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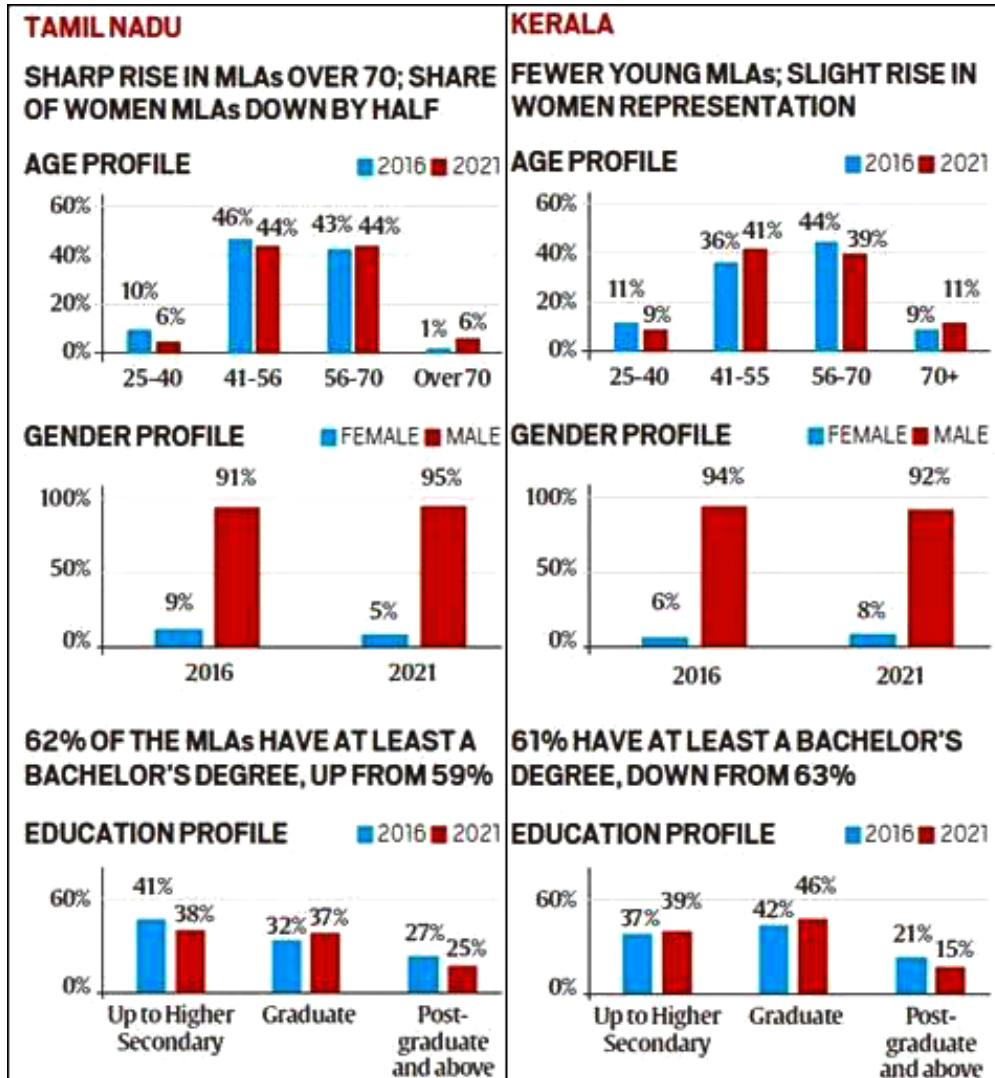
Participation of Women & Youth in State Assemblies

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Why in News

Recent data from the **three new state assemblies**, which are West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, show **less numbers of women and youth Member of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs)**.

- The **data of the 2019 lok sabha elections** also show that the participation of women is low. According to a list compiled by the **Inter-Parliamentary Union** in 2019, India ranks **153 out of 190 nations** in the percentage of women in the lower house of world parliaments.
- India is young. Its leaders are not. The country's median age is 29. The average parliamentarian is 55.



Key Points

- **Reasons for Less Number of Women MLAs:**

- **Illiteracy** - It is one of the main hurdles in making women politically empowered.
- **Work and Family** - Uneven distribution of household work between men and women is also one of the important factors in this regard.
- **Lack of Political Networks** - The lack of openness in political decision-making and undemocratic internal processes pose a challenge for all newcomers, but particularly for women as they tend to lack insider knowledge or political networks.
- **Lack of Resources** - Because of their low proportion in the inner political party structure of India, women fail to gather resources and support for nurturing their political constituencies.
- **Lack of Financial Support** - Women do not get adequate financial support from the political parties to contest the elections.
- **Societal and Cultural Norms** - These norms imposed on women bar them from entering politics.
- **Unfriendly Environment** - Overall political parties' environment too is not women-friendly, they have to struggle hard and face multi-dimensional issues to create space for them in the party.

- **Reasons for Less Number of Youth MLAs:**

- **False Believe** - Political parties believe that the youth, having not seen enough of life, are unprepared for the demands of top-flight politics.
- **Youth will not be taken seriously** - Political parties fear that Indian electors who respect older politicians will not take young candidates seriously.
- **Veterans not leaving** - Key party decision makers, typically veterans, do not want to yield space.
- **Muscle power politics** - Politicians use muscle and money power to prevent entry of good people to enter politics.
- **Less chance of success** - The chances of failure are high and very few people become successful.
- **Good people avoid politics** - General perception of a common man about a politician is someone who is deceptive and corrupt. So people from well to do fields tend to avoid themselves being listed in categories of politicians.
- **Unethical practices** - Many fail to enter due to dirty politics and due to fear of harm to good image. Unethical practices have become the norm in politics.
- **Nepotism** - It plays a major role and many youth who become successful politicians belong to influential political families.
- **Other reasons** - Rising campaign spending and rotational reservation in municipal, panchayat and mayoral elections have created barriers to upward movement for aspiring young politicians.

- **Related Initiatives:**

- **The Women's Reservation Bill 2008:**

It proposes to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 1/3rd of all seats in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women.

- **Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions:**

Clause (3) of Article 243D of the Constitution ensures participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions by mandating not less than one-third reservation for women out of total number of seats to be filled by direct election and number of offices of chairpersons of Panchayats.

- **National Youth Parliament Festival:**

It is organised by **National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)** under the aegis of Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to:

- **Hear the voice of youth in this age bracket of 18-25** who are allowed to vote but cannot contest in elections.
- **Encourage the youth to engage with public issues**, understand the common man's point of view, form their opinion and express these in an articulate manner.

- **National Youth Parliament Scheme:**

- The **Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs** has been implementing the Youth Parliament programme since 1966.
- To **strengthen the roots of democracy**, inculcate healthy habits of discipline, tolerance of the view of others and to enable the student community to know about practices and procedures of the Parliament.

Way Forward

- It is the **need of the hour** in a country like India to have **equal participation of all the sections of society in mainstream political activity** therefore necessary steps should be taken to promote it.
- Considering **legally-backed youth and women quotas** which could be in the form of either seats exclusively (and rotationally) reserved for youth and women or a specified proportion of young candidates all registered parties contesting an election must field.
- **Municipal and panchayat polls should give rise to leaders** who have experience at the ground level. Such leaders, after some experience, should be able to run for state and eventually the central legislative seats.
- **Promoting Inner party democracy**, where in a democratic political party the various positions like president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer etc are filled by the election process.

Source:IE