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SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN WORKERS IN SOME SELECTED BRICK KILNS IN WEST BENGAL: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NADIA DISTRICT

SWAPAN KUMAR ROY
ASST. PROFESSOR
BETHUADAHARI COLLEGE
BETHUADAHARI

ABSTRACT

Brick Industry is one of the informal/unorganized industries in India. This industry is booming with the expansion of real estate business. It is a labour intensive industry. The industry employs millions of workers. Sizable portions of the workers are women. They live in poverty. At work place, they are exploited, deprived and do not get the status which the men workers enjoy. There are varied natures of problems the women workers are facing now. Their socio-economic conditions cause concerns. In this backdrop, an attempt has been made to ascertain and examine the socio-economic conditions of women workers engaged in brick kiln factories. The data collected in this regard have been interpreted through percentage analysis. The entire gamut of discussion reveals that women workers live in poverty and as a consequence they come to work in brick kilns. They and their children are mostly illiterate. Most of them are migrants and their land holdings are minimal. Their annual incomes are very small. They are not given the scope of doing skilled work. Very often they express dissatisfaction on working environments. Working environment needs to be improved so that workingwomen get motivated and enthused that may result in development of the kilns. Statutory benefits need to be given for their welfare.

KEYWORDS

Brick, Migrant, Real Estate Business, Statutory Benefits, and Unorganized Industry.

INTRODUCTION

Workers are one of the pillars of each and every industry. Needless to mention that a well-clad, well-fed and satisfied, contented worker is an asset to any industry. So the owners of the industries need to pay attention towards the development of the workers engaged in the industries. Known to all that a large numbers of women workers are engaged in industries. The brick industry is not an exceptional one. Women constitute a large part of the Indian population. They play a very important role in developing Indian economy. Their contribution to the society cannot be gainsaid. They are the pillars of the families. They hold the main key in maintaining their families. They sacrifice their valuable time in bringing up their siblings. They are rendering their services in different ways. They are also working in brick kilns for the maintenance of their families.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pallab Kanti Ghosh (2008) in his book "Prospects and Problems of Brick Industry" dealt with product and productivity, marketing, financial analysis, work force of the brick industry. Amal Mandal (2005) in his book "Women Workers in Brick Factory" undertook a study of ascertaining socio-economic profile of women workers along with workforce participation, gender discrimination, work and workers of brick factory etc. The focus of the study is confined to the women workers of brick factories in one subdivision of Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. Saran & Sandhwar (1990) in their book "Problems of Women Workers in Unorganized Sectors" concentrated their attention on social and economic life of the women workers, working conditions, wage structure, methods of wage payment and earnings of their workers and problems of working women also. Aggarwal (1959) in his book "Socio-economic Conditions of Brick Kiln workers in the Gazipur Village" describes that the working condition of the workers of brick industry in India is far from satisfactory. The article titled "Conditions of Brick Workers in South Indian Village" written by A. Dharmalingam was published in Economic and Political Weekly on 25th November 1995.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Women work in brick kilns for the maintenance of their families. In order to maintain their families, maintainable earnings should be provided. Conducive working environment, healthy industrial relations, welfare facilities etc need to be extended to the workingwomen. The non-existence of the above factors may hamper the sound industrial relation, demotivate the workers, create job dissatisfaction, increase labour turnover and absenteeism. No denying the fact that good, favourable socio-economic condition of the workers may act as a booster, which in turn may establish congenial industrial relations. In this backdrop, an attempt has been made to find out the socio-economic conditions of the women workers engaged in the selected brick kiln factories.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The statement of the problem is "Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers in Some Selected Brick Kilns in West Bengal: An Empirical Study with special reference to Nadia District".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To discuss about the Brick Industry in West Bengal;
2. To ascertain and examine the socio-economic conditions of women workers engaged in some selected brick kiln factories;
3. To make concluding remarks.

METHODOLOGY

The article titled "Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers in some selected Brick Kilns in West Bengal: An Empirical Study with special reference to Nadia District" has been based on primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data/information have been collected through interview with the owners and women workers of the sampled brick kilns. These apart, related books, journals, newspapers, Report of Brick Association and also different websites have been consulted to make the study an effective one. The period of study is confined to two years i.e. 2010 and 2011. Percentage analysis has been used for interpretation of the data collected from field survey.

ABOUT BRICK INDUSTRY IN WEST BENGAL

Brick making is a traditional industry of West Bengal. Brick is as old as civilization itself. It dates back to ancient Mesopotamia around 500 BC. The archeological ruins of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa which date back over 4000 years indicate that brick making was well developed in India in ancient times. The silted topography of the region (West Bengal) is uniquely suited for making bricks. In the past the riverine delta region of South Bengal provided quality-soil as a cheap source of raw material and the in-land canals functioned as the mode of low-cost and easily accessible local transport. The hinterland of Kolkata – the districts of Howrah, Hooghly, North and South 24 Parganas – thus became suitable locations for brickfields, as the city grew in size. In West Bengal, around 3500 brick-

manufacturing units provide employment (officially) to more than 0.7 million people from the rural agricultural sector. Brick industry creates 50 jobs against an investment of 0.1 million rupees compared to 7 jobs in other small-scale industries and 2 jobs in large-scale industries. Most of the workers engaged in brick industry are migrants and they are casually engaged. The brickfields in Bengal have been set up for nearly two centuries now. Since the beginning of the colonial period in Bengal, the structure of Fort Williams, representing the power and might of the British army and many other structures of significance were erected from bricks. Brick production is a seasonal activity. The seasonal migrant worker living in the brickfields throughout the period of 6 to 8 months of production, returns back to the village after the production season comes to a close. The brickfields, known as the it-khola, are open cast and work continues from 6 a.m. in the morning to 6 p.m. in the evening. The whole process of brick making is split into a number of tasks performed sequentially in different locations within the brickfields spread over 7 to 12 bighas (2.5 to 4 acres) of land. The workers engaged in brickfields in West Bengal are: Pathera (those who mould bricks), Matikata labour (the earth diggers), Taboya (the bearers of mud-filled baskets), Reja (those who carry bricks to the furnace), Bujhai mistri (the workers who arrange bricks in a particular fashion in the furnace), Mati-phulla (the workers who bring prepared soil to the reja for moulding), Bail hakka (the workers who drive bullocks round the mills for grinding soil), and Muh-katta (the workers who collect mixed soil from the open end of the mill).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN WORKERS ENGAGED IN SOME SELECTED BRICK FACTORIES IN NADIA DISTRICT: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study concentrates on the socio-economic conditions of the women workers engaged in 30 brick kilns situated in Nadia district of West Bengal. Total sampled women workers numbering 90 were randomly interviewed out of 908 workingwomen. Side by side 30 brick kiln owners were asked to elicit some information and views on brick kiln matters and socio-economic conditions of the workingwomen engaged in those kilns. The women workers who were interviewed and their working places are shown below (Table-1):

TABLE-1: SHOWING NUMBER OF SAMPLED BRICK KILNS, TOTAL WOMEN WORKERS AND RESPONDENTS

Location	Total Sampled Brick Kilns	Total Women Workers	Respondents (In number)
Dhubulia	06	252	25
Krishnagar	04	114	11
Nakashipara	10	265	26
Badkulla	03	82	08
Santipur	01	25	03
Majdia	01	19	02
Chapra	05	151	15
Total	30	908	90

Source: Field Survey

In order to have an idea about socio-economic conditions of women workers engaged in brick kilns, some factors like religion, ethnic composition, marital status, age at marriage and many other things have been taken into consideration. These factors are discussed below:

A. SOCIO CONDITIONS OF WOMEN WORKERS

Religions of women workers in the sampled brick kilns are shown in Table-2.

TABLE-2: RELIGION OF WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Religion				Total
	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Others	
Dhubulia	17	06	01	01	25
Krishnagar	08	02	-	01	11
Nakashipara	16	07	01	02	26
Badkulla	06	02	-	-	08
Santipur	02	01	-	-	03
Majdia	01	01	-	-	02
Chapra	09	04	01	01	15
Total	59(66%)	23(26%)	03(3%)	05(5%)	90

Source: Field Survey.

The analysis of the data obtained from Table-2 reveals that 66% of the sampled women workers belonging to 30 brick kilns are Hindu. 26%, 3% and 5% of the sampled workingwomen are Muslim, Christian and others respectively.

The ethnic composition of the women workers of selected brick kilns is shown in Table-3.

TABLE-3: ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE SELECTED WOMEN WORKERS IN THE SAMPLED BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Ethnic Composition					Total
	SC	ST	Upper Hindu Caste	Backward Classes	Others	
Dhubulia	03	13	-	08	01	25
Krishnagar	03	05	-	03	-	11
Nakashipara	05	12	01	05	03	26
Badkulla	-	04	02	02	-	08
Santipur	01	01	-	-	01	03
Majdia	-	02	-	-	-	02
Chapra	02	08	-	05	-	15
Total	14(16%)	45(50%)	03(3%)	23(25%)	05(6%)	90

Source: Field Survey.

From the analysis of the above Table-3, it is clear that a majority of women workers (50%) belong to Scheduled Tribe category. 16%, 3%, 25% and 6% of the sampled women workers belong to SC, Upper Hindu caste, backward classes and others respectively.

The marital status of the women workers engaged in the sampled brick kilns is shown in Table-4.

TABLE - 4: MARITAL STATUS OF THE TARGETED WOMEN WORKERS IN THE SAMPLED BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Marital Status				Total
	Unmarried	Married	Widow	Divorced	
Dhubulia	03	16	04	02	25
Krishnagar	01	08	01	01	11
Nakashipara	03	14	05	04	26
Badkulla	01	04	01	02	08
Santipur	-	02	-	01	03
Majdia	-	01	01	-	02
Chapra	01	06	03	05	15
Total	09(10%)	51(57%)	15(17%)	15(16%)	90

Source: Field Survey

It is evident from the above Table-4 that 10% of the women workers are unmarried. 57%, 17% and 16% of the workingwomen are married, widow and divorced respectively.

Table-5 shows the age at marriage of women workers engaged in sampled brick kilns in Nadia district of West Bengal.

TABLE - 5: AGE AT MARRIAGE OF SAMPLED WOMEN WORKERS

Area	Age Group (Year)			Total
	Up to 16	16-19	19 & Above	
Dhubulia	11	08	03	22
Krishnagar	01	08	01	10
Nakashipara	14	06	03	23
Badkulla	05	01	01	07
Santipur	02	01	-	03
Majdia	02	-	-	02
Chapra	08	04	02	14
Total	43(53%)	28(35%)	10(12%)	81

Source: Field Survey

Out of 90 sampled women workers, 9 women workers are unmarried. So the rest i.e. 81 women workers are either married or widow or divorced. It can be said that, at one point of time, 81 workers were married. Out of 81 women workers, 53% got married within the age of 16 years. 35% and 12% got married in the age group of 16-19 years and 19 & above years respectively (as shown in Table-5).

Table-6 exhibits the number of children of sampled women workers.

TABLE - 6: NUMBER OF CHILDREN OF EACH WOMAN WORKER AMONGST THE SAMPLE

Area	Number of Child					Number of women workers (Excluding unmarried women workers)
	Nil	One	Two	Three	Four & More	
Dhubulia	-	05	14	03	-	22
Krishnagar	-	-	08	02	-	10
Nakashipara	-	02	12	07	02	23
Badkulla	-	01	04	02	-	07
Santipur	-	01	01	01	-	03
Majdia	-	-	01	01	-	02
Chapra	-	02	09	03	-	14
Total	-	11(14%)	49(60%)	19(23%)	02(3%)	81

Source: Field Survey

Table-6 manifests that 60% of the workingwomen have 2 children each. 14%, 23% and 3% of the women labour force have one, three and four & more children each. Total number of sampled women workers is 90. Here 9 women workers have not been taken into consideration, as they were unmarried.

TABLE - 7: FAMILY SIZE OF THE SAMPLED WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Number of Family Members				Total
	1-3	4-6	7-9	10 & Above	
Dhubulia	06	15	04	-	25
Krishnagar	03	06	-	02	11
Nakashipara	12	13	01	-	26
Badkulla	03	02	02	01	08
Santipur	01	02	-	-	03
Majdia	01	01	-	-	02
Chapra	06	07	02	-	15
Total	32(36%)	46(51%)	09(10%)	03(3%)	90

Source: Field Survey

Table-7 shows the family size of the women workers in the brick kilns of Nadia district. The analysis of the above Table reveals that 51% of the women workers of the selected brick kilns have the family size ranging from 4 to 6 each. 36% of the women workers have the family members ranging from 1 to 3. Nine women workers out of 90 have the family size ranging from 7 to 9 members each. There are only 3 families that have more than 10 members each.

Educational attainment of the women workers is displayed in Table-8.

TABLE - 8: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF THE SAMPLED WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Level of Education				Total
	Illiterate	Just Literate	Class I-III	Class III & More	
Dhubulia	19	03	02	01	25
Krishnagar	09	-	02	-	11
Nakashipara	21	03	01	01	26
Badkulla	06	01	01	-	08
Santipur	01	01	-	01	03
Majdia	01	-	01	-	02
Chapra	09	04	01	01	15
Total	66(74%)	12(13%)	08(9%)	04(4%)	90(100%)

Source: Field Survey

The analysis of the above Table-8 manifests that 74% of the women workers engaged in the brick kilns under study are illiterate. Only 13% of the women workers are just literate. 9% and 4% of the working women have studied up to Class III and Class III & more respectively.

Table-9 shows the educational attainment of the children of the women workers in the brick kilns of Nadia district.

TABLE - 9: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF THE CHILDREN OF THE SAMPLED WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Level of Education			Total
	No Education	Class I-III	Class III & More	
Dhubulia	13	07	02	22
Krishnagar	05	03	02	10
Nakashipara	13	07	03	23
Badkulla	05	01	01	07
Santipur	01	01	01	03
Majdia	-	01	01	02
Chapra	09	03	02	14
Total	46(57%)	23(28%)	12(15%)	81

Source: Field Survey

The children of 57% women workers do not have any education at all as displayed in Table 9. The children of 28% women workers have attained formal education (from Class I to Class III) and only the children of 15% women workers have been able to get education of Class III and more.

B. ECONOMIC CONDITION OF WOMEN WORKERS

TABLE - 10: MIGRATION AMONG THE SAMPLED WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Migrants				Local	Grand Total
	Same District	Other Districts Of the State	Other States	Total		
Dhubulia	03	04	16	23	02	25
Krishnagar	02	01	06	09	02	11
Nakashipara	-	05	17	22	04	26
Badkulla	01	01	05	07	01	08
Santipur	-	01	02	03	-	03
Majdia	01	-	01	02	-	02
Chapra	01	04	09	14	01	15
Total	08(10%)	16(20%)	56(70%)	80	10	90

Source: Field Survey

Our survey, as depicted in Table-10, indicates that out of 90 women workers, 80 women workers come from same district, other districts of the same State and other states. 70% of the 80 migrants come from other States like Bihar, Jharkhand etc. Only 10 women workers come daily from the nearby villages to do the work in the brick kilns.

Table-11 records the responses of women workers with regard to the earning members of their families.

TABLE - 11: EARNING MEMBERS IN THE FAMILY OF THE WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Number of Working Members in the Family						Total	Number of Working Members
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Dhubulia	03	04	14	03	-	01	25	71
Krishnagar	01	02	05	03	-	-	11	32
Nakashipara	03	03	06	13	-	01	26	85
Badkulla	01	02	04	01	-	-	08	21
Santipur	-	-	01	02	-	-	03	11
Majdia	-	-	01	01	-	-	02	07
Chapra	01	03	05	04	-	02	15	50
Total	09 (10%)	14 (16%)	36 (40%)	27 (30%)	-	04 (4%)	90	277

Source: Field Survey

A perusal of the above Table-11 indicates that in 36 and 27 families, there are 3 and 4 working members respectively per family. 14 families of women workers have 2 working members each. 9 families and 4 families have 1 and 6 working members each. These all help the families of women workers to earn their livelihood. A further analysis of the above Table-11 shows that there are altogether 277 working members in women workers' families who are engaged in economic activities.

Table-12 shows the annual family income of the women workers in the brick kilns of Nadia district.

TABLE-12: ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME OF THE WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Family Income (Annual) (Rs.)					Total
	10000	10000-15000	15000-20000	20000-25000	25000 & Above	
Dhubulia	-	-	-	02	23	25
Krishnagar	-	-	-	02	09	11
Nakashipara	-	-	-	05	21	26
Badkulla	-	-	-	02	06	08
Santipur	-	-	-	01	02	03
Majdia	-	-	-	01	01	02
Chapra	-	-	-	04	11	15
Total	-	-	-	17(19%)	73(81%)	90

Source: Field Survey

From Table-12, it comes to our notice that the annual family income of 19% of the sampled women workers attached to the brick kilns under study lie between Rs.20000 and 25000. 81% of the interviewed women workers earn annually between Rs.25000 and above. As the workers are engaged in brick kilns for 6 or 7 months, so the annual income has been calculated on 6/7 months work, not for 12 month's work.

Table-13 records the sources of family income (Other than brick kilns) of the interviewed women workers in the brick kilns of Nadia district.

TABLE - 13: SOURCES OF FAMILY INCOME (OTHER THAN BRICK KILNS) OF THE WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Sources of Family Income (other than Brick Kilns)							Total
	Agriculture	Agriculture Labour	Labour	Small Trade	Maid	Any Work	No work	
Dhubulia	09	11	02	-	02	01	-	25
Krishnagar	04	03	02	-	01	-	01	11
Nakashipara	12	10	04	-	-	-	-	26
Badkulla	03	03	02	-	-	-	-	08
Santipur	02	01	-	-	-	-	-	03
Majdia	01	-	01	-	-	-	-	02
Chapra	09	04	02	-	-	-	-	15
Total	4 (44%)	32 (36%)	13 (15%)	-	03 (3%)	01 (1%)	01 (1%)	90

Source: Field Survey

Our survey, as portrayed in Table-13, reveals that agriculture and agriculture labour are the major sources of livelihood of the family members of the women workers in the brick kilns. They are engaged in those activities to maintain the one square meal. They are to depend on other activities, as the brick kilns remain operative for 6 to 7 months in each year. So all the workers cannot depend solely on the work of brick kilns round the year. During the remaining part of the year, they engage themselves either in agricultural activities or as maid, agricultural labourer etc.

Table-14 records land held by the women workers engaged in the brick kilns under study.

TABLE - 14: LAND HOLDINGS OF THE SAMPLED WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Land Holdings of Women Workers (Holding Size in Bigha)			Total
	No Land	01-02	02 & More	
Dhubulia	16	08	01	25
Krishnagar	07	04	-	11
Nakashipara	14	09	03	26
Badkulla	05	03	-	08
Santipur	01	01	01	03
Majdia	01	01	-	02
Chapra	06	05	04	15
Total	50(56%)	31(34%)	09(10%)	90

Source: Field Survey

A perusal of Table-14 indicates that 56% of the interviewed women workers have no land at all. 34% women workers have 1 to 2-bigha lands. 10% of the women workers have more than 2 bigha lands.

Responses of women workers with regard to indebtedness among the women workers of the sampled brick kilns are shown in Table-15.

TABLE - 15: INDEBTEDNESS AMONG THE WOMEN WORKERS IN THE BRICK KILNS OF NADIA DISTRICT

Area	Indebtedness to					Total
	Mahajan	Bank/Other Government Agencies	Relatives and Friends	Brick Kiln Owners	No Indebtedness	
Dhubulia	07	-	-	18	-	25
Krishnagar	02	-	01	08	-	11
Nakashipara	02	-	05	19	-	26
Badkulla	02	-	01	05	-	08
Santipur	01	-	-	02	-	03
Majdia	-	-	01	01	-	02
Chapra	01	-	03	10	01	15
Total	15(17%)	-	11(12%)	63(70%)	01(1%)	90

Source: Field Survey

Looking at the Table-15, it is clear that 70% of the women workers are indebted to the brick kiln owners. Only 17% are indebted to Mahajan. 11 out of 90 women workers borrowed money from Relatives and Friends to meet the expenses connected with marriage, funeral, and other unforeseen circumstances.

Types of houses the women workers possess are shown in Table-16.

TABLE - 16: TYPES OF HOUSES OF THE SAMPLED WOMEN WORKERS

Area	Types of Houses		Total
	Kuchha	Pucca	
Dhubulia	23	02	25
Krishnagar	11	-	11
Nakashipara	25	01	26
Badkulla	08	-	08
Santipur	03	-	03
Majdia	02	-	02
Chapra	15	-	15
Total	87(97%)	03(3%)	90

Source: Field Survey

N.B. Kuchha House: House made of mud and Pucca House: House built by bricks

As is evident from Table-16, an overwhelmingly majority of women workers (97%) lives in kuchha houses. Only 3% of the women workers have pucca houses.

C. WORKING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN WORKERS

Table-17 gives us the responses of women workers regarding the years of engagement of women in brick kilns.

TABLE - 17: YEARS OF ENGAGEMENT OF WOMEN IN BRICK KILNS

Area	Years of Engagement					Total
	1-3	3-5	5-7	7-9	9 & Above	
Dhubulia	05	02	03	12	03	25
Krishnagar	02	-	02	-	07	11
Nakashipara	01	-	02	15	08	26
Badkulla	-	02	-	02	04	08
Santipur	-	-	-	02	01	03
Majdia	-	-	01	01	-	02
Chapra	00	02	05	06	02	15
Total	08(9%)	06(7%)	13(14%)	38(42%)	25(28%)	90

Source: Field Survey

We find in Table-17 that 38 out of 90 women workers have been working 7 to 9 years in brick kilns. 25 women workers are working nine or more years in the brick kilns. 14 sampled women workers are working in the brick kilns one to five years.

Reasons for doing brick factory works by the women are exhibited in Table-18.

TABLE - 18: REASONS FOR DOING BRICK FACTORY WORKS BY WOMEN

Area	Reasons						Total
	Agriculture work not available all time	For more earning	For no other available employment	For 6 months work at a time	For Poverty	No use by sitting idle	
Dhubulia	01	05	01	-	18	-	25
Krishnagar	-	03	01	-	06	01	11
Nakashipara	-	06	-	01	17	02	26
Badkulla	01	02	-	-	05	-	08
Santipur	-	01	-	-	02	-	03
Majdia	-	01	-	-	01	-	02
Chapra	01	03	-	04	07	-	15
Total	03 (3%)	21 (23%)	02 (2%)	05 (6%)	56 (62%)	03 (4%)	90

Source: Field Survey

The analysis of the above Table-18 reveals that 62% of the sampled women workers work in the brick kilns because of poverty. 23% of the women workers engaged themselves for more earning. Meagre percentage of working women choose to do the brick kiln work because of non-availability of agricultural work, opportunity of doing the work for 6/7 months in a year etc.

Table-19 shows the types of occupation of women before joining brick kiln works.

TABLE - 19: TYPES OF OCCUPATION OF WOMEN BEFORE JOINING BRICK KILN WORKS

Area	Types of Occupation							Total
	Labour	Agricultural Labour	Cultivator in own land	Maid	Any Other	Factory work from the start	No work Earlier	
Dhubulia	07	06	04	01	04	-	03	25
Krishnagar	-	03	-	01	02	04	01	11
Nakashipara	03	12	03	-	03	05	-	26
Badkulla	-	02	-	-	03	02	01	08
Santipur	-	02	01	-	-	-	-	03
Majdia	-	01	-	-	-	01	-	02
Chapra	03	06	01	02	02	-	01	15
Total	13 (14%)	32 (36%)	09 (10%)	04 (4%)	14 (16%)	12 (13%)	06 (7%)	90

Source: Field Survey

The scan of the above Table-19 shows that 32 of the 90 women workers were engaged in agriculture as agriculture labourer and 13 women workers were engaged simply as labourer. Only 9 sampled women workers get themselves engaged in cultivating their own land. Others were involved either in any other activities or in factory work from the start. 6 women workers did not do any work before joining brick kiln.

Types of brick kiln works for women are shown in Table-20.

TABLE-20: TYPES OF BRICK KILN WORKS DONE BY WOMEN WORKERS

Area	Types of works			Total
	Brick making	Brick Carrying	Others	
Dhubulia	08	14	03	25
Krishnagar	03	06	02	11
Nakashipara	08	15	03	26
Badkulla	03	03	02	08
Santipur	01	01	01	03
Majdia	01	01	-	02
Chapra	07	05	03	15
Total	31(34%)	45(50%)	14(16%)	90

Source: Field Survey

From the above Table-20, it appears that 50% of the sampled women workers were engaged in brick carrying activities followed by brick making (34%) and other activities (16%).

Table-21 records the responses of the respondents about the types of demand of women workers to brick kiln owners.

TABLE - 21: TYPES OF DEMAND OF WOMEN WORKERS TO BRICK KILN OWNER

Area	Types of Demand						Total
	Wage Hike	Job Security	Social Security	Bonus & Advance	Clothing & Fuel	No demand at all	
Dhubulia	20	01	-	03	01	-	25
Krishnagar	06	-	-	04	01	-	11
Nakashipara	19	02	-	03	02	-	26
Badkulla	05	01	-	01	01	-	08
Santipur	02	-	-	01	-	-	03
Majdia	02	-	-	02	01	-	02
Chapra	12	-	-	-	-	-	15
Total	66 (73%)	04 (4%)	-	14 (16%)	06 (7%)	-	90

Source: Field Survey

Table-21 clearly indicates that 73% of the total sampled women workers clamoured for hike in wages as the hike in wages may help them maintain their families. Only 16% of 90 women workers demanded for bonus and advance that would meet the festival expenses. 4 out of 90 sampled women workers opined with regard to job security. 7% of the workingwomen demanded for clothing and fuel.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Women workers come from Hindu, Muslim and Christian families to do in the brick kilns. Most of the women workers belong to scheduled tribe community. A large amount of married women are engaged in brick kiln activities. The women workers engaged in the brick fields got married at the age of 16 years. An overwhelming majority of the women workers and their children are illiterate. Migrant workers are large in number. Family sizes of them are large. Annual family incomes of the workingwomen are not adequate to maintain for their livelihood.

When the brick kiln works are not available, they engage themselves in other activities like agriculture and other works. Land holdings of them are very much minimal. Most of the workers live in kachha houses. Women workers work in the kilns due to severe poverty. They are involved in brick carrying and brick making activities. Majority of the women workers clamour for wage hike as the wage they earn is not sufficient to feed the members of their families. Workingwomen generally take advance from brick kiln owners.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

Nation develops if the women are developed. So it is the first and foremost duty of our Government to pay attention for the well-being of the women community. A number of measures have been adopted by the Government for their welfare. But in some cases, women's interest is not protected. In case of brick industry, they live in the thatched huts close to kiln, which generally do not have electricity. The electricity should be provided in those huts by the owners of the brick kilns. Separate rest room should be arranged for the women workers engaged in the brick kilns. There should have a separate neat and clean toilet for the women workers. The eligible women workers should be given maternity benefit. Very often, some of the brick kiln owners do the little care for the same. In order to provide the maternity benefits to the women workers of the brick kilns, necessary amendments are required in the Maternity Benefit Act. Adult education programme for the women workers of the brick kilns should be implemented for making them literate. Exhaustive and comprehensive legislation is urgently needed for regulating working conditions, wage structure, welfare measures of the women workers in the brick kilns. The Labour Department should come forward to prevent physical-mental torture, sexual harassment and molestation of the workingwomen engaged in the brick kiln factories. For this, the Department should introduce special wing that can supervise the matter and take necessary action against the wrongdoers. Voluntary organizations of eminent personalities of the region (where brick kilns are situated) should be involved to see whether the different provisions and welfare measures are being strictly implemented. It is necessary to enforce the "Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act" and "Contact Labour Act" to check the bungling in the recruitment procedure and working condition. The parents of the women workers married at early stage should be aware of the fact that early marriage invites a lot of problems. Such workers are affected mentally and physically. So Government as well as NGO should make an awareness programme that will discuss about the ill effects of early marriage. The co-operation of brick kiln owners is urgently needed in this regard. Workers live in poverty. In order to alleviate poverty, they should be informed about different poverty alleviation programmes adopted by the Government from time to time. Due to lack of information and ignorance, they suffer from poverty.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are many scopes for further research work on "Brick Industry". The researcher may do the research work on:

1. "Socio-economic conditions of women workers in Brick Kilns in Bangladesh and India": A Comparative Study
2. Working Conditions of Brick Kilns in India: A Case Study of West Bengal
3. Labour Welfare in Brick Kiln Fields in India: A Study
4. Brick Industry and Environment Pollution: A Study
5. Problems and Prospects of Real Estate Sector in India: A Study in the light of Brick Industry.

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