

Habitat, Economy and Society: The Kathodis of Rajasthan

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INTRODUCTION

Kathodi is a small, primitive and isolated community, inhabiting Jhadol, Kotra and Kherwara tehsils of Udaipur district and Abu Road tehsil in Sirohi district of Rajasthan. They are also found in Gujarat and Maharashtra where they are known as 'Katkari'. The Kathodis from the bordering villages of Khandesh district in Maharashtra have migrated to Gujarat and from there to Rajasthan. The largest concentration of Kathodis/Katkari is in Maharashtra State. They are inhabiting Kolaba, Thane, Pune and Nasik district. In Gujarat they are found in Mangrol and Uccal Taluke of Surat district. The term 'Kathodi' or 'Katkari' seems to have been derived from their occupation of *Katha* (Catechu) making. *Katha* is a thickened juice extracted from the *Khair* (*Acacia catechu*) tree. The Kathodis are divided in to two main divisions: (1) Maratha (Son) and Dhor. The Maratha/Son Kathodis do not eat beef and can enter the houses of other groups. The Dhor Kathodis are considered unclean because of their eating habits. They have been reported eating carcasses. The members of these two divisions do not interdine or intermarry.

The Kathodis of Rajasthan are Dhor Kathodis who have been brought to forests of southern Rajasthan for making of *Katha* by Bohra contractors from Western Khandesh. They have been culturally isolated from their own group leading settled life in Maharashtra. Stephen Fuch calls 'Kathodi', a sub-section of Bhils. Numerically insignificant (2,553 according to 1981 census, including Ketkari and other sub groups) they have received special and concerted attention of the Rajasthan Government owing to their stricken state. They are the people of the hills and low forests. They speak their own dialect - a mixture of Vagdi and Marathi. A Kathodi women can be identified locally by the loin cloth which she tucks between the legs. Some 80-90 years ago, Bohra contractors, impressed with their skill of *Katha* making persuaded about 250 families to part with their parent stock in Western Khandesh in search of new fortunes in the forests of Rajasthan. They were employed in the remote interior forests of Phalasiya (now Jhadol), Kotra

and Kherwara tehsils of district Udaipur in Rajasthan, the area abounding in *Khair* trees, the raw material for *Katha* making. The Kathodis had to work very hard to cut and fetch the trees on their shoulders and heads for making of *Katha*. The bark of the trees was removed and the red tender portion underneath was cut in to small chips to be boiled. The process of boiling was carried on a slow fire until a paste was formed which was finally allowed to be dried up.

Their miserable condition has been reported by officers who visited that area. "Since the day the Kathodis were brought by the Bohras to Rajasthan they had been carrying on the hard struggle to eke out their livelihood at the mercy of the Bohra contractors who paid them less and arbitrary wages and extracted work under atrocious working conditions from dawn to dusk. The wages paid were generally on piece work system, and on the basis of one family rather than on a individual basis. It was often at the rate of one *Pali*, roughly a little more than a *seer* of maize per day for a family of 2 to 3 persons. According to the quantity of grain supplied the labourers were also provided with salt, chillies and garlic. They were also provided with half a bottle of liquor per week. The male and female labourers were supplied with *Dhoti* each at the close of the season. The Bohra contractors advanced loan of five to six *Maunds* of grains to Kathodi labourers to help them to stand during the off season. This advancing of loan was considered as a way of binding the labour for future. Contractors also imposed restrains on labourer movements, so as to insure their presence next season. Even otherwise also they did not have enough cash to move away" (Kalla, 1956: 134-35).

The contractors were paying wages to Kathodis by manipulating weights and measures. The contractors and the *Naik* of the Kathodi group would select a heavy stone and would treat it as an equivalent to five *seers* of weight. This stone was always more than the five *seers*. With this stone, the prepared *Katha* was weighed and wages were calculated. Deduction on account of the grains, spices, liquor and cloth supplied during the whole year since the previous

season were made from the wages, resulting no cash for Kathodi labourers. They were staying in temporary shelters with their families in abject poverty. They were moving from one *Katha* manufacturing site to another. Once the *Katha* season was over, they had no means to earn their living. During rainy season they were subsisting on roots and tubers, hunting of birds and on the flesh of the animals. Illiterate, underfed, ill-clad, and without basic amenities they were exploited and degraded by their employers.

Their isolation in the hills and forests separated them from neighbouring caste societies in their culture and religion. They were inhabiting nucleated villages in thick forests and hills of Mewar. It seems that having lived in isolation the Kathodi occupancy had not been recorded till the colonial period. Till then they depended on the Bohras and the forest produce for their needs. As their material requirement were being fulfilled in these isolated tracts, they remained cut off from the main civilization and their contacts with market economy were few and of limited nature, consisting mainly of barter of forest produce for supplies of few necessities, such as salt, oil, spices etc. The extreme poverty of the most of the Kathodis was caused by their subjugation to Bohras. As Kathodis economy was household based, they lived in relatively closed, self-contained society, and even if engaged in barter with other people, they were not economically integrated in to wider social units. In contrast the surrounding peasant societies formed a wider economic social and political network. The essential difference between a Kathodi settlement and the villages of the peasant castes was that in Kathodi settlements Bohra's capital relinquished a surplus without bringing about any profound change in the settlement while in the peasants villages the money lenders capital operated from within the village. In caste villages, *gotra* organization maintained control over the land. They brought labourers, tenants, artisans, priest to serve them. A caste settlement thus was a deliberate creation which incorporated various segments of a society within the hierarchical principles of caste ideology. The capital in peasant village was used to serve people. In comparison, Kathodi settlements had no social institutions to support their life. In peasant villages there was a fusion of economic and social powers among the locally dominant castes which eventually led to political

power as well.

The Kathodi culture has evolved, adapted and survived within the forest clad hilly terrain. These tropical deciduous forests provided them with sport, meat, liquor, food, shelter and medicines. This is now a part of the past as are the once wildlife rich forests, which have seen a steady depletion of animal and plant life due to indiscriminate hunting and cutting. Restrictions on hunting and cutting of trees led to starvation of Kathodis. Lack of natural resources has led Kathodis to all forms of labour work.

Rehabilitation of Kathodis: As Kathodis were living in abject poverty and their miserable plight was a cause of concern for the administrators. To improve their living and social conditions, a scheme for the rehabilitation of 100 Kathodi families commenced by Social Welfare Department, Rajasthan during the year 1953-54. It was not an easy task. Bohras never wanted to loose their labour and were playing at cross-purposes. They misguided simple and illiterate Kathodis and forbid them to move to other places. However, with the efforts of the Department and workers of Rajasthan Sewa Sangh, 89 Kathodi families were rehabilitated in Ambavi Daya of Tehsil Phalasiya in Udaipur. Likewise 62 Kathodi families were settled in 1954-55 in Amba tract adjoining Ambavi Daya. They were settled on a long strip of land of about 8 or 9 miles in length and 3 to 4 miles in width between two parallel hills of Aravalli mountains. The area was considered fertile and was enriched with thick vegetation and natural forest produce. There were about three to four thousand *Mahua* and Mango trees besides *Amla*, *Karonda* and bamboo. *Dholi musli* (a medicinal plant), gum, wax, honey were also available in large quantities. It was an ideal set-up for the forest dweller Kathodis. They were provided with subsidies for purchase of bullocks, seeds, implements and reclamation of land. A plot of 10 to 15 *Bighas* was allotted to each family free of charge. The Kathodis had to depend on rain for their crops as area was devoid of irrigation source. As they were not familiar with agriculture and settled way of life, they needed back up institutions. An agricultural Bias School was started for the education of children. Social Education programme were started in the resettlement areas. A pucca school cum Panchayat Ghar was constructed in the area. A co-operative society of 150 rehabilitated Kathodi families at Ambavi Daya and Ambasa settlements was

formed. Likewise, a co-operative Society for rehabilitation and trade of forest produce was started at Ambasa. To preserve and pursue their original hereditary skills of *Katha* making plans were made which did not materialize.

Presently, 1031 Kathodi families are inhabiting 26 villages and hamlets having total land holdings of 206 hectares in Jhadol and Kotra tehsils of Udaipur district. In 1983, forests of Jhadol and Kotra tehsils were declared as Game Sanctuary 'Phulwari ki Nal' where 14 out of 26 Kathodi villages are situated.

The present study reviews the social and cultural life of the Kathodis, the structural changes in their economy resulting from the process of transformation of *katha* makers in to settled farming pattern and ultimately resorting to all sorts of labour work, and the impact of the neighbouring cultural traditions on them.

AREA AND PEOPLE

The data was collected from Oгна, Ambasa and Ambavi villages of Jhadol Tehsil which are at a distance of 75, 150 and 120 Kilometres respectively from the district headquarters Udaipur. Its longitude is 24° 14'E and longitude 73° 15' N. The tehsil has its headquarters at Jhadol.

Udaipur district lies in the heart of the Aravalli ranges which encircle the district from north to south. About four-fifth of the area of the district is hilly. Only 37 percent of the district area is cultivable. The district, on the whole has a dry climate. Average annual rainfall comes to 650.3 mm. 15.0 percent area of the district is under forest. The main rivers of the district are the Bans, Breach, Som, Jakham, Sabarmati and Wakal. The main river of the area is Wakal which is flowing past Oгна.

Jhadol is situated 58 Kilometres South-West of Udaipur city. Jhadol is the sub-divisional office, tehsil and a Panchayat Samiti of the same name. The place has facilities like a post and telegraph office, a telephone public call office, a PWD (Public Works Department) bungalow, a primary health centre, a dispensary, a veterinary hospital and a post-basic or higher secondary school (Private.) Jhadol is rich in asbestos deposits and calcite.

The area is characterised by a dense jungle spread over a large area which yields valuable timber such as teak, Shisham and trees giving black wood and ebony. The forest here is perennial source of important products like gum,

honey, wax, lac, white *moosli* and is a good source of income. The other plants of the area are *Bahera* (*Terminalia bellerica*). The fruit of *Bahera* is used as medicine, for dyeing cloth and leather, and in manufacture of ink; the *Dhak* (*Butea frondosa*), which exudes gum and flowers of *Dhak* are used by local people for thatching huts; *Dhaman* (*Grewia appastifolia*) yield strong and elastic wood which is used for making bows, *Dhao* (*Anogeissus latifolia*), used as fuel and timber; *Haldi* (*Adina cardifolia*) it is used for roofing huts, *Hingota* (*Balanites raxburghi*) used as fuel and in manufacture of fire works; *Bar* or banyan (*Ficus bengalensis*); *Jaman* (*Eugenia Jambolana*), *Khair*, (*Acacia catechu*) *Khajur* (*Phoenix sylvestris*); *Mahua* (*Basia latifolia*) the flowers of which are used for making local beer and wood for carts; *Salar* (*Bosewettia thurifera*) yield gum and wax; *Semal* (*Bombax malabaricum*) its finely buttressed grey trunk is used; and *Shisham* (*Dalbergia sisoo*) its hard, durable wood is used in house building and carpentering.

In spite of being surrounded by forests and consequent rainfall, the area face famines and related scarcity. The first to be recorded famine was in Rajputana Gazetteer (1908), Vol. II A page 60 which occurred in 1764, 1812, 1868-69 and the great famine of 1899-1900 locally called 'Chappania-ka-Kal', since it occurred in Samvat 1956.

In the past the area of the Jhadol held on the *Bhum* tenure by Rao of Oгна was *Bhumat*. The tenure known as *Bhum* which was peculiar to the Rajputs means the soil, and the term *Bhumia* signifies the allodial proprietor as distinguished from the feudal chief and the tenants of the crown heads. However, the Rao of Oгна was not under the regular service of Raja and he did not have to attend court. He paid only quit-rent in token of submission.

Jhadol is a backward tehsil as all the three productive sectors (agriculture, general industries and small scale industries) are backward. Significant portion of its geographical area is under forest and uncultivated land leaving a small percentage of its geographical area for cultivation. Physio climatic conditions are also responsible for poor socio-economic infrastructure facilities.

Lack of infrastructure facilities hinder the growth of production sectors. If proper infrastructure is provided the region can attract entrepreneurs and capital to exploit natural resources available in the region and develop industrial sector.

Kathodis have known to have migrated in the recorded history to this backward area. In princely states of Rajasthan, masses in general and the Kathodis in particular suffered from long disabilities. Even after Independence in 1947 the consequential integration of the princely states in the region and the guarantee of equality gave them the little protection. Kathodis remained backward and poor. They inhabit marginally productive areas of the Udaipur district and have little excess to services and resources. Kathodis are feeling the pressure of dwindling resources and a growing population as their life style is intrinsically linked to the surrounding ecosystem.

Ogna, Ambasa and Ambavi Villages

The three villages-Ogna, Ambasa and Ambavi which form the part of this study are multi caste villages and Kathodi *Bustles*, are at the periphery of the main villages. The land utilization in the study area is given in table 1. In Rajasthan in the highly stratified villages, there is spatial segregation based purity and pollution. In Ogna village, out of 496 households, 55 are of Kathodis; in Ambasa village out of 360 households, there are 51 Kathodi households; and in Ambavi there are 69 Kathodi houses out of 144 households. The other castes residing in three villages are *Kalal*, *Bhil*, *Lohar* (Blacksmith), *Lashkar*, (Craftsmen), *Soni* (goldsmith), *Sadhs*, *Sutar*, (Carpenter), Rajput, Daroga, Jain, Muslim, Seth, *Nai* (barber), *Mali* (gardener), Brahman, *Kumhar* (potter), *Bhangi* (Sweeper), Meghwal, *Darzie* (tailor), Meena, *Khatik* (butcher), Patel, Bhoi, Rabari, Jogi and Garasia. The relationship of Kathodis with locally dominant caste are like any other typical Indian village governed by the principles of purity and pollution, restrictions on commensality and matrimony are followed like wise. They visit the main village when necessary as they are not welcome in the households of other groups. The neighbouring groups do not even hire them as farm labourers. That is why they prefer to work in forest or at far away places. With artisan castes they do not have *Jajmani* relations. As such their needs are limited and they pay for what they buy. The dependence of Kathodi on Baniya

or *Kalal* is of mercantile nature. The exchange is monetized as well as non-monetized. They buy essential things and eatables in these transactions. Kathodis have service oriented economic relationship with *Kumhar* (potter, *Luhar* (blacksmith), Jogi and *Chamars* (leather workers).

Kathodis buy drinking water pots (*Matka*), other earthen pots and clay horses from *Kumhar*, which are paid in cash or kind. *Nai* and *Dhobi* (washerman) are not important to Kathodis, as they are self sufficient in these functions. The services of *Mochi* (shoe-maker) are important. The things from *Mochi* or *chamar* are bought in cash, kind or credit, depending on the time and space. In recent years, Kathodis have started buying cheap plastic shoes from the market, but other things like plough harness, leather mouth and horn pieces for a pair of oxen and sling etc. are bought from the village *Mochi*.

However, for other economic transactions, they prefer to go to near by areas. They purchase many low priced items and a few relatively expensive items from the market. The things like cooking oil (mustard or nut), Kerosene oil, sugar, molasses, tea, matches, soap, snuff and spices like whole turmeric, salt, cumin seeds, coriander seeds and garlic pods are bought regularly. Most huts have kerosene lamps for lightening. Things like locks, scissors, watches, torches transistors a bag, few cups and soccer and a bucket are bought from a general store in the town. Sometimes wheat and grains are also bought from the market. The regular ritual requirements such as coconut, molasses and incense are bought from a nearby store but for specific rituals requirements, Kathodis have to visit specific shops in nearby areas. Shopping for clothes, silver ornaments and bangles is done at separate stores in town, once or twice a year depending on the economic condition of the family.

All the three villages are poorly connected to metalled roads. The approach to three villages is by a Kachcha road, 2 kilometre in case of Ogna, 1 in Ambasa and 5 to 10 kilometres Ambavi village. Ambasa is connected to Udaipur through Kherwara tehsil(the nearest town Khedbrahma is 16 Kilometres away) and Idar (Gujarat) by a metalled road, the last kilometre being Kachha. The Ambavi is connected to main pucca road 5 kilometre away by a Kachcha road with only one tempo service. The Kathodi *Busties* being at a

Table 1: Land utilization in the study area (in hectares)

	<i>Total area</i>	<i>Forests</i>	<i>Hills</i>	<i>Barren</i>	<i>Land kept for other uses than cultivation</i>	<i>Pasture/cultivable waste land</i>	<i>1-year waste land</i>	<i>2-5 year waste land</i>	<i>Irrigated by source wells</i>
Ogna	840	138	254	96	24	26	15	67	86
Ambasa	2753	1844	151	67	92	82	6	101	120
Ambavi	2022	1799	77	32	33	14	-	-	9

distance from the main revenue village have no roads and transport facilities. There is one bus stop at Ogna but the inhabitants of Ambasa and Ambavi have to walk 5-10 kilometre to avail the services of bus.

The government amenities in the studied villages are adequate as Ogna is a big village. It has got 1 Senior Secondary School, 1 Primary School for boys, 1 Primary School for girls and 2 Balwaris. Village Ambasa has 1 Middle School and 3 Primary Schools. Ambavi has only one Primary School. For higher education the children have to go to other places. Though the educational facilities are adequate, 99% of the Kathodis in study areas are illiterate and only one person is middle pass.

There is one Primary Health Centre and one Ayurvedic Dispensary in Ogna. However, the people of Ambasa and Ambavi have to walk five kilometre to avail the facilities of Primary Health Sub-centre.

Source of water for the people of Ogna, Ambasa and Ambavi are hand pumps and wells. There are 13 hand pumps and 20 wells in Ogna; Ambasa has 4 hand pumps and 6 wells and in Ambavi, only 2 hand pumps provide water to 144 households.

Post and telegraph services are available at Ogna and Ambasa and people of Ambavi have to walk 5 to 10 kilometres to avail these facilities. In Ogna 70 households possess radios and 30 households have televisions. In Ambasa and Ambavi only 20 and 4 households respectively have radios but no one has television. However, no Kathodi household possess radio or television. The Ogna has bank and co-operative society, but Ambasa and Ambavi have no such facility. The inhabitants have to travel 5 to 10 kilometres to avail these opportunities. About 50 percent of the households in Ogna and 25 percent in Ambasa have electricity supply but the Kathodi *busties* have no electric supply. There are 20 petty shops in Ogna, 8 in Ambasa

and 1 in Ambavi. The nearest *hat* for Ambasa and Ambavi is at Ashram (in Gujrat) 6 Kilometres, and 5-10 kilometre away respectively. The Ogna has its own hat.

Subsequent to their rehabilitation in this area, Kathodis were provided with un-irrigated cultivable land. It can be seen from the Table 2 that Kathodis in the study area have small land holdings. In the study area 21.0 percent of the Kathodi households are landless.

Table 2: Cultivable land holdings of Kathodis in the study area

<i>Land holdings</i>	<i>Kathodis (in %)</i>
0 (Landless)	21
1-5	74
6-10	5
11-15	-

There are no big landlords among Kathodis. The majority of Kathodis (74 percent) own land between 1-5 Bighas. Only 5 percent possess land between 6 to 10 Bighas. Only 1 Kathodi household in Ogna and 2 in Ambasa have 10 Bighas of land. Through various rehabilitation schemes Kathodis were provided with subsidies for pumps, seeds, agricultural implements etc. However in absence of irrigation facilities Kathodis grow only are crop during rainy season in a year (*Barsatu Phasal*). Due to lack of technological expertness and managerial skills, they did not stick to agriculture as a way of life. There lands are either undeveloped or being cultivated by other groups.

Settlement Pattern: The Kathodis are culturally isolated from their original stock and generally do not have traditional permanent dwellings. In the rehabilitated colonies, the Kathodi shelters are built close to each other, 96% of the Kathodi hutments are Kachcha. The floors are made of mud or stone while gabled roofs are made of bamboo framework plastered with locally made clay tiles *Thapra*. The sloping

roof projects over the walls and provides a sort of verandah, used for family congregation. At times hearth is also seen there. The pucca houses are made of cemented floor, walls and concrete roofs. 87% of the huts have only one room with no windows or openings and are therefore very dark even during day time. Only 6% Kathodi huts comprises two rooms with no separate kitchen, bathroom or latrine. The hearth is located in open corner of the room. Just 7% of the Kathodi households are with 3 rooms. Even the pucca households built on 20 x 20 feet have been found dingy. Only 4% of Kathodi huts have satisfactory ventilation. 85% of the huts do not have separate cattle shed as Kathodis own few animals. Families with more animals have separate cattle shed. Unhygienic conditions prevail in the area as 70% of the Kathodis throw garbage near their habitation. With no sweeper around sanitary conditions are unsatisfactory. At the beginning of their settlements Kathodi erect an effigy made of bamboo strips stuffed with grains with a bow and arrow fixed on a pole to guard against evil spirits. This *Rakhwala* or Jungle ka *Paleet* is an analogous deity assigned a ritual role when hung on the pole.

Labour opportunities attract Kathodis to different sites. Kathodi camping shelters are larger, both in height as well as in length and breadth. The shape of their shelters may vary from roughly rectangular to prismatic. A large bamboo is tied firmly at shoulder height usually, to the diveriating ends of two bamboos on either side. The structure is covered by twigs and branches with foliage.

Tufts of grasses and shorn leaves of bamboo collected for the coupe are also used. The small entrance is blocked by a screen of bamboo. The Kathodis select leaves which are sufficiently thick and large for the thatch work so as to efficiently screen the cold winds. To avoid frequent replacements they select leaves which do not dry quickly and do not wither and fall down with breeze.

The Kathodis generally live in nuclear families. In the study area 74 percent of the Kathodis are staying in nuclear families and 26 percent in joint families. In 20 joint families, there were 43 nuclear families.

Kathodis are an endogamous group. It has been mentioned that they recognise as many as 13 *gotras* among them from Vijay Nagar (Gujarat) to Kotra and Jhadol tehsils of Udaipur district.

These *gotras* are goddess specific e.g Kathodis of Chauhan, Dingan and Savra *gotra* worship Amba Mata, Kathodis of Singhari, Lokhari and Koiya worship Kalka Mata and Kathodis of Vagri *gotra* worship Ramdeo ji, while Kathodis of Rathere and Range in Vijay Nagar believe in Kham Mata. However, in the study area number of other *gotras*, like Khair, Shaban, Dungair, Singara, Nayak, Khokhriya, Wagira, Sisodia, Kasota, Naname and Dhum have been reported. The *gotras* are not hierarchically arranged. Marital and social relations are maintained among different *gotras*. Marriages between the children of mother's brother and father's sister are preferred. Consanguine marriages are prohibited, however marriages within the *gotra* are taking place if they are not related to each other through blood.

Eating Habits: The Kathodis are very poor. They can hardly afford two meals a day, one in the morning and one in the evening i.e. before going out for work and after coming back from work. Their staple diet includes *Rotis* made of maize, *jowar* or wheat flour along with *Chutney*, a paste of green chillies and salt. Sometimes these *Rotis* are eaten with pulses like *Urad*, *Moong* or *Tur*. Rarely they can buy and cook vegetables. They consume green chillies in large quantities like Bhils. They also eat wild leafy vegetables like *Puar* and *Dimro*. They consume various roots and tubers available in the forest. Kathodis also eat flowers and cooked pods of *Moringa Olifera*. They use groundnuts or mustard oil as cooking medium. Those who can not afford to buy oil make oil from *Mahua* seeds.

Kathodis are extremely fond of animal flesh. They can consume all types of animals from rats to monkeys. They relish monkey flesh who immediately desert the area on advent of Kathodis. The Indian monitor which they call *Gharpod* is their favourite. Fat is not required to cook its meat. The Kathodi claim it as an animal counterpart of the *Mahua* tree. Even their children are expert in killing animals. In case the children are hungry and there is no food in the house, they go and trap squirrels or fetch crabs. Kathodis also hunt other game animals, fishes and fowls that are sought by other tribes of the area as well. Like Bhils of Khandesh, Kathodis have a 'predilection for carrion of domestic animals.' Because of their eating habits, they are considered unclean.

Milk and milk products are rarely consumed.

Sometimes only small children are given milk. At times, they consume, eggs. Kathodis are addicted to drinking *Mauri* regularly; they smoke *Bidis* and chew tobacco. They also chew betel leaves and use snuff. Both men and women consume alcohol.

Though Kathodis belong to Bhil cultural area, they have made a clean break with tradition; they bury their dead. It is in death that Kathodis differ from the rest of the Bhils in the area. The Kathodis of Rajasthan have semblance with the Muslim Bhils of Khandesh who also bury their dead. It has been reported by Ahmed Khan (1935) that "being disorganised in matter of religion have not yet been divorced from primitive conceptions of gods. Idle worship is still prevalent. They prey to Musalman saints and to Khande Rao and in doing so they made mud horse and offer it to the gods who answers their petition" (Ahmed Khan, 1935 p.141). The burial ground is generally outside the village. A flag in case of *Bhopa*, a bamboo at the site in case of child and stones denotes the site of disposal of Kathodis.

For carrying the dead body, stretcher of bamboo called *Jhola* is fabricated by Kathodis. The freshly bathed and attired corpse is placed on the *Jhola* and covered by cloth. Kathodis keep bread encased in vessel on the chest of the corpse besides coconut and vermillion. Before filling the grave, the Kathodis put liquor in the mouth of the corpse and place tobacco near it. After covering the grave, the son moves over the grave from the foot of the corpse towards head and vice-verse. The hut of the dead man along with his belongings are set on fire. Next day, a new hut is erected. On festival days Kathodis perform *Kantiya Ughodva* and place liquor, rice, milk and other eatables on the burial spot marked by stone.

The Kathodis do not think that their practice of burying their dead makes them lesser Hindus. The Kathodis have no temples, but install images in a mud parapet built around the trunk of a sacred tree. The images are mere stones smeared with red lead and oil. They make mud horse and offer it to the god who answer their petition. The horse occupies a special position in their folklore and their stories abound in exploits of the enchanted horse.

The presiding deities of the region Hanuman Ji and Durga, are invoked with as much respect and zeal as any where else. Like all other tribal and Hindu caste groups elsewhere in the region,

Kathodis too meticulously observe the important festivals especially the Dussera. While Bhil, Garasia and Damor make free use of liquor, flesh etc. in their worships and rituals, Kathodis refrain from using liquor, animal flesh or even clarified butter i.e. no animal product is used. Either *Salar* gum or vegetable oil is used for incense or lighting lamps by them. Apart from Hindu gods, Kathodis worships Baba Ramdeo, a famous hero-saint of Rajasthan, a folk-deity who attract now-a-days devotees of all castes and creeds, but is worshipped especially by untouchable such as Meghwal (Bhambi, Balai), Regar, Berwa etc. Ramdeo is believed to be incarnation of Vishnu.

Twice a year a popular mela is held at Ramdeora (at Runicha) near Pokhran, on the Jaipur-Jaisalmer road, where the *Samadhi* (ascetic grave) of Ramdeo is said to be located and over which a temple has been built.

The Kathodis go to Ramdeora after the fulfilment of a vow. Night-long sessions are dedicated to the cult of Ramdeo. During these vigils (*Jagran*) they sing various songs related to the life and miracles of their favourite deity. Such traditional songs are called *Jama/Jagran*. This cult is common among untouchable as high caste Hindu communities are reluctant to perform grave worship-Ramdeo's tomb (now called *Samadhi*) being indeed the main object of worship.

The practice of burying the dead has less to do with religion than with local history. According to the old timers of the area, the Bohra contractors brought them from Gujarat. They were bonded labourers. Their economic conditions did not allow them to follow elaborate rituals. Cremations were costly affairs, wood and ghee alone would cost so much. A burial comes almost free. Old habits die hard and for impoverished Kathodis burying is a thousand time cheaper.

After independence, the concept of untouchability was eradicated and people were given equal rights irrespective of caste hierarchy. The Kathodis of Rajasthan endeavoured to redefine their identity as a specific community within the framework of Hinduism. Number of religious and social reforms were proposed by Guru's and leaders who tried to revive some of their old traditions.

As untouchable Kathodis had been denied access to the Brahmanical temples. After Independence, when they were eventually allowed to visit most of these shrines, they also

started building their own temples. Similarly in an attempt to imitate higher castes, they changed their habits, but they continued with the practice of burying their dead. Traditionally, according to the *Shastras*, cremation was reserved for those who were permitted to maintain sacrificial fires, that is, to the twice-born castes. Many of them continued to bury their dead for another reason.

In case of Kathodis worshipping Ramdeo and affiliation to the mysterious *Alakh Panth of Nizar Panth, Samadhi* refers to the Mohammedan type of burial. Reinterpreting burial as Samadhi transforms an impure low-caste or Muslim custom into a prestigious ritual connected with asceticism and supernatural powers; this has become an ideal which each Kathodi should follow. Kathodis bury their dead as followers of Ramdeo Pir.

However, the idea of equating burial with *Samadhi* is not restricted to untouchables but to the "disciples" of Ramdeo and is found among the followers of the Bishnoi, Jasnathi and Aï sects as well. These sects are also said to bury their dead to imitate the *Samadhi* of their respective Gurus and Gods.

In the Kathodi tradition, the concept of martyrdom which refers primarily to a Muslim background has been recently interpreted in a Hindu framework, so that ultimately Kathodis are portrayed as champion of Hindu faith from the oldest time. The Kathodis tradition reflect a number of conflicting trends. On the one hand, the desire to show that the community has had, from a remote time, its own religious culture. On the other hand, the desire to disguise the real identity of this tradition.

DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE

The data was collected from 100 Kathodi nuclear families in 77 households selected randomly from three villages; Ogna, Ambasa and Ambavi.

The Kathodi population under study has a young age structure typical of less developed society with fertility on the higher side. The Kathodis have 38.6 percent of the population below 15 years, which is higher than India's 36 percent but is equal to Rajasthan's 38.3 percent (SRS, 1992). Demographically advanced Kerala, has shown much lower percentage (29 percent) reflecting a low birth. [According to UN, 2001, the percentages of aged 0-14 years and 65 + years

in India in the year 2000 have been 33 and 5 percent respectively]. However, among Kathodi only 1.8 percent population is above 60 years, (1.3 percent males and 0.5 percent females) indicating low survival rate in old age.

The sex ratio, which generally influence the form and tempo of life, among Kathodis is 974, as compared to Rajasthan's 911 and India's 933 in 2001. The balance between the sexes is an important aspect, as many economic and social relationships are closely related to the balance or disparity between the number of males and females. It bears the reflection to fertility, mortality and migration of the past. The sex ratio for India is highly masculine as compared to other regions of the world particularly Europe and North America. The sex ratio for India has been increasingly adverse for women as seen in the sex-ratio over the years from 1901 to 2001. However, even in India, there is a lot of variation in sex-ratio and a number of demographers have commented on the 'north-south' divide which refers to the highly adverse sex-ratio in the north-western states and the more favourable sex-ratio in the south-eastern state of India. Uttar Pradesh (879) along with other north-western states like Haryana (865), Punjab (882) and Rajasthan (879) have low sex-ratios, whereas Kerala (1036) and other southern states have comparatively high sex-ratios (Bose, 1991). This disparity has been attributed to the gender inequality. The north-western states are notorious for highly unequal gender relations manifested in such symptoms as, practice of female seclusion, low female labour force participation, gender gap in literacy, restricted female property rights, strong boy preference in fertility decisions, widespread neglect of female children and drastic separation of a married woman from her natal family. In these states money and technology have come together to perpetrate discrimination against not only the girl child but also the female foetus.

One of the main reasons for differentials in sex-ratio is the difference in mortality patterns observed in different population. From the time of birth a female child in India is at disadvantage and discrimination against females continue throughout their life. The high degree of maternal mortality is due to variety of reasons, some of these are excessive child bearing, discrimination in giving proper medical attention to female children etc. (Natarajan, 1971;

Ramabhadran and Swamy, 1972; Dandekar, 1975; Jain, 1976).

The Kathodis show higher sex-ratio (974) as compared to Rajasthan (911) and India (933), but is similar to that of any other community in a developing country in which literacy level is low. In most of the families, they do not send female children to schools. They even deny them proper medical attention up to the time they are seriously ill. For male children, maximum care and medical attention is given. This male preference is not explained among Kathodis as female labour is central to all economic activities and they bring bride-price as well. The Kathodi women labour power is not transformed in to their status elevation and it neither increase their role in decision making.

The survival of 59.5 percent Kathodis in the years 15-59 is attributed to falling mortality in the region. However the Kathodis aged 60 and above constitute only 1.8 percent. A similar trend is observed in rate of dependency ratios. The Young Age Dependency ratio among Kathodis is 64.9 as their 38.6 percent population is below 15 years. The Old Age dependency is rather low (3.1) among Kathodis indicating a low surviving ratio. The total Dependency Ratio among Kathodis is 68.0 percent, much less than India's 85.4 in 1981 (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 1997). Dependency ratios are used as approximate indicators of relative sizes of the non-working and working population. The Kathodis show a low ageing index (4.8) indicating poor health status and non-availability of medical facilities.

Educational Characteristics: The state of literacy among Kathodis is very poor. 93.9% males and 99.0% females in study are illiterate. Out of 6.1 percent literate males, 3.0 percent are primary educated, 2.0% middle and only 1 percent high school educated. Only 1 Kathodi female in the study area is middle class educated.

Nuptiality Indicators

Age at Marriage: Marriage is a socially recognised institution which grants a couple liberty to cohabit and share economic, reproductive and child rearing functions of a family. Age at marriage, though in itself a factor for influencing population growth, is also an effect of socio-economic status, education, urbanization, status of women etc. (Srikantan, 1977;

Table 3: Population structure among Kathodis of Rajasthan

<i>Age composition</i>	<i>Kathodis</i>		
<i>Age Groups (in years)</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
0-14	19.1	19.6	38.6
15-59	30.3	29.2	59.5
60+	1.8	0.5	1.8
Total	50.7	49.3	99.9
Sex Ratio	974		
<i>Dependency Ratios</i>			
Young Age Dependency Ratio	649		
Old Age Dependency Raio	31		
Total Dependency Ratio	680		
<i>Index of Aging</i>	47.3		
<i>Educational Characteristics</i>			
<i>Literacy Level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
Illiterate	93.9%	99.0%	
Literate	6.1%	1.0%	
Primary	3.0%	-	
Middle	2.0%	1.0%	
High	1.0%	-	

Caldwell et al., 1983; Dyson and Moore, 1983).

As compared to other countries, India has a lower age at marriage and a higher fertility. Child marriages are not prevalent among Kathodis. Mean age at marriage for Kathodi males is 18.81 years while for females it is 15.7 years. The age at marriage for both males and female is below the legally permissible age. However, only 23 percent Kathodi males married at 21 years and beyond the legally permissible age at marriage for Indian males, 35.4 percent males were married between 17-18 years, while 30.3 percent between 19-10 years. 23.2 percent were married between 21-29 years. For the females the mean age at marriage was lower. 53.0 percent of the girls were married between 15-16 years, while 26.0 percent of the girls were married between 15-16 years, while 26.0 percent were married between 17-18 years. 15% girls were married at slightly lower age of 13-14 years. The Kathodi girls marry after they grow up, as the mean age at menarch among Kathodi girls is 13.06 years. Mean age at menopause is 43.77 years. The percentage of married women in reproductive age group among Kathodis is 52.9. Percentage of population in age group and child women ratios C_{0-4}/W_{15-4} and C_{5-9}/W_{20-49} for Kathodis in study area are 576.09

and 597.56 respectively. It is very high as compared to Kerala's 409.0 and 525.0. Estimates derived from Child-Women Ratios (CWRs) can be used to reconstitute fertility trends at the district level over a 40 year period.

Table 4: Nuptial indicators among Kathodis of Rajasthan

	Male	Female
Mean Age at Marriage (in years)	18.81	15.7
Mean Age at Menarche (in years)	-	13.06
Mean Age at Menopause (in years)	-	43.23

Fertility

Crude Birth Rate among Kathodis is 28.72 which is lower than CBR of Rajasthan (34.9) but higher than the demographically advanced state of Kerala (17.7) and India (24.0).

The General Fertility Rate (GFR) among Kathodis is 114.58. At the National level, the GFR is 119 children per 1000 women in the age group 15-49 years. Among the major states the rates varies from 62 in Kerala to 161.9 in Uttar Pradesh (SRS, 1992). The state of Rajasthan is also showing relatively high rate of 147.9.

In age specific fertility the Kathodis follow the expected pattern i.e., fertility (176.47) peaks at ages 20-24 years, reflecting a pattern of early marriage and child bearing. However the fertility rate is also high (153.85) in the age group 30-34 years, implying prolonged child bearing period. Fertility rate decline considerably after 34 years of age (76.92) but the women seem to continue to bear children till 44 years. The total fertility rate among Kathodis is 3.46 per women. The total fertility rate for India 2.9 (World Population Prospects, 1998). The total fertility rate for Rajasthan is 4.5.

The Gross Reproduction Rate for Kathodis is 1.69 is almost equal to India's 1.7 (SRS, 1992). It may be mentioned here that a host of demographic, economic, socio-cultural and physical environmental determinants, seem to be influencing the fertility component, and differential interplay may be responsible for the observed fertility, levels and differentials (Table 5). In addition, certain 'Period' measures of fertility (including CBR, TFR) and even children ever born and surviving, point to the involvement of simultaneous effects of several factors including the ethnic factor (which may be socio-cultural and/or historical)

Table 5: Measures of fertility among Kathodis of Rajasthan

Measures of Fertility	Kathodis
Crude Birth Rate	28.72
General Fertility Rate	114.58
Age Specific Fertility Rate	
15-19 years	71.43
20-24 years	176.47
25-29 years	136.36
30-34 years	153.85
35-39 years	76.92
40-44 years	76.92
Total Fertility Rate	3.46
Gross Reproduction Rate	1.69
General Marital Fertily Rate	126.44
Child Women Ratios	
C ₀₋₄ /W ₁₅₋₄₄	576.09
C ₅₋₉ /W ₂₀₋₀₉	597.56

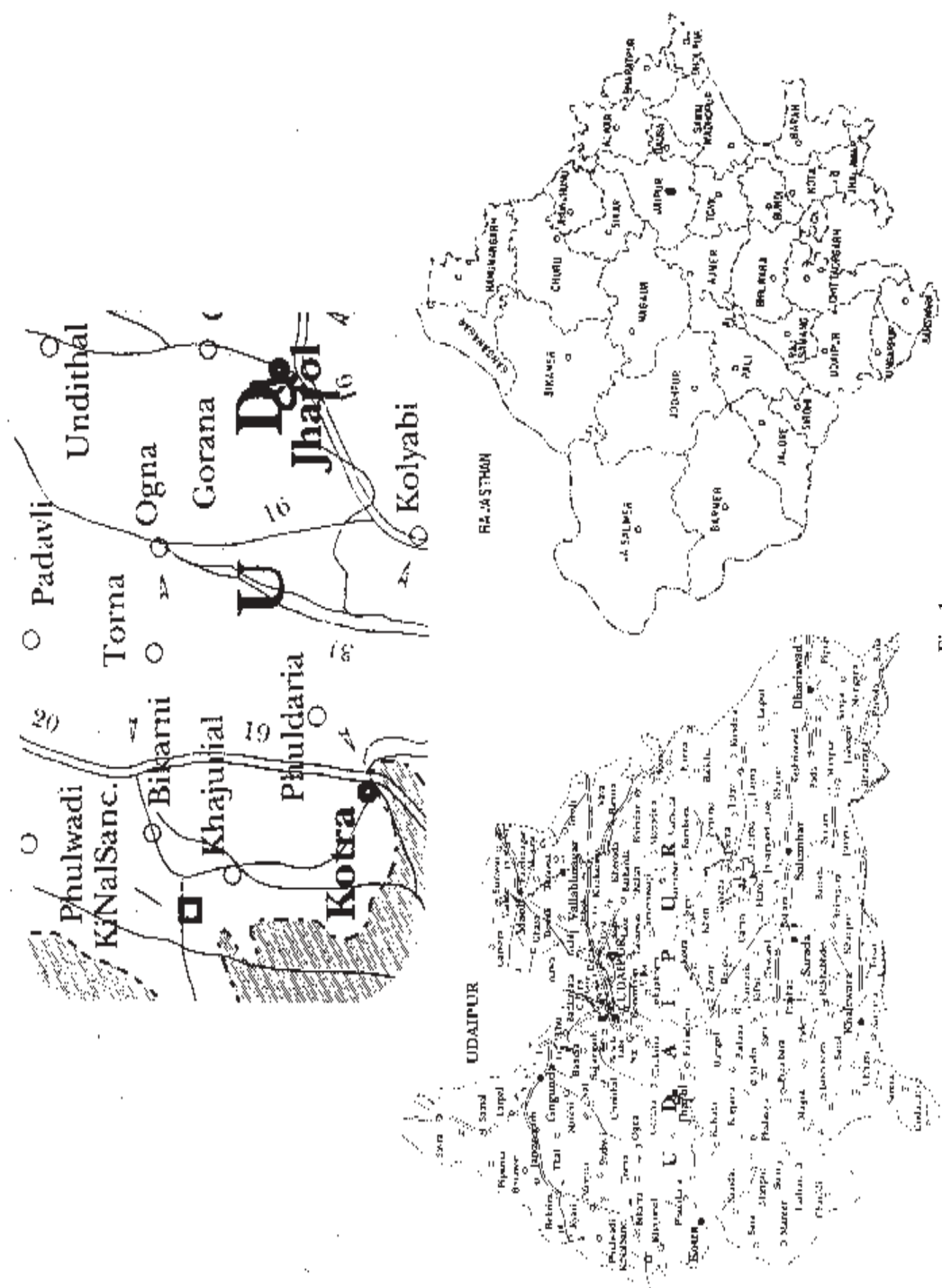
Mortality

Regional diversity in mortality exists in India, particularly for infant and child mortality. Both general and infant mortality rates are high among Kathodis. It can be seen from the Table 6 that Crude Death Rate for Kathodis is 20.89 (20.62 for male and 21.16 for females) which is higher then India's 8.6 per thousand population in 2001 and Rajasthan's 10.5 in 1992. According to SRS, death rates for females is higher than that of males in the state of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, where as opposite hold true for states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and West Bengal.

Table 6: Measures of mortality among Kathodis of Rajasthan

Measure of Mortality	Kathodi
Crude Death Rate	
Male	20.62
Female	21.16
Total	20.89
Infant Mortality Rate	272.73
Neonatal Mortality Rate	181.82
Post Neoratal Mortality Rate	90.91
Child Mortality Rate	90.91
Perinatal Mortality Rate	166.67

The infant mortality rate among Kathodis has been found rather high at 272.73 per thousand live birth. Even though this can be due to the interplay of several factors including unfavourable living conditions, economic and educational scenario, relatively lesser access to bio-medical



services, continuation of folk beliefs and traditional medical practices, occupational patterns, early age at marriage and child bearing, high parity, absence of contraception usage etc, the effect of small sample size can not be ruled out completely.

ECONOMIC RESOURCES OF THE KATHODIS

Forest, land and human labour are the principal economic resources of the Kathodis. The calendar of economic activities of Kathodis show that they practice 'mixed economy' where in they have combined gathering, collecting, subsistence agriculture and labour activities. Their labour activities include agricultural labour, forest labour and casual labour. These economic activities are taken in combination or one at a time depending on the time and space. The Kathodis who own land undertake cultivation only during rainy season. The crops grown under rain-fed conditions are and remain highly sensitive to variation in rain-fall. Those who do not own land or are not interested in growing crops look for other avenues of earning. The other major sectors of economy gathering, collecting and wage labour expand and contract according to their performance in agriculture. It can be said that available resources to Kathodis include physical assets such as land and forest; human assets such as time, labour and skill, social assets such as family and neighbourhood, common property Resources (CPRS) and public sector service. Other local institutions on the principle of a guaranteed subsistence for all, including patron client and *Jajmani* relationship does not hold good for Kathodis. In other parts of Rajasthan patronage relationships have given way to different types of relationships of labour and tenancy. As Kathodis were working for Bohras as labourers and were residing in deep forest, they were poorly provided for. Kathodis are now free to work for any one; one or more employers, but are no longer entitled to wage advance or to slack season subsistence loans from their employers as they were receiving from the Bohras. For Kathodis, this meant, they can sell their labour any where and to anyone, the only drawback being less likelihood of receiving production and consumption loans from their masters. Breman in a study of changing agrarian relations in South Gujarat, points out that, "the breaking down of vertical dependence mecha-

nism does not in itself lead to better existence for those being freed from them." (Breman, 1985:444). The same point has been argued by Appadurai (1984) that the loosening of patron-client ties together with political and economic forces has led to partial emancipation for poor without entitlement to a guaranteed subsistence. Jodha (1988) reasoned while comparing quantitative approaches to the incidence of poverty in two villages of Rajasthan, poor people give up exploitative arrangements with patron only when they become more independent.

79 percent of Kathodis own cultivable land. It was noted earlier that there are no big landlords among Kathodis (Table 2). Each household is surrounded by its own plot of land (*Khet*) for the rain-fed crop (*Barsatu Phasal*). Apart from land, all sorts of implements and instruments are also important which are used for production activities. These are carts, hoes, axes, sickles, simple wedges as well as bullock, plough etc. These are not owned universally. Some people have to borrow these things.

Common Property Resources (CPRs)

Common Property Resources (CPRs) are an important form of natural resource endowment and of collective subsistence for Kathodis. Access to and use of CPRs show a seasonal variation. Kathodis benefit from common grazing land, water resources and other physical products of the forest which supplements their income and provide employment. Many forest products contribute to subsistence, fuel and fodder. Some products are bartered or locally marketed. The commercial products are not collected extensively.

Local trees and shrubs provide the large number of physical products. They also represent assets which can be encashed if the need arise. The privately owned trees can be either share cropped, mortgaged or sold when the owner needs cash. Chambers and Longhurst (1986) have popularized the concept of trees as 'saving banks and insurance for poor rural people.

However these CPRs have been over used and there by, degraded because of increasing human and cattle population and the lack of proper management and regulation apart from the state's appropriation of the forest resources at the cost of the common property rights of the tribals had not been recognized either in the British formulation of the Forest Policy of 1865,

or the Indian Forest Act of 1927. The economy of the region includes the collection of wood, grass, weeds, leaves, cow-dung, berries, bark, fruit and utilization of grazing lands and water for drinking purposes. Governments failure in legitimizing these claims of CPRs by tribals endangers the welfare of these communities. The privatisation of these resources resulted in benefits occurring to outsiders who make use of finished products. The resources which were being utilised freely by tribals residing in these areas were restricted to them. The uncertainty of monsoon and resultant shortage of food grains in absence of alternate strategies for subsistence increased the dependence of tribals on forest produce. The Kathodis still indulge in forest activities despite the risk of being caught, imprisonment or fines by the Forest Act enforced by forest officers patrolling the area regularly. To avoid fines and imprisonment which are difficult to sustained by Kathodis, these activities are carried clandestinely before dawn.

The Panchayati Raj Act clearly states that in Scheduled Areas water, forest and land belongs to Gram Sabha, the Indian Forest Act bestow the same power to the Forest Department, Supreme Court order of 1997 in Samatha Judgement had confirmed tribal right over their land as in the Fifth Schedule and prohibited leasing of lands in Scheduled Areas to private corporations. However, these things are ignored at district level. Kathodis have another problem concerning the right over forest produce. Major changes have been introduced in the sale laws which dictate that the forest produce has to be sold to only certain contractors. According to Kathodis, the gathering of *Tendu* leaves does not last for more than a week and in this process tribals are used as gatherers while a large share of profit is pocketed by contractors and officials. Moreover, the entire exercise is dominated by men whereas tribal women have been the traditional gatherers of *Tendu* leaves.

There is encroachment of tribal land by outsiders or locally dominant castes. Because of their low political awareness, the tribals are exploited by others. Alienation of tribal land by merchants and money lender has been an ongoing process.

Occupational Structure and Work Force Participation Among Kathodis

Main occupations of Kathodis are skilled,

unskilled labour, hunting, gathering fishing, forest work, farm labour and farming. The caste Hindu groups of the villages in the region do not indulge in gathering forest produce, as it is considered the occupation of tribals. The occupational structure of Kathodis in the study area is given in the Table 7.

Table 7: Occupation structure among Kathodis of Rajasthan in the study area

Category	Kathodis	
	Male	Female
1. Non Workers	-	54%
2. Agricultural/Casual	85.86%	80%
3. Cultivations (owners)	11.11%	16.00%
4. Trade and Commerce	2.02%	-
5. Service	.01%	-

Gathering and Collecting forest produce are every day feature of Kathodi economy.

The Kathodis pursue different economic activities. Percentage distribution of Kathodis in the study area reveals that there are workers who indulge in labour activities for others and receive remunerations from employers. These labourers include agricultural labourers/skilled labourers/ live stock managing/small scale horticultural activities. There are other self employed labourers who indulge in labour activities for themselves, and thus do not receive any emoluments for their services. These include men, women and children who work for themselves. Every male and female, adult and child if he/she is physically fit and old enough to work, participates in the economic activities. Though food production is a collective responsibility, there is certain division of work, particularly between sexes. The agricultural operations carried on by men are tilling, sowing and harvesting, women play an important role in the conduct of weeding, harvesting and threshing operations. Children also render considerable assistance in threshing and in carrying it homes. Women do the majority of the tasks connected with food processing and preparation. Apart from agricultural activities, women and children play major role in gathering and collecting forest produce. It is the sole responsibility of the women to look after the house, children and animals. However, taking out animals for grazing is the domain of children and one of the most important activity, apart from fetching water. Formation and continuity of family, hearth and home are the domain of women. Women's role as wives,

mothers, organizers and as the basic foundation of other dimension of social life is of utmost importance. Self employed labour-activities may be extended to co-operative work groups. No remunerations are received for these activities. Apart from these there is a category of non workers which include persons performing household duties/unemployed / retired and others. The women are acquaint with all aspects of forest life and help their husbands in the forests. The occupation of *Katha* making is no longer pursued as a means of regular income. The Kathodis now mainly depend on agricultural labour, forest labour and casual labour. The major part of their income is derived from labour activities. Agriculture is a subsidiary occupation. They supplement their income with hunting, fishing and collecting forest produce. The condition of the Kathodis deteriorated when the Khair trees started dwindling and the forests of Jhadol and Kotra where 14 out of 26 Kathodi villages are situated were declared as Game Sanctuary. The wild life sanctuary 'Phulwadi Ki Nal' was spread into 511.41 square kilometre rich in forest resources and wild life. Green pigeons and Peafowls inhabiting this area were favourite foods of Kathodis. Though agriculture is the secondary occupation of the Kathodis, they earn little from this and pay little attention to its improvement.

Work Force Participation

Among Kathodis the total dependency ratio (68.0%) is high. Out of this young age dependency is 64.0 percent while old age dependency is only 3.1 percent. The effective labour force is the groups between 15 years to 60 years. 59.5 percent are bread earners. Out of this 30.3 percent are males and rest 29.2 percent are females (Table 3). General activity rate for Kathodi male and female in the study area is 59.8 and 29.1 percent respectively. The majority of the females (58.8%) are reported economically inactive. This is so, because most of the work done by women, falls outside the purview of gainful economic activity. The traditional load of work of women from house keeping to rearing children, helping in various agricultural activities (except ploughing), tending cattle, cleaning cattle shed etc., even though may use up their whole day, these are not considered as gainful ones i.e. wage earning one. However female labour is central to all economic activities among these tribals. Women perform both waged and non-

waged, productive and unproductive labour. The economic load factor is 0.807 among Kathodis in the study group.

In the study area 59.5 percent Kathodis are economically active and indulge in an array of activities. Generally who go for forest labour collect forest produce along with. Agricultural activities are limited around rainy season. As the literacy rate is low among Kathodis the percentage proportion in service correspond accordingly. As education level are low they work as class III employees in the government office and Forest Department. In the study group only 1 Kathodi has high school qualification.

The principal occupations of Kathodis on the whole appears to be agricultural and/or casual labour (85.86% males and 80.00 percent females) followed by cultivations (11.11% males and 16.00% females). Only a negligible 2.2% seems to pursue petty business activities like small shop keeping.

Small land holdings, adverse weather conditions (drought like conditions due to absence of timely rainfall), poor irrigation facilities, difficult terrain, poor technology make agriculture a difficult proposition and force them to look for other alternatives like labour. As already mentioned they do not get work as farm labour in neighbouring areas. They often migrate in large numbers from their residential areas to other districts. They go up to Kelva (Rajsamand) and Baharmala marble fields or in cotton farms of Gujarat in search of labour work.

Economic Activities

Gathering and Collecting: Forest produce of the area beside Katha are gum, honey, wax, lac, white *moosli*, *Mahua* flowers and seeds, *tendu* leaves, *Anwala*, *Behera*, roots and turbers. Utilization of forest produce is restricted and controlled by State Forest Department which auctions the coupes according to its laws and by laws. Wood for house construction and fuel is allowed to be freely collected. They are also permitted to stones for use free of charge. For other forest produce like *Moosli*, honey, *tendu* leaves etc, they have to pay nominal charges. Collection of *Mahua* fruits is a important part of tribal economy. To supplement their diet, the Kathodis eat fish during the summer. Fishing is a collective activity, wherein many methods are employed. They collect these minor forest

produce and sell to the local trader or in a nearby village. They also collect *Tendu* leaves used in rolling *bidi*. The forest give them opportunity to hunt monkey, deer, wild pig and a variety of birds. This has now become little difficult because of deforestation and the reservation of forest as game Sanctuary.

Collection of Gum: *Khair* and *Dhak* yield gum of a high quality. The gum is collected in the months of *Phagun Chait/Baisab* (March/April) which last till June end. An edible variety of gum is collected from the *Khair* tree, which is expensive than other varieties.

Collection of Honey: In the months of April, Kathodis collect honey from the honey combs which are abundant in the area hanging from tall trees. They go in groups to collect honey with a container and a thick rope. The Kathodis approach the hives at night and thrust the iron bars in to them to scare away the bees, then they place or hang containers under them. A kilo of honey is bartered for three to four Kilograms of wheat or millet.

Collection of Mahua Fruit: The fruit of *Mahua* is collected in the months of May and June. Liquor is made from its flowers and oil is extracted from its seeds. Fresh or dried flowers and fruits are used for making *Mahuri* or *Mahudi* (local beer). It is generally prepared for self-consumption. The marriage season generally coincides with the flowering season of *Mahua* and it solves their major problem the expenditure on liquor.

Catching Parrots: Kathodis catch parrots for trade. In the evening, when the flocks of birds return to their nests, a Kathodi follows them, ascertain the nests of parrots and come back. Next day, he goes and sets noose of plant fibres in the nest of parrots. On their return in the evening the parrots are trapped in the noose. Kathodis sell these in the market.

Agricultural Activities: The local agriculture calendar is divided into three seasons, the *Kharif* or monsoon season (June to October) the Rabi or winter season (November-March) and Summer season (April-May). Kathodis practice agriculture only during monsoon. They sow maize once a year before the monsoon rains in July and harvest it in October-November (*Barsati Phasal* or summer rain crop). Rainfall in the initial stages of growth is essential for the production of *Makka* (corn). Pulse and soya beans are also grown as Kharif crop along with *Jowar* (millet), *Bajra*

(barley) and maize.

For Kathodis, the monsoon season is a period of hard work and low food availability. The Kathodis who own land and cultivate it themselves, grow crops under rainfed conditions. They do not grow winter crops for which irrigation is necessary. During monsoon period there is a shortage of food for Kathodis as the gathering/collecting period lasts from March to June and they are unable to generate and store surplus. The monsoon harvest brings limited relief to owner farmers.

Even Kathodis who own land, do not prefer to cultivate themselves, because they lack managerial skills and technical Know-how. Kathodis follow the *Bhagera* and *Gehna* system of tenancy wherein they give land on lease to some body else and share the profit according to the terms and conditions of the proposal. Under *Bhagera* (*Bhage* share) system, the land owner and tenant pool assets and share the produce equally. According to *Gehna* rule, the land is given on lease to some one else, and the profit is shared in proportion of 3:1, the three portions being earned by tenant and 1 portion by the Kathodi land owner. The months following the monsoon harvest is the time of peak migration by labourers and they do not return before the end of the winter.

Labour: About 86.0 percent Kathodi males and 80.0 percent Kathodi females in the study area, claim wage labour as their main occupation. The local labour market of Jhadol and Kotra tehsils is of small size and do not provide employment to many Kathodis. As already mentioned because of their unclean status, local caste and tribal groups do not employ them as farm labour, so they go as far as Kelva (Rajsamand) and Baharmala marble fields or in cotton farms of Gujarat. The majority of Kathodis are employed as casual labourers rather than as permanent or attached labourers. For agriculture labour they go to far off areas. As more than 80.0 percent Kathodis are engaged in wage labour, they migrate for some part of the year in search of employment. The households engaged in labour at anytime of the year report labour as a their main occupation whether they are local, migrant or attached labour. Demand for hired labour in and around the study villages as such is limited by several factors and it becomes still difficult for Kathodis. Mechanical thrashing has replaced manually thrashing of wheat and barley

in the big farm houses, thereby displacing local labour from those operations. Majority of the farmers in the Jhadol and Kotra tehsils are from backward castes whose use of family labour, both male and female, in agriculture is not constrained by caste based considerations. Agricultural migrant Kathodi labour circulate through several villages and different employers in the cotton fields of Gujarat. Most Kathodis move and work as family units.

The study data indicates that Kathodis migrate for entire winter season (five months) or the combined winter and summer season (eight months). Those who own land return to grow the *Barsati Phasal*, others are engaged in local wage labour or some other activity, but all Kathodis return to their settlements near *Dussera* and *Diwali*. As whole family units move out of the settlements, few people are left to look after the crops and animals.

Kathodis also work as forest labourers for coal and *Katha* (Catechu) extraction. *Katha* extraction coupes are organized by the Forest Department in the month of March. A number of Kathodi families shift to forest for a stay of six to eight weeks. Previously *Katha* extraction was organized by Bohra contractors who were cutting forest indiscriminately and unscientifically on the one hand and exploiting Kathodi labour on the other hand. Those who join charcoal and *Katha* coupe in the interior forest stay in the temporary shelters. At present the State Trading Corporation of Forest Department is organising operation of fuel, bamboo and timber wood collection, charcoal making, *Katha* extraction and collection of *Tendu* leaves and, Kathodis are employed on daily wages. The number of timber and charcoal coupes is much larger, spread over the districts of Udaipur, Banswara and Chittorgarh, attracting many tribals including Kathodis. In these coupes: fuel wood is collected as such; charcoal is prepared; timber wood is collected and bamboos are cut. A bamboo, after being cut from the root, is levelled at both the ends with an axe and all such bamboos are tied into a bundle. The women and children also help them in these activities. The Kathodis are generally employed in the cutting and sizing of wood of different trees. Their income is higher than those who are engaged in charcoal making.

Once agricultural and forest season is over, Kathodis opt for any type of casual labours. They work casual labourers rather than as

permanent or attached labourers. The casual labourers are employed as either daily or contract employment. Under the daily wage system labourers are offered a specified wage for a fixed period of time. Under the contract system, they are offered a specified lump sum payment for performing a specified task. Within these broad frameworks, labourers are recruited and paid under different arrangement. The key variables are either they are recruited individually or in group or are paid in cash or kind.

Daily wage labourers are recruited individually. There is a common understanding of the wage rate in the area as well as how many hours is meant 'daily' or day's work at any particular time in a year, even though wages vary by work.

Under the contract system, labourers are generally recruited as a team (*toli*). Each *Toli* selects a leader, from among its members, who is the contact person for employers who scouts for labour, negotiates the contract and collect and distribute payments. Most Kathodis prefer the contract system as they can generally negotiate higher wages for the same operation than on the daily wage basis. Often the contract system works to the advantage of employers who avoid paying the minimum wage.

Share-cropping: Kathodis, both landed and landless, try to overcome economic constraints relating to their specific asset-base by entering into tenancy. As Kathodis were not interested in settled agriculture, they paid little attention towards improving their land or their agricultural techniques. They were moving with their families in search of employment from one forest to another. After their rehabilitation by Social Welfare Department (1953-54) they were provided with land and other subsidies to buy agricultural implements, bullockes, seeds etc. They started cultivation with simple implements and technology. As they did not have agriculture culture and social institutions to support this, the experiment was not a spectacular success. However, Kathodis made effort to pursue agriculture as a way of life to earn their living. Other co-operative societies were started to support Kathodis and establish them in settled life.

However, not much has been achieved in last 40-50 years. During study, it was found they are still migrating with their families to labour sites and living under miserable conditions. As they are out of their rehabilitated settlement sites for large part of the year, their contact with authorities

is minimum. As there is no market of buying and selling cultivable land, it was found that most of the Kathodi's cultivable land is either being cultivated by other castes or lying vacant. These people have taken the Kathodi cultivable land as they were not able to pay their debt. The tenancy market is quite active in Kathodi area. The share cropping tenancy in this region appears to be flexible institution. Share tenancy allows Kathodi households to make better use of their specific asset base across the different agricultural seasons. For example, Kathodi household which own land but have no pumps choose to cultivate their land in monsoon season, share-crop out their land in winter and migrate to return in time for preparing their land for the next monsoon season. Similarly, landless households can opt to share crop land in winter or summer if they own pump sets, or in monsoons if they own bullocks. Since, Kathodis are not much concerned with agriculture for a whole annual cycle they give their land for tenancy under *Bhagera* or *Gehna* system.

As about 80.0 percent of the Kathodis are engaged in labour activities it is not difficult to synchronize their activities. Depending on the relative flexibility of their livelihood system, individual household adjust by seeking employment whenever and wherever it becomes available and necessary, combine cultivation/gathering. They seek local employment (in forest coupes) whenever it becomes available, combine cultivation or other activities and migrate if necessary. The labour work in the marble fields is available the year round and it provides employment to Kathodis when ever they want to work. Kathodis mix different occupations in such a way that they do not overlap but complement one another.

Women play an important role in their household economy. They work in most operations of all sectors of the local economy and for longer hours each day than men, in addition to the domestic and reproductive activities associated with household maintenance and gathering, collecting of free goods especially fuel, fodder and water. Kathodi women operate effectively in most economic and social institutions, participating in both local (forest as well as agricultural) and migrant labour activities. Women's autonomy in terms of decision making, mobility and access to and control over economic resources is highly constrained among tribal

women. Findings suggest that Kathodi women are largely excluded from family decision making. They have limited access to, and exercise limited control over resources; and few are free from threat and violence at the hands of their husbands. Cross cousin marriages and family ties ensure that women are not cut off from family support. In other parts of India also, the women autonomy is far more limited than that of women in other parts of Asia (Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand for example) and certainly more limited than that of men in that region (Mason et al, 1995)

Although women are universally involved in terms of wage earning economic activity. However in India where wage work for women is often unacceptable and among Kathodis poverty induced, working for wages is not necessarily an indicator of autonomy. The wage earning Kathodi women can not make the decision to work on their own, nor do they have control over their earnings.

DISCUSSION

The present position and condition of the Kathodis is not an accidental affair. It has evolved because of the operation of several forces in the past. However reconstruction of tribal history has often been a difficult task, because they lack written records of their activities.

The Kathodis do not originally belong to Rajasthan. They were brought to southern Rajasthan by Bohra contractors from Western Khandesh for making *Katha*. They have been culturally isolated from their own group leading settled life in Maharashtra. Since the time they came to Rajasthan with Bohras they were at the mercy of the contractors who treated them shabbily. They paid them arbitrarily and kept them under deplorable conditions. They were working as wage labourers for making *Katha* and supplemented their income with gathering, hunting, and collecting the forest produce and bartering it for necessities of life. The socio-economic life of Kathodis lacked stability. They were at the mercy of Bohras which proved too strong for all of them.

During the princely regime Rajputs had a dominant status. They were warriors rather than cultivators by profession. They preferred living off the cultivators whom they conquered. It was more profitable to wage war and acquire wealth

than carry on cultivation on poor rocky soil. Even on richer soil, Rajputs preferred land-holding rights in contrast to self cultivation. The accumulation of land which signified power was the main consideration of the Rajputs. More than land itself, it was the right in the produce of the land upon which Rajput dominance was based (Baden-Powell, 1892; Stokes, 1978). Network of kin-ties formed the basis of Rajput political power. The Pattern of land holdings largely reflected not only the kin network but also represented the individual authority of the land lord. Muslim invasions and conquests transferred power bases and the Rajput Rajas became *Mansabdars*. It restricted the expansion of Rajput land holdings, though they were entitled to military title and ranks.

Traditionally, tribals were forest dwellers and forests in the Rajput states were considered part of the Rajas or Jagirdar's domain. All the land, forest, water and animal were the property of the king (Koppers, 1948: B6) and the inhabitants had the usufruct rights. The forest and forested areas had no boundary. The defeated chiefs moved in to inaccessible less fertile areas for protection from enemy or incase of scarcity of land. Loyal informers and watchmen who collected revenue etc were also settled in the forested areas by the *Rajas*. This paved a way for their 'expansion into hilly tracts and penetration into tribal areas (Deliege, 1985: 41). Through his proprietorial relation over the *Jungle, the Raja* enhanced his powerful image over his people (Haynes, 1978).

Under the British, the princely states of Rajputana were administered under the special code of sovereignty, a form of indirect rule which advocated little interference in the internal affairs of the state. In actual practice things were different. Changes were introduced in different guises, which made a lot of difference to tribal lives. British classified forest as a separate administrative category and were divided into 'productive' forests and 'waste lands' which were important to the local population as grazing lands, for fodder, wood fuel and medicinal purposes (Haynes, 1987). In order to increase states control over the productive forests, the forests were centralized under the authority of the King. This was first step towards the process by which local inhabitants were dispossessed of their forest rights.

The government classification of land and

forest gave way to land settlement. This was to create interest of the tribals (cultivator) in the soil by fixing reasonable cash rental, and granting them hereditary rights over their holdings. Under these social and political environments, the Kathodis were inhabiting the interiors of Phalasiya, Kotra and Kherwara Tehsils of Udaipur District in Rajasthan where *Khair* trees were found in abundance. As already mentioned, these Kathodis were living on wage labour and forest produce of the area. They had no land or any permanent settlement and were roaming from forest to forest in search of labour. In 1953-54, social Welfare Department started the rehabilitation of Kathodis in Jhado and Kotra tehsils of Udaipur district. In Kotra and Jhadol tehsils, the Kathodi villages tend to be poorly connected by roads, have severe water supply problems and are often reduced to depending on rain and river water. In rain fed regions land ownership is broad based, with a large majority of households owning small parcels of land. Agriculture does not offer a reliable and adequate source of income, is constrained by the uncertainty of water supply, and is chiefly geared to subsistence production with the main crops being maize and millet. A large proportion of Kathodi population is employed in non-agricultural occupation- particularly labour jobs. In other areas the subsistence agricultural production is managed largely by women, but among Kathodis women also join in labour activities.

The climate, land and forest resources are the controlling factors of Kathodi economy. Apart from having unproductive land and low water availability, the Kathodis also lack technical know how and managerial skills. Kathodis have tremendous knowledge of their environment. They know all about trees, shrubs, creepers, roots, tubers including their properties, uses and nomenclature. As they know all about trees and plants, so do they know about animals and fishes, their habits and habitats. Kathodis have utilised their environmental knowledge to fulfil their economic needs. They have tapped forest trees for shelter, food, gum, honey, wax medicines and other household items. On the other hand their knowledge about agriculture and crop-growing is poor. In addition they do not own agricultural machinery and modern technologies and if they do cultivate their lands the returns are uneconomical.

In addition to unprofitable agriculture, Kathodis also regularly experience drought and famine-related scarcity. Their primary concern is to prevent impoverishment from this type of scarcity. Organisation, management and planning of their economic and coping strategies are always towards the goals of keeping alive and stay out of debt. It depends on the nature and extend of scarcity, the number of households in particular area and the extend to which they had been affected by scarcity in last years. Each drought and related conditions make them less able to cope with the following drought. As Kathodis have been facing such hardships for a long time and are a deprived lot. Their deprivation is not just a matter of poverty or lack of income, consumables and wealth but also one of vulnerability and exposure to vagaries of the nature and exploitation by neighbours and outsiders. It seems that Kathodis have been caught in 'deprivation trap' and its five inter related clusters of disadvantage, i.e. physical weakness, isolation, poverty, vulnerability and powerlessness (Chambers et al., 1987: 10). The clusters of disadvantage have led to social, spiritual and material deprivation.

The Kathodis are inhabiting the area of the district which may be included in the 'poverty square' of India, measured according to four indicators - the infant mortality, female literacy, number below poverty line and per capita net domestic product. Among Kathodis the infant mortality rate is very high 272.73 per thousand live birth, much higher than India's 67 per thousand live birth in 2001. The state of Rajasthan also returned a high infant mortality rate of 83 per thousand live birth in 1998 (Sample Registration System, Registrar General, India). The infant mortality rate is an indication of the social and health status of the women and children and a priority for the economic condition of a community. It is also a reflection of the availability of the health services at the grass root level.

The female literacy rate among Kathodis is 13.2, as against 17.2 among males. The State of Rajasthan is educationally one of the most backward state in India. Only 39 percent of the population (age 7 and above) have been found to be literate in the census 1991, as compared to 52 in whole of the country and 90 percent in the state of Kerala.

Kathodis practice 'mixed economy' wherein they undertake gathering, collecting, subsidiary

agriculture and labour activities. The annual income of the 92 percent of Kathodis in the study area is up to Rs.10,000. The dependency ratio being high, (680), the effective labour force (15 years to 60 years) who are major bread earners becomes automatically less.

Diet survey carried out in the study area indicate that large majority of children suffer from malnutrition and specific syndromes. It is recognised that as a result of extreme poverty, in take of essential constituents of food: proteins, fats, carbohydrates, iron and vitamins are inadequate and are far below the nutritional standards of Recommended Dietary Allowance. The calorie intake or energy levels are also below the recommended level. The prevalence of deficiency of vitamins, calcium and iron is due to inadequate intake of green leafy vegetables, fruits and milk. Low family income, lack of nutritional education and prevailing dietary habits are factors responsible for prevalent malnutrition among Kathodis.

Kathodis are below poverty line. Grinding poverty is the root cause of all their problems. Poverty is identified primarily as the inability to meet minimum needs of consumption i.e. food, housing, medical care and education. Frequently it is measured in absolute terms as the amount of income required for subsistence. Kathodis have poor income earning physical assets (land, capital and water), human capital assets (e.g. education and health) and entitlement to public services that enhance income and consumption. Kathodis with modest physical assets, limited education and opportunities and weak claim to public goods are lagging behind in all spheres of life. Economic empowerment is a powerful tool against poverty. To improve their conditions it is important to economically uplift them and empower them to fight their own battles.

Kathodis have been subjected to processes which have marginalised them from the dominantly caste based society of Rajasthan. Historical and contemporary social, economic and political processes helped in alienation of Kathodis. The whole process of their rehabilitation was not conceived thoughtfully. They were resettled in a poor backward area of the district where employment opportunities were few. In Udaipur district, Kotra and Jhadol tehsils are largely maize and wheat growing area with few amenities, while theoretically available health and education facilities function only sporadically.

cally in poorly connected villages with severe water scarcity and related economic problems. District Rural Development Organization; Udaipur gave subsidies for houses, but Kathodis are too poor to pay even nominal cost. The ecological conditions in the area dictate many aspects of Kathodi life. They were provided with small, hilly, fragmented land holdings devoid of irrigation facilities and other basic assets. The major part of the (511.41 hectare) antecedently depleting forests which used to be Kathodis main source of food, fodder, fuel and trade were reserved as game sanctuary by the government, where 14 out of 26 Kathodi villages are located. The depletion of *Khair* forest and declaration of 511.41 hectares of Jhadol and Kotra forest area as Game Sanctuary 'Phulwari ki Naal' in 1983 by Government agencies jeopardised Kathodi's main occupation and posed economic problems for these people, which compelled them to look for other avenues of earning money. They were victims of exploitative social circumstances on the one hand and insensitive administrative machinery marginalising them on the resettlement land on the other hand, by promoting disinterest in the developmental activities and alienation are graduating them to vicious circle of poverty. The Kathodis remain largely under exposed and under developed. Out of 1031 Kathodi families, only 20 percent have Kachcha houses, all the rest are staying in temporary shelters of straw and grasses. Few Kathodis were provided with pucca structures with iron windows and doors built on 20 x 20 feet area, and the roofs had to be provided by Kathodis. These structures are standing as it is. The main problem of Kathodis is that as they are always moving in search of labour employment, they can not even take the advantage of development programmes.

The pace of development has been chronically sluggish. Consequently often the Kathodis have to face considerable obstacles, besides being affected by environmental stresses, natural calamities and various diseases. Short sighted planning and policies, delayed implementation of the projects and programmes synchronizing with slackening attitudes on the part of the authorities subsequently produce more difficulties for these people. This has brought intra-regional and inter-regional imbalance. Laws and legal systems are outdated, along with the economy of these people. There should be equal rights for all, and no privileged classes. Theo-

retically, by abolishing the feudal system the power of privileged was broken and the money and labour they took from the people was diverted for the sound economy. The systems do change, but human nature remains the same, and there are always people who profited at the expanse of others. The feudal agencies were replaced by corrupt officials, contractors and money lenders, consequently the problems of Kathodis persist. The physiography of the resettlement area is not suitable for advance agriculture. The Kathodis are not tuned to agriculture economy and the absence of irrigation has not helped in achieving the desired result.

KEY WORDS Tribe. Demography. Socio-economic Factors. Common Property Resources.

ABSTRACT In the present study an attempt has been made to report a small, primitive and isolated tribe-Kathodi of Rajasthan. Kathodis have been subjected to processes which have marginalised them from the dominantly caste based society of Rajasthan. Historical and contemporary social, economic and political processes helped in alienation of Kathodis. Kathodis have to face considerable obstacles, besides being affected by environmental stresses, natural calamities and various diseases. Short sighted planning and policies, delayed implementation of the projects and programmes synchronizing with slackening attitudes on the part of the authorities subsequently produce more difficulties for these people.

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