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GULABI GANG: A PINK WAVE IN BUNDELKHAND

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ABSTRACT: Bundelkhand, a land of rugged topography and problems of infertility and food crisis at its core is also the land proving itself the most fertile in yielding one of the most roaring movement in India. The Gulabi Gang has set an exemplary example of how women from geographically barren lands, impoverished regions, struck by multiple blows of poverty, hunger, oppression of lower caste and bearing double subordination of patriarchy have emerged as two most looked upto movement in India. The paper covers how Gulabi Gang a movement depicting masculinity in Pink Saree performs in geopolitical, socio-economic setting in Bundelkhand.

The paper gives an insight into the dynamics of Gulabi Gang emergence against its setting, contribution in the area as a women movement and the future prospects.

SETTING

Bundelkhand is an area between Indo Gangetic Plains and Vindhyan in North and South respectively. From the times of Chattrapal Bundelkhand was known as the rare land of Yamuna, Narmada, Chambel and Tons! on the basis of Research done in Bundelkhand region, it can be divided into Yamuna in the north, Chambal in North West and Panna-Ajaygarh in South East Bundelkhand is an ancient area of central India. It extends to both MP and UP.

Bundelkhand is an example of Unity and harmony amongst the people of Bundelkhand. It has witnessed extreme malnourishment. Ecosystem has been disrupted, systems poisoned and ground water depleted. Who lies at the extreme end of poverty, malnourishment and Patriarchal subordination are the women of the region. The patriarchal set up in the region does not allow women to be a part of decision making process, let alone for their own lives.

BANDA

Banda is a part of Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh, an area driven by drought and poverty. Dacoits are rampant and caste systems is deeply estranged. Poverty and discrimination here have proved to be fertile grounds for challenging patriarchal social structure and women have been victims of dual discrimination, first on the basis of gender and then caste. In this setting Banda of Bundelkhand region have become the most fertile grounds for a roaring movement ,Gulabi Gang.

Gulabi Gang : Emergence, Impact and Life cycle

Gulabi Gang, a globally renowned organisation of women laden in pink sarees much for women liberation against domestic violence, sexual assault and oppression. The organisation aims to liberate women from toxic households and families facing patriarchal dominance and atrocities and also claims to enhance their capabilities to enable them to earn a living for themselves. Its vital to look into the emergence, impact and life cycle of the organisation.

Emergence

Emerged gradually with binding courage of women joining hands one after the other. Sampat Pal, is an example of 'one man army' who raised her own 'several women army' through her constant efforts and influence in the region. She single handedly used to spread awareness and assist women in the region to raise their voices against the atrocities faced. She tried to infuse life in lifeless souls of the women in Banda district. She was thrown out of her house by her mother in law for drinking water in the house of a lower class women.

Sampat Pal gave Gulabi Gang an organisational shape only after the exit from her mothers in law's house, on 14th Feb. 2006. The the first two members of Gulabi Gang were Jai Prakash and Ganga Vishnu Vishwa Karma with Sampat Pal. Gradually more and more people of the area started associating themselves with Gulabi Gang. This organisation today is in 14 districts of U.P. with a few in M.P. too. One tip of the leader the Gang members are ready to sacrifice anything to achieve respect for women in the area.

Impact

In the most backward areas of Bundelkhand, this Sampat Lal led organisation which they call 'Gulabi Gang' is fighting corruption with all vigour and courage, rendering tough times to police and administration. Not restricted to mainly shouting slogans or mobilising women and first infusing power and energy into them, this 'gang' is fighting against most devils persistent in the civic society. Corruption in food distribution system being a major problem for the drought hit Bundelkhand.

Holding flags in hand and singing "Ishwar Allah Tero Naam Sabko Sanmati De Bhawan" one can witness Gulabi Gang members protesting at Collectorate the District Magistrate of Chitrakoot promised them to look into the loopholes and corruption at lower levels. Sampat Pal passionately puts across the cases where one can witness extreme injustice and ignorance. The collector one to the efforts of Gulabi Gang had to make changes in Aadhar of an old man who was taking care of five orphan children but failed to get any benefits under any scheme because of discrepancy in his age on Aadhar the old man visited several sunwais in presence of SSP and DM, but all his efforts went in vain till Gulabi Gang raised its voice to deliver justice to this old, shattered victim. Thus Gulabi Gang has since its inception in 2006 extended its wings to not only women empowerment but also other sections of society demanding justice specially because they are underprivileged.

PDS of Bundelkhand and One the biggest achievement of Gulabi Gang is the efficient Public Distribution System in the Bundelkhand region. The PDS was highly irrational and corrupted. The local ration holders used to sell the foodgrains in the open market for profit leading to most ration shops running either out of stock or closed.

Attara's ration shop owner Ram Avtar used to hoard and sell foodgrains in the open market. Everyone in the area was aware of his activities but still none reported or raised voice against him. The local police refused to file an FIR against Ram Avtar from time and being. Finally it was due to efforts of Gulabi Gang the 'Thana Gherao' done by these pink saree women that finally led to cancellation of his license and filing of an FIR against him.

Soon GG members started getting complaints of PDS from other areas. For the drought hit Bundelkhand it was an important step towards ensuring an attack on widespread hunger in the region for below poverty line people. Gulabi Gang was seen as Devi Annapurna who would gratify their hunger.

'Gulabi Gang' known as gang not group, because says Sampat Lal that inculcate a feeling sense of uniqueness and sincerity amongst thus that might mistakenly perceive it as merely a woman lead and women run group. Since the 'gang' quite often had to cross roads with the police and politicians. The gang hail slogans such as 'Neta Ho Jayein Hoshiar Kyunki Behnein Ho Gayin Taiyar, Neta Ho Gaye Gaddar', is one of the songs they sing. Sampat quotes "The police also takes us seriously in the name of gang. They compare Sampat Pal with the Rani of Jhansi. Since childhood Sampat had to face discrimination as a girl child, which motivated her to be no less than a revolutionary. The gang not just confine it to women, but is so efficient and seriously taken that even male members seek their help at times.

Local Instances of Help and support

The asset of Gulabi Gang is mutual support pal Devi says Gulabi Gang won't fight for you but with you (Berthod, 2008/2012). She says Gang is not a welfare office. The gang in other words does not provide food but enable you to earn it for yourself. Similarly the gang welcomes women to join them with a membership fee of 100/- rupees which they can give later if they are unable to pay at that time.

One day a woman came to meet Sampat Lal (Berthod, 2008/2012). Looked distraughted, had a broken hand, Sampat was briefed by her that an influential neighbour had broken her hand since she had shooed away his goats that were spoling her fields. The police had refused to file an FIR as the station officer according to the victim had been bribed by the neighbour for impunity (Berthod 2008/2012).

Sampat tried convincing the station officer but he took her lightly, next day sixty Gulabi Gang member did 'Thana Gherao' with Lathis and the FIR was filed.

Sampat says, the victim in the above stated particular case too joined the gang. The above case describes the modus operandii of the gang.

Once Sampat witnessed a one sided brawl between a Brahmin and a Chamar boy. Chamaars are a sub caste amongst Dalits and are considered lower since there is nothing lesser according to the community than leather tanning.

The 'chamaar' boy was being beaten brutally by the Brahmin, reason was the harsh gaze according to the Brahmin that the boy had given him.

Sampat stopped the man from the Brahmin community and took the help of Gulabi Gang volunteers to do Thana Gherao in this case too as the FIR was not being filed. The Brahmin had to apologise to the boy. Sampat pal mentioned that apology to the victim and not to Gulabi Gang is what is desired. (Berthod 2008/2012).

Life Cycle

Sociologist Charles Tilly has given a deep insight into social movements. Tilly defines social movements as "Service of contentions performances displays and campaings by which ordinary pople make collective claims on others." According to Charles Tilly social movmeent are major vehicle for ordinary people. Participation in the local politics which specific regional problems thereby diversifying in later stages.

According to Charles Tilly social movement has following stages:

- Preliminary stage
- Institutionalization Stage
- Decline stage

The preliminary stage involves emergence and coalescence.

Emergence described by Blumar as social ferment. There is a very initial stage of a social movement with or no organisation. There is widespread discontent but no protest involved. Informal communication within family or friends or writing to local administration through a letter, media might get involved to highlight the problems but that might add to piling discontentment.

Coalescence : According to Rex D. Hopper by this stage unrest progresses from covert, endemic and esoteric. So people in this stage might join to publicise the issue and raise awareness. It is a stage of more clearly defined sense of discontent. Discontent tends to be in this stage more focalised and collective.

Bureaucratisation : Higher level of coalition and organisation .This is the stage of coordinated strategy. Higher levels of organisation and coalition based strategies .The social movement has reached a degree where coordinated efforts seem to be mandatory amongst social movement organisation (SMOs). Similarly they rely on staff persons with some technical specialised knowledge that can be of use to SMOs. In this phase political power is greater and may have regular access to political elites. This is an important phase of any social movement because the organised behaviours and pressure mechanisms are goal oriented and clear in their intentions and desired results.

Decline : Last stage of a social movement. Life cycle is decline or institutionalisation decline does not necessarily mean failure. Instead Miller argues that the movement might witness this stage in either of the following forms:

- Repression - Movement silenced by ruling or dominated authority.
- Co-optation - Adaptation and assimilation
- Success - Success in acquiring the goal.
- Failure - Unable to meet goals and constant deprivation of support.

Gulabi Gang, since years has been acting as voice and hands of action for the oppressed women in the area of function. It has risen from a small collective of women into a social movement through constant efforts. It is in a stage where it continues to grow and is diversifying (Jacob 2019) into accessing means of livelihood through

training. The 'gang' continues to grow in size as mobilising agents of change by transforming victims to participants. As the gang aims 'deliverance through empowerment, (Berthod 2008/2012) and so forges Gulabi Gang.

The gang's decline is not seen till far, can be sighted through its global popularity. This year itself . The design museum of London is all set to display the Gulabi Gang's Pink Saree in Indian Fashion's offbeat saree section It aims to honour Gulabi Gang and depict the pink saree as a symbol of sisterhood. The 'Gang' continues to make its own choices and all choices are strategic in nature determined by several socio-political cultural influences but strictly autonomous.

