

Impact of Erratic of Rainfall and Mica Mines in a South Indian Village

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KEYWORDS Rains. Agriculture. Mines. Social Relations. Resistance

ABSTRACT This paper presents a case of a South Indian village where mica mining made a detrimental effect on agriculture which was already suffering from erratic rainfall. Together both the factors have affected the social system in the village so much so that the traditional social relations have dramatically changed. The failure of agriculture at times due to shortage, excess or untimely rains and high labour costs has weakened the dominant caste considerably. Initially though members of the dominant caste had become rich through mica mining they become poor with the fall of mica production within two decades. Also their attempts to cope up with the shortage of rainfall by bringing about agronomic changes were in vain. Hence, the dominant caste could no longer maintain the traditional social relations with the subordinates. But, having been freed from traditional roles, the subordinate castes entered into contractual relationships and improved their economic position through higher wages in the mines and by pursuing other occupation. The changed circumstances now enabled them to often exhibit open resistance to the caste domination. The paper discusses the impact of erratic rainfall and establishment of mica mines on agriculture and the distribution of traditional social relations in the village due to failure of agriculture.