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RESEARCH ARTICLE

POSITION OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN BASALT QUARRYING INDUSTRY AS AN INFORMAL SECTOR: AN EXPERIENCE OF RAMPURHAT-I C.D. BLOCK, BIRBHUM DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

¹Madhumita Sen and ²Probodh Kumar Mondal

¹Department of Geography, PDC Girls' College, Bolpur, Birbhum

²Department of Geography, Narugram High School, P.O.-Narugram, Burdwan

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ABSTRACT

Women are economically excluded member of family in traditional society of developing countries, but they are engaged in house hold works like cooking, children rearing, manage the all parts of family throughout the day. Because, socially constructed rules are usually unequal in terms of power, decision- making, freedom, ownership of resources, and so on. This is the scenario of non-tribal and rural women in traditional society of main-stream civilization. Women of tribal community are exception to this discipline in terms of family income and other works of family. Tribal women as a hard worker collect the fuel and other resources like fruits, leaf and different types of grass from forest; consequently, they work in agricultural field. Refusing the forest and to some extent the agricultural field by introduction of basalt quarrying in 1960s, most of the tribal women of the area of Rampurhat-1C.D block of Birbhum district are forcefully engage in crusher. Traditional occupations of the tribal women were eco-friendly as well as biogenic resource process. Upcoming economy i.e. basalt quarrying sector create the problems of the position of tribal women in terms of socio-cultural spectrum. The paper made an attempt gives the realistic view about an informal economy as well as position of tribal women in quarrying sector.

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INTRODUCTION

Resource process of the earth surface is divided into two categories on basis of existence of resources and function of resources. One is biogenic resource and another resource process is geo-genic. Vertical growth and dynamic uses of biogenic resources are increasing in contemporary world by the active influence of research and development technology. It is the category of renewable and partially flow resources (forest as a resource). On the other hand, geo-genic resource refers to mineral resource i.e. non-renewable and fixed resource base. The quarrying sector developed mainly with these minerals i.e. the geo-genic resource base. Literary meaning of the word 'quarrying' is a place where large amount of stone, minerals etc. are dug out from the ground below. So, it is a process of extract the minerals from surface or shallow area which is basically unmechanised and scavenging operations. In the study area, quarrying sector is evolved due to availability of good quality basalt. Secondary causes for development of quarrying industry are cheap labor force, capital and transport. Most of the cheap laborers are coming from tribal society. Quarrying industry is associated with quarrying (locally name is *Khadan*) and stone chips production unit i.e. crusher. Comparatively works within *Khadan* is hard, partially skill base with high degree of professional risk. Therefore, women laborers are engaged in crusher units only for the production of different sizes of stone

chips. In terms of total labor force within a crashing unit, 61% of tribal women's are working due to monotonous, unidirectional and have no alternative occupation of the area except low subsistence seasonal agriculture. There is no rationale choice of tribal women workers are denied comparatively high professional hazardous works like basalt quarrying sector.

Area under Study

The study area is situated within northern part of the Birbhum District in West Bengal adjacent with Dumka District of Jharkhand and it extends from 24°06'10"N to 24 °16'26" N latitudes and 87° 34'32" E to 87°49'52" E longitudes. In Birbhum district, there are 38 tribal sub-castes, among these 11 sub-castes are now present in Rmpurhat-I C.D. block. The most popular and also significant indigenous tribes are *Santhal, Kora, Oran, Lodha, Khri, Malpaharia, Munda, Mahali* etc. The racial nature of these tribes is Proto-Austroloides & belonging to Austro-Asiatic Family in linguistic phenomena. Number of *Santhal* is greater than other sub-caste of tribal community particularly this area. They migrate from the central India & settled here basically for the attraction of dense forest tract called '*Jangalmahal*'. They live in 35 *mouzas* distinctively in the Rampurhat-I block, among these half of the total tribal population inhabit in 9 *mouzas*. These selected *mouzas* are *Bhatina, Nirsa, Tarachua, Garia, Chakaipur, Chandpur, Masra, Ranipur* and *Murda*. All these

mouzas are located within 10 km from the Quarrying (locally named as *Khadan*) site. In this spatial unit, there are two Quarrying sites- one is Aranda and second is Baramosia. All the Quarrying sites are situated just alongside the Rampurhat-Dumkaroad. This type of resource process is labor intensive and it is started from 1960s, particular in this area.

Objective

The basic objectives are as follows-

1. To interpret the historical past condition of tribal women of the area particularly.
2. We try to explained quarrying sector as an activity space (which are run through open system) create a community culture depart from identities of different ethno-cultural groups.
3. Finally, to explore some sort of realistic problems of tribal women workers in quarrying sector as a new resource process.

Basalt Quarrying as an Activity Space

The activity space refers to the container of different types of economic sources and efforts of various social groups in a certain spatial concern. It may be percept or assessed with physical reality with human interaction. On the basis of concentration and mobility as well as circulation of man, it formed as large or small spatiality. In this perspective, the crashing unit can be treated as small activity space. It works in various steps from the basalt dumping surface to finish products by different workers who are belonging in different ethno-cultural groups. Association of workers is formed with tribes, scheduled caste and also general caste people. On the other hand, we observed that male and female workers are worked together. Out of total labor force within crusher, 61% of tribal women are engaged in new coming activity i.e. basalt quarrying. They are not familiar with this but they works because no alternative works are available here. Although, major portion of laborers are engaged as unskilled workers in this activity space, to carry out the different size of boulders and load, released into the crusher challis. At the working time they are exchange their view to each other, about the situation of works from a common interest. This perceptual event makes a relational environment with the protection of their interstellar constellation of belief and common interest of the rising phase of a particular work base community. But the identity and ideology of interacting people base only on working interest. After longtime, it ready to response and perform as formal upon the activity space in initially. They try to perceive each other as individual or community in all sphere of human life. They are continuously attached through the linear works. All the laborers take rest in a recess time and they exchange their food habit and language. After a very long day they exchange their ideology and cultural view. So, ultimately this activity space reflects some new ideas of tribal life in terms of food habit, social norms, settlement pattern and economic life style etc. In short time span, it is not totally changed or transformed them individual but some materialistic culture has been exchange among the different social groups through this working environment. Way of life of tribal society of this area was based on mainly forest and seasonal agriculture practice in before the new coming resource process

i.e. basalt quarrying. Traditionally, leaf and fuel collection from forest, low subsistence agricultural, livestock and especially piggery etc. were the basic activities of the tribal women. We surveyed of 25 younger tribal women (age within 15-40 years) who were respondents about their livelihood particularly what types of activities were enjoyed physically as well as mentally. Cent percentage of responder denied the present occupation and more interested for negotiate into the forest and agricultural resources process in free and open nature. After 1960s, basalt quarrying activity has been developed by refusing the forest ecosystem and also agricultural ecological set-up in a spatial concern. Therefore, their own activity space is totally changed except some agricultural tracts of the area. In new time frame work, low subsistence agriculture practice do not support the present dwellers of the area. Due to these facts most of the tribal women engaged themselves in excavating the new resource horizon without desirable identity.

Problems of Tribal Women Worker in Quarrying Sector:

A Uniform Report (2005) on Women Work and Poverty notes that three dimensions of work and arrangements are relevant in determining the nature, costs and benefits of informal work; place of work, employment relations and production systems. This informal sector is not exception like this discipline regarding the status of tribal women worker in this resource process. We were putting the dimensions accordance with Uniform Report on Women and Poverty, the result made a critical juncture regarding the assessment of position of tribal women in basalt quarrying sector. Mal-distribution of benefit in the informal economy is the inherent feature. In basalt quarrying sector, cost and benefits of tribal women is an impermeable image in mind, because they gain only their wages at the end of the day which is Rs. 60-80/- per day. Second dimension is that the actual situation of working place is too much vulnerable as well as unhealthy environment. In short areal extension, number of crusher and quarrying is more, no capacity maintaining at all. 320 crushers unit and 28 basalt quarrying sites are concentrated within 4 sq.km area at present shape. Employment relations and production system within activity space control the future scenario of any production system. Tribal women and other male workers make a labor community and for some demand in favor of labor position make a labor union but all are control by political leader. Therefore, interest of workers towards the production system, wages increase, sanitation, shelter, job cards, and specific identity as worker, risk benefits and compensation etc are too much nominal. 92 % of worker of the basalt quarrying sector disappointed all the above things. The study is only about tribal women workers because they are concentrated in this type of informal as well as unorganized sector. All the women workers especially tribal women are facing all above and sexual harassment is a common scenario in quarrying environment. Apart from this, some tribal women eager to make a physical relationship by exchange of money with non-tribe people who are working in quarrying sector. This type of tribal women is familiar as '*stefny*' in locally. Initial stage of quarrying sector few person was interact with '*stefny*' but now a day's increase the number of '*stefny*' and interacting people. It is not true nature of the tribal society, imposing the man of mainstream civilization who is coming from the outside and exploit the

original nature of tribal society as well as all spheres of human values. This fact increases the fragility of the tribal society as well as departs from the societal norms, ethics, social bondage and impact on mental set-up of tribal child. Apart from this, major problems of tribal women are facing during the operation period of stone chips in crashing unit are occupational health hazards, long hours and unscheduled overtime, mal-distribution of benefits and lack of social protection, insecurity of work and incomes, variability and volatility of incomes, absent of training site for this practice, lack of legal status, seasonal production system, lack of organization and voice. Professional risk of the women workers are disorder of some organ of human body, skin diseases, Tuberculosis' and some health problems like menstruation, decrease the child bearing capacity etc. We tabulated the nature of risk from both *khadan* and crusher and not particular the women workers. Degree of risk according to occupation status, serious injured and heavy injured happen in only *khadan*. Therefore, with high degree of professional risk like death or non- worker condition not affected to women workers. Only medium and slightly injured is the common facts of women worker in crusher. In some cases one working organ has been collapsed but many cases is happen as non-danger but temporally enable worker for 3 months or more. Maintaining solving the situation, owner of crusher have payee like as compensation Rs. 1000-3000/-. Most of the cases the tribal women depend on political leaders to receive the amount. Actual situation is that they are in vulnerable as well as exploit their own life style by the influence of non-tribal man of this sector.

Conclusion

In forest and agriculture resource process, tribal women move free and closely associated with their habitat and properly maintain some sort of socio-facts of tribal culture. They can easily perceive this kind of bio-genic resource process because their perceptual efficiency about the laws and function of nature are right direction. They could not avoid and denied the nature role for sustainability of their life. Especially tribal women, they have regenerated the forest resource during the utilization resource.

Therefore, forest-agriculture based resource process and activity of tribe are closely associated with this. Whenever, introduction of basalt quarrying as a new resource process of the area has refused the forest-tribe association, they agree to join this new coming activity in undefined way. As an informal economy, lots of problems of tribal women may be checked by using the proper strategies with personal communication of the community. However, individual and community interest do not coincide each other in any resource process. Minimum efforts and maximum profit is a real picturesque in basalt quarrying as an unorganized sector.

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