CHAPTER II

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The women workers in India can claim to have made a remarkable contribution to the economic development and growth of the country, even in the most hazardous coal industry where men and women used to work together both below and above ground.

At present, women workers are engaged only on the surface jobs in coal mines as wagon loaders, surface trammer, cleaners, pallet makers. They also carry bricks or work as sweepers. According to some women workers, they can do a large number of jobs in the mines besides those being performed by them at present.

If women had to be employed, it naturally follows that there should be some sort of protection for them which are very essential.

Provisions have been made to remove all types of inequality regarding casteism, wealth, education, to give equal treatment to men and women, to prohibit underground and night work for women and to give equal remuneration to both men and women for equal type of work.
In our constitution of India adequate provisions are there in article 39(d) for equal pay for equal work for both men and women and in article 42 for securing just and human conditions of work and for maternity relief. Government has promulgated an ordinance by which the discrimination in the matter of equal wages for equal work to women in all spheres of employment has been removed. Despite all the protective legislation there is a downward tendency in the field of employment of the women labours in coal industry. Legislation, however will be of no avail if the machinery of implementation lags behind. Women have still to work in the fields shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk. But women workers have always been denied the status and prestige they deserve. There is no change in the situation to date. The position of women in the rural side and in coalmine industry is very deplorable. It is surely somewhat different in urban area.

Most of the women labours cannot get any maternity benefit from the employer as most of the women labours are employed in work of the casual nature and, on daily wages.

Though our Indian Constitution has guaranteed equal rights to women, statutorily, still, a large majority of women even today have no knowledge of their rights and dues.
Women particularly have received a very serious setback in the Coal industry. It is really surprising that, especially after nationalisation, a sharp fall in the percentage of women in the Coal industry has been found.

These problems of women workers in Coal industry have, in fact, induced me to accept this topic as my research work. On the other hand, my stay within this coalfield (Asansol) for years together was also an added incentive for me to undertake this work.

Being in the midst of thick coalmining activity for more than two centuries, Raniganj coalfield has a history of industrial workers. Incidentally, most of the collieries in this industrial belt are concentrated in Asansol Sub-Division. It is evident that Asansol-Durgapur region is highly industrialised involving women workers, too. Raniganj coalfield though now stands second in the list of the Coal producing regions of India, it is in fact, the birth place of the Indian Coal Industry. Upto the year 1905, it retained the premier position among Indian coalfields as regards output, after that year it has been superseded by the Jharia coalfield.
The present research aims at a very indepth study of the women working in the coal belt of Asansol and Eastern Coalfield Limited.

For an intensive study of this definable aspect, information has been collected from a number of persons, organisations and libraries.

Though little reference was available to me on this particular subject-matter, there are books which helped me to get some informations about the conditions of the women labourers in different industries, in general. As a part of the survey of literature, I give below the names of books that helped me, directly or otherwise, in crystallizing my concept and ideas on the topic of this research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(3) Government of India - "Women in industry" In connection of International women's year Labour Bureau (Simla) 1975.
(4) Improving working conditions and Environment.

(5) Report of the seminar on Women Labour in Mines.

(6) Srivastava V.L.

(7) Sri Balaram

(8) Socio-economic conditions of women workers in Mines, December '76-April '77.

For most of the important information of various fields, I could extract from various documents and papers of different coal organisations and I also used their Libraries and documentation centres.
The name of the organisations are giving below.

(1) Coal Mines Labour Welfare Organisation (Headquarter, Dhanbad).


(3) Mines Board of Health (Asansol).


I also used the Library of Eastern Coalfield LTD. (Sakturia), Director General of Mine Safety (Dhanbad), Mine Board of Health (Asansol), C.M.P.D.I. (Asansol), C.M.L.W.O. (Dhanbad and Kalla).

A proforma consisting of a few relevant question had been distributed to the workers to elicit general informations. Personal, lengthy, indepth probing had also been made. Each and every subject had been studied at different hours and at different locale.