

Of Resistances and their Interfaces
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(Un)-told Stories: A study of Naxal women in Bihar (1970 -90)

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The interrogation of Naxalite movement, its socio economic and cultural roots, its trajectory, its politics has been dealt frequently in various academic discourses. But the significant presence of women in the armed struggle and their role in making and disseminating the culture of protest has rarely been discussed.

The women participants of this movement were from typical feudal society. This movement opened up the sky for women and they entered in it with an aspiration to get freedom from all types of social clutches including patriarchy. This 'movement space' is the place where they are not supposed to carry out their classis feminine image of 'good women'.

This naxal world, too was a purely masculine world. though women participants were are not supposed to carry typical feminine qualities like submissiveness, soft and delicate but still they were 'women bodies' and were given the subsidiary roles like preparing food, arranging shelters and transportation of messages and goods. The entry in this movement helped women to liberate from social patriarchal clutches, yet were victim of stereotypes against whom they rebelled.

There were traces of active participation of women in armed struggle. Women were part of Hirawaldasta and Lal sena, armed cores of naxals. There are faded memories in Bihar, (around Bhojpur and Shaha,) of songs and slogans around comrade Nirmala to commemorate her bravery and chivalry. She used to organize meetings in villages of Bihar, to mobilize women to join naxal movement.

But still presence of women comrade in the discourses, history and memories are rare. Their presence has been distorted, sometimes erased or in a faint form. History has not yet been written or analysed by gender lens, these discourses however, need to be re-looked at from the lens of gender.

In this presentation, I am trying to discuss women strategies and coping mechanism to strengthen the movement and to get a liberatory space within the movement. This is an attempt to relook naxal women within their specific location, a dominant frame of masculinity. I will also try to plug the gap by exploring the narratives of exclusion through popular/ alternative discourses. It will open up the silent zone vis a vis misrepresentation of women in naxal world.