

Future of Feminist Movement

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Telugu department of Kakatiya university, Warangal in collaboration with regional institute of South Indian languages, Mysore organized a three day national seminar on 27th, 28th and 29th of January on "Two decades of Telugu Feminist literature its direction and destination" at Senate Hall of Kakatiya university. Professor Katyayani Vidmahe acted as the director of this National seminar. Many feminist stalwarts like Olga, Ratnamala, Indraganti Janaki Bala, Shilalolitha, Krishnabai, Dr.Nalini, Kondepudi Nirmala, Vandrevu Veeralakshmi devi, K.Varalakshmi, Nalluri Rukmini, Kalluri Shyamala and many others attended the seminar and participated in the discussions. Many of them presented papers written on the various issues connected to feminism were read in the seminar.

Feminism in Telugu literature had taken strong roots since 1920s when Gudipati Venkata Chalam, popularly known as Chalam stormed into it with his high voltage writings advocating the liberation of women from the oppression and suppression of male dominated society. Chalam's epoch making book 'Sthree (Woman)' was published in 1925 which is rightly considered the first book that brought feminism into Telugu literature. Even before feminist movement had taken strong roots in western literature, Chalam's 'Sthree' had made the Telugu people to think and discuss the problems of the women. This one book had brought revolutionary change on the attitude of men towards women.

Chalam was influenced by modern western liberal thought. The Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen is considered to be the father of modern western drama. He was the first play writer who had taken contemporary social problems as the themes of his plays. One of his plays "Doll's houses" which was published in 1879 is considered as the first feminist play in European literature. For the first time in literature, Ibsen created character 'Nora', who rebels against suppression of women by their husband's and walks out of her husband's residence. While walking out of her husband's abode she shuts the outer door of the house (Doll's house) with a big thud. Bernard Shaw who was a great admirer of Ibsen, introduced and explained the deep significance of Ibsen's works. Bernard Shaw said something like this: The sound made by Nora while walking out of her husband's house reverberated in all the European families.

Bernard Shaw too had written number of plays in which he had advocated the liberation of women from clutches of conservative societies of England and Europe. Shaw had written a book called "An intelligent women's guide to socialism" in which he says most of the writers before him had addressed only men in their books, but he was addressing women in this book. He explained socialism to women from their point of view. Thus it is men who were in the fore front in the feminist movement in Europe as well as in India. There after many women intellectuals had taken forward this Feminist movement and strengthened it. For example Simone Beauvoir wrote epoch making book called 'Second sex' which made deep impact on the Feminist movement. This book 'Second sex' had become a manifesto for the feminists all over the world.

Some of her observations like...“One is not born but rather becomes a woman” had become an eternal truth. Other observation of Simone Beauvoir is:“Thus humanity is male and man defines a woman not as in herself, but as relative to him; she is not regarded as autonomous being.....she is defined and differentiated with reference to men and he with reference to her. She is inessential as offered to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute, she is the ‘other’

In Telugu literature, feminism had taken the shape of a strong movement from 1985 onwards. Writers like Olga, Jayaprabha, P.Satyavati, Kondepudi Nirmala, Kuppli Padma and many others wrote poems, short stories and novels depicting the problems of women from the point of view of women. There is strong view that feminist literature should be produced by women only. Feminist literature is said be for the women and by the women. So from 1985 onwards many women writers had started shining in Telugu literary firmament.

Because of feminist movement many changes have come into existence in the society. Women are no longer seen as ‘sex objects’ or only as producers of children or only as cooks. Many legislations have been passed giving equal rights to women on par with men. Scores of women are entering into all sorts of jobs which were once considered to be bastions of men. Women are now walking out of their Wed locks when their husbands torture them or harass them. Marriage is no longer considered as a hundred years pact. In political field women’s empowerment had taken strong roots. There is strong case for 33% reservation for women in the state Assemblies and Parliament. Though it is being delayed for various reasons sooner or later this legislation will borne fruit. The rituals which were very humiliating to a woman when her husband dies are slowly undergoing a radical change. No longer a widow is subjected to inhuman humiliations. Thus the feminism had achieved its main objectives even though still a lot has to be done mainly in the field of entertainment. Women are shown as only sex objects in the entertainment and advertisement fields. And in movies too, a woman’s role is limited to titillate the sexual feeling of the spectators. In television serials, women characters are being shown as vamps and conspirators. Feminist movement must seriously address to these problems. Another problem causing a lot of agony to women is the problem of Love Maniacs. As the social interaction between girls and boys is on the rise, boys are after girls to fulfil their sexual desires in the name of love. Lot of violence on women is taking place in the name of love. Feminists must give a serious thought to these problems and must try to find solutions.

As Professor Rajeshwar who was the chief guest in the concluding session of the national seminar at Kakatiya University said “One way of doing it is to take onboard men’s experience and enlist men’s support in the women’s cause. Life includes the male experience as well, and it is important to take into account even in a radical feminist project because the success of such a project is indelibly linked to the co-operation of men.” Bellhooks, author of the feminist treatise “Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics, unequivocally asserts “without males alive in struggle, Feminist movement will not progress.” She goes on to assert that men when divested of male privilege, cease to be the enemies, where as sexism and patriarchy could be real threats irrespective of who practises them - men or women”.

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