

Defining Processes of Gender Restructuring: The Case of Displaced Tribal Communities of North East India

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Abstract : Development Induced Displacement (DID) of subaltern groups has been an issue of intense debate in India. This research will do a gender analysis of displacement induced by the mining projects in tribal indigenous societies of North East India, centering on the primary research question which is 'How does DID reorder gendered relationship in tribal matrilineal societies?' This paper will not focus primarily on the impacts of the displacement induced by coal mining on indigenous tribal women in the North East India; it will rather study 'what' are the processes that lead to these transformations and 'how' do they operate. In doing so, the paper will locate the cracks in traditional social systems that the discourse of displacement manipulates for its own benefit. DID in this sense will not only be understood as only physical displacement, but also as social and cultural displacement. The study will cover one matrilineal tribe in the state of Meghalaya in the North East India affected by several coal mining projects in the last 30 years. In-depth unstructured interviews used to collect life narratives will be the primary mode of data collection because the indigenous culture of the tribes in Meghalaya, including the matrilineal tribes, is based on oral history where knowledge and experiences produced under a tradition of oral history exist in a continuum. This is unlike modern societies which produce knowledge in a compartmentalized system. An interview guide designed around specific themes will be used rather than specific questions to ensure the flow of narratives from the interviewee. In addition to this, a number of focus groups will be held. The data collected through the life narrative will be supplemented and contextualized through documentary research using government data, and local media sources of the region.

Keywords : displacement, gender-relations, matriliney, mining

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