



Discourse on Gender Issues among Rural Women during Bodhgaya Land Struggle, Bihar, the late 1970s and 1980s

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Abstract

Bodhgaya land struggle was a unique agrarian struggle in the contemporary history of Bihar. Landless agricultural labourers led it under the leadership of Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini (CYSV) in the late 1970s and 1980s in the Gaya district of Bihar. The labourers demanded the right to the land which they had been tilling for long, but the Mahants of Bodhgaya Math controlled the land. Apart from being an agrarian struggle, it was significantly a struggle of landless rural women who sought to redefine gender relations at the grassroots. The women tremendously participated in the struggle and seriously discussed the issues of women's right to land, gender division of housework, gender-based violence, and the institution of marriage during the period. The dialogues which happened among the women, including the women activists of the CYSV on gender issues were very crucial to comprehend the life of rural women. Thus, the paper aims to explore the discourse on gender issues in the context of the women's insistence on the redefinition of gender relations in rural areas. The paper equally highlights the women's issues, and notably limits itself to the gender dimension of the struggle. The significance of the paper is in attempting to explore the voices for redefining the gender relations that were coming from a highly marginalised section of the society in Bihar. To be sure, the women took the struggle as an opportunity to challenge the patriarchal attitude and unequal gender relations and envisaged gender equality.

Keywords: Gender Relations, Agrarian Struggle, Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini, Women's Right to Land, Bodhgaya Land Movement.