

Women's Participation in Forest Governance after the Forest Rights Act, 2006: Evidence from Junglemahal, West Bengal

¹Tapasi Giri, ²Dr. Waseem Ahmed

¹Scholar, Department of Political Science,

²Assistant Professor,

Glocal University, Saharanpur, UP

Abstract: *The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (Forest Rights Act or FRA) introduced a rights-based approach to forest governance in India by recognizing the legal rights of forest-dwelling communities over forest land and resources. An important dimension of the Act is its emphasis on women's participation through joint ownership of individual forest rights and their involvement in Gram Sabha-based decision-making. In the forested region of Junglemahal in West Bengal, where tribal communities such as the Santhal, Munda, Bhumij, Lodha, Kheria Sabar, and Oraon depend heavily on forests, women's participation has become increasingly important for both livelihood security and sustainable forest management. Earlier studies on Joint Forest Management (JFM) in West Bengal found that women contributed significantly to forestry activities but often had limited representation in decision-making institutions. The FRA has created greater opportunities for women's involvement, although implementation challenges remain.*

Keywords: Forest Rights Act, Women Empowerment, Forest Governance, Junglemahal, Gram Sabha, Community Forest Resource Rights, Tribal Women.