

Dispossessed Women's Work

The Case of Talcher Coalfields of Odisha

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This paper examines the experiences of dispossessed women in terms of accessing work opportunities in a setting of opencast coal mining in Talcher coalfields of Odisha. Drawing its understanding from the framework of social exclusion and adverse inclusion in the discussions, it argues for the variegated experiences of women's entry into different categories of work with reference to their gender, class and caste positions.

This paper is an inquiry into the changing work opportunities for dispossessed women in the coal bearing areas of India, with reference to intersections of their gender, class and caste positions. For understanding the case of social exclusion and adverse inclusion of women into forms of work in Talcher coalfields of Odisha, it draws on two strands of literature. One that focuses on the continuing marginalisation of women, Dalits and Adivasis in the Indian context through a relational analysis and explains their social exclusion and/or adverse inclusion in different contexts. Specifically focusing on the context of state-led dispossession, the other strand of literature gives a meaningful explanation to differentiated outcomes of dispossession for heterogeneous social groups primarily through the pre-existing agrarian inequalities.

Social Exclusion, Adverse Inclusion and Gender

Gender has been crucial in determining the division of labour, distribution of land and other valued resources in the society (Kabeer 2000). Women have been found socially excluded and adversely included in different aspects of social and economic arenas through the interaction of various actors, such as the state, market and household, especially when it comes to women's labour. Across geographical locations, women have been socially excluded from land ownership, for instance, despite carrying out extensive agricultural work (Agarwal 1988; Bracking 2003). Women are subjected to capitalist exploitation through their adverse inclusion in the unpaid work of the household, subsistence production and work in the informal sector (Mies 2007). They are often excluded from the high paid and formal sector jobs and are faced with adverse circumstances such as being paid a lower wage than men (Kantor 2008; Harriss-White and Gooptu 2009). Historically, this exploitation of women's labour for capitalist accumulation is through the high concentration of women in unskilled jobs (Sen 1999), which is an unfavourable or adverse inclusion of women in work.

The framework of social exclusion and adverse inclusion has extensively engaged with the exclusions based on gender and caste and other communities such as Adivasis and minorities in the Indian context (Nathan and Xaxa 2012). However, we need to be careful about considering the group of the excluded as homogeneous (Thorat 2014) as in this case of working class women. There are poor within the poor, and some persons belonging to certain social groups are poorer than others (Thorat 2014: 49). Similarly, women are also subjected to

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other vulnerabilities based on caste, sexuality, and class which amplifies vulnerabilities and their exploitation. Working-class women are also bound to have differences, with some being more excluded than others. Caste hierarchy and gender hierarchy leads to graded subjugation of Dalit women who have been found at the bottom of unfree labour relations (Mehrotra 2017). Moreover, the structural aspects of caste and gender intersects with class and cannot be reduced to class power alone (Devika 2016). Prior to the feminist contribution to poverty studies, the poor were either assumed to be completely men or the concerns of men were thought to be identical to that of women (Kabeer 1997). On a similar note, understanding the social exclusion and adverse inclusion of working-class women requires a nuanced understanding of women as a group without committing the fallacy of assuming them to be either devoid of any caste subjugation or that the concerns/issues of women belonging to different castes are identical.

Situating Women in Dispossession

Dispossession, for us, is a process where people are deprived of not only the means of production (primarily land), but also access to common property resources, and loss of sense of belongingness through geographical movement and the deprivations in alternative forms of livelihoods. There are three forms of dispossession discussed in this paper: first, loss of agricultural land owned by the landowning households and common resources leading to loss of livelihoods; second, loss of both homestead and agricultural land owned by the landowning households leading to geographical and occupational displacement along with loss of common resources; and third, loss of access to common resources and other livelihoods for the landless.

Many scholars have pointed to the various socio-economic and environmental consequences of dispossession due to coal mining (Lahiri-Dutt 2007; Mohanty 2011; Fernandez and Bharali 2014; Garada 2013a, 2013b, 2015). Moreover, dispossession has also been found to be a gendered process of capital accumulation in various contexts. Access to land and other common property resources has been a source of self-sustenance, and enables women to contribute to their family's livelihoods. The loss of these resources also affects the social and economic status of women within the family. In particular, it leads to a reduction in women's mobility, and changes in power relations between men and women (Ahmad and Lahiri-Dutt 2006). It is to be noted that women's access to land does not imply possession of land titles or land rights by them, but rather mediation through their husbands. Common to the process of dispossession has been the exclusion of women from decision-making processes in the planning of the projects or negotiating the compensation packages. Also, lack of land rights leads to discrimination against women in compensation (Levien 2017). The recipients of compensation are mostly male members, as land title-holders. However, the implication for women's paid (productive) and unpaid (reproductive) work varies across different contexts, depending on the kind of economic activity of which they are dispossessed, and interaction of the pre-existing agrarian inequalities (the intersection of caste,

class and gender positions) with the dispossession process (Levien 2017). The interaction between exclusionary growth (in this case coal mining) and caste-based agrarian inequalities has, on average, expanded socio-economic inequalities between upper and lower castes and left most Dalits worse off in absolute terms (Agarwal and Levien 2019: 4).

Field Site and Methods

Odisha is a mineral-rich state with the highest non-coking coal reserves and more than 79 billion tonnes of total coal reserves (Coal Controller's Organisation 2019). After the formation of Coal India Limited (CIL), all coal mines in Odisha were under Central Coalfields Ltd (CCL), then South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL), before the formation of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) in 1992. MCL has two major coal bearing areas—IB Valley coalfields and Talcher coalfields—with a high ratio of coal to non-coal strata and, thus, high quarrying potentiality (MCL 2016). Talcher coalfields, which is the field site for the present paper, is one of the four subdivisions of Angul district, located in central Odisha. Eight opencast and one underground mines presently operate in Talcher, and two more opencast mines are in the planning stage (MCL 2018).¹ Talcher area is one of the fastest growing industrial centres of India (Garada 2013a, 2013b). Historically, agriculture was the important activity of the area, spread over 3,53,360 acres. In 1981, 68.30% of the main workers were engaged as cultivators (Directorate of Economics and Statistics 1995). In 2011, Talcher had a total population of 97,968, of which 53% were male and 47% were female (Census 2011). The region majorly comprises of upper-caste Hindus and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Around 19% are Dalits and 9% are Adivasis.

The paper is based on two rounds of fieldwork (September–December 2015 and September–December 2018). Primary fieldwork involved a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews across three villages, namely Arisa, Poddoo and Manda (pseudonyms)² in Talcher, Odisha, along with secondary sources. Agricultural and homestead land are acquired through the Land Acquisition (LA) Act of 1894 and Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) (CBA) Act of 1957. A total of 809 acres of agricultural and homestead land of Arisa and Poddoo village were completely acquired during 1999–2000 and 2004–05, respectively. However, around 721 acres of agricultural land of Manda village was acquired in 1991–1992. The two important variables considered while selecting the villages were: the share of land acquired for coal mines and the total number of households displaced or affected in a village. Additionally, preference was given to those villages that have been affected for a minimum of 10 years before the study time period, so that the long-term impacts of dispossession could be analysed. A total of 195 women (aged 35 years and above) were interviewed, using snowball sampling. Of the interviewees, 13 women were upper caste (from Brahmin, Kshatriya or Karan community); 129 women were OBC, majorly from Chasa, Gauda, Kumbhara, and Teli community; three women were Adivasi from Kandha, Tanla, and Kuda community and 50 were Dalit women majorly from Pan

community.³ The major populations were from OBCs (66%), followed by Dalits (23%), then upper-caste Hindus (7%) and Adivasis (4%). Samples were accordingly drawn to make it as representative as possible. In the second phase of the fieldwork, data on worker statistics from the MCL office were collected.

Women's Work before Dispossession

Land, as a source of livelihood and an asset, determined the economic and social status of the people in the surveyed villages. Before land acquisition, both men and women used to cultivate paddy majorly. Of the 195 women interviewed, 154 belonging to landowning households were engaged in agricultural activities.⁴ The remaining 41 women were landless, belonged to the Dalit community and used to work as agricultural labourers. Land was mostly inherited and owned by joint families in these villages. All 154 women among the landed did not possess land titles and their access was mediated by their husbands.

Only nine Dalits and three Adivasi women (out of 154 women) had access to agricultural land from 10 cents to a maximum of 50 cents of land. The land owned by these Dalit and Adivasi households were not *aul jami* (fertile land), so they would work as agricultural labourers in the agricultural fields of upper castes and OBCs. On the other hand, upper-caste and OBC households would own fertile land from a minimum of 1 acre to a maximum of 15 acres, and employed agricultural labourers from Dalit and Adivasi communities in their fields.⁵

Upper-caste and OBC women belonging to landowning households had not been involved in any particular paid employment, but they were engaged in many other livelihood supporting activities. They would often think of activities related to agriculture—taking care of livestock and poultry, working on kitchen garden—as part of their household duties, as observed widely across villages in India (Hirway 2012; Abraham 2013). Out of 154 women, only 24 women identified themselves as self-employed, while 118 women (excluding 12 Dalit and Adivasi women discussed earlier) said they were engaged in domestic chores and allied activities. Upper-caste and OBC women would perform activities such as collecting food items from forest, growing vegetables in their kitchen garden, working with male counterparts on agricultural fields, making a living out of the forest products, etc. They would grow fresh fruits and vegetables in their kitchen garden. However, as mentioned earlier, few considered it as separate productive work apart from household chores because of the existing social norms.

The 41 landless Dalit women would work on the agricultural fields owned by the upper-caste and OBC households as labourers. Labourers would get rice in exchange for their labour.⁶ Their husbands would work as head loaders in the old underground mines for a few days in a week on piece-rated payment. Landless Dalits would sustain themselves by combining the rice earned through agricultural labour, cash wage from mines, and food from common property resources. Since they did not own land, Dalit women would mostly rely on common property resources, such as the forest for food, and would go for food collection every day. They did not grow much food in

the kitchen garden as they did not have enough land. They could only manage a hut for themselves by encroaching on the government land.

Impacts of Dispossession among Women in Talcher

With the appropriation of commons and agricultural land in Manda, Arisa and Poddo villages in 1991–92, 1999–2000 and 2004–05, respectively, the women lost access to agricultural work and other allied activities that both landowning and landless women used to carry out prior to land acquisition. Besides agriculture, tending to the kitchen garden used to be a primary activity among landowning households. With loss of land, it became difficult for the women belonging to landowning households to grow vegetables of their own. Meena, a 57-year-old upper-caste woman belonging to a landowning household in Poddo village, who lost all her agricultural and homestead land to the coal mines, describes the times before dispossession,

I used to grow many vegetables in our kitchen garden. My husband used to work in fields. For rice and vegetables, we did not have to depend on others. Now, for everything we have to depend on market. Other people grow and sell food items and we buy.

Her family had not been able to buy sufficient land for the kitchen garden primarily due to a lack of adequate monetary compensation. In many cases, people were not able to draw the compensation money due to family disputes over job compensation (Nayak 2016).

The contribution of common property resources to household's employment, income generation and asset accumulation has been intense, which public policies have failed to understand.⁷ It has been found that the commons provide large quantities of food, fodder, fuelwood, timber, grass, straw, mulch, manure, and fencing material (Jodha 1986). Along with firewood, other products like the leaves of the palm tree and wild date palm tree, locally called as *barada* and *khajuri gacha patra*, were used for construction of huts providing shelter to the households; bamboo and other wood were used for fencing. Both landless and landowning households used to collect fruits from the forest. The forest as a source of food was valuable for women from landless and landowning households; however, it was more crucial for the survival of Dalit and Adivasi communities in these villages. A typical *mahula phula* was collected by them from which they would make liquor and would extract the seed out of the *tula* (fruit) of the tree to prepare oil and sell both in the market. Dalit and Adivasi women in particular used to collect leaves from the forest to make *khali* (plate) and *choupati* (cup) for selling during festive occasions; grasses were woven into mats and baskets.

Dispossession, Social Exclusion and Compensation Policy

By depriving them of the access to the agricultural land and other common resources, dispossession had a direct impact on the women's work from landowning and landless households. Landless Dalit women are particularly excluded from being a party to the decision-making process for the approval/rejection of the coal mining project because of lack of any land

ownership. This is justified by the state, coal mines management, and the landowning households on the grounds of their inability to contribute any land for the national interest. In negotiating the compensation packages, even women of landowning households are kept out; their opinions are not sought at either the household level or by the state or the coal mines management. However, they are encouraged to participate in protests or strikes, such as blocking coal production. Participation of women in strikes has been strategic for male members of the landed households and the village leaders in putting up various demands before the state.⁸

There are two forms of compensation provided to the dispossessed in Talcher: monetary compensation and job compensation. Compensations are provided based on the quantity and quality of land owned by the households (both homestead and agricultural). Women of different castes belonging to landowning households access these compensations through their husbands who are the recipients. Often the decisions on spending the compensation money remain with the male member of the household. Landless Dalit women are altogether excluded from either monetary or job compensation due to lack of land. They feel that they are the worst off and most excluded with no means to quantify their loss of livelihoods. All the villages surveyed received their compensation as per the Odisha's Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy of 1989 as the notification for land acquisition for these villages had been done prior to 2006 and hence, not eligible for Odisha's new Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy of 2006, or the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. Odisha's Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy of 1989 has provisions for self-employment schemes, which is hardly ever implemented for the landless households.

The compensation policy completely neglected the women, and especially the landless Dalits of surveyed villages. Though, the women of different castes belonging to landowning households had means to sustain themselves through monetary and job compensation provided to the male members of the household, landless Dalit women were the ones most vulnerable. As Meenu, a 37-year-old landless Dalit woman from Manda village, now working as a sanitation worker, says,

I earlier used to be an agricultural labourer—our entire family was. Though, I have also lost work, I am never compensated. They say we had no land titles and so we are not supposed to be compensated. When other people in the village were fighting for their employment in coal mines, nobody listened to us, we few landless Dalits pleaded to our village leaders, political leaders and mines officials to give us some job security. They promise and they forget. I don't have any work after one week. I managed this work by requesting a contractor from our village.

Agrarian Inequalities and Adverse Inclusion

There are three categories of work created for women based on the pre-existing agrarian inequalities in Talcher. All the three categories are cases of adverse inclusion of women into work. The first category is a widely found outcome in Talcher, which pushes women entirely towards reproductive work

referred to here as the process of "housewifisation" of women's labour. The second category is paid formal sector employment in the coal mines as part of the compensation package which is referred to as the process of becoming women miners (based on three exceptions where women belonging to landowning households were pushed into coal mine work). The third and the final category is where landless Dalit women are trapped between casual labour and coal collection which is referred to as moving between casual labour and coal collection.

(i) Housewifisation of women's labour: One of the major impacts of the loss of earlier livelihoods, was that women became housewives. Out of 154 women belonging to landowning households, 69% (107 women⁹ of different castes belonging to landowning households) are presently carrying out only household chores such as cleaning, cooking, and washing.¹⁰ With decrease in access to the forest, non-availability of adequate land to have a kitchen garden, and decline in livestock, women are no more engaged in various activities adding to the household income and self-sustenance. Women have moved away from access to land and other common resources, and also from the cash flows that are now in the hands of their husbands (also discussed in Lahiri-Dutt 2011). Shyama, a 55-year-old OBC woman from Arisa village, who lost both homestead and agricultural land, explains the new world of being a housewife, after 35 years of working in the agricultural field and carrying out allied activities of tending to the kitchen garden, collecting fruits, and taking care of livestock and poultry,

Earlier I used to do many things to help my husband. I used to grow vegetables, collect fruits, agriculture. Now, I only wash clothes, cook food and clean the house. If he comes drunk, I cannot say anything, after all, I live on his money.

This process of "housewifisation" (the term coined by Mies 1980) has been intensifying among rural women in Talcher coalfields with the penetration of a masculine capitalist setting as coal mines. Women are now expected to facilitate the social reproduction of the working class for the coal industry. They take care of their children's education, cook food and feed their men wash their dirty clothes full of coal dust, wash their shoes soiled with coal and mud and clean the house. Many women have admitted to instances of alcohol abuse by their husbands, which has substantially increased after getting into the coal mining job because of cash concentration in the hands of male members and the benefits of alcohol in enduring physical pain and minimising the fear of accidents in mines.

The increase in rural women's reproductive labour and the falling rates of female labour force participation have been a general pattern observed across the rural areas (Rao 2018). However, what is more striking in this context is that the interaction of the state compensation policy, the nature of the coal industry and existing social norms at the household level combined have led to an increase in the housewifisation of rural working-class women. The introduction of cash wage employment or what we can call remunerative work has led to the devaluation of women's reproductive work that is unpaid.

Hence, being a housewife is seen as a duty rather than work. The underlying social norms within the households that strongly remerged after women lost their access to land and other common resources, has affirmed housewifisation. At the same time, coal mines have successfully created labouring women in the household for the reproduction of coal mining labour without assigning any value to women's work. Though women have expressed their willingness to work in the mines, they want work not by replacing their husbands but for supplementing their husband's income. However, the new social norms of gendered division of labour have strengthened the status of men as *murabi* (head of the household) and increased women's dependence on them.

(ii) The process of becoming women miners: In the colonial period, women formed 37.5% of the coal mining workforce in India according to a survey conducted in 1924 (Simeon 1998). However, there are four reasons identified that led to the withdrawal of women from the coal mines in India. These are: the ban on women's employment in the underground coal mines in the 1920s, the use of heavy machineries in the coal mines, the neglect of women's issues and interests by the trade unions, and the gender discriminatory attitudes of by the mining companies (Lahiri-Dutt 2012). In 2017, 8.5% of the total workforce in MCL were women, that is 1,808 out of 22,127 of the total workforce. In 2018, 12.5% of women were found to be working as non-executives in Talcher coalfields alone.¹¹

The conditions under which women of different castes from landowning households are employed in the coal mines as part of the job compensation are as follows. The first is, if the husband is a regular employee in some other institution/or a contractor and the son is too young. Second, if the husband is old and/or physically unfit and the son will not enter into the working age group in the near future. In such conditions, the woman of the household is nominated for employment so that she can add to the household income for more years than the husband. Jagyaseni, a 57-year-old upper-caste woman from Poddoo village who lost both homestead and agricultural land, describes how and why she works in the mines,

My husband was 40 years old by the time I was selected for the job compensation. He could have worked only 20 years more as he would have been retired in the age of 60 and my son was only 7 years old then; so, he forced me to take up the job. I was just 30 years old at that time.

As we see in this case, the fear of unfamiliarity of coal industry work is overcome by the aim of maximising household sustenance through the job. In this case, availing 10 more years of salaried wage work than her husband was more important for her than her own desires. The third condition for women being given job compensation is, if the woman is a widow and her son is too young to be employed.

Out of 195 women interviewed, 47 women¹² were employed in MCL because of the conditions discussed earlier. Upper-caste, OBC, Dalit and Adivasi women belonging to landowning households were employed in coal mining jobs through job compensation that their husbands were not able to avail. They

are employed in canteens, offices, blasting sections and workshops only. Women of different castes working in the blasting section carry out manual handling of explosives, which the male workers refuse to do. Managers encourage women because they can control women workers better than the male workers, and women workers are more efficient in their work than the male workers (according to one of the mining supervisor). Their wages vary from ₹35,000 to ₹80,000 per month depending on their grade.¹³

Women working in offices primarily work as clerks or peons, in canteens as helpers and waitress, and in workshops as helpers. However, three Dalit women employed in the workshops have expressed that they wanted to work in offices as peons but other workers and employees were not comfortable with the Dalit women working around them, and they did not accept the food and tea served by them. Employment in the canteens was denied to Dalit women because many upper-caste and OBC men and women workers refused to eat food cooked by them. So, they accepted jobs in other departments since they did not want to lose their only source of livelihoods.

Though women workers contribute immensely to the coal industry, they are not respected as "coal miners," as they are not the direct producers of coal. Women working in canteens and offices do not enter the coal mines, and hence are technically considered as "office staff." The women who are working in the workshop and especially in the blasting section, fall under the excavation cadre; however, they too are not considered to be "miners." The mining industry is gendered and the extraction, which is considered to be hyper-masculine (Lahiri-Dutt 2011, 2015), is kept away from women as it involves the operation of heavy earth moving machines (HEMM) in the opencast mines. The men who operate the HEMM and carry out the activities of coal production are called "strikers"—locally known as "operators" and considered "coal miners," and as martyrs for the nation if they meet with a fatal accident during coal production. Therefore, though a few women belonging to landowning households are employed in the coal mines, they face enormous challenges in keeping up with their only source of livelihoods because of their gender, and in the case of Dalit women, both gender and caste amplifies their vulnerability within the industry.

Besides the challenges faced by women in their everyday labouring lives, the above discussion suggests that whenever the male member is not able to avail employment in the coal mines, the woman is employed in his place. Though dispossession has brought some flexibility at the household level for women's employment, it may not be an empowering process as their entry into paid work is conditioned by necessity imposed by the male members of the household.

(iii) Moving between casual labour and coal collection: In the processes of dispossession¹⁴, the most neglected segment of households is the landless. Landless households are not eligible to claim any compensation as per the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy of 1989. Across different dispossession contexts, landless households have never been recognised as

project affected because of their lack of formal ownership of land and other resources and, hence, are not compensated (Parasuraman 1993). The constitutional safeguards also do not ensure compensation for landless Dalits. A total of 41 women interviewed are from landless Dalit households. They were primarily engaged as agricultural labourers. Additionally, they also used to work as cattle rearers, locally called as *halia* and cleaners at landowners' houses. With the takeover of agricultural land, they have also lost their livelihoods. Presently, they work as daily wage labourers at construction sites and as sanitation workers in upper-caste and OBC houses as well as in the offices of MCL. There is no guarantee of their job and place of work. As Braja, 44-year-old landless Dalit woman from Arisa village, says,

I was an agricultural labour with my husband. I used to get rice and vegetables in exchange of my labour. In festivals, the landowner used to give me food. We were poor then and we are poorer now. We have to buy everything from outside. With loss of land, we lost our livelihood. MCL did not compensate us because we did not have land to give them.

They are forced to collect coal with their husbands and children either from coal stock yards or from railway sidings. The collected coal is then carried by their husbands on bicycles for selling in nearby villages and motels and to local mafias. On an average, they pick up to 100 kg of coal every day, mostly in the early morning hours or in the afternoon. Collecting coal is considered an illegal activity, which is equated with coal stealing. They are caught many times by the local police, coal mines management and security guards and struggle to free themselves. However, with the loss of agricultural work and common resources, as also intensification of a cash-based economy, Dalit women are forced to continue coal collection as it has become a stable source of cash for them. The cash earned from the coal collection enables them to meet their daily food requirements and other cash-based needs. Pramodini, a 52-year-old landless Dalit woman from Poddo village, says that

Earlier we knew every day we would get work to do, either as an agricultural labour or as a cleaner or for cattle rearing but now with so many labourers in the area, there is no guarantee that we would get a job every day. The contractors sometimes suck our blood by making us sweat endlessly but pay us only ₹150–₹200 (daily wages). Do you think a six-member family can survive on that? So, I help my husband in stealing coal as well which pays us up to ₹250–₹300 per bag.

The loss of common property resources has hit landless Dalit women the hardest. Earlier, they were able to collect various food products from the forest, but now they have no

means to avail free food, and unlike landowning households, neither they nor their husbands have regular employment in coal mines—to replace free food with purchased food from markets. For their coal collection activities, they are shamed by the upper castes as thieves and are always associated with dirt.

Landless Dalit women of these surveyed villages carry out household tasks and also work as labourers for low-grade jobs. They aspire towards regular employment in the coal mines, or to become a miner's wife. They are denied recognition as being affected and dispossessed, and are socially excluded by the state policy and coal mining management. This makes the Dalit women experience an acute feeling of lack of any resources with which to negotiate, and a sense that their very existence is being denied. As Jambu, a 51-year-old landless Dalit woman from Manda village, says, "We were poor and miserable then, also we are poor and miserable now. We don't exist, nobody cares for us."

Conclusions

The variations in the changing lives of rural women as an outcome of the dispossession process, should be viewed as a result of the pre-existing agrarian inequalities shaped by caste, class and gender positions that is used by capital for constructing its division of labour. Coal mines are male-dominated capitalist settings that have created three categories of work for rural women as evident in Talcher. First, the work of "miners' wife," a process of housewifisation, which is basically their unpaid labour contributing to the social reproduction of the miners, and restricting the women to household work. Second, work in the coal mines, the process of becoming women miners, which are not the jobs of "coal miners" in a true sense, but rather the jobs that facilitate coal production. Third, moving between low-grade works such as sanitation work and other casual labour in and around coal mines and primarily, coal collection. Women belonging to landowning households (majorly upper-caste Hindus and OBCs, and a small minority of Dalits and Adivasis) are working in the first two categories. Landless Dalit women are, however, carrying out menial jobs. In all these cases, the entry of women (across the caste and class positions) into different forms of work are under unfavourable circumstances. Women were subjected to exclusion by the state's compensation policy, the gendered coal mining industry, and existing social norms. Where included, the manner of inclusion and the conditions they face are adverse. Marginalisation in the process of dispossession affects landless Dalit women, as the most vulnerable, the hardest.

NOTES

- 1 Information collected from MCL office in Talcher from September–December 2018.
- 2 The original names of the villages and the respondents have been replaced by the pseudonyms.
- 3 Some of the upper-caste Hindu communities such as Karan, Dalit communities such as Pan and Adivasi communities such as Kandha are peculiar to Odisha.
- 4 Around 13 women were upper caste, 129 women were OBC, three women were Adivasi and nine were Dalit women who belonged to landowning households.
- 5 Compiled from survey questionnaire and interviews conducted from September–December 2015.
- 6 The data presented here was collected during fieldwork using survey questionnaire from September–December 2015.
- 7 Common property resources may broadly be defined as those non-exclusive resources in which a group of households have co-equal use rights (Jodha 2001: 120).
- 8 Interviews collected from September–December 2015.
- 9 Out of 107 women, five Dalit and two Adivasi women belonging to landowning households and the rest 100 upper-caste and OBC women belonging to landowning households are housewives.
- 10 The data analysed is based on fieldwork from September–December 2018.
- 11 The data collected from MCL office and analysed is based on fieldwork from September–December 2018.

- 12 Out of 47 women, four Dalit and one Adivasi women belonging to landowning households, and the rest 42 upper-caste and OBC women belonging to landowning households are working in the coal mines through the compensation package.
- 13 As per the data collected during fieldwork from September–December 2018.

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