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Marginals within the marginalised: Exploring the changes in occupational pattern among Adivasi women in the context of land alienation in India

John Kujur^{a,*}, Udaya S Mishra^b, S. Irudaya Rajan^c, Hrushikesh Mallick^d

^a GITAM (Deemed to be University), Hyderabad Campus, India

^b International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India

^c International Institute of Migration and Development, Thiruvananthapuram, India

^d Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, India



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the changes in occupational patterns and addresses the problem of transitioning from paid activities to unpaid activities among Adivasi women in the context of land alienation. We use data sources, viz. the 50th and 68th rounds of Employment and Unemployment Survey, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2022–23) and the Time Use Survey (2019) of the NSSO. We apply simple descriptive statistics, binary and multinomial logistic regression models to derive reasonable inferences. The study reveals that between 1993–94 and 2011–12, Adivasi women's labour force participation has declined more when compared to women from other social groups. However, between 2011–12 and 2023–24, their participation has increased which can be attributed to increase in their participation in unpaid family labour and own account works. The study deduces that landholding size determines their participation in the labour market, and quality of occupations. Larger landholding size is an enabling factor which enhances the propensity of Adivasi women to take up better-paid occupations, while lower landholding size increases the risk of taking up either employment in precarious occupations or unpaid domestic duties. The findings reinforce the argument that landholdings play a crucial role among Adivasis in maintaining the relative egalitarian values in their society. Finally, this study suggests measures to improve the LFPR of Adivasi women and the quality of their employment.

1. Background

Since the early twentieth century, gender parity has been evolving into prominence in the contemporary discourse by challenging the age-old patriarchal relation, which is deeply rooted in the notion of the “ideal of an organised society.”¹ Stereotypical thinking about women's abilities based on the masculine conceptualisation of the female body, mind, and spirit restricts and defines women's role in the society. Such patriarchal relations have engendered gendered economic space, livelihood, culture, sources of knowledge, social status etc. The apparent gender segregation in day-to-day life is the unpaid household work shared disproportionately by women, that compromises their economic engagement outside the home. Women in general are often overburdened with the provisioning of daily needs at their home, while the

resource base is mostly owned and controlled by the male members of the family. Moreover, resource management is primarily vested in the hands of male members of the family. The prolonged exclusion of women from the inheritance of immovable property, particularly landed property, has been one of the main reasons behind the persistence of gender inequality in the social space. To address this gendered inequality, the Hindu Succession Act,² 1956, and the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 were enacted that ensured gender equality in the inheritance of property (agricultural land). In the 1980s, some states also legislated administrative and legal measures to provide joint *pattas* to both the husband and the wife (Sumi Krishna, 2007).

While women managed to receive ownership titles either in their name or jointly with their husbands in certain pockets of the country, they remained vulnerable in aspects of decision-making regarding

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: johnkcds@gmail.com (J. Kujur), umishra@ipsindia.ac.in (U. S Mishra), rajan@iimad.org (S. Irudaya Rajan), hrushi@cds.ac.in (H. Mallick).

¹ Shah, A. & Lerche, J. (2021). Black lives matter, capital, and ideology: Spiraling out from India. *British Journal of Sociology*, 72(1), 93–105.

² The Act shall not apply to the member of any Scheduled Tribe unless the Central government otherwise directs through notification in the Official Gazette (subsection 2 of clause 2, Hindu Succession Act, 1956).

production, management of resources, and accessing different services as owners of the land (Indira, 2007; Geethakutty, 2006; Agarwal, 1994). In some cases, gender-egalitarian laws were conveniently circumvented owing to the absence of the wife's demand for the right over the property (Desouza, 2007; Sumi Krishna, 2007). In other words, the social, administrative, and ideological factors severely constrained the effective implementation of gender egalitarian inheritance laws. For example, women in many parts of South Asia forego their rights over parental property in order to receive potential economic and social support from their brothers (Agarwal, 1994). Such direct or indirect exclusion of women from property rights severely restrained their decision-making power and participation in economic activities or paid work.

The land has been an important source of employment among women, particularly for poor and marginalised sections in rural areas. Their economic activities are inextricably linked to their living spaces as well as their ecological surroundings. In the wake of the structural transformation of the economy, there has been a change in the natural landscape, and increase in mechanisation of agriculture, which have given rise to significant changes in the occupational pattern of the working-age population in general and working age women in particular (Mehrotra & Parida, 2017). On the one hand, the structural transformation has resulted in encroachment of natural productive assets, curtailing further the already small economic space for poor marginalised women. On the other, the economic transformation has opened up new avenues of employment in the non-farm sectors. However, social and religious constraints as well as low level of educational attainment and skills have limited the opportunities for women to participate in non-farm occupations (Mehrotra & Parida, 2017; Rajesh, 2018).

Adivasi women have gone through a unique occupational transformation process owing to the structural transformation of the economy. The Adivasi society is portrayed as a relatively more egalitarian society due to its communitarian values. On account of gender equality, Adivasi women are better positioned compared to non-Adivasi women. Despite being a more gender-egalitarian society, many of the Adivasi communities continue to deprive their women of inheriting immovable property. Moreover, the occupations are also gendered by nature in many indigenous communities. Depriving women of property inheritance is considered as one of the evolving features of transition process of Adivasi society in particular. Since time immemorial, land has been considered a community resource and thus owned by clans, not by individual households. Hence, endowing landownership to individual women is discerned as extraneous. Nitya Rao (2008), however, in her study on Santal women in the state of Jharkhand, asserted that land ownership was historically linked with male identity, although land was held by the community. She also claimed that the term 'community' was used just to deny Adivasi women the right over landed property.

Nevertheless, as far as land alienation is concerned, the community *patna*, or land ownership served as a deterrent to land transfer or exchange to non-Adivasis, as it often required the consent of the entire clan. In the pre-British era as well as the colonial era, indigenous society has undergone systematic assimilation and acculturation into non-Adivasi society, thus changing societal values. This has been intensified in the post-colonial era. The assimilation and acculturation into dominant socio-economic structure has particularly injected the idea of private property into the indigenous value system. Consequently, the community property was segregated into the property of individual households over time (Bijoy et al., 2010; Baviskar, 1997). There are two major driving factors behind this assimilation and acculturation process. Firstly, state-led large-scale land acquisition leads to the proliferation of industrialisation and urbanisation. This is followed by the second factor that is, the large-scale migration of non-Adivasis to Adivasi areas, leading to acceleration of individual land transactions. In the (pre) colonial period, Adivasis were dispossessed of their land by various policies such as the jagirdari, zamindari and ryotwari systems, colonial forest policies, and the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 which was based on the principle of "eminent domain." In the post-independence period

(Nehruvian era), Adivasis were displaced and dispossessed of their land in the name of "development" that is, through the establishment of large-scale dams and industrial projects. Later under the neoliberal regime, the land dispossession among them has been sustained and scaled up as the state has turned itself into a land broker for metropolitan capital or private industries (Levien, 2015; Baviskar, 1992; Sundar, 2016; Mosse et al., 2010; Teltumbde, 2007). These factors led to a large-scale displacement of Adivasis in the country. A study of Walter Fernandes (2008) reveals that about 40–50 per cent of the total displaced people in the country belongs to indigenous communities. The establishment of development projects (mining, industrialisation, dams) brought non-Adivasis to Adivasi areas, as these areas became the land of opportunity. For example, the proportion of the Adivasi population in Singhbhum district of Jharkhand has declined from 54.08 per cent in 1931 to 42.28 per cent in 1991 due to the influx of outsiders on account of mining and industrial development. In other parts of Jharkhand too, a similar trend is observed. In 1982, about 32 per cent of the district population in Dhanbad were in-migrants (Narasimham & Subbarao, 2018).

As non-Adivasis infiltrated into Adivasi land, they tried to usurp their lands through various means, such as transfer to non-Adivasis in the form of a lease or mortgage, *benami* transfers, transfer in the name of concubines, marital alliance with female Adivasi for the sake of transfer of land in her name, transfer in the name of Adivasi servants who may work as bonded labourers, transfer of unregistered or unrecorded Adivasi land in lieu of loan, encroachment of Adivasis' land by force etc. A report of the Steering Committee on Empowering the Scheduled Tribes, Government of India, 2001 elucidated that till January 1999, about 4.65 lakh cases were registered for the recovery of Adivasi land amounting to 9.17 lakh acres of land in different states. Of these, the states which had reported large-scale land alienation among Adivasis were Andhra Pradesh (2.79 lakh acres), undivided Madhya Pradesh (1.58 lakh acres), Karnataka (1.30 lakh acres), Gujarat (1.16 lakh acres), undivided Bihar (1.04 lakh acres), and Odisha (95 thousand acres) (Government of India, 2001). The transfer of Adivasi land to non-Adivasis is prohibited by many colonial laws, such as the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908, as well as provisions under excluded and partially excluded areas as per the Government of India Act, 1935. Post-colonial laws like provisions under Fifth Scheduled and Sixth Scheduled areas, the Santal Pragana Tenancy Act, 1949 and many state-based land laws also prohibit this transfer. To surpass these laws, marrying an Adivasi woman and purchasing Adivasi land in her name was adopted as the most convenient method by non-Adivasis (Singh, 1988; Kumar & Stanley, 1995; Xaxa, 2004; Bhukya, 2012). To check such transfers of land to non-Adivasis, the Adivasi society was believed to have adopted patriarchal land relations as a custom. Therefore, even today, marriage outside the community is highly discouraged by society. Sometimes this discouragement takes the form of a social boycott of individuals/households, who dare to marry outside their respective communities. Most Adivasi households are also patrilineal, as a result of which daughters live in spouses' homes in a different locality after marriage. This makes it impossible to carry out agricultural activities on her parental land. In such cases, the daughter has the option either to sell or lease out the land. This again increases the risk of transfer of Adivasi land to non-Adivasis through a mortgage or land transaction. Therefore, it may be perceived, (not generalised) that female members of the Adivasi family were deprived of inheritance of parental property to check the land transfer to non-Adivasis in and around the region.

Despite the loopholes in the existing system of property inheritance, Adivasi women have access to a vast working space, unlike non-Adivasi women. For a layman, the magnitude of work performed by Adivasi women may be invisible, but pragmatically their contribution majorly shapes the indigenous household economy. The magnitude of the work carried out by Adivasi women in particular, and women in general, remains obscured because, their paid work and unpaid household works viz. child-rearing, social activities, etc. are often entwined with one

another (Habermas, 1987, 1989; Rao, 2008). Besides undertaking household chores, they engage in collection of forest products, farm activities (except ploughing), marketing activities, and handicraft works such as making brooms, mattresses, and leaf plates. All these activities are mostly seasonal in nature. Thus, every season, they have a new economic activity to support their family. Ideally, these activities can't be bracketed within a single occupational category. These activities are both non-cognitive and cognitive in nature.³ Thus, Adivasi women perform multiple economic activities, which essentially make their households self-contained.

These multiple economic activities are being gradually consolidated into household chores and wage labour over time due to the decline in landholding size among Adivasi households (Prasad, 2014; Kujur et al., 2020). The curtailment of economic space by dispossession, displacement, and urbanisation in both colonial as well as post-colonial regimes has made practising indigenous activities increasingly strenuous for Adivasi women, forcing them to shift from self-contained activities to dependent economic activities. The process of alienation from their autonomous economic space has not only made their employment precarious but also has led to the transition from paid activities to unpaid domestic activities.

Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to conceptualise the relationship between land and Adivasi women in the context of emerging changes in their occupational patterns. This paper mostly focuses on Adivasi women's labour force participation and their occupational pattern and thus does not put an emphasize to make a comprehensive comparison between Adivasi women and women belonging to other social groups. Rather, we try to answer some broad questions. Firstly, how does the employment pattern of Adivasi women change in relation to the change in landholding pattern at a macro level? Secondly, is there a transition from paid activities to unpaid activities among them? Lastly, how has the occupational pattern of Adivasi women changed over time?

2. An overview of literature

Claudia Goldin's (1995) theory on women's labour force participation demonstrates that in response to the transition in economic development, women's labour force participation rate will have a U-shaped pattern. At low levels of development or when incomes are extremely low, female educational attainment remains low, resulting in them being employed in unskilled manual labour to a large extent. As the economy develops, the income effect accompanied by social stigma, serves to lower female labour force participation. With rising income levels there appears to be an improvement in levels of female educational attainment. As a result, the substitution effect dominates over the income effect as women take up jobs in the white-collar sector against the social stigma.

The U-shaped relationship, however, has not been reflected in the Indian case. Although both the income level of households and the educational attainment of females have increased substantially, there is little evidence of the increase in women joining the labour force (Swinathan, 2008; Abraham, 2013). On the contrary, there is a negative relationship between labour force participation and educational attainment among women in India. Education among women is mostly perceived to enhance efficiency in the status production of women rather than a route to autonomy in Indian society. Further, the upward social mobility of a household is appraised by the labour market participation of males, the marginalisation of women in the labour force, and the domestication of women (Kala, 1976; Mies, 1982). The caste-occupation nexus too dampens labour force participation among

women. Not working particularly in low-paid jobs is considered a matter of dignity among the forward castes. Lower caste women typically participate in income-generating activities more out of compulsion than choice due to poor economic conditions (Boserup, 2008; Mehrotra & Parida, 2017). On the other hand, various studies counter the argument that the decline in the labour force participation rate of women is driven by income effects and status production. Kannan & Raveendran (2012) discount the income effect by showing that the women missing in the labour market are mostly from the poorest households. Besides, various literature suggests that the decline in the female LFPR can be attributed to the lack of well-paid jobs, agrarian changes, the composition of growth, and the lack of employment creation in the family enterprises wherein women are largely concentrated (Naidu & Oosome, 2016; Das, 2006; Mukherjee, 2011; Lahoti & Hema, 2013). Moreover, the decline in female LFPR is also attributed to the exclusion of certain activities like unaccounted agricultural and allied activities, which is a sub-occupation in the classification of 'domestic and allied activities' while measuring LFPR (Mukherjee, 2011; Naidu & Oosome, 2016). Furthermore, the wage centric definition of employment fails to recognise the economic activities of home-based workers as their production and social reproduction are intertwined (Denning, 2016; Mazumdar & Neetha, 2011; Mezzadri, 2020). The labour force participation among Adivasi women needs to be viewed in with the context of their community and cultural practices, which impose limited restrictions on women's work. The relatively greater freedom to participate in economic activities among them is reflected in both the colonial and post-colonial periods in the form of migrant labourers due to de-peasantisation caused by industrialisation and urbanisation. Their migration as labourers, however, could not uplift their occupational status, and instead, they were considerably concentrated in lower-paid jobs mainly in three sectors namely agriculture, brick kilns, and construction (Mazumdar, 2016).

In the colonial period, Adivasi women of the Chhotanagpur plateau migrated to the tea gardens of Assam and West Bengal. In the post-colonial period, intermittent migration has become their way of life. Adivasi women from central India who migrate to urban destinations are mostly concentrated in the construction sector or employed as paid domestic workers. Those who migrate to rural destinations are employed as agricultural and brick kiln labourers. However, women migrants from north-eastern regions are more concentrated in the service sector (employed as saleswomen, office workers, or beauticians) due to better educational qualifications (Mazumdar, 2016). Importantly, their employment is characterised by the gendered division of labour in the worksites. Among the brick kiln workers in southern states (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka), sugarcane cutters in western India (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka), tea garden workers (Assam, Western Ghats of Kerala, West Bengal), and construction workers in different cities, the gendered division of labour is conditioned by skills. (Mazumdar, 2016; Mosse et al., 2010; Chatterjee, 2001; Besky, 2014; Thakur, 2018).

Besides Adivasi women labourers, Adivasi women employed as paid domestic workers in urban areas have been the focus of many researchers. In recent decades, the migration of Adivasi women, largely from Jharkhand, followed by Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Assam, and other north-east states to urban centres as paid live-in domestic workers has accelerated. The caste non-identity, religious identity, honesty, reliability, obedience, and efficiency of the Adivasi female workers make them the most preferred category of domestic workers in urban locations (Kasturi, 1990; Institute of Social Studies Trust, 2009; Neetha, 2003). However, they are treated as bonded labourers due to their lack of awareness of entitlements regarding working conditions and wage payments. They also often become victims of sexual exploitation. Apart from this, when they join as domestic workers in urban locations, it reconfigures their roles in their native societies and provides new foundations for gender differentials and inequalities, which in turn adversely affect their economic and social status (Neetha, 2016; Neetha & Mazumdar, 2009). Thus, the occupational changes among Adivasi women due to de-peasantisation, industrialisation and urbanisation

³ For instance, collecting *mahua* flower in summer season may be routine non-cognitive activities, while collecting mushrooms in the rainy season requires the use of the mind to trace and find them.

have either become detrimental or have had adverse effect on their occupational status.

Indubitably, industrialisation and urbanisation have been beneficial in cases where Adivasis managed to retain their landholdings. In such cases, Adivasi households adopted mixed occupations, wherein the male members migrated to urban areas for non-farm activities and the females took on the responsibilities of the agricultural activities of the household. It somewhat strengthened the decision-making power of the women and enhanced their occupational status (Dasgupta, 1973). Besides this, they were also exposed to modern education, health care, and other facilities due to the growth and expansion of urbanisation in and around their settlements, which broadened their prospects for occupational mobility. Nevertheless, land alienation and urban life have resulted in the reduction of workforce participation among them (Fernandes & Raj, 1992; Sahoo, 1996; Nath, 2008; Kujur, 2017).

All the household members of an Adivasi household used to be employed in agricultural activities, and the women used to enjoy a relatively better position. Many studies have examined the relatively egalitarian gender relations among Adivasis being disrupted due to land alienation. However, the occupational changes among Adivasi women in relation to the change in landholding patterns over time at the macro level have remained an unexplored domain of inquiry. With growing industrialization and urbanization, Adivasi women are compelled to engage in non-farm activities. This needs a comprehensive exploration. With a focus on such issues, this work is an attempt at verifying the changing occupational pattern of Adivasi women in the instance of land alienation.

3. Concepts, data source and methodology

The study uses a combination of data sources from the Employment and Unemployment Survey (EUS), the Time Use Survey (TUS), and the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by the National Sample Survey Office, Government of India to overcome the data deficiencies which mostly exist while updating the information for the latest period. This is resorted to in the absence of any specific data source providing information over a period of last three consecutive decades. The EUS was conducted every year until 2011–12; however, thick surveys were conducted on a quinquennial basis. The current study uses two thick rounds- 50th round (1993–94) and 68th round (2011–12) to fulfil our objective of analysing changes in the occupational patterns of Adivasi women in response to the changing landholding patterns. To update with the current trends on changing labour force participation and occupational patterns, the PLFS (2022–23) round has been considered.

Primarily, these rounds were selected given the content of information on changing landholding and employment patterns over time. The three rounds (two EUSs and a TUS) offer an assessment over a period of three decades. The surveys collect socio-economic and demographic information of households and individuals from almost all the states except some inaccessible pockets. Individual and household information such as landholding (in EUS), status of employment, and occupations are collected in the surveys which are relevant to this exploration. The sample surveys are representative at the national level and comparable over time. The sampling strategy and questionnaires are quite similar across all the survey rounds. The Employment and Unemployment Survey was discontinued after 68th round, and in its stead, the Periodic Labour Force Survey was introduced. However, the Periodic Labour Force Survey relegates land-related information. Therefore, the Time Use Survey is considered to obtain land related information.

The occupation information in the 50th round was collected based on the National Classification of Occupations (NCO) of 1968 and the occupations are classified into three-digit levels. However, in the 68th round, occupational information has been collected with a three-digit level classification based on NCO-2004. NCO-2004 is the updated version of NCO-1968, wherein some modifications and additions to the occupations have been done. Moreover, the three-digit classification in

NCO-2004 is similar to the two-digit occupational classification in NCO-1968, with little modification. Thus, to make the occupational classifications comparable between NCO-1968 and NCO-2004, a concordance table that matches the occupations has been generated. A concordance of three-digit (NCO-1968) with three-digit (NCO-2004) will not be appropriate. This is because, reducing around 457 occupations in NCO-1968 to 113 occupations in NCO-2004 may seem unreliable. Therefore, in this study, a concordance of two-digit (NCO-1968) i.e., 94 occupations with three-digit (NCO-2004) i.e., 113 occupations have been generated. Moreover, the occupational information in the Periodic Labour Force Survey is collected based on NCO-2015, which involves the addition and deletion of some occupations. However, given the concordance table for NCO-2004 and NCO-2015 by NSSO, the occupational categories have been matched.

In this study, a five-fold classification of occupations has been made to measure occupational changes over time. The five occupational groups are: 1. salariat class; 2. skilled & semi-skilled labourers; 3. cultivator; 4. unskilled manual labourers; and 5. agricultural and related labourers. This classification is aimed at representing the reality of the Indian labour market situation, especially for the working population among Adivasis. This class schematic seems to serve our research objectives as it hierarchically compartmentalises the occupations in a relatively better way. To reflect the precariousness of landholding among Adivasis,⁴ the households are categorised in terms of landholding size into 1. landless: 0 ha, 2. marginal: 0.01–1 ha 3. small: 1–2 ha, 4. semi-medium: 2–4 ha, 5. medium: 4–6 ha, and 6. large: above 6 ha. The Time Use Survey provides land possession data instead of landowning data. Landowning refers to holding registered land while the former includes unregistered land, leased in and out of the registered land. Since the data on land ownership is not available, land possession has been taken into account as a better representative. Adivasis women cultivators are categorised into two groups – “cultivators owning up to two hectares of land” and “cultivators owning more than two hectares of land.” This is because the contribution of land to the livelihood of households with respect to productivity differs starkly, especially when we compare the productivity of land owned by Adivasis with that of non-Adivasis. In India, Adivasis unlike non-Adivasis, mostly own non-arable hilly land (Nancharaiyah, 2000; Bijoy et al., 2010; Xaxa, 2014), because a large section of them lives in remote and forest areas (Forest Survey of India Report, 2003). Thus, the probability of shifting to non-farm activities is relatively high among them, even though they own a good amount of land. To explore the proposed objectives and draw inferences from the data, we use simple descriptive statistics, binary logistic regression, and multinomial logistic regression in the current study.

4. Mapping Adivasi women in the labour market

India, nearly after the two decades of introduction of new economic policy in 1991, has registered a decline in the labour force participation rate (LFPR) by Usual Principal Status (UPS) criteria. The decline has been especially pronounced for marginalised sections and among them, Adivasis happen to be the worst affected, whose LFPR has declined as much as 10 per cent (Table 1). This is reflected in the reduced likelihood of their being in the labour force, from 1.42 times higher to 1.28 times higher with reference to the overall population during this period after reform years (Table 2). The overall decline in LFPR is driven by the withdrawal of the female labour force from the labour market. All social groups have reported a drastic fall in female LFPR and a marginal

⁴ The classification of landholding applies to both adivasis living in rural as well as in urban regions. The urban living Adivasis are mostly landless or own only homestead land. They are particularly the land alienated households due to the growth of industrialisation and urbanisation in their locality. This landholding categorisation helps to understand the intensity of land alienation among them.

Table 1
LFPR (PS) among social groups (in %).

Social groups	1993–94 (50th round)			2011–12 (68th round)			2022–23 (PLFS round)		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Adivasis	58.11	35.35	46.97	55.69	28.18	42.3	58.4	33.78	46.17
Scheduled Caste	54.49	24.01	39.85	54.77	17.75	36.72	56.33	22.57	39.57
Others	54.25	18.76	37.11	55.03	15.15	35.66	54.43	19.9	37.83
All	54.61	21.14	38.45	55.04	16.77	36.43	55.13	21.69	38.9
Changes in LFPR (PS) from 1993 to 94 to 2011–12									
	Male	Female	Person	Change in LFPR From 2011 to 12 to 2022–23					
Adivasis	–4.16	–20.28	–9.94	Male	Female	Person			
Scheduled Caste	0.51	–26.07	–7.85	4.87	19.87	9.15			
Others	1.44	–19.24	–3.91	2.85	27.15	7.76			
All	0.79	–20.67	–5.25	–1.09	31.35	6.09			
				0.16	29.34	6.78			

Source: Author’s calculation from various EUS and PLFS rounds.

Table 2
LFPR Odds Ratio w.r.t. Overall Population.

Social Groups	1993–94	2011–12	2022–23
Adivasis	1.42	1.28	1.35
Scheduled Caste	1.06	1.01	1.03
Others	0.94	0.97	0.96

(With 95% Conf. Interval).

Source: Author’s calculation from various EUS and PLFS rounds.

increment in male LFPR, except Adivasis who have experienced a fall in both female and male LFPR. While the overall male labour force during the period 1993–94 to 2011–12 has witnessed a marginal increase from 54.61 per cent to 55.04 per cent, the female labour force has witnessed a drastic decline from 21.14 per cent to 16.77 per cent respectively during the same period, worsening their situation in the labour market (Table 1). This process of de-feminisation of the labour market did not start immediately after the arrival of new economic policy; it was prevalent way back in 1972–73 and even in the 1950s (Abraham, 2013; Parthasarathy & Nirmala, 1999; Varghese, 1993). However, the female LFPR among Adivasis has remained much higher than the other social groups, i.e., 35.35 per cent and 28.18 per cent followed by Scheduled Caste (SC) women, whose LFPR figures stand at 24.01 per cent and 17.75 per cent in both the EUS rounds respectively (Table 1). The high female LFPR among these marginalised social groups might be due to the economic vulnerability of their households (as illustrated by the studies of Goldin (1995) and Abraham (2013)) as well as the access to economic space, particularly among Adivasi women, that has compelled and incentivised them to participate in the labour market. The female members of these two groups, however, have experienced a large-scale decline in their LFPR i.e., 20.28 per cent for Adivasi women and 26.07 per cent for SC women, over the two decades (1993–94 to 2011–12) (Table 1).

4.1. Adivasi women’s LFPR in post-COVID era

In the post-COVID era, the trend has reverted to some earlier positions. The overall labour force participation rate has increased to 39 per cent in 2022–23, which is equal to that in 1993–94. Between 2011–12 and 2022–23, the female LFPR has increased more than male LFPR. However, among females of different social groups, Adivasi females have registered a lower increment (Table 1). The increment in the labour force is largely driven by the rise in their participation in self-employment, which has increased from 14.74 per cent in 2011–12 to 21.33 per cent in 2022–23 (Table 3). Moreover, the increase in self-employment is due to the increase in the participation in unpaid family labour and own account work (Table 4). There are primarily two reasons for the increment in their participation in self-employment. Firstly, the COVID induced lockdown forced the poor and working

Adivasis particularly to engage in some kind of economic activity to earn a livelihood. Secondly, the MUDRA yojana launched in 2015 and SVA-Nidhi (launched in 2020) provided micro-credit facilities and thereby incentivised many micro enterprises, leading to an increase in the number of own account workers. Of the total MUDRA loans, 95 per cent are Shishu loans which cover loans up to 50 thousand and the average loan amount of 29 thousand is quite deficient for a micro enterprise to sustain its work operation (Mehrotra, 2024). However, the self-employment category is a default sector, as the per capita earnings in this sector are even lower than the wages of casual workers (Kannan & Khan, 2022). Moreover, the ILO compliant definitions regard unpaid family labour as unemployed, while the NSO regards it as employed.

The fall in female LFPR between 1993–94 and 2011–12 has been translated in the form of an increased participation in education as well as domestic duties⁵ during this period. Adivasi females’ participation in education has sharply increased from 12 per cent in 1993–94 to 24 per cent in 2011–12. At the same time, females from SC and Others categories have also shown an increase in educational participation (Table 3). This increment may be a consequence of the aggressive promotion of girl’s education, particularly through the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Right to Education (RTE), Balika Samridhi Yojana, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Education (NPEGEL), National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), Ashram School in Tribal Sub-Plan Areas, and many state-based initiatives in the late 20th century and early 21st century⁶ (Abraham, 2013). Conversely, the increment in participation in domestic duties among all the social groups has also been the result of a deterioration in the share of female participation in the labour force (Table 3). This increment in the share of female labour force in domestic duties indicates the possible intensification of gender division in the labour market i.e., males are engaged in paid work and females in unpaid work (Abraham, 2013). Interestingly, it is observed that for all the women of all social groups, the percentage of female regular wage workers has marginally increased and the percentage of female casual wage workers has decreased over the past two decades (1993–94 to 2011–12). Their LFPR in self-employed/unpaid

⁵ Domestic duties include both “domestic duties only” and “domestic and allied activities” given in the Employment and Unemployment Survey of NSSO.

⁶ As per the Statistics of School Education, 2010–11, Government of India, the percentage point increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of female Adivasi during the period 2000–01 to 2010–11 is more than that of during 1990–91 to 1999–2000. (Pp-s10-s11). The similar trend is witnessed in case of percentage of Adivasi girls’ enrolment at different education level during these time periods. (Pp. s7). Although gender disparity still exists but their literacy has improved. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330521692_A_RELLOOK_ON_LITERACY_RATE_OF_TRIBAL_WOMEN_ISSUES_AND_PROSPECTS https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics/SES2_01011.pdf.

Table 3
Usual Principal Activity Status of women from different social groups (in %).

Activity Status	Adivasis			Scheduled Castes			Others			All		
	1993–94	2011–12	2022–23	1993–94	2011–12	2022–23	1993–94	2011–12	2022–23	1993–94	2011–12	2022–23
Self-employed/ unpaid family work	17.65	14.74	21.33	6.57	5.85	10.26	10.05	7.79	11.88	10.08	8.04	12.43
Regular wage work	1.14	1.79	3.66	1.39	2.73	4.55	1.84	2.79	4.14	1.7	2.69	4.17
Casual wage work	16.3	11.12	8.04	15.67	8.61	6.88	6.27	3.9	2.93	8.85	5.41	4.16
Unemployed	0.26	0.54	0.75	0.37	0.55	0.88	0.58	0.66	0.96	0.52	0.63	0.92
Education	11.95	24.3	24.65	13.39	25.64	25.93	19.03	25.41	24.88	17.4	25.35	25.06
All domestic (a + b)	27.61	32.89	27.51	37.61	41.86	37.26	41.77	45.65	42.68	39.8	43.82	40.25
Others	25.1	14.63	14.06	24.99	14.76	14.24	20.45	13.8	12.53	21.68	14.04	13
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th, 68th EUS and PLFS (2022–23) rounds.

family work has declined; however, the same has increased in 2022–23. Noticeably, Adivasi women have relatively registered greater participation in self-employment and casual works as well as lower participation in regular wage work and domestic duties compared to the women of other social groups. However, it seems that their situation in terms of LFPR has deteriorated faster than the other social groups between 1993–94 and 2011–12. For instance, the percentage of self-employed Adivasi females has declined by nearly three points, while for others it has decreased by only two points. Further, the percentage of Adivasi women involved in domestic duties has increased by five points, while for others it has remained around four points over the two decades (Table 3). Moreover, their participation in domestic duties (only) has increased by two percentage points in 2022–23 from 2011 to 12 (Table 4) while their participation in domestic duties and allied activities has declined substantially (Table 3). Moreover, their likelihood of being in the labour force has declined from 2.04 times higher in 1993–94 to 1.95 times in 2011–12 and then to 1.84 in 2022–23, with reference to ‘Overall female LFPR’ (Table 5).

4.2. Sectoral analysis of Adivasi female LFPR

The deterioration of Adivasi female LFPR is more pronounced in rural regions than urban regions from 1993 to 94 to 2022–23. However, in rural regions, the decline in their LFPR is lower than that of women in general. Conversely, in urban spaces, unlike the women in general, they have suffered a fall in their LFPR. In the rural region, the Adivasi female LFPR has declined by 20 per cent, while in the urban region, it has gone down by 4 per cent between 1993–94 and 2011–12. However, it has increased by 18 per cent in rural areas and 39 per cent in urban areas between 2011–12 and 2022–23 (Table 6). Furthermore, the likelihood of being in the labour force among them was very less in 1993–94, with reference to the overall LFPR of the Adivasi population. This has further worsened in both regions in 2011–12 and increased marginally in 2022–23 (Table 7).

The decline in LFPR in the rural region between 1993–94 and 2011–12 is largely driven by the increase in participation in education and domestic duties and a fall in self-employment among them. Their participation in education has increased tremendously from 10.94 per cent in 1993–94 to 23.78 per cent in 2011–12 in rural areas. On the other hand, their participation in domestic duties has gone up from 26.57 per cent to 31.94 per cent, and has deteriorated from 18.74 per cent to 15.94 per cent during the same period in self-employment (Table 8). In the urban region, the lesser decline in LFPR is plausibly explained by the already prevailing very low attainment of LFPR as compared to the rural region. The LFPR of Adivasi women in urban regions was 18.57 per cent in 1993–94, which has marginally declined to 17.91 per cent in 2011–12 (Table 6). This marginal decline is explicitly reflected in a lesser increment in the participation in education and domestic duties compared to rural regions over the two decades (1993–94 to 2011–12). However, it is to be noted that Adivasi female participation in self-employment and casual labour is much lower, and

in domestic duties much higher in the urban regions (Table 8). The increase in LFPR in 2022–23 is largely driven by the increase in their participation in self-employment (Table 4). The higher increment in urban areas is attributed to the bigger space for informal economic activities, that provides a greater scope for self-employment (own account workers and unpaid family labour).

4.3. Landholding and domestic duties among Adivasi women

The increment in Adivasi women’s participation in domestic duties based on the reported usual principal status criteria has emerged as an important concern. Undeniably, they have emulated the path of women in other social categories who are largely concentrated in domestic duties. However, their participation in domestic duties with respect to the change in landholding patterns reveals the significance of land ownership that shapes labour force participation of Adivasi women in particular. Table 9 delineates that a greater percentage of landlessness has forced more Adivasi women into domestic duties than women on an overall basis. In 1993–94, the percentage of Adivasi women without any land in both rural and urban regions was greater (12 per cent and 54 per cent) than women overall (11 per cent and 51 per cent respectively). In 2011–12, the percentages for Adivasi women have increased to 20 per cent and 67 per cent, while for women (overall) the same increased to 21 per cent and 63 per cent respectively. In 2019, the women in general and Adivasi women in particular had higher participation in domestic duties in response to zero land possession. While 48 per cent of the Adivasi women with zero land possession are engaged in domestic duties, the same for women in general remained at 59 per cent. While reading the same against an increase in landholding/land possession size, the participation of Adivasi women in domestic duties declines faster than women in general (Table 9).

Intensity of zero landholding among women involved in domestic duties (I)

$$= \frac{50 - x_i}{x_i + y_i - 50} (1 - 0.01)$$

Where x_i is the proportion of landless women involved in domestic duties in i^{th} year

y_i is the proportion of women with marginal landholding involved in domestic duties in i^{th} year.

The decline in I means a decline in the proportion of women with marginal landholdings involved in domestic duties and an increase in the proportion of women with zero landholdings involved in domestic duties out of the bottom 50 per cent of the female population with respect to landholding/land possession size, and vice-versa.

Table 10 reflects the rise in participation in domestic work among Adivasi women due to increasing landlessness. The statistics in the table ascertain that out of the bottom 50 per cent Adivasi women as well as overall women with respect to landholding size who have engaged in domestic duties, the proportion of women falling into the marginal landholding category (0.01 to 1 ha) is declining. Thus, the proportion of

Table 4
Participation of women in self-employment and domestic duties.

	Adivasi						Scheduled Caste						Others						All							
	1993-94		2011-12		2022-23		1993-94		2011-12		2022-23		1993-94		2011-12		2022-23		1993-94		2011-12		2022-23			
	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban		
Self-employed	Own account worker	3.58	2.10	3.45	0.06	0.07	15.10	3.6	2.30	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15	
	Employer	2.10	3.45	0.06	0.07	15.10	3.6	2.30	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15		
	Unpaid family work	0.07	15.10	3.6	2.30	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15	0.01	0.15	3.58	2.10	3.15
Domestic duties	Domestic duties only	14.13	10.76	27.48	12.11	21.88	14.45	11.37	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51
	Domestic duties + Allied activities	12.16	15.81	12.11	14	14.45	11.37	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98	13.51	20.98
		11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	11.47	15.45	

Source: Authors' calculation from 50th, 68th EUS and PLFS (2022-23) rounds.

Table 5

Female LFPR Odds Ratio w.r.t. Overall female LFPR.

Social Groups	1993-94	2011-12	2022-23
Adivasi	2.04	1.95	1.84
Scheduled Caste	1.18	1.07	1.05
Others	0.86	0.89	0.90

(With 95% Conf. Interval).

Source: Author's calculation from various EUS and PLFS rounds.

women from both the groups in the zero-landholding category is increasing. It signifies that landlessness has been the major driving force behind women being restricted to household chores. Importantly, landlessness has a larger impact on Adivasi women as is seen in Table 10, wherein the value of *I* for Adivasi women has declined faster than that of the overall women.

Further, the Time Use Survey also suggests that the percentage of Adivasi females involved in unpaid activities is higher than that of females from other social groups. At the overall level, about 85 per cent of the Adivasi females participate in unpaid activities. For other social groups the figures stand at 84 per cent (both SC and OBC), and 82 per cent (Others). The sectoral analysis also suggests that the percentage of Adivasi women participating in unpaid activities is higher than that of the other social groups. Similarly, from Table 11, it is observed that they reportedly spend more time in unpaid activities when compared to females from other social groups. For example, in rural areas, Adivasi females spend 5.58 hrs on average in the unpaid activities, while for females from other social categories, the figures stand at 5.5 hrs (SC), 5.45 hrs (OBC), 5.7 hrs (others) and 5.53 hrs (all).

Landlessness significantly constrains female participation only in domestic duties in three ways. Firstly, about 90 per cent of the Adivasi population lives in rural areas where there are lack of employment opportunities. As the size of the landholding pattern reduces, the working space also shrinks. While the male members of the households migrate to the urban sector for non-farm activities, the same is not possible for female members. This is because their migration to urban or distant places for employment is constrained by safety and security concerns (Punalekar, 1988). Moreover, as male members migrate, the entire household responsibilities fall on the females, limiting their engagement in non-domestic economic activities (Naidu & Ossome, 2016). Therefore, their economic activities are consolidated into unpaid domestic works. Secondly, although they can access jobs in urban spaces, their employment is characterised by wage discrimination (sexual division of labour) that cheapens their cost of labour. This is also reflected in the studies of Angela Davis (2000) on African American and Caribbean women. Moreover, there is also hesitation among contractors or employers to employ them on grounds of safety and security in various industries (A Group of Researchers, 1986). This sexual division in the labour market reduces the earning level of women (Pandey, 1998) and eventually pushes them into the process of what Maria Mies (1986) calls "housewifisation." Finally, the demographic composition in terms of social groups determines the females' outdoor work in agriculture and allied activities. The withdrawal of women from the labour market is witnessed among Adivasis who live in multi-caste villages where they constitute a minority population ethnically and demographically, as they gradually emulate the dominant patriarchal practices (Xaxa, 2004).

4.4. Determinants of Adivasi Women's participation in labour force

The study explores, among other things, whether landholding size determines the labour force participation of Adivasi women. For this analysis, a dichotomous variable, i.e., Adivasi women in the labour force (yes or no) is considered against a set of explanatory variables such as sector (rural and urban), marital status, head of the household (whether male or female), landholding size, age, number of dependents, Adivasi women's spouse's occupation, monthly per capita expenditure

Table 6
Sectoral Composition of Adivasi Women LFPR.

Sex	1993–94		2011–12		Changes (1993–94 to 2011–12)	Changes (2011–12 to 2022–23)	
	Rural		Rural				
Female	36.88	29.43	34.81	22.9	–20.2		18.28
Male	58.5	55.96	58.74	22.9	–4.34		4.97
Female (Overall)	23.70	18.11	22.97	22.9	–23.59		26.84
Male (Overall)	54.89	54.66	54.21	22.9	–0.42		–0.82
		Urban					
Female	18.57	17.91	24.95	22.9	–3.55		39.31
Male	54.03	53.66	55.54	22.9	–0.68		3.50
Female (Overall)	13.20	13.41	18.15	22.9	1.59		35.35
Male (Overall)	53.79	55.98	57.69	22.9	4.07		3.05

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th, 68th EUS and PLFS rounds.

Table 7
Adivasi Female LFPR Odds ratio w.r.t. Total Adivasi Population.

Sex	1993–94			2011–12			2022–23		
	Rural	Urban	R + U	Rural	Urban	R + U	Rural	Urban	R + U
Adivasi Male	1.53	2.00	1.57	1.69	1.98	1.71	1.62	1.84	1.64
Adivasi Female	0.64	0.39	0.62	0.55	0.37	0.54	0.61	0.49	0.59
Male (Overall)	1.84	2.21	1.93	2.07	2.30	2.14	1.85	2.18	1.93
Female (Overall)	0.47	0.29	0.43	0.38	0.28	0.35	0.47	0.35	0.43

(With 95% Conf. Interval) (Odds ratio of Adivasi male & female, and overall male & female were derived w.r.t. total Adivasi population and Overall population respectively.)

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th, 68thEUS and PLFS rounds.

Table 8
Usual Principal Activity Status of Adivasis.

Activity status	1993–94				2011–12				2022–23			
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Self-employed/ unpaid family work	18.74	28.81	5.78	15.59	15.94	30.67	4.87	12.02	22.85	32.23	8.29	15.08
Regular wage work	0.74	3.52	5.49	20.88	1.21	3.21	6.58	27.03	2.84	6.8	10.73	25.14
Casual wage work	17.16	25.58	6.99	14.65	11.8	21.25	5.49	12.62	8.54	18.31	3.8	11.74
Unemployed	0.25	0.59	0.41	2.91	0.48	0.82	0.98	1.99	0.59	1.4	2.13	3.59
Education	10.94	18.1	22.99	26.78	23.78	28.79	28.56	34.5	24.32	26.79	27.51	28.9
All domestic (a + b)	26.57	0.59	39.9	0.44	31.94	0.66	40.64	0.42	26.68	0.46	34.62	0.41
Others	25.61	22.81	18.44	18.74	14.85	14.58	12.89	11.42	14.19	14.02	12.92	15.14
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th,68thEUS rounds and PLFS (2022–23).

Table 9
Percentage of Adivasi women vs Overall women engaged in domestic duties and landholding among them.

		Landless/ no land possession		Marginal	Small	Semi medium	Medium	Large	Total
1993–94	Adivasi women	Rural	12.32	47.79	20.22	13.14	2.95	3.58	100
		Urban	54.28	37.22	4.15	3.29	0.72	0.34	100
		R + U	17.29	46.53	18.31	11.98	2.69	3.2	100
	Women (Overall)	Rural	11.39	56.12	15.37	10.28	3.33	3.52	100
		Urban	51.35	42.52	2.56	2	0.62	0.94	100
		R + U	22.39	52.37	11.84	8	2.58	2.81	100
2011–12	Adivasi Women	Rural	19.65	50.77	17.28	9.42	1.89	1	100
		Urban	67.38	26.07	3.4	2.52	0.41	0.22	100
		R + U	26.04	47.46	15.43	8.49	1.69	0.9	100
	Women (Overall)	Rural	21.34	56.82	11.07	7.11	1.99	1.67	100
		Urban	63.11	32.1	2.09	1.63	0.52	0.55	100
		R + U	34.35	49.12	8.27	5.4	1.53	1.32	100
2019	Adivasi Women	Rural	42.8	44.23	7.9	4.38	0.32	0.37	100
		Urban	78.19	16.93	2.98	1.68	0.13	0.1	100
		R + U	48.39	39.91	7.12	3.96	0.29	0.33	100
	Women (Overall)	Rural	48.93	39.14	6.63	4.1	0.59	0.62	100
		Urban	82.4	14.87	1.36	0.91	0.19	0.27	100
		R + U	59.19	31.7	5.02	3.12	0.46	0.51	100

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th and 68thEUS rounds and Time Use Survey 2019.

Table 10

Intensity of zero landholding among Adivasi women vs Women (All) involved in Domestic duties.

	Sector	1993–94	2011–12	2019
Adivasi Women	(Rural)	3.69	1.47	0.24
	(Urban)	−0.10	−0.40	0.04
	(R + U)	2.34	1.01	0.19
Women (All)	(Rural)	2.18	1.01	−0.06
	(Urban)	−0.03	−0.29	−0.08
	(R + U)	1.10	0.46	−0.07

Source: Authors' calculation from 50th and 68thEUS rounds and Time Use Survey 2019.

*Time Use Survey (2019) gives land possession data instead of land owned.

(standard of living) and educational levels. The situation in the rural and urban sectors differentiates participation in the labour market given the employment opportunities and working environment in both sectors which are different. Similarly, the marital status variable is able to depict the tendency of currently married status restricting women's mobility by increasing the burden of social reproduction duties and limiting their participation in economic activities. The female-headed household is more likely to increase the participation of women in the labour market as it increases their responsibility over the economic as well as social aspects of the household. The age of the women also determines their participation in the labour market. After marriage, women are more likely to remain within the household till their reproductive age (giving birth to a child), as they spend much time in caregiving activities. Moreover, the number of dependents (children, elderly, and non-earning members) in the family also determines the participation of women in the labour market in two ways. First, if the number of dependents is high and requires care, then women are more likely to engage in domestic activities only. Secondly, if the number of dependents as well as non-earning members in the household is higher, women are more likely to join the labour market to support the family financially. The spouse's occupation also determines the participation of women in the labour market. If the spouse is involved in a low-paid occupation, the woman is likely to join the labour market to support the family financially, and vice versa. The standard of living also influences the participation of women in the labour market. The high standard of living discourages the women to join the labour market as the family does not require additional income and vice versa. Finally, an increase in their level of education enhances their prospects of taking up employment opportunities. However, it is seen that a higher level of educational attainment increases the chances of involuntary unemployment as people limit their choice of occupation. The results from the application of binary logistic regression analysis are produced in [Table 12](#), which compares the results emerging from two rounds of survey periods, i.e., 50th vs. 68th round of the survey.

[Table 12](#) shows that the likelihood of labour force participation among Adivasi women has an urban advantage of 2.29 times during the earlier round, which has reduced to 1.55 times in 2011–12. Further, the currently married and divorced/separated have a lower likelihood of labour force participation than the unmarried. The female-headed household is also less likely to enhance Adivasi women's labour force participation, compared to Adivasi women from the male-headed household. The major takeaway from this table is that the landholding and educational level significantly influence Adivasi women's participation in the labour market. Adivasi women from landowning households are 1.015 times more likely to participate in the labour force when compared to those from landless households (however, odds ratio slightly declines to 1 in 2011–12). The spouse's occupation significantly influences the participation of Adivasi women in the labour force, however, their likelihood to participate in the labour market is low for all the occupational categories of spouses with reference to Administrative and business activities of spouses. The educational feature significantly and positively influences Adivasi women to participate in

the labour force in both the rounds. However, Adivasi women with graduation and above education levels are less likely to join the labour market than Adivasi women without education in both the rounds. This may be attributed to the inability of the education system to make them fit for market employment or to the lack of availability of adequate skilled jobs in the economy. Older people also have a greater chance of participating in the labour force, as the burden of care activities shrinks with rising age.

4.5. Occupational changes among Adivasi women in relation to landholding patterns

From the above analysis, it is explicitly observed that the LFPR of Adivasi women is deteriorating as they are withdrawing from the labour market.⁷ Their landlessness has also intensified concurrently. In rural areas, landlessness has increased from 16 per cent to 20 per cent and in urban areas, it has increased from 55 per cent to 63 per cent during the two decades (1993–94 to 2011–12). Moreover, Adivasi women from households with zero land possession are very high in both sectors at 43 per cent and 90 per cent respectively in 2019 ([Table 13](#)).

Nevertheless, the occupational profile of the percentage of working Adivasi women has registered an improvement over the period. It plausibly denotes that Adivasi women are either preferring secured and higher-paid occupations or are concentrated in domestic duties, as seen in [Tables 9 & 10](#). In case of the share of Adivasi women workers in salariat, and skilled and semi-skilled workers in the Adivasi women WFPR, the women in the urban region have reported commendable progress. More than 50 per cent of them in urban regions were employed in the salariat, and skilled and semi-skilled occupations in 2011–12, which is an increment from 44 per cent in 1993–94. It has again increased two percentage points in 2022–23 over 2011–12. However, they are still lagging drastically behind the overall number of women in better-paid occupations ([Table 14](#)).

Dependence on land-related occupations, i.e., cultivation among them, has declined particularly in the urban regions. This decline has been translated into an increment in the salariat, and skilled and semi-skilled occupations. It may be perceived that Adivasi women are joining the salariat occupations in lieu of their land acquisitions by the state for developmental activities. It could also be possible that the skilled and semi-skilled workers are diverting their land from agricultural use to non-farm activities, driving out the employment of these women from agricultural sector.

Surprisingly, unlike for women in general (except in 2022–23), the share of cultivators among Adivasi women has increased from 46 per cent in 1993–94 to 49 per cent in 2011–12 and to 55 per cent in 2022–23 in the rural region. Their dependence on agricultural labour has also declined from 45 per cent to 34 per cent and then to 26 per cent in rural areas for the corresponding years. Many studies, such as [Dasgupta \(1973\)](#), and [Reddy & Mishra \(2015\)](#) have pointed out that the development of industrial and urban centres in the milieu of Adivasi regions in particular has attracted especially the male Adivasis to non-agricultural occupations. The female members meanwhile were left to look after their household agricultural activities. This consequently might have contributed towards the increment in the share of Adivasi female cultivators in the rural areas. The migration of male members from rural regions to urban regions in search of various kinds of manual labour might have also provided more economic space or agricultural responsibilities, which might have reduced the agricultural labour among the females. On the other hand, the share of unskilled labour among them has also increased from 3 per cent to 8 per cent and then to 11 per cent in successive years which also explains their declining labour force participation in agricultural activities ([Table 14](#)). To some extent,

⁷ It has increased in 2022–23, but due to increase in their participation in self-employment ([Table 4](#)).

Table 11

Percentage of persons and hours spent in a day on an average per person/per participant of age 6 years and above for each household social group in various activities.

		unpaid activities/ paid activities/ other activities	Self-development/ self-care/ self-maintenance, etc	unpaid activities: SNA activities	unpaid activities: Non-SNA activities	all unpaid activities	paid activities	all unpaid/ paid activities
Rural Female	ST	Percentage of persons	100	36.7	84.1	85.5	22.9	86.4
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17	0.93	4.65	5.58	1.32	6.92
	SC	Percentage of persons	100	22.7	83.5	84.3	17.3	85.1
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17.5	0.48	5.03	5.5	1	6.5
	OBC	Percentage of persons	100	23.5	83.5	84.4	17.8	85.1
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17.58	0.52	4.93	5.45	0.97	6.42
	Others	Percentage of persons	100	22.2	83.3	84.1	14.9	84.9
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17.58	0.48	5.22	5.7	0.73	6.42
	All	Percentage of persons	100	24.7	83.5	84.5	17.6	85.2
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17.5	0.55	4.98	5.53	0.97	6.5
Urban Female	ST	Percentage of persons	100	13.1	80.5	81.1	18	83
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	1087	0.2	4.47	4.67	1.22	5.89
	SC	Percentage of persons	100	8.8	81.3	81.5	18.3	83.3
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	1080	0.12	4.7	4.82	1.18	6
	OBC	Percentage of persons	100	9.4	81.6	82	15.9	83.6
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	1088	0.12	4.75	4.87	1	5.87
	Others	Percentage of persons	100	6.7	79.5	79.7	13.4	81.9
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	18.28	0.08	4.75	4.83	0.88	5.72
	All	Percentage of persons	100	8.4	80.7	81	15.4	82.9
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	18.17	0.12	4.73	4.83	1	5.83
R + U Female (All)	ST	Percentage of persons	100	33.4	83.5	84.9	22.2	85.9
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17.23	0.83	4.63	5.47	1.32	6.77
	SC	Percentage of persons	100	19.4	83	83.6	17.6	84.7
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17.62	0.38	4.95	5.33	1.05	6.38
	OBC	Percentage of persons	100	19.4	83	83.7	17.2	84.7
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17.73	0.4	4.88	5.28	0.98	6.27
	Others	Percentage of persons	100	15.7	81.7	82.3	14.3	83.6
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17.87	0.32	5.02	5.33	0.8	6.13
	All	Percentage of persons	100	19.8	82.7	83.4	17	84.5
		Hours spent on an average in a day per person	17.7	0.41	4.9	5.32	0.98	6.3

Source: Time Use Survey, 2019.

*The activities included in the coverage of System of National Accounts (SNA) production boundary are termed as SNA production activities and those which are outside the SNA production boundary but within the SNA general production boundary are termed as non-SNA production.

this shift from agricultural labour to unskilled labour may be explained by the onset of rural employment schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in 2006. As per the 68th Employment and Unemployment NSS round, about 34 per cent of the Adivasi women was involved in unskilled labour reported having worked under the MGNREG scheme.

Furthermore, they have a relatively higher representation in land-

related occupations (cultivation), which endorses the argument that Adivasis in general and Adivasi women in particular are a land-dependent community. Table 15 illustrates that the likelihood of being a cultivator among Adivasi women against the reference category of the overall women population is much higher for the landholding sizes, i.e., up to 2 ha and above 2 ha in both EUS rounds. Over the past two decades, their likelihood of being cultivators has increased, particularly for

Table 12
Determinants of Adivasi Women’s Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR).

Binary Logistic Regression (dependent variable: whether in LFPR (Yes/No))					
	50th round		68th round		
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	
Sector (Reference category: Rural)					
Urban	2.298	0***	1.556	0***	
Marital status (Reference category: Unmarried)					
Married	0.178	0***	0.065	0***	
Widowed	0.236	0***	0.02	0***	
Divorced/separated	1	.	1	.	
Head of Household (Reference category: Male headed household)					
Female headed household	0.512	0***	0.413	0***	
Landholding	1.015	0***	1	0***	
Adivasi women’s spouse occupation (Reference category: Administrative)					
Skilled & semi-skilled	0.913	0***	0.959	0***	
Cultivator	0.582	0***	0.435	0***	
Unskilled labour	0.509	0***	0.58	0***	
Agricultural labour	0.428	0***	0.328	0**	
Age	1	0***	0.997	0***	
No. of dependents	1.008	0**	1.057	0***	
MPC	1.001	0***	1	0***	
Educational level (Reference category: Illiterate)					
Literate but less than primary	1.576	0***	1.907	0**	
Primary	2.009	0***	1.514	0***	
Middle	3.27	0***	2.034	0***	
Secondary	1.488	0.014**	1.931	0***	
Graduate and above	0.384	0***	0.729	0***	
Constant	7.035	0***	31.774	0***	
50th round				68th round	
Mean dependent var	0.499	SD dependent var	0.500	Mean dependent var	0.620
Pseudo r-squared	0.045	Number of obs	11,459	Pseudo r-squared	0.053
Chi-square	861672.299	Prob > chi2	0.000	Chi-square	1466455.125
Akaike crit. (AIC)	18437412.601	Bayesian crit. (BIC)	18437537.492	Akaike crit. (AIC)	26044026.040
*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1				*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1	

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th and 68thEUS rounds.

*The regression results for recent PLFS round is not obtained as it does not collect the land related information, the main independent variable in our analysis. However, the regression results of two rounds give a sense of the determining factors of Adivasi women’s participation in the labour market.

Table 13
Percentage of Landholding among Adivasi Women vs Overall Women.

			Landless/ zero land possession	Marginal	Small	Semi-medium	Medium	Large	Total
1993–94	Adivasi Women	Rural	15.97	45.23	19.54	13.34	2.84	3.08	100
		Urban	54.65	36.53	4.49	3.35	0.66	0.32	100
		R + U	19.22	44.5	18.27	12.5	2.65	2.85	100
	Overall Women	Rural	12.93	55.33	14.94	10.07	3.35	3.39	100
		Urban	52.15	41.82	2.53	1.93	0.65	0.91	100
		R + U	22.51	52.03	11.91	8.08	2.69	2.78	100
2011–12	Adivasi Women	Rural	20.09	49.28	18.23	9.82	1.67	0.91	100
		Urban	63.44	29.34	3.97	2.26	0.72	0.28	100
		R + U	24.78	47.12	16.68	9	1.57	0.84	100
	Overall Women	Rural	22.77	54.78	11.74	7.23	1.93	1.54	100
		Urban	64.21	31.24	1.99	1.56	0.51	0.5	100
		R + U	34.56	48.08	8.97	5.62	1.53	1.24	100
2019	Adivasi Women	Rural	43.41	41.59	8.53	5.67	0.41	0.39	100
		Urban	79.92	15.63	2.69	1.6	0.07	0.09	100
		R + U	48.26	38.14	7.75	5.13	0.36	0.35	100
	Overall Women	Rural	48.75	38.3	7.36	4.42	0.59	0.59	100
		Urban	82.92	14.5	1.3	0.87	0.17	0.23	100
		R + U	58.55	31.47	5.62	3.4	0.47	0.49	100

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th and 68th EUS rounds, and Time Use Survey (2019).

Table 14
Occupational changes among Adivasi women vs Overall women (1993–94 to 2022–23).

			Salariat	Skilled & Semiskilled	Cultivator	Unskilled labour	Agriculture labour	All
1993–94	Adivasi Women	Rural	2.3	3.43	46.31	3.03	44.94	100
		Urban	21.55	22.12	11.32	28.75	16.26	100
		R + U	3.13	4.23	44.8	4.13	43.7	100
	Overall Women	Rural	3.62	8.91	42.41	2.57	42.49	100
		Urban	23.61	36.59	8.34	20.18	11.28	100
		R + U	6.48	12.88	37.52	5.1	38.01	100
2011–12	Adivasi Women	Rural	4.04	4.61	48.72	8.09	34.54	100
		Urban	24.74	27.12	8.36	25.88	13.9	100
		R + U	5.41	6.1	46.04	9.27	33.17	100
	Overall Women	Rural	5.99	11.57	39.39	7.97	35.08	100
		Urban	32.13	33.63	4	25.09	5.15	100
		R + U	11.77	16.44	31.57	11.75	28.47	100
2022–23	Adivasi Women	Rural	4.15	4.62	54.56	10.74	25.93	100
		Urban	19.04	34.62	13.65	23.61	9.07	100
		R + U	5.22	6.77	51.62	11.67	24.72	100
	Overall Women	Rural	6.31	7.52	50.54	12.52	23.12	100
		Urban	30.45	35.32	5.38	24.69	4.15	100
		R + U	11.43	13.41	40.97	15.1	19.1	100

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th and 68th EUS and PLFS rounds.

Table 15
Adivasi women Odds ratio (Landholding and Occupation) w.r.t. Overall women.

Occupation	Rural (1993–94)		Urban (1993–94)		Rural (2011–12)		Urban (2011–12)	
	Up to 2 ha	Above 2 ha	Up to 2 ha	Above 2 ha	Up to 2 ha	Above 2 ha	Up to 2 ha	Above 2 ha
Salariat	0.43	0.38	0.51	0.42	0.45	0.43	0.55	1.70
Cultivator	1.14	1.23	1.36	1.87	1.51	1.04	2.50	0.66
Unskilled & agri. lab	1.21	1.01	1.83	1.10	0.99	1.46	1.56	0.25

(With 95% Conf. Interval).

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th and 68th EUS rounds.

*PLFS (2022–23) data is not considered as it does not provide land related information. The Time Use Survey (2019) provides land possession data, however, the occupational classifications is different, therefore we did not considered in this table. Moreover, although the table provides data up to 2011–12 it gives a trend of Adivasi women’s likelihood of being in different occupation when they have different size of landholding.

those having land sizes up to 2 ha in both rural and urban regions. However, in the case of landholding sizes above 2 ha, their likelihood of being cultivators has declined in both regions. It might be because of the possession of a greater amount of capital as a result of higher landholding size, which might have incentivised the women to acquire better-paid jobs through access to better education and training. Table 9 to some extent reflects this. Although their likelihood of being employed in salariat occupations with reference to women in general is very low for both landholding sizes and both the regions, they have registered an improvement, particularly in urban regions when we consider the landholding size above 2 ha. Such an improvement is not seen among Adivasi women who have up to 2 ha of land. Moreover, their likelihood of being unskilled and agricultural labour is higher with reference to the overall female population. However, their likelihood of being in precarious occupations has declined, particularly in the urban regions, depending on whether the landholding is above 2 ha. This specific improvement in the urban region signifies that Adivasi women with a larger amount of landholding have a better chance to move to higher-paid occupations over time, since they hold capital and access better facilities for the enhancement of their human capital. Conversely, the lower landholding Adivasi women in urban areas are more likely to be employed in precarious occupations, although this has declined marginally over the past two decades (Table 9).

4.5.1. Land, job opportunities and migration

Adivasi mostly own non-arable land. They cultivate only one crop during the rainy season as irrigation facilities are not available to them. The crop they cultivate is just enough for their survival throughout the year. The rice cultivation and harvesting usually require three to four months of work. Moreover, in the village, they hardly receive Rs.150 in wages for their labour. Therefore, after harvesting the crop, they mostly

migrate outside their village to seek wage work. This migration transfers the responsibility of agricultural activities to the left-behind family members (females), particularly landowning households, increasing women’s participation in economic activities (Raj, 2018). However, such a transfer of responsibilities in agricultural work also increases the workload on women (Xaxa, 2004). On the other hand, when the landholding size among Adivasi households decreases due to non-Adivasi migration to their area, the job opportunities, particularly for Adivasi women, experience a shrinkage, rendering them agricultural labourers. This transition is reflected in the study of Benbabaali (2018) on land alienation in the Bhadrachalam scheduled area of the state of Telangana. The study ascertains that, as a result of the usurpation of Adivasi land by the migrants, a larger section of Adivasi women was reduced to agricultural labourer in the fields.

In cases of landlessness, the females migrate with their spouses and children to far-off places to engage themselves as labourers. Although they (both male and female) migrate to the same place of work for more than 20 years, this does not enable them to achieve upward occupational mobility, that is, mobility from unskilled labour to skilled labour. On the other hand, migration does not emancipate women from gender-based work. In other words, women continue to engage themselves in reproductive and domestic roles along with wage work (Mosse et al., 2010).

4.6. Determinants of Adivasi women’s occupational status

A reconfirmatory exercise, following the descriptions presented till now, is carried out with the help of a multinomial logistic regression based on the 50th and 68th round survey data presented in Tables 16 and 17. Here we exhibit the effects of land holding size on women’s occupational status, where salariat and business occupation is treated as a reference category against various other occupations such as skilled

Table 16

Determinants of Adivasi women’s occupational status (50th round).

Multinomial Logistic Regression (Dependent variable: Adivasi women’s occupation). Baseline category: Salarial and Business occupation against skilled and semi-skilled, cultivator, unskilled labour, agriculture labour.

	Skilled and semi-skilled		Cultivator		Unskilled Labour		Agriculture labour	
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value
Sector (Reference category: Rural)								
Urban	-0.187	0.369	-1.302	0***	1.147	0***	-1.516	0***
Marital status (Reference category: unmarried)								
Married	-0.102	0.949	-1.266	0.384	-2.529	0.123	-0.668	0.786
Widowed	13.149	0.988	11.587	0.989	-4.168	0.998	113.654	0.987
Divorced/separated	0.973	0.254
Head of Household (Reference category: male headed Household)								
Female headed household	0.002	0.995	-0.319	0.356	-0.608	0.278	-0.711	0.145
Landholding	-0.141	0.199	0.366	0***	-0.587	0.007***	-0.178	0.135
Adivasi women’s spouse occupation (Reference: Administrative)								
Skilled & semi-skilled	2.236	0***	1.213	0***	4.245	0***	2.367	0***
Cultivator	1.209	0***	4.151	0***	3.786	0.001***	2.577	0***
Unskilled labour	1.269	0.005***	2.329	0***	7.342	0***	3.084	0***
Agricultural labour	1.139	0.007***	1.022	0.002***	4.245	0***	6.391	0***
Age	-0.004	0.703	0	0.971	-0.008	0.482	-0.008	0.373
No. of dependents	-0.02	0.684	-0.02	0.614	0.028	0.672	-0.026	0.633
MPC	0	0.489	0	0.653	-0.001	0.342	-0.003	0***
Educational level (Reference category: illiterate)								
Literate but less than primary	-0.552	0.157	0.024	0.932	-0.119	0.772	-0.854	0.017**
Primary	-1.114	0.001***	0.157	0.492	-1.889	0***	-1.545	0***
Middle	-1.014	0.001***	-0.522	0.028**	-1.639	0.001***	-2.49	0***
Secondary	-0.498	0.051*	-3.033	0***	-2.415	0***	-4.435	0***
Graduate and above	-0.082	0.826	-5.878	0***	-16.008	0.975	-18.023	0.994
Constant	-0.719	1.645	1.441	0.335	-1.93	0.327	-0.315	0.9
Mean dependent var		3.435			SD dependent var			1.145
Pseudo r-squared		0.638			Number of obs			5700
Chi-square		8203.164			Prob > chi2			0.000
Akaike crit. (AIC)		4780.927			Bayesian crit. (BIC)			5233.006

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th EUS round.

and semi-skilled, cultivator, unskilled labourers, and agricultural labourers by controlling for other key predictors in terms of characteristics of households such as education, age, marital status, female against male-headed households, urban vs. rural sector, number of dependents in the household, MPC and spouse’s occupation.

The results presented in both Tables 16 and 17 consistently suggest that landholding significantly influences the occupation of Adivasi women. However, they are less likely to be cultivators than to take up the salariat and business occupations. In other words, Adivasi women from landholding households are less likely to work as agriculture labourers and in skilled and semi-skilled jobs (relative to salariat and business occupation) as compared to Adivasi women from landless households. The ‘landholding’ predictor is insignificant in the case of unskilled labourers. The educational level significantly influences the occupational status of Adivasi women. The results suggest that literate Adivasi women are less likely to take up employments viz. skilled and unskilled, cultivation, unskilled, and agriculture labour occupations relative to salariat and business occupations, as compared to the illiterate Adivasi women. Moreover, their likelihood of joining these occupations declines as their education level improves. Hence, lower educational levels serve as a barrier to better-paid occupations. Further, the spouse’s occupation significantly influences the occupation of Adivasi women. Irrespective of spouse occupations, they are more likely to be engaged in low-paid occupations, i.e., unskilled manual labour and agricultural labourers. However, they are more likely to be cultivators when their spouses are involved in skilled and semi-skilled, or even in farming activities. To put it differently, Adivasi women prefer to

rediscover themselves as cultivators along with their spouses, instead of reckoning themselves as unpaid family labourer. Moreover, when Adivasi men are involved in non-farm unskilled labour, Adivasi women take over the responsibilities of household agricultural activities. The regression result based on the 68th round in line with the 50th round suggests that landholding, spouse occupation and educational attainments significantly determine Adivasi women’s occupational status. The ‘age’ of Adivasi women and the number of dependents in the household are insignificant in determining their occupational status. Although in the 68th round, the number of dependents significantly determines their involvement in certain occupations, like skilled and unskilled labour, they are less likely to be in these occupations when compared to their salariat and business occupation counterparts.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This exploration, examining the association between land-holding patterns and occupational changes among Adivasi women based on two rounds of the Employment and Unemployment Survey and the recent Periodic Labour Force Survey in India, gives rise to four salient inferences. Firstly, between 1993–94 and 2011–12, the Labour force participation rate (LFPR), based on UPS criteria, has contracted in general, which has adverse implications on Adivasis. This deterioration in LFPR is driven by a large-scale withdrawal of the female working-age population from the labour force. The decline in LFPR is offset by an increment in their participation in education and domestic duties. However, the LFPR has increased in 2022–23. This is largely because of

Table 17

Determinants of Adivasi women’s occupational status (68th round).

Multinomial Logistic Regression (Dependent variable: Adivasi women’s occupation). Baseline category: Salaried and Business occupation against skilled and semi-skilled, cultivator, unskilled labour, agriculture labour.

	Skilled and semi-skilled		Cultivator		Unskilled Labour		Agriculture labour	
	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value
Sector (Reference category: Rural)								
Urban	-0.101	0.474	-1.514	0***	-0.163	0.354	-1.692	0***
Marital status (Reference category: unmarried)								
Married	-1.709	0.2	-0.18	0.909	11.085	0.986	-2.278	0.137
Widowed	12.273	0.992	13.068	0.991	11.534	0.995	13.242	0.991
Divorced/separated	-1.216	1	1.442	1	31.671	1	-1.61	1
Head of Household (Reference category: male headed Household)								
Female headed household	-0.209	0.508	-0.585	0.036**	-0.24	0.523	-0.578	0.133
Landholding	0.05	0.066	0.324	0***	-0.237	0.029**	-0.38	0***
Adivasi women’s spouse occupation (Reference: Administrative)								
Skilled & semi-skilled	2.621	0***	1.373	0***	2.105	0***	2.345	0***
Cultivator	1.339	0***	3.524	0***	2.242	0***	2.031	0***
Unskilled labour	1.041	0.005***	2.143	0***	4.857	0***	3.359	0***
Agricultural labour	1.009	0.019**	1.298	0***	2.818	0***	5.728	0***
Age	0.017	0.012**	0.001	0.794	-0.011	0.169	-0.017	0.026**
No. of dependents	-0.127	0.004***	-0.05	0.158	-0.173	0.001***	-0.107	0.03**
MPC	0	0***	-0.001	0***	-0.001	0***	-0.001	0***
Educational level (Reference category: illiterate)								
Literate but less than primary	-0.638	0.004***	-0.632	0.001***	-0.847	0***	-0.981	0***
Primary	-1.358	0***	-1.284	0***	-1.61	0***	-1.923	0***
Middle	-0.885	0***	-1.559	0***	-1.797	0***	-1.952	0***
Secondary	-1.593	0***	-2.897	0***	-3.019	0***	-3.862	0***
Graduate and above	-2.295	0***	-5.088	0***	-5.722	0***	-6.489	0***
Constant	-0.358	0.792	-0.208	0.895	-12.994	0.984	1.123	0.47
Mean dependent var					SD dependent var		1.155	
Pseudo r-squared	2.987				Number of obs		4621	
Chi-square	0.385				Prob > chi2		0.000	
Akaike crit. (AIC)	4750.539				Bayesian crit. (BIC)		8012.7	
	7677.972							

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1

Source: Authors’ calculation from 50th EUS round.

their participation in self-employment (as an own account worker and as an unpaid family worker). Secondly, the LFPR deterioration among Adivasi women has been pronounced more in rural regions in 2011–12, although the percentage decline is lesser than that of women in general. In 2022–23, despite the marginal increase in their participation, the LFPR remains less in rural areas. Conversely, in urban regions, unlike the pattern observed for all the women, Adivasi women have registered a fall in their LFPR in 2011–12, which has witnessed a marked increase in 2022–23. Besides this, their likelihood of being in the labour force with reference to the Adivasi population has worsened in both regions over time. Thirdly, landlessness has forced more Adivasi women to assume domestic duties when compared with women in general. The landless Adivasi women have a greater percentage share in domestic duties than women in general in both rural and urban regions. The inverse association between the participation of women in domestic duties and the size of landholding is sharper in the case of Adivasi women than in the case of women in general. Fourthly, unlike in the case of women (overall), the share of cultivators among Adivasi women has increased, and their dependence on agricultural labour has also correspondingly declined in rural areas. Lastly, Adivasi women with a reasonable size of landholding have a better chance to move to higher-paid occupations, particularly in urban regions. Conversely, marginal landholdings among Adivasi women in urban areas is associated with them being employed in precarious occupations.

Globally, land is an integral part of indigenous society. Besides, serving as a means of livelihood, land shapes their socio-cultural and religious identities and status, as well as their socio-economic and

political systems (Ekka, 2012). Therefore, the loss of land is tantamount to the loss of identity and is often regarded as the cultural genocide of the Adivasi population (Padel & Das, 2008). Moreover, the acquisition of indigenous land by the state or non-Adivasis is not merely a material transfer or redistribution of resources for the so-called common cause, but it involves a process of change in social and power relations in the society. In this transition process, Adivasi women happen to constitute the most vulnerable group, as they are dispossessed of their limited socio-economic space in society. The growing urbanisation in Adivasi regions has also failed to generate the desired occupational mobility. Instead, it has systematically dispossessed them of their land assets and pushed them into indignance. With increasing land alienation, they are more likely to be involved in unskilled occupations and domestic duties. This veritably worsens the relative gender egalitarianism by strengthening men’s position in control of the household economy in the Adivasi society.

Such a precarious condition for Adivasi women is not only caused by land alienation but also by the state’s apathy to implement the Forest Rights Act, 2006. As per the provisions under this Act, the government should grant joint *patta* to both male and female members of Adivasi community and forest-dwelling communities. Not only has it been ignored so far, but the distribution of forest *patta* itself by the state has proven to be toothless. After the Act came into effect in 2006, more than 31.3 lakh claims for tenure security were filed until June 2011, of which

only 26.8 lakh claims were settled. And, of the claims disposed of, only 11.9 lakh land titles were granted, and the rest were rejected.⁸

Our analysis indicates that cultivators among Adivasi women seem to be increasing in rural areas. This increase may be attributed to the male migration to urban or industrial areas for non-farm jobs. This may be regarded as a positive impact of urbanisation and industrialisation on the Adivasi society in terms of gender equality. However, Adivasi women assimilated into urban livelihoods are seen as detaching themselves from material reproduction, as more than four-fifths are reported as not being in the labour force (Table 5). This is a matter of policy concern for the researchers and policymakers engaged in the discussion on mainstreaming marginalised communities like Adivasis. There are certain important domains in which policies play an important role in the development of the community and the society. Firstly, the government should ensure landed property for Adivasi women, which should be in consonance with the Adivasi community's ethos, i.e., it should not create any risk of transferring Adivasis' land to non-Adivasis. Secondly, the government should ensure the provisions granted to Adivasis and forest-dwelling communities listed in the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Thirdly, there should be measures adopted to discourage the exodus of Adivasi women to urban regions as unskilled labour such as domestic workers and other manual workers, as indicated in many studies (Neetha, 2003; Neetha & Mazumdar, 2009). The present study echoes similar sentiments with evidence of the fact that a large section of urban-living Adivasi women has ended up being engaged only in performing household chores and belong to the bottom of the living standard hierarchy in society. Their precarious situation in the labour market can be reversed with state support and intervention in the form of quality education and skill development to position them on an equal footing with others in the emerging urban labour market. In the post-(land) dispossession period, Adivasis in general and Adivasi women in particular, encounter constraints on their access to new opportunities and upward mobility due to their low level of educational background and poor economic conditions (Haldar, 2011). A study by Punalekar (1988) on Adivasis in Gujarat shows that female children from a section of Adivasi society have been able to take the advantages provided under reservation and join professional courses like teaching, nursing, and even technical courses, and access the opportunities in the urban centres. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs supports and promotes entrepreneurship among Adivasis, with a special focus on Adivasi women, through schemes like Pradhan Mantri Janajatiya Vikas Mission which has two components: Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce and Equity Support to National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation and the Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana. Further, educational schemes like Ekalavya Model Residential Schools and Ashram Schools set up by the government in remote areas have also been quite rewarding. However, these schemes must be scaled up, and their efficiency must be enhanced to ensure upward occupational mobility among Adivasi women.

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

John Kujur: Writing – original draft, Software, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Udaya S Mishra:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Data curation. **S. Irudaya Rajan:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision. **Hrushikesh Mallick:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Methodology, Data

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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