

RESEARCH NOTE

WOMEN IN ARMED CONFLICT: LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM TELANGANA PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE

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This essay elaborates and compares the role of women in two political movements—the Maoist movement in Nepal and the Telangana people's struggle in India. The first is an ongoing struggle while the latter is a struggle which started in the middle of 1946 and lasted for five years until it was called off in October 1951 after the involvement of the Indian army. This paper is confined to the scenario of women's participation, their feelings and some push and pull factors for joining in the struggles. Apart from that, this paper explores the participants' views on the movement, their leaders, policy, and the programme of their parties for favouring their participation. The women's condition after the end of Telangana movement after the party forgot its earlier promise has also tried to bring it out as concerned matter for discussion. This paper concludes by bringing out some bitter experiences of the women participants of Telangana movement, and tries to make the Maoists aware of escaping such a harassing experience. Before going to examine both the struggle, first, let me introduce both the struggle-in brief!

Telangana People's struggle

Under the British, India was ruled basically by two types of rulers: (a) the British administered provinces of India known as British India and (b) 'princely India' or those state governed by princes, maharajas, rajas, and nababs. Among them, Hyderabad was the largest one, which was under the Nizam prince, and Telangana is one out of three linguistic regions—Telagu, Marathwada and Kannada – of Hyderabad. The Telangana revolt began in the middle of 1946 and lasted for five years. It was an armed resistance of women and men to the feudal oppression or against the princely state in Telangana. It was a struggle against the autocratic rule of Nizam and the *Zamindari system*.¹ There were three types of land holding systems—*sarf-e-khas* (the land controlled by Nizam and his family from where revenues collected were used for their personal expenses) and *Jagirs* (the land which has given to *Jagirdars*) and *diwani* or government land. *Jagirdars* were those who were loyal to the Nizam enjoying their own police, revenue, civil and criminal systems. They had received *Jagirs* and become revenue officers or generals in the army. They also had right over forest and fisheries, and exercised police and judicial functions. Having all the power they compelled

people to various illegal exactions and forced labours. The peoples' conditions of *Jagir* areas were far more oppressed than in the *sarf-e-khas* lands; the *jagirdars* and their agents were free to collect a variety of illegal taxes from the actual cultivators. *Jagir* lands were even above the jurisdiction of civil courts. There was also the *Vetti* (free services to the proprietors) system. Every peasant was compelled to contribute *Vetti* to the Zamindar. Only after completing operations on the landlord's fields, peasants and labourers could work for themselves. A tenant and his family had a compulsion to leave food in their plate and go to the landlord whenever called.

Women were more suppressed under this rule. Women were not allowed to feed their babies while working in the landlord's field. Women were repressed, not only in the field of free work or *Vetti*, but also sexually harassed and exploited. There were many examples of such suppression; if the landlord fancied a woman, she was taken as a consort. Sleeping with the landlord on the first night was a compulsion to newly married women. It was the landlords' prerogative. So, peasant women, along with men, came into the Andhra Maha Sabha (AMS) and started an armed struggle against the 'oppressive feudal system and the fundamentalist militia of the Nizam- the Razkars'.

In 1928, people established Andhra Maha Sabha converting it from the Andhra Jana Sangam, which was established in 1921 with the objectives of social and cultural uplift of the Telugu people. It changed not only the name but also the objectives from socio-cultural to political activity. Earlier, it was common organization to all – The RSS, Congress and even to the non-political – who wanted change in society. In 1930, the Andhra Mahila Sabha and, in 1937, the Mahila Nav Jivan Mandal had formed in co-ordination with AMS. These organizations are credited to bring women into the movement. During 1940-42, some important leaders of the AMS went under the communist leadership and assumed AMS into the character of a mass organization. AMS went into an armed struggle with decision made in November 1946. The struggle was extended form of grass root level resistance, using local weapons to resist against the regime. The movement was also considered in which "the Mao's thought was first put into practice out of China" (Louis 2002:49). The first struggle took place to support Ailimma, a woman who was threatened by landlord's *Goondas*, taking up of local arms e.g. *lathis*, slings and stones for volunteers and pounding sticks and chilly powder for the women as well. Later, volunteer squads were not only formed but also trained in using these kinds of weapons. They started to make local weapons professionally. They even used modern weapons. Several struggles took place between squads and Nizam's supporters. The rebels seized arms 'raiding police stations and landlord's houses'. But women did not leave their strategy to use local means to defend themselves

against the police. Women used to attack the police with pots full of chilly powder.

Ruler's oppression was not a single cause of women's participation in the revolt. Women-oriented programmes of Sanghams were other reasons; when such women's issues like wife-beating, early marriage of child age come up, the Shangam immediately called the people concerned, held debates and resolved the matters. Misbehaviour to the women was started to be severely punished. These rules were practiced even in their organization which attracted women to join the Shangam. For instance, Shankar, a member of organization was accused of raping and mismanaging the party funds, and faced the firing squad. According to them, these punishments were declared by the people themselves as the correct line of action.

"Large number of peasants spontaneously participated in the struggle directed against the government, landlords and their agents. The insurgents had neither firearms nor training but were required to use them. A few volunteers' corps had come into existence, which were not so much well organized guerrilla squads, but ad hoc formation in response to the situation. Initially the revolt was spasmodic" (Dhanaghere 1983: 195) and later it became regular and usual between the people and state security forces when the rebellion received support from all, especially the women. By such enthusiastic participation both men and women, they were able to carry some social transformations in the society. They ousted several police stations from the village, *Vetti* was abolished and thousands of acres of land distributed, debts to be paid were dismissed. The struggle could not reach the aim of the organizer; when the Indian union armies were deployed against the Nizam, the movement also started to face lots of troubles. After the Nizam surrender in September 1948 to the Indian Army, the communists and the movement became the target of the Indian Union Army. Then, the party and its cadre were compelled to leave the villages. Party tried to organize the tribal people for fighting against the local governmental institutions e.g. forest officials and moneylenders "who subjected them to exploitation". However, it was not an alternative to continue emergency. The politburo of the party, finally, took the decision on 21 October 1951 to call off the struggle citing "the increased repression by the Indian union army."

The Maoists Movement in Nepal

The Maoist insurgency, for the last ten years, spread all over the country. Some 15,000 people have already lost their lives since 13 February 1996. The cost of reconstruction of development infrastructure, until 2003, that was destroyed by the Maoists, is estimated to be NRs. 200 billion². Developmentalists argue that the Maoist insurgency 'is basically a social and economic issue and is produced and sustained by failed development' (Pandey 1999:12). It is true that the epicenter and heartland of the Maoist

insurgency is Mid-west hill districts—Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Dailekh, Jajarkot etc. – which the Human Development index categorizes as the lowest rank districts of the country (NESAC 1998: 264-65). Not only this but also some political exclusions and brutal human rights violations are also fostering factors for the insurgency.

The involvement of women in the People's War (PW) lacks reliable data to determine the actual percentage of women in different roles within the organization. Even statistics given by the Maoists are different from leader to leader. Hisila Yami, the central committee member of the Maoists, has given tentative data by writing, "the participation of the women in people's liberation army are from 30 to 40 per cent" (Yami 2006: 66). For Sapana, company commander, more than 40 per cent are women in the People's Liberation Army (Mulyankan, Bhadra 2061: 14), and for Uma Bhujel, a central member who broke Gorkha jail and came back under open sky, the ratio is approximately 40 per cent in army and more than 50 per cent in other field (Ibid: 16). This is more closer to the number of figures in party and militia comprising approximately 40 per cent and in autonomous government and in industries, the number is above 50 per cent (Janadesh 2006: 8).

Here, a question must be raised about the causes, which inspired or compelled Nepali women to join the movement. It is said that some women are forced to join the Maoist movement by the Maoist and some are compelled to join by misbehaviour of the security forces. For example, Ganga and Sobha Thapa, who were 16 years old each and studying in grade nine in Satakhana School of Surkhet district, were abducted by the Maoist on 29 September, 2005³. Shanti 16, Resmi 16 and Binita 15 are the examples of how the security personnel irritated the students and general people.⁴ Brutal suppressions of security forces have also encouraged young girls to join the militia either for their own security or for taking revenge. Being revengeful after the murder of their relatives by the security forces, women have participated in the Maoist organization. Sarita is a perfect example to support the argument. She took gun after her innocent brother was killed by the army (Paudel, 2004:14). For the sake of revenge, she joined the movement. Low success in school leaving certificate examination and lack of training options for engaging students failing their school level examination is another main factor for their joining the Maoist movement in order to escape idleness and frustration (Karki and Bhattarai 2003:5)

Apart from that, propaganda of women's liberation, equality in the Maoists organization in opportunity, in award and promotion, the hope of all kinds of emancipation, and on-going women related social reform programmes like anti-alcohol, anti-gambling campaigns, anti-sexual violence programmes, anti-women exploitation programmes are the main attractions for women participate and support the movement. Some are there only for "romance, pleasure, and luxury". But, there is a consensus that the credit has

to be given to the Maoists for "widespread women's awareness in the Nepalese history" (Mulyankan, August-September 2004: 13).

Slogans about 'progressive education' rather than 'bourgeois education' and love/ courtship is also a vital factor for women's attraction. Orthodox social system towards the widow is another cause for compelling women to join. In Nepal, generally, girls are not allowed to choose their own partners and to decide her marriage; still the society does not tolerate love marriage easily. If the love affair is inter-caste, acceptance is difficult by both, the parents and the society. Increment of Widow population and the unchanged social perception on widow marriage seems another factor, which led women to join the movement. After Maoist movement, 15,000 people are killed; most of them are male leaving behind young widows in the society. However, the society does not accept a widow-marriage easily. In a patriarchal society in Nepal, if people are involved in these activities, a female have to face social degradation in comparison to their male counterparts. In such a situation, the Maoist movement became accommodative to socially mistreated women. It is said that a majority of women in the movement are "influenced by superficial factors (*Bhool Bhulaiya*) than deep knowledge and understanding of state affairs, political process, gender exploitation, women rights etc" (Adhikari 2006, an unpublished paper). Denying these factors, Hisila Yami, a senior woman Maoists leader said that the women are not recruited for party's "contemporary advantages" but hired because of "their double resistance capacity than man" (Mulyankan, August-September, 2004: 12-18).

To sum up the social reality, which promoted women to join the Maoists movement, we can agree with the argument made by a political scientist Kapil shrestha. He argues, "after democracy in 1990 some positive changes towards women participation in politics has appeared, but sociologically speaking most of the Nepalese women politicians belong to 'the small upper strata of urban, middle class, upper caste and educated elite background not from the rural, grassroots or low caste background'" (Shrestha 2001).

Comparison

We can compare both struggles on the basis of its objectives, goals and achievements. Apart from that, the paper tried to examine validities and reliabilities by observing available narratives, and data of both the movement. First, the Telengana movement was declared against the Nizam's oppression. The Telengana struggle supported to abolish the Nizam feudalism from Telengana. It seemed that the Telengana struggle was more focused on democracy and freedom. However, the Maoist Movement in Nepal has been launched after the restoration of democracy in 1990, which provisioned, at least, freedom to the people. Abolishing the monarchy and establishing the

"Democratic Republic" were the said specific objectives of the Maoists of Nepal.

Second, the Telengana movement had supported the independent struggle of India from British colony. If such a disturbance had not occurred in several parts of India, Britain could have taken the independent struggle at face value and they could have tried to use more force against the struggle. People were able to raise slogan against the feudal and brutal regime and able to abolish not only local principality but also its backbone--the colonial power. Ultimately, the Nizam principality was abolished after the departure of the British from India.

Although the Maoists have shown their eagerness to join the "competitive democracy" and signed different agreements (12-point agreements in November 2005 and Eight points agreements in June 2005) with seven party alliance (SPA), their earlier targets were SPA cadres in the villages undermining democracy. The Maoists killed, injured and compelled people to leave the village, who were believed to be at least progressive than any feudal regimes. The SPA cadres were not only tortured but also banned from launching political activities in the Maoists-influenced-areas. Apart from such 'undemocratic' behaviours against the democratic forces, the Maoists claimed that they had a "tacit understanding" with King Birendra. These activities of the Maoists compelled the people to be skeptical. The doubt of the people was 'the objectives of the Maoists movement was not to strengthen the freedom and democracy but to support the undemocratic and feudal regime'. The suspicion of the people over the Maoists was obvious because the monarchy itself has been considered as "the main obstacle for strengthening the democracy in Nepal".

The doubt of the people over the Maoists increased, when both Maoists and the king trapped democratic forces or parliamentary parties, in Nepal. On the one hand, as mentioned earlier, the Maoists banned the movements of the parliamentary parties in the countryside, which made the government unable for holding of the parliamentary and local elections. On the other, the king started ruling the country blaming the democratic government for its 'incompetence' to holding the election and for maintaining the peace and security in the country. It is said that the democratic process was initially disturbed by rampant violent activities of the Maoists; even the democratically elected government was triggered to impose the state of emergency and termed the Maoists as 'terrorists'. The Maoist activities became major 'trump card' for the king to be used in asking support for his autocratic regime.

As a consequence more than forty thousand women's representation in different democratic agencies was directly hit antagonizing them. However, the Maoists defended such antagonism as the initial compulsion when they were weak. Prachanda, in an interview defended it and said such strategy was

there only for "extended political disclose to establish the ideology and to preserve the power when the party was overall weak in ideology, politics, organization and physical power". Now, according to him, they are trying to bring all possible force together because they are now "strong and reached near the strategic aim" (Prachanda in *Janadesh* 2006: 15-16).

Third, both the struggles, the Maoist movement and Telengana movement have definitely empowered women, sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly. Although the Telangana struggle was called off without success, it has brought some qualitative changes in women and in their life. After 40 years of the unsuccessful struggle, women still have no guilty feeling for the struggle but they took pride on it. Somaka of Vimpati who participated in Telangana struggle says, "in those days, could we sit and talk to you like this? Today we can do that. If we dressed up well, if we put kumkum they used to say, what does she think herself?" (Sangathana 1989: 16). For her, that sort of empowerment was gained by the struggle, although the entire problems were not solved. Another woman participant Kausila was also satisfied by the achieved things. She says, "we didn't know what was behind this wall. We could never go out. Now we go out and look to our agricultural works (Ibid: 16)."

One question may be raised about how the women are empowered by the Maoist's movement. Some direct and indirect factors created by the movement, however, have led the women to be empowered. The Maoists' conflict compelled majority of the male members to leave their home into urban area or escape to the jungle to join the Maoist guerrilla force. Women have thus been 'compelled to take the responsibility of running households. They have compulsion to go and take part to express their opinion in front of mass and so on. Women were compelled even to plough the field to feed their family members, which was restricted earlier. Engaging more in the public life than ever before, they have become more vocal in community activities.

On the other hand, the active involvement of women in both political and military organizations of the Maoist party has boosted the confidence of the Nepali women as a whole. This has indeed produced a wide-ranging impact on the Nepali state. Now, the government itself has started to recruit women into the Royal Nepal Army. The parliamentary forces also have realized the need to launch more progressive and reformist programmes to increase the role of women in the political participation.

Taking all these factors into consideration, we can conclude that women were sensitized and made aware about their role in the society. On the other hand, they are affected badly by the ongoing conflict. Women have become double victim due to the People's War. First, they are the direct victims of the security force as they are participants, relatives, wives, daughters and mothers of the rebels. They are continuously threatened, tortured and harassed in the

name of inquiry as well as raped, killed, and disappeared as suspects, rebellion and also relatives of rebels. Second, the Maoists also demand lodging, food, money and sex from women any time and any day. Rapes by the Maoists have been frequently reported in the press and field work reports, conducted by individual visitors and human rights groups. The Maoists are also following the security forces' footsteps to torture people suspecting them as informers, opponents and class enemies. Third, women are compelled to bear the double burden because of absence of their male members who are either killed or are compelled to flee from their domicile.

Although, the Maoist claims itself as a radical party but it is also not far from being feudal towards the issue of women. Only two women members—Hisila Yami and Pampha Bhusal—are among the 27 Politburo members. The same women members of the Politburo are also in the 39-member Central Committee. In the case of female leaders, only two women—Pampha Bhusal and Hisila Yami—among the 40% women representation in the Maoist movement—have represented in politburo and central level. In the military wing, there is no single woman in the division commander where most decisions are made. But we have to say that the issue of gender is highlighted and sensitized in the Nepali society.

After having a look on Latchampas elaboration, we can conclude that the women in Telangana struggle faced same problem whatever Nepali women are facing now; the fear of rape and sexual harassment, torture etc. They kept secrets and protected other party workers especially the male by facing all the troubles of the state security⁵. But they blamed the party for not being able to evolve any policy regarding the women. The charges over the party by women is not only about its policy towards women in the organization, their main grievances are that the party initially appreciated and welcomed women's support in the movement by wooing, and later it distressed them in the way without any alternatives. Some of them left their husbands, kids and home in the name of 'emancipation', but they got nothing but more trouble. Reminding Party's promise to women thwarted their involvement in the struggle, Mallu Swaraj, who commanded a guerrilla squad and was a legend in the Telangana, says:

In the party, they will see only what the movement needs ... So when struggle was withdrawn they told us to go and marry...we fought with them. We said that even if the forms of struggle had changed we should be given some work (Sangathana 1989: 271-272).

But when the movement was called off, the party had not fulfilled its promise by giving work to women. They themselves, who spent their whole active life in the movement, often felt suppressed when the party withdrew the struggle and asked the women to go back and marry. Women are mentally tortured by

such an immature decision of party. Priyamvada who spent years in the struggle said that "she often felt like committing suicide"(Sangathana 1989:272)." Sugunamma's observation is an example how they got frustrated after party's order to women "go back and marry". She says:

They have used us so long and now they say go stay at home. How could they even understand what the situation was at home? What mental torture—I was really upset. That was my first taste of suffering (ibid).

Kamalama and Salama are the examples of exploitation by the party where Kamalama, now, is begging in her village to feed her children and is carrying "liquor and worked as a wage labor to bring up her sons" (Ibid). They themselves are in doubt whether they got some achievements or not because, according to Pesara Sattemma (Sangathana 1989: 221-227), the struggle's initial aim was for land ownership and against the Vetti. Vetti was abolished but women were not successful in getting land on their own name. Women considered that situation as big blow and insult to them. Priyambada, another women participant in the struggle, explained struggle as failed action to address the agenda of women. She says, "after the parliamentary election and police action, these dreams were—smashed-crushed like an egg. What a blow it was, after the elections, do we know where we were? Like a proverbial rug ...lying exactly where it was through" (Sangathana 1989) Ultimately, when the movement was ended, women neither got land, nor enjoyed other sort of settlement. The slogan 'all sorts of emancipation' remained a fantasy.

Everyone who knows the situation of women after calling off the Telengana struggle has always raised the question, fearing whether the Maoist movement will also go the same way as that of Telengana struggle? The fear is real because there were no women participation at the decision-making level in Telengana movement. The condition remains the same in the Maoists movement because only two women members—Hisila Yami and Pampha Bhusal—were among the 27 Politburo members. No women are there in standing committee, which is the supreme body of the party. And, only three (two representing in politburo also, and another was Uma Bhujel) members are in the 39 - Member Central Committee. Now, the Maoist party has dissolved the standing committee and the politburo; all the power has been centralized, which according to them, is because of their forth-coming general convention. In the military wing, there is only a single woman, Sapana is the company commander where they claim 40-50 per cent women's are working under them. The party and its women are still eager to raise the agenda of women participation in all the sectors.

After the *Janaandolan II* (Peoples' movement), the reinstated parliament has unanimously provisioned 33 per cent reservation to women in Nepal. The concern of the people is how this decision of the parliament would be

implemented. The decision of 33 per cent reservation to the women seems unique and progressive in South Asia. People are having a doubt over its' implementation because of the traditional thinking of all the political forces over women in Nepal; till date, every party has offered the opportunities to the women for fulfilling the quotas. Recently after the Janaandolan II also, the position of the parties on the issues of women remained unchanged. Only a state ministerial portfolio has been given to the women; neither the Maoists nor the SPA sent any women in their dialogue teams, and in the interim constitution drafting committee.

After reading the narratives of the participants of the Telengana struggle, the research has concluded that radical agendas would be harmful for society, if the agendas were raised just to woo the people. It will not only be harmful to the organizer, but also to the individual or participants making them frustrated. Such frustration may possibly direct another revolt. The Telengana movement should be taken as a guide in which the CPI called off the movement in 1951 but the party was not able to control its' activists to join another revolt. Those who were not satisfied by both, the achievement and the party's decision to end the struggle, tried to reorganize such a struggle. After being unable to resume revolt by the same party, they tried to form an alternate party. Ultimately, in 1964, the split took place in the CPI and CPI (M) was created in the initiation of those dissatisfied members, which again continued armed struggle against the Andhra rulers in 1969 demanding "separate Telangana state" (Mohanty 2005: 11-15). So, one can conclude that if some one takes weapon, s(he) rarely will quit the weapons before reaching to his target. Experiences show that all revolutionary parties and their accountable leaders can analyze the entire situation and decide to compromise by suspending and even giving up the armed struggle but applying such theory in cadres and followers, who took weapons after suppressed and marginalized feeling, has not succeed properly. For them, 'do continue the revolt and die in the battle field' is better than being back before getting something. The leader of the Maoists must think to prevent such possibility, and hopefully that may be the signal of thinking over it by the Maoists supreme commander when he realized that "whatever has supported for successful development of the people's war, it is the both, main possibility and main threat."

It is the desperate need of time to Nepali Maoists leaders to think and rethink about the hindrances those hindrances felt long before by Priyamvada, Sugunamma, Kamalama and Sattemma, and that group which split and re-organized the revolt after the wind up of the Telengana people's struggle. Every top-level leaders of the groups including the Maoists, which raised the radical agendas, must learn lesson from Telengana before they take any step forward.

Notes

1. The biggest owners of land who claimed and enjoyed proprietarily rights over the peasants.
2. See *Space Times*, May 27, 2003
3. For detail see [Times special.nepali times.com/issue268/ceasefire-roundup-1.htm](http://times.nepali-times.com/issue268/ceasefire-roundup-1.htm)
4. They are the students of Rolpa district they were taken to the army camp and then their name was in the list of *Krantikari* student wing. They were threatened by the army that there was possibility to kill them then they freed but were required to report the army camp at two or three days interval (see Karki and Bhattarai, 2003)
5. She says, 'my husband was scared, but I did not listen to him. I joined the Sangham. After all what could we do alone? Amin was terror. He used to make the men run on their knees. One women was raped. Many were raped. In fact we used to stay together and escape together-pretend that an old women was dead, someone had delivered a baby or a girl had matured. We never revealed to the police or Razakar the where about the sangham' (cited in Sanghatana, 1989: 16).

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फत्तेपुर, सप्तरीका मुसहरहरू : सामाजिक र आर्थिक परिवेश तथा समावेशीकरणको मुद्दा

नानीराम खत्री

पृष्ठभूमि

तराईको सप्तरी जिल्ला, फत्तेपुर गा.वि.स.मा बसोबास गर्ने मुसहरहरूको सामाजिक र आर्थिक परिवेश तथा समावेशीकरणको मुद्दा अन्तर्गत मूलतः जातीय पहिचान, उत्पात्ति र इतिहास, सामाजिक स्वरूप र संगठन, धार्मिक विश्वास, चाडपर्व र संस्कारहरू, सांस्कृतिक परम्परा र आधुनिकीकरणको प्रभाव, जातीय प्रविधि र अर्थतन्त्रका विशेषताहरूका साथै राष्ट्रिय मूल प्रवाहमा समाविष्ट हुन नसक्नुका कारकत्वहरू, त्यसका लागि सरकारद्वारा प्रत्याभूत गरिनुपर्ने नीति तथा कार्यक्रमहरू वारे प्रकाश पार्ने प्रयत्न यस लेखमा गरिएको छ।

हिन्दू वर्णाश्रम व्यवस्थामा दलितहरूलाई शूद्र वर्गमा राखिएको र अछूत मानिएको छ। दलित आयोगको बुलेटिन (२०६०) ले मुसहरहरूलाई तराईका दलित जातमध्ये एकमा गणना गरेको छ। तदनुरूप यहाँ जातीय सिद्धान्तले उब्जाएका विभेदका सम्बन्धमा विद्वान्हरूका व्याख्या तथा विश्लेषणहरूलाई उल्लेख गर्नु सान्दर्भिक हुन आउँछ।

जात एक सामाजिक एकाई हो जसलाई हिन्दू समाजमा वंशज, विवाह र पेशाको आधारमा वर्गीकरण गरेको पाइन्छ। जातका सन्दर्भमा विभिन्न विद्वान्हरूले विभिन्न प्रकारले व्याख्या गरेका छन् :

ड्युमो (Dumont 1980) ले हिन्दूहरूमा 'जात' को अवधारणा कम्तिमा पनि दुई हजार वर्षदेखि विद्यमान रहँदै आएको कुरा उल्लेख गरेका छन्। ड्युमोले आफ्नो कृतिमा 'जात' को जटिल सिद्धान्त र ती सिद्धान्तहरूको प्रचलनको विषयमा विस्तृत रूपले व्याख्या गर्दै जात प्रणालीलाई सम्पूर्ण रूपमा एक धार्मिक र नैतिक प्रणालीका सम्बन्धको उपजको रूपमा विश्लेषण गरेका छन्।

घुरे (Ghurye, 2000) का विचारमा जात भनेको 'भारतीय आर्य संस्कृति अन्तर्गतको ब्राह्मणिक (Brahmenic) शिशु हो जो गंगाको भोलुङ्गो (भूमि) मा हुर्किएर सम्पूर्ण भारतमा फैलियो।' उनका अनुसार पहिले आर्य र शूद्रका बीच जुन विभेद थियो त्यो अहिले आएर द्विज र शूद्रमा परिणत भई हिन्दू समाजमा चोखो (शुद्ध) र विटलो (अशुद्ध) बीचको विभेद बढ्दै गएको कुराको चर्चा गरेका छन्।

श्रीनिवास (Srinivas, 1962) ले जातलाई धर्म र राजनीतिको सन्दर्भमा जोडेर व्याख्या गरेका छन्। उनले जातको व्याख्या गर्दा दुइटा अवधारणालाई मुख्य रूपले उजागर गरेको पाइन्छ। ती हुन्- प्रबल जात (Dominant Caste) र सांस्कृतिकरण (Sankritization)।

स्मिथ (Smith, 1986) ले जातका तीन वटा मुख्य विशेषता (Characteristics) वारे उल्लेख गरेको पाइन्छ। ती तीन विशेषताहरू- (१) तह तह परेको वर्गीकरण