

Grass Root Democracy A booster for Women Emancipation in Dhanbad A District of Jharkhand

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Abstract

Dhanbad District is a living example of both Urban and Rural women Emancipation at Grass root. This district is called "Coal Capital of India" Out of its total population nearly 12,00,000 are women. Right from Gram panchyats to Nagar Nigam from cultural activities to Educational institutions, Morcha to demonstration women of the district are on forefront. Politics is no more a game of male only. They have shown that women of the district are more sincere, stable, committed, hard working and above all not so corrupt.

All women panchyats at village level is the need of the hour for greater empowerment and to eliminate social evils particularly at villages. It is a matter of utmost satisfaction that women of the district are moving and working up for breaking point to out do the males. A mental revolution among women is bound to bring successful grass root democracy leading to complete women emancipation.

Keywords : Mental – Revolution, Strategy, Country Liquor, Women Panchayats, Grass- root

Introduction

Dhanbad being a 'Coal Capital of India' is a very important district born on 5th Nov. 2000 in the state of Jharkhand. Nearly 47% of its total population, which is round about 12 Lakhs, are women. The total area of this district is 2994 Sq. K.M. divided into 8 Blocks namely Baghmara, Baliapur, Dhanbad, Govindpur, Jharia, Nirsa, Topchanchi and Tundi. Block wise Statistical figures relating to population, number of panchayats and number of Villages are relevant to recommend a case for "All women panchayats at grass root level democracy.

Name of Block	Population		No. of Panchayats	No. of Villages
	Male	Female		
Bhagmara	219354	189103	27	227
Baliapur	54832	50781	12	69
Dhanbad	306316	258152	28	85
Govindpur	104886	96990	21	225
Jharia	258743	216598	25	58
Nirsa	197955	178888	25	207
Topchanchi	73460	66918	19	121
Tundi	63400	60726	24	296

The above table and its analysis highlights the presence of 11,18,156 women living in both rural and urban area of this district. The daily coverage of women activities and their awakening in important news papers of the district conclude the hard reality that women empowerment are increasingly emerging on every morcha, protest and demonstration. They are seen in the front rows and caught in the pictures. The Researcher on various occasions met and had conversation with these women and found them confident, loud, vocal and determined to fight out their problems. By using democratic tools like Dharna, Demonstrations and street march they make aware the Society and administration that they are ready for all sacrifices to fight out their grievances.

Since middle of Present year 2014 the direct action of rural women of the district is an eye opener. These rural women, majority are illiterate and victim of cruelty of "Mahua" addicted husbands, launched anti-liquor drive. In the villages of Jharkhand " Mahua - wine" trade production is very common. It is like an epidemic from which even children of villages are not spared. In order to save villages social fabrics and save the future of India, village women stood-up to root out illicit mahua wine production units running boldly under no fear psychosis.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, RANCHI
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2014

jharkhand 03



■ Women of Barwadda locality carry out their drive against illegal country liquor, in Dhanbad on Sunday. BIJAY/HT

Women take up cudgels, launch anti-liquor drive

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DHANBAD: Women of Murradih village under the Barwadda police station area of the district launched an anti-liquor drive on Saturday. Earlier, a similar campaign had been launched in Dhawakitta panchayat under the Rajgunj police station area of the district.

Hundreds of women led by Balika Devi demolished the illegal liquor brewing unit which was operating in the village. About 200 kg of mahua was also thrown away. According to Devi, on August 29 a letter was handed over to the officer-in-charge of the local police station to initiate action against the illicit trade.

“But when the police took no action, we decided to act on our own. Liquor was easily available which was making our men addicts, besides making them jobless,” Devi said.

This anti liquor drive started from Rajganj Village women in organized way in August 2014. They stormed “Mahua Wine Addas” collectively. Destroyed the produced wine in store and other equipments of wine production. Soon after this Andolation spread in other villages of the district like Barwadda, Topchanchi, Jharia, Bhelatand, Baliapur, Alakdia, Dhamakitta, Panchayat and other villages in various police stations and administrative officers to initiate strong action against these illicit Mahua producing units. These Mahila Morchas were lashed with Jharoo and sticks with out any fear of police because it ruined their family peace and created economic hardships on home front.

This “Nari Shakti” is sure to change the face of our villages with its multiplying emancipated are empowered women. It is a matter of surprise that even in urban areas, women, though literate but unorganized, are on this drive and have started making hue and cry against liquor consumption.

In this male dominated society, for women Empowerment, it is necessary that women participate in politics in greater number and appropriate leadership and intermediary positions. So right women who are politically knowledgeable and empowered should come forward as 'Role Model' to

get more and more women involved in politics. Such involvement has to be direct and informal politics and not merely indirectly through domestic and economic activities and conflicts. Such participation by empowered women as well as the empowering of many more women are needed also to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of many women who have faith in the leadership of women. Researcher in her field work activities found that rural and poor women have larger faith and trust in women leadership. They believe that women would be more sincere, stable, committed, hard working and above all not so corrupt. They particularly view that women would worry more for women problems.

Till recently, politics remained a male game. Now women have realized that this must not be allowed to continue. It is for this cause 1/3 rd seat reservation for women in parliament is sought for since long, but this bill could not be passed in parliament for reasons best known to the male members of parliament of this country. Only promises, assurances and lip sympathy roared.

Undoubtedly in the post independence period participation of women has increased at various levels and forums, but it has been allowed and executed half heartedly, women are voters but are not independent voters. Majority of them being illiterate and abide the suggestions of male members of their family. Particularly rural poor women need tremendous mobilization. There is a strong need for efforts to enable the women move forward to take-up positions and responsibilities in various forums. In the absence of any mechanisms that offer some type of support the women participants and political aspirants at all levels, feel isolated, weak, frustrated and at the end apathetic. Their representation, even where there is, has failed to evolve any enthusiasms among other women.

The Researcher after visits and conversations with rural and urban women of 8 blocks of this district emphatically asserts that the issues of women's rights, equality and development never received full attention. Even the question of women childwelfare and living working conditions of women only received a lip sympathy, remained on paper or at best got a halfhearted implementation. So in order to receive full representation in the decision making positions with monitoring power involving thousands of ordinary women rather than a few "super women" the Researcher suggest and recommends formation of "All women panchayats" at village level in Jhrakhand state. This will be a beginning of empowering women from root to the level of higher education and will ultimately ensure greater participation of rural women in the nation building directly.

This recommendation of 'All Women Panchayats' at village level is the need of the hour in the context of worldwide recognition for women participation in politics. In 1952 U.N. had adopted a convention on this political rights of women and in 1985 at the World Conference of Women in Nairobi observed

“For true equality to become a reality for women the sharing of power on equal terms with

men must be a major strategy”.

National Commission on Women (India) called for reservation of seats for women in various forums.

Panchayati Raj means Local Self Government which found place in the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 40) but without constitutional support. Several States set-up Panchayat Raj bodies at Village, Block and District level in the late fifties for the rapid rural development when our democracy being in the making stage, could not give results in the absence of constitutional support, political will, adequate power and resources for such panchayati Raj bodies. Women were rarely found on these bodies, except as co-opted members. In between 1970 to 1990, several commissions and committees were set-up who recommended constitutional status to Panchayati Raj bodies. Finally in 1992, Parliament approved the 73rd amendment giving Panchayati Raj a constitutional status. As per this amendment each state to establish Gram Sabha and set-up three tier Panchayati Raj with 50% seat reservation for women on Panchayati Raj bodies like Gram Panchayats at village level, Panchayat Samitees at Block Level comprising many villages and Zila Parishad at district level.

Gram Panchayats constitute most basic unit of decentralized decision making in India. Each Gram Panchayat has 7 to 15 members depending on the village population led by a sarpanch elected of 5 years and accountable to the gram Sabha the adult Electorate of each village. As local self Govt. panchayats are legally empowered to collect taxes to realize funds besides Central and State Govt. Grants'.

The idea of forming "All Women Panchayats" resulted to the mind of this Researcher when many rural matured women of this district wanted to get rid of male dominated Panchayats. They openly advocated that only some seat reservations in the Panchayat members for women will not solve their problems, aspirations and empowering thinking. Some were so vocal and confident with the Slogan "**We want to out do the males**". Through "All women panchayats" a "**Mental Revolution**" is bound to come not only among women, but also among males that "**Women are moving and waking up for Breaking Point**". The villages of Jharkhand State also need formation of "All women Panchayats" like working in Karnataka, Orissa, M.P. and Maharashtra.

This field based research study for the formation of "All women panchayats" find that this will revolutionize and allow women of villages to transform their lives. The collective action of Women against oppressive patriarchal power with the long term goal of social transformation is bound to ensure women's rights and their liberation from Subjugation, Superstition, degradation and injustice". **Women openly say "If we can run the houses, why not a panchayat"**.

The researcher strongly believes that formation of "All Women Panchayats" will bring self confidence and women at large will certainly be encouraged to promote education and higher education among women. There lies great scope for women empowerment through "All women

panchayats" because by this women can easily come to the fore and make a difference to society through this forum, but for this they need a great deal of encouragement from their families as well. It will not be an exaggeration to say that **the amount of work the ladies do with utmost sincerity and devotion, the men don't**.

Besides scheduled work load for Gram Panchayats. "All women panchayats" will certainly work for women's issues. This will certainly empower village women by giving them a collective voice. A sole female member hardly speak in front of male panchayat colleagues, but there is safety in increased numbers. Through this "**Grass Root Democracy**" **women will realize and work for providing education to all rural girls and endeavor their best for establishing women's colleges in each block of the District**. This spread of education and in particular higher education will empower women in general. So this Researcher strongly recommend establishing "Statutory women's Panchayats" in villages, as an integral part of grass root democracy. Dalit women who are most notable in their lack of participation will also be encouraged, vocal and empowered. Indicators of Women empowerment can only be developed by women themselves. For women, the process by which they learn to sit on a chair, or sign their names or even opportunities to enhance their mobility are empowering and carry great potentials for transformation. This is just a step forward towards women emancipation. Still lots of steps and opportunities are yet to be discovered. It is simply an eye opener to fore see the glittering goal ahead.

Tips of Root out Discrimination against women

From the various data analysis, interviews and discussions following observations may be made to root out discrimination against women which starts from the cradle and which is persistent, pervasive and pernicious in character. This evil has to be exterminated to develop self reliance in women both urban and rural to occupy an honourable place in society:

1. A total Mental Revolution in this male dominated society is needed among males to recognize with respect, dignity and decency that women are complements of men and not as their possessions or subservient to them.
2. It is recommended that no job should be considered sex typed, that is, a job being suitable for a woman because of her femininity or for a man because of his masculinity.
3. Women should have career options they should not be forced to become secretaries, clerks, teachers or nurses rather should be encouraged more and more to become scientists, mathematicians, doctors, engineers, architects, administrations etc.
4. Time is ripe to educate and inform women about the law and their legal rights because many problems they face to-day only because of their ignorance of law and will to assert their rights. So attempt be made to compile the main provision of different enactments affecting women to publish those in simple and intelligible form.

5. A subject like Home Science and 'women's laws' be introduced as compulsory subject for every girl student at intermediate and degree level classes of all faculties.
6. Girls should be given freedom and choice of studying in the field they opt.
7. Free education upto Inter level at least made compulsory for all girls.
8. Women of the district should unite to prohibit alcoholism in both male and female. Tribal women also take drinks (Hadia) prepared by Rice.
9. Govt. should increase budget allocation for health schemes for women and special allowances with higher salaries to lady doctors serving in villages be given to encourage them to stay in villages and serve the rural women.
10. Unlike tribal states of North East and dominantly tribal dominated area of some other states "Tribal councils" be formed to control the lines, customs, marriage practices, property rights, occupational patterns etc.
11. The Jharkhand state govt. must without loss of further time should form "Women Commission".
12. More and more women teachers be recruited in order to get more girls to attend schools and colleges.
13. There should be no stigma attached to spinsters, working girls, remarried widows or child less women.
14. Enough colleges have been established in urban areas, now state Govt. should enact laws that fresh colleges will be allowed to state in rural areas and for this incentives be also given.
15. More and more vocational education be given to girls right from school days , specially in villages . Besides agricultural activities , cottage based work like yarn spinning, bidi rolling , weaving crafts , other handicrafts , paper making and Anchar making jobs etc. be made available by N.G.O.'s to rural women for promotion of self employment .
16. As women members and chair persons of Panchayats , who would be basically new entrants in Panchayats have to acquire the required skill and be given appropriate orientation to assure their rightful roles as leaders and decision makers at village level .
17. The source of input to Centres of higher education must be provided proper educational and sanitary infrastructures specially for girl students in schools run, managed and maintained by Govt.
18. The story of highly educated empowered women and daughters of the soil working as advocates in various courts of this district narrate hurdles and because of those hurdles out of 60 registered women Advocates at Dhanbad Bar hardly 20-25 are regular in practice. Lack of proper seating places and lack of cleaned Lavatories both for lady lawers and lady clients are primary troubles for them. So the researcher highly recommends that district administration both executive and judiciary should stand to-gather for the solution of this burning problems of women in the court campus . The researcher has also approached in person to the authorities of Bar Association for its early redressal.
19. In order to promote self reliant women, socially responsible citizens and over all personality development work shops , seminars , group discussions and short play should be encouraged by the colleges and university .
20. More and more "Self Help Group" be organized in association with village women to undertake development projects . This S.H.G. will undoubtedly counter the Mahajans , prohibit alcoholism, settle disputes of village spouses and even fight with police and village district officials B.D.O. etc. for the betterment of the village .
21. The recommendations of the Law Commission of India must be enacted as laws by one legislatures to ensure daughters get the ancestral property without any discrimination such economic solvency will lead to women empowerment.
22. Crimes against women have tremendously increased during this last decade, Rape , Sexual harassment , Dahej- murders and other coercions on women have became every day news item in almost all news papers of India . So strong punitive punishments and exemplary legal actions are required to invoke self confidence among women , only then women can be emancipated.
23. Women higher education need for separate educational courses and programmes for women through separate colleges for women.
24. State Govt. must take-up female education as their Governmental Policy.
25. From the feed back of girl students it transpired that cent per cent wanted jobs which is not a healthy sign . Rather they should have emerged, after education, more confident ,more efficient in home management and able to understand psychology of elders of the family. This will bring home peace. Education never means only service . An educated empowered women is the live of second defence on economic front used in case of emergency either for herself or for the family. However , the brilliant girls must be given full opportunities of higher education and motivate them for professions like Medical, Fashion designer, C.A. Air hostages Advocate M.B.A., Engineers, Pilots and other jobs of dignity.
26. Financial assistance should be provided by the Govt. to girls having higher education either general technical or professional.
27. Girls hostel facilities with safety and security be provided to each women's college S.S.L.N.T. Mahila college the premier women's college of Dhanbad district has hostel facility for girls, but not adequate and sufficient , which should be increased by 5 times to its present capacity.
28. Transport facility is the second big problem to girl students , the 1st being financial. So the state Govt. of District Administration should provide bus facility for girls on important routes leading

to-wards women's colleges and center for higher education at concessional rates.

29. With the Creation of new state Jharkhand, people had high hopes for quality education and facilities for women education which still need a lot in this direction at all Govt. and University level. So immediate and sincere attention of Govt., University and also N.G.O.'s are required to establish more women colleges for general higher education , professional training centres and introduction of courses like M.B.A. , M.C.A. and also effective coaching centres for C.A./ C.S. and Common admission Test (CAT) for girls , only then the objectives of higher education and women empowerment can be achieved.
30. The construction of working Girl's Hostel for more than 200 seats is urgently needed to accommodate empowered women at district Headquater . For this the state Govt. must provide funds without delay .

It is an accomplished fact that a large number of brilliant students , both boys and girls, shift to Delhi University, B.H.U. and to different Universities of North and South only because Dhanbad is yet not a district which could provide higher education of the standard of a nationally reputed college for the reasons that the teacherstudent ratio in every girls

college is much below the U.G.C. norms, colleges do not have proper library facilities, Laboratories are ill equipped and university exams are rarely held in time, so efforts from all corners are to be made for providing a healthy academic atmosphere for real emancipation of women of the district going for higher education. Thus, a radical change in the out look and drastic reformations in the infrastructure for girls higher education are urgently required.

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