

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025

The Backdrop: March 8th marks the commemoration of International Women's Day, honouring the relentless struggle of women workers who fought for fair wages, better working conditions, and gender equality. The origins of this day trace back to the early 20th-century labour movements, particularly the historic protests by women garment workers in New York in 1908. Later, in 1910, the idea of an International Women's Day was formally proposed at the International Socialist Women's Conference in Copenhagen. The tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911, which claimed the lives of 146 workers, further amplified the fight for labour rights. In 1977, the United Nations officially recognized March 8th as International Women's Day, solidifying its significance in the global struggle for gender equality.

This year 2025, the International Women's Day (IWD) is observed on 8th March, featuring two prominent themes that highlight the ongoing commitment to gender equality:

- **"Accelerate Action":** This theme emphasizes the urgency of expediting progress toward women's equality. Current projections suggest that, at the existing pace, full gender parity may not be achieved until 2158, approximately five generations from now. The "Accelerate Action" campaign calls for collective efforts to eliminate systemic barriers and biases hindering women's advancement.
- **"For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.":** Coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, this theme underscores the necessity of ensuring equal rights, opportunities, and empowerment for every woman and girl. It highlights the importance of involving youth, especially young women and adolescent girls, as pivotal agents of enduring change.

These themes collectively call for intensified efforts and inclusive strategies to accelerate gender equality and empower women and girls worldwide.

International Women's Day in Amaravathi (Andhra Pradesh, India)

Sisters belonging to the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd who are in 68 countries around the world have campaign activities to mark this International Women's Day as a day of reflection for accelerating action in favour of the best interests of women and children. Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Amaravathi of Palnadu District in Andhra Pradesh, India in association with their Partners-in-Mission have observed the day along with women, around 250 of them both adult women and adolescent girls, from Krosuru, Pethakurapadu and Amaravathi Mandals.

The Relevance of Observing International Women's Day

The significance of International Women's Day was powerfully conveyed through a compelling play titled "Women Today," performed by the adolescent girls enrolled in the Good Shepherd Computer Literacy and Spoken English Course, conducted by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Amaravathi.

The play poignantly depicted the silent struggles of women, tracing their hardships from conception to the grave in a male-dominated society. It served as a strong call to action, urging collective efforts to transform societal attitudes and accelerate progress toward gender equality. The play was written and directed by Mr. Dileep, English Tutor of 'Good Shepherd Computer Literacy and Spoken English Course' run by Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi.

Following the performance, the Chief Guest and other distinguished speakers from the region delivered inspiring addresses, further reinforcing the urgency of empowering women and advocating for their rights.

Mrs. Lalitha, Community Mobiliser of the Adolescent Girls Project, and Mr. Laksman, Community Mobiliser of the Child Rights Project (Krosuru Mandal), served as the Masters of Ceremony for the International Women's Day 2025 observance.

The Chief Quest and other Special Invitees:

- i. Chief Guest: **Mrs. Rajakumari**, Member of Guntur District Child Welfare Committee;
- ii. **Rev.Fr. Bhaskar**, Parish Priest cum Correspondent of Pallotti Junior College, Amaravathi;
- iii. **Rev.Fr. Anil**, Assistant Parish Priest;
- iv. **Mr. Ravishekar**, Partner-in-Mission of the Good Shepherd Convent and Rtd. Assistant Engineer, Department of Electricity;
- v. **Dr. Bullaiah**, Teacher;
- vi. **Sr. Deanna**, House Manager, Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi;
- vii. **Sr. Madhalai Vinnarasi**, Director of Community Development Initiatives, Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi; and
- viii. **Sr. Gracy**, Sub-site Director, CHALICE Educational and Community Sponsorship Programme, Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi.

Following is the Key Messages being shared by the speakers:

- i. ***Recognizing Women's Strength and Impact:*** Women often fail to recognize and internalize their own power, productivity, and invaluable contributions—not just within their families, but also in their communities.
- ii. ***Stepping Beyond Boundaries for Empowerment:*** For true transformation to take place, women must step beyond the confines of their homes and, if necessary, venture beyond national borders in pursuit of opportunities that will empower them to become courageous and outspoken advocates for their rights. Even in the Old Testament in the chapter "The Call of Abram" it is read that in *Genesis 26:1–5*; and also in the New Testament in the *Acts 7:1–8*, it is read that the LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you, I will make you into a great nation; and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. This call is meant for all human beings, a call that drives you to go out, learn life skills, and cherish the world's blessing and become a transformed person.

- iii. ***Empowering Girls Through Education and Skills:*** Women and girls must seize every opportunity to learn skills that can bring transformation to their lives. Education is the key to development, and for girls, it is essential to become empowered individuals. Continuous learning enables them to stay relevant in a rapidly evolving world of technology and equips them to face life's challenges with confidence. Without education and skill development, one risks being left behind in today's fast-paced society.
- iv. ***Education as a Path to Empowerment:*** Education alone has the power to transform one's life, opening doors to knowledge, critical thinking, and personal growth. It is not just a pathway to employment but a lifelong journey that nurtures wisdom, integrity, and purpose. True education empowers individuals to make informed decisions, contribute to society, and lead a life of meaning and fulfilment, making it especially vital for girls.
- v. ***Challenging Bias Against Daughters:*** Parents who beget daughters are often looked down upon—but where does such a mindset originate? Is it truly just to believe that mothers who give birth to girls are cursed by God? Science tells us that determining a child's sex is not in the mother's hands, yet society unfairly places the blame on women, branding them as unlucky. This deep-rooted bias must be erased from people's minds, for every child—boy or girl—is a gift, not a burden.
- vi. ***Eradicating Female Feticide for a Just Society:*** Killing a girl child in the womb, known as female feticide, is not only a grave sin but also a serious crime under Indian law. The practice stems from deep-seated gender bias, but laws in India strictly prohibit and punish such acts to protect the rights of unborn girls. The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994 prohibits sex determination tests and bans the use of ultrasound or other technologies to determine the sex of a foetus. Doctors or medical practitioners involved in sex determination or sex-selective abortions can face imprisonment (up to five years), fines, and cancellation of their medical licenses. The Indian Penal Code (IPC), Sections 312-316 criminalize intentional miscarriage and female feticide. If a person causes a miscarriage without the woman's consent, they may face up to 10 years of imprisonment. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971 (Amended in 2021) regulates legal abortions and permits them only under specific conditions (such as risk to the mother's health, fatal abnormalities, or rape cases). It strictly prohibits abortion based on the sex of the child. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 considers 'female feticide' is a crime against children, and strict action can be taken under this law against those responsible. Despite strict laws, female feticide continues in some regions due to societal preference for male children. This mindset must change through awareness, education, and strict law enforcement. Every girl child has the right to life, dignity, and equal opportunities. Ending this crime is essential for creating a just and equal society.
- vii. ***Ending Child Marriage for a Better Future:*** The practice of child marriage must end as it violates the rights of girl children and subjects them to lifelong harm, including health risks, lack of education, and economic dependence. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 declares marriage before 18 (for girls) illegal and punishable, while

the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 criminalizes sexual relations with minors, even within marriage. Strict enforcement of these laws is crucial to safeguarding girls' futures and ensuring gender equality.

- viii. ***Protecting Girls from Human Trafficking:*** Human trafficking is a growing threat to girl children in India, exposing them to exploitation, forced labour, and sexual abuse. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 370 & 366, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 criminalize trafficking and provide strict punishment for offenders. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 ensures the rehabilitation of rescued victims. Girls must stay vigilant, avoid unknown job offers, and seek help from authorities or child helplines to protect themselves from traffickers. Education and awareness are key to preventing such crimes.
- ix. ***Strengthening Trust and Safety for Girls:*** Parents are the most reliable support system for adolescent girls, providing guidance, protection, and unconditional care. In a world where abuse and exploitation are real threats, girls must stay vigilant, trust their instincts, and seek help when in doubt. Open communication with parents and awareness about personal safety can empower them to protect themselves from potential harm.
- x. ***Guiding Girls Toward Safety and Awareness:*** Parents must actively educate their daughters about personal safety, equipping them with awareness and confidence to navigate an increasingly dangerous world. Teaching self-protection, identifying threats, and encouraging open communication can help prevent abuse and exploitation. A well-informed girl is empowered to make safe choices and seek help when needed.
- xi. ***Empowering Women for a Progressive Society:*** Women are the backbone of society, shaping families, communities, and future generations with their strength and wisdom. True progress can only be achieved when women are empowered, educated, and given equal opportunities in all spheres of life. A society that uplifts its women fosters economic growth, social harmony, and overall development. Ensuring women's rights is not just a moral obligation but a necessity for building a just and progressive world. When women thrive, the entire society flourishes.
- xii. ***Embracing Strength for a Better Society: Women*** must recognize their inner strength and embrace their responsibility in shaping a just and progressive society. By actively participating in education, leadership, and social change, they can drive transformation and inspire future generations. True societal progress is only possible when women empower themselves and others.
- xiii. ***Protecting Senior Citizens and Women Under Indian Law:*** Many senior citizens, especially elderly women, face neglect, abandonment, and lack of care in society. To address this, the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 mandates that children or legal heirs provide financial and emotional support to aging parents. Under

this law, elderly individuals can claim maintenance from their children or relatives if they are unable to support themselves.

For elderly women, additional protection is provided under the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, which safeguards them from abuse, harassment, or mistreatment by family members. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 125 & 498A also ensure that neglected senior citizens and dependent women can seek legal help against abandonment and cruelty. Despite these legal provisions, strict enforcement and societal awareness are crucial to ensuring dignity, care, and security for elderly citizens, particularly women, who deserve respect and protection in their later years.

- xiv. ***Legal Protection and Support for Girls in India:*** From conception to adulthood, the rights of girl children are safeguarded through various laws, including the PCPNDT Act, 1994 (against female feticide), POCSO Act, 2012 (protection from sexual offenses), and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 (care and rehabilitation). Laws like the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and the Right to Education Act, 2009 further ensure their safety and empowerment. Protection mechanisms include child helpline 1098, women's helpline 181, and the police emergency number 112 for reporting abuse. Awareness of these laws and helplines is essential for creating a safer society for girls.
- xv. ***One Stop Centres:*** This is a Comprehensive Support for Women in Distress in Andhra Pradesh state. One Stop Centres (OSCs), also known as Sakhi Centres, have been established to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence. These centres offer services such as medical aid, police assistance, legal counselling, psycho-social counselling, and temporary shelter—all under one roof. The aim is to provide a comprehensive, single-window assistance system to facilitate access to justice and rehabilitation for women in distress. To locate the nearest One Stop Centre in Andhra Pradesh, individuals can contact the Women's Helpline at 181, which operates 24/7 to provide immediate assistance and information. Additionally, the National Commission for Women (NCW) website provides details on OSCs across India, including those in Andhra Pradesh. These centers play a crucial role in empowering women by ensuring they receive timely and coordinated support, thereby enhancing their safety and well-being.
- xvi. ***Honouring and Protecting Women at Every Stage of Life:*** Women play an irreplaceable role in every person's life—they give birth, provide care, nurture families, and shape future generations through education and guidance. From childhood to old age, their contributions are immeasurable, making it our moral responsibility to respect, support, and protect them at every stage. Ensuring the safety and well-being of women, from young girls to elderly mothers, is not just a duty but a fundamental step toward a just and compassionate society.
- xvii. ***Women as Their Own Role Models:*** Every woman carries the strength, wisdom, and resilience to inspire herself and others. She does not always need to look elsewhere for motivation—her own journey, struggles, and achievements make her a role model. Whether as a mother, professional, leader, or caregiver, a woman's dedication and

perseverance shape lives around her. Recognizing and celebrating this inner power is the key to true empowerment.

- xviii. ***Men as Allies in Women's Empowerment:*** Men must recognize that empowering women is not just a women's issue but a shared responsibility for building an equal society. By supporting education, equal opportunities, and respectful partnerships, men can help break societal barriers. True progress happens when men and women work together as equals, fostering an environment of mutual respect and growth. A society that uplifts its women is a society that thrives.
- xix. ***Aram: The Supreme Virtue of Humanity:*** 'Aram' is a 21st century's word for reflection. The greatest virtue of humankind is *Aram*, which embodies the principle of accepting all without discrimination, regardless of differences. True virtue lies in treating every individual with dignity, fairness, and respect. When it comes to women's rights, this principle becomes even more significant. It is the duty of every human being to uphold and protect the rights of women, ensuring equality and justice. A society that practices *Aram* fosters inclusivity, where every person—regardless of gender, caste, or background—receives the respect they deserve. In a world striving for progress, embracing *Aram* is the key to building a just and harmonious society.

Celebrating Achievement of Adolescent Girls: The distribution of certificates marks a proud moment for the adolescent girls who have successfully completed their 'Computer Literacy and Spoken English Course'. This achievement symbolizes their dedication, hard work, and commitment to learning new skills that will empower them for a brighter future. By gaining proficiency in technology and communication, these young girls are better equipped to pursue further education, job opportunities, and personal growth. This milestone is not just a recognition of their efforts but also a step toward greater independence and self-confidence. Rev. Fr. Bhaskar, Parish Priest and Correspondent of Pallotti Junior College, Amaravathi, graciously agreed to distribute the course certificates to the successful candidates and blessed them.

Honouring Special Invitees and Speakers: Honouring special invitees and speakers during the observance of International Women's Day embodies the deep-rooted Indian tradition of gratitude and respect. Their presence and invaluable contributions elevate the event, inspiring and empowering women and girls. Acknowledging their dedication is a heartfelt tribute to their commitment to gender equality and social progress. In keeping with this tradition, Sr. Vinnarasi presented the esteemed 'Golden Shawl'—a symbol of appreciation and joy—to all the distinguished invitees, expressing sincere gratitude for their support and advocacy.

Expressing Gratitude: Mrs. Mariamma, Account Manager of 'Euphrasia Mutually Aided Cooperative Thrift and Credit Society Ltd., Amaravathi, Guntur District', delivered the vote of thanks, recalling the key messages shared by the special invitees. She expressed gratitude to the women and adolescent girls for their participation and also, in a special way, thanked

Sr. Vinnarasi for her leadership in initiating and organizing the International Women's Day celebration at the Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi.

Reflection and Conclusion

Attending the International Women's Day celebrations at the Good Shepherd Convent campus was an eye-opening experience, akin to reading more than ten books on women's rights in a single day. The speeches delivered by eminent personalities shed light on the persistent challenges faced by women, from gender discrimination to the fight for equal opportunities. Each speaker brought unique insights, highlighting the importance of education, empowerment, and legal protection in shaping a just society. Their words resonated deeply, emphasizing that women's rights are not just about laws but about changing mindsets.

Listening to real-life stories of resilience and success inspired a renewed sense of responsibility to stand up against injustice. The discussions reinforced that empowering woman uplifts entire communities, fostering social and economic growth. It was a reminder that every individual, regardless of gender, has a role to play in advocating for equality. The session was not just informative but transformative, urging us to take action beyond mere awareness. As the event concluded, it left a lasting impression that the journey toward gender justice requires continuous effort. True change begins when society collectively recognizes and respects the dignity and rights of every woman.

One of the most striking statements by **St. Mary Euphrasia**, the foundress of the Good Shepherd Sisters, about the safety and dignity of women and girl children is:

"One person is of more value than a world."

This powerful statement underscores the immense worth of every individual, especially women and girls who are often marginalized and vulnerable. It highlights the need to prioritize their safety, rights, and well-being, ensuring they are protected, respected, and empowered to lead dignified lives.

Documented by

Mr. Ayyadurai John Aruldass, Partner-in-Mission
Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, Andhra Pradesh, India



PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE OBSERVATION OF
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025, AMARAVATHI, INDIA



"Women Today," a play by adolescent girls of the Good Shepherd Computer Literacy and Spoken English Course, powerfully portrays women's silent struggles from birth to death in a male-dominated society.





Mrs. Rajakumari, a Member of the Guntur District Child Welfare Committee, and Mrs. Lalitha, a Community Mobiliser for the Adolescent Girls Project at Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, ceremoniously light the lamps, symbolizing an auspicious and joyful beginning—an age-old Indian tradition that marks the start of a meaningful event.





"To overcome life's challenges, women must take proactive initiatives to continuously update and empower themselves," advises Rev. Fr. Bhaskar, Parish Priest & Correspondent of Pallotti Junior College, Amaravathi, on International Women's Day.





"Investing in girls' education yields the greatest returns, as educated women become the backbone of strong families and societies," says Dr. Bullaiah, Teacher, on International Women's Day.





"Women must internalize that there is nothing beyond their capability, and the initiatives they take independently will have lasting impact," says Mr. Ravishekar, Partner-in-Mission of the Good Shepherd Convent and Retired Assistant Engineer, Department of Electricity.



"Awareness of laws protecting women and the safeguarding measures for addressing their issues is a crucial step toward women's empowerment," says Mrs. Rajakumari, Member of the Palnadu District Child Welfare Committee.



Sr. Madhalai Vinnarasi, Director of Community Development Initiatives, Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, affirms, "You, women, are the finest examples and role models for yourselves and others."



"Women Must Recognize the Courage Within Them", says Rev. Fr. Anil, Assistant Parish Priest of Pallotti Church, Amaravathi.



Mrs. Lalitha, Community Mobiliser of the Adolescent Girls Project at Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, efficiently coordinates the International Women's Day event.



Sr. Deanna Pereira Inspires and Blesses Women and Girls, Urging Them to Realize Their Inner Power – Closing Ceremony of International Women's Day 2025 at Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi



Rev. Fr. Bhaskar, Parish Priest and Correspondent of Pallotti Junior College, Amaravathi, awards Course Certificates to adolescent girls who successfully completed the 'Computer Literacy and Spoken English Course.'





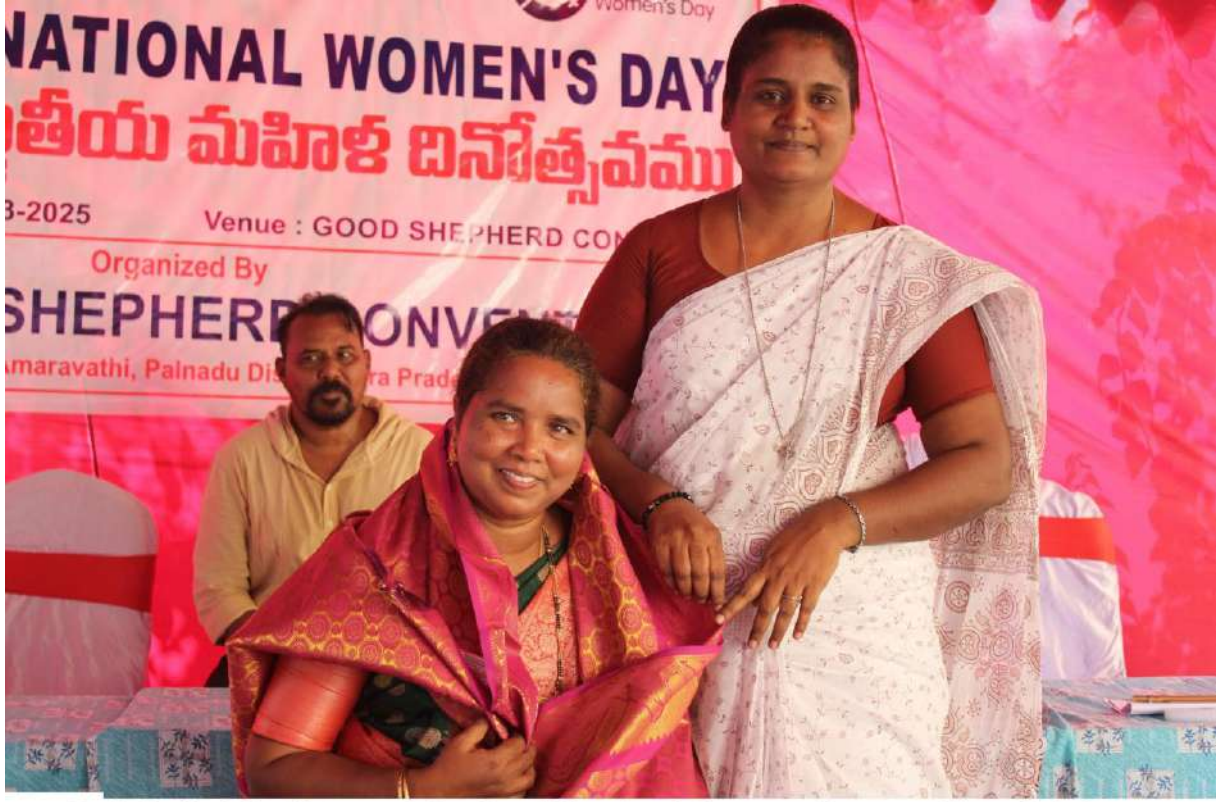
Rev. Fr. Bhaskar, Parish Priest and Correspondent of Pallotti Junior College, Amaravathi, awards Course Certificates to adolescent girls who successfully completed the 'Computer Literacy and Spoken English Course.'





Rev. Fr. Bhaskar, Parish Priest and Correspondent of Pallotti Junior College, Amaravathi, awards Course Certificates to adolescent girls who successfully completed the 'Computer Literacy and Spoken English Course.'





On behalf of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, and their Partners-in-Mission, Sr. Madhalai Vinnarasi, Director of Community Development Initiatives at Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, felicitates Mrs. Rajakumari, a Member of the Guntur District Child Welfare Committee, and Mr. Ravishekar, a Partner-in-Mission of the Good Shepherd Convent and a Retired Assistant Engineer from the Department of Electricity.





On behalf of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, and their Partners-in-Mission, Sr. Vinnarasi felicitates Rev. Fr. Bhaskar, Parish Priest and Correspondent of Pallotti Junior College, Amaravathi, and Rev. Fr. Anil, Assistant Parish Priest of Pallotti Church, Amaravathi, on International Women's Day.





"Women are strong in both body and mind—it's time to recognize, embrace, and celebrate that power!"

