

**STATUS OF TENDU LEAF PLUCKERS IN ORISSA:  
A STUDY OF THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHILDREN AND  
THE SYSTEM OF BONDED LABOUR**

**Final Research Report**

**Executed by**



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## CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Preface</i>	3
<i>Executive Summary</i>	4
Chapter 1 Design of the Study	7
Chapter 2 Tendu Leaf and the Dynamics of Tendu Leaf Trade in Orissa	11
Chapter 3 General and Social Profile of Tendu Leaf Pluckers	18
Chapter 4 Economic Conditions of the Pluckers' Families	22
Chapter 5 Patterns of People's Involvement and Economic Conditions Linked to Tendu Leaf Plucking	32
Chapter 6 Working Conditions	49
Chapter 7 Educational Attainments, Recreation and Entertainment	54
Chapter 8 Nutrition and Health Status	56
Chapter 9 Violence	63
Chapter 10 Status of Children in Tendu Leaf Plucking	65
Chapter 11 Bondage in Tendu Leaf Plucking	75
Chapter 12 Welfare of Tendu Leaf Pluckers	82
Chapter 13 Trends in Tendu Leaf Trade in Orissa	92
Chapter 14 Issues Concerning the Pluckers	97
Chapter 15 Recommendations	102
Annexure I Photo Gallery	108
Annexure II Case Studies	110
Annexure III Newspaper Reports on Problems of Pluckers and Tendu Leaf Trade	118
Annexure IV Minutes of the Workshop	120

## **PREFACE**

*Tendu leaf is used for wrapping beedi- an indigenous cigarette used mainly by poor and lower middle class people. The idea of taking up this research originated during our interaction with villagers in some tendu leaf producing districts of Orissa in 2003. It came to our notice that share of income from tendu leaf plucking in annual family income is at times even more than 50%. For people who get employment for a month or so in a year, plucking for even a week makes great sense. Miserable economic condition of families stands in contrast to the Government's huge profit from tendu leaf trade. Presence of child pluckers further gave us food for thought.*

*During discussions with advisors of Human Development Society (HDS) it was decided that HDS should study not only the socio-economic conditions of pluckers but also of beedi rollers who are an equally oppressed lot. But we decided to take up the study of pluckers first. During January-February 2004, we started discussion with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) for collaboration. We proposed to study the socio-economic conditions of pluckers with special reference to children. During preliminary discussion with Mrs. S. Jalaja, then Joint Secretary, NHRC, a suggestion came that the system of bonded labour should also be looked into in view of the interpretations of the Supreme Court of India. Accordingly, a proposal on the topic titled "Status of Tendu Leaf Pluckers in Orissa: A Study of their Socio-economic Conditions with Special Reference to Children and the System of Bonded Labour" was submitted to the NHRC for financial assistance. We received the sanction towards the end of the March 2004.*

*Data for the research have been collected through interviews of pluckers, case studies, field observation, meeting with Government officials and leaders of Orissa Kendu Patra Karmachari Sangha, library research, and a stakeholders' Workshop. Researchers of HDS visited 100 villages in five tendu leaf divisions of Orissa and interviewed 1000 pluckers according to the approved methodology. Findings of the research have been chapterised keeping in mind the objectives and focus of the study.*

*Prior to this study, there was no incisive research on the socio-economic conditions of pluckers with special emphasis on children and the system of bonded labour. We are sure that the study would bridge the knowledge gap and would benefit policy makers, scholars, activists and people in the government and non-government agencies who are dealing with the disadvantaged social groups. Needless to say, the most important beneficiaries of this study would be the pluckers themselves. The findings of the research can help in designing suitable remedial measures for welfare of pluckers.*

*HDS is thankful to the NHRC for providing financial support for the project. We are very thankful to Mrs. S. Jalaja, then Joint Secretary, NHRC, for sharing her thoughts and extending words of encouragement. Our sincere gratitude goes to Mrs. Sudha Shrotria, Director, NHRC, for providing all possible help and facilitating data collection. HDS acknowledges with thanks the cooperation of Shri R. N. Sahu, Asst. CCF (Kendu Leaves); Shri P. K. Sarangi, DFO (Kendu Leaves), Angul; DFOs of Padampur, Patnagarh, Jeypore & Nawarangpur and their staff; officials of Orissa Forest Development Corporation Ltd.; Orissa Kendu Patra Karmachari Sangha; Vasundhara- an NGO; staff of NHRC library and libraries in Orissa in collection of data. HDS is particularly thankful to Dr. Rekha Pande, Hony. Project Director for providing overall supervision, and Shri Pradeep Mishra, Shri Sanjit Mishra & other researchers for painstakingly conducting data collection and handling other research assignments.*

*The NHRC has exclusive right over the Project Report. The prerogative of its publication/ dissemination rests with the Commission. HDS has duly informed all those associated with the project including Dr. Rekha Pande, Hony. Project Director about the confidentiality of the Report.*

*Delhi  
8<sup>th</sup> January 2006*

*Anil Kumar Das  
Chairperson/HDS*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tendu leaf is used for wrapping *beedi* which is an indigenous cigarette used by poor and lower middle class people. Although the Government of Orissa makes huge profit from the trade, the pluckers remain perpetually poor. The relevance of the present research titled “Status of Tendu Leaf Pluckers in Orissa: A Study of their Socio-economic Conditions with Special Reference to Children and the System of Bonded Labour” should be seen in light of the contradictory position of the government and the pluckers.

### 2. OBJECTIVES

The salient objectives of the study are to examine the extent of child labour & bonded labour in tendu leaf trade; to find out the social, economic and other problems faced by the pluckers and their families; and to suggest measures for welfare of pluckers.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

- ❖ The study covered numerically top five tendu leaf divisions of Orissa viz. Nawarangpur, Jeypore, Padampur, Patnagarh and Angul.
- ❖ After dividing each tendu leaf division into four zones, viz. north, south, east & west, five villages in each zone were selected by following the methods of systematic sampling & random sampling i.e. dividing the villages into five groups & selecting one village randomly from each group for data collection.
- ❖ Sample size for each village was 10 pluckers and sample size for each tendu leaf division was 200. Total sample size for the study was 1000 pluckers in 100 villages.

### 4. GOVERNMENT’S CONTROL OF TENDU LEAF TRADE IN ORISSA

- ❖ Following nationalisation of tendu leaf trade in 1973, a separate wing of the forest department is responsible for production of tendu leaves. The Orissa Forest Development Corporation Ltd. (OFDC) is in charge of marketing the leaves.

### 5. SALIENT FINDINGS

#### 5.1. General Profile

- ❖ Plucking is done primarily by women (about 85% respondents).
- ❖ Level of literacy amongst pluckers is very low (only about 18% literate).
- ❖ Majority pluckers are STs (55.1%). The SCs occupy second position (23.4%).

#### 5.2. Economic Conditions of Pluckers

- ❖ While 27% households possess no productive assets, 34.2% of total sample are landless.
- ❖ Out of those who possess land, 80% possess 2 acres or less land.
- ❖ Poor pluckers get employment for a total of 1 to 4 months in a year.
- ❖ 89% families are living below poverty line as they earn less than Rs.11,000 in a year.
- ❖ Average family income of pluckers in a year is Rs.6272.44.

### 5.3. Status and Conditions of Pluckers

- ❖ Only about 61% pluckers, out of about 18 lakh, possess the plucking card.
- ❖ Payment to pluckers is irregular in case of almost all pluckers.
- ❖ The Government with zero budgetary support is the main culprit for late payment. It invests nothing but gets huge profit, making tendu leaf trade ‘**a trade without investment**’.
- ❖ While some pluckers mortgage their plucking cards and other belongings for taking loans at very high rate of interest, others manage their households with great difficulty.
- ❖ About 77% pluckers earn less than the minimum daily wage i.e. Rs.52.50 from plucking. Average daily income from plucking is Rs.42.68.
- ❖ Present remuneration of pluckers is unjust in the opinion of 68% pluckers.
- ❖ The share of income from plucking in the annual family income is 15.3% on average. But there are families whose share of income from plucking is even more than 50% of total family income.
- ❖ Dependence on plucking increases with the increase in the level of poverty.
- ❖ Working conditions (physical environment, time spent for work, people involved in the work and such other conditions that affect pluckers’ health, earning potential and life conditions) are harsh in the opinion of about 87% women & elderly (60+) respondents.
- ❖ Working conditions are harsh in the opinion of about 69% male pluckers.

### 5.4. Status of Children in Tendu Leaf Plucking

- ❖ There are child pluckers (below 14 years) in all the divisions (8% of total sample, and more than 13% in all, if families having child pluckers are included).
- ❖ Children are not just working with their parents as fellow pluckers, 20.2% of them even possess plucking cards issued by the Kendu Leaf organisation, Government of Orissa.
- ❖ High majority children (77%) spend 5 to 7 hours in plucking in a day.
- ❖ For 80% child pluckers, conditions of work are harsh.

### 5.5. Bondage in Tendu Leaf Plucking

- ❖ Considering the compulsions of economic circumstances that the pluckers face and their inability to earn minimum daily wage of an unskilled worker due to situations on which they have no control, it can be conclusively said that the tendu leaf pluckers are working under conditions of bondage in light of the functional and practical meaning of bondage that the Supreme Court of India has upheld.
- ❖ Bondage in the form of debtor-creditor relationship, however, does not exist in tendu leaf trade.

### 5.6. Payment for Product, Not Labour

- ❖ Even if a plucker spends 10 to 12 hours in a day for plucking, sorting, binding and depositing the leaves in *phadi*, she is paid for the number of leaves, as payment is made on piece rate basis. This is a payment not for labour but for the product.

## 5.7. Government Programmes for Welfare of Pluckers

- ❖ With only one scheme directly benefiting pluckers in the form of Rs.10,000 compensation for death during plucking, welfare measures of Orissa are very insignificant in comparison to Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.
- ❖ Since profit is not calculated, the scheme for sharing of 50% profit from the trade with *panchayati raj* institutions has become irrelevant. Only irregular adhoc grant is given.

## 5.8. Royalty received by State Government

- ❖ From 1998-99 till 2003-04, average royalty received by Government of Orissa per year from tendu leaf trade is Rs.63.3 crore.

## 6. SALIENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ The Government's present profit-based approach should be replaced by rights-based approach.
- ❖ Every plucker should be given the plucking card on mandatory basis.
- ❖ Payment to pluckers should be made within one week from the date of completion of plucking.
- ❖ Children below 14 years should not be allowed to pluck under any circumstance. The KL organisation should not issue plucking cards to children.
- ❖ Government should provide facilities like water, shoes, baskets/ carry bags, umbrella and such other items for use by pluckers in forests.
- ❖ The budget of the State Government should have allocations for tendu leaf trade to tide over the shortage of funds during plucking months and other contingencies.
- ❖ Pluckers should be considered as workers of the KL organisation and should be given the benefits of minimum wage, bonus/ incentive etc.
- ❖ The Government should ensure that every plucker receives at least the minimum daily wage even if she fails to pluck the number of leaves required to earn minimum daily wage due to circumstances beyond her control like non-availability of sufficient pluckable leaves, adverse weather conditions etc. However, the Government will have to be very vigilant against misuse of this benefit.
- ❖ 50% of the profit should go to the three-tier *panchayati raj* institutions namely *gram panchayat*, *panchayat samiti* and *zilla parishad* in the ratio of 75:15:10 with strict instruction that the amount should be utilised for generation of employment either by using local resources or by imparting training on new skills.
- ❖ Another 50% of the profit should be spent for giving incentive wage to pluckers and other marginal workers like binders in *fadis*, and launching & continuing an insurance scheme for them.
- ❖ 'Hard Cash Scale Grant' under which 10% of the KL grant is put at the discretion of panchayati raj minister should be abolished.
- ❖ The Government should consider transferring the ownership right on tendu leaves to tribals through the three-tier *panchayati raj* institutions. In this arrangement, the Government will facilitate quality production and marketing in order to maximise profit and raise household income.

## Chapter 1

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

- ❖ Find out the social background of tendu leaf pluckers such as their caste status, religious status, type of family (nuclear, joint and extended), educational status and such other details;
- ❖ Analyse the dynamics of the tendu leaf trade- the role of different actors, the process and the economics of the trade;
- ❖ Examine the extent of child labour in tendu leaf trade;
- ❖ Examine the extent of bonded labour system in tendu leaf trade taking into account the nature of relationship between the pluckers and the government, wages of pluckers, their working conditions, etc. on the one hand and various constitutional and legal provisions on bonded labour such as Articles 23 (prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour), 42 (provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief) and 43 (living wage etc for workers) of Constitution of India; Section 374 of Indian Penal Code (unlawful compulsory labour); the Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933; the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976; several other international declarations and conventions like Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 and International Labour Organisation Conventions no. 29 (forced or compulsory labour) of 1930 & no. 105 (abolition of forced labour) of 1957 which Government of India has ratified; guidelines and orders of the Supreme Court of India through its various judgements; and instructions of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the other hand;
- ❖ Find out the social, economic and other problems faced by pluckers and their families;
- ❖ Suggest remedial measures that can be taken up to address the problems; and
- ❖ Create a database on pluckers with a view to helping the policy makers and others concerned with the conditions of the marginalized people, especially the tendu leaf pluckers.

#### 1.2. FOCUS

The study focuses on the following aspects:

- ❖ Area profile, geo-cultural factors of the tendu forests;
- ❖ Socio- economic background of the household;
- ❖ Economic status and payment;
- ❖ Working conditions;
- ❖ Child labour;
- ❖ Bondage;
- ❖ Nutrition and health conditions;
- ❖ Educational attainments;
- ❖ Recreation and entertainment;
- ❖ Violence; and
- ❖ Future prospects

### 1.3. AREA OF STUDY

The study was carried out in the State of Orissa which is the second largest producer of tendu leaves in the country. Tendu leaves of Orissa are also considered to be the best in quality. The State has 19 tendu leaf divisions controlled by the forest department of the State government. Total number of pluckers in the State as per government record in 2003, when the study was conceptualised, was 8,76,870.

### 1.4. METHODOLOGY

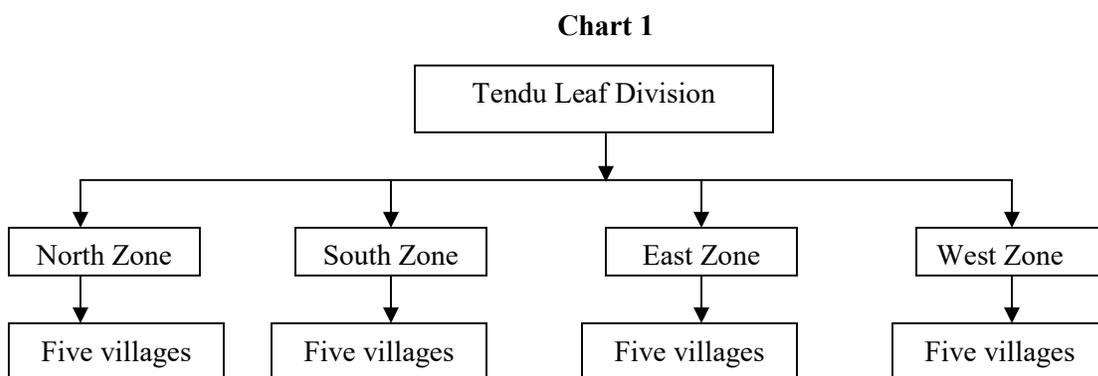
#### 1.4.1. Sample Design

The study covered numerically top five (according to 2003 figures) tendu leaf divisions of Orissa. Accordingly, pluckers belonging to Nawarangpur, Jeypore, Padampur, Patnagarh and Angul having 94316, 72936, 63443, 47795 and 47499 plucker population respectively were interviewed. Nawarangpur and Jeypore belong to southern Orissa. While Padampur and Patnagarh are in the west, Angul is in central Orissa.

The selection of sample involved **three** different stages.

- ❖ **First Stage:** Each of the five selected tendu leaf divisions was divided into four zones, viz. north, south, east and west. In other words, villages of the division having plucker population were divided geographically.
- ❖ **Second Stage:** Five villages in each zone were selected by using the methods of systematic sampling and random sampling. Accordingly, total number of villages in a zone was divided into five groups and one village from each group was included for the study randomly, making a total of five.
- ❖ **Third Stage:** From these five villages, required number of pluckers, as mentioned in the sample size, was interviewed randomly.

The chart below shows different stages in sample design **for one tendu leaf division**.

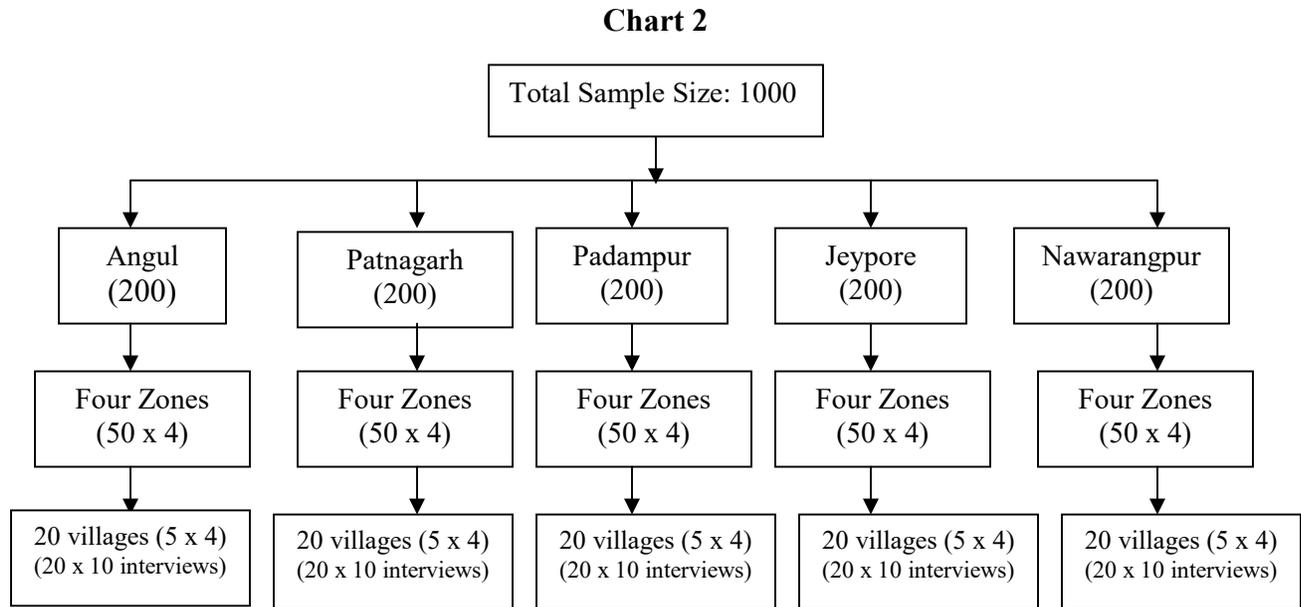


#### 1.4.2. Sample Size

For each of the selected divisions, the size of sample was 200. Since five divisions were covered in the study, total sample size was 1000. From each of the five villages in a zone, 10

pluckers were interviewed. Thus in each zone, 50 interviews were conducted. Since each tendu leaf division was divided into four zones, a total of 200 interviews were conducted in each division.

Details of sample break up of the survey are presented in the chart below.



Some special category pluckers such as those below 14 years of age (child labour), 60 years of age or above (old) or physically handicap were interviewed for **case study**. From each selected division, two case studies were conducted.

Break up of sample size and case studies are also presented in the table below.

**Table 1**

<b>Name of tendu leaf division</b>	<b>No. of total sample In each Division</b>	<b>No. of case studies</b>
Angul	200	2
Patnagarh	200	2
Padampur	200	2
Jeypore	200	2
Nawarangpur	200	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>10</b>

### 1.4.3. Stages of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Data collection involved following stages.

- ❖ In stage one, data pertaining to our sample divisions were collected from Government agencies, Departments, newspapers and other available literature.

- ❖ In stage two, concerned tendu leaf divisional offices, range offices and people having knowledge of the area of data collection were contacted for getting easy access to the area. This made the task of data collection easy.
- ❖ In stage three, pluckers were interviewed by using a structured and partly open-ended interview schedule for obtaining data as per the objectives and focus of the study.
- ❖ Recognising the limitations of formal questionnaire, case studies and field observations were conducted.

#### **1.4.4. Other Components of Methodology**

- ❖ For case studies, a separate interview schedule was prepared with a view to obtaining a detailed incisive account of the plucker's life, her profession, economic condition, the hardships faced by her due to special situation (ex. handicap) and such other specific information.
- ❖ A one-day workshop of all stakeholders including pluckers was organised for critical discussion of the draft report and cross-examination & exchange of views that could not be possible by talking to stakeholders independently/ individually.
- ❖ Based on the findings of the pluckers' survey, views of different stakeholders and recommendations of the workshop, the report was finalised.

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## Chapter 2

# TENDU LEAF AND THE DYNAMICS OF TENDU LEAF TRADE IN ORISSA

### 2.1. THE TENDU TREE AND THE LEAF

Nature has endowed us with a variety of resources that have economic, medicinal and other non-economic utilities. One such nature's gift is the tendu, or kendu, or the Indian Ebony (*Diospyros Melanoxylon* and *Diospyros Tomentosa*), a tree species that occurs in tropical dry, moist deciduous, tropical semi-evergreen and sub-tropical sal forests. Geographically, it extends from central peninsular India through Malwa in the west to Orissa and Bihar in the East and Gangetic plains in the north to Andhra Pradesh in the south. Tendu is found in forests of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar, parts of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh and certain tracks of Gujarat and West Bengal. The tree species has different names in different regions. While 'tendu' is a Hindi word used in States like Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, it is 'tumki' in Andhra Pradesh, 'Kendu' in Orissa and West Bengal, 'timbru' in Gujarat, 'kari' in Kerala, 'balai tupra' in Tamil Nadu, 'balai' in Maharashtra. While the Khonds call it 'duri' or 'during', the Ho and Santhals call it 'tiril' or 'terel'.

The tendu is a moderate to large tree that grows naturally in forests as well as cultivated land. Since it pollards extremely well, pruning the tree is an accepted practice to enable growth of new shoots and tender leaves. The tree is a good coppicer and produces abundant root suckers. It can be made to grow profusely through artificial injuries to its root system. Tendu tree is deciduous. New leaves come out in two phases: first, during March and April, called **Baisakhi leaves**; and second, during October and November, called **Kartika leaves**.

Apart from leaves, tendu tree has many other utilities. Its timber is used for making rafts, shafts, carts, furniture, tool handles, agricultural implements and sports goods. Its sapwood is considered to be the best for making textile shuttles. Tendu bark and fruits are good sources of tannin and also possess medicinal properties. Its fruits are edible. The dried flowers of tendu contain curative powers in treating urinary, skin and blood diseases. However, the most valuable produce of tendu tree is its leaf which is used to wrap *beedi*, an indigenous cigarette used mostly by poor and lower middle class people.

Between the two types of tendu leaves mentioned above, only Baisakhi leaves are commercially collected and processed for *beedi* wrapping. Kartika leaves are smaller, thicker and lower in quality than Baisakhi leaves and have hardly any demand in the market. The villagers use these leaves for rolling *beedis* for personal and local consumption. These leaves can be successfully used in *beedi* making if quick drying can be ensured, which is not possible during winter due to mild sun, heavy dews and occasional rainfall. On the other hand, Baisakhi leaves are mostly large in size, thin, pliable, non-pubescent, without prominent nerves, good in colour and texture. Bluish green and ashy green are considered to be the best, followed by almond colour in order of preference. Baisakhi leaves that are short, thicker, brittle, coarser and are collected from mature trees lack good market value, as rolling *beedi* is difficult with these leaves. These leaves also have an acrid taste that is not liked by many smokers. Besides these inferior quality leaves, leaves that have cracks, fractures, holes,

pox marks, wrinkles, mould, fungus specks, tipis (brown dots in the leaf lamina), discolouration due to water contamination, blotches due to defective drying and also soiled, dirty, immature and over-mature thick leaves are rejected or rarely accepted.

## **2.2. DYNAMICS OF TENDU LEAF TRADE IN ORISSA**

Orissa is the second important tendu leaf producing State of India producing more than 20% of the total tendu leaves produced in the country. Madhya Pradesh with 25 lakh standard bags (nearly 25%) occupies first position in this regard. Tendu leaves of Orissa are considered to be the best in quality. Orissa is also the only State that processes the leaves adding further value to them. Tendu leaves are collected in 23 out of 30 revenue districts of the State. The districts where tendu leaves are not collected (Cuttack, Puri, Khurda, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapada, Bhadrak and Balasore) belong to coastal region of the State. In other words, tendu leaf producing regions constitute about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the State's geographical area.

### **2.2.1. Control of Trade in Pre-independence Period**

During pre-independence period, long-term contracts were awarded to individual contractors/traders to collect tendu leaves in the Princely States. There was generally no sale of tendu leaves in most of the Mughalbundi or Khalsa areas except Sambalpur, Angul and Khondmals. Since the private landowners did not have ownership of trees or other forest produce on their own lands in Princely States, the contractors (or leaseholders) collected tendu leaves from private lands also.

After the merger of the Princely States into Orissa in 1948 and 1949, private landowners were given the ownership rights in regard to trees and other forest produce on their own lands. One consequence of this was the owners' refusal to allow the leaseholders to collect tendu leaves from their lands on the ground that the latter had not negotiated their rights with the former. The entry of petty traders into the trade further complicated the matter as they, after entering into contracts with individual landowners, offered tough competitions to the established leaseholders who had a monopoly over the trade.

In order to increase output, the new traders collected immature leaves which led to deterioration of quality. The harvested leaves were also smuggled out of the State in order to escape the payment of royalty to the forest department which was calculated on the basis of the recorded output. Smuggling could be possible as it was impossible to distinguish between leaves collected from State forests and private lands. Besides these adverse consequences, the established tendu leaf traders further argued that the new traders were incapable of managing the trade due to lack of experience and capital.

### **2.2.2. Kendu Leaves (Control and Distribution) Order, 1949**

With a view to addressing the above-stated problems, the Government of Orissa regulated the trade under the provisions of the Orissa Essential Articles Control and Requisitioning (Temporary) Control Act, 1947 and promulgated the Kendu Leaves (Control and Distribution) Order, 1949.

Under this Order, every person, intended to deal in the leaves, must obtain a license from the government. Tendu leaves units could be leased out to such license holders. These license holders or contractors were selected for a three-year period through a tender system. The Order further provided that the price payable to individual owners would be about 25% higher than the price of leaves produced in government lands. Licensees were bound to purchase leaves from individual growers within a unit. As regards payment to pluckers, rates were to be fixed from time to time by the concerned District Magistrate/ Sub-Divisional Officer/ Divisional Forest Officer. Provision was also made for sharing of 50% revenue from tendu leaves with village *panchayats* for developmental activities.

In the initial years of State control of the tendu leaf trade, the government negotiated annual leases with individual traders. In 1950, the new government initiated the open tender system in order to enhance competition among traders and higher revenue generation. In 1956, traders received three-year leases.

### **2.2.3. Orissa Forest Enquiry Committee, 1957**

The government set up an Enquiry Committee in 1957 to review the functioning of the 1949 Order. The Committee considered various options like abolition of Kendu Leaves Control Order and introduction of free trade, state trading through a government department, state trading through a public undertaking, and working through cooperative societies. The committee made the following recommendations:

- ❖ State control of tendu leaf trade should continue.
- ❖ The rates of payment for collection of leaves from government lands and from tenants' holdings (private lands) should be fixed by the District Advisory Committee.
- ❖ The size of tendu units should be reduced to create some more units, so that some new entrants would be accommodated.
- ❖ Adequate supervisory staff should be appointed to ensure that the wages received by pluckers were in line with the rates fixed.

### **2.2.4. Orissa Kendu Leaves (Control of Trade) Act, 1961**

Based on the recommendations of the Enquiry Committee (1957), the government enacted the Orissa Kendu Leaves (Control of Trade) Act, 1961. In exercise of the powers conferred under Section 18 of the Act, the Orissa Kendu Leaves (Control of Trade) Rules, 1962 was passed. The key objective of the Act was to regulate the tendu leaf trade through state monopoly. Accordingly, only the government, or an officer or agent authorised by the government was empowered to purchase or transport the leaves. Each district was divided into a number of units and each unit had a number of depots convenient for business transactions.

An advisory committee consisting of representatives of government, private tendu leaf growers, traders and *beedi* manufacturers was constituted every year to recommend different prices for different units. The committee did not have representation of the pluckers. Price fixation was done on the following considerations:

- ❖ Prices prevailing during the preceding three years

- ❖ Quantity of leaves expected to be harvested from a unit
- ❖ Available transport facilities and cost of transporting leaves from a unit to a central point
- ❖ General level of wages for unskilled workers

The Act provided for imposition of penalties on agents in case of their failure to collect the expected quantity of leaves and incentives to those whose collection exceeded expectations. Contractors were appointed in advance of the production season on the basis of the prices tendered by them. The Act also provided for revenue sharing with the *panchayats* for development activities. Despite these provisions, implementation of the Act gave rise to several irregularities by the government. The government grossly misused the discretionary power given to it for appointing agents and purchasers. As result, it was dragged into the courts by the aggrieving parties. In the 1960s and early '70s, the politics of the State was highly influenced by tendu leaf traders who not only paid huge donations to leading politicians and political parties but also influenced the compositions of State Cabinets to get favourable policies.<sup>1</sup>

### **2.2.5. Nationalisation of Tendu Leaf Trade, 1973**

Political interference by tendu leaf traders and misuse of the 1961 Act prompted some legislators of the State in 1972 to demand full nationalisation of the trade. The government announced a new tendu leaf policy in January 1973 for nationalising the trade and putting an end to private monopoly.

The main objectives of the 1973 policy were to:

- ❖ Maintain better quality of tendu leaves and to allow the trade to flourish;
- ❖ Safeguard the interests of private growers and primary collectors (pluckers);
- ❖ Maintain comparative advantage of Orissa in tendu leaf trade; and
- ❖ Maximise state revenue.

The Orissa Kendu Leaves Manual 1973 was brought out by the government containing the organisational and operational details of the new arrangement.

### **2.2.6. Organisational Aspect of Tendu Leaf Trade**

A separate wing was created within the Forest Department (hereinafter referred to as KL organisation) to undertake collection, processing, bagging and storage of tendu leaves. The Orissa Forest Development Corporation Ltd. (OFDC), a public undertaking set up in 1962 as the first forest corporation in the country, was entrusted with the task of marketing the leaves on behalf of the government. In other words, the KL organisation would deal with private growers, pluckers and other seasonal workers; and the OFDC would deal with private traders and others having interest in the trade. The scheme would operate within the general framework of the Orissa Kendu Leaves Control of Trade Act, 1961. This arrangement has been continuing in the State since 1973.

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Task Force for Preparing A Draft Comprehensive Strategy for Restructuring Kendu Leaf Trade in Orissa*, Government of Orissa, Forest and Environment Department, Office Order No. KL (B) 11/2000. 8642/F&E dated 5<sup>th</sup> June 2000

The KL organisation of the State, headed by the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Kendu Leaves), is divided into three circles (Cuttack, Bolangir and Sambalpur) and 19 divisions. In 16 tendu leaf divisions, leaves are processed. While Jeypore and Nawarangpur are the two *phal*<sup>2</sup> divisions, Khariar is the only division where both processed and *phal* leaves are produced.

As regards organisational expenses, there is no budgetary support from the state government for tendu leaf trade. The OFDC provides the entire working expenses of the KL organisation and deducts that amount from the sale value of tendu leaves of that particular year. Presently, OFDC gets a commission of 5% of the sale value for marketing the leaves. Out of the 5% commission, 1% is used for construction of central godowns where leaves are stored. After deducting the advance amount paid to the KL organisation for working expenses, amount of sales tax<sup>3</sup>, and its own commission for marketing, OFDC gives the surplus amount to the government as royalty. The royalty is paid in two stages i.e. 75% is paid during the same crop year and balance 25% in the next year. Depending on stock disposal, this process can be liberalised by the government.

### 2.2.7. Operational Aspect: Production, Processing and Storage

Production process of tendu leaves involves several activities, as explained below:

**Coppicing or Bush Cutting:** This is a very useful procedure for the tendu bushes to produce abundant leaves. Tendu bushes and plants up to 10 to 12 centimetres in girth are coppiced/ cut to the ground (1 to 2 centimetres below ground level) in February-March every year to ensure production of large-sized good quality leaves. Generally, it takes about 40 to 45 days for the coppiced tendu bushes to produce desired quality leaves.

**Plucking of Leaves:** On attaining semi-matured stage, the leaves become ready for plucking. Un-matured or over-matured leaves are not plucked due to their unsuitability for *beedi*-making. The pluckers pluck the leaves by hand directly from the coppiced shoots. Since leaves at the lower level become ready first, these are plucked first. Other leaves are plucked subsequently depending on the level of suitability. Usually, tendu leaves are plucked in three instalments. While 50% of the leaves are plucked in first instalment, about 30% are plucked in second instalment after 3 to 4 days from the middle portion and 20% in the third instalment (after a week or so of second instalment) from top portion of the shoot.

An adult plucker can pluck a maximum of about 6000 leaves in about 5 hours. While a 60-year plus person can pluck about 3000 leaves, the capacity of a child plucker is a maximum of 2000 leaves. Usually, women of different age groups and children are engaged in plucking.

Plucking usually starts in April and extends up to May/ June when the rainy season starts. Collection of leaves is stopped prior to rainy season, as drying becomes difficult due to rain

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<sup>2</sup> Tendu leaves that are not processed are popularly known as *phal* leaves. Unlike processed leaves, *phal* leaves are bagged without segregating useful leaves from the useless ones. The only work done in case of *phal* leaves is that water is sprinkled on dry leaves to make them soft (*mulayam*), so that cracks do not develop at the time of bagging.

<sup>3</sup> Present rate of sales tax is 4%. If the purchaser does not give C Form, rate of sales tax is 10%. Source: OFDC. Research Project executed by Human Development Society, Delhi [[www.hdsindia.org](http://www.hdsindia.org)]

and inadequate sunlight. Plucking can go up to a maximum of six weeks. This duration depends not only on beginning of rainy season but also on availability of pluckable leaves, which in turn depends on bush cutting.

**Preparation of Leaf Bundles and Collection:** The pluckers collect leaves from dawn till midday when the sun becomes hot. The collected leaves are carried home on head loads. On reaching home, the leaves are sorted out and small bundles of 20 leaves (40 leaves in case of *phal* areas) inclusive of cover leaves, called *kerri(es)* are made. One hundred *kerries* make one *chatta*. In other words, one *chatta* contains 2000 leaves. Grouping the *kerries* into *chatta* helps the person in charge of collection to count the bundles and calculate the price quickly.

The pluckers, after making *kerries*, take them to collection centres of Forest Department, known as *phadi*.<sup>4</sup> A seasonal employee of Forest Department, called Munshi, collects the leaves from pluckers.

**Drying and Storage:** Drying is required for both processed as well as *phal* leaves. It takes seven to eight days for required level of drying. Leaves are periodically turned to ensure uniform drying. After drying, leaves are carefully stored in *phadies*.

**Processing, Binding and Bagging (PBB):** In case of *phal* (unprocessed) leaves, drying is followed by sprinkling of water on leaves to make them soft. Thereafter, leaves are put in bags and taken to central godown. Each *phal* bag contains 38 kilograms of leaves.

As regards the processed leaves, after sprinkling of water on dry leaves, they are covered by tarpaulins and kept in that state for five to six hours. Then the cover is removed and the *kerries* are mixed again by hand. If necessary, water is sprinkled again and then covered to make the leaves attain required level of softness and pliability. Useless leaves are thrown out, and only quality leaves of each *kerry* are sorted according to quality gradation. Quality-wise sorting is followed by binding of leaves into bundles of five kilograms each under different quality grades.<sup>5</sup> Binding is followed by bagging. In each processed bag, 12 bundles leaves of five kilogram each are kept. In other words, weight of each processed bag is 60 kilograms. It may be mentioned here that each five kilogram leaf bundle contains 350 to 500 *kerries* (or 7000 to 10000 leaves). Processing, binding and bagging (PBB) are done in *phadis*. The bags containing processed leaves are then sent to central godowns located in each forest range. After PBB, the bags become saleable. Generally, 100 bags or 60 quintals (100 x 60) make one saleable lot.

### 2.2.8. Operational Aspect: Marketing

Marketing of processed and *phal* leaves, an important operational aspect tendu leaf trade, is the responsibility of the OFDC. Each year, after the leaves reach central godowns, the OFDC inspects the stock to ensure that specifications for leaves are met. Although theoretically the

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<sup>4</sup> Fadi is a house where tendu leaves are collected, stored and PBB activities are done. Fadis are located at village level. Each fadi has certain tendu producing areas/ forests from which villagers of the fadi are supposed to collect tendu leaves. Under each fadi, leaves collected by several neighbouring villages are collected.

<sup>5</sup> Presently, leaves are graded into five different qualities namely Q I, Q II, Q III, Q IV M (Medium) and Q IV. The bases of quality gradation are texture, colour, presence or absence of defects and the number of *beedis* that a leaf can produce. Q I is the best quality, which is followed by other quality grades in descending order.

OFDC takes over possession of leaves, physically the leaves remain with the KL organisation.

Every year the upset price is fixed by the Kendu Leaf Advisory Committee (KLAC), a statutory committee constituted under the Orissa Kendu Leaves (Control of Trade) Act, 1961. The KLAC meets in every December. The parameters for fixing upset price are:

- ❖ Last three years' average rate per quintal of similar stock in similar sale;
- ❖ Current year previous sale average per quintal; and
- ❖ Present market condition.

**Mode of Selling:** Presently, OFDC sells the leaves by two methods namely sealed tender and public auction. Selling through sealed tender is normally followed as it gives better price. The leaves that remain unsold under sealed tenders are sold through public auction. In other words, tender is better for higher price and auction is better for stock disposal. Both tender and public auction are done at Sambalpur and at Bhubanewar where the corporate office of the OFDC is located.

OFDC has discontinued negotiation sale to purchaser since 2001. Similarly, sale outside sales centres has also been discontinued since 2003.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> There were two outside sales centre, one at Chennai and the other at Kolkata, for disposing of the stock that remained unsold due to inferior quality.

## Chapter 3

### GENERAL AND SOCIAL PROFILE OF TENDU LEAF PLUCKERS

#### 3.1. GENERAL PROFILE

##### 3.1.1. Gender

The survey results reveal that women are predominantly engaged in tendu leaf plucking. Except Jeypore where women constitute 51.5% respondents, in all other divisions their representation is 90% or more. In the combined sample of all five divisions, women constitute about 85%. (Table 2)

**Table 2**  
**Break up of Respondents in terms of sex (%age)**

Sex	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Male	4.5	10	6	48.5	7	15.1
Female	95.5	90	94	51.5	93	84.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

##### 3.1.2. Age

In all the five divisions, majority of respondents belong to the adult age group of 18-60 years. This is also reflected in the combined result, as the 61.8% respondents out of total sample belong to this age group. Pluckers belonging to 60 years and above age group are second in this regard, followed by children below 14 years and adolescents in the age group of 14-18 years. Share of children is the highest in Jeypore (14.0%), followed by Angul (12%), Patnagarh (5%) and Padampur and Nawarangpur (4.5% each). On the whole, 8% respondents are children below 14 years. (Table 3)

**Table 3**  
**Break up of respondents in terms of age (%age)**

Age Group	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Below 14 years	12.0	5.0	4.5	14.0	4.5	8.0
Completed 14 years, but below 18 years	3.0	0.5	0.5	10.0	15.5	5.9
Completed 18 years, but below 60 years	61.5	56.5	49.5	69.5	71.5	61.7
60 years and above	23.5	38.0	45.5	6.5	8.5	24.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

##### 3.1.3. Correlation between Sex and Age

Correlation between sex and age shows that in all age groups, females are more in number in comparison to males. In the '60 years and above' category, female pluckers are the highest (87.3%), and in the 'below 14 years' category, they are the lowest (77.2%). (Table 4)

**Table 4**  
**Correlation between Sex and Age**

Sex	Below 14 years	Completed 14 years, but below 18 years	Completed 18 years, but below 16 years	60 years and above	Total
Male	22.8	17	15	12.7	15.1
Female	77.2	83	85	87.3	84.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

### 3.1.4. Marital Status

Majority of pluckers in all the five divisions are married, with Patnagarh being the highest (97.4%) and Jeypore being the lowest (77.5%) in the category. The share of married respondents in all the five divisions taken together is 87.2%, as against 12.8% unmarried. (Table 5)

**Table 5**  
**Marital Status of Respondents (%age)**

Marital status	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Married	81.9	97.4	92.5	77.5	92	87.2
Unmarried	18.1	2.6	7.5	22.5	8	12.8
Total	100.0	100	100	100	100	100

### 3.1.5. Level of Literacy

As is evident from the data, level of literacy amongst pluckers is very low. In all the divisions, the shares of illiterate pluckers are the highest amongst all the options, with Nawarangpur (92.5%) at the top and Angul (71%) at the bottom in the category. About 82% respondents in all the divisions taken together are illiterate. Respondents having up to Class III qualification are the highest in Angul (15%) and the lowest in Nawarangpur (3%). In Jeypore, shares of pluckers with education up to Class V, Class VII and Class X are the highest among all the divisions with 9.5%, 3.5% and 3% respectively. The lowest share in regard to Class V goes to Padampur (1.5%), and that of Class VII and Class X goes to Nawarangpur (1% and 1.5% respectively). Except 0.5% pluckers each in Padampur and Jeypore, no one in other three divisions is found to have attained matriculation or above qualification. (Table 6)

**Table 6**  
**Level of Literacy (%age)**

Qualification	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Illiterate	71	84	86.5	75	92.5	81.8
Up to Class III	15	9.5	6	8.5	3	8.4
Up to Class V	7	2.5	1.5	9.5	2	4.5
Up to Class VII	5	2.5	3	3.5	1	3
Up to Class X	2	1.5	2.5	3	1.5	2.1
Matric & above	0	0	0.5	0.5	0	0.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

## 3.2. FAMILY AND SOCIAL PROFILE

### 3.2.1. Size of Family

Average size of pluckers' families is five members. In all the divisions, majority of respondents have families of 4-6 members. The highest number of respondents in this category was found in Angul (56%) and the lowest in Padampur (46.5%). The combine results of all divisions indicate the same trend, as about 52% houses have 4-6 members. While pluckers having 1-3 member families secured second position in Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur, the second position in Jeypore (26%) and Nawarangpur (26%) goes to pluckers with 7-10 members. While the share of pluckers with 11 members or more in families is nil in Padampur, it is 3% each in Jeypore and Nawarangpur and 1.5% in Patnagarh. The trends of the divisions could be noticed in the combined results. About 52% pluckers have 4-6 member families, followed by 26.6% with 1-3 member families, 19.6% with 7-10 member families and about 2% with families of 11 members and above. (Table 7)

**Table 7**  
**Size of Family (%age)**

Number	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
1-3 members	23.5	35	41	16	17.5	26.6
4-6 members	56	48.5	46.5	55	53.5	51.9
7-10 members	18.5	15	12.5	26	26	19.6
11 and above	2	1.5	0	3	3	1.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 3.2.2. Type of Family

In all the divisions, pluckers having nuclear families are more in comparison to those having joint families and extended families. Amongst pluckers with nuclear families, the highest share goes to Nawarangpur (78%) and the lowest share goes to Patnagarh (50%). As regards joint families, Patnagarh has the highest number and Nawarangpur, the lowest. None of the divisions has extended families, except Nawarangpur (0.5%). The shares of nuclear families and joint families in all the divisions are 65.3% and 34.6% respectively. (Table 8)

Data in regard to type of family indicate the diminishing preference for joint families. In other words, a social trend that is normally linked to higher level of literacy and economic well being is not uncommon in villages and amongst illiterates and semi-literates.

**Table 8**  
**Type of Family (%age)**

Type of Family	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Nuclear family (parents & their children)	66	50	57	75.5	78	65.3
Joint family (parents, their children & children's families)	34	50	43	24.5	21.5	34.6
Extended family (families maintaining close ties, although staying separately)	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 3.2.3. Social Category of Pluckers

The survey results indicate the predominance of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the pluckers' community in four divisions, Angul being the only exception where Scheduled Castes (SC) are in majority (62.5%). Among the four divisions having STs majority, share of Jeypore is the highest (75.5%) and that of Padampur, the lowest (48%). Other Backward Castes (OBC) are the highest in Padampur (30%) and the lowest in Angul (10%). While no one belongs to general category in Angul and Padampur, their shares in Patnagarh, Jeypore and Nawarangpur are 4.5%, 15% and 3% respectively. In regard to combine results, the STs are the highest (55.1%), followed by SCs (23.4%), OBCs (17%) and General Category (4.5%) in descending order. (Table 9)

**Table 9**  
**Social Category of Pluckers (%age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Scheduled Caste	62.5	14.5	22	8	10	23.4
Scheduled Tribe	27.5	57.5	48	75.5	67	55.1
Other Backward Castes	10	23.5	30	1.5	20	17
General Category	0	4.5	0	15	3	4.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 3.2.4. Religious Status

Nearly all the pluckers in all the divisions are Hindus. While none of the respondents is Muslim, 0.5% (Patnagarh) to 1.5% pluckers (Angul) are Christians. As regards combine results, 99.1% are Hindus. (Table 10)

**Table 10**  
**Religious Status of Pluckers (%age)**

Religion	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Hindu	98.5	99.5	99.5	99	99	99.1
Muslim	0	0	0	0	0	0
Christian	1.5	0.5	0	1	1	0.8
Others	0	0	0.5	0	0	0.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

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## Chapter 4

### ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE PLUCKERS' FAMILIES

#### 4.1. POSSESSION OF ECONOMIC ASSETS

##### 4.1.1. Working Members

Number of working members in a family has a bearing on the family's economic condition. This is especially true in case of families that have little or no productive assets. The survey reveals that in all the tendu leaf divisions, majority of pluckers' families has 1-2 working members. While Nawarangpur has 70% pluckers' families (the highest) with 1-2 working members, Jeypore with 47% families is the lowest in the category. As regards families having 3-5 working members, Angul has the highest share (47.5%) and Nawarangpur (28%) is the lowest. Between 0.5% (Patnagarh) to 7.5% (Jeypore) pluckers have six or more working members in their families. In regard to combined outcome of all the divisions, about 56% pluckers have families with 1-2 working members, followed by 41.2% with 3-5 working members and about 3% with six and above working members. (Table 11)

**Table 11**  
**Working Members in Pluckers' Families (%age)**

Number	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
1-2	50.5	58.5	53.5	47	70	55.9
3-5	47.5	41	44	45.5	28	41.2
6 and above	2	0.5	2.5	7.5	2	2.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Analysis of correlation of number of working members with total family members of pluckers reveals that out of total number of 1-3 member families, 23.1% have 1-2 working members and the rest (3.5%) have 3-5 working members. Thus, there are families in which almost all the members work. In case of 4-6 member families, 27.3% have 1-2 working members, followed by 23.9% having 3-5 working members. In families having 7-10 members (19.6%), 12.6% have 3-5 working members, followed by 5.3% having 1-2 working members and about 2% having 6 or more working members. In regard to families having 11 members or above, only 1.2% have 3-5 working members. (Table 12)

In other words, in smaller families, nearly all or majority of family members are working members, unlike bigger families in which not all members work.

**Table 12**  
**Correlation of Working Members with Total Family Members (%age)**

No. of working members	Share of working members in total family members				Total
	1-3 members	4-6 members	7-10 members	11 and above	
1-2 working members	23.1	27.3	5.3	0.2	55.9
3-5 working members	3.5	23.9	12.6	1.2	41.2
6 & above	0	0.7	1.7	0.5	2.9
Total	26.6	51.9	19.6	1.9	100

#### 4.1.2. Working Women and Children

In all the five divisions, there are very few families (nil to 1.5%) that do not have working women, working children and/ or both. Among the divisions, Padampur has the highest (83%) number of families having working women and Jeypore, the lowest (49.5%). 73.3% pluckers out of total sample of the five divisions have working women in their families. While very few or no families in the divisions have only working children below 14 years, there are 25.2% families out of total sample and 15.5% (Padampur) to 49% (Jeypore) families in the divisions have both working children below 14 years and working women. (Table 13)

**Table 13**  
**Status of Families having Working Women and Working Children**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Only working women	76	79	83	49.5	79	73.3
Only working children	1	0	0	1.5	0.5	0.6
Both	22.5	19.5	15.5	49	19.5	25.2
None	0.5	1.5	1.5	0	1	0.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 4.1.3. Ownership of Productive Assets

Apart from working members, ownership of productive assets that contribute to the income of families needs to be examined. While 22.5% (Angul) to 69.5% (Jeypore) households in the divisions and 44.6% in the combined sample have both land and domestic animals, between 9.5% (Nawarangpur) to 33.5% (Padampur) households in the divisions and 21.2% in the combined sample have only land. Only 7.2% respondents in the combined sample and 1% (Patnagarh) to 12% (Nawarangpur) in the divisions possess domestic animals.

It has come to the notice of HDS researchers during field data collection that there are pluckers who own *mahua indica* tree as in case of Padampur and Jeypore. While some collect mahua flowers, others give the trees on lease for Rs.150 for a tree for one year.

While 27% households in the combined sample do not possess any productive assets like land and domestic animals, the share of landless pluckers is 34.2% of the total sample. Among the divisions, Angul has the highest number landless pluckers (60.5%), followed by Patnagarh (38%), Padampur (36%), Nawarangpur (21.5%) and Jeypore (15%) in descending order. (Table 14)

**Table 14**  
**Possession of Productive Assets**

Assets	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Only land	17	30.5	33.5	15.5	9.5	21.2
Only assets like domestic animals	11.5	1	4.5	7	12	7.2
Both	22.5	31.5	30.5	69.5	69	44.6
None	49	37	31.5	8	9.5	27
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 4.1.4. Size of Landholding

Out of those having land, except Angul where majority of families (57%) has less than 1 acre (100 decimals) land, in all other divisions as well as in the combined sample, majority of the pluckers' families has 1-2 acres of land, Padampur (about 72%) being the highest in this category. In the 'above 2 acre' category, Jeypore has the highest families (44.7%) and Angul has the lowest (1.3%). In the combined sample, little more than 58% households have 1-2 acres land. Families having less than one acre land and above 2 acres land have almost equal representation, about 22% and little more than 20% respectively. (Table 15)

**Table 15**  
**Size of Landholding**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Less than 1 acre	57.0	28.2	17.2	6.5	19.7	21.9
1-2 acres	41.8	61.3	71.9	48.8	62.4	58.1
Above 2 acres	1.3	10.5	10.9	44.7	17.8	20.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Size of land holding, at times, has little bearing on the income from land as productivity depends on quality. For example, if the land is hard, hilly and unsuitable for cultivation, productivity per acre comes down drastically making even 10 acres land inadequate for a year. Field observations reveal that this is the situation in case of many pluckers in all the divisions. Lack of irrigation facility and attack of agricultural fields by wild animals like tuskers also affect agriculture badly. A village called Nandinipali in Angul division, inhabited largely by tendu leaf pluckers, is so prone to attack of tuskers that the villagers find it extremely difficult to grow crops in their small holdings. Even the backyards of houses, where they grow vegetables etc., are not spared by the wild animals.

#### 4.1.5. Correlation of Size of Family with Size of Landholding

Analysis of correlation of size of family with size of landholding very clearly shows the inadequacy of land to cater to the needs of family. Out of those who possess less than 1 acre of land, 55.5% have 4-6 member families, 27.3% have 1-3 member families, 16.6% have 7-10 member families and 0.6% has more than 10 member families. Thus, more than 72% families with 4-10 members possess less than one acre land. Similarly, about 76% families with 4-10 family members have landholding of 1-2 acres. Even families having above 2 acres of land are not well off economically, as 47% of such families have 4-6 member families and 31% have 7-10 member families. (Table 16) In other words, size of landholding is so small for majority of households that its contribution to family income becomes meagre.

**Table 16**  
**Correlation of Size of Family with Size of Landholding**

Strength of family	Less than 1 acre	1-2 acres	Above 2 acres	Total
1-3	27.3	22.7	14.4	26.6
4-6	55.5	51.5	47	51.9
7-10	16.6	24.3	31	19.6
11 and above	0.6	1.5	7.6	1.9
Total	100	100	100	100

## 4.2. SOURCES OF INCOME

In three divisions namely Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur, majority families (89%, 61.5% and 64.5% respectively) earn their living from **agricultural labour**, i.e. working in others agricultural land. Whereas, between 23% (Patnagarh) to 33.5% (Nawarangpur) families in the divisions work in their **own agricultural land**. In all the divisions taken together, 27.3% families work in their own agricultural land. It may be mentioned here that there are families that possess unsuitable land for agriculture and for them there is little or no scope for working in own agricultural land.

As regards **daily wage work in non-agricultural activities** such as construction, etc., Angul has the highest share (45%), and Jeypore has the lowest (11%). Not surprisingly, forest is an important source of income in all the divisions due the pluckers' proximity to forests. While 58.5% families (the highest in the category) in Padampur earn their living from **collection and sell of different forest produce** like wood, fruits and other non-timber forest produce, 21.5% families (the lowest in the category) in Angul depend on this source of income.

The table below shows that 83.3% families depend on multiple sources of income. Among them, 29% depend on all the four major sources of income mentioned in the table. Dependence on multiple sources indicates the uncertainties faced by the pluckers' families so far as income opportunities are concerned, as they do not get work on a regular basis. There are also people who remain largely unemployed all through the year, as is found in Angul (0.3%) and Patnagarh (3%).

The **four main sources income** mentioned in the table below have the following order of importance if the combined results of all the divisions are considered: agricultural labour (52.6%); collection & sell of different forest produce like wood, fruits etc. and other items available locally (33.4%); work in own agricultural land (27.3%); and daily-wage work in non-agricultural activities such as construction, etc. (24.2%). (Table 17)

**Other sources of income** that engage 15.2% families in all the divisions taken together are pot making, cloth washing, begging, cow grazing, selling eatables, old age pension, goat rearing, share cropping, broom making, leaf tray making, poultry, domestic servant, milk selling, turmeric selling, horoscope writing, quack, vegetable selling, bamboo work, grocery selling, contribution of son, chips making, tooth stick selling, driving tractor, etc.

It is clear from the field observation report of researchers of HDS, which is based on interaction with people during data collection, that poor pluckers get a total of 1 to 4 months work in a year. In other words, they get employment for even **less than five days in a month**.

**Table 17**  
**Sources of Income (%age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Work in own agricultural land (1)	24	23	26.0	30.0	33.5	27.3
Agricultural labour (2)	89	61.5	64.5	13.0	35.0	52.6
Daily-wage work in non-agricultural activities such as construction, etc. (3)	45	24	11.5	11.0	29.5	24.2
Collection & sell of different forest produce like wood, fruits etc. and other items available locally (4)	21.5	34	58.5	29.5	23.5	33.4
Any two above (Specify)	0.0	2	0.5	2.0	0.0	0.9
All four above (1, 2, 3 & 4)	4	20	17.0	56.5	47.5	29.0
Remain unemployed	0.5	3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7
Others (Specify)	17	31	25.0	0.5	2.5	15.2
Total *	201	198.5	203	142.5	171.5	183.3

\* Percentages exceed 100 due to multiple answers.

### 4.3. FAMILY INCOME

#### 4.3.1. Daily Income

Daily income (total monthly income/ 30) is calculated on the basis of income from the sources mentioned in the above table that exclude income from plucking. Families with daily income of Rs.10 and less are the highest in Padampur (66%) and the lowest in Angul (19.5%). Families earning Rs.11 to 20 a day are the highest in Nawarangpur (48%) and the lowest in Padampur (27.5%). Between 3% families in Padampur to 18% in Angul earn Rs.21 to 30 per day. Daily income of Rs.31 to 52 is earned by 2% (Nawarangpur) to 13.5% (Angul) families. Impoverishment of pluckers could be proved from the finding that in all the divisions shares of families earning more than Rs.52 daily is either nil (Patnagarh, Padampur and Nawarangpur) or negligible (1% in Jeypore and 4.5% in Angul). In other words, capacity of families to earn daily income at per minimum wage of the Government of Orissa for unskilled work, i.e. Rs.52.50 for 8 hours a day is either nil or extremely limited.

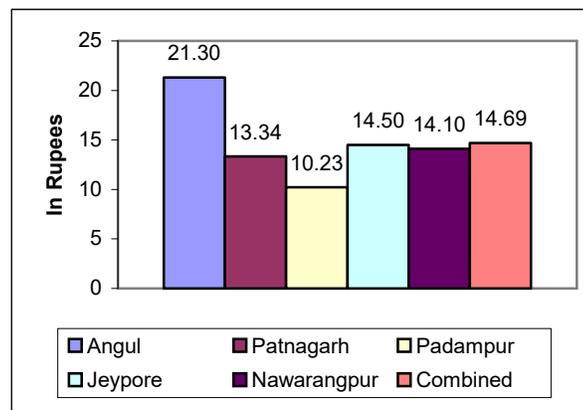
The survey outcome of all divisions taken together gives a very dismal picture in regard to daily income. Out of five income groups, the highest number of families (42.3%) earns a meagre Rs.10 or less daily. This is followed by Rs.11 to 20 per day by about 40% families. While 10.8% earn Rs.21 to 30 per day, about 6% earn Rs.31 to 52 in a day. **Thus, a total of 82.2% families earn Rs.20 or less per day and 98.9% earn Rs.52 or less per day.** Only 1.1% families have per day income of above Rs.52. (Table 18)

**Table 18**  
**Per Day Family Income (%age)**

Daily income	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Rs.10 and less	19.5	47.5	66	38.5	40	42.3
Rs.11 to 20	44.5	35.5	27.5	44	48	39.9
Rs.21 to 30	18	9.5	3	13.5	10	10.8
Rs.31 to 52	13.5	7.5	3.5	3	2	5.9
Above Rs.52	4.5	0	0	1	0	1.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Average per day income of families from different sources** (excluding tendu leaf plucking) is **about Rs.15**. While Angul has the highest daily average income (Rs.21.30) among the divisions, Padampur has the lowest average (Rs.10.23). (Chart 3) Meagre daily earnings of families clearly demonstrate the pathetic economic conditions of pluckers' families.

**Chart 3**  
**Division-wise Average Daily Income**



#### 4.3.2. Monthly Income

Monthly income, as calculated in this section, includes income from the sources mentioned above, and excludes income from plucking. Families earning Rs.200 and less in a month have the highest occurrence in Padampur (33.5%) and the lowest in Nawarangpur (4%). The share of those earning Rs.201 to 400 per month is the highest in Nawarangpur (50.5%) and the lowest in Angul (30%). Families in the monthly income category of Rs.401 to 700 are in the range of 37% (Nawarangpur) to 18% (Padampur), and those in Rs.701 to 1000 category are the highest in Angul (14%) and the lowest in Padampur (1.5%). Except Angul where 12% families earn Rs.1001 to 1500 a month, the representation of other divisions in this income group is either nil (Nawarangpur) or very little. Similar is the case of Rs.1501 to 2000 and Rs.2001 and above income groups.

As regards the combine results, 42.2% families earn Rs.201 to 400 a month, followed by 27.5% families with Rs.401 to 700 and 17.1% families with Rs.200 and less. In other words, about 87% families earn Rs.700 or less in a month. While little more than 8% earn Rs.701 to

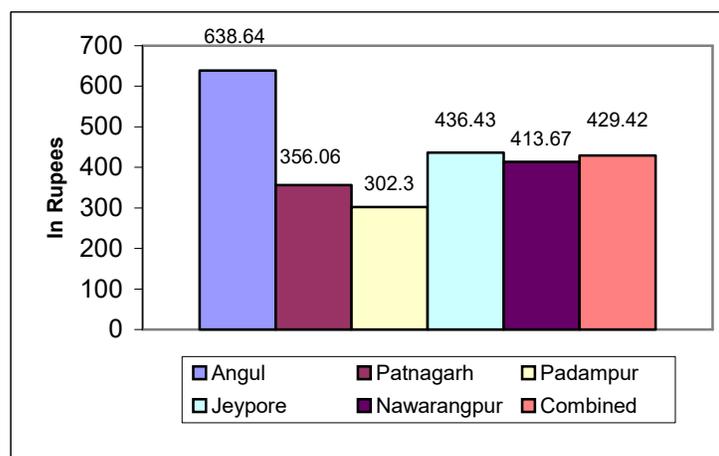
1000, about 4% earn Rs.1001 to 1500. The shares of income Rs.1501 to 2000 and Rs.2001 and above are 1% and 0.4% respectively. (Table 19)

**Table 19**  
**Monthly Family Income (%age)**

Monthly Income	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Rs.200 and less	8	30	33.5	9	4	17.1
Rs.201 to 400	30	38.5	45.5	46.5	50.5	42.2
Rs.401 to 700	31	22	18	29.5	37	27.5
Rs.701 to 1000	14	6.5	1.5	11	8	8.2
Rs.1001 to 1500	12	2.5	1.5	2	0	3.6
Rs.1501 to 2000	3.5	0	0	1.5	0	1
Rs.2001 and above	1.5	0	0	0	0.5	0.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Average monthly income of families** of all the divisions taken together from different sources (excluding tendu leaf plucking) is Rs.429.42. Among the divisions, Angul has the highest average monthly income (Rs.638.64), followed by Jeypore (Rs.436.43), Nawarangpur (Rs.413.67), Patnagarh (Rs.356.06) and Padampur (Rs.302.30) in descending order. (Chart 4)

**Chart 4**  
**Division-wise Average Monthly Income**



### 4.3.3. Yearly Income

Yearly income of families has been calculated on the basis of income from all sources including tendu leaf plucking. While families having yearly income of Rs.2000 and less are either nil or negligible in Jeypore, Nawarangpur and Angul; in Patnagarh and Padampur, their shares are 14.5% and 17.5% respectively. Between 2.5% families in Nawarangpur to 15% in Padampur have yearly income in the range of Rs.2001 to 3000. The percentages in regard to income category of Rs.3001 to 4000 are 19.5% families of Padampur (the highest) and 6% in Angul (the lowest). Among all the income categories, Rs.4001 to 6000 has the highest occurrence in all the divisions.

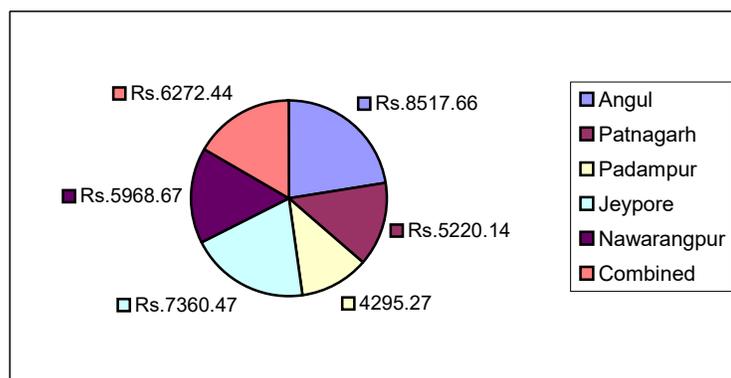
Combined percentages of all the income categories reveal that **89% families are living below poverty line.**<sup>7</sup> Among those who are above poverty line, 23% families (the highest) belong to Angul, followed by 16% in Jeypore, 8% in Patnagarh, 5.5% in Nawarangpur and the lowest 2.5% in Padampur. (Table 20)

**Table 20**  
**Yearly Income of Family (%age)**

Yearly income	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Rs.2000 and less	3.5	14.5	17.5	0	0.5	7.2
Rs.2001 to 3000	4.0	11.0	15.0	3.5	2.5	7.2
Rs.3001 to 4000	6.0	16.0	19.5	8.0	15.0	12.9
Rs.4001 to 6000	29.0	28.0	27.5	35.0	41.5	32.2
Rs.6001 to 8000	20.0	14.0	13.5	24.5	25.5	19.5
Rs.8001 to 10999	14.5	8.5	4.5	13	9.5	10
Rs.11000 and above	23.0	8.0	2.5	16	5.5	11
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The intensity of poverty among pluckers can be gauged from the average yearly income of the pluckers' families. The average family income in a year (inclusive of income from tendu leaf plucking) of all the divisions taken together is Rs.6272.44, which is little more than half of the income considered as poverty line i.e. Rs.11000 in a year. Among the divisions, Angul has the highest average yearly income (Rs.8517.66), followed by Jeypore (Rs.7360.47), Nawarangpur (Rs.5968.67), Patnagarh (Rs.5220.14) and Padampur (Rs.4295.27) in descending order. (Chart 5)

**Chart 5**  
**Division-wise Average Yearly Family Income of Pluckers**



#### 4.4. FAMILY EXPENDITURE

##### 4.4.1. Meeting Family Expenses

Considering the meagre amount earned by pluckers' families as discussed above, its not surprising that their capacity to manage family expenses with that income is very less. In four divisions namely Angul, Patnagarh, Padampur and Jeypore, for majority of the families

<sup>7</sup> In Orissa, yearly income of Rs.11,000 is the poverty line.  
Research Project executed by Human Development Society, Delhi [www.hdsindia.org]

(91.5%, 97%, 97% and 77.5% respectively) the yearly income is not sufficient for the expenses of the family. Only in Nawarangpur, 51% families considered the income sufficient as against 49% negative reply. As regards combined result, 82.4% respondents said that their income was not sufficient for the family expenses. (Table 21)

**Table 21**  
**Sufficiency of Income (%age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	8.5	3	3	22.5	51	17.6
No	91.5	97	97	77.5	49	82.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 4.4.2. Meeting the Shortfall

Due to excess of expenditure over income, these poor families face the problem of shortfall. The survey reveals that institutional finance in the form of loans from bank and other government institutions is not very popular among the pluckers' families. Except Nawarangpur where 16.3% take loans from banks and such other institutions, in other divisions very few (0.5% to 5.2%) opt for such loans. Instead, people prefer to go to friends and relatives. As high as 75.3% respondents in Patnagarh said that they took loans from friends and relatives to make the shortfall, followed by 71% in Angul, 65.5% in Padampur, 34.2% in Jeypore and 19.4% in Nawarangpur. There are families which manage things with great difficulty without taking loans. The highest respondents in this category were found in Nawarangpur (61.2%) and the lowest in Angul (13.1%).

The combined results in this regard are: loans from friends and relatives- 57.6%, loans from banks and other government institutions- 3.6%, both loans from friends and government institutions- 9% and managing things with great difficulty- 28.6%. (Table 22)

**Table 22**  
**Procedures for Meeting Shortfall due to Poor Family Income (%age)**

Procedures	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Take loan from friends and relatives	71	75.3	65.5	34.2	19.4	57.6
Take loan from bank & other government institutions	0.5	1	1.5	5.2	16.3	3.6
1 and 2 above	14.8	7.7	16.5	0	0	9
Have no other alternative, hence manage things with great difficulty	13.1	15.5	16.5	58.1	61.2	28.6
Other	0.5	0.5	0	2.6	3.1	1.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 4.4.3. Loan Repaying Capacity

Poverty is reflected in the loan repaying capacity of the families. In all the divisions, very high percentage of respondents (77.1% in Nawarangpur to 98.8% in Jeypore) said that their

families faced difficulties in repaying the loans as per terms and conditions. (Table 23) It may be mentioned here that these people at times take loans, even from friends and relatives, at 25% or more rate of interest.

**Table 23**  
**Difficulty in Repayment (%age)**

<b>Do you face difficulty?</b>	<b>Angul</b>	<b>Patnagarh</b>	<b>Padampur</b>	<b>Jeypore</b>	<b>Nawarangpur</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	95.6	96.9	98.8	98.4	77.1	96
No	4.4	3.1	1.2	1.6	22.9	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

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## Chapter 5

# PATTERNS OF PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS LINKED TO TENDU LEAF PLUCKING

### 5.1. PATTERNS OF PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT

#### 5.1.1. Duration of Involvement

Duration of a plucker's involvement in tendu leaf plucking in terms of number of years primarily depends on her/ his age. More the age of a plucker, more is the duration of involvement and vice versa. The survey shows that among the divisions, Angul has the highest number of pluckers (31%) who have been plucking since last five years or less and Nawarangpur with 8% has the lowest representation in this category. Those who have been working since last 6-10 years are between 4% (Patnagarh) to 36% (Nawarangpur) and those in the 11-15 years category are between 8% (Padampur) to 37.5% (Jeypore). Pluckers working since 16-30 years are the highest among all the five categories in Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur. In Jeypore and Nawarangpur, 12% and 21% pluckers are in 16-30 years category respectively. Except in Patnagarh and Padampur where 27.5% and 24.5% respectively have been working since last 31 year or more, in all other divisions only 3% to 10% pluckers are in this category.

As regards combine results, the highest 34% pluckers have been working since 16-30 years, followed by 19.7% since 11-15 years, 17.6% since 6-10 years, 14.4% since 5 years & less and 14.3% since 31 years & more. (Table 24)

**Table 24**  
**Duration of Involvement in Plucking (%age)**

Years in plucking	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
5 years and less	31	9	9	15	8	14.4
6-10 years	11	4	4.5	32.5	36	17.6
11-15 years	11.5	13	8	37.5	28.5	19.7
16-30 years	36.5	46.5	54	12	21	34
31 years and above	10	27.5	24.5	3	6.5	14.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 5.1.2. Number of Generations in Plucking

Number of generations, like number of years, indicates the level of dependence of pluckers' families on plucking. While majority of pluckers in Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur has been engaged in plucking since two generations, in Jeypore and Nawarangpur majority pluckers are third generation pluckers. Taking the survey results of all divisions together, 39.2% pluckers said that their families have been plucking since three generations, followed by 38.1% since two generations and 22.5% are first generation pluckers. The share for more than three generations is only 0.2%. (Table 25)

**Table 25**  
**Number of Generations in Plucking (%age)**

<b>Generations</b>	<b>Angul</b>	<b>Patnagarh</b>	<b>Padampur</b>	<b>Jeypore</b>	<b>Nawarangpur</b>	<b>Total</b>
One	40.5	36	31.5	4	0.5	22.5
Two	51.5	63.5	61.5	10.5	3.5	38.1
Three	8	0	7	85.5	95.5	39.2
More than three	0	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 5.1.3. Number of Family Members Engaged in Plucking

The magnitude of people's involvement in plucking can be ascertained from the finding that in about 70% families two or more than two members are engaged in plucking. As the data in table below in regard to combine status show, in 38.4% families two members are engaged in plucking, followed by one member in 30.5% families, three members in 17.7% families, four members in 8% families and five & more members in 5.4% families.

As regards the divisions, Angul, Patnagarh, Jeypore and Nawarangpur have the highest number of families (52%, 38.5%, 30.5% and 39.5% respectively) having two pluckers and Padampur has the highest number of families having one plucker (33%). (Table 26)

**Table 26**  
**Number of Family Members engaged in Plucking (%age)**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Angul</b>	<b>Patnagarh</b>	<b>Padampur</b>	<b>Jeypore</b>	<b>Nawarangpur</b>	<b>Total</b>
One	39	36.5	33	5	39	30.5
Two	52	38.5	31.5	30.5	39.5	38.4
Three	7.5	22.5	24.5	22	11.5	17.7
Four	1	2.5	8.5	20.5	7.5	8
Five & above	0.5	0	2.5	22	2.5	5.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 5.1.4. About Family Members engaged in Plucking

The combined data of all five divisions show that in 18.2% families all the working members pluck tendu leaves. While 8.7% families have male pluckers who are above 14 years, 24.1% families have female pluckers who are above 14 years. In 5.1% families, children below 14 years are pluckers. Share of families having both male and female pluckers; male, female and child pluckers; female and child pluckers; or male and child pluckers are 13.4% ('others' in the table). The combined results show that in 69.5% families, two or more family members are engaged in plucking.

As regards results in divisions, in all divisions except Jeypore the highest percentages of respondents (33% in Padampur to 39% each in Angul and Nawarangpur) are the only members in their families engaged in plucking. While in Jeypore 77.5% plucker have all family members engaged in plucking, in all other divisions very few respondents fall in this category (nil in Patnagarh to 10.5% in Nawarangpur). In case of other respondents in divisions, two or more family members of all age groups are engaged in plucking. (Table 27)

**Table 27**  
**Family Members engaged in Plucking (%age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Only one (self)	39	36.5	33	5	39	30.5
All working members (including self)	1	0	2	77.5	10.5	18.2
Self & only male members (above 14 years)	8	14.5	18	2	1	8.7
Self & only female members (above 14 years)	33	26	16.5	8	37	24.1
Self and only children (below 14 years)	9.5	4.5	2.5	3.5	5.5	5.1
Others	9.5	18.5	28	4	7	13.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 5.1.5. Possession of Plucking Card

Plucking card is the card issued to pluckers by the KL organisation in which number of *kerries* deposited by a plucker in *phadi*, date of deposit and amount due for payment are recorded. It came to light that out of 1000 pluckers interviewed, about 61% possess the card and the rest do not. (Table 28) Although there is no restriction on giving more than one card to a family, not a single family could be found to possess more than one card. The reasons, as found during interaction with pluckers and government officials, are many. The pluckers, at times, do not prefer to have more than one card in a family, as certain amount per card is deducted as annual subscription of the Orissa Kendupatra Karmachari Sangha (OKPKS) [See discussion on Deduction from Pluckers' Payment]. More card in a family means more deduction. The KL organisation, on its parts, never cares to give more than one card to a family, leave alone giving cards to all pluckers in the family, although every one in the organisation knows that more than one member in a family pluck. This is apparently due to extra expenditure that the government will have to incur not only for printing the cards but also for giving the so-called benefits under welfare scheme.<sup>8</sup> In Nawarangpur and Jeypore, where deduction of annual subscription is not an issue due to weak presence of OKPKS, the names of pluckers of a family are written on backside of the plucking card by the KL organisation.

It may be mentioned in this context that as per the procedure the plucking card is retained by the plucker till the final payment is made. Thereafter, it is brought to the range office for cancellation and kept for each individual *phadi*.

However, some deviations could be noticed by researchers of HDS, as in Patnagarh where the plucking cards usually remain only for few days with the pluckers. In many cases, cards are withdrawn even before the disbursement of final payment. There are also instances of cards not being issued in certain ranges. [See discussion on Non-card holding Pluckers]

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter titled 'Welfare of Tendu Leaf Pluckers' for Government's welfare scheme for pluckers. Research Project executed by Human Development Society, Delhi [www.hdsindia.org]

**Table 28**  
**Possession of Plucking Card (%age)**

Possession	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	78.5	57	57	51	61	60.9
No	21.5	43	43	49	39	39.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

It is important to mention here that the number of card-holding pluckers in the State as per the Government of Orissa record is much less than the actual number of pluckers, which is more than 18 lakhs.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 29**  
**Division-wise Break up of Card Holding Pluckers in 2004 as per Government Record**

Sl. No.	Tendu leaf division	No. of pluckers
1.	Angul	47,080
2.	Keonjhar	45,000
3.	Boudh	55,000
4.	Athamallik	31,791
5.	Phulbani	46,210
6.	Sambalpur	48,169
7.	Rairakhol	23,638
8.	Deogarh	38,418
9.	Kuchinda	37,657
10.	Jharsuguda	31,978
11.	Rourkela	41,825
12.	Bolangir	39,012
13.	Patnagarh	43,302
14.	Titilagarh	57,508
15.	Padampur	66,035
16.	Bhawanipatna	42,000
17.	Khariar	50,375
18.	Jeypore	1,11,585
19.	Nawarangpur	76,908
	Total	9,33,491

Source: KL Organisation, Government of Orissa

Among the 19 tendu leaf divisions, Jeypore (Sl. No. 18) and Rairakhol (Sl. No. 7) have the highest (1,11,585) and the lowest (23,638) number of pluckers respectively according to the above table.

### 5.1.6. About Non-Card holding Pluckers

Non-card holding pluckers work with the persons in the families in whose names cards are issued. In other words, the leaves plucked by a non-card holding plucker are deposited in the name of the card-holding plucker of the family. All the interviewed non-card holding

<sup>9</sup> This has come to light in course of discussions with officials of KL organisation and leaders of Orissa Kendupatra Karmachari Sangha.  
Research Project executed by Human Development Society, Delhi [www.hdsindia.org]

pluckers in Jeypore and Nawarangpur fall in this category. The shares of other three divisions namely Padampur, Angul and Patnagarh in this regard are 95.3%, 76.7% and 72.1% respectively. The survey also found that none of non-card holding pluckers works with card-holding pluckers outside the family. There are however pluckers in divisions like Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur (10% in all) who cited reasons like ‘card has not been issued during the year’, ‘card is with the Munshi’ and ‘record is maintained by the government’. (Table 30)

**Table 30**  
**Working of Non-card holding Pluckers (%age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Work with someone <i>in the family</i> in whose name the card is issued	76.7	72.1	95.3	100	100	90
Work under someone <i>outside the family</i> who possesses the card	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other arrangement	23.3	27.9	4.7	0	0	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

## 5.2. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS LINKED TO TENDU LEAF PLUCKING

### 5.2.1. Periodicity of Payment

This is an extremely important aspect of tendu leaf trade in the State. The survey has very conclusively proved that there is no periodicity of payment, as it is irregular in the opinion of all the pluckers of Patnagarh, Padampur, Jeypore and Nawarangpur. Angul is the only division where 4% pluckers said that the payment was made at the end of plucking and the rest (96%) viewed it as irregular. (Table 31) Irregular nature of payment has also been admitted by officials KL organisation and resented by pluckers and leaders of OKPKS.

**Table 31**  
**Periodicity of Payment to Pluckers (%age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Daily	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weekly	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fortnightly	0	0	0	0	0	0
Monthly	0	0	0	0	0	0
At the end of plucking	4	0	0	0	0	0.8
Irregular payment	96	100	100	100	100	99.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 5.2.2. Reasons for Irregular Payment

Between 88.5% pluckers in Jeypore to 95.5% in Padampur are of view that payment to pluckers depends on the release of money by the OFDC. In other words, 92.6% pluckers attributed payment irregularity to irregular release of working capital by the OFDC to the KL organisation. (Table 32)

**Table 32**  
**Reasons for Irregular Payment (%age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Depends on release of money by government	89.6	95.5	95	88.5	94.5	92.6
Can't say	7.8	4.5	5	11.5	5.5	6.9
Delayed payment	2.6	0	0	0	0	0.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The view of pluckers is shared by the leaders of OKPKS as well as the officials of KL organisation and OFDC. In 2004, payment was delayed till October, even if plucking ended in May, when the pluckers sat on a *dharna* in Bhubaneswar, after which the payment was released. There are also allegations that the money meant for pluckers are at times diverted for the PBB workers. This cannot be entirely unfounded in view of the fact that PBB activities cannot, unlike payment to pluckers, be delayed, as the quality of leaves will suffer from processing point of view.

OFDC, while admitting the untimely release of working capital, considers the delay beyond its control. Release of money depends on availability of adequate funds with the organisation. According to OFDC, cash need to the tune of Rs.60 crore at the time of plucking is difficult to meet. The organisation takes loan from different banks on differential rate of interest (DRI), which is a government guaranteed loan. DRI loan is sought due to its low rate of interest i.e. 4%. Since OFDC gets only 5% commission (1% of the commission is used for construction of central godowns, leaving only 4% with OFDC) for marketing the leaves, the organisation cannot take loans at higher rate of interest. Since DRI loan of varying amount is taken from several banks, there is no definite time by which loan amounts are received by OFDC. Banks also take long time in processing the loan due to lower rate of interest. Delay in receiving loan leads to delay in release of working capital to the KL organisation. As a result, payment to pluckers gets delayed.

Although an agreement was signed in January 2000 between the government and the OKPKS for creation of a revolving fund in order to solve the problem of inadequacy of funds with the KL organisation, the government has not taken any step in this regard so far. Unfortunately, the government, with zero budgetary support, spends nothing for the trade but gets crores of rupees as royalty every year. All the expenses of the trade are catered from the sale of leaves. Profit, being the primary motive of the government, dissuades it from coming to the rescue of OFDC and KL organisation. As a result the poor pluckers suffer the most.

### **5.2.3. Consequences of Irregular Payment**

It is not difficult to understand the consequences of irregular payment on pluckers whose economic conditions are pathetic in view of their meagre earning. During summer months, when no other sources of income are available, tendu leaf plucking is an important source of income. The consequences of irregular payment are extremely grave in case of families having no other economic assets and no one to take care of. There are pluckers who earn even more than 50% of their yearly income from plucking. With daily wage hardly equal to

wage of an unskilled worker as fixed by the government<sup>10</sup>, their dependence on earning from plucking is very high. Even the economic conditions of pluckers having land are no better, as explained earlier, due to poor quality of land.

Inability to manage household expenditure often leads to mortgaging of family belongings as in Angul and even mortgaging of plucking card as in Padampur, Patnagarh and Nawarangpur<sup>11</sup> at very high rate of interest. The survey shows that 5.5% and 11.5% pluckers in Patnagarh and Padampur respectively have mortgaged their plucking cards for taking loans. While 67.6% pluckers in the two divisions, out of those who have mortgaged their cards, have taken loan of Rs.500 or less, the amount of loan is between Rs.501 to 1000 for 23.5% pluckers, Rs.1001 to 1500 for about 6% pluckers and Rs.1501 & above for 3% pluckers. (Table 34) All these pluckers are committed to pay very high rate of interest. (Table 35) The rate of interest varies from 10% or less (76.5% pluckers) to as high as 25%. (Table 36) The survey further reveals that a total of 94.1% pluckers, who have taken loans by mortgaging their cards, have entered into agreements with the creditors. (Table 37) All these agreements are written agreements. (Table 38)

Level of poverty amongst pluckers who have mortgaged their plucking cards can be gauged from average annual income these families, which is Rs.4733. Average earning of these families from tendu leaf plucking is Rs.850 in a year. In other words, they earn 18% of their annual income from plucking.

**Table 33**  
**Status of Plucking Card Mortgage (%age)**

Status	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	0	5.5	11.5	0	0	3.4
No	100	94.5	88.5	100	100	96.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Table 34**  
**Loans taken by Mortgaging Plucking Cards (%age)**

Loan amount	Patnagarh	Padampur	Total
Less than Rs.500	63.6	69.5	67.6
Rs.501 to 1000	27.3	21.8	23.5
Rs.1001-1500	0	8.7	5.9
Rs.1501 and above	9.1	0	3
Total	100	100	100

<sup>10</sup> Daily wage of a man is as low as Rs.25 and that of female is Rs.20. Wages of men and women are never equal for similar work.

<sup>11</sup> Although the survey did not reveal mortgaging of plucking card in Nawarangpur, the practice came to light during case study. Sani Goud, a plucker of Nawarangpur whose case has been explained in Annexure I, had not only mortgaged her plucking card but also the BPL card two years back as she could not bear the consequences of late payment by KL organisation.

**Table 35**  
**Status on Payment of Interest (%age)**

Status	Patnagarh	Padampur	Total
Yes	100	100	100
No	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100

**Table 36**  
**Status on Rate on Interest (%age)**

Rate of interest	Patnagarh	Padampur	Total
10% or less	45.5	91.4	76.5
More than 10% to 15%	0	0	0
More than 15% to 20%	45.5	4.3	17.6
More than 20% to 25%	9.0	4.3	5.9
Total	100	100	100

**Table 37**  
**Status on Agreement for Mortgaging of Card (%age)**

Status	Patnagarh	Padampur	Total
Yes	90.9	91.7	94.1
No	9.1	8.3	5.9
Total	100	100	100

**Table 38**  
**Nature of Agreement (%age)**

Item	Patnagarh	Padampur	Total
Written agreement	100	100	94.1
Verbal agreement	0	0	5.9
Total	100	100	100

A plucking card with some outstanding dues on the government becomes a valuable asset for the moneylender. The moneylender, as observed by researchers during field data collection, gets the money collected from the forest department. Since the pluckers are mostly illiterate, there is enough scope for manipulation. There are also instances of 'Munshi' assisting the pluckers in mortgaging their cards.<sup>12</sup> Another dimension of this analysis is that in certain villages, because of non-availability of moneylenders, pluckers often do not find persons with whom they can mortgage their cards and get loan. Therefore, even in places where card mortgaging is not seen, it does not mean that magnitude of poverty is less. Institutional loan, as explained earlier, is also very rare amongst the poor pluckers. In other words, the pluckers who mortgage their belongings & plucking cards and face innumerable hardships in maintaining their households, would not have faced these consequences so badly had the government paid their dues on time.

Paying interests to the moneylenders increases the burden of pluckers further. By the time money from forest department comes to them, interests become quite high forcing the pluckers to part a substantial portion of their income on this account. Timely payment would

<sup>12</sup> This has come to our notice in Padampur tendu leaf division.  
*Research Project executed by Human Development Society, Delhi [www.hdsindia.org]*

have saved the money that goes as interests. It is important to note here that the government does not pay interests to pluckers due to delay in payment. Therefore, the pluckers remain at the receiving end. More the share of income from plucking in total income of family, more grave is the consequences of delay in payment for plucking.

There is a feeling in some quarters in the government that irregular payment leads to forced saving by the poor pluckers which they spend during rainy season and for Nuakhai festival which is celebrated in the districts of Western Orissa.<sup>13</sup> It is felt that timely payment would lead tribal male members to consume more country liquor with little or no money left for Nuakhai. This situation disturbs family peace and may lead to taking loans from the village *sahukars* (moneylenders) to meet Nuakhai expenses.

As discussed earlier, the prevalent feeling in some quarters in the government is not correct. This may be true for pluckers whose dependence on earning from plucking is less or limited to spending the money for Nuakhai. There are thousands of pluckers in the State who are living below poverty line and whose dependence on earning from plucking is very high as evident from the share of this income in total family income (see analysis on 'share of income from plucking in annual household income' in this chapter). Their dependence cannot be measured in terms of Nuakhai or for spending during rainy season but in terms of sustenance.

#### **5.2.4. Income From Plucking**

**Daily Income from Plucking:** Although income from plucking depends primarily on the number of leaves plucked by a plucker, factors like availability of pluckable leaves, age and health condition of the plucker do affect the output. For example, a plucker below 14 years can pluck half to one *chatta* in a day and a plucker of 60 years & above can pluck 1 to 1½ *chatta* in a day.

At present, 21 paisa is paid for 1 kerry (20 leaves) tendu leaves. In other words, Rs.21 is paid for 1 *chatta* (100 keries).

Pluckers earning less than Rs.21 are the lowest in Jeypore (2%) and the highest in Angul (8.5%). While Angul and Jeypore have the highest number of pluckers (62.5% and 54% respectively) in the daily income bracket of 'Rs.21, but less than Rs.42', Patnagarh and Padampur have the highest number of pluckers (49% and 44.5% respectively) in the daily income bracket of 'Rs.42 to Rs.52'. Nawarangpur is the only division in which the highest number of pluckers (33.5%) earns above Rs.63. Comparison of daily income from plucking with daily wage of government for unskilled job i.e.Rs.52.50 reveals that Angul is at the bottom with only 5.5% pluckers conforming to the government rate. Padampur with 14.5% is second from below, followed by Patnagarh (19%), Jeypore (29%) and the highest goes to Nawarangpur (48%).

The combined results of all the divisions indicate that only 23.2% pluckers conform to the minimum daily wage of the State Government. In other words, **about 77% pluckers in the**

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<sup>13</sup> The Divisional Forest Officer, Kendu Leaves, Bhawanipatna Division vide letter no. 3384 dated 25<sup>th</sup> November 2004 communicated this to HDS.

**five divisions earn less than the minimum daily wage.** In the combined results, the highest 42.1% pluckers fall in the income bracket of ‘Rs.21, but less than Rs.42’. This is followed by 30.6% pluckers in the income bracket of Rs.42 to Rs.52. The share of those who earn less than Rs.21 is 4.1%. (Table 39)

**Table 39**  
**Daily Income of Pluckers from Plucking (%age)**

Daily income	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Less than Rs.21	8.5	4	3.5	2	2.5	4.1
Rs.21, but less than Rs.42	62.5	28	37.5	54	28.5	42.1
Rs.42 to Rs.52	23.5	49	44.5	15	21	30.6
Above Rs.52 to Rs.63	5.5	17	13	7.5	14.5	11.5
Above Rs.63	0	2	1.5	21.5	33.5	11.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Combined average daily income** from plucking is Rs.42.68, which is less than the minimum daily wage of the Government of Orissa. Nawarangpur is the only division having average daily income (Rs.57.65) more than daily wage of the government. In other divisions, average daily income from plucking is less than minimum daily wage for unskilled work.

**Table 40**  
**Division wise Average Daily Income from Plucking**

Division	Amount (Rs.)
Angul	30.13
Patnagarh	40.66
Padampur	42.27
Jeypore	45.55
Nawarangpur	57.65
Combined	42.68

**Monthly Income from Plucking:** Monthly income from plucking has been calculated on the basis of number of days spent for plucking and the number of leaves plucked. As will be discussed in chapter on ‘working conditions of pluckers’, none of the pluckers interviewed have plucked for more than a month. Therefore, monthly income of a plucker/ respondent from plucking should also be treated as total income of that plucker from plucking during the year.

Except Patnagarh where the highest number of pluckers (36.5%) earned Rs.501 to 1000 during a month, in all other divisions the highest number of pluckers earned Rs.201 to 400 during a month (Angul- 39.5%, Padampur- 28%, Jeypore- 32%, and Nawarangpur- 38%). Angul has 19% pluckers each in the monthly income bracket of Rs.101 to 200 and Rs.501 to 1000, 14.5% pluckers earned Rs.401 to 500, 7% earned less than Rs.100 and only 1% earn Rs.1001 & above. As regards second highest share in different income categories, the shares of Patnagarh, Padampur, Jeypore and Nawarangpur are 30.5% with income of Rs.201 to 400, 24.5% with income of Rs.101 to 200, 27.5% with income of Rs.501 to 1000, and 21.5% with income of Rs.501 to 1000. Among the divisions, the two *phal* divisions have 13% (Jeypore) and 6.5% (Nawarangpur) pluckers in the income bracket of Rs.1001 and above, unlike the processed divisions that have 1 to 1.5% pluckers in this category. Analysis of data reveals

that pluckers earning Rs.400 or less are very high in all divisions: 65.5% in Angul, 49% in Patnagarh, 67% in Padampur, 50% in Jeypore and 57.5% in Nawarangpur. (Table 41)

As regards the combined results, 33.6% pluckers fall in the category of Rs.201 to 400, followed by 25.4% in Rs.501 to 1000, 18.3% in Rs.101 to 200, 12.2% in Rs.401 to 500, 5.9% in less than Rs.100 and 4.6% in Rs.1001 & above in descending order.

In other words, **70% pluckers earn Rs.500 or less from plucking during a month.**

**Table 41**  
**Monthly Income of Pluckers from Plucking (%age)**

Monthly income	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Less than Rs.100	7	4	14.5	2	1.5	5.9
Rs.101 to 200	19	14.5	24.5	16	18	18.3
Rs.201 to 400	39.5	30.5	28	32	38	33.6
Rs.401 to 500	14.5	13.5	9	9.5	14.5	12.2
Rs.501 to 1000	19	36.5	22.5	27.5	21.5	25.4
Rs.1001 and above	1	1	1.5	13	6.5	4.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

As regards the average monthly income from plucking, the combined income of all divisions is Rs.442.09. The two phal divisions are better than the processed divisions, with Jeypore having the highest income of Rs.558.26 and Nawarangpur is the second highest at Rs.497.02. Padampur recorded the lowest income (Rs.308.97) among the five divisions.

**Table 42**  
**Division-wise Average Monthly Income from plucking**

Division	Amount (Rs.)
Angul	363.98
Patnagarh	482.24
Padampur	308.97
Jeypore	558.26
Nawarangpur	497.02
Combined	442.09

**Total Family Income from Plucking:** This income has been calculated by adding total income of all family members who pluck tendu leaves. In case of families having one plucker, monthly income of plucker from plucking and total income of family from plucking are same. Total family income from plucking and yearly income of family from plucking are also the same.

As regards the highest shares of total family income from plucking in different divisions, the shares of Angul, Patnagarh, Padampur, Jeypore and Nawarangpur are 32.5% with Rs.200 to 400, 26.5% with Rs.401 to 700, 27% with Rs.401 to 700, 30.5% with Rs.2001 & above, and 26.5% with Rs.200 to 400 respectively. The second highest positions in this regard are 29.5% with Rs.401 to 700 in Angul, 25.5% with Rs.200 to 400 in Patnagarh, 21% with less than Rs.200 in Padampur, 19.5% with Rs.1001 to 1500 in Jeypore and 25% with Rs.401 to 700 in Nawarangpur.

Except Jeypore, in all other divisions pluckers having Rs.700 or less as total family income from plucking are more than 50%: 71.5% in Angul, 56.5% in Patnagarh, 68% in Padampur and 54.5% in Nawarangpur.

The combined results in respect of different income categories in descending order are: 24.1% with Rs.401 to 700, 22.8% with Rs.200 to 400, 14% with Rs.701 to 1000, 13.2% with Rs.1001 to 1500, 9.8% with Rs.2001 & above, 8.1% with Rs.1501 to 2000, and 8% with less than Rs.200. (Table 43)

**Table 43**  
**Total Family Income of Pluckers from Plucking (%age)**

Family income	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Less than Rs.200	9.5	4.5	21	2	3	8.0
Rs.200 to 400	32.5	25.5	20	10	26.5	22.8
Rs.401 to 700	29.5	26.5	27	12	25	24.1
Rs.701 to 1000	16.5	14	13	9	17.5	14.0
Rs.1001 to 1500	8.5	15	10.5	19.5	12.5	13.2
Rs.1501 to 2000	2	7	5.5	17	9	8.1
Rs.2001 and above	1.5	7.5	3	30.5	6.5	9.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Average yearly income from plucking of all divisions taken together is Rs.962.17. Jeypore has the highest average (Rs.1850.40), which is followed by Nawarangpur, the second from top (Rs.918.00) [less than half of Nawarangpur]. Angul has the lowest average yearly income (Rs.561.72) among all divisions.

**Table 44**  
**Average Yearly Income Division wise from plucking**

Division	Amount (Rs.)
Angul	561.72
Patnagarh	834.45
Padampur	646.30
Jeypore	1850.40
Nawarangpur	918.00
Combined	962.17

### 5.2.5. Share of income from plucking in annual household income

Since tendu leaf plucking does not employ the pluckers all through the year, the importance of plucking for a plucker can be known by understanding the contribution of income from plucking to the total family income in a year. If the contribution is more, the importance of plucking for the family is more.

Analysis of shares of annual income from plucking in total household income reveals that the share of income from plucking decreases with the increase in total household income. In other words, more the annual income of family, less is the contribution of income from plucking. Families with annual income of Rs.2000 and less have 22.1% of their income coming from plucking. The share becomes 12.5% in case of families with annual income of Rs.2001 to 3000, followed by 9.6% in case of annual family income of Rs.3001 to 4000 and

8.5% in case of income of Rs.4001 to 6000. The share of income from plucking further goes down to 7% in case of families having annual income of Rs.6001 to 8000 and its about 6% for annual income of Rs.8001 to 10999. Those families having annual income of Rs.11000 & above i.e. families above poverty line get only 4% (the lowest share) of their annual income from tendu leaf plucking.

While **average share of income from plucking in the annual income of families is 15.3%**, there are families whose share goes well beyond 50%. They are invariably the poorest of the poor pluckers who do not possess any productive assets, who are either widow or in a socially disadvantageous position and whose earning potential is extremely limited.

**Table 45**  
**Share of income from plucking in annual household income**

Annual income of households	Percentage of families in the income category	Share of income from plucking in annual household income (% age)
Rs.2000 and less	7.2	22.1
Rs.2001 to 3000	7.2	12.5
Rs.3001 to 4000	12.9	9.6
Rs.4001 to 6000	32.2	8.5
Rs.6001 to 8000	19.5	7.0
Rs.8001 to 10999	10	5.9
Rs.11000 & above	11	4.0

#### 5.2.6. Payment making Person/ Authority

The KL organisation, which is under the Forest Department of Government Orissa, makes payment to pluckers. While in Padampur, Jeypore and Nawarangpur, 99% and more pluckers received payments from the person specifically appointed for the purpose (the Munshi)<sup>14</sup>; in Jeypore, Angul and Patnagarh 91% and 68.5% pluckers said so. Except Patnagarh where 30.5% received payments from the card holding plucker of the family under whom they work, in the other four divisions, the share in this regard is very marginal or nil. Reflecting the division-wise results, the combined results also show that 91.5% received money from the Munshi, 7.8% from the card holding plucker, 0.4% from the government directly and 0.4% fall in others like 'non-response'. In case of pluckers, who said that they received payment directly from the government, it is the Munshi who paid the money.

**Table 46**  
**Payment making Person/ Authority (%age)**

Payments received	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Directly from Forest Deptt.	0.5	0.5	0	0	1	0.4
From the person specifically appointed by govt. for this	91	68.5	99.5	99.5	99	91.5
From the card-holding plucker under whom you work	8.5	30.5	0	0.5	0	7.8
Others	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

<sup>14</sup> According to the Orissa Kendu Leaf Manual 1973, the Munshi is responsible for, *inter alia*, "making payments for the price of kendu leaves purchased to the extent authorised."

### 5.2.7. Deduction from Pluckers' Payment

It has come to light that certain amount is deducted from the amount paid to the pluckers for plucking. In Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur, 96.5%, 88% and 81% pluckers respectively said that deduction was made by the person who made payment to pluckers (Munshi). The extent of deduction by Munshi is very less (1.5%) in Jeypore and 43.5% in Nawarangpur. Those who could not reply have been categorised as others. (Table 47)

The combined results indicate that certain amount is deducted by the Munshi from the payment of nearly 62% pluckers. While deduction by card holder pluckers is very minimal (1.3%), 33% pluckers said that no deduction was made from their payments. It is also clear from the survey that the Forest Department (K L organisation) does not make any deduction from the pluckers' payment. If negative replies are any indication, **deduction is less in phal divisions than the processed divisions.**

**Table 47**  
**Persons making Deductions from Pluckers' Payment (%age)**

Deducted by	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
The Forest Department	0	0	0	0	0	0
The person appointed for the purpose	96.5	88	81	1.5	43.5	61.9
The card-holder plucker	0.5	5.5	0	0	0.5	1.3
None	0.5	1.5	7.5	98.5	56	33
Others	2.5	5	11.5	0	0	3.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 5.2.8. Rate of Deduction

The rate of deduction is Rs.5 per season per card holding plucker in case of majority of pluckers in Angul (92.3%), Patnagarh (71.2%), Padampur (95.8%), Jeypore (83.3%) and Nawarangpur (95.5%). The rate of deduction is Rs.10 per season per card holding plucker in case of 7.7% pluckers in Angul, 24.6% pluckers in Patnagarh, 1.2% in Padampur, 16.7% in Jeypore and 4.5% in Nawarangpur. The **highest rate of deduction i.e. Rs.15 per season** could be noticed in Patnagarh (4.2% pluckers). While deduction was less than Rs.5 in case of 1.2% pluckers in Padampur, it was Rs.1 per chatta in case of 1.8% pluckers in the same division. Researchers of HDS observed that in Patnagarh the rate of deduction is as high as Rs.20 per season.

**Table 48**  
**Rate of Deduction from Wages of Pluckers (%age)**

Rate of Deduction	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Rs.5 per season	92.3	71.2	95.8	83.3	95.5	87.3
Rs.10 per season	7.7	24.6	1.2	16.7	4.5	10.7
Rs.15 per season	0	4.2	0	0	0	1.2
< Rs.5 per season	0	0	1.2	0	0	0.3
Rs.1 per chatta per season	0	0	1.8	0	0	0.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 5.2.9. Reasons for Deduction

Pluckers' ignorance about the purpose of deduction could be seen in the variety of replies in regard to the reason for deduction. 75% pluckers in Nawarangpur, 17.4% in Angul, 9.4% in Patnagarh and about 8% in Padampur said that the amount deducted from their payments was meant for **union/ organisational work**. The deducted amount was **card fee** in the opinion of 49.3% pluckers in Angul, 12.6% pluckers in Patnagarh, 0.7% in Padampur and 4.6% in Nawarangpur. Very few pluckers (3.1% in Angul, 0.5% in Patnagarh and 1.2% in Padampur) said that the amount was meant for welfare of pluckers. While Angul is the only division where 1% pluckers said that the forest department officials told for such deduction, 0.5% in Patnagarh and 1.1% in Nawarangpur said the amount would be deposited in the government account. About 5% pluckers in Padampur said the amount deducted was bonus, which seems to be an ambiguous response. Pluckers' ignorance about the reason for deduction is very high in Patnagarh (77%), Padampur (85.5%) and 100% in Nawarangpur.

The combined results show high level of ignorance (57.5%). Nearly equal percentage of pluckers said union fee/ organisational work (20.1%) and card fee (19.2%) as the reasons for deduction. Only 3.2% pluckers in all divisions cited other reasons like welfare of pluckers, bonus etc. (Table 49)

Interaction with OKPKS leaders revealed that the amount deducted from the pluckers' payment is the yearly membership subscription fee for OKPKS. The subscription fee is Rs.5 per cardholding plucker. The amount is deducted by the Munshis, who are also members of OKPKS, on behalf of OKPKS. It is clear from the survey findings that in certain cases Munshis have deducted more than the prescribed fee, as discussed in the earlier section. It also came to light during discussion with OKPKS leaders that there are Munshis who do not pay the deducted amount to the Sangha (Union). The situation reveals the following facts:

- ❖ The Munshis are making money in the name of OKPKS by way of extra deduction and non-payment of all deducted amount to the OKPKS even if it is Rs.5 per plucker.
- ❖ Pluckers' ignorance and illiteracy makes them vulnerable to manipulation like this.

**Table 49**  
**Reasons for Deduction (%age)**

Reasons	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Union fee/ Organisational work	17.4	9.4	7.8	0	75	20.1
Card fee	49.3	12.6	0.7	0	4.6	19.2
Welfare of pluckers	3.1	0.5	1.2	0	0	1.4
Can't say	29.2	77.0	85.5	100	19.3	57.5
Told by officials	1	0	0	0	0	0.3
Money deposited in govt. account	0	0.5	0	0	1.1	0.3
Bonus	0	0	4.8	0	0	1.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 5.2.10. Is the Pluckers' Wage Right?

In Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur, the three processed divisions, very high percentage of pluckers (90%, 80% and 81% respectively) said that the remuneration paid to them is not right considering the work done by them. While 53% pluckers in Jeypore considered the present remuneration unjust, Nawarangpur is the only division where 64% pluckers rated the remuneration at par their labour and only 34.5% considered it unjust.

In regard to combined results, about 68% pluckers considered the present remuneration unjust and only 30.3% considered it right. (Table 50)

**Table 50**  
**Pluckers' view on Present Remuneration (%age)**

Is the wage right	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	10	19	17	41.5	64	30.3
No	90	80	81	53	34.5	67.7
Can't say	0	1	2	5.5	1.5	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 5.2.11. Reasons for Calling the Wage Inadequate

Those pluckers who considered the present wage inadequate cited several reasons for calling it so. The most important reason is the **long and labourious nature of work**, as evident in the choice of highest number of pluckers in each division (34.4% in Angul to 63.8% in Nawarangpur). While the second important reason in Angul (29.4%) and Jeypore (8.5%) is the wage being 'insufficient for family need', delayed payment is the second important reason in Patnagarh (28.1%) and Padampur (35.8%) and for Nawarangpur, the reason is lack of water, shoes & other amenities (23.2%). 16% to 33.3% pluckers could not tell the reasons. As regards combined results, three important reasons for considering the wage inadequate are long & laborious nature of work (42.1%), delayed payment (17.3%) and insufficient for family needs (15.5%). In Padampur and Jeypore, 0.6% and 0.9% pluckers respectively said that the price of leaves in Chhattisgarh is more in comparison to Orissa. (Table 51)

**Table 51**  
**Reasons for Calling Present Wage Inadequate (%age\*)**

Reasons	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Inaccessible terrain	7.2	8.8	1.2	3.8	7.2	5.6
Lack of water, shoes & other amenities	4.4	10.6	6.8	6.6	23.2	8.7
Insufficient for family needs	29.4	6.9	19.1	8.5	1.4	15.5
Delayed payment	6.1	28.1	35.8	2.8	0	17.3
Hot summer days	3.9	4.4	0.6	0.0	0	2.2
Long hours of laborious work	34.4	38.8	37.0	53.8	63.8	42.1
Can't say	18.3	24.4	16	31.1	33.3	22.7
In comparison to Chhattisgarh, Orissa price is less	0	0	0.6	0.9	0	0.3
Total	103.9	121.9	117.3	107.5	129.0	114.5

\* Due to multiple responses, the percentages have become more than 100%.

## 5.2.12. Reasons for Continuing Plucking

Although pluckers consider the remuneration inadequate, they still continue to pluck tendu leaves. The most important reason for them to do so is their poverty. Between 62.3% pluckers in Nawarangpur to 87.8% in Angul cited this reason. The second important reason is lack of alternative sources of income (between 15.9% in Nawarangpur to 77.8% in Padampur). Except Nawarangpur, in all other divisions between 0.9% to 5.6% pluckers considered indebtedness an important reason.

On the whole, poverty is a reason for 80.5% pluckers, followed by lack of alternative sources of income (44.8%) and indebtedness (3.4%). While 4.4% pluckers said that all the three reasons were responsible, 1.8% located their continuity in plucking in any two of the three reasons. A total of 9.2% respondents could not give any reason. (Table 52)

**Table 52**  
**Reasons for Continuing in Plucking (%age\*)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Lack of alternative sources of income (1)	33.9	44.4	77.8	32.1	15.9	44.8
Poverty forces to do whatever work is available (2)	87.8	76.9	85.2	78.3	62.3	80.5
Indebtedness (3)	5.0	5.6	2.5	0.9	0	3.4
Any two above	1.7	1.9	2.5	1.9	0	1.8
All three above (1, 2 & 3)	2.8	6.9	8.6	0.0	0	4.4
Others	1.7	1.3	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.9
Can't say	2.8	10.0	1.9	13.2	34.8	9.2
Total	135.6	146.9	178.4	126.4	114.5	144.9

\* Due to multiple responses, the percentages have become more than 100%.

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## Chapter 6

### WORKING CONDITIONS

#### 6.1. DISTANCE AND TIME

##### 6.1.1. Distance of Tendu Forests from Residence/ Village

For majority of pluckers in the divisions (between 47.5% in Angul to 88.5% in Padampur), the tendu forests/ plucking zones are located at a distance of 2 to 5 kilometres (kms). The distance is above 5 kms, but less than 8 kms in case of 12% (Angul) to 22% (Patnagarh) pluckers. The distance is 8 to 10 kms in case of 23.5% pluckers of Angul, 5% each of Patnagarh and Nawarangpur and 3% of Jeypore. In Padampur, all the tendu forests/ plucking zones are located at a distance of 2 kms to less than 8 kms. Jeypore (0.5%) and Nawarangpur (3.5%) are the only divisions having jungles at a distance of more than 10 kms.

As regards combine results, the distance of tendu forests/ plucking zones and its corresponding share of pluckers are: 2 to 5 kms- 71%; above 5 kms, but less than 8 kms- 16%; 8 to 10 kms- 7.3%, less than 2 kms- 4.9% and above 10 kms- 0.8%. (Table 53)

**Table 53**  
**Distance of Tendu Forests from Residence/ Village (%age)**

Distance	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Less than 2 kms	17	5	0	2.5	0	4.9
2 to 5 kms	47.5	68	88.5	80.5	70.5	71
Above 5 kms but < 8 kms.	12	22	11.5	13.5	21	16
8 to 10 kms.	23.5	5	0	3	5	7.3
Above 10 kms.	0	0	0	0.5	3.5	0.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

##### 6.1.2. Time Taken to Commute

While majority of pluckers in Angul (55%), Patnagarh (90.5%) and Padampur (98%) takes less than 1 hour to commute to the tendu forests, majority in Jeypore (75.5%) and Nawarangpur (80.5%) takes 1 to 2 hours. As regards combine results, 57.3% pluckers take less than 1 hour, followed by 42.4% 1 to 2 hours, and only 0.3% more than 2 hours. (Table 54) Although pluckers usually cover the distance by walking, in some cases male family members take them to forests by bicycles and bring them back, as in Jeypore and Nawarangpur.

**Table 54**  
**Time taken to Commute to Tendu Forests (%age)**

Commuting time	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Less than 1 hr	55	90.5	98	24.5	18.5	57.3
1 hr to 2 hrs	45	9	2	75.5	80.5	42.4
More than 2 hrs	0	0.5	0	0	1	0.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

## 6.2. PLUCKING HOURS AND DAYS

### 6.2.1. Hours Spent for Plucking

In Angul, Patnagarh, Padampur and Jeypore, 89.5%, 99%, 92.5% and 59% pluckers respectively spend 5 to 7 hours in plucking. While no plucker in Angul and Patnagarh spends more than 7 hours, Nawarangpur has 61% pluckers falling in this category, followed by 39.5% in Jeypore and 7.5% in Padampur. While no one spends 3 hours or less in Padampur and Nawarangpur, the share of other divisions in this regard is very marginal 0.5% (Jeypore) to 3.5% (Angul).

The combined results indicate that 75.7% pluckers spend 5 to 7 hours, followed by 21.6% more than 7 hours, 1.7% more than 3 hours but less than 5 hours and only 1% spends 3 hours and less. (Table 55)

**Table 55**  
**Hours Spent for Plucking (%age)**

Hours spent	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
3 hrs and less	3.5	1	0	0.5	0	1
> 3 hrs. but < 5 hrs.	7	0	0	1	0.5	1.7
5 to 7 hrs.	89.5	99	92.5	59	38.5	75.7
More than 7 hrs.	0	0	7.5	39.5	61	21.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

One important aspect of plucking is that a plucker's work does not end after she reaches home with plucked leaves. Sorting the leaves and making *kerries* take the whole of afternoon. As the work starts at 4 o'clock in the morning when the plucker leaves for forests, by the time she is ready with leaves for depositing in *fadi*, she spends 10 to 12 hours or even more in the work.

### 6.2.2. Days of Plucking

Although pluckable leaves remain for about two months, number of plucking days varies greatly from area to area, as leaves are not available every day. Therefore, pluckers pluck in different phases. The survey made it distinctly clear that majority of pluckers pluck either for 5-10 days or for 11-15 days. Except Jeypore, in all other divisions, the majority of pluckers (Angul- 43%, Patnagarh- 47.5%, Padampur- 36.5% and Nawarangpur- 47%) pluck for only 5-10 days. In Jeypore, the highest (36.5%) share goes to 11-15 days. Pluckers working for less than five days could be found in highest number in Padampur (36%) and the lowest in Angul (1.5%). As regards pluckers working for 16-20 days, the highest share goes to Jeypore (28.5%) and the lowest share goes to Padampur (6%). While none of the pluckers in any division plucks for a month and more, the share of those working for 21 to 30 days is either nil (Nawarangpur) or insignificant (Angul- 8%, Patnagarh- 7%, Padampur- 3.5% and Jeypore- 1%).

The combined results indicate that nearly 40% pluckers pluck for 5-10 days, about 29% for 11-15 days, 14.5% for less than 5 days, about 13% for 16-30 days and about 4% for 21-30 days. (Table 56)

It may be mentioned in this context that the number of plucking days was used to be more than a month in the past. But now the period has come down drastically. In a village called Sananki in Padampur division, number of plucking days is only 3. During discussions with officials, pluckers and OKPKS leaders, it became clear that the decrease in number of plucking days is due to improper bush cutting, fixation of production quota and decrease in command area as a result of growing cultivable land, and at times development projects like water harvesting project in Padampur. The impact of less number of plucking days on earning potential of pluckers has been discussed in Chapter on ‘Bondage’.

**Table 56**  
**Number of Plucking Days in a Year (figures in %age)**

<b>Plucking days</b>	<b>Angul</b>	<b>Patnagarh</b>	<b>Padampur</b>	<b>Jeypore</b>	<b>Nawarangpur</b>	<b>Total</b>
Less than 5 days	1.5	6.5	36	9	19.5	14.5
5-10 days	43	47.5	36.5	25	47	39.8
11-15 days	34	32	18	36.5	24	28.9
16-20 days	13.5	7	6	28.5	9.5	12.9
21- 30 days	8	7	3.5	1	0	3.9
1 month and above	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### **6.3. WORKING CONDITIONS**

For the purpose of analysis of working conditions, the respondents have been divided into three categories considering factors like age, sex and our perception about women and old people. Women and respondents of above 60 years (both male and female) have been treated as one category as they both are considered socially and physically weak. While adult male respondents, including adolescents (above 14 years, but less than 60 years), are treated as another category; pluckers below 14 years have been treated separately because of the study’s special focus on children. Opinion of children (below 14 years) in regard to working conditions has been discussed in the Chapter titled “Status of Children in Tendu Leaf Plucking”.

Working conditions refer to physical environment, time spent for work, people involved in the work and such other conditions that affect the pluckers’ health, earning potential and life conditions.

#### **6.3.1. Working Conditions: Views of Women and Elderly (60 plus) Respondents**

The survey proved conclusively that working conditions of women and above 60 years pluckers are not good or very good in the opinion of majority of pluckers. Very high percentage of pluckers in all the five divisions considered the conditions harsh. While the highest 98.9% in Padampur considered the conditions harsh, the lowest share in this regard goes to Nawarangpur (59.2%). The conditions are slightly better in Jeypore and Nawarangpur as 19.1% and 39.1% pluckers respectively considered the conditions good, whereas in Angul, Padampur and Patnagarh only 0.5% to 2.2% fell in this category.

The combined results show that 86.6% pluckers treated the working conditions as harsh. While working conditions are good for only 11.7% pluckers; except 1.1% in Nawarangpur

(0.2% combined), no one in any other division considered the conditions as very good. (Table 57)

**Table 57**  
**Working Conditions in the Opinion of Women and Respondents of above 60 years (% age)**

Working conditions	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Very good	0	0	0	0	1.1	0.2
Good	1.7	2.2	0.5	19.1	39.1	11.7
Harsh	94.9	97.8	98.9	76.6	59.2	86.6
Non response	3.4	0	0.5	4.3	0.6	1.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Reasons for Judging the Conditions as Harsh:** For pluckers of Angul, ‘hilly terrain and thorny plants’ of forests is the most important reason for considering the working conditions as harsh as 47.6% pluckers (the highest among all reasons) viewed it so. Long working hours is the most important reason for pluckers of Patnagarh (75.7%) and Padampur (22.3%). While pluckers of Jeypore considered ‘fear of wild animals’ & ‘hot days without proper amenities’ (34.7% each) equally responsible for harshness of working conditions, for pluckers of Nawarangpur fear of wild animals is the most important reason. In the opinion of little more than 39% pluckers in all the divisions taken together, multiple reasons are responsible for making working conditions harsh.

Analysis of combined results indicate that ‘long working hours’ is the most important reason (36.7%), followed by ‘hot working days without proper amenities like water, shoes etc.’ (30.9%), ‘hilly terrain and thorny plants of forests’ (24.4%), fear of wild animals like tuskers (16.1%), delay in payment (5.1%), rejection of leaves on unreasonable grounds (1.6%) in descending order. Only 1.8% cited other reasons like scolding by fellow pluckers. (Table 58)

**Table 58**  
**Reasons for Judging the Working Conditions as Harsh (% age\*)**

Reasons	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Hilly terrain and thorny plants	47.6	16.6	5.4	29.2	31.1	24.4
Fear of wild animals	26.5	1.7	0.5	34.7	38.7	16.1
Hot days without proper amenities like water, shoes etc.	34.3	40.9	17.4	34.7	29.2	30.9
Rejection of leaves on unreasonable grounds	1.8	2.8	0.5	0.0	1.9	1.6
Delay in payment	1.8	12.2	5.4	1.4	-	5.1
Long working hours	32.5	75.7	22.3	19.4	13.2	36.7
Others	4.8	1.7	0.5	0.0	0.9	1.8
Can't say	3.6	5.0	67.9	11.1	12.3	22.7
Total	149.4	156.4	120.1	130.6	127.4	139.2

\* Due to multiple responses, the percentages have become more than 100%.

### 6.3.2. Working Conditions: Views of Adult Male Respondents

While all the respondents in this category in Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur considered the working conditions harsh, the shares in this regard in Jeypore and Nawarangpur are 69.2% and 33.3% pluckers respectively. While 30.8% (Jeypore) and 66.7% (Nawarangpur) pluckers found the conditions good, no respondent in any of the five divisions considered the working conditions very good. Thus 68.6% of all the adult male respondents found the working conditions harsh, as against 31.4% who found them good. (Table 59) Based on the responses of the five divisions, it can be said that working conditions in Jeypore and Nawarangpur in the opinion of adult male respondents are better than Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur.

**Table 59**  
**Working Conditions in the Opinion of Adult Male Respondents (%age)**

Working conditions	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Very good	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good	0	0	0	30.8	66.7	31.4
Harsh	100	100	100	69.2	33.3	68.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Reasons for Judging the Conditions as Harsh:** In the opinion of adult male respondents, fear of wild animals is the most important reason (41.4%), followed by working on hot days without amenities like shoes etc. (30%), hilly terrain & thorny plants (21.4%), long working hours (14.3%), and delay in payment (7.1%). Only in Jeypore, about 2% respondents considered 'rejection of leaves on unreasonable grounds' as a reason for harsh working conditions. A total of 28.6% respondents cited more than one reason. (Table 60)

**Table 60**  
**Reasons for Judging the Working Conditions as Harsh (% age\*)**

Reasons	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Hilly terrain and thorny plants	50	0	20	16.7	100	21.4
Fear of wild animals	0	0	0	50.0	50	41.4
Hot days without proper amenities like water, shoes etc.	0	40	20	31.5	25	30.0
Rejection of leaves on unreasonable grounds	0	0	0	1.9	0	1.4
Delay in payment	0	40	20	3.7	0	7.1
Long working hours	0	60	0	11.1	0	14.3
Others	0	0	0	3.7	0	2.9
Can't say	50	0	60	5.6	0	10.0
Total	100	140	120	124.1	175	128.6

\* Due to multiple responses by some respondents, the percentages have become more than 100%.

## Chapter 7

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS, RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

#### 7.1. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS

##### 7.1.1. School going Children in Families

Except Nawarangpur where children in 66% pluckers' families are going to schools, in all other divisions, shares of families having school going children are less than non-school going children. The combined results indicate that in 52.3% pluckers' families children are not going to school as against 47.2% families having school-going to children.

**Table 61**  
**School Going Children in Pluckers' Families**

School going child	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	45	46.8	36.6	41.3	66.0	47.2
No	54	52.7	63.4	58.7	33.5	52.3
NR	1	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

##### 7.1.2. Reasons for not sending Children to Schools

In the opinion of 1% (Jeypore) to about 21% (Angul) respondents in divisions, education of children is not affordable due to poverty. 'Earning is more important than education of children' is a reason in case of 1% respondents in Angul (the lowest among all divisions) to 72.3% (the highest among all divisions) in Jeypore. In the view of 4% pluckers in Patnagarh and 1.6% pluckers in Nawarangpur, education of girls is unimportant. A total of about 59% pluckers in all divisions taken together cited several other reasons like inability of children to study, issueless status of parents, beating of children by school teachers, distance of school from village and no school going children in family. While 21.6% pluckers in all divisions taken together considered earning is more important than education of their children, about 10% found education not affordable due to their poor economic condition. Only 1% plucker in all the divisions taken together considered education of girls unimportant. (Table 62)

**Table 62**  
**Reasons for Non-school going Children (% age)**

Reason	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Education is not affordable	20.8	15	8.3	1	1.6	9.8
Earning is more important than education	1	3	0.8	72.3	40.6	21.6
Education of girls is not important	0	4	0	0	1.6	1.0
Others	71.9	75	90.9	11.9	28.1	58.9
Non response	6.3	3	0.0	14.9	28.1	8.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

## 7.2. RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

Recreation and entertainment are essential for a person's mental and physical stability. They energise our body and mind, and as such their utilities cannot be underestimated. The survey attempted to capture the status of pluckers in this regard not only when they pluck but also during other time of the year. In three divisions namely Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur, 80.2% to 99% pluckers do not find enough time for recreation and entertainment. But, in other two divisions, i.e. Jeypore and Nawarangpur, 82.6% and 95.8% respondents respectively find time for recreation and entertainment.

The combined results show that 59.3% respondents do not find time for recreation and entertainment. Only 36.5% find time for such activities.

**Table 63**  
**Recreation and Entertainment of Pluckers (% age)**

<b>R &amp; E</b>	<b>Angul</b>	<b>Patnagarh</b>	<b>Padampur</b>	<b>Jeypore</b>	<b>Nawarangpur</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	4.5	1.6	0	82.6	95.8	36.5
No	80.2	96.8	99	14.5	2.6	59.3
Non response	15.3	1.6	1	2.9	1.6	4.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

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## Chapter 8

### NUTRITION AND HEALTH STATUS

#### 8.1. NUMBER OF MEALS TAKEN IN A DAY

Number of meals taken in a day indicates not only the status of health but also the magnitude of poverty in a family. Between 32% (Angul) to 96% (Jeypore) pluckers in the divisions always take only two meals in a day. While in Jeypore and Nawarangpur only 1.5% and 2.5% pluckers respectively take usually two but occasionally one meal in a day, the shares of Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur in this category are 55.5%, 57.5% and 52.5% respectively. Except Jeypore (0.5%) and Nawarangpur (2%), no one in other three divisions takes one meal a day always. While no one takes one but occasionally two meals a day in Jeypore, in other four divisions 0.5% (Nawarangpur) to 3.5% (Angul) pluckers fall in this category. The 2.4% pluckers (combined result) who opted for 'others' take either three meals a day or have no fixed pattern, as number of meals is dependent on availability of food. (Table 64)

The combined results indicate that 62.1% pluckers always take two meals in a day and about 34% take two but occasionally one meal in a day. In other words, a total of 96% pluckers take maximum two meals in day. The meals, as observed by researchers of HDS based on interaction with pluckers and their families, are most of the time not nutritious, as they cannot afford to buy different types of green vegetables and non-veg items.

**Table 64**  
**Number of Meals taken in a Day (% age)**

No. of meals a day	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Always only once	0	0	0	0.5	2	0.5
Always two times	32	41	47	96	94.5	62.1
Twice, but occasionally once	55.5	57.5	52.5	1.5	2.5	33.9
Once, but occasionally twice	3.5	1	0.5	0	0.5	1.1
Others	9	0.5	0	2	0.5	2.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 8.2. CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

Consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other intoxicants is an important variable to determine the status of health of pluckers, as these intoxicants adversely affect health and make them susceptible to different diseases like cancer.

Except Jeypore where 35% pluckers consume only alcohol, in other divisions consumption of only alcohol is either nil (Padampur) or negligible (0.5% in Angul to 2.5% in Nawarangpur). But consumption of only tobacco is very high in all divisions (Angul- 56%, Patnagarh- 71.5%, Padampur- 82.5% and Nawarangpur- 46%), except Jeypore (7%). Those consuming both alcohol and tobacco are very low in Angul (2.5%), Patnagarh (1.5%) and Padampur (3.5%) and moderately high in Jeypore (35%) and Nawarangpur (36%). Those

who do not consume any intoxicants are the highest in Angul (40.5%) and the lowest in Padampur (14%). (Table 65)

The combined results indicate that share of tobacco consumers is the highest (52.6%), followed by both tobacco & alcohol (15.7%) and only alcohol (about 8%). In other words, 76.2% pluckers consume either tobacco or alcohol or both. This also shows majority of pluckers' susceptibility to adverse impact of these intoxicants.

**Table 65**  
**Consumption of Intoxicants (% age)**

Intoxicants	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Alcohol	0.5	1.5	0	35	2.5	7.9
Tobacco	56	71.5	82.5	7	46	52.6
Both 1 & 2	2.5	1.5	3.5	35	36	15.7
None	40.5	25.5	14	23	15.5	23.7
Others	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 8.3. SAFE DRINKING WATER FACILITY

A positive finding of the survey is that drinking water is available in most of the villages covered in the study. While all the villages in Patnagarh have safe drinking water facilities like tube wells, in other four divisions 89% (Angul) to 99.5% (Jeypore) villages fall in this category. In other words, 96.3% villages in the all five divisions have safe drinking water facilities. (Table 66)

**Table 66**  
**Availability of Safe Drinking Water Facility (% age)**

Availability of water	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	89	100	94	99.5	99	96.3
No	11	0	6	0.5	1	3.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Sources of Drinking Water in Villages having no Safe Water Sources:** Those pluckers having no drinking water facility in their villages depend on neighbouring village tube well as is the case with 18.2% in Angul and 8.3% in Padampur. All pluckers in Jeypore, 50% in Nawarangpur and 22.7% in Angul consume water of village ponds. Spring water is used by 18.2% pluckers in Angul and 66.7% pluckers in Padampur. Users of other sources like rivers and open wells are 40.9% in Angul, 25% in Padampur and 50% in Nawarangpur. (Table 67)

Analysis of combined results show that a total of more than 51% pluckers having no safe drinking water sources in their villages use open water sources like village pond, spring or river. Only 14% depend on neighbouring village tube well.

**Table 67**  
**Sources of Drinking Water in Villages having no Safe Source (% age)**

Water sources	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Neighbouring village tube well	18.2	0	8.3	0	0	14
Village pond	22.7	0	0	100	50	19
Spring flowing near the village	18.2	0	66.7	0	0	32
Others	40.9	0	25.0	0	50	35
Total	100	0	100	100	100	100

## 8.4. HEALTH PROFILE

### 8.4.1. Health Problem in Family

In three divisions namely Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur, at least one family member has fallen sick during last six months (88% in Padampur to 95.5% in Angul). The shares in Jeypore and Nawarangpur in this regard are 38% and 50% respectively. In all, about 73% families have members falling sick during last six months. (Table 68)

**Table 68**  
**Sickness in Families during last Six Months (% age)**

Sickness	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	95.5	92.5	88	38	50	72.8
No	4.5	7.5	12	62	50	27.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

As regards nature of sickness, fever and stomach problems are very common in all the divisions, as told by 69.3% (Padampur) to 95% (Nawarangpur) pluckers. Families having tuberculosis are the highest in Nawarangpur (16%) and the lowest in Padampur (2.3%), and those having fracture/ body injury are the highest in Patnagarh (3.8%) and the lowest in Jeypore (1.3%). In Angul, Patnagarh, Padampur and Jeypore, between 5.3% (Jeypore) to 16.2% (Patnagarh) families have members suffering from body ache/ headache. Between 6% (Nawarangpur) to about 20% (Padampur) families have members suffering from other diseases like arthritis, blood pressure, asthma, paralysis, filaria, cancer and anaemia.

In all, 79.1% families have members suffering from fever & stomach problem, followed by 10% suffering from body ache/ head ache, 7% suffering from tuberculosis, 2.6% body injury/ fracture. (Table 69)

**Table 69**  
**Nature of Sickness in Pluckers' Families (% age)**

Nature of sickness	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Fever & stomach problem	72.8	81.1	69.3	92.1	95	79.1
Tuberculosis	4.7	10.3	2.3	3.9	16	7.0
Fracture/ body injury	1.6	3.8	2.8	1.3	3	2.6
Body ache/ head ache	11	16.2	10.2	5.3	0	10.0
Others	18.8	16.2	19.9	6.6	6	15.4
Total	108.9	127.6	104.5	109.2	120.0	114.1

\* Due to multiple responses, the percentages have become more than 100%.

#### 8.4.2. Health Problem due to Plucking

In Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur, majority pluckers (82%, 65.5% and 58% respectively) said they had fallen sick as a result of physical strain due to tendu leaf plucking. In case of Jeypore and Nawarangpur, only 2.5% and 1% pluckers respectively belonged to this category. Low percentage of sickness in Jeypore and Nawarangpur could be attributed to working conditions in the two divisions which are comparatively better than other three divisions. [See chapter on Working Conditions] Interactions with pluckers reveal that due to better earning from plucking in Jeypore and Nawarangpur, pluckers of these divisions often prefer to downplay the harshness of working conditions and the health problems associated with plucking. If all the divisions taken together, about 42% pluckers suffered due to physical strain during plucking, as against 58.2% negative replies. (Table 70)

**Table 70**  
**Pluckers falling sick due to plucking (% age)**

Sickness	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	82	65.5	58	2.5	1	41.8
No	18	34.5	42	97.5	99	58.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

As regards nature of sickness, majority of pluckers out of those who reported sickness due to plucking, in Angul (54.3%), Patnagarh (51.1%) & Padampur (50.9%), and 40% & 50% pluckers in Jeypore & Nawarangpur respectively suffered from fever. While no one had body ache & headache in Nawarangpur, in other four divisions between 25.9% in Padampur to 40% in Jeypore suffered due to this. Tiredness and sunstroke affected pluckers of all the divisions in the range of 12.1% (Padampur) to 60% (Jeypore). No one in Jeypore and Nawarangpur suffered from stomach problem and body injury, unlike other three divisions. While stomach problem affected 7.3%, 9.9% and 12.9% pluckers in Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur respectively; 2.4%, 6.9% and 6% pluckers in Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur respectively sustained body injuries during plucking.

The combined results of five divisions are as follows: fever- 52.2%, body ache & headache- 29.4%, tiredness/ sunstroke- about 18%, stomach problem- 9.6%, and body injury- about 5%. Other health problems like acidity, joint pain, boils, etc affected about 6% pluckers. (Table 71)

**Table 71**  
**Nature of Sickness due to Physical Strain during Plucking (% age)**

Nature of sickness	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Tiredness/ sunstroke	18.3	20.6	12.1	60	50	17.9
Fever	54.3	51.1	50.9	40	50	52.2
Body ache head ache	30.5	31.3	25.9	40	0	29.4
Stomach problem	7.3	9.9	12.9	0	0	9.6
Body injury	2.4	6.9	6.0	0	0	4.8
Other diseases	8.5	3.8	4.3	0	0	5.7
Total	121.3	123.7	112.1	140	100	119.6

\* Due to multiple responses, the percentages have become more than 100%.

### 8.4.3. Physical Threats to Pluckers

Besides health problems that are explained above, pluckers also face physical threats in forests. Except Padampur where no one faced threat of wild animals only, between 3% (Angul) to 28% (Nawarangpur) faced such threats in other divisions. Threat of snakes and other reptiles is more encountered in comparison to wild animals by pluckers as 12% (Angul) to 49.5% (Patnagarh) pluckers faced such danger in forests. Pluckers who faced threats of both wild animals and reptiles are in the range of 38% (Nawarangpur) to 84% (Angul).

In all, about 58% pluckers (the highest) faced both threats of wild animals and reptiles like snakes, 32.4% faced only threats of snakes & other reptiles, and 9.5% faced only threats of wild animals like tuskers. (Table 72)

**Table 72**  
**Physical Threats to Pluckers (% age)**

Physical threats	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Threat of wild animals like tuskers	3	1.5	0	15	28	9.5
Threat of snakes and other reptiles	12	49.5	32.5	34	34	32.4
Both	84	49	67.5	51	38	57.9
Others	1	0	0	0	0	0.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 8.4.4. Death due to Health Problem

Between 4.5% (Jeypore) to 10.5% (Angul) pluckers' families had deaths in families due to health problem during last six months. In other words, deaths due to health problem occurred in 7.4% pluckers' families. This is one of the indicators of the type of health infrastructure available in villages.

**Table 73**  
**Deaths due to Health Problem (% age)**

Deaths	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	10.5	7.5	6.5	4.5	8	7.4
No	89.5	92.5	93.5	95.5	92	92.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 8.4.5. Loan for Medical Expenses

In three divisions namely Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur, 79% to 83.5% pluckers said that they had taken loan to meet medical expenses of self/ family. But in other two divisions, percentage of families taking loan for this purpose is either nil (Jeypore) or marginal (1.5% in Nawarangpur). The combined results show that pluckers taking loans for medical expenses (48.9%) and those not taking loans for the purpose (51.1%) are almost equal.

**Table 74**  
**Pluckers taken Loans for Medical Expenses (% age)**

Loans taken	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	80.5	79	83.5	0	1.5	48.9
No	19.5	21	16.5	100	98.5	51.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 8.4.6. Sources of Loan

While moneylenders are an important source of loans in Patnagarh (91.8%) and Padampur (82.6%) for meeting the medical expenses, friends and relatives constituted the majority source in Angul (65.8%). In Nawarangpur, 33.3% pluckers each took loans from moneylenders and friends & relatives respectively. Institutional sources of loans are very rare as only 1.2% (Angul) and 0.6% (Padampur) pluckers received loans from banks and other government institutions. In the combined results, moneylenders (67.1%) and friends & relatives (28.4%) mostly catered to the financial needs of pluckers in regard to medical expenses. Those who took loans from medical stores and doctors are categorised as other sources (2.7% in combined results).

**Table 75**  
**Sources of Loan for Meeting Medical Expenses (% age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Moneylender	27.3	91.8	82.6	0	33.3	67.1
Friends & relatives	65.8	3.8	15.6	0	33.3	28.4
Banks & other govt. institutions	1.2	0	0.6	0	0	0.6
Any two above	2.5	0	1.2	0	0	1.2
All three above (1, 2 & 3)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others	3.1	4.4	0	0	33.3	2.7
Total	100	100	100	0	100	100

#### 8.4.7. Medical Facilities

In Angul, Jeypore and Nawarangpur, majority of pluckers (83.5%, 72.5% and 96.5% respectively) go to government-run dispensaries/ hospitals/ primary health centres for treatment. But in Patnagarh and Padampur, majority of pluckers (54.5% and 43.5% respectively) go to different other sources like village doctors and paramedical staff. It is evident that use of private clinics/ hospitals is either nil (Angul) or very rare (only 0.5% in Jeypore to 11% in Padampur). Quacks are present in all divisions, the highest being Jeypore (26%) and the lowest being Angul (0.5%).

The combined results indicate the following: government-run dispensary/ hospital/ PHC- 61.7%, other sources like village doctors/ paramedical staff- 22.9%, quacks- 10%, and private clinic/ hospital- 4.7%, in descending order. (Table 76) In other words, little more than 38% pluckers depend on different non-government sources for treatment. It is important to note that there are villagers as in Kendubhata, an interior village in Patnagarh, who despite

existence of government dispensary, visit private practitioners not because they are rich but because they trust private practitioners more than government doctors.

**Table 76**  
**Medical Facilities used by Pluckers (% age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Government-run dispensary/ hospital/ PHC	83.5	20.5	35.5	72.5	96.5	61.7
Private clinic/ hospital	0	10	11	0.5	2	4.7
Quacks of the village/ nearby area	0.5	14	8.5	26	1	10.0
Others	16	54.5	43.5	0.5	0	22.9
Non response	0	1	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 8.4.8. Distance of Government Dispensary/ PHC

In all the divisions, majority pluckers (35% in Nawarangpur to 68% in Padampur) said that the distance of government dispensary/ hospital/ PHC from their villages is 5-10 kilometres. While in Angul (34%), Patnagarh (24%) and Nawarangpur (29.5%) the second highest number of pluckers have government medical facilities located at a distance of less than five kilometres, the second highest number in Padampur (20.5%) and Jeypore (28.5%) said that the medical facilities are located at a distance of 11-15 kilometres.

The combined results in this regard are: 5-10 kms (51.9%), less than 5 kms (22.6%), 11-15 kms (19.9%), and 16 kms & above (5.6%). In other words, for 77.4% pluckers government medical facilities are located at a distance 5 kms or above. (Table 77) For some pluckers, the distance is even as high as 20 kms. Due to poor roads in rural areas and lack of transport facilities, covering a distance of even five kilometers sometimes takes more than an hour. Thus, majority of pluckers are at a disadvantageous position in so far as government medical facilities are concerned.

**Table 77**  
**Distance of Government Medical Facilities from Villages (% age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Less than 5 kms	34	24	6	19.5	29.5	22.6
5-10 kms	59.5	56	68	41	35	51.9
11-15 kms	5.5	20	20.5	28.5	25	19.9
16 kms and above	1	0	5.5	11	10.5	5.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

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## Chapter 9

### VIOLENCE

#### 9.1. VIOLENCE INVOLVING PLUCKERS

##### 9.1.1. Extent of Violence

Since status of children has been discussed separately in another chapter, this section deals with violence involving pluckers who are above 14 years of age.

Violence in varying degree involving pluckers could be noticed in all the divisions covered in the survey. While Padampur has the highest share (40%), in other divisions between 1% (Angul) to 9% (Patnagarh) pluckers faced violent situations. In all, 13.1% pluckers faced violence during plucking. (Table 78)

**Table 78**  
**Extent of Violence (% age)**

Presence of violence	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	1	9	40	7.5	8	13.1
No	99	91	60	92.5	92	86.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Out of those pluckers who faced violent situations, 92.4% were women. (Table) This is a reflection of the fact that women are primarily involved in plucking (about 85%). (Table 79)

**Table 79**  
**Break up of Pluckers facing Violence in terms of Gender (% age)**

Gender	Percentage
Male	7.6
Female	92.4
Total	100

##### 9.1.2. Nature of Violence

Violence was limited to only scolding for all the pluckers of Angul, Padampur and Nawarangpur. In Patnagarh and Jeypore, 72.2% and 93.3% pluckers respectively faced scolding. While beating took place in case of 16.7% pluckers of Patnagarh, 11.1% and 6.7% pluckers of Patnagarh and Jeypore respectively faced both beating & scolding. The combined survey results show that out of those who faced violent situations, 95.4% were scolded by other pluckers, followed by 2.3% beating and the remaining 2.3% both beating and scolding. (Table 80)

**Table 80**  
**Nature of Violence (% age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Beating	0	16.7	0	0	0	2.3
Scolding	100	72.2	100	93.3	100	95.4
Both 1 & 2	0	11.1	0	6.7	0	2.3
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	0	100

### 9.1.3. Reasons of Violence

One major reason of violence, as told by the majority in Patnagarh (72.2%), Padampur (98%), Jeypore (73.3%), and Nawarangpur (93.8%), is the area conflict with people of neighbouring *fadi*. It has been discussed earlier that the number of plucking days is gradually coming down. As a result, income of a plucker is also coming down. Since payment is made on the basis of number of leaves plucked, each plucker wants to pluck more. This is not possible due to improper bush cutting and reduction in command area because of reasons mentioned earlier. Under the circumstance, in order to collect more leaves, the pluckers of one *fadi* area go into another *fadi* area leading to clash between two groups. It has also come to the notice that as the government is not cutting tendu bushes properly, people at times do bush cutting on their own and do not allow others to collect leaves from that area.

In two divisions namely Angul and Padampur, 50% and 1% pluckers respectively faced refusal by others to pluck. Combined results show that 89.3% pluckers, out of those who encountered violence, faced area conflict that led to violence in the form of beating and/ or scolding. (Table 81)

**Table 81**  
**Reasons of Violence (% age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Area conflict with people of neighbouring <i>fadi</i>	0	72.2	98	73.3	93.8	89.3
Others refusal to pluck	50	0	1	0	0	1.5
Can't say	50	27.8	1	26.7	6.3	9.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

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## Chapter 10

### STATUS OF CHILDREN IN TENDU LEAF PLUCKING

#### 10.1. CHILDREN IN PLUCKING: MEANING AND EXTENT

Since status of children is discussed in the context of a specific type of work i.e. tendu leaf plucking, we have accepted the prescription of the Constitution of India in regard to age of children as given in Article 24 (Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc.), and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. The Article 24 of the Constitution says, “No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment.” The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 defines child as “a person who has not completed his fourteenth year of age”. Therefore, status of children in tendu leaf plucking means status of pluckers who are below 14 years.

As stated earlier, pluckers below 14 years could be found in all the divisions. While the highest number of child pluckers belonged to Jeypore (14%), the lowest number belonged to Padampur and Nawarangpur (4.5% each). A total of 8% pluckers belonged to below 14 years age. Establishing a correlation between gender and age, the study found that out of total child pluckers interviewed, 77.2% were female and 22.8% were male.

Apart from the child pluckers interviewed, there are child pluckers in families that have more than one member engaged in plucking. 5.1% respondents out of total sample size belong to this category. There are also families that employ more than one child in plucking. If the number of children interviewed and the number of families that have child pluckers are added, **total share of child pluckers will be more than 13%**. Therefore, it is impossible to accept the argument of the KL organisation that ‘the child pluckers are mere aberrations, not a normal situation’.<sup>15</sup>

#### 10.2. POSSESSION OF PLUCKING CARD

Plucking card, as explained earlier, acts like an identity card in which information regarding number of leaves plucked by a plucker, amount and date are mentioned. It has come to light that plucking cards have been issued to 20% pluckers in all the divisions taken together, who are below 14 years of age. This is contrary to the official claim that plucking cards are issued only to persons who are above 14 years age.

**Table 82**  
**Possession of Plucking Cards by Pluckers of Different Age Groups (%age)**

Possession of Plucking Cards	Below 14 years	Completed 14 years, but below 18 years	Completed 18 years, but below 60 years	60 years and above	Total
Yes	20	39	68.6	59.8	60.9
No	80	61	31.4	40.2	39.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

<sup>15</sup> In the Workshop organised in connection with the project, the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Kendu Leaves), who is head of the KL organisation, termed child pluckers as aberrations.  
*Research Project executed by Human Development Society, Delhi [www.hdsindia.org]*

### 10.3. DAILY INCOME OF CHILD PLUCKERS FROM PLUCKING

Income of children and other pluckers is calculated on the basis of average number of leaves plucked in a day. For 54.4% (the highest) of all child pluckers, per day income from plucking was 'Rs.21, but less than Rs.42'. About 90% child pluckers in all the divisions taken together earned either Rs.52 or less, which is less than the minimum wage for unskilled labour as fixed by the state government.

**Table 83**  
**Daily Income of Pluckers of Different Age Groups (%age)**

Income per Day	Below 14 years	Completed 14 years, but below 18 years	Completed 18 years, but below 60 years	60 years and above	Total
Less than Rs.21	19.0	3.4	1.8	5.3	4.1
Rs.21, but less than Rs.42	54.4	47.5	37.4	48.8	42.1
Rs.42 to Rs.52	16.5	17.0	31.9	35.3	30.6
Above Rs.52 to Rs.63	2.5	10.2	14.2	7.8	11.5
Above Rs.63	7.6	22.0	14.7	2.9	11.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

### 10.4. SPENDING PATTERN OF CHILD PLUCKERS

Before explaining the spending pattern of child pluckers, it is important to know the manner of payment. As stated earlier, payment is made in the name of the cardholding plucker. In case of families having more than one plucker, payment normally does not go to the actual plucker, as it is treated as a family income rather than an individual income. Therefore, income of children in such families also remains with parents/ elders. In such cases, the reply indicating 'children giving the entire income to parents' as stated in the paragraph below should be viewed notionally. But there are families in which income is shared among the members. In such families as well as in families having cardholding child pluckers, children keep a part of their income for their needs as stated in the paragraph below.

While no child in any division keeps the entire income with self and spends for self and family, only in Padampur 10% child pluckers keep the entire income with self and spend for own education and other needs. Between 10% (Padampur) to 50% (Jeypore) child pluckers keep part of income with self and give the rest to parents. Very high percentage of child pluckers in Angul (86.4%), Patnagarh & Padampur (80% each), Nawarangpur (77.8%) and 50% in Jeypore give the entire income to parents. In all, **70.9% child pluckers give their income from plucking to parents.** (Table 84)

**Table 84**  
**Ways of Spending Money earned from Plucking (%age)**

<b>Ways of spending</b>	<b>Angul</b>	<b>Patnagarh</b>	<b>Padampur</b>	<b>Jeypore</b>	<b>Nawarangpur</b>	<b>Total</b>
Keep the entire income with self and spend for self & family depending on need	0	0	0	0	0	0
Keep the entire income with self and spend for own education & other needs	0	0	10	0	0	1.3
Keep part of income with self & give the rest to parents	13.6	20	10	50	22.2	27.8
Give entire income to parents	86.4	80	80	50	77.8	70.9
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

It is clear from the findings on income and spending pattern that child pluckers certainly contribute to their family income. His/ her labour is a paid labour and, hence, is income-generating. Child work, which is referred to children's participation in some type of light work like helping parents in home and family care, is meant to acquire practical skills of life and is considered to be part of children's grooming process. The work of child pluckers cannot, therefore, be equated with child work.

## **10.5. WORKING CONDITIONS**

As discussed earlier, the criteria for understanding the working condition of child pluckers are same as that of pluckers of other age groups.

### **10.5.1. Time taken to Commute**

About 52% children walk for 1 to 2 hours a day to reach the tendu forests. The remaining children walk less than 1 hour to reach the forests. (Table 85) It may be mentioned that walking on the hilly terrain for about 4 hours (to and fro) in a day is quite an uphill task for a child of this tender age.

**Table 85**  
**Time Taken to Commute to Tendu Forests**

<b>Commuting time</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 1 hr	48.1
1hr to 2 hrs	51.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

### **10.5.2. Hours Spent for Plucking**

The highest number of children (77.2%) spent 5 to 7 hours in forests for plucking tendu leaves. while 16.5% children spent more than 7 hours in a day plucking leaves, those who spent more than 3 hours but less than 5 hours were the lowest (6.3%). In other words, 93.7% children spent 5 hours or more in plucking. (Table 86) It has been stated earlier that the work

of a plucker continues till evening, as she has to sort and bind the leaves into *kerries*. Therefore, total number of hours spent by children in a day becomes 10 to 12 hours.

**Table 86**  
**Hours Spent for Plucking**

Hours spent	Percent
More than 3 hrs, but less than 5 hrs	6.3
5 to 7 hrs	77.2
More than 7 hrs	16.5
Total	100

### 10.5.3. Nature of Work

The fact that children do not only pluck but also do other allied work associated with plucking could be proved from the finding that in all divisions very high percentage children (between 66.7% in Nawarangpur to 96.4% in Jeypore) were engaged in both plucking leaves and binding the plucked leaves into *kerries*. In combined results, 86.1% children fall in this category. Only about 9% children do only plucking and 5.1% do only binding. (Table 87)

**Table 87**  
**Nature of Work done by Child Pluckers (% age)**

Nature of work	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Only plucking tendu leaves	13.0	20	22.2	0	0	8.9
Only binding plucked tendu leaves	0	0	0	3.6	33.3	5.1
Both 1 & 2 above	87.0	80	77.8	96.4	66.7	86.1
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 10.5.4. Conditions of Work in the Opinion of Children

None of the children considered the conditions of work as very good. Except Jeypore and Nawarangpur where 32.14% and 77.28% child pluckers respectively considered the conditions of work as good, no one in other three divisions rated the conditions as such. In other words, all child pluckers in Angul, Patnagarh & Padampur, and 67.86% in Jeypore & 22.22% in Nawarangpur found the conditions of work as harsh. **In all, about 80% children considered the conditions of work as harsh.** (Table 88)

**Table 88**  
**Conditions of Work in the Opinion of Children (%age)**

Conditions of work	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Very good	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good	0	0	0	32.1	77.8	20.3
Harsh	100	100	100	67.9	22.2	79.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 10.5.5. Reasons for Judging the Condition of Work as Harsh

The children, who considered the working conditions as harsh, cited several reasons for saying it so. Except 8.7% child pluckers in Angul, none in any other division considered 'non-receipt of plucked tendu leaves on unreasonable ground' as a reason in treating the conditions of work as harsh. 'Less payment' is a reason for 5.3% (Jeypore) to 50% (Nawarangpur) child pluckers. Only in three divisions namely Padampur, Jeypore and Nawarangpur, 11.1%, 42.1% and 50% child pluckers respectively considered 'delay in payment' as a reason in this context. Except Nawarangpur, in other four divisions, 17.4% (Angul) to 55.6% (Padampur) child pluckers cited a combination of two reasons mentioned above. Out of those who cited a combination of two reasons, 83.3% said 'less payment & delay in payment' and the remaining said 'non-receipt of plucked leaves on unreasonable grounds & delay in payment'.

The combined results show that 28.6% considered a combination of two reasons for calling the working conditions harsh, followed by 15.9% for delay in payment, 9.5% for all the three reasons mentioned above, 7.9% for less payment and only 3.2 for non-receipt of plucked leaves on unreasonable grounds & delay in payment. (Table 89)

Besides the reasons listed above, there are several other reasons (30.2% in all) that the child pluckers mentioned in this context. These are fear of wild animals, fear of snakes, lack of water, thorny plants, hot days, mosquitoes and long working hours.

**Table 89**  
**Reasons for Judging the Condition of Work as Harsh (%age\*)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Non-receipt of plucked tendu leaves on unreasonable grounds	8.7	0	0	0	0	3.2
Less payment	8.7	0	11.1	5.3	50	7.9
Delay in payment	0	0	11.1	42.1	50	15.9
Any two above	17.4	40	55.6	26.3	0	28.6
All three above (1, 2 & 3)	0	40	22.2	0	0	9.5
Others	56.5	30	0	15.8	0	30.2
NR	13.0	0	0	10.5	0	7.9
Total	104.3	110	100	100	100	103.2

\* Due to multiple responses, total percentages in some cases have become more than 100%.

## 10.6. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS, RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

### 10.6.1. Educational Attainments

In Patnagarh and Nawarangpur, high percentage of child pluckers (70% and 66.7% respectively) said that they were studying yet working. In other three divisions, 17.9% (Jeypore) to 39% (Angul) children belonged to this category. Between 10% (Patnagarh) to 75% (Jeypore) child pluckers in the five divisions have never gone to schools. Share of child pluckers who are school dropouts is in the range of 7.1% (Jeypore) to 48% (Angul).

In all the five divisions taken together, 38% child pluckers each belonged to ‘studying yet working’ and ‘have never gone to school’ categories. 24% belonged to the category of dropouts. In other words, **a total of 62% child pluckers are not studying.** (Table 90)

**Table 90**  
**Educational Attainments of Child Pluckers (%age)**

Status of Education	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Studying, yet working	39	70	33.3	17.9	66.7	38
Have never gone to school	13	10	22.2	75	33.3	38
School dropout	48	20	45	7.1	0	24
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

School dropouts could be noticed in all the surveyed divisions in high number by researchers of HDS during field data collection. Interaction with dropout children, parents and villagers revealed several reasons responsible for this state of affair. The reasons are, *inter alia*, non-availability of schools, uninspiring parents due to illiteracy and ignorance, discrimination against girl children and seasonal migration. In cases of seasonal migration to Andhra Pradesh or Chhattisgarh, children also accompany their parents, thereby discontinuing their study. When they come back after a season, they have to attend the same class again which they had left. This creates a depressing and uninspiring situation and in the process the children often leave their studies. Impact of seasonal migration on children’s education could be noticed in all the surveyed divisions.

### 10.6.2. Managing Study with Plucking

Out of 38% child pluckers who are studying yet working, all in Padampur, 33.3% in Angul and 42.9% in Patnagarh said that work hampered their studies, especially during plucking time. The shares of those who could manage both study and plucking without difficulty are 57.1% in Patnagarh, 40% in Jeypore, 16.7% in Nawarangpur and nil in Angul & Padampur.

The combined results indicate the following: ‘study gets hampered due to work, especially during plucking’- 30% and ‘can manage to do both without difficulty’- 23.3%. In the opinion of 46.7% of those who are studying yet working, both plucking and studying could be managed as the former is done during vacation time. (Table 91)

**Table 91**  
**Ways of Managing Work and Study**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Study gets hampered due to work, especially during plucking	33.3	42.9	100	0	0	30.0
Can manage to do both without difficulty	0	57.1	0	40	16.7	23.3
Plucking during vacation	66.7	0	0	60	83.3	46.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 10.6.3. Reasons for Not studying/ Dropout

In case of children who are not studying or are dropouts, poverty is the main reason for this state of affair, as 36.7% of total sample said that education was not affordable due to low income of the family. In divisions, 4.4% (Jeypore) to 86% (Angul) children fall in this category. In Angul and Jeypore 7% and 56.5% children respectively cited ‘earning is more important than studying’ as the reason for not studying/ dropping out. The corresponding combined percentage is 28.6%. Only 16.7% children in Padampur and 4.3% in Jeypore (4.1% in total sample) said that the class up to which they studied was sufficient. While a total of 16.3% girl children dropped out of schools or could not study because of biasness towards education of girls (16.7% in Padampur to 66.7% in Nawarangpur in divisions), a total of 14.3% cited some family reasons or non-availability of schools in their localities as reasons for not studying or dropping out of school. (Table 92)

**Table 92**  
**Reasons for not studying or Dropping out of Schools**

Reasons	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Education is not affordable due to low income of family	86	33.3	50.0	4.4	33.3	36.7
Earning is more important than studying	7	0	0	56.5	0	28.6
The Class up to which you studied was sufficient	0	0	16.7	4.3	0	4.1
Education of girls is not important (If the respondent is girl and below 14 years)	0	33.3	16.7	17.4	66.7	16.3
Others	7	33.3	16.6	17.4	0	14.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 10.6.4. Eagerness for Study

If opportunities/ incentives are given, a total of 53% child pluckers, who are dropouts or have never gone to schools, would resume studies. Among the divisions, Patnagarh has the highest share (66.7%) and Padampur & Nawarangpur have the lowest shares (33.3% each) in this regard. (Table 93)

**Table 93**  
**Eagerness to Study**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	64.3	66.7	33.3	47.8	33.3	53
No	21.4	33.3	66.7	47.8	66.7	38.8
Non response	14.3	0	0	4.4	0	8.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 10.6.5. Recreation and Entertainment

While 20% (Patnagarh) to 82% (Jeypore) child pluckers had time for recreation & entertainment, 7% (Jeypore) to 77.8% (Padampur) child pluckers did not have time for such

activities. In all, 49% child pluckers could find time for recreation & entertainment and 38% could not find time for this purpose. 13% respondents could not reply. (Table 94)

**Table 94**  
**Scope for Recreation and Entertainment**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	26.1	20	22.2	82	66.7	49
No	65.2	50	77.8	7	11.1	38
Non response	8.7	30	0	11	22.2	13
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

## 10.7. NUTRITION AND HEALTH STATUS

### 10.7.1. Number of Meals taken in Day

Out of total children interviewed in all the divisions, 62% (the highest) always take two meals in a day and 31.6% take normally two meals but occasionally one in a day. While 1.4% takes one meal a day always, 2.5% take one but occasionally two meals in a day. In other words, 93.6% child pluckers take not more than two meals in a day. (Table 95) The meals, as observed by field researchers, are not nutritious. The situation indicates acuteness of poverty in their families.

**Table 95**  
**Number of Meals taken in Day (% age)**

Age Group	Always only once	Always two times	Twice, but occasionally once	Once, but occasionally twice	Others	Total
Below 14 years	1.4	62	31.6	2.5	2.5	100

### 10.7.2. Consumption of Intoxicants

Survey outcome in regard to consumption of intoxicants like alcohol and tobacco indicates the state of health of child pluckers. While 1.4% child pluckers consume alcohol, about 9% take tobacco. Although it is good to see 89.8% children not taking any intoxicant, consumption level at 10% is a concern that needs to be addressed. (Table 96)

**Table 96**  
**Consumption of Intoxicants**

Age Group	Alcohol	Tobacco	Both	None	Total
Below 14 years	1.4	8.8	0	89.8	100

### 10.7.3. Health Problem due to Plucking

Out of total child pluckers interviewed, about 33% faced health problem due to physical strain during plucking. (Table 97)

**Table 97**  
**Health Problem due to Plucking (% age)**

Age Group	Health Problem	
	Yes	No
Below 14 years	32.9	67.1

Out those who fell sick due to physical strain during plucking, 56.2% (the highest) suffered from fever. This is followed by 28.2% children who had body ache. While 12.5% suffered from tiredness, 3.1% had stomach problem. (Table 98)

**Table 98**  
**Nature of Health Problem (% age)**

Age Group	Tiredness	Fever	Body ache	Stomach	Body injuries	Others	Total
Below 14 years	12.5	56.2	28.2	3.1	0	0	100

#### 10.7.4. Physical Threats

All the child pluckers faced some type of threats in the forests. A total of 55.6% child pluckers faced threats of wild animals as well as snakes and other reptiles. While 6.5% faced only threats of wild animals like tuskers, about 38% faced threats of snakes and other reptiles. (Table 99) These threats indicate the danger involved in tendu leaf plucking. For children below 14 years, the dangers obviously become a cause of concern.

**Table 99**  
**Physical Threats faced by Child Pluckers**

Age Group	Threat of wild animals like tuskers	Threat of snakes and other reptiles	Both	Other	Total
Below 14 years	6.5	37.9	55.6	0	100

### 10.8. VIOLENCE

#### 10.8.1. Extent of Violence

In two divisions namely Angul and Patnagarh, 43.5% and 20% child pluckers respectively faced violent situations from their family members for not going for tendu leaf plucking. (Table 100) This is disturbing in the sense that children face anger of not some fellow pluckers, but of their family members.

**Table 100**  
**Violence against Child Pluckers Committed by Family Members**

Presence of Violence	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	43.5	20	0	0	0	15.2
No	56.5	80	100	100	100	84.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 10.8.2. Nature of Violence

While the nature of violence is limited to only scolding (100%) in Patnagarh, it is both scolding and beating in case of 40% child pluckers and only scolding in case of 60% child pluckers in Angul. (Table 101)

**Table 101**  
**Nature of violence faced by Child Pluckers from Family Members**

<b>Nature of violence</b>	<b>Angul</b>	<b>Patnagarh</b>	<b>Padampur</b>	<b>Jeypore</b>	<b>Nawarangpur</b>	<b>Total</b>
Beating	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scolding	60	100	0	0	0	66.7
Both 1 & 2	40	0	0	0	0	33.3
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	0	0	0	100

### 10.8.3. Factors leading to Employment of Children in Plucking

Employment of children in plucking is an outcome of economic backwardness of families, and parents' lack of realisation about the physical strain that the children receive due to plucking. A poor plucker wants to earn some more money by employing her children in plucking. It is this economic consideration, rather compulsion, which also leads to beating/scolding of children for not going to forests.

The KL organisation, instead of dissuading the parents against sending their children for plucking, has even issued plucking cards to some children (20% of total child pluckers interviewed) of below 14 years. Photographs of some child pluckers have been given in the photo gallery in Annexure I.

The issue of 'children in plucking' has not caught the attention of forest department so far, as could be evident during interaction with the officials during data collection as well as in the one-day Workshop. Although the officials agree that children should not pluck, nothing has been done so far to stop them from going for plucking. The government has not issued any message to the pluckers through its seasonal staff like Munshi in this regard, nor has it brought out any pamphlet for the purpose. In other words, level of awareness on the issue is nil or low amongst the pluckers as well as the government.

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## Chapter 11

### BONDAGE IN TENDU LEAF PLUCKING

#### 11.1. MEANING OF BONDAGE

As per the International Labour Organisation Report on Stopping Forced Labour (2001), the term 'bonded labour' refers to a worker who renders services under conditions of bondage arising out of economic considerations, specifically indebtedness through a loan or an advance. At the root of this system, therefore, lies certain amount of debt that the debtor takes from the creditor on interest and in the process gets tied to the creditor for a specified or unspecified period until the loan or advance is repaid. He not only pledges his services but also the services of his children and other family members as a condition for repayment of the loan. The system is highly exploitative as the process of repayment often continues for generations.

The problem of bonded labour is a creation of inequalities in our society. While previously there were feudal landlords or *zamindars* who acted as creditors, now there are moneylenders and owners of factories or business. No matter who the creditor is, it is the socially, economically and culturally weaker sections of the society who are at the receiving end. The problem is closely linked to the problems of unemployment/ underemployment, surplus labour force, inequitable distribution of land and other productive assets, low wages, obscurantist social and cultural traditions, and other forms of discrimination that put the weaker sections in a disadvantageous position.

The issue of bonded labour first came to the national limelight with its inclusion in the old 20-point programme of the Government of India in 1975. It was the fifth point of the programme which stated that bonded labour, wherever it exists would be declared illegal. In pursuance of this, the government promulgated the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Ordinance, which was later replaced by the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. Although the 1976 Act is the first comprehensive legislation to abolish bonded labour system, there are several constitutional and legal provisions denouncing the dehumanising system. Articles 23 (prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour), 42 (provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief) and 43 (living wage etc for workers) of Constitution of India; Section 374 of Indian Penal Code (unlawful compulsory labour); and Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933 are particularly noteworthy.

There are also many international declarations and conventions which denounce different forms of bondage, like the Slavery Convention, 1926; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; International Labour Organisation Conventions no. 29 (forced or compulsory labour) of 1930 & no. 105 (abolition of forced labour) of 1957 which the Government of India has ratified; UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery (1956); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966; and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993.

## 11.2. SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENTS ON BONDAGE/ FORCED LABOUR

The meaning and implications of bondage, however, are not limited to the creditor-debtor relationship. The system has acquired new meaning due to the interpretations of the Supreme Court India from time to time.

In the landmark *People's Union for Democratic Rights and Others vs. Union of India and Others*,<sup>16</sup> popularly known as the Asiad Workers Case, the Supreme Court of India probed, *inter alia*, the question- "whether there is any breach of Article 23 when a person provides labour or service to the State or to any other person and is paid less than the minimum wage for it?" The court observed, "It is obvious that ordinarily no one would willingly supply labour or service to another for less than the minimum wage, when he knows that under the law he is entitled to get minimum wage for the labour or service provided by him. It may therefore be legitimately presumed that when a person provides labour or service to another against receipt of remuneration which is less than the minimum wage, he is acting under the force of some compulsion which drives him to work though he is paid less than what he is entitled under law to receive" The court remarked that forced labour as prohibited under Article 23 might arise in several ways. "It may be physical force which may compel a person to provide labour or service to another or it may be exerted through a legal provision such as a provision for imprisonment or fine in case the employee fails to provide labour or service or it may even be compulsion arising from hunger and poverty, want and destitution. Any factor which deprives a person of a choice of alternatives and compels him to adopt one particular course of action may properly be regarded as 'force' and if labour or service is compelled as a result of such 'force' it would be 'forced labour'."

The court further observed in the Asiad Workers case, "There is no reason why the word 'forced' should be read in a narrow and restricted manner so as to be confined only to physical or legal 'force' particularly when the national charter, its fundamental document has promised to build a new socialist republic where there will be socio-economic justice for all and everyone shall have the right to work, to education and to adequate means of livelihood. ... The word 'force' must therefore be construed to include not only physical or legal force but also force arising from the compulsion of economic circumstances which leaves no choice of alternative to a person in want and compels him to provide labour or service even though the remuneration is less than the minimum wage. ... Where a person provides labour or service to another for remuneration which is less than the minimum wage, the labour or service provided by him clearly falls within the scope and ambit of the words 'forced labour' under Article 23."

In the *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India and Others*,<sup>17</sup> the Supreme Court of India gave a new interpretation to the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. The Court found the definition of bonded labour in the Act limited only to a situation where a debtor is forced to provide labour to a creditor. It rejected this legalistic definition and adopted a functional and practical approach for effective implementation of the Act. The Court observed: "Whenever it is shown that a labourer is made to provide forced labour, the court

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<sup>16</sup> Writ Petition No. 8143 of 1981, D/ 18-9-1982, [(1982) 3 SCC 235; AIR 1982 SC 1473]; and *Liberation of Bondage* (Jalandhar: Volunteers for Social Justice, 2003), pp.100-123

<sup>17</sup> Writ Petition No. 2135 of 1982, D/ 16.12.1983

would raise a presumption that he is required to do so in consideration of an advance or other economic considerations received by him and he is therefore a bonded labour.”

In the *Neerja Choudhary v State of Madhya Pradesh*<sup>18</sup> 1984 3 SCC 243, the Supreme Court concluded that denial of minimum wage by itself is enough evidence of the existence of forced labour and that forced labour is merely a variant of bonded labour.

The judgement of the Supreme Court in *Mukesh Advani v. State of Madhya Pradesh*<sup>19</sup> is very relevant for the present research. This case was related to the horrid plight of bonded labourers working in stone quarries of Raisen in Madhya Pradesh. The labourers whose rights the Supreme Court upheld were paid on piece rate basis, like the tendu leaf pluckers. The piece rate ranged from Rs.10 to Rs.20 for a standard 'Khanti'. The average earning of a pair of workers (a male and a female) was in the range of Rs.5 to Rs.10 per day out of which unauthorised deductions were made leaving very little for the workman. However, the labour department was of the view that unofficially a workman could earn Rs.650 per fortnight. The court observed, “The state in discharge of its obligation under Articles 38, 41, 42 & 43 must extend the umbrella of protection to these poor and needy and unprotected workmen who are unable to negotiate on terms of equality and who may accept any terms to stave off hunger and destitution.”

Referring extensively to its observations in the *Asiad Workers' case*, the Supreme Court in *Sanjit Banker Roy v. State of Rajasthan*<sup>20</sup> observed, “The State cannot be permitted to take advantage of the helpless condition of the affected persons and exact labour or service from them on payment of less than the minimum wage.”

In view of the above interpretations of the Supreme Court of India, it can be said that bondage is not simply a relationship between a creditor and a debtor, it is also a condition of work in which the person, rendering services to another person or organisation or government, does so under compulsions of economic circumstances and for a remuneration less than the minimum wage. Even payment on the basis of piece-rate cannot be a reason for denying the applicability of minimum wage. It is in light of this functional and practical interpretation that the issue of bondage has been analysed in regard to tendu leaf pluckers.

### 11.3. UNDERSTANDING BONDAGE IN TENDU LEAF PLUCKING

Keeping in view the functional and practical meaning of bondage or forced labour, the following aspects of tendu leaf trade in the State of Orissa need to be analysed in order to understand the element of bondage in the trade.

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<sup>18</sup> Writ Petition (Crl.) No. 1263 of 1982, D/8.5.1984

<sup>19</sup> Writ Petition No. 1232 of 1982, D/2.5.1985

<sup>20</sup> Writ Petition No. 6816 of 1981; *Liberation of Bondage* (Jalandhar: Volunteers for Social Justice, 2003), pp.225-235; and Y. R. Hargopal Reddy, *Bonded Labour System in India: Causes, Practice and the Law* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1995), p.77

### 11.3.1. The Employer of Tendu Leaf Pluckers

It has been noted earlier that the Government of Orissa is the employer of the pluckers. They receive their payments from the government through the KL organisation, which is under the Department of Forest and Environment. No private party or person is involved in the process.

### 11.3.2. Are the Pluckers getting Minimum Wage?

It has also been discussed earlier that out of total sample **about 77% pluckers earn less than the minimum daily wage** (Rs.52.50) of the State government for unskilled workers. The average daily income of the five divisions taken together is only Rs.42.68. Division-wise analysis also shows that average daily earning in four out of five divisions is below minimum daily wage. Nawarangpur is the only exception in which average daily income (Rs.57.65) is more than minimum daily wage.

### 11.3.3. Should Minimum Daily Wage be applicable for Pluckers?

The government thinks it otherwise. The amount paid to the pluckers is the cost of leaves. Since the government is not enforcing any fixed number of working hours for pluckers or any supervision on their work as is done in case of other unskilled workers, minimum daily wage for unskilled work fixed by the Government of Orissa, in the opinion of the government, should not be applicable for pluckers. The government argues that due to increasing number of pluckers, it is difficult to ensure that each one of them collects sufficient number of leaves to enable her to earn minimum daily wage. Therefore, earning of minimum daily wage is dependent, in the government's view, on the pluckers.

The above arguments are absurd to say the least. Whether the government enforces fixed working hours for pluckers or not, a plucker undoubtedly spends a total of 10 to 12 hours daily for plucking, sorting the leaves, making *kerries* and depositing *kerries* in *fadi*. (See Chapter on Working Conditions) The value of labour put in by her cannot be ignored just because the government is not enforcing working hours.

As regards supervision of work, even if work of each plucker is not supervised individually, some degree of supervision by seasonal staff like Checker and Head Checker is certainly there in order to ensure quality production. In this context, it is important to note the duties of Checker and Head Checker, the two seasonal staff, in regard to production and supervision as mentioned in the Orissa Kendu Leaf Manual 1973. The Checker "shall go round the Kendu Leaf growing areas under his jurisdiction to ascertain the maturity of leaves for plucking the leaves regularly during the season. He shall draw up programme for plucking of leaves of the area assigned to him keeping in view suitability of leaves and also take up plucking of leaves in the concerned areas." The Head Checker shall be responsible for "checking and ensuring the production of Kendu Leaves of proper quality." The Munshi, another seasonal staff of the KL organisation, also visit the forests during plucking. It has also come to the light during discussions with officials that senior officials like Range officers and DFOs also visit forests occasionally. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that the KL organisation does not at all supervise the work of pluckers.

By following the piece-rate system of payment, the government is complacent with the possibility that a plucker can earn even more than the minimum daily wage if she plucks more leaves. The ground reality is that very high percentage of pluckers earns less than the minimum daily wage due to several reasons as discussed under the heading below. Moreover, the judgement of the Supreme Court in *Mukesh Advani v. State of Madhya Pradesh*, as stated earlier, categorically says that piece rate system cannot be a basis for non-applicability of minimum daily wage. Since the circumstances preclude earning the minimum daily wage and the grounds for government's refusal to apply minimum daily wage are illogical, the government should apply the minimum daily wage for pluckers and ensure that each one of them earns that amount.

#### **11.3.4. Can the Pluckers earn Minimum Wage Daily?**

The statutory Kendu Leaves Advisory Committee fixes the purchase price of tendu leaves after taking into consideration the efficiency of an average plucker, minimum wage rate and viability of the trade. The government thinks that a plucker can earn even more than the minimum wage if she exercises 'due diligence and efficiency'.<sup>21</sup> This thinking is based on the argument that a plucker can usually pluck 2.5 to 3 *chattas* in a day, thus can earn Rs.52 to Rs.63 in a day.

The government's thinking is fallacious on many grounds. The capacity of a plucker to pluck 2.5 to 3 *chattas* in a day, which is the only way for her to earn minimum daily wage at government rate, is dependent on age of the plucker, availability of pluckable leaves, the conditions of weather of the working day(s) and even the conditions in forests. Plucking a maximum of 3 *chattas* is possible only in case of adult pluckers and in situations like availability of leaves, not too hot day and good forest conditions. This is an ideal situation which is possible only in case of few pluckers. Reality is different from the ideal. It has already been mentioned that the plucking capacity of pluckers who are old (above 60 years) and children (below 14 years) is less. There are families that have only child and only old pluckers and for such families, plucking the requisite number of leaves for earning minimum wage is extremely remote. Also, in case of families having more than one plucker (69.5%), the leaves plucked by all family members are taken together to the *phadi* and entry is made in one person's name, who is the card holder. In this case, the number of leaves, shown as one person's collection, may be more than 3 *chattas* but collection of these leaves involve more than one person's labour.

Availability of pluckable leaves is a very important factor that affects the output of a plucker. Normally at the beginning of plucking season, leaves are available in good number. But as the plucking proceeds, the number also comes down. As a result, even if a plucker has capacity to pluck 3 *chattas* in a day, she does not find the pluckable leaves. Due to this, there are many *fadi* areas in which total number of plucking days is even less than a week. Non-availability of pluckable leaves is to a great extent due to improper bush cutting and reduction in command area. This issue has already been discussed in the chapter on 'Working Conditions.'

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<sup>21</sup> This argument is based on interaction with government officials and *Report of the Taskforce for Preparing A Draft Comprehensive Strategy for Restructuring Kendu Leaf Trade in Orissa*, Government of Orissa, Forest and Environment Department, Office Order No. KL (B) 11/2000. 8642/F&E dated 5<sup>th</sup> June 2000, p.25  
*Research Project executed by Human Development Society, Delhi [www.hdsindia.org]*

Interestingly, pluckers face equally distressing problem in areas where leaves are available in good number. The government's fixation of production target for each division, which is fixed on the basis of average production of last three years, is at the root of this problem. Once the target is met, collection of leaves stops, thereby restricting the income of pluckers. This issue was also discussed in the one-day Workshop. The government officials said that more production would lead to non-disposal of leaves, as they are already facing the problem of backlog in sale. This is, however, an escapist argument in view of the fact that private *beedi* manufacturers and traders continue to operate illegally. The issue has also been discussed in the Chapter on 'Trends in Tendu Leaf Trade'. It is important to note here that whether it is situation of availability or non-availability of leaves, the sufferers are the pluckers.

Therefore, drawing the conclusion, that a plucker can earn minimum wage by plucking 2.5 to 3 chattas leaves in a day, without considering the factors that affect her output is not correct. Had the situation been so ideal as perceived by the government, such huge percentage of pluckers would not have been in the below minimum wage category.

### **11.3.5. Is there any element of Force?**

The element of force has to be analysed in the context of plucker's socio-economic conditions, more particularly their critical dependence on plucking. The issue of pluckers' dependence on plucking has already been analysed earlier in the context of irregular payment. Since there are families whose incomes from plucking are even more than 50% of the yearly family income, and the level of dependence on plucking increases with the increase in the level of poverty, plucking for them is not simply a seasonal work. It is a major source of income. It is this critical dependence of thousands of poor pluckers on plucking, which needs to be kept in mind for an understanding of the element of force.

It is true that the cost of leaves has increased over the years. But the enabling conditions for the pluckers to earn more have also deteriorated as is seen in discussions in this as well as in other sections of the report. Mere increase in cost of leaves, without addressing several other problems, is a meaningless exercise. But the pluckers, due to their critical dependence on plucking, do not have any choice but to pluck no matter what the conditions of work are.

Although the government claims it otherwise, its primary concern in tendu leaf trade is profit. This could be best evident from the fact that it invests nothing and gets a huge return from the trade (See relevant discussion in the chapter on Trends in Tendu Leaf Trade). And when it comes to sharing the return, the track record of the Government is pathetically distressing, as will be seen in discussions in the chapter on "Issues Concerning the Pluckers"

Although pluckers face situations like harsh conditions of work, irregular payment, insufficient payment and many other conditions that adversely affect their output, they continue to pluck. For a plucker who is dependent on different seasonal work and whose total duration of employment during a year does not even exceed a month in many cases, plucking for even a week makes great sense. It is this vulnerability that weakens the pluckers' ability to bargain. Even the OKPKS has not been able to address the issues concerning pluckers favourably.

The above discussion makes it clear that the element of force is certainly there. It is, however, not physical or legal force, but a force arising out of compulsion of economic circumstances. The compulsion of economic circumstances is a result of wrong, anti-people and pro-profit policies and measures of the government. It is certainly not the making of pluckers. They are the victims, whose control over the situation is nil. However, the compulsion of economic circumstances is a covert compulsion.

#### **11.4. THE ELEMENT OF BONDAGE**

Considering the element of covert force that the pluckers are being subjected to and their inability to earn minimum daily wage of an unskilled worker, it can be conclusively said that the tendu leaf pluckers are working under conditions of bondage in light of the functional and practical meaning of bondage that the Supreme Court of India has upheld. The Government of Orissa cannot refuse to pay minimum daily wage to the pluckers on the ground that it makes payment on the basis of number of leaves. Mere absence of physical or legal force does not also prove that bondage is non-existent in tendu leaf trade. It is certainly present in light of the interpretations of the Supreme Court and the compulsion of economic circumstances that the pluckers face not only during summer months when plucking is done but also during the entire year. Bondage in the form of debtor-creditor relationship, however, does not exist in the tendu leaf trade. The bondage of pluckers has to be understood in the context of their poverty, ignorance and perpetual backwardness.

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## Chapter 12

### WELFARE OF TENDU LEAF PLUCKERS

#### 12.1. HOUSING

##### 12.1.1. Types of Houses

The survey found that in four divisions namely Angul (89%), Patnagarh (80.5%), Padampur (84.5%) and Jeypore (59%), majority pluckers have thatched houses. Nawarangpur is the only division that has 38% thatched houses. The combined results show that 70.2% pluckers have thatched houses. (Table 102) Those who do not have thatched houses (29.8% in all) have either houses with tile (*khapar*) roofs or no proper houses of their own. In Patnagarh, many houseless pluckers could be found to have hired verandas, locally known as '*parchi*'. Staying in verandas is like staying in open space.

**Table 102**  
**Possession of Thatched Houses (% age)**

Thatched house	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	89	80.5	84.5	59	38	70.2
No	11	19.5	15.5	41	62	29.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

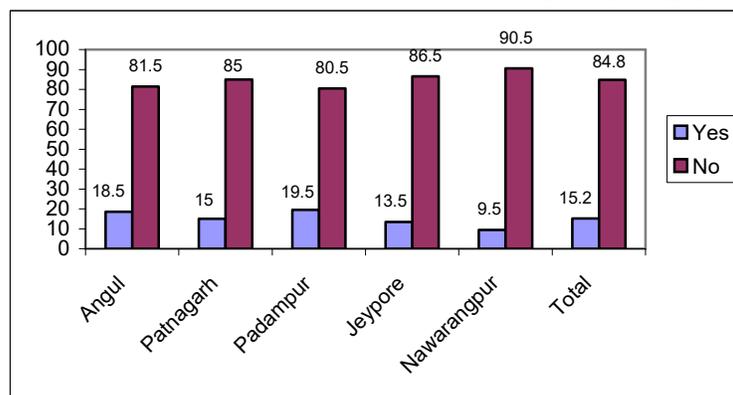
The conditions of thatched houses, as thoroughly observed by researchers of HDS during field data collection, give clear indication of the level of poverty that is prevalent among the pluckers. These are mud houses with thatched roofs. The thatching material used are straw, palm leaves and such other locally available material. In Jeypore, some people use a type of long grass collected from forests for thatching, which is longer and stronger than straw. During rainy season, rainwater comes into the house making life miserable. Even if roofs are repaired by some pluckers every year, leakage during rainy days is not uncommon.

The pluckers live mainly in one-room houses, but rarely two rooms, housing as high as 10 or more family members. In such a situation, there cannot be separate space for parents and grown up children. Space is so acute for many poor pluckers that they often house their cattle almost in the space where they live. For many, cattle sheds are like extension of main dwelling space. The houses of pluckers lack proper system for ventilation and sanitary conditions are also very poor. Thus, housing is a major problem from majority of pluckers.

##### 12.1.2. Indira Awas Yojana

Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) has benefited very few pluckers' families. Only 9.5% (Nawarangpur) to 19.5% (Padampur) pluckers (15.2% in all) have been allotted houses under the scheme, leaving a vast majority whose housing conditions are pathetic. (Table) Researchers of HDS came across landless pluckers who have been denied the benefit under IAY, as they do not possess *patta* (record showing ownership) of the land where they reside. There have also been complaints of favouritism and malpractices in allotment.

**Chart 6**  
**Beneficiaries under the Indira Awas Yojana (% age)**

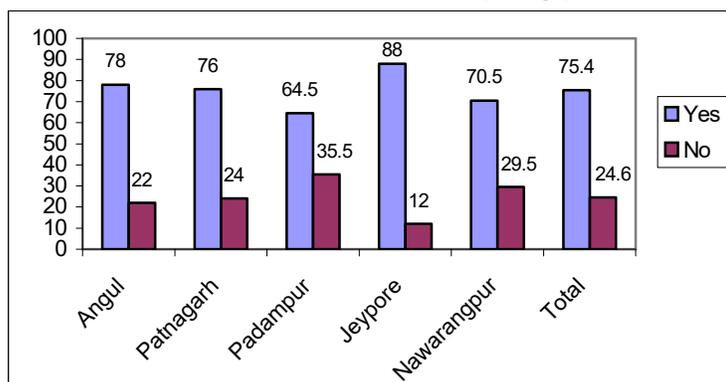


## 12.2. POSSESSION OF BPL CARD AND PDS

### 12.2.1. Possession of BPL Card

Families living below poverty line (BPL) are provided a card called BPL card to enable them to avail various government facilities, including provisions under public distribution system, meant for welfare of the poor. Among the divisions, the highest number of BPL cardholders was interviewed in Jeypore (88%), followed by Angul (78%), Patnagarh (76%), Nawarangpur (70.5%) and Padampur (64.5%). In all, 75.4% pluckers' families have BPL cards. (Chart 7)

**Chart 7**  
**Possession of BPL Card (% age)**



It has already been mentioned earlier that out of total sample, 89.1% families are below poverty line. Since the number of BPL card holding families is 75.4%, there are 13.7% families, even if living below poverty line, do not possess the BPL card.

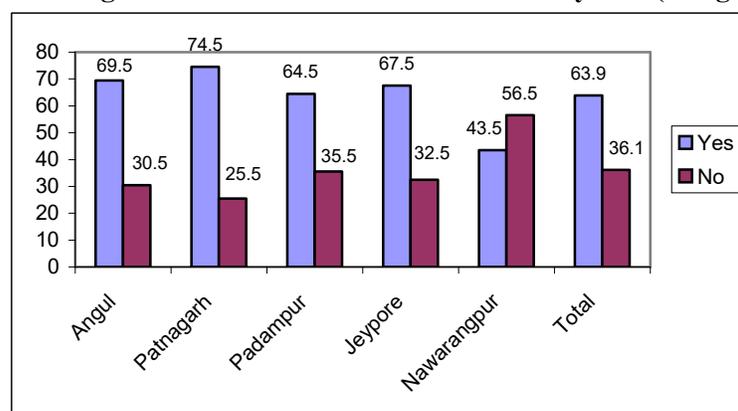
### 12.2.2. Public Distribution System

Except Padampur where all those who possess BPL card also buy provisions like sugar, kerosene oil, rice etc. under PDS (64.5%); in all other divisions, there are families who do not buy provisions even if they have BPL card. As regards combined result, although 75.4%

families possess BPL card, only 63.9% families buy provisions under the PDS. (Chart 8) This shows certain degree of deprivation.

Poverty is an important reason for the inability of BPL cardholder families to buy provisions. There are also cases of malpractices on the part of the dealer leading to deprivation of the benefits of the system. Often people get only kerosene, as is the case in some villages in Angul. No other items like sugar and rice are available. At times provisions are over-priced as in Khirapali village in Padampur. The villagers of Khirapali complained that the person in charge of PDS charges Rs.4 more for every 16 kg rice which is priced at Rs.76 by the government. The situation in regard to PDS clearly shows that the pluckers, due to poverty and ignorance, have not been able to fully avail the benefits. Even if they know the malpractices as in Khirapali, their social position puts them in a helpless situation.

**Chart 8**  
**Availing Benefits under Public Distribution System (% age)**



## 12.3. BENEFITS UNDER OTHER GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES/ SCHEMES

### 12.3.1. Extent of Benefits

In three divisions namely Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur, 16.5%, 31.5% and 31% pluckers (or members of their families) respectively are beneficiaries of different government schemes, other than the ones mentioned above. Jeypore and Nawarangpur have no pluckers enjoying such benefits. In other words, except the programmes mentioned in earlier sections, no other government programmes have benefited the pluckers significantly.

**Table 103**  
**Beneficiaries of Other Government Schemes (% age)**

Benefits from Govt.	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	16.5	31.5	31	0	0	15.8
No	83.5	68.5	69	100	100	84.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### 12.3.2. Names of Government Programmes/ Scheme

Among different programmes under which the pluckers received benefits, old age pension has the highest takers in all the three divisions: Angul- 87.9%, Patnagarh- 85.7% and Padampur- 96.77%. While no one in Angul received physically handicap pension, the scheme benefited 27% and 3.23% pluckers in Patnagarh and Padampur respectively. Student stipend/ education aid benefited 12.1%, 1.6% and 1.61% pluckers' families having school-going children in Angul, Patnagarh and Padampur respectively. While 3% pluckers of Angul received Annapurna rice, 1.6% pluckers each benefited from Jeevandhara, Rehabilitation pension and land ceiling in Patnagarh. (Table 104)

**Table 104**  
**Government Schemes and their Beneficiaries (% age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Old age pension	87.9	85.7	96.7	0	0	90.5
Physically handicap pension	0	27.0	3.2	0	0	8.9
Student stipend/ edn. aid	12.1	1.6	1.6	0	0	3.8
Arnapurna rice	3.0	0	0	0	0	0.6
Jeevandhara	0	1.6	0	0	0	0.6
Rehabilitation pension	0	1.6	0	0	0	0.6
Land ceiling	0	1.6	0	0	0	0.6
Total	103.0	119.0	101.5	0	0	105.7

\* Due to multiple responses, the percentages have become more than 100%.

## 12.4. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME FOR WELFARE OF PLUCKERS

### 12.4.1. Government's Welfare Programmes

The Government of Orissa, according to the information provided by the KL organisation, has only one welfare programme at present **directly** benefiting the pluckers. Under this, in case of death of a plucker due to sunstroke, lightning, snake bite, wild animal attack etc. during plucking, her/ his family is entitled to get Rs.10,000 as compensation. The benefit will be given only if the plucker is a card holding plucker. The scheme was introduced in January 2002. The KL organisation could not provide data on the amount of compensation given so far as the same have not been compiled due to the nascent nature of the scheme. Expenditure under the scheme is adjusted from the Miscellaneous Contingent Head of the fixed cost.

There is another welfare measure, which does not benefit the pluckers' families directly. According to clause 11 of the Orissa Kendu Leaves (Control of Trade) Act, 1961, not less than 50% of the net profit from tendu leaf trade should be paid to the *panchayati raj* institutions like *gram panchayats* and *panchayat samitis* for undertaking development work in their respective areas of jurisdiction. After the formation of *zilla parishads*, they are also given a share of this grant, although the 1961 Act does not provide for it. At present, the shares of *gram panchayat*, *panchayat samiti* and *zilla parishad* are in the ratio of 72:10:8. 10% of the grant is treated as 'Hard Cash Scale Grant', which is kept under the discretion of the Panchayati Raj Minister for extending financial support to different organisations for socio-economic development programmes. The status of KL Grant, as this scheme is called in Orissa, has been discussed critically in chapter on Issues Concerning Pluckers.

After persistent demand of OKPKS, the government has agreed to supply *chappals* to the pluckers. This is in the process now. Like death compensation, *chappals* will be given only to the card holding pluckers.

#### 12.4.2. Awareness about any Government Welfare Programmes for Pluckers

Except 8.5% pluckers in Angul, 1% pluckers in Patnagarh and 3.5% in Padampur, no one in any of the divisions is aware of any government programme meant for the welfare of tendu leaf pluckers. (Table 105) This shows very high level of ignorance of pluckers about government's welfare scheme.

**Table 105**  
**Awareness about Government's Welfare Programme for Pluckers (% age)**

Awareness	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	8.5	1	3.5	0	0	2.6
No	91.5	99	96.5	100	100	97.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### 12.4.3. Welfare Programme that the Pluckers' are aware of

Pluckers' ignorance could be proved again as few, out of those aware pluckers, could name the welfare programme that they are aware of. Half of the pluckers in Patnagarh and 47.1% & 42.9% pluckers in Angul and Padampur respectively could say that government gives compensation in case of injury during plucking due to wild life etc. (Table 106) They could not, however, say the details.

**Table 106**  
**Welfare Programme that the Pluckers are Aware of (% age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Welfare scheme for injury during plucking due to wild life etc.	47.1	50	42.9	0	0	46.2
Can't say	52.9	50	57.1	0	0	53.8
Total	100	100	100	0	0	100

#### 12.4.4. Beneficiaries of the Programme

Out of those pluckers who are aware of the welfare programme and/or those who could name them, only 5.9% in Angul are the beneficiaries of the scheme. In Patnagarh, all those pluckers are beneficiaries of the scheme also. But in Padampur, no one has benefited from the welfare scheme. (Table 107)

**Table 107**  
**Beneficiaries of the Government's Welfare Programme for Pluckers (% age)**

Beneficiary of the Scheme	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	5.9	100	0	0	0	11.5
No	94.1	0	100	0	0	88.5
Total	100	100	100	0	0	100

## 12.5. COMPARISON OF WELFARE MEASURES OF ORISSA WITH OTHER STATES

The Government of Orissa's welfare measures for tendu leaf pluckers can be better understood by making a comparison with the welfare measures of Governments of three other important tendu leaf producing States namely Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. Comparison of the States will also help us in judging the level of importance attached by the States to profit and welfare- the two key components of State control of the trade.

**Table 108**  
**Welfare Measures for Pluckers in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh**

Welfare measure	Orissa	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Andhra Pradesh
Group Insurance	No	Yes  Launched in 1991, the scheme is the biggest of its kind in Asia. All pluckers between 18 and 60 years are insured free of cost. The Scheme is run by Life Insurance Corporation of India. The benefits under the Scheme are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Death of Plucker: Nominee is paid Rs.3500</li> <li>❖ Disability due to accident: Plucker is paid Rs.12,500</li> <li>❖ Death or permanent disability caused due to accident: Rs.25,000</li> </ul> Till now, 134002 claims have been settled and an amount of Rs.48.95 Crores paid to the nominees of the deceased pluckers.	Yes  Details could not be obtained despite repeated attempts.	Yes  Pluckers are insured under Group Janatha Personal Accident Policy. The benefits under the policy are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ In case of death: Rs.25,000</li> <li>❖ Permanent total disablement: Rs.25,000</li> <li>❖ Permanent partial disablement: - Loss of two hands/ feet/ eyes: Rs.25,000 - Loss of one hand/ foot/ eye: Rs.12,500</li> </ul> For this coverage with a period of three months for Rs.25,000, a premium of about Rs.4 lakh will be paid to the insurance company every year.
Incentive wage	No	Yes  Due to huge profit in 1989, the government gave Rs.150 crores as incentive wage to pluckers. The amount was paid in four instalments through accounts of pluckers opened in local branches of Cooperative Banks or credit societies. This payment was discontinued in 1990 and was again started in 1995. From 1995 to 1997 seasons, nearly	Yes  All registered collectors of tendu <i>patta</i> (leaves) are eligible to get bonus.  Details could not be obtained despite repeated attempts.	No

		20% of net income was paid as incentive wage.  Following 73 <sup>rd</sup> amendment of the Constitution, the State Government decided to pass on all net income from the trade of N.W.F.P. to the Primary Cooperative Societies and the Societies, in turn, are to distribute 50% of this net income to the Tendu leaf pluckers as incentive wage from 1998 season.		
Other Benefits	<p>1. Rs.10000 as compensation in case of death during plucking. [See critical analysis of this Scheme in Chapter titled Issues Concerning the Pluckers.]</p> <p>2. There is Provision for sharing 50% of net profit with the panchayati raj institutions. [See critical analysis of this Scheme in Chapter titled Issues Concerning the Pluckers.]</p> <p>3. Supply of <i>chappals</i> (in process)</p>	No	No	From 1999, 50% of net revenue from tendu leaves collected from VSS/ EDC (Vana Samrakshana Samithies/ Eco Development Committees) areas are given to VSS/ EDCs. So far the VSS/ EDCs have benefited Rs.16.228 crore.

Among the four States, Madhya Pradesh is at the top and Orissa is at the bottom in so far as welfare of pluckers is concerned. The uniqueness of Madhya Pradesh is that all net income from the trade is transferred to the primary cooperative societies of pluckers. Whereas in Orissa, pluckers are not even getting the benefit of insurance which their counterparts in other three States are getting. Although Andhra Pradesh is not giving incentive wage, its transfer of 50% net revenue to VSS/ EDCs in which pluckers have representation is a big relief to the pluckers. The benefits that Orissa is giving to its pluckers are not only insignificant but also full of flaws as discussed in Chapter titled ‘Issues Concerning the Pluckers’.

## 12.6. PLUCKERS’ UNION

### 12.6.1. Awareness about Pluckers’ Union

Just as majority of pluckers are unaware of the government’s welfare measure, they are also unaware of the existence of pluckers’ union to a considerable extent. In Jeypore and Nawarangpur, the two *phal* divisions, none of the pluckers interviewed could express her knowledge about any union of pluckers’ working in her division or in the state. Some pluckers of Nawarangpur could, however, refer to the deductions made from their payment for the purpose of organisational work. While only 3% and 2.5% pluckers in Patnagarh and

Padampur respectively could express their knowledge of the existence of the union, in Angul 26% (the highest) pluckers fell in this category.

While a total of 74.1% pluckers had no knowledge about pluckers' union, about 20% could not reply. In all, only 6.3% pluckers know about the existence of pluckers' union. (Table 109)

**Table 109**  
**Awareness about Existence of Pluckers' Union (% age)**

Awareness	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	26	3	2.5	0	0	6.3
No	58	84.5	95.5	53.5	79	74.1
Can't say	16	12.5	2	46.5	21	19.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100.0

### 12.6.2. Awareness About Activities of Pluckers' Union

Out of those who are aware of the existence of pluckers' union, only 5.8% in Angul and 33.33% in Patnagarh are aware of the activities. In Padampur, although 2.5% pluckers are aware of the existence of the union, none is aware of its activities. (Table 110)

**Table 110**  
**Awareness of Activities of Pluckers' Union (% age)**

Awareness	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	5.8	33.33	0	0	0	7.9
No	94.2	66.67	100	0	0	92.1
Total	100	100	100	0	0	100

Surprisingly, there are pluckers who are aware of the activities of the union, but when asked to explain the activities; no one in Angul could do so. Only 50% in Patnagarh could say that the union helps them in time of need without naming any specific help or activities of the union. (Table 111)

**Table 111**  
**Activities of the Union for Pluckers' Welfare (% age)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Can't say	100	50	0	0	0	80
Help in case of need	0	50	0	0	0	20
Total	100	100	0	0	0	100

### 12.6.3. Correlation of Pluckers' Awareness about Union with Deduction from their Payment

It has already been explained earlier that deductions of varying amounts were made from the payment of 63.2% pluckers in all the five divisions for the purpose of pluckers' union. But only 6.3% pluckers in all the five divisions are aware of the existence of pluckers' union, still fewer know its activities. Besides, pluckers' level of awareness about the union is very

vague. None of the pluckers interviewed could say the name of the union, although they are paying money for its annual membership subscription. This clearly shows their ignorance.

#### **12.6.4. Orissa Kendu Patra Karmachari Sangha**

Notwithstanding the pluckers' lack of knowledge about the union, a union named Orissa Kendu Patra Karmachari Sangha (OKPKS) exists in the State. The OKPKS was established in 1964 as a trade union under the leadership of Shri Biswanath Pandit. It has a State Council and a State Executive body. It has a Divisional Committee in each tendu leaf division. The 19 Divisional Committees together constitute the State Council. The State Executive, which is elected by the State Council, has one-third female members. The OKPKS is not an exclusively pluckers' union, as it also works for the welfare of bush cutters, PBB workers, and seasonal employees like munshi, chaprashi, checkers and circle checkers. The focus of the union is primarily on social security measures and right wage for the members.

#### **12.7. SUGGESTIONS OF PLUCKERS FOR THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELFARE**

For each division, three suggestions have been noted on the basis of percentage value in descending order of importance.

**Angul:** Assurance of employment and minimum working days in the off season when plucking is not done (29.5%); increase in leaf price (28.5%); and facilities like water, shoes, basket, umbrella etc. (10.5%)

**Patnagarh:** Increase in leaf price (54%); timely payment (50%); and facilities like water, shoes, basket, umbrella etc. (7.5%)

**Padampur:** Timely payment (34.5%); increase in leaf price (26%); and rejection of leaves on unreasonable grounds should stop (12.5%).

**Jeypore:** Timely payment (29.5%); assurance of employment and minimum working days in the off season when plucking is not done (8%); and increase in leaf price, and facilities like water, shoes, basket, umbrella etc. (4.5% each)

**Nawarangpur:** Timely payment (41%); increase in leaf price (12.5%); and facilities like water, shoes, basket, umbrella etc. (8% each)

**As regards the combined results of all divisions,** the most important suggestion of pluckers is timely payment (31.5%), followed by increase in leaf price (25.1%), assurance of employment and minimum working days in the off season when plucking is not done (9.4%), provision for facilities like water, shoes, basket, umbrella etc. in forests (7%), rejection of leaves on unreasonable grounds should stop (0.2%), and reservation of plucking areas for old people who can't go deep into forest (0.1%) in descending order. (Table 112)

A total of 16.8% pluckers suggested different other options which are noted below.

- ❖ Bush cutting in more areas
- ❖ Increase in number of plucking days

- ❖ Provision for security in jungles
- ❖ Cost of per kerry leaves should be increased to 70 paise
- ❖ Government should purchase more leaves
- ❖ More fadis should be set up
- ❖ Village infrastructure should be improved
- ❖ Government should implement some social security measures for pluckers
- ❖ Loans should be given for different income-generating activities like goat rearing
- ❖ Benefits like old age pension, BPL card etc. should be extended to all those who fulfill the criteria

**Table 112**  
**Suggestions of Pluckers for their Socio-economic welfare (% age\*)**

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Assurance of employment and minimum working days in off season when plucking is not done	29.5	7.0	1.5	8.0	1.0	9.4
Increase in leaf price	28.5	54.0	26.0	4.5	12.5	25.1
Facilities like water, shoes, basket, umbrella etc	10.5	7.5	5.0	4.5	8.0	7.0
Timely payment/ regular payment	2.5	50.0	34.5	29.5	41.0	31.5
Rejection of leaves on unreasonable grounds should stop	0	0.5	12.5	0	0	0.2
Reservation of plucking areas for old people who can't go deep into forest	0	0	0.5	0	0	0.1
Can't say	26.0	8.0	48.0	51.0	40.5	34.7
Others	14.0	22.0	7.5	12.5	28.0	16.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>149.0</b>	<b>135.5</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>124.8</b>

\* Due to multiple responses, the percentages have become more than 100%.

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## Chapter 13

### TRENDS IN TENDU LEAF TRADE IN ORISSA

#### 13.1. TRENDS IN TENDU LEAF PRODUCTION & COST

##### 13.1.1. Data on Tendu Leaf Production and Cost of Production

Understanding the dynamics of tendu leaf trade in the State requires an understanding of the production and revenue aspects of the trade. Data available with the KL organisation in this regard are presented in the table below.

**Table 113**  
**Production of Tendu Leaves and Cost of Production for 1991-2004 Tendu Leaf Operation**

Sl. No.	Particulars	1991 crop	1992 crop	1993 crop	1994 crop	1995 crop	1996 crop	1997 crop
A.	Production (lakh quintal)	4.97	5.09	4.98	4.91	3.86	5.11	5.00
B.	Fixed Cost per quintal (Lump sum) [in Rs.]	428.61	443.31	447.17	453.60	622.06	530.14	583.24
C.	Variable Cost per quintal (in Rs.)	815.07	875.58	837.91	880.57	989.44	1000.78	1020.63
D.	Total working expenses (Rs. in lakhs)	6181.08	6713.15	6399.69	6550.77	6220.39	7823.00	8019.35
E.	<b>Total Cost of production per quintal (in Rs.)</b>	<b>1243.68</b>	<b>1318.89</b>	<b>1285.08</b>	<b>1334.17</b>	<b>1611.50</b>	<b>1530.92</b>	<b>1603.87</b>

Sl. No.	Particulars	1998 crop	1999 crop	2000 crop	2001 crop	2002 crop	2003 crop	2004 crop
A.	Production (lakh quintal)	3.91	4.70	5.19	4.07	4.60	4.77	4.75
B.	Fixed Cost per quintal (Lump sum) [in Rs.]	786.45	788.94	769.97	931.43	902.97	903.64	907.73
C.	Variable Cost per quintal (in Rs.)	1069.54	1238.84	1310.49	1481.86	1616.70	1652.00	1644.00
D.	Total working expenses (Rs. in lakhs)	7256.92	9530.56	10797.59	9822.09	11590.48	12190.40	12120.71
E.	<b>Total Cost of production per quintal (in Rs.)</b>	<b>1855.99</b>	<b>2027.78</b>	<b>2080.46</b>	<b>2413.29</b>	<b>2519.67</b>	<b>2555.64</b>	<b>2551.73</b>

Source: KL organisation

##### 13.1.2. Trends in Production

As regards production of tendu leaves in the State, figures since 1991 show that except three years (1992, 1997 & 2000), production has remained below 5 lakh quintals mark. In some years (1995 & 1998), production has even gone below 4 lakh quintals. In other words, there has not been any consistent pattern in the production level. However, since 2000, it has actually declined from 5.19 lakh quintals in 2000 to 4.75 lakh quintals in 2004. As discussed earlier, besides improper and less bush cutting, the government's fixation of production target is responsible for the decline in production. While the government finds it difficult to dispose of the leaves, it is surprising to know that illegal trade by private players continues to

flourish in the State.<sup>22</sup>

It is important to note here that out of total production of tendu leaves, about 80% are processed leaves and more than 20% are *phal* leaves. Considering the fact that only two full divisions and part of one division produce *phal* leaves out of 19 tendu leaf divisions of the State, the percentage share of *phal* leaves in total production is considerable.

### 13.1.3. Production by Private Players

According to the leaders of OKPKS, the state has the potential of producing more than 8 lakh quintals of tendu leaves in a year and illegal sale of leaves is rampant. Government officials also admitted that tendu leaves are collected and sold privately. The OKPKS sources told that *beedi* manufacturers are buying from non-OFDC sources and leaves are even sold outside the state by private traders.

It has come to light during data collection that pluckers do collect leaves for *beedi* rolling at home. There are, however, very few pluckers (2% in Angul and 0.5% each in Jeypore and Nawarangpur) who admitted during survey about accumulation of leaves for purposes of *beedi* rolling and selling. (Tables 114, 115)

**Table 114**  
Accumulation of Leaves (% age)

Accumulation	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
Yes	2	0	0	0.5	0.5	1
No	98	100	100	99.5	99.5	99
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Table 115**  
Duration of Accumulation (% age)

Item	Angul	Patnagarh	Padampur	Jeypore	Nawarangpur	Total
3 months or less	75	0	0	0	0	50.0
> 3 months till 6 months	25	0	0	100	0	33.3
One year and more	0	0	0	0	100	16.7
Total	100	0	0	100	100	100.0

### 13.1.4. Rise in Cost of Production

Although production has not shown upward trend, cost of production per quintal has increased since 1991. From Rs.1243.68 per quintal in 1991, the cost has reached Rs.2551.75 in 2004, an increase of **more than two times**. As regards some specific components of production, the rates of increase since 1991 till 2004 are as under:

- ❖ Establishment cost has increased 3.3 times (from Rs.526.58 lakh in 1991 to Rs.1767.36 lakh in 2004),
- ❖ Cost of bush cutting has increased more than 1.8 times (from Rs.383.75 lakh in 1991 to Rs.706 lakh in 2004),

<sup>22</sup> Interaction with OKPKS leaders, villagers, officials of the KL organisation and OFDC, discussion in Workshop and newspaper reports indicate the illegal trade by private traders and *beedi* manufacturers. See Annexure II for some newspaper clippings in this regard.

- ❖ Cost for seasonal staff has increased 1.8 times (from Rs.619.49 lakh in 1991 to Rs.1134 lakh in 2004)
- ❖ Cost of PBB (Packaging, Binding & Bagging) has increased 1.6 times (from Rs.182.50 per quintal in 1991 to Rs.300 per quintal in 2004)
- ❖ Cost of Purchase of tendu leaves i.e. **payment to pluckers** has increased 2.1 times (from Rs.531.37 per quintal in 1991 to Rs.1151 per quintal in 2004)

Among the major components of production, rate of increase is the highest in regard to establishment cost that includes, *inter alia*, salary of 1956 employees of KL organisation<sup>23</sup> and the lowest in regard to PBB activities.

## 13.2. TRENDS IN TENDU LEAF MARKETING

### 13.2.1. Trends in Tendu Leaf Marketing in Orissa

Marketing trends of tendu leaves are noted in the table below.

**Table 116**  
**Marketing trends of Tendu Leaves in Orissa (Quantity in lakh quintals)**

Financial year	Opening balance 1 <sup>st</sup> April		Delivery from KL organisation		Total quantity		Grand Total (6+7)	Quantity sold/ disposed		
	Phal	Processed	Phal	Processed	Phal	Processed		Phal	Processed	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1998-99	0	1.09	0.71 18%	3.29 82%	0.71	4.38	5.09	0.71 100%	3.06 70%	3.77
1999-00	0	1.32	0.82 18%	3.78 82%	0.82	5.10	5.92	0.82 10%	3.21 63%	4.03
2000-01	0	1.89	0.81 15%	4.73 85%	0.81	6.62	7.43	0.81 100%	4.52 68%	5.33
2001-02	0	2.10	0.79 18%	3.63 82%	0.79	5.73	6.52	0.73 92%	4.72 82%	5.45
2002-03	0.06	1.01	1.02 21%	3.76 79%	1.08	4.77	5.85	1.06 98%	4.25 89%	5.31
2003-04	0.02	0.52	1.22 26%	3.54 74%	1.24	4.06	5.30	0.89 72%	3.49 86%	4.38
2004-05	0.27	0.70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Note: Data for rest of the columns for 2004-05 are not yet available due to non-completion of FY.*

Source: OFDC

Sale of phal leaves was never a problem from 1998-99 till 2000-01, as all leaves were sold during these years. The problem, started in 2001-02, has now become more acute as can be seen from unsold figures of 2003-04 (28% remained unsold). This problem, as told by officials of OFDC, is due to change in sale strategy of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. These two states, also producing phal leaves, have started selling green leaves. The buyers prefer these leaves as they can better identify the quality of leaves in comparison to phal leaves of Orissa, which are sold dry. Sale of processed leaves, although has increased now and is better in comparison to phal leaves, has never attained 100% sale target. (Table 116)

<sup>23</sup> Total sanctioned staff strength of KL organisation headed by Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Kendu Leaf) is 2316. Presently 360 posts are lying vacant. Source: KL organisation  
Research Project executed by Human Development Society, Delhi [www.hdsindia.org]

### 13.2.2. International Trade

Contrary to the Government's claim that tendu leaf trade is a diminishing trade as more and more people are becoming health cautious and are quitting smoking, export figures of beedi and tendu leaves indicate no such trend. Exports of beedi and tendu leaves have been on the rise since 1998-99 except marginal fall only in quantity of tendu leaves in 2002-03. Figures in respect of Madhya Pradesh, an important tendu leaf producing State, also indicate similar trend. Disposal of leaves has always been cent percent since 1989 except 2003 when 20.74 lakh standard bags were sold out of 22.21 lakh standard bags stored by the Government.

**Table 117**  
**Export of Beedi and Tendu Leaves (Quantity in ' 000 Kg and Value in Lakh Rs.)**

Year	Beedi Export		KL Export	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
1998-99	1382.50	3486.54	2577.05	1325.13
1999-00	1604.40	3615.86	2977.50	1554.24
2000-01	2679.27	7354.99	3264.26	2000.41
2001-02	2900.80	7905.06	4098.67	1924.41
2002-03	3859.96	9985.91	3505.15	2188.18

Source: Arun K. Bansal, "Dynamics of Kendu Leaves Trade in Orissa with Special Reference to Welfare of Pluckers", Paper presented in the one-day Workshop organised in connection with the project

Therefore, poor disposal of leaves in Orissa has nothing to do with people's smoking habit. It is due to failure of existing marketing strategy. The report of the Task Force of Government of Orissa on restructuring tendu leaf trade in the State has referred to the unprofessional approach of the OFDC to market tendu leaves.<sup>24</sup> The organisation is also constrained by the meagre 5% commission (of sale value) that it receives for marketing the leaves.

### 13.3. ROYALTY RECEIVED BY STATE GOVERNMENT AND PROFIT

#### 13.3.1. Royalty

Royalty received by the State government is total sale value of the year minus advance amount paid to the KL organisation for working expenses, amount of sales tax and commission of OFDC for marketing. From 1998-99 till 2003-04, average royalty paid by the OFDC per year is Rs.63.3 crore. However, royalty amount has substantially come down to Rs.31 crore during 2003-04 from previous year (Rs.75 crore). (Table)

**Table 118**  
**Royalty Received by the State Government (Rs. in crore)**

Item	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Royalty	63.500	74.500	55.000	69.000	75.000	31.000	8.00 (not final)

<sup>24</sup> *Report of the Task Force for Preparing A Draft Comprehensive Strategy for Restructuring Kendu Leaf Trade in Orissa*, Government of Orissa, Forest and Environment Department, Office Order No. KL (B) 11/2000. 8642/F&E dated 5<sup>th</sup> June 2000

### 13.3.2. Profit

As regards profit from the trade, it has not been calculated after 1997-98, as enquired from the KL organisation which is responsible for the task of profit calculation. However, if disbursement of tendu leaf grant to *panchayats* are any indication, profits have not been calculated since 1994-95, as only adhoc grants have been given to *panchayats* due to this non-calculation. (See discussion on grants to *panchayats* in chapter on “Issues Concerning the Pluckers”).

**Table 119**  
**Profits of State Government from Tendu Leaf Trade (1998-99 to 2004-05) [Rs. in crore]**

Sl. No.	Particulars	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
1.	Cost of Production incurred by KL organisation	72.569	95.305	107.975	98.220	115.904	121.904	121.207
2.	Marketing Commission of OFDC	7.030	7.800	9.180	9.170	10.190	7.294	6.32 *
3.	Surcharge on OST	2.877	3.420	4.310	0.200	0	0	0
4.	Total cost of production & marketing (1+2+3)	82.476	106.525	121.465	107.590	126.094	129.198	127.527 *
5.	Total sale value	140.613	155.890	183.560	183.400	203.470	145.879	138.210 *
6.	<b>Profit (5 - 4)</b>	58.137	49.365	62.095	75.810	77.376	16.681	10.683 *

\* Indicate tentative figures

Source: Calculated on the basis of data obtained from KL organisation and OFDC

Researchers of HDS have calculated the profits on the basis of data obtained from KL organisation and OFDC. Cost of production incurred by KL organisation, amount of marketing commission of OFDC and amount of sales tax have been deducted from the total sale value of a year to arrive at profit. From 1998-99 till 2003-04, average yearly profit is Rs.56.577 crore. As the above table indicates, after a fall in profit in 1999-2000, it has continuously increased till 2002-03. In 2003-04, profit came down drastically from Rs.77.375 crore during previous year to Rs.16.681 crore. Tentative figure of 2004-05 shows further decline. The fall in profit can be attributed to fall in sale value, which in turn is dependent on quantity of tendu leaves sold that has registered decline in 2003-04 and 2004-05 (tentative). It may be mentioned here that average sale value of tendu leaves per quintal during a year has not shown any sharp rise or fall since 1998-99, as given in the table below. Average yearly sale value per quintal is Rs.3594.90.

**Table 120**  
**Cost Per Quintal of Tendu Leaves (Amount in Rs.)**

Year	Sale value per quintal
1998-99	3729.78
1999-2000	3868.23
2000-01	3443.90
2001-02	3365.13
2002-03	3832.82
2003-04	3330.57

Source: Calculated on the basis of data collected from the OFDC

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## Chapter 14

### ISSUES CONCERNING THE PLUCKERS

#### 14.1. STATUS OF PLUCKERS

Interaction with different government officials including the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Kendu Leaves) who is head of KL organisation makes it clear that the government does not consider the pluckers as workers or employees of the forest department. Rather it considers them as primary producers or primary collectors. It argues that the pluckers do not work under anyone's supervision, nor are they required to report to someone in regard to their work. There is also no fixed working hours for them. They are at liberty to work for the number of days/ hours they wish to work and to pluck the number of leaves they can/ want to. The government argues that any villager, within a *fadi* area, can freely collect leaves from anywhere in the *fadi* area.

The arguments of the State government are based on rather wrong analysis of the conditions of work and nature of work of the pluckers. Instead of considering them as primary producers, the government should treat them as **key producers**, who are integral to the production process of tendu leaves. Considering them as key producers would make the government appreciate the work done by the pluckers.

It is important to note in this context that in the Industrial Dispute Case No. 12/1985, the Tribunal has already considered pluckers as workers of the KL organisation. The government's refusal to accept this is therefore not understood. The leaders of the OKPKS, however, say that the pluckers are the workers of the Forest Department.

The government's position in regard to the status of pluckers is based purely on economic consideration. The pluckers, if considered as workers of the government, would have to be compensated at par the minimum wage of the state government. This would entail huge expenditure and consequent lowering of the profit margin of the government. At present, the government does not pay the pluckers any wage. Rather it buys the leaves at a fixed purchase price. As discussed in the context of bondage, payment on the basis of number of leaves plucked has actually negatively affected the income per day of the pluckers. Besides payment of minimum wage, there will also be demands for other benefits like insurance which the binding and seasonal workers are getting at present.

#### 14.2. DELAYED PAYMENT

The issue has already been discussed in the Chapter titled 'Patterns of People's Involvement and Economic Conditions linked to Tendu Leaf Plucking'. While it is not difficult to understand the OFDC's inability to meet cash need to the tune of Rs.60 crore during plucking months, the Government's inability to make budgetary provision for the purpose is due to its primary focus on profit rather than the rights of pluckers to receive timely payment.

### **14.3. PAYMENT FOR PRODUCT, NOT LABOUR**

As explained earlier, a plucker works for about 10 to 12 hours a day starting from early morning till evening. Whether leaves are available or not, the number of total working hours does not diminish. Since payment is made on piece rate basis, the number of hours spent during a day to pluck, sort and bind the leaves, and the hardships that a plucker faces in the forest are not considered while making payment. In other words, the government, as the present system shows, pays only for the product, not for labour. This is very exploitative in nature. In areas where pluckable leaves are not in good number, the payments received by pluckers nowhere matches their labour.

### **14.4. NON-COMPLIANCE OF MINIMUM DAILY WAGE**

Non-compliance of minimum daily wage by the Government of Orissa is a major issue affecting the socio-economic conditions of the poor pluckers. Although 'minimum daily wage' is one of the criteria that are considered while fixing purchase price of tendu leaves, the government's lack of concern in regard to its applicability is tantamount to depriving people their legitimate due. As explained in the Chapter on Bondage, the piece rate system currently in practice cannot be a basis for non-applicability of the minimum daily wage. At present, the government has absolutely no mechanism to ensure that every plucker, after working for 10 to 12 hours a day, gets Rs.52.50 i.e. the minimum wage for unskilled work of 8 hours a day. This is a serious anomaly, the remedy of which lies not with the pluckers but with the government.

### **14.5. FLAW IN GOVERNMENT'S WELFARE MEASURES**

The Government's welfare measures like Rs.10,000 compensation to the family of a plucker who dies during plucking and supply of *chappals* (now in process) have a basic flaw, i.e. the beneficiaries must possess the plucking cards. It has already been mentioned that almost half of the pluckers of the state do not have plucking cards in their names. There are also many families in which cards have been issued in the names of male members, whereas the female members go for plucking. As a result, the possibility of death of non-cardholding pluckers is always there. In that case, the victim's family will not be compensated. The OKPKS leaders also pointed out this flaw in the government's scheme.

### **14.6. NON-POSSESSION OF PLUCKING CARD**

Besides depriving the pluckers of the benefits stated above, non-possession of plucking cards also enable the unscrupulous elements to earn a fast buck as explained below. Regulating the number of pluckers also becomes impossible in view of the non-possession of plucking cards. It is in the interest of the trade and the pluckers that each plucker should be given a plucking card. Unfortunately, due to the Government's overriding consideration for profit, it has not shown interest in giving plucking cards to all pluckers.

### **14.7. PLUCKING BY UPPER CASTES**

Plucking is traditionally done by people belonging to Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and other deprived sections of the society. But some people belonging to upper castes and

economically well off sections are also engaged in plucking, as noticed in Padampur. What is disturbing is that they are employing their servants or 'guti' (as is locally known) for this purpose. The only motivating factor for them is money. Due to increase in purchase price of leaves, these upper castes people consider it profitable to engage their servants and earn some quick money. Although it is not legally possible to deny someone plucking leaves and selling to the Government, entry of upper castes people into plucking and their *modus operandi* like the above one will damage the interests of the poor in the long run.

#### **14.8. KL GRANT TO PANCHAYATS**

KL grant, as explained in the Chapter titled 'Welfare of Tendu Leaf Pluckers', should be calculated on the basis of profit (50% of net profit) from the trade. It is found that due to non-calculation of profit of tendu leaf trade, the government has been giving only adhoc grants under this head since 1991-92. Even these adhoc grants at times reach after the completion of financial year, as in case of Sambalpur Zilla Parishad that received the grant for 2000-01 during May 2001. HDS researchers enquired the utilisation pattern of KL grant in two *gram panchayats* (Shankarma and Kainsir) and one *panchayat samiti* (Dhankauda) in Sambalpur district on a random basis. Everywhere it was found that the total amount was spent for road development. Pluckers are thus not getting benefits under the KL grant directly. Some previous studies also indicate similar pattern.<sup>25</sup> The OKPKS also expressed the view that the KL grant only gives indirect benefit like development of schools, roads etc. It is not utilised for raising the standard of living of the poor pluckers.

Besides, the KL grant is given to all the 30 districts of the state, whereas, tendu leaves are collected only in 23 districts. Although the Orissa Kendu Leaves (Control of Trade) Act, 1961 is silent on this aspect, there is no basis for giving the KL grant to the coastal districts that are no way connected to tendu leaf trade. Another objectionable aspect of KL grant is the 'Hard Cash Scale Grant'. The money, which should ideally be utilised for the welfare of pluckers, is being spent at the discretion of the panchayati raj minister. The hard cash scale grant, in the opinion of OKPKS leaders, is often given on personal/ partisan considerations.

#### **14.9. IS PLUCKING A SEMI-SKILLED OR UNSKILLED JOB?**

Unskilled work does not require application of reasoning for its performance. There is no need of training for such work. Semi-skilled work, on the other hand, requires the worker to undergo task-specific training, although such training does not provide much in the way of using reasoning skills.

Presently plucking is an unskilled job. Interaction with pluckers, however, revealed that plucking requires certain degree of skills. The most suitable leaves are the ones that remain parallel to the ground. While tender leaves remain downward, mature/ older leaves remain upward. There is also a need to see other aspects relating to quality which are important from the point of view of beedi-making. An efficient plucker can pluck leaves that are good in terms of texture, colour, and can produce more number of *beedis* than leaves that are

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<sup>25</sup> A study conducted by Vasundhara, an NGO, indicate that for the period 1990-91 to 1997-98 in four *gram panchayats* in Lahunipada block of Sundargarh district, 61% of the KL grant was used for salaries, 13% was used for sports, 5% for cultural programmes, 12% given as donations and 8% used for roads. None of the activities benefited the pluckers directly.

defective. If a plucker possesses the skills required to identify different quality aspects, the leaves that she plucks would definitely be of better quality. Care needs to be taken for quality production due to the fact that 80% of leaves in Orissa are processed and are better than *phal* (unprocessed) leaves.

In view of competitive market situation and the need for quality production, periodic training of pluckers is essential. Plucking should, therefore, be treated as a semi-skilled job only in case of divisions where leaves are processed. But there is no need for such skill upgradation in case of pluckers of *phal* leaves, as quality is not a concern in *phal* production.

#### **14.10. TENDU LEAF TRADE FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

In view of the fact that 89.1% pluckers live below poverty line, poverty is undoubtedly at the top of the problems faced by pluckers. Almost all other problems spring from the problem of poverty of income. Therefore, welfare measure of any kind, in order to be successful, must address this core problem.

As tendu leaf trade is a big revenue earner, its potential for poverty alleviation is tremendous. At present, tendu leaf trade is one of the most important sources of non-tax revenue of the Government of Orissa. Ironically, as explained earlier, the Government's investment in the trade is nil. At a time when lakhs of pluckers are living a life of abject poverty, the Government's control of the trade is perhaps one of the worst forms of exploitation. While Governments of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh consider, in varying degree, welfare of pluckers as the primary concern as discussed in the Chapter titled 'Welfare of Tendu Leaf Pluckers', Government of Orissa considers profit as its primary concern. This profit-based approach needs to be changed to a rights-based approach. This is possible only if the money that goes to the State Government's exchequer as profit from tendu leaf trade is used for welfare of tendu leaf pluckers and such other marginalised seasonal workers of KL organisation. Considering the positions in other three States that have been discussed earlier, this is certainly possible. The present system of sharing of profit with the *panchayati raj* institutions is only giving the pluckers indirect token help, as discussed earlier. Unless job opportunities are created, no plucker will be able to augment her family income.

This can be possible if the Government passes on the entire profit from tendu leaf trade to the pluckers, and binds in *phadis* who are also an oppressed lot, by way of incentive wage and specially designed programmes for employment either by using local resources or by imparting training on new skills. Considering the huge profit that the State earns from the trade without making any investment, sharing of entire profit would give a real boost to the employment generation programmes. However, this will not be possible until the Government's approach in regard to tendu leaf trade is guided by profit, not by welfare. In other words, the goal of the Government should be the welfare of pluckers and other marginalised workers, and any attempt to maximise profit should be considered as an attempt to maximise welfare.

Another way of alleviating poverty amongst the pluckers is by transferring ownership right on tendu leaves to the tribals,<sup>26</sup> wherever practicable, and facilitating quality production and marketing in such a manner that would maximise profit and raise household income. An Act prescribing transfer of ownership rights on minor forest produce (MFP) to tribals in Scheduled Areas already exists. Extending the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution relating to the *panchayats* to the Scheduled Areas, the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 outlines some *exceptions and modifications* to Part IX of the Constitution. In this context, the Act says, “Notwithstanding anything contained under Part IX of the Constitution, the Legislature of a State shall not make any law under that Part which is inconsistent with any of the following features, namely, ... (m) while endowing Panchayats in the Scheduled Areas with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government, a State Legislature shall ensure that the Panchayats at the appropriate level and the Gram Sabha are endowed specially with- (ii) the ownership of minor forest produce ...” In other words, ownership of MFP like tendu leaves in Scheduled Areas should remain with the tribals.

Implementation of the above provision of the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 would certainly help in economic empowerment of tribals. However, the Government of Orissa is yet to take any step in regard to transferring the ownership right on tendu leaves to the tribals of the Scheduled Areas of the State.<sup>27</sup> This is unlikely to happen soon in view of the Government’s economic interest in the trade. It may be mentioned that except the Schedule Area of Balasore district all other Scheduled Areas of Orissa fall under the tendu leaf producing divisions of the State.

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<sup>26</sup> Transferring of ownership right to STs is considered in view of the fact that majority of pluckers in four divisions, except Angul, belongs to STs. (See chapter titled ‘General and Social Profile of Tendu Leaf Pluckers’.

<sup>27</sup> Presently Orissa has the following Scheduled Areas as per the order of the President of India under Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India: Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Koraput (fully scheduled areas in these three districts), Rayagada, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Boudh, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Balasore (only parts of these districts)

## Chapter 15

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the outcome of survey, interaction with Government officials, scholars, pluckers, leaders of OKPKS and field observations during data collection.

#### 15.1. CHANGE OF APPROACH

At the root of all problems that the pluckers face lies the approach of the Government of Orissa in regard to tendu leaf trade. The Government considers the trade as a revenue-generating business. This is the reason for relegating welfare of pluckers to a secondary position. A change in this profit-based approach is urgently needed.

It is therefore recommended that the Government's policy for the trade should be solely guided by rights-based approach, and 'welfare' of pluckers should be the only aim of the trade.

#### 15.2. REFORMING THE PRESENT SYSTEM

##### 15.2.1. Regulation of Pluckers

**Recommendation:** Every plucker should be given the plucking card on mandatory basis.

**Rationale:** This will regulate the number of pluckers, help them receive death compensation without deprivation and solve the problem of plucking by hired servants of upper castes. There will be no scattered pluckers once cards are given to all.

##### 15.2.2. Status of Pluckers

**Recommendation:** Pluckers should be considered as workers of the KL organisation and should be given the benefits of minimum wage, bonus/ incentive etc. that the workers are entitled to.

**Rationale:** Till the time they are not treated as workers of the Government, the Government can avoid implementing welfare measures for the pluckers.

##### 15.2.3. Demarcation of Fadi Areas

**Recommendation:** Fadi area should be demarcated keeping in view its production potential and the number of pluckers in the fadi area so as to enable each plucker to get work for at least 15 days in a plucking season.

**Rationale:** Demarcation of fadi areas, especially where plucking days are even less than a week, is essential in order to enable each plucker to earn a decent income. This will also partly address the problem of pluckers' inability to earn daily minimum wage.

#### 15.2.4. Timely Payment

**Recommendation:** Payment to pluckers should be made within one week from the date of completion of plucking.

**Rationale:** Since delayed payment is a major problem and resented by almost all pluckers, the Government should not dilly-dally on this issue. Timely payment would save the pluckers from taking loans on very high rate of interest by mortgaging their household items. There is no basis for denying the right to timely payment, especially when the claimants are the poorest of the poor.

#### 15.2.5. Minimum Wage Protection

**Recommendation:** Considering the right of every plucker to receive minimum daily wage, the Government should ensure that every plucker receives at least the minimum daily wage even if she fails to pluck the required number of leaves that can enable her to earn at least the amount equal to minimum wage. Before applying minimum wage protection, the Government will have to be sure that the plucker's inability to pluck the required number of leaves is genuine and there are factors like non-availability of sufficient number of pluckable leaves, adverse weather conditions etc. that preclude plucking capacity. The Government will have to be very vigilant against misuse of this provision.

**Rationale:** Minimum wage protection will be a protection against situations that are beyond the control of pluckers like non-availability of leaves, adverse weather conditions etc. In view of the economic miseries of pluckers, minimum wage protection is a genuine welfare measure which no democratic and welfare state can refuse.

#### 15.2.6. Budget Provision

**Recommendation:** The budget of the State Government should have allocations for tendu leaf trade to tide over the shortage of funds during plucking months and other contingencies.

**Rationale:** As delayed payment is linked to lack of budgetary allocation, the above recommendation will enable the Government to give payments without delay. The OFDC will not run from one bank to another to get loan as it does now.

#### 15.2.7. Regularisation of Deduction for OKPKS

**Recommendation:** The OKPKS should ensure that only the fixed annual membership subscription (at present Rs.5) is deducted from the pluckers' payment voluntarily and strict instruction should be given to Munshis for this. Proper receipt should be given to all for the payment in order stop manipulation by Munshis. One membership subscription should be collected from one family.

**Rationale:** Regulation of deduction will bring transparency and strengthen the OKPKS. People will be aware of the union's activities. One subscription for one family is desirable to avoid putting extra financial burden on the poor pluckers.

### **15.2.8. Provision for Different Facilities in Forests**

**Recommendation:** Government should provide facilities like water, shoes, baskets/ carry bags, umbrella and such other items for use by pluckers in forests.

**Rationale:** These essential items will be of great help during hot summer days and reduce chances of falling sick during plucking. They will also act as incentives to the poor pluckers.

### **15.2.9. Monitoring Health Conditions during Plucking**

**Recommendation:** Suitable mechanism should be developed in collaboration with local PHC/ government dispensary for monitoring and looking after the health needs of pluckers during plucking period. Field staff like Munshi or any other seasonal staff can play the role of health monitor at the fadi level and help the pluckers in receiving immediate medical attention.

**Rationale:** This welfare measure is easy to implement. Its benefits are too obvious to be stated.

### **15.2.10. Measure to Control Violence**

**Recommendation:** Munshi, Checker and other seasonal staff should ensure that pluckers of one fadi area do not enter into another fadi area. Regular staff of KL organisation should provide overall supervision in this regard.

**Rationale:** This recommendation along with the recommendations in regard to regulation of pluckers and demarcation of fadi areas will help maintain peace and smooth plucking.

### **15.2.11. Children in Plucking**

**Recommendation:** Children below 14 years should not be allowed to pluck under any circumstance. The KL organisation should not issue plucking cards to children.

**Rationale:** Once loopholes in the present system are rightly addressed, no parent will feel the need of sending her child for plucking. Besides making the system constitutionally, legally and ethically right, stopping children from plucking would contribute to quality production, as children tend to pluck leaves that are not of good quality.

### **15.2.12. Profit Calculation**

**Recommendation:** Profit from the trade should strictly be calculated every year by the KL Organisation, preferably in the month of April.

**Rationale:** Yearly calculation of profit would enable the Government to utilise the amount for welfare of pluckers without delay.

### 15.2.13. Utilisation of Profit

**Recommendation:** Profit from the trade can be fully utilised in the following manner:

- ❖ 50% of the profit should go to the three-tier panchayati raj institutions namely *gram panchayat*, *panchayat samiti* and *zilla parishad* in the ratio of 75:15:10 with strict instruction that the amount should be utilised for generation of employment opportunities either by using local resources or by imparting training on new skills.
- ❖ Another 50% of the profit should be spent for giving incentive wage to pluckers and other marginal workers like binders in fadis and launching & continuing an insurance scheme for them. Insurance schemes of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh may be studied for this purpose in order to evolve a suitable scheme.
- ❖ 'Hard Cash Scale Grant' under which 10% of the KL grant is put at the discretion of panchayati raj minister should be abolished.
- ❖ KL grant should not be given to *panchayats* of non-tendu leaf producing districts. In other words, *panchayats* of seven districts namely Cuttack, Puri, Khurda, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapada, Bhadrak and Balasore should be excluded.

**Rationale:** Once profit is fully shared with the pluckers, their hardships due to poverty and lack of alternative sources of income will reduce considerably. Since money will be utilised for creation of employment opportunities, the demand of pluckers that they should be given employment and minimum working days in the off season will be suitably met. Utilisation of profit in the above manner will also help in curbing child labour, as no parent will be constrained to send her child for plucking due to better economic conditions.

### 15.2.14. Curbing Illegal Trade

**Recommendation:** The Range officer of a division, under the supervision of DFO, should be responsible for curbing illegal trade in his range.

**Rationale:** Curbing illegal trade will stop loss of revenue. It will also lead to full realisation of the production potential of the State.

### 15.2.15. Adequate Bush Cutting

**Recommendation:** Bush cutting should be properly and adequately done by the forest department.

**Rationale:** Adequate and proper bush cutting will ensure good production and consequently good income for pluckers. This will also discourage illegal bush cutting by villagers.

### 15.2.16. Realisation of full Production Potential

**Recommendation:** Government should collect all pluckable leaves without citing reasons like lack of market, change of smoking habits etc. in view of the fact market for tendu leaves and *beedi* has not diminished as discussion in relevant section has shown.

**Rationale:** This will result in increase in profit, end of illegal private trade and increase in income of pluckers.

### 15.2.17. Professionalism in Operations and Marketing

**Recommendation:** The problem of lack of professionalism in tendu leaf trade should be addressed in the following manner:

- ❖ Both KL organisation and OFDC should function as professional organisations with achievement-oriented work culture.
- ❖ Training of personnel on management and marketing practices with the assistance of professional consultants should be conducted at regular intervals.
- ❖ Key operations of marketing should be handled by professionally qualified marketing personnel rather than regular forest department officials.

**Rationale:** Professionalism in management and marketing will address the problem of marketing that the OFDC faces now. It will also result in better coordination between KL organisation and OFDC and handling of more production will not be a problem.

### 15.2.18. Increase of OFDC Marketing Commission

**Recommendation:** The present 5% commission that the OFDC gets for marketing tendu leaves should be urgently increased to 10% to enable the organisation to augment its marketing infrastructure like reopening of sale centres at Kolkata and Chennai, introduction of e-marketing etc. on a priority basis.

**Rationale:** Considering the fact that efficient marketing is a very important component of trade without which increased production will prove disastrous, upward revision of OFDC commission for marketing is a must. This will ensure higher return.

### 15.2.19. Skill Up-gradation

**Recommendation:** In tendu leaf divisions where leaves are processed, plucking should be considered as a semi-skilled job and periodic training should be provided to pluckers on different quality aspects.

**Rationale:** Besides production of quality leaves, skill up-gradation will lead to better remuneration for pluckers.

## 15.3. OWNERSHIP RIGHT TO TRIBALS

### 15.3.1. Transfer of Ownership

**Recommendation:** In view of the fact that majority of the pluckers are tribals and a law already exists in regard to transfer of ownership rights on minor forest produce (MFP) to tribals in Scheduled Areas, it is recommended that the Government should consider transferring the ownership right on tendu leaves to the tribals through the three-tier *panchayati raj* institutions.

**Rationale:** In such an arrangement, the Government would play the role of a facilitator for quality production and marketing in such a manner that would maximise profit and raise household income.

### 15.3.2. Constitution of Expert Group

An expert group consisting of members from all concerned Government departments, representatives of the OKPKS, scholars, human rights activists and representatives of NGOs should be formed by the Government of Orissa in order to work out the details of the transfer of ownership. The key consideration for the expert group would be socio-economic development of pluckers and other marginalised workers by maximising profits from tendu leaf trade.

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**Annexure I**  
**PHOTO GALLERY**



## Annexure II

### CASE STUDIES

Two case studies were conducted in each of the five tendu leaf divisions covered in the research with a view to obtaining a detailed incisive account of the plucker's life. Case studies include mainly special category pluckers such as those below 14 years of age (child labour), 60 years of age or above (old) or physically handicap.

#### ANGUL TENDU LEAF DIVISION

**Jhuna Dehury**, Village Jaypur, Narsinghpur Tendu Leaf Range, Angul

Jhuna, a ten year old girl studying in Class III, belongs to a family of landless labourers. She belongs to OBC. All four members of her family work as agricultural and non-agricultural labourers, besides occasional collection of different forest produce. The family has a small meadow (grassland) without ownership right (*patta*). Since the land hardly gives any yielding and non-agricultural activities are very rare, the family mainly depends on work in others' agricultural land. They get work for about five days a month. Monthly earning of the family is Rs.450 and yearly income, inclusive of tendu leaf plucking, is little more than Rs.6,000. Thus, the family is living below poverty line. But it does not have the BPL card.

Besides plucking, Jhuna works in others' agricultural land. She possesses a plucking card. In 2004 plucking season she had plucked for 21 days. It takes about two hours to reach the plucking zone of forests which is at a distance of 8 kms. She considers plucking a long and labourious work for which remuneration paid is not adequate. Since Jhuna plucks about half chatta leaves (1000 no.) in about four hours time, her daily income from plucking is Rs.10.50. After reaching home during midday, like any other plucker, she has to sort and bind the leaves into *kerry* before depositing in fadi. Her family has two pluckers (including herself). Besides physical strain for which she had fever last year, she also faces threats of wild animals, snakes etc. in forest.

Poverty has adversely affected all aspects of her life. She has no books, papers and pencils. Her frail body and pale face indicate malnourishment. Clothing is also a problem for her. At the time of conducting the case study, Jhuna was wearing a *saree*, which is not meant for a girl of her age. Due to financial problem, stitching or buying a dress is not an easy option for her.

Besides work as agricultural labourer and plucker, she also spends time in collecting woods for domestic use and assists her mother in all domestic work, leaving no time for recreation and entertainment. Unfortunately, Jhuna complains about ill-treatment by her parents and peer group in school.

Despite all these problems, the girl takes interest in study and does not wish to discontinue. Since her village has no school, she goes to a neighbouring village even if there is the fear of tuskers on the way. Poverty has not dampened her zeal for education.

**Vilasini Naik**, Village Asarada, Ranjagole Tendu Leaf Range, Angul

Vilasini is a 30 year old Scheduled Caste woman who is living under conditions of perennial poverty. After her husband went mad two years back, she had no choice but to come back to his father's place. After death of her mother, her family now includes only her father. She has no child also as her only son died of illness.

Due to her father's age, he finds it difficult to work. Vilasini is practically the only breadwinner of the family. Since the family has no land and no other productive assets, working as agricultural labourer is the only source of income. In a month she gets work for only 4 to 5 days. Due to gender discrimination, she earns a meagre Rs.20 for a day's work. Monthly income of the family is not more than Rs.100. If income from tendu leaf plucking is added, the family's yearly income will not be more than Rs.1700. Thus, poverty in the family is acute. Being Pana (untouchable) by caste, she cannot even work as domestic servant. She is also illiterate.

She is the only plucker in her family. Last year she had earned Rs.496 by plucking for 16 days (average Rs.31 per day). The amount is certainly less than the minimum wage for unskilled labour. She considers the conditions of work as harsh as working hours are very long. She had fever last year due to plucking. Dangers of wild animals, snakes are also there.

Besides the above problems, Vilasini also faces humiliation from fellow villagers as they blame her for all misfortunes. A married girl staying at father's place is also looked down upon in rural areas. She is however not interested to marry again. Devoid of good food, good clothing and any type of recreation and entertainment, Vilasini leads of a life of perpetual backwardness. Her family receives no benefit under any of the government's welfare programme. The family does not have the BPL card, although clearly falling in the category.

There is, however, hope for Vilasini. She is young and can work, if opportunities are provided. Vocational training of some kind can be of great help.

## **PATNAGARH TENDU LEAF DIVISION**

**Mamta Bhoje**, Village Mundapala, Patnagarh Tendu Leaf Range, Patnagarh

Mamta Bhoje is a 10 year old girl studying in Class four. Her four-member family lives in a one-room house. The family has not benefited under the Indira Awas Yojana. Mamta's father is a petty vegetable seller. His daily profit is not more than Rs.10. He sells vegetables for approximately six months in a year. Mamta's elder sister is an agricultural labourer. But she gets work only during sowing season and her daily income is not more than Rs.25. As a result of uncertainties of work, the family's average daily income is not more than Rs.10. The family has no land or any other productive assets. If income from tendu plucking is added, yearly income of the family becomes little more than Rs.4500. Although the family lives below poverty line, it does not have BPL card. It also gets no benefit from any other government's welfare programme.

Acute poverty of the family compels Mamta to join plucking with another family member. Last year she had plucked for 7 days and earned Rs.217. Total family income from plucking

is little more than Rs.950, which is about 21% of the family's annual income. Although the family heavily depends on its earning from plucking, delayed payment makes life miserable.

Mamta, like other pluckers, finds plucking a tough work. Possibilities of sunstroke, mosquito bite and attack by wild animals are always there. She also goes to forests on barefoot. Last year she had fever and headache during plucking. No wonder, Mamta finds the present remuneration for plucking inadequate.

Despite her tender age, Mamta does a lot of work for the family besides working outside. Everyday she cooks in the morning before leaving for school which is located in a neighbouring village at a distance of two kilometers. Due to poverty, her father has not been able to buy a proper dress for her. Today Mamta faces uncertainties in regard to continuing her studies. But she is very keen to continue.

**Kundi**, Village Dandrabahal, Patnagarh Tendu Leaf Range, Patnagarh (deaf & dumb)

Kundi belongs to Dhurua tribe. She is not only deaf and dumb she is also a destitute in true sense of the term. Her parents died when she was a kid. She now stays with her maternal uncle, as she has no one in her paternal family. She does not have a house of her own and has no productive asset. She will be on the street if her uncle throws her out. Of course, this has not yet happened. But Kundi lives under perennial insecurity, as her uncle's economic condition is not good enough to sustain his own family.

Kundi's economic condition is very pathetic. She largely lives on the sympathy of her uncle and some other villagers to whom she extends some manual assistance. She hardly gets any money for her work (Rs.30 a month or so); people give her only food. The only money that she earns in a year is her payment for plucking tendu leaves. In 2004, she had earned Rs.420 for plucking 10 days. This was 50% of her annual income. She gives the money to her uncle with whom she stays. One can easily imagine the extent of her poverty.

Kundi's misfortune does not end here. Despite being a disable, she does not receive the handicap pension. She has met officials of the Block including VLW in this regard but nothing has happened so far. She does not also receive benefit under any of the government's other welfare schemes.

Although she is now 30 year old, there is no chance of getting married due to her disability. Considering the physical, social and economic disabilities that Kundi has, it is not hard to say that her world is full of uncertainties. Kundi's case also clearly proves the very high level of dependence of some pluckers on plucking. Unfortunately, the Munshi had deducted Rs.15 from Kundi's payment last year in the name of OKPKS annual membership subscription, although Rs.5 is the subscription amount.

## **PADAMPUR TENDU LEAF DIVISION**

**Tava Suna**, Village Dhaulibahal, Padampur Tendu Leaf Division

Tava Suna is a more than 60 year old illiterate woman. She belongs to Ganda caste (SC) which is considered untouchable. Her husband has deserted. As a result, she now lives on the

veranda of her brother-in-law's house purely on a compassionate ground. She has no child and hence lives alone.

With only 16 decimal unproductive land, Tava's economic condition is miserable to say the least. Even if she cultivates the land, which she cannot practically do due to lack of facilities, she would not be able to get food even for a month. Besides collection of mahua flowers and tendu leaves, she works as agricultural labourer for not more than 15 days only during farming season of the year. As an agricultural labourer, she earns Rs.20 per day. Wage is often paid in kind which is very exploitative. About 30 to 40% paddy given as wage is of very poor quality. Last year she had earned Rs.320 from tendu leaf plucking. Her total yearly income from all sources is not more than Rs.700. Although she lives far below the poverty line, she does not possess the BPL card. At the time of conducting the case study (June 2004), her BPL card was withdrawn since last four months. She does not also receive the old age pension.

Tava is highly dependent on her income from tendu leaf plucking which is 46% of her annual income. Therefore, delay in payment by the KL organisation puts her in great trouble. For pluckers like Tava the sad part is that they cannot pluck more even if they want to due to their old age. Tava considers the working conditions as harsh. Dangers of mosquito bite and wild animals are always there. Last year she was down with malaria during plucking days.

Due to Tava's socio-economic conditions and age, she hardly finds time for recreation and entertainment. She has no family and no grand child with whom she can spend some leisure time. On the health front, she is equally underprivileged. Her frail physique gives enough indication about her poverty and malnourishment. In case of need she prefers to be treated by the village quack rather than consulting qualified doctors due to possibility of spending more money.

Harsh realities of life have made Tava mentally weak also. When she was asked by the interviewer the reason for her husband deserting her, she started crying. Unless she is provided measures for social and economic security, her conditions will not improve.

### **Kalyani Suna, Village Kendumal, Padampur Tendu Leaf Division**

Kalyani Suna is a below 14 year old plucker. She belongs to Ganda caste (SC) and has studied up to Class IV. She lives in a one-room house that is not at all sufficient for the eight members of her family. Along with her parents, she works in the field. When she does not work in the field, she helps her mother in household chores.

The family of Kalyani does not possess land or any other productive assets. Daily wage work is an important source of its income. They also collect forest produces like mahua flowers and make broom. Total family income from all sources amounts to little more than Rs.2600. Although the family has three working members, its annual income is very insignificant. Lack of non-agricultural work, regular drought and non-availability of work on a regular basis severely restrict the family's earning potential.

Economic conditions of the family force Kalyani to pluck tendu leaves. Everyday she walks a distance of about of 5 kms. Last year she had earned about Rs.75 from plucking for seven

days. Her family's total income from plucking was Rs.441. Due to her labour in the forest and at home, she considers the present remuneration inadequate. Delayed payment further complicates the family's problems. The family had to mortgage its plucking card to get loan. Ironically, the card was mortgaged with the Munshi. Since Munshi is a seasonal employee of the KL organisation, there is enough room for manipulation with the payment of the family. Like the cases noted above, Kalyani considers the working conditions as harsh due to long hours of work.

She is a school dropout. She had to leave studies when she was in Class V due to poverty. Earning became more important than education. Whether she is working in others' field or plucking, Kalyani is certainly a child labour in true sense of the term. Recreation and entertainment are luxury for the girl as she hardly finds time for such activities. It came to notice that she was even scolded by her parents for not going for plucking on some occasion.

Despite all odds, Kalyani wishes to continue her studies if opportunities are provided. This is very encouraging.

## **JEYPORE TENDU LEAF DIVISION**

**Madhu Bhumia**, Village Raniguda, Mathili Tendu Leaf Range, Jeypore

Madhu Bhumia is an old person in the above 60 age group. He is illiterate. Since his daughter is married and son is dead, he lives with his wife at present. Madhu belongs to Bhumia tribe.

The family has no productive assets worth the name, except a small piece of land behind the house which is categorised as forestland. Due to old age, Madhu can no more work as agricultural labourer. The family mainly depends on collection of firewood, minor forest produces like mahua flowers, sal leaves, sal seeds etc. and tendu leaf plucking. Income from mahua flower is very little as Madhu owns only two mahua trees. Collection of other minor forest produces depends on their availability and the family's ability to collect them. Last year the family had earned only Rs.400 by selling mahua flowers. Income from sal leaves during the year was Rs.100.

Tendu leaf plucking is the family's principal occupation. Both Madhu and his wife had plucked for 20 days during last year and had earned Rs.1800, which is about 82% of the family's annual income from all sources. This high level of dependency on plucking is the reason enough for Madhu to say that payment for plucking is right. He also considers conditions of work as good. It may be mentioned in this context that in Jeypore and Nawarangpur, the two *phal* divisions covered in the study, production of tendu leaves is more in comparison to the processed divisions, thus giving scope for more earning.

Despite higher income from tendu leaf plucking, the family lives under conditions of extreme poverty. Unfortunately, it does not even possess the BPL card. It is also not receiving any other benefits from the Government, including old age pension.

The family's poverty could be known from the house. It is a one-room house. The roof is made of some long wild grass and palm leaves which is put on the lower end of the roof. The house is in a broken condition. The roof has not been repaired since many years. Since

cooking, sleeping and all other household activities are done in one room, the living condition is very pathetic. There is no proper ventilation also. Except a narrow bed and some utensils, the family has no household items worth the name. Clothing is another problem for the couple and the problem is particularly acute during winter. Recreation and entertainment are anathema for them. There are, however, tribal festivals when people dance and drink together.

Madhu Bhumia's case aptly demonstrates the extent of poverty and the dependence of poor people on tendu leaf plucking.

**Purni Harijan**, Village Sadasibpur, Balimda Tendu Leaf Range, Jeypore

Purni is a ten year old plucker. She is a Scheduled Caste. She lives with her mother and two younger brothers aged five and two. After death of her father, the family is facing several problems. Purni had to quit study as there is no one in the family to look after the kids when their mother goes to work. Purni does all household work including cooking.

Economic hardship is acute now. The land of family has been encroached by others. Purni's mother is practically the only working member of the family. She works as agricultural labourer and also in non-agricultural activities. They also collect and sell different forest produce like mahua flowers, sal leaves. Both Purni and her mother collect tendu leaves. Despite hard labour, the family's yearly income is far below the poverty line. Yearly income from all sources is only Rs.2800. Income from tendu leaf plucking during last year was Rs.1200, making it the highest contributor to the annual income (about 43%). Considering the number of family members, the income is certainly not sufficient.

Purni has been plucking since last two years. She does both plucking and binding of the plucked leaves. Plucking during summer days is harsh. During last summer, Purni had stomach problem while plucking. She also told about threats of wild animals, snakes etc. in forest. But she is satisfied with the job due to contribution of plucking to family's income.

Poverty of the family is reflected in the one-room house in which the four member family lives. The house is in a dilapidated condition. There is improper ventilation. Since the family has some pet birds which are kept in the same room, it results in unhygienic condition.

Purni's contribution to her family's income and other needs is not ordinary due to fact that she had to forcefully leave her studies to do all these activities. She, however, conveyed a bold message that given an opportunity, she would resume her studies.

## **NAWARANGPUR TENDU LEAF DIVISION**

**Sani Goud**, Village Ladhuapara, Chandahandi Tendu Leaf Range, Nawarangpur

Sani Gaud is a more than 60 year old lady. She is illiterate. She belongs to the OBC. After her husband divorced her at a young age, she has been living alone. In her young days she had even worked, *inter alia*, as a traditional birth attendant (TBA). Due to old age and eye problem she cannot work as TBA now. Since she did not get any property from her former husband or her parental family, she has no productive assets also. As a result, she now lives

primarily on the sympathy of others. Her work as a domestic servant and separating food grains from sands, stones etc. fetch her some money and food. Sometimes people give her food out of sympathy. Her monthly income is in the range of Rs.50 to Rs.100. She earns not more than Rs.1000 in a year which also includes income from tendu leaf plucking. Last year she had earned Rs.400 from tendu leaf plucking.

Tendu leaf plucking is undoubtedly an important source of her income, as it constitutes 40% of her annual income. Due to her age and inability to walk properly, she now plucks in the bushes near the village. She does not go to the forest areas. As a result, her income from plucking has decreased as she collects less number of leaves now.

She considers the working conditions as harsh. She was wounded two years ago while plucking in hilly terrain. She also resents late payment by the KL organisation. Her opinion about fellow pluckers is, however, very positive as they help her in transporting the plucked leaves to residence and again to fadi.

Poverty is a curse for Sani. Although she possesses the BPL card, she often fails to buy provisions under the scheme. Last year she had mortgaged her BPL card with the village moneylenders to get some cash. She had also mortgaged her plucking card to get some rice from a neighbour.

Health conditions of Sani are no better. She is malnourished and suffers from pain in her knees. Consumption of alcohol and tobacco has further affected her health adversely. Tobacco is so inseparable from her that she even consumed it during the interview. Entertainment and recreation are limited to village functions.

### **Musi Bhatna**, Village Dharnaveda, Nawarangpur Tendu Leaf Range, Nawarangpur

At the age of eight Musi Bhatna is a plucker. She has never gone to school. The miserable economic condition of the family and her parents' ignorance are responsible for what Musi is today.

There are six members in Musi's family. Musi's parents are habitual alcoholic. Her father goes to the nearby town- Nawarangpur- to work as a daily wage worker. But everyday he spends almost the entire amount consuming alcohol. His contribution to the family income is nearly nil. The family's needs are taken care of by Musi's mother who also works as a daily wage earner. She rarely goes outside the village to work. Her daily income is a meagre Rs.20. Since agriculture is the main occupation in the village, Musi's mother normally gets work during crop season. As a result, total duration of work hardly goes beyond a month in a year.

Income from collection of mahua flowers is not more than Rs.100 in a year, as the family uses mahua flowers for its own consumption of liquor. The 30 decimals land, that the family has, yielded only two bags of paddy last year. Thus, from all the sources the family's yearly income is not more than Rs.2700. The family lives far below the poverty line.

Income from tendu leaf plucking is little more than 33% of the family's annual income from all sources. Musi and her mother are the two pluckers in the family. She plucks almost half of

the total leaves plucked by the two. Therefore, Musi's contribution to family income is quite substantial.

Musi does the plucking and binding work like her mother. The work takes the entire day from early morning till evening. In the forest, there is always the danger of snakes and wild animals like bear. But she has no other alternative but to pluck to earn for the family. As she is not studying, she takes care of the children when her parents go out on work. Unlike some other children covered in the case study, Musi does not intend to study if opportunities are given. She seems to be scared of school environment.

Poverty has its impact on the family's food habits and health condition. They do not take more than two meals in a day that are not nutritious. The children are malnourished and look pale. Fever, cold, stomach problem and such other health problems are regular in the family. Regular consumption of alcohol and tobacco certainly affects health. Even Musi consumes tobacco, albeit irregularly.

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**Annexure III**

**NEWSPAPER REPORTS ON PROBLEMS OF PLUCKERS AND  
TENDU LEAF TRADE**



## Annexure IV

### MINUTES OF THE WORKSHOP

**TITLE OF WORKSHOP:** “Status of Tendu Leaf Pluckers in Orissa: A Study of their Socio-economic Conditions with Special Reference to Children and the System of Bonded Labour”

**ORGANISER:** Human Development Society, Delhi

**COLLABORATOR:** National Human Rights Commission, New Delhi

**VENUE:** SIEMT Conference Hall, Behind Shiksha Soudh (OPEPA Office)  
Unit 5, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

**DATE:** 28<sup>th</sup> January 2005 (Friday)

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:** 31

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

The Workshop was organised primarily to capture the views of different stakeholders of tendu leaf trade in Orissa, namely the Forest Department, Orissa Forest Development Corporation Ltd., Orissa Kendu Patra Karmachari Sangha, tendu leaf pluckers, social scientists and others, on issues that emerged as a result of data collection exercise. By bringing different stakeholders together on one table, the Workshop provided scope for cross-examination and exchange of views that could not be possible by talking to stakeholders independently/ individually. It can, therefore, be said that the Workshop was a part of the data collection exercise.

Considering the above objectives, Human Development Society (HDS) did not make any recommendations for discussion in the Workshop, nor did it discuss all the research findings like that of bondage. Rather HDS captured the views of participants on different issues, including the issue of bondage, that came on their own volition.

#### **INAUGURAL SESSION:**

The Workshop session started at 10.30 A.M.

#### **Welcome Address**

Dr. Rekha Pande, Honorary Project Director of the project welcomed the participants on behalf of HDS and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). She informed the participants that Mrs. Sudha Shrotria, Director, NHRC could not attend the Workshop due to her engagements in New Delhi. After introducing the speakers, she requested all the participants to introduce themselves.

Welcoming the participants, Dr. Pande highlighted the vulnerability of women in our society as well as in families. Women, who are working, suffer the most due to the double burden of looking after family needs and the needs of work. Majority of workers in the beedi industry as well as in plucking of tendu leaves are women and children. Citing her earlier study on beedi industry workers, she narrated the pathetic conditions of women and children in beedi manufacturing units. She further said that globalisation has resulted in gradual withdrawal of state from welfare functions leading to deepening of economic hardships of marginalised sections of society. She wished that the present research would help in understanding socio-economic conditions of pluckers objectively.

### **Introductory Remarks on the Project and Workshop**

Dr. Anil Kumar Das, Chairperson, HDS and Coordinator of the project spoke on the project and objectives of the Workshop, as stated above. He said that the idea of taking up this research originated during his interaction with villagers in some tendu leaf producing districts of Orissa. He briefly pointed out the objectives of the project and said that the Workshop would help HDS in giving a balanced report due to presence of different stakeholders on one platform.

### **PLENARY SESSION:**

#### **Presentation of Draft Survey/ Research Findings**

Dr. Anil Kumar Das made a Power Point presentation of the survey of pluckers. The salient points of his presentation are stated below.

- ❖ The scope of study includes, *inter alia*, economic status & payment, working conditions, child labour, bondage and welfare of pluckers.
- ❖ A total of 1000 pluckers belonging to five tendu leaf divisions @ 200 per division were selected for interview on the basis of systematic random sampling.
- ❖ Women constitute the majority of pluckers (85%) and about 82% pluckers are illiterate.
- ❖ Average yearly family income from all sources is Rs.6272.44.
- ❖ Families living below poverty line (Rs.11,000 income per year as per Government of Orissa): 89%.
- ❖ About 77% pluckers' daily income from plucking is less than the minimum daily wage of the government for unskilled labour.
- ❖ Conditions of work are harsh in the opinion of 86.6% women and elderly respondents (above 60 years), 68.6% adult males, about 80% child pluckers.
- ❖ Out of total respondents, 8% are children below 14 years.

#### **Presentation by Shri Arun K. Bansal**

Shri Arun K. Bansal, Addl. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APCCF), Orissa made a Power Point presentation on the topic: "Dynamics of Kendu Leaf Trade in Orissa with Special Reference to the Welfare of Pluckers". It may be mentioned here that APCCF is the head of Kendu Leaf Organisation of Orissa, a wing of the forest department, that is in charge of production of tendu leaves.

The salient points of Shri Bansal's presentation are as under:

- ❖ In 23 out of 30 districts of Orissa tendu leaves are collected.
- ❖ Total production of tendu leaves in the state is 5 lakh quintals in a year.
- ❖ Nearly 1 million primary collector families get engagement during the peak summer months
- ❖ Provided data in regard to production, cost of production, sale value of leaves and export figures since the trade was nationalised in 1973.
- ❖ 50% of the net profit is distributed to *panchayati raj* institutions as KL grant.
- ❖ Compassionate Grant of Rs.10000 in case of unnatural death of KL pluckers due to sunstroke, lightning, snake bite, wild animal attack etc., while actually engaged in plucking of KL in the field.
- ❖ Supply of *chappals* (in process)
- ❖ Pluckers are members of the General Body of the Phadi Committees constituted for supervising various operations related to the respective phadis/ Collection Centres.

### **Presentation by Shri Bijoy Ketan Pattanaik**

Shri Bijoy Ketan Pattanaik, Chairman-cum-Managing Director, Orissa Forest Development Corporation Ltd. (OFDC) was the next speaker. He spoke on the topic: "Marketing of Kendu Leaves in Orissa: Strategy, Constraints and Solutions". It is important to note here that OFDC is in charge of marketing of tendu leaves in the state

The salient points of Shri Pattanaik's presentation are the following:

- ❖ OFDC sales the tendu leaves both by tenders and public auction.
- ❖ Sale of phal leaves (non-processed) was not a problem till 2001-02 (100% sold). In 2003-04, 28% phal leaves remained unsold.
- ❖ Sale of processed leaves was never 100%. In 2003-04, 14% processed leaves remained unsold.
- ❖ The organisation is planning to integrate marketing of tendu leaves with marketing of medicinal plants in order to enhance profit margin.
- ❖ E-marketing is another such step to streamline marketing. Buyers can submit tender forms through website and the same can be quickly processed.

### **Presentation by Shri Bijoy Mohanty**

Shri Bijoy Mohanty, President, Orissa Kendu Patra Karmachari Sangha (OKPKS) spoke on "Socio-economic Conditions of Kendu Leaf Pluckers in Orissa: Views of Orissa Kendu Patra Karmachari Sangha". The OKPKS is the only union working for the welfare of tendu leaf workers (*karmachari*). As the name suggests, OKPKS is not an exclusively pluckers' union. It also works for the welfare of bush cutters, PBB (Packaging, Binding & Bagging) workers, and seasonal employees like munshi, chaprashi, checkers and circle checkers.

The salient points of Shri Mohanty's paper are stated below.

- ❖ Out of about 18 lakh pluckers in Orissa, only about 10 lakhs have been provided with Identity/ wage cards.

- ❖ A plucker earns a maximum of Rs.60 to 75 for 10 to 12 hours of labour. They get less than the minimum wage of Govt. of Orissa for unskilled labour for 8 hours of works (Rs.52.50).
- ❖ Pluckers are not unidentified stray workers. They are workers of the forest department.
- ❖ All labour laws like Payment of Wages Act, Workmen Compensation Act, Industrial Disputes Act, Minimum Wages Act, Payment of Gratuity Act, Payment of Bonus Act, etc. are applicable to the pluckers as they are workers of the Forest Department.
- ❖ A welfare fund for the benefits of pluckers and other tendu leaf workers should be created out of profits earned from the trade.
- ❖ Building up of local leadership and awareness about rights at the grassroots level are required to achieve welfare of pluckers and other tendu leaf workers.

Shri Bijoy Mohanty was the last speaker of the plenary session, as Shri Arabinda Behera, Commissioner-cum-Secretary to Government, Forest and Environment Department, Government of Orissa; and Mrs. Aparajita Sarangi, Director, Social Welfare, Government of Orissa could not attend the Workshop. Shri Vinod Kumar, Special Secretary, Forest and Environment Department, Government of Orissa, who represented the Forest and Environment Department in place of Shri Behera, attended the afternoon session.

### **Observations and Discussion**

Prof. R. M. Mallik, Professor in Economics, Nabakrushna Chaudhury Centre for Development Studies, a Bhubaneswar-based ICSSR research centre, made a detailed presentation on the topic of research, which are stated below.

- ❖ A tabular presentation of employment potential of tendu leaves in regard to plucking, binding and bush cutting may be given in the final research report.
- ❖ Working hours of pluckers should also include commuting time to forests and the time they spend at home for sorting leaves and making kerries (bundles).
- ❖ There should be a balance between livelihood interests of pluckers and revenue interest of the government.
- ❖ Two organisations, one for production and other for marketing of tendu leaves, as is the system now should be merged. One organisation should deal with both production and marketing.
- ❖ Since 90% tendu leaves are sold outside the state, more leaves should be retained for domestic consumption. This will push employment in the state.
- ❖ Government officials involved in the trade should be trained in managerial skills.
- ❖ Fadi houses (collection centres) that are used for only four months in a year should be used as community centres for villagers.
- ❖ Lack of investment by Government in the trade and lack of efficient market strategy are two key areas of concern.
- ❖ A high level committee of the government should look into the problems affecting tendu leaf trade in the state and suggest measures for the benefits of all concerned, especially the pluckers and other seasonal workers.

### **Lunch Break: 1.30 PM – 2.30 PM**

## **OPEN SESSION:**

### **Observations and Discussion (*Continued*)**

#### ***Issues of Child Labour and Bondage***

Shri Vinod Kumar, Special Secretary, Forest and Environment Department, Government of Orissa began his observation by saying that the title of research is inappropriate. The phrase “Bonded Labour” should be expunged, as it is designed to attract international attention. In his view, bondage does not exist. Therefore, it is inappropriate. He also aired his reservation regarding child labour in the trade. He was of the view that children are not employed by the government, they only render token help to their parents in the form of binding leaves. As such their labour cannot be treated as a wage earning labour.

In response to Shri Kumar’s objection to the use of the phrase “bonded labour”, Dr. Das referred to his presentation in the morning session when Shri Kumar was not present. While reiterating the implications of bondage and linking it to forced labour in the context of Supreme Court judgements, Dr. Das said that HDS has not yet completed the research and hence no conclusion or recommendation has yet been derived.

Referring to Shri Kumar’s observation on child labour, Dr. Rekha Pande cited the definition of UNICEF and differentiated between child work and child labour. When a child helps his/her parents or family in certain work of family that is not exploitative and that does not contribute to family income, such an act of the child is called child work. Whereas, when a child’s labour is exploitative in nature and he/ she earns for the family by rendering services, it becomes child labour.

Shri Vinod Kumar, however, insisted that the phrase “bonded labour” should be deleted, as it would make the tendu leaf trade in the state unsustainable. He said if a child is going to school and plucking, that child should not be considered as child labour.

Intervening in the discussion, Prof. Mallik said that in Economics labour is referred to exhaustion of body and mind in order to earn. The children are not going to forests for some pleasant trip. They are plucking to earn, hence their labour cannot be unaccounted. Referring to the issue of bondage, he said that in tendu leaf trade creditor-debtor relationship is absent. Therefore, in this context bondage does not exist in the trade.

Sharing his field experience, Shri Pramod Kumar Sarangi, DFO, Angul Tendu Leaf Division said that economic considerations are responsible for the parents to take their children for plucking. He had once come across a child plucking leaves during his forest visit. When he objected this to the parent who was with the child, the parent drew his attention to the family’s poverty and said that if the child did not pluck, her income would be less. This was echoed by other fellow pluckers.

### ***Minimum Wage and Private Beedi Manufacturers***

Shri Bijoy Ketan Pattanaik said that pluckers' payment should not be compared with minimum wage, as they do not have fixed working hours. They even earn more than the minimum wage for working 4 to 5 hours in a day.

Dr. Anil Das said that a plucker's total number of working hours in a day is even more than 10 hours as after plucking in forests, the leaves are sorted and bound at residence that continues till evening. He further said that absence of leaves does not decrease the number of working hours. Rather the working hours go up as pluckers spend more time in forests looking for leaves.

Shri Vinod Kumar drew attention to the piece rate system (payment is calculated on the basis of number of leaves plucked) and said minimum wage cannot be applied in such a system, as number of working hours is not counted.

Shri H. S. Upadhyay, Conservator of Forests, Bolangir asked, "Should the number of pluckers be reduced to ensure minimum wage?"

Shri Vinod Kumar said that tendu leaf trade is a diminishing trade as more and more people are becoming health cautious and are quitting smoking. Besides, non-availability of pluckable leaves and non-disposal of plucked leaves are threatening the trade.

Shri Utkalmani Satpathy, Secretary, OKPKS disagreed with the above view and said that consumption of *beedi* has not declined and concern for pluckers will be there till the time *beedis* are consumed.

Countering the view that pluckable leaves are less in number, Shri Bijoy Mohanty, President, OKPKS said that private *beedi* manufacturers are engaged in plucking in Angul and other places smoothly.

Shri Arun K. Bansal argued that private *beedi* manufacturers employ people all through the year, unlike government. As a result, they continue to get leaves plucked, which has nothing to do with the government.

Shri Utkalmani Shatpathy, however, put the blame on the government's fixation of target collection. After the target is achieved, government does not accept the leaves. He asserted that if the government accepts the leaves till they are exhausted, the present problems would not occur and would lessen the operations of private operators.

Shri Vinod Kumar disagreed with Shatpathy and said that without target fixation, the system would be unviable and uneconomical, as leaves will remain unsold.

### ***Pluckers' Presentation***

The following problems were highlighted by the pluckers:

- ❖ Delayed payment causing financial strain on the family

- ❖ Hard labour in forests and hot days affecting their health
- ❖ Long working hours from 4 o'clock in the morning till late afternoon
- ❖ Demand for excess leaves by Munshi
- ❖ Rejection of leaves by Munshi on flimsy grounds

Although Shri Bansal and Shri Vinod Kumar admitted delayed payment, they however asserted that the pluckers have faith in the government that their payment would be made.

On the issue of quality of leaves, Shri Bansal said that pluckers at times give unsuitable leaves forcing rejection. But, Shri Mohanty said that quality of leaves deteriorate due to improper storage and bagging by the forest department.

Raising health issue, Shri Bansal said that the survey findings of HDS regarding of health problems due to plucking might be re-examined, as disease like fever might not occur due to plucking. Dr. Anil Das countered Shri Bansal by saying that the views of pluckers cannot be ignored as the interviews have been conducted carefully and efficiently.

Dr. Rekha Pande emphasised on a holistic approach to understand health problem. Shri Vinod Kumar said that the government should not be overloaded with demands like health, social security and economic well-being. This would lead to collapse of the tendu leaf trade in the state.

### ***Are the pluckers employees of the State Government?***

The views of OKPKS leaders and forest department officials were diametrically opposite on this issue.

Shri Bansal said that pluckers are primary collectors. Their work is not supervised by the forest department. They are free to pluck and deposit the leaves with the department. Considering their nature of work, Workmen Compensation Act and other Acts on labour welfare are not applicable for them.

Shri Satapathy, however, said that all labour laws are applicable for pluckers as per court judgments. Shri Mohnaty, President of OKPKS had already mentioned this in his presentation in the morning session.

Shri Bijoy Ketan Pattanaik said that pluckers are employed for only few days in a year and hence cannot be considered as employees of the government. Countering Shri Pattanaik, Shri Satapathy said that the pluckers are workers of the department for those few days when they pluck. Therefore, they are entitled to get all benefits.

### ***Is plucking a semi skilled or unskilled job?***

It may be mentioned that plucking is presently considered as an unskilled labour. Shri Vinod Kumar wondered how does unskilled or semi-skilled status of a plucker affect her income? In reply, Dr. Anil Das said a semi-skilled worker is entitled to get higher payment. While the union leaders viewed that plucking should be considered as semi-skilled, the forest department officials considered it as unskilled.

### ***Is pluckers' payment a payment for labour or for product?***

Dr. Anil Das said that under the present system the government counts the leaves and makes payment. It does not consider the number of hours a plucker spends for plucking, sorting and binding the leaves.

Shri Bansal and Shri Vinod Kumar were of the view that piece rate system is a viable system and the number of hours spent by a plucker for her work cannot be counted.

### ***Should the children continue to pluck?***

All the participants were of the view that children should not pluck. Referring to the survey findings on child pluckers, Shri Bansal, however, said that they are aberrations, not normal situation.

### ***Government's Welfare Scheme for Pluckers***

Dr. Anil Das compared the welfare measures of Orissa with other states and argued that Orissa is at the bottom in this regard. Shri Bansal was of the view that comparison of welfare measures with that of Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is not proper, as other conditions of trade should also be compared. Dr. Das disagreed with Shri Bansal.

Shri Pramod Kumar Sarangi was of the view that a comparative study of villages having pluckers with those having no pluckers should be made in order to understand the conditions of pluckers. In reply, Dr. Anil Das said such a comparison would not serve any purpose as the focus of the present study is on socio-economic conditions of people who pluck. In other words, plucking is not a dependent variable. It has nothing to do with those who are not pluckers.

### ***Plucking by upper castes***

Forest department officials said that the government has no control over the pluckers. Dr. Anil Das was of the view that plucking by upper caste people, especially those who are economically well off may affect the income level of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who are traditionally identified with plucking. Agreeing with this view, other participants said that plucking by upper castes is rare.

### ***Kendu leaf grant to panchayats***

While leaders of OKPKS considered the system of sharing of 50% profit with the *panchayati raj* institutions laudable, they resented the sharing of KL grant with the non-tendu leaf producing districts in coastal Orissa. President of OKPKS Shri Mohanty drew the attention of participants to the discretionary power of panchayati raj minister to utilise 10% of the profit as hard cash scale grant. He considered this as unjust.

The forest department officials, however, did not find anything wrong in sharing profits with non-tendu leaf producing districts, as no provision exists in this regard.

### ***OFDC's Inability to Release Working Capital***

Dr. Anil Das enquired from Shri Pattanaik, CMD, OFDC the reasons for OFDC's inability to release working capital on time resulting in delayed payment to pluckers.

Shri Pattanaik replied that cash need to the tune of Rs.60 crore at the time of plucking season is difficult to fulfil. Loan on differential rate of interest, which is guaranteed by government, is the only option for the OFDC. Late payment is linked to late receipt of loan. There is no budgetary support for the tendu leaf trade.

Shri Bijoy Mohanty referred to the government's inability to create a Revolving Fund to ward off lack of credit situation.

Shri Vinod Kumar said that delayed payment is faced by other states also. So blaming Orissa is not proper. Even the conditions of pluckers in other states are no better than Orissa. Dr. Anil Das said that we should try to understand our problems and solve them, rather than taking solace by citing similar problems in other states. Moreover, welfare measures for pluckers are better in States like Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in comparison to Orissa.

### ***Issue of Bondage***

Although the issue was discussed earlier, Shri Vinod Kumar told at the end of discussion that the phrase bondage should be removed from the topic of research by HDS. In reply, Dr. Anil Das said that in research of any type phrases or issues are not removed by word of mouth. If research proves that bondage exists, HDS will say so in the report and vice versa. He further said that HDS is not empowered to remove the phrase. Its mandate is to examine various issues concerning the socio-economic conditions of pluckers, including the issue of child labour and bondage, and submit the study report to the NHRC.

### **SUMMING UP**

Dr. Rekha Pande summed up the day's discussion by highlighting the salient aspects. She wished that the Workshop would enable HDS to prepare its report logically and objectively. She viewed that the interaction with different stakeholders was enlightening.

### **VOTE OF THANKS**

Dr. Anil Kumar Das thanked the NHRC, officials of KL organisation and Orissa Forest Development Corporation Ltd., leaders of Orissa Kendu Patra Karmachari Sangha, researchers of HDS and all other participants for their contributions at different stages of the research as well as to the day's discussion. He also thanked the pluckers for coming from distant places and sharing their views on their problems.

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