ROLE OF WOMEN IN MAHILA SAMITI MOVEMENT IN MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT

The "women's tribunal" is a fairly new but increasingly common occurrence in modern India (mahilaadalat or mahilamandal). It attempts to provide a secure and unattached atmosphere in which women may respond to their complaints and develop acceptable settlements with spouses and in-laws or discover methods of completely escaping their unpleasant circumstances. It encourages women, rather than recourse to State judicial authorities, to settle household issues informally. The majority of women's courts are governed by female non-governmental organisations, typically with financial assistance from foreign donor agencies or, in certain instances, governmental or semi-governmental organisations such as state women's commissions or legal societies. Mahilamandals have tremendous capacity to handle women's strategic gender issues as a traditional local women's organisation. In rural regions they are more and more used as resistance vehicles, which allow women to join the public realm. A research in Thane, Maharashtra on certain mahilamandals.

Keywords: *MahilaSamiti Movement, Maharashtra, Mahila Mandal, Women's Activist, Thane*

INTRODUCTION

The name Indian female movement is widely disputed. The name 'Indian' suggests political and cultural uniqueness when it is used for the women's movement which obscures the variety, disagreements and struggle of the movement. The issue is not only one of disagreements but also of the insistent confrontations amongst women, deriving from the prominent role of gender in Indian postcolonial culture and politics. In the historic development of Indian nation-state, processes of sex — the building of identity, roles and connections based on sexual disparities — played a significant role. Yet sex can't be isolated from other political identities which are clashing, and all play a vital part in the nation's existence.

One of the many speeches, which has not been taken so seriously, but still has a social, economic and political importance was the women's movement in India. In the Indian setting, because of the profound patriarchy, women have always been at a disadvantage in our social and political structure. But women's power was a strong force of social movements in India, despite everything. Female movement creates an atmosphere in which women are capable of feeling their sense of belonging, free of societal constraints, believe that they are in a paradise of their own and that they are capable of taking their own personal choices and of shining as equal in society.

This was definitely not the opinion of the Committee on the Status of Women. At the conclusion of their 'Approach Chapter,' the writers of Towards Equal Opportunities have written 'guidance and criteria' to offer a logical, philosophical framework for what was suggested by the Committee on Equal Opportunities. They have discovered the images of equal rights.

It is widely known that from ancient times, women have had numerous domestic crimes. Many women's movements have been established to address this issue and to improve the status of women. Women's movements are considered to be one of contemporary social motions's most significant crusades. 8 March is observed worldwide in honour of women. It is regarded an emblem of the fight against abuse and suppression by women across the globe for more than a century. It is a momentous day. It is stated that there are various understandings of patriarchal oppression and of the results of it, and therefore different methods for combating it, when it comes to learning about the ideology of women' s movements. Some organisations, while others, having popular backing, have tiny intellectual sections. Some have come to support specific causes or a concentrated campaign, while there are some organisations with changing objectives that have existed for years.

The traditional local women's organisations are 'Mahilamandals' or women's clubs. Mahilamandals, at the most fundamental level, are informal women's communal groups who are brought together in joy, grief or catastrophe. My field experience in Thane is the basis of the illustrated ethnologies of successful Mahilas in the rural regions of The Maharashtra district.

LITERATURE REVIEW

BonguralaGangadhar (2020) The role of women in the Statehood movement in Telangana is enormous in the fulfilment of women's aspirations, who want to emancipate themselves from trafficking, dowry, domestic abuse and spiritual mafia. Belli Lalitha's involvement in the 1990's triggered a surge of individuals mobilising people for their rights. Belli Lalitha's career began as a school dropout with up and downs, married early, cotton worker, labourer, folk singer and leader, but her unexpected assassination by thugs and politicians altered the movement's speed from the pinnacle to ground. The folk music tradition taught at grass-roots level by Belli Lalitha takes an essential role in mobilising millions of people for the last stage of the Telangana struggle.

Krishna Hazra'sBenoy (2017) The lack of mobility and limited practical experience of rural women in the countryside may impede welfare and empowerment of women. This article discusses how rural women in the education, healthcare and economic sector of socio-culture may profit from the new media like mobile computers and contemporary mass media. Their lack of capacity to speak in voicing their empowerment in India via modern communication medium is partially to marginalise women in rural western Bengal. We need the new form now since all the old forms have been taken over and converted into a highly effective way of communicating. This confluence has at the same time changed our society in rural society into our culture and a new social framework.

Roy Chatterjee Kasturi (2016) The dearth of chances and facilities in India constantly affects women. This is due to inherent prejudice that has been widespread for years in society. Thus, when

one takes into account the contribution of Bengali women in the Freedom Movement, it is impossible to recognise that women have never emphasised their participation. However, it has been emphasised in recent years that Bengali women have not only participated in but played an active role in the independence struggle.

 Raju (2016) The province of Nizam comprised of three linguistic areas – 9 districts of the Telaguan region, 5 Marathwada districts, and 3 Kannada-spoke districts of the Karnataka area.

Silvia, Vatuk (2013) This article examines the form and workings of some of those women's tribunals on the basis of two decades of anthropological observations and interviews, and on the work of other academics who have more extensively researched comparable groups than I. It highlights some of the peculiar characteristics of these 'tribunals' and explains why so many impoverished women have chosen to find ways to provide justice for people who come to them.

The Indian Movement

While colonial rule and liberty movement in India marked the start of women's awakening, various streams of anti-imperialist and anti-feudal fighting posed various, even controversial, visions of women's identities. The nationalist consensus was nevertheless a symbol of freedom, justice, dignity and equality for women, as vital to nation-building in the Indian National Congress' 1931 Fundamental Rights Resolution. These rights have been guaranteed by the Constitution. But women seeking paths for socio-economic and political mobility ran up against the constraints of the former colonial third world country during the post-independence era. This presented differences between their new and the long-term patriarchal social hierarchical value skillfully cultivated. Social infirmities and the increasing isolation from the political and ideological conflicts that shaped the national building process led to the disintegration of the women's movement.

The revival of the women's movement and its dimensions in modern India must be viewed in the light of:

1. The government and state crises in the seventies went into an emergency;
2. civil rights arose after an emergency.
3. The mushrooming in the early 1980s of female groups and the coming on the agenda of the female problem.
4. In the mid-80s the problem intensified in relation to the state, the government and society, characterised by a fundamentalist breakthrough; and in the 990s.

Women's Activism and Public/Private Distinction

The way they see, connect their activism in public spaces to their private lives and their perceived distinctions among women is crucial for feminist activisms and women's involvement in civil society. In feminist discourse public/private dichotomy views the connection of women with the private world and its subsequent devaluation as the principal cause for the disparity of gender and power. Women's interests are linked with cultural and communal ideas and this process is related to

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the focus of the public/private divide. Since the interest of women is built up in social and cultural discourses, situations where the limits of the 'private' are strict are likely to exist. The Beijing Conference (1995) reiterated the importance of women's rights as human rights and saw violence against women in private as an infringement of human rights. There was a questioning of the classic boundaries between the "public" and "private" worlds and of the necessity to see home life as profoundly political. While feminist politics have been able to transcend these limits in certain areas, the public-private gap is strengthened in others.

In feminist politics in India, the difference between public and private is not defined as an analytical term, but women are mobilised on a number of problems. Historically, this divide has been important to the feminist middle class fight and to the understanding of the issues of women. The reinforcement of the public-privat divide and the way it is related to gender may be traced to colonisation. The idea of middle-class private sphere (Bengal) comes from bhadramahila (respectful lady) the victorian concept of femininity built against Western materialism and lower sexual class / caste standards. Womenhood (gender), the concept of spirituality (caste/class connected) are part in forming the ideal concepts of middle class feminineity. It must not be overlooked that colonial and nationalist speeches are combined with selective encouragement for women to enter the public arena in order to legislate and regulate the sexuality of these women. Thus the contradiction between progressive and conservative ideas created the foundation of women's fight. While feminist politics stressed the democratisation of the public and private sphere and gender equality in the home and workplace, institutional structures were nonetheless interrogated in accordance with family middle-class ideals.

Women's low rate of resort to the courts

Despite all these new "woman-friendly" regulations, the overwhelming majority of women who are subjected to domestic violence and other marital disorders are not going towards the state – and never considering even turning to help. And if you do, it is only generally after you cannot solve your issues by any other way. Holden notes that official law is the ultimate recourse for family conflicts, as her study in rural Maharashtra has shown. Even on the official legal level the litigants frequently engage in forum shopping tactics aiming at inofficial and non-judicial arrangements. Holden's views are congruent with the ethnographic results of ethnographic research conducted by women of different socioeconomic strata in Thane andPune—in the family courts of both cities and in the courts of the judge dealing with cases involving women's offences in Pune.

There are numerous reasons why women with marital difficulties seldom seek help from their State – or only after other treatments have been tried in vain. The reason for this is obviously financial: police's virtually bribes for registration of an F.I.R.; the sequence of fees imposed at each step of the procedures in court; the under-tabling of payment to court staff to guarantee that the documentaries move on time and the lourd expense of hiring an adviser. For the extremely poor, assistance is occasionally available through formal legal aid organisations, although demand for these services is enormous and cannot be accommodated for everyone who needs them. In addition, these agencies

provide little pay to lawyers who accept their clients and thus it is hard to attract the finest or the most skilled – without the extremely socially aware and publicly-focused legal practitioner. The fact that law matters sometimes drag endlessly contribute to the low percentage of women resorting to the courts is another reason. Even the familial courts may take months, and at times even years, to conclude cases for divorce, restoration of marital rights, or maintenance — the kinds of issues most frequently dealt with here.

Media critiques of *panchayats* and *shari'at* courts

Reports on suspected crimes against the local customs frequently occur in reports of harassment of women, Dalits (previously referred to as "untouchable") and other marginal groups by all-male conservatories (managed by members of the upper-caste farming families and their allies). In different areas of the nation there has been also widespread publicity of anti women fatwas by Muslim religious authorities or shari'at tribunals, generating significant popular anger. These male committees serve as moral police officers by issuing editions that penalise young women, for example, for wearing tight clothes, forbid buying on the market and compel them to hide their face while publicly released. Young people were prohibited from using mobile telephones in certain areas. The most grievous instances include harassing couples who have ostensibly married by own decision rather than awaiting matches from their elders. Rapes and so-called 'honour killings' of one or both of the parties in these marriages – especially when spouses of different classes or faiths are common, or the union is almost unstinting, between members of the same clan, or those who reside in the same village – have reportedly taken place increasingly frequently over the past few years. However, nothing has been done in relation to specific actions to diminish its strength and impact, and political leaders and government officials have in some instances even made comments indicating that their actions are at least indirectly endorsed.

Practice of MahilaMandals, Thane

Thane is a major area in Maharashtra, north of Mumbai. It is split into rural and urban regions by administration. The countryside contains 2,2 million inhabitants living in 1,610 settlements. Class, tribe and caste are quite heterogeneous. Rural Thane is mostly populated by 'adivasis' in around 1100 villages, which make up the bulk of them. Mahilamandals must be registered with the Directorate of Women's and Children's Welfare in order to receive government benefits as a group. The 1,355 registered mahilas are primarily found in the more developed communities of Non Adivasi. There are many mahilamandals in certain communities.

Mahilamandals may be caste-based homogenous, but they can also be diverse groups based on women's housing in villages. They may sleep for lengthy time, except when they become energetic, unless they need social activity. This is not the case with MahilaMandals who receive government programmes as the most popular group in rural development (DWCRA). DWCRA stipulates that only impoverished women who have established groups have access to programme advantages such as education, marketing, and infrastructure. The explanation of our failure to address DWCRA groups is due to the fact that they are groups of women belonging to families below the poverty line

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and usually organised by an outside agency or by NGOs. (At the same time as other poverty reduction initiatives, each district aims at spending money under DWCRA. In this goal pursuit, there are many issues that do not lie within this debate.) In many instances, the focus on achieving women's development goals by DWCRA led to the identification of a community for support under the programme before a women's organisation was established. Thus, groups of women who seek DWCRA help frequently do not correspond to the conventional way mahilamandals are established.

Other mahilamandals may be continually active if they are united in an incoming action, or to protest perceived necessities (water, grain, etc.). Of course, this level only reaches the more powerful and more organisedmahilas. Historically, at least one mahilamandal has been used in most non-advasi communities. The exclusions are the poorest towns not actively involved in politics.

Leftist organisations like the KashtakariSangathana and the ShramjiviSangathana, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) have organised men and women on the issues of adivasis rights. This debate is not organised by women's groups organised by these organisations. Their effect on their rights was important according to adivasis. However, they don't address particularly the strategic gender requirements of women from adivasi in relation to men from adivasi, but of males from adivasi in relation to the mainstream development pattern, which excludes adivasis from developmental benefits.

Often Mahilamandals maintain and reinforce historic patterns of female power. Numerous exceptions to this rule have nevertheless been found. Exceptions typically arise if mahilamandals are utilised by a programme established by outsiders, especially outside NGOs, to call conventional power equations into question. The traditional mahilamandals, however, challenge only patriarchal systems carefully and are thus not a genuine threat to the old male power organisations. The foundation for their success is certain mahilamandals. What do I think of Thane's successful mahilamandals. The following qualities are present in successful Mahilamandals.

Goal: to achieve certain objectives even if they are 'only' a group of ladies (though the value of that for the social capital of the village has to be underscored).

Participation: to enable all members in the group to participate.

Linkages with external environment: having contact/communication with village power structure, government and/ or markets.

Well-defined activities: to demonstrate qualitative or quantitative outcomes, such as village alcoholic control, epidemic control and other activities/areas.

Active: having longer activity periods rather than dormancy, but a mahilamandal may not meet or become more busy amid crises such as a natural catastrophe at regular intervals throughout the year, particularly during active agricultural season.

Thane has therefore successfully obtained the mahilamandals in the outside environment. Discussion of certain mahilamandals in illustration will highlight the key elements that contributed to these mahilamandals' success. 'Enhancement Moral' in Andad: Andad is a mostly non-tribal hamlet in Thane and has a strong self-development history. Andad was a typical town in Maharashtra till the 1970's and has had issues with male alcohol addiction, poor education, upper and lower caste segregation and wife-blowing.

One of the key principles of gandhian philosophy is the anti-alcoholism process. PitaleGurujirealised that organising women is the most successful method for combating drinking in the community. So a highly active mahilamandal formed in Andad who actively campaigned in the community to fight alcohol addiction. In the community it was able to close alcohol stores. Drunken males by a watchful group of women are not permitted entrance to the settlement.

Although women who were beaten by the Mahila Mandal were never directly on the agenda, the same women who fought drinking also became vocal advocates of violence against women. The mahilamandal has been an active partner in a series of development initiatives such as commercial production of mushrooms, sanitation and girls' education, but they have not all been affected by the anti-alcohol campaign.

The mahilamandals' leaders are women of the aristocratic families of the ruling marathakunbi caste. They are women. Most of them are wives of office holders of the autonomous organisation of the village, the "grammemandal." The mahilamandal has a hierarchical, patriarchal and caste-based structure with a low involvement of women from the lower castes. The advantages of alcohol addiction and violence have impacted all women, though.

A communal organisation and an identification of the reasons of under-development and its remedies seem to be the most important characteristic of that movement. The organisation was also strongly moral and aimed at guiding its growth. On the basis of Gandh's ideas of self-help and moral enhancement, these initiatives were part of a larger "cleansing" movement in society and in oneself. The male-dominated grammemandal gave him a moral and social backing, both because of his idealistic, moralisingardour and the links between the officers of mahilamandals and the strong members of the society. In Maharashtra, Anna Hazare and PandurangShastriAthavale against corruption and moral degradation, the localised movement in Andad has similarities. The Maharashtra movement

The prosperity of the three MahuliMahilamandals is explained by many factors. Although the first mahilamandals were not established as such, their primary activity lay in the implementation of a savings and credit plan. The enthusiastic bank manager of the main bank was the impetus for their instruction in accounting, bookkeeping and formal group formation. He now presented the mahilamandals to the world of politicians and bureaucrats as a proof of his own achievement. The local autonomous authority has promoted and is pleased to announce its own achievement.

The group is chosen to the leaders of the Mahilamandals and usually has training. They are chosen on a set basis. Muhilamandals also contribute to the selection of recipients for the government's rural housing programme and to the production and selling of mushrooms. It is the loud and effective way of expressing the demands of the society, but the lower caste women are not represented and tribal women who live in the village are not there. Therefore, the group is homogenous since its members include women from the village's top strata. The organisation has a high degree of involvement yet membership is limited.

Consequently, Mahilamandals began to be used as weapons by political parties. They consider mahilamandals to be the training ground for their candidates in local elections. The leaders of mahilamandals associate in tiny villages where stakes are smaller and political parties are unable to organise through mahilamandals. This provides them with support and the means to vote. Moreover, established power institutions such as the panchayat members become middlemen in women's transactions. Such connections of client and intermediary are significant because of the lack of information on administrative and legal processes and laws among women whose political activities are limited to MahilaMandals. In many cases, the sarpanches are in line with political parties and therefore also have a party effect on the mahilamandal.

CONCLUSION

The above-mentioned ethnologies contain significant similarities and distinctions. The mahilamandals we examined all refer to methods through which women's collectives try to negotiate with the institutions created. Although certain results and procedures may be viewed as strengthening the power structures, the voices of opposition are increasing inside these institutions. It is not to claim that women of the higher classes are not subjected to oppression or gender discrimination. On the contrary, when they utilise the latter's assistance to improve their leadership abilities, women are frequently unwittingly subjected to male power structures. Based on Thane's experience, we can claim that mahilas allow women to be public in four ways. Firstly, they enable most members to take measures to express practical requirements such as water, health, work or sanitation. Secondly, they promote a leader of privilege-who, based on their experience in mahilamandals, join official politics. Thirdly, when political parties are utilised as their women's weapons they act as the venue for the political party in this region. Fourthly, they enable women to challenge and act against the oppression inherent in violence.

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