

Changing Livelihoods in Delhi's Periphery, circa 1930–2012

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ABSTRACT

The understanding of livelihoods in an economy dominated by informality can benefit considerably from correlations between macro data on employment and detailed studies of 'work' and 'non work' in select communities. As a modest contribution in this direction, this paper charts the changing profile of myriad occupations, from about the 1930s, in a village called Dhantala (in Meerut, western Uttar Pradesh) and a slum called Aradhaknagar (in east Delhi) through local records, oral history, focus group discussions, and personal interviews. Besides throwing light on the changing patterns of officially acknowledged and unacknowledged occupations in a rural and an urban setting over eight decades, the paper identifies factors that support or constrain economic mobility among the subjects after comparing studied employment trends with those in other micro studies as also national data sets for the said period. The paper highlights changing proportions of students, homemakers, home based workers, employers, entrepreneurs, 'illegal' professions, middlemen, activists and 'multi taskers' etc. along with standard occupational categories like agriculturists, skilled and unskilled labour and salaried workers in both locations. The study shows that among the five broad phases of policy regimes in the country since the late colonial era, it is the period of economic liberalisation that benefitted the workforce the most in the said locations, contrary to the general left anticipation of pauperisation and proletarianisation growing with liberalisation. The paper concludes with a list of policy imperatives and some pointers for future research in this light.

Keywords: Livelihoods, India, slums, villages, , underdevelopment, economic liberalisation

1 INTRODUCTION

Every country that moved out of poverty went through major shifts in its occupational profile too. The advancement of most economies—from Britain in the 18th century to Brazil in the 21st century—has thus entailed rapid reduction in the rural and agricultural workforce; a substantial swell in the formal economy; a marked rise in women’s participation in the workforce; massive expansion of the salaried class and increasing mechanisation; and specialisation and commercialisation of work, along with growing social and geographical mobility of labour.¹

In India, modern industry started in the mid-19th century, and planned development began after independence. Despite these early shoots, our occupational profile continues to be marred by immense informality of work; predominance of agriculture and the rural sector; massive underemployment; a low count of ‘working’ women and the presence of a vast ‘shadow economy,’ besides sharp income inequalities; labour market segmentation; and low wages and poor social security for workers. Such hallmarks of underdevelopment impel a close look at the livelihood struggles of our workers to grasp the nature of obstacles in their social mobility by relating the aggregate statistics on employment trends with insights from micro-studies of working communities.²

A macro–micro dialogue in research on Indian livelihoods also seems pertinent in the light of persisting enigmas regarding ‘feminisation of agriculture’, paralleled by a massive withdrawal of women from rural ‘work’; swings in figures on employment growth and unemployment in recent survey rounds; unexpected shifts in the size of our slum population and the population below official poverty line(s), besides sharp differences in scholarly estimates of our ‘black’/illegal economy, extent of caste discrimination and prevalence of child labour, bonded work, etc.³

Differences in employment counts in a diverse country like India do not necessarily signal a weakness in data. Categorising, counting, and even defining ‘work’ is tricky and debatable everywhere (Hirway 2012). In India, particularly, the undercount of ‘work’ in the informal sector, shadow economy, and the household space and among workers with multiple jobs has been well acknowledged (Harris-White 2003; Sharma and Gupta 1991).

¹ Simon Kuznets’ views on the bell shaped relation between inequality and economic growth have been challenged by Piketty and others lately. However, his proposition regarding simultaneous shifts in incomes and employment patterns in modern economies seems pertinent still (Kuznets 1971) and Piketty (2014).

² The call for a dialogue between economists and anthropologists may be seen in Bardhan (1989).

³ For diverse views on recent employment trends in India, see Papola (2013) and Dev and Mahajan (2003) on the one hand and Parikh (2005) and Sundaram (2008) on the other.

Intriguingly, conceptualisation as well as estimation of occupational categories has varied not only between ideological stances but also official bodies like the Census Commission and the National Sample Survey Organisation (Bhalla 2000; Government of India 2011). In this connection again, long-term in-depth studies of livelihoods in diverse settings (applying oral history methods along with periodic revisits) can throw fresh light on national statistics on employment as well.

2 FOCUS

As a small contribution in this endeavour, the present paper offers a detailed chart of changing livelihoods, from the 1930s to 2012, in a village called Dhantala (in Meerut district) and a slum called Aradhaknagar (in East Delhi). Both are multi-caste communities, with a preponderance of dalits in the latter and of middle castes (or OBCs) in the former. Significantly, both include a cohort of a dozen-odd elders who proved helpful in according historical depth to the present study.

Apart from charting changes in myriad categories of work in the said communities over eight decades, the paper correlates its findings with occupational transitions noted in other long-term studies of rural and urban communities in India, and with national statistics on employment available from official bodies before highlighting possible relations between successive policy regimes and occupational trends and implications thereof.

Before reporting our findings, it would be pertinent to dwell briefly on some complexities associated with the notion of livelihoods and work. Economists have drawn a clear boundary between 'work' as a general category referring to any expenditure of energy for a recognised task and the disciplinary usage wherein it refers to value addition in the production or distribution of goods and services that needs to be counted, tracked, and compared across countries on the basis of standard classification norms. The latter conception of economic work may be further distinguished from closely related categories like occupations, livelihoods, jobs, and employment, referring respectively to a person's long-term association with a profession; changeable work and earning strategies of individuals; and a position in an enterprise. However, these terms can and have been used interchangeably in scholarly writings, as also in this paper, even as their demarcation from 'non-work' or engagements dissociated from the economy and the account of country's GDP is clear and accepted.

A more contested terrain in the charting of economic 'work' has centred on the question of naming and counting activities in a collective that satisfy the above criterion and international norms. Difficulties ingrained in counting or not counting workers in grey zones like the black economy, production for self-consumption as also unreported second

jobs, and problems faced in categorising individuals with multiple jobs or different combinations of principal and subsidiary activities are well known (Sen 1973). Alfred Marshall's quip that were he to marry his cook, *ceteris paribus*, the GDP as well as the work count of his country would go down, as per standard counting practice, is an apt illustration of the dilemma confronting occupational count at times.

2.1 Classifying Work

Apart from the complexities inherent in defining and counting workers in a community, the task of clubbing and classifying occupations is also riddled with problems. Professions in a modern economy are umpteen; the need to categorise them along shared criteria for comparisons and policy formulation is also evident. At a basic level, occupations have been classified across countries as per standard industrial divisions and skill levels in nine or ten major categories and numerous sub-categories.⁴ At a broader level, for charting trends in the national economy, occupations have also been classified in a three by three pattern (of main, marginal and non-workers; primary, secondary and tertiary sector workers; and self-employed, casual and regular wage earners) on the basis of time spent in work over a year, sectoral location, and activity status respectively.

A more complex issue in charting occupations has been of relating multiple livelihood strategies in real life situations and the need to count individuals by time spent in a particular job. Similarly, the task of relating economists' categories with subjects' own notions of work and its varieties also poses a challenge. The latter would restrict cross-country comparisons of occupational structures while the former fails to nab local concerns and insights (Bremen 2002). In India, for example, the categorisation of work into 'majdoori' (hard labour in casual or petty self employment), 'apna kaam' (well paying self employment) and the highly desired 'naukri' (regular paid work) expresses an intense concern with job security and steady returns rather than type of industry, economic sector, activity status or even skill or education level. This concern dominates the conceptual frames of national occupational classifications.

Given the disjuncture between macroeconomic concerns and categories valued by anthropologists, many micro-studies of local economies have refrained from clubbing professions and listed, at times, the numbers of disaggregated carpenters, vendors, mechanics, etc. in local occupational studies (Ghosh 2008; Kumar and Aggarwal 2003). The present report has found it useful to classify and count workers in the studied area in detail. However, my effort has been to combine and correlate standard occupational categories, such as self-employed and casual workers, with classes of work reflecting subjects'

⁴ For instance, see National Classification of Occupations adopted by Government of India and NSSO and the National Occupational Classification modelled on the Standard UN classification.

own concern with security, regularity, and safety of work. In this light, certain work divisions such as formal–informal, high skilled–low skilled, and legal–illegal have been foregrounded along with the standard three-tier classification mentioned above; see subsequent Tables 3 and 5 for the resultant cross-classification of work categories discerned in our research field.

There are numerous sub-categories of workers that appear significant in our field but seem sidelined in most occupational surveys. Some of these are employers as a distinct category within the self-employed; home-based women workers; poor land lessees; entrepreneurs and professionals in slums and villages; multi-taskers with varied work profiles; categories within non-workers such as full time social workers; political activists; and illegal and semi-legal professions, besides various combinations of principal and subsidiary employment, etc.

2.2 Questions on Livelihoods

Besides naming and cross-classifying work categories, livelihoods in a country can be studied from a number of angles at micro and macro levels. At the macro plane, for instance, it may be pertinent to ask a few questions. Which kinds of jobs are growing with time, and which are dwindling? Which types of policy regimes have spawned the maximum growth in employment, and why? How has the ratio of subsidiary work, self-employed, etc. changed over time? To what extent and under what conditions have wage rates, mechanisation, formal employment, etc. grown? Is caste and gender segmentation of the labour market diminishing? To what extent do epithets like modernisation, proletarianisation, and casualisation of work seem applicable to recent trends in employment in the country?

From a micro-perspective, it is also possible to study livelihoods for charting various sub-categories of work in detail and their divergence from other micro-studies as also from macro data. Such a comparative perspective would enrich quantitative chartings of data on employment with qualitative profiles and personal insights on subjects' own work categories, and also pinpoint possible ambiguities in macro-level data on multiple vocations, illegal professions, and undercounted work of women and children. Above all, micro-studies of livelihoods can throw light on complex work strategies adopted by many in the informal sector and struggles waged for upward mobility or to prevent downward social mobility.

Not all issues regarding livelihoods can be resolved or even addressed in a single paper. The present multi-method study seeks mainly to chart the transitions in myriad categories of work (and non-work) over three generations in one rural community and one urban community. Apart from an internal comparison of changing occupations over time, the paper seeks to relate findings from chosen sites with other long-term studies of villages

and slums (like that of Palanpur and the Slater villages) as also with macro trends in rural and urban data provided by national surveys.

This study also aims to chart long-term trends in occupational profiles. It pays special attention to the changing proportions of agriculturists, formal sector workers, the local bourgeoisie, etc. and to minor categories like employers, rentiers, 'non-workers', subsidiary work, etc. and, more cursorily, their changing caste and gender profiles. The study also tries to shed light on issues like swings in estimation of women's work in rural areas and the extent of uncounted work in the domestic sphere and of multiple occupations and quasi-legal jobs; and pinpoints phases of rapid growth and their possible sources.

Due to space constraints, the task of delineating the class, caste, and gender dimensions of the noted occupational shifts and of charting determinants of upward and downward mobility among our subjects has been left for another full-length paper.

2.3 The Selected Sites

I studied Dhantala and Aradhaknagar in 1988–89 (as part of my research for the MPhil degree) and again in 2006 and 2012 (as subjects of survey for my postdoctoral research). These successive surveys, along with oral history evidence gathered from surviving nonagenarians in these locations, provide an opportunity to delineate changes in the local economies over past eight decades. While Dhantala is known to have existed in Meerut district, from the late 18th century, Aradhaknagar came into existence only in the late 1960s on the border between Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. The slum was chosen for my first fieldwork in 'Bharat' mainly because of its multi-caste profile and proximity to my residence in East Delhi.⁵ Dhantala was chosen for additional fieldwork to trace the transitions experienced by ten emigrants who had moved to Aradhaknagar and also because the village appeared as a distinct case where the landless had mobilised to claim agricultural plots from the common land in the recent past.

No doubt Dhantala and Aradhaknagar are neither comparable nor representative samples of major categories of Indian workers. Yet, in conjunction, they offer a glimpse into two principal segments of Bharat where the vast majority of Indians make a living mostly through manual work and with little public infrastructure.

In 1988, when I first surveyed Aradhaknagar, its population was 491. It had crossed 1690 by 2012. On the other hand, demographic growth has been slower in Dhantala,

⁵ Here, 'Bharat' refers to the majority of Indians who live in villages and slums with extremely poor economic and social infrastructure.

which grew from 2080, in 1989, to 2604 in 2012. The composition of various caste and religious communities in these locations may be noted in Tables 3 and 5.

3 METHODOLOGY

Before presenting my findings on livelihoods in the studied field, it is also pertinent to spell out the methodology applied in this study and its limits. As stated, profiling of livelihoods in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar relied on a long-term, multi-method approach involving primary documents, census and sample surveys, focus group discussions, interviews, life sketches, oral history, and some telephonic follow-ups. However, participant observation has not been applied fully as most of my visits to the two sites (about 50 since 1988) were short barring the third, in 2007, which lasted eight weeks in Dhantala. Besides personal repeated visits, I also relied on four successive project assistants and one native graduate in each community for carrying out house-to-house surveys in 1988, 2006 and 2012.

While relying on local assistants for gathering primary data for each house, I concentrated on conducting focus group discussions and building qualitative evidence (especially in-depth interviews and life sketches) besides carrying counter-checks and sample tests on assistants' work regularly. Also, I gathered oral history evidence on the state of the local economy in the 1930s and 1960s through conversations with two nonagenarians, four octogenarians, and several septuagenarians in both communities. These group conversations proved helpful in generating data on prices, wages, the proportion of labourers, farmers, etc. and crop yields and demography in Dhantala (in the 1930s and 1960s) and Aradhaknagar (in the late 1960s). The same were corroborated with some documentary evidence accessed through the collectorate at Meerut and from family records available in the field.

Statistical data is notorious for its deceptive certainty. In the present research project also, variations noted in respondents' feedback, during repeated interviews, made me cognisant of the frailties of figures. On the other hand, the public character of my research theme (focusing on occupations rather than family finances); the remarkable candour and interpersonal knowledge exhibited by most subjects on the issue; and the accessibility of many men in the research field and their generous attitude to my endeavour were big props for this study. The technique of group discussions seemed particularly fruitful to me, since information that could not be reliably gathered from individuals came forth with greater confirmation and cross-checks in these discussions in close-knit groups, in which individuals share considerable mutual information and also often talk with heartening candour.

No doubt statistics on numerous sub-categories of work charted in the following tables do not still present a precise picture. The lack of a professional team of surveyors prevented

adequate checks and counter-checks in my work. Yet, with its two-decade span and repeated revisits and cultivated relations with several families, it is my hope that the methodology adopted has been successful in detecting at least the broad transitions in subjects' livelihoods and in providing a road map for further research.

To enhance the reliability of data, this study adopted a number of innovative approaches too. First, it mentions the actual names of places and residents (wherever it was safe and permitted by subjects); it is thus open to follow ups as well as scrutiny by other researchers. Secondly, I maintained field notes in Hindi (the subjects' language) to facilitate scrutiny and sharing with the latter. Lastly, the analysis has been kept as lucid as possible to invite critique from a broad body, including our subjects. A copy of an early draft of the paper (translated into Hindi) was also shared with the subjects to gather their comments and to accord multi-vocality to the text.

However, the best of precautions cannot rule out the sub-conscious influence of the researcher's biases, interests, and assumptions on his findings and their selection and interpretation. Apart from seeking disproof of one's ideology in the field, best practice also asks for baring the same before the reader at the outset. To the extent that a label may help in indicating my ideological leaning, 'left-liberal' may be an apt description; this is a position that seeks a synthesis of—rather than exclusion between—the ideals of liberty and equality or 'personal freedoms' and 'social justice'. While acknowledging points of contradiction between the two, it supports moderation rather than choosing rigidly one over the other. More specifically, it values liberal freedoms (including the freedom of economic enterprise) but seeks to restrict inherited wealth severely.

3.1 Phases within the Study Period

The eight decades since the 1930s—for which data could be generated on changing livelihoods in our sites—can be divided into five broad phases:

1. the late colonial era of scant rural development;
2. the Nehruvian epoch, which brought five year plans and abolished big landed estates;
3. the 'Indira years', which benefitted from the green and white revolutions, but failed on governance and rapid growth;
4. economic liberalisation (1991–2004); and
5. so called 'inclusive growth' (2004–14).

My own surveys in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar coincided roughly with two major departures in national policies (1991 and 2004), and thus help to chart the fallouts on local occupations of economic liberalisation and inclusive growth strategies until 2012. Evidence about local livelihoods in the earlier phases of the 1930s and 1960s was culled from elders' recall and reflects only a very rounded picture.

At this point, it is pertinent to add that the impact of a policy regime often comes after a lag. The gaps between the full implementation of a policy and its impact on the economy may itself vary from more than a decade (in the case of scientific and research infrastructure) to about five years (in areas like road and communication development) and less than a year, possibly, in the case of successful welfare measures. The principles for differentiating policy eras and policy impact need to be surely debated further. For our study, it would be useful to remember that the impact of Nehruvian investments in power, irrigation, and scientific research largely fructified in the early Indira era; and the momentum given to the Indian economy in the 1990s continued to boost the economic performance of the initial years of the Sonia era.⁶

3.2 The Macro Setting

Before we begin discussing livelihood transitions in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar, it would be useful to review the employment scenario in and outside India over the study period (Tables 1 and 2). While several Asian and Latin nations have emerged as middle or high income economies in recent decades, India still lagged at 126 in human development ranking (among 177 listed countries) in 2004 (Panda 2013). In the sphere of employment, the minuscule size of our formal economy, growing from 7 per cent in 1951 to just 14 per cent in 2011 (including the majority that works on contract within the coveted sector) and the negligible number of ‘employers’ in the economy are markers of a weak mutation in our development trajectory (Sengupta 2008). The silver lining is the belated growth of the rural non-farm sector, which accounts for about 40 per cent of rural workers and about 60 per cent of rural incomes now. The rise of construction in rural as well as urban India has been phenomenal in this regard, along with growth in services including high productivity sectors like information technology, transport, and communications.⁷

A cross-country perspective, however, dims this silver spot too, as it reminds us that the ratio of agriculturists has been less than 5 per cent in advanced economies like the US since the mid-20th century and only 31 per cent even in neighbouring Sri Lanka without loss to productivity (Drèze and Sen 1996, 2012). Similarly, the formal sector covers more than 90 per cent of the workforce in most of the advanced countries and up to 65 per cent

⁶ Here, the expression ‘Sonia era’ refers to the 10 years of Dr. Manmohan Singh’s prime ministership, during which much power rested with Sonia Gandhi, the National Advisory Council chair. It is also the period that was supposed to bring ‘inclusive growth’.

⁷ A synoptic view of major changes in the Indian economy since independence has been attempted in Table 1. Table 2 offers a glimpse of major economic indicators from other countries/ economies today. However, the aim here is only to contextualise our micro study with some aggregate indicators. Therefore, precise decimal level data have been left out and figures provide rounded statistics only.

in Malaysia too. We also need to remember that minimum wage for unskilled work, per hour, was US\$10 in USA but only US 50 cents for India's metropolitan workforce in 2013. Similarly, productivity of an agricultural worker is about US\$ 50,000 per annum in the US as well as Japan while in India was estimated at just US\$ 500 per annum in 2001 (Sen and Bhatia 2004; Balakrishnan 2010).

Table I India's occupational profile, circa 1951–2011

Sector/ Year	2011-12		1951 etc.	
	Employment Data	Output and Other Details	Employment Datas	Output and Other Details
Total Population	1200 million appr.	GDP 90 lakh crore appr. (20 times since 1951)	370 million in 1951	GDP: Rs. 10,000 crore in 1951 prices (4.5 lakh crore in 2011 prices)
Working Age Population	63%		60% in 1911; 53% in 1981	
Labor Force	45% of Total and 75% of Work Age		43% of Total Population in 1991	
Work force	39 % of Total Population	33% of urban population 16% of urban women	41% of Population in 2004. 37% in 1991	
Unemployed	6.6% of labour force	About 1.1 crores new job seekers bt 2004-09 but 1.8 crores found employment	8.2% of labour force in 2004; 6% in 1991	
Growth of Employment	0.5 % p.a.2004-09		2.5 % p.a. 1999-04 (including 7.5% in manufacturing)	
Main Workers	78 %		72% in 2004	
Marginal Workers	22 % of workers and 9% of population		8% in 1971	
Women 'Workers'	25% of Adult Women	(31% in rural and 16% in urban)	31% in 2004 27% in 1991	(withdrawal of 25 million rural women between 2004-2011)
Child Workers	2.5% of Workers		5% in 1991	
Self Employed	52% of workers (42% own account and 10% family workers)	Urban 42%	59 % 1977; 55% in 1991	Urban 41%
Regular Wage Earners	18% of workers	Urban 43%	14% in 1977	Urban 41
Casual Workers	30% of workers	Urban 15%	27 % 1977; 23% in 1973	Urban 16
Employers	Not Available		Not Available	

contd. ...

Table I India's Occupational Profile: circa, 1951-2011 (contd.)

Sector/ Year	2011-12		1951 etc.	
	Employment Data	Output and Other Details	Employment Datas	Output and Other Details
Worker Productivity in Services	8.7 times agricultural work		3 times of agricultural work	
Black Economy Estimate		50% or more of GDP		NA
Domestic Work (Not counted in WPR)		Not Available		Not Available
Informal Sector	86% (exclud. 7% contractual in Formal Sector)	60% of GDP (12% each of informal manu, trade services constn and agricultural appr.)	93% in 1951	Formal Sector in China: 32% in 2001; Thailand: 42%; U.S.:89%; Japan: 91%
Formal Sector Workers	2.9 crore		2.7 crore in 1991	
Unorganised Workers in Formal Sector	50 %		33% in 1993	
Formal private Sector Workers	1.1 crore in 2010		0.7 crore in 1981	
Public Sector Workers	1.8 crore employees appr. (62% of formal employees)	20 % of GDP (?)	1.5 crore in 1981 1.9 crore (72% of formal workers in 1991)	NA
Salary Bill of Public Sector Employees	12 lakh crore (15% of GDP)		11 % of GDP in 1991	
Agriculturists (99% are S.E./ unorganized)	49 % of all workers	14 % of GDP	75 % in 1951 66% in 1991	66 % 1911; 57% 1 in 951; 30% in 1991
Share of Agriculturists among informal workers	60%		70% in 1991	
Dependent on Animal Husbandry Alone	2%	NA	4% (?)	NA
Industry (Including Construction)	19%	27% of GDP	12% through 1951 to 1991	15% in 1951, 25% in 1971, 28% in 1991
Construction alone	8 %		2.5 % in 1991	
Services	26% (upto 75 % in advanced countires)	59% of GDP	13% in 1951, 14% in 1971, 21% in 1991	27% in 1951, 32% in 1971, 42% in 1991
Rural Non Farm Sector (exclusive)	28% of rural workers	More than 50% of rural output	15% in 1971, 17% in 1991, 22% in 2001	34% 1994, 40% in 2001
RNFS Employment Breakup in 2005	Rural Manufacturing 8%, Construction 5%, Trade 6%, Transport 2.5%, Services 6%			
Cultivated Area	163 million hectares		159 million hectares in 1991	

contd. ...

Table I India's Occupational Profile: circa, 1951-2011 (contd.)

Sector/ Year	2011-12		1951 etc.	
	Employment Data	Output and Other Details	Employment Datas	Output and Other Details
No. of agricultural holdings	137 million in 2011		90 millions in 1981	
Segments within Farmers:-				
Independent Farmers (Who do not hire out labour)	55% of Agriculturists		65%	
Marginal and Small Farmers	86 % of Farmers	40 % of Cultivated Land	66% in 1991	20% in 1991
Medium Farmers	10%	27%		
Tenants	9 %	11% in 1990		
Big holdings (above 10 acres)	4% of Farmers (own 30 % of land)	1 million big holdings (0.8% of total holdings and 10% of cultivated area)	2.2 million big holdings in 1981.	Covering 90 million acres
Rural Labor (Farm and Non Farm)	45% in 2011 (?)		33% in 1991	
Agricultural labour	25% of agriculturists in 2004 (20% landless and 80% marginal farmers)	98% of agricultural labour are casual and 2 % are regular wage ern	30% of agriculturists in 1993	
Landless Agricultural Labor	6 % of Agriculturists and 20% of Agricultural Labour		?	
Migrants Workers (in past one year)	40 million		30 million in 2008	

Note: All data in this table is in rounded figures only.

Sources: Government of India, Economic Survey: 2011-12; National Sample Survey Organisation Reports including Employment and Unemployment Survey 68th Round, 2011-12; Registrar General of India and Census Data as cited in Datt and Sundharam, Indian Economy, 2013; and Tata Consultancy Services, Statistical Outline of India, 2012.

4 OCCUPATIONS IN DHANTALA AND ARADHAKNAGAR

Between the late colonial era and the establishment's recent venture in 'inclusive growth', occupations in both our research sites went through changes at the level of work techniques as well as workers' ratios. But the overriding fact is that the quality of livelihoods of a vast section of our subjects remains practically unaltered even after decades of planned development. Thus, in self employment, salaried as well as casual work; in agriculture, industry and services; and in principal, subsidiary as well as multi-work status, up to 90 per

cent of both lower caste and middle caste denizens of Dhantala and Aradhaknagar remain manual workers, and about 67 per cent in Aradhaknagar and up to 90 per cent in Dhantala remain bound to the 'high anxiety' informal sector. No doubt, a minor sprout in the proportion of the local bourgeoisie (petty entrepreneurs and some professionals and clerks) is discernible in both Dhantala and Aradhaknagar. Yet, low skills, extreme drudgery, poor incomes and productivity, poor safety and hygiene, negligible unionisation, little social security or scope for upward mobility and a high degree of underemployment and disguised unemployment combined with a heavy burden of 'work' as well as non-work on women continue to mar the economic life of an overwhelming majority in both instances of 'Bharat' examined here.

Table 2 Major economic indicators (Some international comparisons, 2009)

Country / Indicator	Gross National Income per Capita US #	Population Below Poverty Line (1)*	Formal Sector Share in Employment	Minimum Wages in \$ per hour	Labor productivity in agriculture (Per annum per wrkr in \$) (2)*	Employment in Agriculture (% of Employed)	Unemployment (% of labour force)	Urban Population (%)	Life Expectancy at Birth Female/Male	Forested area (% of Land Area)	Energy Consumption per capita per annum (3)*	Per capita CO2 Emission Estimate (4)*
India	1073.1	68.7%	16.4%	0.61	\$ 500 (5)	50	8 to 6%	30.0	66.9 / 63.7	22.9	396.0	1.4
Sri Lanka	2082.9	29.8% ? 5	38 %	0.94		31.3	5.2	14.3	78.6 / 71.3	30.0	200.0	0.6
Malaysia	6732.1	9%	65%	1.79		14.8	3.3	72.2	77.6 / 72.9	62.8	2714.0	7.0
Thailand	3719.4	15 %	58 %	2.04		41.7*	1.2	34.0	72.8 / 67.1	37.1	1211.0	4.3
Indonesia	2080.3		27.5%	2.32		41.2	8.4	44.3	74.3 / 70.2	52.9	565.0	1.8
Vietnam	1032.0			0.56		—	2.4	30.0	77.4 / 73.3	43.6	425.0	1.3
Cuba	5355.4			0.8 ?		18.7	1.6	—	81.3 / 77.2	26.3	878.0	2.4
Brazil	7948.6			2.04		19.3	8.2	—	77.2 / 69.9	61.9	882.0	1.9
US, Japan etc.	>40,000		Up to 90%	8\$	\$ 50,000 \$ 48,000 in Japan	>2%						

Source: World Statistics, United Nations 2010; Balakrishnan (2010).

*Notes: (1) US \$2 per day per capita; (2) Worker productivity in India has risen in services from three times of agriculture in 1951, to 8 times agriculture; (3) Kilograms Oil Equivalent; (4) Metric Tons ; (5) Balakrishnan's corresponding figures for India and US agriculture are \$360 and 23,000 respectively

4.1 Tardy Change

This is not to say that work variations between the two communities or changes over time are not striking in our field. Aradhaknagar is a slum on the fringe of India's capital, while Dhantala remains clearly rural and agricultural. Employment patterns understandably differ between the two in several respects—over and above the expected contrasts in the shares of primary occupations—as we shall see below. However, occupational mutations in both Aradhaknagar and Dhantala reflect some long-term similarities too.

The most salient long-term transition in work visible in both locations is commercialisation involving production for the market rather than self-consumption; payment in cash rather than barter; and a decline in feudal coercion and inherited vocations too. Among other long-term mutations noted in local work patterns are: some diversification and specialisation in jobs; a conspicuous growth in horizontal mobility involving commuting as well as migration; a slow decline in the primacy of the primary sector (specially full-time livestock rearing); growth of services and construction; and a near-freezing of the ratio of workers in manufacturing. Lastly, the profiles of gender and castes across occupations show some change in both communities, though varna ceilings (as against sub-caste barriers) still remain significant at the top and bottom of the pyramid.

Other transitions visible in livelihoods in both our research fields are a rise in casual work at the expense of self employment; expansion of non-agriculturists in the village population and a minor rise in the proportion of formal sector contract workers in Aradhaknagar, a stagnant manufacturing sector within which many old crafts have been replaced by new ones; a rising number of families as well as individuals with mixed incomes and multiple jobs; and lastly, a recent budding of women's paid work in teaching, welfare delivery, etc. that remains dwarfed, however, by some decline in the number of women farm workers.

It is also worth noting that the pace of occupational mutation in both Dhantala and Aradhaknagar has continued through all the five policy eras listed above. While maximum diversification and wage increase has been noted in both locations since the 1990s, occupational shifts though tardy were not absent even in the colonial era. The late colonial epoch saw the beginnings of a secular decline in the death rate; the emergence of a small but significant rail, canal, and road network and school and legal infrastructure; and the arrival of tubewell irrigation in Dhantala and a transport hub next to Aradhaknagar. This was accompanied by the creation of new jobs in brick kilns, road building, secure pensionable work in the army and police, besides a broader transition from livestock rearing to a more productive mix of dairy and cultivation.⁸

⁸ For a cogent survey of changes in the agrarian social structure, see Beteille (1974).

More recently, the 1990s saw faster growth and diversification in the local economies due to a boom in the construction and service sectors. This is clearly reflected in growing numbers of professionals, businessmen, and multi taskers in both Dhantala and Aradhaknagar (Tables 4 and 6). The last decade also saw rising farm incomes as well as real wages in the wake of enhanced employment guarantee and support price announced for farmers by the state. However, rising inflation and a faltering economy negated much of the expected gains for the poor on the ground.

4.2 Ups and Downs in Occupations

It may not be relevant to repeat detailed data on all occupations listed in Tables 3–6. Yet, some broad trends and patterns that do not surface in numbers are worth highlighting in words. Among the occupations that have disappeared since the 1930s in our field are rural services like skinning of animals; bonded labour; delivering water in leather bags; the position of ‘jajmans’ or landowning patrons of craftsmen and labourers or kamins; and dominant absentee landlords. Occupations that have dwindled but not disappeared in our field include middle farmers (owning between 10 and 20 acres of land); traditional crafts like pottery and plough making; attached farm labour; and full time livestock rearing. In Aradhaknagar, the proportion of skilled workers and craftsmen has rarely crossed 20 per cent while, in Dhantala, they constitute about 10 per cent of all workers (after falling from 13 per cent to 8 per cent between the 1930s and 2006). However, this stagnation masks a major shift from old crafts like pottery to new services like vehicle repair, motor driving etc.

Among occupations that have surfaced recently in Aradhaknagar are mobile and electric repair, commercial taxis, and room renting (about 35 house owners in the slum had rented out rooms in 2012 while four rented shops appeared in Dhantala in 2009 for first time). Professions that have swelled in recent decades in Dhantala include marginal and sub-marginal farming (up from 70 in the 1960s to 318 in 2012), non-farm labour (rising from 20 in the 1960s to 116 in 2012), and daily commuters (growing from a negligible number to 120 in 2012). Construction work has particularly swelled even within Dhantala as the number of kuchha houses came down from 100 in 1988 to just two in 2012. In Aradhaknagar, on the other hand, the maximum spurt has been seen in the number of sweepers and domestic maids (the latter grew from just one in 1960s to 122 in 2012) as dalit maids started finding employment in middle and upper class homes and even kitchens in the last decades of the previous century.

4.3 Micro vs. Macro Trends

While slow shifts in occupations in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar since the 1930s are not surprising, a closer view of such transitions throws up a bag of nationally consonant and

some divergent patterns. The ratio of working age adults or labour force in India fell in the middle decades of the 20th century and recovered again in recent decades. The latter trend is discernible in demographic data from Aradhaknagar too, though the emigration of adults from Dhantala seems to have moderated the expansion of the working age section in the village. Similarly, the workforce or the ratio of workers to total population at 42 per cent in Dhantala today seems consonant with the national rural estimates. However, Aradhaknagar shows higher work participation rate (at 40 per cent) than national urban data (at 35 per cent) as the number of poor women working as maids, sweepers etc raises the slum's WPR above urban levels as a whole. The proportion of workers engaged in manufacturing (including crafts and factories but excluding construction), in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar remains low at about 6 per cent as big industries are very few within and also in the vicinity of both communities.

Table 3 Occupations and castes in Dhantala (May 2012)

(as per Usual Principal + Subsidiary Status; brackets denote women workers)*-

Occupations// Castes	SCs	LMCs	Muslim	UMCs	UCs	Total
All Workers	271	144	113	558	02 (00)	1099 (242)
Total Population	599	317	209	1477	02	2604
Workers' Ratio	45%	45%	54%	38%	100%	42%
Employers***	03 01%	04 3%	00 00%	51 9%	01 50%	39 3%
Self Employed	137 51%	70 49%	77 68%	419 74%	01 50%	717 65%
Casual Labourers	86 31%	55 38%	36 32%	51 9%	00 00%	228 21%
Wage Earners	45 17%	15 10%	00 00%	47 8%	00 00%	107 10%
Manual Workers	260 95%	140 97%	10 3 91	534 94%	01 50%	1038 95%
Low Skilled Workers	256 94%	104 72%	60 53%	518 91%	01 50%	929 85%
Non Agriculturists	114 42%	73 51%	63 56%	12 22%	02 100%	381 35%
In Manufacturing	62 (25 artisans + 35 factory workers + 2 Manufacturers)					
Agriculturists	157 58%	71 49%	50 44%	437 78%	00 00%	718 65%
Livestock Alone \$	02	00	00	00	(00)	02
<i>Women livestock rears</i>	35	20	17	99	00	171 16%
Tenant Cultivators	03	02	01	02	00	08
<i>Small Tenants</i>	03	2	1	1	0	07
<i>Substantial Tenants</i>	0	0	0	1	0	01
Farmers \$\$	89	38	24	320	00	471
Sub-Marginal Farmers	23	15	07	24	0	69 (2)
Marginal Farmers\$\$\$	46	7	07	188	0	248 (5)
Small Farmers	20	14	10	74	0	118
Small Leasors	0	2	0	6	0	08
Semi Middle Farmers	0	0	0	23	0	23
Middle Farmers	0	0	0	03	0	03
Absentee Landlords	0	0	0	0	0	00
All Cultivators	92 40%	40 28%	25 22%	322 58%	00 00%	479(7)44%

contd. ...

Table 3 Occupations and Castes in Dhantala (May 2012) (contd.)

(as per Usual Principal + Subsidiary Status; brackets denote women workers)*-

Farm Labor	20 (15) 7%	11 (9) 8%	09 (6) 8	6 1%	0 00%	46 (25) 4%
<i>Casual Labor</i>	16	10	06	06	0	38 (25)
<i>Landless Casual Labor</i>	4 (2)	1 (1)	3 (2)	0	0	8 (6)
<i>Laboring Farmer</i>	<i>Most of the Sub Marginal Farmers</i>					
<i>Bonded Labor & Kamin^</i>	0	0	0	0	0	00
Non-Farm Labor:-	40	30	19	27	00	116 11%
NFL Within Village	30 (3)	24 (5)	15	23	0	92 (11)
Casual Labor	30	22	15	23	00	90
<i>Construction Labor</i>	19	10	6	14	0	49 (9)
<i>Other Labor^^</i>	11	12	9	9	0	41 (2)
NFL outside village	07	06	05	08	00	26
Wage Labor	0	2	0	0	0	02
All Labor	60(18) 22%	40 (10) 28	28 25%	33 7%	0 00%	161 (36) 15
Occupations// Caste	SCs	LMCs	Muslim	UMCs	UCs	Total
Artisans and Servers:						
Traditional Artisans@	00	04	02	00	00	06 (1)
New Artisans/ Mechanics	6	12	18	06	0	42 (8)

Artisans cum Farmers	0	06	16	6	0	28
Semi-skilled Servers@@	2	1	3	0	0	06
Skilled Servers	2	6	4	0	0	12 (2)
Petty Vendors	4	7	0	4	0	15 (4)
All Artisans	14 5%	36 25%	43 38%	16 2%	0 00%	109 (15) 10

Formal Sector Employees:-

Private Sector:-

Grade IV))	32	5	0	0	0	37 (5)
Grade III)))	0	5	0	25	0	30 (1)
Public Sector:-						
Grade IV	3	1	0	0	0	04 (1)
Grade III	9	2	0	20 (6)	0	31 (6)
Grade II	2	0	0	2	0	04
All Formal Employees	45 17%	13 9%	0 00%	47 8%	0 00%	105 (13) 10

Petty Bourgeoisie & Entrepreneurs

Professionals!	2	1	0	6	0	9
Village Shopkeepers	0	0	4	15	01	20
Manufacturers	0	0	0	0	0	2
Business Persons!!	4	0	2	10	1	17
Multi-Taskers!!!	1	1	0	5	0	7
All Entrepreneurs	11 4%	4 3%	10 9%	31 6%	02 100%	55 5%
All Workers	271	144	113	568	02	1099 (242)
Number of Households	90	40	35	218	1	384

Adult 'Non-Workers' in 2012:-

400 (35% of adult population)

In Higher Studies	8	2	0	11	0	21
Unemployed (seeking wk)	12 (5F)					

contd. ...

Not seeking work	10 (including 13 Physically challenged)
Social Workers	02
Political Activists	02
Semi-legal Works!!!!	04
Illegal Workers!!!!!!	02
Home Makers#	330 women
Physically Challenged	17 (6 working)

Examples of other Notable Work Categories, in 2012, in Dhantala:-	
Landless Households	90 including 50 living away from parents with marginal farm
Rentiers	26 middle farmers + 8 land leasors
Single subsidiary work >	Women cattle rearer, child worker and physically challenged
Two or more subsidiary jobs	Most marginal farmer cum laborers
Disguised unemployed >>	Solely marginal farming, petty vending etc
One principal work	Wage earners, artisans, professionals and middle farmers
Principal and subsidiary work	Some public sector employees cum farmers
Two or more principal activities	Big farmers + business/ public sector/ brokerage etc
Bonded Labor	Nil Traditional Bonded; 25 child wkrs + some indebted labour
Earning Women	76 including farm labour, welfare workers and tailors
Independent Women Farmer ##	07
Child Workers Outside Home	25 work on others' fields
Semi-legal work	2 (no known beggar or prostitute)
Illegal Work	02 (adulteration but no known pickpockets etc)
Families with more than one	Occupations 237
Families with more than One	Occupation 81 (besides agriculture)
Individuals with more than one^	Occupation 24 (besides agriculture)
BPL Pensioners	8W+6H+0E
Retired Pensioners	16
MGNREGA card holders	25 (paid only twice between 2007 and 2012)
Daily/Weekly Commuters	126
Relatively Overpaid Persons	Rentiers and some public sector employees
Degree Holders	61BA, 15 Diploma holders
Beneficiaries of Job Reservations	11 dalits
Political Activists	06
Physically Challenged	17 (6 working)

Notes:

Figures in italics are sub totals and in bold are grand totals. Figures in red denote percentages which are of respective grand totals of all workers in concerned columns. Semi-skilled here refers to those who are mostly described as unskilled in official parlance. F stands for number of women which are shown in bracket; G stands for girls; SCs stands for scheduled castes; LMC for lower middle castes while UMC refers to upper middle castes. Middle Caste here substitutes 'other backward class' terminology. NFL refers to non farm labour. W stands for number of Widows; E stands for Elders; H stands for Handicapped; Regular Child workers refers to working members less than fourteen years old, who work outside family units. NA stands for not available. For the index, see Table 2.

Table 4 Estimated Occupations in Dhantala: 1930-2012
(Usual Principal + Subsidiary Status; brackets denote women workers)*

Occupations// Years	1930s**	1960s	1989	2006	2012
All Workers	321	558	873	1132 (272)	1099 (242)
Total Population	700	1200	2080	2704	2604
Workers' Ratio	46%	47%	42%	42%	42%
Employers***	05 2%	28 6%	31 4%	40 4%	38 3%
Self Employed	238 74%	355 64%	708 81%	761 61%	710 65%
Casual Laborers	56 17%	132 24%	88 10%	230 20%	228 21%
Regular Wage Earners	22 7%	43 8%	41 5%	100 9%	107 10%
Manual Workers	312 97%	550 93%	837 95%	1082 96%	1040 95%
Low skilled Workers	269 83%	377 87%	745 85%	986 87%	931 85%
Non Agriculturists	63 20%	127 23%	175 20%	321 29%	381 35%
In manufacturing	62 in 2012 inc 25 artisans, 35 laborers, 2 manufacturers				
Agriculturists:-	258 80%	431 77%	698 80%	811 71%	718 65%
<i>Rear Livestock Alone \$</i>	30	10	05	02	02
<i>Women Livestock Rearers</i>	60	110	151	182	171 16%
Tenant Cultivators					
<i>Small Tenants</i>	100	20	16	08	07
<i>Substantial Tenants</i>	05	00	00	01	01
Farmers:- \$\$	03	205	476	536	471
Sub Marginal Farmers	00	30	15	66 (2)	69 (2)
Marginal Farmers \$\$\$	00	40	223	292 (2)	248 (5)
Small Farmers	00	60	170	130	118
Small Leasors	00	10	10	08	08
Semi Middle Farmers	00	40	41	34	23
Middle Farmers	02	25	17	06	03
Absentee Landlords	01	00	00	00	00
All Cultivators	108 33%	225 40%	492 56%	545 (5) 8%	479 (7) 44
Farm Labor^	60 (40) 9%	86 (50) 5	40 (36) 5%	65 (35) 6	46 (25) 4%
<i>Casual Labor</i>	40	30	28	55 (29)	38 (20)
<i>Landless Casual Labor</i>	10	50	12	10 (6)	8 (5)
<i>Laborer cum Farmer</i>	<i>Most of the Marginal Farmers</i>				
<i>Bonded Labor</i>	10	06	02	00	00
Non-Farm Labor:-	10 3%	24 4%	47 6%	107 11%	116 11%
NFL Within Village	10	24	43	81 (17)	92 (11)
Casual Labor:-	06	12	31	79	90
<i>Construction Labor</i>	04	06	21(8)	31 (12)	49(9)
<i>Other Labor^^</i>	02	06	10 (4)	40(5)	41(2)
Wage Labor	04	12	12	02	02
NFL Outside Village	00	00	04	20	24
All Labor	70 22%	120 22%	87 10%	166 (62) 15	161 (36) 15%

contd. ...

Table 4 Estimated Occupations in Dhantala: 1930-2012 (contd.)

(Usual Principal + Subsidiary Status; brackets denote women workers)*

Occupations// Years	1930s*	1960s	1989	2006	2012
Artisans and Servers:-					
Traditional Artisans@	12	24	17	08 (1)	06 (1)
New Artisans/Mechanics	00	02	16	30 (4)	42 (8)
Artisans cum Farmers	20	17	40	30	28
Semi-skilled Servers@@	05	08	12 (12)	13 (2)	06
Skilled Servers	06	17	10	13 (2)	12 (2)
Petty Vendors	02	04	08	12 (4)	15(4)
All Artisans and Servers	43 13%	72 12%	92 11%	96 (13) 8%	109 (15) 10%
Formal Sector Employees:-					
Private Sector:-					
Grade IV)	02	05	03	34 (4)	37 (5)
Grade III)	01	00	02	29	30 (1)
Public Sector:-					
Grade IV	05	06	08	04 (1)	04 (1)
Grade III	00	03	12	28 (4)	31 (6)
Grade II	00	01	02	03	04
All Formal Employees	08 2%	15 3%	27 3%	95 (9) 8%	105 (13) 10%
Petty Bourgeoisie and Entrepreneurs:-					
Professionals!	00	01	04	07	09
Village Shopkeepers	00	02	05	10	20
Manufacturers (in Dhan)	00	00	00	02	02
Business Persons!!	01	01	07	17	17
Multi-Taskers!!!	01	01	02	08	07
All Entrepreneurs	02 <1%	05 <1%	19 2%	44 4%	55 5%
All Workers	321	558	831	1132 (272)	1099 (242)
No. of Households	120	220	302	364	384

Index:

*As per NSS survey and census methodology 'principal' status has been accorded to persons working for more than 183 days in a year. The principal occupation of workers with more than one profession may be identified on basis of time spent on particular work in a year or sense of identification with a particular job. In our survey, the first criterion namely, labour/ time invested was mainly used. The count of women workers is in brackets. However, the gender break up for some work categories could not be gathered. For referends of abbreviations like SC, LMC see index.

**Employment figures for 1930s and 1960s are based on elders' recollections and are rough estimates only.

*** Employers include big farmers and entrepreneurs. Casual laborers include most sub-marginal farmers and some non farm workers. Self employed (excluding employers) include all artisans and service providers, petty shopkeepers and all agriculturists excluding big farmers and sub marginal farmers.

§ It may be noted that all but ninety families of Dhantala owned agricultural land in 2012. Of the landless families fifty had parents with marginal holdings. All villagers except forty have livestock and tend to livestock as subsidiary activity.

\$\$ It was difficult to precisely classify members in agricultural households since most members share such work from time to time and some have other occupations too. As a general practice, two farm workers have been counted here from cultivating households (excluding helping women). Some farmer categories are still in odd numbers due to presence of a few single men or women farmers. Some artisans do part time cultivation and many formal employees also have agricultural land. Similarly, many agriculturists work as non farm labour or artisans. Their categorization as farmers has been based on the criterion of time spent in principal work.

\$\$\$ Cultivators include independent and tenant farmers. Sub-Marginal farmers are those with less than one acre agricultural land; marginal farmers correspond to owners of 1 to 2.5 acres of fields (one hectare); small farmers have been associated with holdings between 2.5 and 5 acres (two hectares); middle farmers hold between five and ten acres while middle farmers are owners of less than twenty five acres but more than ten acres or four hectares of fields.

^ Farm labour denotes those who are mainly dependent on laboring in fields for most of the year; it includes most of the sub marginal farmers but not marginal farmers who generally do farm labour occasionally. Dalit laborers were forced to do begaar till 1980s in Dhantala and included attached workers or kamins who worked for specified families under jajmani/ lagbandi arrangements.

^^Other labour includes transport workers, load carriers and shop assistants etc.

@Traditional artisans include carpenters; potters etc. while new mechanics include vehicle and gadgets repairs etc.

@@Semi-skilled servers include cobbler, barber etc. Skilled servers include mechanics, drivers etc.

) Grade IV workers include peons, security guards etc besides sweepers.

) Grade III workers include salesmen, clerks and also supervisory manual workers etc.

! Professionals include lawyers, doctors etc.

!! Business Persons include traders, contractors and city shop owners.

!!! Multi-taskers combine farming and/ or salaried jobs with liaison work, real estate, money lending etc. They are in the top bracket of persons with multiple occupations.

Homemakers refers to women who only do domestic work besides some seasonal help on family farms or enterprises. Unpaid women workers are those who do regular work in livestock rearing, milk selling, shop-keeping.

Independent women farmers are mostly widows or those in all women households.

^More than one job here refers to parallel jobs like public sector employment combined with a side business not successive subsidiary employment of a vendor changing to wage labour etc.

> Very few villagers can afford to be subsidiary workers earning for less than six months. Some, however, are not able to work regularly due to chronic illness, inclement weather etc. On the other hand, a number of workers combine several subsidiary occupations or one principal and one subsidiary job at times.

>>The term 'disguised unemployment' here refers to underworked persons who are also often under paid.

Table 5 Castes and occupations in Aradhaknagar (March 2012)
(as per Usual Principal + Subsidiary Status; brackets denote women workers)*

Occupations/ Castes	Valmiki	Other SCs	Middle Castes	Muslims	Upper Castes	All Castes
All Workers	378	205	55	11	29	678 (218)
Total Population	946	443	167	20	110	1694
Ratio of Workers	40%	46%	32%	55%	26%	40%
Employers	18 5%	08 4%	08 15%	01 9%	05 17%	40 6%
Self Employed	54 14%	48 23%	15 27%	04 36%	06 20%	127 19%
Regular Wage Earners	279 74%	81 40%	13 24%	04 36%	12 41%	389 57%
Casual Laborers	27 7%	68 33%	19 35%	02 18%	06 20%	122 18%
Manual Workers	366 94%	188 96%	51 93%	10 91%	25 86%	640 94%
Informal Sector Wrs	210 54%	176 90%	50 91%	10 91%	25 86%	471 69%
Manufacturing Sector ³¹ in all including only 1 manufacturer in 2012						
Low Skill Workers	82%	69%	58%	55%	59%	73%
Primary Sector Wr	04 >1%	00 0%	02 4%	00 0%	00 0%	06 (1) <1%
Livestock Rearers	00	00	02	00	00	02
Gross Collection**	04	00	00	00	00	04
Semi-Skilled Manual Workers:- @						
Self Employed	46	31	07	02	06	92 (6)
Home Based Workers	00	07	02	00	00	02 (2)
Vendors	02 (1)	04 (3)	02	00	02	10 (4)
Others	44	20	03	02	04	73
Wage Earners	84	45	04	02	00	135 (122)
Maids	(79) (5G)	39 (15G)	02	02	00	122 (20G)
Others	05	06	02	00	00	13
Casual Laborers	17 (7)	46 (10)	07	01	03	74 (17)
All Semi-Skilled	147 (87) 38	122 (13) 63	18 33%	05 45%	09 31%	301(145) 44
Skilled Manual Workers:- @@						
Casual Masons etc	10	22	12	01	02	47
Wage Earners	19	15	01	01	05	41 (8)
Self Employed Artisan	00	03	06	01	00	10 (4)
Self Employed Servers	04	14	00	01	01	20 (2)
All Skilled	33 8%	54 28%	19 35%	04 36%	08 28%	118 (16)17%
Formal Sector Em	175 45%	21 11%	10 18	1 9%	06 21%	213 31%
Private Sector Em^^	71 18%	17 8%	07 13%	01 9%	05 17%	101 (32) 15
Grade IV Sweepers	60	02	00	00	00	62 (22)
Grade IV Labor))	10	14	06	01	04	35(10)
Grade III Clerks etc))	01	01	01	00	01	04
Public Sector Empl:-	104 27%	04 2%	03 5%	00 00%	01 3%	112 (29)16%
Sweepers (R)	59	00	00	00	00	59 (18)
Sweepers (T)	31	00	00	00	00	31 (6)
Others in Grade IV(R)	01	01	01	00	01	04
Others in Grade IV(T)	10	01	01	00	00	12
Grade III Clerks etc	03 (2)	(2)	(1)	00	00	06 (5)

Table 5 Castes and occupations in Aradhaknagar (March, 2012) (contd.)
(as per Usual Principal + Subsidiary Status; brackets denote women workers)*

Occupations/ Castes	Valmiki	Other SCs	Middle Castes	Muslims	Upper Castes	All Castes
Petty Bourgeoisie and Entrepreneurs:-						
Business Persons!	08	08	04	01	03	26 (1)
Manufacturers:-						
Within Aradhak	00	00	00	00	01	01
Outside Aradhak	00	00	00	00	00	00
Professionals!!	03	00	03 (1)	00	(1)	07 (2)
Multi-Taskers!!!	06	00	00	00	00	06
All Entrepreneurs	18 4%	08 4%	08 15%	01 9%	05 17%	40 (3) 6%
All Workers	388	195	55	11	29	678 (225)
Total families	160	75	32	05	05	292
'Adult Non Workers':- 230 30 % of adults in 2012						
In Higher Studies	00	03	03	00	05	12 (6)
Seeking Work	10 adults					
Not seeking work	10 adults					
Semi-legal work	06 (including prostitutes, beggars, brokers etc)					
Illegal work	12 (alleged pick pockets etc.)					
Home Makers #	180 women					
Other Notable Work Categories, in 2012, in Aradhaknagar:-						
Examples of subsidiary workers ##	50 appr. (most underage maids, waiters and vendors and some physically challenged workers)					
Disguised unemployed ##	Many home based vendors					
Two or more subsidiary wkr	Casual labour followed by vending etc.					
Principal + subsidiary	Some public sector employees having side businesses					
Two or more principals	Money lenders cum contractors etc.					
Unpaid women workers	Very few unlike village					
Women Earners	225 33%					
Child Workers	30 (20G)					
Rentiers	35 room lenders in 2012 growing from 5 in 1988					
BPL Pensioners	50					
Retired Pensioners by caste	12	00	00	00	01	13 (5)
Families with 4 or more Job	13	03	05	01	03	25
Persons with more than one occupation#	20 (4)					
Enriched Emmigrants	02	00	00	00	00	2
Relatively Overpaid	Some Public Sector Employees					
Degree Holders	12 BA (inc 6 Women; 2 from regular college); 1 MA; 2 Diploma; 5 ITI					
Reservation Beneficiaries	Ten in college admissions; 1 Valmiki in a non sweeper job					
Political Activists	05					
Social Workers	04 women					
Physically Challenged	13 of which 5 are working					

For notes and index, see Tables 1 and 4.

Table 6 Estimated Occupations in Aradhaknagar: circa 1960-2012
(as per Usual Principal + Subsidiary Status (brackets denote women workers)*)

Occupations/ Years	Late 60s**	1988	2000	2012
All Workers	20	157	537	678
Total Population	60	441	1380	1694
Ratio of Workers	33%	36%	39%	40%
Employers	0 00%	03 1%	06 1%	10 1%
Self Employed	11 55%	33 21%	101 19%	127 19%
Wage Earners	06 30%	78 50%	319 59%	389 57%
Casual Wage Earners	03 15%	42 27%	90 17%	122 18%
Manual Workers	20 100%	154 98%	512 95%	640 94%
Informal Sector Wkrs.	16 80%	123 78%	367 68%	471 69%
Manufacturing Sector	31 including 1 manufacturer in 2012			
Primary Sector Wkrs	08 40%	09 6%	07 1%	06 (1) <1%
Livestock***	06	03	2	2 (1)
Grass Collection	02	06	05	04
Semi-Skilled Manual Workers:- @				
Self Employed	01	11	74 (7)	92(6)
Home Based Worker	00	04	04 (4)	2 (2)
Vendors	01	04	12 (3)	10 (4)
Others	00	03	58	73
Wage Earners	02	37	113 (104)	135 (122)
Maids	1	20	106 (40G)	122 (20G)
Others	01	17	09	13
Casual Laborers	01	22	60 (12)	74 (17)
All Semi-Skilled	04 20%	74 44%	252 (133) 38	301 (145) 44%
Skilled Artisans and Servers:- @@				
Casual Masons etc	02	20	30	47
Wage Earners	00	07	36 (6)	41 (8)
Self Employed Artisan	01	07	05 (1)	10 (2)
Self Employed Service	01	06	15	20
All Skilled	04 20%	42 25%	88 (7) 16%	118 (16) 17%
Formal Sector Workers	04 20%	36 22%	164 32%	213 31%
Private Sector Empl^	02 10%	13 8%	88 (14) 16%	101(32) 15%
Grade IV Sweepers	02	08	57 (10)	62 (22)
Grade IV Labor)	00	04	28 (4)	35(10)
Grade III Clerks etc))	00	01	01	04
Public Sector Empl	02 10%	24 13%	76 (20) 16%	112(29) 16%
Sweepers (R)	00	17	33 (10)	69 (18)
Sweepers (T)	02 (1)	02	31 (8)	21 (6)
Others in Grade IV(R)	00	02	04	04

contd. ...

Table 6 Estimated Occupations in Aradhaknagar: circa 1960-2012 (contd.)
(as per Usual Principal + Subsidiary Status (brackets denote women workers)*

Others in Grade IV(T)	00	00	02	12
Occupations/ Year	Late 60s	1988	2000	2012
Grade III Clerks etc	00	00	04 (2)	07 (5)
Petty Bourgeoisie and Entrepreneurs:-				
Business Persons!	00	00	13	22 (1)
Manufacturers	00	00	01	01
Within Aradhak	00	00	01	01
Outside Aradhak	00	00	00	00
Professionals!!	00	01	05	07 (2)
Multi-Taskers!!!	00	01	06	08
All Entrepreneurs	00 00%	02 1%	26 5%	40 (3) 6%
All Workers	20	157	537	678 (225)
Total Families	10	91	206	292

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Also see the end of Table 3.

@ Semi-skilled here refers to those who are described as unskilled in official parlance. Semi skilled casual labour includes load carriers, waiters, transport workers etc. Semi-skilled wagers include helpers in unregistered small shops, dhabas, transporters etc.

@@Semi skilled self employed include rickshaw pullers, rag-pickers, junk collectors etc. Semi-skilled servers include cobbler, barber etc. Skilled servers include priests, drivers etc.

^^Among sweepers, there are ten middle caste sweepers in private sector but no one from the upper caste.

More than one job here refers to parallel jobs like public sector employment combined with a side business not successive subsidiary employment of a vendor changing to wage labour etc.

##Very few slum dwellers can afford to be 'subsidiary workers earning for less than six months. Some, however, are not able to work enough due to weather, illness etc. Some underage maids, waiters and vendors are subsidiary workers in Aradhaknagar.

4.4 Farmers

The peasants in Dhantala have been saved from pauperization despite a massive shrinking of fields, by four developments since the fifties to which we have drawn attention.⁹ In the last decade, the support price for staples like wheat and sugarcane have also risen faster than before. Yet, per acre optimum yield for sugarcane, in 2012-13, in Dhantala, was about 300 quintals or just Rs. 36,000 per annum at best. A laboring couple, on the other hand, can earn upto Rs.450 per day or Rs. 6000 per month on working for half a month on average. Thus, farm incomes seem relatively low due to rise in input costs and specially due to the higher gains experienced by workers in other sectors including salaried employees and wage labour too (refer pages 21-22).

⁹ For recent growth in the rural non farm sector in India refer: Chadha (2001); Gupta (2011) and Coppard (2002). There has been some difference of opinion among agricultural economists on trends in farm incomes in the 1990s. However, long term improvement in yields as well as profits in green revolution zones have been recognized by most scholars. Refer Sen and Bhatia (2004).

Such relative retardation in agricultural incomes is driving many beyond agriculture partially, if not fully in Dhantala. As a result, the nature of the 'farmer' has changed radically in recent times. Many of the residents who give time to their fields daily are not just cultivators now. In 2012, 90 of the 367 families of Dhantala did not have any agricultural land and 20 did not have any livestock either. Of the 718 men and women (out of a total of 1099 workers) who described themselves as agriculturists, 171 were women part time livestock rearers. Of the 479 men who worked in the fields, 237 had a second non agricultural source of earning in casual labour or vending, trading, crafts etc.

Mechanisation of ploughing and irrigation work along with the shrinking of farms reduced the work load of cultivators in recent decades; as a result many more could engage in dairying as well as non farm employment in Dhantala, and some are now earning more from the latter. However, the unstable, casual and shifting nature of most non farm work, forces landowners, big or small, to describe themselves as agriculturists only. Yet, beneath the surface, there has been a kind of 'subsidiarisation' of cultivation, in the region, in the wake of rising population and shrinking fields since the seventies, dairy outstripping cultivation in the eighties, reduced work load due to accelerating mechanization specially from the nineties and increasing non farm work and post school education in the more recent years in Dhantala.

While non farm work has been growing in the region, it is notable that the price of agricultural land has risen sharply over time. In 1940, for example, Surja Singh's father had purchased 15 acres in Dhantala for just Rs.1300 (or Rs.86 per acre). By 1968, the price had risen to about 5000 per acre.¹⁰ In 2012, the price was around rupees fifty lakhs per acre. This implies that even a marginal farmer, in Dhantala, can be called a millionaire today going by his land value.

Most farmers do not wish to sell land still. Yet, some are beginning to consider this option to meet financial exigencies and also for income diversification. Ironically, new land laws make land sale difficult specially for dalits who can sell only to another dalit; often at less than half the price available to other castes in the same situation because of the law which is supposed to help but only ties them to low income marginal farms.

In Aradhaknagar, regular wage earners make up the highest proportion of all workers (57 per cent in 2012), as a large number of slum women work on monthly wages as domestic maids. The majority Valmiki community also has many sweepers working in adjacent shops,

¹⁰ Sale deed dated 05-02-1968 between Sohna Singh of Kharkoda and Sohrab Singh of Dhantala. Interestingly, T.B. Kessinger's classic account of Vilayatpur also cites a major increase in land price to Rs.10,000 per acre by 1968 in rural Jullundhar.

factories, malls and also the municipal corporation of the capital on regular wages. Understandably, formal sector employment also appears high at 31 per cent, in Aradhaknagar. However, it needs remembering that almost all the formal sector employees in the slum are Grade 4 sweepers and peons.

The proportion of farm labour was 19 per cent in Dhantala in the 1930s; it came down to just 5 per cent in 1988, because of land redistribution and did not rise again as women farm labourers (including dalits) started withdrawing from farm work. The number of women farm labourers (nafrees) fell from 61 in 1998 to 25 in 2012. However, the much-debated swings in women's participation in rural labour, noted in 61st and 66th NSS rounds, have not been evident in Dhantala.¹¹ Instead, a slow but steady withdrawal of women from farm labour has been noted (mostly from casual work rather than own farms¹². In fact, in our area, there has been little decline in the number of 'kisanans' (women agriculturists) as most homes continue to have at least one or two women engaged in part-time own farm labour and livestock rearing.

The distribution of land in Dhantala not only brought down the proportion of labourers in the village but also enabled many dalit children to undergo higher education. Thus, a small class of dalit professionals and salaried employees formed within a generation. Until 1988, there were no dalit teachers, lawyers, clerks, or businessmen in Dhantala. In 2012, out of 55 such 'bourgeois' men and women, 11 were dalits. The contribution of land redistribution to this turnaround in the village's livelihood pattern can be understood by comparing the occupational profile of Dhantala after 1988 with that of another hamlet called Doymi (in the adjacent district of Hapur) where no agricultural land was distributed and the vast majority of dalits remain engaged in farm and non-farm labour. Thus, out of 439 dalit workers in Doymi in 2012, only six described themselves as petty businessmen and none was a professional or even a clerk (Table 7).

4.5 Village versus Slum

Besides the stated contrasts in the work profiles of Dhantala and Aradhaknagar, others worth remembering with regard to their livelihoods today are regular wage employment (57 per cent in Aradhaknagar and 10 per cent in Dhantala); presence of domestic servants (none in the village and 17 per cent in the Delhi slum); working women (one-fourth in Dhantala and one-third in Aradhaknagar); earning women (only 8 per cent in Dhantala

¹¹ Other studies corroborate this diversity in patterns of rural labour in different regions of India (Byres et al. 1999).

¹² My data on slowly declining women participation in farm labour in Dhantala differs from the national trend observed by Sundaram (2013) of a major rise of women farm workers between 1998-2004 and then a major decline between 2004-09. Secondly, unlike the national trend, there is little evidence of women withdrawing from work on own farms or home based cattle rearing in Dhantala.

and 33 per cent in Aradhaknagar); the proportion of the dalit population (80 per cent in Aradhaknagar and 20 per cent in Dhantala); nature of illegalities (beggars and prostitutes in the city slum and none known in the village); and nature of home-based work (like fuel collection, milk production, etc. done by rural women and children) as against greater concentration on out of home work among slum women. Wage rates are also higher in Aradhaknagar by about 25 per cent for men and about 33 per cent for women.¹³ Above all, hopes of a chance turnaround in a fast-changing urban environment distinguish the predicament of younger migrants in the slum.

Table 7 Rural occupations in Doymi (District Hapur, May 2012)

Occupation / Community/ (above 14 yrs)	Total populations	Landless Agricultural Workers		Non Farm Unorganized Workers		Laborer cum Farmers	Tenant Farmers	Small Farmers	Land Renting Farmers	Landlords (owning more than 6 acres of land)	Land (owning more than 10 acres of land)	Landless Artisans	Farmer cum Artisans	Shopkeepers & Business Keepers	Pvt. Organized Sector Workers	Grade IV Govt. Employee	Grade III Govt. Employee	Educated Professional (Lawyers, Teachers etc.)	Total Employment
		M	F	M	F														
Jatavs	1091	30	125	120	06	05	25	50	00	00	00	40	00	06	03	00	00	00	410
Valmikis	60	02	05	03	02	02	01	00	00	00	00	01	00	00	10	03	00	00	29
Muslims	51	05	04	04	03	01	03	01	03	00	00	09	00	00	00	00	00	00	33
Middle Castes	624	18	10	30	02	20	03	50	01	10	00	00	00	01	12	00	13(5)	04	174
Upper Caste	375	00	00	09	00	00	00	60	02	05	02	00	00	12	20	00	10(5)	03	123
Total Workers	2201	55	144	166	13	28	32	161	06	15	02	50	00	19	45	03	23	07	769

5 GENDER

Among marginal groups in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar, the status of women is particularly important to note. They form the most overburdened segment in both communities; feeding and nursing from early morning until late at night, without any holiday.¹⁴ As elsewhere in Bharat, they also collect water and grocery, make fuel, teach and groom children and suffer domestic violence too. Further, in Dhantala, most women are also engaged in livestock rearing and on farms while, in Aradhaknagar, they labour further as domestic maids, repeating same daily chores in rich households daily.

¹³ The daily wage of an unskilled labourer in Aradhaknagar was Rs. 300 in 2013. The same was Rs. 200 to 250 in Dhantala (depending on agricultural cycle) and Rs. 150 for women farm workers. Skilled workers like mason earned up to Rs. 500 daily in the same period in Delhi.

¹⁴ For a radical suggestion on mitigating this grave injustice in rural India, see Agarwal (1994).

Yet, national statistics counts only one third of rural and about one sixth of urban women as ‘workers.’ I have stuck to the conventional notion of ‘work’ and not counted domestic labour (apart from livestock rearing) in our surveys, to maintain comparability. However, a glance at the daily routine of a housewife in one of the biggest landowning families of Dhantala (Box 1) says a lot.

**Box 1 Daily Routine of a Middle Caste, Middle Peasant Woman in Dhantala:
November 2013**

Name: Jagwati **Age:** 63 years **Caste:** Gurjar **Work:** Home Maker **Education:** Illiterate
Family’s Occupations: Agriculture and Legal Profession (The family has ten acres of land and eight buffaloes, one son is an advocate and commutes daily)

Time	Activity
5:00 to 5:30 am	Getting ready for the day
5:30 to 8:00 am	Helps husband/ elder son in milking and feeding cattle; Collecting cow dung; Boiling milk on mud chullah (Gas cylinder used only to serve milk/ tea during day time); Preparing buttermilk and butter.
8:00 to 9:00 am	Cooking (rotis/ parantha on mud chullah); Serving brunch.
9:00 to 12:00 pm	Goes to field to collect fodder; fodder chopped in a machine (operated manually since power is generally unavailable during day).
12:00 to 1:00 pm	Bathing cattle and cleaning the house including the cattle shed; Dung cakes are prepared by the two daughters in-law.
1:00 to 3:00 pm	Time for some rest (if no guests in the house); watches TV, if power available.
3:00 to 4:00 pm	Collects water from own hand pump for family and for cattle;
4:00 to 5:00 pm	Milks cows and buffaloes;
5:00 to 7:00 pm	Boils milk and cooks evening meal;
7:00 to 8:00 pm	Feeds the cattle with grass, soaked seeds and husk along with leftovers.®
8:00 to 9:00 pm	Cleans utensils and watches television before going to bed.

Jagwati is assisted in these chores by her two daughters in-law and occasionally, by her grown up grand daughters who study in a local private school.

My survey thus suggests that the national count of rural women workers (at about 25 per cent of all rural females) does not correspond to the trend visible in the 'milk belt', where most women are engaged in cattle rearing as principal or subsidiary workers. Indeed, this reality of overworked 'kisanan' in our area makes the data regarding withdrawal of 20 million women from rural work between 2004 and 2009 a bit puzzling.

5.1 Caste and Bondage

Besides gender, caste divisions also segment occupational profiles of Indian communities deeply. Tables 3 and 5 offer a detailed chart of different categories of workers noted in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar by caste. On the positive side, recent hikes in the salaries of public sector employees (including sweepers) and some growth of contract work in the formal sector have raised the living standards of a small segment of dalit households. Increasing numbers are adopting family planning. And, rising literacy and the referred distribution of land to the landless in Dhantala also helped develop a stratum of dalit professionals and entrepreneurs.

Despite these improvements, the vast majority of dalits remain extremely poor and marginalised in both communities. For want of space, we have deferred an elaborate comment on the changing caste and occupation matrix in the studied sites. A glimpse into the experiences of the few upwardly mobile dalits and the daily struggles of the mass of the lower castes may be seen in the following sketches of families of Dhantala and Aradhaknagar.

Box 2 The Ups and Downs in the Life of a Small Farmer

Shri Prahlad Singh—my generous host in Dhantala since 1989—passed away at the age of 80 on 28 May 2013 after suffering from intestinal and lung infections for one and a half years. In his long life, he had seen many ups and downs. Starting as a 'sikmi' (secure) tenant of the absentee landlord of the village, he later worked as a manual labourer for a decade and as a farmer after receiving a plot of two acres (besides his half acre inherited land) following a massive struggle of the landless, in Dhantala, in 1984.

The most remarkable aspect of Prahladji's hard life was his sustained investment in his six children's education because of which he saw one son becoming a magistrate, another a reputed lawyer, one more a munshi and the eldest—a teacher. In view of their poor dalit background, the family's achievements are lauded in and around Dhantala till today.

In 2007, Prahladji narrated his life story to me thus: 'Having lost the family field to dominant village farmers, in 1955, I fell back on farm labour along with my wife—Mukundi. It was a very hard time for us. But two developments improved our financial position in the 1980s. First, Parag Dairy appeared in Dhantala and we started getting better return from dairying. I also purchased two buffaloes. Secondly, in 1984, the landless, in Dhantala, were allotted three acres of land from village commons by the newly elected pradhan—Tekram. Before this, we had demonstrated continuously at the Meerut collectorate for 15 days and many of us went to jail also.

"By the time the allotments were made, in 1984, my son Kuleshwar had crossed his eighteenth year and thus we both got two acres each. However it took long hard work of several years before the fields could be made productive. Secondly, a portion of our land was grabbed by a powerful Gurjar in connivance with the patwari (record keeper). But my sons were coming of age and we could gradually improve our condition in the village. Four of my sons thus completed their education from Meerut University. While Kuleshwar and Satpal obtained an MA, Gautam and Ramavtar completed their L.L.B.

"Kuleshwar became a teacher in a government school in Delhi. He had vowed that he would not pay any bribe to get a job and kept his word. But the boy who was so idealistic has become an alcoholic today. He also quietly sold off his field in Dhantala and built a separate house in Hapur where he now resides.

"My second son—Gautamrishi turned out to be a big support for the family. He was more practical and after completing his study started practising as a lawyer in the district Court at Meerut. Today he has not only earned name for himself but has helped three of his younger brothers in their studies and in settling in the legal profession. He also refused to marry even though many good offers came for him. Instead, he made our house pucca and brought television, phone, inverter etc.

"My youngest son Laxman looks after our small field while the fourth one—Ramavtar has been appointed magistrate at Saharanpur now. Only the third one—Satpal is still to settle properly. The elder daughter Sandhya is married to a railway employee and has two children now. We are looking for a good groom for Archana—the youngest child.

"My health has deteriorated in last two years. Chronic abdominal pain has debilitated me. Gautam took me to a doctor in Meerut but the problem has persisted. Mukundi continues to be my big support in old age also. She looks after our buffaloes and brings grass and dung from the village to make fodder besides drawing milk daily. My sons also lend a helping hand before and after work."

Box 3

Globalisation and Liberalisation inside Aradhaknagar

The Experiences of Karan Singh

Karan is a skilled tailor who used to do patchwork on cloth for an exporter and earn up to Rs.300/- daily, until 2007, when Chinese supplies hit his employer's business hard. For long Karan tried to find tailoring work from other sources but could barely earn Rs 4,000 per month from piecework. Thus, his income fell by half between 2007 and 2013 while his expenses doubled due to rising inflation. Karan had a yellow ration card that fetched wheat, sugar, and kerosene at a subsidised rate, as shown in the following chart. According to Karan he was able to save at least Rs 2000 per month until 2007 and now, even after cutting down on meat and mobile expenses, he finds it difficult to carry on. In 2011, he was forced to sell his only asset—a residential plot in Loni at a price of Rs. 1.5 lakh. But the savings did not last long and Karan's family was forced to cut down milk intake also.

Luckily, in 2013 Karan was able to find a job of a peon in a private school at a salary of Rs 6,000 per month. He is relieved that his family has been saved from starvation even though his earlier living standard is only a distant dream now.

Food Items and their Prices in Aradhaknagar		
Item	2005	2013
Potato	Rs.4	Rs.30
Tomato	Rs.5–6	Rs.30 to 60
Onion	Rs.5–7	Rs.30 to 50
Dal	Rs.25–30	Rs.90
Rice (from market)	Rs.10–15	Rs.30
Wheat	Rs.10	Rs.20

Box 4

Chaman: A Multi-Tasker of Aradhaknagar

An Instance of Rapid Upward Mobility in the Delhi Slum.

Narration: 1989 and 2009–10 Age: 59 years (Born 1950)

Caste: Valmiki; Present Occupation: Head Sweeper in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi; Also invests in money lending and properties.

Monthly Income of Family: Rs. 60,000 appr. per month; Education: 4th pass

Family Members: Wife (Asha Devi), three sons, one daughter

Occupations of Other Members: Wife is a temporary sweeper in the Corporation while sons are employed as sweepers in the same.

Chief Assets: Television, fridge, washing machine, water pump and now own pucca house on the outskirts of Delhi.

Chaman has a head sweeper's job in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi which brought a salary of Rs.18,000 per month in 2009. His three sons and wife are also employed in MCD as sweepers on temporary basis getting a salary of Rs. 6000 per month. Chaman himself runs parallel businesses like small shops and money lending too. He built a new house in Loni at a cost of Rs. 4 lakhs after selling his three-room dwelling in Aradhaknagar for Rs.1.5 lakh in 2007.

5.2 On the Margins

'Kamins' or workers attached to landowning jajmans (patrons) as also bonded labourers were common in Dhantala until the 1980s. Today, big farmers of the village are complaining about the dearth of farm labour despite increased farm wage. This does not imply that bonded labour is non-existent today. Indebted workers are forced to work for creditors on low wages and dozens of children are engaged in part-time farm labour (on family as well as others' fields) in Dhantala while, in Aradhaknagar, 20 girls and 10 boys were found to be working on a regular basis as domestic helps or as vendors etc., in our last survey.¹⁵ However, the distribution of land to the landless, in Dhantala, in 1984 increased the bargaining power of dalits considerably while the enrolment of children in schools also went up remarkably, in both the sites and many combine schooling with part-time work now.

Another striking change observed in Dhantala has been the sharp decline in the number of tenant farmers after the abolition of zamindari and distribution of land to middle tenants in the 1960s and to the landless in 1984. An interesting twist in this transition has been the emergence of some poor landowners who lease their small plots while emigrating from the countryside and some rich lessees who own tractors and hire plots for cultivation from a number of lessors.

Very few among the poor can afford to be subsidiary workers (toiling for less than 183 days in a year). Yet, ill health, physical handicaps, inclement weather and violence etc may compel some to not work for long periods. Old age and physical incapacity also forces many into disguised unemployment as of a vendor seated outside his home everyday but

¹⁵ For data on bonded labour today, see John S. and S. Jodhka (2008).

hardly selling anything. The number of such workers is higher in Aradhaknagar while unpaid subsidiary work of women in dairy work is high in Dhantala as noted in the index to Tables 3 and 5.

On the other extreme, there is a notable minority of multi taskers in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar who have more than one full time parallel occupation. Such individuals may have a public sector job along with a side business or property business as well as money lending besides considerable earning from brokerage, liaison work etc. and are different from agriculturists with an additional income from casual labour or a vendor alternating as a labourer etc. The total count of such individuals came to about 2 per cent in both the studied communities—24 in Dhantala (besides agriculture) and 20 in Aradhaknagar—in 2012. Figures for earlier years could not be calculated by me. However, their number seems to have grown since the 1990s.

The NSS reports, however, show workers with more than one occupation as less than one per cent generally.¹⁶ It needs to be probed whether group discussions as used in our fieldwork fare better in producing data that is lost in personal interviews on complex livelihood strategies of many households.

5.3 Non Workers

The category of adult ‘non-workers’ remains underexplored in most micro and macro reports on work. Our study has identified a notable spectrum of such men and women in Dhantala as well as Aradhaknagar. Apart from home makers, students, pensioners and idlers, the segment includes a range of highly productive but uncounted workers like social and political activists, quasi-legal or illegal manufacturers and distributors of contrabands, sex workers, usurers, beggars and some public sector employees engaged in hidden side businesses like shops, brokerage etc. In Aradhaknagar too, a section of rentiers have emerged who rent out rooms (for up to Rs 1,000 a month) from a growing number of two-storied houses in the slum. The proportion of ‘non-workers’ in both communities is about 30 per cent of adults and seems to be rising.

It is worth highlighting that in Dhantala, uncounted work includes non monetized work like bartered labour hours in peak farm season and domestic uncounted work or home based food processing etc. There is also disguised monetised work e.g. liaison work in government offices etc., which is a major source of earning for some middlemen and public sector employees too.

¹⁶ For national statistics on second subsidiary occupations, see National Sample Survey Organisation 2010, Table 30.

5.4 Real Wages

Another notable aspect of livelihoods in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar is the fact that real wages, which rose minimally through the colonial era (from about Rs 2 per month in 1780 to about Rs 4 in 1951 in 1870 prices) are registering a sharper rise since the 1990s, despite growing mechanisation and spiralling prices. (Sundaram 2013) In Aradhaknagar, for example, the daily wage of a 'beldaar' (male construction labourer) rose from Rs 25 in 1988 to Rs 300 by 2012 (a twelve-fold increase). The wholesale price index (WPI) over the same period rose about six times from 60 to 360 (base year being 1993–94). Allowing for some difference in consumer prices of late, our assessment of wage increase is in consonance with the historical analysis presented by other scholars.¹⁷

No doubt the rise in formal sector salaries has been even higher in the same period; yet, it is pleasant to note that the gap in the wages of men and women has come down in the past two decades, as has the gap between skilled and unskilled workers and between urban and rural manual work (down from 50 per cent to about 33 per cent in each dyad now). In the next section, we shall dwell on structural factors behind increased occupational mobility and better wages among labouring classes since the 1990s. At the moment, it is worth remembering that the mass of underemployed workers in Aradhaknagar as well as Dhantala (including marginal farmers, street vendors, home-based craftsmen etc.) do not earn even the equivalent of a day's wage of an unskilled labourer on average. The total absence of social security, a high dependence ratio within families, and extreme physical vulnerability further magnify the anxieties of hard manual work in this vast segment of the unorganised informal workforce.

6 EVIDENCE FROM OTHER STUDIES

Many of the trends discerned in the occupational profiles of Dhantala and Aradhaknagar correspond closely with those reflected in successive national surveys as well as long-term studies of sites like Palanpur, the Slater villages, and Dharavi (Himanshu et al. 2013; Harris et al. 2008, 2010; Sharma 2000). The steady rise of the rural non-farm economy (especially construction and transport jobs), the jump in migration and commuting, and the withdrawal of women from farm work are known trends that may not require further comment.

It may be more useful to now reflect on major dissimilarities between our findings and those evident in re-studies of other Indian villages and reasons thereof.

A striking facet of the work pattern in Dhantala was the low proportion of farm labour in the wake of a major land distribution that took place here in 1984. Petty landownership seems to have aided dalits in this village in purchasing livestock and developing dairy as an allied occupation. Interestingly, engagement with animal rearing appears to have further

¹⁷ For a historical analysis of wage increase in India, see Roy (2013).

helped dalit women to withdraw from farm labour, which ranks as one of the most detested occupations after bondage in the rural economy.

To gain a balanced perspective on the relation between landownership and occupational profile of villagers, we compared the position of the landless in an adjacent village called Doymi and found a very high proportion of dalit farm and non-farm workers there. Studies like those on the Slater village of Iruvelpattu and 'halis' of south Gujarat correspond with the latter, while the evidence from Gangaikondam shows that landlessness has declined there too with increasing occupational diversification (Tables 8–10).

Table 8 Occupation status in Palanpur 1957–58 to 2008–09

Year		1957		1983		1993		2008	
Name of the Occupation		Primary	Sec.	Primary	Sec.	Primary	Sec.	Primary	Sec.
Cultivation and Livestock		141 (81)	12	141 (50)	32	187 (55)	13	184 (48)	122
Self Employment	Non-Farm Skilled Self Employed	6 (3)	2	17 (6)	6	16 (5)	7	45 (12)	26
		6	2	5	3	9	5	13	3
	Unskilled Self Employed	12	3	7	2	3	2	2	3
Wage Employment	Regular/Semi Regular	5 (3)	6	72 (26)	2	46 (14)	3	43 (11)	8
	Regular (Skilled)	1		7	1	7		13	
	Regular (Unskilled)	4	4	48		21	1	17	
	Semi Regular (Skilled)			1		1		6	3
	Semi Regular (Unskilled)		2	16	1	17	2	7	5
Wage Employment	Casual Agriculture Labor	22 (13)	24	23 (9)	36	34(10)	34	36 (9)	74
		22	7	10	21	16	17	2	30
	Non-Farm Casual Labor	0	17	13	15	18	17	34	44
Study		0 (0)		9 (3)		28(8)		46 (12)	
Other		0 (0)		5 (2)	2	4 (1)		9 (2)	1
None		1 (1)	131	17 (6)	206	25 (7)	280	24 (6)	156
Total		175 (100)	175	284 (100)	284	340 (100)	340	387	387

Note: Sec. denotes Secondary Occupations.

Source: Himanshu et al. 2013

Table 9 Landholdings in Irvelpattu,2008

Category of Land owned	Caste Hindus		Dalits		Total		Index of Access to Landownership	
	Acres	No. of Households (%)	Extent of Land Owned (%)	No. of Households (%)	Extent of Land Owned (%)	No. of Households (%)	Extent of Land Owned (%)	Caste Hindus
Landless	111 (43.0)	Nil (0.0)	86 (58.1)	Nil (0.0)	197 (48.5)	Nil (0.0)	0.00	0.00
0.01-0.99	35 (13.6)	15.66 (3.5)	41 (27.7)	16.78 (29.0)	76 (18.7)	32.44 (6.4)	0.36	0.33
1.00-3.99	54 (20.9)	58.37 (12.9)	11 (7.4)	11.50 (19.9)	65 (16.0)	69.87 (13.7)	0.86	0.83
2.00-3.99	36 (14.0)	86.21 (19.0)	9 (6.1)	24.50 (42.4)	45 (11.1)	110.71 (21.7)	1.90	2.16
4.00-6.99	14 (5.4)	67.57 (14.9)	1 (0.7)	5.00 (8.7)	15 (3.7)	72.50 (14.2)	3.84	3.98
7.00-9.99	6 (2.3)	7.00 (1.5)	Nil (0.0)	Nil (0.0)	1 (0.2)	7.00 (1.4)	5.57	Nil
10.00+	6 (2.3)	68.00 (15.0)	Nil (0.0)	Nil (0.0)	6 (1.5)	68.00 (13.3)	9.01	Nil
BL	1 (0.4)	150.00 (33.1)	Nil (0.0)	Nil (0.0)	1 (0.2)	150.00 (29.4)	119.29	Nil
Total	258 (100.0)	452.81 (100.0)	148 (100.0)	57.78 (100.0)	4.6 (100.0)	510.52 (100.0)	1.40	0.31

Source: Harris et al. 2010.

Another trend visible in Dhantala has been the growing share of the non-farm sector in the village economy. The same has been noted in the long-term study of Palanpur in western Uttar Pradesh (Himanshu and Peter Lanjouw et al. 2013, 17). Indeed, the Palanpur study corroborates the Dhantala finding regarding growing dissociation between sub castes and occupations also though not across varna divides. Similarly, my impression of about 2 per cent workers with two or more full time jobs matches with that of Palanpur where too workers with two or more jobs (over and above the cultivation-livestock combine) have been noted as high in 2008.¹⁸

¹⁸ The data on multiple occupations could not be collected systematically by me. Yet, both sites show a small number of prosperous multi-taskers as well as a large proportion of marginal farmers who are also labourers and many artisans and public sector employees who have other (subsidiary or principal) occupations.

Table 10 Principal occupations amongst the major castes of Gangaikondam, Tamil Nadu, 2008

Occupation Category	Thevar Total (%)	Konar Total (%)	Pallar (Hindu) Total (%)	Pallar (Christian) total (%)	All Village Total (%)
01. Professional	6(1)	7 (2.1)	23 (2.5)	21 (4.3)	83 (2.9)
02. Administrative	1 (0.2)	6 (1.8)	9 (1.0)	1 (0.2)	0.8)
03. Clerical	14 (2.3)	7 (2.1)	17 (1.8)	9 (1.8)	2.4)
04. Sales Workers	39 (6.3)	9 (2.6)	19 (2.0)	9 (1.8)	.0)
05. Service Workers	27 (4.3)	17 (5.0)	19 (2.0)	6 (1.2)	.0)
06. Cultivators	90 (14.5)	54 (15.9)	266 (28.4)	171 (35.0)	616 (21.2)
6a. Agricultural Labourer	50 (8.1)	41 (12.1)	100 (10.7)	21 (4.3)	245 (8.4)
6b. Agricultural related	62 (10.0)	18 (5.3)	7 (0.7)	2 (0.4)	3.3)
07. Production (a)	105 (16.9)	40 (11.8)	110 (11.8)	53 (10.9)	5.0)
08. Production (b)	8 (1.3)	8 (2.4)	12 (1.3)	11 (2.3)	154 (5.3)
9a. Drivers	22 (3.5)	9 (2.6)	29 (3.1)	25 (5.1)	97 (3.3)
9b. Construction	26 (4.2)	16 (4.7)	60 (6.4)	34 (7.0)	167 (5.7)
9c. General Labour	141 (22.7)	92 (27.1)	181 (19.4)	78 (16.0)	579 (19.9)
Total Labour force	621	340	935	488	2906
Work Participation rate (%)	38.4	43.1	46.3	46.3	42.2

Source: Household census data, 2008 cited in Harris, John, et.al, Rural Urbanism in Tamil Nadu: Notes on a "Slater Village": Gangaikondam, 1961-2012, *Review of Agrarian Studies*.

Another difference between the charting of occupations in the present study and in other micro-studies concerns the tiny but significant proportion of entrepreneurs, professionals, Grade 3 and 2 formal sector workers (or clerks and junior officers respectively) and a variety of 'non-workers' found in Dhantala as well as Aradhaknagar. The confinement of the Palanpur and Slater restudies to very broad occupational categories prevents comparative comment in this connection, and greater attention to these may yield similar finding in latter sites too.

6.1 General Currents

Broad assessments of social change are challenging and often controversial. Some of the generalisations currently being debated in writings on occupations in India are: proletarianisation, casualisation, pauperisation, the vanishing village, the rise of the growing rural non-farm economy, and the scale of neo-bondage and footloose labour, etc. (Breman 1996; Gupta 2005).

Our study corroborates the reading on increasing casualisation of work in the light of the unmistakable expansion of the marginal farmer who is forced to combine casual labour

with agriculture and of ad hoc workers within the formal sector in cities. However, 'pauperisation' seems to have been checked, in our area in the wake of the green and white revolutions from the 1970s (just when population pressure began downsizing landholdings). More recently, the growth of the non-farm sector and rise in real wages, from the 1990s, has again helped in reducing poverty despite high inflation.¹⁹ Similarly, the assumption regarding increasing 'proletarianisation' of work (associated with falling self employment and growing casual as well as wage work) in the wake of globalisation, finds limited support in our area where a vast section of the self-employed are highly underemployed and eager to shift to wage work instead of avoiding it as inferior.

The thesis of the 'vanishing village' (as a moral and aspirational space) is supported by growing flight from rurality in Dhantala (Gupta 2005). However, the countryside also exhibits limited but unprecedented democratisation and reduction in inequality since independence. Recent decades have seen the village panchayat, land ownership, gender relations, education and politics going through limited but unprecedented improvement.

In the economic sphere again, the era of highly competitive electoral politics brought other turnarounds in the 1990s like poverty reduction, rising literacy, arrival of new communication technologies, accelerating urbanisation, a swell in the middle class and increased access to gadgets and motorised vehicles among poor too; and, significantly, a sharper fall in the birth rate (along with falling infant mortality) in the country. It is also worth repeating that within the tardy growth record in the studied sites, maximum transition in work appeared between 1988 and 2006 when the tiny but dynamic stratum of petty entrepreneurs, professionals and multi taskers showed expansion and real wages started rising at an increased pace (Panagaria 2013). The 'great Indian debate' on poverty and employment indices, since the 1990s, thus seems to be settling more in favour of pro-liberalisation scholars and our study corroborates this.

However, the upward movement in the graphs of so many indices from the 1990s need not be ascribed to the dynamism introduced by liberalisation alone. The 1990s saw simultaneous improvement on a number of fronts, including the breakdown of single party rule in the country, greater decentralisation and devolution of powers specially to panchayats, major new initiatives in welfare spending from the centre, new initiatives on women's empowerment and education along with the arrival of mobiles, rural telecasting, high mileage LMVs, computers and several other technologies that gradually impacted the poor in positive ways. The masses' own contribution to recent economic improvements through

¹⁹ Our findings thus support the libertarian arguments of Bhavani and Tendulkar (2012) and Aiyar (2008) etc on the general impact of economic liberalisation on the poor in India.

increasing family planning is also crucial, since the fall in supply of cheap labour is strongly correlated to rise in wages.²⁰

Most improvements on economic and livelihood fronts in India remain anaemic, however. Moreover, they have been accompanied by serious deterioration, in recent times, in areas like pollution, congestion and growing adult morbidity (as reflected in higher anaemia levels recorded in the Third National Family and Health Survey, in 2004–05) besides rising crime, corruption and frustrations. The conspicuous rise of drunkenness in both Dhantala and Aradhaknagar is an index of growing anomie in the midst of anaemic economic development.

Lastly, we need to recall that marginal improvements in wages, non-farm employment and growth of transport and other services, in the country, do not compare well with levels crossed, centuries ago, in the west and, more recently, in several parts of East Asia and Latin America.²¹

6.2 Factors inhibiting Occupational Mobility

The long-term study of Dhantala and Aradhaknagar and the case histories of Kuleshwar, Karan, and Prahlad Singh cited above point to a range of factors that restrict mobility efforts of workers trying hard to move out of poverty. Chief among them are: poor electricity and roads infrastructure; near absence of vocational and entrepreneurial training in most educational institutes, spiralling inflation; dearth of micro credit, efficient welfare delivery; and skewed enforcement of labour, land and environment controls which have throttled the growth of formal sector manufacturing in particular.

Considerable stress has been laid by left scholars on structural constraints on growth and occupational mobility brought by class, caste and gender inequalities in society (Bardhan 2010; Bhaduri 2008). The same is evident in our field to some extent as illustrated in the experiences of Karan and Prahlad Singh. However, an overemphasis on equality at the cost of basic issues of infrastructure development or good governance and business support for achieving rapid formal sector growth would be inappropriate. Indeed, the failed experiment of almost all the communist states cautions against deducing a strong correlation between equality and growth or inequality and underdevelopment in general.²²

²⁰ Indeed, our data suggests that works of scholars like Utsa Patnaik and Amit Bhaduri depicting major deterioration in a wide array of national indices since the 1990s (including not only sharpening inequality but also hunger, poverty, employment and agricultural productivity) may be simplifying a more complex socio economic transition in the country in the wake of economic liberalisation. For similar views on the rise in farm incomes from the 1990s, see Bhaumik (2002).

²¹ For a perspective on rural transitions in South East Asia, see Elson (2002) and Lienbach (2003).

²² The centrality of the ideal of economic equality in the project of social justice, however, is another matter and deserves support on its own independent of the issue of economic growth undoubtedly (for more on my ideological bias, see Vijay 2004).

Table 11 Quickening change in the Indian economy

No.	Year/Indices (in percentage)	1951	1971	1991	2001	2011
1	Annual GDP growth	2.3	3.0	5.3	5.8	6.9
2	Per capita Income (in Rs. at 2004 prices)	7763	10825	15865	22751	42851
3	People Below Poverty Line (per cent population as per Tendulker method)	?	65	55	37	27
4	Welfare Expenditure (per cent of total expenditure)			4.5	5	6.7
5	Life Expectancy (in years)	32.1	45.6	58.6	63.5	64.9
6	Urbanisation (per cent of population)	17.29	19.91	25.7	27.8	31.71
7	Literacy Rate	18.33	34.4	52.2	64.3	74.4
8	Birth Rate (per 1000 population)	39.9	36.9	31.5	25.8	22.1
9	Rural Non-Farm Output (ratio of rural)		27.6	43	50	60.6
10	Formal Sector Employment (including contractual workers)	5	7.5	10	12	14
11	Debt to GDP ratio				72.7%	69.4%
12	Electricity Generator (in billion kilo watts)	–	129	289	554	959
13	Total Road Length (in km)	–	–	2327	3374	4110
14	Exports (percentage of GDP)			5.8	9.9	14.9

Source: Government of India, Economic Survey-2011-12 and BalaKrishnan, Pulapre (2013) etc.

7 CONCLUSION AND POLICY DERIVATIVES

The study of livelihoods in Dhantala and Aradhaknagar reveals a large variety of ‘work’ as well as ‘non work’ combinations that are adopted for survival by the majority of residents dependent on informal ventures. Indeed, the close scrutiny of occupations in the sites (charted in Tables 3–6) threw up a number of activities that find rare mention in macro as well as other micro studies on work.

Our long-term study also reveals slow but continual change in work patterns, which saved the communities from pauperisation in the wake of demographic explosion and growing pressure on land, but also pre-empted any take off in the local economies in the absence of rapid growth of infrastructure or the formal economy outside. The 1990s, however, saw some acceleration in work diversification and the evolution of a petty bourgeoisie too. The continued rise in real wages despite steep inflation in the preceding decade has been heartening and owes as much to expanded welfare programmes and the growing construction and service sectors as to decelerating population growth since the 1990s. The

most sought after work option among peasants as well as labourers, however, is regular formal sector employment (in public or private sector enterprises). But this remains difficult, almost a chimera in urban as well rural settings where Grade 4 (sweepers' or peons') jobs are best that even graduates contend with.

Some policy implications can be clearly drawn from these trends. First, efforts to increase formal sector employment in the public and private sectors needs to be promoted rapidly to arrive at international norms cited before. One measure worth considering is a massive expansion of medical and welfare services across 700,000 villages and towns, besides greater investment in roads, electricity, and agro processing to increase more productive employment. Also, since the public sector and services cannot be stretched beyond a point, policy makers and legislators need to make every effort to encourage honest private enterprise instead of tying it up in red or green tape. Indeed, the interests of capital and labour need to be reconciled, and rapid economic development today requires a culture of 'trusteeship' more than class war.

In addition, a low but well-enforced taxation policy also needs to be strengthened on the basis of a new inheritance tax on large family bequeaths. Indeed, restrictions on inherited wealth would address the problem of social injustice also (more comprehensively and efficiently than caste based reservations and quotas perhaps).

Environmental concerns have led to major stoppages in mining and manufacturing in recent years. However, the experience of well-protected environments in major manufacturing hubs like South Korea, Sweden, Germany, etc. suggests that large-scale manufacturing and environmental protection can coexist, and that revenues from a prosperous formal economy would serve the natural environment more than overregulation that pushes production into the shadow economy of small scale, unregistered and often highly polluting work.

No policy measure would fructify unless delivery mechanisms, including public-private partnerships and administrative reforms, are pushed. To counter leakages and waste in government schemes, denial of salary increments for deliberate dereliction and incentives for extraordinary performance in public service need to be considered today. Also, welfare schemes need to be designed in such a way as to pre-empt leakages from the outset.

Lastly, our analysis suggests that population control needs to be reemphasised today as an additional means for restricting supply of cheap labour and thereby raising wage rates, besides improving child care and maternal health too.

For future research on occupations, our study highlights the need to pay greater attention to the considerable extent of undercounted work in domestic space and among unreported

occupations of a 'quasi-legal' nature. It is also submitted that in counting of work, in national surveys, women engaged in livestock and farm work and home-based processing as also farmers pursuing parallel non-farm work be considered afresh. Secondly, available data on segments like employers, rentiers, non-workers, multi-taskers and petty entrepreneurs deserves more foregrounding in employment charts. Indeed, these segments may deepen our understanding of the huge gap between the size of working age population and available labour force as also the difference between the number of workers and the number of jobs in the economy.

A major concern of national employment surveys, across continents, is the counting and categorisation of workers as per standard industrial classifications in which high income and highly educated and powerful groups figure on the top while the mass of 'elementary' occupations are placed at the bottom. The vast mass of workers in 'Bharat' and its infrastructure-starved villages and slums calls for a more ethnicised understanding of work categories and their intersections (but not substitution) with internationally compatible classifications. A reversal of the order of major occupations listed by the National Occupational Classification into one that puts 'primary workers' on top, is an example.

Slippages can still appear in data collection at several stages. Our experience suggests that precision may be enhanced in employment and other counts through a multi-method approach in which focus group discussions serve as major tools in conjunction with household surveys and interviews. Multi-method restudies of a few instances of unit level data of national surveys may help in further refining our aggregate data too.

On social sciences generally, it is submitted that the vast chasm between micro and macro research, qualitative and quantitative approaches and field work and modelling, as also the sharp divides between Human Science disciplines, need to be scaled down. Also, by opening more space for subjects' voices in our writing and by translating our findings with clarity and brevity, for respondents' feedback and comments, research is likely to benefit immensely. Lastly, it is suggested that new modes of recording and sharing data, applying digital techniques also need to be given respectability in academic work today.

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