

A Study on Status and Challenges of Women in the Institutions of State Legislative Assembly in Orissa: From 1952 to 2014

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Abstract - When one looks at the history of the last 100 years and the leaders and news makers, we would be hard pressed to find women. Why is that? I can understand 200 or even 300 years ago. But I have heard so much that women have come such a long way. Obviously they have not come far enough. The Indian Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Empowerment is one of the key factors in determining their success. Though women form a sizable part of India's population, their political representation and participation is definitely below the mark. The fact that women are grossly under represented at the political level in Central and State government, is a testimony to lack of political power in the hands of women. In this paper attempt is made to analyze the women representation in assembly elections in Orissa from 1952 to 2014.

Keywords - Political participation, women empowerment, reservation, Assembly elections, political activism

Introduction

The strengthening of women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the discourse of economic and social development in the last decades. Virtually every international and bilateral development agency has proclaimed policies to integrate women better into economic and social processes (Anzia and Berry, 2009). The promotion of women in politics, however, especially if it is supposed to be implemented through affirmative action is still contested. This is in spite of the fact that women, who form around 50% of total world population, share a considerably lower presence in elected political bodies. Apparently universal franchise is inadequate to overcome structural constraints that impede female presence in political offices. Thus, despite their numerical strength, women are still a minority in respect to political power and positions occupied. Interestingly enough India is one of the countries where a women's quota of 33% was introduced at least at the local level. The same strategy for the State Assemblies and the National Parliament is still highly contested and the so-called "Women's Bill" failed thrice to be passed so far (Camissa and Reingold, 2004). At the same time, some readers might be astonished that India has realised a women's quota at all, since India is often portrayed as backward in regard to women's position in society. News on dowry deaths, widow burning, and the abortion of female fetuses still dominate the rather undifferentiated public image of India. Nevertheless, in 1992 the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution laid down new rules for the establishment and design of rural local government (called Panchayati Raj). This Amendment also stipulates that at least 33% of the seats and positions have to be filled by women. Proponents of this measure believe that the quota for women will lead to their empowerment, whereas critics claim that those women will be mere "proxies" for influential males and will be mainly drawn from the elite (Volden, and Wittmer 2010).

The opponents furthermore point out that women in rural India are not equipped for participating in politics, since they lack basic qualifications. Indeed, India's rural social structure can still be characterized as being predominantly patriarchal (Schwindt and Mishler, 2005). Women face restricted mobility in the public space; yet, this differs with respect to caste, class, religion as well as age and family status. As already mentioned, treating women as a political group with common concerns provokes the question in how far gender actually transcends caste, class or ethnic affiliation. Which interests should the elected women represent - those of other women, of their caste, clan or religious community? How can rural women, who are initially without doubt less equipped for political office (lower formal education, less political experience, less public exposure etc.), overcome these inhibitions? And how do male colleagues, officials and the village communities react if they are forced to elect and deal with female representatives? In order to pay tribute to the contextual nature of empowerment this study was conducted in a single State of the Indian Union. Orissa was selected because it is in one of the most "backward" States in the Indian Union and thus presents an environment that is not very conducive for women's empowerment to begin with (Strickland and Duvvury, 2003). If one can prove that empowerment happens in such a setting, it is fair to assume that it should definitely take place in a location which provides better conditions, like, e.g. in a State like Kerala. Gender gap exists regarding access to education and employment. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society (Steinburg, 2012).

True democracy is a system which in Abraham Lincoln's words, is a government of the people, by the People and for the people. While most of the democracies have given a system which has government Elected by all the sections of societies, it is debatable whether the government comprises of all the diverse sections and importantly whether the government works for all the people of the democracy (Carter, Simkins and Simpson, 2003). In this context, the problem of low participation of women is of special concern for democracies and without changing that true democracy can never be achieved. Women's participation in decision-making is essential for women's interests to be incorporated into governance. It has been widely experienced that governance

structures which do not provide for adequate participation of women, often suffer from state interventions which are neither inclusive nor democratic. Including women, especially in local governments are an essential step towards creating gender equal opportunities and gender sensitive policies (Shevchenko, 2002). Since women have different needs and perspectives on social and political issues, it is important to involve women in governments to incorporate all of the societal viewpoints in policy and decision-making processes. Women are actively involved in household and community work and hence well aware of real issues faced by common people. This gives them insight and perspective which can be instrumental in sustainable overall development (Chen, 2008).

It's no less a big shocker when the International Women's Day is to be celebrated on Tuesday! In an indicator of women participation in State legislatures, Odisha figured the 7th poorest in the country among 31 States. Only 7 per cent legislators are women in the Odisha Assembly. This revelation in 'Women and Men in India-2015' is certainly a cause for unease. But Odisha has some cheering news on this gloomy backdrop since it has a better record than States like Kerala and Karnataka, where the women participation in legislatures is around 5 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively. However, in the BIMARU States (Bihar, Jharkhand, MP, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and UP) the rate is higher ranging from 9 per cent to 14 per cent. When around 44 per cent of the Odisha Assembly constituencies have no women contestants at all, the irony is owing to a 50-per cent reservation for women in panchayats, a whopping 53,396 elected representatives of the total 1, 00,352 members are women. Odisha echoes a precarious scenario because even women electors in the State root for men candidates and vote out women contestants quite comprehensively despite a record turnout of women voters in the last Assembly elections. An analysis shows even strong women candidates across the political spectrum have bitten the dust. Senior BJP leader *Surama Padhy* and the BJD's *Hema Gamang* failed to carry through as they lost to men contestants. Significantly, when a whopping 75 per cent women electors voted in the 2014 Odisha elections vis-a-vis a total turnout of 74 per cent, shockingly 80 per cent of the women contestants had lost even their deposits -- means four of every five women candidates lost quite comprehensively. The reason: The State's major political parties do more of a lip service on women empowerment as they failed to groom up women winners.

Sample this. While the BJD, which was riding on the *Naveen Patnaik* popularity, fielded a mere 14 women, *Mayawati's* BSP, a letter pad party in Odisha, emerged the dark horse with 12 women contestants. And major national parties like the BJP and the Congress fielded only 11 and eight women contestants, respectively. However, none of the women BJD candidates forfeited deposits whereas all of the BSP did. Significantly, when in 2014-15 the State saw the fourth-most registration of cases under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Test (PCPNDT) Act in the country, grave women issues like increased women trafficking; rising cases of child rape and POSCO Act, sanitation and maternal mortality were hardly debated full-fledged in the Assembly in recent times. Not only politics, the Women-Men in India-2015 report reveals the Orissa High Court has only one woman judge compared to 21 men justices. The measurement of women political participation is essential to identify the need of policy intervention to improve the same. India had understood the need to record gender statistics on political participation since its independence. The process of capturing women participation at the local level is an evolving area and efforts are being done to improve the present infrastructure.

Odisha Election History

Orissa, or Odisha as it is presently called, is an eastern Indian coastal state, situated by the Bay of Bengal. With Bhubaneswar as its capital, the 11th largest populated state of the country, Orissa, is bounded by Jharkhand to the north, Andhra Pradesh to the south, West Bengal to the east and Chhattisgarh to the west. The present name of Orissa is fairly recent, as part of the British administrative setup. Orissa has been known by different names from the ancient times, most common among them being Kalinga, as derived from the Mahabharata and Puranas; Utkala, derived from texts such as Raghuvamsa and Brahma Purana; and Udra-desha or Odra-desha, meaning a particular tribe residing in this region.

Orissa has a rich and varied political tradition. Starting from the ancient times, Odisha (Orissa) was the abode of a number of significant dynasties such as the dynasty of king of Kalinga Srutayudha, who joined the Kaurava camp in the Kurukshetra War, as given in the epic the Mahabharata. Orissa was historically more important during the later period of the Mauryans, when in 261 BCE, the great king Ashoka made war in Kalinga, which in turn changed his life from a blood-thirsty warrior king, to one who practiced and preached the non-violent, Ahimsa path as dictated in Buddhism. The state experienced its golden age during the rule of Ganga dynasty, such as king Anantaverma Chodagangadeva in the 11th century AD. In fact, the construction of the famous Jagannath Temple was started by him. In the Mughal period, Orissa was a contested terrain, as in the last decade of the 16th century, Akbar wrested Orissa from the Afghans and made the state an important centre of Mughal power. In the British period too, a number of political struggles for independence were executed in this land, such as the historic fight to reunite the two administrative portions of the state. From the ancient times, thus, Odisha (Orissa) has remained politically active. Orissa's political prominence was heightened during the post-Independence era, especially after it was granted complete statehood in 1950. The singular rise of the Congress party in the state as the only secular, progressive force in Orissa was countered by the gradual rise of Biju Patnaik and his son Naveen Patnaik, who formed the Biju Janata Dal, which has gained the majority for the last three consecutive terms. The BJP has also made its presence in the state felt, and is considered an important political party in Odisha (Orissa). Orissa has its own judiciary (Delhi High Court), legislature (the Legislative Assembly) and executive council of Ministers, with the Chief Minister at the head. Orissa has a 147-member strong Vidhan Sabha. There are national as well as regional political parties in the state, although the political scene is dominated by the Congress. Naveen Patnaik, President of the Biju Janata Dal, continues in the office of the Chief Minister of Orissa presently, owing to his welfarist schemes for the people. Former Chief Minister of Odisha, S.C. Jamir, who was sworn in as Governor in March 2013, holds the incumbent office.

Orissa has a unicameral legislature. The Orissa Legislative Assembly or the Vidhan Sabha is the law-making highest body in the state, as part of the parliamentary system of representative democracy. The Orissa Vidhan Sabha along with the Secretariat is situated in the capital city of Bhubaneswar. It was first formed in May 1950. There is a total of 147 Assembly constituencies in

Orissa Legislative Assembly which is represented by 147 MLAs or Members of Parliament. 146 candidates are elected while one member is nominated from the Anglo-Indian community. Out of them, 90 Assembly seats are reserved for General candidates, 24 seats are reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates and 33 Assembly seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribe contestants. The term of the Legislative Assembly is 5 years, if it is not dissolved sooner. Periodic elections are held to elect members of the Vidhan Sabha. There are three sessions of the Orissa Legislative Assembly - budget, winter and monsoon. The Governor is the Nominal Head of the state, nominated by the President of India. The Chief Minister is the head of the government, vested with real executive powers. The Chief Minister is also the head of the MLAs. The present Speaker of the Orissa Vidhan Sabha is Pradip Kumar Amat from the Biju Janata Dal. While Naveen Patnaik is the Leader of the House, representing the BJD, Bhupinder Singh of the Congress is recognized as the Leader of Opposition in the Orissa Assembly. The current Legislative Assembly, which is the 14th Assembly of the Orissa Vidhan Sabha, was elected in May 2009. At the national level, Orissa is represented by 21 Members of Parliament in the Lok Sabha and 10 Members of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha.

Status of Women in Orissa Politics

The status of women in India has seen many ups and downs since ancient times - from at par status in ancient history to be in veils (Parda System) during the medieval period. In the post independent India, the status of women regained its strength and has been on a rise ever since. Women in post-independent India have been participating in almost all types of economic activities, day-to-day household chores, voting for a better governance and also in active politics. India has elected a woman prime minister, Indira Gandhi, and a woman president, Pratibha Patil. In the present central government, women comprise roughly quarter of the Indian cabinet with portfolios like external affairs, commerce and human resource development. At the ground level, India has a significant proportion of women in local level politics which has been achieved by reserving seat for women

In India's eastern state of Odisha, the presence of women in the political arena is not a new phenomenon. The state saw its first woman chief minister, Nandini Satpathy, come to power in June 1972. It has also witnessed many prominent women legislators – both at the parliamentary and state levels. Sadly, however, Odisha seems to have regressed. Today, although there are a number of female politicians in all the major parties, they have all had to contend with a patriarchal order. Male chauvinism marks all aspects of the election process and, unsurprisingly, it is the men who corner the lion's share of the posts and tickets. Some high-profile women leaders in Odisha could only prove themselves because they came from politically connected families. A woman politician emerging from the ground level and making it to the top is rare because attitudes within parties do not encourage them. While many do well in panchayat elections, during parliamentary or state level polls, male candidates are invariably preferred on the argument that they are more efficient, mobile and can undertake aggressive campaigns.

Almost all parties hesitate to field women candidates. Hence the number of women candidates fielded by various political parties has always been very low as compared to their numbers in the population. Among women who manage to rise in the political echelons, in spite of their ability in administration and the art of political articulation, very few women reach the level of cabinet ministers. Mostly they remain deputy ministers or ministers of state. When women reach the few ministerial positions, they are generally assigned portfolios in the social service sectors of Health, Education, Social Welfare, Women and Child Development etc. Another trend of women representation in Odisha reveals that most parties resorted to tokenism and symbolism when it came to representation of women. Women issues were not taken up by parties in a serious manner nor translated into programmes, policies and legislation nor were they mandated specifically to address issues of women. Almost all political parties set up a women's cell or wing but they worked as ancillary bodies. Very few women were able to capture seats of power. The number of women in the legislatures remained very small. Very few women reached the position of party president or leader of legislative party. The political mobilization and participation of women has been impressive in the Indian National Movement. They belonged to the elitist groups. It is worth-noting that the political mobilization of women and their participation in elections has steadily increased since the first General Elections of 1952. Women like A.Laxmibai, Subhadra Mahtab, Kiran Lekha Mohanty, Sarala Devi, Saraswati Devi joined real politics during this period. Women legislators elected from Odisha to State Assembly and Parliament so far, mostly belonged to the elite and high caste groups. The Kshatriyas (rulers of ex-princely states) have contributed the largest number of women legislators. The noticeable supremacy of Kshatriya women over other women in the field of politics is mainly due to the feudal ruling backdrop and influential temperament. It is imperative to note that up to 1971 not a single Brahmin woman could be elected as an MLA despite the fact that it is one of the "Dominant Castes" of the state. It was after only in 1972 the Brahmins, Karans and Khandayats entered into politics. The fate of OBC women representatives is also miserable. Due to the introduction of reservation in representation, some scheduled caste women and scheduled tribe women are getting involved in politics. Some of them are elected MLAs and MPs as a result of the reservation policy of the government. It is important to note that the election success of scheduled caste or scheduled tribe women is merely symbolic. They are just "token elites" without exercising any power. Most parties resorted to tokenism and symbolism when it came to representation of women. Another trend has been the entry of widows of prominent political figures into politics and positions of power. Some widows of the departed MLAs have also got the party tickets in order to contest in the bye-elections. Smt. Patta Nayak wife of ex-Minister Sri Trinath Nayak and their daughter Anjali Behera, Smt. Ratna Manjari Devi wife of Raja Sisir Kumar Narendra Deb, Shanti Devi, wife of Shri Ananta Narayan Singh Deo, Usha Devi, wife of Shri Trigunateeta Deb of Chikiti, V. Sugnana Kumari Deo, wife of Purna Chandra Mardaraj Deo and daughter in law of Ramchandra Mardaraj of Khallikote royal family, Mandakini Behera, wife of ex-MLA Sri Bhagabat Behera, Usharani Panda, wife of ex-Minister Sri Sarat Chandra Panda etc have entered politics through this family legacy. Odisha has 33 seats out of the 147 in the legislative assembly reserved for tribals. At the parliament level, five of the total 21 seats are reserved for ST candidates. Historically, political parties have never fielded more than an insignificant number of women from these seats. But when women candidates have been given a chance, they have won - not just once, but twice and thrice - proving that they too can master the 'winnability factor'. Saraswati Hembrum, Frida Topno, Sushila Tiriya, Hema Gamang, Draupadi Murmu were examples in this regard. The representation of Odia women in the Parliament election is very miserable. It is pertinent to note that till 1980

not a single women from Odisha was elected to the Lok Sabha. It was only in 1980 Smt. Jayanti Patnaik, wife of former Chief Minister; Shri J. B. Patnaik was elected to the Lok Sabha. Since 1980 only ten women so far have been elected to the Lok Sabha and since 1952 ten women have been elected to the Rajya Sabha. The total number of women MLAs elected to the Legislative Assembly between 1936 and 2009 was 56. Among them 36 women MLAs were elected for one time, 10 women MLAs were elected twice, 5 women MLAs were elected thrice, 3 women MLAs were elected four times, 1 women MLAs was elected for even times and 1 women MLAs was elected for 9 times. Among them V.Sugyan Kumari Devi had been elected for 9 times and this is the highest number of frequency in Odisha legislative Assembly in terms of winning the election and representing the state legislature by a women. Next to her Nandini Satpathy had won 7 times

History of Women in Orissa Politics: (1952- 2014)

There was a big gap between men and women in Odisha in electoral field during the pre - independence era. This can be inferred from the fact that none of the three ministry of Odisha during the Pre-Independence Assembly period, i.e., from 1936 to 1947 included any women, although Sarala Devi and Punya Prabha Devi were elected from the Cuttack town constituency, A. Laxmi Bai was elected from the Brahamapur constituency. But in the link assembly from 1947 to 1952 among the women legislators Smt. A. Laxmi Bai was the Deputy Speaker of the Odisha Legislative Assembly from 29.05.1946 to 20.02.1952 and Smt. Basant Manjari Devi was the Deputy Minister of Health in the Harekrushna Mahatab Ministry, who assumed the charge of office on 23rd April, 1946. After the Independence of India there had been a spectacular increasing in the political participation of women in Odisha. Many of them contested in the elections to the Assembly and Lok Sabha. A few of them were also appointed as the ministers both at the centre and in the states. But except Basant Manjari Devi, others were not very influential. The real powers continued to lay with the male politicians. Although Basant Manjari Devi, (queen mother or Rajmata of Ranpur) was a prominent women political personality during the post-Independence era, she lacked statewide influence. Despite the fact that Basant Manjari Devi had been the Deputy Minister she was at best a “decorative piece” of the cabinet of H.K. Mahatab and abakrishna Chaudhury from 1946 to 1959. Up to the end of 1960’s the political scene of Odisha was dominated by male leaders like Harekrishna Mahatab, Biju Patnaik, Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo, Nabakrishna Choudhary and Biren Mitra. The mid-term election to the Odisha Assembly was held in 1961. Smt. Saraswati Pradhan, a Congress Party candidate was elected from Bhatali constituency of Sambalpur district. She was inducted into Biju Patnaik’s Cabinet as a Deputy Minister of Education. [3] Smt Saraswati Pradhan was again inducted as a Deputy Minister of Education in the Biren Mitra’s government on 2nd October, 1963. She also served in the Ministry of Sadasiv Tripathy as the Deputy Minister of Education as before. Smt. Saraswati Pradhan served as a Deputy Minister in the three Ministries of Biju Patnaik, Biren Mitra and Sadasiv Mishra from 1961 to 1967, but she was not promoted to the Minister of state or Cabinet rank. The fact is that Smt. Saraswati Pradhan was appointed only to fill up the women quota in the ministry. Smt. Anang Manjari Devi, a Jana Congress candidate from Sukinda constituency Smt. Swaraswati Pradhan of the Congress party from Bhatli constituency and Smt. Ratna Prabha Devi, a Swatantra candidate from Dhenkanal constituency were elected in the elections of 1967 to the Odisha Assembly. The Swatantra–Jana Congress, Swatantra–Jana Congress Ministry did not include any women from the elected women legislators from their respective parties. In the mid-term elections to the Odisha Assembly of 1971 although 12 women candidates contested, none of them were elected to the Odisha Legislative Assembly. But Smt. Nandini Satpathy, then a Union Minister of state became the Chief Minister of Odisha though she was not a Member of Assembly. [4] Smt. Nandini Satpathy was the first woman Chief Minister of Odisha. Later on she was elected to the Assembly from Cuttack Constituency on 26.11.1972 in a bye election. In the 1974 mid-term elections Nandini Satpathy formed her second ministry on March 6, 1974. Other women candidates such as Sairindri Nayak, Subhansu Malini Ray of Congress and V. Sugyan Kumari Deo of Utkal Congress were elected to the Assembly. But none of them were included in the ministry of Smt. Satpathy. The Binayak Acharya Ministry that assumed charge of office on 29th December 1976 also did not induct any woman minister. Nilamani Routray, took over the administration of the state on June 26, 1977. Eventhough, out of seven women legislators five were elected from Janata party, Routray Ministry did not include any woman minister.

In the 1980 elections to the Odisha Legislative Assembly 5 women members were elected. Sri J.B Patnaik inducted Smt. Saraswati Hembram, as a Deputy Minister of Child Development and Rural Reconstruction. Smt. Hembram continued as a deputy minister till the end of the J. B. Patnaik’s first tenure of Chief Minister. In the 1985 Assembly elections 7 women members were elected to the Odisha Assembly. Never before such large number of women candidates were elected to the House. Miss Frida Topno was inducted as the Minister of State for Fisheries and Animal Husbandry in the second Ministry of J.B. Patnaik in 1985. J.B.Patnaik reshuffled his Ministry on 22nd July 1986. He inducted Smt. Parama Pujari and Smt Saraswati Hembram as Deputy Ministers. Smt Pujari was given the portfolio of Child Development and Rural Reconstruction while Smt Parama Pujari was given the portfolio of Harijan & Tribal Welfare. Shri Hemananda Biswal became the leader of the Congress Legislature Party and he took over as Odisha’s Chief Minister on 5th December, 1989. He included all the women ministers of J.B.Patnaik’s Cabinet. In the March 1990 elections seven women members were elected to the Odisha Assembly. Except Congress legislator, Smt. Nandini Satpathy, all others were elected from Janata Dal Dal ticket. But Biju Patnaik inducted only Dr. Kamala Das as a Minister of state for Education and Youth Services (Primary and Adult Education) into his Cabinet. In the 1995 elections to the Odisha Assembly eight women members were elected. Among them Smt. Nandini Satpathy, Parama Pujari, Usha Rani Panda, Bijayalaxmi Sahu, and Saraswati Hembram were the prominent and high-flying members having previous political experience. But Shri J.B. Patnaik inducted only one woman member, Smt. Bijayalaxmi Sahoo, in his Cabinet, and was given the portfolio of Women and Child Development. On 9th February, 1999 J.B.Patnaik resigned from his office and he was succeeded by Giridhar Gamango. He inducted Smt. Usha Rani Panda, Smt. Parama Pujari, Smt. Swaraswti Hembram and Smt. Bijayalaxmi Sahoo in his cabinet in February, 1999. But after super cyclone of October 1999 he was removed from his post and Shri Hemananda Biswal succeeded him. He retained all the women ministers of the Gomango Ministry without leaving any one of them. Shri Naveen Patnaik assumed the charge of office of the BJD-BJP coalition government on 5th March, 2000. Fourteen women members were elected to the

Assembly for the first time. This was the highest number of women members ever elected to the Assembly. Shri Naveen Patnaik inducted two women ministers in his cabinet. Dr. Kamala Das was included in the ministry as the Cabinet Minister of Health, Family Welfare, Women & Child Development and Smt. Draupadi Murmu as a Minister of state for Commerce and Transport. But in 2002 he dismissed Dr Kamala Das from his Ministry on the charges of corruption and after the reshuffle of the Ministry on 6th August 2002 he included Bishnupriya Behera in his Ministry as the Minister of state for Women and Child Development. He also suspended Smt. Kumudini Patnaik, Member of Parliament from Aska constituency, in April, 2002 to avert a possible split in the Parliamentary party. In order to prevent a formal split in the Parliamentary Party, Bishnu Priya Behera, Shri Padmanav Behera were accommodated in the ministry. The suspension of Kumudini Patnaik assumed significant, as she was the wife of senior B.J.D leader and former Finance Minister, Shri Ramkrishna Patnaik. Angry with the Chief Ministers' decision to shift him from Finance to Agriculture Minister, Shri Ramakrishna Patnaik had resigned from the BJD-BJP ministry. In a mark of revolt the Patnaik couple resigned from the BJD and joined the opposition Congress Party. The 2004 election elected 11 women members Shri Naveen Patnaik inducted Smt Pramila Mallik, (BJD) as the Cabinet Minister of Women & Child Development and Smt. Surama Padhy, (BJP) as the Minister of state for Cooperation. The trend of the 2009 Assembly Election in Odisha was the poor representation of women candidates. This election saw just six women candidates making it to the State Assembly and none to Lok Sabha. The women members elected to Assembly were Pramila Mallik from Binjharpur, Anjali Behera from Hindol, Sipra Mallik from Kendrapada, V.Sugyana Kumari Deo from Kabisuryanagar, Usha Devi from Chikiti and Mamata Madhi from Chitrakonda. There were just 118 women candidates in the fray for 147 seats, the major culprits being the principal parties. The Biju Janata Dal had nominated just eight, while the Congress gave tickets to 14 women aspirants. The BJP nominated 14 too. Parties like CPI and CPI (M) did not nominate any women candidate at all. It is ominous for the cause of women empowerment in Odisha Talking about the issue does not make any sense if political parties do not practice what they say. Not nominating adequate number of women candidates is an indicator in itself. [8] But after a couple of days of her induction into the ministry as the Minister of Women and Child Development Smt Pramila Mallik was asked to resign from the State Cabinet for her alleged involvement in *dal* scam. In the last week of May, 2012. Shri Naveen Patnaik recommended dismissal of Women and Child Development Minister Anjali Behera from the Ministry for her alleged support to Shri Pyarimohan Mahapatra.

In 2014 election Only 11 women have been elected to the House, which is two less than their number in 2000. In 2004 the number of women MLAs was 12 and in 2009, there were just seven of them. In 1995, the House had ten women members. The new 15th Assembly will have 10 BJD women MLAs while BJP's Radharani Panda will be the lone woman member for her party. Congress does not have a single woman in its 16-member legislature party. The women BJD MLAs are Sugnana Kumari Deo (Kabisuryanagar), Pramila Mallick (Binjhapur), Usha Devi (Chikiti), Basanti Mallick (Mohana), Raseswari Panigrahi (Sambalpur), Nandini Devi (Sanakhemudi), Rajashree Mallick (Tirtol), Seemarani Nayak (Hindol), Snehagini Chhuria (Atabira) and Tukuni Sahu (Titilagarh). Out of the 11 women MLAs, eight are new faces while Sugnana Kumari Deo, Pramila Mallick and Usha Devi of BJD are old timers, and the last two have been Ministers in the Naveen Patnaik Government. According to the State Assembly data, 56 women have been elected to the House since 1936 and 20 of them elected repeatedly. Observers blame political parties for not fielding more number of women candidates during the elections because of an unreasonable apprehension that women have less chances of winning than men. "If political parties do not field enough number of women candidates in the elections, how can we expect to get more number of women representatives? The parties are only talking about women empowerment, but when it comes for action, they hesitate to do so," said a women's rights activist. A total of 115 women candidates had participated in the Assembly polls this time, which works out to roughly 8 per cent of the total number of contestants. The ruling BJD, which keeps talking of 'women's empowerment' on every conceivable occasion, had no more than 14 women in its list of candidates for the 147 Assembly constituencies. Still, it was ahead of other parties- the Congress had nominated just eight women candidates and BJP, nine. The representation of Odisha women in the Lok Sabha presents an equally dismal picture. Only two women Rita Tarai from Jajpur and Sakuntala Laguri from Keonjhar (both from BJD) will represent the State in the Lower House this time. Almost all political parties had failed to field enough women candidates. A paltry 17 women were in the fray for the Parliament elections from the State out of a total of 197 candidates in the race. This gives a clear indication about how serious the parties are about 33 per cent reservation for women.

Women still face challenges in political leadership

Political Parity recently asked, "Why the scarcity of female candidates and elected officials? Are women uninterested, unwilling, or uncertain? Is the political system unresponsive and impenetrable? Ultimately, is the issue the driver or the road?" Ultimately, the report concludes both the driver and the road matter to any journey. "In particular, the driver's perceptions of whether she will face smooth road conditions or stop and go traffic influence her choice to take or avoid a certain route. Likewise, women contemplating running for office are strongly affected by the costs and benefits they anticipate from a candidacy (Chinkin, 2003). We also found that road conditions appear to differ for women; the roads on which men travel to higher office have fewer potholes and roadblocks than those navigated by women. Surely women's documented lesser confidence matters for whether they run for office but so too does the larger set of structures that help shape their choices." (Schwindt, 2006)

Some of the challenges that women faces in Orissa politics are:

i. Lack of quota in internal party : This is one of the major challenges that women face in Orissa. In every political party in Orissa, man plays a major role, and the participation of women in political parties are discouraged. During our discussion, it was found that only 2 out of 200 members in parties are women and they are either wife of some of leaders or relatives, there is less scope for women if they are not relatives of any big leaders in parties. It was also observed that there is no fixed quota form women sections who will be joined in the political party.

ii. **Campaign Funding:** Generally, when money dominates politics, women lose out. With women having persistently lower incomes for many reasons (gender gap in pay, occupational segregation, disproportionate unpaid family care, frequent unwillingness to face the social consequences of pushing for higher salaries or promotions and with social and business interaction proceeding heavily along gendered lines, women are far less likely than men to be in the social and business networks that pour money into political campaigns. Combine a lack of public funding for our campaigns in the Odisha with, at the very least, careful fundraising and spending limits, and women are at a decided disadvantage as candidates.

iii. **Persisting Gender Roles:** Certain features of gender have proven resistant to feminist critique over the past few decades, including the association of masculinity with leadership and femininity with weakness. Although recent discussion of “transformational leadership” has begun to help us appreciate the advantages of non-traditional approaches, implicit biases (especially activated in a context of crisis) lead to suspicion that women are not “strong enough” to be political leaders (Powley, 2003). A lack of women in high-powered positions may affect both men’s and women’s perceptions of women’s “ability to rule.” And while we know that mentorship is the most powerful way to bring more women into political office (and counteract social biases), being a token “woman at the top” is often accompanied by extreme work overload that leaves little time for female political leaders to be nurturing the next generation of women in politics (Powley, 2003).

iv. **Family Work and Time Constraints:** Continuing uneven distribution of family care responsibilities means that women spend far more time than men in home and child care. Studies repeatedly demonstrate that women pay a “motherhood penalty,” across fields, relating not just to the time, effort, and medical care of pregnancy and childbirth, but to the far greater maternal involvement necessary for breastfeeding, and to the persistent tendency of women to do a larger share of childcare as the child grows. Anyone deeply involved in childcare, whether male or female, would face tough time constraints navigating between family responsibilities and a political position; because the work is rarely equally shared, women are more disadvantaged (Mollmann, 2011). Generally, the studies shows that, compared to men, “female politicians tend to start their careers later, have fewer children, spend more time caring for their families, and arrange their lives to have shorter commuting time than their male counterparts. (Indeed, commute time to a state’s capital correlates strongly with the number of women who run for that state’s legislature. This means that only women with supportive families run for office, whereas men are more likely to run in spite of discouragement from their families (O’Connor, YYYY)

v. **Risk taking and Rushing In:** New political “spaces” frequently open up through revolutions (be they political or technological) or the creation of new groups or movements. It is common for men to rush in to fill these new spaces. Sometimes the exclusion of women has been explicit and intentional,

as in the classic case of the French Revolution but often it is an unintended consequence of men’s greater tendency to seize the moment without needing to consider gendered effects of their actions and women’s to hesitate, perhaps rationally, knowing the punishment for them will be harsher should they fail (Moccia, 2007). When deliberate exclusion gives rise to awareness and anger on the part of women, it can launch feminist movements, as with suffrage and women’s liberation.

vi. **Political Culture:**

Political discourse and electoral campaigns have grown extremely negative, acrimonious, and, all too often, uncivil. While acrimony and incivility seem to turn off most citizens, and turn away good potential candidates of all genders and colors, it seems to affect women more than men Karam and (Lovenduski, 2005)

vii. **Not Believing Politics Matters:** Like men, women are often ambitious to change the world, but are far less likely to believe that politics is the most effective or efficient means of doing this. In a recent survey of graduate students in law or policy schools, men were significantly more likely to agree that

“The problems that I most care about can be solved through politics.” Given the many costs, financial and personal, involved in mounting a political campaign (costs which are higher for women than for men), and the scant rewards of holding office, it is no surprise that women are far less likely to want to run. Additionally, as institutionalist scholars point out, we continue to exclude women from politics by maintaining gendered political institutions that value men and masculinity and devalue women and femininity. “Inclusion” thus has to mean more than bringing in women and expecting them to conform to male norms within institutions; our ideals of candidates and officeholders need to be “retendered” to give women greater incentive to engage (Jones, 1997).

Conclusion

Orissa has a rich history of measuring political participation of women since its independence. The decentralization of governance which is taking place for last two decades has increased the importance of measuring participation of women in decision making. Proper gender budgeting has already been worked out for inclusive growth of women & girls by ear-marking one third budget for the women in all the schemes. The Government of Orissa has a lot of emphasis on utilizing real time data for measuring different social indicators and using them for policy intervention. With more responsive data on women participation, better gender budget initiatives aim to move the state towards a gender equal society. So, in conclusion we may say that Odisha is a state where serious challenges exist for women. Apart from inequalities in the health, education and employment sectors, inequality in the political arena is a new challenge for our women. Even as we equip these women representatives with the necessary leadership skills for effective participation in the election system, there is a bigger challenge of sensitizing other stake holders, from the government, to the media to the society at large, on the importance and necessity of removing discrimination against women at all level (Wilbere, 2011).

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