

**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN JHARKHAND
SINCE 2000: A CASE STUDY OF FIVE DISTRICTS**

ABSTRACT

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BY
SHALINI GUPTA

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY

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Political Participation of Women in Jharkhand since 2000:

A Case Study of Five Districts

(Synopsis)

Women constitute half of the world's population, yet they are marginalized and neglected all over. Discrimination against women is an acute problem which again is a major cause of concern in the 21st century. Women are given secondary positions be it in households, society, work place or levels of governance as compared to their male counterparts. They lag behind men in terms of social, economic and political achievements. The roles and responsibilities of women have attained new definition and perspective in this global era. Women play a very strategic role in the development of society in particular and a nation in general. A woman is the leader of the family, the first trainer; supplier of labor and by playing focal role in the development of different sectors like agriculture, industry, service, etc., she contributes towards the creation of an enlightened society. In spite of the positive role played by women in different walks of life. They have been subdued and denied proper access to different resources.

Women are kept at the receiving end without any freedom to take decisions for themselves and others. They are hence denied proper access to power and decision making processes in different spheres of public life. Men mediate women's relation with the outside world, hence they are expected to stay within the confines of private life, which leads to low political participation of women all over the world. From the local to the global level, women's leadership and political participation are restricted. Women are underrepresented as voters, as well as in leading positions, whether in elected office, the civil service, the private sector or academia. This occurs despite their proven abilities as leaders and agents of change, and their right to participate equally in democratic governance.

Low representation of women in the legislatures is due to several reasons which include lack of education, poor financial condition, cultural and social obstacles which prevent them to actively participate in politics. Moreover political parties prefer to encourage female members if it suits the number game for them. Both nationally as well as at the state and local levels women in elected bodies have been very few and even those who have been elected

when observed properly present a complex picture. The money and muscle associated with the electoral process inhibits a large number of women from joining politics.

Jharkhand 'The land of forests' is a state in eastern India, created on 15 November 2000, from what was previously the southern half of Bihar. It has an area of 30,778 sq. mi. As per the 2011 Census, Jharkhand has a population of 32988123. Sex ratio in the state is 948 female per 1000 males. Female literacy in the state is 55.42%, while male literacy being 76.84%. About 26.2% of the population belongs to the schedule tribe. The state has twenty four districts, highest proportion of tribal population has been recorded in Khunti, where 73.3% of the population belongs to the schedule tribe.

Jharkhand witnessed its first panchayat elections in 2010 and municipal elections in 2008. More than 50% of seats in these local bodies are occupied by women. It must be noticed that women participation in the state legislature is less than 5% where as there is no reservation for women. Female literacy in Jharkhand is as low as 56% and work participation is merely 26% . There are serious questions regarding the direct link between the policy of reservation and women empowerment in the state. Both at the panchayat as well as municipal levels women participation when observed properly present a complex picture.

Review of Literature

Review of the existing literature was done to find out various theoretical dimensions of the concept of political participation. Madan Lal Goel in his book *Political Participation in a Developing Nation: India* identifies political participation as a dependent variable and makes an effort to find out various independent variables that are correlated and associated with it. He argues for a broad definition of political participation to include such conventional activities like voting and discussing politics as well as demonstrations, sit-ins and marches as well. Faulks Keith in his book *Political Sociology: A Critical Introduction* Chapter on 'Political Participation' explains the importance of countering the centralizing tendency by the State and concentration of power in few hands. The first part of the chapter reviews major theories of political participation i.e. democratic elitism, rational choice and participatory theory. Political participation is seen by A S Kabbur in the article '*Political Participation*' as a civic duty and a good sign of political health of a country. There are various types of political participation, active and passive as well as instrumental and expressive. The psychological and social variables have been playing an important role behind the political

participation. According to Kabbur the operation of political variables very much depend upon the limitations posed by social and psychological variables.

The book *Behind the veil- Dalit Women in Panchayat Raj* by Sunita Dhaka and Rjbir Dhaka focuses on the status of SC women representatives in panchayat in the state of Haryana. The book focuses on a number of indicators reflecting gender inequality in the country. It emphasizes awareness of common people in general and woman in particular about their participation and functioning women in the panchayat raj institutions. The author at the end comes up with various obstacles that hinder the smooth participation of women in panchayat raj institution. The article '*Feminism and Political Empowerment of Women at the Grass Root- The Karnataka Experience*' by B K Subha and B S Bhargava begins with the definition of Feminism and argues that the liberal feminism has a profound influence in building pressure on the government to give equal status to women.. Political participation as an important element of women empowerment is emphasized in the article and especially at the grass root level. The article studies the working of the reservation policy at the grass root level in Karnataka and identifies practical problems in the field which prevents women to actively participate in the decision- making process at the grass root level. The article does mention some of the positive impacts of political participation of women at a grass root level in terms of basic training and motivation of women to shoulder political responsibilities and broadening the base of women's representation in political institutions. One must not forget the role of local government in implementing policies that have direct impact on day to day aspects of a women's life, hence political participation of women at the grass root level is a major cause of concern in any society.

The article '*Do Electoral Quotas Work After They are Withdrawn? Evidence From a Natural Experience in India*' by Rikhil R. Bhavanani does a comparative study of two election results of BMC in the year 1997 and 2002. The author argues that the reservation largely work by introducing into politics a group of female candidates who can win elections and allowing parties to learn that women can win elections. The author gives a detailed account of various hurdles that a woman might face in terms of incumbency, family rules, approaches of parties and the general voters. The author found that the process of reservation did influence the women's chances of winning elections in a positive way and thus encouraged political parties to have more female candidate than before. The article '*One More Reservation*' by Anand Teltumbde begins with a criticism of the overall reservation policy for being a strategic tool in the hands of the ruling class to manipulate people. The author argues that the present

reservation system only benefits the elite of the targeted section and thus benefits of reservation can hardly lead the majority. Women's reservation will only benefit the better placed amongst the target group. The author argues that women reservation would reinforce the domination of traditional political structures and do not improve the condition of the oppressed women who are outside the elite political structure. The article '*Women in Power? Gender, Caste and the Politics of local Urban Government*' by Mary E. John studies the role played by reservation based on caste and gender in the municipal corporations of Delhi and Bangalore. The paper studies the socio- and political backgrounds of municipal councilors and its influence on the role of reservation. The author identifies the system of proxy representative as a means to enter into politics. This in turn hampers the capability of women to build up their distinct political identity. This must be pointed out that women share much less a common identity as women in the process of becoming local political leaders. The author comes up with the finding that women rarely came up with the women related issues nor did they focus on women's interest. The author goes on to say that 'self made' women are indeed an exception when it comes to the overall political participation of women.

The book *Kahani Jharkhand Rajniti Ki* by Balbir Dutt gives a detail study about Jharkhand movement since 1930s. The book is divided into various stages keeping in mind various developments in the movement since 1930s. The book discusses the rise and contributions of various leaders involved in the movement. The book gives details of electoral politics in the state till the year 2009. This helps analyze changing political dynamics since the formation of the state. The book *Kahani Adivasi Rajniti Ki* by Nirmal Minz gives an historical analysis of the Jharkhand movement. The book starts with information regarding the movements that were directed against the British since 1772. These revolts in the tribal area of Chotanagpur are treated as a predecessor of the modern movement started in the 20th century. The revolts in the 19th century help us analyze how the traditional tribal society was ruined by the outsiders. The book *Jharkhand Andolan Ke Dastavez : Shoshan, Sangharsh aur Sahadat* by Anuj Kumar Sinha gives us an idea about the contribution made by many people towards the Jharkhand movement, whose sacrifices have been ignored all these years. Author says that many people died in police firing and at the hands of the mafias, which went unnoticed in the larger picture. He also throws light upon sacrifices made by women at the grass root level during the movement.

The edited volume *The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples' Struggle for Autonomy in India*, edited by Ram Dayal Munda and S. Basu Mullick is a collection of various articles that

deal with different aspects of the Jharkhand movement.. A few articles give a firsthand experience of the members of the Jharkhand party and their grievances with Jaipal Singh. The volume also gives detail about various speeches given by Jaipal Singh during the initial phase of the movement. The volume gives a historical analysis of the revolts in the 19th century and how it led to identity formation among the tribals of the region.

The book *Jharkhand: Politics of Development and Identity* by Amit Prakash explains how the dominant discourse on development has been neglecting the needs of the peripheral areas. Jharkhand region has been used as a periphery since independence and denied the access to resources. Jharkhand had to pay the price for industrialization of other areas. Lopsided development led to the inflow of outsiders in the area, who exploited the locals. The book gives a detail analysis of the changing pattern of development profile of the region since the 1950s till the 1990s. The author argues that Jharkhand was a major source of revenue for the state of Bihar and mainly treated as an internal colony of the state.

The paper '*The Socio-Cultural Dynamics of Jharkhand Movement*' by Seema Jha analyses the nature of Jharkhand movement from the perspective of a social movement. She argues that that in its early phase movement was mainly led by the tribals, but in the later stages it was not the movement of the tribals alone. A lot of non-tribals got involved in the movement in the later stages. The movement became regional in nature demanding regional autonomy for all those who stayed in the region, be it a tribal or a non-tribal. The relationship between the sadans and the adivasis has resulted in the creation of a composite culture. The paper '*Jharkhand from Separation to Liberation*' by A K Roy argues that Jharkhand has a composite culture, which is a result of mixing of different groups together. Jharkhand has been used as an internal colony in independent India. Jharkhand is not only rich in natural resources with its forest and mines, but also in human resources, which provided an opportunity for the outsiders to exploit the cheap labour available in the region.

On the basis of the above problem area the researcher intends to study the nature of political participation of women in Jharkhand. For the purpose of the study following research questions have been identified by the researcher.

- What is the theoretical understanding of various dimensions of political participation/
- What are the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of Jharkhand movement?

- What is the nature and extent of participation of women in the Jharkhand movement?
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- What are the factors that hinder active participation of women in politics at different levels?
- What shall be the effect of gender based affirmative action on nature of political participation of women in Jharkhand?
- Is there any major difference between performances of women representatives in urban local bodies and rural local bodies in Jharkhand?

Research Methodology

In order to find answers to the above mentioned research questions study was conducted following both qualitative and quantitative methods for the purpose of analysis. Entire research is based on use of both primary and secondary resources.

The researcher begins by understanding different theoretical dimensions of the concept of political participation. In order to understand the concept political participation review of the existing literature is done. Theoretical understanding of the concept formed the basis for further analysis of various dimensions of political participation of women in Jharkhand.

The researcher attempts to study the background of the prolonged movement that led to the formation of the separate state of Jharkhand. To situate my study in the historical context a review of the existing literature was done. For the purpose of studying the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of the movement a historical understanding of the existing secondary resources was done.

In order to understand the nature and extent of participation of women in the Jharkhand movement, the researcher uses various primary and secondary sources available on Jharkhand movement. Review of various secondary resources, mainly books and journals are done to highlight the contribution of women in Jharkhand movement. It was observed during the study that names of many women were ignored in the existing literature. The researcher undertook direct interviews of few women who were directly involved in the movement. Few interviews were also done over the telephone. Experiences of women were recorded through unstructured questionnaire consisting of open ended questions. The researcher had to depend on these oral narratives in order to identify the contribution made by women in Jharkhand movement.

The researcher collected government documents related to the details of the female candidates in local bodies in Jharkhand. Further study would require minimum number of panchayats and municipalities to collect information from the target group. A field study was conducted across five districts of Jharkhand in order to study the nature of political participation of elected women representatives in local bodies of the state. Five districts covered during the field study were Ranchi, Hazaribag, Gumla, Lohardagga and Khuti. Representatives of the local bodies both in rural and urban areas of these five districts were interviewed during the field study. Separate analysis is done for the rural and urban local bodies, although the interview schedule was same for studying both rural and urban area. Interview schedule contained both open ended and closed ended questions.

During the Field study Mukhiyas of Gram Panchayat were interviewed from five districts of Jharkhand. From each district, two Blocks were selected randomly and women Mukhiyas of ten Blocks across five districts of the state were approached to conduct the study. Total eighty two women Mukhiyas across five districts were interviewed for the purpose of data collection and analysis.

For the purpose of the study Ward Councilors and Chairpersons of Five Urban Local Bodies were intervened. Elected representatives of Ranchi Municipal Corporation, Hazaribag Municipal Corporation, Gumla Nagar Parishad, Lohardagga Nagar Parishad and Khuti Nagar Panchayat were interviewed. Total seventy seven Councilors from these five districts were approached during the field study. Present and former Mayor of Ranchi Municipal Corporation, Deputy Chairperson of Khuti Nagar Panchayat and Chairperson of Lohardagga Nagar Parishad gave their valuable time and feedback for the purpose of analysis of the study conducted.

For the purpose of analyzing voting patterns among women voters in the state, primary data was collected from government websites and tabulated for further understanding. Interview schedule with both closed and open ended questions were used to collect data during the field study, which was conducted across five districts of the states in order to study the nature of political participation among rural and urban women in the state. Total 404 women were interviewed during the field study, 192 women from the rural area and 212 from the urban area across the five districts in the state. It must be noted that only those women were interviewed who belonged to the local constituencies where seats of a local Councilor or a Mukhiya was reserved for a woman. This was done in order to take valuable feedback regarding the performance of women who were local representatives of their area. It is

important to understand what women as ordinary voters think about women who are active in politics and part of local administration.

Polling percentage has been calculated by using the available data on total number of electors and voters during the elections held. Separate polling percentage has been calculated for men, women and women belonging to different categories. Overall polling percentage has been calculated for women along with separate polling percentage for tribal women and women belonging to the general category. It must be noted that for the purpose of studying voters turnout, a comparison is made between the tribal and non-tribal women. Voters turnout in four General Elections i.e. 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019 and four Legislative Assembly Elections i.e. 2005, 2009, 2014 and 2019 have been analyzed for the purpose of the study.

For the purpose of the study details of women candidates from Jharkhand of four General Elections i.e. 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019 and four Legislative Assembly Elections i.e. 2005, 2009, 2014 and 2019 has been taken from government websites as primary data in order to analyze the extent of participation of women in Legislative bodies in Jharkhand.

Chapters

Chapter One : Conceptual Analysis of the Concept Political Participation aims at understanding various theoretical dimensions of the concept of political participation and a feminist perspective on political participation of women. Political participation is the involvement of different groups and individuals at various levels in the political system. Political participation is complex phenomenon liable to be influenced by a variety of variables. Political participation can be defined as the involvement of members of the society in the decision making process of the political system. Participation is not just about exercising ones franchise but it involves active involvement, which in a real manner would influence the decision making of the government. Only in a decentralized decision making process can citizens have the opportunity to perform their responsibilities and make proper use of their democratic rights. Democratic form of government is that which encourages maximum participation government processes. Political participation can be both professional and non-professional and there are various levels of political participation. Political participation can be divided into three types of activities mainly gladiators, transitional and spectator activities. Protest participation is also a major form of political participation.

Chapter Two : History of Jharkhand Movement deals with the background of the Jharkhand movement in the historical context. Jharkhand as a state was formed on 15th November, 2000,

after the bifurcation of Bihar. Jharkhand movement began as a protest against the outsiders in order to stop their intrusion into the tribal area and the exploitation meted out to the tribal people largely by the British administration. The Jharkhand leaders traced their struggle back to the tribal revolts of nineteenth century, which were sparked off by the oppressive land revenue arrangements under the permanent settlement. Jharkhand movement can be divided into three phases. First being the Formation Phase from 1900 to 1930, second being the Active Phase from 1939 to 1963 and finally the Revival Phase from 1963 to 2000.

Chapter Three : Role of Women in Jharkhand Movement attempts to find out the nature and extent of participation of women in the Jharkhand movement. Women remain an integral part of the economic activities like cutting of timber, clearing jungles, gathering leaves and harvesting crops. However it is very difficult to locate tribal women in these movements because of the scarcity of written literature. One has to depend upon oral sources and biased official records for our analysis. Women had to deviate from their traditional roles and perform extraordinary duties during anti-colonial struggle. During the anti-colonial movement as well as the Jharkhand movement one could see the beginning of politicization of women in a set direction where they were more concerned about their tribal identity and interests. Women's contribution towards the Jharkhand statehood movement is still not recognized as something which had a huge impact on the course of the entire movement. Women did emerge as leaders in smaller groups and local areas and gave direction to the entire movement.

Chapter Four : Political Participation of Women in Rural and Urban Elected Bodies is based on the report of the field study done on the women representatives of the urban local bodies and rural local bodies across five districts in Jharkhand. The field report helps us analyze various aspects related to the performances of women politicians at the local level. The study helps find out the extent to which women politicians take up women related issues within their area. The chapters seek to understand the impact of gender based affirmative action on nature of participation of women in active politics. The study was an eye opener that helped in identifying few women politicians at the grass root level who became a role model for other women who wanted to join active politics. The researcher attempts to do a comparative analysis of the performance of women representatives in rural local bodies and urban local bodies.

Chapter Five Participation of Women in Political Process in Jharkhand is based on the report of the study that attempts to analyze the nature of political participation of ordinary women

voters in Jharkhand. The study also seeks to understand the common perception among ordinary women regarding women politicians in their respective constituencies. The study tries to find out factors that impacted political decisions made by ordinary women voters. Analysis of the election data helps find out the extent of participation of women as voters in the electoral process. A comparative study of tribal and non-tribal voters is done in the chapter. The chapter also studies the nature and extent of representation of Jharkhand women in legislative bodies. For the purpose of the study election data has been tabulated to find out the role played by political parties in bringing women in active politics.

Major Findings

Political participation is complex phenomenon liable to be influenced by a variety of variables. It involves both involvement in decision making and act of opposition. Only in a decentralized decision making process can citizens have opportunity to perform their responsibilities and make proper use of their democratic rights. Initially citizens participate in electoral process , voting, campaigning, attending party meetings, communicating others and collecting money for campaign was a part of political participation. Later concept was broadened to include activities in the period between elections when citizens try to influence government decision. Nature and extent of political participation is effected by psychological, social and political factors.

The Jharkhand movement is rooted in the poor socio-economic condition of the region and draws its political symbolism from tribal culture and tradition. Jharkhand movement can be divided into three phases. First being the Formation Phase from 1900 to 1930, second being the Active Phase from 1939 to 1963 and finally the Revival Phase from 1963 to 2000. Internal colonialism can be regarded as one of the main cause behind the Jharkhand movement. Jharkhand movement during the initial years in the post-independence period was mainly led by elite leaders like Jaipal Singh Munda, who had mass appeal but was not close to the masses in general at the grass root level. During the final stage of the movement leftist organizations had huge impact on the movement along with grass root leaders like Sibhu Suren, who was very close to the masses and was able to successfully mobilize the common people against the repressive state authorities.

Women's contribution towards the Jharkhand statehood movement is still not recognized as something which had a huge impact on the course of the entire movement. Women did emerge as leaders in smaller groups and local areas and gave direction to the entire movement. Leadership role displayed by Ramanika Gupta and Lado Junko among the mines

workers cannot be ignored by the historians at any cost. The two women were working at the grass root level among the common people. Ramanika had fought hard to make her way to the Vidhan Parishad and speak for the common people while she had an access to political power.

Women as leaders motivated other women to come and participate in the movement. Women like Rose Karketta and Malanch Ghosh had organized women into different groups and tried to link the demand for separate statehood with the different forms of exploitation faced by tribal women due to the presence of the outsiders in the region. We are aware about the problems faced by the rejas and the other women labourers in the region. Women leaders came up during the course of the movement to protect the land rights of the tribals men and women.

Industrialization has been a major issue during the course of the movement. Indigenous people of the region were and are still being denied the fruits of development, instead they being robbed of their natural rights over the land and forest. Leaders like Vasavi nad Daya Mani Barla are still fighting hard to deal with issues related to displacement and land rights in the state. Both Barla and Vasavi had emerged as a powerful activist in the movement through their writings as a journalist as well.

One cannot forget the contributions made by those women who were part of several rallies and meetings during the course of the movement. We would never know their names due to absence of any record, but their contribution to the mass movement cannot be denied. Many women had fought against the police, faced their atrocities during the movement. Many brave women had to sacrifice their own life, which usually went unnoticed in the historical records. One must also understand that many non0-tribal women had also actively participated in the movement. Malanch and Ramanika Gupta were non-tribal women, but had deep concern for the tribal society and the entire region. However it would be wrong to say that the movement was popular among the urban non-tribal women in the region. Mass participation of women in the movement came from rural belt of the region which mostly included tribal women.

Women were also active members of many political parties during the course of the movement. Many political parties like the AJSU and JMM had included a lot of women in their party cadre during the course of the movement.

Field study was an eye opener as it changed all wrong notions about rural women. Mukhiyas in the villages were not that educated, but were quiet aware about their responsibilities. Most

of them had made Toilets for people in their village along with houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna. Most of the Mukhiyas had engaged their local women in some or the other training programs depending on the nature of business done in their respective districts. Most of the Mukhiyas were more independent and self-confident as compared to women Councilors in town.

The field trip would have been incomplete without meeting few Councilors across five districts, who are an inspiration for a lot of other women who want to join grass root politics. They were confident about their work and had contributed a lot towards the development of their locality in general and women empowerment in particular. After a lot of informal conversation with the locals as well as the Chairperson of the respective districts, it was found that some of the women Councilors stand out from the crowd when we talk about their performances.

During the study it was found that Hazaribagh was the worst in terms of performances of the local representatives both in rural and urban areas among the five districts. Performance of the women representatives in rural area was far better as compared to women councilors in urban bodies. Mukhiyas did command a respectable position in the rural society. It is indeed important to mention that tribal women performed much better than the non-tribal women. Socio-economic structure of the tribal society helped tribal women in the state to grab the opportunity given by gender based affirmative action. Reservation did help a lot of women at the grass root level to enter into active politics.

During the study it was found that women voters in the rural area were much more close to their local representatives than women in the urban area. It was found that rural women had much more interaction with the local women representatives. Majority of the respondents in the urban area were unable to recognize their local women councilor. Although majority of the respondents supported reservation of seats for women but most of them did not have any intentions of joining active politics.

There has been a rise in the voters turnout in Jharkhand during the Lok Sabha elections since the state was formed. Total voters turnout rose from 55.69% in the year 2004 to 66.8% in the year 2019. A decline can be seen in the year 2009 in the overall voters turnout in the state along with voters turnout among women. However there is a continuous increase in the participation of tribal women in the voting process, which rose to about 70.95% in the year 2019 from 47.81% in the year 2004.

Women from Jharkhand are poorly represented in the Lower House of the Parliament, with only three women elected since 2004 to the Lok Sabha. Sushila Kerketta was elected in the year 2014 while Annapurna Devi and Geeta Kora elected in 2019. Mabel Rebello was the only women who represented Jharkhand in the Rajya Sabha from the year 2006 to 2012. No woman politician from Jharkhand has been a part of any important Ministry in the Central Government till date.

After the formation of the State representation of women in the state legislature has not been very satisfactory in Jharkhand. State had witnessed political instability since its formation. Most of the government failed to complete their full term resulting in President rule in the state due to absence of stable government. First government to complete its full tenure was under the leadership of Raghubar Das formed in the year 2014. In spite of the instability a few women were able to grab a position for themselves in the Council of Ministers. Joba Majhi, Neera Yadav, Annapurna Devi, Geeta Shree Oraon, Vimla Oraon and Sudha Choudhary are few women politicians who were a part of the ministry under different government formed in the state since the year 2000.

We need a mass movement initiated by women activists that would sensitize both men and women towards gender equality. An increased role of women within political parties along with better partnership with civil society can help motivate women for a more informed participation in politics. The present style of politics has to be altered to be more accommodative in nature by incorporating silent voices. More participation will not only remove the gender gap in politics, but will also help reduce gender disparity at the societal level. Hence the presence of women in politics is desirable in proportion to their presence in society, leading to women's empowerment in a broader sense of the term.

<i>18/10/21</i> Countersigned by the Supervisor		Signature of the candidate
Date <i>4/2/21</i>	Associate Professor	Date:
Seal:	Department of International Relations	
	Jadavpur University	
	Kolkata - 700 032	