

# Women's Struggles for Freedom Continue...



#DalitLivesMatter



#Anti-CAA-Resistance

#WomenFarmersProtest

**ANTI-CAA-PROTESTS**

## CONTENTS

Editorial - Amelia Andrews.....	3
When Women Lead The Way - Dr. Kochurani Abraham.....	4
The Magnificat - Dr.Lalngakthuami.....	6
Dreaming Aloud- Rev.Dr. Pearly Walter.....	7
Covid & the Chemistry of Loss.....	7
ICWM National News Round-Up.....	9
Celebrating Women's Prophetic Persistence.....	9
Women Bonding For Palestine.....	9
ICWM Regional News Round-Up.....	11
Kerala.....	11
Mumbai.....	12
Delhi.....	12
ICWM Recommends.....	13





## EDITORIAL



Happy 75th Independence Day! This edition of WWW, is a special one. We are celebrating the spirit and form of leadership shown by women. Be it the 'dadis' of Shaheen Bagh becoming the face of the Anti CAA movement, or women farmers who are fighting against the farm laws or women who led through the Lockdown pandemic such as K. K. Shailaja, Former Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Kerala who successfully managed the pandemic. On International Women's Day, we applauded women's leadership during the pandemic. ICWM members from across the country 'chose to challenge' the shackles that bind them. Shortly after celebrating the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Day, we went through one of the toughest phases of the pandemic. By God's grace we made it through. It is befitting that we reflect on the themes of independence, liberation and redemption.

What happens when women are freed from the self-limiting beliefs placed on them by society? We see exceptional leadership. Kochurani's article explores how women led during COVID-19 and how it should inspire us, women of and in the church, to be leaders, wherever we are, to bring to life the vision of social justice and equality in the Church and society. If we need any more inspiration, Thuami's reflection on Mary's Magnificat provides insights on how God partners with the most lowly for redemption.

With God as a partner we can do mighty works too, let us be audacious in dreaming of big things. In this edition, we have introduced a new section 'Dreaming Aloud'. As we grow older and learn to become practical, do we lose the ability to dream? Many a time we sacrifice our dreams in the face of security and stability, or for the sake of the family or something else that is always bigger than us. Dream Aloud with us at WWW. Send us your "dreams" through your Coordinator. So long ladies till next time. Keep dreaming. Stay inspired. Act decisively!

## WHEN WOMEN LEAD THE WAY...

### Dr. Kochurani Abraham



When the pandemic COVID 19 set in and caught humanity reeling under its stiffening grip, women were in the news for two reasons: for being among those who became highly susceptible to violence and for their ability to make a breakthrough. The increased incidence of domestic violence made many homes the most unsafe places for women, children and gender non-conforming persons to stay safe in the lockdown. Yet, even amidst these adversities, women have emerged as leaders in the domestic and the public front giving some of the most commendable responses to the pandemic as leaders of governments, health workers and in managing difficult situations in the family space. The leadership patterns set by Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand or Tsai Ing-Wen of Taiwan or Angela Merkel of Germany and other female-led countries have been held up as models of managing a pandemic. Closer home, KK Shailaja, the former health minister of Kerala was named the 'top thinker 2020' in the world by British magazine Prospect. Even as the world has been battered by multiple crises in the times of the pandemic, women have been offering models of creative, thoughtful and decisive leadership.

Women can change the world when they give the lead. Where women are liberated from the patriarchal conditioning of hierarchical thinking, they exercise leadership in a way that enables others to reach where they ought to reach; to become what they ought to become and to make the best in life even amidst many constraints and limited resources. Though leadership implies power, when it is exercised in a sharing mode that facilitates strength and freedom in others, the leader becomes a change agent. It is on this premise of liberative leadership exercised by women that we envisage ICWM becoming a catalyst of change in India, within our particular churches and society at large.

Leadership can be exercised not just when one is vested with authority from outside. The greatest example of this form of exercising leadership we have in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who was questioned about his authority when he led people out of brokenness to wholeness, captivity to freedom and death inducing situations to life in greater abundance. When Jesus moved beyond the horrendous





death on the cross to the victorious resurrection, for encountering the Risen One, it was women who led the way! All the four Gospels testify to the liberated and down to earth leadership of Mary Magdalene and her women companions, which paved the way to encounter the Risen Christ. It was indeed their deeper convictions fuelled by passionate love that enabled the other male disciples who were paralysed in fear to open themselves to the experience of the resurrection.

Perhaps there is an urgency today more than ever, that we, the members of ICWM follow the footsteps of our foremother Mary Magdalene in exercising our spiritual agency and lead the Church to move out of the tangles of scandals, cover-ups and corruption to greater truthfulness and integrity. Energized and impelled by the Spirit-Sophia, let us give the lead for birthing this Church that can be instrumental for realizing the vision of a new social order founded on justice, inclusion and equality, in our society. Even amidst this ravaging pandemic, let us move into the future with greater passion and hope!



*Dr Kochurani Abraham of ICWM Kerala is also former Convener ICWM National Team and currently Ex-Officio Member of the National Team.*

## Feminist Scriptural Text: The Magnificat (Lk 1: 46 – 55)

Dr. Lalnghakthuami

On August 15, the Catholic Church celebrates the Feast Day of the Assumption of Our Lady even as India celebrates our Independence Day. What a coincidence!



Mary's Magnificat is a revolutionary song of salvation whose political, economic and social dimensions cannot be blunted. All people like the battered woman, the homeless, the downtrodden, the discarded, etc., are included in the hope Mary proclaims. It is more than a prayer of praise. It reminds us about the essential link between humility and holiness as the song says, "God has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid ... and has done great things ... He has put down the mighty and has exalted the lowly." St.

Ambrose referring to this prayer said, "Let Mary's soul be in us to glorify the Lord; let her spirit be in us that we may rejoice in God our Saviour." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian who was executed by the Nazis, called the Magnificat "the most passionate, the wildest, one might even say the most revolutionary hymn ever sung."

Mary must have been a young woman, when she sang this song about toppling rulers from their thrones. She must have also been a radical, existing within the confines of patriarchal institutionalized religion of her time. So, she could not have been protected by the prevailing social structure. She must have been powerless in the socio-economic position of the patriarchal ladder. Yet, God chose her to turn things upside down as a woman, who was pregnant and unwed. Elizabeth Johnson interprets the Immaculate Conception as Mary, a Spirit-filled woman who was "free and fully human." Rosemary Radford Ruether also



notes that "Mary's consent to the Incarnation was a free and independent action." Mary's Magnificat reminds us all of the freedom she exercised in her life, first of all, to accept the call of God to be an unwed mother to fulfil God's plan of salvation. Her life continued to throw her constant challenges, which she lived up to. What were the freedoms she proclaimed in the Magnificat and to whom?



The Indian Constitution guarantees 'freedom' to its citizens – freedom to move about, speak, live everywhere, enter any place, work anywhere and be what we want to be. But has this freedom moved into women's lives? Do women really enjoy equal opportunities with men in all walks of life? As of now women

are unable to exercise a right to make our own choices. Are women really as equal as their male counterparts? Are women really empowered and equal? Is there rather a gender bias? After decades of Independence we are still fighting for the freedom to be inclusive. Are we free from patriarchy is another big question? How can we depatriarchalize our socio-religio and political system? How long will women continue to be the victims of patriarchy? Freedom from patriarchy is a big agenda to be wrestled with in our struggle for justice today. We also need to consider the freedom of women from stereotypical thinking where free will and independent existence are dictating the behaviour of women. If we critically analyze our reality we realize that women are not free at all. Another important question is - do we have freedom from atrocities? The simple answer is No. Women are still suffering rape, gang rape, acid attacks, harassment, dowry deaths, sex trafficking, etc. Freedom seems to be far away from us but our constant fight for freedom will continue till we reach the goal of full liberation. As we celebrate India's freedom, let us be spirit-filled like Mary, daring to sing a revolutionary hymn, in our journey toward full freedom.

*Dr Lalnghakthuami is a Professor in Aizawl Theological College, Mizoram and a member of the ICWM National Team.*





## DREAMING ALOUD



Rev. Dr. Pearly Walter, Diocese of Madras, Church of South India has a dream of creating a sisterhood of solidarity through ICWM.



### *Covid and the Chemistry of Loss*

*The need to mask, while grieving,  
Is immensely disturbing.  
The missing warmth of hands and hugs,  
Leaves one freezing,*

*Sitting through rituals, all alone,  
Feels futile and disheartening,  
While near and dear ones watch from afar,  
Reaching out to their loved ones on the screen.*

*Wonder how it will be to unmask?  
To reach, to touch and hold each other again.  
Will tears that could not flow, find a way out?  
Will we breathe easy once we unmask?*

*As life goes on, some questions go unanswered,  
So, one can move on with a flicker of hope.  
As this purple tulsi leaf that reached out,  
To warm up a plantain lily.*

Anita Cheria, 19<sup>th</sup> June/2021

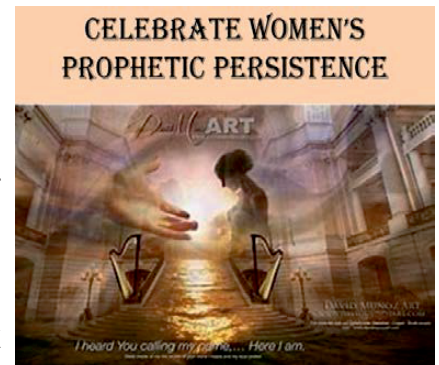


## ICWM NATIONAL NEWS ROUND-UP

### CELEBRATE WOMEN'S PROPHETIC PERSISTENCE (An ICWM Workshop on 30th January, 2021)

The meeting began with a wake-up call to all, with the song JAAGO. Sr Shalini, ICWM Founder member, galvanised the group with her keynote address.

She reminded us that this year being the 7th year since the ICWM was formed in Jan 2014 is a time for a Sabbatical, a time to look back to look ahead. It's a time to reflect on the WHY of our prophetic call and our Social Justice involvement. She dwelt at length on our 3 Identity markers: 1. Indian, 2. Christian and 3. Women. As Indians we have a duty to preserve our vibrant and rich cultural heritage from a narrow divisive and sectarian agenda. As Women we need be alert to the abuse, rape, murder and exploitation of children, girls and women in our church and society and protest the collusion of the judiciary and government in preserving this patriarchal status quo. As Christians and baptised members of the Body of Christ, we share a priestly and prophetic role. Through Breakout rooms. 6 groups reflected upon two Questions: 1. What are the calls for change that you hear from the prophetic persistence of women in India today? 2. How does this challenge ICWM to be change agents in our churches and society? Many important points emerged, through the group- sharings. Especially energising was the powerful quote "When we lose our fear, they lose their power." Jerin Jacob's rendition of Amanda Gorman's powerful poem, The Hill We Climb was a fitting conclusion to the energised discussion.



### WOMEN BONDING FOR PALESTINE



The ICWM webinar on Saturday 5, June at 6.00 pm was an attempt to facilitate conversations to help Indian Christian women develop a clear perspective on the Palestine-Israel conflict. "Justice and justice alone is the solution," was the core message shared with us by the featured speaker Lucy Janjigian, a member of the Presbyterian Church, USA. She gave a historical oversight of the region and concluded that the Occupation must end so that the people of that small, beleaguered region can find peace. It is not recognised as a country by the Israeli occupiers and most of the world. The region is being slowly, and intentionally, occupied by new settlers who are being invited to come and find a new home while Palestinians are being herded into some small regions, such as Gaza. She spoke about the recent tension in Gaza which, in her estimation was provoked by Israeli forces. The uneasy peace that prevails there will not last long, was her concern. She spoke of the efforts being made by her with a group of committed women in the US, who are lobbying the US House of Representatives and the Senate and other networks and solidarity movements including some of the mainline churches. She also spoke with concern about Christian



Zionism and reminded the meeting of the role of the Bible in the Palestinian struggle. She urged ICWM to support the DBS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement to destabilise Israel's powerful military, and the political and military role Israel plays in the region and the world. She agreed that we need an international solidarity response from women and urged Indian women to give leadership to such a movement.

**BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions)** campaigns are practical and concrete tools for holding Israel accountable. These are directed at the Israeli state, its institutions and corporations profiting off Israel's crimes towards Palestinians. This website is a rich and updated resource for all the info so do visit it: <https://bdsmovement.net/> **BOYCOTT: Academic and cultural Boycotts:** Israel uses culture, as in arts, cinema, events and so on to whitewash Israel's crimes against Palestinians. Artists and cultural figures across the world refuse to perform in Israel or have institutional ties.

**Consumer boycotts:** Boycott HP campaign is one of the key global BDS campaigns. The company has a long history of involvement with Israel's occupation and since its split, both successors: HP Inc and HPE (HP Enterprise) have ongoing complicity. Here is the info on it and also attached is a factsheet with all the information: <https://bdsmovement.net/boycott-hp> **Puma:** you can find all the info on this here <https://bdsmovement.net/boycott-puma> **DIVESTMENT:** Divestment campaigns are organized around withdrawing personal or institutional investments from complicit companies. Churches have been active with this. **SANCTIONS:** As a final goal, the aim is for lawful, targeted sanctions to be imposed on Israel. This demand is being raised with the UN.



HAPPY  
INDEPENDENCE  
DAY



## ICWM REGIONAL NEWS ROUND-UP

### KERALA NEWS

Kochurani Abraham

During the lockdown months of 2020, in order to break the distancing silence, the core team of Kerala ICWM began a monthly program titled "Ennilekkoru Ethinottam" that signifies 'taking a glimpse of my life'. In this



program we asked one person of the core group to share her learnings and un-learnings in the process of her liberative struggles in becoming who she is today. Dr Susan Thomas, Ms Shanta George, Sr. Jessina SRA and Ms Shanti Mathai shared their life stories and their learnings and un-

learnings from September to December 2020. Since this has been a very rich experience of getting to know each other, growing into a deeper bonding and learning from each others' unfolding paths, we have continued it faithfully on stepping into the year 2021 with Jiji Johnson sharing in the Month of January 2021 and Thressiamma Mathew OMMI in February 2021 and Ms Omana Mathew in April 2021.

March being the month to celebrate International Women's Day, Kerala region organised a wider level Webinar for the women's day celebration and also as an annual gathering of ICWM members. The



response was overwhelming with 79 women belonging to different church denominations participating in the webinar. We focused on Leadership for Change as the theme of the webinar. Sr. Thressiamma Mathew was the main speaker and she shared her challenging experiences of becoming a liberated women breaking free of the gendered mould and of empowering thousands of women through Archana Women's Centre of which she



On 22 May 2021, Kerala ICWM launched its youth wing at a webinar on the theme Women's Lives Matter. Of the 70 participants, around 40 were either students or young working women and this programme opened the doors to introduce the vision and mission of ICWM to a younger generation of women in Kerala.

As a follow-up to the launch of the youth wing, on 4 July 2021, Kerala ICWM held a webinar on the theme Marriage and Contemporary Questions. This theme was taken with a sense of urgency in the context of the many suicides/murder of many young girls due to dowry harassment and other concerns in the recent past in Kerala.

Our latest programme has been on 1st August 2021, when the core-team met for the regular monthly sharing on Ennilekkoru Ethinottam (life-story



sharing on learnings and unlearnings) and this time the sharing was done by Dr. Kochurani Abraham. But what was more significant about this event was that we had the official handing over of the leadership of ICWM Kerala to Dr. Susan Thomas as the Co-ordinator and Dr. Neena Joseph as Secretary and Ms Shanta George as the Treasurer. We wish the new team all the very best and the guidance of Spirit Sophia for the mission at hand.



## MUMBAI NEWS

### Virginia Saldanha

ICWM Mumbai celebrated IWD 2021 on 14th March from 6 – 8 p.m. The theme was "Walk in HerShoes." We had women members sharing their stories of pain, not just surviving but emerging victorious. The sharings were very touching and at the same time exhilarating to witness the strength of the women. The ICWM Mumbai members had a meeting on 30th May 2021.



One of the important points discussed were the posts put in the WhatsApp group. Guidelines were drawn up for members to follow when posting any information/or videos in the group. As always WhatsApp is meant to promote healthy conversations and share important information and should not be used for frivolous messaging.

ICWM Mumbai was invited to participate in the Indo Palestine network on 2nd June, to give them their perspective on the issue as many members had a lot of negative information about Palestinians. Virginia was requested to moderate the Meeting of the IPS Network.

## DELHI NEWS

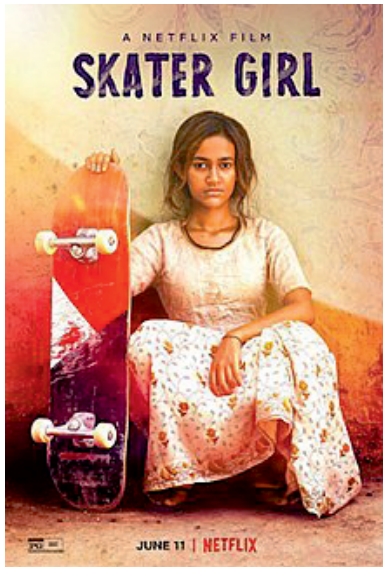
Election of new office bearers in Delhi Chapter took place in January 2021. The new core committee comprises of the following members: Convener: Amelia Andrews, Secretary: Sandhya Samuel, Treasurer: Sushma Ramswami, Team members: Sr. Shalini Mulackal, Elizabeth Martin, Evelyn Sunita Prem and Mavis Russell.

**International Women's Day 2021** ICWM-Delhi celebrated IWD on 2021, at the prayerful Community of St. Stephen's in Old Delhi.



Around 25 women of all ages, dressed beautifully in various hues of purple representing the struggles and triumphs of women attended the programme. The theme was "#ChooseToChallenge", the women pledged to challenge social injustices that women face by raising their right hand. There was a time of renewal of commitment to the mission and vision of ICWM led by Ms. Sushma Ramswami. Ms. Dimple Francis gave the keynote address highlighting the various challenges that women face outside the house and inside as well.

This was followed by a Biblical reflection on Esther, Chapter 4, verse 13-17, using the Lectio Divina technique led by Amelia Andrews. The women found guidance in Esther's call for the community fasting together and praying for the future of the Jews. In today's context of modern India, this passage spoke deeply to all the women participants inspiring them to pray together, take action and to remember that God's purpose is never defeated. In conclusion, all participated in a Hindi hymn invoking the Holy Spirit.



## ICWM RECOMMENDS ...

Set in rural Rajasthan, *Skater Girl* is a coming-of-age story about confidence, courage, and the profound impact of taking your own decisions and breaking free from toxic cultures. The movie chronicles the journey of a teenage girl and many children in her neighbourhood whose life changes once they are introduced to a sport. The best part of this movie lies in the mirror it offers of life in a rural set up that is devoid of good education, livelihood and rooted deep in patriarchy and stagnant traditions. The beauty lies in women empowering women and of course the co-operation of a few men who believe in

feminism. It is a family movie that can be watched across all age groups.

Streaming on: Netflix



A "breakout film of the year", *The Great Indian Kitchen* is a satire to our



*Great Indian Weddings* unfolding in a dark grim kitchen of a patriarchal household belonging to a respectable, middle class family. A hard-hitting

take at deep-rooted misogyny and sexism that exists in families, the movie has created waves across the nation being a part of many online chat-rooms only to the benefit of a progressive India. Streaming on: Amazon Prime

Written by Lucy Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* has always been a book across all ages and now a series well received across all ages. Anne is endearing not just as a child, teenager but also as a young adult with a courageous and progressive mind of her own. Chronicling the life of a young orphan, the book and the series touches on all aspects of acceptance, friendship, love, gender equality, human rights and women empowerment. Books: available on Amazon, Streaming on: Netflix

### ICWM

Email: [icwmjan14@gmail.com](mailto:icwmjan14@gmail.com) | Website: [www.icwmindia.org](http://www.icwmindia.org) | Twitter: [@icwm\\_india](https://twitter.com/icwm_india)

#### Masthead:

Anil Kulkarni

#### Editorial Team:

Amelia Andrews  
Jerin Jacob  
Joycia Thorat  
Marcia D'Cunha  
Rachael Alphonso  
Seena Abraham  
Shefalle Karanjikar  
Virginia Saldanha

#### Website:

Amelia Andrews  
Rachael Alphonso  
Seena Abraham  
Virginia Saldanha