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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CHANGE OF RESOURCE BASE AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF TRIBAL FAMILY: AN ENQUIRY

***Dr. Probodh Kr. Mondal**

Assistant Professor of Geography, PDC Girls, College, Bolpur, Birbhum, India

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ABSTRACT

No resource and resource process is a static phenomenon of the earth surface. It is a dynamic process whose linkages extend deep into the cultural system of the people connected with exploitation of that resource far beyond the limits of immediate physical, technological and occupational considerations. Therefore, understanding of resource base is more economic view than natural but it has a definite role by resource process on development of human civilization. All resources are derived from natural elements but the resource potential of natural elements is not realized unless the elements are separated from their natural disposition and are converted into raw materials by labor process. This paper, thus, seeks to find out the present context of change of resource base with a historical background of its analysis and how the notions of resource process and resource function have impacted the study of socio-economic transformation with special case study of the tribal family of Basalt quarrying industrial area of Rampurhat-I C.D. Block, Birbhum District, West Bengal.

Key words: *Nepenthes khasiana*, Endophytes, Colonization frequency, Shannon-Weaver diversity index, Simpson's index of dominance, Environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Change of resource base and shifting of occupation in an agrarian society may be explained through different reasons—need or crisis or choice or relative advantage and disadvantage. Whatever may be the reasons, change of resource base leads to change in production function and production relation. Under such circumstances, changing functional system and activity space definitely alter livelihood pattern and thereby culture of the communities. Here the panorama is highlighted under the change of physical and cultural landscape with the introduction of new resource base like basalt quarrying in the pre-existing resource processes like forest and agriculture of the concerned area. The forest plays as dynamic resource base and resource process. Because, the forest of the area was considered as source of food and drinks, source of raw materials both timber and non-timber forest products, source of shelter etc. of the tribal people. With the rapid depletion of forest, forest economy has lost its importance due to deforestation or expansion of agricultural land. Thereafter, new resource process, basalt quarrying activity refused to all set of natural as well human ecological balance of the area.

Area under study: In this case, the area under study is to vary in accordance with specific questions relating to objective. While examining the new resource process and economic trend of the area, then study area is confined to affected area of basalt quarrying industry which is located the western part of Rampurhat-I C.D. Block. This area was covered with forest and agricultural land but now it is change by quarrying industry. On the other hand, question is arises from the perspective of socio-cultural transformation, then it indicate to tribal society which is located within the Rajmahal trap area in the tip western part of the study area.

Objectives

Briefly, the objective of the present study is to examine, with an economic view point as well as with stand for socio-cultural transformation of tribal society by opinion of two research responder of the area and to assess the relative hope and despair of the society as well as relative gains and losses experienced by the tribal society which is connected with the new resource process.

Change of Resource Base and Socio-cultural transformation – A Real Story

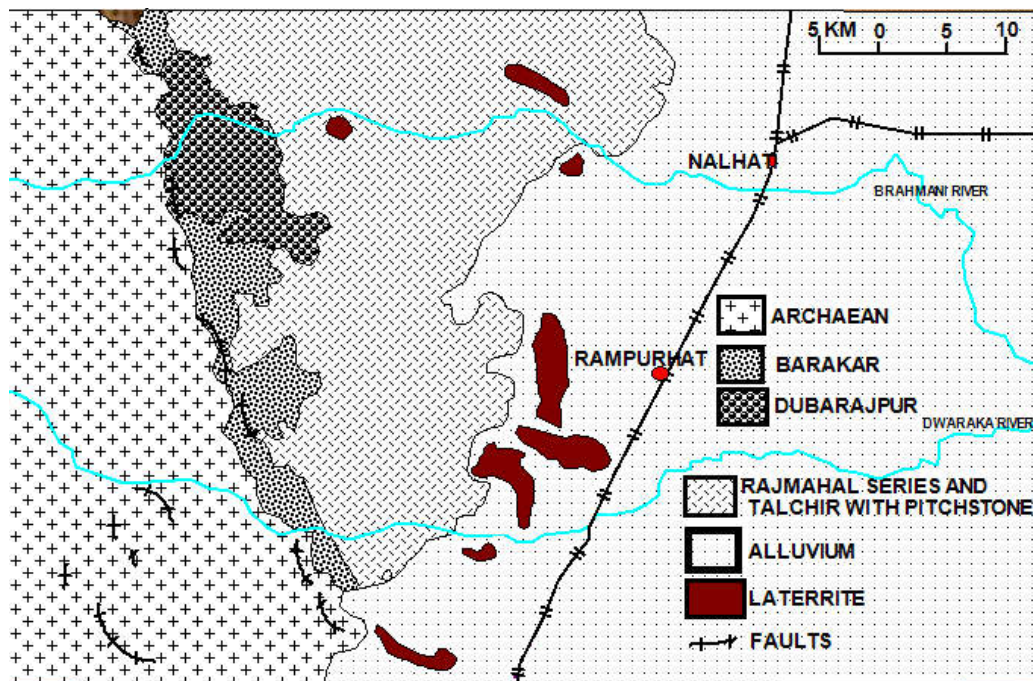
To fulfillment of research objective, the acquit research problem is needed for the analysis. Before development of basalt quarrying

*Corresponding author: Dr. Probodh Kr. Mondal,
Geography, PDC Girls, College, Bolpur, Birbhum, India.

industry the whole area was under some patches forested tract and agricultural land. Thereafter, western part of this area has been experienced with the new resource process i.e. Basalt Quarrying since 1960s for demand of the stone cheeps as constructional materials. Apart from this, particularly this area, Basalt Quarrying is developed due to the presence of basaltic tract i.e. extended part

From the age of twelve years she would help her parents in collecting fuel woods from the nearby forest. During paddy season, of both showing and harvesting she would go with her parents like other tribal children towards east (prosperous paddy growing region of Burdwan and Birbhum) to earn money and also some bags of rice, that was enough to meet their livelihood.

Association of geology and basalt quarrying (study area and its surroundings)



Map 1. (Computed from map of Geological Survey of India)

of Rajmahal trap, cheap massive labor force from tribal society and also supply of huge capital by entrepreneurs from local and outside of the area. After development of basalt quarries, the area is facing the trivial situation both physical and social environment. But the present context to be highlighted on social environmental perspective by the active participation of research responder from tribal society who are facing lots of changes their social values, social ritual, religious beliefs, livelihood and all set cultural traits.

Case Study-I

Shila Soren of 52 years old, born and brought up in a tribal village nearby Baramosia has the experience about the change caused up by stone quarrying of this area. She is good responder in perceiving the change of tribal livelihood, especially position of tribal woman workers in quarrying activity. She is not only a good responder, but she has some insight. She feels nostalgia about the peace full co-existence of man and nature with the complete absence of unrest mind, rather filled with peace and tranquility. Now it has transformed in to hectic-life, burdened with tension and stress. In the lap of nature they would only think about present and were never worried about the future. She feels nostalgia- "we were good enough in our forest based tribal society. There was no tension, no stress. The villages are shadowed by trees, with a deep forest nearby-the abode of peace. Shila has no formal education, has no distinct idea about change of resource base and its impact on landscape, but she has deep realization of change of livelihood of tribals by quarrying.

Traditional fuel wood collection and a break through by paddy cultivation were joyful activities in tribal livelihood earlier and also in the recent past. Being married in the same village, Shila continued the work, as it is permitted to tribal customs. After marriage, Shila engaged in paddy cultivation in two *bighas* of land in her in-lows' property. She has no hesitation for seasonal migration to Burdwan and Birbhum to work in paddy field even after marriage. She was leading a peaceful life. But the situation turned around at the end of 1970s. At the age of 18, she observed that few people of civil society came to her village to talk with the villagers, for setting up of stone quarrying taking the lease of the tribal land. They offered huge money and assured employment of able bodied villagers in quarrying. The lease hold was granted by *Mukhaia* (the leader of the village) with the support of main members of the village.

They convinced the people about the benefit of new operation. Shila, said "not all the villagers were agreed to this, especially a considerable members of women did not prefer it, but their unwillingness was dumped by others. Within one year, villagers observed drastic changes. In the morning they heard unbearable sound of dynamite blasting, rapid movement of dumpers. Top soil was removed and *Khadan* were established overnight. Construction of roads was done earlier. Crashing units were set up by the side of the roads for easy dumping of debris, soil, rock fragments as well as loading-unloading of rocks of different sizes. Peaceful village environmental disappeared, as everyone is busy to work in *khadan*. Green agricultural field, dense forest patch, rocky undulating surface with ups and downs disappeared on all sudden. Rural set up and livelihoods of villager were changed drastically. Shila and

other women lost their peaceful job of fuel wood collection associated with singing in the forest, conversation with her mates about the joy and woe of their life, rhythmic walk along the roads with a band of fuel stock on their heads. Shila and other women are now engaged as contact laborers in crushers. According to her version, women in the crushers have to carry iron basket over their head with a weight of 40-50 kg of rock debris, from ballast site to crushers with a token (*tikli*) given to them for each basket with remuneration of Rs.0.25 per token (surveyed in 2009). From the morning to the afternoon they do the work almost ceaselessly in each session and the amount of earning was Rs. 25-30 during late 1980s. This is their daily routine now, with this tired-some work throughout the day, they lost their mentality to make a conversation with the family members and neighbors. Returning home, they take food and go to bed. Family bond has weakened. Neighbor relation has loosened by dint of this hectic work. They rarely take part in evening time, folk dance and song-an essential part of glorious tribal culture. Tribal people were habituated to take part in dance and song with the rhythm of tribal drums and flute in the light of kerosene lamp, in the dark of evening in tribal village surrounded by forest. The recreation would continue up to 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. with immense enthusiasm driven by action of country liquor. All has faded in oblivion. Most of the villages nearby *khadan* are now illuminated by electricity. By her earning Shila, has bought a television and a tape recorder. Tribal people of this area are now habituated to use television, tape recorder and cell phone.

Their traditional recreations have been substituted by all these electronic equipments. They are now familiar with popular culture, with the rapid simultaneously omission of traditional culture. Instead of working in a pristine environment, present occupation has brought up physical ailments, skin problems, bronchial problems, asthma, menstruation problems, liver cirrhosis and social ailments of sexual harassment, gender bias etc. Because of her age, Shila can no more work in the crusher. Her two sons and a daughter are engaged in quarrying. Aged people can't able to cop up with this hard work and normally sometimes work as agricultural laborers. Some young adults, who don't prefer this hectic work, have already been engaged as construction workers in distant urban locations. Astonishingly, four families of this village who were not in favor of this quarrying activity have permanently migrated to Kurunda, a village in Burdwan district. They lead their livelihood working in the paddy fields owned by large farmers. Shila invited them in the *badhna* festival, but they refused her, as it has lost its validity and charm. I had the opportunity to meet with them with Shila's reference. They expressed their grief about this transformation. They can't bear it and so they left the area. Shila said-"many of us have the same feeling, but our inner spirit was dumped by this lucrative economy. But I don't know what will be our fate, if this stone quarrying is collapsed. We have lost our forest, occupation, livelihood and culture. So, what will be our future?" I uttered silently, "you will be the environmental refugee, your identity as a member of tribal community will be lost. You will be diffused randomly within the sea of urbanization."

Case study-II

Sukhi Munda of 48 years age, residing in Aranda village has experienced the change by the introduction of *khadan* economy, being not only a local man of this area, but also an employee of a *khadan*. He is the victim of social pathology,

which haunt him everyday and will continue till to death. Sukhi's two *bighas* of unproductive barren land was given to *khadan* owner on lease hold basis for thirty years. He was offered huge money for this lease and also has been employed as a dumper loader. Like other 16 workers of Aranda village, Sukhi also do his work of dumper loading regularly. After drilling, blasting and removal of rocks from vertical walls of *khadans*, he is habituated to hold up rocks with a weight of 5-25 kg and carries those to dumper and throws into the carrier. Thus he earns Rs.160-170 (in 2010) per day. Presently 30-32 dumpers are loaded by 7-8 workers with a rate of Rs. 50 per dumper. By such opportunity, earning Rs. 4000-4500 per month, Sukhi was initially happy and admitted his sons in a primary school for their education. But after 10 years Sukhi could not continue their education because of their (Tribal) social set up and cultural inertia. Being drop out his two sons are now engaged in *khadan* economy as crusher workers. Sukhi is happy now with his earning. He has constructed a brick built house thatched with asbestos, in contrast to traditional tribal houses furnished with mud wall and thatched by tiles. But he is worried about the cultural transformation of tribal society. Tribal society are crazy about television, cell phone etc. Present generation is delinked from their social values and customs and is gradually imitating popular culture which is discordant for tribal society. Sukhi's family has faced the tragedy of devaluation of social norms. Sukhi said '*Badhna Parab*', is the most popular festival, organized by us in an open space surrounded by tress. It is the opportunity for unmarried tribal youth to select their life partner. It is organized for two days in winter, with a fair for the gathering of youth. Young boys and girls generally enjoy, joining in the festive dance and song. Male may select a female or a female may select a male after conversation.

After primary selection they participate in dance with folk song, holding hands of each other. They take wine jointly and go for lucid conversation about the conjugate life. After final conversation they take oath to marry each other." In 2007, Sukhis' elder son Moni Munda of 18 years old selected a 13 years old girl in the *Badhna* festival to marry her. Ensuring to marry her in *Badhan* festival, he later on denied to marry. Moni was punished Rs. 4000 for breaking this oath. This penalty frequently occurs to day. Young males enjoy in *Badhna* festival and thereafter refuse the girls. They take it as an enjoyment rather than oath. Sukhi was disappointed and refused Moni to recognize him as his son. That does not matter to Moni. Thus the norms and customs are being soiled by popular customs. Sukhi is aware of every chance of permanent damage of limbs while working as a dumper loader in *khadan*. Few workers have lost their ability to work by such accidents and have got only primary treatment and marginal compensation. For instance of permanent disability one member of his or her family is allowed to work in *khadan* sometime, but not always. Sukhi identified such hazards as temporary loss but devaluation of social values and norms are permanent damage. The literary meaning of the word 'Sukhi' is happy in version of Bengali. In material sense Sukhi is happy now but spiritually he is unhappy. Perhaps all elderly tribals are unhappy. This unhappiness has been rooted though *khadan* economy breaking and grinding the social values just like the breaking of massive rocks. While asked what will be the future of this uncertain journey. He replied, "you don't know, even I don't know. Environment is destroyed, people are exploited and the society is deformed. If you asked this question to the *khadan* owners they will smile without any response. Because they know very well as that it

has happened earlier in Pakur area, the earliest growth pole of stone quarrying of this region.”

Conclusion

The socio-cultural transformation is the process of series of transition which transfer from one state of phase to another phase of the particular society. Many anthropologists think about it that process may be forward or backward, up and down, towards progress or regressive in respect of socio-cultural set up. David Mandelbaum (1972) argued that ‘in tribal life the principal links for the whole society are based on kinship’. But from the case study the control of kinship and social order is almost fragmented due to effect of Basalt quarrying activity. Not only that the society was under the pristine nature, family cohesiveness and system sustaining but now it is under rapid system-transforming process. So, the tribal group may be considered as relatively weak social formation whose survival is guaranteed only at a low level. Because they have no specific alternative works within their locality due to the scavenging operation of the land.

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