

Chapter 5

Livelihood and Migration among Devipujak Community

Bokil has classified nomadic and semi-nomadic communities into four different categories such as i) pastorals and hunter-gatherers, ii) goods and service nomads, iii) entertainers and iv) religious performers. The pastoral communities include shepherds who are found as Dhangar in Maharashtra, Kuruba in Karnataka whereas cowherd communities like Maldharis in Gujarat. The hunter-gatherer nomads comprised Pardhi community found in most parts of country whose main occupation was hunting and gathering. The second types of groups used to offer good and services in society. They comprise Gadi Lohar (wandering blacksmith), Otari (metal casters), Banjara (salt carrier) and so on. Other groups who are known as entertainers include Bahurupi (strolling actors), Garudi (snake charmers), Darweshi (bear exhibitors) and Makadwale (monkey trainers). The fourth groups include religious performers such as Gosavi (ascetics), Joshi (astrologers), Aaradhi (devotional singers) and so on (2002, p.151a). It is observed that caste name is derived from the profession people are engaged particularly in Hindu society. Brahmin is the caste who follows occupation of rituals and worship. They are practicing priestly profession since long time but there were certain changes occurred in recent times and some of them have taken up other professions like writing, clerical work. The caste-name Kumbhar is traced from the groups who are engaged in occupation of pottery. Tili or Teli is caste who are involved in occupation of oil (Ghurye, 1950). It was the caste-system which led British government to misunderstood criminal tribe in Indian context. They believe that the ex-criminal groups were the communities who professed crime from one generation to another generation same way other castes were carrying forward their profession from one to another generation in India (Kapadia, 1952). Yerukala, an ex-criminal tribe of Andhra Pradesh was labelled as burglars, thieves and railway wagon breakers. It was a nomadic community and used to move from one place to another. They acted as spies or espionage whose work was to collect secret from enemy and passing it to the ruler who employed them. Once British occupied their territories, they lost their traditional ways of livelihood which led significant numbers of them to adopt crime as means of livelihood (Gandhi, 2016). Radhakrishna (2000) mentioned that Yerukulas used to be salt and grain traders who were taking salt from coastal areas of presidency to inland areas. They lost their means of earning after development of road and railway network. After

loss of livelihood, not all but some of them adopted crime as means of livelihood. The nomadic communities have adopted diversified activities to earn their livelihood but the development of modern processes have badly affected on their earnings. Development in terms of industrialization, mechanisation, urbanization, transportation, communication have impacted their traditional livelihood which forced them to adopt new alternatives for meeting their basic needs. The livelihood of pastorals and hunter gathers have affected due to no open access of grazing land and forest land and also mass production with enhancement of industrialization have impacted earning opportunities of good and service providing nomads. The spreading of modern entertainment means particularly television in remote parts of the country during last decades lead to loss of livelihood for entertaining communities who used to entertain people since ages. The status of religious performers is same due to various reasons. There have been changes in religious beliefs, attitude and practices of people with development of modernization and rationalisation. It does not mean that people have been less religious or important of religion has been decreased in day to day life of people. Blind faith and superstitious practices are still widely prevalent in society but rites and ritual have changed in recent times. The occasion of eclipses and Amavasyas are not considered as auspicious days for donation while computerised horoscope has taken place of fortune telling parrot. The religions performing groups have lost their tradition occupations due to this kind of development which reduced them to adopt beggary as source of earning (Bokil, 2002a).

There were certain policies and enactment of laws to conserve wildlife which imposed ban on open access to grazing and hunting which led to expel forager and pastoral communities from many National Parks (Rangarajan 1996). One such community Bawarias who used to have habitat inside Sarika National Park lost their habitat rights and forced to live away from the watch of Forest Department. Most of them are occupied in occupation of *chowkidari* nowadays which means guarding agricultural land from crop-raiding animals. But at the end of agricultural season, they are asked by landowner to move and vacant the place because of fear that Bawaria families will make it their permanent place otherwise (Dutt, 2004). Lambadas, earlier known as Banjaras were major caravan traders and merchant since centuries. The state rulers used to take their services as food grains transporters. They were highly efficient in long-distance trade to transport food items from surplus areas to deficit one during time of famines. After establishment of British rule which led to changes into

economic relations and development of rail network pushed them into marginalization (Satya, 2011).

Majority of DNTs population do not own substantial assets except bicycle, mobile and television. Their traditional occupations such as acrobatics, snake charming, monkey show, medical herbs are not enough remunerative so they are not much interested to carry these occupations and wish to adopt alternate means of livelihood. Due to stigma towards them, DNTs are not allowed to take up decent jobs. People from upper strata are not providing them reliable good job opportunities (Japhet & Diwakar, 2015). There are many incidences observed that nomadic communities are displaced because of various developmental projects. These developmental activities also led to loss of livelihood for nomadic groups due to dislocation (Bokil, 2002b). Significant number of NTDNTs are landless so most of them are engaged into non-farm activities to meet their basic needs. Additionally, their economic activities are not only unskilled but they are highly lacking to earn regular and sufficient income. Their income generation sources are mostly informal in nature (Korra, 2017).

Migration is found very usual among nomadic and denotified communities in search of livelihood opportunity. They migrate multiple times in a year which is indicating that seasonal and circular migration are frequent among denotified groups (Korra, 2019). They migrate due to their historical, cultural, occupational reasons. The vital aspect compels them to relocate themselves is not having ownership of agricultural land (Korra, 2017). The principal reason of migration among nomadic and denotified communities is observed for very less employment opportunities available to them in native or nearby place so they have to migrate to urban areas for earning (Venugopal & Chandrasekar, 2018).

Devipujaks were living as hunter-gatherer in earlier times and many local rulers were taking help from them for hunting wild animals in jungle. There are many subgroups among them like Datania, Chunaria, Gamechia, Chibhadia, Talpada who are named on the basis of occupation they are carrying. Chunaria Devipujak were lime burners whereas Datania were engaged in selling babool stick in village (Enthoven, 1922 as cited in Singh, 1994). With the advancement of technology, new form of occupations emerged so it was not possible for all

members of community to practice their age-old traditional occupations with growth of population and changing scenario. In some cases, traditional occupations became superfluous and many communities had to adopt new means of livelihood. For instance, the traditional weaving occupation gradually lost due to development of new weaving technology. Datania Devipujaks who were selling babool stick to villagers lost their age-old livelihood as people started using tooth-brush. This changing scenario led to migration of many communities to urban areas in search of livelihood.

5.1 Traditional Livelihood

5.1.1 Hunter-gathers

The Devipujak community was living like a hunter-gatherer during previous times. They were forest dwellers and had been hunting wild animals to meet their food requirements. They were so sharp in hunting skills that local rulers used to take Devipujaks along with them for hunting wild animals. It was believed that they were able to hunt tiger also with their powerful skills. The community was warrior and adventurous in nature so they were recruited by local kings or landlords in their army to fight against their enemies.

5.1.2 Dantun Occupation

In Pritampur village, the father of Karjibhai and Jahmatbhai was given right to local rulers to provide *Dantun* (Babool chewing stick) to the villagers. He was given two villages of nearby with exclusively rights to provide Babool stick. The Pritampur village was part of Rathnath estate earlier. It was very small estate in the regions. It was only family of Devipujak community who had lone right to provide *Dantun* to villagers so no any other family could do so. Jahmatbhai told me that they had possession of around hundreds of Babool trees in village from where they were cutting branches, giving it proper shape and making *Dantun* from it. They used to move house to house in village to give *Dantun*. They were giving *Dantun* to

each family according to number of members in family. Usually, they were doing this task during evening time so that people can use it next day morning. The villagers were giving them food in return of their services. This was the way their forefathers use to live and meet basic needs of their life. Their family was living in very extreme poverty. Karajibhai told me that *Jo Emna Vadavao Koi Vaar Datan Nakhava Naa Jay to Darbar Loko Emane Marata Hata* (If they do not go to put *Dantun* sometimes, they were also beaten up by Darbar community). They were doing this task since long time. Slowly and gradually, they had to stop it when people started using tooth-brush instead of *Dantun* in village.

Once Vajabhai told me that his father had gone to Ahmedabad for earning purpose. He was selling *Dantun* to the people in city. Their condition was extremely poor. His father used to climb Babool trees to cut branches of it for making *Dantun*. He was also once fell down from tree and got his leg fractured, but his father had to go to sell *Dantun* so that they can have food. There was heavy rain and his father was returning back to home after selling *Dantun*. He had to cross river to reach home back and his leg was already fractured. While crossing the river, the level of water increased so he started drowning as he was unable to cross river due to leg injury. There was shepherd man who saw him drawing and saved him from the water. Their condition was very hard in past. Vajabhai along with his elder brother went to Nadiad for earning. He was 10 years old during that time. They used to go to pick *Dantun* from Babool tree and coming back home during noon time. Then they were giving proper shape and used to go for selling *Dantun* in evening. He said that *Jo Ame Dantun Na Vechiye to Divas Na Ante Amari Pase Khava Mate Kasu Rehatu Nai* (If we do not sell *Dantun*, we do not have anything to eat at the end of day). Gamabhai was nearly 50 years old living in village. He said that his father was staying at Ahmedabad for earning. He was able to earn around rupees 2.5 when he was selling one thousand *Dantun*. The family of Ramadada who was around 80 years old was also engaged in task of giving *Dantun* to villagers. Ramadada was not native of Pritampur village but he migrated here couple of years back. He shared information that his elders were giving *Dantun* to villagers on alternate day. They were getting food from them in return of their services.

5.1.3 Vegetables Growing

The another means of livelihood for them was growing vegetable nearby river areas in village. They were growing vegetables like Brinjal, Wax gourd, Musk Melon on vacant land surrounding river or pond. They were selling it and earning meagre income from it.

5.1.4 Protecting Farm Land

Some of the families in village were engaged in *Rakhopu* means *Chowkidari*. Their duty was to protect the farm land from animal attack and guarding grains from theft. Generally, the landlord was giving task of *Chowkidari* to Devipujak family. There was family of Khambhubhai who was given task of *Chowkidari* by landlords in village. His father Aanubhabha was taking contract for protecting the farm land. He was very adventurous and fearless person so people were afraid of him in village and nearby areas. He was keeping horses and reaching to different farms riding on them. He was having responsibility of protecting huge lands which was nearly impossible for single family to handle it so he was taking some other Devipujak people with him and dividing task to protect farm land among them. They were given either cash or cereals by landlord for their services.

5.1.5 Messenger during Kingdom

During time of kingdom, Devipjaks also served as *Khepal*³³. The work of *Khepal* was to exchange message between two rulers. Earlier, there was no development mobile communication mechanism so *Khepal* was the person who used to go on feet to deliver message of one ruler to another. They had to walk miles for this job.

³³ Messenger who used to exchange messages between two kingdoms.

5.1.6 Daily Wage Earner

I had interacted with mother of Nagajibhai who was aged near to 90 years. I asked her about the earning situation of Devipujak community in earlier times. She told me that they were very poor when she came here after marriage. Her in-laws were living in *Kuba*³⁴. They were working as daily labourers in farm land. They were getting 50 paisa or one rupee as wage for a day. At that time, the population of Devipujak was not much in number there. They were daily buying groceries like oil, sugar, flour etc for food. Nagajibhai's father had also gone to Karachi now situated in Pakistan during British time. He was working there as labourer to earn livelihood. At the time of partition, he was there and did not go again to Karachi after independence.

Narharibhai said that they were working as daily wage earner in farm but were not able to meet requirements of two times meal a day even after so much hard work. Their condition was extremely poor and had to face many hardships due to poverty. Jahmatbhai was going to work at Junagadh to pick up groundnut from farm in early days. He was getting two rupees per day as wage. In conversation with Vajabhai, he once shared that they used to eat jawar in earlier times and wheat was considered food for rich people. Our food was *Rotalo, Marachuanane Dungadi, Jyare Shakhaji Khavi Amari Mate Sapananai Vaat Hati* (Rotalo, spices and onion while eating vegetable was like dream for us). They used to buy flour, oil and kerosine from rupees 1.5 for food and used to save 50 paisa from which they were buying milk, sugar and tea leaves for next day. Their earnings were mostly spent behind to meet basic needs so they were not able to save money for the future. Nanubhai's wife shared her story that she was getting Rs. 20/- per day wage for whole day to cut corn in farm. She said that their condition was like *Roj Kamao and Roj Khao* (Earn daily, eat daily). Over the time, their wage was getting increased to Rs. 50/-, Rs. 100/- and so on. Nowadays there are getting Rs. 200/- to Rs. 300 per day as daily wage.

³⁴ A house made up of mud.

5.2 Bonded Labour

Bonded labour which is also called debt bondage and forced labour is a system where a person surrenders their freedom to employer or landlord for security of repaying loan or inherit a debt from family members. In this system, money is given on credit to labourer at high interest which is very difficult for person to pay back immediately. In rural economies, the existence of bonded labour is since long time and people from underprivileged background are force to work at landowner for the advance amount paid to them (Jayal & Thakur, 2022). There are multiple causes of bonded labour which can be due to caste-discrimination, extreme poverty, inequality, lack of awareness, unjust social system and unwillingness of government to change the status quo for taking care of interest of certain sections (Finn, 2008).

The landlord had been able to exploit labourers through means of money lending which surely create a vicious cycle of indebtedness over the generation resulting into lower income of labourers (Guérin, 2013). In the system of Bonded labour, there was a space of mutual interdependence between patrons and their clients in which clients were getting assurance of security in terms of daily survival and informalized property rights; but its base was highly unequal and exploitative for clients (Bremans 1974; Prakash 1990; Basu 2009; Pouchepadass 2009; Rammohan 2009 as cited in Guérin, 2013). The driving force behind the system were not only economic aspects; but landlords were having their vested interest to control people with lower socio-economic background for sake of prestige and power (Bremans 2007).

There were some families in village who worked as bonded labour in past shared their stories to me during the time of field work. They use work *Golipanu* for bonded labour in local language. Jahmatbhai and his brother had worked as bonded labours at the house of Mukhi³⁵ and his brother in village. Their condition was very poor so his father borrowed some money from Mukhi to build house which was *Kutchra*. He kept his sons as bonded labour in exchange of money borrowed by him. Unfortunately, their father died when they were young.

³⁵ A person who was considered head of the village.

Both of them worked nearly 10 years as bonded labours to repay the amount borrowed by their father. They had to do work for whole day with taking care of livestock including cleaning and collecting waste, farming and so on. It was very hard to get rid from this cycle. There was time Jahmatbhai needed more money for his marriage so he borrowed again from Mukhi and they had to work for some more years to repay the amount through service of labour. They need to wake up at 02.00 am in morning to take care of oxen. Jahmatbhai said with heavy heart in local language that *Aa Koi Dushman Ne Pan Na Aave To Saru, Karan Dhor Pachhad Chali Chali Ne Pag Ghasai Jata Hoy Chhe* (Even our enemy should not face this situation, we feel so tired at the end after waling miles behind cattle). They were provided meal for three times a day, *bidi, chappal* etc from landlord but their work was extremely too much compare to things they were given.

Ghemabhai also had same story to share about bonded labour. He had borrowed some money from Patel family. He had to work there as bonded labour for long time. He was not exactly aware about how many years he worked there as bonded labour. Ramadada who was aged person talked about the extreme hardship faced in past life. He borrowed Rs. 500/- from Darbar family and had to work for two years as bonded labour there. After some times, there was occasion of his marriage and again he borrowed Rs. 600/- from Darbar family for which he worked as bonded labour for another three years. He said that life was very hard while working as bonded labourer. They are bound to work for whole day and need to stay at their place if not married. He was waking up at mid-night to take care of livestock. He shared that it is not a good system because they had to do lot hard work which was beyond compare to money they had borrowed.

Khambhubhai was a graduate person in the community. He said that the main reason behind practice of bonded labour was poverty among Devipujaks. They need to borrow some money to meet certain expenditure which were pushing them into vicious cycle of bonded labour. The landlords were preferring this system because they were getting person who was bound to work for them whole day. They did not have much botheration to find person for doing work in their farmland. He said that *Mukhi* was keeping persons as bonded labour earlier times in village. He was very indifferent toward bonded labour and made them work very hard. He shared that higher caste people used to give money to person in need even more than

they demand so person remains indebted to them and they can make him work at their places. If person returns them money they have borrowed, they will not accept cash and will demand to repay their debt through working in their farms. This is very cyclic process so people get trapped in it as they will again borrow money for some other requirement which will bound them to work for landlord again. It takes years for them to get free from the indebtedness. Jahmatbhai said that there is no any family among Devipujak community working as bonded labour nowadays in village. I came to know from community people that there are still some families of Devipujak and Koli community in nearby villages who are still working like bonded labourers. They have taken debt from landowners but still are not able to pay back them.

5.3 New Means of Livelihood

Many nomadic and denotified groups have to adopt new occupations leaving their older ones due to technological advancement, enactment of certain laws and outing demand of traditional occupations. Some of these communities were dependent on forest produce and game-shows of wild animals like bear, snakes, monkey, birds which became illegal after arrival of legislations on wild life and forest conservations. There was not any other option left for these groups to move out from their age-old occupations. The traditional occupations of forest products and domestication of wild animals which were earning sources for them became offence suddenly due to legal restrictions. Among Devipujaks, there were many families who have migrated to urban regions like Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bangalore in search of earning. They are engaged into different occupations like secondhanded items, new clothes, bags selling, spices and so on. Devipujaks are also engaged in horticulture nowadays. They keep huge land on contract for a year and do farming of mangos, gooseberry, banana, chiku and coconut (Talpada, 2020).

5.3.1 Daily Wage Earner

The distinctive characteristic of rural economy is growing number of agricultural workers, cultivator and labourers who are engaged in farm production (Vetrivel & Manigandan, 2013). Agriculture is considered as one of the important phenomena who provides employment to large number of rural populations in India. However, there are many uncertainties in the sector. Most of the labour class is engaged as daily wage earners at villages. Their income is very low and nature of employment is also highly irregular. Additionally, large number of agricultural labourers are belonging to marginalized sections. Though, India has seen rapid economic growth in recent decade which contributed in improving living standards of some, but large number of people are still living miserable life (Dreze and Sen, 2014).

In Pritampur village, people belonging to Devipujak community who stay in village and not migrating were engaged as daily wage earners in farming and non-farming activities. Except few families, rest of the people were landless among Devipujak community. They were getting wage between Rs. 200/- to Rs. 300/- for a day. They were paid Rs. 200/- to work in farm of cotton production while Rs. 300/- was paid for work of cutting *Jar* (fodder) which means fodder. The time of work was generally 09.00 am to 05.00 pm. Female and young or middle-aged men used to work in farm. I had observed that men above age of 50 were hardly working and used to stay at home. Agriculture was mainly dependent on rain-water in areas so they were hardly getting employment in agriculture for 5 to 6 months in a year. Those farmers who had irrigation facilities could have taken two crops in a year while rest of farmers were able to take one crop only. During time of no work in village, they were either moving to cities or nearby areas in search of earning or taking up work such as construction labour, painting house and so on. I had inquired to the participants whether they are getting work under scheme The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which provides employment to people, but there was no effective implementation of scheme at ground level. I had visited farms where they were working during the field work. The working conditions were very harsh at time of hot sunny days under open sky. There was also fear of insects and reptile like snake, scorpio. Some of the people in community were working on daily wage in *Plastic Dana* manufacturing factory set

up in village. The owner of this factory was from Darbar community. Their work was to make plastic ball there. They were paid Rs. 250/- wage par day and had to do night shift also.

5.1 Working in Farmland



Source: Field Work

5.3.2 Share Farming

The share farming is a system between landowner and person who keeps it on contract. It is not based on formal agreement between landowner and party who sign it legally but they follow it based on mutual understanding and words of mouth. Devipujaks were also involved in system of share farming with landlords in village. They used to keep it for cotton farming, cumin farming or *Jar* cutting. It is called '*Bhagye Rakhavi*'³⁶ in local language. Jahmatbhai had kept shared margin in cotton farming with landowner Manubhai Darbar in village. His share was 25 percent of total production. But he met a loss due to less production affected by bad weather and high input cost of labour which pushed him into debt of Rs. 60.000/- at the

³⁶ It is a system at village level where one person keeps land on contract from landlord at particular share of profit.

end of season. His labour cost went high compare to production of cotton which led him into debt and the land owner was demanding money from him. Next year, he kept shared farming of cotton at Nakho village which was situated hundreds of kilometres away from Pritampur village. He was able to earn profit of Rs. 60,000/- after all expenditure so he paid off debt of Manubhai Darbar. He again kept same cotton farm on share for second year also. There was good production at the end of season where he earned profit of Rs. 50,000/-. He got good price of Rs. 1600/- per 20 kg cotton sack during those years. Sometimes, they earn profit from the share farming but also there are risk of losses.

Arvindbhai who was belonging to Devipujak community also kept contract of share farming in village. He had kept contract of *Jar* (fodder) cutting from farm of around 18-20 *beegah*³⁷. He had partnered with other Devipujak people for this task and kept land at cost of Rs. 1600/- per *beegah* from the landowner. In this system, the cost of labour has to be borne by person who keeps it and not by landowner. It is responsibility of person to bring labourers for the work and need to make payment to them. The landowner gives them some amount in advance to meet expenditure and remaining after completion of task. The landowner will give money which was decided during time contract according to measurement of land. If the labour cost goes high, then additional expenditure to be borne by person who keeps it. The partner of Arvindbhai left partnership in middle which resulted into high cost of labour at the end. So, he had to borne loss of Rs. 10,000/- at the end.

I was going back to my home when I met Bhimabhai who was coming on cycle. He kept contract of cutting *Jar* at Rs. 1500/- per *beegah*. He was told by landowner that land measurement was 7 *beegah*. There was not system of showing documents to understand measurement of land so they make estimation based on their understanding. Bhimabhai met loss in this contract as he felt that the landowner has lied to him that total land measurement was 7 *beegah* but it was more than it. If the land measurement is more than estimation, then person who keeps contract has to spend extra money which result into high cost of labour.

³⁷ A method of measurement of land in India.

Sanabhai had kept around 90 *beegah* of farm land with task of cutting *Jar* on contract. He had kept contract with different price such as 20 *bigaah* with rate of Rs. 1950/- per *bigaah*, another 20 *bigaah* at rate of Rs. 1700 per *bigaah* and remaining land at rate of Rs. 1600/- per *bigaah*. The rate of per *bigaah* also decided on base of quality and quantity of *Jar* in farm. Here, it is responsibility of party to cut all standing *Jar* from the farm and make bunches of it. The labour cost needs to be borne by same person who keeps contract. Sanabhai told me that he was able to earn profit of Rs. 30,000/- at the end of season after excluding all his expenditures.

Nathubhai had kept land on contract for cotton production at share of 25 percent of total production. In this system, the expenditures like irrigation, pesticides are borne by landowner where the total cost of labour from starting to end are to be borne by person who keeps contract. He told me that he has implanted cotton seed before some days but he was feeling that production will be less this year due to delayed in rain. He said that small plant of cotton will be burnt due to extreme hot weather if rain is not happening. This kind of farming based on share percent is risky. Sometimes, it is profitable while other times it can put them into heavy debt. Their condition was very poor so it became heavy burden on them if season fails and they became indebted at end of season. It takes couple of years for them to come out from the debt.

Though they used to keep land on share farming but they were telling that it is very risky task so it is better work as daily wage earner rather than it. You will get your wage at the end of your day and not chances of getting you indebted.

5.3.3 Supplying Labour Force

Another form of employment for them was to provide labourers to the land owners. It was work like a middle man who will provide labourers from the community to land owners according to requirements. Dhanabhai was a person who was engaged in such activity. He was earning money between Rs. 200/- to Rs. 300/- for providing required numbers of labourers to the landowners. He will gather person from the community and will take them to

the farm. He stopped working as labourers in farm since last 10 years and involved in supply of labourers to landowners in agricultural activities. He also needed to ensure that labourers are working properly in farm and they completed minimum required task at the end of day.

5.3.4 Art and Craft

Khambhubhai was an artistic person in community. He was making idol of Dasha Maa as per order he was getting from people. He was good in drawing skills also. He was called by people to draw picture of Lord Ganesh during time of marriage in village.

5.3.5 Keeping Horses

Khambhubhai was keeping horses at his home. Not he, but his father started keeping horses so he got this occupation from his father. His father used to keep '*Rakhopu*' in which his duty was to protect the farm land from animals and robbers. He was having one horse and mare was given to him by someone else to take care of it. He was renting horse in marriage season. He was able to earn ranging between Rs. 60,000/- to Rs. 1,00,000/- sometimes in marriage season. He said that there is certain cost to take care of horses in a year around Rs. 25,000/- to Rs. 30,000/- including their food, health and so on.

5.3.6 Charcoal Making

Some of Devipujak people were doing occupation of making charcoal from gando baval (mad tree) or prosopis juliflora. Nanubhai was migrating to places like Amod, Jamusar along with his wife and small children for this occupation. He was staying these places for 7 to 8 months in a year to earn livelihood. He said the it was very hard living conditions there. He was making temporary staying facility with tarpaulin sheet beside roads. They first used to cut mad tree, making small pieces, covering it with grass and setting on fire. He was able to earn Rs. 3,000/- to Rs. 4,000/- from it in one month. Karjibhai's wife shared that they were

migrating to Kutch region to earn livelihood through charcoal making. Arvinbhai was also engaged in occupation of charcoal making from mad tree. He was supplying the charcoal to some companies for fuel and was able to earn nearly Rs. 50,000/- per month from it.

5.3.7 Working in Diamond Unit

There were some Diamond making units in nearby areas of Pritampur village where people belonging to Devipujak community were going as workers. The money was paid for making per diamond. Tarun who was around 22 years old used to go there for work. He was paid 1 rupee and 10 paisa for making one final diamond and was able to earn around Rs. 250/- to Rs. 275/- per day. This diamond unit was nearly 17 km away from the village so he had to spend Rs. 50/- for transportation and Rs. 25/- to 30/- for other expenditure likes snacks. He told me that he was able to save Rs. 200/- at the end of day which was equivalent to earning per day wage in farm. He stopped going there after sometimes and started working as a daily wage earner in agricultural activities at village. Dhirajbhai once told me that he was working at Diamond unit and was getting 90 paisa for making one diamond earlier. At the end, he was able to earn Rs. 100/- to Rs. 150/-. Tinabhai and Vimal had earlier gone to Surat to work in diamond factory. They did not feel comfortable there so came back to village.

5.3.8 Driving

Nowadays, driving vehicles is also source of earning for many of them. Ajay was earning his livelihood by driving tractor in farm. Nareshbhai was also engaged in driving tractor and he was most of time working at Darbar family. Kamlesh who was son of Nanubhai was driving JCB at Vadodara before marriage. He now stays at village and drive JCB of Patel family staying in nearby village. His salary was Rs. 15,000/- per month there.

5.3.9 Domestication of Animals

The domestication of animals like goat, sheep, cows, poultry was another source of livelihood for Devipujak community in Pritampur village. There were good number of families who were domesticating these animals and were earning their income. Maganbhai was having many goats and poultry in livestock. His routine was to take goat for grazing in nearby areas in morning and come back during late noon. They earning was from selling extra goat milk in dairy and also selling goat to other people. They were earning around Rs. 4,000/- to Rs. 5,000/- selling small goat and Rs. 15,000/- to Rs. 20,000/- by selling big goat. Naraharibhai domesticated fowls at his house. He was keeping them in cage outside his home. He was selling its egg known as *Desi egg* at Rs. 30/-. They were also selling animals to people for the purpose of sacrifice to deity. Once I was at house of Nanubhai and was having discussion regarding research. Two persons came to him and asking him for goat to offer it to goddess. They selected small goat which was around 8 months old at price of Rs. 6,000/-. He told me that they do not demand much money from people if they are taking goat for offering to deity. Nagajibhai was domesticating 5-6 cows at his home. He was the one who was having huge farming land among Devipujak community. He was earning from giving cow milk in dairy and also making fertilizer from cow waste.

5.2 Domestication of Animal



Source: Field Work

5.3.10 Job

There were few individuals who were involved into different kind of jobs. Vishnubhai who was around 27 years old staying at Mumbai along with his family. He studied graduation with Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS) and was working in Kotak Mahindra Bank. His monthly salary was Rs. 25,000/-. Naginbhai was having two sons who were staying at Ahmedabad and working in factory which makes kitchen utensils. Their work was to apply sticker on utensils and working time was twelve hours a day. They were getting Rs. 8,000/- per month with Sunday off day. If they take off day other than Sunday, the money will be deducted for absent days. Two people were working at Dairy in nearby village. Lalabhai was working in Dairy and was getting Rs. 5,000/- monthly salary.

5.3.11 Limestone Making

Earlier people were using limestone to paint their houses. Bhimabhai's father was earning his income from making limestones.

5.3.12 Engaged in Different Occupations at Village

The people from Devipujak community were doing various occupation in village and also nearby areas. Rakhiben who was around 30 years old staying in village. She was married to Shambhubhai. Her in-laws were staying at Mumbai and they used to bring new clothes for selling whenever they come to village. Rakhiben used to go nearby cities and villages to sell new clothes. She was going house to house for selling it. The usual price for new clothes was nearly Rs. 300/-. There were other families in village who were staying in cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta and so on bringing new clothes with them for purpose of selling in village and nearby places. Generally, female members of their family were going house to house in village and surrounding areas for selling clothes. One family was doing *Zariwork* on petticoat but they were paid very less only Rs. 60/- for the work on one petticoat. One lady

was earning through stitching quilt. She was earning Rs. 100/- per quilt stitch. She was giving work by Devipujak who stays at Calcutta. They usually visit village in month of *Chaitra* and giving her quilt stitching work. She earned Rs. 2000/- for stitching 20 quilts during that time. Among them, some of families were engaged in seasons occupations in village itself. They were standing on road side near railway crossing with their cart and selling things like *Jambu* (Indian Blackberry), *Bor* (Jujube fruit), sweet corn etc. They were able to earn Rs. 300/- to Rs. 400/- out of it in a day. During weekend time, their sale was reaching to Rs. 700/- to 8,00/- per day. It was highway connected so they were getting good commuters who used to stop there and purchasing their things. The female members were also standing and selling things along with their husband. Sunny was staying at Mehmdabad and was engaged in occupation of selling new clothes there. He started staying in village itself for sometimes and brought new clothes with him while coming back to village. His mother and wife used to roam in village for selling the new clothes. Ghemabhai's sons were staying at Mumbai for livelihood purpose and sometimes they carry old clothes along with them when they visit village. Ghemabhai's wife was selling these old clothes to village people at Rs. 50/- and Rs. 60/- and usually labour class people were coming to purchase old clothes from her.

5.4 Migration and Livelihood

Migration among nomadic and denotified communities are influences by number of factors such as economic opportunities, social stigma, marginalization and environmental impact (Narbat, 2024). In many rural areas, people are usually getting employment for six to seven months in a year and diverse earning sources are also not available for people. It was very common among Devipujak community to migrate to cities for earning livelihood. There were no enough employment opportunities available for them throughout year. They used to migrate to different cities for the purpose of income generation. They have adopted different occupations in cities. There were many families or some members among family migrated to Mumbai in search of livelihood in Pritampur village. Devipujak from different regions of Gujarat migrate to Mumbai to meet their economic needs. There were also other families in village who migrated to different places such as Calcutta, Delhi, Tata Nagar, Hyderabad and so on. For them, migration to cities was to meet their primary needs rather than improving

their living standards. It was important for me as an ethnographer to understand migration and life of Devipujak in cities.

5.4.1 Engagement in Second Hand Items and Other Occupations at Mumbai

I decided to visit city where Devipujaks reside in good numbers and they get various earning opportunities. I was able to develop good relations with some of the families in Devipujak community during field work who were visiting village quiet often in a year. They were family members of the key informants who were residing there. Mumbai was also a place where there were opportunities to meet Devipujaks coming from different parts of Gujarat for earning livelihood. I went and stayed at Mumbai for a month to understand livelihood perspectives and living standards of Devipujak community. I got support from Tikabhai and Anilbhai who were cousins and Sajanbhai who was father of Vishnubhai. I also asked support from them to find rented house for me where they were living. They advised me not to stay in slum area which lacks basic facilities like bathroom, toilet and hygiene and also it is bit difficult for outsiders to find house in slum they were residing. I got accommodation facility at Andheri areas with help of my friend. It was far from the slum where they were staying and I had to take rail transportation to reach there. I met Tikabhai reaching there who was residing in slum at Vasai road along with his family. I visited these places many times to understand life of Devipujak community during my stay at Mumbai.

Many Devipujaks families who reside at Mumbai were engaged in occupation of collecting and selling old clothes and other things. They roam house to house to collect old things such as clothes, watches, mobile phones and so on. They collect these things in exchanges of plastic bucket, tub etc. Usually, the women go house to house for collecting old clothes. Once they have enough clothes, they go to second hand markets for selling it. *Chor Bazar* situated near Grant Road is considered as one of the biggest second-hand markets. I visited house of Tikabhai which was situated in Slum at Vasai road. The slum was very congested and unhygienic. There were small houses built over there. He took me to his house having very minimal and old clothes kept at one side. They were eight to ten people staying in one room small house with his own and brother's families. There was no enough space on floor where

all can sleep so they made wooden ceiling roof inside room where some people can sleep during night time. One customer came there to buy old clothes who belonging to Muslim community. They were showing him different clothes such as t-shirts, jeans, saris. A customer was not happy with clothes so he said that *Jaan nahi he* (quality of clothes is not good). They started laughing when he said these words. I was observing quietly when they were having conversation with customer and how customer was checking the clothes. Tikabhai in lighter mood said that *Aa bhai grahak ne ketalu dhyani juve chhe* (how consciously he is looking at customer). A customer was not convinced with quality of clothes so he did not buy. Tinabhai told me that sometimes male person is not allowed entry inside the building and society when they go to collect old things. One of his relatives said that he used to go at Godrej colony earlier but later security stopped them to get entry because he was denied by authority not to allow hawkers inside premises. Tinabhai's wife was also engaged in earning activities. She used to sit at one place in Bhayandar with her plastic goods and collect old clothes from customers in exchange of it. Tinabhai then took me to tea stall which was near to gate of slum so that I can meet other Devipujak people who come there for tea during evening. We met there some of them and he introduced me to them. He said that I am staying at his native village since last couple of months and writing a book kind on Devipujak community. He has come to understand life of Devipujak at Mumbai. It was my first time meeting with them so they share very brief information about them like different occupations they are engaged.

I also visited Anilbhai's house which was neighbouring to Tinabhai's house. Both of them were cousins. Anilbhai' was outside and his younger brother was at home. He inquired me when I came to Mumbai and where I am currently staying. He told me that they are engaged in occupation of collecting old things in exchanges of plastic bucket or tub. They walk from house to house in search of colleting old things. He stays here with his wife and children along with his brothers' family. I contacted Anilbhai again on mobile to meet him but he was outside for earning on that day also but informed me that he will go to *Chor Bazar* next day and invited me to accompany him. He informed me to reach at Grant road railway station early morning around 06.00 am. I dropped down there and took taxi to reach at Dau tanki area. Anilbhai was already there so I reached there by talking with him on telephone. The *Chor Bazar* market remain open from early 04.00 am to 10.00 am every day. The market was having many shops which open after closing of second-hand market. They were street

vendors who were sitting on floor to sell their goods. Anilbhai and his other family members occupied the place and sat on floor by spreading goods they have carried along with them. They had old clothes and mobile phones in goods. I took my place on floor with them. The customers started coming there gradually. One customer came there and purchased 5 pants at Rs. 100/- (Rs. 20/- per piece). Immediately another customer came who bough four t-shirt at Rs. 40/- (Rs. 10/- per piece). The customers who were coming for purchase consciously checking the quality of clothes and the price was decided based on quality of goods. Many of them were not purchasing due to quality or price mismatch.

Anilbhai's wife was having second-handed mobiles for sell. One buyer came there and she showed five-six mobiles she was having. He was offering her Rs. 400/- for all but she wanted to sell them at Rs. 500/- so she did not sell to him. Another customer wanted only one mobile and was paying Rs. 200/- for it but she wanted to sell all of them together. Apart from it, she had another three used mobile phones which were comparatively good in condition. One mobile was of Oppo company and remaining two were of MI company. One buyer reached there to buy mobile and was offering Rs. 500/- for three but she wanted to sell them between Rs. 2000/- to Rs. 2500/- as mobiles were in working condition.

Jayesh who was younger brother of Anilbhai was sitting beside him. He was having used T-shirts, trousers and jean pants in goods. He was selling t-shirts at Rs. 5/-, trouser at Rs. 15/- and jeans pants at Rs. 50/-. The market was very crowed and many people were there as seller and buyers. Most of Devipujaks who were engaged in occupation of second-hand goods used to come there for selling. The customers were having variety of choices at low prices. There were many goods apart from second-handed clothes such as electronics items, laptops etc in the market.

I asked Anilbhai how much he was able to earn at the end of day and he replied that he earned Rs. 1000/- on that day. He told me that his profit was Rs. 940/- out of 1000 as he collected old clothes which he sold against plastic goods he exchanged. His wife made earning of Rs. 2000/- on that day selling used mobiles. She got mobiles against cost of Rs. 300/- plastic

utensils and was able to earn profit of Rs. 1700/-. I asked her that she is earning well so she keeps earning with her, but she replied that she gave all her earning to Anilbhai.

Anilbhai's aunt who also came there for selling old goods told me that Devipujak are earning quite well in cities but they do not have saving habits. Major expenditure of them is behind food consumption. They do not wash or recycle the collected old clothes but sell in the same condition they have received. They check quality of clothes whether it will be saleable or not before accepting old clothes from customers. If clothes or any old things are not in condition of saleable, they do not accept it. I also inquired whether they earn well collecting old clothes in exchanges of plastic goods. I was informed that customers do not possess knowledge about price of old clothes so they are able to earn well from selling old clothes by giving plastic goods compare to taking cash.

They also need to pay rent of Rs. 20/- to persons who come there to collect it for sitting and selling their goods. I observed that there were two persons who came to collect money and each was given Rs. 10/- by Anilbhai. They are collecting money from every vendor and do not give any receipt of payment. They are collecting it without having any authority rights. I inquired to Anilbhai why they were collecting rent from them. He replied me that father of one of the persons was collecting rent from them earlier and was bullying them if they resist to give rent. He was dead now so his son is collecting money from them. They are bullied even today if they do not give money to them. It becomes difficult for them to occupy sitting place without giving money.

The Devipujak persons were also involved in other occupation at Mumbai such as selling spices, *chikki*, new clothes, travel bags, vegetables, job and so on. Jashubhai was working as a security guard in Godrej company where he was getting salary of Rs. 10,000/- per month. One of his sons was graduate and working as a salesman in Amazon company and second son was engaged in selling new clothes. Pravinbhai Bhutia was Joshi and had two sons. One of his sons was working as a salesman in Amazon and second one was engaged in selling new clothes at Ghatkopar area. Jaswantbhai Amaliya who was maternal uncle of Vishnubhai had three sons. He is suffering from paralysis now and not able to earn by himself. One of his

sons was staying at Calcutta and engaged in occupation of collecting old clothes while two sons are earning by selling new clothes at Borivali area as hawkers.

Their forefathers who came first time in Mumbai had adopted different occupations like selling honey, ghee, ceramic idols, working as daily wage earner to meet their basic needs. I had met Viralbhai at Mumbai who was having small shop of electronic items. He was engaged in this occupation since last 30 years. Earlier, he was buying old VCR, CD Player, DVD Player and separating important parts and selling it. These products have been outdated nowadays so he is buying old mobile phone then separating ic (integrated circuit) and other items from them. He either use for his own purpose or sell parts in market. He was earning quite well from this occupation.

Chinubhai was taking up different seasonal occupations at Mumbai. He was sometimes selling spices sitting on footpath or roaming house to house. He used to sell flowers on Dussehra³⁸ festival, colour on Holi³⁹ festival, raincoat during rainy season, warm clothes in winter and so on. Ramilaben who migrated to Mumbai along with her husband since many years was engaged in occupation of collecting old stuffs in exchange of plastic goods. Her son is working at Kotak Mahindra Bank at Mumbai and her husband stay at home only and not going for work. His elder son stays at Pritamnagar village. She used to roam house to house to collect old things such as clothes, watches etc. She was earlier going to sell old stuffs at *Chor Bazar* but nowadays visiting second hand market at Thane. Her daughter-in-law was also engaged in same occupation. Ramilaben told me that she earns around Rs.500/- per day in this occupation.

³⁸ Dussehra is celebrated on the 10th day of the month of Ashvina as symbol of victory of good on evil.

³⁹ A popular Hindu festival celebrated with colour.

5.3 Second Hand Market (Chor Bazar), Mumbai



Source: Field Work

5.4.2 Engagement into Different Occupations at Different Cities

Naresh who was son of Vajabhai staying at Halvan for earning livelihood. He was selling artificial jewellery there. He purchases artificial diamond set at cost of Rs. 1200/- to Rs. 1500/- depends on quality and sells around Rs. 1800/- to Rs. 2000/-, but there is no fix price for selling. Sometimes he gets more money and other time he has to sell at lower price. There was also not surety that everyday he was able to make selling. There were days when he did not earn a single penny during whole day while in contrast, he also earned Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 1500/- per day.

Maganbhai stayed at Delhi for nearly 25 years. He is staying in village now since last 17 years. At Delhi, his wife used to roam house to house for collecting old cloths in exchange of utensils. There is a huge market for second hand cloths known as Raghbir Nagar Market. The market starts early morning around 4.00 and stays open till 10.00 am. They used to go to this market for selling the collected old clothes. Nagajibhai along with his family migrated Tata Nagar for earning livelihood. He stayed there for nearly 40 years and was involved in

occupation of collecting old clothes in exchange of utensils. Maganbhai went to Tata Nagar along with his relative when he was unmarried. He is presently 55 years old and staying in village nowadays. He also migrated to others cities like Calcutta and Mumbai for earning livelihood. Nemubhai also stayed at Delhi and Calcutta when he was engaged in occupation of collecting old clothes in exchange of utensils. He was selling old clothes at Raghbir Nagar Market at Delhi.

Sunny who was youngest son of Karajibhai was staying at Mahemdavad along with his in-laws. He was around 25 years old and selling new ladies cloths roaming from house to house in Mahemdavad. He keeps materials like Indo-western and Plazo for ladies. The cost of one dress ranges from Rs. 300/- to Rs. 700/- depending on quality of material and he is able to earn profit around Rs. 500/- to Rs. 600/- per dress at time of selling. Their targeted customers were from middle class people. The one-piece of dress sold at Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 4000/- in big shop or Mall which they sell at price of Rs. 1200/- to Rs. 1500/-. His brother-in-law migrated to different cities like Godhara, Dahod and engaged in same occupation of selling new ladies dresses. They buy dress from Ahmedabad market. They earn profit around Rs. 10,000/- to 15,000/- per month. He also said that there is uncertainty in occupation. There are days when they are not able to sell even single dress. Ramanbhai who was middle-son of Karajibhai stayed Godhara for the purpose of earning where he was engaged in selling new clothes in city and nearby areas. He was not able to earn well so he came back to village for stay. He was thinking to shift Somnath for the earning purpose after sometimes. Tinabhai stayed at Mumbai for 12 months along with his brother-in-law at Mulund. He was selling new ladies wear there. He was buying new dresses from Surat which was costing him Rs. 100/- and he was selling it at price of Rs. 300/- to 400/-.

Sartan was working as labourer in Pharma company at Ahmedabad. His duty was to unload cartoon boxes from vehicle for which he was getting Rs. 1.5 per box. He was able to earn average Rs. 400/- to Rs. 500/- a day. Sanabhai stayed at different places like Dungarpur (Rajasthan), Kutch and Mumbai for earning purpose. He was involved in collecting some parts of old refrigerators and he was extracting copper and iron from it and selling out in markets.

Jatin and Paresh who were sons of Khambhubhai went to Ahmedabad for livelihood. They were working in *Mandap* decoration shop there. Jahmatbhai's both sons were staying at Hyderabad and were engaged in occupation of collecting old clothes in exchange of utensils. There are also 300 to 350 families of Devipujak residing in area. They buy goods of around Rs. 25000/- to Rs. 30,000 per month from owner who comes there once in a week with his vehicle. They had Honda Active which they used for the purpose of occupation. Their wives are engaged in same occupation along with them. They were paying house rent of Rs. 6,000/- per month there. Dineshbhai started occupation of selling Helmet at Ahmedabad when government made it compulsory for all to wear helmet while driving two-wheeler in Gujarat state. He invested huge amount with hope that he will be able to make good selling and earn profit of it. He was not able to earn well in his occupation and faces loss of rupees two lakhs.

5.4.3 Mango farming

Many people among Devipujak community are also engaged in occupation of mango farming. Khambhubhai's brother-in-law once came to attend marriage function of relative at village. He was telling me that he was keeping mango farming on contract for some years at different places in Gujarat. In mango-farming, a person make deal with land owner and keeps gardens of mango on advance fixed price before arriving of mango in season. The price is generally fixed to see size of land, quality of trees and estimation of profit which can be earned during mango season. A person who keeps mango farms will take care of garden and will earn money by selling mangos during time of season. If production is good enough, they make profit out of it while sometimes they have to face loss also if mango production is less during season.

5.4.4 Antique Things

Sometimes they get antique pieces also when they collect old things. Anilbhai was physically challenged and staying at Mumbai along his family members. He got old silk sari from

customer which had hand-woven art of some of major incidences of *Ramayana*. He said that people were asking him to sell it to them but he was not getting good price from them so he did not sell it. He also collected some of the branded old watches and contacted some of the persons from Devipujak community in nearby village who were doing occupation of buying old watches, but he was not offered good prices during sell. He told me that he will be able to earn good money by selling it if he gets a right customer who understand value of antique piece.

5.5 Land Owner among Devipujak Community

Most of the Devipujak families were landless in Pritampur village except very few. There were two families of Nagajibhai and his brother who were possessing huge farmland among Devipujak community. Both Nagajibhai and his brother were owning farm land of 160 *viga* each. Nagajibhai is engaged in full-time farming nowadays. He produces various crops such as BT cotton, cumin and wheat. He is able to earn between Rs. 3 to 5 lakhs from the farming in a year. He said that agriculture is very uncertain. Sometimes he had to face loss also due to weather conditions.

5.6 Summary

The nomadic and denotified tribes had played crucial role in rendering various services in society. The developmental activities such as industrialization, mechanisation, urbanization, transportation, communication have impacted their traditional way of earning and they were compelled to adopt alternate means of livelihood for sustainability. The adoption of modern means of entertainment like television in last some decades resulted into loss of livelihood for entertaining communities who were once providing services to entertaining people since ages. The enactment of certain laws for protecting forest and wild life led to loss of their livelihood who were dependent on forest produces and animals as source of income. Devipujaks were living as hunter-gatherers in earlier time and they were very sharp in hunting skills so they were supporting to local kings in hunting. They were earlier rendering

services of giving *Dantun* to villagers. Some of the families were given rights by local rulers for giving *Dantun* to particular village. They were getting food in return for their services by villagers. They were also engaged in growing vegetables near pond and protecting farm land. There were some families who acted as bonded labour in past at farms of higher caste families in village.

The tradition occupations were not enough to sustain themselves so they adopted new means of earning in their life. There were many families in village who were migrating to cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Tata Nagar and so on for earning livelihood. There were not much sources of income available in village. They were getting four to five months employment into farm land. Many of them were engaged into occupation of collecting old clothes in exchange of utensils or plastic stuffs. They used to move from house to house daily to collect old things at cities. There was one of the big second-hand markets known as *Chor Bazar* in Mumbai where they used to go to sell second hand clothes and other collected stuffs. Those who were staying in village itself were engaged in occupations like charcoal making, share farming, domestication of animal, working in diamond units, driving and daily wage labourers. Except very few families, remaining of them were landless in village.