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RESEARCH NOTES
AND STATISTICS

**Scheduled Tribe Households:
A Note on Issues of Livelihood**

Brinda Karat* and Vikas Rawal†

Neo-liberal policies and the aggressive spread of capitalist relations in Adivasi-dominated areas have caused changes in the lives and livelihoods of the Adivasi people (Scheduled Tribes, STs) that have important implications for the Left movement.

Data from different official sources provide material for a preliminary analysis of broad trends in the socio-economic conditions of STs. There are, of course, substantial regional variations in this regard, particularly with respect to the North-Eastern States. More primary data are needed from different regions where Adivasi populations are significant so as to better understand the changes that are occurring.

SOME FEATURES OF THE SECONDARY DATA

Broadly speaking, eight salient points emerge from the secondary data on rural Adivasi households, which include various survey rounds of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) including the 66th Round (2009–10), 68th Round (2011–12) and 69th Round (2012), the Censuses of India, and other sources of official data.

1. Landlessness among rural Adivasi households is growing; correspondingly, the number of Adivasi households that used to cultivate some land has decreased. This indicates increasing proletarianisation among significant sections of Adivasi communities.
2. Among rural Adivasi households, the proportion of households whose primary occupation is wage labour is higher than the proportion of households whose primary occupation is cultivation.

* Vice President, Adivasi Adhikar Rashtriya Manch (National Platform for Tribal Rights) and Member, Polit Bureau, Communist Party of India (Marxist), brinda@cpim.org.

† Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

3. The work participation rate among Adivasi women is higher than the work participation rate among other social groups although the wages of Adivasi women are lower.
4. A relatively high proportion of Adivasi workers are short-term migrants.
5. There is acute deprivation with respect to living conditions in Adivasi habitations and high levels of poverty among Adivasi populations relative to other social groups.
6. There is an increase in the number and proportion of Adivasi people living in urban areas.
7. There is an increase in the number of educated Adivasi youth.
8. Accumulation, in the main, is taking place through the exploitation of Adivasi land and labour by non-Adivasis; this process is driven by policies of the state.

CHANGES IN RURAL AREAS: LANDLESSNESS AND DISPOSSESSION

The data show that the proportion of rural Adivasi households that do not own any land – not even homestead land – increased from 16 per cent of all Adivasi households in 1987–88 to 24 per cent in 2011–12 (Table 1).

A broader category is of households that *possess* land whether or not they *own* it. This category includes those who may have leased in land, and those who are cultivating or occupying land but do not have ownership papers, and so on. The increase in the proportion of Adivasi households who do not possess any land is even more alarming: from 13 per cent in 1987–88 to 25 per cent in 2011–12 (the NSS estimate for 2009–10 was even worse, at 31 per cent) (Table 1). Thus land loss and dispossession have been a significant feature of Adivasi livelihoods in the last two decades, and point to increasing proletarianisation of Adivasi communities. In this context, an important area for future research is the question of which sections of the Adivasi population are losing land and to whom the land is going.

Table 1 *Proportion of Adivasi households that did not own, possess, and cultivate any land, rural India, 1987–88 to 2011–12 in per cent*

Year	Households that did not own any land	Households that did not possess any land	Households that did not cultivate any land
1987–88	16	13	28
1993–94	19	13	30
1999–2000	10	7	32
2004–05	24	23	34
2009–10	24	31	39
2011–12	24	25	39

Notes: Data on ownership and possession of land cover all types of land. For consistency over different rounds of NSS surveys, only landholdings above 0.01 hectare were counted.

Source: Based on unit-level data from various rounds of the National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO's) Surveys of Employment and Unemployment.

Table 2 *Proportion of Adivasi households in different size-classes of operational landholdings of Adivasi households, rural India, 1987–88 to 2011–12 in per cent*

Size-class	1987–88	1993–94	1999–2000	2004–05	2009–10	2011–12
Landless	28	30	32	34	39	39
≤ 1 hectare	38	39	43	39	39	38
1–2 hectares	18	18	16	16	13	14
2–4 hectares	10	9	7	9	8	7
4–10 hectares	5	3	2	2	2	2
> 10 hectares	1	1	0	0	0	0

Note: For consistency over different rounds of NSS surveys, only landholdings above 0.01 hectare were counted.

Source: Based on unit-level data from various rounds of the National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO's) Surveys of Employment and Unemployment.

Table 3 *Share of land cultivated by Adivasi households in different size-classes of operational landholdings of Adivasi households, by State, 1987–88 to 2011–12 in per cent*

Size-class	1987–88	1993–94	1999–2000	2004–05	2009–10	2011–12
Landless	0	0	0	0	0	0
≤ 1 hectare	18	19	27	26	27	26
1–2 hectares	24	26	31	29	26	30
2–4 hectares	25	25	24	30	27	28
4–10 hectares	24	19	14	14	15	12
> 10 hectares	9	11	3	2	5	3

Note: For consistency over different rounds of NSS surveys, only landholdings above 0.01 hectare were counted.

Source: Based on unit-level data from various rounds of the National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO's) Surveys of Employment and Unemployment.

We present data on household operational holdings of land with the caveat that the NSS data on landholdings have many problems, including a large and increasing measure of under-reporting of large landholdings.¹

Tables 2 and 3 show data on the distribution of operational holdings of land managed by Adivasi households by size-classes of landholdings, from 1987–88 to 2011–12. These tables show that the share of households and the share of land cultivated by them fell in all size-classes above marginal holdings (0 to 1 hectare), and that the proportion of Adivasi households with large holdings was negligible.

NATURE OF DISPOSSESSION AMONG ADIVASIS

The impact of neo-liberal policies in intensifying differentiation among rural populations dependent on land is somewhat different as far as Adivasi communities

¹ See Rawal (2013).

are concerned. Here it is characterised by the takeover of land and resources of the community *as a whole* by exploiter classes among non-tribal communities. To state the core issue more explicitly: notwithstanding regional variations, capital accumulation in tribal areas is, in the main, a process by which the land and labour of the Adivasi people is expropriated by non-Adivasis.

Experience at the ground level shows that Adivasi households have lost land in the main to non-Adivasis through state-sponsored appropriation and also as a consequence of illegal land-grabbing. This constitutes one of the biggest projects of accumulation in neo-liberal India. It has two aspects. The first is the violent encroachment by the state in Adivasi areas, including Fifth Schedule areas. The Fifth Schedule provides protection to Adivasi areas by prohibiting the sale or transfer of land held by Adivasis in these areas to non-Adivasis. At present, the Fifth Schedule areas fall within the States of Odisha, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Himachal Pradesh. Many of these areas are rich in minerals. Coal, iron ore, and bauxite, as well as other minor minerals, lie beneath or on land owned (or possessed) by Adivasis either individually or as common property resources. In the name of state control over mineral resources, mineral-rich land has been taken over by the state and “leased” to the private sector, including foreign and domestic corporations. Big irrigation and power projects have also been established in the Adivasi areas whereby land held by the Adivasi people has been submerged. Such policies have led to large-scale displacement and dispossession.

Common property resources, which are very important to the livelihoods and survival of Adivasis, are an important part of the land wealth that has been lost by Adivasi households. The loss of these resources does not show up in government statistics.

A substantial number of Adivasi people live outside the Scheduled areas, and have little constitutional or legal protection. The share of Adivasi people living in States not covered by either the Fifth or Sixth Schedule increased from 17.5 per cent in 2001 to 18.8 per cent in 2011 (Table 4). There was also a substantial Adivasi population living outside Scheduled areas in States with Fifth and Sixth Scheduled areas. In Andhra Pradesh, for example, the number of people of the Scheduled Tribes living outside Scheduled areas (referred to as “plains tribals”) as a proportion of all Adivasis in the State was around 52 per cent. Substantial sections of Adivasis thus have no constitutional or legal protection.

With rapid urbanisation taking place across the States and the encouragement to real-estate projects that accompanies such urbanisation, Adivasis living around urban areas have lost their land either through illegal dispossession or through sale of their land at low prices. This is the case, for example, around Ranchi (in Jharkhand), Raipur (in Chhattisgarh), and Bhubaneswar (in Odisha), where struggles

Table 4 Population of Adivasis in States with and without Fifth Schedule or Sixth Schedule areas, India, 2001 and 2011 in number and per cent

States	2001		2011	
	Adivasi population	Per cent of total population	Adivasi population	Per cent of total population
States with Fifth Schedule or Sixth Schedule areas				
Himachal Pradesh	244587	0.3	392126	0.4
Rajasthan	7097706	8.4	9238534	8.9
Arunachal Pradesh	705158	0.8	951821	0.9
Nagaland	1774026	2.1	1710973	1.6
Manipur	741141	0.9	902740	0.9
Mizoram	839310	1.0	1036115	1.0
Tripura	993426	1.2	1166813	1.1
Meghalaya	1992862	2.4	2555861	2.5
Jharkhand	7087068	8.4	8645042	8.3
Odisha	8145081	9.7	9590756	9.2
Chhattisgarh	6616596	7.8	7822902	7.5
Madhya Pradesh	12233474	14.5	15316784	14.7
Gujarat	7481160	8.9	8917174	8.6
Maharashtra	8577276	10.2	10510213	10.1
Andhra Pradesh	5024104	6.0	5918073	5.7
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	29469	0.03	28530	0.03
<i>Total</i>	<i>69582444</i>	<i>82.5</i>	<i>84704457</i>	<i>81.2</i>
States with no Fifth Schedule or Sixth Schedule areas				
Jammu & Kashmir	1105979	1.3	1493299	1.4
Uttarakhand	256129	0.3	291903	0.3
Uttar Pradesh	107963	0.1	1134273	1.1
Bihar	758351	0.9	1336573	1.3
Sikkim	111405	0.1	206360	0.2
Assam	3308570	3.9	3884371	3.7
West Bengal	4406794	5.2	5296953	5.1
Daman & Diu	13997	0.02	15363	0.01
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	137225	0.2	178564	0.2
Karnataka	3463986	4.1	4248987	4.1
Goa	566	0.0	149275	0.1
Lakshadweep	57321	0.1	61120	0.1
Kerala	364189	0.4	484839	0.5
Tamil Nadu	651321	0.8	794697	0.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>14743796</i>	<i>17.5</i>	<i>19576577</i>	<i>18.8</i>
All India	84326240	100	104281034	100

Note: Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Puducherry do not have any Scheduled Tribe population.

Source: Census of India, 2001 and 2011.

of the Adivasi people to retain and protect their land from the real-estate mafia (often helped by government policies) have highlighted the issue of unjust, and often illegal, dispossession.

Research on the economic conditions of Adivasis living outside Scheduled areas would help us to better understand the process of dispossession of the Adivasi people with respect to land. Answers to the questions of which sections of the Adivasi people are losing land, and which sections of the Adivasi population are acquiring land, would help a great deal in understanding the process of capitalist development in tribal areas. The NSS data are not helpful in this regard; we need more primary data-based information on this subject.

USE OF WAGE LABOUR ON ADIVASI LANDHOLDINGS

Another issue with respect to the development of capitalist relations in Adivasi areas is the use of wage labour on Adivasi landholdings. One of the consequences of the small size of Adivasi landholdings is that the levels of utilisation of wage labour are relatively low. Labour assistance or exchange labour is still common among Adivasi households, even in a State like Andhra Pradesh where capitalist development in agriculture is relatively high.

There are, of course, regional variations in the forms of labour on operational holdings. The situation is quite different, for example, in the North-Eastern States, many of which are Adivasi-majority States. In Tripura, a section of Adivasi households that own rubber plantations – a development enabled by the Left Front government's pro-Adivasi policies – does employ wage labour. Here a contradiction may arise between Adivasi land owners, and Adivasi or non-Adivasi workers. In Rajasthan, 13 per cent of the population is Adivasi, and approximately 6 per cent of the State's population belongs to the Meena community, which is classified as a Scheduled Tribe. The Meena population is considered to be much better off than other Adivasi communities, and includes a section of big landlords who employ both Adivasi and non-Adivasi labour on their farms. More studies are needed in these States in order to gauge the extent of use of wage labour on Adivasi farms, and the implications of new types of land ownership and cultivation for political movements among the people.

TRIBAL CULTIVATORS AND TRIBAL WAGE LABOURERS

The process of proletarianisation of substantial sections of Adivasis is brought out clearly by data on the sharp increase in the number of workers and the decrease in the number of cultivators in a period when the work participation rate of Adivasis was higher than of other social groups.

In 2011, 65 per cent of rural Adivasi men and 54 per cent of rural Adivasi women were workers; whereas among social groups other than Dalits (Scheduled Castes,

SCs) and Adivasis, rural work participation rates were 62 per cent for men and 32 per cent for women (Table 5).

The proportion of cultivators among Adivasi male workers declined by about 9.5 percentage points between 2001 and 2011. Among Adivasi women workers, the proportion of cultivators declined by 11.3 percentage points. The decline in the proportion of Adivasi cultivators was much sharper than the decline for other social groups. Correspondingly, in the same period, the proportion of agricultural workers increased by 8.3 percentage points among Adivasi male workers and 9.4 percentage points among Adivasi women workers. This rate of increase was also much higher among Adivasis than among other social groups (Table 6).

The importance of wage employment for Adivasis is seen in the NSS data on employment as well. Table 7 shows that in 2009–10, 55 per cent of rural male Adivasi

Table 5 *Proportion of workers in population aged 7 years and above, men and women, by caste, rural and urban, India, 2011 in per cent*

	Men			Women		
	Scheduled Tribes	Scheduled Castes	Others	Scheduled Tribes	Scheduled Castes	Others
Rural	65.2	62.4	61.7	54.4	36.9	31.5
Urban	57.3	59.9	61.1	27.7	21.1	16.5
Total	64.4	61.8	61.5	51.6	33.1	26.1

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Table 6 *Proportion of different categories of workers among total (main and marginal) workers, by caste, rural and urban India, 2001 and 2011 per cent*

	Cultivators		Agricultural labourers		Workers in household enterprises		Other workers	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
<i>Rural male</i>								
Scheduled Tribes	51.1	41.6	32.0	40.3	1.4	1.2	15.5	16.9
Scheduled Castes	25.6	19.7	46.5	50.8	3.0	2.3	25.0	27.2
Others	44.7	38.3	22.1	29.1	3.3	2.9	29.9	29.8
<i>Rural female</i>								
Scheduled Tribes	42.6	31.3	45.9	55.3	2.8	2.3	8.7	11.2
Scheduled Castes	19.9	15.5	61.8	63.0	5.1	4.4	13.1	17.1
Others	40.8	32.2	36.7	42.2	6.4	5.9	16.2	19.7

Source: Census of India, 2001 and 2011.

Table 7 Proportion of workers whose principal and subsidiary status occupation was casual labour, Adivasi and other workers aged 15–60 years, rural and urban India, 2009–10 in per cent

Social group	Male			Female		
	Casual workers (principal status)	Casual workers (subsidiary status)	Casual workers (principal or subsidiary status)	Casual workers (principal status)	Casual workers (subsidiary status)	Casual workers (principal or subsidiary status)
Rural						
Adivasi	44.8	10.1	54.9	46.4	12.2	58.6
Other (non-Dalit/ Adivasi/Muslim)	30.2	4.3	34.4	38.2	6.2	44.4
All	39.4	4.9	44.3	44.8	6.6	51.4
Urban						
Adivasi	29.3	1.4	30.7	35.1	1.8	36.9
Other (non-Dalit/ Adivasi/Muslim)	13.1	0.4	13.5	15.6	0.4	16.0
All	17.2	0.4	17.7	19.9	0.7	20.5

Source: Based on unit-level data from the 66th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO's) Survey of Employment and Unemployment.

workers and 59 per cent of rural female Adivasi workers in the age-group 15–60 years worked as casual wage labourers. These proportions for Adivasis were considerably higher than the corresponding proportions for the population as a whole.

MULTIPLE OCCUPATIONS

Most sections of the rural poor in India have to take to multiple strategies for family survival; these take the form of a combination of various types of work and income-generation activities. The need for such strategies is acute for Adivasi households because of their specific geographical locations, which provide very limited alternative work opportunities. Land loss for Adivasi families or the non-viability of cultivation of their small plots of land have a very big impact on their lives. There has been an intensification of uncertainty in Adivasi livelihoods – an uncertainty linked to land loss, the unviability of cultivation, decreasing work-days in agriculture, and, consequently, dependence on casual work. There has been large-scale casualisation of the Adivasi work force.

As shown earlier, 33 per cent of Adivasi households owned or possessed landholdings that were between 0.025 acre to 1 acre in extent, and of them, only 19 per cent actually cultivated these holdings. Households that cultivate their small holdings (or leave them uncultivated) are likely to combine farming with wage labour, shifting through the year between family labour on the farm, agricultural wage work, work as migrant labour and daily manual non-agricultural labour. In such circumstances of occupational fluidity, classifying a worker into a single occupational category of “cultivator” or “wage worker” can be both difficult and inaccurate. Further, to classify a household with a holding of less than 1 acre as primarily dependent on cultivation can lead to an underestimation of households that are dependent on wage labour.

According to the NSS data, 17 per cent of male Adivasi workers and 20 per cent of women Adivasi workers combined cultivation on their household land with casual wage labour. The proportion of workers who combined cultivation with wage labour was higher among Adivasis than among all other social groups (Table 8).

The NSS data also show that, among Adivasi workers, there was a decrease in households engaged primarily in agricultural labour, from 38 per cent in 1987–88 to 33 per cent in 2009–10, while there was a small increase in those engaged primarily in non-agricultural wage labour, from 12 per cent in 1987–88 to 13 per cent in 2009–10 (Table 9). Non-agricultural work comprised mainly tasks in construction, brick kilns, and contract work in mining operations.

Further, the proportion of regular workers among Adivasis, 8 per cent, was the lowest among all social groups; and the proportion of casual workers among Adivasis, 44 per cent, was second only to the Scheduled Castes.

Table 8 *Proportion of workers who combined self-employment in agriculture and allied activities with casual labour, men and women aged 15–60 years, by social group, rural India, 2009–10 in per cent*

	Men	Women
Dalits	11	12
Adivasis	17	20
Muslims	6	6
Others	8	12

Source: Based on unit-level data from the 66th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO's) Survey of Employment and Unemployment.

Table 9 *Proportion of Adivasi households whose primary occupation was agricultural labour, non-agricultural labour, and self-employment in agriculture, rural India, 1987–88 to 2009–10 in per cent*

Year	Agricultural labour	Non-agricultural labour	Self-employment in agriculture
1987–88	38.1	11.6	37.8
1993–94	37.8	10.1	38.1
1999–2000	39.6	8.8	36.3
2004–05	34.0	11.3	39.3
2009–10	33.6	13.1	37.1

Source: Based on unit-level data from various rounds of the National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO's) Survey of Employment and Unemployment.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) could have been an important policy instrument to address the issue of vulnerability of the Adivasi work force as far as earnings and work conditions are concerned. The website of the Ministry of Rural Development shows that of those who got work under NREGA between March 2012 and March 2013, 17 per cent belonged to Scheduled Tribe households. The average number of days of employment in 2013, however, was only 29. Government intervention against unemployment and joblessness among Adivasi communities in rural areas has been weak and highly inadequate.

NREGA has also been unable to help Adivasi workers escape the migration trap. There are numerous studies which show the existence of a system of bonded labour among Adivasi communities. The practice of labour contractors providing advance payments to Adivasi workers under extremely exploitative conditions is highlighted by the recent incident of violence against two migrant workers in Odisha, a Dalit and an Adivasi. Twelve migrant workers were given an advance and told that they were to work in Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh), but they were taken instead to a brick kiln in Raipur (Chhattisgarh). They protested and although ten of the twelve workers managed to escape, two were caught by the contractor and their right hands cut off as “punishment.”

According to the NSSO's Surveys on Migration for the years 1993 to 2007–08, the proportion of migrant households among STs is higher than among other communities. The same data show that STs were the single largest group among female migrants. A study conducted by the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi, between 2009–11 across 20 States in the country, shows that Adivasi women comprised more than 26 per cent of migrant women workers in rural destinations and 21 per cent in urban destinations. It shows that the most distinctive feature of Adivasi women's labour migration is their concentration in short-term and circulatory migration – that is, migrating from and returning to their villages every year, and sometimes more than once a year (see Mazumdar 2014). However, official policies do not recognise this large and vulnerable migratory work force.

There is also an increase in the flow of young Adivasi women to urban areas to work as live-in domestic workers. The absence of a legal framework in India to protect the rights of domestic workers has a direct impact on them. Recent cases in Delhi of the torture of young Adivasi domestic workers by their employers point to the urgency of establishing measures to prevent such abuse and protect the workers.

WAGES OF RURAL ADIVASI WORKERS

In a situation where the loss of land and traditional livelihoods is forcing Adivasis into the labour market, the low wages earned by Adivasi workers as well as the dreadful work conditions they encounter are another cruel aspect of the accumulation of profit through the exploitation of cheap Adivasi labour. The data in all the survey rounds of the NSS clearly show that wages for Adivasi men and women workers were low, and lower than the wages of workers from other social groups. In 1999–2000, the daily wage earned by an Adivasi male worker in an agricultural occupation was just Rs 33; a decade later, in 2009–10, the average wage increased to Rs 73. In non-agricultural operations the daily wage was higher, Rs 54 in 1999–2000 and increasing to Rs 111 in 2009–10 (Table 10). If we look at wages at constant (2009–10) prices, we find that in 1999–2000, the average wage of an Adivasi male worker in an agricultural occupation was less by Rs 13 than the corresponding average wage for workers from all social groups; in 2009–10, this gap increased to Rs 14. In non-agricultural occupations, the average wage gap between male Adivasi workers and workers from other social groups increased from Rs 11 in 1999–2000 to Rs 18 in 2009–10 (Table 11).

The gap between the amount earned by an Adivasi woman and women from other social groups was lower than the corresponding gap for men, showing the reality of general exploitation of female labour across social categories. At 2009–10 prices, an Adivasi woman earned Rs 45 a day in 1999–2000 in an agricultural occupation (compared to an average of Rs 49 earned by women from all social groups). In 2009–10, Adivasi women workers' average wage rate went up to Rs 60 (and that for women from all social groups was Rs 65). In non-agricultural operations, in 2009–10, the average wage rate was Rs 81 for Adivasi women and Rs 85 for all women (Table 11).

Table 10 Daily earnings in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, male and female workers aged 15 years and above, rural labour households, India in rupees, at current prices

	Agricultural occupations			Non-agricultural occupations		
	1999–2000	2004–05	2009–10	1999–2000	2004–05	2009–10
<i>Men</i>						
Scheduled Tribes	33	42	73	54	55	111
Scheduled Castes	42	49	88	61	72	120
Other Backward Classes	41	50	89	67	81	136
All	41	48	87	65	75	129
<i>Women</i>						
Scheduled Tribes	26	32	60	34	43	81
Scheduled Castes	30	35	66	37	44	85
Other Backward Classes	28	34	65	87	41	86
All	29	34	65	56	43	85

Sources: Data for 1999–2000 and 2004–05 taken from the Rural Labour Enquiry report (Labour Bureau, 2010). Data for 2009–10 based on unit-level data from the 66th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO's) Survey on Employment and Unemployment using the same method as in the Rural Labour Enquiries.

Table 11 Daily earnings in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, male and female workers aged 15 years and above, rural labour households, India in rupees, at 2009–10 prices

	Agricultural occupations			Non-agricultural occupations		
	1999–2000	2004–05	2009–10	1999–2000	2004–05	2009–10
<i>Men</i>						
Scheduled Tribes	57	65	73	93	85	111
Scheduled Castes	72	76	88	105	111	120
Other Backward Classes	70	77	89	115	126	136
All	70	74	87	111	116	129
<i>Women</i>						
Scheduled Tribes	45	49	60	59	67	81
Scheduled Castes	51	54	66	63	68	85
Other Backward Classes	49	52	65	149	64	86
All	49	52	65	96	66	85

Sources: Data for 1999–2000 and 2004–05 taken from the Rural Labour Enquiry report (Labour Bureau, 2010). Data for 2009–10 based on unit-level data from the 66th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO's) Survey on Employment and Unemployment using the same method as in the Rural Labour Enquiries, converted to 2009–10 prices using CPIAL (consumer price index for agricultural labourers).

MINOR FOREST PRODUCE AND LIVELIHOODS

Gathering of minor forest produce (MFP) is an important part of Adivasi livelihoods. Collection of MFP includes all forest produce – grasses, bamboo, seeds, plants, roots, leaves, honey, gum, etc. – except timber.

Estimates have been made by various official committees of the number of Adivasi households that depend on collecting MFP as part of their livelihoods. The sub-group of the Planning Commission for the Twelfth Plan looking into issues connected with MFP held that half of all Adivasi households were involved in this activity (Planning Commission, 2011). The Haque Committee set up by the Ministry of Panchayat Raj (2011) estimated that between 20 per cent to 40 per cent of the income of forest dwellers came from the sale of MFP, while other estimates placed it at between 35 per cent to 80 per cent in certain regions (Planning Commission, 2011).

At the same time, both committees noted that deforestation, a decrease in trees on which some types of MFP grow, climate change, and the absence of a national policy on minimum procurement prices for MFP have caused a decline in incomes earned through collecting minor forest produce, a task done mainly by women. While systems of barter of MFP for consumer goods have more or less ceased to exist, marketing of MFP has not succeeded because of a lack of infrastructural support. Exploitation of the Adivasi people by middlemen and traders in this sphere is rampant. The government has proposed that minimum support prices for minor forest produce should be introduced, but no financial allocations have been made in this respect.

Even as Adivasis have to pay higher prices for the commodities they buy from the market, the prices of commodities they collect or cultivate are not increasing. The pricing of these products is an important issue. At present there is no scientific basis for fixation of prices and in most cases the prices of MFP are even less than the labour costs involved, bringing down the income of a day's work in collection to less than the minimum daily wage. The price of MFP has little relation to the price of the end-product in which it is a component. In most States there are very few schemes for value addition, so that the Adivasis do not benefit from the market prices of the products.

In the absence of strong and sustained government support for a minimum support price for MFP, traders and middlemen exploit the Adivasis by giving them low prices. To take an example from Araku in Andhra Pradesh, in 2013, for 50 kg of tamarind, an Adivasi collector was paid only Rs 15 a kg, when the market price was around Rs 80 a kg. On average, earnings were just a little over Rs 90 per person for two days' work.

Or, take the example of tendu leaves, which are used for beedi manufacture. For every 50 leaves collected, the price in 2013 in Araku in Andhra Pradesh was 50 paise

to 65 paise. The price, which varies from State to State, could be as low as 35–40 paise. The trader who bought the leaves sold them for not less than Rs 1.20 to Rs 2, depending on the quality. Workers' struggles – in Andhra Pradesh, for example – have resulted in higher earnings.

In West Bengal, during the rule of the Left Front government, some steps were taken with regard to the production and sale of medicinal plants. The government stepped in to procure medicinal plants grown by tribal communities in some districts, with quite substantial benefits to these communities. For *triphala* – a compound of *amla* (*Phyllanthus emblica*), *baheera* (*Terminalia bellirica*), and *harra* (*Terminalia chebula*) – the difference between the government's price and the trader's price was substantial. In 2008, while traders paid Rs 5 per kg of *amla*, the government offered a price of Rs 25 per kg. Similarly, for *baheera*, while traders paid Rs 2–3 per kg, the government's price was Rs 15 per kg. And for *harra*, while the trader's price was Rs 8 per kg, the government's price was Rs 16 per kg.

Thus, the demand for a central minimum support price for MFP is of great relevance to tribal communities.

In many States, Adivasis have been in confrontation with Forest Departments because of the latter's utterly anti-Adivasi attitude. They often prevent Adivasis altogether from going into the forest to collect minor forest produce.

ISSUES CONNECTED WITH THE FOREST RIGHTS ACT, 2006

The rights of Adivasi communities to non-timber forest produce and free access to forests was one of the issues addressed by the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (referred to as the Forest Rights Act). The Act specifically mandates registration of common community resources of Adivasi communities. Provisions of the Act have however been sabotaged in various ways in several States.

The Left parties, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in particular, played an important role in the struggle for enactment of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. The Act, which was opposed by a range of forces – from fundamentalist environment lobbies to the timber mafia – was meant to address the injustices faced from colonial times by Adivasi communities, who were termed and treated as encroachers on their own land in the forests. The Act was to recognise, through the issue of land *patta* (title-deeds), forest land that was occupied by Adivasis and traditional forest dwellers from a specified cut-off date. In an act of political chicanery, the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the Centre added a clause at the last minute that differentiated between Adivasi forest dwellers and others. The cut-off date for Adivasis was 2005, as suggested by the Select Committee of Parliament. But the cut-off date for other traditional forest dwellers was kept at 75 years prior to

the implementation of the Act – that is, non-Adivasi traditional forest dwellers had to prove that they had been in occupation of the land for at least three generations. A large number of non-Adivasi traditional forest dwellers belong to the Scheduled Castes. At one stroke, this clause eliminated their rights, since it is near-impossible to provide evidence of continuous occupation of 75 years.

Even as far as recognition of Adivasi rights is concerned, the experience with respect to the implementation of the FRA has been negative and has once again shown up an anti-Adivasi bias. Many Adivasis living on forest land did not have Scheduled Tribe certificates, without which their claims were not considered (it remains difficult to obtain these certificates). Recent orders of the Government of India regarding quick environmental clearances for industrial projects, including on forest land, violate the provisions of the FRA, which strictly enjoin recognition and settlement of the rights of tribals and traditional forest dwellers before any project can be planned. The FRA is perceived by the government as a barrier to its plans for takeover of forest and tribal land.

Till September 2013, according to information available on the website of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 3.5 million (35.39 lakh) individual and community claims had been made for title-deeds (*patta*) in occupied forest land. Of these, only 1.4 million (14.06 lakh) claims have been accepted and title-deeds issued, which means that 60 per cent of the claims have been rejected. The number of community claims were over 71,000, of which the number accepted were 18,000. The extent of land for which individual and community title-deeds have been given, it is claimed, is around 5.4 million (54 lakh) acres. This figure, however, has been given by the State governments and has been accepted by the Central government without any independent verification, and does not conform to the reality on the ground where the land titles issued are far less than is being claimed.

It is noteworthy that in the ranking of States that have successfully implemented the Act, two States that have been led by Left-led governments (namely, Tripura and Kerala) occupy the first and second places. Tripura accepted 66 per cent of the claims and Kerala, 61 per cent. In contrast, the record in States with governments led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is poor: Gujarat accepted 22 per cent of claims (the lowest ratio in India), and Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh accepted 37 and 41 per cent of claims. With regard to States ruled by Congress Party-led governments, 50 per cent of claims were accepted in Andhra Pradesh, 48 per cent in Rajasthan, and about 30 per cent in Maharashtra.

Since there is no disaggregation of the number of claims that have been rejected, it is not possible to accurately analyse the ratio of acceptance of Adivasi claims. However, the high rate of rejections in States where there is a substantial Adivasi population, such as Gujarat and Maharashtra, indicates that Adivasi communities have been denied their rights under the FRA.

The law has also been subverted with respect to registration of community property rights. For example, in Andhra Pradesh, instead of registering the list of households in any particular village that have the right to a community resource, the government has registered all community resources, amounting to more than half of the land given under the FRA, in the name of an organisation called the Van Suraksha Samiti (Forest Protection Committee). Over the years, such committees have been acting as an arm of the Forest Department, and have snatched away the right of Adivasis to decide how to use community resources. Registering community resources in the name of the Van Suraksha Samiti makes a mockery of the law.

One example of the authorities' contempt for the law comes from Andhra Pradesh where the Forest Department recently issued a poster that was pasted all across Adivasi areas in the Telangana region, warning Adivasis against traditional "*podu*" or shifting cultivation. They were threatened with imprisonment or a Rs 10 lakh fine if they continued with this method of cultivation. The FRA, by contrast, specifically recognises traditional methods of cultivation of Adivasi communities.

Another injustice associated with the implementation of the law is that even where an Adivasi household has been given a title-deed under the Act, banks do not advance loans against the title-deed. Earlier, banks refused to accept land as collateral for loans to Adivasi cultivators living in Fifth Schedule areas since such land was non-transferable.

Specific plans with adequate allocations must be drafted in order to develop land secured through the FRA. In Tripura the State government has tried to implement such a programme through the development of Adivasi-controlled and Adivasi-owned rubber plantations, which, as a consequence of favourable global prices, has led to significant increases in income for Adivasi families. Plans to develop fruit and horticulture are also being implemented in some places. In Andhra Pradesh, the government has encouraged cashew plantations, which, if properly established, can lead to increased incomes.

SOME OTHER POLICY ISSUES

The livelihood patterns of people of the Scheduled Tribes are being changed by force. The state, excluding itself from the principle that no Adivasi land can legally be bought or taken over by non-Adivasis, has forcibly acquired Adivasi land, and handed it over to private corporations for mining, power, and irrigation projects. Arbitrary declaration of areas inhabited by Adivasis as wild-life areas or sanctuaries without recognising their land rights has also led to displacement.

As far as mineral-rich areas are concerned, the first and most important requirement is recognition that Adivasi people have a right to the mineral wealth that exists in such areas. The popular slogan of "*jal, zameen, jangal*" (water, land, forest) requires,

at the present juncture, an additional component – converting it to “*jal, zameen, jangal, khani*” (water, land, forest, minerals). Opposition to the handing over of mineral-rich areas to private corporations and the demand for nationalisation must be accompanied by the demand to recognise the stake the Adivasi people have in minerals that lie in the land owned by them and in the Fifth Schedule areas.

The provision of informed consent by Adivasi populations through gram sabhas before any project is undertaken should be a mandatory one. Such a provision for democratic governance with respect to land held by Adivasi populations is reflected to some extent in the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA), but it has been violated repeatedly. The Supreme Court had to intervene in the Niyamgiri project in Odisha to ensure that gram sabhas were consulted. As is now widely known, the gram sabhas rejected the takeover of their land and of their mountain deity almost unanimously.

URBAN AREAS AND MIDDLE CLASSES

In the two decades between the Censuses of 1991 and 2011, the proportion of Adivasi households living in urban areas increased from around 3 per cent to 11 per cent. Urban Adivasis include those sections that have been able to secure jobs through constitutionally mandated quotas (although the numbers of those employed in reserved jobs are less than the legal entitlement). People employed in Class III jobs or in the educational sector as teachers form part of the growing, though still small, Adivasi middle class. Their main employers are the Central or State governments, or the public sector. With increasing privatisation, however, job opportunities for Adivasi youth in reserved jobs are shrinking. Reservations in the private sector and vocational training are thus very important issues for Adivasi youth.

A growing number of young Adivasi people now receive some formal education. As per the NSS data for 2011-12, of all urban Adivasi men aged 18–40 years, about 74.5 per cent had studied up to middle school or more, about 28 per cent had completed secondary school or more, and 16 per cent had completed higher secondary school or more. Among women in the same age-group, about 29 per cent had studied up to middle school or more, 15 per cent had studied up to secondary school or more, and about 9 per cent had completed higher secondary school or more (Table 12). Although the gap between ST students and students from other social groups is still very high, both in terms of enrolment and in terms of drop-out rates between Classes 1 and 10, the trend is towards sending Adivasi children to school despite all hardships. There is a critical need to take up the issues of Adivasi students and, as mentioned before, to address the issue of educated unemployed Adivasi youth.

According to the 2011 Census, around 15 per cent of rural Adivasi households and around 64 per cent of urban Adivasi households had television-sets; the

Table 12 *Proportion of Adivasi youth (aged 18–40 years) by levels of education, rural and urban, by sex, India, 2011–12 in per cent*

		Level of education			
		Middle school or more	Secondary school or more	Higher secondary or more	Graduate or more
Rural	Males	43.8	23.4	12.7	3.6
	Females	25.0	12.0	6.1	1.4
Urban	Males	74.5	56.7	39.9	19.1
	Females	59.8	42.0	30.0	12.8
Total	Males	47.8	27.8	16.2	5.6
	Females	28.9	15.4	8.8	2.6

Source: Based on unit-level data from the 68th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation’s (NSSO’s) Survey on Employment and Unemployment.

corresponding figures among other social groups (other than Dalits and Adivasis) was 38 per cent of rural households and 79 per cent of urban households. Although these are small proportions, the impact of the mass media has spread among Adivasi communities, particularly in urban areas. In 2011, 35 per cent of tribal households had telephones (the corresponding proportion for other social groups was 69 per cent). Road links between Adivasi areas, Fifth Schedule areas, and urban centres have also increased, allowing for more easy flow of dominant bourgeois influences, which affect Adivasi cultures and ways of life. Changes in ways of life and thinking, and in aspirations are an inevitable corollary of increasing contact with the “outside” world.

INTENSIFIED DEPRIVATION

While these changes have to be taken into account, it is important to remember that deprivation, particularly among rural Adivasi populations, is very great and that inequalities have intensified.

Over 50 per cent of rural Adivasi women and 32 per cent of rural Adivasi men were illiterate in 2011; the corresponding proportions among persons belonging to other social groups were about 32 per cent for rural women and 17 per cent for rural men (Table 13).

In 2011, only 1 per cent of rural Adivasi households had treated tap water, electricity, and latrines in their houses. Of course, the overall situation in rural India in this regard is also very poor, with only 5 per cent of households having access to these three basic amenities (Table 14). Data from the 2011 Census show that only 3 per cent of rural Adivasi households had treated tap water in their homes, less than 5 per cent used electricity as the main source of lighting, about 16 per cent had any kind of latrine in their homes, 1.7 per cent had a bathroom, and

Table 13 Proportion of literates among population aged 7 years and above, males, females, and persons, ST and non-SC/ST population, rural, urban, and total, India, 2011 in per cent

	Males		Females		Persons	
	ST	Non-SC/ST	ST	Non-SC/ST	ST	Non-SC/ST
Urban	66.8	79.9	46.9	61.1	56.9	70.7
Rural	68.5	83.5	49.4	68.2	59.0	76.1
Total	83.2	89.7	70.3	81.0	76.8	85.5

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Table 14 Proportion of households that had treated tap water within the premises of their homes, and access to electricity and a toilet in their homes, by caste, rural and urban, India, 2011 in per cent

	Scheduled Tribes	Scheduled Castes	Others	All
Rural	1.2	3.5	6.0	4.9
Urban	33.1	33.5	48.0	45.3
Total	5.6	11.2	21.1	17.8

Source: Census of India, 2011

1.7 per cent had closed drainage in their homes. Only 2.6 per cent of rural Adivasi households had an indoor kitchen and access to smokeless fuel (kerosene, LPG, biogas, etc.) (Table 15).

Table 16 is based on data from the 49th and 69th Rounds of the National Sample Survey. It shows that progress in provision of basic amenities like drinking water and sanitation between 1993 and 2012 was dismal, especially for Adivasi households in rural areas. The proportion of rural Adivasi households that had access to tap water within their homes was 1.1 per cent in 1993 and only 9.5 per cent in 2012. Similarly, the proportion of rural Adivasi households that had a latrine in their homes was 0.6 per cent in 1993 and only 8.8 per cent in 2012. The proportion of rural Adivasi households that had pucca or underground drains to dispose of waste water from their homes was 0.8 per cent in 1993 and 4.1 per cent in 2012.

Table 17 shows that 41 per cent of rural Adivasi households did not have any of the basic assets (such as bicycle, radio, or TV) that were enumerated in the 2011 Census; the corresponding figure for other social groups (other than SC and ST) was about 19 per cent. In urban areas, 13.5 per cent of Adivasi households and 6 per cent of households belonging to other social groups did not have such assets.

Even by the estimates of poverty of the Planning Commission, 47 per cent of Adivasi households are below the poverty line, the highest proportion among all social groups.

Table 15 Proportion of houses having access to treated tap water, electricity for lighting, latrine, covered bathroom, covered drainage, and indoor kitchen with smokeless fuel, by caste, rural and urban, India, 2011 in per cent

	Get tap water from treated source within premises	Use electricity as main source of lighting	Have latrine within premises	Have covered bathroom within premises	Have covered drainage for waste water	Use smokeless fuel and cook in a separate indoor kitchen	
Scheduled Tribes	Rural Urban	3.0 38.2	4.6 86.5	15.8 66.0	1.0 63.5	1.7 33.9	2.6 50.2
Scheduled Castes	Rural Urban	7.9 39.6	4.9 86.9	22.8 65.9	16.1 61.5	3.6 33.8	4.9 47.0
Others	Rural Urban	10.3 51.6	78.6 94.0	35.6 84.8	32.3 81.0	7.1 46.9	12.7 68.0

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Table 16 Proportion of households that have tap water, latrines and covered drainage in their houses, by caste group, rural and urban, India, 1993 and 2012

Social group	Proportion of households having access to tap water in their house		Proportion of households having a latrine (with a septic tank or flush) in their house		Proportion of households having a covered pucca or underground drainage from their house	
	1993	2012	1993	2012	1993	2012
<i>Rural</i>						
Scheduled tribes	1.1	9.5	0.6	8.8	0.8	4.1
Scheduled castes	2.3	14.1	1.6	11	1.1	11
Others	5.9	18.8	6.5	22.9	3.1	17.8
All households	4.6	16.8	4.8	18.8	2.4	14.8
<i>Urban</i>						
Scheduled tribes	19.9	49.4	17.2	53.3	13.6	46.5
Scheduled castes	23.2	45.3	16	37.6	18.2	47
Others	40.6	57.8	38.1	60.8	31.1	63
All households	37.4	55.7	34.2	57.3	28.6	60.1

Source: Based on unit-level data from 49th round NSSO survey on Housing Condition and Migration and 69th round NSSO survey on Drinking Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Housing Condition.

Table 17 Proportion of households having specified assets, ST and non-SC/ST households, rural, urban, and total, India, 2011 in per cent

	Transistor/Radio		Television		Telephone		Computer		Bicycle		Two-wheeler automobile		Four-wheeler automobile		None of the specified assets	
	ST	Non-SC/ST	ST	Non-SC/ST	ST	Non-SC/ST	ST	Non-SC/ST	ST	Non-SC/ST	ST	Non-SC/ST	ST	Non-SC/ST	ST	Non-SC/ST
Rural	13.0	18.9	15.2	37.8	29.1	60.9	3.8	5.5	36.2	48.1	6.4	17.5	0.9	2.8	41.1	18.7
Urban	21.9	26.5	64.2	78.8	71.0	84.5	14.2	20.2	37.6	41.9	25.4	37.8	6.2	10.9	13.5	5.9
Total	14.2	21.6	21.9	52.5	34.8	69.4	5.2	10.8	36.4	45.9	9.0	24.8	1.6	5.7	37.3	14.1

Source: Census of India, 2011.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This note attempts to describe some of the changes taking place in the livelihoods of Adivasi communities in the context of the growth of capitalism in Adivasi-inhabited areas in India. Passing mention is made of some of the government policies that have permitted and driven these changes. The paper also deals with the subversion by the state of the constitutional provisions, such as they are, that afford some protection to Adivasi communities. More detailed studies that explore the links between specific policies, and their impact on living conditions and social structures, would be useful in taking our analysis forward.

Capitalist development has had a distinct impact on Adivasi identity and culture. At present there is a five-point framework officially used for the identification of Adivasi communities. The framework is already outdated. For example, among the criteria for recognising an Adivasi are “shyness of contact with the community at large,” “geographical isolation,” and “indication of primitive traits.” There is a paradox here: Adivasi populations are subjected to deprivation and dispossession; at the same time, that dispossession and change in habitat cause changes that, in turn, become the cause for depriving them of rights to benefits.

There must be suitable organisations to address the multiple issues that accompany the changing livelihoods of Adivasis, that is, their problems as peasants, workers, students, women, migrants, citizens in urban India, and so on. Organisations working among various sections of the working people have to re-examine their strategies to better highlight the specific problems faced by Adivasi workers and peasants. A concerted, unified, and united effort to defend, protect, and take forward the rights of Adivasis is an urgent need.

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