Women, Labour and Technology in Coal Mines: A Case Study of the Impact on Local Economy of Korba District (Chhattisgarh)

Key words: Women, Labour, Local Economy, Technology, Women and Mines

Women and labour are intricately linked to each other in a technology embedded industry and how the introduction of technology has a bearing on lives of women. The aim of the thesis is to study the impact of mining on women's work and lives. These impacts can be studied both within the mines and around the mines. It also studies the impact of mining on the local economy, which will focus on the public sector mines of South Eastern Coalfields limited of Korba district in Chhattisgarh and how its impact on industrial labour market is replacing the agricultural economy. The thesis will also concentrate on the changes in sexual division of labour .It studies the structures of patriarchy which throws light on gender based occupational structures , both within the family and in the local economy. This study deals with the issue of women's exclusion in mining industry which reveals their disadvantaged position in this sector. The case study of South Eastern Coal field Limited (SECL).Korba region has been included in the study for a better understanding of the field reality.

The thesis is divided into two broad themes; Part one discusses industrial economy and Part two discusses local economy. Part one is divided into two chapters; the second chapter of the thesis discusses social division of labour within industrial economy and the third chapter is on technology, skills and patriarchy determinants of women's labour. The second theme is elaborated in three chapters; the fourth chapter explores the transformations in the social mileu and women's work in mining while the fifth chapter delineates the interface between industry and local economy within Korba area. The sixth chapter critically dissects the State intervention and the working conditions of women workers in mines.

Research Questions:

1. Why are policies framed in a manner which excludes women from production processes, although women are recruited in secondary jobs?
2. What is the impact of mining on the local economy and the social milieu?

Objectives:

1. To investigate the ways in which mining has led to a shift from agrarian economy to a more technologically advanced economy, thus changing the role of women in the local economy.
2. To understand the Patterns of work and position of women in the Coal Mines in context of macroeconomics, to locate women labour in the industrial economy and the question of the well-being of a majority of the labouring people in the country.
3. To explore ways in which patriarchy embedded coal mining industry relegates women to secondary status, thus not recognising their contribution in the production process.
4. To explore the changing transformation of the division of labour that takes place in coal mining.
5. To explore the links of women, work, technology, labour and family decision process.
6. To understand the impact of technology on the marginalization of women's labour in coal mining and the role of women in its decision-making process.

Research Methodology

The study has used qualitative methods. A pilot study was conducted which is based on face to face interaction with the women miners. Understanding that generating quantitative data may be difficult because of the very nature of these mines, a qualitative way to improve the understanding of women's participation and contributions in the mines and quarries was undertaken. The methodology required to visit the field personally, to establish contacts with key personnel and civil society groups working on the ground, and to establish local partnerships to build up on their local knowledge and for mobilizing additional support.

Sources of Data

Both Primary and Secondary data have been analysed in order to study the impact of women labour and the impact of local economy in the mining industry.

Primary Data

Primary data collected from women working in the mines and houshehold heads of 5 villages. The data has been analysed based on the parameters of socio-economic, demographic study through a census of village households around the mines. Census reports have also been used as primary data.

Secondary Data

Secondary Data include, project reports and maps, books, articles and un-published dissertations.This dissertation is supported by pre-field and post-fields stints of intensive

library research and an elaborate study of the relevant data and documents pertaining to the women miners.

Sampling design, sample size and methods of data collection

Stratified random sampling design has been used to collect data from 116 women working in mines (9 collieries of SECL). A Census survey of 5 villages was carried out i.e 547 households were covered as part of the effort.

Interview Schedules have been designed to study the impact of coal mines on the local economy in Korba its social division of labour and the impact of technology on the coal mines.

Interview Schedules:

There were two sets of interview schedules; the first set was deployed among head of the households which were selected using the village census of households and second set of interview schedule was used among women working in the mines.

The interview schedule focussed on head of the households contained questions on displacement, land ownerships, migration, occupation details, socio economic parameters, payment of compensation and land acquired. A separate section was added to understand women's involvement outside mining activity. The impact of local economy after the introduction of mines was enquired by eliciting information from women in household on agricultural activity, forest produce, household chores, pollution and environmental degradation.

Regarding the mining activity questions were asked focussing on women working in mines, nature of work before joining the mines and activity after joining the mines. Questions related

to trainings, welfare measures, safety, condition of work and trade union participation were addressed in the interview schedule.

Profile of the Field Area: Korba

The fieldwork was conducted in South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) mines, situated in Korba district of the state of Chhattisgarh in the year 2013- 2014. The study was chosen because it has both opencast and underground mines as well as Central Workshop (CWS). There are only 4 central workshops in India for the Coal Mines one being in Korba, Chhattisgarh. The work areas in CWS are the Structural shop, Heavy repair shop, Machine Shop and Roller shop. In CWS the machine from all over India come for repair as the cost of repair is less than to purchase a new machine imported from Japan and China. One of the important sections of coal mines apart from Coal Handling Plant (CHP), is hospital which is an important division of coal mines. Besides, women working in the Project offices as office assistants (peon), General Mazdoor, Sweepers, Machinists, Roof bolt Cutter, Gottamitti maker and as security staff was also interviewed.

Findings:

The present study tried to study about the contemporary debates on gender and mining. It comes up with an argument of conventional hegemonic notions. It sees mining as inherently masculine industry and tends to hide social construction on gender and tries to highlight the importance of women's work in the mines and how her work is related to the economy, even though mining communities fail to recognise her as an active participant.

It also tries to explore the status of women in the SECL coal mines and its accommodation in the various types of jobs on compensatory ground. It also tries to finds out the discrimination

created by socially constructed gender roles in the mining industry and the nature of skills demanded by the job that creates sexual division of labour.

Technology as a skill tries to explain how mining needs to see the different level of labour process participation of women and therefore all have access to technology and explore the transforming social milieu and women's work in the mining.