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JANUARY 2019

Chief Editor

Dr. Ramesh Chougule

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Editorial...

Writing in English literature is a global phenomenon. It represents ideologies and cultures of the particular region. Different forms of literature like drama, poetry, novel, non-fiction, short story etc. are used to express one's impressions and experiences about the socio-politico-religio-cultural and economic happenings of the regions. The World War II brings vital changes in the outlook of authors in the world. Nietzsche's declaration of death of God and the appearance of writers like Edward Said, Michele Foucault, Homi Bhabha, and Derrida bring changes in the exact function of literature in moulding the human life. Due to Globalization and liberalization, society moves to the post-industrial phase. Migration and immigration become common features of postmodern society. These movements give birth to issues like race, ethnicity, gender, crisis for identity, cultural conflict, dislocation, isolation and many others. Thus multiculturalism becomes the key note of new literatures written in English. The colonial legacy, immigrants and migrated authors attempt to define Britishness in literature and the result is postethnicity in English literature. The writers like Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Andrea Levy and many others attempted to redefine and reevaluate the singular authority of text and plead for the plurality of themes. There is another form of literature growing consciously in the country like India. This literature is called as Fourth World Literature or the literature of protest. The marginalized sections of society attempt to protest against upper caste ideologies in Dalit Literature. All these issues are reflected in the present issue of Literary Endeavour.

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WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Political participation is not only relates to right to vote but also relates to participation in decision-making process, political consciousness, campaigns to create political awareness about political issues and promote political reforms. It is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and real democracy. It helps in women's direct involvement in public decision-making and it is a source of ensuring better accountability for women. To fight with gender inequality in politics the Indian government has given reservations for seats in local governments. Apart from all these from the local to the global level, women's leadership and political participation is restricted. women are seen as mere voters even after proving their abilities as leaders. There are many challenges to women's participation in politics. In India women are sexually abused. Child marriages, domestic violence, low literacy rates, discrimination had lowered Indian women's economic opportunities. Unlike men there are fewer opportunities for women to get involved in organizations to gain leadership skills.

Key Words: *Political participation-right to vote-decision making-political issue political reforms- real democracy-reservations-challenges- barriers to overcome women empowerment.*

Introduction

In any political system, right from the developed to the developing countries, presence of women is very low compared to men. In many countries women had to wage long battles to get right to vote. Today the percentage of women as voters has increased considerably, but their political participation is not equal to men and therefore women are unable to get an equal share in organization that require decision making. Women have not been regarded as significant part of the political arena. From the local to the global level, women's leadership and political participation are restricted. Women are underrepresented as voters, as well as in leading positions, whether in elected office, the civil service, the private sector or academia. This occurs despite their proven abilities as leaders and agents of change, and their right to participate equally in democratic governance.

Role of Women in Nation Building

Many women around the world have proved themselves as dynamic, vibrant, sincere and perfect in many fields. They are efficient and perseverant enough to face all odds and challenges and obstacles. Today's educated modern women are successful both as home makers as well as professionals, academicians, bureaucrats and Politicians. Women such as Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, Sirimao Bandaranaike, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Kiran Bedi have proved themselves in shaping their own destiny as well as country's destiny. While India was struggling to liberate from the clutches of the British Raj, the women folk came forward to shoulder their responsibility. Rani Lakshmi Bai is an epitome of bravery and courage. A number of Freedom fighters such as Sarojini Naidu, Sucheta Kripalani, Durgabai Deshmukh etc., display their courage and determination in the struggle for Independence. Mary Kom, Sania Mirza, Saina Nehwal, P.V.Sindhu, Sumitra Mahajan have made their presence strongly felt in their respective fields. Arundhati Battacharya, Indra Nooyi, Kiran Mazumdar, Shika sharma, Chanda Kochhar are some of the women who are contributing in their unique way in economic journey of India as CEOs of various organizations and Financial Institutions.

Political Parties

India has a multi party system with the seven registered parties at the nation level out of which three are the largest parties. They are Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) and Communist Party of India (CPI) and these parties created Women's wings. The INC wing is All India Mahila Congress, the BJP wing is the BJP Mahila Morcha and the CPI wing is the National Federation of Indian Women. The INC has increased women participation by instituting a 33% quota for women. In June 2009, the INC nominated a woman to become a first Speaker of Lok Sabha and also supported the election of Smt Pratibha Patil, India's first female President. The BJP has encouraged representation of women by inducting 7 women as Ministers in Union Cabinet.

Women Representation among Elected Representatives

As per the data from ECI, out of the total 4896 MPs/MLAs across the country, only 418 or 9% are women. Among MPs, Lok Sabha has 59 (11% of 543 MPs) and Rajya Sabha has 10% or 23 (10% of 233 MPs) women MPs. Among State assemblies, West Bengal 34 (out of 294 MLAs), Bihar 34 (out of 243 MLAs) and Andhra Pradesh 34 (out of 294 MLAs) have the maximum no of women MLAs followed by Uttar Pradesh with 32 women out of 403 MLAs and Rajasthan with 28 women out of 200 MLAs. In terms of percentage, among state assemblies, the highest percentage of Women MLAs is from Bihar with 14% (34 out of 243 MLAs) followed by Rajasthan with 14% (28 out of 200 MLAs) women votes and West Bengal with 12% (34 out of 294 MLAs).

Women Political Participation in India Low, Need More

The Economic Times conducted a survey on women's political participation and reveals that Women's political participation in India is low inspite of their 49% share of population. The survey for 2017 stated that factors such as domestic responsibilities prevailing cultural attitudes, role of women in society and lack of support from their families were some of the main obstacles that prevented women from entering politics. The survey said that there are countries like Rwanda which has 60 percent women representation in 2017 but countries like India, Japan, Egypt etc have less than 15% representation of women. Quoting an Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women report- Women in politics the survey said Lok Sabha had 64 (11.8 percent of 542 MPs) and Rajya Sabha 27 (10 percent of 245 MPs) and out of 4118 MLA's only 9 percent were women. But however there has been substantial representation of women at local government levels. Women Sarpanch accounted for 43% of total Gram Panchayats across the country exhibiting their active leaderships. Stressing on the importance of more women participation in the survey said, "Recognising the significance of roles of women in decision making process in the society is critical to strengthen women's agencies for building a progressive society with equality of opportunities among all citizens."

Women's Vote in 2014

The gender-wise patterns of vote in the 2014 elections can be seen at two levels. At the first level, it is about the increased turn out among women voters in these elections. At the back drop of a significant increase in the overall voter turnout (from 58 to 66 percent) at the all India level, there is a remarkable closing of the gender gap between men and women voters (men at 67 and women at 66 percent at the all India level). In quite a few states women have outnumbered men voters. If this is not so new a phenomenon for states in the North East like Manipur, Meghalaya and Sikkim; it is definitely happening for the first time in states like Bihar, Rajasthan, Punjab, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand etc. Lastly, it must be noted that the parties with women leaders (AIADMK, TMC and BSP) have all gained more support among women voters in these elections and it may point to another possible space for arrival of a women's constituency in the future. Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men.^[12] In 16 out of 29 states of India more women voted than men.^[12] A total of 260.6 million women exercised their right to vote in April-May 2014 elections for India's parliament.

Rise of Women Ministers in Union Cabinet

Seven women Ministers were inducted in the Union Cabinet after formation NDA Government.

They were

- ? Smt Sushma Swaraj - Cabinet Minister for External Affairs
- ? Smt Smriti Zubin Irani - Cabinet Minister for Textile Ministry
- ? Dr Nazma A Heptulla - Cabinet Minister for Minority Affairs
- ? Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi - Cabinet Minister for Women and Child Development
- ? Smt Harsimrat Kaur Badal - Cabinet Minister for Food Processing Industries

The number is higher in terms of previous Governments. The portfolios held by these ministers show how the modern woman have successfully balanced their personal as well as professional commitments.

The level and forms of women's participation in politics is largely shaped by cultural and societal barriers in the form of violence, discrimination and illiteracy. In the larger society, violence and the threat of violence affects many women's ability to participate actively in many forms of social and political relationship, to speak in public, to be recognized as dignified beings whose worth is equal to that of others. In India sexually abused. Child marriage and domestic violence and low literacy rates had lowered Indian women's economic opportunities and contributed to sexual violence in India. Although the Constitution of India removed gender inequalities among caste and gender, discrimination continues to be a widespread barrier to women's political participation. Women also lack leadership experience why many Indian due to the fact they are burdened with household duties. There is little public space for them as men have dominated the political arena for many years in India. Literacy among Indian women is 53.7% which is much lower than literacy among men reported at 75.3%. Illiteracy limits the ability of women to understand the political system and issues. Problems with exploitation, such as women being left off of voters lists, have been reported as illiteracy limits the ability of women to ensure their political rights are exercised.

Overcoming Obstacles of Participation

To combat with gender inequality in politics the Government of India has given reservations for seats in local governments. The Indian government directed the state and local governments to promote equality by giving equal pay, free legal aid, maternity relief, right to work and education and improving the standard of living.

Conclusion

Although there are many institutions that promote women's civic engagement and political participation, obstacles to women's political participation and leadership persist. Women's lesser economic resources compared with men's, their greater care giving responsibilities, their more limited access to important supports that would help them to run for office, and succeed as office holders, and the greater scrutiny that women candidates seem to face from the public and the media all restrict women's political participation and leadership in states across the nation. Progress in advancing women's political status continues to move at a glacial pace. But a ray of hope can be seen in the 2014 General Elections as they were unique and unsurpassed in many ways. They not only showed greater rate of women voting but also their representations in Cabinet. This went on to prove the rising status of the women.

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