

Preface

Nomadic and denotified communities are most vulnerable sections of the society in recent times. They have been victim of injustice both during colonial as well as post-colonial period. They were once highly regarded and considered important segments in the society. They were also providing various services to different sections in the society during previous time. The British government declared these communities as born criminals under Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. This was a draconian act which ruined life of number of such communities. Though they were decriminalized by enacting Habitual Offenders Act in year 1952 but the stigma and criminal labelling still prevailing same way towards them society.

Devipujak community is one of the twelve denotified tribes found in Gujarat. They are classified under OBC category by government of Gujarat. They are found in most part of Gujarat. They migrate to different cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad in search of livelihood. They were living as hunter-gathers in previous time and possessing sharp skills for hunting. Their traditional occupations were proving *Dantun* to villagers, vegetables growing near pond areas and protecting farm land. They are dividing into various sub-castes such as Datania, Gamecha, Patni, Vedva and so on. They have lost their traditional ways of earning due to advancement of modern development so shifted to adopt new occupations to sustain their livings. Devipujak community were not a part of ex-untouchables groups but they have faced caste-based discrimination one or another way in their life. They have been victims of criminal labelling, exploitation and social exclusion.

The present study attempted to understand life of Devipujak community adopting ethnographic method. I stayed with the community for long time to understand various aspects pertaining to living of Devipujak community. I tried to know about social history of the community, their tradition occupations and its changing pattern, migration and livelihood opportunities, their culture, traditions and belief systems. I also attempted to understand their perceptions towards themselves and other communities as well as their relations with other communities. The findings of the present study can be useful to understand about life of Devipujak community itself and planning intervention for the welfare of community in future.