



Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS)

Eastern Regional Conference 2025

Theme:
Gender and Politics:
Women's lives in
Eastern India

**31st October &
1st November, 2025**

Venue:
Berhampur University,
Berhampur, Odisha



Call For Papers

In September, 2025, the world-wide struggle for gender equality will celebrate the thirty years of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing that committed itself to the goal of women's 'full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power' as 'fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace'. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action insisted on 'transformed partnership' to address the gendered inequalities in the sharing of resources, power and decision making at all levels. Equal partnership means an intensive focus on the areas of underrepresentation in terms of participation, opportunities, leadership and institution building. It addresses the lack of resources like financial, policy support and social network in achieving equality. Equal participation prioritises challenging the stereotyped gender norms and behaviours marginalizing women's perspectives in social and economic development. It is important to understand how sexed and gendered structures of politics intersect with different social vulnerabilities in terms of class, caste, tribe, ethnicity, religion, trans and sexual minorities, disabilities etc. in creating complex layers of discrimination, dispossession, marginalization and inequalities. The focus on intersectional experiences becomes organic to the struggle for gender justice and political empowerment. Breaking the 'culture of silence' at different levels along with the struggle against the 'culture of violence' is a necessary condition of engendering politics. Keeping line with these priorities, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development revisit the normative focus of governance with the goal of creating a more accessible, violence-free and capable environment for women. It necessitates reframing notions like rights, entitlements, access and ownership and challenging the culture of exclusion at institutional and non-institutional spaces of decision-making.

A gender-sensitive political culture demands the substantive role and agency of women in decision making beyond their numerical presence. In this context, it is important to point out that despite the aspiration of the Beijing Conference in empowering women as 'political constituency' and subsequent global commitments to gender equality, women's participation in politics remains at a very low level marking unfulfilled dreams. A quick look to the global picture of women's political representation reveals that only in a handful of country women could secure nearer to 50 per cent share of seats (a larger part of these countries having electoral quota for women). After 75 years of independence and equal suffrage rights, the share of women members in the Indian parliament remains, on an average, below 15 per cent. The current Lok Sabha has only 78 members, consisting of 13.6 per cent share of female members. Modern populist politics, while incorporates women as 'demographic dividend', often corrupts into a tendency to undermine women's civic agency as a cosmetic stakeholdership. As evidenced from many instances from India, women's role as panchayat pradhan is being usurped by the male members of the family or the respective male party members in villages. Women members in the elected bodies of power or political organizations often struggle with gendered norms, like soft portfolios in cabinets or lower ranks of party organization. Women's participation, role and leadership in social sector, formal and informal economic spaces, various domains of organizational activities including movement spaces are being threatened by newer forms of patriarchal political power, invisible boundaries, masculinist culture of governance, absence of policies and support mechanisms and lack of violence-free environment in contemporary India.

The conference will focus on the challenges and complexities in engendering politics in India, with a broad focus on eastern Indian region. It will address the issues related to various forms of socio-political, economic and cultural exclusion, marginalization and discrimination that pose as threats to empower women as independent political subjects. The autonomy and agency of women, newer strategies of resistance and resilience, in challenging this representational invisibility in public and private spheres will be an important part of the conversation in the conference.

The broad sub-themes are:

- **Women in State Politics, Local Self-Governance**
- **Women's Movements in Eastern India**
- **Politics of Migration and the State of Adivasi Women**
- **Repression, Representation and Rights of Women**
- **Culture of Gender Based Violence and Silence**
- **Struggle of Informal Women Employees and Women Workers' Rights**

Abstracts (500 words) are invited on the Subthemes but may not be restricted to these. Scholars and activists from West Bengal and Odisha along with those in Bihar and Jharkhand are encouraged to submit abstracts. Submissions from other parts of the country are also encouraged where the study is on the Eastern Region of India. Preferably full paper will be required if selected. Please send Abstracts to Email Id - iawseasternregionconference@gmail.com

Deadline for Abstract Submission: August 30, 2025

Communication for Abstract selection: September 10, 2025

Registration Fees for the Conference:

500INR for students, 2000INR for non-students

Paper presenters are to make arrangements for their own travel. Accommodation and local hospitality will be provided.