

**Gender, Militancy and Memory:
A Study of the Mau Mau and Naxalbari Women**

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ABSTRACT Women's history is not only an effort to restore women to history, but perhaps more importantly, also to restore history to women. This paper attempts to look at two very significant protest movements of the Indian and the African subcontinents – The Naxalbari and the Mau Mau movements. The objective is to look at the significant contribution of the women involved in these movements and relooking at the collective silences regarding the documentation of the women's roles. The Naxal phase examined here is from 1967 to 1975 in West Bengal where the "spring thunder" struck in the form of the radically Left Movement. Though technically the spring thunder was short lived, its repercussion can be heard even today as the movement changes faces and names but continues as the rebel mouthpiece against the oppressive governmental regimes. The Mau Mau Uprising was a military conflict that took place in Kenya between 1952 and 1960. The conflict set the stage for Kenyan independence in December 1963. The Mau Mau was a top secret movement which came into being as a protest against British Land policies. This paper attempts to analyse the significant role played by the women in these Movements and seeks to question their erasure in the documentation of these Movements.

"Anyone who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment" (Karl Marx).

"...the real fundamental human difference is not between White and Black, it is between man and woman" (C.L.R. James, 1981, reviewing Toni Morrison's Sula).

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