Social Citizenship through Social Forces: A Case Study of Nepali Women

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Abstract

The present paper aims to show a correlation between social forces and social citizenship. The paper highlights the aspect of citizenship rights of Nepali women. Nepali society is composed of people holding different aspirations. If the aspirations of people remain unfulfilled then people adopt the medium of social forces to transform their state. Not only a single force determines to ensure social citizenship but the action of social force plays the determining role. In the Nepali context, common Nepali people were deprived of educational rights and treated as subjects rather than citizens. It is the political movement of 1951 that transformed the social status and role of Nepali people including women. Similarly, social force ensured the democracy of Nepal in 1996. Onward movements of social force the constitution of 1990 declared Nepal as a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-religious country. The people's war of Nepal from 1996 to 2006 played an imperative role to ensure the social citizenship of the Nepali people. The interim constitution of Nepal 2006 ensured the inclusion of Women, Dalits, indigenous ethnic groups, Madhesi communities, oppressed groups, poor farmers, and laborers, who are economically, socially, or educationally backward with the right to participate in state structures based on principles of proportional inclusion.

Introduction

Social forces play a prominent role to achieve the expectation of society as without struggle nothing can be achieved. Transformation of the status quo is possible through the activities of social forces. Social status is determined through social citizenship. To be a full and equal member of a community requires citizenship and social, economic, and political rights and obligations (Marshall, 1950). Social force is composed of various actors in the field. Such actors influence policy-making (Tilly, 2005). Social forces are the agent of change. It is impossible to influence various aspects of society without a political milieu. Social forces are a medium to transform the political milieu (Sharma, V.S.2000). The social behavior of people can be modified through social forces. Social forces are the entity that influences social behavior (Scott, 1999). Social forces impose various forms of peace and coercion to achieve the goals. Coercion is the process in which people compel other people to do something against their will and coercion is based on force (Curry, et al 1997). Social

forces adopt various means to achieve expectations. To prevent reductionism in Sociological research many social, political, and economic forces should be acknowledged and acknowledged in analyzing the social event. Neuman mentioned that major macro-political events cannot be reduced to a specific act of one individual. Similarly, Neuman argued that World War I occurred due to a combination of large-scale social forces, and individual action is not a cause (Neuman, 2014). Ritzer (2000) mentioned the significance of social forces such as political revolutions, the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism, the rise of socialism, feminism, urbanization, religious change, and the growth of science in the development of sociological theory. In the same manner, the citizenship of Nepali women is not achieved through a single factor but a series of factors that contributed to ensuring the citizenship of Nepali women. Nepali women evolutionarily achieved political rights. First and foremost, the first women's organization was formed in the Siraha district in 1917. The women's committee aims to make people aware of political and social conditions. Later on, the organization had dysfunction after one and half years as the Rana regime charged it with participating in undesirable activities (Malla, 2011).

Social forces indicate different meanings to different people. In the case of social workers and social reformers, social forces are considered as obstacles or resources to be mobilized in connection with their problem as such particular and concrete. In the context of Nepal, Nepali women acted as social forces, directly and indirectly, involved in people's wars as propagandists and guerillas. They are involved as an agent of social force in the Maoist strongholds as every third guerilla. The experience of Peru also proved that the presence of women in the propaganda, logistics, and fighting ranks played a critical role in the success of the people's war. In the Nepali context, women especially poor, peasant, illiterate and *janajati* achieved political visibility. The Maoist Movement of Nepal was oriented towards expanding the rights base of the poor and the marginalized including women. The 40-point charter supports property rights for women and access to property and land. In that charter, it is mentioned that patriarchal exploitation and discrimination against women should be stopped ensuring access to parental property for daughters. The people's war ideology created space for women to claim rights to become commanders and party committee secretaries. During the people's war period, women are visible in mass actions, cultural and propaganda organizations, and guerilla units. Maoist guerillas were projected as formidable fighters, more committed, disciplined, reliable, and militant. Even Prachanda admitted that before launching the people's war women's questions were not taken seriously. However, women's activism urged ideologically and programmatically to incorporate the issue of women. The revolution in Nepal provided a platform to choose alternative social, economic, and political fields for Nepali women (Yami, 2006). In the published book, Yami writes People's War and Women's liberation in Nepal mentioned the struggles faced by Nepali women during the 10-year-long civil war. However, still, the representation of women is less than 10% in the working committee of political parties. She mentioned that women fight for political will and equal rights being combatant fighters against the National armed forces (Ibid). Nepali women living in rural areas do not have the option to quit agriculture. People are not willing to choose agriculture through agriculture

uplifts the rural economy and people living on the grass root. Approximately 96% of women are active in the agricultural field (Pandey, 2005). Patriarchal families and social structures deny women real property rights on land and they have limited control over land (Jiggins, 1989). Similarly, illiteracy, economic dependency, lack of access to property, heavy burden, patriarchal norms, and values lead to female poverty (NPC, 1994). Involvement in the revolution allowed Nepali women to change such practices through their actions. Even illiterate and economically dependent women have lesser power in decision-making than women who have higher educational qualifications (Thapa, 2004). In the South Asian context, women experience social, economic, political prejudice and oppression in the past and which continues till now (Mazumdar, 1982).

The objective of the study is to study the causal relationship between social forces to achieve citizenship rights, to track social force and citizenship through a sociological perspective, and to explore whether citizenship is a big step forward to alter the situation of Nepali women. The drastic transformation of Nepali society is possible through citizenship rights. Citizenship right is achieved through an agent and social forces that prevail in society.

Research Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research methodology aims to understand society without statistics. The qualitative research method aims to identify and understand the meanings of society. Qualitative research methods explore and understand individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem. The process of qualitative research involves emerging questions and procedures and data collection. Under the qualitative research method, researchers explain the situation and develop a relevant and true statement (Creswell, 2009). The research will adopt a descriptive research design. Descriptive research finds out the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship and the study starts with a well-defined issue or question and tries to describe it accurately (Neuman, 2014).

Analysis

In the Nepali context, Nepali women were devoid of citizenship rights in a patriarchal social structure. However, political actors and women's organizations played an active role to ensure the citizenship rights of Nepali women. Without social forces and subsequent citizenship rights, every aspect of women remains as it is. First and foremost, the Maoist movement raised significant questions about women's rights. Through the medium of citizenship relationships of citizens were determined. Citizenship is an essential component to acquire voting rights in the election. Social forces demanded citizenship rights, for instance, voting rights, social security benefits, and position in the public sphere are determined. Citizenship rights are achieved through a citizenship certificate. Declaration of national identity is possible through a citizenship certificate (Gyawali, 2068). The Maoist movement acted as a social force. The movement organized to end all forms of discrimination against people including women, ensure gender equality and allow daughters access to parental property, equal access to inheritance rights, and equal pay and address the

sexual vulnerability of lower-class women, eradication of prostitution, human trafficking, authorization for abortion, marriage by mutual consent and divorce proceeding (Sthapit, 2017). People's war played an important role to improve the level of consciousness of Nepali society. People's war encourages people to demand the rights of ethnic people, Madhesi regional identity, Dalit, and women. People's war transforms the issue of secularism, federalism, and republicanism into the issue of debate (Sharma, 2070).

In the movement, the network works as the social force. In the case of Nepal, networking between different women's organizations and civil society organizations increases the movement's strength. Also, networking and dialogues with political parties, politicians, and policymakers are vital to achieving policy change (Daurer, 2017). Without the network and actions of women, it is impossible to ensure equal representation of women at all decision-making levels. The organization named SANKALPA aims to make diverse groups of women visible in the Constituent Assembly and the peace-building process. The attempt of SANKALPA brought significant change as four women were included among the sixteen people forming the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee. Eventually, the mother's right to transfer citizenship to her children, and 33 percent representation of women in the Constituent Assembly is ensured in the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee (Sankalpa, 2014). In the case of the United States, the early feminists advocated the equal rights of women to acquire an education (Anderson, 1983).

The existence and action of social forces ensured the citizenship rights of women would have been impossible. The active and contributing role of social forces ensures the citizenship rights of women. In every community, women are the most oppressed and marginalized section of society. Despite being the backbone of the subsistence rural economy women have no legal right over the property. Socio-cultural practices outlined in the Muluki Ain of 1854 are oppressive and subjugate Hindu women. In the Maoist movement women from the poor peasantry, the Janajatis and untouchable communities joined the people's war. In the people's war oppressed and marginalized Janajatis, Dalits, and women joined the social force identifying and recognizing the relations of exploitation in the Nepali society. The people's war aimed at attacking and destroying the basis of these unequal relations (Patel, 2018).

Since time immemorial Nepali women have engaged in the private sphere. However, the post-conflict conflict situation transformed the situation of Nepali women. As a spillover impact of conflict, a large share of Nepali women is involved in the Constituent Assembly. This aspect is remarkable in the South Asian context. It is seen that the post-conflict conflict scenario provided a promising opportunity for women to become involved in politics. In the Nepali context, social force is composed of women activists, female ex-combatants, and women participants in post-conflict Nepali politics. Likewise, bilateral, multilateral, and regional institutions provided substantial support for women's rights and political participation. The National Women's Commission shows that the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) comprised one-third of women. Even the role of national NGOs and civil society organizations is seen in promoting women's rights.

Generally, people involved in a movement aim to address prevailing injustices (Turner &Killion, 1972). To transform the existing social conditions of the people involved in the movement. For instance, in Europe and the United States, the feminist movement emerged in the century, with geographical expansion, industrial development, expanding educational opportunities for women, and the growth of another social reform movement.

Result and Conclusion

Historically, women were deprived of citizenship rights and women remain in the private sphere. Women were unable to participate in social, economic and political activities of the state due to lack of citizenship rights. To transform the state as such social forces played an imperative role. Actions and activities of social forces played a significant role in changing citizenship rights. Emergence of diverse political movements transformed the social life of people including women. Citizenship rights gradually changed the social life of women as women got access to social, economic and political domain through the right. Citizenship rights are not given easily on behalf of women in the society run by the patriarch, However, diverse political movements, agents of political movement and social forces contributed to ensure citizenship of women. In the context of Nepal women acquired educational rights after the democratic movement of 1951. Movement of 1990 densured the citizenship rights of the women declaring women as equal citizens. Onward the People's war Nepali women got the opportunity to be involved in diverse political, social and economic spheres through positive discrimination schemes. Eventually Nepali women acquired citizenship rights gradually to uplift the social position of women. Looking back in history we can see the women participating in the political domain dates back to 1950. Crossing social and cultural boundaries Mangala Devi Singh and Sahana Pradhan worked for democracy and human rights from 1947 to 1952. Eventually, in the General Election of 1999, only 12 women out of 205 seats were elected to executive positions. The Constituent Assembly elections in 2008 gave 197 women representation which is 33.2% highest in South Asia. Women's representation in parliaments was low as 5%. However, progress is seen as in 2011 as 19.2% women received women rights (Rai, 2012). Such type of inclusion of women in decision making is a democratic good in itself and breaks male dominance in politics (Hassim&Razavi, 2006). In Nepali context Shailaja Acharya became the Deputy Prime Minister in the Nepali Congress Government. Before the advent of Constituent Assembly elections, only 10 among the 205 parliamentarians were women. The World Bank Report (2017) showed that in 51.6 percent of total population in Nepal 33% women are in the parliaments. In the year 1990 only 6% of representatives were women and the percentage is highest among South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Nations (World Bank, 2017). However, participation in politics is invisible in terms of decision making bodies. In terms of the global world only one in five members of a parliament is a woman, where women form less than 10% of the world leaders. Nepali women contributed in the street and parliament to ensure citizenship rights.

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