

WOMEN'S MOBILIZATION IN INDIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This paper seeks to understand the women's mobilization in India. Women's mobilization can be understood in terms of the women's movement in India. Most of the women participated in the various movements of India. Women's movement is a type of social movement. It focuses on protecting the various women's rights, and against their atrocity, discrimination, & gender inequality etc. Women's mobilization can be seen in the various movements in India like the freedom movement of India, peasant movement, student movement, and Dalit movements. Women also have played a significant role in the environmental movements of India such as: - the Bishnoi movement, Chipko Movement, Appiko movement, and Narmada Bachao Andolan. Therefore the concept of eco-feminism has emerged. This paper highlights the nature of women's mobilization in various movements in India. The attempt is also directed to understand the issues of different women's movements. In this study, data have been collected through secondary sources.

Keywords

Women's Mobilization, Movement, Gender Inequality, Feminism.

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Introduction

Social movement is a loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. And women's mobilization can be seen in the various social movements. Like peasant movement, freedom movement, environmental movement etc. Any social movement has 5 significant components. These components are-

Components of a Social Movement

Any Social movement has five important elements:-

1. Demand Or Issue
2. Mobilization
3. Ideology
4. Leadership
5. Loose Organization

Thus it can be argued that mobilization is one of the significant elements of social movement. The success of any social movement depends on the effective mobilization. Therefore this paper seeks to understand the beginning of women's mobilization in India in social movements. The emergence of the women's mobilization can be seen in the history of feminist movements. Women's movement can be seen worldwide in the form of three waves of feminism. In the first wave of feminism, women's rights were the main issue. This wave talks about women's rights, and equality with men. The first wave of feminism basically focused on women's legal rights, especially the right to vote; therefore the women's suffrage movement came into existence in the 19th century. This movement fought for the right to vote for women in national or local elections (<https://www.britannica.com/event/womens-movement>). In 1893, New Zealand was the first country to give women the right to vote. Before this movement women were not allowed for the right to vote. During this wave women got voting rights for the first time, therefore this wave can be considered as the women's suffrage movement.

The second wave of feminism denotes the equality of women, equal rights and opportunities of women in family, politics, workplace, gender discrimination, justice, and sexuality. Simon de Beauvoir wrote the book "Second Sex", in this book she denoted what are the reasons for inequality between men and women. Barbara Smith also said that the status of women is unequal and unscientific. Both feminist writers said the inequality between women and men is the reason for this inequality. According to them this wave of feminism was radical in its nature.

In the 1990s issues and thinking related to feminism has been changed and this wave of feminism basically focused on rape, violence, and patriarchal-related issues. In the third wave of feminism the main issue was sexuality, and feminism has been described through postmodern ideas and theories. Due to the third wave of feminism several types of women's feminism have emerged such as black feminism, Dalit feminism, eco feminism, Islamic feminism, and post feminism. And women's movements have also started. Therefore, it can be argued that the women's movement and the ideology of feminism have emerged simultaneously.

Women's mobilization in India can be seen in different social movements in India. However women's mobilization started during the pre-independence of India. Most women participated in the various activities in the freedom movement in India. Therefore here the contribution of women's mobilization in India can be analyzed during pre-independent India and after the independence of India.

This paper highlights the emergence of the women's movement in India. It also emphasizes how women are mobilized in other social movements in India such as the freedom movement, social reforms movement, environmental movements, peasant movements, and student movement's etc. Neera Desai (1988) argues that the women's movements are the collective effort for the freedom and equality of women.

According to Gail Omvedt (1978) women's movement can be divided into two categories: - women's equality movement and women's liberation movements. However Kalpana Shah (1984) says that the women's movement can be classified into three types like moderate or women's right position, radical feminism, and socialist feminism movements (Shah,2009).

The present paper explains the women's mobilization in pre-independence of India and after the independence of India. Here it can be said that the women's movement started during the independence movement of India. Social reform movements were started by social reformists such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Raja Rammohan Roy, Behramji Malbari, Keshav Chandra Sen, Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule. They raised their voices against the conservative religious, and social customs, which were the subjugating women. Due to their efforts British government established laws for Sati Pratha, child marriage, Purdah Pratha and remarriage of women (Shah, 2009).

Savitribai Phule, was the first female teacher, fought for women's education in pre-independent India. In 1848, she started a separate school for girls in Pune. Therefore, it can be argued that in the colonial phase of India, the women's

movement can be seen in the form of social reform movement. And Indian feminism started as well.

In this phase many women's organizations were also established by early women social reformers such as Arya Mahila Samaj, Bharat Mahila Parishad (1905), and The Ladies Society in Calcutta (1882). These Organizations were started for the empowerment of women in society, promoting women's education, political participation of women, economic empowerment, and for the social and after independence of India. legal rights of women.

Some other women's organizations were founded in pre-independence India as well, these organizations worked for women's education, rights, freedom, and social problems. These organizations were Young Women's Christian Association (1896), Bengal Women's Education League (1902), All India Muslim Women's Conference (1914), Indian Women's Association (1917), Madras Women's Indian Association (1917) and All India Women's Conference (1927). These women's organizations helped women with their social, political and economic development. They fought for their education, emancipation, and rights, against atrocity and equality.

However on the other hand women were also mobilizing in the independence movement of India. Women have played a vital role in the freedom fighters of India (Chandra, 1988). Aparna Basu (1976) argues that female participants were accepted as political comrades in the Indian freedom struggle and they had equal opportunities for participation. According to Govind Kelkar (1984) women's participation has been treated in the Indian freedom struggle as a helper not as a comrade. However several women were involved in India's quiet movement (1942) in the influence of Gandhi, 's ideology (Shah, 2009).

The contribution of women's mobilization can be seen in India's struggle movement very firstly in 1817 when Bhima Bai Holkar fought against the British Colonel Malcolm and defeated him in guerrilla warfare (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_of_the_Indian_independence_movement). There were some female social and political activists who actively participated in the freedom movements in India. These female activists are Rani Laxmi Bai, Kasturba Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Aruna Asif Ali, Kamla Nehru, Annie Besant, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Utsa Mehta, and Madam Bhikaji Cama. Rani Laxmi Bai, who was one of the leading figures of the first Indian rebellion of 1857 in Jhansi, fought against the British government. Kasturba Gandhi, who was a social reformer and political activist participated in the non-cooperation movement (1920), nonviolent civil disobedience movement and India's quiet movement (1942).

Sarojini Naidu worked for civil rights and women's emancipation. She also fought against the British government. She was a great poet and also known as the Nightingale of India. She raised women's voices around the world by participating in the public sphere (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_of_the_Indian_independence_movement).

Begum Hazrat Mahal was involved in the 1857 revolt by providing her leadership along with Nana Saheb. They all were prominent female leaders in pre-independence India. They mobilized women for their rights and exploitation. They raised Indian women's religious, social, economic and political issues in front of patriarchal society. These activists not only worked for the independence movement but they also helped women with their education and ensured the women's participation in the freedom movement activities.

Therefore, it can be argued that after social reformers, the women's movement was led by female leaders. Here it can be seen that earlier women's issues were raised by the male social reformers and they worked for women's emancipation in male dominant Society but later when female activists came in front of society, women's related issues were presented by female leaders and they ensured women participation not only in social economic sector but in politics as well. Therefore it can be said that this time women started taking part in political issues.

After independence women mobilized in the Telangana movement (1947-51) Telangana Peasant Movement was launched in the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1947. Tenants, sharecroppers and landless laborers protested against the oppression of the former Nizam of Hyderabad. The main thing of this rebellion was the tenants, sharecroppers and landless Laborers and a large number of women mobilized together against the feudal system of Nizam. The movement was led by the communist Party of India and All-India Kisan Sabha. In his study Peter Custers (1987) talked about the active participation of women in the Tebhaga movement (1946-1947).

Women also mobilized in different environmental movements. There are many environmental movements in India which are: - the Bishnoi movement, Chipko Movement, Appiko movement, Silent Valley movement and Narmada Bachao Andolan. The Bishnoi movement started around 1700s and 1730 in Khejarli, Marwar region, Rajasthan state. This movement was led by Amrita Devi along with Bishnoi villagers. Another environmental movement is the Chipko movement (1973, it was a nonviolent social and ecological movement by rural villagers, particularly women, in India, aimed at protecting trees and forests. This movement began in 1973 in

Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. The prominent leaders of this movement were Sundarlal Bahuguna, Gaura Devi, Sudesha Devi, Bachni Devi, and Chandi and it was based on Nonviolent, Gandhian ideology. The Appiko movement was started in 1983, in Uttara Kannada and Shimoga districts of Karnataka State. And Pandurang Hegde was the prominent leader of the appiko movement. This movement had been inspired by the Chipko movement.

Another very famous environmental movement is Narmada Bachao Andolan., It started in 1985 in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. It was a social movement against a number of large dams being built across the Narmada River. This movement was led by Medha Patker, and Baba Amte.

Thus, Women's mobilization can be seen in the various environmental movements in India like the Bishnoi movement, Chipko Movement, Aapiko movement, Silent Valley movement and Narmada Bachao Andolan. Women play a significant role in the environmental movements of India. Therefore the concept of eco-feminism has emerged. Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that explores the relationship between women and nature. Vandana Shiva and Bina Agarwal are the eco-feminists in India.

In the contemporary society various Women's related laws have been made by the Ministry of Women & Child Development, India, which are: - the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention Act) 1956, The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986, The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.

The National Commission For Women Act 1990, The Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act 2005, The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 As Introduced In The Lok Sabha , The Sexual Harassment of Women At Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition And Redressal) Act, 2013 And Draft The Trafficking In Persons (Prevention, Care And Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021. Some women's organizations also work for the empowerment of women such as the National Commission for Women (NCW), and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (<https://wcd.nic.in/> Ministry of Women & Child Development| India). These legal provisions help women to live in society equally as men.

There are several schemes which are run by the government of India for the entire development of women in India such as Working Women Hostel, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila Shakti Kendra, Women Helpline Scheme, Ujjawala Yojana, One Stop Centre Scheme, Rajiv Gandhi National crèche Scheme, Mahila Police

Volunteers, Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana, and Women Self Help Group (SHG) Scheme.

Recently Women's Reservation Bill, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam), has been presented for the 33 percent women participation in Lok Sabha. These all schemes work for women's empowerment. Therefore it can be said that after independence women's status in society has changed in some ways.

Conclusion

Before independence, the women's movement was run by the social reformers because there was a need for the reforms in Indian women's status in society. Indian women had no voting rights, and no education rights. They were marginalized. When the British government came to India social reformers made some changes in the status of women by establishing some laws against Sati Pratha, child marriage, and various social, and religious customs.

Thus if we talk about the leadership of early women's movements, it is observed that pre-independence women's movements were led by social reformers such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Raja Rammohan Roy, Behramji Malbari, Keshav Chandra Sen, Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule. They raised women's related issues in front of society. They worked for the gender equality and the emancipation of women. Here it can be said that in this phase women were not mobilized for their own rights and their issues were raised by the male social reformers. It is because at that time women were not educated and they didn't have the right to speak about their rights because of a patriarchal society. At this time women's movement mainly focused on various women's rights, their exploitation, education, religious and social atrocity, gender inequality and women's emancipation.

After independence the nature, and issues of these women's movements have been changed. Women leaders also participated in the women's movement and provided their leadership. They basically worked for the empowerment of women.

After independence women came in front of society and they started taking part in social, economic and political issues. Their collaboration and significance can be seen in environmental movements, peasant movements and student movements as well. Here it is also found that in India effective women's movement was not found, because women participate either in other social movements or their issues are raised by other persons in the public sphere. Thus a dominant and successful women's movement was not found in India. Therefore there is a need for feminist activities for the Indian women's movement. However, today women's social,

economic, political and religious statuses are transforming. It is because of government efforts and women's awareness about their rights.

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