

# **AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE PROGRAMMES OF WOMEN BEEDI WORKERS IN CHHATTISGARH**

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The Chhattisgarh state came into existence on 1st Nov., 2000 by the Bill "Madhya Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2000" passed in the Parliament. It is situated between 17.46 to 24.05 degree North latitudes and 80.15 to 84.26 East longitudes. Rice is the principal crop of the state. Uttar Pradesh to the North, Jharkhand to the North East, Orissa to the east, Andhra Pradesh to the south-east and south, Maharashtra to the south-west, Madhya Pradesh to the west and north-west form its boundaries,

Beedi is a forest product and also called the poor man's smoke or poor man's cigarette. A standard beedi contains about 0.2 grams of rolled tobacco flakes. Beedi manufacturing industry is an agro-based and labour intensive unorganized industry with the employment rate only next to agriculture and handloom industry. The Beedi industry co-exists, on one side, with factory based manufacturing and, on the other, with large number of unregistered and home-based enterprises. The beedi industry employs more than 55 lakhs workers spreading over 16 States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.<sup>1</sup> As per information of labour ministry, Government of Chhattisgarh, in the year 2007-08, there were 2,779 licensed industries are there, in which 22,48,050 workers were worked and out of which 18,000 approximate Beedi workers are in the Chhattisgarh State. In the year 2005, 11656 identity cards have been issued to the Beedi workers in the state.

Beedi manufacturing is being undertaken in the private sector in most of the states with exception of Kerala and West Bengal, where co-operative societies are also playing a significant role in this industry. Majority of the beedi workers are engaged in beedi rolling in home based work from the organized factories which has only ten percent of the workers involved in beedi rolling, Mostly the economically and socially backward populations are involved in beedi industry. It is to be noted that the tendu leaf collection is one of the profitable livelihood works for tribals as is beedi rolling for backward and schedule castes.<sup>2</sup>

According to ILO, there are about 300 manufacturers of major beedi brands and thousands of small scale contractors and manufacturers involved in bulk production of Beedis in India. The Beedi industry employs approximately 4.4 million full time workers and an additional 4 million in Beedi Industry-related jobs. Most of the workers are largely poor and illiterate. The lack of organized production in the Beedi Industry creates difficulty in regulating the working conditions and in implementing welfare laws among the workers.<sup>3</sup>

The existing studies of the Beedi Industry have pointed out that the production of beedi is organized in two main forms- factory and contractual systems. In the formal factory system, manufacturing is carried out within factory premises and under the direct supervision of managers/owners. Under the more common contractual system, a Contractor/Sattedar

supplies raw materials to workers who roll Beedis in their homes and return the finished beedis to the Contractor. This system has shifted the bargaining power away from the workers to middlemen and contractors who may cheat workers in respect of their wages and allowances.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Production Process in Beedi work :**

Beedi manufacturing has three major components and involves intensive human labour by the Beedi tobacco farmer, the tendu leaf plucker, and the Beedi manufacturer. The Beedi making process starts with the tendu leaf (locally known as tendu patta or Beedi patta ) which is used for wrapping the tobacco to make Beedis. Tendu leaves form nearly 70% of the weight of the Beedi. These leaves are grown in the remote forests of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and some parts of West Bengal. The tendu plants are pruned in the months of February and March and the mature leaves are collected after about 45 days. They are collected in bundles of 50 to 100 leaves, which are dried in sunlight for about a week. The dried leaves are sprinkled with water to soften them and then packed tightly in jute bags and exposed to direct sunlight for two days. The bags, thus packed and cured, can be stored till their use in Beedi manufacture. Great care is needed in the plucking, curing and storage of tendu patta. It is a sensitive product and with the slightest mishandling, its quality deteriorates, rendering them unfit for making Beedis. One standard bag of tendu leaves consists of 1,000 bundles of 50 leaves each. Most of the tendu leaf collectors are women and children especially girl children and the collection is done in the extreme hot season from April-June. The tendu pluckers start for the forests at 4.00 am. They travel 20-25 km for one or two bagfuls of leaves. Collecting tendu leaf from the forests is thus another form of tobacco-related employment involving about 2.2 million tribal and rural people in India. Around 150,000 tonnes of tobacco and 30,000 tonne of tendu leaves are used annually for the manufacture of Beedis.<sup>5</sup>

There are some health and hazards associated with tendu plucking. Sunstroke, snakebite, and bear attacks are some of the hazards that collectors face. If the trees are tall, people climb up the trunks to pluck the leaves, putting themselves in danger of injury or even death from falling

Next step of beedi making is tobacco procurement. Tobacco procurement is a process where tobacco is procured from the farmers directly to be used in the filling of leaves. The third process involves sizing of tendu leaves, filling the leaves with tobacco and binding which are labour intensive and can be done either in factory premises or done in the homes, through an out-work or a contract system. In the out-work system the employer gives the raw materials to the employees to take it to their homes convenient place and bring back the finished product. In the he contract system the raw materials are given to the workers not directly by the actual employers but through a contractor or agent who channelizes and regulates the flow and has direct contact with the workers. The fourth process is checking, roasting, drying and labeling which are normally done in the factories premises mostly by males.

The four main steps involved in the production of a beedi are (1) rewinding the thread, (2) cutting of beedi leaves (3) rolling the beedi, and (4) folding the beedi head. Generally it takes about half an hour to an hour to rewind a bundle of thread. The next step of beedi making i.e. cutting of beedi leaves requires some skill to cut maximum number of pieces from the leaf. Rolling of beedi leaf with tobacco is the main job in the process-tobacco is rolled in the leaf and tied with the thread. And the final step of the folding of beedi head can be done by

Exploitation of labour mainly women beedi makers are more common. Since beedi industry is primarily home based industry, economic security that it provides to women workers, is however, and coupled with exploitation and innumerable health hazards. The industries are more than 80 per cent.

and hardworking. It is significant of note that in some places women workers in beedi factor for indulging in beedi work.<sup>11</sup> And finally, women are considered to be more sincere of saving the money earned by doing beedi for better marriage proposals is also a major are burdened with taking care of younger siblings and doing household chores. The notion poor households is preferred. Likewise, educations in poor households mostly the girl children For instance it is assumed that the girl children working in home based work in economically religious, caste factors results in a wide prevalence of women labours in beedi industries. time. Fifthly, gender bias against the women coupled along with strong patriarchal tendencies, beedi work. Beedi work does not require any formal training and can be carried out at any and other benefits. Fourth cause was poor economic conditions of the families involved in they are preferred, in order to save on wages and avoid the legal measures like leave, wage, more suited to the work of beedi rolling.<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, women are easy to dominate and subjugate, time attending to their children and other household works. Secondly, their deft fingers are Firstly, the work is done generally from home and women can do it while at the same following:-

The reasons for higher percentage of women labour force in the beedi industry are following:-

#### The factors responsible for women working in the beedi industry

daily earning.<sup>9</sup> Children are also engaged in beedi rolling by their parents to supplement their workers and majority of them are women. Women constitute more than 50% of the beedi of women and children are employed. About 94 per cent of workers in the industry are home Beedi rolling is one of the major unorganized activities in India in which a large number makers, zari workers, papad makers, cobblers, lady tailors, carpenters, etc.<sup>8</sup> and craft persons. The other major occupations of the home based workers are agarbatti 45 lakh workers are employed in beedi rollings, 65 lakh in handloom weaving, 48 lakh artisans estimated that over 3 crore workers in the country are home based workers. Among these, In India, there is no authentic data on home based workers. However, it has been

year.<sup>7</sup> organized sector in the country which is higher by 0.1 per cent as compared to the preceding concerned, in March 2011, women workers constituted 20.5 per cent of total employment in cent as compared to 15.44 per cent in the urban areas. In so far as the organized sector is 22.27 per cent in 1991. The work participation rate for women in rural areas is 30.02 per compared to 25.63 per cent in 2001. The work participation rate of women was however workers. As per Census 2011, the work participation rate for women is 25.51 per cent as the remaining, 8.5 million are in household industry and 43.7 million are classified as other females are working as cultivators and another 61.5 million are agricultural labourers. Of rural and urban areas respectively. Out of total 149.8 million female workers, 35.9 million number of female workers in India is 149.8 million comprising of 121.8 and 28.0 million in Women form an integral part of the Indian workforce. As per Census 2011, the total employer.<sup>6</sup> The prepared beedi are then bundled and sent to the beedi contractor or assistants also.

exploitation of the beedi workers is mainly socio-economic issue. They are not entitled to proper legal wages, bonus, maternity benefits, pension, housing facilities, health facilities etc. The beedi industry poses health risks for Beedi workers especially women working from home. As noted in the International Labour Organization 2001 report, beedi workers suffer from postural problem (neck and low back pain), abdominal pains, eye problems, burning sensation in the throat, cough, asthma, T.B., bronchitis, excessive bleeding during menstruation, irregular and painful menstrual cycles, leucorrhoea, anemia, anemic body aches, dizziness from constant exposure to tobacco dust.<sup>12</sup>

In Chhattisgarh, more than 50,000 families work in the multi-crore beedi industry. Despite the laws that govern this industry, the beedi workers are paid much less than the minimum wage, have no benefits and are constantly at risk of respiratory diseases. The workers, being unorganized, are generally deprived of many facilities, for instance, minimum wage, social security and other employment benefits. Earlier the workers were not protected by any specific labour laws.

### **Central Government welfare schemes**

Matters relating to Social Security are listed in the Directive Principles of State Policy and the subjects in the Concurrent List. The following social security issues are mentioned in the Concurrent List (List III in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India)-

**Item No. 23:** Social Security and insurance, employment and unemployment.

**Item No. 24:** Welfare of Labour including conditions of work, provident funds, employers' liability, workmen's compensation, invalidity and old age pension and maternity benefits. Directive Principles of State Policy also narrates about welfare schemes under following articles.

**Article 41 Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases.** The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

**Article 42 Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.** The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

The Indian government has developed a series of legislative acts and policies aimed at monitoring working conditions of and providing social security benefits to Beedi labourers. Major legislation/policies meant to protect and improve the livelihoods of the Beedi workers.

The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 provides for fixation/ periodic revision of minimum wages in employments where labour is vulnerable to exploitation. The minimum wages system serves a useful purpose in preventing workers exploitation in terms of payment of unduly low wage and helps in reducing inequalities in the standard of living of different social groups of workers by statutorily prescribing minimum wage rates. This helps in reducing poverty and improving the position of low paid wage earners in the sweated industries.<sup>13</sup>

The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 covers all employers who employ one or more workers in any scheduled employment in respect of which Minimum Wages have been fixed under the Act. Although the Act provided for fixation/revision of minimum wages by the appropriate Government at interval not exceeding 5 years, to make wages more realistic, yet the implementation of the Act remained a cause of concern for the Government.<sup>14</sup>

## **The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966**

The object of the Act is to regulate the conditions of work in beedi and cigar manufacturing establishments and to provide for the welfare of workers employed therein. It extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir but all or any of its provisions becomes operative in any State or part of it only from such date as notified by the State Government. Under the Act, an industrial premises is defined as a place or premises including precincts thereof in which or in any part of which an industry or manufacturing process connected with the making of beedi or cigar or both is carried on with or without the aid of power. The Main provisions of the Act relate to (i) health and welfare, (ii) hours of work and wages for overtime, (iii) employment of young persons and women, and (iv) leave and holidays. The administration of the Act rests with the State Governments.

**The Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act 1976** was enacted to collect taxes by way of cess or by imposing excise duty on manufactured beedi so as to fund the measures to promote the welfare of persons engaged in beedi establishments. The welfare schemes for beedi workers are being run through the collection of cess only. The expenditure on the ongoing various welfare schemes is restricted due to less collection. Under Section 3A of the Beedi Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1976, the exemption is granted to the manufacturers who manufacture less than 20 lakh unbranded beedis. The beedi manufacturers and contractors are taking advantage of this provision and appointing number of contractors for getting exemption under the above provision of cess.<sup>15</sup>

Under the law, employers of beedi workers are required to issue identity cards to their employees to enable them to receive welfare benefits. However, as many employers do not issue the Identity Cards, the responsibility has been shifted to the Labour Welfare Organisation through the Welfare Commissioner. However, surveys/special campaigns have also been conducted by some State Governments for identification of beedi workers in their respective States.<sup>16</sup>

6 lakh beedi workers have not been issued identity cards till date which is depriving them to have access to the welfare fund and availing benefits under the schemes meant for them. Till December, 2009 only 20,782 Beedi workers has been registered in Chhattisgarh.<sup>17</sup>

## **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)**

The 'Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana' for BPL families (a unit of five) in Unorganised Sector was launched on 1st October, 2007 and became operational w.e.f. 01.04.2008. Under the scheme, smart card based cashless health insurance cover of Rs.30,000/- per annum on a family floater basis is provided to the BPL families (a unit of five) in the organized sector. The premium is shared on 75:25 basis by Centre and State Government.<sup>18</sup> As on 31.01.2012, the scheme is being implemented in 24 States / UTs, namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, RSBY has been extended to building and other construction workers registered under the Building and other Construction workers (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Service) Act, 1996 and street vendors, beedi workers, MGNREGA beneficiaries who have worked for more than 15 days during the preceding financial year and domestic Workers.

## **Construction of Houses for Beedi Workers in Chhattisgarh**

The Revised Integrated Housing Scheme (RIHS), 2007 for beedi workers is being implemented in the country through the 17 Welfare Commissioners of the Labour Welfare Organisation of the Ministry. The housing subsidy of Rs. 40,000/- is given in two equal

instalments to the workers for construction of houses. The R1HS, 2007 is applicable to the Chhattisgarh State beedi workers also. An amount of Rs. 10.00 lakh as 1st instalment for 50 houses to beedi workers was sanctioned in 2007-08 for Village-Chaple, Raigarh District in Chhattisgarh State. The inspection report and utilization certificate of 50 houses are awaited from the state Government for release of 2nd instalment.

For tendu leaf collectors, a group insurance scheme was launched in 1991 and all tendu leaf pluckers between 18 and 60 years of age are supposed to be insured free of cost under this scheme. The scheme is run by the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India. The nominees of the pluckers are provided help and guidance in the submission of claims. But in reality, seldom do the pluckers get the benefits from LIC. Moreover children, who often meet with casualties, are not covered by the insurance.

### **Chhattisgarh Government welfare scheme**

Besides the Central Government's rules and welfare schemes, the Government of Chhattisgarh has initiated some measures for the welfare of tendu leaf workers and beedi workers. One of them is the sharing of profit from tendu leaves trade. From the collection year 2008, government of Chhattisgarh has fixed 80% of profit as incentive wages to the collector of tendu leaves. From 2006-07, the Government of Chhattisgarh has decided to provide Charanpaduka ( shoes/ Chappal) to one member in each family of tendu leaves gatherers.

Various insurance schemes like Jan Shree Insurance scheme, group insurance scheme and Pradhin Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojna. Under education schemes, award to meritorious student for professional courses as well as non- professional for the children of tendu leaves gatherers family has been initiated by the Government. The revised integrated housing schemes (RIHS), 2007 for beedi workers is being implemented in the country through the welfare commissioners of the labour welfare organization of the ministry.

### **Construction of houses for Beedi workers (Scheme no 8352):-**

As per the approved proposal, 504 residential quarters are to be constructed. The allocation for these houses: the Central & State Govt. is Rs. 40,000 & 23,000 respectively? Along with taxes this amounts to a proposed budget of Rs. 317.50 approx. In the State of Chhattisgarh, houses of beedi workers to be proposed in Dongargarh 200, in Rajnandgaon 254 and in Village Chaple (Raigarh) 50. Constructing houses for Beedi Workers, Collector Rajnandgaon and Raigarh land was allotted. In the year 2006-07 there were Rs. 317.52 lakh provision had made(201.58 Central Share+115.92 State Share), but for need of sanction from the State Government the utilization not possible. The same provision was made for the next year 2007-08 also. Central Government has given the Administrative approval for above proposals. In addition to the above a survey was conducted for the construction of houses for beedi workers in the Chhattisgarh.<sup>20</sup>

### **Chhattisgarh Government has taken various measures for the welfare of Tendu leaves collectors.**

#### **Sharing of Profit from Tendu Leaves trade**

From the collection year 2008 onward profit earned from the trade of Tendu Leaves is distributed in the following manner. 80% of profit as incentive wages to the collector of Tendu leaves 5% of profit for collection, sale, godowning and value addition of non-nationalised minor forest produce, 5% of profit for the temporary reimbursement of losses of societies. Primary Co-operative Societies is the basic unit for calculating the amount of profit.<sup>21</sup>

Collection Season	Amount of incentives wages	In crore
	Cash	Rice
2001	28.64	-
2002	39.95	-
2002	39.95	-
2003	33.18	-
2004	25.37	-
2005	24.48	-
2006	31.59	-
2007	117.32	-
2008	65.96	-
2009	92.41	-
2010	135.88	-

Source: Chhattisgarh State Minor Forest Produce (Trading & development) co-operation/  
[http://cgmpfed.org/new/welfare\\_scheme.php](http://cgmpfed.org/new/welfare_scheme.php)

### Distribution of Charanpaduka's (Shoes) to Gatherers of Tendu leaves

The Govt. of Chhattisgarh decided to provide Charanpaduka (Shoes/Chappal) to one member in each family of Tendu leaves gatherers from 2006-07 onwards. Only those families are eligible for above who collect minimum 500 gaddies in at least one year in preceding two years.

S.NO.	Year	Distributed Charanpaduka (In Lakh Pair)	Charanpaduka Details	Purchase Rate per Pair (In Rs.)	Amount Received By Federation from Govt. (InRs. Crores)
1.	2006-07	1253	Ladies/Gents Shoes	88.00	11.345
2.	2007-08	1260	Ladies/Gents Shoes	81.70 for Gents 76.40 for Ladies	13.00
3.	2008-09	12.82	Ladies Shoes	63.36	8.00
4.	2009-10	13.22	Ladies Shoes	52.98	10.00
5.	2010-11	13.76	Gents Shoes	105.00	10.00
6.	2011-12	11.45	Ladies Chappal	125.00	18.10
7.	2012-13	11.62	Gents Shoes	123.00	15.00
8.	2013-14	12.55	Gents Shoes	127.5	15.00
9	2014-15	12.53	Ladies Chappal	135.00	17.99

Source: Chhattisgarh State Minor Forest Produce (Trading & development) cooperation/  
[http://cgmfpfed.org/new/welfare\\_scheme.php](http://cgmfpfed.org/new/welfare_scheme.php)

### **Education Promotion Schemes**

Education schemes have been started for the children of head of tendu leaves gatherer families who have collected 500 or more gaddies of tendu leaves in at least two of the last three years. The Meritorious student award scheme was launched from the year 2011-12. Under the scheme one boy and one girl of every primary co-operative society are eligible to get RS. 2000, Rs. 2500 and Rs. 3000 to the students who secured highest marks in class VIII, X, XII respectively.

### **Insurance Schemes**

All tendu leaves gatherers whose age is between 18 and 59 years and whose families have collected 500 or more gaddies of tendu leaves in at least in one of the last 2 years are insured under following insurance schemes: -

Chhattisgarh government has started insurance schemes like Jan Shree Insurance Scheme from the year 1, May 2007. Under the scheme, the tendu leaves gathers family receive Rs.30,000 in case of normal death, Rs. 37,500 in case of partial disability and Rs 75,000 in case of death or permanent disability.

Under the group insurance scheme, from first May 2007, Government of Chhattisgarh has started an scheme for tendu leave gatherers of age group between 18 to 59 years except the head of the on the following payment provision for normal death Rs. 3,500, partial disability Rs, 12,500 and accidental death or permanent disability Rs. 25,000.

### **Conclusion**

Beedi rolling is highly labour intensive, located in economically backward areas where cheap labours are available and no means of alternative employment. The workers work whole day to prepare 1000 beedis. Though they get very low wage, which is only 50 to 130 Rupees for thousand beedis. Chhattisgarh Government prescribed the minimum wages Rs 77.50 from 1/1/2015. .Nevertheless, manufacturers give them very less.

Despite the efforts made by various social partners, the coverage of welfare policies and the degree of organisation are still weak (about 10% of the beedi workers are organised). The trade unions say that the shift from factory-based production to home-based beedi rolling (which started in a large way after the beedi workers laws came into being) adversely affected the organising process. The identification of workers, the implementation of minimum wages, dearness allowance and other regulatory provisions of the beedi workers law have also been a major problem in the home based work.

Beedi making is women based work which, large numbers of female children have engaged. Consequently, they drop out from school. In fact, beedi workers belong to the poor family and they have been depriving from education day by day. Plenty number of children (mainly female children) of the beedi rolling households give up education in the early days of school life engage in beedi making to fulfill their family needs.

Tendu plucking is a highly labour intensive work which involves about 14-15 hours of hard work every day and fetches very little remuneration when considering the hard labour involved. Income through tendu collection is seasonal which does not resolve the problems



of poverty and livelihood of the tendu pluckers. Tendu pluckers are often subject to exploitation in the hands of private contractors and the government agents. Under-counting and rejection of leaves and under-payment for them are some of the ways that middlemen exploit the pluckers. Delayed payments by the agents are a problem for migrant labourers as they may shift from the area and will no longer be available after the season.. Pluckers have no proper footwear or clothing, as stipulated by the state, to combat the heat while walking long distances to the jungles. There are no provisions for insurance for the minors (under the age of 18) who are involved in plucking tendu in large numbers and often face serious casualties

To regulate the Beedi industry, and to enable Beedi workers to demand their legitimate rights, all companies should be registered and identity cards should be issued to all the workers working both in organized and un-organised sectors. There should be a fool-proof registration system in place, with ID cards provided to all workers and contractors so that the benefits can reach them. The introduction of a Goods and Services Tax is an opportunity for the Government to bring Beedis under the tax ambit and levy additional taxes on this 'sin product' to save millions of lives. In addition to the Beedi cess, the excise duty collected from the tax imposed on Beedis should be used for the welfare of Beedi workers.

Beedi workers must be assisted to adopt safer, alternate sources of livelihood as a majority of them want to shift from this occupation which has kept them in perpetual poverty. Implementation of poverty eradication programmes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA), Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), and Backward Regions Grant Fund Beedi workers can also be linked to vocational training institutes like Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Industrial Training Centres (ITCs), according to local market needs.

Rehabilitation measures must keep the aspirations of the community in mind while shifting them to sustainable, remunerative micro enterprises. Alternative occupations must take into account the lifestyles of Beedi rollers, level of skills, needs and constraints. They must also be designed with a long-term vision so that the benefits extend to the next generations as well, who should not under any circumstances be compelled to take up Beedi rolling as an occupation again.

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