

Beedi Industry: A Case Study of Suti 1 CD Block in the District of Murshidabad, West Bengal

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Abstract : *The particular paper has mainly highlighted the effects of beedi rolling on health and education of working women. It appears from the present paper that the problem may also be addressed from different angles e.g. scope of alternative livelihoods and its effect on management of working women and young girl children in beedi industry; to find out the loopholes in various acts and poor implementation of laws and legislation in order to control the problem of women workers in beedi industry in particular and beedi workers in general; to understand the income status of the families. The present paper emphasizes the working conditions of women engaged in beedi (indigenous cigarette) industry with a case study Suti I CD block. Beedi industry played an important role in the economy as well as socio-economic life and livelihood of the beedi workers in Suti I CD block of Murshidabad district. The wages they receive is less than the wages set by the minimum wages act. The women were less aware on the claims against health insurance, loan allowance provident fund which adds benefit to the beedi sector. This paper intends to explain the limited and confined lifeworld of the women and young girl children. Besides, this paper also employed non participatory observation to bring out the ground reality of their everyday social lives. This paper further has tried to throw light on the women beedi workers of Suti I CD block and how they are being exploited and they are in perpetual poverty due to their lack of education, unemployment and under-employment, less-mobility and socio-religious practices. The simple random sampling was used for selection of respondent and the Garret's ranking technique was used to evaluate the health problem of women beedi workers.*

Key words: *Beedi workers, women and young girl children, occupational health hazard, globalisation, home based.*

Introduction

Beedi industry is a part of tobacco industry. Beedi is a poor man's cigarette. According to Jhon (2008), *beedis* are cheap and widely smoked in India. Beedi sector is an informal, unorganised, home-based high labour intensive manufacturing industry in India. This traditional agro-forestry based industry provides large number of workers in India, after agriculture, handloom and construction (Government of India, 1995). This sector encompasses workforce involved in the

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collection and processing of the two main raw materials, tendu (beedi wrapper) leaves and tobacco. Ministry of labour and employment (2005) reported that there are about 4.5 million workers engaged in beedi industry in India with largest number in Madhya Pradesh (18.3%), followed by Andhra Pradesh (14.4 %) and Tamil Nadu (13.85 %) (Dube and Mohandas, 2013). Economy of this Sub-division highly influenced by this industry as it plays an important role in providing livelihood to a large number of working people. The process of manufacture of beedi is highly labour intensive and predominantly unorganised in nature. This sector encompasses workforce involved in the collection and processing two main raw materials, tendu (beedi wrapper) leaves and tobacco. Women constitute a very high percentage of labour force in beedi industry as work is done generally from home and women can do it while at the same time attending to their children and other household chores. Beedi manufacturing is a highly labour intensive unorganised sector where women and girl children are mainly involved in beedi rolling. On the other hand, men are mostly involved in sorting, checking, banking, labelling, wrapping and packing where they get higher wages than beedi rollers. Government sources have estimated that there were about 5.5 million workers in the beedi rolling industry spreading over 16 states, majority of are home based women workers (ministry of labour and Employment Report, 2010). But trade unions claim that there are over 7 million beedi workers.

Objectives of the Study

The paper aims at the following objectives:

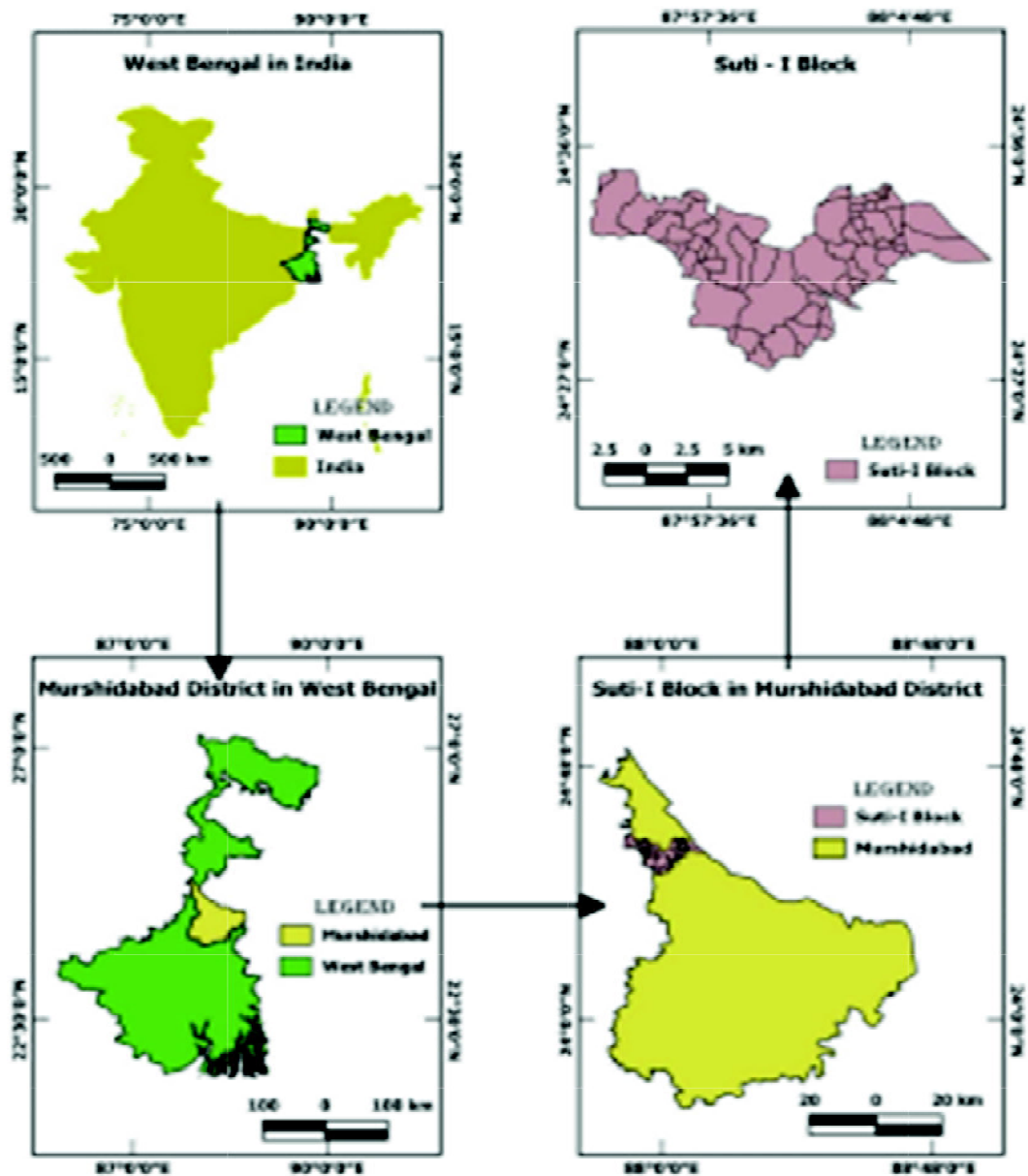
- (1) To understand the socio-economic profile of beedi workers.
- (2) To identify the problems of the beedi worker.
- (3) To explore the level of health hazard and social security scheme availed of the beedi workers.
- (4) To suggest suitable policy interventions to improve the status of beedi workers.

The Study Area

The latitude and longitude of Suti I CD block in West Bengal, India is 24°30'23.73" N 88°01'24.63" E. Suti I is a community development block (CD Block) that forms an administrative division in the Jangipur subdivision of Murshidabad district in the Indian state of West Bengal. Suti I CD block has an area of 143.68 km². It has one panchayat Samity, 6 gram panchayats, 106 gram Sansad (village councils), 61 mouzas and 46 inhabited villages. Suti police station serves this block. Headquarters of this CD block is at Ahiran.

Demographics Characteristics: According to the 2011 Census of India, Suti I CD block had a total population of 179,908, of which 150,803 were rural and 29,105 were urban. There were 91,905 (51%) males and 88,803 (49%) females. Population in the age range 0-6 years was 31,398.

LOCATION MAP OF THE STUDY AREA



Scheduled Castes numbered 25,860 (14.37%) and Scheduled Tribes numbered 261 (0.15%). Table - 1 shows that 8020 male marginal workers and female 55469 out of 24390

Table 1 : Working Population Of Suti I Block:

	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	54513	38349	16164
Cultivators	4973	4875	98
Agricultural labour	15935	15473	462
House Hold Industries	14956	1637	13319
Other Workers	18649	16364	2285
Marginal Workers	24390	8020	16370
Non-Working	101005	45536	55469

Sources: Census Data, 2011

Research Problem

The beedi worker in Suti I CD block are facing several problems such as poverty, illiteracy, sickness, low payment, etc. Some of the problems that women beedi workers of Suti I CD block of Murshidabad district of West Bengal face are

1. Health Issue related problem of the worker.
2. Low and irregular payment of wages.
3. Education level is very low.
4. Incidence of child labour.
5. Low Illiteracy rate of beedi workers.
6. Non availability of social security.

Methodology And Database

Present study is based on available data gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data is collected from the field survey. Simple random sampling method is used to conduct survey, selected 30 household of every gram panchayet, total 150 respondents out of 6594 female beedi workers. The secondary data were collected from government offices, available publications, research articles published in various journal. The Garret's Ranking Technique (1969) was used to rank the preference mentioned by the respondents on different reasons of selecting the beedi rolling as occupation. It is used to find the most significant reasons which has influenced the respondents in choosing the job in beedi industry.

Application of the Garret's Ranking Technique

An attempt is made to identify the reasons for selecting job in beedi industry. The identified reasons are ranked by making use of Garrett's Ranking Technique. The technique was used to

rank the preference mentioned by the respondents on different reasons of selecting the beedi rolling as occupation. It is used to find the most significant reasons which has influenced the respondents in choosing the job in beedi industry.

Formula

percent value = $100(R_{ij} - 0.5) / N_j$

Where, R_{ij} = Rank given for the 1st variable by jth respondents

N_j = Number of variable ranked by j the respondents .

With the help of Garrett's Table, the percent position estimated is converted into scores by referring to the table given by Garret and Woodworth (1969). Then for each factor, the scores of each individual are added and then total value of scores and mean values of score is calculated. The factors having highest mean value is considered to be the most important factor. Below is the tabular representation of the reasons for selecting job in beedi in beedi industry in Suti I CD block. The table is a random categorization of the problems found during personal interviewing and with the help of questionnaires. The table shows the preference and ranking of problems faced by the workers engaged in Beedi industry.

Result and Discussion

The beedi industry is unorganized sector mainly women and girl children are involved in beedi rolling. The Major factors related to the working conditions of women engaged in Beedi Industry are mentioned below -

- Wage differentiation, runover of equal work and more submissive nature of women are important attraction for the employers to employ women in the beedi industry
- Unorganized women workers cannot enter formal sector jobs because of low education and training The factors aggravating pitiable conditions of migrant workers are lack of sanitary facility, unsafe conditions, and exploitation and gender discriminations
- Women mainly work in unorganized sector are to supplement the family income.
- Beedi workers are exposed to dust, nicotine, causing respiratory diseases and infertility in young women. Immobility of labour, seasonal nature of employment, lack of job security are the greatest impediment of women labour that keep them confined to low paying, irregular and local avenues of employment.
- Women workers are facing economic exploitation due to ignorance, tradition-bound attitudes, lack of skill and illiteracy, extremely unsatisfactory working conditions in the form of heavy physical work, lack of job. Security, long working hours, lack of minimum facilities at workplace, ill-treatment and bondage. Temporary or casual nature of employment and poverty due to low income, high level expenditure, lack of assets and indebtedness

in unorganized sector. The women folk get lower wages than men which is not at all linked with the quantity or quality of work; it is simply because of gender bias.

Health Hazard and Social Security Schemes

A healthy manpower is a great asset of a nation as it leads to greater output per worker. Efficiency of a worker depends considerably on his health. Bad health and undernourishment adversely affect on the quality of workers. Hence an attempt is made to study the health aspects of beedi workers in this chapter. Industrial or factory workers are subject to various risks like sickness, old age, accidents death etc. under such conditions the workers are unable to protect the family and they are put to great suffering. Social security schemes are undertaken by the government to protect the industrial workers. Thus social security covers through an appropriate organization certain risks to which a person is exposed, for instance old age pension, insurance, accident, maternity benefit, medical benefit etc. Hence an attempt is made to study the social provisions of beedi workers in this chapter.

Table -2: Health Problem Faced by The Sample Beedi Workers

Sl No.	Problem	Average Score	Rank
1	Eye Problems And Irritation	61.97	I
2	Pain In The Limbs And Shoulder	51.62	IV
3	Headache	36.77	VI
4	Fever, Cough And Cold	58.28	III
5	Gastric Problem	32.72	VII
6	Skin related Problems	47.21	V
7	Respiratory Problem	64.58	I

Source: Field Survey, 2024

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By using Garrett's score the first rank assigned to respiratory problem due to smell of tobacco followed by eye problems and irritation. The third and fourth prioritized problems were fever, cough, cold and long hours of sitting create pain in the limbs and shoulder. The fifth rank was given to the problem of skin related problems followed by frequent headache and gastric problem respectively. (Table -2)

Reference : John Christy, R. (2014) : Garrett's Ranking Analysis of Various Clinical Bovine Mastitis Control Constraints in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu, IOSR Journal of Agriculture and Veterinary Science (IOSR-JAVS) 7(4):62-64

Social Security Scheme Availed:

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Social Security Scheme Availed

Schemes	Frequency	Percent
Medical Benefit	25	16.67
Provident Benefit	44	29.33
Bonus Scheme	23	15.34
Pension Scheme	41	27.33
Gratuity Scheme	17	11.34
Total	150	100

Source: Based on field survey, 2023

Table 3 shows the distribution of workers social security schemes availed. The social security schemes are applicable only to regular workers, hence casual workers not considered to the facilities of social security schemes. As the regular workers are working in factory Act they have availed the social security schemes such as medical benefit, provident fund, bonus schemes, pension schemes, gratuity schemes. The data in the table also shows, none of the workers enjoyed maternity benefit, sickness benefits and dependent insurance. During maternity period they do not go to factories to get raw materials during that time they do not get their wages.

Table – 4: Monthly Personal Income of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Monthly Personal Income	No of Female Beedi Workers	Percentage
1.	Less Than Rs. 3000	33	22.00
2.	Rs. 3001 – Rs.5000	53	35.33
3.	Rs. 5001 - Rs. 7001	41	27.33
4.	Rs.7000 and Above	23	15.33
	Total	150	100

Source: Calculated Primary Data

Out of 150 female beedi workers a majority of 53 (35.33 percent) earn a monthly income of Rs.3, 001 to Rs.5, 000 followed by 41 (27.33 percent) earning Rs.5,001 to Rs.7,000. 23(15.33 percent) of the female beedi workers earn Rs.7,001 and above, 33 (22.00 percent) earn less than Rs.3,000. (Table -4)

Table -5: Impact Of Beedi Industries On Monthly Personal Income

Sl. No.	Monthly Personal Income	Before Joining Beedi Industries	After Joining Beedi Industries
1.	Less than Rs.3000	49 (32.67)	24(16.00)
2.	Rs.3001 –Rs 5001	70 (46.67)	56(37.33)
3.	Rs.5001-Rs.7000	17 (11.33)	42(28.00)
4.	Rs.7001 and above	14 (9.33)	28(18.67)
	Total	150	150

Source: Computed From Primary Data

Note: Figures in brackets represent the percentage of the total.

Table 5 reveals the monthly income of the respondents before and after joining beedi industries. Before joining beedi industries, 32.67 percent of the respondents had a monthly personal income of less than Rs.3000, whereas after joining beedi industries 16.00 percent of the respondents had a monthly 31 personal income of less than Rs.3000. 46.67 percent of the respondents had a monthly income between Rs.3001-5,000 before joining beedi industries, which decreased by 37.33 percent after joining beedi industries. 11.33 percent and 9.33 percent of the respondents had monthly personal income between Rs.5,001-7,000, and above Rs.7,001 respectively before joining beedi industries. However, after joining beedi industries, it increased to 28.00 and 18.67 percent

respectively. From the Table, it is evident that after joining beedi industries the respondent's monthly personal income has shown a substantial increase in beedi industries.

To study the impact of the development of income of the sample respondents in beedi industries paired sample 't' test used.

The null hypothesis shows that there is no significant difference between the income of the sample respondents before and after joining beedi industries.

Table – 6: Results of Paired Samples T Test for Income Before and After Joining Beedi Industries

Pair 1 Before- After	Paired Differences				T	Df	Sig.(2 Tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std.Error Mean	95 Percent Confidence Interval of The Difference			
				Lower			
	2779.366	1009.647	58.292	2664.6520	47.68	299	.000

The test result shows (Table 6) that 't' statistics - 47.680 is significant at 1 percent level of significance with 299 degrees of freedom. Therefore the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference among the income of the sample respondents before and after joining beedi industries is to be rejected. Hence there is a significant increase in the income of the respondents after joining beedi industries. Gini Ratio: Gini coefficient of concentration ratio was used to measure the extent of inequalities in the distribution of income of female beedi workers before and after joining beedi industries in the case of those engaged in different activities in the study area.

Table – 7: Gini Coefficient

Gini coefficient ratio	Before joining beedi industries	After joining beedi industries
	0.21719	0.11782

The Gini ratio was estimated to analysis the distribution of household income of the female beedi workers before and after joining beedi industries in the study area. The estimated values of Gini ratio before and after joining beedi industries indicate that there is no perfect equality among the women workers income. However, the decrease in the value of Gini ratio from 0.21719 to 0.11782 shows that the income inequality between the female beedi workers has decreased after joining beedi industries.(Table – 7)

Major Findings of the Study

The main findings of the study are listed below:

- Almost all beedi workers are between the age group of 26 to 50 and above 50 year.
- More than 73 % of workers are married and remaining workers are widows and divorced.
- 19.33 % workers are illiterate and only 10.67% workers complete their graduation.
- As 60 percentage workers consists Muslims.
- Nearly one-fourth (24.49 percentage) of families have the beedi rolling on their main occupation .
- More than 65% of workers are belongs to nuclear family.
- All respondents entered this job through relatives and friendship. None of the respondents are not appointed through the recruitment process.
- Half of the sample respondents entered into beedi work as family occupation and the remaining workers entered because of easy accessibility and to supplement their family income.
- The three-fourth (75.77 percentage) of workers are working for more than 10 years.
- Nearly 80 percentage of the sample response roll less than 1000 beedis per day and 20 percentage workers roll more than 1000 beedis per day.
- All sample workers have been doing beedi rolling work at their own houses.
- Nearly 98 percentage of the sample response roll less than 1000 beedis per day. Hardly one or two percentage workers roll more than 1000 beedi per day.
- More than 50 percent of the workers are aware and 45 percent unaware of the diseases caused by beedi rolling.
- The nearly two third (61.11 percentage) of the workers aware of the social security schemes.

Policy Intervention

The beedi rolling is one of the artisen based manufacturing activity in India. Since this work is done by down trodden and poor families of the society on the one hand and perils of beedi rolling on the other hand needs policy suggestions for the survival of families whose livelihood is beedi work. Therefore, the following policy recommendations are suggested –

If the beedi company provided masks to beedi workers so they would get a lot of protection from health hazard.

Bonus, provident fund, maternity benefits, student scholarship, marriage loan, housing loan should be increased in liberalized process of getting these benefits.

Static cum mobile health clinic, made available medicine for minor diseases, and costly medicines are not provided from this clinic. The provision should be made to get such costly medicines through mobile cum static clinic.

Daily wage should be introduced in the beedi manufacturing industry.

Uniform piece wage rate should be paid for both regular and casual workers. It should be raised to Rs. 250 per 1000 beedi.

Beedi manufacturing colonies and homes are far from the beedi factories Government or factory owners should provide a vehicle for procurement of beedi.

Central and state government should be interfering between employees and beedi workers union for settling the disputes.

Since the women beedi workers are illiterate with rural background Government should arrange awareness programs on social security scheme and social welfare benefits for these workers.

The process of getting social security and social welfare benefits should be liberalized.

Some percentage of widow, divorce and unmarried female workers are working in this field. They demand some special facilities of government such as special monthly stipend.

More percentage of workers illiterates, so they demand special education programs such as night classes and adult education programs.

Few percentages of total workers families are in rented houses, so they required government should provide houses for them.

More than 90 percentage of beedi workers do not have toilet facilities, hence they demand financial help to construct private toilets.

All the sample workers have been doing beedi rolling works at their own houses, but they demand the factory system (10.00 AM to 5.00 PM) should be introduced, so that their work burden will be reduced.

The 50 percentage of beedi workers are unaware of the major and minor diseases but they demand special health programs for them.

Almost all workers are facing the problem of long hours of work and they are suffering from backache problem. So they require factory system of working.

All most all workers are against the untimely wage rate. They demand time wage.

Conclusion

From the preceding discussion it is clear that at present, the situation of these beedi workers is very precarious. They are not only poor, uneducated, unskilled but also immobile and most of them have large families to support. In such circumstances, if government adopts this type of negative policy towards tobacco production and beedi rolling, thousands such families will be thrown in to a bad economical situation. Hence, it is the need of the hour to develop some alternative policy initiative to rehabilitate these beedi workers in general and women beedi workers in particular. Alternative employment needs to be provided to them with little training or skill development. For this purpose, the need of the hour is to chalk out a policy keeping in view their issues. In spite of the growing public concern on its traditional uses, tobacco offers enormous scope for its exploitation for nonconventional uses. This is of course, a formidable challenge and our earnest hope is that the policy makers will accept this challenge whole heartily and design a suitable policy initiative in the near future in the best interest of the beedi workers of Suti I CD block, Murshidabad, West Bengal.

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