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"PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN
IN
75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENT INDIA"
DEPARTMENT OF TELUGU

ICSSR SPONSORED TWO DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

రెండు రోజుల జాతీయ సదస్సు



నిర్వహణ :
డాక్టర్ బి.జ్యోతి
తెలుగు శాఖ

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Women In Politics: Achievements And Challenges

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INTRODUCTION :

As India celebrates 75 years of independence, it is imperative to acknowledge the crucial role women have played in shaping the political landscape of the nation. Over the years, women in India have made significant strides in the political arena, breaking barriers and challenging traditional gender norms. However, despite notable achievements, they continue to face numerous challenges that hinder their full participation and representation. This article explores the achievements and challenges faced by women in politics during 75 years of independent India.

Historical Perspective: When India gained independence in 1947, the political landscape was predominantly male-dominated. However, pioneers like Sarojini Naidu and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit paved the way for women's participation in politics. In 1952, the first general elections saw women elected to the lower house of Parliament. Since then, the number of women in politics has gradually increased, reflecting a more inclusive democracy. India is a country with a long and rich history of women in politics. From the early days of the independence movement, women have been at the forefront of the fight for equality and social justice. In the 75 years since India gained independence, women have made significant progress in achieving political representation.

Achievements:

1. **Reservation and Representation:** The introduction of reserved seats for women in government bodies, such as Panchayats and Municipalities, through the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution in 1992, significantly enhanced women's political representation at the grassroots level. This ensured their involvement in decision-making processes and the implementation of policies that directly impact their communities. In 2019, elected women M.P's had increased to 78, representing 14% of the total seats in parliament. This increase in representation is due in part to the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, which reserves 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women.
2. **Prominent Women Leaders:** Independent India has witnessed exceptional women leaders who have held key positions in government. From Indira Gandhi, who became the first female Prime Minister in 1966, to Pratibha Patel, who served as the first female President in 2007, these trailblazers shattered glass ceilings and inspired countless women to pursue careers in politics.
3. **Legislative Reforms:** Over the years, several legal reforms have been introduced to address gender disparities and promote women's empowerment. Since 1947, the Parliament of India has passed several significant acts aimed at empowering women and addressing gender disparities. Here is a glance at some of the key acts:
 1. **The Hindu Succession Act (1956):** This act was a landmark legislation that brought significant reforms to inheritance laws for Hindu women. It recognized their right to inherit property, ensuring greater economic empowerment and gender equality within the community.

2. The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961): This act aimed to combat the social evil of dowry, which often led to harassment and violence against women. It made the giving, taking, or demanding of dowry illegal, with stringent penalties for offenders.

3. The Maternity Benefit Act (1961): This act ensured certain benefits and protections for women during pregnancy and after childbirth. It provides for paid maternity leave, medical allowances, and other benefits to support women's reproductive rights and maternal health.

4. The Equal Remuneration Act (1976): This act aimed to prevent gender-based wage discrimination by ensuring equal pay for equal work. It prohibits employers from discriminating against women in matters of recruitment, promotion, and salary.

5. The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act (1987): This act criminalized the practice of Sati, the act of a widow self-immolating on her husband's funeral pyre. It declared the practice illegal and punishable by law, reflecting the commitment to protect women's rights and dignity.

6. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005): This act provides a comprehensive legal framework to protect women from domestic violence. It recognizes various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic, and ensures the provision of protection orders, shelter, and other support services to victims.

7. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act (2013): This act addresses the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. It mandates the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees in organizations and provides mechanisms for reporting, investigating, and redressing cases of harassment.

8. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (2013): This act was introduced in response to the widespread protests following the heinous gang-rape incident in Delhi in 2012. It amended several provisions of the Indian Penal Code and other laws to provide stricter punishment for crimes against women, including rape, acid attacks, and voyeurism.

9. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act (2017): This amendment increased the duration of paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, providing women with extended time to care for their newborns and ensuring their overall well-being.

These acts represent significant steps taken by the Parliament of India to safeguard women's rights, promote gender equality, and create a more inclusive society. However, there is still much work to be done to address the persisting challenges and ensure the full empowerment of women in all spheres of life.

4. Top of Form

Challenges:

1. Gender Bias and Stereotypes: Deep-rooted gender bias and stereotypes pose significant challenges for women in politics. Women often face prejudice and discrimination, with their capabilities and qualifications being questioned solely based on their gender. These biases can deter women from entering politics or pursuing leadership positions.
2. Lack of Support Mechanisms: The absence of adequate support mechanisms, including financial resources and institutional support, hampers women's political aspirations. The cost of campaigns, limited access to funding, and the absence of party support pose significant barriers for women seeking political office.

3. **Violence and Harassment:** Women politicians are frequently subjected to violence, intimidation, and harassment, both online and offline. This creates an environment of fear and discourages women from actively participating in politics. Addressing this issue requires robust measures to ensure the safety and security of women in the political arena.
4. **Low Representation at Higher Levels:** While women have achieved substantial representation at the grassroots level, their presence diminishes as they move up the political hierarchy. Women's underrepresentation in state assemblies and Parliament remains a pressing concern, highlighting the need for affirmative action and efforts to bridge this gender gap.
5. **Patriarchal attitudes and practices:** Patriarchal attitudes and practices can discourage women from participating in politics, and they can also make it difficult for them to succeed once they are in politics.

Conclusion:

The achievements made by women in Indian politics in the 75 years since independence are commendable. The introduction of reserved seats, the rise of prominent women leaders, and legislative reforms have contributed to increasing women's political participation. However, significant challenges persist, including gender bias, lack of support mechanisms, violence, and low representation at higher levels. Addressing these challenges requires collective efforts from society, political parties, and policymakers to create a more inclusive and gender-equal political landscape. Empowering women in politics will not only enhance democracy but also lead to more comprehensive and effective governance that benefits all citizens of India.

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**"Progress and Challenges of Women in 75 Years of
Independent India"**

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