



BLOCK 3
WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION
AND PARTICIPATION

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UNIT 8 WOMEN IN LEGISLATURES

Structure

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Learning Outcomes
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- 8.4 Role of Women in Legislatures
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8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will study the role of women in legislatures. It explores the trajectory of the legislatures. The gendered nature of politics is central to this unit. Questions of patriarchy related to politics are being questioned across the globe. Patriarchy also demands an exclusive space for women. This unit will probe the role of women in legislatures. In other words, it analyses how women engage with the questions of politics. It reflects on the various dimensions of the political representation and participation of women. It also discusses the problems faced by women in the field of politics. Broadly, it revisits the aforementioned questions through some of the theoretical and empirical perspectives that emerged in the context of women in legislatures.

8.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to;

- Understand the trajectory of the debates related to legislatures;
- Explore the role of the women in legislatures and
- Map the problems faced by the women in the field of politics.

8.3 HISTORY OF LEGISLATURES

The legislature is central to every modern government. It is observed that “the legislative authority forms the major premise; the judiciary the minor; and the executive the conclusion” (Gilchrist, cited in Mahajan,2005). Before engaging with the history of the legislatures and the women in legislatures, one has to explore the debates on the political socialization and social bases of politics. Political socialization is deployed to refer to the continuation of political values across generations (Hyman, cited in Mukherjee,2015:71). It is analyzed as the process that creates spaces for political orientation and

pattern of behavior (Easton, cited in Mukherjee,2015:71). It also explained as the process of maintenance and transformation of political cultures. It is the induction of the individuals into politics as well as determining their orientation towards political objects (Almond and Powel, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:71). It is analyzed that political socialization “unquestionably meets the criterion of significance in as much as it is important to feature of every past, present and future body politic. Every community transmits with varying degrees of success the mature practices of its culture to the immature” (Laawell, cited in Renshon,1977:46). Political socialization is described as a process “to train or develop individuals that they become well-functioning members of the political society (Siegel, cited in Mukherjee,2015:70). There are direct and indirect political socialization and the family, schools, family, peer groups, religious institutions, political parties and media act as the agents of the political socialization (Mukherjee,2015:72-82). In addition to political socialization, the impact of the social bases of politics also needs to be explored to understand the complex dimensions of political representation and gender relations.

The social base of politics also needs to be understood before discussing the issues related to women in legislatures. It is observed that “the fundamental pillars of society are money, authority and knowledge. Money indicates its resources and property; authority is the legitimate recognition bestowed upon society to use power for organizing itself; and with knowledge, a society prepares for the future. The social bases of politics need to be understood in this background” (Ghosh,2015:25). Politics is also about “the transformative capacity of the social agents, agencies and institutions” (Held and Leftwich, cited in Ghosh,2015:26). Politics is also defined as the realm where “fundamental conflicts are fought out and social possibilities determined” (Shapiro, cited in Ghosh,2015:26). Thus, politics is grounded in social bases and it is carried out through culture, institutions and ideas (Ghosh,20015:32-39). Political culture too plays a vital role in the issues related to political representation. The idea of political culture stands for “specifically political orientations towards the political systems and its various parts and attitudes towards the role of the self in the system” (Almond and Verba, cited in Shaw,2015:56). It is observed that “there is an ordered subjective realm of politics which gives meaning to the policy, discipline to institutions and social relevance to individual acts” (Berger, cited in Shaw,2015:56). Culture, language and caste in Indian politics thus play a major role (Shaw,2015:65). The relations of social stratification, social change and political participation have to be explored before delving into the complexities related to the debates on the women in legislatures. Class, racial, ethnic, religious, caste and gender stratification are widely discussed social stratification. These questions are central to the debates on social stratification in the context of political sociology (Biswas,2015:110-123). Gender stratification needs to be understood in the case of women in legislatures. The stratification based on gender legitimizes the hierarchy of men over women. The fluid nature of gender also needs to be understood while discussing the larger dimensions of gender and politics. It is further noted that sexism and misogyny constrain the social mobility of women. (Biswas,2015:120-123). Demographic, economic and psychological factors determine the political participation of women as

well (Guha,2015:178-179). Thus, the political process becomes complicated due to the concoction of social, emotional, identitarian and community-related larger issues.

The political process in India has a distinct tenor. It is observed that “the claim is that parliament as institutions not only represent different constituencies, identity groups and interests within a nation but also that they mirror society and that nation at large. (Their) authority and legitimacy are derived from this claim of representativeness, which in turn has to be underpinned by institutional norms and performed by its members-legislators, the representatives -and accepted by its citizens” (Johnson and Rai, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:4). The idea of citizenship thus is linked to many social and political factors and related transformations. The question of gender relations has a particular space within such political articulations. It is noted that “the roles that women and men play dramatize the political moment, the discursive power as well as the gendered social order operative in specific historical contexts and in doing so reveal for us the underlying social tensions which point to the palimpsestic nature of political institutions”(Rai, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:15). There are issues related to inclusion, policy-making and politics of appeasement. Political representation through affirmative action has created lots of debates in India. For instance, Dakshayani Velayudhan, the first and only Dalit woman to be elected to the constituent assembly argued that “As long as the Scheduled Castes, or the Harijans or by whatever name they may be called, are economic slaves of other people, there is no meaning demanding either separate electorates or joint electorates or any other kind of electorate with this kind of percentage. Personally speaking, I am not in favor of any kind of reservation in any place whatsoever” (Velayudahn, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:9). Social movements of the marginalized sections have created political spaces based on their assertions as well. However, such assertions related to the political representations need to be analyzed in the context of the pan-Indian perspectives and political assertions related to the issues of the women in legislatures. The next section discusses the various shades related to women in legislatures.

8.4 ROLE OF WOMEN IN LEGISLATURES

The role of women in legislatures needs to be understood in the larger social and political developments. The status of Indian women, for Shirin Rai and Carole Spary, was central to the digressive and political mobilization of Indian nationalism. Indian nationalists and the British deployed the imagination of the Indian women (Sangari and Vaid, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:37). It further led to the pruning of the gendered discourse and related social transformation. Colonizers positioned themselves as the ones who save the brown women from brown men (Spivak, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:37). The women's question became key to the project of the colonizers. It also impacted the nationalist's interest in the struggles of women. Middle-class women, for Rai and Spari, in the late nineteenth century exhorted organizations and social groups related to social reform. For

instance, the Ladies Society in Calcutta was formed by Swarnakumari Devi, sister of Rabindranath Tagore in the year 1882. It was formed to provide education and skills to empower widows. It was also formed to kindle the economic autonomy of poor women. Arya Mahila Samag in Pune was formed by Ramabai Saraswati. A women's wing of the Indian National Congress, Bharat Mahila Parishad was formed in the year 1905. It is noted that social reform was the first political interest of the women who organized the women around the issues of patriarchy, education, self-reliance etc. It is also noted that leaders such as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and Sarojini Naidu resisted the patriarchal stereotypes related to women. In addition to these political and social transformations, the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) was formed in the year 1927 (Rai and Spari, 2019:38-39). It is also noted that "...the Women's Indian Association had been established in 1917 when Indian women had first demanded the vote (Liddle and Rai, cited in Rai and Spari, 2019:39). Trajectory of the nationalist movement and the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms due to the democratic struggles in India led to the the Government of India Act of 1919 and it was made on the Minto-Morley reforms started in 1909. It is noted that "this act provided for a Central Legislature and bicameral system with two houses-the Council of State and Indian Legislative Assembly". However, it is critiqued that "seventy per cent of the members in the provincial and legislative councils now came to be elected by less than 3 per cent of the Indian population, comprising mainly propertied males... Women and the so-called "depressed" classes were silently disadvantaged in the matter of representation" (Jayal and Chiriyankandath, cited in Rai and Spari, 2019:42). It is also analyzed that women's movement between 1917 and 1945 addressed the issues of political rights for women and reform in the personal laws (Basu, cited in Rai and Spari, 2019:42). Irish women suffragists such as Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinarajadasa founded The Women's Indian Association in the year 1917. It is noted that "they were joined by Malati Patwardhan, Ammu Swaminathan and Mrs Ambujammal . WIA was ...the first all-India women's association with the clear objective of securing voting rights for women" (Basu, cited in Rai and Spari, 2019:42). Twenty-three women signed a memorandum from different regions from India demanded votes for women equally like that of men was submitted to Montague and Chelmsford. Sarajini Naidu played a vital role in sending a delegation of women to the secretary of state of India in England in the year 1917 for the franchise for women. It is noted that "...the demand was ignored in the secretary's state report and rejected in the subsequent franchise report, and also excluded from the 1919 Government of India Act. It did, however, allow future Indian provincial legislatures to grant or refuse the franchise to women; many did, making it possible within a short span of time for women to be represented, in however limited a manner, on par with men" (Rai and Spari, 2019:42). Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya contested from Mangalore in Madras Legislative Council elections in the year 1926. Kamaladevi lost the seat by a narrow margin (Rai and Spari, 2019:43). It is further noted that "The Government of India Act of 1935 introduced quotas for a range of minorities and a series of separate electorates for differing religious communities to ensure their presence within the legislatures... The Act also increased the number of enfranchised women and

removed some of the previous qualifications to gain a franchise. All women over 21 could vote provided they fulfilled the qualification of property and education. Women had to wait until after the independence to get a universal adult franchise (Basu, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:47). Mainstream parties also mobilized women under their parties and Indian women's movements engaged with the larger questions of state practice, citizenship and law. It is critiqued that the women's movement questioned the gendered parties but it could not change those parties based on their critiques. There were contradictions as well. It is criticized that "while there was discussion of quotas for women in the constituent assembly, this was rejected by women members representing the AIWS as demanding for women struggling for equality with men in all spheres of life(Rai and Spari,2019:52).

The social composition and political legacy of the women leaders is core to the political history of India. It is noted that "some women MPs from across the ideological spectrum have closely associated with the institution of Parliament due to their leadership, contribution and enduring parliamentary careers-Najma Heptulla(six terms), as the long-serving Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha(and longest-serving Rajya Sabha MP among both men and women), Meira Kumar(five terms) and Sumitra Mahajan(eight terms) as the first and second women speakers of the Lok Sabha respectively, and long-serving-serving MPs such as Vijaya Raje-Scindia(eight terms), Mamata Banerjee(seven terms) and Maneka Gandhi(seven terms) (Rai and Spari,2019:10). There are interlinkages between social stratification, gender and caste. It is analyzed that "others, however, including some with substantial parliamentary careers, have been less remembered due to a lack of memorialization of women's presence in the Indian parliament, particularly of female politicians from lower caste and regional or religious minority backgrounds and with the passage of time, many have faded from public memory" (Rai and Spari,2019:10). At the same time, women from diverse communities are marginalized from the political process in multiple ways. It is observed that "they hardly form a majority of the membership and do not very often participate in parliamentary debates to take up visible institutional roles, or indeed sustain their participation over time" (Rai and Spari,2019:3-5). Gendered political spaces impact the mobility of the women leaders in various ways. It is analyzed that "...gender as an axis of power (not just in India but in all societies and politics) is particularly fraught within the context of democratic institutions and practice. Given the claims that it makes for representation as well as the democratic practice where all are formally considered equal ... Parliament is particularly productive space to study these contradictions" (Rai and Spari,2019:4).

However, the entry of women into political arenas has to be understood in the context of reservation for women. It is analyzed that women's reservation in the legislature will challenge the patriarchal culture of Indian politics and the passage of the constitution amendment bill to introduce 33% of women in Parliament and state assemblies in the Rajya Sabha are described as a progressive and substantive step towards the political empowerment of women in India (Bose,2010:10-12). The entry and exclusion of women leaders have to be analyzed against the backdrop of the ups and downs

related to their political representation. It is noted that “The 2019 election saw a historic rise in the number of women elected to the lower house of Parliament. Seventy-eight women were welcomed to Parliament for the first time since independence when only 22 women members were part of the house of 543 members during the first Lok Sabha”(Hussain,2022:52). These facts reflect how they gradually became part of the political systems. A study conducted on the women legislatures from social and economically well of background with politically economic backgrounds from Uttar Pradesh from the first election in 1952 to 1996 has been low due to their low numerical status(Pundir and Pitam,2002). At the same time, there are contradictions related to political representation and consequences. It is analyzed that increasing the number of seats in the Lok Sabha in connection with the amending of the Constitution may impact the spirit of the 91st amendment and National Population policy (2000) negatively and it may result in the freezing of the seats until 2026(Retnakumar and Irudaya,2005)It is also observed that women's vote share has increased in the last 50 years and it is linked to women empowerment. However, there are issues in analyzing such political transformation within the confined spaces of political institutions. Therefore, it is argued that there is “... a sharp decline in gender bias in voting over time, across all states, including the traditionally backward states. This decline is solely driven by an increase in women's participation while male turnout remains unchanged over time. This is a positive and encouraging trend in Indian politics. Particularly, as this improvement does not seem to be brought about by a deliberate top-down policy action but largely due to voluntary participation of women voters in elections, that is the reason, we term this phenomenon as one of self-empowerment (Kapoor and Shamika,2014:67). This unit only focuses at some of the political changes in the case of the women leaders and women’s interventions in the context of politics. The following section revisit some of the debates on the problems faced by women representatives.

8.5 PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES

The various problems faced by women representatives have to be explored in the context of larger political and institutional Parliament, for Rai and Spari, are political institutions. They are institutions with formal rules and informal norms. It is much discussed in the perspectives on politics. It is analysed as an institutional performance. It recalibrates the dominant and social-political relations (Rai and Spari,2019:12). It is analysed that “in terms of Pitkin's (1967) political triptych, parliament matters descriptively (representing constituents), substantively (making laws) and symbolically (representing democratic politics)(Pitkin, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:12). The functioning of parliament, for Rai and Spari, can be deployed to judge the nature of the democracy in India. It helps to analyze the health of the democracy. For instance, the majority of male politicians and the dearth of women politicians show the problems with the nature of democracy. Parliaments are analyzed as undifferentiated institutions that are influenced by sexuality, (dis)ability, gender, race and class. It is studied that “Parliaments are critically embedded

in the political economy of modern state systems and create spectacles of, as well as represent, a particular set of structures-in-dominance” (Rai, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:12). The nature of the disciplinary approaches may also help to understand the historical background of the perspectives on the women in politics and legislatures.

As a subfield, for Rai and Spari, Parliamentary studies are central to bringing out typologies of legislative institutions. Socialization and behavioral aspects of parliamentarians are also discussed by in the fundamental debates on political socialization. Scholars have already studied the prominence of functionalist, and behaviouralist approaches and rational choice in the debates on parliaments. According to Rai and Spari, there are three forms of post-cold War era-new institutionalism. They are sociological, rational choice and historical institutionalism. They all emphasize on the rules, conventions, norms and procedures that determine the nature of institutions. It is further analyzed that feminist institutionalism demonstrates the operation of gender norms within institutions. It also shows how institutions provide spaces for gendered norms (Krook and Mackay, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:13). It is observed that institutionalism helps to look at “(a) institutional rules about gender (b) institutional rules which have gendered effects (but are not specifically about gender) (c) the gendered actors who work with rules; and (d) gendered policy outcomes which in turn allows...to inquire into how gendered organization of political life make difference (Gains and Lowndes, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:13). What are impediments that block the political mobility of women leaders?

Women in parliament, for Rai and Spari, have to undergo the complexities of recruitment. They have struggled to gain access to such exclusive patriarchal political spaces. They have to survive in such antagonistic spaces as well. It is analyzed that they are not only mediated by gender but also by caste, class, religion and ethnicity. The political space is also a gendered establishment (Rai and Spari,2019:11). Gendered political spaces also are caught between the varying, patriarchal nature of the political institutions. It is noted that “...just over 11 per cent of MPs in India’s lower house of Parliament are women; the world average is 23.6 per cent and the regional average (Asia) is 19.7 per cent. This puts India’s rank at 145 out of 193 in the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s League for Women’s Representation in Parliament (as of 1st December 2017) and also affects India’s rank 131, in the UNDP Gender Inequality Index(2017)(Rai and Spari,2019:9). It is further observed that “the increase in the women’s representation in the Indian political system has therefore been relatively small and slow. All the 333 individual women MPs ever elected to the Lok Sabha, from the 1st to the 16th, would not fill a single Lok Sabha not even two-thirds, which further underscores the historical dominance of male MPs. Rather than increasingly slowly over time, the number of women MP’s in the upper house-the Rajya Sabha -from 1952 to now has fluctuated between 5 and 12 per cent with a slightly higher representation of women in the 1980s compared to the 1990s(Rai and Spari,2019:9).

Check Your Progress-1

1) *Write in your own words about the history of legislatures.*

2) *Write in brief the role of women in legislatures .*

8.5 QUESTION OF REPRESENTATION

Representation in democracy is also linked to gender equality (Rai and Spari,2019:4) Critique to the representation shows its epistemic and pragmatic questions. It is analyzed that “we need to move away from the idea that representation is first and foremost a given, factual product of elections, rather than a precarious and curious sort of claim about a dynamic relationship”(Saward, cited in Rai and Spari,2019:6). There are more aspects that operate behind the political representation of women. It is critiqued that “the exclusion of women from political power has been more marked than their exclusion from 'productive' work or even property rights. The contemporary era is no different”(Omvedt, cited in EPW Engage 2019). The political entry of women has to undergo various social and political phases. It is observed that “This structural exclusion of women takes the form of both formal as well as informal exclusion. Beginning at home, women are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior by staying away from politics because of the threat of violence against them in the public domain. Structural inequality exists in the form of political parties acting as gatekeepers to keep women out of parliamentary politics and overlooking them while distributing tickets for winnable seats and membership of various parliamentary committees. It can therefore be argued that familial set-up, kinship, and the socio-economic and cultural conditions in which the socialization of women takes place has a firm bearing on how women perceive politics as a career”(Hussain,2022:58). Women across the globe are struggling for the equality across the globe. It is observed that “To be truly representative, the voices of women from different constituencies and backgrounds are needed, as they make space for a different mode of politics and new sensibilities. In addition to “lived experience,” what is needed is a belief in as well as the practice of values of democracy and feminism, and the posing of questions to forces that spread aggressive masculinity and militancy. A mere lip service to feminism or using it to enhance one’s image will not be of much help in ensuring change in attitudes. While the increased presence of women can affect attitudinal changes, the effort should also be to resist enacting the same power culture to survive in what is considered to be the “hardcore man’s domain.” (EPW editorial,2019).Women thus have to

struggle hard to achieve social and political equality.

8.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have studied the various dimensions of the category of the legislature. It discusses the ideas of political socialization, political culture, and political participation and the social bases of politics as its historical emergence. Those debates are analyzed in the context of the questions of gender and women in legislation. It also probes the debates on the problems of the women in legislature. Broadly, it tries to discuss the gendered understanding of the issues related to women in the legislature.

8.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Analyze the issues of women in the legislature.
- 2) Do you think gendered inequality exists in the context of women in politics? Substantiate your arguments with suitable examples.

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UNIT 9 COMPARATIVE BEST PRACTICES

Structure

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Learning Outcomes
- 9.3 Moldova
- 9.4 Germany
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- 9.7 United States of America
- 9.8 Australian Local Government Women's Association
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9.1 INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in local government is a gateway for a just, fair, and equal world. Women should be acknowledged of their potential role in political and civic life without getting discriminated based on gender. Despite their increased role in economic and civic participation in international and national arena, there is inadequate political representation when it comes to local governments. According to the Working Paper on 'Women's Representation in Local Government: A Global Analysis' (UN Women, 2021), out of 6.02 million elected representatives at the local government only 2.18 million (Global average - 36 percent) are women. Region-wise statistics reveal that percentage of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) range from 41 percent in Central Asia, 35 percent in Northern America and Europe, 32 percent in Oceania, 29 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 25 percent in Eastern and South-eastern Asia, 25 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and as low as 18 percent in Western Asia and Northern Africa. In this Unit, we are going to discuss some of the best practices adopted by EWRs across the world vis-à-vis Moldova, Germany, France, India, United States of America, and Australia.

9.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the pivotal role of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) at the local level;
- Infer the governance challenges at the local government level; and
- Spell out the relevance of EWRs in ensuring citizen well-being.

9.3 MOLDOVA

- **Barrier Free Public Spaces**

In Moldova, women are underrepresented when it comes to subnational level politics (local level), say for example, only 22 percent of women are Mayors and 27 percent women serve as district councillors. Among women with disabilities, the representation is abysmally low. Primary reason that has been cited for inadequate or poor participation is the discrimination that they encounter or barriers to participate in public life, such as, increased violence, lack of finance for political campaigning, patriarchy system etc.

It was amidst these challenges in Moldova (Europe), Elena Crasmari contested in her first local council election at Dolna village. To contest in the local council elections, Crasmari's first task was to mobilise at least five percent registered voters in the community. Being a woman with disability, Crasmari with an undeterred spirit was seen as a potential changemaker by her community that while campaigning she received warm welcome from the people. As their demands related to healthcare were unmet by previous councillors, the grieved community requested her to provide healthcare facilities once she gets elected. Out of eight men, Elena Crasmari is the only women local councillor in Moldova. All was not that easy for Crasmari as she had to face a lot of challenges that she even thought of resigning from the role. She asserts that: "I know I can't give up. I promised my community that I would help them. I have to do my best" (UN Women, 2021). Crasmari received a small grant that was utilised to repair a sidewalk in her village (Dolna). By executing her decision, she was able to make the public space accessible to all. As people with disabilities face a lot of challenges in navigating public spaces, Crasmari took cognizance of it and executed the installation of two more ramps in her village. She felt that ramps enable not just disabled population but even the elderly, sick, mothers and children can access public places with ease. Besides, she contributed for the renovation of the local health centre. During the pandemic since many villagers with disabilities have been isolated, Crasmari had raised funds to support them. She also wants to reach out to those women with disabilities who have been victims of domestic violence. While speaking on the significance of local level leadership, Crasmari says, "Change starts with us, and everyone can make significant changes in their communities by doing small things." (UN Women, 2021)

- **From a Filthy Landfill to a Small Forest**

Residents of Taraclia village (Moldova) suffered from physical illness due to an illegal landfill located in their neighbourhood. It created health hazards, bad odour and filthy atmosphere. Although, this place is an important tourist destination, the local council was inadequate to tackle this challenge until Pelaghia Traci took charge of this issue. Mentored by UN Women support programme, and leadership executed by Pelaghia Traci, the filthy landfill has been replaced with a small forest filled with fresh air. Being a first-time local councillor, Pelaghia could mobilise community and engage them in decision

making. Through community consultations, Pelaghia could seek involvement of people from all age groups and eventually the people agreed to eliminate the piled-up garbage to another legal landfill. The name of the Project was Eco-Taraclia and people from all walks of life cleared and levelled the two hectares of land within two months of time. They prepared the ground for tree plantation and sooner 2000 healthy trees were planted. The male Mayor appreciated Pelaghia that she could solve a serious and deep-rooted problem of the village (UN Women, 2016). During one of her community consultations, Pelaghia motivated the villagers that lack of financial resources should not deter them from solving the problem. The inhabitants of the community are proud of their activity and believe that people would become healthier.

9.4 GERMANY

Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz served as a Mayor of Warsaw (Germany) more than twice. She became the first female Mayor in 2006. While in office she could establish the Warsaw Climate Protection Committee that took significant decisions connected to climate change. During her term, she was able to introduce few important initiatives: sustainable and efficient public transport system, European public bike scheme, energy efficiency revitalisation programme, and protection of River Vistula. In Warsaw, to encourage pro-environment behaviour at the individual level, bike sharing and bicycles have been encouraged among people. For example, 500 kilometres of bicycle lanes have been specially dedicated to this purpose.

For perspective, Hanna and the Committee focused on public transport, such as, new buses, new trams, and a second Metro line, that runs on natural gas and renewables. In the process, they also replaced diesel buses with electric and natural gas models. As on 2018, around 70 percent of Warsaw people use public transport. Similarly, 80 percent of the city's residents use the district heating network. The district heating network is a centralised source that distributes residential and commercial heating requirements, such as, space heating and water heating. According to Hanna (Flint, 2018), in the past ten years nearly ten thousand additional homes have been connected to the centralised source. Another significant contribution made by Hanna was the 'Extension and Modernisation of the Wastewater Treatment Plant' through which the local government could treat 100 percent of wastewater released in River Vistula. It was completed in 2012 with investments from different sources. With a total value of 800 million Euro, it has been hailed as the largest environmental project in Europe (C40 Cities). Another pro-environmental practice that has been welcomed by the citizens is the provision of subsidies to install photovoltaics, solar panels, and heat pumps that could effectively replace the old-fashioned stoves.

Check your progress 1

1. What was the significant contributions made by Elena in her village?

9.5 FRANCE

Anne Hidalgo was selected as the Mayor of Paris in 2014. One of her foremost ambitions was to include citizens in local democracy so that they can share their ideas and co-create sustained development along with local elected representatives. In effect, participatory budgeting was introduced with an annual allocation of 100,000 Euros wherein people get to propose, create, and vote for development projects. In 2014, nearly 40,000 people voted for various development projects that was put forth by the Paris City Council. Based on people's preferences, projects such as, vertical garden, urban sports, renovation of outdoor 'kiosks' for music and arts in public spaces etc. were finalised by the City Council. In the following year, a separate website was launched for sharing people's ideas wherein residents enthusiastically shared over 5,000 ideas. In 2016, the project titled 'Shelters for the Homeless' had received the highest number of votes of about 21,000. This sent a message to the City Council that people are ready to take a call against poverty. Not just the ideas, the participatory budgeting process also puts the ideas into action, say for example, one fourth of the total 416 winning projects have been delivered. The projects delivered include establishment of new public gardens, co-working spaces, renovated schools, pedestrian areas, sports facilities etc. (Paris Participatory Project).

Anne is also known for her stand when it comes to climate change. By 2050, she vowed to make Paris as one of the greenest cities in the world. To give effect to the Paris Climate Agreement (2015), she decided to close the banks of River Seine that was earlier allotted for car parking and instead made this space open for pedestrians and cyclists. Besides, she opened new green spaces. On refugee front, when the entire Europe was against accommodating refugees, Anne Hidalgo took a stand to accommodate them. Some of her other initiatives include: development of one of Europe's largest business incubators for developing the social economy, extending bicycle paths, enabling elders to travel for free in public transport (C40 Cities).

9.6 INDIA

- **Arati Devi**

When Arati Devi got elected in the local body elections, 2012, she became one of the country's youngest sarpanch. She contested in the Dhunkapada gram panchayat (Ganjam District, Odisha). Having worked for a corporate, Arati Devi wanted to contribute on social front. During her tenure, she was able to bring forth public infrastructure like 'pucca' roads, electricity connections to the villages of Dhunkapada gram panchayat. She also contributed for efficient delivery of Public Distribution System, planting of

over 1.5 lakh trees, and revived folk art troupes. Due to her continuous efforts all teaching vacancies have been filled. Another feather to her cap was the literacy campaign 'Tipa Nuhen Dastakhat' (no thumb impression, only signature) which was launched to overcome illiteracy among women. As on 2017, nearly 700 women learned to put signatures along with basic reading and learning skills.

One of her notable achievements has been convening of the 'Palli Sabhas' (social forum) wherein over 1000 women take part to discuss their issues. Earlier, only few men used to attend but after she assumed office, she could mobilise women to take active participation in such forums. Arati Devi has been recognised for her contribution that she got selected to be part of 'International Visitors Leadership Program' wherein she was invited to talk about the importance of transparency and accountability in government (Odia news, 2017).

- **Mohini Devi**

Mohini Devi was in her twenties when she became the Sarpanch of Sonasar Gram Panchayat, Rajasthan. The first glass ceiling that she had to break was the stereotypical image of married women whose role is to get restricted within the four walls of the house. A significant achievement of Mohini Devi was her capacity to mobilise women's self-help group wherein women get to discuss their problems without any hassles. Several community level competitions were held where women participated shedding off their inhibitions. At the village level, she banned the use of liquor. To get it done, she along with other women made a peaceful protest outside the District Collector's office and thus demanded for liquor ban. She stood assertive against those male villagers who were trying to block her development projects (PRIA, 2003).

- **Mamta Devi**

Mamta Devi became the Pradhan of Soukni da Kot Panchayat, Himachal Pradesh in 2011. She represented the Scheduled Caste community reserved for women and went ahead to become the President for the second term. Mamta Devi wanted to empower her panchayat. In the process, she attended various capacity building programmes organised by non-government organisation as well as the government. Before becoming the Pradhan, her active participation in Mahila Mandals had improved her networking skills that she immediately swung into action by integrating rural development projects through these Mandals. She met the ward representatives and community-based organisations on a regular basis to collect community feedbacks about the several needs and what could be the possible state interventions.

Her synergy with state and non-state actors enabled her to involve local community in development in the long run. Her best practice was recognised by the Panchayat President's Association of Dharamshala that she was elected as its Vice-President. This forum served as a learning curve for its members to learn from each other. Her ability to negotiate with higher ups enabled her to lobby with the government to revoke fines on slate miners and thus paved way for employment of hundreds of labourers in her panchayat.

On the higher education front, she negotiated to open a law college in her panchayat where students can access with ease.

Mamta Devi's thoughtful leadership gesture won the villager's hearts when she constructed pedestrian paths, rain shelter at bus stops, and installation of solar street lamps. For perspective, under the Swachh Bharat Mission, she could utilise funds for the construction of community and household toilets and thus improved the health and sanitation status of the Panchayat. Another noteworthy achievement includes the provision of concrete structure to the health and veterinary department of the panchayat and erection of a huge community centre where 300 to 500 people could be accommodated for social and family functions. Indeed, the user fee of the community centre became a source of revenue for the panchayat (NIRD and CORD).

- **Shivkumari Devi**

Shivkumari Devi, a Ward member was associated with the capacity building training programme – 'Pahel' (a civil society initiative to train elected women representatives). Having received training about her roles and responsibilities, she along with Mahila Sabhas periodically visited health centres and inspected schools. Through women groups, she was able to mobilise local women to discuss issues about women's health, significance of girl child education, immunization etc. While paying regular visits to the Anganwadi centre and the health sub-centre, she would check the availability of needs and monitor the quality of services delivered. On one such visits she found the quality of food served by the Anganwadi workers was poor and warned that it would be complained to the higher authorities if same situation existed. During the Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND) there was poor participation among women and children and she mobilised the pregnant and lactating mothers from the community and explained them the need to attend such community events. Gradually, the participation of women increased and also the quality of services improved (Centre for Catalysing Change, 2015).

9.7 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Muriel Bowser is the Mayor of Washington D.C. She became the first woman to get re-elected to the position in the year 2018. She has been known for her policies regarding affordable housing, citizen satisfaction in city services, and diversification of D.C.'s economy. During her first term, she was instrumental in creation of over 57,000 jobs and thus reduced unemployment rate up to 28 percent. As chronic homelessness in the city is one of the major issues, she played a crucial role in building small, serviced shelters. Indeed, the problem came down to a 15-year low. Under the affordable housing project, she has envisioned to construct 36,000 new homes by 2025. She has been a champion of family-oriented policies, such as, raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour, establishing over 1,000 new child care seats, and boosting maternal health outcomes. She indeed deployed the first major city body-worn camera programme, wherein the police personnel get to record enforcement, investigate and public interface. It has facilitated police management to enforce public accountability and transparency. She

also has her official twitter handle through which latest updates about D.C. are shared with the netizens.

On Climate Change front, she has collaborated with the leaders representing the C40 cities in achieving the Paris Climate Agreement. Also, she took lead in the diplomatic and economic development missions to countries, such as, China, Cuba, Israel, Canada, El Salvador, and Ethiopia (Washington D.C. Mayor, 2022).

Check Your Progress 2

1) *Name at least three significant achievements contributed by Mamta Devi.*

9.8 AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION

In 1951, the Australian Local Government Women’s Association (ALGWA) was instituted to support women’s participation and involvement in local government as political and administrative executives. Although it is a network of women local government councillors and officials, it aims to resolve local governance issues in a non-partisan way. The membership of this association is open not only for the women leaders and administrators at the local government but also for all those who aspire to mentor and support women in local government. It also includes former Mayors, councillors etc. The association is headed by a President and four Vice-Presidents. The foremost aims of the association are to:

- a) Assist in improving women’s knowledge and understanding of the functions of local government;
- b) Enable women’s participation in local government;
- c) Inspire women to pursue local government as a career;
- d) Ensure women’s rights and aspirations in local government; and
- e) Advise women candidates during local government elections.

The association ensures women local government stakeholders to take an assertive stand when their rights get violated. One of the pledges that they affirm include: “Where I observe disrespectful behaviour, I will call out”. This segment of the pledge empowers women to stand up for their rights and take necessary action against the perpetrators. Ever since its inception the association has been mentoring and guiding potential women leaders that in 2018 more than one third of Australian councillors represented women. Indeed, this was for the first time in the history of Australia that number of women elected to councils significantly increased. To substantiate, when compared to the previous local government elections, year 2018 local government elections witnessed an increase in women councillors from 32.8 percent to 34.94 percent (ALGWA, 2018).

Following the brainstorming session to discuss the issues affecting women's participation in Australian local government, the National Framework for Women in Local Government was launched in 2001. To promote gender equity in local government, the Framework sought to bring forth a long-term vision for this cause. One of the broad commitments is to remove barriers to women's participation and engender safe, supportive workplace where diverse views are valued. By removing the barriers, it is expected to increase women's representation, both as elected representatives as well as administrative officials. Another objective is to engender inclusive Councils where diverse opinions about local governance issues would be ideated and considered for making decisions.

9.9 LET US SUM UP

From this Unit, you are able to understand that women's participation and representation is low across the world, irrespective of developing and developed countries. Despite the challenging context, these women leaders we have discussed in the Unit continue to create a just, fair, and equal world. Wherever they have been discriminated they tried to break the glass ceiling and has shown the pathway for co-creating a better world. To enable them to come out of their glass ceiling, we need more and more networks to boost women's representation at the local government level.

9.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Write your understanding on the aims of the Australian Local Government Women's Association.
- 2) Write an essay on comparative best practices that you have read in any article.

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UNIT 10 LEGAL LITERACY AND LEADERSHIP

Structure

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Learning Outcomes
- 10.3 Basic Premises
- 10.4 Debates on Legal Literacy
- 10.5 Socio-Legal Understanding in Relation to Legal Literacy.
- 10.6 World of Legal Literacy Education
- 10.7 Challenges before Legal Literacy
- 10.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.9 Unit End Question
- 10.10 References
- 10.11 Suggested Reading

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Relations of law and various sections people depend upon the nature of the societal mechanism and related legal institutions. Political class and dominant intelligentsia who are part of the policy regime exist within a field of power structure. Majority of the people are usually alienated from such hegemonic realms of powers. Customs coexist with the modern laws in peculiar ways. Most of the people are ignorant about the field of legal experts and production of legal knowledge/practice. Political and social facets of democracy determine complex power relations between people, their rights and governance. Equality can be only ensured if diverse sections of people have the knowledge about the law. Legal literacy empowers such various sections through making them aware about the various parts of law. This unit discusses about the various dimensions related to legal literacy. Before entering into the various perspectives on legal literacy, one has to gain the knowledge about the evolutionary premises of the idea called legal literacy.

10.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- Learn the concept of legal literacy;
- Examine the debates related to legal literacy; and
- To know the challenges before legal literacy.

10.3 BASIC PREMISES

The concept of legal literacy is interpreted in multiple ways. According to Archie Zarisky, the concept of literacy was deployed to denote particular facet of the legal education. Legal literate lawyer is the one who can read and write the briefs, opinions, legal arguments, legislation and judgment is further noted that legal literacy refers to be literate in the law. It is considered as central to legal writing programmes in law schools. Legal literacy makes the lawyers to reflect and articulate like lawyers (Zarisky,2014:64).

There are two approaches related to the concept of legal literacy. What are those two approaches related legal literacy? Primarily, it empowers people in the case of ensuring their rights in the absence of the lawyer. It is analyzed that “one approach considers legal literacy as a as a capacity spread along a continuum, with lawyers and judges at one end and relatively incapable non-lawyers(“laypersons”) at the other”(Zarisky,2015:64).Renowned legal scholar ,James Boyd White analyzed that legal literacy refers to “that degree of competence in legal discourse required for meaningful and active life in our increasingly legalistic and litigious culture”(White,cited in Zariskly,2015:65).According to May Sarah Bilder,legal literacy is “spectrum of functional skills” connected to conduct of litigation (Bilder,cited in Zarisky,2014:65).

The second approach considers legal literacy as a language that needs to be studied by those who are in the field of law. It is like a knowledge that should be gained by the legal community(Zarisky,2015:66).It is also analyzed that “...Full literacy goes beyond the development of a basic legal competence and implies the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and critical judgement about the substance of law, legal process and legal resources ,enabling and encouraging the utilization of capacities in practice”(Manley-Casimar,Wanda,Suzanne,Cited in Zarisky,2014:66).Legal literacy is also analyzed as “the ability to make critical judgements about the substance of law, the legal process and the available legal resources ,enabling and encouraging the utilization in practice”(American Bar Association, Commission on Public Understanding about the law, cited in Zarisky,2015:66).Legal literacy is also interpreted as “ ...the ability to understand words used in a legal context, to draw conclusions from them, and then to use those conclusions to take action(Canadian Bar Association: Cited in Zarisky,2014:67).Legal literacy is also described as “...Legal literacy is a process of self and social empowerment that moves women not only to activate the rights they do have, but to redefine and reshape the inadequate ones as expressed in law and in practice”(Hasan, cited in Zarisky,2014:67)

10.4 DEBATES ON LEGAL LITERACY

Diverse societies and communities are drastically transforming due to the shifts in the governance, science and technology. Political systems across the world are facing various political upheavals. People from diverse social strata are facing various challenges in the context of law and chaos. Economic inequality and social stratification also complicate the social and political

chaos. Crimes of various hues are therefore challenging the sphere of law makers and legal institutions. The role of legal literacy needs to be explored in such context. The law that was confined to certain elites became central to the lives of the people through political articulations. In other words, the shift from the formal rule book version of rule of law to that of right based approach provided substantive dimension to law (Sankaran and Ujjwal,2015: xii). It is further observed that rights-based approach driven individual rights alone cannot bring substantive justice. Moral rights should be captured and enforced through the rules in the rule book. There are contradictions between the abstract and practical sides of law. It is therefore argued that "...For a long time now the sphere of rights has expanded to include groups and communities ,and laws have reflected the need to address contexts of social exclusion, especially those in which entire groups such as women, the elderly ,and the disabled, cultural or religious, and caste communities are collectively subjected to systemic oppression"(Sankaran and Ujjwal,2015:xii).However, one of the central questions asked in this context is regarding the practitioners of law and its impact on the people. Whether people can understand law without the mediation of the experts or not? It is observed that emerging consciousness about rights have raised questions regarding the power relations that are operating between the legal experts and the ordinary people. For instance, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights Act (2006), National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) and social security laws for workers are having the sense of democratic rights (Sankaran and Ujjwal,2005: xii). Colonizers in India have created law for the purpose governance. But, some of the laws, for Sankaran and Ujjawal, have contributed in the democratization of law among the people (Sankaran and Ujjwal,2005: xii-xiii) Access to law and informed citizens are central to the debates on legal literacy, As mentioned earlier, how far the law is practiced and reached across the diverse sections of people remain the core themes in the debates on legal literacy in India. Paradoxically, social contexts of law do not allow to fulfil the real spirit of the law (Sankaran and Ujjwal,2005, xiii)

Legal literacy, for Baxi, needs to be analyzed in the context of the citizen's right to know about the law. The laws that made by the political institutions are analyzed in the backdrop of the people's interests to obey such laws or to not to obey such laws. Baxi shows the complex worlds of people, governance and laws. Laws are also embedded in the space of collectivities and member of the people. One of the significant questions that is raised here is that, what operates behind the non-conflictual, collective existence of human beings? It is made out of the citizens' identities and their obligations towards the political society. It is further noted that cultural and religious identities also determine the peaceful coexistence of human beings. These aspects create its own fissures and conflicts as well.It is further observed that community and identity that are determined by the law of the state play important role than the political factors. Literacy in state law, for Baxi, is important in this context. However, it is not enough to understand the obligations of the citizens. Baxi analyses the illiteracy related to law to further understand the nuances of the legal literacy. literacy is analyzed as the central to developing society like India. Baxi analyses that illiteracy of the people regarding the

law is produced through social and political factors. Such production of illiteracy is to strengthen the power and legitimacy of the ruling classes. Baxi's perspectives thus implies the radical potential of the legal literacy that has the potential to challenge oppressive nature of the elites. It is analyzed that "legal literacy ...may be simply thought of as a continual war against forms of power and domination that thrive by the production of legal illiteracy"(Baxi,2015:7).It is also analyzed that "...legal literacy, ideally conceived, at the same moment, fosters the capability of subjection to 'good' governance and the power to question and combat 'bad' governance"(Baxi,2015:8).According to Baxi ,legal literacy "is not merely imparting formal instruction concerning 'the law' but also relates to the development of collective/dialogical social thinking about justice"(Baxi,2015:7).Legal literacy is thus noted as a serious means to understand justice. It is 'the art and science of citizenship" that simultaneously address rights and suffering of the people (Baxi,2015:1-9).

Legal studies transform the student through exposing them to the bilingual capacities. It transforms them into lawyers and ordinary persons (Zariski,2014:24). However, the nature of the legal literacy is articulated in many ways. Legal literacy is analyzed as the skills, knowledge abilities that are essential for litigation in common legal systems (Zariski,2014:29). People in countries like Canada find it difficult to meet the lawyer due to exorbitant fees. It is analyzed as an important factor that hinderers the access to courts. Legal literacy is suggested to overcome such crisis in the field of law (Zariski,2014:49). Legal literacy is like a tool for the lawyer and the non-lawyer that sharpens their critical outlook on law. It helps the people to face the litigation without the help of the lawyer (Zariski,2014:49). Legal literacy creates awareness about the potentials of the law among the people. It also creates awareness about the limits of the law. It also gives tools to change the society (Zariski,2014:61). According to Zariski, written law empowers the society through its guidance. Legal system requires certain form of literacy. It is further described that people in the absence of literacy may get alienated and terrified by the law. Such crisis leads people to backlash against the law (Zariski,2014:62). One has to move beyond the idea of literacy to engage with the written forms of law and compound, legal discourses (Zariski:2014:64). Broadly, legal literacy refers to the ability to respond to the problems related to law. Such understanding responds to the rewards and demands related to the membership within the community. Zariski observes that it is gaining the complete membership in a community that allocate with the system of law. It leads to the constraints and opportunities related to action and change (Zariski,2015:68). It is noted that legal literacy liberates the common people from the legal elites. In turn, it empowers the citizenship. Legal literacy, for Zarisky, is needed for complete and creative life. It is analyzed that legal literacy cannot survive in isolation. It has to coexist with other forms of literacies like computer literacy driven information literacy. Broadly, it links the world of lay people to that of the complicated life based on the m lange of political institutions, science and technology (Zariski,2014:69). The next section explores the manner in which socio-legal scholars explored the concept of legal literacy.

10.5 SOCIO-LEGAL UNDERSTANDING IN RELATION TO LEGAL LITERACY.

Socio-legal scholars have analyzed the legal literacy in the backdrop of the other concepts. Legal consciousness is one among those concepts that is closely read in relation to then legal literacy. Legal consciousness is the awareness about the law and institutions affiliated with law and the reaction to the public in the light of the law and such institutions. Another concept is that of the legal mobilization. According to Zariski, it is proximate to the idea of legal literacy. In other words, the individual and groups rights are secured by the people via rigorously appealing to the legal institutions. It is the response of the people subjected to the legal institutions. Their approach to law is analyzed as instrumental in nature. Instead of the critique to law, mobilization happens within the realm of law itself. Therefore, it is analyzed as something that operates within the status quo rather than yearning for social change (Zariski, 2014: 73-74).

Another concept that is discussed in the context of legal literacy is the legal socialization. Zariski analyzed the various debates that emerged in the context of the concept of legal socialization. It is examined that the underlying methodological premise related to legal socialization refers to the ways in which people are surrounded by the legal institutions. It denotes to the manner in which how people internalize the law. It also implies to the ways in which people identify with the law. Legal socialization as a concept unfolds how people discard the law. It explores the modes through which people repudiate the legal institutions. It is also critiqued as the socialization to law as the acceptance of the law. In other words, people conform to its ideological core irrespective of its oppressive nature. Zariski observed that the liberal understanding of law includes the critical readings of people about the law. Such understanding shows that people's approach to law is related search of justice than the blind submission to law. It is observed that legal socialization "works to clarify and elaborate reciprocal role orientations and rights expectations in relations to law, not to institutionalize blind obedience or preach the goodness of specific rules" (Tap and Levine, cited in Zariski, 2014: 74). It is further analyzed that "an individual...who lacks the knowledge of rights and resources, the sense of self and the problem-solving competence to sufficient to mobilize the law...as legally impoverished" (Tap and Levine, cited in Zariski, 2014: 75). Legal socialization transforms the individuals and prepare them for larger change. Thus, it is connected to legal literacy (Zariski, 2014: 75). The next section discusses the aims and goals of the legal education.

Check Your Progress-1

1) Write on socio-legal aspects of legal literacy

10.6 WORLD OF LEGAL LITERACY EDUCATION

Aims and goals of the legal literacy education need to be analyzed to understand the depth of the concept of legal literacy. One of the important goals of the legal education is to disseminate the information about the various aspects of laws. It is carried out in order to increase the knowledge of law. It is intended to connect the people to the law in an active manner. The productive critique of law is also inherent within the gamut of goals related to legal literacy education. The aforementioned goals are classified as the “educational, competency and critical goals of the legal literacy education” (Zariski,2014:75). It is analyzed that law related education is the category used to create awareness about the legal literacy. is also promoted in order create awareness about the law who experienced conflict with the law (Zariski,2014:76)

What are factors needed for the perfect space for the legal literacy? It is beyond the mere possession of information and knowledge about the law. People need skills and competencies to have a serious engagement with the legal literacy. In order to facilitate the rights for the women and marginalized communities in the developing societies, legal literacy empower such people to mobilize for their cause (Zariski,2014:77). One of the central aspects that is discussed is the role of legal literacy in the field of critical legal education. It is analyzed legal literacy provides critical dimensions to legal literacy. It attempts to democratize the law to certain extent (Zariski,2014:77). At the same time, it is critiqued that reading the legal literacy in the light It is also linked to citizenship education. It is also noted street law education of the critical legal studies is less welcomed in the field of law (Zariski,2017:78). These issues raise serious challenges to the debates that explore the connections between hegemonic lawyers and legal literacy programmes.

What is the central argument of legal literacy? According to Zariski, it should see the society through the lens of the law. It needs to find out the proper terms to explain the relations between people, objects and events. Such position enables the legal literacy as central to something that seeks justice. It also includes the conceptual structure through which the world understands the world (Zariski,2014:79). It is observed that “...legal structures have the power in themselves. Becoming legally literate in a critical way must include analyzing the structure to reveal the powerful interests behind them, and finding a way to use power of legal structure to secure more just results from law” (Zariski,2014:113). Legal interpretation is connected to skills and techniques for the meaning of law. It is deployed to explain act of reading and providing meaning to law. It is important in reading private documents like wills and contracts. It is analyzed that legal literacy requires fundamental understanding of legal interpretation (Zariski,2014:285-286). Legal interpretation is considered as “one of the most complex tools of legal literacy” (Zariski,2014:287). The next section discusses the challenges before legal literacy.

Check Your Progress-2

1) Write on socio-legal aspects of legal literacy

10.7 CHALLENGES BEFORE LEGAL LITERACY

Legal services authority act-1987 expects constitution of legal services to give free legal services to the marginalized sections. It is done in order to ensure that justice of anybody irrespective of economic background should not be denied by the concerned legal institutions' role of Lok Adalats is to observe whether legal institutions ensure justice on the basis of equal opportunity. One needs to ponder whether legal literacy really happens at the grassroot level. India is also facing major challenges in the neoliberal phase of the capitalism. Such economic complexity affects the rights and justice of the vulnerable sections as well. Scholars have to analyse the whether justice happens beyond the social stratification and linked power structures or not.

Legal literacy programmes in India are carried out through the District Legal Services Authorities at the District and Sub Divisional Legal Service Committee at the Taluka level. It is observed that "These grass root legal services agencies, as of now, are leading from the front by performing multiple functions of planning, organizing and popularizing the concept of legal literacy. In Haryana, District Legal Service Authorities are administered by the District & Sessions Judges as their Chairmen, while an officer of the level of a Chief Judicial Magistrate as a whole-time functionary act as a secretary of a District Legal Services Authority in a district. Legal aid and legal clinics are central to legal education as well. The need of the hour is to have a relook on the functioning and structure of the same and redefine their roles by functional and administrative re-engineering" (Parson, 2015). It is noted that "Legal literacy is key to legal empowerment of We, the people of India. The Press has a special role to play. Everyone is to contribute by spreading knowledge and information about basic knowledge of such laws and about way and means of their enforcement. Democracy will be functional and vibrating, only on legal empowerment of everyone" (Parsoon,2015)

The concept of legal literacy is being re-read from the most oppressed sections in the Indian society. It is observed that "Lack of legal awareness and education are the main causes of injustices being meted out to the marginalized populations, especially women" (Kabir,cited in Raza, 2021).Struggles of the people are also becoming complex in the age of drastically changing cultures of governance and corporate world. It is analyzed that "Legal platform has been utilized to challenge the hegemony of the feudal forces, patriarchal structures and powerful multinationals'-coca cola struggle to Narmada Bachao Andolan, Bhanwari devi's struggle against

feudal and political forces to tribal women assertion to their right to forest and natural resources all have utilized law as a platform to challenge hegemonical forces. The legal literacy programme thus may attempt to explore rights as a political recourse and may aim towards the social change within the broader socio-political perspective. Further paternalistic approach in the field of law needs to be replaced by right based approach. Legal literacy campaign may aim at making the law as a 'voice of people' or more specifically 'voices of poor and the marginalized' (Nigam,2008). Hierarchies related to information is also creating new forms of power relations in developing society like that of India. It is critiqued that people are still facing problems in the access to legal information. It is argued that "Law libraries in the country have adequate resources and infrastructure to disseminate legal information to its users. These services may be extended to general people. Law libraries make it easier to share out nonacademic users. Moreover, a number of states have such elaborate chains of public libraries which are so well stocked and financed that only a limited number of people opt to go to law school libraries" (Dangi and Prabhat: 2017:25-27)

Privatization of education has led to the emergence of the private legal educational institutions. The proliferation of corporate law firms has also impacted the values associated with the legal profession. One needs to be reflexive of the idea and practice of judicial activism as well. Formation of non-governmental organizations have also widened the gap between the people, social movements and other institutions. Digital divide and vanishing of the traditional libraries have made major challenges across India. The divide between the developed and underdeveloped region also demonstrates the plural understanding related to customs, laws and justice.

Scholars have been raising concerns about the non-lawyer intermediaries. How legal literacy can be strengthened in the case of non-lawyer intermediaries? It is analyzed that "...This is not to suggest that the legal literacy of citizens is not important, but it is critical that we are cognitive that many people seek help from non-lawyers when faced with a legal problem. It is essential that we ensure that these non-lawyer intermediaries have sufficient legal literacy to assist them in their role and that is reflective of current practices. It is with addressing the legal literacy of these important intermediaries that we can be a step close to ensuring that we have greater civil engagement for all in the future, and that legal literacy is not just for lawyers" (Freudenberg,2017:25). Access to legal information has become serious debate in the context of information and communication technologies. According to Jennifer Murphy Romig and Mark Edwin Burge, Plain Language Movement(Plain English Movement) lurks as a hope in the case of legal literacy. Professor David Mellinkoff, from UCLA and Professor Richard Wydick from University of California-Davis and so on argued that law should be written in plain language for the ordinary people. It exhorted lawyers and academics to liberate the law from jargon ridden language (Romig and Mark,2019:8). It is further argued that "knowledge can be power, and legal literacy is a kind of knowledge that can serve as an empowering life skill(Romig and Mark,2019:10)

10.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we learn the fundamental premises about the category of legal literacy. Various debates on legal literacy are also discussed to demonstrate the changing meanings of the term, legal literacy. In addition to those debates, socio-legal understanding in the context of legal literacy is also explored to explain theoretical nuances of the category of legal literacy. Legal literacy is also probed in the context of legal literacy education. The unit also analyses the challenges before the project and practice of the legal literacy across the globe.

10.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Evaluate concept of legal literacy.
- 2) Discuss the socio-legal understanding in order to understand legal literacy.
- 3) What are the challenges before legal literacy? Discuss.

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