

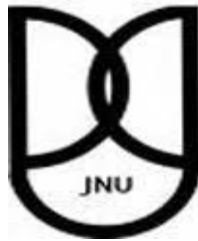
**THE WOMAN'S QUESTION IN A RADICAL LEFT MOVEMENT:
A STUDY OF ALL INDIA PROGRESSIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
AND NARI MUKTI SANGH IN BIHAR**

Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

for award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

The Doctoral thesis entitled **THE WOMAN'S QUESTION IN A RADICAL LEFT MOVEMENT: A STUDY OF ALL INDIA PROGRESSIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION AND NARI MUKTI SANGH IN BIHAR**, submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my original work to the best of my knowledge and has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any institution.

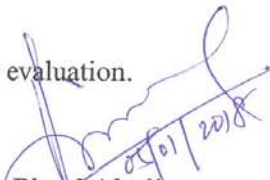

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Abbreviation

AIPWA	All India Progressive Women's Association
AILRC	All India League of Revolutionary Culture
CPI (ML) Liberation	Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Liberation
CPI (ML) People's War	Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) People's War
CPI (ML) Party Unity Unity	Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Party
CPI (Maoist)	Communist Party of India (Maoist)
BPKS	Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha
IPF	Indian People's Front
JMM	Janvadi Mahila Manch
PMM	Pragatisheel Mahila Manch
MCC	Maoist Communist Center
MKSP	Mazadoor Kisan Sangram Parishad
MKSS	Mzdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti
NMS	Nari Mukti Sangh
NMSS	Nari Mukti Sanghrsh Samiti
PUCL	People's Union for Civil Liberties
PUDR	People's Union for Democratic Rights

Abstract

This study explores the relationship of women's liberation project via peasant struggle/revolution of the Radical left [Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism)] Liberation and Communist Party of India (Maoist) that followed a Chinese path such as the thesis of "semi feudal and semi colonial" and advocated a "New democratic revolution" in Bihar in the 1980s. The research is rooted in extensive interviews with former women members and current women activists of women's organizations such like All India Progressive Women's Association and the Nari Mukti Sangh that associated with the CPI (M-L) Liberation and the CPI (Maoist). The study consisted of Bhojpur, Patna, Arwal, Aurangabad and Gaya districts of Bihar. Through my study, I addressed the question on the nature of women participation in the Radical left movement and seek to assess the extent to which women's life was involved in organizing and participating in the struggle against the oppressive atmosphere within the rural setup in Bihar, particularly asking questions that focus on important features of the struggle against the private armies and the state. This has been done by taking into consideration the specificity of women's role in the Radical left movement that had struggled against private armies for almost twenty to thirty years in Bihar.

This research also focuses on how the Radical left addressed women's question, specifically those related to family, marriage, sexuality and caste during the struggle in Bihar. In other words, the study concentrates on the intersectionality of caste, gender and class that is a determining feature of women's life and their subordination. I argue that to understand women's oppression and subordination in agrarian Bihar, it is necessary to explain the role that women labour, caste, land and family play within the agrarian system. What is women's position/status in the agrarian economy? How women's sexuality and family control are determining factors for the caste system and which one plays a more important role within the agrarian set up in Bihar?

Through such women's narratives, I have tried to include detailed accounts of those women activists who engaged in the movement since the 1980s on the issues of labour, land, marriage, caste, reproduction and women representation within the party structure. I argue that the tension

between the utopian ideal of Marxist theory on the gender question never reached the politics of love, sexuality, marriage, caste and reproduction in Bihar during the struggle.

Introduction: History of Left Politics and Women's Question

Introduction

In one of the mornings of November 2015, I was traveling in a local passenger train going to Jehanabad district, south Bihar. In the train, 5-6 people from Jahanabad (aged above 40) were sitting in front of my seat, they were discussing Naxalite movement in terms of the armed struggle against the oppression of feudal landlord. They appreciated their work like land distribution among poor families, increase in wages, but they also criticized any changes in family and marriage system, especially love marriage, inter-caste marriage, and marriage between poor and rich. In this discussion it clearly indicates that the agenda of social transformation of the radical left parties failed to bring change in the right to choice of life partner and control of women's sexuality, which was governed by the defining authority of family or parents who decide marriage according to caste kinship and class- as well as social status in rural Bihar. However, Communist Party of India (Maoist) and Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Liberation, the main leading forces, claimed that the parties advocate women right and freedom to choose their life partner is one of the main agendas of the parties for social transformation from the beginning of the movement. In short, this has serious implications as a citizen, their democratic space, their rights, choices in life and right to choice of life partner across class, caste, and religion. But another side also indicates radical left failed to bring social transformation on agenda of women's liberation.

During an interview for the study, one of my interviewees shared "We have fought against feudal power within village system but we have failed the feudal (indicating husband) who lives inside the family". This indicates the two contrasting views- patriarchal views

especially male gaze in general society- and second, from women activist who engaged in the armed peasant struggle for women liberation since the 1980s in south Bihar.

The term “radical left” in this research refers to Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Liberation and Communist Party of India (Maoist) because of both parties consider Mao-Tse-Tung’s thesis such as “semi-feudal and semi-colonial” and followed the path of New democratic revolution through armed struggle since the 1980s. These parties have common objectives. Despite that, there are differences on the question of strategies and tactics after the 1990s. The CPI (ML) Liberation functions openly and moved towards parliament politics after the 1990s and contested election with consideration of the Maoist theory of revolution. In contrast, Maoist Party continued led the armed struggle in Bihar. In 2004 Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) People’s War and Maoist Communist Center merged together and formed Communist Party of India (Maoist). All India Progressive Women’s Association is women organization of CPI (ML) liberation which was formed in 1994 in national level and Nari Mukti Sangh originally was associated with MCC but after the merger it is carry forwarded as CPI (Maoist).

The bulk of studies are available on both parties from either class or caste point of view, especially in Bihar but these have largely undermined, marginalized or silenced women’s voices, thereby making women invisible. This study seeks to revisit the silences that render women’s invisibility in the literature on peasant movement, especially in Bihar on the one hand and examines programmes, policies, and ideology towards women’s rights on the other hand. My critical engagement is to re-examine the armed peasant movement and contextualize women’s role in the movement, mainly by building upon the feminist intersectional approach of the class, caste and gender building upon nuanced understanding about movement and women’s experience of the radical left parties in Bihar. Before entering into a discussion on specificities of this research, I trace the historical roots of women’s experiences in the armed peasant movement which was led by Communist Party of India in 1946-1951, namely Tebhaga in West Bengal and Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, to understand the ideological framework and chronological order to build up ideological formulation. In the initial phase of the struggle for the ‘two third of the crop cultivation’ that was to be given to the landowner in the area covered in the Tebhaga

movement and against eviction, and against feudal oppression and extortion in Telangana, the party tried to change the entire *zamindari* system and build new society.

Historical Background of Armed Peasant Movement and Women Question

The character of our society, prevalent issues such as forced labour, landlessness, structural violence, caste oppression, Brahmanical power structure and oppression, sexual oppression, male domination and oppression of women inside and outside of family etc. In this situation, everyday women's life embodies with class exploitation and sexual oppression in society - structural, ideological and cultural, especially Dalit women face multiple oppressions (that is called intersectionality by feminists in "gendering caste" (Chakravarti, 2006) society. In feudal patriarchal rural setup, rape is a harsh reality of Dalit women, the undenied right of the landlord all over India. The experience of Dalit women has no end of bitterness in their short, mostly poverty-ridden lives. The material conditions of poor men and women push them towards active participation in the armed peasant/agrarian struggle.

In extreme exploitative and oppressing condition, the undivided Communist Party of India (CPI) mobilized poor Dalit peasant and tribal people against feudal landlord exploitation and oppression in the West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh in 1946 -1951. The CPI from its inception had claimed to commit and struggle against feudal forces, tried to abolish all power relations that had existed between societies.

The communist party appeals to all women with the confidence that they will see in the programme of our Party the prospect of new and happy homes for themselves here and now and a life of purposeful endeavor for their sons, brothers, and husband which they must actively work in every way open to them. The communist party is pledged to fight for complete equality for women in the law, economy and political life of our country.
(Joshi, 1954, p. 120)

Theoretically, CPI recognized that women oppression closely associated with class oppression and need to organize them. The leadership tried to mobilize women and encouraged participation in the movement. In this situation, the condition of landlessness and extreme poverty faced peasant labourer women, who shared an economical concern with landless peasant men, were easily integrated with the peasant struggle. Cooper noted that the nature of women participation as two-fold- democratic front- rally, demonstrations, meetings, dharna and they went on delegation to landlord on the one side and “semi militia” (Cooper, 1979, p. 47) - household implements used for husking and chopping wood, brooms, knives, etc – fight against landlord and the state machinery on the other side. In this process, women gained confidence, learned new kind of politics and delivered speeches in public forum. They were able to relate their own oppression to the entire structure. Thus, they provided strong support such as message delivery, security, shelter, food, warning system, etc. In the urban areas, party formed women committee, namely, Atma Raksha Samiti around 1942-43, before Tebhaga Movement. Kavita Panjabi noted, “If Tebhaga movement was the lamp, then the Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti (MARS) represented the rolling of wick” (Panjabi, 2017, p. 3).

In a critical sense, the history of peasant movement was more complicated in the context of peasant union and women organization and their programme and agenda. They recognized class-based agenda was primary in which included women’s liberation. But unfortunately, the domination was since the beginning of peasant union and their agenda over women fronts or their issues. For example, in the Tebhaga movement, some documents were published as such “The Peasant Battle” and others, Custers (1987) referred two documents in his own article in “Women Role in Tebhaga Movement”. Custers noted that in the ‘The Peasant Battle’, written by Krishno Binod Ray, the Chairman of the Peasant Association, which was published in the early period of the movement provided encouragement and revolutionary thrust in the movement. Ray addressed the entire peasant movement of Tebhaga but did not mention tribal and peasant women who intensively fought on the ground. The Chairman said the Tebhaga was not just a struggle for ‘partial demands’, it was a struggle for the liberation. The document describes the class structure and land relationship and ownership of Bengali society but did not address women labour and patriarchal oppression. Incidentally, they draw seven demands for peasant movement such as reduction of interest on crop loans and end of illegal exaction. “But Ray’s list is completely silent on the specific interests of rural poor women” (Custers, 1987, p. 100). The other

booklet was also written by Krishno Binod Ray, namely “Tactics of Peasant Combat” in 1947. Ray discussed on the task of the movement and encouraged the members, and suggested them how to alert from the police force. But the author did not mention “alarm system” (Custers, 1987, p. 100) which was a more important tactic adopted by the Nari Bahini and dominated women specific job to provide information of danger. Thus, these documents provide us with insights about the leadership which ignored or insensitive about adopted tactics of tribal women as struggle force. In rural areas, peasant union decided all action, programme, and execute policy; justice and only men were elected. Cooper (1979) also noted that in the Tebhaga struggle, “Yet it is significant that women were rarely members of the elected or nominated village committees set up by Kisan Sabhas, that is, even great dedication in the struggle was not given recognition” (Cooper, 1979, p. 49). The tribal women through their leadership challenge traditional approach of the male peasant leader and party leadership which is referred as the secondary role and consequently they could contribute in decision-making process. In contrast Tebhaga movement, we can see, Hazongs tribal women Nari Bahini formed an independent structure in tribe without proper guidance of the party. Women participated in the peasant movement but very few women were part of the structure of Communist Party of India. Even women faced opposition from Kisan Sabha leaders because many men who were supposed to be communist had very traditional views regarding women and did not recognize women’s ability and their commitment.

The major concerns of the peasant were violence within the familial structure: alcohol, wife beating, sexual oppression, dowry, and unequal access to property which are the main tools of male domination in the day to day lives but the party has taken little attention. Many women raised questions such as “When the husband and wife together are dying in the field, in the battle for Tebhaga; when the two together are fighting against the enemy, how then was it possible for one soldier to beat the other after returning home?” (Cited in Custers, 1987, p. 177) And attack directly on leadership, for example, “The wife of a local committee comrade asked in her local dialect: Comrade is there any law that says that you can beat your wife? Why should my man beat me? I want a decision on this” (Chakravarty, 1980, p. 89). Consequently, if a woman complained of wife beating then some party members tried to convince that men should not involve in physical violence against wife. Wife beating was prohibited by the party on moral ground and was not seen as patriarchal power. It was neither seen as a political issue nor

ideological issues to be discussed and analyzed violence as a patriarchal power and need for political intervention. Sugunamma's says "It was more like a ritual... some leaders used to dismiss these issues lightly" (Kannabiran and Lalitha, 1989, p. 93-94). However, the attitude and approach of the Communist Party to the women question continued to be ambiguous. There was no blueprint of women issues in the road of the revolution and was determined by a committee of local members who mostly did not trust women capacity or responsibility. They (male) also decide local committee member's whether women could take leadership or not. Generally, male prejudices existed in the whole party structure.

The leadership wants women to participate in the struggle but not introduced any policy specific women rights. Generally, in the rural areas, women labour involves generating small economic activities. For example, Chakravarti noted that

We sell the vegetables we grow in our backyard, the goat and cow's milk we sell, we sell the eggs, the fish we catch in nearby water-filled fields or we sell the goats. Who is the owner of the money we get the wife or the husband? We use it generally for family expenses, but the men on some pretext or other are always after it. (Chakravarty, 1980, p. 89)

The same issue rose in many places, but unfortunately party leadership said "This money was *stree-dhan* (money owned by women)" (Chakravarty, 1980, p. 89). Breakdown of village feudal authority meant not only to end extortion and compulsory free labour, women also want to end the authority of men within the family.

The main programme of the party was land capture and distribution among poor peasants family, end of forced labour, bounded labour and increased agricultural wages. In the process of struggle raised question on the entire system of land-relation "Land to the tiller" (Chakravarti, 1980, p. 89) was one of the key slogans and tried to abolish exploitative *zamindari* system. The land distribution policy directly affected poor peasant labourers community and also some significant change women live from feudal and familial exploitation and oppression. For example, during the struggle period, the tenancy law was passed and it consequently abolished the forced system and its strong impact on Dalit or peasant laborers women's free from extra

economic labour in the interest of landlord. The most important impact on Dalit women, landlord didn't dare rape after the movement. In this context, generally, head was mostly male. Bina Agrawal notes "Possibility of women having independent titles, or even titles jointly with their husbands was not raised. The party considers women land rights if they were widows. The land distribution policy was not challenging family structure and ideology of male ownership of property" (Agrawal, 1994, p. 443).

Stree Shakti Sangathan (Women organization from Andhra Pradesh) (1989) recollected memories of Telangana movement, interviews with women who were actively involved in the movement, provided us a strong and lively account of how the Party approached of gender issues and how women experience after the movement. The Party's uncertainty/ambiguity was shown in various manners. The party acknowledges that the women are revolutionary forces for the movement but we can see the experience of women of the party as a secondary role. Another point, women reputation is used in highly sexual and moral ground. For example, Dayani Priyamvada narrates her experience,

We women are still being looked down upon with the old outlook, that we are inferior. Any slip or mistake we commit, our leaders come down very heavily on us. It becomes a subject of open gossip and scandal . . . if we move a little freely, we are watched with suspicion. The Party was not sure 'whether it was the correct thing to take such women away from their husbands. They were afraid that the Party would lose its reputation. (Kannabiran and Lalith, 1989, p. 72)

Peasant women raised the question from their position as women in family and peasant community as a whole leadership failed to understand and received the question of oppression and control over women in the peasant community. According to Marxist understanding peasant as a class and intersectional relation between caste, religion ethnicity with patriarchal control on women. As Custers noted "Women said: it does not hurt your sense of propriety when we sow or harvest in the fields along with you. How does it become objectionable when we want to attend Kisan Samiti meetings?"(Custers, 1987, p. 172). These lines indicate that women come in the movement with a dream for freedom and equality but unfortunately never got. At this time no

room for these uncomfortable, disturbing and uneasy questions. Ultimately, women's issues and their front were not seen as apolitical force. Their question was not emerging as a political question. In these contexts, half-hearted approached preserved by the Communist Party, consequently, not conscious concrete policies to eliminate male dominance during the struggle. Thus, they did create alternative structure and mechanism within the party structure. Their objections were not seen as essential and important to the larger political framework for the struggle. During the struggle, women were able to emerge as a political force but they were forced to return to largely unchanged gender relations within the family when the struggle ended.

However, entire Tebhaga and Telangana movement the top leadership was divided.. Within party split into two different factions. One was pro-Russia and another pro-China. After 1947 in the Second Congress, the central leadership totally divided and retreat struggle in 1951. Custers opines, "Leadership one side and people's resistance on the other side. At this time the Communist party failed to take most advanced steps, it refuses to provide the leadership which the people expected it to" (Custers, 1986, p. 102). After the movement many women asked question from the party leadership, the leaders suggested going back to home. Incidentally, the leadership adopted more patriarchal and opportunistic view. Almost after two decades against armed peasant movement, known as a Naxalite movement started in West Bengal in 1967 and spread in different states of India. Bihar had the most influence of Naxalite Movement since inception but till 1975 all top leaders were killed and were arrested by the state and unfortunate crackdown. But after 1975 many groups emerged within ML groups and organized poor Dalits peasant in undivided Bihar especially like Bhojpur by CPI (ML) Liberation, Jahanabd, Arwal, Gaya, Patna by Party Unity and Gaya, Aurangabad Palamu and another district of Jharkhand by Maoist Communist Center in the 1980s.

Theoretical framework: Intersectional Approach

In feminist theory "Intersectionality"¹ arose in the 1980s in response to analytical strategy to deal with the interrelation of multiple power relations in the society which was raised by black women in terms of race class and gender. Black feminist argues that there are important

¹ For Crenshaw, it is not only analytical category, but also theory and methodology.

differences among women who have divided in various identities not simple one category as well as “woman”. American Feminist lawyer Kimberly argued that gender, race, and class are interlinked with each other and shape it and connected as “intersecting oppressions” (Crenshaw 1989). After that many feminist thinker gave attention on intersectionality to define interrelation between multiple power structures that determined a factor for women oppression.

Ange-Marie Hancock (2007) defines intersectionality as a body of normative theory and empirical research that precedes under six key assumptions: first, multiple categories of difference such as race, gender and class play important role in the investigation of complex political problems. Second, this multiple of difference must be equally treated to in research. Third, categories of difference are equally conceptualized of individual and institutional factors. Fourth, a category of difference has within-group diversity. Fifth, intersectional research examines multiple levels of analyses rather than simply adding together. Six, intersectionality existence as a normative and empirical paradigm requires attention to both empirical and theoretical aspects of the research question. However, sociologist feminist, Sharmila Rege (2003) noted that we can use the categories of difference in terms of women oppression in a caste society. But does not mean requires discarding the previous understanding in toto.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s in India, feminism emerged as an autonomous organization from left parties based on women’s issue, despite that there was lacking on the relationship between caste class and gender. Rege (2003) criticized that “The left party based women’s organization collapsed caste into class, the autonomous women’s groups collapsed into sisterhood, both leaving Brahmanism unchallenged” (Rege, 2003, p. 93). The main focus of the feminists of that time was on three main subjects: women, experience and personal politics built on a feminist theory which was based very limited their own class status and in their imagination of womanhood. They assumed the identity of the upper middle caste and class women, without considering the multiple identities of women from another caste, class, ethnicity, nationality, and religious and sexual identities. In such a theoretical and methodological position, black or Dalit women were excluded as a structural analysis within feminist politics, making it seem as if the concept of “woman” was a “subjective experience”. Dalit Women raising the important role for the next phase of feminism in India. In this, it is also a break from the stagnant point within the women’s movement and feminist politics in Indian as well as Europe and America which further

challenged the ignorance and misunderstanding of the feminist circle about the existence of casteless gender and genderless caste. The editor of *Politics and Gender* argued that

At the same time, viewing gender as a stand-alone factor necessarily distorts reality. Gender never really operates independently from other aspects of political life, and so it is misleading to think of gender as an autonomous category of analysis. Instead, gender differences must always be understood within a particular context and in connection with other aspects of identity, both individual and collective. While we tend to think in ways that require us to titrate gender out from other aspects of identity, in so doing we risk misrepresenting the ways in which various parts of our identities are connected to one another. The integrated, mutually constitutive nature of identities is the central premise of intersectionality. (Politics and Gender, 2007, p. 229)

This was a welcome move and led to a micro-level analysis of the complex interplay between the different axes of inequality. The intersectionality approach is reflected in the following chapters. I have included in a detail manner Marxist theory on the women question and its implementation in pre and post-Chinese revolution on the women question where Indian Radical left has borrowed the formulations, programmes, and strategies for Indian revolution in the late 1960s and further. I draw attention to achievements and shortcomings towards women rights in the Chinese revolution. There was the centrality of class issues over the women's issues. Thus, women could not liberate in a socialist state. In order to do this, I have focused on the Methodology of Marxist and feminist for a nuanced understanding of women subordination, especially production, reproduction, labour, marriage, sexuality, and methodology from a feminist point of view on the women oppression and their liberation. In this context, feminist revisited Marxist literature and challenged the theory of labor, value, and prices, the relationship between production and reproduction and theory of hunting man from the feminist point of view. Some feminist argue that we can use the Marxist methodology to define women oppression and

others centralized on women experience in male domination society, the idea of difference and intersectionality etc.

Indian Marxist scholars defined Indian society in terms of class but failed to understand caste as a determined factor in our society which is providing Brahmanical social order and ideology. According to Brahmanical order the position of Brahmana on top hierarchical order and untouchable at the bottom which is interlinked between political and economic position. The political and economic arrangements provide a material base of the landlord for the top position and landless laborers in the bottom line. Caste represents the formal arrangements and class represents the material base for that. Both are interrelated and integrated in terms of inequality in Indian society (Chakravarti, 2006, p. 12). But according to D.D. Kosambi caste itself was expressed in class. He observed the relationship between caste and the relation of production in early India. He said that “Caste is an important reflection of the actual relations of production, particularly at the time of its formation” (Chattopadhyaya, 2002, p. xxiii). But in contrast Sociologists focused on caste but from the purity-pollution point of view without including class. The famous sociologist scholar such as Louis Dumont in *Homo Hierarchicus* (1972), considers that the caste system should be understood in terms of religious ideology which is displayed in many manifolds. It is reflected in the endless, complex, even conflicting, arrangements of ranks, the higher position as always belonging to the Brahmanas who were considered to be the “Purest and command much of its ritual. The ranking does not originate through economic source but on the basic principle of purity or pollution” (Dumont, 1972, p. 288). As a result, the caste system is neither formed of classes, or through social stratification, and it need not correspond to the power of wealth (Dumont, 1972, p. 300). According to him, hierarchy expressed through religious ranking which determines position. It is fundamental principle governing the arrangement of castes in Hindu society.

Anand Chakravarti criticized Dumont view of caste and argued that “Agrarian class relation in Bihar is embedded in caste, because whether a person controls land or not is conditioned by that person’s caste status” (Chakrawarti, 2001, p. 1449). We can see how Marxist and sociologist failed to class and caste in terms of gender while Chakravarti emphasizes without control of women sexuality thorough endogamous marriage caste cannot sustain or maintain. Thus, she saw “Women as a gateway” of the caste system (Chkravarti, 2006, p. 35).

Uma Chakravarti (2006), Sharmila Rege (2006) and others noted that caste system in our society directly linked with the women oppression. Chakravarti strongly points out the connection between caste and gender as follows:

Class, caste, and gender are inextricably linked; they interact with and shape each other: the structure of marriage, sexuality and reproduction is the fundamental basis of the caste system. It is also fundamental to the way inequality is sustained: the structure of marriage reproduces both class and caste inequality and thus the entire reproduction system through its tightly controlled system of reproduction. (Chakravarti, 2006, p. 27)

The above reference explicitly draws interconnection between class and caste that are determining factors for the women subordination. In a historical sense, caste and patriarchy are developed together in the historical process. Suvira Jaiswal argued that caste and patriarchy are consolidated gradually in changing in the socio-political process. The existence of male dominance and the upper caste dominance are not separate but interlinked with each other.

In this context, present study explores women experience in different class and caste location and their social position in the day to day life in peasant society. The experience of the oppression led to participate in the peasant movement which was led by radical left parties in Bihar since the 1980s. The experiences of women in Bihar provide us rich content of struggling history against the feudal landlord. At the same time this provides the experience of the radical left towards women rights agenda in peasant revolution but women are missing from the peasant literature. In other words, earlier scholars studied the movement only from the male point of view producing androcentric knowledge. Ange-Marie Hancock (2007), the editor of *Politics and Gender* argues, "Intersectionality research can answer new questions as yet unanswerable with the traditional model and can generate strategies for political change that incorporate all of us as political beings" (Hancock, 2007, p. 249). In order to do this, the study draws attention on the women participation in the peasant movement being as an active actor but how radical left failed to provide policies, programme, and ideology towards women's rights in Bihar.

Family, Labour, Caste and Sexual Oppression of Women in Bihar

During colonial period labour relation referred as the *Kamia* and *Malik* system in Bihar. The meaning of *Kamia* is bonded labour and *Malik* is a landlord. The problem with the term *Kamia* is, it means male labour and does not encompass female labour, while the fact is both men and women with their children was bonded labour for the landlord- at field and household. In other words, where their sexual services were part of their labour and where their children were the property of their masters/landlord. I did not find an appropriate word for *Kamia* which could be used for female labour as well with sexual oppression in her own family or landlord's family. Hence, I shall use the term 'Kamia family' rather than *Kamia*, meaning the bonded labour moved with all the family members in particular landlord and not a single person of the family. Along with this, the bonded labour system provides "next generation" as bonded labour for *malik* in the feudal system or agrarian mode of production. We can see how on one side, women labour produces production and on the other side, through reproduction how production gets sustained for next generation no matter either in feudal or capitalist system.

In colonial period agrarian relation was based on interest of the landlord and against landless family. When *Kamia* men decide to bond labourers on behalf of themselves, they commit to landlord for bonded labor, and it included their wife and son labours. In this condition an entire family member worked in the field. In addition to, involved extra-economic services such as labor of rice pounding and husking for the rich raiyat or animal grazing, collected food for animal from field and so on so. The landlord restrict over life of labourers family such as economic restriction on their family economic mobility. The landlord had power to sell them as slave's family to another landlord and purchase paying labour cost. When son was at the age of 14/15 in *Kamia* family landlord pressurized on the family for his son's marriage because landlord could lend more money for that on the one hand and also one family member would (daughter-in-law of *kamia*) increase for their services to the landlord. The condition of poverty and starvation conditions are faced by men, women and children, they have very less probability or opportunity to refuse. And *Kamia* are restricted to leave their work, if they go away anywhere, police would capture them and hand it over to the *malik*. Some Dalit caste-like *mushar* and *bhuniya* (untouchable's caste, lived in starvation condition in all time) are totally under system,

some backward castes are also under the *kamia* system. Arvind Narayan Das (1992) observed that the exploitation is not only in economical terms, the landlord also use violence for power. Violence is one of the most useful tools against the Dalit family.

In agrarian relation Dalit family are forced to labour in field on the one hand and on the other hand feudal patriarchal norms keep upper caste women inside the family for domestic labour. The condition of indebtedness continues to render invisible the family and the household direct pressure labour in field or landlord land and most importantly Dalit women were faced with sexual oppression by the landlord section. The backward caste families force women to stop work in the fields as soon as they can afford to do so. PUDR noted (1992) that

While this might be a manifestation of the internalization of the patriarchal norms of the upper castes as they ascend the agrarian hierarchy, it is also a reaction to the accentuated nature of oppression faced by women who work in the fields, for it is they who bear the full brunt of class, caste and gender oppression. (PUDR, 1992, p. 15)

The sexual violence against women, especially Dalit women by upper caste men broke existing structures of sexuality, honor, and dignity of women and their family. My observation in rural Bihar often Dalit family moved far from the main village as such Bathani Tola from Badaki Khadau and Ekwari because of landlord oppression, humiliation and sexual assault on Dalit women. The sexual humiliation and oppression of Dalit women laborers were submerged within the structure of everyday relations between them, their families, and their *maliks*. There was the harsh reality of Dalit women who faced sexual oppression by the landlord. The upper caste men tightly control the women mobility or confined them within the domestic chores and on the other side, lower caste women concubines to upper caste men. The culture of violence ensured that the Dalit family never raises their head in protest. The form of oppression in caste hierarchy is manifested in different ways such as prohibition on Dalit family to sit in the presence of their master/landlord even on the cot outside their own mud houses, wear clean clothes, and play radio. If young boy does not follow sub manners such as bow down their head and body and walk erected, the landlord would threaten the Dalit family, particularly Dalit women are sexually

abused, abducted and raped. “Feudal norms sanction customs like the *Dola*, which force Dalit brides to spend their wedding night with the local *malik*. Dalit women are subjected to particularly humiliating treatment while working in the field” (PUDR, 1992, p. 13-14). The basis of women oppression in rural Bihar evidently shows the needs to be interpreting this category through intersectional approach.

We can find out violence as powerful weapons against Dalit who struggle for basic demand under the CPI-ML groups. But CPI ML groups failed to understand how caste provide more suitable oppressive structure for class exploitation in our society, especially more appropriate for Bihar. In this context, for example, private caste militia such as Lorik Sena, Kunar Sena, Sunlight Sena and most reactionary and powerful private caste militia like Ranveer Sena. The attack on the poor Dalit, Kunnath noted that “91 massacres that have taken place in Bihar since 1970” (Kunnath, 2012, p. 18). The physical assaults, rape, and violence on Dalit community are not just reaction against peasant struggle and counter-revolution. The roots of massacres within the framework of Brahmanical patriarchal structure of the society determine the everyday reality against Dalit and women deeply embedded in society. The condition of subordination of lower in hunger, poverty, landlessness ‘untouchability’ sexual oppression, labour relation and various other discrimination. In this context, there is a need to establish the relationship between the organization of labor with family, caste, and gender. In the next section, we will be discussing the importance of relationship between the family, labour, and caste which are organized and establish entire agricultural relation in Bihar.

The present literature on peasant movement has not dealt with the intersectional approach towards caste class and gender rather than had written either class war or caste struggle in Bihar. Interestingly, consciously or unconsciously within academic sphere, the peasant as a male being is a dominant figure in the literature. The same situation reflects within the peasant movement. Ranjana Padhi notes,

The dominant assumption that existed within society and even among peasant unions is that of the peasant being male.....most dangerous approach because peasantry comprises every member of a peasant family or village; the participation of everyone in agriculture

and reliance on it for sustenance makes the whole community part of the peasantry, despite the graded inequalities within. (Padhi, 2012, p. xxvi)

The invisibility of women labor in the production system or agricultural field is a basic character and it continues to ignore their role in the economic contributions for livelihoods. Thus, women were never given the status of a peasant. As Ranjana noted, “the urgent need for intervention to understand how women labor produce peasantry, particularly through domestic and field labor which is already marginalized in deep tradition and patriarchal society in the day to day life” (Padhi, 2012, p. xxvi). My basic argument is that without intersectional approach we cannot understand agrarian social relation and peasant movement without recognizing gender dimension.

Research Questions

There are five specific questions that have been derived from the research questions as follows:

- How does the Radical Left formulate the women question? And more specifically women’s subjugation and liberation?
- How has the radical left conceptualized patriarchy?
- How have the party conceptualized and theorized 1) sexuality, 2) reproduction, 3) love, 4) desire, 5) marriage and 6) family?
- How does the radical left define intersectionality between class, caste, and gender?
- How have the radical left defined women as a revolutionary force? How is this formulation reflecting in revolutionary praxis?

Objectives of the study

Based on the above research questions, the following can be noted as objectives of the present research.

- i.** Developing an understanding of the women’s question in the context of the radical left politics and movement
- ii.** Exploring the intersectionality of caste, class, and gender

- iii.** Exploring the notion of family reform of the radical left such as revolutionary marriage, land relation, sexual division of labour, reproduction, caste and how is it implicated in revolutionary peasant movement

Field: Research Methodology

I have conducted a field study on the two women's front of the Radical left parties, namely, 'All India Progressive Women Association (AIPWA) and Nari Mukti Sangh (NMS)', to analyze their theory and practice of women question. The rationale for selecting these fronts is that they represent the radical left ideology and practice of women's liberation.

In order to address the research questions, I have focused on two sets of data: (a) the official documents (both published and unpublished), pamphlets, posters, press releases and magazines of the radical left parties and their affiliated mass organizations, (b) interviews of the members of radical left organizations. These two sets of data are chosen in order to decipher what Rabindra Ray (1988) terms as 'literate ideology' and 'existential ideology' of the left movements.

Given the nature of these sources of the data that seek to look at both the ideas, practices, and experiences of women of the organizations and the methodological orientation of the present research shall be that of qualitative research, and thereby the data shall be expressed in terms of words/ideas/meanings etc. Correspondingly, the choice of the sampling design and the interview technique shall also be guided by the same imperatives.

Research Design

I have interviewed 30 women comprised of two different groups. The first group consists of 14 women activists' from All India Progressive Women Association and Nari Mukti Sangh. The second group consists of 16 women from the village that supports the Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Liberation and Communist Party of India (Maoist). I have also conducted an in-depth interview with 8 women from All India Progressive Women Association but some women leader are inactive from the party at present and 7 women from the Nari Mukti Sangh who are inactive at present because Maoist party shifted to Jharkhand and some other left

the party. I have also selected five women activists for case study such as three women who from Maoist Party and two from CPI (ML) Liberation. To select these members, I have used mixed sampling design of a non-probability kind which consists of purposive, quota and snowball sampling techniques. The sample is drawn from five districts. They are Bhojpur, Patna Jehanabad, Gaya and Aurangabad districts of Bihar.

The use of purposive sampling technique is guided by the decision of the researcher to reflect on the research issues/question through/from the different vantage points or 'locations' of the members/cadres of these organizations. In that, as per my major analytical themes, not only in terms of office-bearers and ordinary members, women from diverse caste, class backgrounds will constitute my sample.

For the said sampling design the interview schedule is focused on the semi-structured interview schedule. This model allows the interviewee to explicate and elaborate on the answers and also allows the researcher to take important analytical decisions on the themes and format of questions while conducting the interviews.

Mode of data analysis and interpretation

Gender is a powerful analytical category in feminist theory and politics. I have looked at and analyzed the primary and secondary data through feminist lens. The data is qualitative in nature, particularly in terms of discourses/discursive practices and narrative analysis. In this regard, I tried to position a few women for case studies which have used as illustrative cases of the general themes that might emerge from those analyses.

In order to deepen the interpretative quality of the data at hand, both in terms of its depth and spectrum of the themes, I have also looked into various other sources like (a) movies and documentary films (b) pamphlet, booklets, reports, memoir, biographies which are published in party's magazines and accounts of observers (c) literary works such as oral stories, songs, which are relevant to the present research of my topic and (d) research and other scholarly work done in this area.

Structure of the dissertation

The above research questions are being explored in this work in the following chapters. The first Chapter is the introduction of the history of the undivided Communist Party of India led armed peasant movement 1945-1951. I have traced the roots of the historical relationship between armed peasant movement and nature of women's participation in Tebhaga and Telangana movements and what are the issues of women at that time. I have also included my theoretical orientation such as "intersectional approach" in this research. Women question interlinked between caste, class, and gender that provide a mechanism of women subordination and inferior position in the society. To understand the mechanism of women subordination in Bihar I tried to understand the relationship between family, labour, caste and sexual oppression.

The second chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I included a theoretical outline of Marxist theory on the women question to investigate the Chinese revolution. It provides me a background to understand the theoretical positions and its implementation by the radical left parties, the especially Communist party of India (Marxism-Leninism) liberation and Communist Party of India (Maoist) that take China as their reference point for Indian revolution. In the second part of this chapter, my interest is to see where the how women's question was addressed in pre and post-Chinese revolution whereas Indian radical left have provided a very positive account of the Chinese revolution. But from the feminist perspective, the question would be: the women's question adequately deals during the struggling period and fully resolved in post-revolutionary China? Many Scholars accounts and studies show that there were dramatic changes in gender relations under the leadership of Mao in China but several complexities and tension involved in this process. Various complication and difficulties arose on the family reform such as the relationship between peasant union and women's union, land and divorce, free choice marriage, the sexual division of labour, the evaluation of women labour in public and private sphere. The CPC continues to compromise with women's rights, more specific policy of land reform and family reform. I have included in detail in this regard how CCP provides policies of women rights on the land and tried to reduce economical independence but at the same, it could not resolve the authority of male on the land, especially in rural areas through many scholar's accounts those visited in China during Mao period and after that. They help us understand how there continued to exist patriarchal domination in women life several forms in socialist state at

least women faced a double burden in private and public sphere. In the commune system continued the existence of asexual division of labor and also women earn less than men. In fact during Cultural Revolution CPC preserved more authoritative and patriarchal attitudes that ceased women of China (Its magazine of Women Federation) and direct attacked on the editor in the name of bourgeois ideology, in result CCP disbanded Women Federation. They never put up the question in the form of the family like patrilineal and patrilocal which provided the structure of subordinate condition for women oppression. As a result, ambiguous Chinese revolution advocated two distinct objectives for the socialist program and policy for women liberation design: equal right in all sphere is short term but for the full emancipation of women within the family, their structure and family ideology are far distant from communist party and socialist state. I have included in detailed sense in review of literature and discussion in this chapter is to set up the theoretical framework and praxis of CCP to grapple with the material issue at hand, that is, the issue of the women liberation and Marxist politics.

In the third chapter, I have discussed ideology, formulations, and theorization of Marxism and feminism on the women's oppression. This chapter is also divided into six subthemes. In first subtheme, I have discussed what is different between feminist and Marxist understanding on women oppression within two different approaches on the labor, production, reproduction, sexuality, the sexual division of labour etc. The second subtheme of this chapter is that feminist challenged the Engelsian formulation of "hunting men". The third subtheme of this chapter is on the caste and class in India, I have discussed Marxist and sociologist understanding of it. I have included accounts of D.D. Kosambi, R. S. Sharma, Louis Dumont and Hira Singh who have defined different perspective of class and caste in Indian society. The fourth subtheme of this chapter, I have included feminist accounts on the relationship of class-caste and patriarchy such as Suvira Jaisawal, ShemilaRege and Uma Chakravarti. The fifth subtheme of this chapter has emphasized on the feminist methodology. I have discussed two feminist approaches to the methodology. First, feminists who consider Marxist methodologies such as historical materialism and dialectical materialism can be used to explain women's oppression from the feminist standpoint. Second, feminists who have emphasized on the women experience and argued that thorough intersectional approach we can build feminist knowledge about women oppression in male-dominated society. Six subthemes of this chapter have emphasized on the idea of women experience, difference, and intersectionality to set-up the

context of the methodological choices in the present research. In this context, the “women experience” of the male domination and their struggle against it can provide an opportunity to map the radical left movement on the women question. In this study interviews of women members who are representatives of the different class, caste and social rank in the society and their position in the radical left parties provide to contextualize their experience, difference, and intersectionality. These women are missing from the peasant movement and literature but they are central in this research. In this context I have focused on two women organizations and these are: All India Progressive Women’s Association (associated with Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Liberation) and Nari Mukti Sangh (link with Communist Party of India (Maoist) provide us rich and fascination resources for analyzing the party programmes, policies and structure towards women rights in Bihar.

The fourth chapter is based on fieldwork. I have divided this chapter into two parts for convenience such as pre- the1990s and post 1990s onwards whereas Liberation adopted armed struggle from 1981 to 1990 but after 1990s they entered in electoral politics. It also influenced women issues and their struggle. I have focused on the nature of women participation in the armed peasant movement led by Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Liberation since the1980s. Through the interview, I have explored their issues and struggle against landlord oppression and private armies on the side and other how CPI (M-L) Liberation addressed the issues of women rights. In the first part of this chapter, I have mentioned in detail the history of women militancy who engaged in armed action before the foundation of CPI (ML) Liberation, known as the first phase of the Naxalite movement. Along with this, women leaders accounts also indicate that how party leadership preserved more traditional approach on the sexuality, marriage, and reproduction on the one hand and also local women leader express control of sexuality of young women in the name reputation. There were complexities involved in the issue of marriage, sexual politics, dowry, reproduction and caste and women participation in an election that I have highlighted in detail in the chapter. The complexities and achievement influence women’s struggle and their condition.

The second part of this chapter deals with the phase of post1990s. I have included in detail the changes in strategy and tactics of the CPI (ML) Liberation. Party formed women’s organization such as All India Progressive Women Association at the national level in 1994. In

1995, CPI (ML) Liberation participated in the election but within the party, women were not given tickets in the state assembly election. In the last state assembly, five women got a ticket that was held in 2015 where there was no chance for women to win. The women's accounts show that how women face discrimination within the party in the form of their issues and their organization. However, I have traced debate and party understanding on women question without any policies and ideological clarifications how women question deal half-heartedly in the peasant revolution since the 1980s. I have also included after 2000 AIPWA entered the panchayat election and change own social base like semi women employee and current their struggle.

The fifth chapter deals with the history of Communist Party of India (Maoist) and Nari Mukti Sangh that associated with Maoist Party after the merger between Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) People's War and MCC (Maoist Communist Center) in 2004. I have developed my argument based on in-depth interview with seven women activists who represent party structure and women's organization. Women's accounts show that women participation in the movements of the 1980s for their rights provides distinctive accounts to understand their engagement with the movement against the landlord and state repression. But at the same time explicitly anxiety of peasant revolution and women rights agenda is a more critical issue for the party.

I have included in detail women narratives, alternative resources and party documents that provide for a more nuanced explanation of women as active actors in the peasant revolution but Maoist party failed to provide structural representation, policy and program on the women issues during the struggle. Thus, women could not develop a permanent revolutionary force in praxis despite that party considered working-class women as are volutionary force for class struggle. However, party dealt women issues in some limited sense such as widow property, forcefully marriage if men denied marriage after sexual relation, couple protection, alcohol, wife beating and against rape culture through people's court and love marriage and love cum arrange marriage thorough "ideal marriage" that was propaganda about new kind of marriage (of which no Brahmanical norm and value and without dowry) among the rural people.

In this study, three key areas between radical left and CCP are examined. First, Indian radical left failed to provide structure or create women's department which was formal space for women. Without structure it could not be possible to carry forward struggle in favor of women

because by nature peasant union are against women rights particularly land rights for women, love marriage etc. on one hand and on the other hand within peasant union women could not use bargaining power for their rights. Now the question arises as to how parties could imagine women to join the Sangathan without any concrete policy. Third, lacking theoretical understanding on the women's question how women relate their own oppression with class oppression

The last chapter shall briefly look at what the study seeks to investigate and what has been achieved as well as the shortcomings of the work. It shall, therefore, present a brief discussion on each chapter and an overall discussion on the central concerns of the work and draw a brief conclusion.

Theoretical Perspective: A Literature Review

In 1844, Marx suggested that the relationship between men and women represents as a whole, the social development of society (Marx, 1977, p.96). This is an important suggestion through which we can examine a socialist state which conceptually agrees with the Marxian view. The theoretical outline of Marxist theory on the women question and how it is implemented in praxis is explored in the chapter. In this context, the historical roots to investigate the Marxist theory on the women question in Chinese Revolution is revisited in the work where Indian Radical left has borrowed the formulations, programmes, and strategies for Indian revolution in the late 1960s and further. Here the central enquiry area of the work is agenda, programme, policies, and structures that alter gender relations in socialist China. In this context, China provides us with an especially rich and fascinating study about commune structure, socialist development model, and policy for building our understanding about women liberation under the socialist state. This will also provide us a background to understand the theoretical positions and its implementation by those communist parties of India which takes China as a departure point in the Indian context.

Marxist Theory on the Women Question

In 1844, Marx addressed the women question for the first time in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript of 1844*, where he approved Fourier's critique of the relations between the sexes and the women position in a capitalist society. Marx suggested that we can see the whole development of society through the status of women. However, Marx did not say much more on the gender issue in the above mentioned Manuscript. But Marx's point of view in his theory is that society is divided into two classes—the bourgeois and the proletariat. The bourgeois class holds and controls the means of production while the other depends on its own labor alone

for livelihood. The powerful and the powerless are factors that determine the position of a person in the society. Consequently, oppression is the result of a lack of power and their class location. It is also applicable to women's oppression. In Marx's view, women are excluded from the production system in the class society.

In *German Ideology*, they explicitly draw a demarcation line between bourgeois ideology, the notion of the family and the real historical experience of families within different classes. For example, they say, "one cannot speak at all of the family 'as such'" (Marx and Engel's, 2010, p. 195). Historically, the bourgeois tried to understand the family from their own standpoint alone linking it with money and monotony or boredom. For the bourgeois, the role of the family is limited to property transfers that "Is made necessary by its connection with the mode of production" (Marx and Engel's, 2010, p. 195). In the bourgeois family, "Boredom and money are the binding links...its dirty existence has its counterpart in the holy concept of it in official phraseology and universal hypocrisy" (Marx and Engel's, 2010, p. 195). At the same time, they also mention that the family can only be abolished by the proletariat whose ideology is in opposition to the bourgeois notion. They noted that "The concept of family does not exist at all, but here and there family affection based on extremely real relation is certainly to be found"(Marx and Engel's, 2010, p. 195). Feminist scholar Lisa Vogel identified *The German Ideology* as the actual turning point of Marx's own understanding about society, in her work. She argued that Marx and Engel's developed a more nuanced method which was the historical materialism of class analysis (Vogel, 1983, p. 48). She defined Marx and Engel's studies were extended towards family, ideology and social reproduction on the one hand and criticism of the bourgeois hypocrisy and ideology of the family on the other as "Mature to young" and "early views to mature years" with respect to Marx's earlier writings.

Marx and Engels further explain how social institutions like the family are connected to the production system. They recognized that first of all the existence of human beings is defined by their need to eat, drink, find shelter, etc. They identify three dimensions of social activity that respond to these necessities. Firstly, people create means to satisfy their basic needs as well as the production of material life itself. Secondly, this "action of satisfying and instrument of satisfaction" leads to the creation of new needs. Thirdly, people are involved to "Daily re-create

their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the *family*” (Marx and Engel’s, 2010, p. 48). But these three aspects of social activity did not emerge in three different historical phases but at the same time. To sum up, they tried to explain the human being involve simultaneously with natural as well as social activities such as need, creation, and procreation. Further Marx and Engel say,

The production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a twofold relation: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relation—social in the sense that it denotes the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end (Marx and Engel’s, 2010, p. 48-49).

In this context, the character of the family is itself is two dimensional. But at the same time, Marx and Engels argued, “The family, which to begin with is the only social relation, becomes late when increased needs create new social relation and the increased population new needs, a subordinate’s one” (Marx and Engel’s, 2010, p. 48). In *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels saw the division of labour in early human society in the familial terms which provoked force or played a key role in the division of labour. They explain that the roots of the division of labour “When the population increase, then develops the division of labour, which was originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act” (Marx and Engel’s, 2010, p. 50). Marx recognizes the first as natural, while the latter is not so important for him. They identify the actual division of labour as existing between “Material and mental labour” (Marx and Engel’s, 2010,p. 50). But it was the first time in the history that the “natural” division of labour within family appeared.

In *German ideology*, Marx and Engels also commented on the future form of the family in the communist society. They suggested that the “Abolition of the individual economy which is inseparable from the abolition of private property, was impossible for the simple reason that the material conditions required were not present” (Marx and Engel’s, 2010, p. 84). They noted,

almost as an afterthought, “The supersession of individual economy is inseparable from the supersession of the family is self-evident” (Marx and Engel’s, 2010, p. 50). In *The German Ideology*, for the first time, Marx, and Engels engaged on the utopia of a socialist society where the present form of the family would be abolished, an idea that was further developed by Engel’s in *Family, private property, and the state*. This work is a fundamental guide for the next emerging Communist generation towards women’s subordination which has its firm beginnings in the Marxist view point on theory and history of women’s subordination. But for communists, this is a firm approach to see the issues of women subordination rather than a specific character of its own society like India where the inter-link between caste and gender is ignored.

The *Communist Manifesto* was written to provide more political motivation to the newly formed Communist league which required new political and theoretical proposal. Marx and Engels took up the responsibility to write of the *Communist Manifesto* against this historical background, in order to provide instruction to the Second Congress of the Communist League. However, in the initial phase, the manifesto was written in the form of question-answer for organization, workers, and discussion, and published in the first Congress of the Communist League in London in June in 1847, entitled “Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith”. Finally, the *Communist Manifesto* was published in 1847-48. Marx and Engels reconstructed their own views in the Manifesto and gave more programmatic guidelines for women liberation. Marx and Engel’s took into account the mechanism of women oppression in the stage of historical development and were able to link between past, present, and future. Even though there was less empirical material on the issue concerning the history of women and the family, they helped construct a “new world outlook” on the historical development. In the “Confession of Faith” Engel’s pointed that:

“Question no. 20. Will not the introduction of community property be accompanied by the proclamation of the community of women?”

Answer: By no means. We will only interfere in the personal relationship between men and women or with the family in general to the extent that the maintenance of the existing

institution would disturb the new social order. Besides, we are well aware that the family relationship has been modified in the course of history by the property relationships and by periods of development, and that consequently, the ending of private property will also have a most important influence on it”(Marxist Internet Archive, 2014, Question no. 20).

But the *Communist Manifesto* noticeably detaches the relationship between family and property in the capitalist society. The bourgeois family is based “On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form, this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But in this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletariat, and in public prostitution” (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 68). The ideological levels in *The Manifesto* claim with a dramatic increase that “The bourgeoisie has turned away the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation as having being reduced to a mere money relation” (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 45). In their view “bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production” but in contrast, they claim that the lack of property in the proletariat class “Relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with bourgeoisie family relation” (Marx and Engels , 2010, p. 58). In *The Manifesto*, Marx and Engels had little to say about the emancipation of women, they wrote that “The abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e., of prostitution, both public and private” (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 71).

In the capitalist society, “The bourgeois family is viewed as an instrument of capitalist society” (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 70), with no dimensions particular unto itself. The sexual division of labor as the sexual definition of roles, purposes, activities, sexuality, and reproduction etc. are not importance issues for Marx and Engels. As a result, Marx and Engels perceived the exploitation of men and women as deriving from the same source and assumed that their oppression could be understood in the same structural term. Both of them saw capitalism as drawing all women into the wage labour force and for them, this process destroyed the sexual division of labor. But in this process, they have oversimplified the sexual division of labour or

women's labour in the capitalist society. Basically, Marx and Engels' point of view is that women are constituted as a class.

Marx and Engels' analysis of the women question is articulated within the larger economic system rather than seeing women in relation to its domination by men. Finally, Marx and Engels said "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win" (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 96). Ultimately Marx and Engels spoke of the conflict between men and women as a class conflict. They defined all women's oppression in relation to production and considered women as a part of the working class. As a result, Marx and Engels perceived the exploitation of men and women as deriving from the same source and assumed that their oppression can be understood in the class structure, with no different patriarchal power structure for them. I would like to argue that Marx's discussion of gender extended far beyond merely including women as factory workers.

Engels produced a work that came to be known as *the Origin of the Family, Private property, and the State*, published in 1884. The book presents a comprehensive exposition of what Engels saw from the communist world outlook on the women question. Here he brought in some newer insights along with recapitulating his own and Marx's earlier analyses and positions. The book is based on Lewis H. Morgan's work *Ancient Society*, which was published in 1877, and the notebooks of Marx in which he had jotted down his thoughts related to the subject. The title of the book indicates that it not only comments on the family structure but also on private property and State which is rather limiting as it allows the author to only probe the issue of women subordination rather than provide comprehensive insights and analysis of women, the family, and working class. The book simply locates some certain aspect of the question in the theoretical and historical framework on the question of women subordination.

Morgan (American anthropologist) had characterized human society into four categories (as he had observed in the Iroquois tribe) such as "Invention, discoveries, government family, and property" (Vogel, 1983, p. 75). Based on these four characteristic of the Iroquois tribe, Morgan divided the historical stages of human development as savagery (hunting and gathering), barbarism (food production) and civilization (advanced agricultural methods and art). Engels

presented an augmented version of Morgan's work in the *Origin*. While Morgan presented his own data on the generalization of the stages of human development, Engels theorized it.

Engels emphasized the egalitarian nature of early primitive society, calling it a communistic household based on a material foundation of a natural sex division of labor. According to him, there was a simple and functional division of labor - "A pure and simple outgrowth of nature" - between men and women" (Engel's, 2009, p. 155). For example, he explained the nature of a communistic household as a place where men engaged in work outside the house like hunting fishes and collecting raw material for food and making tools for these tasks. Women, on the other hand, were involved in preparing food, child care, clothing etc. He remarked: as "Each master in his or her own field of activity; the men in forest and women in the house....the household was Communistic. Whatever was produced and used in common was common property" (Engel's, 2009, p. 155). Engels drew attention to the historic origin of private property and the form of monogamous family. Historically, with the production of sizable surplus, the man started looking for possibilities of preservation and started transferring into the private control through the family. Once property control or privately held surplus started moving into the social issue, as Engels observed, "The overthrow of mother right, the world historic defeat of the female seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of men's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children" (Engels, 2009, p. 57). The female line or mother supremacy was creating obstacles for social development in favor of private control.

Engels saw the emergence of the patrilineal clan system through private property and control on women's sexuality have a strong impact the status of women too. The private property not only had an impact on the set of social relation in the society but also introduced class society in the human history. A family is an economic unit; it functions as a property holding institution. Consequently, Engels writes the first effect of the sole rule of men that was now established is shown in the intermediate form of the family which now emerges, the patriarchal family. Engels emphasizes the emergence of the monogamous family form in the new economic condition and function such as property holding social institution. Thus, "It was first form of the family to be based not on natural but on economic condition - on the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property" (Engel's, 2009, p. 65). Engels underscores the important

aspects/impacts of the monogamous family on the subject of women's position. Now, monogamy is considered essential and practiced on a regular basis to enforce it on women and force their allegiance only towards men. In this process there is an enforcement of control on women, solely to increase their subjugation through monogamous marriage pattern. Thus, along with the so called monogamous marriage, there is an increase in adultery and prostitution. In addition, "Monogamous marriage comes on the scene as the subjugation of the one sex by the other; it announces a struggle between the sexes unknown throughout the whole previous prehistoric period" (Engel's, 2009, p. 65). In Engels' conceptualization, the struggle between the sexes and class relations appear simultaneously. "The first class opposition that appears in the history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male" (Engels, 2009, p. 66). This is the central problem in his theory, that point out that Engels does not recognize sex conflict as predating class conflict. Although, he also remarks that the "Division of labour is that between man and woman for child breeding" (Engels, 2009, p. 65).

Engels differentiates between the bourgeois and the proletariat through the issue of marriage. He discusses bourgeois marriage in the capitalist society. In a capitalist society, among bourgeoisies, marriage is arranged by the parents for their class interests. In contrast, working class or proletariats have the potential for truly experiencing sexual love. "All the foundations of classical monogamy are removed. Here there is a complete absence of property, for the safeguarding and inheritance of which monogamy and male domination were established...personal and social relations of quite a different sort are the decisive factors here" (Engels, 2009, p. 71-72). In addition, Engels assumes and believes that when women enter the production system or wage labour from the house to labor market and into large-scale industry "...Remnants of male domination in proletariat [loses] all foundation, except, perhaps, for something of the brutality towards women which [becomes] firmly rooted with the establishment of monogamy" (Engels, 2009, p. 72). But there is the problem of Engels' optimism. Firstly, Engels and also Marx have missed the important significance of working class household as an essential social unit, which is not the property holding unit like the other classes but the produce of the working class itself. Secondly, he fails to note the manner of the material basis for male domination which comprises the working class household. Thirdly, they absolutely ignore the

ideological and psychological aspect that continues to provide a favorable condition for male domination in the working class family.

Engels concludes that women liberation was necessary such as participation in the production system. He also suggested a socialist program and strategy for women liberation in the socialist revolution. But the result is ambiguous as both Russian and Chinese revolution advocated two distinct objectives for the socialist program and policy for women liberation design: equal right in all spheres is short term but for the full emancipation of women within the family, their structure and family ideology are far distant from communist party and socialist state. In the next part, the focus will be emphasized on the program and policies of the socialist state on the subject of women liberation.

Chinese Revolution and Women Liberation

In the 20th century, the anti-colonial movement was a common face of the Chinese society along with the rest of the world. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP formed in Shanghai in 1921) was the central force that led the movement against the feudal lords and the colonial ruling power since 1921. Women were entering the struggle against both the feudal and the colonial powers and helping shape the modern society from the traditional Chinese society. But the relationship between CCP and the women leaders was not very easy and smooth on the women's question. The pre-revolutionary history of the CCP shows tensions amongst the progressive urban forces on the issue of women rights and family reform policy, debate, approach, and attitudes, especially between the autonomous women's movement and the Marxist CCP. Some of the attitude and approach can be traced from the initial period. For example, CCP's attacks on the urban feminist movement in the name of bourgeois and sexual politics in this initial phase. At the same time, CCP also criticized the reformist agenda of the nationalist and created an atmosphere where the activists were pressured to move towards revolutionary struggle engaging in reformist politics. The revolutionary struggle based on the class analysis advocated a transformation and reconstruction of the society based on the ideas of Marxism. In this sense, women from urban and rural joined the revolutionary movement in the hope of equality.

From the beginning, CCP concentrated on the economical exploitation and argued that class struggle was only the way in which we can transform the traditional social relations or reconstruct them. As Croll noted, the Chinese Marxists scholars tried to establish links between the economic exploitation of women and class struggle against the ruling classes (Croll, 1978, p. 118). Li Dazhao, a Marxist scholar explains that the oppressed condition of Chinese women was completely “Determined by economic exploitation” (Croll, 1978, p. 118). Other intellectuals such as Dai Jitao, published an article, namely, “Similarities between the Emancipation of Workers and the Women’s Emancipation Movement”. Chen Duxiu in “The Women Problem and Socialism” recognized and tried to link up that the problem of women is double, not only as women but also as a worker that shared the oppression of men. They were oppressed by the class and patriarchy. The class struggle served the interest of the working class women who were the revolutionary force for the party and revolution.

The CCP from its beginning recognized and believed that the women movement would play an important role in the revolutionary movement against colonial rule. After one year of the foundation of CCP, leadership decided to form a separate women’s organization to help mobilize women for the revolutionary movement and make them aware of their rights (Johnson, 1983; Croll, 1978; Stacey, 1975). The first manifesto of the CCP published in 1922 on “Current situation in China”, advocated equality between men and women, which were “One of its immediate aims” (Croll, 1978, p. 119). In the initial phase, CCP focused on the urban centers and took advantage by attracting many intellectuals and feminist activists towards Marxist politics and activities that were previously involved in the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Despite that, there were still some contradictions that existed among the party leaders and women leaders on the women’s question. The condition of Chinese women under control of male power was the more general character of the patriarchal society in the world. An understanding of the traditional Chinese societal hierarchy and male domination through family, marriage, and labor were the central sites and the way in which power relations exercised within society. CCP actively mobilized women in urban places and placed demand for equal treatment of women. The manifesto of the Women’s Department in the second congress included the demand of “Unlimited right to vote for all workers and peasant, regardless of sex protection for female and child labour, and the abolition of all legislation restricting women” (Johnson, 1983, p. 41).

In 1922-25, CCP mainly concentrated in the spaces of factories where working women were in majority. Hsiang Ching-Yu was the top women leader who actively engaged with politics from the initial period and who was the only woman in the central committee) and head of the Women's Department, devoted to organizing working class women in silk and cotton industry in Shanghai, Canton, and Hong Kong cities. March 8, 1924, on World Women's Day, CCP organized a rally in the Canton with a small group of women who were mostly student and workers shouting slogan such as "Down with imperialism, down with warlord, same work same pay, protection for child labour and pregnant mothers, equal education, abolish child brides and polygamy, prohibit the buying of slave girls and the taking of concubines, formulate a child protection law" (Yang, 1959, p. 120). As Yang noted, with that "Began a new chapter in women's movement and a quarter of a century thereafter these slogans continued to echo throughout the nation, and women were increasingly pitched into the political battle that eventually led to the triumph of Communist power" (Yang, 1959, p. 120). The most important forces of youth and young women were mobilized within the university because CCP recognized young female students as bridges between party and women who played an important role for revolution. Not only this, the force also helped in shaping Communist policies and practices towards family, marriage and land reforms, and the primary agenda of women's liberation during both pre and post revolutionary periods.

In 1925 an alliance was formed between CCP and KMT (Kuomintang was a nationalist party led by Sun-Yat Sen), which was defined as the bourgeois democratic phase of revolution by the CCP. Unfortunately, it did not recognize autonomous women groups as political forces and did not attempt any political alliance. On the contrary, they criticized "bourgeois feminists concentration on the sexual politics" (Judith, 1975, p. 75; Johnson, 1983, p. 40). CCP leadership did support progressive women's movement and officially identified the universal legitimacy of their demand such as equal rights not just to vote but in every other way as their final goal. Despite that, Johnson noted that CCP expressed distrust about the feminist politics and movement. The favorite allegation of the CCP was along the lines of eliticism, and the bourgeois and deviant nature of the feminist movement. It concentrated more on sexual politics rather than class. It was almost as if the CCP, which had been influenced by the Russian revolution, had

internalized the antifeminist approach of the Party leadership that had emerged in 1923. Its conservative approach against feminism lay somewhere between that of Chinese Marxists and feminists.

However, alliance broke between CCP and KMT in 1927; the Communist leadership faced the most serious setback. Judith states, “The violent bloodbath of the counterrevolution which Chiang Kai-shek’s forces unleashed against the Communists reserved some of its most sadistic brutality for the women organizers. More than a thousand female leaders (not all of them communist) were hunted down, tortured and executed” (Stacey, 1975, p. 75). Many women leaders lost their lives in this violent bloodbath. There was a massive failure in implementing the urban strategy of the young CCP. After 1927, CCP entered into the new face of the revolution with maturity. For the next two decades, CCP adopted new strategies and concentrated its energies to mobilize rural poor peasants for the revolutionary movement. At the same time, Mao formulated a new thesis of revolution like “semi feudal and semi colonial” in which he advocated an alliance with the workers and the peasants for a peasant based revolution. In the Hunan Report (1927) Mao defined the character of the Chinese society and state. He noted that the male peasant in China was usually subjected to the domination of three systems of authority: (1) the state system (political authority) (2) the clan authority (3) the supernatural system (religious authority), while, women suffered from male domination (such as the authority of the husband). These four authorities, namely the political, the clan, the religious and the masculine, strongly interlinked the whole feudal-patriarchal system and ideology (Mao, 1965, p. 44-45). This formulation was important for Chinese women who associated their own oppression with the entire political power relation. Additionally, it also helped develop an important relationship between women's emancipation and several other revolutionary goals. The challenges were that of women liberation agenda and peasant interest.

After the serious setback, CCP moved to the hilly areas to build a strong base such as the Hunan- Kiangsi border and Central Southern China. In Kiangsi Soviet, the main task for the party was to build up a liberated zone to fight against the KMT such as “Encirclement and annihilation campaigns” of the KMT (Johnson, 1981, p. 51). The party started focusing more on

women's work and published the document "Plan for work among Women" in 1931. The Special Committee by CCP Central Committee was set up with the following goal in mind:

The most important task of the Women's Movement is to mobilize the broad masses of toiling women to join the revolution in order to keep abreast with the main task [which is to resist the attack of the imperialists and the Kuomintang against the Red Army, and to struggle for the consolidation and expansion of the power of the Soviets]. We must make the women understand that only the extension and consolidation of the Soviet area and the intensification of the attacks on the enemy can protect the interests gained and still to be gained by the women within the Soviet area. (Johnson, 1983, p. 52)

The CCP started recognizing and believing that the women front could provide an important contribution to the Red Army. The most important task of the women's front was to provide support for the army. CCP appealed to the people to help the army by providing food, cloth, and other support. In this context, the party started organizing classes and workshops for women to teach them the skills of arming because in the traditional agricultural manner women were not supposed to perform the main task in the field in certain regions. Mao reported, "Women want[ed] to learn to plough and harrowing". (Marxist Internet Archive, 2004, para. 5) The women's organization also organized teams for laundry work and sewing the army clothes, woolen socks and carrying food for the army. Many women sold their valuable things to buy arms for the troops. The women's groups wove straw sandals and stitched cloth shoes for the soldiers (Davin, 1978, p. 23). As Davin had noted, women contributed against "encirclement and annihilation" of the KMT. But at the same time, the issue of sexual division of labour was not raised. It showed that the fight against the imperialist forces was a mere extension of the domestic role in the revolutionary periods. Their gender role benefitted the party leaving no need for raising the question of the sexual division of labour.

Women's participation in the defense was important because in patriarchal societies men are the protectors of the community and the nation. The notion of a patriarchal society is that

men are powerful who are able to fight against the enemy while women are weak and emotional and cannot deal with a war-like situation. But CCP opened its doors for women to participate in the troops. These women were ones who were interested to join the Red Guard units or parallel youth volunteer units that were trained by the trade (Johnson, 1983, p. 52). Many women attained military training and engaged in carrying supplies, nursing soldiers and occasionally carrying out intelligence work while in some areas like Szechuan, a regular fighting regiment of women was formed. One unit was even attached to the Chang Kuo-tao armies for the Long March (cited in Johnson, 1983, p. 52-53). But it did not mean that women engaged in the army or troops in every place. In other places, despite wanting to join the army, women were not allowed to join any front of troops for fighting. The CCP drew the attention of more men to enroll themselves in the army in order to fight in the war, while for women it was an appeal to participate in Soviet Bodies. Mao reported that the “Great number of people joined the Red Army from Changkang Township in Kiangsi and Tsaihsi Township in Fukien. In Changkang 80 per cent of the young men and women have joined the Red Army, and in Tsaihsi the figure is 88 per cent” (Marxist Internet Archive, 2004, para. 4). In other reports, Mao mentioned “Above 25 percent women represented many cities and village councils within the Soviet democracy. Yakhontoff noted that “In some area like the Fukien area, women were of 60 and 66 percentages, with a large number of them participating in the affairs of the state government” (Yakhontoff, 1934, p. 259).

Soviet-Kiangsi was not only important for the party but for women as well. Kiangsi-Soviet was the testing ground for the women liberation agenda. In 1930, “CCP developed almost fifteen base areas in ten provinces” (Davin, 1979, p. 21; Hong, 1997, p. 151) but Soviet Kiangsi was the largest and most successful in terms of the base area where CCP had introduced socialist policies. In the Kiangsi Soviet, CCP adopted various social policies such as land reforms, marriage laws and divorce laws for people to alter the whole status of poor peasants as well as women. As Stacey notes, the central executive committee passed its first two marriage laws in 1931 and 1934. CCP introduced the socialist policies for women, such as land laws, labour law, marriage, and divorce laws for the first time in the Kiangsi Soviet. The Land reform policy provided equal rights to women and men in land allotments, and it became the material base for women’s liberation. But the peasant male employed a more patriarchal attitude towards women’s

rights. For example, the peasant male supported the legal reform for women's rights but at the same time, they were afraid of them and even threatened young women leaders. The larger interest of the peasant male was vastly different from women as was their respective hopes and dreams for the revolution.

The peasant male fought to end his own oppression and improved their livelihood and maintained/held their command on the family in the traditional format of a man exercising his control over his property and wives. But the land and marriage laws were being threatened by the women leaders if marriage laws could be applied in practice. Generally, the peasant male did not want to divide the land after a long struggle. The peasant male not only lost their wives to divorce laws but also the lands that their wives possessed, which was traditionally supposed to be under their (male) right. Many local peasant leaders ignored that conflict and very easily suppressed women rights. In this manner, women were not able to enjoy greater equality in marriage and family, and could not gain greater freedom (Johnson, 1983). The Labour Code adopted by the Soviet Congress included the demands that had been previously committed for women's rights; but when the male peasants started disappointing the party leadership, especially women leaders, the leadership also surrendered its own determination towards women rights. For example, Johnson and many other scholars also mentioned in detail how CCP compromised gender rights in front of male anger. Male anger was most important for the party.

The marriage law was passed two times in 1931 and the other marriage law was revised for the Red army on the issues of divorce in 1934 (Johnson 1983; Judith 1975; Croll, 1978; Yang, 1958; Davin, 1978; Andors, 1983; Wolf, 1985; Levy, 1971). Through the marriage law, CCP established the principle of equality between men and women, along with free association and mutual understanding for marriage. For both marriages as well as divorce, one was required to register in the local administration. When the divorce law was passed, women were given the right to apply for divorce against the charges of brutal oppression and suppression, especially pertaining to the issues of violence against women within the family set up. The applications for divorce signified that in Kiangsi-soviet, women were able to use the liberal marriage regulations to obtain a divorce and marry out of their free choice. As Johnson noted, "The report from the two counties of Northern Kiangsi indicated that the divorce rate was extremely high. Mao's

investigation of the Ch'ang-Kang Township mentioned that free marriage and divorce for women were being put into practice”(Johnson, 1983, p. 57).

There was another face of the marriage regulation where there was problem such as it not only criticizes behalf of traditional control on the women sexuality but also prevents thorough governing body. In this unfavorable atmosphere for many women and young people, they faced difficulty to exercise the marriage regulation that was their rights. Not only defame by the detractors of progressive laws but also CCP avoids conflict between men and women. As a 1932-report published by the central government shows, a solution was passed after a year of the Soviet Kiangsi that pointed out how various local government bodies were practicing a more patriarchal attitude and tendency to suppress the interests of women and were refusing their divorce applications. However, the provisional government investigated the problem and tendency of the local government which appeared later in 1932 exemplifying some of the problems. Some reports were also published on the issue of mistreatment by the government. For example, Davin noted that “If women apply for divorce they were sent back home by local cadres who were involved or tied up like criminals” (Davin, 1979, p. 29).

The revised marriage law was reduced to the Red Army in 1934, as a result of two incidents that occurred in 1931 related to the marriage law. The account of Davin, Stacey and Johnson provide us with detailed materials and analysis that why second marriage law was passed after two years and how CCP surrendered the radical marriage law in front of the privileged and Party needs. Unfortunately, the failure of the CCP and Soviet government were dealt adequately with the problems rather than officially covering for them. The CCP gave excuses and justifications how it was the urgent needs to recruit more men into the Red Army. The major changes made to the new marriage law were the addition of certain clauses such as if a soldier's wife wanted a divorce she would compulsorily has to obtain her husband's consent. If the husband failed to communicate for long period (two or four years, depending on how difficult communications were) the wife would request the government to register a divorce. In that case, it was in the government's power to accept it or reject it. Another rule was passed, “If women moved to another area after the divorce she would get land under the local government where she would move” (Davin, 1979, p. 29). It is true that there was increasing military

pressure on the Soviet and it faced serious economic problems from KMT during 1932-41. It was assumed and argued that since the army soldiers were risking their lives by taking the responsibility of the revolution on their own shoulders, they should not have to worry about their wives filing for a divorce against them. That is why it was the duty of the Soviet government to protect their property, including their wife, and to maintain their families in the absence of the revolutionary fighters. Mobilization for war, land reform, and economic reconstruction were more important for CCP and was considered as a more urgent primary task of the party. They had forgotten the authority of the husband during the war period. Despite that CCP recapitulated the intention of the CCP and dissembled (make believe) on women rights, no matter what the CCP leadership continued to do by pruning and compromising on the agenda of the women rights from time to time.

The earlier view of Mao on women issues and the present praxis were contradictory in nature, hanging between his numerous revolutionary goals. Mao, who strongly supported the issues of women rights, attacked the traditional patriarchal system. For example, after the death of Miss Chao in 1919, he wrote a piece strongly criticizing traditional male domination, foot binding, and traditional morality and expressed support towards the women's struggle for freedom and new rights. He also understood the political economy of marriage whereby the oppressed poor peasant male was not able to pay the high price for his bride. He was able to understand; the poor peasant male hoped and aspired to get his dignity and manhood from the revolution through by sustaining a stable family. Through the marriage reform, Mao argued that it not only promoted women's rights but also benefited these poor peasant males who were not able to pay high bride price because it would abolish the political economy of marriage. But when there arose a serious conflict between his goals like others he also surrendered and compromised or moderated his aspirations for women's rights against traditional male and family authority. Thus, Mao, "just like other leaders, was usually in favor of revised marriage law to protect the high morale of the revolutionary fighters. He personally supported the clause of revised marriage law which was in favor of the army"(Johnson, 1978, p. 60). The pattern and trend of compromise of the CCP not only appeared in Soviet Kiangsi, it was an enduring feature of the women's rights agenda in China as well.

In the historical perspective, the record of Kiangsi Soviet was mixed. It seems, relatively from Northern Shensi, women rights campaigners and supporters compare more successful in influencing policies but the problem was in implementation of it. The reason for this was the radical forces within CCP came from urban areas who involved in May fourth movement in 1919. They advocated women's rights during Kiangsi Soviet. Johnson noted that "The evidence is far from conclusive; it seems that upper-level policymakers persisted in officially supporting a fairly radical policy towards women's rights and family reform until the last months of the soviet despite pressures from conservative elements" (Johnson, 1978, p. 61).

However, the Soviet Kiangsi base area did not survive for long periods as CCP moved through the Long March in Northern Shaanxi and built the second largest base area. The northern Shensi area and Yen-an, its capital, was known as the Communist headquarters during the anti-Japanese war (1936-45). Yen-an got heights for revolutionary victory in the Chinese communist history and its influence on the Naxalite leader, Charu Mazumdar, called Srikakulam, is Yen-an. After Kiangsi, from the Northern Shaanxi, "CCP and their armies' successfully fought anti-Japanese war and Civil war against the Kuomintang" (Davin, 1976, p. 33). In 1937-1945, during the anti-Japanese War, CCP leadership emphasized on the United Front and mobilized many other groups who were fighting against the Japanese army.

Many feminists have also recognized that the united front was required and they directly involved revolutionaries' activities in favor of revolution. But at the same time, they expressed their own dissatisfaction and criticism of the CCP and their approach towards women rights in the united front. In other words, CCP continued to compromise on women rights. If any conflicts arose regarding the sexes, "CCP moved to confine in the name of unity and tried to create consent for the common enemy-the Japanese invaders" (Croll, 1978, p. 210). In short, the area of Northern Shaanxi was the most remote and backward area rather than the southern areas in terms of very low status of women in society such as rule of foot binding, women being sold by the husband and father during the famine in 1920 and 1930, women being controlled by strong Confucian ideas, less participatory in agricultural activity, restricted to the home, purchased during marriage etc. In the more conservative atmosphere, CCP would have considered the women's rights issues more sensitive rather than Kiangsi. As Johnson noted that the "Officially

policy towards family reform became more conservative” (Johnson, 1978, p. 63). Many scholarly works show that the issue of marriage law which was passed in 1943 speaks only about the oppression of women by the feudal family. CCP preserved more disinterested and half hearted approach on the women rights agenda. It was without doubt that the Red Army was the main force of the CCP, rather than the conciliatory campaign between women’s rights and family reform policies in China. One can observe in the CCP, patterns of compromising efforts to women’s rights on the one hand and the threat to be of a feminist mind on the other hand. Officially, the policy on women rights was actually given less priority and CCP turned to attack feminists who attempted to raise a question on the Party approach. However, it was true that women were more difficult to mobilize in the conservative and suppressive structure. The CCP continued to try and mobilize women for support of the revolution and engaged in activities such as, spinning, weaving, and sewing, production of army uniform, and shoes, food collection for troops, and the development of the agricultural activities with the small co-operatives production units becoming the basic organizations of the women’s movement (Croll, 1978; Judith, 1975; Davin 1978; Johnson, 1983). Of course, it was a far difficult situation than Kiangsi Soviet.

However, CCP launched a political campaign for mobilizing women in large number in Northern Shensi Soviet in order to play a significant role in the war (Stacey, 1975, p. 76). Women were also involved in the political campaign for the 1941 elections. As Seldon writes, “One important feature of the 1941 election movement was its co-ordination with a campaign for women’s rights...in 1941 women were elected to fill 8 percent of the seats in township council, including over 20percent in two districts” (Seldon, 1971, p. 165; Davin, 1978, p. 36). It was an important achievement in the hostile atmosphere of the Shaanxi region but “The numbers were not as remarkable as Kiangsi” (Davin, 1978, p. 36).

William Hinton observed that male domination in the village affairs neglected the Women’s organization and their women rights agenda. It seemed like the position of a second class organization for second class citizens. It was a very difficult situation for the women association itself, as it was unable to forward the interest of its members. For example, as Hinton noted that in Longbow village, “When the vice-chairman of Peasant’s Association forced an under-age girl to marry his son because he had bought and paid for her, the Women’s

Association, afraid of his power, refrained from interference” (Hintion, 1966, p. 465; Croll, 1978, p. 211). In the same village, when women organized themselves into a separate association, attended meetings and entered into the public life, they encountered more and more opposition. Hintion observed that “Opposition from the men within their own household, most of the women regarded any activity by their wives or daughter-in-law outside the home as ‘step leading directly to adultery’, took a particularly virtual form” (Hintion, 1966, p. 157). The agenda of women liberation was “temporarily suspended” (Selden, 1971, p. 115-16).

The conflict was not only in the village affairs but even existed at the leadership level. The regional variation and internal conflict indicated that the contradiction between Shensi and Kiangsi leadership did not share their views about these issues before the arrival of the Red Army. No significant reform efforts had been undertaken in Northern Shensi. For example, the high level communist leaders of the Kiangsi had participated in the Long March (and who later betrayed the Communist Party) and observed that the top-level leadership of the North Shensi did not share views with the Kiangsi leadership. Johnson noted that Liu Chih-tan, Kao Kang and other leaders in the North Shensi Soviet continued with their reservations and “Influenced by old Chinese ethics on issues related to family reform” (Johnson, 1983, p. 64). After the arrival of the Red Army in Shensi region from the Kiangsi, the Shensi leaders apparently expressed concern on the idea of reform of the Kiangsi Soviet. The conflict showed up in the government meeting in 1936, where the section chief of the Central Internal Affairs Department openly complained that “Everything the Red Army stood for was good except for the marriage law it had brought from Kiangsi...which was very bad and would result in a high tide of divorce”(Johnson, 1983, p. 64).

However, the Central Organization Department issued resolutions on the building of mass organizations including women’s organization in 1936. In the next few years, women’s association mobilized women in large number in study groups and production units in the village area. In 1937, the representative of the Women's Department, Li, claimed that “130,000 women in Shen-Kan-Ning, were loosely organized into women's associations. But apparently, these memberships were nominal and perhaps only 15 percent of the women population. Li found that about 80,000 women were active and attended meetings regularly” (Johnson, 1983, p. 64). In

early 1938, women's association of Shen-Kan-Ning claimed “their membership to be of 173,800” (Selden, 1971, p. 142). However, in one sense it also shows that the party expanded among women and achieved the support of women but in another sense, the membership of the organization is hard to judge how politically active or meaningful these organizations were - it seems like just propaganda effects rather than meaningful impact. In 1938, more than twenty mass organizations, including the peasant, youth and women's associations were combined into the “Rear Area Enemy Resistance Association and mass organization paying attention to the united front and military mobilization tasks” (Selden, 1971, p. 142). Johnson noted that the “It has been suggested that while mass organizations as village peasant associations were important and strong during the major mass campaigns for land reform and rent reduction, between these periods their membership became more formal than real”(Johnson, 1983, p. 64).

In some areas, organizational efforts began in the initial phase through some propaganda for women’s rights like better treatment in the familial relation but the main target remained to increase women participation in production to help support against the anti-Japanese war. CCP established some training centers to train the women leaders. Trained women leaders organized small local cooperatives and encouraged women to take up work in their extra time in their home such as spinning, weaving, and sewing (Davin, 1978; Johnson, 1983; Croll, 1978). These works traditionally done by women were extended to the modern industry like textile and handicraft industry which was also by women workers. During the Yanan period in the North and Northwest, those women who lost a job from the market, engaged in handicraft work in the home, and trained and encouraged other women in small groups for the revolutionary movement. As a result of such efforts the numbers of women engaged in the household production of cloth for the Red Soldiers increased. “In Shen-Kan-Ning increased from 5,000 in late 1930 to 13,500 at the beginning of 1943” (Johnson, 1983, p. 65). Trained women prepared shoes, blankets, socks, and uniforms for the Red Army that were more important for the Army. Women also engaged in agricultural activities and provided support to the party but less than that of Kiangsi Soviet because there was a tradition of foot binding and other restrictions on the woman's body. It seems that the attempt to mobilize women for productive activities minimized the degree of change from traditional control on the body of women because behind the motivation lay the policy to increase women’s production which was utilized for war and established base area.

There was also a requirement to make up for the loss of male labor power. But women leaders also considered that when women participated in productive work, it also improved their social position in the family and society as they contributed directly towards the family income.

Even though CCP tried to introduce and promote marriage reform, it was not totally absent during the Yen-an period but was of less priority as noted by Davin. The same Marriage Law of Kiangsi Soviet was introduced in Yen-an in 1936 (Davin, 1978), but women rarely used it, “There was no effort mounted to popularize and implement the law” (Johnson, 1983, p. 66). However, marriage law advocated free choice in marriage and women’s property rights. If women wanted a divorce and submitted their application to the local government on specific grounds for divorce, the courts had to give their judgment by granting them the divorce. This was, however, more difficult for women in the conservative north. Johnson noted that “In early 1940, several local versions replaced the relatively strong Kiangsi version of the law in each of the different areas” (Johnson, 1983, p. 66). All family reform laws reintroduced options like free-choice in marriage and women’s property rights, but in many ways were much weaker and more conservative than the Kiangsi law. Johnson argued that “Old judicial personal were probably retained and relevant government positions manned by untrained local cadres, this discretion was likely to result in the greater use of traditional standards in deciding divorce cases-standard” (Johnson, 1983, p. 66) As a result, women often expressed strong reservations against the new rights. Along with this, the CCP leadership assumed that the policy of family reform eliminated the custom thorough persuasion rather than coercion and it was time consuming.

During the anti-Japanese war, many intellectual women were from the urban areas such as Shanghai, who joined hands with the CCP during the united front but brought with them the idea of women liberation which was to influence the May 4th movement - which saw the great clash between feminist intellectuals and the Party. For example, in 1942, Ding Ling published an essay in the *Liberation Daily* (Party magazine) and criticized the party approach, saying/arguing that they were being overworked, expected to play a dual role and subjected to criticism if they failed in either. The CCP's counter-attack on the Ding Ling went like this: “Full sex equality had already been established and that their feminism was outdated and harmful” (Davin, 1978, p. 36). After that the Central Committee issued resolution for women cadres in February 1943,

suggesting that “Women cadres must stop looking on economic work as unimportant.” Its role of reference to the “feudal oppression of women lies in the assertion that they can escape it through production”(Davin, 1978, p. 36-37) but male dominance, purchases marriage, and other such problems were not mentioned in that resolution.

After the withdrawal of the Japanese armies in 1945, CCP continued to mobilize and the struggle began against the civil war. But at the same time, CCP introduced the land reform policy against the landlord and tried to break the economic power of the rich peasant and landlord. According to the Agrarian Reform Law promulgated by the CCP, in 1947 “Land in rural was not only equally distributed between men and women but also separate land deeds issues” (Croll, 1978, p. 215). According to the land resolution “Land was distributed among the family as an economic unit, that means men and women have equal rights to the land. When necessary, land needs for women can be issued separately” (Davin, 1978, p. 46). Women were entitled to separate land needs but in the real sense, the certain practical problem existed in any sexist society. As Croll noted:

The problem extended the question like what should a girl do with her land after marriage, should engaged girls have their land at their father’s or their future husband’s property and on what basis should land be distributed to new widows, to discussions and resolutions of problems concerning the location of separate wives’ and daughter’s plots. Many women settled for joint ownership of land, but even this was an important step. (Croll, 1978, p. 215)

The peasant women were quick to realize the importance of this law. For instance, Hinton noted in Fanshen, in Chao Chen village in Shanxi province, many women said,

When I get my share I’ll separate from my husband, then he won’t be able to oppress me anymore...If he divorces me, never mind, I’ll get my share and the children will get

theirs. We can live a good life without him...When I get my share I'll never look for a husband again. A husband is a terrible thing. (Hinton, 1972, p. 294)

In some villages, men moved with the army, and women were the main force in the land reform. But it was an important issue that an imbalance in the figures of women activists in the land to represent the interests of their families. "Married women must have left this important affair to their husband in accordance with custom" (Davin, 1978, p. 47). We can see the entire pre-revolutionary period as being introduced to the new law and after the male reaction; the CCP leadership compromised, backed a strong campaign of women rights and finally seconded the priority of women issues. It then became converted to the second status of the organization or less priority of women's issues in praxis under Mao leadership but the radical left never focused on the failure of the Chinese revolution towards women rights. In the next section, I will discuss the priority between nation building and socialist state after the national liberation in 1949.

After Revolution: Agenda of State Building and Women's Liberation

After the national victory of China in 1949, it was declared as the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) and it entered into the new phase of the revolution. The CCP captured the state power with the hope of building a new society with the dream of implementing socialism after long years of struggle against foreign invasion and civil war. The leader of the new China, Mao Zedong, proclaimed the birth of the new age and declared that "The Chinese people, one quarter of the human race, have now stood up" (Croll, 1978, p. 223). The Communist government declared that the Communist state has committed freedom for half of the population of women in terms of socio-economic political and cultural transformation. But in this process, the centrality of the class struggle and the centrality of gender became more complicated and complex by involving questions of marriage reform, land reform, cooperatives, asexual division within commune system which was a major political task of the CCP and the PRC government.

In 1950, PRC launched socio-economic programs, especially land reform, industry, collective agricultural and family reform. The PRC government created material conditions for the improvement of the people both through economic policy and laws. Various laws were integrated and mutually in support of each other for the structural transformation of the society. CCP wanted women to actively participate in these reforms. The issues of land reform after 1949, was considered as the main task by the CCP and was thus devoted to the improvement of the material condition of poor peasants. But the CCP leadership was ambiguous on the issue of marriage and land reform like how marriage reform should relate to other work of the period, especially with directives on the land reform. In May 1950, 75 percent of the countryside did not practice land reform. However, in June 1950, the Agrarian Reform Law was issued by the government, which was to direct the land reform throughout rural China. Both marriage reform and land reform were introduced in close succession, which was to implement a restructuring of the Chinese property relation in terms of class and family. Johnson noted that the “The marriage law provides equal property right to women and children within family; the land reform law gave them real property” (Johnson, 1983, p. 102) and tried to eliminate patriarchal, “authoritarian exploitation of the Confucian family order, arbitrary and compulsory feudal marriage system which is based on the superiority of man over women” (Stacey, 1975, p. 80-81).

The imagination of the democratic family through the marriage reform policy and law were based on the principal of free choice of marriage and sexual equality. All patriarchal control and practice such as polygamy, concubinage, child engagement, purchases marriage, infanticide, and illegitimacy were prohibited by the law. Marriage law guaranteed women as well as men for divorce, remarriage, inheritance and property rights, but it was very difficult to implement it in the ground. It was an important and necessary step towards building up a democratic social institution for the government and the CCP. Davin's accounts show that the Party launched tremendous campaigns to publicize the new law, especially the marriage law with land reforms. CCP and the government criticized the older system and advocated the new law through newspapers, magazines, special booklets, stories, and pamphlets for literate people. “CCP reached out to the illiterates through drama and play in the villages” (Davin, 1978, p. 86).

The importance of divorce as an essential anti-feudal and anti-patriarchal reform was clearly highlighted in various reports. It was in practical effects such as over the thousand women complainant filled divorce application in the local government or authority. However, the Women's department recognized it and encouraged women to use their rights of free choice in marriage and others rights. Several brave and rebellious women's stories were written in magazines indicating that women were willing to confront and struggle against intergenerational biases and against the old values, and wanted to use their new rights. During 1950, the marriage reform was given more attention by the women's department than in the past. Often more complex situations between authorities of marriage reform and land reform such as land reform authorities continued to express and operate on the assumption that family reform was non-class related.

Sometimes the land reform authorities and women rights authorities were antagonized, especially "In the rural areas that had no complete essence of the land reform (Johnson, 1983, p. 103). Thus, the successful implementation of land reform was unequal and even in the highly successful areas the real benefits to women was questionable. The problem is that "Actual control over the land allotted to women often remained in the hands of family or the male head" (Andors, 1983, p. 33). The regional and geographical factors also produced variation. Andors also expressed his own view that "It is difficult and even possibility of misleading to attempt to generalize about the result of land reform and marriage law all over the country" (Andors, 1983, p. 34). The official report shows regarding the divorce cases that women filed divorce applications within one year in comparison to men. It was an indication that women were suffering under the patriarchal marriage system. In 1950, for example, in cities of Shanghai, Peking and Tientsin, "546 of the 800 divorce suits or about 68 percent, were brought by women, 176 or about 22 percent by men and 78 or about 10 percent, by both husband and wife" (Yang, 1959, p. 71). Even Kiangsi province from January to October in 1951, statistics show "84.3 percent of all divorce application brought by women in the municipal people's court. Of course, 21,433 divorce cases in 32 cities and 34 rural county seat towns mentioned in the People's Daily of September 29, 1951, 76.6 percent were brought by women" (Yang, 1959, p. 71). The party members also played the role of fatherhood and parental control on their own children while young people demanded freedom of choice for marriage. As Davin noted, "In

1951, '10,000 women were said to have suffered death by suicide or homicide in Central and South China alone after family disputes about questions of marriage and divorce' (Davin, 1978, p. 87). In 1955, it was estimated that "70,000-80,000 women were dying annually because of such disputes" (Davin, 1978, p. 87). Obviously, these statistics show that the negative picture and horrible conditions of women more obviously open to many questions.

The PRC government continued publishing reports regarding the implementation of the Marriage Law. Many Scholars also noted that the increased of free-choice marriage began to be used in some areas. The authorities claimed that "The rise in free choice marriage and decline in arranged, blind, buying and selling marriages are more difficult to evaluate than those made about divorce" (Johnson, 1983, p. 118). But the more important question to be asked was that whether it was unclear how free choice marriage was defined and also determined the perception of the investigator team on the issue of marriage. As Johnson noted in his report on the free choice marriage which comes from those villages or are as which largely practiced traditional arranged marriage:

It was reported that in 178 villages in a county of Chahar Province, about 80 percent of the 400 marriages which took place during the first ten months of the Marriage Law was free-choice marriages. This percentage seems unbelievably high in light of earlier demographic surveys and village studies which indicate that self-determined marriages-even "compromise" arranged marriages in which the couples were first consulted were virtually unheard of in rural areas. The 80 percent figure for a rural area, attained after only ten months, seems especially high given the necessity that meaningful free-choice marriage practices be supported by new, more extensive and freer patterns of social interaction among village youth, providing them with courtship opportunities. As Teng Ying-ch'ao had commented in May 1950, greater social freedom between the sexes still scandalized even educated, presumably more progressive cadres and Party members. She

criticized the existence of an "unhealthy attitude" against the freedom of young men and women to fall in love, saying that usually "rumors run wild when a man and woman comrade becomes friendly. (Johnson, 1983, 118-119)

The government produced more propaganda rather than material and women had to face brutal conditions. As early as 1950, Deng Yingchao (head of Women's Department) had recognized "The shortage of able local cadres as a crucial difficulty in the administration of Marriage Law Reform and in the years that followed the press regularly carried rebuke to member who opposed the Marriage Law and exhortation to administer it better" (Davin, 1978, p. 88). But she did not address the violence as having its structural roots within the family structure which was largely a male agency and used by them to create a violent condition. The tone of the leadership got a more urgent task to campaign more strongly for the marriage law and build more able cadres who were able to deal with the new marriage law. Thus, these concerns of the leadership culminated in the campaign of 1953, where a strong campaign about marriage law was carried out, in which the main target was the cadres rather than feudal minded parents, parents-in-law, and husband. Again the Marriage law was launched under the leadership of Zhou Enlai in 1953. CCP reorganized the national level of the women's front, namely, All-China Democratic Women's Federation (formed in 1949 for the national front of women movement). It was also restructured for effective implementation of the government's decision of women's rights. The Women's Federation centrally controlled and tried to reach large. Permanent work committees were established at the regional level. These committees acted with responsibility for the Women's Federation Central Executive. The Central Executive was responsible for headship and guidelines of the local women's association, recruitment of the cadres, organizing training and education for the new cadres. It was an important effort of the women's federation to promote local activities in support of the upcoming marriage reform campaign in 1953. Johnson writes,

The 1953 Marriage Law campaign differed significantly from previous efforts to propagate the law. It was more extensive, more coordinated, better directed and better prepared for. In these respects, the long-standing rhetorical commitment to marriage

reform and women's rights issues was for the first time being accorded some of the organizational attention and energy which had been invested in problems and goals which the leadership considered important to the revolution and construction. Furthermore, special marriage reform committees, made up of representatives of Party, government and mass organizations, were set up outside of the regular Party and administrative apparatus at various levels from the region down to the county (in some cases lower) to plan, coordinate, and supervise the preparations and campaign activities. The National Committee for the Thorough Implementation of the Marriage Law, with Chief Justice Shen Chun-ju as chairperson and Teng Ying-ch'ao, Shih Liang and Ho Hsiang-ning, among others, as vice-chairs, was established at the national level. The National Committee was charged with the task of coordinating preparations for the campaign, monitoring its progress, drawing up educational materials for cadre study and generally keeping the campaign on course. (Johnson, 1983, p. 139)

The Women's Federation continued moving in the rural areas and organized a local cadre at the village level. Davin's description shows that the "Ten thousand of people, many of them village cadres in the Women's Federation, travelled to their local county seats to do training courses of a few days" (Davin, 1978, p. 88). The Women's Department also published a booklet on the marriage law in a question and answer format. In these processes, we can see that the Women's Federation was totally functioning like state feminism rather than as a separate or autonomous entity. Johnson notes, "Emphasizing the federation's subordination to the Party, and to the Party-dominated Women's Federation Executive, seems to reflect the long-standing concern that the activities of local women's groups not become separate from Party control" (Johnson, 1983, p. 140). However, many reports show that compromises in semi-arranged marriages were common, at least in the rural set up, and were accepted by the party. As Davin noted, for example, in 1970, "Henan village life shows that the initiative in arranging a marriage was always taken by the parent, although the young people normally met and approved each other before the wedding"

(Davin, 1978, p. 93). She argued that “Strong morale and economic pressure by parents on young people to make the needed verbal consent to marriage” (Davin, 1978, p. 93).

Through literature, we can identify some important contributions that increased women's status within the family and society by the land reform policy. One of the major tasks that the women front was responsible during the land reform was to ensure women rights in property for equal share in land and their legal rights in the land registered in their names. Of course property rights in the land increased possibility to help improve women's condition and also importantly increase their “bargaining power” (Bina Agrawal, 1994) within the family. Thus, there was also the psychological impact on women. In this context, the impact of land reform was deferent on both men and women. For example, when men lost his confidence he sometimes spread the fear of exercise of male power but similarly it turned into more attacks on women. Many local women leaders and women supporters appreciated land reform work; they asserted a piece of land in their name and economic independence. Under the land reform laws, women were supposed to be given rights to an equal share of land, with their names registered to the land. In many areas during the land reform movement, the party tried to mobilize women for effective/larger participation. Margery Wolf argues that there was huge participation of women in the land reform movement which was not a one night journey of transformation of their individuality. Although the implementation of land reform policies clearly impeded the introductory phase of the Marriage Law in large parts of rural China, land reform by itself is considered to have made an important initial contribution in raising women's status and power. It is claimed that during the land reform movement, women not only became politically more conscious and active but they also took an important step towards economic equality and independence, by receiving an equal share of land along with their husbands. These general assertions deserve closer consideration, not because this brief period of land ownership had a lasting impact, but because it allows us to look at the crucial issues concerning the dynamics of change for women. In most villages, especially in the newly liberated areas, “Land reform did provide women with their first opportunity to participate in meaningful public activity in their communities” (Johnson, 1983, p. 106). Andors argues, during the land allotment control over the land by a male, if the land remained it got in the head of the family or the male. But in a critical sense it was a tremendous oversimplification of the structure of family, the nature of property

transfer and the value of women labor which saw men as primary owners of the patrilineal and patrilocal family structure and had a real impact of land ownership and equality in property for women's independence and exercised it. Within the patriarchal family structure as well as the androcentric culture, it has significant barriers for women rights within family and society.

When the PRC government launched the law of marriage and land reform in the androcentric culture and patriarchal family structure, the male peasant, and local peasant male leader were afraid that if both the laws were implemented in the real sense it would threaten male privilege and domination in the family and their economical security. Thus, they (local peasant leaders) were not willing to coordinate educational activities of land reform. The poor male peasant hoped for better economic conditions through land reform but they were afraid and were against marriage law fearing what if their wife or daughter-in-law used the marriage law to leave and take her legal land share with her. The land reform authorities felt the problems and realized that they were complicated. Johnson noted that,

A directive on land reform issued by the Central Committee of the East China Region in September 1950 illustrates land reform authorities' desire to involve women in land reform and other activities, but to play down the controversial issues of marriage reform which most directly threatened traditional male prerogatives. (Johnson, 1983,p. 104)

In this directive, it was pointed out that there was a widespread tendency among members to accept the avoidance or neglectful approach concerning the mobilization of women. The members of the party who were personally opposed to the Marriage Law had sufficient justification to ignore one central directive in order to betray and carry out another more important one. Here some important concerns about that many local members understood to the essential principle of the revolution in common sense and land reform in particular-make sure economic security and justice for the poor peasant, abolish landlord exploitation, hard-working male tillers of the soil. Thus, the Marriage Law was seen as unfit in the essential principal of the peasant members.

The significant approach taken up by the party leadership, who were also representative of the government, was only limited to pointing one's attention to the lack at the functional level like that of local leaders who were incapable of dealing with the government directives rather than pointing one's attention on the approach of the leadership who felt that women liberation agenda was secondary to military, political or economic benefit of the revolution. Thus, cadres and local leadership presumed that women's rights were secondary to the class interests of poor male peasants when it came to conflict. As a result, if women from poor family's submitted applications for divorce, male members commonly understood the poor male peasants as having "Lost both their wives and their property" (Johnson, 1983, p. 105). Therefore, in order to defend the interests of poor peasants and working class men, a lot of divorce applications were rejected by the village leaders. In this sense, the poor women understood its own liberation with the peasantry revolution but the party and related authorities failed to implement policies to provide freedom for women in a rural setup. In the next section, I will discuss in detail the relationship between the great leap forward policy and women rights during the socialist construction of China.

Women's Labor and the Socialist Construction of China

Through the Great Leap forward policy, the party tried to apply the theoretical suggestions of Engels' work, namely, *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in which he indicated a twofold policy comprising of elimination of private property and participation of women in production - a major task of the Communist state towards women's liberation. During the process of collectivization and socialization of means of production in China, CCP tried to reduce the economical role of the family in order to convert it into the commune system for building up the socialist society. The PRC government introduced the Great Leap Forward policy after Russia withdrew its support. As Cludie Broyelle remarked on the Great Leap Forward policy in her book which was published in 1977, "women changed the work and work changed the women" in the great leap forward period. This remark is very important for us to understand the Engelsian formula of women's liberation in China. The official view of the Party on how to build a socialist society with equality for both men and women, and the Engelsian formula or quotation was very famous among the members. It is as follows,

In order to build a great socialist society, it is most important to mobilize the masses of women to join in productive activity. In production men and women must receive equal pay for equal work. Genuine equality between the sexes can only be realized in the process of the socialist transformation of society as a whole. (Marxist Internet Archive, 2004, para. 27)

Mao-Tse-Tung had pointed out that there was a need to participate in large numbers in the production for their liberation. The PRC government and CCP would have mobilized women for socialist construction.

From the beginning, this formulation was dominant among the members for the cause of women liberation. After the marriage law campaigns, CCP tried to mobilize women through “women work” in the countryside for utilization of female labor in the agrarian economy. At the same time, the PRC government promoted collectivization. Johnson argues, “The collectivization was to provide an organization framework for production that would permit the more efficient use of land and labour and a diversification of the agrarian economy” (Johnson, 1983, p. 158). CCP propagated that the alternative organizations of labour like cooperativization helped shift the control of labor from a single family and also removed the ownership of the means of production from the family. In that respect, he argued that through these developments, the patriarchal economic power in the family was eventually eliminated and the traditional authority from the family was annihilated. The CCP Leadership assumed and hoped that these efforts would lead to an end of the sexual division of labor within the family, which in the Marxist view is a central part of women subordination. Johnson was of the opinion that it was necessary to “Remove the family as main production unit from feudal mode of production and provide women with new opportunity for labour and way of life against private labour” (Johnson, 1983, p. 159). But in the initial phase, women were not included in the cooperatives, but after 1955, politically mammoth efforts were undertaken to attract and encourage others to join it. For example, Mao pointed out,

Before the co-operative transformation of agriculture, surplus labour-power was a problem in many parts of the country. Since then many co-operatives have felt the pinch of a labour shortage and the need to mobilize the masses of women, who did not work in the fields before, to take their place on the labour front...women form a great reserve of labour-power in China. This reserve should be tapped in the struggle to build a great socialist country. The principle of equal pay for equal work for men and women must be enforced to encourage women to engage in productive activity. (Marxist Internet Archive, 2004, para. 38)

After 1957, the female labor force entered into the production system on a large scale as part of the massive construction projects and the rural small manufacturing industries which were to launch new developmental infrastructure by the PRC government. Female labour was hired from a model province in central China. The report shows that “6,000,000 women in the province were thus emancipated from domestic labor” (Andors, 1975, p. 50). During this time, the Henan province was famous as a backward province but after the revolution it changed as a model area because every soon it started producing steel and established welfare service for its own commune members. Party admires this development that was producing iron and steel, and out of which, 40 percent was being produced by women. A report of Ah Tsou who visited Chihliying people’s commune² in 1959 describes in detail about the atmosphere of the commune and provides an account of the various aspects of the commune system, particularly the aspect of women participation in production. She reported that the “Commune now has 450 women worker in various factories run by Chihliying Commune, representing about 21 percent of all the workers employed” (Tsou, 1960, p. 21). The Chihliying commune has a history of undertaking a variety of initiatives in a wide range of welfare services since its beginnings. This can be seen in Tsou's account as pointed out below,

² The Chihliying People’s Commune is one of the famous communes for faster progress in agricultural mechanization, semi-mechanization, electrification and industrialization.

Running 381 community dining-rooms, 64 kindergartens, 298 nurseries, 61 maternity hospital and 18 homes for the aged...whenever they mention these new things they say: “you need do no more cooking; no more turning of the grindstone; no more worrying about the children; and you have nice cloth cloths made for you and the family. But more than anything else they appreciated the community dining-room. The community dining-room sets the women free, they told me. “we said good-bye to the chores in the kitchen which have been ours for thousands of years”. (Tsou, 1960, p. 22)

The above lines seem highlight the fact that the party tried to eliminate domestic labor through the socialization of domestic work such as establishing crèches, nurseries, kindergartens, communal dining halls and collective sewing groups on a larger scale. As a result, during 1958-1959 huge number of women entered into construction projects, local industries and engaged in other new economic activities. The millions of women were involved in “Water conservation and a forestation projects, communal dining halls and nearly all of the six to seven million workers in daycare centers were women” (Johnson, 1983,p. 161). A women worker of the Chao Yan Medical Apparatus Factory in Peking, Ma Yu-yin shared the history of the factory with Broyelle (1971) in the following words,

Until 1958, it was then that the whole country rose up to make the ‘great leap forward’, and everyone’s energies were mobilized for the next step in the transformation of society...Mao appealed to us ‘to rely on own strength, to break away from our housework and participate in production and social activities’. We wanted to answer this call, to make the great leap forward too. But how could we go about it? It was then that about twenty women in this neighborhood decided to ‘cross the threshold of the home’ and set up a local factory. The street committee let us have two empty warehouses for this. From one point of view everything seemed to be working against us: there were nit

many of us, we had no equipment, no crèche, no canteen, no experience of production (we were all housewives). We did not even know what make...but we wanted to make life a bit more comfortable for our families: we wanted to change society, to transform the condition of women...finally, after asking round the district, we decided to make essential goods such as kettles, stove-pipes, saucepans, that sort of thing. We brought our own tools from home: hammers, pliers, a few screwdrivers, nails and so on. We had nothing else. We went to factories to salvage sheets of scrap metal and iron tubes, and we set to work. (Broyelley, 1977, p. 11-12)

Politically and socially, the Great Leap increased women's participation and struggle as the above reference mentions. At that time, various articles were published in magazines which argued that the land reform of China's society had turned democratic through the marriage reforms, formally establishing equal treatment for men and women, in the real and actual women liberation through the Great Leap. "CCP did not recognize any conflict between gender equality and developmental agenda which led to a socialist construction, but the experience of women provides with clear indications that complexities did exist" (Andors, 1975, p. 37). In general, the phenomenon of labor force pulling back firstly began with the pushing away of the women labor force in all patriarchal societies. In 1957, Chinese women had also been pushed back from the production system, when back from the expansion of capital construction. It was easier for the leadership to push back into the domestic sphere where women were placed as primary objects. Johnson argued,

Women's family roles and social subordination to men make them a "flexible labor force" that both socialist and capitalist economic systems can manipulate to help adjust to economic fluctuations. Thus in 1957 there were efforts to pull some women out of the urban labor force accompanied by a propaganda campaign concentrating on the positive role of the housewife. (Johnson, 1983, p. 160)

In fact, the basic contradiction between Mao and Liu Shao Chi was that Mao was critical of Liu's policy- one where he had adopted the restoration of the capitalist road which was based on the 'rationalization' that labor was dependent on merit. Ma Yu said,

In the 1961 some of the factory's managers, completely blinded by orders from the Peking town council, decided to 'rationalizes' production. They decreed that there were too many of us working there and that we would have to stop making kettles since we were now a medical-apparatus factory. How contemptuous they were about our kettles! The 'reorganization' would have meant a good number of us returning home. They thought they'd convince us by saying that the men would get a wage rise so that we could stay at home and look after our families. Wouldn't everything be simpler that way? But these plans encountered spirited resistance from the women, and they declared: we won't go back to our cooking; we won't give up our jobs! Life in the factory became very tense. There was a desperate struggle between that faction of the management who wanted the factory to be run for immediate profit and who, above all, didn't want the women workers to liberate themselves, and the large majority of women workers who wanted to continue on their chosen path. (Broyelley, 1977, p. 13)

Another contradiction appeared when a feeling of anxiety and fear spread among the cadres and people of the family institution during the Great Leap. The main anxiety of the people was that if socialization of women's labor and the family operate under the commune system the family would disappear. CCP leadership tried to explain in a very simple way and quoted Engels' concept, where he writes how the form of the family would see a decline in future and expressed his uncertainty about the continued existence of the monogamous family under communism. Engels argued that the abolition of private property, socialization of household with an absolute form of women participation in productive labor, would end the family's status as a socio-

economic unit. In that sense it would no longer be based on relations of economic control and dependency and family relations would be based only on equality for interests of all. Unfortunately, at this juncture, the question that arose was more about the form of the patrilocal and patrilineal system under the commune system rather than how the party approaches was in many ways depoliticizing the family reform. Even after the revolution, not much importance was given towards the ideological struggle and education in the family.

Engels tried to rationalize the half hearted and politically conventional position on gender equality of the CCP through a theoretical hypothesis. At the same time, the feminists raised nuanced questions about the agenda of women liberation and also criticized the party for ignoring and compromising women's rights and taking a male centered approach. But leadership continued to try and defend their position and thus, clamping the absolute practice on the economic concentration and political priority for women liberation. For the future of communist society, there was a final realization of complete gender equality which was completely achieved through policy instruction leading to the theoretical assumption performed in the commune system such as the abolition of private property, the large-scale participation of women in production and socialization of domestic chores. During the great leap, the communes represented the future for women and created an impression like how it would champion a historical defeat of patriarchy.

Lu Yu-Ian was the Secretary of the Linhsi County Party Committee and Deputy Secretary of the Hopei Provincial Party Committee. She shared her own view after long years, commenting how it is not easy to achieve women's emancipation. In the current situation, there is a wrong idea prevalent about women's freedom like the fact that women can win their freedom simply by seizing control in the family which leads to conflict and fighting among husband and wife under the law. The superficial understanding about family and oversimplification of patriarchy failed to win and achieve its aim. After sometimes, the Party organized study groups and discussed Mao's views about women's emancipation.

The struggle was not only related to family, land and labor rights but also most importantly questioned how to analyze women's labor in the commune system. Many studies

show that males earned more work points than females and even where women were engaged in equal work they were not accorded equal work points. While women were still responsible for house work they were not accorded work points, thus, contributing to their burdens. The economic inequalities existing in terms of work points were actually based on the sexual division of labor. However, women contributed both to the family and the collective production of the commune system but in a critical sense, it caused an obstacle for women emancipation. In this context, the Great Leap policy failed to practice an equal treatment of work points. The practice of unequal pay within the commune system was based on the sexual division of labor where women received much lesser work points. For example in the 'Fenglin Peoples Commune' in Hopei Province, the unequal wage was distributed between men and women such as ten work point for men and seven for women, which was the unfavorable situation for women labour. Another example, "In competition a male worker, Cai Huabo and women worker, Wu Xiuning, it was discovered the both accomplished the same work but Cai was given ten points for his efforts and Wu received only seven" (Andors, 1983, p. 59). Though the commune system advocated and promised for gender equality such as 'same pay for same work', it did not actually implement the rule in the rural areas where political conflict existed eternally.

The Women federation raised questions but did not solve the issue of equal wage work point within the commune system. Some women leaders took up the issues of equal pay as the most important and organized women workers for the meeting and discussion on this issue where they tried to investigate the same. Through the investigation, they built up pressure on the commune authority (generally male). When the commune leadership faced the investigation report with statistics on the contribution by the women to overall production, it built pressure on the commune leadership to revise it. Finally, "It led to an increase in work point but did not move towards equal wage as women received the basic wage point from 4.5 to 6.5" (Andors, 1983, p. 59). However, "Evidence available from some area, [shows that] women were more successful in pressing their demands at the brigade or commune level, where a change of status did not present such as a direct challenge to male family members" (Andors, 1983, p. 60). Basically, one of the most convenient arguments raised were in opposition to equal pay for women or a greater number of work points for them because it was not considered consistent with women labor. Month wise "Women ...worked in average like twelve to twenty days in

depending on the intensity of household burden and no work point allocation for household work” (Andors, 1983, p. 60). During the Great Leap, the leadership tried to attain a socialization of household work such as mess hall, nurseries, sewing group, but it was not the reality of every commune and even where they existed they were faced with serious problems of efficiency and quantity. For example, a women worker of the Chao Yan Medical Apparatus Factory in Peking, Ma Yu-yin shared the history of the factory with Broyelle (1971) in the following words

A serious problem of another kind was looking after the children. For example this comrade here had five children. We managed as best we could. The older children looked after the younger ones. Some women could leave their children in the care of their mothers or mother-in-law....Finally, by a process of trial and errors, we succeeded in making kettles and stove-pipe by hand. These products were accepted by the state.
(Broyelle, 1977, p. 12)

The Maoist leadership never thought of encouraging ideas about distinctive female role and status in the family and society. Never was it suggested, even in the theories of the most utopian movement that men should learn from women or that men should be sent down to the laundry or nursery to learn the value of and how to perform the nurturing human services relegated to women. Rather, the Maoist approach is symbolized by the quotation which was popular during the Cultural Revolution such as “Times have changed. Whatever men comrades can do, women comrades can do too” (Johnson, 1983, p. 167). In this process, women faced double burden while entering the production realm in the Great leap which was dominated by men. The CCP provided an alternative system ‘idea of the commune’ as an economic unit for the development and presented it as a harbinger of complete emancipation of women. However, the leadership was of the view that when women would enter social labour it would improve as well as reduce their task from domestic labor. Of course, their condition saw a marked improvement within the family and even contributed towards the construction of a socialist state, but it was not fully liberated through labor.

Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution and Women's Rights

In 1966, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was one of the greatest phases of the Chinese Revolution. The Cultural Revolution, like the Great leap, resulted in rapid socio-political and ideological debates towards class consciousness and class struggle. The intense debates were around the relationship between bourgeois ideology and culture, and revolutionizing people's thought through proletariat class struggle. The Cultural Revolution was based on Mao's assumption that "Social changes are the result of the class struggle rather than industrial expansion and technological innovation" (Andors, 1983, p. 101). For Mao and his followers, the Cultural Revolution was an attempt to create a favorable condition for social change. But Johnson argued that "The actual impact of the Cultural Revolution on the rural women and the family was far less than the rhetoric" (Johnson, 1983, p. 178).

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-70), Maoist leadership believed that the abolition of private property and the collectivization of the major means of production after state power had been seized by CCP would be enough, but many pieces of evidence show that it was not sufficient for women liberation despite CCP guaranteeing it. The essence of the Cultural Revolution delivered the proletariat class view point into people's thought and culture. It started being understood as the leadership's reach towards a socialist goal and the socialist economic development on one side. On the other side, it was seen as an attempt at smashing capitalist/bourgeois approach within the party which was based on two mass lines namely politics and struggle. Three general themes were placed, revolutionizing ideology, "put politics in command" and class is a primary category for understanding the social problem, including the women's question. In this process, bourgeois culture and forces of capitalist restoration, feudal culture, and traditional images of women were criticized and the youth was mobilized with new spirit and hope. It is without a doubt that there was an assertion that class and class struggle were the primary category for understanding all social issues during the Cultural Revolution, but there were repeated political mistake committed by the leadership who did not recognize patriarchy as a power relation which provided more privilege to men over women.

The CCP started a political attack on the Journal of Women Federation, namely, “Women of China” which attempted to deal with women’s issues and the special problem of women. In the magazine, “Red Flag” articles “Asserted that it was impossible to abstract ‘women’s question’ and a ‘women point of view’ which transcended class that indeed the problems under discussion were issues of ‘class viewpoint’ and that to raise them as ‘women’s issues’ was to adopt a ‘bourgeois viewpoint’ (Johnson, 1983, p. 180). The article argued that the economic unit of the family should be eliminated in a socialist society since women faced discrimination and oppression by private property within such spaces. Thus, women were no longer treated as slaves in the home during this time. After two years, CCP directly attacked Tung Pien the Editor of *Women of China*, and finally the publication of the magazine ended. After sometime, “the Women’s Federation was banned” (Johnson, 1983, p. 181) drew justification from the crackdown on the Women’s Federation and its local branch for eliminating feminist/bourgeois potential and its ideology which was dangerous for the Cultural Revolution and class struggle.

The CCP tried to propagate awareness of the bourgeois culture which was dominant in the party in order to create a true class consciousness within the party and society. But in this process, the party leadership not only preserved a bourgeois idea in the brand of Women’s Federation but also showed that the interest of the proletariat rested on giving no special attention to women, who did not require separate organizations, were able to tackle all issues on the ground of class and proletariat dictatorship. But in reality, the case was different. One could take an example from the Chinchien commune where women complained about family burden and discrimination in collective labor to the investigative authorities and proved of the existence of asexual division of labour within the commune. Two women complained of wage discrimination and the sexual division of labour. They protested in the following way,

You may be stronger and get higher wages, but in pedaling the wheel you exploit us.

"How do we exploit you? "All of us pedal the wheel with our feet, there's no difference.

But your wages are higher than ours. Is this not exploitation?" The one male members of

commune said: "Let’s drop it. Anyhow a hen can't crow like a cock, and a woman is a

woman"...the weaker ones pull us back. Women are not only weaker; they don't know

how to work either. They just drag on us. If the whole team were strong workers, we could guarantee harvests increasing twenty or thirty per cent every year". Even the team leader of the commune said, "That's right. The weaker ones are always dragged along by the stronger. Without strong workers for the ploughing and threshing there would be no crops. (Mao, 1972,, p. 72-73)

The team leader who was very sharp to understand of conflict according to Mao,for, example, "Team leader has said ploughing and threshing depend on strong workers. That's s one sided way of looking at things. Without the buffalo boys to tend the buffalos, how would we plough? Without the women to dry the rice, could we eat it?"(Mao, 1972, p. 72). The entire debates hovered around the weak and the strong by secretary rather than being recognized as a traditional approach of labor by the commune members. This was inclusive of the continued sexual division of labour within the new structure and putting the doubly heavy burden on women. In this context, the socialist education movement had failed to recognize the existence of the sexual division of labor within the commune system.

Cultural Revolution does not entirely neglect the women question. In the initial phase of the Cultural Revolution, intense ideological debates were carried out in the press and the Red Guard student movement. For example, a teacher of Philosophy at the Beijing University and leader of the party criticized against the conservative elements within the university administration [which] were representative of the thousands of young women student whose voices would join her in the struggle and debate of Cultural Revolution. But without redefining the old cultural and structural factors which continued, women faced patriarchal practice, which advocated and projected women as possessing a true revolutionary proletariat consciousness and hence suggestingthem to adopt a proper attitude. The entire period of Cultural Revolution centered on the issues of development strategy and the nature of the social transformation of Chinese society, but the issue of women subordination in different nature continued existing throughout the whole period. However, the large participation of women and its success effect

led to a more radical innovative approach which finally developed the notion that it was important to have certain kind of women liberation, even if not in the complete sense.

The significant contribution that Marxist theory provides in understanding the role of women was identifying the family as part of the wider social division of labor and thus as a source of female inequality, the barrier to the wider participation in social labor. But Marxist theory failed to provide a coherent analysis of how female roles would be transformed into a society. The Marxist theory also failed to identify how and why male domination of women worked within the working class. Engels addresses this question focusing solely on the presence of violence within the working class because of their worst condition. He describes that the lack of private property within the workers was no reason for male domination. “Within the working class, the last remnant for male domination remains as a form of brutality towards women which is firmly or rigidly rooted within the establishment of monogamy” (Engel’s, 2010, p. 72). It cannot be convincingly shown that brutality within the working class determined male domination within the working class family. Theories of this type thus naturally led to a political strategy providing collapse of the struggle for women into the class struggle.

In this chapter, we have seen how Marxist theory was implemented during the Chinese revolution, where CCP tried to create better conditions for women that would protest against their discrimination in public and private spheres, and how various complexities and conflicts arose in this process in the pre and post revolutionary China. We have seen the nature of the armed peasant revolution and the complex relationship between women rights and revolution which the CCP continued to preserve through a compromising approach towards women rights from the initial period in China. CCP’s attempts at propagating the feudal remnant and their culture created problems in the way of women liberation. The leadership failed to understand how patrilineal marriage patterns were being produced and reproduced by the socialist state. The PRC government introduced various policies and new organizational forms to ensure equality between men and women but was not able to challenge the patriarchal domination within the family and outside, and completely eliminate them. Patrilocal exogamous marriage pattern and family structure provided structural support to the continuing male domination on women through bride price, son preference, subordinate traditional roles, and obligations carried out by

women, the sexual division of labor, being excluded from public authority etc. The pervasive traditional attitudes based on discrimination helped to maintain and perpetuate the family and community domination on women as “natural and neutral” even to the eyes of the revolutionaries. Thus, the PRC government policies, economic substantial and political changes in China failed to break the patriarchal domination of women in the complete sense. Family reform remains a major project of women rights that remained incomplete during the Great Leap and Cultural Revolution. Not only were there attack on women representative likes Ding Ling during the united front in the name of unity in Yen-an, but as soon the Editor of the *Women of China* during the high conflict of Cultural Revolution. In the next chapter, I will discuss the dialogue between Marxists and feminists on the issues of women oppression and their liberation as to whether there is a theoretical lacuna in the Marxist theory on women question or is there a problem in the praxis of women question which could not liberate them in the socialist state.

Methodology: Marxist and Feminist Dialogue

During the mid-twentieth century, the most crucial question emerged in front of the feminist thinkers was regarding, whether the question of women's oppression can be taken up from a Marxist point of view or not? In the 1960s, feminist thinkers tried to understand the reciprocal relationship between labour within family and outside of the family, sexuality, motherhood, and marriage etc. In this process, feminists started to examine the non-economical issues of women's oppression but from the different standpoint of traditional Marxism. These feminists were engaged in the reassessment of concepts, ideology and the method of Marxist theory and politics. They were also engaged in reanalyzing social science and asking the question as to why women were being excluded from the mainstream knowledge sphere. They started thinking about research from the point of view of the day-to-day life of women. In this process, many feminist thinkers started focusing on social science research methods and methodology and criticized the mainstream research method and methodology. They claimed that there existed an androcentric bias within social sciences. Thus, on the count of these biases, women were absent at both the level of framing research questions as well as coming up with their respective answers. In this chapter, I shall discuss the Marxist and feminist ideology and methodology, and use the concepts as methodology to study the oppression of women and their subsequent liberation. This dialogue is to setup the context of the methodology in the present research.

The Russian and Chinese revolution provides us practical ground to examine the Marxist theory not only from the point of view of gender but also from the point of view of the revolutionary transformation of society in general. In the Soviet State, various policies and programs were launched by the government like freedom of domestic work, large-scale participation in the production system, a new marriage policy with land reforms and other such initiatives. Despite that, most active women leaders like Alexandra Kollontai in Russia and Ding ling in China were suspicious about Engels' and the party's approach on women's issues

and strongly believed that women liberation could be achieved only through class struggle. In addition to this, they also felt the need to challenge the non-economic issue. Beyond the economic issues, sexual practice and rules were the most important sites of women's oppression. Kollontai raised the question of a dominant Marxist understanding of the deterministic approach of class on the question of women's oppression (Kollontai, 1998). The important observations by Kollontai were twofold, firstly, in pointing out their important role as policymakers and being responsible for implementing the agenda of women's liberation and program in the Socialist State; secondly, to raise awareness about the complications in the matter of gender issues in a Socialist State. In other words, the failures of the socialist states pushed for a more nuanced understanding of the system of oppression on women. As feminists, they recognized the non-economical issues as the major reasons behind the oppression of women, one that was not defined only from the class point of view.

The feminists tried to revisit Marxist theory from the angle of oppression of women and challenged the Marxist notion of production, reproduction, family, the sexual division of labour, and the idea of use value and exchange value. At the same time, some feminists also included the Marxist methodology to generate different kinds of knowledge about the oppression of women from the feminist standpoint. The basic premise from where almost "all feminists begin is the understanding that women can possess and share valuable knowledge and thus start researching from the perspective of women's lives" (Nagy and Yaiser, 2004, p. 14). This would not only incorporate women's point of view but also advance understanding about class, caste, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality, thereby leading to the formation of new knowledge. In fact, feminists used Marx's method to extend the present understanding of oppression of women in a capitalist society. In this chapter, I would like to explore the different perspectives of Marxism and feminism on the subject of women's oppression.

Understanding of Class and Sex

After the 1950s, feminists who were unsatisfied with the Marxist practices on the women question initiated a re-reading of the nineteenth century Marxist writings. In this process, feminists – be it Marxists or Socialists in their approach - tried to define women's oppression as women

themselves instead of reducing the analysis to class and class conflict as is the way of the Marxist theory of exploitation and dialectical method. The first feminist conversation during 1960 on the issues of the relationship between labour and production which is a basic relation with value, capital and driving force of the society, particularly capitalist society that is purely based on the profit and exploitation of the labour of the working according to Marxist analysis. Marx and Engels referred to exploitation as the inherent nature of capitalism. Working class produces surplus value for the capitalists/bourgeois who exploits the worker's productive labour. Surplus labor is a result of the wage labour. Labour power obtains a particular form of the product which is bought and sold on the market. This product possesses a particularly useful property. In fact, this source of value has been observed by Marx in *Value, Price, and Profit* that was written in 1865 before *Capital*. Labour is also divided into two parts such as necessary labour and surplus labour. The domestic labor is part of the necessary labor which is to definitively include the bound surplus labour in the capitalist production process. But for Marx, necessary labour means that he or she is paid. The work reproduces surplus value for the capitalist on a working day but the capitalist is not paid off the worker's (he and she) value of surplus value. From the worker's point of view, no difference exists between necessary labour and surplus labour time. He and she get wage labor that is covered by both. In their view, every labor is paid labour (Marx, 1865, p. 11-19).

Marx does not discuss the second part of necessary labor that is referred to as domestic labor by the feminists. Feminists recognized domestic labour as part of the necessary labour. It has been performed outside the sphere of capitalist production. Benston (Marxist feminist) was the first one to address the relationship between labour and family in her article, namely "*The Political Economy of Women's Liberation*" which was published in *Monthly Review* in 1969. The article provided us to think how to organize labour in a patriarchal or capitalist society. Benston emphasized on domestic work as being a researchable field about which one needed to make a nuanced understanding from the feminist standpoint. Benston argued that the fact that the produce by women in the household could not be sold in the market did not necessarily mean that their labour was unproductive (Benston, 1969). Therefore, a woman's secondary position in society could only be explained through material and economic means. Women performed a lot of economic activities including child care and cooking, but the product and service which resulted from this work were consumed directly and did not reach beyond the family or trade and

the marketplace. In short, these products and their service had neither use value nor any exchange value. For Benston, “It can be shown that women as a group do indeed have a definite relation to the means of production and that this is different from that of men” (Benston, 1969, p. 3). Another thing that she points out is that women constitute “The group of people who are responsible for the production of simple use-value in those activities associated with the home and family” (Benston, 1969, p. 2). Therefore, Benston emphatically argues that a family is an economic unit whose primary function was the production of use value and not merely the consumption of goods. Moreover, because women are unpaid domestic laborers and are technologically primitive and outside the money economy, Benston argues, each family household represents an essentially pre-industrial and pre-capitalist entity. The material base provided by domestic labor enables the capitalist economy to treat them as ‘reserve army’ of labour. According to her, until and unless women are freed from their domestic labour, women’s liberation through jobs outside the home is not possible. Benston suggests the socialization of domestic work and childcare as a solution to the problem.

Peggy Morton (1970) extended the analysis of the family and household as a materially rooted social unit in the capitalist society. Morton sees the family as a unit for the maintenance and reproduction of labour. In other words, the main task of the family was to maintain the present workforce and provide the next generation of workforce. The function of the family was reduced to making people fit with the skill and values necessary for the capitalist system. Another Italian feminist Mariarosa Dala Costa argued, “Women constitute a distinct group whose oppression is based on the character of unpaid, she maintains that on a world level, all women are housewives” (Vogel, 1986, p. 203). She argued that domestic labour provides for labour which produces surplus in the market. Lise Vogel arguing that domestic labour is the part of necessary labour as evident in the following extract,

For the reproduction of labor power to take place, both the domestic and the social components of necessary labor are required. That is, wage may enable a worker to purchase commodities, but additional labor-domestic labor-must generally be performed before they are consumed. In capitalist societies, then the relationship between surplus and necessary labor had two aspects. On the one hand, the demarcation between surplus

labor and the social component of necessary labor is obscured through the payment of wages in the capitalist labor process. On the other hand, the domestic component of necessary labor becomes dissociated from wage labor, the arena in which surplus labor is performed. (Vogel, 1983, p. 152-153)

Vogel established a relationship between the household and the market, something that was missing in the Marxist understanding. Necessary labour produces a surplus in the market and at the same time leads to the reproduction of labour power in the household that is part of domestic labour.

Eisenstein (1979) argued that Marx and Engels saw exploitation and oppression as a result of men's position as workers in a capitalist society. Apart from this, Marx also assumed that women's oppression paralleled that of worker exploitation. They saw women as exploited when they entered the labour force as a member of the class or proletariat, but failed to see how "patriarchy and capitalism contributed to women's oppression" (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 23). Eisenstein argued, "Socialist feminist tried to define that women oppression is rooted in more her class position, have to address their position within patriarchy in both structurally and ideologically" (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 23-24). In the *Origin of the family, Private Property and the state*, Engels noted,

According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life. This, again, is of a two-fold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social organization under which the people of a particular historical epoch and a particular country live is determined by both kinds of production; by the stage of development of labour on the one hand and of the family on the other. (Engels, 2009, p. 5-6)

According to Engels, relations of reproduction become subsumed under the relations of production. Eisenstein argued in a contrasting manner and said that the reciprocal relationship between production and reproduction defines the life of women and should be dealt with respect to both sexual and economic material conditions if one wanted to understand about women oppression, rather than merely understanding their economic exploitation. "The historical materialist method must be extended to incorporate women's relations to the sexual division of labour and society as producer and reproducer as well as to incorporate the ideological formulation of this relationship (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 16).

Heidi Hartman (1981) contributed to the understanding of the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism by exploring how capitalism used sexual division of labor to benefit as a system. Hartman differentiated and emphasized that patriarchy and the mode of production or the capitalist system were separate, where patriarchy existed in every mode of production even in a socialist state. Socialist feminists recognized the class analysis but at the same time also argued that it is not sufficient for fully capturing the oppression of women. Zillah Eisenstein said, "Socialist feminist have made a synthesis which argues for looking at a woman as both a mother and worker and reproducer and producer" (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 1). Hartman argued, "Marxist analysis provided essential insights into the law of historical development, and those of capital, in particular, the category of Marxism are sex-blind" (Hartman, 1981, p. 17). The socialist feminists, on the other hand, developed two approaches known as the Dual System theory and the Unified System's theory.

The Dual System theory maintains that patriarchy and capitalism are distinct forms of social relation and distinct sets of interest which oppress women in particular ways. Hartman argued that "To understand women oppression both patriarchy and capitalism must be analyzed first as separate phenomena and then as phenomena that dialectically relate to each other" (Hartman, 1981, p. 19). She noted that "Patriarchy mean[t] male control over labor power, sexuality and reproductive capacity of women" (Hartman, 1981, p. 15). Many another feminist such as Iris Young and Lise Vogel argued, patriarchy and capitalism were not two separate systems. Vogel rejected the dominant trend, 'dual system', within the socialist feminist's circle and argued that class and gender hierarchies were not parallel structures of domination. She argued, class oppression was structured by social relations of production and sex oppression

was based on the social relations of reproduction. In such an analysis, capitalism and patriarchy were not seen as an independent system. Through the Unified theory, Vogel suggested that patriarchy and capitalism were two sides of the same coin.

After the 1960s, another branch of feminism known as Radical Feminism emerged as a powerful oppositional discourse. It challenged the epistemological basis of Marxism. Reproduction, motherhood, sexual politics (personally is political) and sexuality were the major issues that were taken up by the radical feminists. In fact, almost hundred years (from 1850 till 1950), the most influential and dominant Marxist thoughts on the women question were debated upon in which Marx proposed that the oppression of women would come to an end when class oppression had been eliminated. After the 1950s many feminists realized that class and gender interacted with each other in every category. While even Engels agreed that production and reproduction were both interrelated, it was generally accepted that production was primarily on one side, whereas the radical feminists primarily focused on reproduction on the other side. Kate Millett tried to establish the “Autonomy of reproduction from production” (Millett, 1971, p. 24-38), while Firestone accepted “Reproduction as a primary category of society” (Firestone, 1972, p. 20-12). Marx adopted the dialectic of Hegel and converted it into material reality in a similar fashion as Firestone. He took into consideration the reciprocal relationship between production and reproduction of Engels’ concept but recognized and established reproduction as the basic category. Firestone tried to convert the base structure to superstructure against the Marxist concept which was based on the centrality of biology but there is the potential of conservative and reactionary. Thus, for a feminist, it is not easy to move the construction of a society based on equality.

How is it possible to have a linear understanding of the relationship of men and women while society is divided into race and class, and also into various castes especially in the Indian context? Radical feminist also ignores in the same way power of class in front of sex power. Broadly, feminists tried to understand how power relations promoted women's oppression as a worker, whereas the fact is that women are also oppressed as a reproducer. In the next section, I will discuss the notion of hunting man in Marxist theory and its rejection under feminist investigation.

Challenging the Theory of “Hunter Man”

Feminist anthropologists and historians have made a valuable critique of anthropocentric notions about women and challenged the thesis of “man the hunter”. According to Marx and Engels, the main factor of women’s subordination is private property, a fact that I have included in my second chapter. To put it in short, the most important assumption of Marx and Engels was that there existed a natural division of labor, referred to as primitive communistic society, in which men were engaged in producing goods for livelihood and women were engaged for procreation. In this light, the producer was the primary driving force of the material life in hunting and agricultural society. Engels assumed, classless communist societies emerged ahead of private property. Engels noted,

The men went to war, hunted, fished, provide the raw material for food and the tools necessary for these pursuits. The women cared for the house and prepared food and clothing, they cooked, weaved and sewed. Each was master in his or her own field of activity; the men in the forest, the women in the house. Each is owner of the instruments which he or she makes and used: the men, the weapons and the hunting and fishing tackle, the women, the household goods and utensils. The household was communistic, comprising several, and often many, families. Whatever was produced and used in common was common property: the house, the garden, the long boat. (Engels, 2009, p. 155).

In the recent time, many ethnographical accounts provide a different picture of the hunting society and disapprove the generalization one can see in Engels’ accounts. Feminist historian Gerda Lerner (1986) disproves the thesis of hunting man and how men’s primary role was in production which in her view became the justification for men exercising control over women and making the latter a subordinate in the family. The problem is that very few empirical data are available from the time of Marx and Engels. Despite that their explanation and analysis is required for any new interpretation and analysis of the history of patriarchy. Then, what is the

basis of patriarchal power? Lerner tries to reinterpret through the available archeological and written material to deal with the question of women's subordinate position. She focuses on the Mesopotamian, Sumerian and Babylonian world and finally on the Hebrew culture between 3500 BC and 500 BC. Lerner deals with the question of the origin of women's subordination? Because of the origin of private property or state or agriculture, when was it exactly that men got power over women? She rejects the notion of Marx and Engels that the natural division of labour leads to women's subjugation and the historical defeat of women in the world. She observes that it is a set pattern of male thinking and formulation of the family unit that justifies men as going for hunting outside and women engaging in the household as a caregiver.

On the contrary, she considers the role of women and men as very important for the continued existence of the group and puts them both on an equal level - "Their roles are different but equal" (Lerner, 1986, p. 18). Not only does Lerner challenge the theory of the hunting man but also evidence available from the walls and paintings of Bhimbetika cave which is located in Madhya Pradesh. Bhimbetika wall paintings indicate how women's role in the creation of society was seen as inclusive of both the collection of food for livelihood and reproduction of the species. Sociologist Elise M. Boulding (1983) also notes, "The myth of hunter man shows that the maintenance as socio-culture of male supremacy and androcentric assumption of human relation" (Boulding, 1983, p. 273-91).

Lerner argues,

In the most primitive societies of the past, even their existence in present-day or time mostly depends on the ecological condition which women provide on the average 60 percent or more of the food. To do so they often range far from home, carrying their babies and children with them. Further, the assumption that there is one formula and one pattern for the sexual division of labour is erroneous. The particular work done by men and women has differed greatly in different culture, largely depending on the ecological circumstance. (Lerner, 1986, p. 22)

She suggests, Engels' work or theorization was actually "Based on animal husbandry which was the basic essence of led to commerce and to ownership of herds by individual heads of families, presumably male, but he was unable to explain how this took place" (Lerner, 1986, p. 22). According to Lerner, women subjugation or subordination was the first instance of slavery. According to her, it was the first time that women were held captive during the war and enslaved, reinforcing sexual relations and marital exchange, concubinage, and labour. It can be possible that when the conqueror was defeated by the enemy, the male was often killed through captors or injured and transferred to an isolated area, but the females and children were retained as captives to be included in the household and society of the captors. Lerner argues,

It is not easy to say what first led men to the conditional commutation of death for women and children. Most likely their greater physical vulnerability and weakness made them appear less of a threat in captive than did male enemy warriors. "Natal alienation" was readily accomplished by transporting them away from their home place, which place usually were physical destroyed. Since their male kin had been slaughtered, these captives could have no hope of rescue or escape. Their isolation and hopelessness increased their captor's sense of power. The process of dishonoring could in the case of women be combined with the final act of male dominance, the rape of captive women. If women had been captured with her children, she would submit to whatever condition her captors imposed in order to secure the survival of her children. If she had no children, her rape or sexual use would soon tend to make her pregnant and experience would show the captors that women would endure enslavement and adapt to it in the hope of saving their children and eventually improving their lot. (Lerner, 1986, 78).

It is a powerful argument taking into account the war period, an area which is lacking in the Marxist theory. In this context, Lerner emphasizes basically three major points, sexual oppression, reproduction, and labor existed during the war situation. In this process, women became

synonymous with property for the captors. With the development of agriculture in the Neolithic period or the New Stone Age, which saw an advance in the technological development in the inter-tribal, women were not only exchanged but there was a need for more women to produce more children. For agricultural activities, more women labor was used and children to increasing production and accumulated surplus. She said, "Men-as-a group had rights in women which women-as-a group did not have in men" (Lerner, 1986, p. 212). In both the situations, be it during the war period or during the agricultural process, men exchanged their women as property. For example, we can find out in the history of civilization "Women were exchanged or brought in marriage for the benefit of their families; later, they were conquered or brought into slavery, where their sexual service was part of their labour and where their children were the property of their masters" (Lerner, 1986, p. 212-13).

By citing the powerful historical analysis about slavery, she explains in detail how women were converted into slaves within history. By using women as property, as a reproducer of more labour power and for the purpose of sexual pleasure during the war period, men had learned how to control women as a group. Men had also learned how to enslave men of those groups and, later, "Subordinates from within their own societies" (Lerner, 1986, p. 213). She concludes "The enslavement of women, combining both racism and sexism, preceded the formation of classes and class oppression. Class differences were; at their very beginnings, expressed and constituted in terms of patriarchal relations. Class is not a separate construction from gender; rather, class is expressed in genderic terms" (Lerner, 1986, p. 213).

From the beginning of slavery and class, evidence suggests that the dominance of men and women did not operate in the same way. Primarily, men were exploited for purely economic reasons. But women were providers of sexual services as well as reproducers and laborers. Feminist theory, anthropological data, along with historical record suggests that every slave society offers evidence towards this generalization. The practice of sexual exploitation of lower-class women by upper-class men indicates how in the ancient time there started a division in parallel with class. Thus, complexities arose in terms of sex/race or sex/caste along with the class. Lerner argues "It is ubiquitous and pervasive for women and sexual exploitation is the very mark of class exploitation" (Lerner, 1986, p. 124-15). Some men are owned and control the means of production and they dominate other males who don't have anything, but only

labour for a livelihood. But the owners of the means of production obtain the commodity of female sexual services from both “Women of their own class and from women of the subordinate classes” (Lerner, 1986, p. 215).

However, this process creates more complexities within the women category. The upper-class women have class privileges unlike the lower class women, which is not the same in terms of class but rather in terms of some common interests beyond class and sex. Lerner also indicates that women are not a “homogeneous” category. She notes that in the context of women, the class is mediated through their sexual relationship with a man. Women have had access or been denied resources through the man. In short, it is through their sexual practice that they gain access to the class. “Respectable Women” (who practice according to the patriarchal code of conduct, rules, and regulation) gain access to the privilege of class through their father and husband, but the violation of the sexual code of conduct cannot survive in the same class. She argues that “Gender definition of sexual ‘deviance’ marks a woman as ‘not respectable’, which in fact consigns her to the lowest class status possible” (Lerner, 1986, p. 215).

On the whole, Lerner’s main arguments are, firstly, men’s appropriation of women’s sexuality and their reproduction capacity happened before the creation of private property and hence the commoditization of women’s body is inherent part of the foundation of private property; secondly, archaic states such as Mesopotamia, Sumerian, and Babylonia were practicing the form of patriarchal family and from its beginning, the state was interested to maintain the structure of the patriarchal family; thirdly, women are treated as subordinate through the practice of dominance and hierarchy by the men from their own group and this was an expression by the institutionalization of slavery which was started with the enslavement of women by the captors; fourthly, the state power enforced the law codes that was earlier institutionalized on women’s sexuality. Women also made adjustments or made it easier for the system that was secured by several force such as economical dependency on the male head of the family or class privileges that was also made the women of the upper classes dependent on their men. The division was among women in the name of being respectable or not. The men were and are still recognized by class relations but women are recognized by their sexual relations with men. Respectable women were tied with those men who were able to access material resources and non-respectable women were tied with all male that is they were freely

available for all men. We can see how women labour and their association with men determined their position in the society. In the next section, I will discuss how Indian Marxist intellectuals define the Indian society from a Marxist perspective which obviously includes the relationship between caste, class and gender and how women are subordinated in our society.

Understanding of Class and Caste in India

Indian Marxist intellectuals, especially historians studied the Indian society from the Marxist point of view. It has a twofold importance. Firstly, it provides us a glimpse beyond the nationalist history into the dominant notion of the Altekrian account of the ancients in the nineteenth century which was glorified in the past. Secondly, in the 1950s and 1960s, it shows us the turning point in historical studies which rejected the earlier understanding of history. Marxist historians rewrote history from a new perspective, a view of history from below or from the margins through the use of Marxist tools which provides us with rich resources about Indian feudalism with a nexus between the class and caste system, a feature of agrarian development in India. Here I would briefly like to discuss the importance of studying some of the prominent historian's works, who had conceptualized the past in terms of class and socio-political framework of the caste.

D. D. Kosambi was the first Marxist historian who initiated an investigation of the conceptualization of the relationship between caste and class in ancient India. Kosambi defined Indian history through "Indus valley civilization, the Aryan society, of the Vedas, to the ascendancy of Kosala and Magadha, before the emergence of the first Indian empire-that was/is the Mauryan Empire" (Kosambi, 2002, p. xxii). Romila Thapar says, Kosambi's scholarship was outstanding in the way he had interpreted the complex history of caste and class. Kosambi shifted the paradigm from the colonial and nationalist framework, "to introduce a new perspective that integrated socio-economical and cultural investigation about ancient India (Thapar, 2008, p. 44). He contributed a complex and unique structure of caste in the socio-political framework, thus enabling the next generation to study the phenomenon through a different lens. Roy noted "The strong argument of Kosambi, the structure of caste is developed in process of socio-political arrangement of society" (Roy, 2008, p. 78).

Kosambi argued, there was a contrast between Indus valley society and Aryan society. He explained that Indus valley was fully developed with a high technical and complex social organization that is indicated through the available information. In the Aryan society, one can see the continuities of the earlier cultural elements of the Aryan society. Kosambi provides two reasons for, 1) The basis of production in the Aryan society were horses, iron and plough, so that there were more effective ways of building a coercion state, 2) Labor service was provided by the Sudra's because of the caste system. Kosambi wrote, "India had helotage, not slavery" (Chattopadhyaya, 2002, xxii). Kosambi argued, the class and state formation happened through Sudra labor. The "State formation, clearly in the establishment of the Magadhan Empire, is crucial as the basis of this class society because state is directly involved in the creation of the true village which is the foundation of the state, through Sudra labor" Chattopadhyaya, 2002, xxii). The second and third stage of the Indian past roots of class and caste constituted a more hierarchical socio-economical relation among the tribes and the Aryans. For example, the second stage of "Aryanization" as referred to by Kosambi, was characterized in terms of the technological development from bronze to iron and also as a period of socio-economic transformation from a pastoral-nomadic tribe organization from a two-caste system to a four-caste-classes. The third phase of Indian history was characterized as agrarian and in terms of its political growth. Finally, Kosambi defined the exploits of the labour force which was provided by the Sudras with the emergence of the Magadhan Empire

Kosambi (1956) wrote his own views in *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, mentioning that the caste system did not emerge out of any internal reason in the original Vedic society, but from external processes. He mentioned, "The entire course of Indian history shows tribal elements being fused into a general society. This phenomenon...lies at the very foundation of the most striking Indian social feature, namely, caste" (Habib, 1995, p. 165). Kosambi considered, caste itself was expressed with class. He observed the relationship between caste and the relation of production in early India. For example, he said, "Caste is an important reflection of the actual relations of production, particularly at the time of its formation" (Chattopadhyaya, 2002, p. xxiii). He frequently expressed his own views regarding the relationship between caste and class with social arrangements. He wrote, "India has a unique social division, the (endogamous) caste system. Caste is class at a primitive level of production, a religious method of forming social consciousness in such a manner that the primary producer

is deprived of his surplus with the minimum coercion”(Chattopadhyaya, 2002, p. xxiii). In this context, he often observed the role of caste with class as equal that created an unequal relation among the people and was occasionally substantiated. But question was, is caste equal to class? In the answer of this question, Kosambi visualized the “Sudra as making a class of more or less dependent labors with no independent access to productive resource” (Roy, 2008, p. 79).

He suggested the possibility that priesthood and ritual authority had helped maintain a social control in the Harappan society. In Harappa, the priesthood was negotiated with the Aryan ruling elite. These negotiations and interactions (“On the Origin of Brahmin Gotras”, originally published in 1950) with the Aryan elite, led to the emergence of the fourfold varna order. In this order, it was the “Brâhmana claiming ritual superiority while they surrender or accepting political power to the ksatriya” (Habib, 1995, p. 126). Kosambi suggested, “Part of their position also derived from their grasp of the calendar which was so essential for regulating agricultural operations” (Habib, 1995, p. 165). But in this process, one section within the caste structure experienced the most vulnerable condition. However, the process of consolidation of caste structure with the class to change was ruling and warrior class, like Kshatriyas. Actually, the continued invasions and war made a hereditary monopoly of armed power within groups who was fought extremely difficult situation. While it seems like the caste system continued strong in history, it also seems that in the real condition it was one of the major weaknesses of the stability of the ruling caste. The ruling caste continuously faces challenges from the other dominant caste. The entire caste structure supposed a system of exploitation and oppression whose major beneficiaries were determined on its own terms. Almost in the basic sense, he seemed to agree with Kosambi in “Universalizing the caste system within India, Brahmanas have played an important role and that by integrating the caste doctrine into the dharma, Brahmanas made the caste system and Brahmanism inseparable” (Habib, 1995, p. 167). Rich and relevant accounts of Kosambi can be used to understand the nexus between caste and class.

R. S. Sharma was another prominent Marxist historian who studied ancient history, Indian feudalism and the caste system. His views on jati emerged during the second urban revolution before the rise of Buddhism. At that time, it appeared that there were a variety of productive skills in agriculture. It is possible that the tribe brought in large numbers into the

general society and started to throw away splinters under the pressure of the emerging division of labor. In this process, different craftsmen isolated and separated from their own original tribe groups and formed specific jatis. The *Manusmiriti* includes the carpenters, charioteers, and physicians among the 'mixed jatis'. But at the same time a "Similar process of differentiation of people who involved in a trade perhaps direct to the mercantile caste which is quite prominent in the jatakas story. It seems like emerged vaisya varna completely their own" (Habib, 1995, p. 167). Thapar noted, "We can find out priestly consolidations on the one hand and tribal incorporation within the agrarian or peasant population on the other. It was historical sources led to the creation of a caste system, helping and providing an institutional frame for exploitative relationships" (Thapar, 2008, p. 87).

For sociologists, there is a gap in understanding the relationship between caste and class. Sociologists define the caste system as a system where the position of everyone's caste is according to their rank in caste structure, purity and pollution/impurity, specific norms, and the ritual sanction by religious practice as adopted by each caste. Sociologists read the caste hierarchy cum independence, occupational specialization without division of labour and restriction on it, endogamy restriction without control on women sexuality and family and marriage without central site of women oppression in the initial phase. For example, in *Homo Hierarchicus* (1972), Louis Dumont considers that the caste system should be understood in terms of religious ideology which is displayed in many manifolds. It is reflected in the endless, complex, even conflicting, arrangements of ranks, the higher position as always belonging to the Brahmanas who were considered to be the "purest and command much of its ritual. The ranking does not originate through economic source but on the basic principle of purity or pollution (Dumont, 1972, p. 288). As a result, "The caste system is neither formed of classes, or through social stratification, and it need not correspond to the power of wealth (Dumont, 1972, p. 300). He explained hierarchy on the basis of purity, without any reference to the economic phenomena, making it seem like the economic impulse is very weak in India. In other words, the political economy of caste does not determine the factor for Dumont. The caste system in India is an unchanging hierarchy, with no history to recognize it.

Kosambi's contrasting accounts help to understand the link between both categories in the early period when a priest entered with their ranks in history. In Kosambi's view, the

Brahman priests were not associated with the tribe or the Aryans. But within the process of Aryan invasion, the priest provided not only the established Brahmanical model but also became the religious spokesman, protecting and maintaining the caste system. As a result, he concluded that the very important role of the Brahmans was to help and establish a model for the other castes - known or recognized as castes in the later periods. He suggested, "Other process too behind the formation of castes, namely, "tribal elements" being "merged into a general society". (Habib, 2008, p. 87) However, a tribe "Entering the general society would include a large number of primitive hunting or food gathering tribes living in forests, who would be subjugated by the advancing peasant communities.....as the food gatherers were subjugated they were reduced to the lowest jatis, so low as to be outside the four varnas altogether" (Habib, 1995, p. 167). In the Buddhist text, Chandals and Nisad were hunters – Kosambi notes, these were the original 'untouchable' castes. In the historical process of development, the Chandals and Nisad were excluded from it. They were engaged in minor or seasonal work. They were landless labour and paid the lowest wages by the superior landholders. The "Concept of purity and 'pollution' were a rationalization of this basic economic fact" (Habib, 1995, p. 165). The separation of peasant and menial jatis represented a division of labor.

Other sociologists like Hira Singh critically analyzes *Homo Hierarchicus* and argues Dumont neglects the history of caste and the existing critiques from within mainstream sociology and that he does not interrogate that mainly because the mainstream approach is indifferent or opposed to the historical method (Singh, 2014, p. 1). In contrast, he argues, historical approach is an essential to the study of caste. Singh suggests that there is a need to overcome the separation between sociology and history to study varna and jati. Singh advocates an intersectional approach on caste and tries to build interlink between caste and economic-political relation and ideology in the historical perspective. He argues, the continuity and change in the caste system can be seen in the changes of the material relation or the eco-political and ideological realm. In contrast, mainstream sociologists provide an alternative view that norms and rituals of caste are integrated and interconnected with the eco-political atmosphere. Chakravarti also criticizes the mainstream sociological writing on caste and argues "It gives an overemphasis on the ideological of the caste system, namely, on its ritual aspect, to the exclusion of material condition and the question of power" (Chakravarti, 2006, p. 6).

Sociologists focus on the Brahmanical viewpoint in their text rather than the experience and views of the Dalit writers who provide strong counter evidence of the oppressive caste system, which they totally ignore.

But what is lacking in almost all historians and sociologists is that they ignore the intersectional approach towards caste, class, and gender that determine the maintenance of caste system and patriarchy. Feminists recognize this gap and criticize both historians and sociologists for advocating that gender is the main important pillar of the caste structure, which produced and maintains it. Recent feminists challenge the earlier understandings of caste and class. Feminist figures like Uma Chakravarti, Suvira Jaiswal, Sharmila Rege tried to re-conceptualize caste and class in terms of gender through the feminist lens. Feminist accounts show how in both contemporary and ancient historical contexts, caste structures are/were created throughout the control of female sexuality. In the next section, I will discuss how the feminist intervention in the history of class and caste in terms of patriarchy made women realize what is lacking in the theorization of caste and gender from the feminist point of view.

Intersectional Approach of Feminist on the Caste, Class and Gender

The Marxist historian provides us with a nuanced understanding and interpretation in the context of caste and class but again seems like steeped in male prejudices and androcentrism or as male-centered production of accounts. In contrast, feminist Gerda Lerner argues, both men and women have been engaged in the creation of society. In order to rewrite history from the women's point of view, many feminists in India have turned towards the project of rewriting history after the 1980s. I will take the accounts of Suvira Jaiswal, Uma Chakravarty and Sharmila Rege for understanding the gendering of caste in contrast with mainstream academic disciplines that produce a biased knowledge about caste and class tempered with male prejudices.

Endogamy is recognized as one of the major characteristics of the caste system according to the sociologists. But the question which arises here is, whether there is any history of endogamy? Is it just embedded in the psyche of the Indian people? Has it evolved from any historical process and why does it continue to survive today? Jaiswal tried to understand these

questions through an examination of the historical development process. Jaiswal views caste endogamy as a continuation of the tribal past that integrated with the Aryan society. During the historical investigation, many examples were available which indicated that tribal groups had transformed into an endogamous caste. Jaiswal argues, “Caste endogamy was not a borrowing or survival of aboriginal practice. It evolved and consolidated in the process of regulating hierarchical subordination of social groups and reproduction of patriarchy” (Jaiswal, 2008, p. 5). She does not agree with Dumont’s views which make it seem that the caste system exists in the Indian mind through value and idea. In contrast, Jaiswal notes that

Caste ideology evolves gradually integration with changing material conditions and is not a mental invention unrelated to its material roots...caste hierarchy is not simply a matter of superiority of the pure over the impure but a form of exploitation which evolved in the process of enforcing subjection of women and weaker social groups. (Jaiswal, 2008, p. 5)

The existence of male dominance and the upper caste dominance are not separate but interlinked with each other. She assumes that when permanent agriculture was developed and the availability of servile labor from the Dasa and Sudra tribe became regularized, the men and women of Vedic privileged family possibly left manual labor and become more disrespectful of manual labour with laborers. She notes that “The caste system ended up providing a useful mechanism for controlling and regulating the economic and political resources (Jaiswal, 2006, p. 16).

Jaiswal’s account was similar to that of the other historians, arguing that caste system ensured the structured dependence of the agricultural and artisanal labor, which the land-owning and ruling elite took advantage of. She said that “The upper-class contempt of manual labour has been one of the organizing principles of the varna-Jati hierarchy” (Jaiswal, 2006, p. 17). The important intervention by Jaiswal was his reliance on ancient history, thereby filling important gaps that were missing in the accounts of Marxist historians like Kosambi. She also investigates the root of patriarchy with caste emergence which is significant to feminist understanding and feminist theory. She argued that for the sustainability of caste system, the presence of two

pillars was very important. One was, women subordination and the second was its capacity of recreating itself in a changing situation. For example “It has been shown that in spite of its apparent rigidity the system was able to enroll new members and create new caste categories at various levels” (Jaiswal, 2008, p. 5). She gives the example of the emergence of the Rajput and Kayastha. Within the caste structure, it is the scope for mobility through process fusion and fission that creates categories of the caste or sub-caste. It also maintains control of woman’s sexuality as well as endogamy and hypergamy and creates a different caste identity and its status. It is true, “The caste system continues to generate a condition in favor of the dominant caste through protecting structured dependence of menial and 'untouchable' castes for provided cheap labour for the ruling class and caste” (Jaiswal, 2006, p. 9).

We have also seen a continual change in the caste system because it has the capacity to rebuild or recreate itself and create new caste categories according to different political formations. Not only that, there is also an inherent part of the “site of struggle” which is to create identity and power with possibilities for political mobilization in the favor of the oppressed like an assertion of the Dalit identity. Here I have not entered into the debate of what were the different forms of Dalit assertion and the degree of challenge it posed to the political economy of caste or the changes it brought about in the politico-economic pattern of domination and exploitation in India.

Feminist historian, Uma Chakravarti’s accounts provide an analysis of caste and class in terms of gender. Theoretically, Chakravarti agrees with Lerner, which is rejecting the Engelsian formulation of the hunting-gathering society. Chakravarti observes how production is arranged and who controls it but also argues the importance to understand how reproduction is arranged and who holds it. The crux of the Lerner investigation provides unique evidence from early Mesopotamia where women belonged to different classes and had economic participation. Despite that her sexuality and her reproductive role were under the control of men and the state.

Chakravarti argues, the Harappan civilization appeared as a clear stratified society where the food production system and the distribution mechanism were far more complicated. In fact, there was trading, maintain the distance between laboring class and elite class. The elite class who lived in the bastion. However, with the complex production system, social stratification, and existence of the state, it was not difficult to imagine that the control of

women's sexuality was under the state or the community. She notes, "Some form of community, clan and state control over women and their sexuality were aspects of the social organization of the archaic state and could well have existed in the Harappan culture too" (Chakravarti, 2006, p. 42). In the hunting-gathering societies, women were engaged in productive activities and the same women were reproducers. In this context, one can assume that no strict form of the division of labor and the role of women in food production was equal. Chakravarty says

Archeological evidence indicates that the 'women participation in the hunt was visually represented in the cave paintings in Bhimbetka in central India, a Mesolithic site dated to roughly circa 5000 B. C. In this paintings clearly shows that the "women engage in fruits gathering, using basket and small nets. They also seem to have combined their role as mothers with their activities as gatherers. Paintings include those a woman with a basket slung across her shoulders with two children in it as well as an animal on her head; another one depicts a woman dragging a deer by its antlers and a third depicts a woman engage in trapping fish. Women carrying baskets are often depicts as pregnant and there are group –hunting scenes in which women too are present. (Charavarti, 2006, p. 40)

The above reference clearly indicates that the economy was simple and women played double roles such as that of the producer and the reproducer who took care of the cattle and the family rather than the men. Chakravarti also drew attention to the Rig-Vedic period, referred to as the war period, which led to the settlement of the Indo-Aryan conflicts. During the Rig-Vedic period, the war continued between the various tribes, Rig-Vedic tribes against dasyus, dasas and sudra, in which men were engaged in war. Chakravarti argues, women's sexuality was controlled by the clan or the community. The practice of *niyoga* indicates that the woman's sexuality was a family resource whereby women were married to their brothers-in-law after the death of a husband. Likewise continued the subjugation of women - women from the defeated tribe would be included within the victorious household for labour and reproductive labour.

Chakravarti disagrees with Kosambi's position on caste as a specific and unique kind of stratification. She argues caste is a different form of oppression but connected to class. She

defines caste and class as the two hierarchies operating in the entire society. One functions in ritual purity whereby the Brahmanical ideology occupies the upper social position and 'untouchable' the lower position. Secondly, it bestows the political and economic status of the landholders or landlord to the upper position and landless to the lower position. She notes, the "First corresponds to the formal representation of the society and second to the reality- together they make for the unique form of inequality that caste represents" (Chakravarti, 2006, p. 12). The most important thing which Chakravarti relates is the crucial factor of the caste system, its 'endogamous character', which directly controls which person should another person marry within their own caste. Chakravarti strongly points out the connection between caste and gender as follows,

Class, caste and gender are inextricably linked; they interact with and shape each other: the structure of marriage, sexuality and reproduction is the fundamental basis of the caste system. It is also fundamental to the way inequality is sustained: the structure of marriage reproduces both class and caste inequality and thus the entire reproduction system through its tightly controlled system of reproduction. (Chakravarti, 2006, p. 27)

She tries to relate women subordination with caste and class. Chakravarti emphasizes class is a different system of production from caste, which is a system of production and reproduction that differentiates the Indian stratification system from others and also creates difficulties within the Indian situation. She argues, endogamous marriage is the central pillar of the caste system which directly influences and shapes the gender relations. Caste cannot reproduce without endogamy. Thus, the endogamy marriage system works as a basic weapon or tool to maintain caste and gender subordination. Chakravarti also explains the character of endogamy as an "Expansion of a certain kind of production relations and provides it with the flexibility to incorporate other pre-caste communities, maintaining the cultural discreteness of each other new community that becomes a part of the caste system" (Chakravarti, 2006, p. 27). Thus, she reformulates patriarchy in the Indian context, particularly in the northern part of India - which is the center of Manu-land with its roots in the Vedic period. The Brahmanical and Hindu rule and code of conduct for caste, class, and gender has originated in the northern part of India. She uses the term of "Brahmanical patriarchy" to define its character. Recently, this idea of "Brahmanical

patriarchy” has been accepted within the feminist circle. It basically defines the whole complex formation of the social status and economic production on which the social reproduction is built on.

In Chakravati’s views, Brahmanical patriarchy is a unique structure of Hinduism and the caste system. Through this, she addresses the unique form of patriarchy which exercises control over women life all over India. She mentions that there is a cluster of regulations and institutions in performance with caste and gender, connected with each other, shaping each other and maintaining a very thin line through women between castes.

Chakravarti defines,

Patriarchal code of brahmanical structure ensure that the caste system can be reproduced without violating the hierarchies order of closed endogamous circle, each distinct from and higher and lower than others. Further, brahmanical codes for women differ according to the status of the caste group in the hierarchy of castes with the most stringent control over sexuality reserved as a privileged for the highest castes. Finally, it incorporates both an ideology of chaste wives and *pativrata* women who are valorize, and a structure of rules and institutions by which caste hierarchy and gender inequality are maintain through both the production of consent and the application of coercion...caste system the distinctive cultural code for upper and lower caste women in term of marriage and sexuality are also closely linked to the appropriation of the labor of the lower castes by the upper castes. This explains the ban on remarriage of upper caste woman at one end and, sometimes, the enforced cohabitation of the lower caste woman at the other. The large ‘rational’ of the caste system as system of labor appropriation has shaped the code of gender to further the end of the upper castes. (Chakravarti, 2006, p. 27)

From the above reference, it clearly draws the line demarcation mechanism of Brahmanical patriarchy as the main element of the land, and women and ritual as the basic feature of unique formation of caste in our society. It is governed only by the need to control women's reproductive power of the upper caste not only to ensure land and ritual but also to ensure control over all cases of labor source. She also draws attention to the category of women as not a "homogeneous category" within the caste system. For example, the upper caste women are the central point of the caste system which is a threat to the purity of blood by the lower caste men. For purity of the upper caste, sexual interaction is not permitted between women of the upper caste with lower caste males. Thus, the upper castes watch or control their women's mobility and sexuality very carefully. The upper caste women have the privilege of caste and class only if they are performing according to their gender role. In conforming to these rules they have no fear of losing the privilege. But at the same time, upper caste males have the right over lower caste women to sexually abuse them and exploit their labour. Women from the lower castes have no rights and their position is the most vulnerable in comparison to the upper caste female. It is an inherent part of a caste structure and Brahmanical ideology.

We have seen a dialogue between Marxism and feminism on the essential categories that determined the factors of women's oppression. Now, in the next section, I will discuss the feminist methodology which is an important part of feminism. Without the feminist methodology, feminists cannot challenge the androcentric knowledge system which was produced in academics since along time. In Eichler's words, feminist research methodology consists of research methods and methodology that are non-sexist in nature.

Sex as a Social Category: Feminist Methodology

The feminist methodology was the most important question among the feminists after the 1970s. The important question which arises is that: Is there any feminist methodology or distinct feminist method of inquiry? Over the last three decades, many feminists tried to answer this question. There are two approaches or trends within feminism which gear it towards feminist methodology. One approach advocates the use of Marxism to define women's oppression within capitalism. One could take the example of, Nancy Hasrtock (1985), who

suggested the question of epistemological level in order to advocate the feminist standpoint theory. She argued,

Marx's understanding of the world from the standpoint of the proletariat enable him to go beneath bourgeois ideology, so a feminist standpoint can allow us to descend further into materiality to an epistemological level at which we can better understand both why patriarchal institutions and ideologies take such perverse and deadly forms and how both theory and practice can be redirected in more liberatory directions. (Hartsock, 1985, p. 231)

According to Vogel, Martha Gimenez, Rosemary Hennessy, Hiedi Hartman and others, Marx's concepts and category of class, production, exploitation, alienation, and methodology such as historical materialism and dialectical materialism can be used for a better understanding of the capitalist society. Along with this, the Marxist methodology can be used to explain women's oppression from the feminist standpoint. Vogel and Rosalind Petchesky suggested, our goal is with a "double vision" as projected by Joan Kelly, which is not to dissolve the hyphen between Marxism and feminism. Through the double vision, one will be "Enable to achieve a unified social outlook" (Vogel, 1981, p. 196-7).

The second approach is in recognizing class category is itself is gendered and one should move beyond it. In this context, Sandra Harding (1991), a feminist philosopher, argues for the need to build a strong objective through feminist inquiry. She develops the standard of feminist research as that with a "strong objectivity". And other feminists are inspired by the theory of structuralism and post-structuralism which advocates the deconstruction of "women" as a category of analysis, the focus on "discursively constructed" genders, sexualities, bodies, and the manifold differences among women which together seem to have established the link between feminist theory and the women's liberation project. Through the idea of women's experience in a sexist atmosphere, we can eliminate the discursive construction. In my view, there is no compartmentalization or antagonism on the material condition and ideology of sexism. In reality, both are related, interlinked and shape each other from time to time.

Gimenez (2005), a feminist sociologist, used Marxist methods for understanding women oppression from a feminist point of view. The methodological insights of Marx, she suggested, is needed to examine the unequal relationship between men and women in their historical context. She argued, “Marx cautions us to avoid projecting into the past or into a universal human nature the attributes people exhibit in the present; e.g., the individual for whom it is natural to engage in market competition and utility maximization is the product of bourgeois society, of a particular historical epoch” (Gimenez, 2005, p. 15). She noted that we have to look at the historical circumstances that produced and reproduced the present asymmetrical social relation and level of consciousness among men and women. The theoretical and methodological needs provided by Marx can be used to understand the relevance of the oppression of women. The basic tool of investigation and methodology used by Marx is that of dialectical and historical materialism. She believed,

Marx’s most important potential contributions to feminist theory and politics reside precisely in the aspect of his work that most feminists ignored: his methodology. Exclusive focus on what he said and did not say about women kept feminist theorists from exploring the potential of his methodological insights to deepen our understanding of the phenomena called ‘the oppression of women’ or, in earlier times, the ‘woman question.’ (Gimenez, 2005, p. 15)

It is a methodological statement of Marx that some aspects of social reality appear to us in the form of concrete and obvious nature. Our starting point of examination is at least in the informative sense because “They presuppose multiple historical conditions of possibility that cannot be grasped without further theoretical and historical analysis” (Gimenez, 2005, p. 15). Gimenez argued that we get knowledge when we progress from those “imaginary concrete conception” (women, men, and children etc.) to “increasingly concrete conception” towards a partial, one-sided aspect of complex phenomena like domestic labor, the sexual division of labor and gender. Then, after a theoretical and empirical examination of the historical social relation of these abstractions, we return to the phenomenon that concerned us, now understanding it as “A totality comprising many determinations and relations. The concept is now a “real concrete”

because it is “A synthesis of many definitions, thus representing the unity of diverse aspect” (Gimenez, 2005, p. 15-16). Gimenez explored the relevance of Marx’s methodology for deepening our understanding of the structural basis of inequality that exists between women and men under capitalism. She emphasized on the structural conditions of women oppression in a capitalist society and analyzed it within its specific historical contexts. She strongly believed that Marx’s methodology can lead us to a conceptualization of the oppression of women. For example, the socio-economic stratification, and domestic division of labour and so on that we can observe in the labour market.

These questions clearly increased feminist consciousness, affected each other, and initiated change in the conceptual foundation of history by introducing sex as a category of social thought (Kelly, 1976). The most fruitful result is the conception of women as a social class, making Marxist feminists like Margaret Benston and others focus on studies of women through class analysis. Benston traces the roots of women’s subordination and argues secondary status in history in term of economic, and also women as a group have had a distinctive relation to production and property in almost all societies. Benston herself makes “A clear understanding of women’s subordination from the class point of view and extends the tool of class analysis to women and to maintain that women are a class” (Kelly, 1976, p. 18).

Kelly argues, women have to be defined as women. The relationship of the sexes is as necessary to an understanding of human history as the social relationship of classes. What now needs to be worked out are the connections between change in class and sex relations. Kelly argues that we consider a significant change in the respective roles of men and women in the light of the fundamental change in the production. “A theory of social change that incorporates the relation of the sexes has to consider how general changes in production affect and shape the production in the family and, thereby, the respective roles of the men and women” (Kelly, 1976, p. 21).

The second trend within feminism is seen in the rejection and detachment of themselves from mainstream social methodology, in order to develop a nuanced understanding from the women’s point of view through feminist perspective and feminist methodology.³ Stacey, a

³ Here I am indicating that method and methodology are different, method is technique of data gathering but methodology is theory and analysis of how research should proceed.

feminist sociologist, noted that feminist scholars were explicitly known to express widespread disappointment with dualism such as “Abstraction and detachment of positivism and rejecting the separation between subject and thought and feeling, knower and known, political and personal – as well the reflection of these separations in the arbitrary boundaries of traditional academic discipline” (Stacey, 1991, p. 111). The majority of the feminist scholars advocated the integrative, intersectional and trans-disciplinary approach to build knowledge from the everyday lives of women or experience of the women in their day to day life in a male-dominated society. In 1983, Barbara Du Bois wrote, ‘*The Passionate Scholarship: Notes on value, knowing and method in feminist social science*’, in which she asserted “women experience” as the main and central agenda for feminist scholars but in contrast Catharine A. Mackinnon observed that each sex has its role, but their stakes and power are not equal. This is not a dialectical paradox but it is a methodological expression of the women’s situation, in which the “Struggle for consciousness is a struggle for world: for sexuality, a history, a culture, a community, a form of power an experience of the sacred” (Catharine, 1983, p. 136). Feminists celebrated feeling, belief and experientially based knowledge and relationship. Discussion of feminist methodology generally assaulted the hierarchy, exploitative relations of conventional research urging feminist researchers to seek instead on egalitarian research process characterized by authenticity, reciprocity and subjective between the researchers and their subjects.

Harding (1987) raised question on theory of knowledge or epistemology and provided a historical sensitivity which raised methodological and epistemological questions such as what to know, who knows about it, who has the knowledge, what is the validated form of knowledge to be known, can woman be a knower and who has this sort of validated knowledge. She observed

Feminist have argued that traditional epistemologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, systematically exclude the possibility that women could be ‘knower’ or agent of knowledge; they claim that the voice of science is a masculine one; that history is written from only the male perspective or point of view (of the dominant class and race); that the subject of a traditional sociological sentence is always assumed to be man. (Harding, 1987, p. 3)

The idea of experience, difference, and intersectionality

The idea of experience, difference, and intersectionality have led to a development of feminism over the decades and been recognized in the academic discipline in India as well as the overall world. The experience of women in male domination society is important but also there is different experience regarding their class and caste. For example, upper caste women oppressed by own male members. They are enjoying the privilege of upper caste and class. But Dalit women (class and patriarchy, some feminist referred as Dalit patriarchy) in the caste system and class structure are more of 'suffering and pain. There is a strong connection between caste and gender that determined the whole structure of oppression against women. Thus, it is not only for the present power structure but also a "historical necessity" (Bagwat, 1976) to engage with a radical alternative politics and theory for their liberation. Dalit women's experience provides the reality of the multiple oppressions according to social status, poverty and helplessness and struggle of the historical and current against power structure of the society. The significance in Dalit women's experience articulate concerns of a member of a peasant community in gendering sense, challenging the singular notion of peasant male in the society. At this juncture, Rege has written: "Complex and conflicting relations between the women's question and the caste question suggest the need to interrogate historically the frames of reference that assume narratives of mutual exclusions or erasures" (Rege, 2006, p. 45).

In this context the experience of women, their struggle can provide an opportunity to map the peasant struggle in Bihar on the one hand and party structure, radical left theory on the women question on the other hand. The interviews of women members who are representatives of the different class, caste and social rank in the society provide valuable inputs that can be used to contextualize their experience, difference, and intersectionality and build up a women's history of the peasant movement. There is much study on the radical peasant movement in general but if I want to know about the women struggle against State and private militia of the upper caste while playing an active part of the peasant movement, their experiences as women of the peasant struggle in general and as members of the radical left party in particular. However, a socio-political movement like the Naxalite movement is not only a present struggle between landowners and landless but also provide the struggle between the authority of family, a new idea

of marriage with tradition practice, caste practice through marriage and family kinship and recollection of political movement among ordinary people. In this context, this research includes women activists of All India Women's Association (associated with Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Liberation) and Nari Mukti Sangh (associated with Communist Party of India (Maoist) who experience politics and their memories of struggle and impact on their lives.

This study is based on interviews with women who have actively participated in the movement – among them, some are still active while others are not. My first objective is that to place women experience in the center of the movement who were missing from the movement and peasant literature and to understand their struggle and hardship against landlord oppression as women. The second objective is, how radical left parties address the women question and place women agenda for their liberation? Thus, a conscious decision was taken to confine my interviews only to women activists. I deliberately restrain from adopting any form or method in its entirety. My attempt is to take the feminist understanding to new and difficult areas and to look at how patriarchy plays out in the Radical Left Party in practice while lacking in a theoretical understanding of women oppressions in the Indian context. I have attempted to include secondary sources such as party documents; magazines, booklets etc, and primary resources such as women interviews who are members of the parties. The fourth and fifth chapters are specifically based on these resources which provide us a nuanced understanding of gender dimension of radical left movement. My argument here is women, especially Dalit women's life experience provide the truth of the struggle and resistance. The next chapter shall focus on All Indian Progressive Women's Association and Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Liberation on the women question in Bihar.

Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism)

Liberation

We had nurtured the party in our pallu (the corner of saree), we had made food for our comrades, and we saved the party from the oppressive Ranvir Sena and also the Sate.

Chinta Devi⁴ of Sahar (Bhojpur)

In the above quote, Chinta Devi, a member of the All India Progressive Women's Association from Sahar block of Bhojpur, indicates her commitment, subjective alignment with the party, and engagement to save the party from private caste militia. She is an active participant in the struggle which has been launched by the Communist Party of India (ML) Liberation in Bhojpur of Bihar in the early 1980s. Chinta Devi was recalling a "different period" when she had worked as an underground activist – referring to it as "*gupt karya*" (underground work). Women of Bhojpur remember "those days of struggle" against the feudal landlord as one that had spread across villages, where they not only acted as supporters but as active agents. Despite this, they are invisible in the peasant history. The story of the struggle and experience of the women of Bhojpur provides a rich and fascinating resource to study women's struggle in Bihar. Through these accounts, it is clearly indicated that women have been a major force of the movement and how the movement has shaped the area of Bhojpur. Further, the movement has created a space for women use their own political agency – something that makes this movement so unique.

It was in the 1970s when peasant struggle spread among poor people, especially the Dalit community and agricultural workers. It is the Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Liberation that led the armed peasant movement around the issues of land rights, minimum wage and dignity right up to sexual oppression in Bihar. This historical experience of the struggle in which thousands of poor Dalit male and female participated under the leadership of the CPI (ML) Liberation is recognized as qualitatively different from the pre-Naxalite struggle such as Triven Sangh and Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha where

⁴ All names taken in this chapter are take names. The real names were not taken in order to hide their real identity. A pseudonym

peasant women did not participate in such large numbers as in the Naxalite movement. In Bihar, women accounts show that there is a powerful history of women's struggle in Bihar that has never been found in the studies of peasant history. It is also the history of the ML Liberation and nature of peasant struggle was to subsume women militancy and struggle - their roles were depicted as "additive", and sometimes as "heroic." The problem is not only approach of the "additive" or "heroic" the problem of additive or heroic approach is missing from the struggling picture of the day to day life of women from the movement and their accounts as women leaders) but there is also tensions and contradictions regarding the policy and programme for women rights, primarily pertaining to land reform and family reforms in the entire period. Essentially, the CPI (ML) Liberation tried to define women's oppression in combination with class oppression, especially emphasizing the fact that the oppression of women had to be abolished through class struggle. In this process, the party tried to deliver the content of the struggle and the strategy of peasant-as-peasant and worker-as-worker (which is class defined by property, power and ownership of means of production, in generic sense filled these categories by male. Can this be applied to both the sexes?) as more important rather than oppressions of women as women.

In the course of practice, however, the CPI (ML) Liberation failed to address even the class question in terms of women rights to land and ownership of it. Along with this if the class was described in terms of property, ownership and power, women was seen either in term of class category or merely as women. In an androcentric and patriarchal society, women relationship is defined in terms of male through sexual service, labor service and motherhood – the core concepts through which women enter the class category. Secondly, the more important concept is that "woman" is not a homogeneous category. They enjoy or suffer their privilege or unprivileged socio-economic power relation in terms of male class and caste status. I will trace the achievements and contradictions through the women experience of the struggle against the feudal landlord and the party on the women's issues in the rural areas of Bihar since 1980s on the one hand, and party attitudes, debate and policy approach toward women's rights on the other.

I would like to divide this chapter into two sections - pre-1990s indicating underground politics and post-1990s indicating parliamentary politics of the CPI (ML) Liberation. I will explore the nature of the party and how it carried forward the struggle against oppression of women. From post-1990s, the party changed its mode of struggle for revolution. But the party faced some serious obstacle, specially, during the emergence of Ranvir Sena in the base areas of Bhojpur. However, after 1992, the party started participating in electoral politics. Complexities arose due to a major shift from the class struggle to the political struggle, with a definite impact on women's issues, their struggle and other new challenges. I would like to explore the experience of women's struggle against landlord oppression, with the state on one hand and the women experience of CPI (ML) Liberation from the 1980s onwards in Bihar on the other hand. Here my main resources are in-depth interviews of those women who were part of the struggle from its beginning period when it was known as underground politics and I will also focus on the post-1990s struggle of the women in Bihar.

In this chapter, I would like to look at the arguments based on the interviews that I have conducted in 2015 in Jahanabad, Bhojpur and Patna. The interviewee women of the first group are mostly illiterate and local women activists from different class and caste background who had participated in the movement during the 1980s but who are presently inactive. The second group consists of women who are literate, still active and are leading the movement in the present time. I will also examine some of the methodological issues involved in such storytelling, especially experience of the struggle shared by the office bearers and local women leaders. I am aware that 'women' are not a 'homogeneous' category. In fact they have many identities such as poor, rural, Dalit, illiterate women activists who all shape their experiences differently. In this context, I will examine the CPI (ML) Liberation's idea of women's liberation and how did the leadership place the agenda of women's rights during the struggle. For understanding this I have visited some party literature on the women's question discussed by the leadership. Before entering the discussion on women's participation in the agrarian movement I will briefly mention the history of the Naxalite movement in Bihar and then will return to my main research theme.

History of CPI (M-L) Liberation in Bihar

In the 1980s, the peasant struggle was launched by the CPI (M-L) Liberation in Bhojpur, Patna and Jahanabad of Bihar through open peasant organizations, namely, Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (henceforth BPKS), Indian People's Front (henceforth IPF)) and also armed activities against oppressive landlords. BPKS organized poor peasants for their land rights, wages, dignity and *izzat* (honor). This movement was essentially started in the late 1960s and early 1970s under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar. The CPI (ML) had adopted armed struggle against landlords, a movement known as the Naxalite movement as it happened in the village Naxalbari within the Siliguri Subdivision of West Bengal. The movement was initiated by the unsatisfied local leadership of the Communist Party of India (Marxism) who was in favor of Mao's strategy and theorization of peasantry, as well as the "semi feudal and semi colonial" state and advocated that New Democratic Revolution. After the struggle of Naxalbari village under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar, the CPI (Marxism-Leninism) was formed in 1968. The main agenda of the CPI (ML) was the complete overthrow of the rule of feudal landlords and comprador bourgeoisie. With this aim in mind, they mobilized the landless peasants with hopes and dreams in the 1970s to turn the decade into that of revolution. But the state started a crackdown on the movement and an emergency was imposed where CPI (ML) leadership were arrested on a massive scale, tortured and killed by the state.

In the course of the attack, surviving CPI (ML) activists revisited the strategy and tactics of Charu Mazumdar and formed new party, namely Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) Liberation after national emergency. Under the leadership of Mishra, the party reformulated its old strategy of revolution and the nature of peasant organization and struggle. As a result, the CPI (ML) liberation formed open peasant organization such as the Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha to address the peasantry in Bhojpur and the Indian People Front in 1981-82. The IPF involved in the national political realm and tried to unite other mass organizations with the aim of building a strong peasant movement in the country. Although the Liberation accepted the thesis of "semi feudal and semi colonial" and new democratic revolution however

it adopted the strategy and tactics of open mass organization and armed activities. In 1985 they decided to incorporate electoral participation through the IPF. The party was underground at this point of time and fought armed battles against the oppressive landlord and private caste militia.

The Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha mobilized poor peasants against labor extraction, forced labor and sexual abuse in the rural area of Bihar. The basic demands were land rights, increased wage, hold on common property, housing, *izzat* (dignity or honor) and the end of sexual oppression (Bhatia, 2006; Loius, 2002). Through these demands, both the organizations such as BPKS and IPF developed a powerful peasant movement in Bihar. From 1989 onwards, the party leadership felt the need to change the strategy for peasant movement or revolution. As a result, the party held a Special Conference in July 1990, where it was decided to open the party. It was also accepted that there was a need for a change in strategy which could be achieved through encouraging participation in electoral politics. After two years, in December 1992, the decision was formalized at its fifth congress. After this decision, Geeta Devi told me that the “Party faced internal problems such as many members disagreed on the decision and some members became inactive. Some members of armed units also disagreed and took separate armed actions without party guidance”. After sometime some members again joined the party but only half heartedly. After that in 1994, the Indian People’s Front was disbanded. The party was recognized by the Election Commission in 1995, and was able to contest the 1995 assembly elections as CPI (ML) Liberation which has continued till today. In 1995, the Liberation won seven seats and was recognized as the third opposition in the parliament. But some of the MLA decided to shift their allegiance towards Laloo Prasad Yadav, ultimately joining JDU - it was a tragedy for the party.

After certain structural and tactical changes, the party started facing serious problems with the emergence of Ranvir Sena in 1995. Along with it they also started facing internal problems regarding the mode of struggle against Ranvir Sena. During 1995-1999, “the party fought against deviation and stagnation according to the documents of the party (CPI (ML) Bhojpur zila committee, 1997, 1996, p. 2-3). For example, a debate emerged among the members on whether to fight against the Ranvir Sena with arms or not. The Liberation published booklets for its member and also organized meetings to conclude the debate. It tried to convince the members of a democratic means of struggle such as padyatras, gheraws, rallies, dharnas, conventions, protest march etc. However, Ranvir Sena was the most notorious private caste Sena that emerged in Bhojpur against the peasant movement. As a result, entire central Bihar was burnt; the most brutal violence was unleashed on those living in mud houses by the Senas. The Ranvir Sena launched a series of attacks on the Dalit Tolas such as Bathani Tola, Laxmanpur Bathe, Shanker Bigha, Narayanpur etc., between 1994-2000, something which Kunnath referred to as “the killing field” (Kunnath, 2012, p. 98). These attacks on landless peasants, particularly on Dalit families were very crucial for the ML Liberation. The poor Dalit community faced massacre after massacre till 2000. Rapes and physical assaults became rampant in an attempt to crush the movement. However, the ML liberation defined these attacks as its manifestation of the decline of feudalism in Bihar. They failed to look at the Brahmanical structural manifestations based on the socio-economic condition where poor landless, ‘untouchable’ Dalit men and women were subjected to labor extraction and caste and sex oppression, particularly in the case of Dalit women. In addition, sexual subordination of Dalit women to

upper caste men provided a structural root of violence on the Dalit women. There existed a whole realm of everyday action in the lives of the Dalit community which was deeply embedded into the Brahminical patriarchal power structure and ideology. In other words, it showed the complete nexus of class, caste and gender. It was in this crucial situation that Dalit women started participating in the struggle against caste militia and state repression. Their experience of sexual oppression and labor exploitation had finally pushed the poor Dalit community to participate in the movement and bring about a change in their own condition. In the next section, I will discuss women's participation in the movement during armed struggle.

Women Struggle against Landlord and State Agency under CPI (ML) Liberation

The influence of the Naxalbari uprising was strong in Bihar and from its very beginning the Dalit community mobilized under the CPI (M-L) leadership. It was in 1971 that the first Naxalite armed action took place against an upper caste landlord, namely, Shivpujan Singh in the Ekwari village of Sahar block of Bhojpur, under the leadership of Jagadish Mahto, Rameshwar Ahir, Bikhar Kahar, Maharaj Mahto and Singhasan Chamar (Bhatia, 2005, p. 1537; Mukherjee and Yadav. 1980, p. 48). From 1969 to 1978 several Naxalite attacks on landlords took place where the oppressive landlords were killed. During this time almost all villages of this region were influenced by the Naxalite movement. Kalyan and Yadav (1980) noted that when landlords were killed, the Dalit community took a breath of relief. For example, when landlord of Ayar as well as Thana Singh was killed by the Naxalite, after that the reaction of the Dalit community can be seen in the following extract:

Thana Singh one of the most oppressive Rajput landlords of Jagdishpur, was killed in 1972. The poor Musahar and Chamar peasants in and around the village of Ayar heard of this with relief...An old Musahar of Barnau village of Jagdishpur block said "if Thana Singh can be killed, probably things may change." For he had a notorious reputation and people said of him: 'Ek thana Jagdishpur, doosra thana Thana Singh'. The words of 'Naxalite' thereafter came to connote to many, a person who would resist sexual oppression with his last drop of blood... Ayar had been traditionally regarded as the fortress of the Rajputs of the Bhojpur; when Naxalites killed Thanan Singh, became a milestone in the history of Ayar. (Mukharjee and Yadav, 1980, p. 46)

Women from Bhojpur remembered those days as: *Hamni ke bahut shasan bhail ba, Jamindar Mahila logo kee izzat lootta tha* (we had to face a lot of oppression, women are sexually harassed and raped by the landlord), *us samy ham logo ko kuchh hosh nahee rahataa thaa sivaay bachan eke* (those days we had nothing in our mind except the thought of how to keep ourselves alive), *har samy Ranveer ka aur police kaa dar lagaa rahata thaa* (in fact all the time we were afraid of police and Ranvir Sena).

The beginning of Naxalbari movement had a crucial influence on many Dalit women of Bihar, who were not only just supporters but also active participants and contributed to the war against landlord and the state more actively. Women were associated with armed squads. Some examples of such as women could be found in Sheela Chatarje, known as, the commander leader of the Bhojpur arm unit; Agni, known as the women political commissar of the second armed unit in Sandeh block of Bhojpur; and Lahari who was the commander of the same unit. I have provided detailed accounts of how these militant women fought in full strength in this war, but surprisingly neither of their accounts is available in the social history of the Naxalite movement or Left historiography. I will try to make amends by presenting a short account of how these militant women fought through armed action. I have interviewed the local party leaders from those villages where these women belonged and were active. I have also used fragmented documents.

The Naxalite movement was spread across entire Bhojpur, mainly Sahar, Sandesh and Udvantnager, Pero block etc. Agni and Lahari belonging to Sandesh block. Agni was appointed as the Political Commissar of the Second Armed Unit of Women and Lahari was the commander of the Second Armed Unit of Women⁵. It was not very easy for women to join the movement. Lahari faced a strong opposition from her family. But one night she ran away from her house to join the armed unit. Within a very short period, she became the commander of the second Armed Unit of Women and led the war against the state in the Sandesh Block (personal communication with local party members in Sandesh block office).

On 31 December 1975, around midnight, police encircled the entire Dalit Tola of Sandesh block after getting information that the squad had arrived. Agni continued fighting with the police and yelled that “Dogs of Indira Gandhi get out of here, we are soldiers of freedom, we are not surrendering at any cost to you, and you are dogs of ruling class”. She continued to fight for two hours and was finally killed by the police (personal communication). In the next morning 300 police forces encircled the entire Dalit

⁵According to Party document in 1983, Political Commissar is responsible for ensuring that the operate unit functions according to party guide line, programme and plan; Commissar will be responsible for imparting ideological, political and literal education to the unit members; forming Party branches within the unit; forging solid unity among the unit members and for taking care of their personal problems. Commander is responsible for strict discipline within the unit, formulating military plans and leading the unit members in executing such plans. In military affairs, their word shall be supreme. Commiasar and commander shall work in close cooperation and the former have a crucial role to play in the development of outstanding commanders.

Tola. Lahari immediately mobilized the villagers for struggle against the police and was able to temporarily push back the enemy. But soon she ran out of ammunition and was shot dead by the police

Sheela was an urban and educated woman from West Bengal. Influenced by the Naxalbari Movement, she had joined the squad in Bhojpur. She and her armed unit successfully led action on 1976. Mukharjee and Yadav have noted in their book that “They had entered Gurupa at dusk and shot dead five Bhumihars” (Mukharjee and Yadav, 1980, p. 8). But on 10 October in 1977, she was killed by the police in the Ekawari village. Nirmala⁶ told me “When police entered in village squad was resting in the morning and other members went for their needs. Suddenly, police forces entered the village; Sheela Chatterjee took position and fought against the police. Finally she was killed”.

However, despite such mass mobilization of peasant women, they remained largely invisible in scholarly works. Scholars have so far been interested mainly in producing androcentric knowledge about the armed peasant movement, which deploy the frameworks of class war or caste oppression. The question of women liberation, women’s role and their experiences in the movement barely feature in these works. In this sense, the existing literatures remain undermined or marginalized, silencing women’s voices, thereby making them invisible. Consequently, women’s agency has been submerged or subsumed within the framework of male households, under the idea of the peasant family. As Lerner points out “This neglect of women in history was obviously not caused by the conscious decision or the ill will of male historians, but reflects the androcentric bias of all academic studies and of the general culture” (Lerner, 1981, p. 6).

Rajeshwar Lal, *Aadhi Zammen*, 2009 recounts that peasant women from Kaither Kala fought in the semi-militia form during police repression which became increasingly brutal with its attack on male leadership who were forced to go into hiding. Women fought against police repression in the absence of the party. Kaither Kala village is famous in Hindi literature, especially because of the poem *Kaither Kala ki Auraten* (Women from Kaithar Kala) written by Gorakh Pandey, which talks about the militant struggle that took place under the leadership of women. In this village, CPI (ML) had developed contact with the peasants and tried to organize them against landlord oppression. But police arrested many leaders from the village. The women of Kaithar Kala mobilized and successfully attacked on the police with ladle, rolling-pin, peelers and traditional weapons. They beat up the police when they entered the village in search of male members. Two police persons were injured and the others fled without taking arms; three rifles were snatched. The militant women knew that the police would be coming in the morning with a huge force. They were aware what would happen next in the village. Therefore, these women were moved to another village for mobilization in the night in order to plan their next strategy against the police administration. By the next morning, the police came with a huge force and attacked the women protestors. Nine women were arrested along with their children. One woman was pregnant, who suffered a miscarriage as a result of the brutal assault by the police forces. After that, the police camp was

⁶ Nirmala is a local Dalit woman leader and cultural activist from Arwal

established in the village. The landlord took advantage of the situation with the administration. He made his claim on the government land which had been captured by the people under the leadership of party and tried start cultivation on it. When news spread among women, they waged an attack on the landlord with traditional weapons like plow and axe. Following this, the women started cultivation with spade and scud on the government land.

In the absence of any guidance from the party or any male leadership, the women fought in full strength against both the police force and the landlord. It was not an easy task. Women from Kaithar Kala fought uncompromisingly to protect not only their land and homes but also their leaders in hiding. The courage of these women to challenge the police force became a buildup for collective struggle together. The successful collective struggle of the Kaithar Kala women not only undermined the power of the police but at the same time created solidarity among women similar to the male solidarities across the community.

The sense of collectiveness among men and women who fought in the “extraordinary situation” in Bhojpur, especially, in Chwari and Bahura villages in 1973 and 1975 of the Sahar Block against the huge police forces was exemplary. I visited both the villages which served as a backdrop for this struggle, and which still remembers and upholds the history of the struggle of Bhojpur even today. But there also remains an unclaimed history of women as fighters in this struggle, which marks for an alternative history. I met these village women, who are political supporters of the party. They had participated in the struggle but had not joined formal organization of the party in the initial phase. It was only later that some of them joined the party, in the hope of attaining a better life.

In Chanwari village, there was an intense struggle between the police and the Naxalite supporters in 1973, when four party members were killed by the police, fourteenth were injured, including one woman, and thirty six people were arrested.⁷ The incident had been set off by a particular event which occurred during the harvest season. Laxmi Devi, a Dalit woman, was working with the other women in the field of the landlord. The son of the Bhoomihar landlord sexually harassed Laxmi. However, Laxmi and the other women continued to work on the field. But when they returned in the evening, they decided to leave work (Mukharjee and Yadav, 1980). This triggered tension in the village between the poor Dalit family and the landlord. After that the Dalit family did not work in the landlord’s field for some days. Finally, the landlord filed an FIR against some of the Dalits for stealing – a common and easy practice followed by the landlords for targeting the Dalits. However, the rape of Dalit women was a major issue for struggle in the rural area. Till that time, the party had paid no special attention to the women’s issues. The women of the Dalit community engaged in a struggle against the landlord which became a struggle for the entire Dalit community in general. When the police approached the village for making arrests, there were protests from the Dalits. The police was not able to enter the village. They open fired, which

⁷However, conflict between landlord and laboures started in 1968-69 for wage and against forced labour. The landlord continued forcing women to carry harvest from the field to storehouse without pay. But after Naxalite movement in these areas tension emerged between poor Dalit families and landlords.

killed four poor Dalit males, including the husband of the concerned woman. Kaushalya Devi, an old Dalit woman from Chawari village, shared the struggles of those days through the following incident:

That time police and upper caste fired and tried to attack our home, they abused me with my name, and were threatening to rape. Despite this we were not afraid that time. I jumped in courtyard of sister-in-law through stairway. I said “*Babua log bahgo, ranvir sena aa gayaa, aur ve log hamaare ghar par hamalaa karane vale hai, us time sab betee aur bahoo ko hataa diya tha*” (“all men run away, Ranvir Senais attacking our home”, and we immediately kept our daughters and daughters-in-law in safe place) and I ran away on the other side of the village. But I was shot in my leg with a bullet when I was fleeing. I don’t know remember what happened after that but in mid night party had come and gave treatment to my leg. It was a time much painful for village people but people were committed to the struggle against landlord at any cost.

Old women cannot recall exactly how many years ago the party started its struggle against the feudal landlord. But they often expressed their resentment in their own as evident in the following story: “When my daughter was born; police entered the village and beat up my mother-in-law very badly for being supporters of the Naxal activity”. The group of men and women sat in front of me and told the story of their struggle in detail. Often villagers adopted the most unique form to remember incidents of pain, struggle, and their commitment for the movement. For example, this song expresses the feelings of a woman referring to her husband (although it was sung by a male member that day):

The year was 89, a Wednesday,

It was the day of election, a dark day, my beloved!

साला रहे नवासी दिन रहे बुधवा काला बन के आइ चुनाव रे सजनवा

On this Wednesday, plunderers - who captured the entire village – and who would not think twice before snatching away a child from its parent’s arms, had set up camp here, my beloved!

बुधा के लुटेरा सब डाल रहे डेरवा छीन ले ले गोदी के बलकवा रे सजनवा

Anyone can understand the narrative of the struggle of the Magadh-Bhojpur region of Bihar in this way and how it was followed by women and men. It is also indicative of the fact of how women have devised their own articulate techniques to remember the movement, traditionally having been denied the position of a resource person for knowledge production.

However, another historical village – Bahuara - within half an hour of walking distance from Chawari village, hosts an old woman by the name of Sanno Devi, who narrated to me about an intense struggle between the party and the state which continued up to 96 hours. I observed that immediately four to five men and about five to six young women joined us to hear details of the struggle from those days and also to hear about the political commitment of these women and their engagement in what seems to be an earlier phase of his life. She was narrating the story of the “war” and recalling difficulties of that time. The narrative of the Bahuara woman ran this way:

You can say our village had a red zone. In our village tunnel was made for the safety of the comrades. In that day when news spread in the village about police, we shifted all weapons in the other village and kept some weapons in the center of hut in other houses. Party informed all women to leave houses, especially young girls and newly married women were kept safely in some Ahir houses (OBC) and old women were sent to nearby houses. Party comrades had taken position under the tunnel. When police was not killed our comrades, they were frustrated. Finally they entered in our houses after three days, police forces mixed all grains. They mixed cow dung in all grains. They will think to crush our movement. But they are not able to understand and judge strength of our movement. In this process we have lost much more in those days but party support was much stronger. After that we never missed any rally and demonstration against landlord and state, and we were again starting our life as active supporters.

Bahuara village was famous at the national level for struggle against the police forces. On 27th July 1975, Indira Gandhi’s Government declared a national emergency. The day before 27th July, the “Poor Dalits fought against CRPF and Jat regiments with 300 bhoomihars, a 96 hours long battle, almost three days” (Mukharjee and Yadav, 1980, p. 87). Devi Das said that “The information spread in the village that police are coming with huge preparation. Actually in the village, top leadership were conducting meeting”. He said “I don’t know how the information reached the police. If people are coming in our village we can see around three km far away. One comrade was going somewhere with the same route

through which police was coming. He suspected about the police and immediately gave information in our village”. When police encircled the entire Dalit Tola, “Prolonged exchange of fire, the police threw targets squad in order to ‘smoke’ out the hiding Naxalites. But police failed, and then set ablaze the Dalit Tola on fire and 6-7 Dalit houses were reduced to ash and cinders” (Mukharjee and Yadav, 1980, p. 87). However, that time, the top leadership was able to flee through the tunnel, but after three months of the Bahuara struggle, the General Secretary of the party, Jauhar Dutta was killed by the police on November 1975. The entire movement was immediately affected. After 1975, Vinod Mishra was elected as the General Secretary. I will address how women survived and struggled against the landlord’s oppression, their militia and state repression solely on the basis of their determination and motivation for struggle in the Second phase of the Naxalite movement. Finally, I will discuss the policy and program of the party as it addressed question of the women rights.

CPI (ML) Liberation: Women Mobilized under Peasant Union

After the death of Jauhar Dutta in 1977, the party entered a new phase of the movement. In the second party congress held in 1978, the party decided to make some changes in their strategy and decided to form open organizations. But the party was underground and leading an armed struggle against the oppressive landlord. They formed a peasant front under the name of Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha and All India People’s Front which were engaged in democratic activities through rallies, demonstration, public hearing against the landlord, state repression etc that I have already mentioned above. Strategically, the liberation adopted an economic blockade against the landlord as a policy to eliminate them. It was indeed a powerful tool used against the landlord and it destroyed their economic position. However, in Bhojpur, though there were no big landlords, their dominance was prominent over the entire Dalit community. There the basic demand was raised through peasant fronts but finally they faced the most violent repression by the landlord’s private caste militia which had a connection with state.

From the beginning, women had been engaged with the movement for land and wage matters, to fight against sexual oppression, and particularly, for carrying out underground activities such as carrying bullets, bomb, and literature, delivering message, collected food for squad and providing shelter for the squad and party members. I asked Geeta Devi how they safely moved around with these items. She said, “In those days police did not investigate women. I brought bullets from Jahanbad to Bhojpur and in many villages where squads used to stay because police did not believe that the women can be involved at this level. I was keeping arms and bullets in a bundle of some old cloth and was carrying it on the head, so no one doubted about it. But in the following days, police had begun investigating women activists”.

Sona Devi remembers those days when she had joined the IPF. She told me “*hamein yaad hai vah samay jab bandhuua majadoor saal bhar aatmaa bahr bhojan nahee karate the. lekin saamanto kaa*

anaaj se ghar bhar dete the aur saal bhar khud aadhaa pet (I remember those days when bonded laborers produced abundance for feudal lord but stayed alive on a half-empty stomach itself for an entire year). She told me “In the initial phase of the struggle, participation of women was spontaneous; it was only later that the party took notice of the fact about women’s participation in the movement”. When Sona Devi, Geeta Devi and Kanti joined the IPF as full-timers, the party took up the responsibility to mobilize women and built the women’s organization. Sona Devi said:

When I came in the IPF there was no women’s organization. Party gave me the responsibility of building women’s organization. I was talking about increase in women’s wage and against molestation and oppressive behavior of landlord. I saw they have no food and I hesitated to demand meal, so many times I was hungry but build the women’s samiti. When they invited me for meal then I was eating. They had given us food depriving their children. And their children were hungry. But people wanted to struggle and change their lives.

Geeta Devi also confirmed that there was no conscious decision on the part of the party to involve peasant women in the movement. They had a similar story to tell about the condition of the people in this region but from some different dimension. Geeta Devi told me:

When I came in the IPF, I tried to build women’s front in rural districts of Jahanabad. The condition of People was very poor, sometimes they even had no food. Often when I would stay with someone, some would bring raw wheat or rice and then we will together reel and thrash them to make it eatable. Party wanted to build women’s organization for security propose. Sometimes party lost the cadres because their wives or family members did not support that the male who went to the party because those males were not able to fulfill the need of their wives and children. Often women out of anger had unconsciously given information of landlord. For example, generally squad members or underground members used to come home at night. If women are unhappy with male they will be shouting on those males. Generally Dalit houses are so small that their voice was heard from outside and party cannot do anything against the women.

Some cases like this happened but generally party misunderstood these cases thinking that informants have given information to the police. But some serious leaders recognized it and tried to organized women and tried to generate support from family level. If family faced so many problems then party gave some money to the family.

Essentially, the party propagated a new kind of politics among the poor people to induct them into the struggle and not just to spread the party program and their slogans. There was also the cultural team who propagated the party agenda and the idea of socialism. Geeta Devi sang an extremely pertinent song which was very popular and significant for the movement.

We will make a village where there is no oppression, where even in dreams there is no unjust landlord present

अइसन गाव बना दया जहा अत्याचार न रहे जहवा सपनव मे जालिम जमीन्दार न रहे

Where there is food aplenty for everyone and a roof above everybody head,

सबके मिली भर पेट दाना सबके रहे के ठिकाना

All those people without cloths will have enough to cover their body, where even in dreams there is no unjust landlord present

कोइ बस्तर बिना लगटे उघार न रहे जहवा सपनवा मे जालिम जमीन्दार न रहे

We will work together and in return get the labours due,

सबे मिलजुल करे काम और पावे पूरा श्रम के दाम

At the same time, there will be no one to forcefully snatch away our earnings from us, where even in dreams there is no unjust landlord present

कोइ केहू के कमाइ लुतनिहार न रहे जहवा सपनव मे जालिम जमीन्दार न रहे

Where everybody will respect each other and sing the song of unity

सभे करे सबके मान गावे एकता के गान

Nobody will use profane language against the others, where even in dream there is no unjust landlord present.

कोड़ के कोड़ कुबोली बोलनीनीहार न रहे जहवा सपनव मे जालिम जमीन्दार न रहे.

Through this song, it is clearly indicated that the party had created hope for a better life among the poor peasants through which poor peasantry mobilized others in order to make a new society where there would be no oppressive conditions. In other words, struggle around the issues of land struggle, wage and sexual oppression in order to create dignity in the new society through the idea of socialism.

The first conference of Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha was held in Patna in 1984. In this conference, several programs of struggle were adopted such as the struggle against bonded labor, abolition of child labor, cultural degeneration, superstition, casteism, untouchability, liquor addiction, child marriage, and dowry; which are essential parts of the feudal structure. BPKS organized the “poor people’s struggle such as equal pay between male and female laborers, equal rights for women, and to protest against rape and other immoral practices of the older systems of marriage and post-funeral ceremony” (BPKS, 1984, p.).

Geeta Devi, a cultural activist from the Jahanabad district wrote and sang songs for narrating the stories of mobilization, especially, how women got together against rape culture and spread a political consciousness too. Rape was a more serious issue for the Dalit community. Geeta Devi tried to educate and mobilized women for the purpose of the struggle. She told me: “We went to every village and talked about women’s condition through story and songs. Often I used the story of Kalawati and Usha who killed the landlord when the landlord tried to rape her”. The story of Kalawati and Usha had come through the member of the Dasta (squad). Kalawati and Usha were Dalit laborers. When they went to forage for animals, the landlords forced to make sexual relation. She told the member of squad about that landlord. The squad took the responsibility to train her. On another day, the landlord forcefully harassed her again and asked her to come back again to the sugarcane field the next day. Kalawati and Usha went to the field of sugarcane the next day. When the landlord came to the field, she told the landlord that “Malik *bandook rakha kar kapada utar lo*” (put down your rifle and undress). When the landlord tried to undress Kalawati immediately took his rifle and killed him. The story of the Kalawati and Usha was very inspiring for all the Dalit women and girls. Geeta Devi spoke to the women from the Dalit community very easily relating their own oppression to that of Kalawati and Usha.

Geeta Devi educated the poor women through this song which focuses on the need to struggle against the sexual oppression of women, the nexus of political and feudal power of the landlord with the state administration on the one hand and at the same time against the androcentric history of the old HSeematexts. The song is that:

सामंती रिवाज पथा तोडे के परी

We have to break feudal norms and values

हाथे हथियार रनवा गाहे के परी

Taking arms in hands against oppressors

दिन रात बहिनिन के इज्जत लूटाला

who day and night molest sexually our sisters

सामंत गुन्डा पुलिस ढाले मधु प्याला

Feudals, goons and police are at their pleasing positions

गाठ जोड नापाक उनका तोडे के परी ए बहना

whose strong nexus we have to break

हाथे हथियार रनवा गहे के परी ए बहना

Taking arms in hands against oppressors

रमायण पुराण गीता देखे महाभारत

We have seen Ramayan Purana and Gita

सिहनी समान नारी पहली हम हारत

Where lion like women got defeated

नया इतिहास इहवा जोडे के पडी ए बहिना

There have to be added a new history of our women

हाथे हथियार रनवा गाहे के पडी ए बहिना

Taking arms in hands dear sisters

For the first time, Dalit women were able to relate their own oppression to the entire feudal structure and understand how it was necessary to struggle against such kind of an oppression which women had been facing for a long time. Geeta Devi tried to educate women how such stories of women's bravery was never included in the written history of the peasant struggle. She mobilized and developed male and female cadres across the villages of Jehanabad and Bhojpur. At the time her interview, she recalled the role of culture and their enthusiasm towards the struggle. She said, "In the evening men and women sat together to listen to political songs. When I started singing, they demanded for more and I would sing for

hours”. Songs became a major political medium for women to gain more confidence for their struggle against the oppressors. In fact, these peasant women who were educated solely through such cultural medium, developed to become village leaders later on. “that time was different” Sona Devi used it in a positive sense to demonstrate the struggle, pain, commitment towards the party, nostalgia of that time, comradeship and friendship between the activists, and of course their engagement in all dimensions. Sona Devi said,

This does not happen automatically or smoothly in rural setups. We tried to explain women’s oppression in terms of sexual harassment, issues of women’s wage, discrimination on the one hand and we talked about dowry, superstition, mistreatment with wife and child marriage on the other. We are worked day and nights among the people and villages. The rural women understood why party appeal to poor people to organized against landlord order.

From the beginning, the party raised the combined issues of both economic exploitation and sexual violence against women, especially dalit women, by the landlords - something that the landlords considered as if to be their birthright. Both issues were combined issues such as economic exploitation was the need for women to protect themselves from the landlord on the one hand and on the other hand it was also required to launch struggle against rape culture to protect from sexual oppression. For example, many villages started their struggle on the issues of sexual oppression such as Chawari which I have mentioned earlier in this chapter. The upper caste landlord and their henchman not only ruled over the economic life of the poor people, particularly the Dalits, they also made decisions regarding their birth to death (like marriage, matchmaking) in cases of doubt. They also oppressed the Dalit women sexuality and crushed their dignity, with repeated rapes and sexual abuse.

In the 1980s, most of activists of the Dalit community, especially the women activists, were not literate. Party leadership focused on developing the abilities among women. Education became a more important mean of political communication whereby an individual could relate her own oppression to others. Educated activists were given extra attention by the local activists, particularly women in order to develop the latter's ability to read. They started giving political education to women in order to make them aware of what was happening with women in a semi-feudal society as well as in the world of politics. In this process, women were able to understand oppression from the class perspective. It was a significant activity that led to the development of a feeling of camaraderie thorough the processes of teaching and learning. Sona Devi said “Party leadership always appreciated and sometimes created pressures on women for learning, because in the initial stage many women activists ignored, hesitated and felt ashamed”.

The life experience of local women leaders such as Sona Devi, Geeta Devi and Kanti indicates that it was significant for women to participate in large numbers as it gave a unique shape to the movement itself in terms of the involved political arena. Geeta Devi was not just a women activist for the party. She also tried to induct her own family members into politics, especially, her husband and brother-in-law who were gradually promoted as squad commanders within the group. Domestic boundaries were expanded to maintain the political sphere. The whole family participated in the movement. In this context, she remembered a song which addresses the fact that women were more active with the movement in order to motivate husbands to participate in the movement and build a new society.

किहो बलमुआ सुतला चदर ताने आ गइला नइका बिहान हो २

O my beloved! Why are you sleeping covering your bedsheet? Come out and see the new time (indicate as new society)

आ गइला नइका बिहान हो ओ हो आ गइला नइका बिहान हो २

Come out and see the new time

ओ हो दिन रात खेतवा मे कइला कमइया रतिया मे रहला उपास हो २

We work day and night in field still remained hungry at night

आ हो गर्मी के दिनवा मे चुवे पसीनवा जाडा गुदडिया के आस हो २

In the summer we keep sweating but in the winter we are left with no single cloth to cover us up

किहो बलमुआ सुतला चदर ताने आ गइला नइका बिहान हो २

O my beloved! Why are you sleeping covering your bedsheet? Come out and see the new time.

This song gives us a glimpse of the women were able to understand new politics with the dream of equality through the movement. The involvement of women indicated commitment towards struggle against their oppression and their aspiration with the new society shows how the political bonding developed for party politics. Such process of building up solidarity between individuals as activists bound the entire movement and helped sustain it for decades. One could notice how Geeta Devi's subjectivity proved significant for the movement and provided powerful solidarity that spread from village to village as women opened up to providing shelter for activists who were constantly on the move across Bhojpur, Jahahabad, Arwal and Gaya, building networks for the movement.

In the peasant society, control over women's mobility was a major obstacle for women's mobilization and when they moved towards the political realm they faced more violence from their family

members. Even the Dalit women, who worked in the field as laborers, were brutally beaten up by their mother, brother and husband when they joined the party. In this context, the major obstacles and more importantly, a lot of physical violence was faced by them from their family. The party always launched their struggle against feudal or sexual violence outside the family, particularly, against the landlord. But within the party, leaderships adopted an ambiguous approach regarding the violence against women within their own family. Sona Devi narrated the contradiction and tension among the party leadership when she was joined the party. She noted:

I was married at the age of 12; my family was planning to send me to my husband's house for the first time. I knew if I went to my husband's house I could never join the party. I was 13 years old, when I left home without informing my family members because I knew if I informed them they would never support my decision. After that my family found me. When I came back to my house, my mother beat me up and threatened that I don't dare run away again. However, my father was an active member of CPI in those days.

Sona Devi continued:

But so many top party leaders did not support me. I cannot imagine. One party member suggested me to go back to home. I felt that the ground was shaking under my feet. The party was divided into two groups on my issue, some members supported me. In those days party had no space for especially girls because party feared for honor and reputation. Party feared that rumors can be created that the party is involved in escaping girls and party will lose support of social base from entire community. However, it was true for party in some sense because upper caste lobby tried to spread false propaganda all the time and they blamed that party uses women for sexual lust and exploitation. Finally, although I joined district committee of IPF.

A poor Dalit woman narrated her own experience about initial period when they had entered the political sphere. Nirmala, a Dalit poor woman, mentioned:

I left home in 1984. My family requested the party leaders for meeting me. But I denied meeting with the family members. After that family created a lot of pressure on the local leaders. After some days I agreed to meet family. When I went home, my two cousin brothers had beaten me brutally, tying my hand and leg, and confined me in the house for three days. The entire village gathered; my uncle told me that you are doing wrong work. After that when *Dasta* was coming, I was crying. The party leader took me in the hospital for treatment. I faced so much oppression. When I went to husband house, my husband also beat me and they told me, we will not keep you. In their mind there was wrong idea about party. They thought of sexual relation with male members of party.

The courage to challenge the family's authority and power structure was very difficult for the women leaders. Unfortunately, at that time the party did not tackle the issue of violence against women within the family with much seriousness. Kumudini Pati, who is inactive at present, told me: "The party thought it was private matter and tried to solve it in individual level. They tried to persuade the male of family not to use violence against women". The party never took a radical step in favor of women through social boycott of male members etc. While the party was the main tool against the landlord, it was never used as a powerful tool against males because male violence against women was not considered as political issues for the party. While carefully avoiding family conflict, which mostly affected women and their subordinates within the family, it continued to put pressure on the women leaders to not deviate from the class approach on the issue of women's oppression and to carry forward the line of the class struggle. Kumudini Pati told me:

Women's issues are coming in gradually within the party with development of consciousness and sometimes women also challenge the party approach. In the starting phase some women also joined the party from urban area but they were not aware how to define women's oppression in society in general and especially within family. But they felt uneasy of the male's attitude within party and family. Women were engaged with party politics but party did not encourage build separate women's organization. When I meet women activists they complained to me about male comrade's behavior such as wife beating. An ex-comrade's wife told me their husbands used to beat them and they cried. Those days when I listened to their pain, some male leader commented

on me that it is the gossip group such as *Tum log ghar gharautan ke mudde ko lekar rote rahtee ho, tum log ka dimaag vahee tak chalataa hai, jab inhee saaree cheenjo me apanee takat lagaagee to majadoor ka savaal peeche ho jaayegaa* (you are crying on issues of domestic chores, your mind is centered around it, the issues of workers will be left behind if you spend the total energy in these things). If women leaders are talking about these issues, their image used to be negative within the party. Party interest and women's interest did not match in the beginning. Party always encouraged women to join the party but did not want women to raise women specific problems because they were afraid that if entered in this realm the peasant male will go against it. However, women raised question and later party tried to take the issues of wife beating and alcohols seriously.

Kumudini Pati's account shows us how the party preserved a male centric approach on the women's question and failed to understand the mechanism of women's oppression in the rural set up. The party mobilized women to participate in the class struggle but at the same time did not launch a struggle against family oppression. However, top women activists were also not able to understand women's oppression beyond the party's understanding in the initial phase.

Emergence of Separate Women's Committees

The first time in late 1984, when CPI ML officially turned its attention to women as a group, was the year after its foundation that the organization decided to establish women's committees to help develop women cadres for struggle on the women's issues along with grooming them to fit the party structure too. The party considered their failure at building up the women's organization in the initial phase. According to the fourth Party Congress report: "Our party also did not take up the women question seriously since its inception although several women comrades led the peasant struggle and women martyrs" (Political-Organization Report of the fourth Party Congress, 1988, p. 1.7.25). According to the same report: "It was at the third Party Congress the women question was duly and seriously taken up" (Political-Organization Report of the fourth Party Congress, 1988, p. 1.7.25). However, many women leaders told me during their interviews that the party formed women's committees, namely the Janwadi Mahila Samiti (Democratic women's Committee) which focused on rural area, and the Pragatisheel Mahila Samiti (Progressive Women's Committee) at the district level, around 1985 to 1986. But when I went through the fourth Party congress report, there was no mention of any women committee. In this report, one section documents "women's movement" which includes the party's discussion on women

oppression, the party's aim, the lack of party's intervention on the women question and the guidelines on the women question. I have included the available party congress report in the appendix to help show how the party defined and addressed the women's question. However, the party defined women's condition in India in terms of the feudal economic structure and the feudal culture, labeling them as perpetuating the oppression of women in the rural set up. The fourth Party document recognized that:

Women question is not merely a problem of the specific section or class of women, but of the womenfolk as a whole, although, poor and landless peasant women, tribal women and women of the working class are the worst victim of oppression. In the specific condition of India, the oppression of women is the very characteristic of the all pervasive feudal culture and the feudal economic structure in the countryside. The discrimination against women is sanctioned by numerous religious code and custom, which over the centuries have not only numbed the general consciousness against such evil practiced, but have even rallied women to accept their deprivation in servility and apparent willingness. (Political-Organization Report of the Party Congress of CPI ML Liberation, 1988, p. 1.7.24)

The above reference indicates that women across class were characterized as an oppressed group. However, it failed to address the fact that women cannot be seen as a homogenous category. They also fulfill the interest of class and caste. During an intense struggle, for instance, between Ranvir Sena and CPI ML, the upper caste women marched against CPI ML in Ekwari, Khopira, Belaur and other villages in Bhojpur and raised the slogan “*male ssale hosh me aao*” (O Male idiot! come back to your senses - here *saale* is used in the derogatory word of abuse). They fought with the police to save Ranvir Sena and mobilized for agricultural activities in the field (Aaddhi Zameen, 1999, p. 15) - although they had never gone outside and never worked outside the household before this struggle. This reference suggests that women served the interest of caste and class not only in abstraction but also in an observable form on a practical ground in Bhojpur. However, the fourth report written during early 1990, when Ranvir Sena had not emerged, remains a theoretical underpinning that is reflected in the report. Women in our society, is essentially, divided into the class and the caste structure. However, they face oppression inside the family despite the fact that they are the best honest resource person to save their own *Malik* because structurally women have no property right, no control over their own labor and sexuality - which is the base for any human for survival. They come to recognize their existence through their male relations, his caste and class. Then how women can ignore their valuable resource (I mean male) and also they have to learn and trust on it through family, kinship, marriage and culture of male, so her interest is also determined by her affiliation with her male counterparts. But the party consisted of womenfolk. This is true that there were some common interests among women as women, but at the same time women also had to achieve their

place in the social rank and for this they are expected to perform through their family, caste and class, custom and codes. It is sometimes difficult to separate the argument about the basis for women's oppression in the complex structure of class and caste in the society. Sometimes they effect interchangeably but sometimes they indicate different objects of analysis. Women cannot be considered as an abstraction, but must be seen difference among women. But the party failed to address the conditions of women under which women expressed their self identify.

Women's participation in the movement and their representation in the party structure was a crucial issue for the party. In 1988, very few women were in the top position in the party. In the fourth All India Party Congress, there were only seven women delegates out of 83 delegates. It means that only 8.75% of them were women, "In terms of number and relative share their presence this time was considerably greater than that in the last congress" (Political-Organization Report of the Fourth All India Party Congress, 1988, p. 1). However, the party said that, "The struggle against all oppressive condition and build strong women' movement for the emancipation of women is central part of the new democratic revolution which aims not only overthrow feudal economy and politics but destroy feudal culture too" (Political-Organization Report of the Party Congress of CPI ML Liberation in 1988, p. 1.7.24). Without any concrete discussion about the ground reality, complexities and experience of the women leaders who worked among the women in the rural areas, how can one imagine to overthrow the feudal economic structure and culture?

What is the position of women in a peasant society, how women are subjected to caste oppression, especially by an upper caste male and the feudal landlord, finds no space for a detailed discussion in the accounts of the party. Every party congress report majorly focused on having an intense discussion on peasant struggle, problems and tendency of peasant leader, state repression of the movement and other problems within the struggle, but as soon as the women's question came up, there was no discussion about their struggle and problems. It was as if there were many problems with the peasant organization, peasant issues and the way of struggle but no obstacle for women who had to struggle against patriarchal domination on ground and within the party. In the fourth political organizational report, the party had given two guidelines for all future work such as "all party units and bodies must attempt to mobilize women in large numbers and also develop of women cadres for the party structure to all levels including its higher rank. The second guidelines for the Party on specific participation of women's issues tried to intervene in the feminist camp and develop contacts with the feminist organizations. But at the same time it shows that their approach towards feminist groups was not recognized as a political organization which is based on feminist theory and politics. Rather, it seemed like an attempt to convince its own party. This is evident in the extract: "Our comrades must be able to unite with these organizations both in order to advance the programme of these organizations as well as to politicize the more advanced elements of these organizations without resorting to unnecessary confrontation practices" (Political-Organization Report of the Party Congress of CPI ML Liberation in 1988, p. 1.7.27). The same report mentions others future work like women's magazine that adopted scientific outlook on women's issues, took up welfare activities such as training and educating women so that they could fight against the different types of assaults, particularly that which was of the nature of

sexual offence. These included fight for demand of employment for women, equal pay to women and improvement in their working condition, provision of crèche, full motherhood benefits at the government's expenses, steps against sexual discrimination to be taken by the employer, landlords bureaucrats, anti-social elements and police, opposition to sex determination test, dowry, bride burning and other forms of cruelty against women. However, Janvadi Mahila Samiti continuously organized meeting, dharnas, rallies, strikes, economic blocked for wages for women and also actively participated against state repression since 1990s. In some areas there was an increase in women's wage. The most important dimension was that women were mobilized under the Janvadi Samiti against rape incidents in particular and the rape culture in general.

Although CPI (ML) Liberation tried to develop a network among urban feminist groups, it was defined as a major task. We have seen how in April 1986, the IPF tried to get together the feminist groups and the Radical left groups. After that, many feminist groups and individuals attended a national women's conference held in Calcutta in April 1986 (Ombedt, Gala and Kelkar, 1988, p. 883). After two years, in 1988, the conference was held in the name of "Nari Mukti Sangharsh Sammelan" (Women's Liberation Conference) which was joined by many feminist groups, individuals and other party related women's groups, especially, the CPI (ML) Party Unity and the Maoist Communist Center (MCC). In this conference, 60 per cent participants were rural and tribal women from Bihar, Jharkhand, Asam, Maharashtra, Rajsatha. This conference was a departure point in the series of women's movement and the party related women's organizations for understanding the women's issues, their subordination, marginalization and struggle. Kumudini Pati told me "The conference was very important for women's leaders not only in terms of their consciousness but also for significant mobilization of women in the rural areas of Bihar. Our women members also gained confidence specially, local women leaders". The objective of this conference was to capture and theorize on the issue of women's emancipation on the basis of the women's experience of anti feudal struggle in Bihar which saw women from the Dalit, adivasi and agricultural labor background at the forefront of the struggle.

CPI (ML) Liberation tried to create a platform where relation between urban and rural women could be built for building up a strong women's organization which would be a base for toiling women who were struggling for better lives as it appeared in the fourth political organizational report. In the conference, all parties appealed to urban women to come together to build a strong women's movement. "Let us gather in Bihar to say no to slavery, Let us organize the fight against oppression, goondaism, exploitation, casteism and patriarchy" (Ombedt, Gala and Kelkar, 1988, p. 884). On the last day of the conference, a rally was also held at Gandhi Maidan, in Patna, which saw the coming together of over twelve thousand women. They marched with banners, shouting slogans against the feudal state, sexual oppression and state repression as well as against the atrocities committed by the private caste militias (Ombedt, Gala and Kelkar, 1988, p. 884). The rally was constituted "Entirely by rural and working class women who discussed their struggle, especially against state and police repression, but also against alcoholism, against sex abuse, against local landlord" (Ombedt, Gala and Kelkar, 1988, p. 884).

However, the objective of the party was to make a link between the party and the urban feminist groups but it never happened because during the conference a tension was created between both. After that, the CPI (ML) Liberation critically examined this conference. The party expressed their views in the organizational report:

One major initiative at the national level was to organize an all India women's convention under the sponsorship of our mass political organization....this convention attracted almost all important segments of grassroots feminists, mobilized our entire women ranks in a single direction and generated some serious discussion on the women question inside the Part...one link team was formed, but we failed to establish the implication of the convention throughout the party and no planned efforts were there to follow up this step. (Political-Organization Report of the Party Congress of CPI ML Liberation in 1988, p. no. 1.7.26)

We have seen how the period from 1981-1990 was that of intense struggle in rural Bihar, however the general feeling was that there were very less women as represented in the party position. But the women front of the party took up issues around rape, minimum wage and their individual struggle against dowry, mistreatment of daughter in-law, wife beating and so on. In the next section, I will discuss about some concrete policy taken up by the party such as land right, distribution and women issues which were major tasks taken up by the third and fourth party congress in terms of dealing with women's issues.

Land to the tiller and Women's rights Agenda

Land reform was a major political task of the CPI (ML) Liberation and its main program was to capture land from big landlords be it gairmajurua land, or absentee land, or Diyara land and the distribution of these lands among the poor people. This was an important program for the anti-feudal movement whose agenda was to champion a democratic reform in the countryside. Agrarian reform program directly attacked the Brahmanical nexus of caste and land. Land reform agenda redistributed property among the poor families. The slogan 'land to the tiller' addressed class orientation but it did not ensure a struggle against patriarchy. Often land distribution leaders were from peasant organizations and they did not pay any attention to women rights. The party leadership recognized that women are half of the peasantry and their participation is important for land struggle. But the women rights agenda and land reform were complicated issues without any concrete direction and policy for women's rights. The land reform program gave hope to the poor male peasants about gaining a land piece but did not take up the issue of championing a policy for women rights thus continuing the promotion of unequal treatment to

males and females within a family. Thus, land reform did not threaten the male economic position within the family relations. If women wanted to own land on their name, it was wholly canceled out because the leadership was not interested in promoting an equality between men and women during land allotments. The approach of the leadership was that women rights issues should not be tackled in an area where class struggle was weak information that I found out during my interview and will be dealt by me in detail later). Consequently, in practice, land rights were not given to women. Some party leaders expressed their own views in the present time of how they failed to implement women's rights, especially, in the area of land reforms.

The Flaming Field of Bihar, a book which was published in 1986, reported that women were involved in movement:

The women had participated in class struggle, particularly in land struggles, peasant women have played a very significant role...whether it is a mass meeting, demonstration, gherao of some official, or movement over land or wages, everywhere the women can be seen fighting shoulder to shoulder with their men folk. And they, too, have shed their blood in these struggles — the martyrdom of Chandravati while resisting police repression in a village in Bikram PS (Patna, 1981) is a shining example of the women's death-defying spirit and persistence in the movement. In keeping watch on the enemy, safeguarding the underground and maintaining the secrecy of underground work, it is the women who play the frontal role. (CPI (ML) Liberation, 1986, p. 98)

Chandrawati challenged the police forces with a lot of courage and participated in the collective struggle together, fighting with equal risk factors like that of martyrdom. Of course, the party considered it as the women's participation in peasant movement or class struggle. In 1984, the Liberation leadership published an agrarian reform program in order to guide the land to the tiller movement. The directive on land reform, issued by the peasant union in Bihar in 1984 illustrates that land should be given to the poor people. I quote a document from the second congress of the BPKS which suggests:

The land distribution among landless, poor and lower middle peasant who were natural to the struggle should also be given a share with a view to activate them in subsequent struggle and to establish a broader peasant unity. The interest of the handicapped, old and widows should also be

taken into consideration and special attention should be paid to the families of martyr comrades and peasant cadres, keeping in mind their actual condition. (CPI (ML), 1986, p. 151)

In the above reference, there is no need to ask, who fills the category of landless, poor and middle peasant in a patriarchal society? Are women landless laborers? Is it applicable on both sexes equally? Is the “landless, poor and middle peasant” including the women’s experience of peasantry and inequality different from men?

There is a need to ask the question of how to analyze a peasant, who is a peasant and what made peasantry in the rural settings and who were missing from this reference? In an androcentric perspective, women are seen as “passive objects” rather than “active subjects” (Lerner, 1981, p. 21-22). The ignorance of women labor as active actor in the production process is the basic character of invisibility of women labor which does not recognize their equal role in economic contributions for livelihoods. Thus, women are never given the status of a peasant within the society, even within peasant literature. As Ranjana Padhi noted: “The urgent need to intervention for understanding how women labor participate in production in peasantry, particularly through domestic and field labor which is already marginalized in deeply traditional and patriarchal society in day to day life” (Padhi, 2012, p. xxvi). My basic argument is that peasant theories are incomplete without including gender perspective in its analysis.

The above references are very significant to understand the party approach on women rights. Firstly, the party considered land distribution on the basis of participation in the struggle. And the above reference also indicates that the party accepted women were participating in the land struggle movement, but at the time of land distribution, the party assumed a gender biased approach and compromised the agenda of women’s rights. Kumud told me “In reality, women were not given land rights”. However, she mentioned it more in a general sense without giving the reference of any specific case. She added: “Some local initiatives were undertaken in some villages like some land in the name of both leaders (men and women) who were fully commitment for party work but it was not general case, party did not encouraged land distribution in name of women”. She continued: “Some conscious women tried to include their name to the land during land distribution but distribution committee gave them hope that the next time will include their name but that happened never”. In demanding for land rights, however, women did not have any guarantee of acceptance, either by the patriarchal peasant union or the party. This also is a significant indication that the party had discouraged the demand of land if some women wanted to include their own name to the land. This shows that the lack of leadership initiation and organizational effort for land reform had contributed to the avoidance and inattention of issues of women's rights in terms of family reform. Ultimately, women did not have access to land rights in the general picture. Kumud said, “Party had good intention but not able to implement in practice of gender issues.”

Almost similar accounts of Geeta Devi told me “Land distributed to male comrades or family head that does not in terms of amount of land”. I asked Geeta Devi how it was decided as to which amount of land would be distributed among the comrades or poor people? She said, “The party decided the amount of land for this or that comrade according their economic condition. In our knowledge if male are absent in family then land given by the party was in the name of women, particularly, widow women otherwise in general in the name of male comrades. Not any single name mention of women comrades independently for land distribution. Land was not distributed in the name of wife and husband in our knowledge”. These narrations, I think, will provide valuable information for understanding the party's perspectives on gender issues.

There is also an important issue of women's organization which existed during that time but had no conflict with the peasant union on gender equality. It is possible? What does it mean for the women's organization? The land reform policy was not to break the traditional practice of excluding women from property rights. In this context, we have seen how women were organized for the land struggle movement while cautiously avoiding any special attention on women's land rights. However, the party has been continuously claiming that they were against the feudal economic structure and feudal culture.

It is a very crucial reality in both senses that no rights were given to strengthen women who wanted to own a land. Others were indirectly forced to continue patriarchal domination over women. But at this point, the mobilization of women to participate in class struggle did not include specific, concentrated efforts on women and men to educate about women's rights vis-a-vis land rights. Kumud said, “Women never thought that the party did not deliberately distribute land in our name but their understanding was that this was according to the norms and tradition of property distribution. Women thought that if land was gained by our family, particularly the husband's names, then they would be sharing and at least to overcome the condition of poverty, we would have food and house”. In feudal and peasantry society in general and more specifically in Bihar, the individual identity was so affected that the party leaders addressed individuals according to their hierarchy. The hierarchal relationship in the sense of gender (male), age, and caste was because generally leaders were male. In this scenario, how could the local women leaders raise questions about the party leaders and challenge their approach. In their oppressive, hunger-ridden starving condition, how could dalit women fight against the patriarchal approach of the party, while the party itself was fighting for minimum wage and against sexual oppression.

The problem was when the party itself propagated and delivered the content that land distribution would be based on how poor a family was. Party had strong excuses for ignoring the land rights for women. For example, the party had already presumed that the masses would not support land rights for women without a policy having been made or directives been introduced for women rights on the land before land distribution. There is little doubt that the women were not to wish to take land in their own name. According to a conversation with Kumud that I have included above, “If some women wanted to claim their rights on the land, the party leadership misinterpreted and argued that “if land distribution

among poor peasant automatically women will be share it". Of course, land distribution among poor family to provide economic security and justice to the poor family was a move in the right direction, but it cannot also be denied that they ignored the issue of male domination on the women within a family.

In the absence of training of women's rights among male and female cadres and of course among the masses, initial reactions generated were according to the patriarchal norms and from an androcentric perspective about property distribution, which is quite natural. The party was afraid to antagonize men on women rights and found it better to justify the traditional norm towards land distribution. It was not a time when revolutionaries were willing to make the conditions worst on the issue of women rights. Essentially, the party wanted to establish a women's organization but was unable to understand women's issues. Kumud told me that "The party had not wanted to open this question because it would raise the family question. But women leaders also were unable to understand that discrimination was not only based on being a poor dalit but also as women in the family and society". The party leadership forgot their early commitment to women rights during land distribution but in public speech, report, propaganda material party proclaimed that the party would advocate women rights at all times and fight for it. Actually, the land reform becomes a testing ground for me to understand the party's approach towards women's rights.

Secondly, it was also bad that women's organization was not asked to question and attack the party position on land distribution. The party was not willing to create any tension among the peasant union on women's rights. The party continuously tried to establish a unity between the peasant union and women's committee, in somewhat ambiguous, restrictive conditions for women. It shows that women's issues were responsible for class unity and women's committee should have borne it. It was felt that the report of the party congress, which centered on peasant union and peasant struggle, never discussed the issues of landless women during land struggle and land distribution. The poor masses also assumed that women rights were supposed to be subordinate to the class interests of poor male peasants. One also has the example of land distribution by the Chinese government in the Maoist era which was poor peasant who suspected marriage reform and land reform, particularly issues of divorce. They felt afraid that if a divorce case was ruled in favor of women then the peasant male "Lost both their wives and their land" (Johnson, 1983, p. 105). When the top leadership themselves felt that women's rights issues should be subordinate under the peasant association or economic interests of the revolution, then how could the party assume that that lower level cadre and also masses (both male and female) would accept it.

There was a contrasting reality on ground/practice but in the documents and programs of the women's liberation it seemed like the party really wanted to be abolish patriarchal oppression and domination. In the documents, for instance, the propaganda material also pointed towards the thesis of "semi feudal and semi colonial". It was something that was very frequently used in the documents and an article defined by CPI (ML) Liberation which borrowed from the Chinese revolution not only oversimplifies the relationship in terms of cultural and cultural consciousness that existed among people, but also the "feudal attitude" and "feudal remnants" that were based on the feudal structure. In general, the "feudal remnants" and "feudal attitude" assumed that the material base which perpetuated female

subordination is a particular male domination in within, control of mobility, unequal relation between men and women, exclusion of women from productive labor in the public realm and private property system. If the feudal attitude and the patriarchal attitudes provided obstacle for implementing women's rights, why did the party preserve an ambiguous approach or half hearted change in the material life of women in term of land rights.

The fourth Party congress report as discussed above was one of the main tactics of the party that tried to develop contact within the feminist circle with the final culmination of “Nari Mukti Sangharsh Sammelan” which discussed gender equality within the property relation and theoretically the top leadership accepted it but in reality women never got property share in term of land.. The reason of acceptance actually pressurized the women’s movement in the party, but in practice the party never dealt like feminists. The important movements at least in term of women rights, was the Jay Prakash Narayan Movement, known as JP movement where after an intense struggle, women had acquired some part of land on their name (Alaka and Chetna, 1987, p, 25) but the party leadership expressed that it was a break of class alliance among poor people.⁸ The party did not want to open such issues and avoided direct confrontation with family. Kumud told me “When women struggled for land in Bodh Gaya movement party had avoided discussion on it. The party leadership feared that it would divide and weaken of the party if such question was raised by someone within the party. Leadership expressed that it was anti-class struggle and that would be affecting class unity within peasantry”.

As a result ‘Land to the tiller’ meant that the tiller was a male. The logical ending of this slogan, was that land was distributed or transferred between the landlord (upper caste) male to a Dalit poor male. Exceptional cases were when widows got land in the rural area. The men did not easily accept sharing land with women and women did not have the courage to demand the land from the men folk which was mainly party leadership responsible for it. This is the pure economic transformation after intense struggle and hundreds of massacre in central Bihar. This was a sharp contradiction on the question of women’s rights. Land reform authority or committee did not have any concern of women’s rights. Theoretically, formulation of slogan expressed mainly male understanding of agrarian relation in Bihar. In agrarian society, sexual division of labor showed up in a very sharp manner. While women’s labourers engaged in twofold action: direct involvement in field and cleaning of the grain throughout the year inside the household, society recognized only the primary labor of the male in the field. During the ‘struggle period’,⁹ land to the tiller also expressed primary right of male on the land but party encouraged women to join the movement because their husbands would get land, so the husband could raise his class. However, when the family received the land they got some relief from poverty and starvation. But for women, such property rights were supposed to help improve women’s “bargaining power” (Agrwal, 1994) inside and outside the family. The psychological impact which legal land ownership such as the Bodh Gaya women brought about, was recorded by Manushi. Alaka and Chetna wrote a report from the Bodh Gaya movement for Manushi. The report below discusses how women struggled for land rights:

⁸ Based on interview.

⁹ I mean when Liberation struggled for land prior 1990s.

After this agitation, about 150 acres of land were given in women's names in Kusa and Beeja villages of Sherghati. Women of these villages have not acquired complete decision making control over the crop or the land. They are not, for instance, in a position to sell the land. We held discussions with the women to ask whether getting the land in their names had made any difference to their lives. Some of their reactions are given below. "Didi we have got just an acre of land. It isn't as if we have got a lot to eat but how can we say it has made no difference. It has made a difference", Malan said "Before, we used to work for a wage on the Math's land. The men could beat us up and snatch away our wages. Now, we are at least able to feed our children from the produce of the field." "D, the men cannot so easily throw us out of the house now. They are afraid lest if they trouble us too much and we leave, the land too will go with us and they will get nothing." "Didi, earlier, we had tongues but could not speak, we had feet but could not walk. Now that we have got the land, we have got the strength to speak and to walk. (Alaka and Chetna, 1987, p. 25-26)

Sexual Politics and Caste: A semi Conventional Solution

As we have seen, the land distribution policy and women rights never attained its own revolutionary goal of attaining equality between the sexes which was propagated by the party. Free choice marriage, inter-caste marriage/inter-religious marriage, consensual unions between men and women are common characteristics which are advocated by communist parties across India, at least as an idea or an abstraction. We can also trace it back to the early Marxist analysis of the "women's question", particularly in Engels' work, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which critically examined the monogamous family, particularly in the case of the bourgeois family. In addition to this, Marx and Engels state that "The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain" (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 68). Marx and Engels provide an ideological motivation and political program for the communist movement in order to attain a revolutionary transformation of the society.

The socialist states defined marriage as one based on mutual love or free association between men and women. I mention in the previous in chapter two how the pre-revolution Chinese Communist Party made some policies and directions in the first Soviet Kiangsi base area in the 1930s. Samyorup noted that “Mao appealed to all the cadres and the poor masses in 1930, stating that men without wives may take the liberty of finding a husband as quickly and women without husbands may take the liberty of finding a husband as quickly as possible” (Samyorup, 2004 p. 7). Julia Kristeva also commented that marriage reform initiatives helped eliminate at least the patriarchal control on the marriage or partner selection. It clearly shows that marriage was a basic factor of union between two people in the communist movement. The Indian communist expresses a similar view and advocates marriage reform through love marriage and inter caste/religious marriage. The party dealt marriage reforms without introducing any policy and structure but prorogated a rhetorical way of revolutionary change. In this context, we can ask the questions of how marriage and sexuality were dealt with within the movement and the party?

A resource from Bhojpur is available in two kinds with regard to marriage and sexuality. Firstly, some individuals simply informed the Party and the leadership organized the required event in the fashion of the party. However, it is important to note that the party activist belongs to a higher ranking within the party. But at the same time, contrasting evidences are also available that demonstrates the party’s fundamental conservatism on the issues of sexuality and gender rights, particularly within the local unit of the party. In this context, local units preserved a more ambivalent approach on the issues of marriage and sexuality, particularly in the case of local women leaders or hierarchical low rankers within the party. The reference of the top women’s leaders indicates that some positive changes were introduced as a result of the marriage reform agenda of the party but in local level create more complicating situation. I will examine the party program and their policy on marriage, sexuality and caste within the movement, as it might be valuable to understand the party's position with regard to the marriage reform.

It may be that urban areas have favored the condition of exercising family reforms, but this study is mainly concerned with its revolutionary impact in the rural areas of Bihar. In the countryside, the impact of the revolution helped women gain respect and establish their identities, at least in the struggle, through minimum wages and forcing an increase in women's wages, and resenting against sexual oppression like rapes or molestations of poor Dalit women. But at the same time, it remained contradictory in the rural areas, directly and indirectly reinforcing the basis of the traditional family control on women, especially in the case of arranged marriages where traditional patriarchal structure and ideas were preserved.

From the narratives of the local leaders that I have mention below, we can find out discourses on marriage within a party. A dominant discourse within the party on the subject of marriage which is progressive in some sense such as challenged the paternal control on sexuality but has several internal contradictions. There is no party documentation regarding these contradictions within the ‘official, progressive’ version. The APIWA Secretary of Bihar has argued that their party not only defines

interpersonal relationships but also propagates the breaking up of gender barriers for women, to create a favorable atmosphere for women's freedom.

According to *Aaddhi Zameen*, the party supports love marriage to improve women's freedom and status and wants to establish a more egalitarian family in the society. The leadership also has frequently expressed that the party supports love marriage and problematizes traditional marriage which lacks freedom for women and young people. Arvindam Sen, a senior leader, mentions in his article which was published in the *Liberation* in 2008:

To promote communist moral value within the party and a modern democratic attitude in our mass base-don't forget that the two are organically integrated-we must fight against certain erroneous ideas and feudal practices. We must oppose dowry, child-marriage, forced arrange marriage, the purdah etc. and uphold women's rights to choose their partners cutting across caste/religion/financial divides even in the face of familial/ social opposition and their right to be fully consulted in all family matters. We must oppose confinement of women within four walls and encourages their participation in productive activities as well as social and political affairs.

(Sen, 2008 p. no. 33)

But the narrative of the local women leaders shows that they did not have a similar kind of experience on the issue of marriage. In some sense, it appears that norms and customs were often broken or maintained in accordance with individual choice. Sometimes individual narratives are contradictory regarding this question - some emphasizing how the party kept their distance from the private lives that were secondary to the 'revolution'. Sona Devi said "It is matter of family or personal life. Conflict is normal if male and female living together where two vessels are touch make a loud sound. We are not worried about it". But Rita, Kanti and Sona Devi's accounts show how the party was concerned about it and regulated their lives when they were not even married. Their experiences are important as they indicate how class struggle was prioritized above everything else, especially love and sexuality (considered 'bourgeois' concerns), which were regarded as secondary to this essential revolutionary task.

The local women's narrative about marriage was completely in contrast to the experience of the top women leadership's version which advocated love marriage and freedom and rights to choose one's life partner. Sona Devi (from Jahanabad) narrates her own life experience. She says:

I have been trying for a long time that it does not damage the reputation of the party because of me. I will not do anything particularly love or sexual relation. But party leader all the time tried to convince me that if you want to get married, tell me and will arrange for you. However, after some time again they spoke to me about marriage and said that a boy is very good and of same caste. The boy also becomes a comrade that you think about it. And finally, I was ready for marriage. But it was a very big mistake of my life, for that I myself am responsible.

The story of Prabha ji, middle caste widow woman who joined the organization around 1985. She shared her life experience with me and told me:

When I was young my husband passed away. I joined party after that. In the initial phase party leader feared and hesitated to ask to me for marriage. No one talked on this issue. After two three years one senior comrade told me in an indirect way, I understood but I did not reply anything. Often they tried to convince me for marriage, sayings that marriage is necessity of every person. I told them openly whether you are worried that I will take wrong step in the life; I never take any step in life for which the reputation of party will be damaged. I told you don't worry about my need of a life partner. I told the party member.

Both the narrations indicate how the party leaders knowingly or unknowingly controlled their life and intentionally or unintentionally tried to direct their life. Apart from this, when I asked Prabha Ji, how she deals with issues of love marriage or love affairs as a woman leader in this area. She shared an example with me:

An unmarried girl had joined the organization. She was a very bold leader within short time. When she worked under me there were all right because I convinced her and kept tight control. I told her if you ready for marriage; I will talk to some people for you. I tried to talk about issue of

love and I said that when you are working with me don't try to love or make sexual relation and don't defame the party. When party was shifted her in other area she took wrong step. When issues spread among leaders, party asked to her about it the top leadership had taken disciplinary action against both her and that man and expelled them from the organization. There is some party rule you have to follow. Party comrades cannot start a relationship without giving information to party. Without rules comes to anarchy and also damages party reputation among masses.

This reference is very important as it helps us understand the contradictions that existed between love or marriage, especially in the case of an unmarried girl. Often the party leader, even women, tried to control and watch the unmarried girl's behavior and mobility. The agenda of marriage reform efforts affected individuals rather than providing policy, structure or any other mechanism. But it did have disciplinary action against individuals. In this situation, it was easier to pressurize women, especially unmarried ones, for party reputation. Despite that, individuals adopted several methods for sexual relationships based on personal interest such as in the name of commitment for marriage. But when the party or any senior member intervened, they either broke the relationship or left the organization. In this process they continued to try and keep their secret relation and faced fear on the moral basis and conservative notion. Often, the party put pressure based on moral objections against couples. Thus, cadres cautioned against the use of public struggle, adopted tactics to misinterpret relationships, especially inter caste love affairs. This is similar to the story Prabha, Reeta Ji shared with me which talks about the same contradiction showing how love affairs were controlled by leadership. However, she also advocated free love and love marriage but was against inter-caste marriage because of their experiences. Reeta ji, a member of the state committee and a top leader of APIWA told me:

In Gaya, had unmarried Muslim girl in our AIPWA. She was working in very well with AIPWA in Gaya district. She attracted many women toward Organization. Organization had flourished and many women were joined APIWA because of her. She was also leader in local unit. But without giving information she was sexually active with Dalit comrade. When I suspected about her relation, me and my husband asked to her but she was denied that time. When she was pregnant both the male and female left from the Organization without given information neither family and or me. We were shocked.

When I asked why they left the organization, she replied:

Because of fear and also damage the reputation of the party and also no one accepted their relation in the party, family and society. When she fled their family members were put allegation on me. We are faced much more problem this incident. After three-four years she was returned with two children's. She was wanted again to join the Sagathan but organization denied and took disciplinary action against her for breaking party discipline.

This is an effective method to control on sexual relationships and friendship. Consequently, the activists no longer shared the matters of their personal life. There was no room in the party for freedom. Rita ji used that "I suspect her relation" indicating that she had noticed or observed her activities. It means that if unmarried women or single women join the party, then the party members observed their mobility, their sexual relation or their friendship. However, an article also noted the intervention of the party member in issues of sexuality, as can be seen below:

In our semi-feudal society there is a deep discomfort with the idea of women having an affair, marrying in disregard of parental advice, divorcing, remarrying, etc; and such retrograde values tend to penetrate the party. The worst insensitivity and outright gender-prejudice manifesto themselves when women comrades happen to violate the prevalent feudal/petit-bourgeois notions of sexual morality. The principal of non-interference in personal life including choice of partners is crudely violated and this is justified by saying that communists must not cause a scandal in society, that they should sacrifice their personal linking because they have a larger responsibility to society and so on. There have been cases where we have managed to isolate a forward-looking comrade with patriarchal sermonizing and restriction- so much so that the party ends up losing her, especially if she is not yet that much integrated with the party. (Sen, 2008, p. 31-32)

There is a strong evidence of how party leaders tried to control, restrict and intervene regarding the traditional understanding in the name of the party's reputation. This is more common restriction in the rural area. This is why men and women did not trust the party leadership with their relationships. The problem is that they (men and women) feared about their own relationships to share with the leadership not knowing whether the party would accept it or not. There was no directive or a clear cut stand from the party's side. This was totally dependent on the interpretation of the local leadership and subjectivity of the couples. In this ambivalent party position, they (couple) continued to keep their affairs secret. These problems led to complications and reinforced what we have seen in the narrations of Prabha, Sona Devi and Kanti along with the widespread notion to defend the traditional norm against new principal and ideas of marriage. The above reference also indicates that there was a tendency within cadres to be “misunderstood [and] and misinterpret” women’s freedom on her own body and sexuality. It might be that the traditional consciousness and morality existed among the party cadres which resulted in the failure of the political initiations to deliver a socialist idea of progressive marriage by the party. Consequently, it was revealed that the hostile atmosphere against love marriage was manifested against many young couples within the party, especially, against unmarried girls. Within this there is no room for “my body, my right”.

I asked questions to the AIPWA secretary regarding love marriage and how the party or AIPWA deal love marriage in the rural areas. She told me “our local women comrades are able to deal with all questions. You must have visited the villages and would have seen it”. When I met the local women leaders in the village I made sure to ask them two questions: Did couples approach the Organization for help in their love marriage in this area? And, how was the matter of love dealt with in the village? Parbha Ji told me:

Are is sab kam hamni ke naikhe karat baanee, (we do not deal with this type of issues) gaav me dushmanee hoi jaye (people in the village will become our enemy) to fir ham kisako-kisko samjhai bbaanee (Then how will we convince all people of village), aisee mudde ko ham nahee dhyyan dete. (We don't take care of such issues), sab apane tarah se nipate hai (people solve these issues themselves).

Prabha ji takes a long breath and continues, “Bihar is more feudal society, they do not accept love marriage in the village. So that we avoid this kind of issues”. It also indicates that the inexperience and untrained lower cadres have been unable to deal with the complex and contentious task of marriage related issues in the village and also sometimes preserved traditional approaches on the issue of family and marriage. In fact, Sona Devi also talked that of the story of love affair within the villages. She narrates “When families invite me then I attend the panchayat meeting and try to convince both families

to control their children. Panchayat suggested that getting marriage, especially, girl as well as possible. Families also tried to gets marriage of girl as well as possible. Sometimes these created enmity between both families.” When I asked Sona Devi how the party advocates the issue of love marriage and why doesn't she deal with the issues of love marriage, inter-caste marriage according to the party position, she replied, "I'm here all the time, why I fight to people useless opposition from the villagers. Party occasionally comes in villages and they are not faced with opposition from the people".

But Prabha ji also raised more important questions such as sometimes within the village girl and boys fall in love. They are sisters and brothers defined by village people. So how can they make relationship? This is an important issue and one must consider how to address it. In practice, it may be very difficult for a cadre to support a justified relationship within the villages without gaining sympathy of the villagers who defined them as siblings. This dilemma is probably far more complicated for the Indian revolutionaries. Generally they emphasize that through collective participation of the people for revolutionary transformation of society. Despite that, the party was optimistic, believed and highlighted that the backward/traditional consciousness could be transformed by mass struggle and education would lead to revolutionary objectives.

However, the party played a significant role for arranging marriage according to the caste and class of the poor cadres in the countryside. On the question of marriage of the cadre's daughter or the party member from Ekwari village, Devi Das told me how he organized the marriage of his daughter. In the Bihari society, there was a strong control on women sexuality's that was practiced like in others parts of India. When girls entered puberty, the family arranged the marriage of the girl. In the Dalit community in Bihar, the most common phenomena are that of underage or child marriage. In Bihar, according to the UN, 60% of the marriages took place before 18 years rather than UP (50%). Even within the movement this tragic phenomena still exists and controls women's sexuality even today. In many cases there are village leaders who arranged marriages for girl under 18 years. I met some families where the fathers are active in the party on a full time basis. They have no money for marriage. The party has given some thousands of rupees for their daughter's marriage that was same caste of that cadre. Davi Das said, “15-20 thousand given dowry and remaining balance spend buying some jewelry, cloths and furniture goods for daughter”. When I discussed this with the Secretary of the AIPWA, she said that: "What we do, this is against AIPWA but we have to do. APIWA is against dowry system but state committee members are also against AIPWA and arranged daughter marriage around 15-16 lakhs during my field work". When I asked question about dowry, state committee member (male) commented on APIWA, I write the exact words: *are ye sab faalatoo kee baate hai, APIWA khud to vahee sab karate hai* (these are useless issues, AIPWA are also involved it). When I asked the top leaders of AIPWA, she said, “I don't know about it”. No one talked about it. This is because I was asking very uncomfortable questions. This is a political issue for the AIPWA and also the party. The question is that: what is the political position of the AIPWA within the party. Why did AIPWA preserve the political duality on the issue of dowry?

I would like to say that there was problem from the beginning of the movement if investigated seriously of the armed peasant resistance. Party never took seriously the popular peasant culture and consciousness rather mentions these as feudal culture and feudal ruminants. The party tried to link gender in superficial level at the same time they forget caste dimension with marriage and their political economy. But popular consciousness of peasant is very strong cannot be artificially linked with caste and gender. Peasant question, peasant front and programme of the land to the tiller are more concerning issues for the party which is largely filled by male. As a result we can see peasant resistance to reforms own condition in which they challenged the feudal landlord authority which was upper caste in Bhojpur but Kurmi and Yadav were landlord in Jehanabad but at the same time peasant union preserved the “normative pattern/androcentric perspective. They are boss also dominated women within family. They fully enjoyed their privilege within family system. The contradiction and complexities are also involved when many women, especially older women who joined the party in early period of the struggle, voiced often against introduction of the idea of inter-caste marriage, love marriage or new marriage pattern in the name party reputation. I also observed that the lower level cadres are neither encouraged nor criticized by the top leadership who got love marriage or inter-caste marriage but in the village affairs they felt that love marriage or inter-caste marriage could not be implemented in the villages, maybe it could be implemented in the urban area but not in a village.

Another important dimension as has been discussed earlier is that a number of scholars have noted that the dominant ideology and cultural practice not only existed among the oppressed groups, but was also actively defended by the oppressed groups. We have seen how the Dalit male and women who were oppressed by the Brahmanical ideology and cultural practice were also actively defending it, especially inter-caste marriage and inter-religion. The social and cultural conditioning had been forced by the powerful institutions, which might have led to the internalization of the dominant patriarchal notion and casteist notion, norm, identities and self denigrating images. Certainly, it is deep rooted in the structure, social institution and their stability, circumstances. The subordination under the dominant male power was needed to penetrate the idea of a subordinate women's self identity into the rubric of the society. Revolutionaries believed that the oppressive institutions and structures were maintained primarily by threat and fear in terms of the socio-cultural practice. It was a more powerful tool against the women and of course had an influence and impact on women. Thus, one needed to take the power of those institutions seriously to shape the women’s lives and their understanding.

Although in the armed peasant struggle, the problem right from its inception was that the party was in an immature condition but the process of struggle was not able to introduce any analysis of women role and condition in peasantry. It was generally assumed, implicitly and explicitly, that within the dominant consciousness of the ML revolutionaries, the issues of women’s rights would lead the weak through class struggle. However, this assumption continues even till today within the party. Liberation theoretically follows the thesis of Chinese revolution but the leadership did not follow the policy of social transformation of the CCP, particularly on land reform and marriage reform. The party leadership always wanted women to sacrifice their desires which in general were based on norms and values culled from the familial codes and thus it was difficult for women to get out of. But the party never understood the

women's feeling and depression within the familial atmosphere which alienated them and affected them in different ages on physiological level. But the party continues to appeal at the superficial level for women participation in the movement, unable to understand the physiology of women in the feudal atmosphere. This is not only about women's question in particular, but an indication that the left leadership failed to understand the entire feudal relation in terms of caste, class and gender.

Reproduction and Caste Practice within Party

Throughout the struggling period, the party leaders would concentrate on the land struggle, minimum wage and political priority rather than on the problems that the women participants were facing for being active in the movement. The traditional family system is not only a socio-economic unit of the society. Caring is also a nature of the family where mothering is considered to be the primary responsibility of the women within the traditional family. During the peasant struggle, it was generally presumed by the leaders that increasing the wage for women and stopping sexual oppression would essentially realize the greater gender equality. In the historical sense, this assumption might be seen as a radical struggle against the anti-patriarchal and the anti-feudal, but when women came out of the family there was a break out of the entire family structure in one sense. In spite of that, the family system reorganized during the social change. I would like to explore and contextualize the women's experience about child rearing when they entered into the political sphere and tried to break the traditional structure of reproduction. At the same time it would also be important to observe how mothering was performed through the family, caste and kinship system within movement and party.

Although some women leaders wanted to have children and some others under the pressure of their family, especially the mother in-law, were forced to conceive as soon as possible, they couldn't afford to be choosy. In this process their political careers were suppressed because with both roles they didn't have much time for to fulfill their responsibilities. The husband continued his political work and maintained the revolutionary force for the party while the women gradually broke away or changed their position and became secondary revolutionary forces for the party, at least some times. From the party too they were subjected to criticism. Party leadership never played a serious role in the women's life in terms of issues within the family be it the husband-wife relationship, relationship with the child and its upbringing, events in the natal family or the husband's house as the family was considered to be institution for which these issues were sensitive and involved moral values.

In the initial phase, women who decided to work as full-timers for the party, faced a lot of trouble to balance their political careers during their pregnancy or child rearing process. I made it a point to pose this question to every women leader asking them how they dealt with child rearing along with political work. Geeta Devi replied:

When my child was 6-7 months, I was carrying. When I stayed in villages, many women sympathizers were there and I gave my child to them so that the women take care of child such as feeding, applying oil, cleaning cloth when child does potty and even help the child to sleep. When I returned from village meeting, I used to feed. And some women used Breastfeeding themselves. I have not faced problem in two years. When I walked with *Dasta* (squad) for some days in far village then I kept the child with women whom I know better and in base areas many women help for child caring.

Generally, the party convinced the women that childrearing within the masses will bring support for the party. The party argued that the women leaders must trust their supporters. The supporters, in turn, would take care of the child properly. But Sona Devi shared a different story with me:

I was very careless in terms of children; today our party leader will never do it. Even I left children aged 5-7 years for 15 days. When I returned, our neighbors would complain saying you are freely moving and you are eating food outside, but your baby is hungry here. However, they would give food to my children but also will complain all-time to me. When we faced much more problems I decided to keep the children in supporter's family but I knew that they will not treat my children as their own child. When I met my children they complained that all the time we are grazing animals and sometime they beat me but I cannot do anything. The supporters would not send my children to school in the initial phase. However, somehow my children studied. One time I kept my children with the upper caste supports but my children were not felt easy then I decided to keep them with my own caste.

Women activists preferred to keep their children with the supporters of their own caste because otherwise the activist mother and her children used to feel uneasy. Thus, generally the Dalit children were kept with Dalit supporters. However, there is different between the experiences of the local Dalit women leaders and the women in the top leadership experience on the issue of child care. Seema from Jagdishpur told

meshe was carrying young children with themselves up to the age of 1-2 years. After that I kept the child with mother-in law and finally kept with sister when child was going for school. However, the question of child rearing was important for top women leadership. Rita ji told me “many times this central question was raised within party committee but was never settled”. But top leadership did not follow the pathway of Sona Devi and Geeta Devi, mainly because of their family resources, and social and cultural capital. The example of Sona Devi and Geeta Devi at first glance, it appears in some sense a break from the traditional manner of child rearing, but this practice of childrearing within the movement was according to caste, culture and their kinship. In this manner, caste purity within the party was maintained.

Actually in the initial phase, the party did not think about this matter. It was purely the women’s problem which had to be solved by them on their own. Kumud said:

Party said, you keep child with your own relatives. Within the party all women solved the issue of child caring in same manner. Top leadership of women managed sometimes and left child with natal family or mother-in-law. Many women were carrying the baby with them for two or three years. Then they kept the child with their own family or relatives. Generally, when they kept their child with the supporters, they preferred those with their own caste and class. But party had never taken responsibility of children’s study, food, cloth etc.

This was the major issue for women throughout the entire period. Generally, the top leadership never trusted and remained unsatisfied with the party's understanding of child care. However, the party failed to provide an alternative system of reproduction and its impact on how to reshape the same within the party and finally went back to the traditional family structure that was differentiated according to caste practice.

However, Sona Devi and Geeta Devi had similar views on child care. Both of them said: “We have failed on this issue which is a reason for many women to go back from the women’s organization. It was a major issue for women but party imposed its own thought, never thought from the women’s point of view. Party never understood the difficulties of these women. The party’s dealings were insufficient keeping with the reality of women in terms of child rearing.

Basically, in the traditional structure, major responsibility of the household and that of child care were always on women. When the communist party thought that women were revolutionary forces themselves, it must have also thought about the mechanism that had to be created for the women force.

This was especially relevant in the case of Dalit women, who had nothing - even their relatives were so poor that there was nobody to take the responsibility of another woman's children. Secondly, it is interesting how the party thought that women were more family centric. On the contrary, family should be treated primarily as dependent or independent variables, as it is not a theoretical debate among revolutionaries that was simply put as women being family centric in nature. In the next section, I will discuss the parliamentary politics, the AIPWA politics and the party's approach on the women question.

Post 1990: CPI (ML) Liberation: All India Progressive Women's Association

The CPI (ML) liberation entered into the second phase with parliamentary politics in a particular July in the 1990s, entitling it as the Special All India conference in Delhi, where the party decided to work over basic groundwork such as organizing open rallies through open banners, demonstrations and seminars in defense of Marxism. After 1990, the party launched several new fronts such as the All India Central Council of Trade Union (AICCTU) and the All India Students Association (AISA) although we can see that the women organization at the national level was launched only after four years as the All India Progressive Women's Association in 1994.

On 22 July 1992, the fifth congress was held by the party in Kolkata and it was decided that the party would participate in electoral politics after nearly twenty years. This time the party reorganized new challenges and also reviewed the earlier party work. In 1992, the party started the women's magazine, *Aadhi Zameen* (Half Sky), for developing consciousness on gender issues. The magazine addressed the various dimensions of gender issues. Arvindam Sen wrote an article entitled "Party Building among Women" which was in the magazine in 1995, and addressed issues around the women position within the party structure, and developing a mechanism of recruiting women cadres for the party. That time very few women in leadership positions. They emphasized that "We have decided in the fifth congress increased proportion of women member from 5 percent to 20 percent till 6th congress, we have hardly made any progress towards the goal" (Sen, 1995, p. 33), and further suggested that the party had taken responsibility for building up the women's movement and developing its interaction with other movements. But there was also the need to focus on the participation of women along with the workers and the peasant struggle and other democratic movements, rather than putting constraints only on women organizations to develop them politically for their active participation. Through Sen article we can see that "We tell or instruction them to participation this or that programme but never tell the importance of programme. Not even that after programme we are not raise any discussion and debate among women. In result, after instruction women are participate in programmes but not develop their political consciousness." This article was written in 1995. I observe that this problem is continuing to the present day. In this context, Kanti talked about how "We are all time busy in programmes that decided by party".

However, Sen focused that there is a need to recruit women within the party, in order to educate them later about the communist party and to train them to spread that education among the other women

cadres. The members of the women's organization took the responsibility to build a strong women's organization, because if the party committee was unable to overcome this weakness the party would remain weak largely among the women. In this direction, it was suggested for the AIPWA leaders that they should visit the villages from time to time, stay with the local women members and take the responsibility to introduce them to the party debates. But Chinta Devi's comment is very important for understanding what the reality in the rural area is in present day. Chinta Devi said that "AIPWA does not need us any more, never visited in our village. Either election time or when some critical issues are coming then they visited in some times in block otherwise AIPWA leaders visited in district level". She commented in front of the block level leadership in Sahar, "he had just laughing and their face expression like are you critiquing party. The block level leadership told that "When you will call AIPWA, they will come to your village". This is an important indication of how the AIPWA was invisible within the village. I also observed that the AIPWA was not properly functioning in the village which I visited. In general, I met with full-timer women leaders who worked mainly with the party in addition to AIPWA.

However, in 1994, the party formed an All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA) and the Janvadi Mahila Manch and Pragatisheel Mahila Manch were merged with it. In the fifth party congress party in 1992 it was recognized that our first attempt at organizing a women's organization at the national level after the Calcutta conference (April, 1986) faced a serious setback. All sorts of ideological problems cropped up at the national women's cell and it simply disintegrated, leaving a dampening effect on women's organizations operating at state and local level". Prakash Louis noted that "In 1995 AIPWA had a membership of 10,000 women" (Louis, 2002, p. 177). However, when I asked the leaders of the Sahar block on how to give membership of AIPWA to the women, they said that in general, the wives of all the male supporters in the villages were included in the list of AIPWA. It is an indication that the qualification of membership of AIPWA for women was just as a wife of male supporters in the village like a military club where the woman needs the qualification of being the wife of a military man. I observed that in general male supporter wives are supporters of the party and sometimes they even participated in party programs like, demonstration, or during elections. But my focus is that understanding of the party leaders about women as not independent individuals. Their identification was as a wife for party leaders on the one hand and mostly as participants in programs. They didn't know their status in the party and AIPWA. It is indicated that the party leader's created propaganda about their strength.

The women issues taken up by the AIPWA struggle for propagating a progressive law such as developing an anti-rape culture, employment and educational opportunities for women, equal wages for men and women, Bihar women commission etc. But right from its origins, the AIPWA faced the most serious problem, particularly with the emergence of Ranvir Sena. One of the major struggles taken up by the AIPWA was to launch a struggle against the notorious landlord such as Jwala Singh. Jwala Singh was the most barbaric landlord in Danwar - Bihta of Bhojpur district. AIPWA organized protests against the rape of Dalit women and against the landlord in this area despite that Jwala Singh's was more powerful and had strong political nexus. Jwala Singh had a history of attacking and murdering the party leaders. However, it was not an easy task to mobilize people. Despite that the AIPWA launched a struggle against

Jwala Singh. However, “When they legally failed to punish Jwala Singh, they were killed by the peasant organization” (Luois, 2002, p. 178).

The analysis of the party’s approach towards the women question shows the contradiction of how the party addresses women’s issues within the context of the revolutionary aim. The life experience of Meend, Sona Devi, Kanti and Rita and others their understanding of family, sexuality, love marriage and inter-caste marriage, family violence - which was never taken seriously by the Party – makes the contradictions clear. Party secretary, Vinod Mishra wrote a 1995, entitled ‘The Question of Women’s Liberation in the Perspective of Marxism’, where he opined that women’s oppression in our country is strongly connected with class oppression. He defined the women question based on Engels’ book, *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, but he failed to understand how class and caste functions and produces a subordinate status for women and how the marriage system maintain the caste status through control of women’s sexuality in the Indian context. Without including women’s experience of marriage reform, reproduction, caste, family and the kinship system, especially the experience of many women leaders, he fails to show how the party addressed the feudal patriarchal system within the Indian Society.

However, Vinod Mishra noted that the women constituted a part of the peasantry so they participated in all struggles of the peasant. He also considered there is a need to recognize specific issues of women’s struggle and its autonomy. But autonomy in the sense that women organizations should be developed to lead strong women’s movement on the one hand and other participate in national rank for advocating women’s liberation on the other. For example, he said that our women comrades should be participating in other working class movement and feminist movements too. But the party expressed their fear about the feminist tendency coming in their own women’s organization. In the fifth political-organizational report, one can see the anxiety of the party that “our women front also had to come to grip with the tendency of obsession with feminist organization, their ideology and practice. This had particularly diluted the level of party consciousness among women comrades (political-organizational report, 1992. The Party’s view on the feminist tendency was harmful for class struggle.

CPI (ML) Liberation considered that feudal tendency that existed among men within the party in the fifth party congress report. The report identified many problems including the assessment of the capacity of women, and came to the conclusion that the party did not provide a favorable atmosphere for women, because of which women were not given any responsible position within the party. Thus, women did not achieve top level of leadership. A significant number of the male members, including some responsible ones, did not want women from their family to join as party members because they thought that their family life would be in trouble. Kumud told me “Many women who were actively engaged for party work and ignored domestic responsibility as they spend more time outside the household, then they faced problems from the communist husbands, and they have been use to hear anger their communist husbands. Generally, party ignored these issues and thought of these as personal matters”. Thus, the organization did not touch these issues and felt it was better to remain silent. This made it easier for them

to forget the matter and support the behavior of male dominance. For this question, the party had to answer like how merely joining the party would not be able to bring about a drastic change to the mentality of male supremacy among the male activists. Thus, the party should gradually eliminate its historical limitation and continue developing consciousness about how to help the women members. In the fifth congress mentioned that “ Party must strictly deal with all offences against women cadres and activists and make special effort like organizing workshops to educate and promote women cadres” (political-organizational report of the 5th All India Party Congress in 1992 p. 60). This is the tragedy of CPI (ML) Liberation and other communist parties which failed to understand the complexities of patriarchal domination, but instead gave in to the party leadership’s rhetorical politics. For example, Ramji Rai noted in his article on the occasion of the All India education camp, how the party carried forward the communist approach:

Communist International had declared as part of its programme: “social equality between men and women in law as well as in real life; revolutionary transformation of the relations between husband and wife and of the family code; motherhood to be accorded the status of social work; responsibility for the care and education of babies and young children to be in the hands of society; and relentless struggle against all ideologies and traditions that enslave women. This very programme of women’s liberation struggle defines our basic direction even today. The CPI (ML) Programme is a programme to implement this basic direction in the concrete conditions of our country. (Rai, 2008, p. 42)

The matter of women representation within the party structure has been a crucial issue. At the Diphu Organizational Conference that was held in 1995, major issues were discussed regarding democratic centralism. In this context, the party decided that women’s membership within the party should be at least 20% and to include at least 10% women in the party structure at all levels. Ramji Rai noted that:

In the 15-20 years since then, we have certainly made progress in this direction but in spite of the renewed emphasis on this direction in the Bardhaman Conference and the recently concluded 8th Party Congress, we have not been able to achieve the goal of women’s membership of at least 20% of the total membership – stabilizing this level and moving beyond it being a far cry. We have more or less stabilized the presence of 10% women in each committee, and it seems that we

have satisfied ourselves that this is the best that can be achieved. We are not trying to induct an even larger number of women in our structures. The lack of even an attempt in this direction perhaps suggests that we are satisfied with the existing level. (Ramji Rai 2008 p. no. 43)

On the issue of women position in the party was an external and internal pressure on the party to respond on it. It seemed that when women from middle caste and class took the decision to become a fulltimer, many questions were raised within the party organization. In the urban area when the party would build the organization, they faced more criticisms from the feminist thinkers despite the fact that the party did not address all the serious issues. For example, nowadays, leaders like Kavita Krishana are more prominent leaders in the urban area, especially in Delhi, and their views have more feminist approach such as marriage is a key institution to reinforce caste. But within the party, there is no policy on the marriage and caste in present. This is a more ambiguous position and it poses a challenge for both the party and also the women's front. This is an indication of the conflict between the views of the AIPWA Secretary and the party policy.

After ten years of AIPWA, in a published article in *Aadhi Zameen*, Kumud expressed her own views on the oppression and slavery of women inside the family. She argued that "Women can't fight with the family as an individual without the provision of a new structure because of her economic and social status. The sexual division of labor and labor hierarchy leads to the devaluation of women labor in the society, where their labor is considered to be of a secondary position. Consequently, women cannot gain confidence in their fight against the household and family. When women are ready to fight against the exploitative system then they realized that it is the only process of struggle against society through which family as a whole could be changed. This will help women understand family from a broader perspective. They can realize how the whole system uses family and how women are subordinated within the family (Aadhi Zamin, 2003 October). However, Kumudini Pati fails to address how their party develops a mechanism or introduces any policy regarding women rights. Even in China, the leadership of Mao, introduces land policy and marriage policy in Kiangsi Soviet in 1930 while the instability in their political condition continues. Finally within four –five years party left Kiangsi Soviet.

Massacres and Survive: Struggle against Ranvir Sena

Your 36 inch intestine, in the reaction of six, we will tear out 36 in the pieces,

Not only you, will we tear out of your women of which no able to give birth.¹⁰

¹⁰ Documentary, Operation Black Rain by Cobrapost associated Editor K. Ashish

(Shailendra Vatsyayan, Spokesperson of Indian Nationalist farmer organization supported by Ranvir Sena)

Against Ranvir Sena Dalit woman says:

Give us guns, not compensation. We do not want your money. We want to fight with those who have been killing us and moving around freely.

(Ramwatia Devi, 1999, Frontline, Vol. 16, Issue No. 4, Feb, p. 13-26)

The anger of Ramwatia Devi was most common even among other women who lost the lives of their children, husbands and other family members. The most difficult situation was faced by the poor Dalit people when the brutal attacks by the Ranveer Sena took place. Many accounts show that the Ranvir Sena attacked the Dalit poor community who were struggling against these massacres. In this context, village women were organized for struggling against Ranvir Sena.

The Ranvir Sena had been formed in 1994 in the Belaur village of Bhojpur District. Belaur is a Bhoomihar-dominated village near the Arrah district. The official opinion of the party was that when the party entered into electoral politics, the upper caste and Bhoomihar felt anxious because the party was intruding into their place of politics. If the poor Dalits acquired or captured their political places, the Bhoomihar and the upper caste would lose their political space which might lead to the loss of their hegemony over the political nexus. Thus, the upper caste people started mobilizing more aggressively and attacked in an organized form on the peasant movement. . According to the party leader, Rameshwar Prasad, “Arose as Ranvir Sena the decline of feudalism” (Singh, 2005, p. 111). But there were different opinions among the supporters and intellectuals, who considered the policy of the liberation as an anarchic action and retreated from armed struggle as a pre-condition of the emergence of the Ranvir Sena.

Before emergence of Ranvir Sena, the fifth congress party also recognized that “Our own sectarian policies and indiscriminate action-some at the behest of thoroughly degenerated units-also played their own role in strengthening the reactionary caste organization” (political-organizational report of the 5th All India Party Congress, 1992, p. 45). Many supporters within the party and outside criticized

the party when the party retreated from the militant struggle during 1990 and openly entered into electoral politics. In this process, the party ignored the armed action which provided a base for the Ranvir Sena. This was the strongest argument during that time. Within the party, a debate was raised on the use of arms when many cadres within the party wanted advanced weapons in their struggle against the Ranvir Sena. The party document published and distributed among the party cadres on this issue clinched the debate of arms and ammunitions. But when I visited the rural area's party cadres (both men and women), they did not seem to be satisfied by the argument of party and hence did not consider the present struggle of the party as radical. For them the party struggle with armed forces of the earlier days was more effective. When Ranvir Sena attacked the villagers, the party engaged only through rally, dharna, and press releases. Even when the party had prior information of attack by Ranvir Sena on seeing the tensions among the villagers, they engaged in press releases rather than making any efforts to save the villagers' lives. Thus, the party lost the trust of the rural people (Singh, 2005). For example, when the attack of Ranvir Sena on Bathe took place, the local women leadership demanded armed action against Ranvir Sena such as Ramwati Devi I mention above.

What does mean when we say Bhoomihar domination or caste oppression was an acute problem in Bihar. It means, for example the son of the landlord Deep Narayan Chaudhary was a notorious lecher. Even during the Surya Madir mela (festive season), when the women congregate near the temple for puja, Deep Narayn's men would molest the women. The Deep Narayan (Upper caste) used to gloat about his son, "*maine saand pala hai*" (Luois, 2002, p. 218). The literal translation reads that 'I have reared a bull' but in the Hindi belt it means 'male domination over women', typically used to connote sexual harassment and rape. This was the nature of the upper caste male psyche of dominance over women, especially Dalit women. During the massacre, the Brahmanical male psyche was at its height against the Dalit women and their community. The nature of the massacre was clear through its reflections in places such as Bathani Tola, Laxmanpur Bathe, Shanker Bigha etc. In Bathani Tola, for example PUDR noted that:

On the afternoon 11 July 1916, 50-60 armed persons belonging to the Ranvir Sena approached Bathani tola from the near the police camp. The men of tola ran away leaving women, children, and old people behind. Most of the attackers were bhumiars from the village. They attacked the house of Marwari Chaudhuri in which people had taken shelter. After setting fire to the house, they went on a horrifying killing spree, killing 19 people on the spot and injuring five others. Two children died later. (PUDR report, 1997, p. 6)

I visited Bathani Tola in 2015 and met Kapil Sharma. He recalled the background of the massacre of Bathani Tola. Kapil Ji and the other villagers sat on the *chabootra* (common place for villages) in front of their mud houses and shared this information:

CPI (ML) liberation mobilized to poor people for issue of wages since 1975. It was main conflict between poor people and landowners who was *Bhoomihar* and *Rajputs* in this village. The demand was five kg paddy for *Banihar* (*the kind of bounded labors*) and 20 rupees plus food for daily wage workers. In 1988 it was only five rupees. The laboures demanded minimum wages according to government rule. But landholder in our village continued denied for it. Villagers did *hadtaal* (strike) in 1988 against landholders for minimum wage which some Muslim were also participated. The entire year was not cultivated on land. When strike was called off and laborers went for work. In spite that they used to beat and abusive language of laboures. They were harassed women workers. On these issues tension created between poor and landowner in the village. When Ranvir Sena was formed landholders were invited them. In 1996 villagers organized *sabha* (meeting) for wage, they (landowners) were identified who participated in this *sabha*. In day light around on 25 April around 10-11 am Sultan Mian killed by landowners Ranvir Sena. After this incident Ranvir Sena was stay in this village and in the evening they moved in village and threatened to Dalits and Muslim family. Who will not afraid the murders? So many families flew from village out of fear, and lived with those families in this village (Kapil indicate for Bathani tola) that lived earlier. On From 25 April 1996 were attacked on seven times in this tola and final culmination on 11 July 1996, around 2 -3 pm started firing from behind of eucalyptus trees of that was far around 500 hundred meters. That time men from the village went outside for worked. When they were soured that no one challenged us entered the village. Women and children ran away and leaving one houses out of fear. Ranvir Sena entered this house and buttered our peoples, they raped and killed one year old child to 80s years old people. They killed 21 people of this village. While police camp situated in nearby Bathani tola (Kapil indicated through hand which I saw clearly, I gauss may be 500 meters). Whenever I remember this incident still goo bum on my

When I entered this village, I saw the statue which was made by the Ram Naresh Ram (MLA of CPI (ML) Liberation). In the statue (as shown in the picture below), one could mostly see the faces of women and children - a sight that made me lose control over my emotions.

Figure from Bathani Toal Village that I had visited October in 2015



In this statue, the name, age and gender of 21 people are mentioned, which includes the information of most of the women and children who were killed by Ranvir Sena in 1996.

The history of the massacres reported in 1971, such as Belchhi to Mianpur, resulted in the loss of over 786 lives. The existence of the private militia was a constant from the beginning of the movement. But Ranvir Sena was most brutal compared to the other private militia such as the Bhumi Sena, the Lorik Sena, the Brmharshi Sena, the Kunwar Sena and the other such Senas. “90 massacres, 26 were committed in Bhojpur, 22 in Jehanabad, 13 in Aurnagabad, 11 in Gaya, and 9 in Patna. Bhojpur witnessed eight massacres in 1996” (Louis, 2002, 241). The series of massacres that were carried out in central Bihar in the regions of Bathanitola, Shanker Bigha, Narayanpur, Laxmanpur-Bathe were brutal in nature. In 1999, the Chief Minister of Bihar, Laloo Prasad said, “*Male ko Bhojpur se ukhadane ke liye main narak ki takato se bhi samjhauta karne ke liye taiyar hoon* (To uproot the ML group from Bhojpur, I am ready to compromise even with the forces of hell)” (Louis 2002, 241).

During 1995 to 2000, BPKS and AIPWA got together to organize protests, dharnas, demonstration rallies against Ranvira Sena and the state administration who supported them in Bhojpur. They demanded justice for those families who had lost their lives in the massacres all over the region. The secretary of AIPWA told me: “It was a very difficult situation for AIPWA but continuously challenged the state authority and upper caste militia through women’s mobilization and resistance like rallies, dharnas, and demonstrations against Ranvir Sena and demanded of women’s commission for taking seriously the issues of women’s condition in Bihar.

From the Ekwari Village of Sahar block, local women leaders Nirmala and the others would sit together. When I asked her how they had protected their village and the dalit families when Ravir Sena had launched their attacks, she told me: “Ekwari village in 1997 massacre four women three men and one child was killed by Ranvir Sena. A day before this massacre one comrade came to the village and landlord had given information about it to the police. After some hours police force encircled the village, Police searched Dalit houses, then one woman hidden the comrade in wheat field and play bangles so that police doesn’t enter in field. They also said, during struggle period there were regular police raids in Dalit houses. In the day to day life they learnt how to be safe from police. When police entered in the village, women played major role for safety of the comrades. Many times women used cow-dung pellet for safety of the comrades. Even women also had hidden the comrades in labor room”. The term ‘labor room’ is not an appropriate term in the traditional sense. Traditionally, in the post-partum period, women are prohibited from coming in contact with any object or member of the house per se. They are assigned a particular part of the house where only the mid-wife is sent, and the place including the woman, is considered to be impure. But when police raided the houses, women tried to hide their comrades in this room. It was a unique strategy practiced by the women against the state. On one hand they arose in full force against the landlord, and on the other hand, they helped strengthen the movement.

Niramla also recalled the struggle of those days when Ranvir Sena had launched its attack on Ekwari and mentioned how the Dalit community in those parts of the region felt anxious and fearful throughout the night and day. Nirmala, remembering their struggle against Ranvir Sena and how the village had united against them, said that “the male members of the village would keep a constant watch outside the village. Women also formed watch teams at the village level when Ranvir Sena brutally attacked the poor Dalit community. They guarded their territory with domestic weapons in general but sometimes they even kept pistols. They protected their own village from the police and Ranvir Sena through militant struggle and strategies. Police and Ranvir Sean were unable to enter the village many times”. Women’s role was very important to the movement. They provided shelter and food to the leader, confronting the police at all times. It was the reality of every village. During this time, every Dalit village/tola mobilized against the Ranvir Sena attack. Women played an important role by organizing demonstrations, rallies, dharnas, and by saving their people from the Sena attacks.

Women Participation in Elections

After the year 2000, when Ranvir Sena stopped their attacks on people, AIPWA entered the Panchayat election at least partially. But in the 2005 Panchayat election, AIPWA engaged in full strength, campaigning for women candidates, as a result of which many women won. AIPWA tried to mobilize women in the rural areas through the Panchayat election. They had success in some sense such as in the struggle for instating the social welfare scheme at the village level. I met the Secretary of the AIPWA. She told me: “After entering the Panchayat election, many women joined the party politics”. But in my observation, only three women are active in the party in the entire of Bhojpur district in recent times, among whom only one came through the process of election. There were various problems involved in this process like the cases where a ticket was given to the wife of a male member who was not active within the party. After winning the election from the Panchayat, the panchayat members would no longer be under the party's control and would even get involved in corruption. But leaders of the AIPWA never considered it. As a result, some of the women who were active in earlier time left the party.

There also existed a contradiction during 1995, when the CPI (ML) Liberation decided to participate in the election in full strength. But who were able to contest the election? There are many evidences that show that the party did not give tickets to women, out of the fifteen male contesters in the state assembly election in 1995 (which won six seats) and eleven contesters in 2000 (which won six seats). Even in 2005, they won five seats out of the seven, while in 2010 they did not win any seat out of the five out of which there was not a single candidate who was a woman. In the last state assembly in 2015, five women contested the election from that area where there was no chance of winning. According to a senior woman member: “generally the party gives ticket to women where there is never a chance to win an election”. She further added: “In the initial period when the party entered the Election contest, tickets were generally given to male members. Many times at its meetings, I raised the question of why women were not given tickets to contest elections? After that the party started giving tickets to women of places where there was no possibility to win”.

In this period, the party continued to face the challenge of loss of mass support in the rural areas. This is the most dangerous situation that points out how people engage according to the change in party politics and strategy, and how the party tries to convert active participation into vote politics. For example, when people directly participated against the rural feudal power and state repression, they recognized it as a ‘struggle period’ referring to the period from 1981 to the 1990s. But after that people also started eyeing the party with suspicion. As a result, people gradually started assuming a passive role. When the political strategy of the CPI (ML) Liberation was shifted, women also withdrew from their militant tendencies and converted to passive supporters. For example, Sona Devi note: “When very serious issue arises in the party and party's reputation is at stake, I used to gather some other women. Otherwise I didn't care what program was going on. I told the members of my village to active participation in the movement when there was an urgent need”. Another woman also expressed the same thing. She said, “I fully engage with the party when the party faces any crisis”. Here the terms ‘crisis’ was referred like elections. . In the present situation election is the more important event for the party and their members. During the election, passive supporters become active in order to carry out the election

campaigning. They understand the period of the election as the most critical time for the party. These changes are some of the challenges for the CPI (ML) Liberation in the pathway of building a strong women's movement.

The social base of AIPWA was changing in a slow process. Around 2005, AIPWA was focused on semi-employed women such as Asha workers, Anganbadi, Mamata and midday meal workers for their recognition as employment, increase salary, provide facilities as government employ so on. However, very few women got involved in the AIPWA politics. They also faced challenges that women started coming only for economical benefit, and very few women entered the AIPWA politics and the women's movement. But in the rhetorical sense, the party repeatedly goes on mentioning that:

The feudal character of relations between men and women in India is expressed in other relations in our society too. In its concrete analysis of Indian society, our party holds Indian society to be semi-feudal and semi-colonial. "This determines the stage of our revolution-the stage of people's democratic revolution with agrarian revolution axis". Though the primary aim of this democratic revolution will be to abolish all feudal remnants and the concomitant autocratic and bureaucratic distortions in the polity, it will necessarily have several socialist aspects as well. (Rai, 2008, p. 42)

Unfortunately, how can one imagine that the party had concrete analysis of the thesis of "semi feudal and semi colonial", when the top leadership of the party shifted into an urban area? Even in China, Mao moved from the urban to the rural area but the liberation moved from the rural to the urban area. How can they then apply the theory of the semi-feudal and the semi-colonial? The basic theory of Mao's thesis is that after the Hunan report, peasant and workers began to be seen as revolutionary forces for the new democratic revolution, which encircled the village in the urban areas and finally captured the state. If the CPI (ML) Liberation changed this, Mao thought about what was their alternative. This was the most serious and dangerous condition for the CPI (ML) Liberation to make their local leader active, who felt an alienation from the party. It was not just a simple situation.

However, in some sense, the party tried to consolidate and reorganize through some activities. In the party document of 2013, it was reported that the "Party took initiatives political education among women cadres. In Bihar, learning material prepared by central women's department, and organized 683 camped among 20 thousand members and activists" (Party organizational report, 2013, p. 15). The aim of Jan-Raajaneetik Saakshatrtta Abhiyaan (political learning campaign), was to recruit new members, increase the average level of the party members and develop new cadres. Based on this report, I wanted to

visit Bhojpur and meet those women who were active in the village units of the AIPWA. The top leadership of the AIPWA had given me only three names which were full-timers with the AIPWA and the Party. During my field study I observed that many supporters provided support to the party in a passive manner.

Slowly the top leadership of AIPWA totally shifted into an urban area. Sona Devi told us that the “party wants urban and educated women who defend the Marxism very well. No need of rural and uneducated women to the party. Once party elected me in state committee it’s for showpiece. After that I was demoted in the lower structure. ". Her anger shows how she felt alienated from the party. She further told me: “We are engaged halfheartedly in party work unless when matters are very serious. I told the same to the villagers. That only when matters are very serious then they should attend the party programmes”. There are women supporters in village but they are not active in any structural function. Sona Devi took long breath and said that “*jo ho gaya so ho gaya, ab pachhta kar kya Karen. ab koi fayada nahee hai. Kaha jaye? Baki sab party se ye party achhi hai isalie isame hai*” (forget about the past, we won’t benefit just from remembering the past, but where should I go now, at least this party is better than others).

Communist Party of India (Maoist)

Sangita wrote a letter, *Pita ji mere hisse kee jameen bechkar mujhe jail se nikalane kee koshis keeje. Pita ji ne kaha, Chinta mat karo betee, maine Organization ko soochanaa de dee hai jaldee hee partee tumase milegee aur nikaal legee.*

(Father In-law sells the land of my share and tried to release me from the jail. Father in-law said, don't worry, I gave information to the organization, a party would take you out from prison. After some time lawyer of the organization contacted and took out from jail).

Convener of Nari Mukti Sangh from Magadh Zone

Sangita has a revolutionary potential. She is not the kind of happy slave that Aristotle talks about. She has the potential to initiate a struggle against landlord oppression and the state too. She is able to think and understand the exploitation and oppression of men and women in the class society and encourage people to struggle against their exploitation to build up an egalitarian society where nobody exploits the other. The struggling life story of local women leaders like Sangita from Jehanabad of Bihar make for a nuanced understanding of women participation in the Maoist movement in 1980. Sangita's experience of struggle, along with that of the other women, give us a glimpse into their life experience of unity, their struggles, spirit, and comradeship, one that is referred to as a "unique period" by the activists, especially in relation to the dream of socialism. Vasantha Kannabiran and K. Lalitha (1989) describe it as "that magic time", Manikuntala Sen (2001) recollects "magic" and Malarika Sinha Roy (2012) refer to the "magic moment" through women's narratives. Women have revolutionary potential and

consciousness but their experience of the Maoist Party and social intuition during struggle are more complex than how the Marxists and the Communists understand them to be.

Sangita, convener of the Nari Mukti Sangh (NMS), was arrested from Brachatti of Gaya with two other women activists in 2006, where they had gone to attend the organization's meeting (NMS was associated with the Communist Party of India (Maoist)). Sangita went underground after the merger in 2004 (merger between the People's War and the Maoist Communist in September 2004), when the state had launched a massive attack on the party, including on its women's leaders. Not only Sangita's story of women militancy against state oppression of Jahanabad, but I also got to know from Gaya that Sushila was arrested three days after when I met her in June 2015. Anita was arrested in 2014 and at present is in the Beur jail in Patna. My curiosity about knowing how and why women join the movement like Sangita, who not only joined the party but also prepare to compromise her property in order to support the movement, find the confidence and strength to survive during such a war and maintain their commitment towards active politics? As Marry tyler's account¹¹ shows, the Indian government has been launching attacks on the Naxalite movement (who demanded basic rights of the livelihood when the state failed to provide with the basic need of people) since its very inception. Despite that, poor Dalits of Bihar have actively continued to engage in war against the feudal and state oppression under the Maoist party. In this chapter, I will highlight women participation in the movement against their oppression and the assertion of their rights through women's experiences of the struggle. These accounts by women demonstrate their struggle against the feudal, patriarchal male domination on the one hand and the lack of understanding of the party on women's issues on the other.

When I first met Krishna Ji (a senior leader of the Maoist party who has actively organized peasant movement in Bihar, since the 1985) in Delhi, he told me "if you genially want to know about the movement and women question, go find out Sangita, Shusila, Sadhna, Kmala, Anita Jyoti in Janahabad, Gaya and Aurangabad districts of Bihar, understand the dynamics of movement, engagement of women activist with the party and their achievements and failures". It

¹¹ Marry Tyler's account show that how Indian state threw her into prison by mere suspicion. She had just arrived in India three-four days before. Mary Tyler wrote a book published in 1977 by Penguin, titled "My Years in an Indian Prison." She spent five years in jail without trial. In 1976 she was released from jail without allowing her to met Amlendu, her husband, Indian state forcefully sent her back to England.

is also important to understand why some leaders have withdrawn political militancy from the party which is invisible, silent and sidelined from the academic sphere. However, it was a very tough job for me to find these women leaders without any contacts. Presently in Jehanabad or Gaya there is no existence of the peasant union, women organizations or other fronts in the condition of state repression.

After waiting for a long time, I developed contacts through snowball sampling. I finally met those women which I have mentioned above who had been leaders since the 1980s. In the absence of the party in present times, Sangita and Sushila are active in little sense; Meera and Sadhana have withdrawn their active participation from the movement, while Anita has become a passive supporter of the party. All of these women leaders represent a body of the women organization of the Maoist Party. They also provided a critical view of the party on the gender issues. In the process of interaction with these women leaders, I felt that there was a history of women's movement in rural Bihar. Poor men and women of Jehanabad mobilized against landlord oppression under the Maoist/Naxalite groups in Jehanabad of Bihar, in the 1980s, with demands for minimum wage, land and an end to the sexual oppression which the landlord considered to be his undefined rights on the Dalit women. There are no records that offer an adequate explanation about women participation, their issues and the approach of the Maoist party towards the women question. Many extraordinary stories of women's struggle are suggested that need to be dug up to find out how they understood and analyzed the relationship between the peasant movement and the Maoist movement.

Recently some studies were available on the Tebhaga, Teleangana and Naxalite movements (based in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal) which have two different perspective about women's participation in the movement. Women are either seen as a passive category, who occupy a secondary position in the movement through their support or they are glorified. In reality, women have been active participants from the very beginning, as the witnesses of the Naxalite movement in Bihar have shared through their lived experiences of the movement. Despite that, there is lacking of nuanced understanding about the contradictions and achievements of the struggle, particular in Bihar. This study provides insightful knowledge of the movement through accounts of women who have a lived experience of the movement. In this context, I

interacted with those women leaders and supporters who had participated in the Maoist politics in Bihar since 1980s.

I developed my arguments on the basis of the interviews that I conducted in 2015. There are mainly two categories of women leader and supporters that I have interviewed: Firstly, those women who have participated in the movement and supported the party politics but have not joined the formal structure of the party. Secondly those women who evolved as leaders out of which some remained inactive while others remained active. Through interview, I shall search their engagement in the struggle which is not included in the “official version” of the party. I have included party documents, party magazines, leaflet and booklets on the one hand and also used alternative resources such as songs, stories and documentaries. In this chapter, I will highlight women participation in the movement against their oppression and the assertion of their rights through women’s experiences of the struggle. These accounts by women demonstrate their struggle against the feudal, patriarchal male domination on the one hand and the lack of understanding of the party on the women's issues on the other.

In this chapter, I will firstly explore the beginning of women mobilization under the peasant union and contextualize their collective experience of struggle against the landlord and the State. This will be with special focus on how women protected “people’s war” from their own mud houses since the 1980s and what women were adopted strategies against landlord oppression and state repression. Secondly, I will refer to specific discussions on the on Nari Mukti Sangh (MCC) and Nari Mukti Sangharsh Samiti (Party Unity),¹² to show how they started mobilizing women on the women’s issues such as fighting for land rights and minimum wage, and against sexual violence. How did both the organizations protect women interest against male domination in the rural setup? Thirdly, I will trace the changes in the power equation between men and women in the countryside, especially with regard to the Brahmanical-patriarchal control on women’s body. Finally, I will look at how the Maoist party understands women’s subjugation in the Indian context and places its agenda of women’s liberation within the peasant struggle? In the concluding section of this chapter, I will highlight two important points of my argument: firstly, related to the practice of male domination within the family and

¹² In 2004, Maoist Communist Center and Peoples War came together and formed the Communist party of India (Maoist). Before the merger in Bihar MCC and PW led peasant struggle separately. PW also made alliance with Party Unity in 1998. In Bihar Party Unity and MCC led the armed peasant struggle.

patriarchy how landlords through the practice of economic exploitation and social oppression like rape and sexual molestation of Dalit women oppressed and exploited women. It was the feudal and the Brahmanical patriarchal structure that pushed women towards the Maoist party. The other facts that initiated this move were issues like “land to the tiller” minimum wage and sexual oppression through “selective annihilation” of the oppressive landlords, people’s court and commitment of building an equal relationship between men and women. But participation in demonstrations, rally and protest does not necessarily lead to any structural changes within family, marriage, and physical and sexual violence within a society as there is no proper policy, structure, and program for women liberation. It was a half revolution that was attained through the Naxalite movement. The Maoist party failed to create an identity for women as a “peasant/producer” inside the party and outside in the society with respect to the class struggle or peasant struggle in Bihar. However, before entering the discussion, I would like to draw the attention to the formation of the Communist Party of India (Maoist).

History of the Maoist Party

In 2004, a merger between the Maoist Communist Center (MCC) and the Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) People’s War led to the formation of the CPI (ML) Maoist Party (Gupta, 2006; Kunnath, 2012). Before this merger of 2004, the CPI (ML) Party Unity and the CPI (ML) People’s war also merged, forming the CPI (ML) People’s War in 1998. Earlier in 1998, the MCC and the Party Unity were a separately launched armed peasant struggle in Bihar.

In the previous chapter, I have mentioned how Bihar was influenced by the Naxalbari movement which started in Bihar. Between the years 1968-1975, poor peasant laborers from the villages of Bihar were organized for a struggle against the landlord’s oppression (Mukharjee & Yadav, 1980; Louis 2002, Bhatia 2000; 2005, Kunnath, 2012). During the emergency (1975-77), almost the entire leadership was arrested, killed and the activists and ideologues were put behind bars. After a national emergency, some activists of the CPI (ML), including Mary Tyler, were released.

Several ML/Maoist leaders came together after their release from prison, reviewed the old politics and strategy and formed the Communist Party of India (Marxism-Leninism) Party Unity in 1982 (Bhatia, 2005). The Party Unity formed an open peasant union, namely, Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS) in 1982 that was subsequently banned in 1986 after the Arwal massacre. This did not deter their spirits and they again formed a Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Parishad in 1994 (Bhatia, 2005). The MCC was formed under the leadership of Kanai Chatterjee in 1969. It recognized the CPI (ML) line and practice as a deviation from the Left. However, within the radical left circle, the MCC was considered as extremists. Nevertheless, both PU and the MCC recognized the Chinese path of revolution based on the thesis of Mao such as “semi feudal and semi colonial” and “New democratic revolution”. The Party Unity adopted three basic resolutions: continuation of the ideological and political program of armed revolution, building the mass movement through peasant organization such as Mazdur Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS) and to take armed action. PU advocated the elimination of the landlord’s oppression through “selected annihilation” that was lacking in the understanding of Charu Mazumdar’s leadership (Bhatia, 2005; Louis, 2002; Kunnath, 2012). PU entered Jehanabad, which is dominated by the Kurmi landlords. Despite that, landless agricultural workers gave shelter to the Party leaders for their struggle against the Kurmi landlord who was not a big landowner but was much more oppressive towards the poor Dalit laborers. PU had adopted double strategies such as economic blockade and armed action against the oppressive landlord. The agricultural workers boycotted the field and burnt the standing crop of the landowners. Second took armed action against the oppressive landlord. In retaliation landlords also formed the Bhoomi Sena and started an intense struggle against PU since 1985.

The MKSS organized mass demonstration, strikes, economic blockade and social boycott against the landlord’s power in several villages around programs of land reform. Apart from this, PU constituted armed squads and took armed action against the oppressive landlord. The program of the Party Unity was to carry forward the demand of minimum wages, seizure of land, land distribution among the landless, elimination of forced labor and attached laborers, and put an end to sexual oppression. MKSS put forward the agendas of the party like equal pay for equal work and protected the marginalized against theft, abduction, rape and other feudal atrocities.

From the beginning of the 1980s, Bihar has been a direct witness to the brutal violence of the private caste militia like the Kurmi caste formed by the Bhoomi Sena, Loric Sena by the Yadavs, Ganga and Sunlight Sena of the Rajputs and Ranveer Sena. The nature of the massacres was evident in the plethora of burning houses. Physical assaults and rape were general phenomena of the violent action taken by the private Sena, and generally inflicted upon the Dalit community. The Ranveer Sena alone conducted 26 massacres within five years, killing 247 people, mostly from the Dalit community (PUDR Report, 1999; Louis, 2002; Kunnath, 2012). Kunnath argued that the massacres were just “Partial stor[ies] of violence,” and they considered it as “everyday actions, and societal arrangements” (Kunnath, 2012, p. 18) that determined the factor of violence against Dalits. It was manifested through the patriarchal Brahmanical power structure, hate against the Dalit community and the misogynist Brahmanical ego. Through Sheela’s narration, we can understand how the entire Dalit Community faced oppression (especially Dalit women) in their day to day life in Jehanabad.

Every day forms of Oppression of the Dalit Women

The Dalit women of Jahanabad have collective memories of rape, molestation, and gang rape at the time of working in the field or the landlord’s house, during marriage ceremonies among the Dalits and also of the incident of *Dola pratha*. These stand proof to the harsh realities faced by Dalit women in their everyday lives. When I coaxed Meera to share her childhood incidents with me, she said:

Raja Yadav from Machhil (Makhdumapur) was the most oppressive landlord in my village before the party arrived. Raja Yadav was the most notorious person. Their reputation among Dalit men and women was that of a rapist and sexual molester, and for their cruel behavior, they sheltered dacoits. They conducted several murders of lower caste, labor extortion, theft of animals and used other oppressive manners.

She continued recalling her childhood memories:

In Machhil village a Dalit male of Chaudhari caste (Dalit caste) was married in Patna. His wife from Patna city, she was looking modern comparatively, in a village and she was very beautiful. Chaudhari family sold alcohol and *Tadi* (like alcohol) in the village. The Yadav's and Bhoomihar's came drunk in Chaudhari shop. Raja Yadav along with *tadi* kept an eye on daughter in-law of Chaudhari. I don't remember the year but I just came from Kolkata when this incident had happened. I remember the cruel behavior of Raja Yadav with my neighbors. Raja Yadav and their henchmen kept Chaudhari's daughter in-law, raped and threw in the field in an unconscious condition. Villagers and family searched here and there entire night, but they found her out in the morning, in the field. They brought on the cot. In that time family and villagers were silent, they could not do anything. Better option was silence. Another such case took place in our village when Raja Yadav raped Dalit woman who had given birth to a baby two days ago, along with her mother in law and sister in law. Because of this incident, the Dalit families were in anger and restlessness in our village, but they couldn't do anything. If Raja Yadav saw any beautiful women, he raped her. First of all, the organization was formed in our village against the terror of Raja Yadav.

Our local market is Payagi bigha. On the occasion of the marriage ceremony, son of the Jhoomak Sav, Raja Yadav and their *giroh* (gang) captured the bride and groomsmen came back in the day light. He and their henchmen raped a newlywed bride in Aankoopur *Bagicha* (garden). So many groomsmen were there but they could not do anything out of fear. You can say it was a part of *Dola pratha* in the modern state against Dalit women.

Meera told me of around ten raped incidents that had occurred in her village alone. She said, “Along with economic exploitation, Dalit women faced sexual oppression. Rape was an everyday reality of the Dalit women. Thus, everyday forms of sexual oppression and economic exploitation of Dalit women determined their active participation in the Naxalite movement”. In reacting against landlord oppression, Meera took an action to protest against the acts of sexual harassment as had been forced upon the minor girl by the brother of Raja Yadav, even before the Party Unity arrived in her village.

I have beaten Sukhendra Yadav who was brother of the Raja Yadav. Those days, students used to come from ten km (mile) to study in our village because there were no schools nearby. Sukhendra also came to study in our school. Our sisters and daughters of Mahto caste came back from school. Sukhendra said, ‘let us come and make food for me in my home’. But three of them did not reply. I was working in the field and heard that he commented on the girls. I asked my sister but she denied, one girl told me about Sukhendra comment. I scolded and said he was much stronger than you. I took the short cut and reached nearby but he fled away from Paibigha market. I commented that come tomorrow morning I would beat you so much that you will remember it entire life. I kept the plum stick on the evening. The next day, he had come alone. When he came, I captured him with other girls. I tied his hand and feet and said ‘beat him’ whoever wants. What happened? If he would die, I threw in well. Their brother killed so many Dalit people. Nobody knows about that; but we are not a killer and could not do it. I was hung him in well out of fear. He said ‘I would never do that; please leave me’. After that, I left him. That time I was 13 years old. But I was naughty from childhood. But after this incident, Dalit families feared as Raja Yadav would have attacked us. After this incident I slept in Saraj Mian house and some nights in Sav ji house. After that my uncle shifted me

to their daughter's home and my father came from Kolkata and immediately arranged my marriage. You can say that in Machhil village struggle started against Raja Yadav on the issue of molestation.

Kannabiran and Lalitha point out that women came to the Telengana people's movement to find an opportunity to fight against the powerful who rendered them "powerless and invisible" (Kannabiran and Lalith, 1989, 2006). In this regard, I also found out that when women participated in the movement against the landlord in Jehanabad, they were able to respond to the world of the powerful. Before entering into this discussion, I would like to trace the shift that women made from being under the domination of the family to using their agency in the political field. I would also like to show how the family reacted against these women and tried to control their mobility. Women leaders recalled those incidents and the kind of obstacles that they faced from within the family after entering into politics.

Women Participation in Maoist Politics

The collective experience of the oppressive structure such as poverty, untouchability, caste oppression and sexual violence of against women, show how women, particularly Dalit women, faced triple oppression within the society. That became a determining factor for them to enter into Maoist Politics. Helen Snow argued in terms of the Chinese revolution that the commitment of the Maoists to reform women's condition, encouraged women to take part in the revolution because they knew that "Their emancipation lay right at the root of the social structure and this had to be torn up at the root before they could be freed" (Stacey, 1975, p. 76). In this context, we can also understand why women from Jehanabad entered into Maoist politics that was led by Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (henceforth PU). Meera's childhood experience with Raja Yadav pushed her towards Maoist politics. Meera told me, in the following words:

But within one year of my marriage, party arrived in our area. When I returned to my village on the occasion of *Holi*, I met comrade Kanu Sanyal through my uncle. When I met him, his personality inspired me so much because the party was against feudal

landlord who oppressed Dalit men and women, party programme of land distribution and socialist idea of society where nobody oppressed anyone, equality between men and women. After that, I decided to join the party in 1984 and mobilized people against Raja Yadav. He was very powerful. He had 150 acres of land but we struggled not against that but against his cruelty. The people of nearby villages were troubled by his cruelty. Some of the henchmen of his *giroh* (gang) were killed by the party. Raja Yadav had twelve brothers. All brothers were killed by the Organization except one. Bihar governments saved Raja Yadav who had setup a police camp in their house. Despite that whenever the party got a chance, they attacked him. Finally, party seized him in the market of Makhdumpur, hijacked police station and road of Makhdumpur. After that, the party shot Raja Yadav and his son in the middle of the Market in 1995.

Sangita recalled those days when she had joined the organization. Sangita was inspired by her husband. She told me:

When I was married in 1988 then I came to know about Sangthan because my husband was a leader of the organization. When he used to come back home, he and other party member always used to convince me to join the Sangthan. He was also a commander of the squad. After that I taught in school around three years after that the organization had started. Sometimes I used to join the programme organized by the organization locally and also outside of the district. That was the first time when I saw such a huge meeting. After sometime I decided to be a part-timer. But I faced some problems from my mother and father in-law. For example my mother in-law left household works for me and expect I would do it without any complaints but they were not demanding anything from own son. When my husband came home at night with squad despite that my mother in-law

expect from us made a proper food for his and squad member but when I went any programme of the party they create problem so much. I pressurized for a child for that I don't go in party programme. So, there was a clash between domestic work and political work when I decided to be a full-timer.

Women from different social strata that were more oppressed in terms of class and caste joined the party. They had no other option for their survival. Sushila, from a Dalit labor family in Gaya, joined the MCC in 2000. Recalling the time when she had joined the party, she mentioned in detail:

My father was a drinker and he chose a more habituated drinker than himself for my marriage. My husband beat me so many times. When I came back to my Mother house, my mother told me, 'brother and sister-in-law (Babhi) are not supportive to anyone. Don't come here'. I thought when I am going to my husband's house he used to beat me and my mother says, 'don't come' here. So I was thinking where I would go. I cannot stay with my husband any more. I met Jamuni (member of MCC) when I worked at her relatives home. She convinced me to join the Party. She tried to explain our situation as well as about husband house and my mother house. She told me you have a daughter. In this oppressive condition how would I nurture my daughter? I thought that I did not know anything about party. But I heard about party as *mudkatwa* (*Head cut*). In my mind it was not a good image about the party. I thought that I would never go in *mudktawa* Party. I had fear. In our childhood in Dhanbad area MCC was infamous as *mudktawa*. That time I feared when Jamuni told me about party. I thought that party would kill me and my daughter too.

In between my parents again sent me to my husband's house. In spite my parent knew the violent nature of my husband. After some days he beat me again so badly and threw me out from home. I was thinking where I would go. Again I came to mother's houses. But my situation was so worse that I decided to join the party. Jamuni decided date timing and place. I was afraid that time when she came. I went with her in Kranti Nager in Gaya that place resettled by the party. The village was very nice. Majority of villagers were Bhuinya and Majhi Caste-Dalits community. I met Mahesh in this village; he kept my new name for security purpose. When I reached, could not see my daughter for sometime in front of my eyes I was worried and thought that someone run away my daughter. When I was searching I saw she was eating, I wept seeing this. I thought I was moving around here and there, nothing to eat, nothing to wear, nothing to have for daughter, someone gave food to my daughter, I was so sad. Mahesh said to me 'don't worry you are in safe place, here comrade and women organization will take care your daughter'. After some hours squad came in village with arm. When I saw arm I was so afraid that they would kill me. When they tried to handshake with Lal Salam (Red salute) I hide my hand. I was afraid that they would pull my hand and kill me. After sometimes I realized that comrades are so sensitive and party people kept my daughter very well. I had fear unnecessarily. After two three days when I used one saree, Mahesh asked me 'don't you have another saree'? Then they went to market and bought some saree, blouse and petticoat for me. I did not do any work for the party for around two years. Once Vijay Arya called me in the base area and said to me that he heard about me fearing so much. He was explaining everything very well about party aim, goal and work. After that I had

started working in 2004. I went in rallies, demonstrations and slowly I learned speech, conducting meeting, and mobilized women against their oppression in Gaya district.

The patriarchal power structure maintained a tight control on women's mobility. Meera said, that when they finally decided to join the party, "It was not an easy task for me to move over to the political realm". She shared her own experience in the following words:

After two year when I came back in mother house, my family and husband pressurized me that go to husband's home, crated emotional drama for that. My husband was very cunning. He had promised to support party work. After this promise I went to his home for a week. This was biggest mistake in my life. After seven or eight days I heard about one member killed by Liberation squad who was my best friend. I was shocked and very sad. When I told about this incident to husband and told them that I would go. He said, don't dare come back. Somehow I came back in party. After that I never go in his house. But next three-four years I faced so many problems. Finally I kept divorce proposal in front of the committee.

I observed the contradictions in Meera's life. Meera had beaten the brother of Raja Yadav without any support, she had suffered in her marriage and been troubled by her husband (from 1984 to 1989). It shows the complex relationship between class and patriarchy. Women's mobility was subjected to tight control through emotional blackmailing by their family members. It was a powerful tool used against women who crossed the boundary of the family. Family members, primarily parents and husbands, created an emotional trauma for women if they didn't adhere to the practices of traditional patterns and responsibilities. If the family authorities were not successful in controlling the women's mobility or body through emotional trauma (in the name of family honor), they would try to throw her out of the family forcefully like in the case of Sushila's family. In both the practices of forceful inclusion and exclusion, women underwent considerable trauma. Sushila shared a memory about her parents, that was different from that of Meera's in terms of family authority, in the following words:

After six or seven months, I went to my parents' house. Mother said, 'why are you coming here, to eat and go immediately from here. How dare you to come here? Village people will be angry on me if they see you. If village people knew about you, they would not allow to me to live in this place'. Immediately, I moved out without eating and went to Anwar ji's village. I told everything to Anwar ji. Anwar ji told me, 'let's go; he left me at my mother's house and influenced the entire village alone. He planned for a cultural program in the evening in that village'. In the evening, people came in the cultural program. During a cultural program, Anwar ji said 'what is your problem from Sushila and her family if she is engaged in party work. Village people said, 'no one will create problems for Sushila and her family'. After that, I frequently went without any fear. But I understood my mother was lying because of my brothers.

Some women activists also shared similar experiences of the family regarding their entry into Maoist politics. Women leaders (mostly Dalit women leaders) challenged the feudal system and the patriarchal family's domination when they entered into politics and used their agency for their liberation. During my field work, I saw Sushila addressing a large crowd (around 1000 people) on the occasion of Mangal Pandey's (tribal leader during British) death anniversary in Gaya district. Sushila, recalled the militancy of Mangal Pandey revolt against the British Raj. I observed that around hundreds of women had come from nearby villages to listen to the cultural program in the middle of the night. She made an appeal to the people for uniting against feudal oppression through culture and also sang progressive songs. However, the Maoists tried to integrate the public and private life of women but how they understood women's oppression in our society and adopted the women liberation agenda within the peasant revolution can be understood in the following chapter.

Women Organized under Peasant Union

Following the years when PU led an intense struggle under the MKSS's banner, there was an increase in the number of women's participation at demonstrations, strikes, janadalat

(people's court) and economic boycott of the landlord in order to protest against the oppression and exploitation of the landlord. Meera told me how she had been engaged in mobilizing women in the initial phase when the party was trying to build a peasant movement in her area, in the following words:

I started working with the local unit of the committee. I was organizing the meeting in nearby villages, establishing peasant organization among the landless people and also took extra effort to organize women against sexual oppression and their self-respect. Apart from these, we held political classes, debates and discussions, to develop our understanding and knowledge build up consciousness about class contradiction among the peasantry and class struggle. People, in general, were enthusiastic to listen to us. Slowly our effort converted into building organization and political action, namely Sangram Samiti (Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti) in our block.

Sona Devi ji from Dumari village remembers those days, where firing was an everyday reality, during the struggle between the Bhoomi Sena and the Party Unity. She told me about her engagement with the Party Unity and mentioned how difficult it was in those days:

Every day there was firing. My responsibility was to meet comrade's family and other party members who were hiding in different places and gave information's to squads regarding my responsibility. I was also running for my safety. But after sometime I was arrested, police tortured me so much but I didn't give the address of anybody. After six month, when I returned home after being released from jail, I saw doors, roof, vessels and all goods were stolen. Entire courtyard had grown grass. Again I started with an active participation in movement.

She continued:

It was a horrible time. The men ran for safety, there were police cases on all men of the villages. Every day police searched in our houses. The door was broken. Police took my goat and scattered all grains like wheat, rice and pulse on the ground and mixed them with cow dung. They ruined all goods for the entire year. They had been watching the entire night in front of my home, and abused and threatened the village people.

Sona Devi indicated those days when intense struggle between the PU and the Bhomi Sena was going on. Kunaath also collected detailed accounts thorough Raju Bhai. People who were exiled were called *Baged* (exile) and only women and children were left in the village of Dumari during the struggle between the PU and the Sena. Shanti Devi (a Dalit woman) shared her own experience with Geroge Kunnath. Shanti Devi said, “When the *laadai* (struggle) began in Damari, I joined the Organization. Until then I knew nothing about politics. The Maoist leaders trained me in the *Krantikari Rajniti* (revolutionary politics). Once I was arrested while leading a demonstration. A policeman caught my hand. I shouted at him to take his hands off from me” (Kunnath, 2012, p. 99). Sangita, whom I met at Dumari village, shared such similar experiences with me:

I pasted posters; distributed leaflets, gave massages for the programme and talked with women about their problems. I hesitated in the starting phase when party leader called me to a deliver speech. But I went regularly to the programmes and meetings, to hear the speech. In the starting periods I sang some revolutionary songs. Gradually I started giving speech but after some lines my mind was blank. The organization had encouraged me all

the time. After sometimes organization gave the responsibility of areas which included some village and at the block level, district and zone wise.

Many women from the villages who supported the PU underwent police raids and their houses were searched. Sometimes they would mislead the police forces through unique strategies. For example, a woman from Banauli, named Champawati Devi mentioned:

Once squad had stayed in my house; suddenly police force had come in front of my door. The police asked me where is *Dasta* (Maoist armed squad)? I replied, what is that? What does *Dasta* mean? I have everything in my home like vessels and other goods but I have never heard of *Dasta*. I don't know *Dasta*. How does it look like? I talked around for half an hour with the police in this way, other village women also came and they expressed that they do not know anything. Police was not able to enter my house. Meanwhile, *Dasta* had left safely from my home.

It was a part of the strategy practiced by the village women who protected their party members when they stayed at their houses. Anita from Gaya district (where MCC had been active) has a completely different memory of the militant peasant struggle. Anita recalled those nights when she helped the squad member's comrades to escape from a hole on her wooden roof. Anita said, "Police was often searching my house no matter day or night. I helped the comrades to escape when I got the information that police is coming towards our side. I knew what it means if police is coming to our side". Anita's home is situated in front of the village and she could easily be watched from 2 kms away if a police jeep or something like that came. When the police would to come to the village, they would first search Anita's house.

Like Rajmati from Sahar, whom I have mentioned in the previous chapter to talk about commitment towards party, Jehanabad women also nurtured the party without participating in their violent activities. They hid food in their *aanchal or pallu* (the corner of the saree worn by women) when camps were established near their village. It was a part of the strategy of the

village women. A report published in Samgrami Mukti Marg in 1993, mentioned women's participation in Akbarpur. In 1992, PU called a meeting in Akbarpur for minimum wage but suddenly the private militia attacked the meeting. The women did not leave. The squad counter attacked the private militia. Women were involved in nurturing the squad by providing curd and *chuda* (chuda is flattened rice, a common food among the village people) which they had hidden in the corner of their saree. The meeting went on successfully and one thousand's acre of land was captured by the party. The police thought that these illiterate women were innocent and were not involved in politics.¹³ Meera also talked about this Akbarpur struggle. She stressed on the patriarchal approach of the police about how "They were not able to think about political agency of women in the movement. When landlord had given information to the police about those women then police had beaten them up, harassed and tortured them for giving information".

The first time the police administration open fired on women was in 1986 in Jehanabad in an incident known as the "Arwal massacre". According to the PUCL report published in 1986, 21 people were killed by the police and 35 were injured, which included women participants from the demonstration. However, the numbers were actually far more than what was published, one which could not be found out that time. 13 supporters who were injured were treated at the Patna Medical College under police custody. Manmato Devi died on April 29 with three others in the Patna medical college. 22 people had bullet injury and were privately treated by the MKSS - of which there were 8 women members.¹⁴

When I visited Jehanabad, I met many local women who were present during the open firing. I met Kalawati, an old Dalit woman who had been a part of the struggle, and had been injured during the police firing. All of them remembered the struggle of those days, the hardship, the songs, the tragedy and the pain that accompanied their dream of liberation. In fact, one could see the glimpse in their eyes, wrinkles, smile, welcoming style, pain and attachment with the people who wants to know more about their struggle. It seems she is still living in the past.

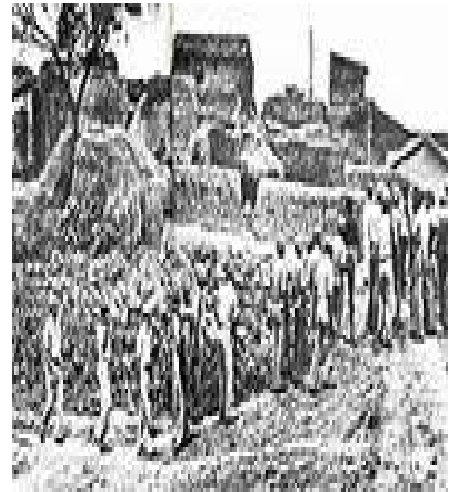
¹³ Sangrami Muktimarg (Hindi Magazine of Party Unity), May-June 1993, p. no. 12.

¹⁴According to PUCL report the Razak family made a wall on disputed land (26 decimal). After sometimes some landless families complained to MKSS against the Razak Family. The MKSS decided to solve the issue. On 19 April, MKSS organized a meeting on the disputed site. Around 600-700 people gathered under the leadership of MKSS and demolished the wall which was made by Razak family. When MKSS was holding meeting continued, without even When the meeting continued , without even a single warning police opened fire on the people gathering there and ultimately 22 people were killed.

Perhaps the struggle is still present in their minds. She said: “from my village so many women participated in MKSS demonstration in 1986”. Kalawati said:

Figure of police at Arwal In 1986: Violent pattern¹⁵

I went to attend a meeting in Arwal. Many women were also there to attend the meeting from our village. The meeting was going on, suddenly two jeeps of police arrived in the meeting place. Without any warning, they ordered to fire during the meeting. Suddenly, people started escaping towards village but police had dragged the comrades and other members. When police open fired on one *sathee*



(comrade). I was engaged to escape other *sathee*. I thought police would not fire on women. When I saw police opened fire on everyone. I was also running but police shot in my leg. I fell down. Nevertheless, I stood up and again started running towards the village. I was holding my thigh tightly but I again fell down in nearby village and lost consciousness. When I opened my eyes I felt this place is different from my village. Some party members were there. Party had organized doctors for treatment of injured members in the village where party developed a base area. I stayed for days in party village. Police had killed many of our comrades. I will never forget in my life. State and upper caste thought that they will abolish our movement but they are in illusion. After Arwal Massacre, our movement grew stronger and also increased women’s participation in the Organization.

A group of five-six women were sitting with Kalawati and they also expressed the same spirit,



¹⁵ Source: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/land/1/349141.html>

anger and view on the Arwal massacre. Before the Arwal massacre, MKSS organized rallies which saw large participation of men and women. Kunnath noted that “The rally was so long that it extended more than two kilometers on the road to Jahanabad town. Women, children, old people, everyone participated in this” (Kunnath, 2012, p. 202). After this rally, the administration attacked the MKSS leaders. Meanwhile, MKSS held protests on the disputed land in Arwal. The administration was already afraid because the Naxalite movement had spread across the entire area. Thus, the administration decided to launch an attack on the MKSS programme. However, after the Arwal massacre, PU called for a united front for struggle against the Arwal Massacre which was participated by the entire left from Bihar, civil society’s organizations, individuals in this rally. According to a senior member of the party (who was active in Lok Sangaram Morcha that time in Bihar) “there was huge participation against Arwal massacres”. Majority of the Dalit families participated in the militant protest in front of Vidhan Sabha in 1986 in Patna which can be seen in the following picture.

MKSS organized protest against Arwal Massacre in
Patna¹⁶

Kalawati remembered the day before the protest. She told me “day before the protest in front of Vidhan Sabha, in Jahanbad, Gaya, Bhojpur police were deployed and blocked all main roads. Despite that people went through railway track for protest. People walked overnight and next day arrived in Patna”. Four-five women were sitting with Kalawati who also participated in the protest after massacre; one of them shared her own experiences with me. She said, “I went to Patna with my child. When party arrived nearby Vidhan Sabha police started *lathi* charged on the activists. Many party members were arrested and create terrors. People ran here and there. Suddenly, one police pushed me and pulled my child from my hand and threw the child in gutter. Police said, ‘it will grow as a Naxalite’. I was crying and crying. I felt my child was scrunched. Somehow I picked up my child. That day it was so horrible for me. After that I left my child when I go for protest anywhere”.

¹⁶Source:<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/arwal-massacre-bihar-cm-bindeshwari-dubey-justify-police-action/1/348467.html>

Kalawati narratives explicitly indicate that people's anger increased and expressed in an organized form against the landlord and the police force but at the same time the state attack on the people also increased. For instance, three months after the Arwal massacre, the state government banned the MKSS. These accounts suggest that women participated in the Naxalite movement and also faced the most dangerous of situations.

However, the understanding of the Party Unity and MCC on the subject of women organization was that women should be organized under the peasant union. They justified this argument in the name of the class oppression and struggle at both the theoretical and the practical level. Private property or classes were seen as the main source of women's oppression, and thus women's struggle naturally considered as a part of the class struggle. Consequently, the need to form a separate front for women was not felt till at least 1981-1986. Could it be that the peasant union led the struggle on women's issues? Meera told me PU faced the problem at the three levels: violence against women within family structure such as wife beating, mistreatment of daughter-in-law, alcohol, sexual relation without commitment of marriage and suspicious male gaze on women sexuality etc. did not deal adequately by the peasant union. Secondly peasant union members did not want their family member, particularly, women participate in the struggle. They also tightly controlled on women's mobility within family. In this patriarchal set up, women faced violence and there was control on their mobility within family structure and there was sexual harassment but peasant union member also involved. Thirdly, if women did not join in larger numbers party will not sustain longer because women force coming in front of the state party was able to sustain. Apart from this women leader created pressure on the party for separate organization of women to deal women's issues separately otherwise party was unable to mobilize women in significant numbers against feudal patriarchal system and state oppression. The experience of the women leaders, the attitudes of the peasant leader and repression led to the setting up of the women's organization in Jeahanabad. Some party members also realized that in order to increase women's participation in the movement, it had to form a separate women's front within the party. PU formed "the Nari Mukti Sangharsh Samiti (NMSS) around 1986, and MCC also constituted its women's wing, Nari Mukti Sangh (NMS), the very same year" (Louis, 2002, p. 7). After the merger of MCC with PW in 2004, the Nari Mukti

Sangharsh Samiti also merged with the Nari Mukti Sangh, under the name of the Nari Mukti Sangh.

Women experiences of the violence and counter violence

Women's experience articulated the nature of the struggle where they took part as an active agency against their oppression. It is also the experience of the Naxalite movement that one encounters through these experiences in remembering the massacres, suffering and pain in the initial period. The experiences of the struggle become "social texts" in this study that is manifestation on different issues. I argue that women's experience becomes a part of the contesting or struggling history of women and tries to create a "space within struggle" (Sen, 2000). Experiences of the struggle and their suffering continued to influence women's consciousness making them realize that their self-awareness was a political agency, which also became the cause for sadness and alienation for them at times. From the women's point of view, the experiences of the violence and their encounters with violence were "critical moment[s]". But before I discuss the implications of such encounters in a woman's life, I will present detailed accounts as narrated by women of Bihar.

From the beginning, women mobilized in the presence of private armies and police forces in rural Jehanabad of Bihar, in response to the struggle against the police camp which had been established in the villages for the purpose of the landlord's protection. Because of these police camps, men, women, children and old people felt very unsafe in their villages. Meera said, "During struggle (she indicates Bhoomi sena and Lorik Sena) village women saved activist life". She said:

It was very difficult time for the villagers. When Senas attacked the people, the police also attacked for villagers rather than save to the people. It was double terror. When our squad attacked the Bhoomi Sena in Rampur (Karpi block, Jehanabad) then police started raids and searching in the name of 'combing operation'. Police encircled fifty villages and searching in the same day and arrested so many activists from the village without any

evidence. Not only that beaten and abused woman, children and old persons and destroyed property and houses, grains damaged or looted.

Women brought information if the landlords held meetings and prepared some plan of action. According to the information brought by the women, the squad took action against the landlords. Women watched every move of the police, which direction they entered the village from etc. If the police came into the village in search of the squad, the women fought with the police on one hand while the squad was able to escape from the other side of the village¹⁷. Often the police searched the activist's houses and this could be at any time. Women adopted the strategy of "social relation"¹⁸ against the police force when the police entered the village for raids and searches when they did not find the activist women and children and old persons were beaten up. The Maoist party provided training in arms to only some men and women cadres, but the village women were able to fight in their own way. Surja Devi, an elderly Dalit woman from Dumari village, recalled the struggle against the policemen without any arms or ammunition and mentioned how they were able to protect a squad member who stayed in her home. She said that "when the police asked her about the most wanted squad member, she simply answered that she had just come from her *mayaka* (natal family), and that she didn't know anything about it. The repression on women and the way it ruptured their life were a process in continuation. Surja Devi narrated one incident in the following words:

Once police entered in Dumari village in 1985 when Ramesh Das (top peasant leader) came out from jail. Police asked one old woman about Ramesh Das. The village women knew everything about Ramesh Das. An old woman said, 'yes I knew. Police told them when you saw the last time. She answered, this is Ramesh house but I don't count that how many times he came. When he came in home why are you not come on that time? Police asked one old men that you know he come in home. He said, 'when you come I

¹⁷ Interview with Surja Devi in Gulabchak in 2015.

¹⁸ I mean that sometimes women do not confront the forces in direct way. They at times manipulate their social relations (like brother, cousin and husband) in order to protect the squad members.

think he came. Police tortured so much Ramesh wife. Police beaten her so much she felt she died.

I had many conversations with Meera about the role and responsibility of the women in the struggle, and particularly if women were part of the squad or not. She shared some personal experiences with me in the following words:

Primarily, women were active in open front like NMSS or peasant front because there is plain area, required to build mass organizations. Despite that some women were in squad at least in partial level for self protection. During Bhoomi Sena and Lorik Sena women leader could not move alone, even could not move in day light. I moved one place to other place with squad in the night. That time entire Jehanabad was in terror of Bhoomi Sena and Lorik Sena. The attack on us could happen anytime. For self protection and also squad protection party had given armed training to the women leaders. But women were not formal part of the squad. I always part of the open front but according to the situation I was also part of the squad. For example when I went to Jharkhand I was part of the squad. But Party never encourages women to join squad in the starting phase. Within party they developed this sense when party interact with CPI (ML) People's War and visited to Andhra Pradesh that women were in squad and separate women squads in Andhra Pradesh. After 1995 some women were join the squad.

She shared the responsibilities of the party when she had joined it in 1984. PU fought intensified struggles against the Bhoomi Sena and the Lorik Sena.

When I joined party in 1984, party gave me armed training. After that my responsibility was mobilize women and gave armed training for self defense. After that I gave armed

training to other women who joined the party. Party gave arms to women such as rifle, pistol and gun. An understanding of the party that squad could not stay in one place for all time. Squad moved in area according to area distribution. Secondly, party gave training to women because they were able to fight at least in minimum through armed in emergency situation like if suddenly attack on the village by the landlord or police. When struggle against Lorik Sena in Jehanabd seven women were part of the squad. I was also part of that.

When *Sabha* (meeting) in Sigori (Paliganj Block) in 1987. Already knew that there would happen something. Thus, our squad also moved with rally. Party already gave instruction to people that if Sena will attack on people tried to hide behind farmyard. When rally arrived nearby destination Lorik Sena attacked on the rally. People were following the instruction. When rally was moved again Lorik Sena again fired then our squad fired for safety of the people. Then Lorik Sena was back. But immediately police reached from Paliganj side. Squad also fought against police and attack on the police forces. Squad pressurized on the police for surrender. Some police able to fly but three were captured and beaten by the squad. Finally, meeting was held successfully. During fought with police interestingly incident happening with me. Whenever I remember those days I laugh so much. First time I fought with police. Generally I was active in open front so that my practice was not good at least fought with police. Senior commander of the squad said to me, 'sit down immediately, and don't stand without my instruction'. It was very funny for me.

The encounter represented a rupture in the women's life despite which they continued challenging the state and oppressors. Sangita narrated how she suffered a huge loss at these encounters, in the following words:

My husband died in an encounter, in the year 2000 in Dumari village. I was very upset that time when I heard about it. But as soon as possible, I gained confidence because my husband died for a social cause and then I followed his path. I turned sadness into courage. After some days, the party organized a meeting in the name of the martyrs, in a nearby my village. I gave a speech and told my father-in-law 'don't worry father-in-law your son is gone but I'm here, like your son.

Sangita recalled how difficult life was when her husband died. She said that all the squad members died at that encounter. Sangita searched for her husband's photo in one of her boxes to share it with me. She said, "The party published booklet about his revolutionary life. I have cut out a photo from one booklet because I don't have any photo of my husband. I always told my husband that let's go to the studio for a photo but he was never serious about it". I have seen how many women were involved in the movement against oppression from close counters. Many women from Jehanabad shared similar experiences of the struggle as evident from the accounts of Suraja Devi, Meera and Sangita, all of whom took deferent kind of actions in the struggle against the exploitation and oppression.

Nari Mukti Sangharsh Samiti and Nari Mukti Sangh: Women Liberation Agenda

In 1986, the party decided to establish the Special Women's Department, namely, Nari Mukti Sangharsh Samiti, to help mobilize women force and develop them into political activists. Meera recognized the need for building a strong women's organization which would fight on women's issues and support the goals of the class struggle. In response, NMSS's organizational efforts were aimed to protect people's war with the agenda of women's liberation. Years of painstaking organization among women from different castes, and sometimes also classes, within the society has built up the platform for women's mass movement. Organizing the marginalized

meant that the Dalit poor peasant women were able to form the backbone of the women's movement. In the history of Bihar, a new chapter of women's movement started through the slogan of "down with the feudal landlord", "down with state repression", "new democratic revolution long live", "equal pay for equal work", "increase minimum wage", "stop sexual violence on women", "abolish child marriage" etc, which continued for almost the next 20 years.

The aim of the Nari Mukti Sangharsh Samiti was to develop itself into a political force within the party and society but unfortunately it never reached that level. All the time, NMSS was dependent on the party and the peasant's union. In late 1990s, the party published a document "Strong Implementation of Party Decision" which clearly shows that women's organization had been less structured. The report mentions about the important role that was played by the women's organization in the peasant's struggle but fails to build up a strong women's organization. This article also recognizes that they failed to convert a large women's participation into a political participation for the struggle. The women's organization, engaged at the district level, remained without any written program and constitution and even lacked an organizational structure. This is an important indication about the party's approach on women's organization and women's issues while the party wrote the program and policy for the peasant union from time to time beginning with the initial phase. For example, when the MKSS was banned in 1986, the party again built up a peasant union, namely, Mazdoor Kisan Sangrami Parishad (MKSP) and defined the program of the MKSP. Interestingly, the same did not happen with the women's organization at least till 1993, even though the party repeatedly said that without women there would be no revolution and without revolution there would be no women liberation. However, for the last six-seven years of the women's organizations, they functioned without a program or a constitution. In contrast, in China, the CCP formed the Women's Department in 1922 which was within one year after the establishment of the Party. In that case, how can the Indian Maoists claim that they are following the Chinese path and thesis of "semi feudal and semi colonial"? Even after ten years, the document shows the lack of proper structure of the women's organizations. How can such a party think that their party was seriously concerned about women's oppression and that their program was to eliminate patriarchal domination from society ever since the 1980s?

When I asked Meera about the difficulties that the women organization's faced in organizing women, she said, "Violence against women is one of the main problems in front of women leaders. Violence against women in terms of family, private caste militia and state too. Wife beating in a general phenomenon in Dalit community, and more specific when women moved in political realm also faced brutal violence within the family. Even our ex-peasant leader also involved wife beating". The consumption of alcohol was very frequent within the Dalit community and often led to frequent outbursts of fighting and where women were abused both within and outside the family. According to Krian, Maoists took action and mobilized people and conducted anti-liquor campaigns in many villages. Many times they destroyed the vessels used for making alcohol and imposed fine on those who engaged in making alcohol. The NMSS organized strong campaigns to stop the drinking of "toddy" (like alcohol) thus finding "militant propagandists" among women. In Daulatpur, according to the PUDR report "We were told that all the village women refused to cook for a whole day to protest an incident of wife beating" (PUDR, 1992, p. 21-22).

However, the party was unable to completely abolish violence against women. Even party members were prone to beating wives. Rabindra Ray has noted that the Naxalite ideologies are not explicit in their meanings and their praxis. Thus, Ray differentiates their "existential ideology" from their "literate ideology" (Ray, 1988, p. 1).

Secondly, we have seen in the above narrative, shared with me by Meera how rape culture was seen as a part of the feudal system like the *Dola pratha* sanction by the feudal norm and culture in day to day women's life. During the struggle, women, especially Dalit women, faced continuous brutal sexual violence from the upper caste private Senas. One of the most sensitive and emotional moment for me happened during my interaction with Yasoda, when she started singing this song:

An intense spirit of struggle has been fuming Oh revolutionary sisters!

Oh revolutionary sisters!

The dignity of my sisters is being ravished

Oh! The ravishing of dignity
Now is the time to contemplate and opine, oh my revolutionary sisters
An intense sprit of struggle has been fuming, oh revolutionary sisters
The dignity of my sisters has been ravished in the lands of *Pararia*¹⁹
Nonhi Nagwa was massacred by the high- born sons, oh revolutionary sisters
Nonhi Nagwa was butchered, oh revolutionary sisters
Hardly was the stream of blood in *Noni Nagwa* desiccated, oh my sisters
That *Damua Khagdi* was butchered again, oh revolutionary sisters
Hardly had the stream of blood in *Kansara*²⁰ desiccated, oh my sisters

Yasoda remained silent for a few seconds and tried to control the emotion and tears in her eyes. Her eye focused on one point. She started singing again:

Arawal was butchered, oh revolutionary sisters
Hardly had the stream of blood in *Arawal* desiccated, oh my sisters
That *Bhadasi* was massacred by the high- born sons, oh revolutionary sisters
Only brothers and sisters united can rebel
Hold the red flag high and give the clarion call, oh revolutionary sisters.

Yasoda's sentiments reverberated with powerful emotions that were reflected from her eyes, facial expressions and voice. We both were silent for several minutes. In front of both of us, the *Dhibari* (local style of light) was burning. I was not able to read her facial expression or her mind. Maybe she was recalling the hardness and difficult moments from the past several years. After four-five minutes she took a long breath - perhaps she was thinking about the massacres and the police repression on the movement and the party. She lost her husband in a police

¹⁹ All Italicized words are names of the villages from Jahanbad and Gaya District. All massacres mentioned in the songs occurred in Jahanabad before 1990s.

encounter in 1995. She had lost many of her comrades during instances of police repression. Many comrades who had helped her when her family members including her first husband beat her up badly when she had joined the Organization. Some comrades had threatened their family members and provided treatment for Yasoda. Her face had several lines which were representative of the much sadness, pain, worries and of course the spirit of struggle that she had experienced during the course of her life. I had not been able to comprehend these nuances initially, at the time of the interview. But after spending almost ten days and nights in their mud house, sharing the same roof and bed on the floor by spreading a paddy plant, spending few nights together – going to sleep at 3 am and then getting up at 6am - which I understood their silences.

The NMSS organized meetings, demonstrations, strikes, rallies, people's court etc. in a democratic fashion to fight for minimum wage. According to the PUDR report:

The restoration of the dignity of female agricultural labourers has featured as a major plank in the political agenda of the various organisations of the rural poor in the area. Strikes for better wages are organized during the sowing and transplanting of paddy, a crucial period, and the labourers' bargaining power is greatest at this point. These operations normally depend entirely on the labour of women, and the success of these strikes depends on the ability to mobilise the women in the village...the participation in militant struggles against the oppression of the *maliks* has also resulted in some change in the exercise of domination within the family and community...the resistance is a political act that questions the arbitrary exercise of power by *maliks*. Even senior members of the district administration conceded that the left-wing organisations have done much to force elements among the *maliks* to end their sexual depredations. In Gaya, a senior official stated that the activities of the MCC had put a virtual end to the raping and molestation of

Dalit women by instilling in everyone the fear that the penalty for rape in its lexicon was death.(PUDR report 1992 21-22)

It is not an easy task to increase the minimum wages for women. Sometimes it created tension regarding women issues within the Peasant union. For example, according to a senior leader of Lok Sangram Morch at that time, men and women were assembled in Rohtas district for the demand of minimum wage. He said, “When struggle was started to increase women wage, peasant members were divided in two groups. Some member of the peasants union rejected the demand of equal pay for equal work and argued that women work less harder than men why equal pay to women”. However, the conflict was solved after the peasant members accepted women’s demand like equal pay for equal work.

NMSS was active in almost every block and district of Jahanabad. But they faced continuous attacks from the state, because of which the members were forced to go underground. When the state repression increased, the women’s front was moved to the hinterlands of Jharkhand in the forest areas to continue their struggle. Several of the NMSS leaders were killed in a 1990 encounter against the government military troops. Its members were engaged in organizing underground struggle in Jahanabad.

Village Development Committee, People’s Court and Gender Issues

During the course of the struggle, PU introduced a village development committee and people’s court in the region which helped in “shifting power relations” (Kunnath, 2012, p. 100) in the rural areas. PU tried to establish a kind of power relation in favor of Dalit, women and poor people who did not have much power within the feudal system. In this context, poor Dalit women were made part of the decision making body in the village development committee. PU took up the political agenda against the landlord’s oppression, especially rape and sexual molestation. Kunnath noted that from Dumari village, where he had conducted his anthropological field study, there was a “Village committee which was ten member of Dalit including three women out of

fifteen members”. The village committee addressed the question of sexual molestation. Raju Bhai, a village committee member, shared his own experiences with Kunnath. Raju Bhai said:

In 1999, as the head of the village committee, I had to deal with a complaint lodged by a working class widow from the kahar caste whose daughter was sexually assaulted by a Kurmi man. I convened the *janadalat*(people’s court). The Dalit and Kurmi were present, the latter because one of their caste-men was being put on trail. In spite of some protests, the people decided that the girl should slap him five times with her chappals (sandals). They also decided that his head be shaved of hair and chuna (lime powder) applied, and that he made to run five times round the village. This public shaming of the offender, however, had to be abandoned as the police arrived in the village before punishment was carried out. Yet I managed to have the girl slap the accused five times with her chappals. He asked her pardon with folded hands (Kunnath, 2012, 101).

Raju Bhai shared another incident with Kunnath which had happened in the same village in 2001. Some Kurmi youth sexually assaulted some Dalit women, something that was a very normative pattern of exhibiting Brahmanical power relations in day to day life. Kunnath noted that:

It was written in the banner, *yeh Rajabazar hai, yanha sab kuchh milata hai* (‘This is Rajabazar; Everything is available here’). Ganesh Sahu had three teenage daughters. He felt deeply insulted by the sexual connotation of the banner. He complained to the parents of the boy but refused they to accept. Then Ganesh Sahu had approached to the village committee. After that village committee called for a meeting. The entire village members gathered in the mango grove at the outskirts of the village. It was the Kurmi versus the rest of the village. Many women also attended the meeting. The Kurmi boys were forced to

apologies to Sahu and to all those gathered at the meeting. Ganesh Sahu told me that this had been a big blow to the Kurmi pride. (Kunnath, 2012, p. 102-2)

This is the evidence that shows how power shifted in the village affairs and why the Dalit community participated in the struggle. Along with the economic exploitation, issues of social and patriarchal domination within the family were raised during the struggle period. For example, Meera told me “A landlord from Paliganj had many charges of rape and other criminal activities against him. The Party decided to shoot him. In broad daylight, the squad shot him in the streets of Paliganj. However, after that it raised a debate within the party regarding the “decision of shooting rapists and criminals”. In rare cases, severe punishments were given to the accused. Generally, the accused was punished by slapping them, making them run around the village, shaving their hair, forcing them to apologize to all those who had gathered at the meeting and other forms of economic punishments.

Along with economical issues, there was also the struggle for social and political power. PU introduced ideas of social justice through the village development committee. The village development committee ensured equal distribution of common resource, solved disputes among villagers, and gave the order or judgment through people’s court. Sometimes women organizations also helped the committee if a gender related issue came up in the committee such as rape, sexual harassment, property rights for widow women, forceful marriages when men are denied after make/made sexual relation, mistreatment of wife, mistreatment of daughter-in-law and so on.

Sangita shared an episode of inter-caste marriage which was dealt with by the People’s court. She said, “A couple gave a letter in women’s Organization for marriage. The man was from upper caste but economically weak and woman was a widow and from Bhoomihar caste. In the village, tension was created but when party took up this case no body was against the Organization. Sangthan provide protection of the couple till fifteen days. Finally, party arranged marriage in front of the people’s court. The party continued led the struggle against patriarchal control was not in abstraction”. She told me in the following words:

संघर्षशील इलाकों में आयोजित कुछ चर्चित जनपंचायत

नारी मुक्ति संघर्ष समिति व मजदूर किसान मुक्ति मंच द्वारा आयोजित

ग्राम-माछित :

माछित गाँव में ६.५.९४ को एक जन पंचायत बुलाई गई। यहाँ कुछ ही महीने पहले दिनेश ठाकुर (भूमिहीन किसान) ने अपनी पत्नी को इतना पीटा था कि वह आग लगाकर जल मरी। दिनेश ठाकुर ने उसे बचाने या आग बुझाने का कोई प्रयास नहीं किया। इसके बाद उसने ५०० रु० दारोगा को देकर मामले को दबाना चाहा। गाँव के मुखिया व विनयन गुट के नेता गब्बर सिंह ने इस मामले को दबाने में दिनेश की पूरी मदद की। छानबीन के बाद पंचायत बुलाई गई। इसमें लगभग ३०० जनता, जिसमें आधी महिलाएँ थीं, जुटी थी।

दिनेश ठाकुर, उसके पिता, भाई, चाचा, चाची और बाकी गाँव वालों का बयान लिया गया। परिवार वालों ने कहा, कि वह खुद अपने आपको जलाकर मर गयी थी। पंचायत में बहुमत की राय यह थी कि उक्त औरत को जलाया गया था। महिलाओं की राय भी बंटी हुई थी।

इसके बाद सजा पर बहस हुई। फैसला यह हुआ कि दिनेश ठाकुर को सिर मुड़ाकर, पाँच गाँव घुमाया जाय। दण्ड देने में व दिनेश को घुमाने में महिलाओं की भागीदारी थी।

इसी गाँव में ९.५.९४ को एक और जनपंचायत बुलाई गयी। यह मजदूर किसान मुक्ति मंच और नारी मुक्ति संघर्ष समिति-दोनों के आह्वान पर आयोजित की गई थी। २५० लोग जुटे थे। विषय मनु ठाकुर द्वारा एक औरत लक्ष्मी देवी के साथ छेड़खानी का मामला था। मनु ठाकुर नारी मुक्ति संघर्ष समिति की संयोजिका के पति हैं—होताकि करीब १ साल से पति-पत्नी के बीच किसी प्रकार का सम्बन्ध नहीं है। औरत दारु बेचती थी, और मनु ने दारु खरीदते वक्त उसकी बाँह पकड़ी थी। लक्ष्मी देवी ने हल्ला मचा दिया था। तीस व्यक्तियों का बयान लिया गया। फैसला यही हुआ कि मनु ठाकुर कान पकड़कर २५ बार उठक-बैठक करे और आईन्या ऐसा न करने का वादा करे। गाँव में इस बैठक का प्रभाव बहुत अच्छा पड़ा। आस-पास के गाँवों में इसकी चर्चा हुई।

ग्राम-भेवड़

भेवड़ गाँव में ४.५.९४ को छेड़खानी की एक घटना घटी। लोधीपुर गाँव की एक लड़की (रंजू) आटा पीसनाकर भेवड़ बाजार से लौट रही थी। उसे गाँव के तीन युवकों—राजेश सिंह, मण्डू पाण्डे और आदित्य पाण्डे ने रोका और छेड़ा। उसी दिन बैठक बुलाई गई। लड़के भाग गये थे। लड़कों के कार्रियन ने बैठक में आश्वासन दिया कि अगली तिथि पर वे उन लड़कों को पेश करेंगे। अन्यथा वे पाँच-पाँच डमकों की सजा भुगतने को तैयार होंगे। तिथि ६.५.९४ तय हुई। उसके पहले ही तीनों अभिभावकों ने विनती

पत्र भेजकर कुछ और समय की माँग रखी। जन पंचायत की तारीख बढ़ाकर २३.५.९४ कर दी गई।

भेवड़, तिकरिया, सुकुलचक, बिस्तीत, लोधीपुर, मुसेपुर व कड़ौली गाँवों की जनता उस तारीख पर जुटी। लगभग ५०० की उपस्थिति थी महिलाएँ लगभग १५० थी। तीनों लड़के हाजिर हुए। लड़की ने उस घटना का बयान किया। शुरु में लड़कों ने बात टालने का प्रयास किया। काल यह था कि हादसा योजनाबद्ध तरीके से नहीं, वरन् गलती से हुआ था। सभी ने तय किया कि उनसे सच्चाई का बयान उगलवाया जाय और उनका पीटने की राय दी। एक लड़का मण्डू ने सुपना गलती कबूल कर ली। आदित्य पाण्डे ने लाठी देकर गुनाह कबूल किया। परन्तु राजेश ने लाठी मारने के बाद ही गलती कबूल की।

पंचायत के फैसले के अनुसार लड़की ने तीनों को १०-१० चप्पल मारी उन्हें १०० बार उठक-बैठक करनी पड़ी और लड़की से और पूरी समा माफी माँगी पड़ी। पंचायत काफी सफल रही। नारी मुक्ति संघर्ष समिति की पहचान भी स्थापित हुई।

ग्राम-भुतैनचक

तकरीबन एक माह पहले रामेश्वर यादव के घर उनका कुटुम्ब-संघ आया था। उसी समय उसका केंसर यादव की बहन के साथ, शान्त के साथ कुछ हँसी-मजाक चला था। केंसर यादव इससे उत्तेजित हुआ, और उस लड़का-लड़की दोनों को पीटा। लड़का भाग गया। केंसर यादव, बदरी महेन्द्र यादव के साथ रामेश्वर के घर गया और उसे धमकाने लगा। अगले सुबह तीनों दुबारा उस घर में गये और उनकी पत्तों को केंसर यादव के घर में उठाकर बाहर खेत में ले गया। वहाँ उसने उसकी साड़ी खोलने का प्रयास किया। बदरी व महेन्द्र ने उसकी की बाँह पकड़ी। लड़की की साड़ी का फाड़ दिया गया। उसकी टाँग को पकड़ खेत में घसीट-गया। इन मामलों को लेकर २९.५.९४ को जन पंचायत लगी। ६०० से अधिक जनता जुटी थी। इनमें २०० महिलाएँ थी। आसपास के सभी गाँवों से लोग आये थे। उस औरत, उसके परिवार वाले, तीनों अभियुक्तों, केंसर यादव के पिता चन्द्रबाबू और सत्येन्द्र से बयान लिया गया। केंसर, महेन्द्र और बदरी अपराधी ठहराया गया। सत्येन्द्र पर जो आरोप था—बन्धुक लेकर पहरा देना का, वह गलत साबित हुआ। दो अपराधी-केंसर यादव व महेन्द्र अपना पुरा अपराध स्वीकार नहीं कर रहे थे। जनता ने उनको पीटकर सब उगलवाया तय किया। डमकों की मार पड़ने पर सच्चाई सामने आई।

पंचायत ने दण्ड के रूप में यह फैसला किया कि अपराधियों को १०-१० चप्पल मारे। उसके बाद उन्हें महिला का बूक चालना लोग अपराधियों ने सजा स्वीकार की और उसे सजा भी किया गया।

उत्पुक्त जन पंचायतों के सफलतापूर्वक सम्पादन से महिलाओं में पहलकदमी बढ़ी है। लेकिन सभी जगहों पर इलाके में कार्यरत मातृक किसान संगठन के अपेक्षित सहयोग का अभाव दिखा।

I tell you one case that is related to a Muslim couple. Man denied marriage with the girl who was pregnant. The Sangthan interfered in that case. Village development committee issued a letter for those families and fixed date for hearing. People assembled to solve the case on the fixed date. Both families also came in people's court. People's court decided that the man's family must call the man who flew from village. And also decided that male family must keep the girl to themselves till the time when he was not back. As soon as he returns both families organized marriage immediately. When man returned after six month the Sangthan forced them to get married. Finally, the Muslim family arranged the traditional marriage according to their own religion and culture.

The significance of the event of 'forced marriage'²¹ was that it raised the awareness of countering male domination. PU was able to create pressure on the male family for marriage who took advantage.²² The above reference also indicated that PU gained the trust of female member's family who approached the party for a solution to their problem. But in critical sense female had no other option left when a man denied her marriage. In this hostile and patriarchal atmosphere, a lot of pressure was created on the female to get married to the man. The pressure was not only from the community, family and religion; there was also a pressure from the PU side. It shows that the issue of marriage is controlled through family, community and religion which were no space for women's freedom. It also shows the contradictions in the priority of the Organization with respect to gender equality.

Suppose a girl denied marriage with that man, what option did the PU have? They had no option, no blue print against the traditional domination on women. The above reference indicates that the party was interested depending on the family and community's interest and only if they

²¹ I used the term 'forced marriage' because there was no mutual relationship between couples that is basic principle of Marxist theory of women's rights.

²² I mean that hierarchy exists within family structure. The male side of the family is always on the top position in terms of marriage rather than the female side.

fit in well with what many supporters believed regarding the particular marriage case. In the established patriarchal structure, if a woman has any sexual relation with a man, she is bound to marry that particular man and nobody else. Interestingly, PU also carries forward these patriarchal norms and values although it claims to follow the notion of gender equality according to the Maoist philosophy. In the absence of any marriage law and policy, it is very easy to continue with traditional rules and norms during the struggle. In this condition, it was very natural that such traditional thinking existed within the party leadership. It was very convenient for the party's leadership to continue with the traditional rule of sexuality in the absence of any proper mandate. PU managed the issues of sexuality in the rural area, once that were under the basic control of the family, caste and the traditional system. Throughout the movement, the most problematic issues like marriage whether party was attempting to resolve the male domination through force marriage. The family and caste control on women's sexuality, which is at the center of patriarchy no matter semi feudal or capital but also in semi feudal patriarchal revolutionary attitudes and struggle. Party leadership preserved more patriarchal attitudes and belief that the unable of marriage for women if men refuse to marry and asked the party for democratic rule and governance within the party there was nothing for those women. There was ethical and moral position of the party on the women sexuality. The notion of virginity was given a lot of importance by the leadership. It was believed that female sexuality should be controlled in order to maintain the reputation of the party according to the social order or popular consciousness. This attitude within the party system, made it impossible to fully eradicate women's oppression and male domination from the society despite the revolution. The Party publicized at all times that they advocated love marriage and was against forced marriages in which explanation that women are oppressed old system, thus party support of those who wanted to marry and challenge the parental and caste control.

However, the Party organized the people's court and assembly for those who gave a letter to the Organization regarding property. Sangita discussed another case regarding women's right on her husband's property. She told me:

A man who got into a second marriage; he denied to give his first wife any part of the property and also physically abused her. The first wife then reported it to the organization. In this circumstance the organization punished the man by beating him five

times with sandal. They asked the woman to slap him five times but she denied doing it herself and asked others to do it. To which another woman got up and slapped him. .

Sangita also adds her view that “No matter how much the men abuse women but women cannot do the same. Women are socialized constructed in a way that they cannot raise their hands on their husbands”. When I asked Sangita if the male family members were against the people’s court decision, she replied that “Generally family had not gone against couple and decisions of people’s court because there was pressure from the organization”.

If a widow was denied the right to property within the family, the party took the responsibility for protecting the woman’s rights. PU advocated the new idea of property distribution within the family. According to that, it was not the responsibility of the people’s court alone to implement the party policy. However, neither the peasant union nor the women’s organization launched any campaign or guideline publicizing the socialist idea about gender equality and family reforms. However, not only did the Dalits approach the village development for solving the matter, even the Kurmi caste approached the committee. Kunnath noted that:

A Kurmi woman approached the village committee to settle their own family disputes.

One woman from Kurmi caste, whose husband- a member of Bhoomi Sena – was killed by the Maoist during the initial struggle, came to the committee because she had been refused her share of land by her husband’s brother. Raju Bhai took up her case. He met her husband’s brother and persuaded him to part with the land on her behalf. (Kunnath, 2012, p. 103)

These examples show that the struggle signified in changing power in favor of Dalit and women life in rural Bihar during struggle in very limited sense. For example, during my field study I saw a Dalit woman from Paliganj threatening her daughter-in-law. She said, “Don’t forget I’m a supporter of the party if you would create problem with my daughter i’ll be forced to call *Dasta* (Squad) members”. Dalit women felt confident and dealt with interfamilial problem on behalf of the party. Despite that some contradiction remain that point towards the lack in the understanding of the party regarding the issues of women.

Sexual Division of labour: Reaction of male leaders and Gender Perspective

Sexual division of labor refers to different roles of men and women within the family and the society that defined traditional roles based on sex/gender system. Feminist refers as social construction not a biological determination and argued that the division of labor is not natural that is linked to the subordination of women. Sexual division of labor is one of the main issues of feminist theory and politics in the last century which defines that women labor within the household provided an important contribution in the mode of production and family ideology. The sexual division of labor was based around the issues of economic subordination, social construction of gender roles and reproduction. Ultimately women's labor benefitted the mode of production, be it a capital or a feudal society.

It raised a number of questions on sexual division of labor within the household during the struggle which was a more important issue for women. In a short discussion with Meera about how the male peasants within the party reacted to the sexual division of labor, she mentioned that the "Peasant male argued that women are doing less work rather than men. No hard work in the home. Why women organization wants to men to work at the home. If women capture power, will force men to do work in the house". Peasant male members were angry and openly expressed their patriarchal thinking on the sexual division of labor and commented that domestic work is to be done by women. During my study, I asked the same to a woman from Banuli village but her husband interrupted into discussion that was ex-peasant leaders of the MKSS and later MKSP in Jehanabad. Ex-peasant leader, I called Yugal Das, shared story of the squad and activity of their wife follow words:

When I went in Assam for two months party arrived in my area. My wife actively participated in the movement and squad stayed in my home. I don't know this development. When I came back that night squad came to my home stayed. My wife was waking me to met *sathee* (comrades). I was angry on my wife and said who will come at mid night in home? Then I was woke and met with squad members which was one woman. In my mind may be they are robbers. But I was silent. After that spread gunny

bag on the ground and they slept. The next day my wife went for Organization work. I asked them where you are going. She said, 'I'm going to party work. I said, no need, don't go. If you go outside for work then I will be a woman in the home and for care of children. You are stay in home and take care of children I go to work in the party.

When asked why he had a problem if he took care of children, he replied that "If I stayed at home and she would go outside? It could not happen. I felt ashamed". I observed that his reply was interspersed with pride.

While men expressed themselves through male domination, women expressed their own views through songs. The local Dalit women told me "when we sung this songs, the peasant male expressed anger and taunted on women that you would go to work outside and male constraints within home, you forget your dream, it is not possible". Despite that, women expressed their views on the sexual division of labor, her confinement within the household, control over a women's body through songs as evident in the one mentioned below. They attacked the idea of patriarchal culture and tried to create a "space within struggle".

Had my rights were achieved and I ordered you

How would you have felt then? you would have joined hands and pleaded me for mercy.

What would you have done, if I would have demanded a T.V., refrigerator and a cooker from you?

What if you were asked to stitch cloths and asked to cover your full body from head to toe with thick cloths in summer,

Above and beyond this, what if I would have subjected you to endless verbal and physical abuse? How would you have felt then?

What if I would have told you to rear children and to look after them whole day and to wash clothes in the same undying spirit?, how would you have felt then?

It would have been so prosperous if we both husband and wife would have learnt to earn dissolving the disparity between 'me' and 'you'

Only this unity would have laid the foundation of a new society and a new beginning!

Several issues are dealt in every line of the song. As far as its content goes, it offers a more powerful description of unequal relationships between men and women with respect to the family chores. Who has power and who exercises it, who has nothing and is powerless in this patriarchal family structure? In the sexual hierarchical society, women are alive only at the mercy of male authority. It seems like a dream of oppressed women and the idea of utopia if exchange of power equation then how oppressor would feels. Political economy of marriage, control over the women's body and their labor, mental and physical violence, domestic work and reproduction indicated that the whole structure was against women across categories. They tried to create a space as indicated in the song, addressing all women in the hope of uniting them against patriarchal domination which is otherwise widely different among women of different class and caste.

The Relationship between Peasant Union and Women's Front

The relation between peasant's union and women's organization and their agenda are more complex than is usually assumed. From the beginning some women hailed from the urban area such as Patna and majority of the women were from agricultural background and from the Dalit community. Both urban and rural women played a very important role in the formation of Nari Mukti Sangharsh Samiti. Here I would like to clearly draw a demarcation between women's participation versus the women's front. The women's issues were different from women participation in the struggle and did not mean that the party dealt with the women's question in an adequate fashion. It is sure that the participation of women in a struggle changes their living condition with all limitations but women as a political force and women's issues are two completely different things.

Women's leaders faced tremendous opposition from the peasant leaders on the women's rights agenda. Noting a similar experience of the Chinese women's organization, Stacey writes "The subordination of women's association to local peasant union assured that male political

domination would be likely to prevail” (Stacey, 1975, p. 76). I also observed during my field work how one peasant leader taunted women in a very ridiculous manner. When I asked him about the women organization, he said, “*Un logo ke koe izzat thi, din-rat gali ke biolliyo ke traha ghoomatee rahatee thee*” (They have no respect, they spent day and night out in the same manner as “alley cats”). Given this hostile attitude among the peasant leaders, it was difficult for women leaders to mobilize women. Many women, either individually within the family or collectively within the village and caste, found it difficult to counter the resistance of the men when they tried to extend their activities beyond the domestic realm. Husbands, fearing that their wives might go astray, objected to their attending public meeting and many young wives who insisted on attending the women’s meetings braved the inevitable domestic crisis on their return - usually receiving beating or scraps of food instead of the usual meal. Many young daughters-in-law had painful memories of her first step into public life, something that I have mentioned in my previous chapter. The Party Unity also noted that in the magazine, if women joined Sangatha, they faced problems within the community and the family. For example, in an article entitled “Build strong Women’s organization” which was published in the party’s magazine in 1994, it is mentioned that:

Women of different social background all face formidable opposition of differing from and intensity, from the moment they enter movement. Not only from their family, their community but also from the entire villages. A young woman seeking to join our peasant organization faced the wrath of nearly ten village committees who called a meeting and threatened to leave the organization if a girl from their panchayat was allowed to join! Apart from societies structures there is opposition from within the family. This is the more commonly takes the form of parental pressures, bullying of husband, taunts and accusations of in-laws.

This kind of opposition was among peasants and many who participated in the movement. From the above reference we can understand in what manner the peasant family maintained a control on women’s mobility, their labor, sexuality and body. But in the entire article there is not a single

mention of what action or activities was undertaken by the Party Unity to attack male domination within the family and the community. The peasant male feared that they might lose their domination on women, especially since they were dependent on their wives or women for domestic work and for the care of their children. There was also a fear among the peasants that they would lose their wife. Secondly, they would also not be able to prevent the caste and community honor through control on the women's body if they entered politics. Because of that, the party sometimes organized democratic marriage of cadres and politicized among the people about a new idea of marriage. I would like to argue that the women's experience in Jehanabad shows that the interest of the peasant union was not representative of women's interest. If women moved from their family and joined the party, they directly challenged and affected the family's domination, the community's domination and also the parental domination at least in a little sense. It was a direct attack on the privilege that men enjoyed within their home (which included sexual desire, labor and care of children) and challenged the control they had on the women body. Thus, women organizers faced direct opposition from peasant and workers.

This was not a unique phenomenon of the peasant union members in Jahanabad, as a similar experience was faced by the Chinese women in the peasant union in some areas. Let me explain how the contradiction was same but in different place and time. In China, in the pre-revolution period, "men of Hailofeng hated the women organization who called themselves the "Bureau of Divorce and Remarriage" (croll, 1978, p. 211). I had a similar experience during my field study when Yugal Das said, "Women were coming in the Organization to choose for suitable male who was unsatisfied in arrange marriage". In their mind women's leaders were sexual lust who was not satisfied from traditional husband. He said, "When she got married they ditch the organization". This was a very dangerous attitude on the part of the peasant leader towards women's organizers. It was also the means of controlling women who wanted to join the party. In this hostile atmosphere governed by the male members, it was difficulties for NMSS to gain women's trust especially if the peasant leaders created a feeling of hatred against the women leaders. It was also very difficult for the NMSS to encourage women to join the party politics.

The peasant's union and women's rights agenda together were only in the abstract sense. In practice very few moments were together in the progressive sense. Agricultural relations were based on the exploitation of women's labor but during the peasant land reform these matters of women's rights were never put together as I have already mentioned in the previous chapter in detail. There is no difference between the CPI (ML) liberation and the Party Unity on the land distribution policy.

No Revolution without the liberation of Women & No liberation of Women without the liberation

In 1918, Lenin emphasized the role women in the Russian revolution that “there can be no socialist revolution unless very many working women take a big part in it” (Marxist Internet Archive, 2004, para, 1). The relationship between proletariat revolution and women liberation are significant for class struggle from the Marxist point of view. In Bihar, after the 1980s Party Unity and MCC that followed the Maoist path, the ground became fertile for peasant struggle. Both parties recognized a slogan “No Revolution without the liberation of Women & No liberation of Women without the liberation” in their own documents. Here I mention in detail the seminar and party conference of both who participated in this seminar, making a sense for what the party's understanding was on the women issues such as women mobilization and theoretical understanding.

The Party unity published an article in 1994, after 14 years of its formation. The article was entitled - “Build strong women's movement”. PU recognized that in feudal society like Bihar where women are more oppressed than a semi feudal society, one fails in organizing a strong women's movement like the militant women's movement in Philippines, Argentina and Vietnam.

In many other third world countries women's front have organized and developed as strong forces opposing repression- the GABRIELA, a women's organization in Philippines resisted Corazon Aquino's total war' against the revolutionary New Peoples Army (NPA). The campaign of mothers of the Plaza de Mayo against the disappearance in the counter insurgency operation in Argentina emerged in time

of extreme repression as a strong democratic force. Vietcong Vietnam, and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua had battalions of women soldiers led by women commanders. Our failure in this regard is a question of pressing urgency (Party Unity, 1994, p. 10).

The analysis of the party regarding the condition of women within family, caste and community are partially true. I would like to argue that the detailed account of Meena and Kunti's life as mentioned in the previous chapter, show how women joined the party despite facing brutal violence from the family. Majority of the Dalit women were always in support of the party but the party paid no attention to build a proper structure for women organization or give priority to other less important women's issues. Sangita criticized and provided valuable suggestion on this. She said, "large numbers of women participated in the movement in many forms such open activists to underground. Certainly women joined the party because of different issues but when they left from the party and became inactive, for that party was responsible. The women members went back from party because no special attention was given on those women who faced problems within organization".

Sushila from Gaya also criticizes the party's approach towards women issues. She told me, "Problems of mobilizing women were more apolitical, irrational and benefit oriented. Women joined the party for certain benefit. When their certain demands were fulfilled they retreated from struggle. For example, in my case local women leader convinced me for certain benefit like you have daughter, if you joined the organization party took responsibility for marriage of your daughter". I met one woman who joined the movement because the local party member had committed to get her two daughters married through the arranged system. There were also women who got their daughters married and then left the organization. The Party never questioned these dangerous practices, nor did it pay any attention to understand why women joined the movement, what their reasons were, what their dreams were and what the problems were if they entered the political realm. Party leadership tried to impose their understanding at all times without investigating women's problems. The Party analyzed those women who went back from the movement because their main responsibilities were of defined by the domestic and feudal value system. Every party document addresses the task of the party for organized political

class for raising revolutionary consciousness among women and committing to build a strong women's organization. But it was rhetorical and seemed like lip service. But in practice there was no concrete blueprint. For example, the Party Unity emphasized on women's work in the 1993 in 'Our responsibility for Women's organization':

Immediate task of our party for the women's movement is to organize the broad masses of toiling women to join the revolution in order to keep abreast with the main task (which is to resist the state repression and private militia of upper caste, and to struggle for the consolidate and expansion of power) and protect the interest of women. This is should be women from agricultural labor Dalit and adivasi background are naturally backbone of our women's organization. Our strategy and tactics should be developed keeping this in mind. (Party Unity, 1993, p. 20)

The Party recognized and believed that the women's movement was capable for making an important contribution to the revolutionary movement. But there was no mention of the tactics and strategies from women mobilization in these documents. Sometimes they organized political education among the women members for making them conscious of their oppression and making them realize the need to struggle against patriarchal forces. This political classes should "Include basic knowledge of the body, health and medicine ...it is not easy task and without it cannot organize a women's movement or launch struggle against the oppression of women in total disregard to popular levels of consciousness" (Party Unity, 1994, p. 15).

On 14th-15th May in 1993 in Patna, the "All India League of Revolutionary Culture" (AILRC) organized a seminar on the topic "Class Struggle and Women Liberation" which was attended by feminists such as Sudesh vaid (PUDR), Rajani Desai, Dr. Asmita, Anuradha Gandhi of the People's War, Nari Mukti Sangh of the MCC and Nari Mukti Sangharsh Samiti of the Party Unity. Anil Ojha wrote a report which was published in Sangrami Muktimarg in 1993 in Hindi. According to this report there was recognition of feminist analysis and new information

about women's oppression which should be included in the practice of class struggle and women's liberation, but the feminists ignore the state and class oppression.

I include the existence of the debate between NMSS and NMS that is based on the published report. According to the report, Gandhi's paper focused on the feminist trend in India. Anuradha Gandy's paper was on the women question, relating it to the relationship of class exploitation and women oppression, trying to understand it through a theory of historical materialism. She argued in this paper without an understanding of family and society, production and reproduction, the cultural and material relationship cannot be understood and resolved. Patriarchy is a product of class power, and there is a need for a conscious effort to struggle against class exploitation and women oppression. But Nari Mukti Sangh objected to Anuradha Gandy's paper and argued that she has used Marxist feminism. But NMS views feminism and Marxism as two completely opposite ideology and political position.

NMS strongly believed that there should be a conscious development among toiling women about the aspects of class oppression and not just that of male domination/rule. NMS also focused on private property which was seen as the reason behind the emergence of male domination in society. Between toiling women and the males, there existed a contradiction but the contradiction was not antagonistic. There is a main contradiction in India regarding imperialism-feudalism and comprador capitalism which leads to the exploitation of both male and female. Thus, men and women must come together and struggle against the real enemy; otherwise no one will be liberated (Lal Chingari, 1993, p.54). MCC also suggested how to struggle against patriarchal behavior. Firstly, if a contradiction exists between male and female of the poor and middle class family, there will be an attempt at solving it through dialogue. If dialogue fails and male preserves a rigid attitude, then it would be considered right to fight against male domination (Lal Chingari, 1993, p.54) Sushila also told me, NMS was a positive interference in the class struggle, particularly, on women issues such as fight from police and landlord oppression. She said "*Are Bihar ka samaj bahut pichhda hai samanti vichar bahut haavee hai, khaskar purush maila ko kuchh nahee samajhata hai, vah kabila nahee hai*" (Bihar is more backward society, there is more feudal idea about women, especially among male like women are not able or women are able to understand about politics). We can see that how the contradiction between MNSS and NMS existed at the theoretical level. Both parties were seen as

innate unity between class struggle and struggle against patriarchal domination. This unity denote there was the possibilities and potential to reduce male domination through class struggle but women experiences of the parties tells us more about the limitations of parties action against male members within party structure and in general too.

Anil Ojha noted that the main opposition between Nari Mukti Sangh and Sangharsh Samiti were on the NMSS paper. It considered that the issues of women liberation could only be eliminated if one could break the class, caste and patriarchal structure. But Nari Mukrti Sangh objected to this formulation and argued that only through class approach could woman define oppression rather than saying that the enemy was of high caste and high class. But according to Anil Ojha, “Our party takes responsibility launched to struggle against brahmanical values and life style which is more oppressive” (Sangrami Muktimarg, 1993, p. 17). The report says that “NMS denied this position of the NMSS and advocated that Marxism is the only way of understanding of women’s oppression while feminism and Marxism are opposite” (Sangrami Muktimarg, 1993, p. 17).

The political anxiety on the theory of women oppression was central in the seminar. I met a woman in Delhi who had participated in this seminar. She told me about this seminar that was not mentioned in this report but was very important as it showed how parties attacked feminists in the name of the bourgeois and urban feminism that was not necessary in the rural area and of the women organization as well, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter how feminist tendency deviates our women’s organization. She told me:

The seminar was scheduled for two days. In the second session there was intense debate among feminists and parties leaders on the relationship of feminism and Marxism. We slept at mid night. When we were woke up in the morning, saw very humiliating and disturbing such as “Bourgeois feminism Down Down” written in the placard and in wall.

The above reference explicitly indicates a sectarian approach that the parties undertook towards feminism and feminist politic in the name of the bourgeois and urban. They feared that if feminist politics entered into class politics or class struggle, it would deviated the spirit of the class struggle and our women’s organization.

Apart from this we can see male members from both parties fighting with each other. In this process, women front disappeared from both sides in this debate. There were no women members who were able to write a report on behalf of the women's organization on the women question of disagreement from the feminists. This was not an important issue for the members who wrote articles in the magazine. The question is that: why the women organizations were not able to respond to the women question. My supposition borders on two points: firstly, parties did not trust women members who were able to address the theoretical debate or did not have a space within the parties and thus, did not take a political position on the debate. Secondly, the women front was able to think like their male counterparts. While many reports were written in the magazine by the women members from the battle field in the name of Nari Mukti Sangharsh Samiti, but the sexual division of labor still existed, at least at the intellectual level.

Other documents were published in Janwadi Muktimarg about Magadh Zonal conference in 1999 namely, "Perspective of Revolutionary Women's Movement". It was recognized that the party strongly fought against patriarchal biasness in the society and of course within organization but patriarchy cannot be eliminated immediate or today. We can't build women's movement ignoring popular level of consciousness but should continue to fight and struggle against patriarchal biasness. This is important how the party claimed that the theory of intersectional relationship between caste, class and gender, but in practical they preserved the ambiguous approach. Although popular consciousness and resistance were obviously a problem during the struggle on women issues as I have mentioned in the previous pages, it was assumed that popular consciousness could not be challenged on the women's rights. It was feared among the Party leaders that they would face challenges and criticism from the peasant male who was the backbone of the struggle. Vasantha and Laitha observed in the Telangana Movement and argued that "While to men the break-down of feudal authority meant an end to extortion labour and compulsory free labour, to the women it added the promise of a life where there would be greater equality, both within and outside the home" (Vasantha and Laitha, 1989, p. 181). I would like to add to this observation in the context of Bihar that the peasant males wanted to fight against landlord oppression and participated in the land struggle in the hope to get land pieces. Apart from this, women participated in the struggle for hope of equality between the sexes that was a determining factor in their life, particularly for Dalit women. This included a desire for the end of oppression in the field and from their husbands like in the case of Meera and Sushila and the

others. It shows that incapability of the party to prioritize the issues of gender inequality for the struggle rather than latching on to the traditional formula of women's liberation only after the liberation of the working class.

Sexual Politic: Remarriage, Love Marriage and Caste

Marxist theory and politics advocated love marriage that is based on mutual love without the greed of wealth and property. The radical left parties also politicized love marriage as free from class and caste so on so. In the narratives that I consider below we can see there were very few (one or two) marriage form of hypogamy. In general, the party engaged or arranged marriage in the same caste, called "ideal marriage". The party had the excuse that people were not accepted in out of caste marriages. The narratives on "marriage" in Bihar reveal similar contradiction and anxieties about love marriages.

There is also some study available on the Naxalite movement from West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh such as the Stree Shakti Sangathana (1989), Srila Roy (2012), *Remembering revolution: gender, violence and subjectivity in India's Naxalbari Movement*, Malarika Sinha Roy (2011), *Gender and radical politics in India: magic moment of Naxalbari* and Kavita Panjabi (2017) *Unclaimed harvest: an oral history of the Tebhaga women's movement* are producing feminist understanding about armed peasant movement and Naxalite politics on the women question, more specific, practice of love, marriage and sexuality within movement. But in Bihar scholars (generally male fill this category at least in Bihar) have been more interested on the movement, politics and agrarian struggle that led by Party Unity and MCC in Bihar but not attention on social institutions, especially, family and marriage during movement that is more important project of women liberation. Even not any accounts of the feminist on the Bihar. Here I explore "ignoring field of study" from feminist point of view, through women experience which explore how they got married and how they were remembered in its aftermath. I try to explore an interlinked between love, marriage, sexuality and caste in the Maoist movement in the 1980s in Bihar. I also mention in the previous chapter almost the same contradiction with the Maoist party about marriage, discipline of sexuality, family and caste. But there are some

documents available on marriages which the parties referred to as “ideal marriage” or as the anti-brahmanical/traditional marriage system. But even in this concept of “ideal marriage”, several contradictions existed.

In the political–organization report of the NMSS published in 1999, mentioned that NMSS work in Magadha region continues challenge the feudal dominance on women in Bihar thorough remarriage, inter caste marriage and love marriage. In this process without taking dowry and without follow brahmanical norm many men and women activist got democratic marriage. In theses marriages thousands of people were participated (Janwadi Mukti Marg, 1999, NMSS, political-organization report of conference of Magadh zonal, p. 25). But women’s narratives of the movement show how women continued to be bearers of traditional norms. We can say that women body is object of the social policing (Kannabiran and Lalitha, 1989). Many scholars concentrated on the failure of the Marxist understanding on the family, sexuality and patriarchy to private sphere because of their economic deterministic understanding of the society. In this context patriarchal culture and norms are reestablishing on women body and continued practice of power that existed between men and women in the society.

The members of the male peasant leaders often tried to attract women in the name of care. Also when women fell in love and got married after some time the husband started practicing patriarchal control on the women’s mobility, and forcing upon her the household responsibilities, child care etc. This is referred to as the “extended disciplinary control over individual lives” (Vindhya, 1990; 2000). Vindhya also observed that there were no coherent policies towards marriage and sexuality that could represent the socialist ideal of gender equality in clear terms. Like Vindhya, an observation of a similar kind based on the experience of the women in Bihar provided me to conceptualize that there were no such guidelines on the gender issues, specifically in marriage and inter-personal relationships, saying that it was oppression by the state and landlord leading to the failure in developing any conscious or concrete policy.

Sangita told me, 'In the starting some women and men choose partner without giving information of the committee or party. So that party took action against those activists. After that they were left from the party. Our party was not against love marriage. When party asked to cadres about their relation, cadres denied. They damage reputation of the party among people. If they choose the partner party never denied for their marriage. When party took disciplinary action against cadres and members also realized that, kept proposal of marriage in front of committee and committee accept inter-caste marriage proposal and after that party arrange ideal marriage'.

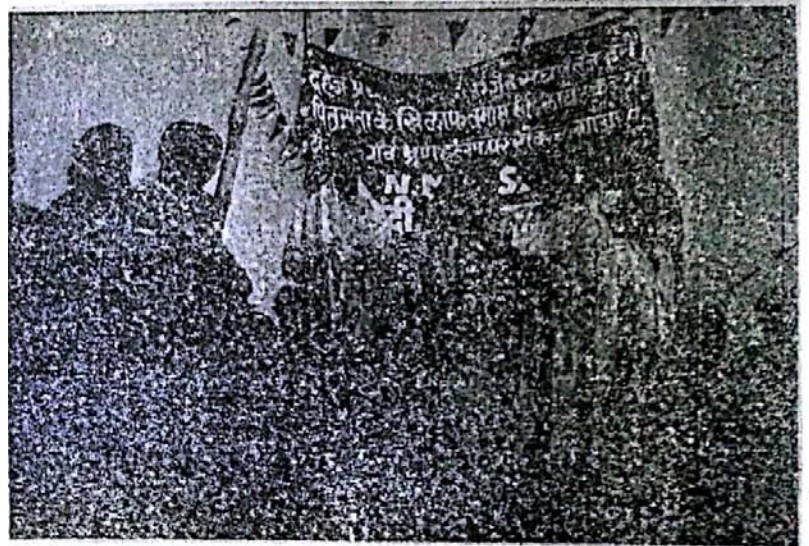
The Maoist party launched a struggle against the landlord power but at the same time could not politicize the family power structure that existed between men and women, as it was still considered as personal issues (Roy, 1999, p.81) or trivial matter. During the struggle, both at the organizational level and the political level, the issue of personal was solved in a contradictory manner by either relegating from the

organization or watching on the cadres. Finally subjected of the member if they practice of intrapersonal relation without party consent, party took disciplinary action on them. As

ना कर रहा है ।
इस प्रकार के
एकता कायम करे
र तले गोलबन्द
जवतक दमनकारी
ने शोषक-शासक
क्षेत्रगला चौक

जनवादी विवाह समारोह

दिनांक-12.2.2001 को नारी मुक्ति संघर्ष समिति एवं भारत नौजवान सभा की ओर से ब्राह्मणवाद व दहेज प्रथा को तोड़ते हुए पतड़िया-मिल्की रकूल प्रांगण में एक जनवादी विवाह समारोह का आयोजन किया गया । इस समारोह में सिकरिया निवासी भोला कुमार एवं भखडाचकिया निवासी देवी कुमारी ने



आई० पी० आर० प्रगतिशील फुटपाथ पुनर्गठन किया है । 187 दुकानों का न अभी भी संकड़ों को विवश हैं । पीपुर में एक मशाल धरना का आयोजन र्यों के अलावा ए० के सदस्यों ने भी मक्ष तमाम फुटपाथ र्ण करने, उनके मालों की नियमित लेकिन जवतक इन संघर्ष नहीं चलाया । ए० ए० सु० री० नि संगठना के साथ

एक दूसरे के गले में माला डालकर पति-पत्नी के रूप में एक साथ रहने की घोषणा की । इस अवसर पर एक सभा भी आयोजित की गई, जिसकी अध्यक्षता नारी मुक्ति संघर्ष समिति के मगध जोनल कमिटी सचिव ज्योति कुमारी (जो देवी कुमारी की बहन भी हैं और जिसने खुद जनवादी तरीके से अन्तरजातीय विवाह किया था) ने की और जिसे ना० मु० सं० की सुनीता, ए० आई० पी० आर० एफ० के राधिकादानन्द प्रभात, भारत नौजवान सभा के वासुदेव नन्दन व जयकिशोर एवं मजदूर किसान संग्रामी परिषद के शोभित जी ने सम्बोधित किया । इस समारोह में एक हजार से अधिक लोग शामिल थे । सभी वक्ताओं ने पितृसत्तात्मक समाज में महिलाओं पर होने वाले तरह-तरह के अन्यायों की चर्चा की । उन्होंने रामाज के विवेकशील लोगों व तमकों एवं खासकर युवक-युवतियों का आह्वान किया कि जाल-पाल व तिलक-दहेज प्रथा के खिलाफ विद्रोह कर विवाह-जैसे सामाजिक काम को ब्राह्मणवाद से मुक्त करें । इस समारोह के दौरान ब्राह्मणवाद, दहेज प्रथा, पितृसत्ता, भ्रूण हत्या, जाति प्रथा, आदि कुरीतियों के खिलाफ जोरदार नारे भी लगाये गए ।

(Vindhya, 2000), noted that the how party wanted from women cadres of sacrifice of personal happiness, including love, sexual desire and control of women sexuality in name of revolution.

In contrast narration of Sangita, Meera shared own experience on the divorce and remarriage within party. She narrates through following words:

I kept proposal for divorce in front of committee in 1988. In the name of divorce no one agreed for it. For that I have to struggle within party for it. In between one daughter had born. I decided for operation and tell to one comrade about my decision. He supported me but other committee member opposed that. However I don't care to anyone I did operate. Finally I got divorce in 1991. In between party leader kept proposal for remarriage. But I denied it. After two years of divorce I kept proposal for marriage in party. In front of party committee no one against it but behind they were critiquing so much. For example, more general comment or gossip about my relational that she had developed relation with that personal then she kept proposal for divorce in the party. Another comment and rumor against me like she develops as leader last seven eight years, she met educated urban middle class male then why she like rural and backward husband. When I kept proposal of my relationship in front of committee, came to proposal from party side for ideal marriage but I did not agree it. I don't like ideal marriage. Why I tell to the people about my personal relation that this is my husband or wife. I did not follow party line. I lived without any marriage ceremony. Secondly, it was also important for my security.

Decision regarding marriage and divorce were taken by the area committee, which generally committee comprised of the male members who had no specific guidelines. Similar experiences were recorded in Srikakulam and the Naxalbari local area where the committee took a decision on the marriage and divorce which was selected by three or four members who usually all male.

Meera accounts shows how the party leader was against her divorce application. There is a complete surrendering in front of the husband's authority no matter how the husband had dominated the woman's life. As Donner (2008 84) noted, the way in which the self surrenders to god in bhakti, in the same manner a woman was supposed to be devoted to her husband. The devotion of women is idealized in a patriarchal culture. However, there was no fixed format of marriage. Meera told me, "I kept proposal like just information I never follow the party line". Meera's experience indicates that it appears that the norms and customs were broken or preserves in according to individual choice. Meera also indicate some contradiction existed among women activists. She said, "Women also happy was during marriage that party organized. Some women activist also wearied *sindoor* and *Mangalsootra* (symbol of the marriage)". Even the party had no problem in arranging an ideal marriage of the comrades among the masses which was to just put a *Jayamala*²³ and give speeches on the new idea of marriage. Thus, both the party and the women comrades were happy but for different reasons. For the party when the unmarried women participated in the movement, the party leaders tried to arrange their marriage because they feared that if women chose their partner by themselves then the party would face a loss of reputation among the people. So the party often arranged a hypergamy form of marriage of the cadres, there was very little hypogamy marriage.

However, there was no party documentation on the practice of ideal marriage like the official version, but we can identify the normative construction of ideal marriage through the women's experiences. In this context, it was how women activists defined revolutionary marriages in terms of the progressive culture established by the party. I wanted to know Sangita's life story because she is from a middle caste family. Sangita shared her own life story with me:

Archana ji, my marriage was ideal marriage by the party. In Bihari society nobody wants to get married with widow women, especially in my caste. May be widower would marry with unmarried girl but it was not with widow. I had thirteen year old, got first marriage in 1984. After one year that boy died of cholera. Then my father thought that girl is very young so that he decided for second marriage of mine. My father wanted to selected boy

²³ Jayamala is Indian wedding garland symbolic of the popular marriage ceremony.

who belonged to my caste despite that people of my caste disagreed. My father heard about Organization people supported issues of remarriage. My father selected person who commander of the Organization. My parent decided to marriage because of his property. My father thought it does not matter that a boy commander of the Organization or lived outside of the home but he have land. So my daughter will be survived. No tension of her livelihood. My marriage was so cheap. Even my parent gave one thousand rupees to my husband but he used to buy medicine for the Organization rather than buying marriage cloth. He wore old clothes for marriage. I married in 1988.

According to story of Sangita, from Sangita and her parents' point of view the marriage arranged by the organisation was a relief with no dowry, no Brahmanical arrangement for marriage. In one sense it was a progressive marriage embraced by revolutionaries who had the agenda of propagating liberal politics. But there were some contradictions that were in contrast with the party's position. Firstly, Sangita married an older person with around ten years' gap while she was under age. Within the party, peasant leaders also got their daughters married in under age very frequently. Secondly, Sangita's marriage according to caste which party reputation was maintained among supports. The same composition of caste also did by MCC of activist marriage. A published report in Lal Meera in 1991 follow picture:

शिविर विवाह का आयोजन

क्रान्तिकारी सांस्कृतिक संघ एवं क्रान्तिकारी बुद्धि-जीवी संघ द्वारा विभिन्न जगहों में शिविर विवाह का भी आयोजन किया गया।

△ 6-3-91 दिन बुधवार को औरंगाबाद जिला, थाना-गोह्र ग्राम—पाली में का० राजदेव यादव के साथ का० कोशिला कुमारी का विवाह सम्पन्न हुई।

लड़की व लड़का नाम व पता इस प्रकार है—

लड़की का नाम—कोशिला कुमारी

पिता का नाम—स्वर्गिय श्री राम विलास सिंह

ग्राम—पाली, थाना-गोह्र, जिला-औरंगाबाद।

अभिभावक—चन्द्रेश्वर यादव

लड़का का नाम—का० राजदेव यादव

पिता—स्वर्गिय श्री डोमन यादव

ग्राम—गम्हारी, थाना—गोह्र, जिला—औरंगाबाद

अभिभावक—मुनारिक यादव

का० सिद्धेश्वर मेहता एवं का० विजय आर्य द्वारा

इस आदर्श विवाह का कार्यक्रम सम्पन्न हुआ।

□ 12-3-91 को ग्राम नौनी, थाना-टिकारी, जिला-गया में गणेश पासवान एवं सरस्वति कुमारी का शिविर

विवाह सम्पन्न करायी गई

लड़की व लड़का का नाम व पता इस प्रकार है।

लड़की का नाम—सरस्वति कुमारी

पिता—बालेश्वर पासवान

घर—नौनी, थाना—टिकारी, जिला—गया

लड़का का नाम—महेश पासवान

पिता—गणेश पासवान

घर—माखुखाप, थाना—गुरारू, जिला-गया का०

सिद्धेश्वर मेहता द्वारा शिविर विवाह का आयोजन

सम्पन्न हुई एवं का० दयमन्ति दीदी भी इन आदर्श विवाह

को सम्पन्न कराने में मदद पहुँचायी। का० सुरेन्द्र द्वारा

गीत का भी आयोजन किया गया।

However, this reference not shows that it was love marriage or typical arranged marriage because in the first marriage the name of the man “comrade Rajdev Yadav” but not mentioned “comrade” with female name. While I heard so many times during field study, even if anybody who is only supporters of the party, called them as comrades. In fact in the last paragraph of the reference denote comrade Damyanti. That means KaSadhanalya was not party member or active in movement but maybe she was daughter of party supporters who organized daughter marriage with party member. It was also “ideal marriages” according to this reference. Thus, this reference showed that these were arranged marriage which is MCC called “ideal marriage”. Although in this reference title was “camp marriage” but inside the reference denote “ideal marriage”.

However, Kaushilya Yadav got married with the comrades Rajendra Yadva. This was radical or revolutionary marriages held by MCC in Aurangabad and Gaya districts of Bihar. Parties (Liberation, Party Unity and MCC) also arranged marriage daughters of poor activist. Sangita told me, “If a cadre has daughter, and activist is poor then organization arranged the marriage”. For example, “One girl just joined the organization. She was married but did not go to the husband's home. Then organization gave some items to the girl so that she could go to her husband's house for the first time because she was very poor. The items were given so that her

in-laws would not comment or taunt their poor condition and behave properly with her. The Sanagthan only gave items not cash. But if the marriage was within the organization then nothing was given”.

In contrast, however, some marriage were based on mutual love which shows that rejection of the traditional arranged marriage system and also caste composition party arranged ideal marriage which was based on mutual love with party member like Sadhana and Jyoti, an ex-activist in the NMSS. Sadhana left from the organization when she was injured in the head by the police, shared her story of marriage with me. Sadhana said,

Party arranged my marriage when I kept proposal for marriage with senior peasant leader. Party had no problem but my family never accepted my marriage. My father said, ‘don’t dare come to home. After that I never came to home since 1994’. My marriage was against caste system and it was love marriage. In Bihar no one think about that girl is upper caste and male from lower caste can marry.

These narratives of women’s leaders indicate there was some marriage like intercaste of which women from upper caste and male from lower caste but there was no programme and policy on the marriage. During the course of the struggle according to the leadership took decision on the marriage issue. It shows that inability of the party on the women question in Bihar. However, in theory party claimed that they advocated women rights in Bihar but these references reveal is against it. The women rights agenda subordinate to the demands of the peasant revolution marked as ‘half hearted revolution’.

The issue of Women Permanent revolutionary force and Child Care

The Maoist party recognized that women were the most oppressed in the society, so they have the potential to develop as a revolutionary force. But the party had no programmatic structures and policies, if women really took part in the revolutionary movement. We have seen in the previous chapter that Kunti and Meena's narration on the issues of child care and household responsibility were major reasons for the women and it resulted them to leave the organisation. The Party Unity also recognized this in an article that was published in the party magazine in 1994, which explained that:

One objective reason for this is the fact that the burden of housework and other domestic responsibility rests almost totally on the shoulder of women...crucial here is the traditionally female' responsibility of child caring. This involvement not only the practical tasks of feeding cleaning but also the more intangible aspects of nurturing and caring. All of which is highly demanding on the physical and emotional resources of the woman. It is not enough simply to bring up children until they are able to find for themselves but to be able to instill in the values and political beliefs the mother is fighting for. In the absence of such an option women find themselves inevitably cutting down their political involvement. (Party Unity, 1994. p. 10)

This reference is very important for understanding how PU mobilized women force and women used their political agency in the political movement as women converted to permanent revolutionary forces. However, during the course of the struggle, why did PU not introduce any campaign, how men learnt to carry out household responsibilities and sharing child caring accountably when women moved into the political realm. I wanted to get the answers to these questions from the women activists who had to face a double burden in their private and political life.

The Party appealed to women to join the party for bringing about a revolutionary transformation of the society and make their dream for equality between men and women. For women like Meera, Sangita and Sushila, who came to the movement for its promise of a new egalitarian society (that included gender equality), had a different experience as women leaders. They found a huge gap between ideals and reality - which helped them better understand the party approach. Many women joined the party. Despite that there was continuous ignoring of the matter of child care and they were also pressurized that the child should be kept with a relative or within the family. However, the party never pressurized the males to work in the household when women came in to the meetings of the women's organization. As a result, when the women went back to their homes, the males generally engaged in gossips with others in the common place of the village or showed male supremacy by enjoying a free time at home. Men never contributed to the household work or child nurturing as it was totally against their *Mardangni* (masculine mind). The Party never felt the need to alter this attitude of the male but rather wanted women to carry out the double burden of the domestic as well as the political.

Child care was a personal issue for the party but for women it was a central issue. The Party could not understand it. Meera said, "When I raised the issue of child care because I have two daughters I could not managed it with political work then party arranged some kind of arrangement such as hostel for child. But my daughters were suffering much more within one year. After that I took out of the daughters from the hostel and arranged personally". In contrast, PU recognized it in following words:

We have to explore the option of activists and activist families having children and nurturing them along with their regular political activity. The first of course is ensuring that arrangements are made to look after children during the meeting, and practical support in keeping the children in possible comfort while moving from village to village. Longer term, as more women cadres develop we may have to think arrangements for looking after children of women activists. (Party Unity, 1994, p. 15)

In contrast, in the above reference Sangita told me "When my child was small; I carried them from village to village. Sometimes other members who walked with me would the support me,

two years I managed in this way. After that I left my son in my mother in-law. It was big problem within the party". I also mentioned in detail how through child family, caste and reproduction and social strata maintain within the movement in previous chapter. There was no difference between PU and Liberation on it. Sushila said, "Many times I thought why party leaders pressurize only on women for child care responsibility. When women decided to join the party, in general family did not support them. Women had no family support to arrange for child rearing". Sushila narrated her personal experience through the following words:

When I joined the party, Party leadership arranged in supporter's house for my daughter; I met her when I wanted. However, party did not give any attention for education of my daughter. I was also insensitive for their education. I felt that I could not pressurize on the party because of my condition. I could not even demand the party for my daughter's education. But right now I am feeling very bad on myself and party too. But I heard about that one woman also came with daughter in the party. Party kept her daughter in educated family supporters so that family provides education of her daughter. Education was depending on the interest of the supporters. Party had not interference for education. Party only paid attention to the safety of children.

Sushila's narration indicates the half hearted approach of the party towards support system of the child care. The women members felt that women left from the party for these reasons. They had no other option - either leave the party or face problems of child rearing and responsibility towards household. Not only that, some women faced physical violence if they were not able to provide proper child care. Sushila told me, "when I mobilized women for attending programme, meeting or rally in outside of the Gaya, women complained that my husband got angry and beaten me when I came in home. I tried to convince of her husband. I dealt so many cases". When I asked Sushila what was the party's position on these issues, she said, "Party leaders said, 'contradiction between male and female are friendly, should try to convince them". But the party never did anything on behalf of the party name that appealed to reduce male supremacy.

Women members were dissatisfied with the party's approach on child caring and sexual division of labor, but women members also did not question the party approach neither at the ideological or the programmatic level. The Party leadership dismissed this question in the name of personal issues. As a result, women never developed as a political force within the party and definitely not as a permanent revolutionary force for revolution. The Party did not reduce the traditional women image within the party such as revolutionary identities in the course of struggle. They had to play responsibly towards household work and child care. These were uneasy question which raised the issue of sexism within the peasant struggle as well as the party's understating too. The women experience of the radical left parties provides us with an understanding as to what complications and contradictions existed within the movement around the women question.

Merger and Women's movement

In 2004 the Maoist party claimed that after the merger, armed revolution would enter a new phase of the Indian revolution. In the last forty years the party developed through powerful class struggle in the plain. In the present time, the Maoist party was committed to organize a large section of the oppressed people against imperialism and feudalism and state repression.

Joint Press Statement on Merger of MCCI & CPI-ML (PW) and Founding of CPI (Maoist).

Imperialism, feudalism and state repression were the primary enemies of women. It was also the space for discussing/defining patriarchy within the Maoist Party. In 1927, Mao defined the peasant oppression as consisting of four systems which was included in the feudal patriarchal system. Mao defined men and women subjected by the system of politics (state authority), clan and religious authority. In addition, women were subjected by the husband's authority making women be dominated by men. This formulation of Mao for the Chinese revolution was important because from time to time the critical question was raised on the CPC approach such as priority of women's liberation agenda and other revolutionary objectives. But the Indian Maoist did not focus on women oppression in the center of the class struggle. It is hard to say if class struggle

was enough to understand struggle against patriarchy without addressing it in the center of the revolution.

However, on September 21st in 2004, the alliance between Peoples War and Maoist Communist Center, Communist Party of India (Maoist) was formed, further referred to as the Maoist Party. After completing the unifying process, the Maoist party moved to dialogue with women's organization and the feminists. On 19th October 2004, the Maoist party organized a meeting for a dialogue with the feminists on women's issues. Vasantha Kannabiran, Volga and Kalpana Kannabiran, wrote a piece in the *Economic and Political Weekly* in November 2004, namely, "Women's Rights and Naxalite Groups" where they shared a discussion on some topics which they had discussed with the Maoist party in that meeting. According to the authors, the feminist scholars raised a number of questions in the meeting on the Left's political structure and their ideology. These questions were: 'representation of women in the upper echelons of party's structure and leadership, why no women's (party not inviting of women activist during peace process who interested in process of democratization) representative in the peace talks. They also raised questions regarding the sexual division of labor within the party, intellectual creativity, the nature of women's role in the struggle and how the party theorized it. However, the author's hope through this dialogue was to develop a positive relation within the revolutionary movement. Feminists saw this advanced development as result of the feminist's criticism of the revolutionary parties. But for the Maoists, it was part of the strategy and tactics of the Party for mobilizing women. Both of them were speaking from a different standpoint about each other. The Party published a document regarding the strategy and tactics for the Indian revolution, in which one section was dedicated to the women movement. According to the party document:

We should support the struggles of women that are breaking out either spontaneously or under the leadership of petty bourgeois, feminist organizations against social degradation, discrimination, oppression and exploitation while at the same time we should expose the limitations of those leadership. The party should help organize them in the correct revolutionary direction and strive to transform their protest into mighty struggles. We

must expose...including feminist organizations that have been trying to depoliticise and demobilize the women and to divert the women's movement from the real path of liberation. We should also try to bring more and more women into the revolutionary movements by imbuing them with the politics of new democratic revolution and making them realize that there cannot be women's liberation without the liberation of the oppressed masses from feudalism, imperialism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism. (CPI (Maoist), Strategy and tactics of the indian revolution, 2004, p.127)

The above reference indicates that the party approach towards feminist and other autonomous women's organization as bourgeois, depoliticize and demobilizing force which is potential to deviate of revolutionary women forces. Thus, through dialogue and discussion, the feminists were attracted towards the revolutionary path of real struggle. Further, it shows that the Maoist party had the correct path for women's liberation such as struggle against feudalism, imperialism and comprador bureaucrat capitalism. It was the main enemy of women's oppression, but the where Maoist Party defined it in terms of patriarchy, caste, class, religion and class. The same viewpoint shows the political resolution on the women question of the Party as can be seen from the following extract:

Mobilization of toiling women in the revolutionary people's war against imperialism and feudalism is a must. The equality between men and women can be realized mainly in the course of the revolutionary war and then further "in the process of socialist transformation of society as a whole". However, taking into consideration the deep-rooted ideology of patriarchy and family institution in backward semi-colonial, semi-feudal countries like India Comrade Mao warned that the final solution of the women's question will require a fairly long period of time even after the establishment of socialism. Hence, he stressed on the need to continue the class struggle in the

superstructure to uproot the old decadent feudal and bourgeoisie ideas, culture, customs and habits related to patriarchy and male domination even during the course of new democratic revolution. (CPI (Maoist), (2004). Political resolution, 2004, p. 52)

Of course patriarchy is tightly interlinked with culture, custom and values which a feminist calls androcentric culture. But without defining patriarchy in the Indian context in term of caste, family, marriage and labor pattern, which lies at the center of the male domination on women through social institution, how could the party imagine that they could eliminate patriarchal culture and idea. Land reform was a major program and agenda of the CPC for New Democratic Revolution (NDR) which was land distribution in the name of men and women despite who controlled it. But the Indian Maoist party repeatedly said that their goal was NDR without any concrete blueprint and policy on the women liberation. However, in the last twenty years, the same program has been mentioned at every conference, in documents and has been used to define the party's task of building a strong women's movement, although it has never happened in Bihar.

In Bihar, after the alliance, Sangita said that the Sangthan gave her the responsibility of the Nari Mukti Sangh in Magadh Zone (including district of Jahanbad, Gya, and Aurangabad). In Bihar, the Maoist Party adopted the name of the women's organization Nari Mukti Sangh after the merger. Before the merger, NMS was the women's front of the MCC. Sangita said, "Our party was strong after unification but state was more conscious and lunched massive attack on the party. In present time repression on our party by the central government and central anti Naxal operation it mean that not only one states but other states government get together conduct operations against our party such as special battalion, police station, camp, and especial security plan. The States planted to intelligences and build strong informer network in the villages. In this repression party has lost many comrades in the following years. However, Party shifted in forest area of Jharkhand. But many women leaders did not shift with the party".

Although, the alliance appears to be at the top leadership between PW and MCC, it consisted of contradictions and anxiety at the local leadership level such as at the level of

Sangita, Sushila and the others I have interacted during my field study. When I asked about the merger, the women leaders expressed their anxiety and worry about it. The issue of alliance between PW and MCC has most striking issue among local members. The top leadership from both parties decided for an alliance, but I observed that the local members of the parties did not trust each other. The sharp contradiction shows when Sangita said, "Some activists of MCC kept contact with police and their role in arresting of our activists". The similar anxiety also expresses Sushila's skepticism when she said that "PW activists involved in arresting".

However, in 2005, according to Sangita, in Bihar the party took the decision to attack the Jahanabd jail where many comrades had been arrested and kept on false charges. The NMS members from Jahanabad spent two months concentrating only on it. The party gave strict order to the party members to work more consciously and silently. NMS supported with full strength in this attack. "We will attack jail from all sides with one thousand supporters," Sangita mentioned. According to the People's March,

The attack began at about 9 pm on November 13th soon after the completion of the days polling in another part of Bihar's third stage of voting for the assembly election. The media had reported that about 1,000 comrades launched an attack on Jehanabad from all side. The simultaneous attack took place on the police Lines, police station, government offices and then the jail. The attack continued around two to three hours which was Naxalies seized over 200 arms from the police line 341 persons were escaped with the retreating Maoists. These included senior leaders like Ajay Kanu. In addition, the revolutionaries killed two of the ring leaders of the notorious Ranvir Sena (army of the Bhoomihar landlords) and took another 40 captive" (Banned thought, 2005, para. 2)

However, this incident brought the Maoist party into the limelight of the media. But the state continuously attacked the Maoist Party, during which Sangita was arrested along with two others in 2006 from Braachatti of Gaya district. She narrated the story of her arrest in the following words:

We were going to Jharkhand in the programme of Nari Mukti Sangh. Suddenly police stopped the bus. I guessed that the police was following me in the way. Police forcefully got me off from the bus and seated us in the police *gadee* (vehicle). I have 15000 thousands rupee for buying clothes and bags for the cadres. One woman member had a mobile. In the way she was stopped the police jeep but she went in far away from police and seem in the ground. Police interrogated separately in local police station the whole night. Two women members were released after two days but I was thrown in jail without any charges. Somehow, I wrote a letter to the father in- law after half a month. I wrote that "*Pita ji mere hisse kee jameen bechkar mujhe jail se nikalane kee koshis keejie* (please sell the land of my share and release me from the jail). After sometimes father in-law met and said that he gave information to organization, don't worry, I'm sure party will take out from the jail. I was taken out from jail after one year.

Sushila from Gaya was arrested many times, but the police had no evidence of any kind. She was thus released many times from the jail. It seems like she got used to the jail. Sangita said, after 2008, it was difficult for the NMS to work on its name. Women members worked through intellectual activities and some through human rights activities for the program. In the present day, many women members are in jail or are struggling to survive.

We have seen from the beginning, CPI (M-L) had claim that they follow Chinese path of revolution and adapted of theoretical formulation, strategy and tactics are borrowed from China. CPI (M-L) groups to some extent successfully led the peasant struggle but there were some critical issues such as how to conceptualize caste and gender question in Indian context. The Indian radical left failed to provide both theoretical and structural space for women when movement was in highest phase. In this study, three key areas between radical left and CCP are examined. First, Indian radical left failed to provide structure or create women's department which was formal space for women. Without structure it could not be possible to carry forward struggle in favor of women because by nature peasant union are against women rights

particularly land rights for women, love marriage etc. on one hand and on the other hand within peasant union women could not use bargaining power for their rights. Secondly, the parties appeal to women joined the organisation. Now the question arises as to how parties could imagine that women to join the organisation without any concrete policy. Third, lacking of theoretical understanding on the women's question how women relate their own oppression with class oppression.

The radical Left theoretically defined women as the more oppressed category in the society, when private property came out in the history of human civilization. Marx and Engels provided a theoretical and conceptual framework of history of the family and marriage with class emergence where women's oppression was shown as a product of the birth of private property. It was a well established framework among the Communist parties of India no matter what the path of the revolution was - parliamentary or armed struggle. And no matter what feminists engaged with, Marx and Engels were always revisited to work on the women question. As Gerda Lerner seriously challenge of Engel's theorization of "hunting man".

Through experience of women members and their memory of the struggle suggested that women participated in the struggle against landlord oppression with dream of end patriarchal oppression. An NMSS leaders recalling hardness of those moment when many men and women tortured, beating, burned their house have lost their life by the private caste militia and state administration too. There was huge women's participation in movement during repression but party and women organization failed to turn this participation into political form. However, NMSS contributed in the peasant revolution but unfortunate they are invisible in history of the movement and also academic sphere. Women accounts are barking of framework and cross the bouderies of Naxalite history at least in recorded form which forgotten feature of women's accounts of the strggle in Bihar. These account also explicit critique of the naxalite historiography that subsumes the issues of caste and gender into class perspective. The sexual experince of peasant women is even less documented in India.

Maoist Party dealt with the women question through mobilization of women on matters such as equal wage for equal labor, against rape culture, sexual molestaion on the one side and other people's court decision in favour of women which was immediately effective in the

society. The power relation between caste and family chagend in limited sense in rural Jehanabad. For example, Kunnath noted that Rajubhai's elder daughter was married, and had come to the *maaike* (mother's house) for the birth of her child. Her husband was away in Delhi who was working as a laborer at a construction site. She said her in-laws treated her with respect and never harassed her because they knew that her father was a Naxalite, and they were very scared of him. She said proudly: 'I told them that if they harass me, my Bapuji would come and put a bullet into their head' (Kunnath, 2012, p. 116). Meera also said, where Organization was strong landlord could not rape of Dalit women, reduce wife beating in Dalit community, alcohol. But on other side even ex-peasant leader also used violence against wife, it is completely failure of the Maoist party.

For us as women researcher, it is very important to question why there is no significant women representation in the upper strata of the political structure and leadership. In this context at least in Bihar we have seen in this chapter very few women developed a leader of the Maoist Party in the local level like Meera Sangita, Sadhana, Sushila etc. Throughout the narration we have also seen how women question was raised by the party in a very limited sense which did not provide any political solution for the women who faced in the field. As a result, women joined the party for a very short period and when they saw that there was no effective support system and they felt that they could not survive for a long period within the party, they left the Party structure. This was a very dangerous approach by the party and the practice which assumed that if women participation in programs, demonstration, rally or people's court that means our political perspective and ideology are adequate towards women's question. This is clearly a show that if women representation is very less in the structure that means there is missing of structure, policy and ideology. I would like to argue that a nuanced political perspective should be shown in structure of gender, ideology and policies towards women's question. But there was invisible of all. Consequently, women representation in the party structure was very less and also would not develop into a permanent revolutionary force.

Maoist party argued that feudalism, capitalism and compradore capitalist are attributed to women subordination, party appeal to women come to joined the revolutionary movement for abolishe of feudalism, capitalism and compradore capitalist. In praxis emphasis is needed to attack the landlord power but whereas examined power relation between sexes and caste, while

parties repeatedly mentioned that the thesis of semi feudal and semi colonial but interestingly parties never examine ubiquitous power relation between sexes or examine of the historical roots of patriarchy in along with caste and class in Indian context. Although the Maoist party focused on women oppression, it would only explain the Englesian model of patriarchy when it appeared that there was no significant special character of patriarchy in India. The women's accounts also suggested that party did not attack particrhy from within but outside of the party struggle against as well as the landlord. Without attack on family, sexual devision of labour, marriage, caste voilence against women and other discriminated pattern of the society how party could imagine for women liberation. The Maoist leadership was also afraid to antogonise the famliy relation which is menifestaion of power relation between men and women. Because family is served male dominaltion, men priviledge and male ego that's why party leadership affrid from male supporters who was permanent revolutionary forces for the party. Johanna Brenner argued that "The theroy of the class struggle naturally leads to a political stratgey which simply collapess the struugle for women's liberation into class struggle: women's social position express their exploitation by capital, not a relationship of dependence and powerlessness vis-à-vis their husband and father"(Brenner, 2006, p. 11-12). In the context of Bihar we have seen, primarliy struggle launched feudal forces in Bihar, there was lacking towards women liberartion porject.

Discussion and Conclusion

Some key areas of my research findings have been discussed and highlighted in this concluding section. My study on women's question within the radical left movement in Bihar offers a different perspective for conceptualizing an 'active actor'. Through this study, I have established that large numbers of women's participation in the movement makes a case for a more nuanced explanation of women being active actors in the peasant revolution which is not just a project of "adding women"²⁴ in the Naxalite history. The economical exploitation, sexual oppression and political circumstances were determining factors that led to women's participation in the movement. Secondly, intersectional research provides a historical sensitivity which raises the methodological and epistemological questions such as: what to know, who knows about it, who has the knowledge, what is the validated form of knowledge to be known, and can woman be a knower who has this sort of validated knowledge. These are some of the questions which have the capacity to change the very nature of the research. Thirdly and most importantly, women's participation in the movement has distinctive accounts to understand the manner in which women were engaged against landlords and state's repression for their rights. Women's participation in the movement and their role as active agents in it didn't necessarily mean that women's question was adequately dealt by the Communist parties. I used the term "women participation" in the movement in terms of its different programmes, rallies, dharnas, and demonstrations in general sense and more specifically women's active role when police and caste militia attacked them. These women were not part of the party structure, but they were involved as sympathizers. Women 'activists' were part of the party structure. Finally, I will discuss about the left parties in the context of the agenda of women's liberation as well as land reform and family reform during struggle in Bihar.

²⁴ One of the major feminist projects such as rewriting history or adding women to existing social science analyses from women's point of view through alternative methods was missing from mainstream academics. Feminist rectified the androcentric traditional analyses, thus they first tried to add women in these analyses. They emphasized that there is need to understand gender and women activities in history.

In India, the CPI (M-L) groups led the armed peasant movement, particularly in Bihar since the 1970s, based on Mao's theorization of India's context as "semi feudal and semi colonial" and using the strategies and tactics of guerrilla warfare to advocate seizure of power, to change the society through the socialist idea. To some extent, CPI (ML) successfully led the armed peasant struggle but at the same time they faced brutal repression which was launched by Indian state. In 2007 former Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh termed Naxalite Movement as "The Biggest Internal Security Threat", but in spite of that the radical left celebrated fifty years of the Naxalite struggle in May in 2017. In these fifty years we have seen the radical left movement gaining a heightened phase and then it's falling down, splintering into various fractions and merging together. For example, the CPI (ML) groups which were divided on the issue of tactics and strategy for revolution. One of them was the Communist Party of India (ML) Liberation who adopted parliamentary politics after the 1990s, after more than a decade of practicing armed struggle.

Today, there are two kinds of intellectual engagements. Some of them represented Maoist politics and struggle and were the only available voice for the poor, marginalized and tribals who faced undeclared war, particularly in Chhattisgarh, Orissa, and Jharkhand. . The critiques of the Maoist struggle were made by famous left intellectuals, one of whom is Sumanta Banerjee. He focused on the contemporary crisis of the Maoists, their theory and strategy of revolution in India. He emphasized on the Maoist military strategy and its thesis of the 'semi feudal and the semi colonial'. But no one discussed about the tactics and strategy of the CPI (ML) Liberation. It seems like there was no crisis. However, there has also been no sociological intervention on this debate, even when sociologists read and analyzed the social movement.

The debates came to the forefront in the urban place after the publication of Arundhati Roy's long essay in *Outlook* in 2010, namely, "Walking with the Comrades" where she romanticizes and glorifies the Maoist struggle. She provides eyewitness accounts of everyday lives of the Maoists such as squad members from the district of Dantewada in Chhattisgarh. Today, Chhattisgarh is an epic center of war between the Maoist party and the State. The most important episode that Roy accounts bring to the forefront in her study is the way she presents the figure of the female squad members and their revolutionary spirit. However, in the process of romanticizing about the female commanders, it seems like there was no patriarchal domination

within the party and that the female members were able to use their freedom. While in 2004, the Maoist party organized a meeting for a dialogue with the feminists on the women's issues. Feminist scholars I mentioned in the previous chapters in detail, raised a number of questions in the meeting on the Left's political structure and their ideology, representation of women in the upper echelons of Party and movement and in leadership, and on the position of intellectuals and political leaders of the movement. In the context of Roy's essay, women's participation in the squad is shown to be high but one cannot use it to judge the women's question on the whole. Subhojit Bagchi also visited Chhattisgarh in 2012 and reported that in some squads, women were more than men - such as 40% men and 60% percent women. From the village to the district level, 50% women were in the squad. This is an important indication that women's representation in the party structure was high. Despite that, very few women were at the top level and the decision making power still belonged to the central level. The important change after 2004 was that the Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisam Mazdoor Sangathan and the Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sangh (Bernard D'Mello, 2017, p. 9), major fronts of the Maoist party in Chhattisgarh, were formed. The documentary by Sanjay Kak, namely *Red Ant Dream*, clearly shows that women's participation in armed squads against state repression has been increasing. In this context, previous women organizations never gained equal status within the peasant organization, particularly in Bihar. However, we can identify that before 2004 there was no equal treatment of women's organizations with peasant organizations, at least at the structural level, particularly in Bihar, where women's organizations never gained equal opportunity in terms of peasant organizations. Krishna Bandyopadhyay (2008) also shows her affinity with the party leaders and towards party politics but at the same time she argues why patriarchy prevails within the Naxalite Movement. Through this research I also examined the same question- why and how or in what manner patriarchy was preserved in the radical left.

From Naxalbari, the radical left has been claiming that the Chinese path of revolution is required for the overthrow of the "semi feudal and semi colonial Indian state". Thus, they adopted the theoretical formulation, strategy and tactics from China, despite the fact that the interim period is marked with the history of split and merger among the CPI (ML) groups. But here my question is that: how did women's oppression and liberation in Chinese revolution get defined and how the radical left was incorporated within the Naxalite movement. The bulk of literatures, available on the party policies, programme, ideology towards women's rights and nature of women's

liberation in peasant revolution that I have mentioned in detail in the second chapter, are on the Chinese context. The nature of the peasant revolution and the complex relationship between women's rights existed in the pre and post- revolutionary process in China. From the beginning, the issues of women's rights and reform of the Confucian family were important part of the anti-feudal struggle led by the May fourth movement and after that CPC. But the problem was that there was a continuation of semi arranged marriages, sexual division of labour in public and private, androcentric attitudes, preference of sons over daughters, etc. Maoist leadership either produced and represented pragmatic view of change or carried on with the feudal remnants in behavior and attitude which will take time to go. CPC seeing such problem only as feudal remnants ignored the roots of the issue which was dependent on patrilineal marriage patterns, which was to actively produce and reproduce male centric attitude and practices in society despite the fact that the PRC government introduced women's rights policies and programme. The nature of patrilocal exogamous marriage patterns provide structural material and give support to continue with all these approaches such as bride price, to male centric approach, by excluding women from equal treatment in public authority to family practices which promoted continuation of the sexual division of labor and the subordinate position of women in society. CPC failed to understand this structural root problem which was the most crucial factor of patriarchal control rather than adopting political efforts on the women's question. Many scholars, for example, recognized that unity was required during the united left front but at the same they expressed their own dissatisfaction and criticism on the CCP's approach towards women's rights. In other words, CCP continued to compromise on women's rights. If any conflict came regarding sexes, CCP moved in the name of unity and tried to create consent for their common enemy - the Japanese invaders (Croll 1978 210). Such was the situation not only before 1949 but also after the revolution. There is no doubt that the Red Army was the main force of the CCP, conciliatory campaign between women's rights and peasant family reform policy in China. These patterns of compromising efforts for women's rights on the one hand threaten the feminist thinkers. . Officially, the policy on women's rights was actually given less priority and in a contrasting manner CCP attacked whoever attempted to raise the question in the Party.

The basis of Marxist understanding and position on women's liberation was set up by Engels. Engels noted that women's liberation can only be achieved when women enter the production sphere in large numbers, free from the domestic sphere. Broyelle and Davin's studies show that

women entered in the production system in large numbers during the Great Leap Forwards policy but sexual division of labour continued in the new economical organization as well as the commune system. In order to prove this, we have seen CPC appeal to women to join in production in large numbers during the Great Leap Forward. The rate of women participation in production sphere was the criteria to judge the successfulness of the policies in China. We have seen that there was a crucial factor to fulfill the principle of the Marxian view which Engels proposed for women's liberation. Davin noted that "The provision of some communal facilities to reduced domestic burdens has made it easier for them to do so, and the obstacles of traditional and prejudice have been fought with propaganda and education" (Davin, 1978, p. 191). There was huge participation in the labour force. It was a temporary relief to women from oppressive condition but did not fully reduce male authority from community, family and public sphere. For example, during the Leap, commune system was to gain equal pay for equal work. Women earned less than men. Many reports were published from various counties but leadership considered it as the inefficiency of the government rather than changing the continuity of the sexual division of labour. Generally males were the leaders of the communes who preserved a patriarchal attitude towards women's rights. In spite of all these, official assertions maintained that in China, men and women were equal.

Anthropologist Alpa Shah and George Kunnath's studies on the Maoist areas indicated that Maoists built intimate relationship between the party and poor people to create favorable condition for dignity and respect for life of tribal and Dalit community through people's war. Despite that there are crucial factors that can be used to understand the reasons behind the development, growth and persistent mobilization of poor people for the revolution. However, in we have to understand in a critical sense, issues such as how radical left communist parties conceptualized caste and gender questions in Indian context. are important questions . During the Naxalbari movement, structural and ideological discourse on caste and gender was absent creating a failure to show the intersectional relationship between caste and gender which is that caste is maintained through the control of women's sexuality. Aunradha Ghandy, who was the leader of the Maoist party, recognized that the "caste and class system is an Indian specific problem of Indian democratic revolution" (Teltumde and Sen, 2011, p. 7). She identifies that "anti caste struggle is the part of the class struggle in India caste and that the battle for transformation of social relations and ideology are part of the class struggle" (Teltumde and Sen,

2011, p. 5). The radical left parties considered women's oppression to be linked with class oppression and women were also seen as revolutionary forces for a revolutionary transformation but there was no specific writing on patriarchal arrangement, sexuality and family in the Brahmanical social order and other religious social orders that show how patriarchy is practiced in the Indian society. Party leadership only explained women's questions based on Engels' theorization of family in terms of class. This lacuna is clearly seen in the praxis in Bihar.

In Bihar, the movement gained momentum, as I referred before, during the 1980s of the CPI (ML) Liberation and Maoist party. The women's organizations were formed in 1986 by these parties. During this time women participated in the peasant organization as the accounts of women activists that I mentioned in detail in chapter fourth and fifth proves. In general, the nature of women's participation in movement was through their participation in rallies, demonstrations, dharnas and gheraos, and in their engagements in hiding arms, communicating messages, delivering letters, providing shelter, etc. But that did not mean that they were part of the party structure. Through fourth and fifth chapters, I have discussed how the village women sometimes adopted party strategy but many times developed their own unique strategy against the police and landlord. Women mobilized under peasant organizations with the demands around wage, land and against sexual oppression. In this study, I have identified how the Indian radical left failed to provide a structure or create a women's department which was a formal space for the women within the party structure in the heightened phase of the movement. Without structure it cannot be possible to carry forward struggle in favor of women because by nature the peasant union was against women's rights, particularly land rights for women on one hand and on the other hand within peasant union women could not use bargaining power for their rights. Kumudinipati's accounts provide in detail what was the party leaders' approach towards women's problems. Party leadership discouraged discussion on women's problem such as wife beating and treatment of wives by male members of the party within family. The argument given by the party leadership was that if women activists are involved around family issues or private issue then they are deviating from the question of class. Kumudinipati's accounts clearly show that the party appealed the women to join the movement but at the same time did not want to enter into their family matters. The issues of marriage, dowry, under age marriage, controls on women's sexuality, divorce are critical issues in the movement. In order to address this gap,

Rabindra Ray used or referred to terms such as “literal ideology” and “existential ideology” (Ray, 1988, p. 1).

Very few women joined the party structure because party did not give attention to women for their participation in the party structure. In other words, I would like to say that women’s participation in the movement was different from their structural participation within the party structure. They were not in good numbers within the party structure and also could not achieve a higher position in the central decision making body. The structural participation of women was less was because of one of the major reasons that the party leadership preserved traditional/conventional approach towards women’s problems when they entered in the movement, especially sexuality, marriage, caste, reproduction and interpersonal relations which was obstacles for building strong women leadership and agenda of women liberation. However, women activists raised the question of approach of the party as can be seen through the experiences of Kumudinipati, Kunti, Meena from liberation and Kiran, Basanti and Sunita from the Maoist party in Bihar. There are also strong evidences from the Tebhaga and Telangana movement that I have included in the introduction and from the accounts of Krishana Bandopadhaya from West Bengal and Ajitha from Kerla in 1970, the leader of the CPI (ML) wh raised questions on the party’s approach towards women’s rights and provided accounts in what manner patriarchy was alive in the parties. These women entered the political/public domain via the movement, but the code by which they were inevitably judged was that of the private, as Kannabiran and Lalitha (1989 193) have noted of the Telangana people’s struggle (Roy, 2012, p. 179). The party emphasized sexual violence against women in the public domain but failed to challenge wider assumption about rape as rooted in community identity and honor. Within the radical left led movement, it was considered as a violation of the codes of sexual honour and shame.

After 1986, there was a formation of a women’s organization but it was a very loose structure within the party and in public too at least till 1995. However, in this time there was some extent of women’s issues such as organization of the Patna conference in 1988 in which more than twelve thousand women participated. It was a remarkable move in terms of women activists interacting with urban feminists who were also involved in the struggles at the urban center. Rural women were able to relate their own oppression in the larger framework and gain some

confidence. But women's organizations were dependent on peasant organizations. While in contrast evidence from Chinese revolution CCP (formed in 1921) show that they constituted independent women's organizations in 1922. The parties (referred here CPI (ML) liberation, Party Unity and MCC) appealed the women to join the Sangathan but the question is that how parties could imagine the women to join the Sangathan without any concrete policy. In fact women largely participated in the programme and also supported the parties but refrained from involving in party structure in large numbers. The experience of women in the Naxalite movement was active in front of struggle against landlord and state administration but they were very few women who got top ranking in the party as well as their issues too. There was also complex situation with women activist they were not developed as permanent revolutionary forces during the struggle. They withdrew their own active participation in the movement while male activists were represented as permanent members for revolution. Why women left from active participation was narrated by Kunti, Meena, Sunita and Basanti which I have discussed in the fourth and fifth chapters.

This also indicates that the ideal type of revolutionary subject was strictly the male and not women as they were seen as responsible for child care and responsibility of the household. Often even within Party members it was taken without criticality that child caring and the burden of household responsibilities are primarily the responsibility of the women. But Parties never trained their male members to take care of these responsibilities. This came out clearly from the narrations of Kumudinipati, Kunti and Meena narration which have been discussed in chapter four and from the narratives of Sunita and Basanti, elaborated in the fifth chapters. The complex location and position of women within public and private, made it hard for women to take up revolutionary identities and to compose themselves on their terms (Roy, 2012, p. 181). Women had to pay extra effort for leadership but such extra effort was not necessary for the male leadership for revolution. They enjoyed privilege of sexual division of labor within the movement. Party gave no attention to the fact of sexual division of labour within the family and the responsibility of the household and child care. There was no idea how to make the male members learn to reduce sexual division of labour. Parties wanted women to come to the standard of male revolutionaries in spite of all the problems they had to face, but, neither party nor male leadership came down at the level of women's problems and tried building equal opportunity among men and women for leadership. Throughout the discussion of this research,

we have seen the acceptance of conventional certainties about gender and sexuality according to Brahminical and cultural norms. Roy point out that “The radicalization of conjugal relations within the movement was, for example, deeply reiterative of the hegemonic gender norms and sexual moralities of then old society that the revolutionaries were trying to dismantle” (Roy, 2012, p. 175). Thus, we can say that continued practice of revolutionary masculinity existed within the movement.

The practice of child rearing was accordingly linked to the caste and social capital in the movement. I could not find even one example in which a Dalit child was reared in an upper caste supports house. The facility of child rearing of women activists was provided either in family or home of party supporters from similar kinship or castes. The alternative of child rearing provided by parties, like keeping the children among the supportive masses seem partially progressive but they were according to caste and class affiliations. The experience was different between local and top women leadership, especially among the members of AIPWA. Some rural local women activists used what party provided such as supporters home because they had no social capital and economically strong kinship. But the important question is that how did party decide it. Party supporters usually males decided to take child of women activist for rearing. But accounts of local women activist show how badly the supporter’s wife treated the child because she had not decided to take the responsibilities of a child; she discriminated between her own child and an activist’s child. If caste was different it was difficult for the child also to adapt to a different caste atmosphere. For example, accounts of Kunti shows that the first time she kept her son in the household of a different caste, her son complained so much that she decided to keep him with someone from their own caste. Often women activist knew about it but could not do anything because she felt at least her child was in a safe place in terms of police and private caste militia’s atrocities. Safety was the first priority of women activists that time. They felt that the party should take responsibilities for their children’s schooling but unfortunately it never happened. In this crucial condition local woman activists felt regret and sadness in those days. However, top leadership of AIPWA and Nari Mukti Sangh used social capital of family and kinship for child rearing. The women could not be developed as revolutionary force despite the party considering them as revolutionary force. Many women leaders who were part of the party structure and engaged as full time activists were not ready to keep their own child in a supporter’s home, and had to withdraw their own active participation from the movement. It was

a major issue of women for converting into passive supporters but parties were not able to understand women's problems and argued that women are more domesticated and took responsibilities of family. Parties wanted the women to come and join the movement but without introducing any concrete policy. The issue of motherhood and child is not only to be seen from the point of view of nurturing. There is also an integrated psychological issue linked to it.

The theoretical question arises as how women would relate their own oppression within class oppression. If we look at the Chinese revolution from its starting phase, after the set back of Chiang Kai-shek in 1925, Mao examined the peasant's condition in the Hunan province and constructed a new formulation for the revolution. In this formulation, Mao even drew the attention to women's conditions. Mao analyzed that in Chinese society there were three obstacles: political authority, clan authority and religious authority; in addition to this for women the fourth obstacle was observed as the authority of the husband. It was important for the CCP to mobilize women. Also women were able to relate their own condition with the oppressive system in the larger framework. When CCP formed its first base area in Kiangsi Soviet, they launched the land reform and marriage reform policies for women's rights at the same time, despite the existing contradiction and compromise within the CCP. In this perspective, Liberation, Party Unity and MCC failed to introduce any policy regarding women's rights. In a substantive manner, parties claimed that they advocated women's rights at all times but women were excluded from the main programme such as 'Land to the Tiller'. The parties gave the reason that giving land rights to women might weaken class struggle and the parties feared that they would lose the support of men if land rights for women were included. These strongly suggest how CPI (M-L) failed to create a structure, to make policy and to understand theoretically the women's question in the Indian context.

The process of this study was not easy for me. In this study I have tried to address some of these concerns through a process of subjectivity with collected narratives from Meera, Geeta, Kumud, Seema, Cinta Devi, Nirmala, Sangita, Shushila and many other women who struggled for their rights. Throughout my research, I was involved at various levels, and I also developed emotional attachment with these women - as a woman myself on one hand and on the other hand because of my political commitment for societal change. The identification of these issues was not without

its dilemmas. In this process I have developed a critical view on peasant literature and the radical left movement in Bihar through a feminist lens and insight.

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Appendix
Interview Schedule

Archana
08/10/2015

Characteristic information

- a) Name (optional):
- b) Age:
- c) Education:
- d) Class status:
- e) Caste/Ethnicity:
- f) Marital status:
- g) Children:
- h) Profession/occupation:

Theme-1

1. History of Activism of the Respondent

- 1) The Party:
- 2) Status of member:
- 3) Full timer/part timer
- 4) If full timer, since when
- 5) Presently status:
- 6) How many years have you been in this party/ organization?
- 7) Which was the entry point when you joined?.....Student/women/peasant/
worker/other organizations
- 8) Who inspired you to join this
movement?.....Father/mother/sister/brother/husband/Friends/teachers/others

9) What was it that leads you to join the movement in the beginning?.....Circumstantial/ familial/economical/ideological reasons/others

(If married)

i. Which fronts engage your husband.....worker/peasant/ other.....

ii. Status in the sangthan?

iii. Is your workplace near your husband or away from him?

10) What do you like most in this movement/ organization?

11) Who is your most favorite woman leader in the national and international Communist movement and feminist movement?

Theme -2

Activism of the Sangathan

Sub-theme

I. General Activities

Land, Peasant and caste

- 1) The party slogan and main program of the Sangathan when entered in this area 'Land to the tiller' how did they struggle for the land?
- 2) What was the way of land distribution among family?
- 3) Are the Cadre and supporter given extra land?
- 4) Dalits, who are at the bottom line in the caste hierarchy, and peasant class, who are superior in caste structure, how did they alliance and mobilized dalit and peasant class?
- 5) How did they mobilize especially against caste oppression?
- 6) Is there any caste discrimination exists within the Party?
- 7) Which are the fields where caste discrimination exists?

Wages and Development programs

- 8) What was the struggle for equal rights over village common resources?
- 9) Plz tell me what was the struggle about wages?

- 10) In 1980 to present time how much increase in wages took places for the workers in party areas?
- 11) Plz can you tell me in detail what was initiatives taken by the Sangathan?.....pond/canal/fish form/school and other development programs.

Election

- 12) How were the candidates chosen for the contest of the election?
- 13) How do campaign during election time?
- 14) What issues rise for the election time?
- 15) What were the initiatives taken in the villages when your party candidates win the election?
- 16) How was the landlord's house being attacked?
- 17) Did you participate in this type of programs?
- 18) Plz tell me suppose that if any member arrest then who took case, Sangthan or individual?

II. Women related activities

Mobilization, Caste and marriage

- 1) What are the conscious efforts of the party or Sangathan for mobilizing women?
- 2) What were the issues raised by the Sangathan?
- 3) Please tell me in detail related to dowry, caste abuse and inter-caste marriage?
- 4) What did the Sangathan do if any women faced sexual violence in Sangathan area?
- 5) Please tell me if any case came in your Sangathan that is related to love marriage or inter-caste marriage?
- 6) Did the issue of divorce come within the Sangathan?
- 7) If women came with girl child then Sangathan arranged the marriage of that girl?
- 8) Plz tell me what was the method of marriage by Sangathan?
- 9) What were the items that were given?
- 10) How do fight Sangathan against dowry system?

Wages, people's Court

- 11) How much wage was given to the labor when entered the Sangathan in this area?
- 12) Plz tell how much increase in women's wage after the Sangathan came?
- 13) What were the issues tackled in the people's court?
- 14) Did you participate in the people's court?
- 15) Did the family accept the decisions of the people's court?

Theme-3

2. Women in the Sangathan

Work and individual development

- 1) What kind of responsibility/nature of activity were you assigned initially in the organization?
- 2) Who wrote the leaflet and poster?
- 3) Have you attend any political class?
- 4) What were the issues in which you have participated in the political classes?

Marriage

- 5) Can you tell me individuals simply informed the organization about choosing partner or necessary to take agreement from organization?
- 6) Is the party documentation on the practice of marriage?
- 7) Plz tell me is there a pressure on women through organization if a man would like to marry him? Generally, why women leave from the organization?

Decision making

- 8) The kind of questions often rose by women, are considered in social planning?
- 9) Does women front leads the programme independently or under party structure?
- 10) If tension exists between man and woman, where would they go to solve their issues?

Reproduction

- 11) Generally, party says that the children are barrier for revolution. So they should not be bear babies?
- 12) When women are married what kind of problems faced?
- 13) Pressure for baby/work related/decision making/other)
- 14) If child birth.....what kind of problems faced by women members?
- 15) if you did not want more than one child who took precaution?
- 16) Plz tell me did you attend any class for reproductive health?
- 17) Did any doctor arrange program for awareness of reproductive issues?

Leadership Approach

- 18) Why women are completely absent from the top leadership?
- 19) Does the party preserve discriminative approach in assessing the leadership or decision making ability of women members?
- 20) In order to develop leadership quality of women, what are the steps that have been undertaken the Sangathan?
- 21) Do you feel some moment party preserve the patriarchal approach?
- 22) Which field seem these attitudes? Policy level or behavior?
- 23) Does the party half-hearted efforts assessing the leadership capacity or representation of women in political structure?
- 24) What are the problems faced by women within the Party?

People's Court

- 25) Plz tell me are women's Sangathan participated in people's court?
- 26) Are you participated any in people's court?

Theme-4

3. Personal and political experience

Women work in the Sangathan

- 1) Can you please tell me in a little more detail why did you joined this Sangathan, what did you think...?

- 2) During meeting or conference what kind of work distribution you are given? Specifically food making/cleaning or generally what is ratio of male/female
- 3) Do you experience women are being discriminated in this context?
- 4) Do you feel role of caste in work distribution? Or caste privilege or discrimination in this context?
- 5) After marriage what kind of changes do you see in your work?

Marriage and Reproduction

- 6) According to you what is the best method of marriage System?
- 7) How to manage women both care of child and political work?
- 8) Is any activity/program for awareness within party and masses that the men should to take care of child and help in domestic work?
- 9) Your party says that the no revolution without women and there can be no women's liberation without the liberation of the working class then what did the special task for women mobilization?
- 10) If issues remain unresolved or unacceptable and they want separation, what is the procedure?
- 11) Generally, who is petitioner for separation?
- 12) On what issues women are seeking separation by men members?
- 13) What kind of problems faces by unmarried women?
- 14) Any disagreement between Party and male members, such as marriage law, divorce issues and other?
- 15) Any disagreement between you and your party?
- 16) Can you tell me you had heard or directly seen women being sexually abused within the party?

Politicization about patriarchy

- 17) Theoretically Party says that within the 'feudal patriarchy' women are oppressed in Indian society, but many feminist theorize 'brahmanical patriarchy'. What do you think about it?

18) Is the party providing any national or international feminist writings about women's oppression?

Promotion and leadership capacity

19) Do you feel women are being discriminated when it comes to promotion?

20) Do you feel women are distrusted in the course of giving them responsibility?

21) Do you believe women are weaker than men in terms of physical/mental strength?

22) What measures should be taken in order to increase women participation in the movement?

23) Does the party half-hearted efforts assessing the leadership capacity or representation of women in political structure?

24) What are the problems faced by women within the Party?

25) Are you participating any meeting in this context/issue?

26) What measures should be taken in order to increase women's participation in the movement?

- i. Women should be accepted as the basic revolutionary force for the revolution
- ii. Special rights should be guaranteed for women in the organization
- iii. Wives and family members of leaders should be politicized
- iv. Women cadre should be safeguarded from Sexual oppression
- v. Gender sensitization regarding women's specific problems should be imparted
- vi. Other