to Our Lady, - Anamela D Souza

NORTH MUMBAI DEARNER

St. Mary’s, Ambern - April 2014 - visited 15 kin and household partners to whom they wish for Easter and presented them with an Easter Egg which brought tears to their eyes.
- May: Conducted a Drawing Competition for children in the age group of 2 to 12 years, on the topic ‘GREEN ENVIRONMENT’.

Women’s Cell members attended a training on WAVE (We Alther Violence Everywhere) conducted by Mrs. Diana Godinoh at Salvation School, Dadar,

June: Visited the Tetra Pack Factory at Dombivli, with 20 students to learn the recycling process of tetra packs into worthy boxes and takeaway food. Ms. Anusha, a lady in consultation with St. Francis Xavier, Vishakha, conducted courses were conducted at Dev Kripa, Caronora School, Marim, (Courses conducted: English, Tailoring, Embroidery and Basic Computer Skill) which includes Tailoring. A Certificate of Appreciation, was presented to our Women Cell by the Sister In-Charge at Dev Kripa.

August: Organized a fun in frivolic picio - “The Farmer’s Day” at Hadapsar, with a fun full (40) of our partners - young, middle aged and elderly. It was a day of celebration, with games, music, delicious food. Victor O’Meara received the importance of collection of empty tetra packs with demonstrations.

September: Visited 20 kin and home bound partners, to wish them for Our Lady’s Feast, and presented them with small mementos. We also distributed choclloates to a box full of the Aged and Sick who were brought from a home at Anegre to Mt. Mary’s, Bandra.

October: Visited St. Joseph’s Orphanage, at Bombay Central, spent time with the 70 inmates playing games, singing, dancing, and distributing cakes. We also distributed Blankets after Mass for the courses at Dev Kripa, Mount Carmel, Caronora School (Basic Legal procedures on Domestic Violence, Human trafficking, how to make a Will and the Role of the Media).

November: Organized an Ice Cream Contest at Our Parish Church, where a contestant had to feed her partner an ice cream cone. The response was overwhelming and prizes were given, to encourage the participants to feed ice creams to their partner. For the Free Eye & Dental check up at the Camp, Zahnar conducted the camp and organized free eye check up for the Camp. Took a few children for the R.U.R Go Green Workshop, at Sahakari Bandra, Prabhadevi, where they were taught how to make lanterns, got fun activities on their hands, received sweets and gifts from our Cell Members, Our Cell Members also visited Kolhad and joined in the Dwalt program organized by the Sts for 100 children from the neighboring villages, who were picked up and dropped in vehicles. There were games, dancing, competition, breakfast, lunch, cold drinks with snacks, and lively memories as takeaways. Some of it gave a donation to the Sts for the work they were doing and good they work they were doing. On request of a wolf winter, Fatima O’Meara, Our Women’s Cell leader, identified a widow who was not traceable, and so could not receive the service from the same. After her husband since 15 years, Ganga Sequeira then assisted her in recovering her due.

December: Fatima O’Meara visited a house in Indiara, helped a young teenage girl student get some pocket money by doing floral mehendi designs, Spread Awareness of Recycling Empty Tetra Packs in Societies and on collection of 2000 tetra packs, .it collected a recycled garden bench of St. Vegas Ward, on World Environment Day. Attended The Trash Festival organized by R.U.R. in association with other organizations and was presented the “Go Green Leadership Award Certificate, for the Go Green Society Initiative, and a Recycled Becher for a Society known as “Navratri Hagg, Society, Mahim”. Women’s Cell Members.

NAVI MUMBAI DEARNER

St. Francis Xavier, Panvel, Parish several groups along with the women’s cell of St. Francis Xavier Church, Panvel had organised a seminar on “WOMEN IN CHURCH” on 4th January 2015. Mr. S. K. Surendran, IAS PANVEL, IPS, IAS & Dr. Dr. Madhav, Mr. Fernandez an expert in self defence organized the programme. The programme was well attended by the local people of Navis and emphasised on the rights of women while M.

SHE & HE – What's it all about?

Marcia D’Cunha

Marcia D’Cunha is Executive Secretary of the Archdiocese Women’s Commission,

The logo created by the Catholic Commission for the Elimination of Violence and Inequality. It includes an artistic variation of the male and female symbols, the traditional blue and pink, for men and women. The logo is used to promote peace and equality. The commission is working towards eliminating violence and promoting gender equality in society.

The commission aims to achieve equality for all women and men, regardless of their gender. They work towards eliminating gender-based violence and promoting gender equality in all aspects of life, from education to work and family. The commission collaborates with other organizations and works towards building a gender-sensitive and just society.

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RISE WOMEN RISE......

Please....connecting for Life...Life in the Eucharist...a week-long program organised at St Blaise to bring out skills and talents of participants in different groups: children, youth, women, senior citizens, and family. An opportunity given to the Women’s group for the first time, given the inputs to make something extraordinary happen.

The Women’s Cell of St. Blaise, Amboli, put up an innovative program on 26th October. The day started exclusively to the women of St Blaise. The theme "Flow Women/Rise was an invitation to all women to rise against injustice, inequality, inequity, how the storms of life, to forecast the light and give us in the love of our Eucharistic Lord. The core team dressed in red and black, began with the Women’s touch the hearts of women who were brought to tears with the scene of the pregnant mother who is about to deliver her child...the joy and plea of the girl child in the womb to her mother...not to abort her as she desired to experience life in its fullness. The idea of the child brings a realization to the husband and mother-in-law who were partners in this harrowing crime, and silent to saving the child, "Break the Chain" dance truly touched the hearts of many women who demanded a repeat performance on the concluding day, when all the groups showcased their talents.

The write-up in the Parish magazine highlighted the importance of the role of women in home, church, society, and in connection with the Eucharist, Jesus, and life; on earth, was gender-sensitive. He encouraged women in a way when women had no status or place in society. In today’s world of violence, rape, significant disparities in levels of health care between males and females, women are called to rise above all and embrace with our gift in the love of God, who gives us the strength and grace to live a life of righteousness, truth, peace, and joy. Jennifer Kolhattar

VIOLENCE FREE FAMILIES DAY

On 2nd November 2014 mount Panhans and Schools of Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane, came together at Sacred Heart School Hall, Santragon, to celebrate Violence Free Families Day. The program commended with a Prayer Service which included a song and dance by school children. This was followed by an informative talk and presentation by Advocates Cassandra Fernandes and Joelle Bhatto from International Justice Mission, on Human Trafficking, and screening of a film on the same created by the United Nations Organization showing examples from India. It was shocking to see several women and children who were unknowingly roped into this big business and then abducted, molested, and tortured. The children actively participated in the discussions and the session was interactive.

B. A. Bhandari – our chief guest for this event, released a book on Health of the Girl child compiled by Sharon Rodrigues and Sister Nathy Lopez (CMH) with the help of Health Promotion Trust Team of the Archdiocese of Mumbai. This was a voice of the child of Fr. Rocky Banti.

Next the High On life for Boys and Beautiful Women for Girls program was introduced. This talk and video presentation is given in most Sunday Schools and regular schools to create an awareness in our children and men for their Values for Life. In spite of the holidays, around 300 children attended along with their parents and teachers. The best boys and girls selected by their teachers were awarded certificates by B. A. Bhandari. Everyone pledged to stand up against violence in any form and take all precautions for their safety. It was a morning well spent and educative too. Sharon Pires

CSCB GENDER POLICY – 3RD NOVEMBER 2015

The Women Cell of St. Plus Parish, hosted the presentation of the Gender Policy of the Catholic Church of India, for Thane deanery, on 09th November 2015. The policy was presented by Sr. Phaniaram Dsouza, the presentation of the Policy started with a skit on Rapes of Women in the Church pre and post Vatican II which was enacted by some of our parishioners. This was followed by a video on Human Trafficking, narrated by Swastha Krishnan a survivor of gang raped at the age of 15 years.

St. Philip’s presentation of the Policy was interesting, impactful and scriptural. Our parish team of priests were present for the whole program. Parishioners from St. John Baptist Church, Thane, St. Joseph’s Church Vikrani and Holy Trinity Church Powai, attended the program.

Josephine Fernandes – Thane Deanery Co-ordinator

A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON THE BIBLE – WOMEN’S CELL, VERSOVA

With the gracious help of our Parish Priest Fr. Adrian, the Women’s Cell of Our Lady of Health, Versova hosted a program on "Reading the Bible Through A Women’s Eyes" at the Sub center at T Bungundore. There was an overwhelming response and 45 participants including 5 men attended the program. People from our parish took advantage since it was closer home. There were 35 participants from St. Blaise Amboli, Good Shepherd Church, Four Bungundore who attended the event Mr. pieces Mrs. Nagro, Roshni, Malad and Juhi.

The resource person Ms. Olga Netto, a Theologian and Counsellor, initiated a discussion on whether the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) was Feminist, Androcentric or both. Ms. Olga referred to the five books from the Old Testament (Torah) and made many interesting observations that were stimulating and thought provoking.

Ms. Olga also spoke about the position of women in the New Testament. Luke 10:35-45, the story of Martha and Mary, Martha serving and waiting upon Jesus. Luke 6:12-15 two men as Apostles, Different roles for men and women. The main issues arising from Patriarchy are inferiority and inequality of women. What Christian Women today want is to understand the Bible surface of its human arms, to critique it from within without criticizing, to be listened to and to articulate their own experiences. The whole talk was very informative and left with a thought that women are made from the ribs of the men and are equal in all respects. The program was attended by the participants asking for more such programs.

Blanche Rupnar

SHARING NOTES WITH CHILE

A team of four associates from Chile visited India and were keen on understanding the condition of women in India. After a warm welcome with the traditional dance and flowers a very fruitful interaction followed. A few Deanery Co-ordinators present shared their experiences on working with women within the church and outside. The Chileans shared the problems they face in Chile, the breakdown of families, the problems of single mothers, the problems of childhood growing up in these circumstances, additions and more... We shared our own stories of women’s safety, violence, our support systems within the church. The evening was long and it was only the closed door that reminded us that we needed to bid farewell to our guests, it was certainly an experience to treasure. Marylin Pires