



# **INCLUSIVE GENDER** ROLES : **AN INTERFAITH** PERSPECTIVE

**YWCA OF INDIA & INSTITUTE OF HARMONY AND PEACE STUDIES**

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FR. DR. M.D. THOMAS

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# FORWARD

**YWCA OF INDIA**  
**NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY**

Ms. Kalpana David

## Inclusive **Gender Roles** – An Interfaith Perspective

Gender is a social construct and is always associated with women. The reason gender is interlinked with women is mainly because of the need to overcome the bias, discrimination and deep-rooted negative traditional cultural and religious practices existing in the society.

It is however important to understand that gender is not a synonym for 'women'. In this same background it is also essential to recognize that both men and women have their own identities, individual characteristics and though it is essential for men and women to contribute towards each other's existence, it survives in a world of unequal relationships and power dynamics.

This power imbalance exists in the religious milieu sometimes explicitly and implicitly recognized and sometimes unacknowledged. Engendering religion is critical for building in a balanced faith perspective.

Alas, faith based documents have been the domain of the male community and therefore the interpretation has also remained under their power. This could also be because of religions being created by men, hence interpreted in accordance with their thinking. These religious teachings and practices, especially scriptures, religious rites, beliefs, have continued to create a gender divide which is considered normal by society.

On the other hand a closer look at religious books do show men and women having a connect and women did have an important roles to play. Somehow when discussion on these roles do take place men are always shown having an upper hand while women are relegated to remain subjected and subordinate to men. These traditional religiously defined and socially prescribed gender roles though remarkably fluid across different religions and cultures need to be interpreted differently to create a reasonable gender balance.

# FORWARD

**YWCA OF INDIA  
NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY**

Ms. Kalpana David

It is however incorrect to assume that there has been no shift in how society thinks about religion today. *There has definitely been a change however it is still too raw to be considered a revolution.* It still requires concentrated efforts to gain momentum for a radical creation of balance between men and women.

It is with this thought in mind the YWCA of India had decided to partner with the Institute of Harmony and Peace and to bring other faith based organizations on one platform to brainstorm and find a way forward to engender religion.

It is with thanks that I acknowledge the insights shared by Father M.D Thomas and the esteemed participants that has made it possible for the YWCA of India team to come up with this round table conference booklet . While I am privileged to share this thoughtful publication with the YWCA's around the country, our network partners and like-minded associations, I also am confident that we at the YWCA INDIA would not make this a one time effort but continue to bring in more and more people together to create a gender just world.

Ms. Kalpana David  
National General Secretary  
**YWCA of India**

## **Inclusive Gender Roles – An Interfaith Perspective**

The Creator, whom religionists call God, designed the entire gamut of beings, humans and other species, within the frame of 'gender'. All other realities are human-made and are secondary. That would amount to state that 'gender' is the yardstick with which the humans can be gauged as to how well the humans behave themselves.

Society is the mirror that reflects the way humans perceive gender and conduct themselves with regard to it. The fluctuating male-female ratio, sex-related violence, the recent feminist movements, and the like, along with international women's day, are indicators that all is not well with humans with regard to gender. It is unfortunate to note that 'biased and exclusive ways' disturb the balance between genders, making a topsy-turvy of social life, along with playing with the dignity of the person accorded by God.

From time immemorial, there have been belief systems in the human world. They became more and more organized in the course of the history, too. Now, have these belief systems of religions helped humans in honouring the divine order of the Creator in relation to gender? It has to be admitted with extreme humility that religion, to a great extent, has been part of the problem than of the solution. That calls for critiquing religion in terms of an interfaith and inclusive perspective.

### **MODERATOR: ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE**

Fr Dr M. D. Thomas is Director of Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies (IHPS), New Delhi. He worked at the National Commission for Interfaith Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) as National Director and Editor of an interfaith journal 'Fellowship'.

# FORWARD

**DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTE OF  
HARMONY AND PEACE STUDIES**

Fr. Dr. M.D. Thomas

Except sharing in the creative role of the Creator, all the roles of men and women are inter-changeable and they have to be considered inclusive to one and all. Equal dignity, rights and duties have to be recognized, on the basis of the divine image and abode man and woman are endowed with. The eternal status of being the children of God is a regular invitation to consider one another brothers and sisters. Pooling the divine insights from all religious and secular traditions of faith, a new world order requires being created, where discrimination and division among the genders is a sheer anomaly.

The theme 'Inclusive Gender Roles – An Interfaith Perspective' has been placed on a scholarly 'round table' of persons of various affiliations, in view of being discussed and scrutinized. The cross-faith insights should facilitate seeing the gender phenomenon from the eyes of the other and then learning from each other. Perceptions and situations that lag behind have to be attended to. The 'spirit of equality and fraternity' among the human species will, I am sure, do a good job in making gender truly interfaith and inclusive. That is the pathway towards a better society for the humans to have their being, in line with the divine order, truly so. Then, and only then, the family culture of 'vasudhaiv kutumbakam' will become a reality for one and all.

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# FORWARD

**DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTE OF  
HARMONY AND PEACE STUDIES**

Fr. Dr. M.D. Thomas

I have the pleasure of complimenting YWCA national office, its officials and staff, for this insightful book/booklet, the round table conference and the deep sense of commitment to the cause that has been part of the game. With these words, I have the privilege of 'forwarding' this book/booklet to the larger public. I wish the readers of this book/booklet very motivating, inspiring and action-oriented moments, as the pages of this volume turn before the eyes. May this great effort contribute to a gender-friendly and gender-balanced world for the humans, of course more pleasing for the Creator God!

Fr Dr M. D. Thomas Makar Sankraanti  
Director of Institute of  
**Harmony and Peace Studies, New Delhi**

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# PANELISTS

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## MODERATOR

**Fr. Dr. MD Thomas**, Director of Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies (IHPS), New Delhi

## SPEAKERS

**Dr. Shuchi Bharti**, Executive Director for Forum for Democracy

**Mrs. Carmel Tripathi**, Director, Public Information, Office of Public Affairs, (AP) Baha'i House of Worship

**Rev Jyoti**, Executive Secretary, Women concern, National Council of Churches in India

**Ms Harpreet Kaur**, Founder & Managing Trustee of Soch Trust, Advisory Member of Delhi Minorities Commission

**Prof. Farida Khanam**, Former Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi

**Prof. Hemlata Mahishwar**, Former Professor and Head, Hindi Department, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi

**Prof. Sanjeev Kumar**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Zakir Husain Delhi College, Delhi University

## PARTICIPANTS

**Rev Moumita Biswas**, General Secretary, YWCA of Delhi

**Mr. Jose Kalathil**, Senior Journalist The Statesman Newspaper

**Dr. Sneh Arora**, Baha'i House of Worship

**Ms. Mariyam Faizi**, Baha'i House of Worship

**Ms. Mona Bartar**, Baha'i House of Worship



# PRELUDE

## **A Booklet on GENDER AND INTERFAITH DYNAMICS**

The YWCA of India and Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies discussed the need to address gender in its social context by creating a space for dialogue. The organized event was focused on the theme Inclusive Gender Roles: An Interfaith Perspective. The roundtable was a closed event. Panelists were invited to represent their individual perspective on gender roles and norms assigned in the social structures. As a result, the discussion is collated into a booklet addressing thematic areas of discussion and solutions suggested during our dialogue on gender and faith.

The booklet aims to capture the need for dialogue on gender in its social context. It highlights the importance of communication, a safe space for healthy interaction and critical thinking on social issues. Furthermore, the booklet is not only a collation of data but also a resource tool to create awareness and start a dialogue to provide solutions on social issues we advocate.

The Booklet (Inclusive Gender Roles: An Interfaith Perspective) serves as a by-product of the Roundtable conference. It will serve as a significant piece of literature in conversations of faith and the impact it has on gender as a societal construct. The book is a documentation of various religious perspectives and will showcase the proof of tolerance and healthy discussions. As the roundtable focused on providing and building a safe space for such discussions, the booklet contains and summarises the approach and conclusion of the discussion. The booklet aims to build equal representation and open dialogue on different perspectives about gender roles in our social structure. The panelists for the Roundtable Conference have focused their discussion on 'Inclusive Gender Roles: Interfaith Perspective'. And through this roundtable we have discussed the following thematic areas:

- Gender (Roles and Responsibilities)
- Social norms
- Representation in public spaces
- Understanding gender and what part it plays in the social structure

# INTRODUCTION

## ORGANIZATION BRIEF

**YWCA OF INDIA** is an International movement working to create a platform for empowerment, leadership and women's rights in more than 100 countries. YWCA of India as a pioneer Women's rights and Equal rights Organisation works everyday to impact people's lives. As part of renewing our commitment in attaining equality through inclusion. Our project and programmes are crafted to support work at the community level, and also seeks to change broader systems, including accessibility to skills training and capacity building for women for economic empowerment, educational opportunities for children and better employment prospects for youth.

**Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies (IHPS)** in New Delhi, is committed to academic research and social interaction in the area of cross-cultural perspectives, cross-scriptural values, constitutional values, social ethics, inter-faith relations, communal harmony, national integration and social wellbeing and current concerns. 'Inclusive thinking and harmonious living' is its esteemed motto.

## HOST PERSPECTIVE

The round table aims to give equal representation and open dialogue on different perspectives on Gender roles in our social structure. The panelists for the Roundtable Conference have focused their discussion on 'Inclusive Gender Roles: Interfaith Perspective'. And through the roundtable we have discussed the following thematic areas:

- Gender
- Social roles
- Representation in public spaces
- Understanding gender has part of the social structure

# Thematic Dialogue

## SEX AND GENDER

The words Gender and sex are terminologies that differ in meaning and can not be used interchangeably. Sex refers to the biological and physiological differences between men and women. Sex is directed towards the role of human beings in the reproductive needs. Whereas, Gender is social and culturally ascribed roles for men and women in the functioning of a social structure.

The present discourse on gender is diversifying from the binary understanding of women and men to further explore additional diversity and minorities within the space and scale of gender and gendered ways of living. The roundtable strives to address the diversity of gender in the interfaith social scenario.

## INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

The very understanding of inclusion and exclusion is based on the diversity a society experiences. The norms around exclusion and inclusion are based on the social and cultural context of the society. The term exclusion highlights the absence of representations, accessibility and awareness of the resources and knowledge. The exclusion of a group is done due to the inability to identify minorities and in the diverse setting. Therefore, leading to the marginalization of the unidentified community from political and social structures of representation. Exclusivity in all its forms is the highest degree of superiority one can claim over the rest of the world. This encourages prejudiced attitudes and complexes in many people.

The roundtable conference aims to understand the exclusion of roles in context of gender and faith as the main lens of discussion.



# Thematic Dialogue

## INTERFAITH DYNAMICS

Our country has a diverse array of faith and religious beliefs that play an important role in altering ideas and concepts in the community. The interfaith exchange can be seen developing through the exchange of experiences in the community, by observing traditions, customs and access to interpretation of scriptures/religious beliefs. Religious beliefs should not be a basis to discriminate against other sects/groups as superior or inferior. Therefore, the need to understand tolerance and difference of perspective as a way of life.

The roundtable discussion aimed to capture the need to access information and interpretations based on the present context of the social norms and structures.





# Social Re-Construction: A Tool for Change



YWCA of India Project - Kolkata, Kharberia Weaving Center. February 2022

“Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys.  
It is everyone’s responsibility.”

**Ban Ki-moon**

In everyday life the role of every person is determined through the social structures around us. A person befalls multiple identities and roles in a diverse structure of chaotic control in every society, urban or rural.

As a country of multiple realities and identities, we can assume that every person has acquired their essence in the society. These characteristics and notions are learned through the preconceived systems formed based on external and internal relationships, social and cultural norms, skills and economic inheritance.

To understand social construction, it is necessary to trace its root of conception. One of the fundamental and simplest forms of structures that reinforce social construction can be seen in ‘family’. A family is essential to circulate, monitor and maintain the core of a social structure. Conventionally, a family is a socially and legally sanctioned group consisting of partners, parents, children and siblings. As part of a family the individual is socialized and introduced to larger structures for social and economic function which in turn sets an individual’s social identity.

The construction of a family can be seen encouraging and supporting the norms and roles assigned to each of its members based on their biological appearances. The socially ascribed roles in a family idolize men as the breadwinners and women are home runners in the Indian context. The social structure plays an important role in molding the children through the blanket rules of their social group. The roles assigned to each makes it impossible for them to understand identity as a plural concept. The ability of a family to allow an environment that encourages awareness, experience and exposure breaks the restricted cellos of ascribed norms and preconceived notions.

Evolution of family as a social structure is quintessential. It is important to look beyond the prescribed functions of a family and not limit its action to an agent for survival and a controlled reproductive circle. Family has been limited to materialistic needs, it is necessary to look at its evolution as a social agent and incorporate ideas like co-parenting, awareness of socio-emotional well being, ability to speak one's mind and encourage an environment to explore new spaces, identities and interests. The institution of family is also part of larger systems such as faith, these external structures draw and sustain their systems with core elements found in a family. Therefore, having norms and behavior maintained with external context and under constant pressure to accept social identities represented and accepted in the community.

The idea of a social construction should be made accessible to all for dialogue. The need to explore and open our social structures to new understanding of the society, without inhibitions can create safer spaces for youth in our country. Let's find effective ways to work towards a society that encourages open minds, safe constructions and equality through the future generations of our country. Furthermore, we understand that social construction and reconstruction are far fetched yet possible. The key is to address the larger social structure through small yet significant focal points called a family. The need to provide a space free and safe for all individuals in the family to make change in the larger system is central for social reconstruction.

# Romanticized Traditions : Exclusion or Oppression



Tradition has been one of the most accessible concepts to women of all times. As per tradition women have been encouraged to be the center and carrier of information and practices to sustain it. Females have been part of the society and woven into the social customs since their childhood. Traditions intentionally or unintentionally have a major impact on the accessibility and mobility of every person in the structure. The manifestation of these practices are visible in the form of restrictions, invisibility of certain groups and lack of decision making roles/power in the society.

The role of a mother, sister, daughter, female partner (wife) are placed strategically and effortlessly with staunch boundaries. Over the years, we have observed women to be a major stakeholder in domestic spheres with minimal or no representation in the public domain. A present day example of no representation of women in politics is comparison to men is drastically low in India. We are still far from accepting women as an influential part of the public sphere. We are cautious of giving independence and freedom to our women folk to an extent that women's representation is affected in the larger social system, their learning is shaped based on parameters of the patriarchy and further kept in - check mechanisms of bias and sexism.

The well constructed model of social tradition amplifies the idea of good and bad; obedient and disobedient; respected and not respected as major concerns in daily life. Behaviour of a person is not just informed by their individual traits but also by their socially assigned gender roles. Therefore, women being portrayed as the weaker sex are traditionally expected to be presentable, proper and dignified in order to be accepted. The presentable behaviour of the second sex is inferred to be the group etiquette, which in turn establishes, maintains and controls her social status. For this reason, compliance to the prescribed norms, rules and behaviour becomes necessary.

A study by Cornell University, Ithaca, states that women underestimate their performances and abilities, while men are found overestimating the same. As a matter of fact, the actual performances of both the genders do not differ in quality or quantity.

The gender difference in confidence is more dramatic !

The 'imposter syndrome' coined by Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes suggests that the female confidence is challenged in every performance leading to the feeling that they don't deserve the opportunities and will be caught for being an imposter. They are more likely to worry about being disliked and unattractive or outspoken and attention seeking. Women have been socialized with restricted and limited exposure leading to stifled confidence, smothered self esteem, shallow expectations and in some cases acceptability to violence and injustice.

The costumes and practices are made to engage and bind the masses in the social structure. Every practice is significant and unique to its own group. The interpretation of customs and actions leads to liberation or limitation of accessibility, space, network and opportunity based on one gender.

Any society that fails to harness the energy and creativity of its women is at a huge disadvantage in the modern world.

**Tian Wei, CCTV News**

Michelle J Mall  
Programmes Associate  
**YWCA India**



# Roundtable Conference

## Discussion Summary

**The Round Table Conference addressed the questions written in bold along with the discussion that comprises the collective discussion of all the speakers present at the Conference.**

NOTE: The answers to these questions have been curated summarising the point of views from different faith perspectives that were brought forth in the discussion by the various speakers who spoke on the behalf of their respective faith communities.

### **1. How important is understanding gender in the social system?**

Everyone is equal in the eye of the creator, but understanding gender from the lens of the world and how our societies perceive the concept of gender is crucial. We have to understand that a lot of this is brought by us as contributors to the society and the gender dynamic through our different faith and spiritual belief systems as well. Conversation has to focus on the concept that Religion is not static, neither are religious beliefs. Speakers highlighted that how the concept of gender disparity or discrimination exists more in the way people interpret religion and religious scriptures. Customs and religious insecurities are responsible for the position of women in the society. The concept has to be looked at from a multidimensional perspective as what is accepted and how is oppression of women blanketed under the name of tradition and customs.

### **2. What according to you is the gender roles assigned based on religion? What does the belief system achieve with division of roles?**

We need to understand an individual's need of an anchor to hold them and their faith, thus comes along religion playing an important role in delivering that. When it comes to women, agency and autonomy is not considered important. Women should have a choice to decide as an individual. Historically, there has been created set gender roles which are not only suppressing or repressing, one of the two - men or women but its both. Women and men are equal and always have been. This is a spiritual truth whose expression in the world has been suppressed throughout most of history, owing in part to imbalance systems and structures that have long favoured men's progress and participation over women's. A prejudiced mindset believes that men and women are not equals. This creates barriers for not only women but for men as well to live a full human experience. This belief system creates imbalance and gives one gender superiority over the others which feeds in further exploitation.



### **3. What are the obstacles of interfaith dynamics on gender roles and perspective?**

There was consensus amongst the speakers when they discussed the obstacles of interfaith dynamics on gender roles and perspectives and how there are convictions towards it. Interfaith dynamics demands tolerance and acceptance of all on an equal platform. This brings in reservations a lot of times from people in positions of power who would not look at it as an opportunity to change and grow. Interfaith perspective will only be possible when we are able to come together and not stay attached to one's own religion. Religious beliefs and ethos are moulded according to the existing patriarchal hierarchy. If we are able to bring in the concept of equity and respect for all. We as part of the society will also be motivated to work towards overcoming these obstacles that restrict us from bringing in the gender perspective into the mainstream.

### **4. A comparison of modern day social structure affecting the preforeligious systems ?**

Modern day social structures and roles are changing, there are similarities but also vast differences from the preforeligious systems. Where on one hand we as a society are witnessing customs and traditions turning into their most regressive forms, that achieve great salvation from the oppression of the weak. On the other hand, we see communities and social groups accepting, practicing and promoting progressive ways of living and believing through their faith perspectives. The speakers again stressed on the factor of individual responsibility and contribution and how we can be better people through our actions. We have to consciously evolve from these preconceived belief systems that benefit a select few and bring harm to the larger society.

**5. What is the natural instinct of men and women with regard to risk taking propensity and do you think it affects the way faith works?**

Faith scriptures talk about equality of being and purpose of life. Unfortunately, the cultural construct enforces it in a way that it talks about women's restricted roles in society. Seldom with this kind of toxic attitude, we start violating human rights. When we get into violence we harm ourselves also as humans. Religion and faith have been responsible for the gender imbalance not purposely, but through interpretations. This has confined men and women to a large extent to remain in lines with the construct that has been approved by the said society. Taking into account of religious believe systems and the rules and regulations laid out by leaders of any and all religions. Men have been able to enjoy more superiority in religious practices, customs and values. These further leads to men being more drawn towards risk taking behaviours and extremist attitudes that are associated with believing in the superiority of your religious belief and the need to showcase this in the fore-front. People need to call out on such extremist behaviours and discourage participation.

**6. With the rapidly changing world, how does gender, religion and feminism function intersectionally and/or uniformly.**

Intersectionality plays an important role, now it is time to accept the existing differences. People should be able to navigate their own life and experiences. Women should have the agency to decide. We have to inculcate ways of practicing and exploring progressive principles that promote living in an environment where everyone is treated with the same amount of respect and honour. Through gender-neutral ways of living and practices in our day to day lives. Family is a seedbed to nurture young boys. And the role of the family to build equality in practice, not just words, is important. So, girls and boys must be given equal opportunity and responsibility as well as equal skills. Be it kitchen work or other everyday household chores. All religions have seen changes in different civilisations and those civilisations have twisted the ethos accordingly. Change is inevitable, we have to be welcoming towards it for that will allow us to build communities and relationships in good faith and love and not on the basis of hate or competition.

Puja Mandal

RiseUp! Young Woman Lead Phase IV

**YWCA India**



# CREATING SOLUTIONS

There are a lot of ways that can be discussed as community centered practices that will bring in change in the way people perceive gender in regard with religion and faith. Women have been the first educators of rising generations, their educational opportunities should be given importance in all communities. Women and men are equal and have equal capacities. Women's education will lead generational change that is pertinent to our society.

A big objective has to be to include men who actively work towards gender equality. Gender equality in our community cannot be an exclusive space for women only. We want men to be included in that talk and dialogue. We don't need to exclude men to make it a safe space for women but also listen to them and talk with men as well to help them understand different perspectives, stories and lived experiences.

A gender-neutral world where children grow up without any prior convictions or preconceived notions about what they are and what they need to be. Co-parenting as a non-negotiable approach should be taken up by partners raising their children in today's world. Change in the name of overall growth has to always begin with our own selves and our own responsibilities as a human being.





# CREATING SOLUTIONS

To create awareness and safe spaces for open discussions, on the matters/issues related to faith. Such environments provide outlet to constructively share perspectives and beliefs without being pressurized to accept or reject ones faith

## **Solutions** that are currently present in the community :

1. **Counselling Centers** are a safe space. Marriage counseling centers that act as a basic block to inculcate values that leans towards social re-engineering
2. **Interfaith Forums** are safe and non-judgmental forums for students and children to have dialogue with religious leaders to emphasis on equity for all.
3. **Legal Aid centers**
4. **Mental Health Helpline (iCall 022-25521111 toll-free helpline number )**

## Possible **interactive activities** we can use as tools for creating awareness:

1. Issue-based awareness **campaigns**
2. **Creation of resources** - books, magazines, newsletter, pamphlets,
3. **Discussion groups panel** discussion, debate group, clubs and roundtable conferences
4. **Social Media awareness**
5. **Organizing small awareness events offline/online:**
  - Quiz,
  - Webinar,
  - Theater/flash mobs
  - Poster making
  - Debate,
  - Storytelling



# KEYWORD GLOSSARY

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- **Accessibility** is the easy for a person to receive, use and reach resources, opportunities and means irrespective of their age, gender, sex, religious identity, social status, ethnicity and geographical area.
- **Co-parenting** is a child care system that makes both parents equally responsible for the development, socialisation, care, and upbringing of children.
- **Division of Labor** is dividing work into smaller tasks and assigning the small task to separate individuals for efficiency.
- **Intersectionality** can be understood as an intermix of multiple social identities and experiences leading to preconceived notions and creation of patterns of bias.
- **Feminism** is a range of socio-political movements the belief that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men and to establish equality in all sectors of society.
- **Gender roles** can be defined as unsaid/unwritten rules and norms shared verbally in the form of folklore, stories, incidents as part of the process of socialisation. These roles are made clear from a very young age based on biological appearance. A simple example would be dressing up children in certain clothes of specific color i.e. girls in pink frocks and boys in blue pants.
- **Gender Dynamics** can be defined as the socio-cultural ideas about gender and power relations. It can also be referred to as the perception of a society regarding the social or personal interactions between a male and a female. Gender dynamics play an important role in the decision making processes in every social group.
- **Gender Equality** can be defined as the state of a society or community where there is equal opportunity, access to resources, dignity and justice for all. It also means that an individual's characteristics are not defined or controlled by the gender of that person. In terms of gender equality all genders need to be at power with each other.

# KEYWORD GLOSSARY

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- **Patriarchy** can be defined as the exact opposite of Gender Equality. It means a social system that gives absolute power and autonomy of decision making to men rather than women. In our society it is visibly present in large spaces like legislative assemblies to smallest of spaces like our homes. Which creates a power imbalance between men and women as one of the genders has great power over the lives and decisions of others.
- **Oppression** can be defined as the unjust or cruel exercise of authority and power. It means to crush or subdue someone through their place in society. In terms of Indian context a classic example would be the rampant caste based discrimination faced by lower caste communities. Another description of oppressive behaviors is the influence of powerful people over law enforcement and judicial systems and manipulating decisions in their personal favor or benefit.
- **Social Construction** is a set of pre-made oral and memory based traditional or cultural activities to assign by internalized roles and responsibilities created around the needs of social structures.
- **Equity** can be defined simply as a fair, just and inclusion. Equity in a society means one where there is inclusion of all irrespective of gender, caste, class, religion, sexuality, sexual preferences or other biases that exist in a society. It means that an equitable society will create opportunities based on the reality of all people, and to make access to resources and opportunities to be made inclusive of all barriers.
- **Gender Neutral** The term 'gender-neutral' means that something is not associated with an individual's associated gender. It refers to the creation of a society that believes in the basis of a gender neutral world for it to prosper.
- **iCall** - is a telephone and email based counselling service run by School of Human Ecology, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, that offers free telephone and email-based counseling services, to individuals in emotional and psychological distress, across age, language, gender, sexual orientation and issues, through a team of qualified and trained mental health professionals. This information is listed for people who are in distress and seek help, you can visit their:  
*WEBSITE : <https://icallhelpline.org/what-is-icall/>*  
*PHONE : 9152987821 Available from Monday to Saturday: 10:00 am to 8:00 pm.*

# LEADERSHIP

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**Ms. Kalpana David**  
National General Secretary  
YWCA of India



**Dr. Shakuntala David**  
National President  
YWCA of India



**Fr. Dr. M.D. Thomas**  
Director of Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies  
Moderator for Roundtable Conference



# EDITOR & AUTHORS

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**Dhiya Ann Mathew**

**NATIONAL SECRETARY ADMINISTRATION & PROGRAMMES**

Dhiya Ann Mathew is a development sector professional and a project management expert having 10 years of experience centered around administration and intersectional program building for NGOs. Core competencies include program management, resource mobilization, advocacy, developing multi-stakeholder partnerships and capacity-building on gender issues and broader human rights.

**Booklet Editor**

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**Michelle J Mall**

**PROGRAMMES ASSOCIATE**

As a social worker, my inclination to contribute to gender empowerment and community development has given impetus to my work. As part of the YWCA of India, I look forward to significantly contribute and uphold the women's movement with a fresh perspective.

**Booklet Design & compilation | Author**

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**Puja Mandal**

**RISE UP! YOUNG WOMEN LEAD**

Specialising in Public Health and Gender Rights social work in my professional field. My work focuses on building proof of deep-rooted societal gender disparity, neglect and lack of access. As part of YWCA of India, I want to contribute further towards the movement seeking Gender Justice and Dignity for all.

**Author | Booklet Editor**

# OUR **TEAM**



**Yashika Sharma**

**RISE UP! YOUNG WOMEN LEAD**

An aspiring changemaker and educator facilitating art-based interventions. Building community engagements and digital activism through values of empathy, co-creation and sensitization. As part of YWCA of India, I am motivated to create safe spaces of dialogue and sustainable action-oriented programmes.



**Apoorva Dheekaw**

**YWCA INTERNS | TISS GUWAHATI**

Dec 2021 - Jan 2022



**Rinchin wangdi lama**

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