

Economic Pursuits and Strategies of Survival Among Damor of Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT The present study aims to investigate the economic pursuits and activities that Damors—a tribal group of Rajasthan ensue for their survival. How these low-income tribal families in southern Rajasthan survive with small hilly landholdings, fewer sources of irrigation, traditional agricultural technology, unemployment and underemployments and strategies they adopt to make their ends meet. The present study analyzes resource conflicts among Damors and practices use to resolve them. It is assumed that the condition of these tribals and their continued survival in these environments is typical for most of the tribals in southern Rajasthan. The present position and conditions of the Damors 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. Unequal distribution of land and instruments of production, unequal distribution of income and the rate of exploitation of labour characterizes the difference between tribal and non-tribal communities that inhabit southern Rajasthan. These inequities are associated with the forces of money lending on the one hand, and political power, education etc., on the other hand. The dominant castes have better access to the co-operative and bank credit and subsidies, while the tribals tend to rely on non-institutional credit nexus.

INTRODUCTION

There are unlimited numbers of ends to be satisfied with a limited number of means in the tribal society. Resource constraints are an inevitable part of tribal society. Their causes include hierarchical and patron-client social relations, the incompatibility of formal laws, conflicts of interest, perception and belief and competition of scarce resources. The factors like unwillingness of the state to respond to social, economic, political and technological changes, corruption and bad governance assist in maintaining the status quo. Like all societies, tribals also have a set of institutions that combine natural resources, technology and labour to produce food and goods. Division of labour, co-operation and labour play their part in the production of goods. The climate, the flora and fauna, water supply and the geology are the controlling factors of the tribal economy, which are used according to the cultural sanctions. The present study deals with the Damor tribals of southern Rajasthan that are cultural products of age-old historical process. Despite the introduction of various development programmes under different schemes the poverty of the tribals could not be done away with. It looks as if it has operated the other way round and the Damors have nothing to look forward to. The economy of the Damors is related to the

habitat, resources available and technology to exploit these. Other factors affecting the economy are historical and socio-political. The social field of Rajasthan is split vertically, horizontally and diagonally into caste, religious and national categories. That leaves little space to be 'Rajasthani' or 'Indian' or 'Adivasi' (tribal). The tribals in Rajasthan are typical examples of the chasm identified by government between the exploitative social system and insensitive administrative machinery marginalizing them on their own land by promoting disinterest in developmental activities and alienation and are graduating them to the vicious circle of poverty.

PRESENT STUDY

The present study aims to investigate the economic pursuits and activities that Damors—a tribal group of Rajasthan ensue for their survival. How these low-income tribal families in southern Rajasthan survive with small hilly landholdings, fewer sources of irrigation, traditional agricultural technology, unemployment and underemployments and strategies they adopt to make their ends meet. The present study analyzes resource conflicts among Damors and practices use to resolve them. It is assumed that the condition of these tribals and their continued survival in these environments is typical for most of the tribals in southern Rajasthan. The socio-

economic characteristics of the area are representative for tribals (excluding Minas) in the district. The tribals in these parts are living below poverty lines and to improve their economic condition way out must be initiated. To bridge the gap between income and expenditure they have evolved particular means.

Locale: The fieldwork for the report at hand was conducted between 1997-1998. The ethnographic data were collected through a range of methods, including personal narrations, household surveys, conversations, observation and interviews with the help of schedules in the three villages—Takari, Doonka (Dooka) and Bhandari in Simalwara tehsil of Dungarpur district. The present report forms part of a much larger study, “Human Settlements, Human Activities and Health Among Tribals of Rajasthan” which covered 46 villages from five districts.

The Dungarpur district is situated in the southern part of Rajasthan and lies between 23°21' and 24°01' N and 73°22' and 74°23' E. It is bounded on the north by Udaipur district and on the east by Banswara district. On its south and west, it has a common border with the state of Gujarat. Simalwara tehsil is situated in the southeast part of the district and is predominantly inhabited by Bhils, Minas and Damor tribals. Dungarpur is the smallest district of Rajasthan with an area of 3449 square kilometers. Simalwara is linked with Dungarpur town by a metal road and buses run from Dungarpur and Simalwara twice a day.

The Dungarpur district though fairly open in the south and east, is interspersed with stony hills covered with low jungle of cactus, Jujbe trees and *salar* (*Boswellia serrata* a gum producing tree) together with other varieties of shrubs and trees requiring neither a deep soil nor moisture. In the north and east the landscape is rugged and wild, but towards the southwest border, the harsh features gradually become softer and finally merge in the topography of Gujarat region. The rugged and wild aspect of the region is attributed to the offshoot of the Aravallis. The area is broken and hilly, but none of the hills attain a great height. There is hardly any pastureland. The cultivated area is almost confined to valleys and low ground between the hills.

The district has a hot and dry climate. The cold season from December to February is

followed by the summer that continues till the middle of June. The southwest monsoon then sets in and the rainy season lasts till the middle of September. The normal rainfall in the district is 61.7 mm but the variations from year to year are large.

The villages under study are located in the Simalwara tehsil of Dungarpur district. Simalwara is a backward tehsil having all the three backward productive sectors. The physioclimatic conditions of the area have led to poor economic and social infra-structural facilities. Large portion of the geographical area is hilly and uncultivable. The only river of the district Mahi touches the eastern part of the Simalwara. Lack of infra-structural facilities hinders the growth of productive sectors. Tribal settlements which are part of a caste village remain at the periphery and are devoid of facilities that are available to other inhabitants. Owing to the nature of the socio-historical factors, these tribal groups occupy distinct and unequal position with regard to their access to material resources, knowledge base and social conditions existing in society. The ecological conditions in the area dictate many aspects of traditional life especially production, consumption and distribution. In tribal Rajasthan, ecological constraints as well as socio-historical factors have influenced economic development and consequently life of many.

THE DAMORS

Damors, who numerically being the smallest of all the Tribes in Rajasthan, are concentrated in small pockets of the border of Gujarat and the Simalwara, Sagwara and Aspur tehsils of Dungarpur district (especially Simalwara tehsil) of Rajasthan. According to ethnographic accounts they are migrants from Gujarat. They trace their origin from Chauhan Rajputs and had a relation with the latter when Rajputana was under the Rajput rule. At that time the Damor were also chieftains of some of the small states of Rajputana. According to them Dungria Panwar (a Damor) was the ruler of Dungarpur and it was designated after his name. The Damor is also a clan among the Bhils but these Damors are different and claim their origin from the Rajputs. According to 1981 census their population was 31,337. They speak Vagri and Mewari dialect along with Hindi.

The three villages Takari, Doonka and Bhandari are characterized by hilly terrain and inhabited by 719, 2650 and 782 personnel respectively. The approach to Doonka and Bhandari village is through *pucca* road; whilst the Takari is connected by a *Kachcha* road with a bus service available at a distance of 5-10 km. The Dunka and Bhandari village enjoy bus service facility, even if it is limited to daily two services. Doonka village with 517 households comprising 6 *Phalas* is a multi-caste village having 254 Damor households. 132 Damor, 5 Meghwal and 5 Jogi households predominantly inhabit the 5 *Phalas* of Takari village. Bhandari village with 166 households containing 8 *Phalas* is an exclusive Damor village.

The other communities residing in the area are Bhils, *lohar* (blacksmith), Muslim, *nai* (Barber), *kumhar* (Potter), *bhanggi*, *darzie* (tailor), Jogi, Garasia, *chamar* and *wadi* (Beggars). All artisan castes have *Jajmani* relationship with Damor, and receive fixed amount of grain crop per household twice a year in return of their services.

Gujarati and Rajasthani Damors are separate endogamous groups. Gujarati Damors consider themselves original and higher (*oonche*). Gujarati Damors claim that Rajasthani Damors had migrated as servants of their ancestors. On the other hand Rajasthani Damors claim that they migrated to this place earlier than the so-called higher Damors. The local Damors do not recognize the lower Damors as one of them; however the local administration does not differentiate between the two groups. The distinction of higher and lower is not prevalent in the state of Gujarat, where this community has not been declared as scheduled tribe. The Damors are structurally organized into exogamous *Ataks* (clans).

Gujarati Damors are generally vegetarian, whereas Rajasthani Damors are non-vegetarian. Nonetheless their staple diet consists of cereals and pulses like wheat, maize, *moong*, *chana* and *urad*. Mustard and groundnut oil is used for cooking. They consume large quantities of alcoholic drinks and are fond of drinking tea and smoking *bidis*.

The Damors are an endogamous group practicing *Atak* exogamy. Junior levirate and junior sororate are permissible. The age at marriage varies from fourteen to twenty years for girls and eighteen to twenty-five for boys.

Monogamy is the rule but polygyny is also permitted. Bride price (*dapa*) is prevalent. Divorce is permitted and the new husband has to pay the compensation to the previous husband. Remarriage for widows, widowers and divorcees are permissible. They generally live in extended families though nuclear families are also common.

Damor have both scattered and clustered type of settlements. Some *Phalas* of village are scattered while others have clusters of huts. The Damor huts are generally larger and specious. The over-hanging roof juts out a greater distance from the proper hut supported by teak pillars. 99% of the Damor huts are *Kachcha* with 52% having just one room, 27% two rooms and 21% huts having more than two rooms. Only one per cent of Damor huts are provided with separate kitchen, while 99% huts have kitchen in the corner of a main living room. The houses are not electrified and do not have proper ventilation. Only in 14% Damor huts there is provision for domesticated animals. General sanitary conditions of the 99% of Damor huts is unsatisfactory as majority of the households dispose off refuse in nearby surroundings.

There are 5 primary schools, 4 Balwaris and one high school in the study area. Medical facilities are inadequate as only one Damor village in the study area has medical facilities in the village itself. The Damor of other villages have to walk up to 5 kilometer to avail medical facilities. Otherwise they depend on their traditional resources. However, the presence of a facility does not guarantee the service also. The Primary Health Center in Doonka is ill equipped. The Ayurvedic dispensary in Doonka is working well. The post office is present in Doonka village and Damors of other two villages have to walk up to 5 kilometer to avail postal facilities.

Economic Resources

The Damor villages-Takari, Doonka and Bhandari of Simalwara tehsil are resource poor. Land and labour are the principle economic resources. Forest a major economic resource accessible to other tribals in Rajasthan wherein they undertake gathering and collection of non-timber forest produce is not obtainable to Damors. The forests have largely disappeared due to indiscriminate felling of trees. In 1948, soon after the formation of the former Rajasthan,

a political agitation claiming that the forests belong to the Bhils was launched and trees were cut down forcibly in large areas and many of the forests were set on fire. Remote areas were encroached upon for cultivation without restrictions under the 'Grow More Food Campaign' (Source: Office of the Assistant Conservator of Forests, Dungarpur). Increased pressure of population augmented demand for firewood and timber for construction. Only *Mahua* (*Madhuca indica*) trees are found in the agricultural fields. Damors practice subsistence agriculture. The Damors possess poor assets, meager resources and petty means. They put their environmental knowledge to manage the environment for making a living. The undulatory and rocky topography, inadequate irrigation, fragmented and small land holdings restrict agriculture. Moreover, tribal agriculture in Rajasthan is not a traditional one, having originated in the later half of the last century. The physical environment exercises a restraining rather than a determining influence on how people in an area obtain their food; technology and socio-political factors might be more important.

The Damor villages under study tend to be poorly connected by roads. They inhabit marginally productive areas and little access to services and resources. They do not seem to have any apparent substitutes of making a living to ensure their survival except labour. The government (state and center) welfare and development projects for the tribals have not benefited these groups. Households routinely plan for seasonal variations and fluctuations. The uncertainties of weather and resources pose hardships for these people who face chronic vulnerability in terms of access to resources. There are several dimensions of household livelihood system among tribals.

Available resources include: -

- (1) physical assets such as land and water.
- (2) Human assets such as time and skill.
- (3) Social assets such as Common Property Resources (CPRs) and public sector services.

PHYSICAL ASSETS

Land and Water

The terrain is hilly and cultivated area is

confined to slopes and low grounds where the soil is rich alluvial. The brokenness of the land, however, counterbalances to a large extent the advantages of the rich soil. On the top of the hills, soil tends to be gravel and shallow and of poor nutritive quality. The shades range between stone brown to dark brown. However, occasionally owing to the flow of water along the sloping hills and check dams there are fields that retain enough water and yield two crops without irrigation. Damors possess *Chahi* land i.e. land which is irrigated by wells. Land utilization has been prearranged in table 1.

Table 1: Land utilization of Takari, Doonka and Bhandari villages of Dungarpur District

Name of the village	Total area	Forests, Hills	Barren land	Land for other than cultivation	Pasture waste
Takari	426	- 93	14	9	41
Doonka	1568	- 432	63	41	129
Bhandari	398	- 53	-	18	33

*in hectares

It can be observed from the land utilization table 1 that geographical features of the area have restricted the land use. Land utilization table of the three villages illustrate that hills and barren land form the major portions of the terrain. Despite the fact that agriculture is the mainstay of the Damors merely 105 hectares, 384 hectares and 63 hectares respectively are sown twice. These villages have little land for cattle grazing (Table 2).

The main sources of irrigation in the three villages are wells. The hilly terrain makes it difficult to construct any extensive networks of canals. Consequently great reliance is placed on wells. Deep wells having brick lining and raised surrounding walls supply drinking water. In Doonka village, there are few wells for the exclusive use of Damors and other local low

Table 2: Irrigated land in Takari, Doonka and Bhandari villages of dungarpur District.

Name of the village	Total irrigated land	Irrigated by source	Total unirrigated	Area sown twice
Takari	56	56 wells	313	105
Doonka	171	71 wells	1091	384
Bhandari	55	55 wells	253	63

castes. The number of wells in Doonka is 171; out of that 71 are being used by Damors. Many of these are newly constructed. The *Charas* is the indigenous water drawing system from the wells. The other means of drawing water from the wells are *Rahett*, *Dhenkali*; Persian wheel operated by bullocks and manually operated *Parti*. The water is drawn with clay pitchers tied with ropes of root fibers. Pumping sets and canals are also being used for irrigation. Panchayat Samiti provides loans and subsidies for pumping sets and Persian wheels. The condition of the wells that are being used for irrigation is such that 3 wells are irrigating 18 *Bighas* of land. On an average there is one well among six families. Out of the total wells only 1/3 had water. The lack of water in the 2/3 wells is the reason for scarcity of water for irrigation. The problem of soil erosion through water is high. Erosion by wind is not so great. High temperatures and scorching heat turn earth in to a dust bowl. When it rains the sandy hilly terrain fail to hold the slurry torrents that rush down the hills and take away precious topsoil with it. When it does not rain (and that is more often) the irrigation from the wells becomes more difficult as water-table plummets lower with each passing month. Drip irrigation is not practicable. To hold water in the sloppy fields Damors have done contour bunding and *med bandi*.

Density of Population by Terrain

Density of population in the three villages under study shows a considerable variation. The hilly terrain and higher proportion of uncultivable wasteland coupled with poor irrigation facilities and inaccessibility accounts for the comparatively lower density of population in these regions. Table 3 shows the density of population in its natural region

However, it can be observed from the table.3

Table 3: Density of population by terrain

Village	Region	Area in square kilometers	Population	Density of population (per sq. km)
Takari	Hilly	4.26	719	169
Doonka	Hilly	82	2850	182
Bhandari	Hilly	3.98	782	196

that the density of population per sq. km in three villages is not so low. Nevertheless it is lower than the plain villages of the region where density per sq. km is high because of fertility of the soil, irrigation facilities and better means of transport and communication.

Land Ownership

Cultivable land is a prime asset of Damors and it lies at core of all socio-economic relations. Differences in landholding rights among tribals arose as a result of the British and later Indian Government census classification. Outsider perceptions and attitudes to tribals are related to the tendency of the alternative administration.

It can be seen from the table 4 that majority of the families are small landowners having land less than 5 *bighas* (17 families in Takari, 105 in Doonka and 105 in Bhandari); 90 families from Takari, 149 families in Doonka and 55 families in Bhandari are medium landowners having land between 5 and 19 *bighas*. Merely 6 families in Bhandari village are landless who resort to unskilled labour and farm labour. Only 32 families in Takari and 32 families in Doonka hold more than 10 *bighas*. The selected villages mainly grow subsistence as well as cash crops. Damors practice settled agriculture on slippery slopes of sandy hills ploughing with the help of bulls, which non-tribals do not practice. The difference of type of land holdings of tribals (hilly) and non-tribals (plains) has attributed to this difference in agricultural technology. Damors have learnt the technique of slope cultivation under economic duress.

During the princely regime Rajputs had a dominant status as central ruler. 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 then carry on cultivation

Table 4: Land ownership among Damors of Takari, Doonka and Bhandari villages

Landholdings in Bighas	Number of Damor households		
	Takari	Doonka	Bhandari
Landless	-	-	6
Less than 5 Bighas	17	105	105
5-10 Bighas	90	149	55
More than 10 Bighas	32	32	-

on poor rocky soil. Even on richer soil, Rajputs preferred land-holding rights in contrast to self-cultivation. The accumulation of land that signified power was the main consideration of the Rajputs. More than land itself, it was the rights in the produce of the land upon which Rajputs dominance was based (Baden-Powell, 1892, Stokes 1978). Network of kin-ties formed the basis of Rajputs political power. The pattern of landholdings largely reflected not only the kin network but also represented the individual authority of the landlord. The system of land distribution generated rivalry between kins on the one hand and between them and the ruler on the other. The position of the ruler was asserted by the compliance and participation of his kin and descendants. This resulted in direct and localized administrative set-up in Rajputana. Muslims invasions and conquests transferred power bases and the Rajput *Rajas* became *Mansabdars*. It restricted the expansion of Rajputs land holdings, though they were entitled to military title and ranks. The *Rajas* were granted *Jagirs* in lieu of their salary, which was fixed according to the *Mansab* they held (Sharma, 1977: 292). The Mughals introduced an organized system of rank and office akin to the Rajput system of *Pattidari*, which thwarted the previous grants of land revenue by kinship or loyalty. The Mughal administration did not bring fundamental changes in the relation between the larger and small chiefs, however it increased the conflicts in loyalty between brothers, relatives and friends.

Traditionally, tribals were forest dwellers and the forests in the Rajput states were considered part of the *Raja's* or *Jagirdar's* domain. All the land, forest, water and animals were the property of the king (Koppers, 1948: 136) and the inhabitants had usufruct rights. The forest and non-forested areas had no boundary. The defeated chiefs moved into inaccessible less fertile areas for protection from enemy and scarcity of land. Loyal informers and watchmen who collected revenue etc. were settled as well in the forested areas by the *Rajas*. This paved a way for their 'expansion into hilly tracts and their penetration into tribal areas' (Deliege, 1985: 41). Through his proprietorial relation over the *Jungle*, the *Raja* enhanced his powerful image over his people (Haynes, 1987).

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 tribe's lives. British classified forest as a separate administrative category and were divided into 'productive' forests and 'waste lands' on the basis of their commercial potential. Even the 'waste lands' were important to the local population as grazing lands for fodder, wood, fuel and medicinal purposes (Haynes, 1987). In order to increase state's 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 (cultivators) in the soil by fixing reasonable cash rental, and granting them hereditary rights over their holdings. Shifting cultivation practiced by the tribals was the main reason for the depletion of the forests. The shifting cultivation was prohibited by government orders in order to prevent the destruction of forests. British introduced cash rental system – *Bighoti* (based per *Bigha* unit of land), as opposed to the *Batai* (crop rent system based per plough) prevalent in the region. Most of the cultivators who accepted and paid revenue under the *Bighoti* system were granted permanent hereditary rights. Uniclan tribal communities, inhabiting a particular area traditionally shared resources, especially land, forest and water. The tribal landholdings under this category were termed '*Bhaiachari*' (Baden-Powell, 1892: 265). In contrast, land in multi-caste villages is regarded as ancestrally divided into separate shares (*Patti*) among male family members. This was known as *Pattidari* (lineal). In the study area, the tribal follow regional *Pattidari* (linear) system in their division of land and water and communal – brotherly sharing during some occasions in the production, distribution and consumption of food, which reflect elements of *Bhaiachara* (collateral). The nature of the property relations in the area continued to be on the traditional lines i.e. the earlier structure of land relations and debt dependencies, where few landlords and moneylenders of local upper castes dominated the scene.

HUMAN ASSETS: TAME AND SKILLS

The calendar of economic activities of the tribals shows that they practice 'mixed economy' wherein they have combined, subsidiary agriculture and labour activities. Their labour activities include – agriculture labour, and casual labour.

Subsidiary Agriculture

Agriculture is the way of life among Damors. The local agricultural calendar is divided in to two seasons: the *Kharif* or monsoon season (June to October); the *Rabi* or winter season (November to March). Rainfall in the initial stages of growth is crucial for the production of corn. The selected villages mainly depend on *Kharif* crop of maize, rice and *Rabi* crop of wheat. Cash crops of the area are mustard, coriander, gram and soyabeans.

The Damors grow *Rabi* crops of wheat, barley, gram, *methi*, *moong*, rape and mustard, coriander, cumin, garlic, tobacco and vegetables. The Damors cultivate on slippery slopes of sandy-hills ploughing with the help of bulls. The rainwater passing through the fields cause erosion. Many Damors have found contour bunding an effective measure. Damors start preparing the land for wheat cultivation from mid- September. Sowing by broadcasting or dibbling is done between third week of October and mid- December. Irrigation for sowing is done between mid- October and mid November. Watering at monthly intervals till the end of February and after this it is repeated fortnightly. Generally five to seven waterings are required in areas irrigated by wells. Wheat is harvested between second weeks of April and mid-May. Some varieties are early growing. From April to June, the fields lie bare till the next growing season. The domestic animals are pastured in the harvested fields. Then this field is left fallow till the next sowing. Pulses (*arhar*, *til*, *tur*, *urad*, *moong*) and soya beans are grown as *Kharif* crop along with *Jowar* (Millet), *bajra* and maize. Following some parts of cultivated lands, keeping domestic animals in the fallowing fields, grazing them on the harvested fields are traditional practices to maintain soil fertility. To increase soil fertility Damors use traditional manure. They use manure from the Compost Pits that they build near their houses. When a Damor

constructs a new house, the ground for constructing the hut is dug in such a way that hollow takes the shape of a compost pit. Damors use cow dung, green manure and chemical fertilizers to enhance crop production. A small number of Damors of Doonka village are using Ammonium Sulphate- a popular chemical fertilizer. The remainders feel that chemical fertilizers necessitate additional irrigation; produce tasteless grains; gives good yield for only first year of its introduction to the field and moreover it is difficult to get hold of. Compost pits are popular among Damors for quite a long time. Damors are ignorant about improved agricultural implements like iron plough, chaff cutter, seed drillers and tractors. Persian wheels for irrigation are better known among Damors. The Damors, by and large, still rely on traditional methods of cultivation and use conventional agricultural implements prepared by local artisans or by Damors themselves. Apart from these the agricultural production is marred by disease like wheat rust and invasion by rats and Jackals.

Crop Rotation

Damors practice crop rotation in their fields as follows:

- | | | |
|----------|-------|-------|
| 1. Maize | Gram | |
| 2. Maize | Gram | Wheat |
| 3. Paddy | Wheat | |
| 4. Paddy | Wheat | Gram |
| 5. Paddy | Gram | |

Rice growing is tricky in this area. There are three methods of sowing seeds of rice. (1) By broadcasting on the water filled field; (2) Seed is sown with the help of plough in relatively dry field; and (3) Seeds are sown through transplantation. As Damors fields are not leveled, it fails to retain water. They have to

Table 5: Important crops grown in Takari, Doonka and Bhandari villages

Name of the village	Food crops	Cash crops
Takari	Kharif-Maize, Rice	Tur, Urad, Moong, Vegetables, Castor
Doonka	Kharif-Maize, rice Rabi-wheat Gram, coriander	Tur, Urad, Moong, Sesame, mustard,
Bhandari	Kharif-Maize, rice Rabi-wheat	Tur, Urad, Moong, Sesame, Castor, Gram

prepare small mud dams to retain water in the fields. Green manure is good for paddy cultivation. The crops used for green manuring are cowpea, *Sania* and *Rancha*. The crops grown in the three villages are given in the table 5.

Crop Mixture

To make maximum use of land different crops are grown in one piece of land. Important crop mixtures grown by Damors are: (1) Wheat with barley and the mixed crop is known as *gojra*. (2) Wheat with gram, the mixed crop is called *gochni*. (3) Wheat with barley and gram, the mixed crop is called *bejad*.

Co-operation and Enterprise

Damors are subsistence farmers of small landholdings and agriculture is a way of life rather than a commercial proposition. Earnings from agriculture are generally low and are not economically feasible to hire labour for assistance in agriculture operations. It is natural in communities that are not affluent; there should be some arrangements for co-operation when a man is in want. The Damors usually need help at the time of harvesting, house building, marriage and death etc. The social structure and organization, which is the instrument of co-ordination is consequently the key to successful agriculture at this level. Co-operation between families come to surface at the time of ploughing and threshing when two or three families may help each other in turn, pooling their livestock, tools and labour. Most of the residents of the *Phala* are kins but within the *Phala* friendship and co-operation are governed by compatibility and closeness of the kin ties. Co-operation between families occurs on the same economic level and both sides feel it is fully reciprocal.

Common Property Resources (CPRs)

Common Property Resources (CPRs) are an important form of natural resource endowment and of collective subsistence for the poor tribals. Access to and use of CPRs show a seasonal variation. Tribals benefit from common grazing land, water resources and other physical products of forest that supplement 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.

The practice to encroach upon the commons by landless is an age-old tradition in the region. The tribals in this part of Rajasthan are asset poor and lack access to gainful high wage employment outside agriculture sector. Traditionally, tribals depended on forests for wood, wild life, edible plants, medicinal herbs for personal use and selling. As forests on which other tribals relied are not available to tribals in this area they are bound to take advantage of whatever is available to them. Common land is one such object and traditional practice of '*Pani Dhal*' makes it easy for them to encroach upon land lying up the slopes of their own land. As such these rights are meant for meeting the needs of the expanding family size and for the purpose of grazing. Nonetheless, tribals usually construct huts on the commons. They also use encroached land either for growing '*Barsati Phasal*' (Kharif crop) during rainy season or to graze animals or cut grass.

The combination of low productivity of land, poverty and drought can have serious repercussions on environment and common property resources. Tribals had their own set of rules for controlling access to and use of CPRs that have broken down in the tribal belt due to Government intervention and are difficult to restore.

Local trees and shrubs provide the largest number of physical products. They also represent assets that are cashable if the need arises. The privately owned trees can be sharecropped, 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.

The tribals in the study sample who are landless labourers, landless tenants and small land holding households fulfill their subsistence requirements of fuel and fodder from CPRs. Other tribals who are medium, large and surplus land hold households collect just 50 per cent of their fuel and 25 per cent of their fodder requirements from free resources. However, these CPRs have been overused and thereby, degraded because of increasing human and cattle populations and the lack of proper management and regulation apart from the state's appropriation of the forest resources at the cost 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, fruit, bark and utilization of grazing lands and water for drinking purposes. Government's failure in legitimizing these claims of Common Property Resources by tribals endangers the welfare of these communities. There is encroachment of tribal land by outsiders or locally dominant castes. Because of tribals' low social and political awareness, others exploit them. Alienation of tribal land by non-tribal merchants and moneylenders is serious in this region that had a hierarchy of tribute collectors and was brought under *Zamindari* System before the early 19th century.

The average production of the crops is low. The low average production of crops point to the tough circumstances like hilly terrain, scarce irrigation facilities and less productive soil under which Damors have to grow crops.

Sharecropping

By and large Damors are owner cultivators. It can be observed from the table 1 that majority of them are small or medium landowners. These small and medium landowners try to overcome economic constraints relating to their specific asset-base by entering into tenancy. Although the market for buying and selling cultivable land is rather inactive in the area, the tenancy market is active and consists of share tenancy. The share cropping tenancy in this region appears to be a flexible institution. Share tenancy allows households to make better use of their specific asset base across the different agricultural seasons. A variety of sharecropping patterns are prevalent in the region. Variations in these patterns have more to do with how input costs are shared than with how output or crops are shared. The most common type of contract is *Adhera*, which entitles each party to half the crop. Under it, the landowner and tenant pool assets and share input costs in what is perceived by both parties to be roughly equal proportion.

The *Batai* is another form of tenancy where tribals hire land for cultivation. Among Damors this system of *Batai* is known as *Sivari* wherein the owner of the land gives the cultivator a fixed share of the produce. The percentage of share varies in terms of labour input and the

implements used by the party. Depending on the number of assets provided by the owner, the *Sivari* percentage is arranged. If the owners provide irrigation, manure, seeds, plough and bullocks, the tenant gets one-fourth of the produce. If the bullock and manure belong to the tenant, then he may get fifty per cent of the total crop. In case the tenant and owner share the seeds, manure, and bullock equally, then the tenant may receive two-thirds of the crop-production. There are other variations under this basic contract where owner provides land and irrigation; tenant provides all inputs and labour; owner provides land and share irrigation and input costs, tenant provides labour and shares irrigation and major costs.

Labour

Many Damors sell their labor, whether for agriculture or any other purpose. The local labour market is of moderate size providing employment to many Damors. The majority of Damors are employed as casual labourers rather than as permanent or attached labourers. The agriculture labourers are hired across the area in the 10-15 kilometer radius. Demand for hired labour in and around study villages is limited by several factors. Mechanical thrashing has virtually replaced manual thrashing of wheat and barley, thereby replacing tribal labour from those operations. Greater part of the farmers in the region is from backward castes whose use of family labor, both male and female in agriculture is not constrained by caste-based considerations. Damors mostly become *Hali* (ploughman) for a year. Terms and conditions of contract are decided in advance. Those who opt for labour have to synchronize the constraints of several occupations. They mix different occupations in such a way that these do not overlap but complement one another. Depending on the relative flexibility of their livelihood system, individual households adjust by seeking employment whenever it becomes available and necessary, combine cultivation or other activities in slack seasons.

Domestication of Animals

In the Damor economy where there are no big landlords and physiographic constraints prevent the mechanization of agricultural operations, cattle are kept not only for providing

protective food like milk, but also for the valuable draft power and manure essential for agriculture. Goats are reared for milk and meat. In this area livestock raising supplements agriculture to a major extent.

Each family owns at least a few animals. Pastoral activity is an important part of tribal economy. They keep cows, buffaloes, oxen and goats etc. According to the tribals as well as authorities, the breed of the animals in the area is inferior and their milk yielding capacity is low. The milk yield per *desi* breed cow is 1-2 kilograms per day, while that of a buffalo varies from 4-5 kilograms per day. The milk yield of goat is only 250-300 grams per day. Damors mostly consume milk and milk products themselves. Very few people go to market to sell milk, however at times it is sold to needy people. Some tribals also prepare *ghee* from the extra milk and sell it to outsiders. Lack of good pasture and improved breed are cited as reasons for the unsatisfactory picture. Women or children take cattle to the fields after harvest or to the pastureland for grazing. No concentrates are given. The cow dung is used as manure as well as fuel. Scarce irrigation facilities do not encourage the use of, 'hard to get' chemical fertilizers. The unavailability of firewood makes it necessary to use cow dung for fuel. The animals of the villages are grazed together in the area reserved for the purpose. Damors grow fodder crops (*Gochari*), while chaff, stalks and occasionally grain are fed as well. The animals subsist on wild forage, which they rummage, and that which is gathered for them comes from pasture or cultivable wasteland. Thus, animals are a crucial link of tribal ecosystem. In effect, the animals broaden the food resources base of human through their ability to ingest and convert vegetal materials which human cannot assimilate into forms they can assimilate (Andress, 1966: 214; c.f. Berreman, 1978). They do so by transforming wild fodder into food for people. Animals take fodder and help in: (i) production of manures for good yield of crops, (ii) cultivation and thrashing (by providing energy for traction), (iii) providing milk and meat and (iv) earning money from sales of animal products.

Tribals also keep goats, which provide milk and meat. Goats are also offered as a sacrifice. Some tribals also raise hens, but poultry as such is rarely taken as subsidiary occupation. The poultry produce is for self-consumption and only

in dire needs the poultry products are sold. Eggs, chicken and fowls form an important part of religious offerings. It is economical to breed chicken, then to buy them from somebody.

AGE DISTRIBUTION, DEPENDENCY AND ECONOMIC LOAD

Occupational Structure

The Damors of southern Rajasthan pursue different economic activities. Percentage distribution of Damors in the study area, classified by sex, workers/non-workers and occupation reveals that there are workers who indulge in labour activities for others and receive remunerations from employers. These include agricultural and unskilled labourers, besides others who assist shopkeepers or petty businessmen, help in looking after livestock and small-scale horticultural activities. There are other self-employed Damors (men, women and children) who indulge in labour activities for themselves, and thus, they do not receive any emoluments of their services. Every adult male and female, old enough to work, participates in the economic activities. Though, food producing is a collective responsibility, there are certain divisions of work, particularly between sexes. The agricultural operations carried on by men are tilling, sowing and harvesting, women help in the weeding, harvesting and threshing operations. Children also render considerable assistance in threshing the produce and in carrying it home. Women do the majority of the tasks connected with food processing and preparation. Apart from agricultural activities, women and children play a major role in gathering fuel and fodder. It is the sole responsibility of women to look after the house, children and animals. However taking the animals out for grazing is the domain of children and one of their most important activities, apart from fetching water. Formation and continuity of family, hearth and homes is the main domain of women. Women's role as wives, mothers, and organizers and as the basic foundation of other dimensions of social life is of utmost importance. Self-employed labour activities may be extended to co-operative work groups. No remuneration is received for these activities. Apart from these there is a category of non-workers that includes persons performing household duties or

unemployed or retired and others. 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 and fodder.

However among Damors the economic activities remain limited. The Damors who own enough agricultural land and permanent source to irrigate undertake cultivation. Those who possess less land or do not have permanent irrigation source work on the land of others. The crops grown under rain-fed conditions are and remain, highly sensitive to variation in rainfall. The wage labour sector of economy expands and contracts in response to performance in the agriculture sector. Other local institutions in the area operate on the principle of a guaranteed subsistence for all, including patron-client and *Jajmani* relationships. Damors have been integrated with the non-tribals of the area in the economic pattern of *Jajmani* system and in the occupational structure. The interdependence from the occupational point of view is basically on agriculture and unlike Bhils and Sahariyas, Damors do not prefer casual labour as occupation. They work as *Hali* (ploughman) in the fields of local politico-economically dominant castes. The '*Jajmani* system' conceptualizes agrarian social structure in the framework of exchange relations. Different caste groups specialized in specific occupations exchange their services through an elaborate system of division of labour. But it does not hold good for tribals of Rajasthan. Patronage relationships have given way to different types of relationship of labour and tenancy. For labourers this mean that they are now free to work for one or more employers but are no longer entitled to wage advances or to slack season subsistence loans from their bosses. For tenants, this has meant that they are now free to share cropland for one or more landlords or to sell their produce directly but are less likely to receive production or consumption loans from landlords. Breman (1985: 444) in a study of changing agrarian relation in South Gujarat, points out that 'the breaking down of vertical dependence mechanism does not itself lead to better existence for those being freed from them'. Appadurai (1984) argued the same point of view that the

loosening of patron-client ties, together with other political; and economic forces, has led to partial emancipation for the poor without entitlement to a guaranteed subsistence. Jodha (1988) reasoned while comparing quantitative approaches to the incidence of poverty in two village of Rajasthan, poor people give up exploitation arrangements with patrons only when they become more independent.

It can be seen from the table 6 that 77.0 per cent of the female population in the study area is economically inactive. This is so, because most of the work done by women among the present population, and elsewhere as well, fall outside the purview of gainful economic activity. The traditional load of work of women from housekeeping to rearing children, helping in various agricultural activities (except ploughing), tending cattle, cleaning cattle shed etc. even though may use up their whole day, are not considered as gainful ones i.e. wage earning ones. However female labor is central to all economic activities among Damors. Women perform waged and non-waged, productive and unproductive labor. The percentage of young (0-14) is 39.95 in the sample size while 5.71 per cent are 60 years and above. The rest 54.32 per cent are between 15-59 years who are economically active and indulge in subsistence activities. The 41 per cent of the Damors are owner cultivators, whilst 46 per cent resort to labour activities. Despite the fact that there are merely 6 landless Damor families in Bhandari village, number of families resorting to labor is high since small landowners also resort to labor for additional income. Few indulge in shop keeping, carpentry and tailoring etc. The gathering and collecting activities, which contribute towards Bhil, Sahariya and Kathodi economy are absent in Damor activities, as there are no forests in the area. As literacy rate among Damors (25.34 per cent, 39.04 males and 10.48 per cent in females) is comparatively higher than the other tribal groups in the area, 10.0 per cent

Table 6: Occupational structures among Damors in the study area (in per cent)

Category	Husband	Wife
Economically inactive	-	77.0
Agriculture/Casual labour	46.0	15.0
Cultivators	41.0	7.0
Petty business	3.0	-
Service	10.0	1.0

males and 1 per cent females Damors are in service.

It was found that the households though engaged in different occupations rely more on agriculture. Damor differentiate between the main and subsidiary occupation as well as full agriculturalists and semi agriculturalists. Damors who are semi agriculturalist indulge in number of subsidiary occupations. They opt for agricultural labour when they are looking for subsidiary occupation. The entire adult Damor population has to work to make ends meet. The other subsidiary occupations that Damors follow are carpentry, black smithy, and masonry besides working as artisans and messengers. Damors are not engaged in industrial occupations of the area. These industrial occupations related to flour mill, rice mill, oil mill and iron industry are located in mixed villages and are the domain of non-tribals.

Work Force Participation

The young age dependency as well as old age dependency is high among Damors being 73.5 and 10.5 respectively. The total dependency ratio is 84.0 (Table 7). When dependency ratio is high, the effective labour force is the group between 15 years to 60 year who are major bread earner. Female participation in the economic activities is low in all the age groups. General Activity Rate for males and females in the tribal groups is given in the table 8. In other parts of Rajasthan, economic load factor (measured as ratio of non-workers to workers, in population) is high. However in study area it is very low, as it is the least developed region of Rajasthan. The economic load factor among tribals in the study area is given in table 9.

The percentage of young (0-14) in the sample size is 40 and 5.71 above 60 years. The rest 54.34 per cent are between 15-59 years who are economically active and indulge in different activities. As primary occupation of Damors is agriculture, 46 per cent Damor males and 15 per cent females work as farm labor followed by 41 per cent males and 7 per cent females as owner cultivators'. Where as 10 per cent males and 1 per cent female are employed in service, only 3.01 per cent males seems to pursue petty business activities like small shops. Thus almost all males are economically active. This implies that men are the principal earners among the

Damors.

As can be seen from the table 10, that the majority of the female are economically inactive (77 per cent). This is so, because most of the work done by women among the present population, and elsewhere as well, fall outside the purview of gainful economic activity. However female labour is central to all economic activities among these tribals. Women perform waged and non-waged, productive and unproductive labour.

Table 7: Dependency ratio among Damors of Rajasthan

Dependency ratio	Damor
Young Age Dependency (YAD)	73.5
Old Age Dependency (OAD)	10.5
Total Dependency Ratio (TDR)	84.0

Table 8: General Activity Rates in percentage (work force participation rates) among Damors of Rajasthan

Population groups	General activity rate		
	Male	Female	Total
Damor	48.2	14.8	32.2

Table 9: Economic load factor among tribals of southern Rajasthan, Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Dhaulpur, Bharatpur, Kota and Jaipur.

Population/Area	Economic load factor
Sahariya	0.761
Mina	0.689
Bhil	0.309
Kathodi	0.807
Damor	0.475
Garasia	0.439
Total	0.561
*Sikar (Arid region)	2.16
*Jhunjhunu (Arid region)	1.99
*Dhaulpur (Eastern Rajasthan)	2.38
*Bharatpur (Eastern Rajasthan)	1.88

* cited from Sharma, 1991

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The annual income of Damor households has been ascertained from interviews and the monthly recording of the inflow in cash and kind. These are approximate estimates as Damors are reluctant to reveal about their income and expenditure. The payments received in kind have been converted in equivalent money value. The standard earnings of the 78 per cent families are less than rupees 10,000. The average income of 19 percent Damor families varies between

Table10: Percentage distribution of Damors classified by sex, economic characteristics (workers, non-workers and occupation)

Population group	Non-workers		Agricultural/Casual labourers ¹		Cultivators (owners)		Workers, Trade and Commerce		Service ²	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Damor	-	77.00%	46.00%	15.00%	41.00%	7.00%	3.01%	-	10.00%	1.00%

Note: M = Male, F = Female; 1 = agricultural labourers, skilled workers, artisans, petty business/livestock managing, forest labour, small-scale horticultural activities.

2 = skilled workers/professionals/defense service/public/private.

Rupees 10,000-20,000 per annum. Merely 2 per cent Damors earn between Rupees 20,000-30,000 annually. There are few Damors who make more than 40,000 Rupees.

The inflow of cash and kind in Damor economy is from following sources: (1) Earnings from agriculture and grain crops for personal use. (2) Sale of labor within the village or adjacent areas. (3) Marketing products from the domestic animals. (4) Income from trees. Two types of trees, Mahua and mango trees are economically beneficial. Mahua is used for preparing liquor and vegetable oil. (5) Petty business. (6) From service. (7) Taking loans- (a) under government schemes; (b) from *Bania* or village moneylender; (c) from employers; and (d) neighbours, relatives and others.

The ascertained income of the Damor families was far below the expenditure incurred by the families for consumption. Even if they grow grains for subsistence, they need cash for their other requirements. They need money to buy grocery, clothing, medicine and treatment, education, social obligations, maintenance of huts, agricultural implements and other small effects. Damors have been integrated with the non-tribal castes of the area in the service-oriented economic relationships with some of the neighbouring villages for the procurement of necessary goods and services. However, for other economic transactions, they prefer to go to near by towns. 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 pod are bought regularly. Most houses have kerosene lamps for lightening. Things like locks, scissors, watches, torches, transistors, a bag, a few cups and saucer and a bucket are bought from a general store in the town. Sometimes, wheat

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 special rituals requirements tribals have to visit specific shops in nearby areas. Shopping for clothes, silver ornaments and bangle is done at separate stores in town, once or twice a year depending on the economic condition of the family. The *jajmani* relation between Damors and other non-tribals like Brahman, Nai, Jogi, Harijan, *chamar* and *kumhar* exist. Damors avail the services of these castes and pay them in kind twice a year. Damors have to pay 2-3 kg. grains to Brahman; 20 kg. to *Nai* (barber); 5 kg. to *chamar* (leather worker); 20 kg. to Jogi; 20 kg. to *harijan* (sweeper); 5kg to *lohar* (blacksmith); and 5 kg. to *kumhar* (potter).

COPING WITH NECESSITIES

It can be seen from the foregoing account that Damors engage in more than one occupation and have to synchronize the constraints of different occupations. To bridge the gap between income from regular sources and basic requirements Damors look for other opportunities. Damor's economy is characterized not only by multiple activities but also manifold factors and institutions in which households are engaged. The non-market activities are central to household system. The tribal households mix their resources and activities across a given year according to seasonal fluctuations. Under abnormal weather conditions Damors seasonal coping strategies and household responses involve intensification or modification of regular seasonal strategies. For countering risk and uncertainty Damors engage in many activities. Their main economic activity is cultivation. As this does not provide for the yearlong subsistence, they look for other avenues. They do not seem

to have any apparent alternative professions or earnings from other sources to ensure their survival accept labour. In an agrarian economy where land distribution is unequal, the relations between the land owning and landless provide a more or less complete configuration of the agrarian structure. The landowner with large holdings will need to employ outside labour to cultivate his fields. Conversely among the landless and smaller landowners, the propensity to sell labour will be greater. There can be a number of permutations and combinations in terms of employment of the outside labour.

Owners of the same land size may cultivate their fields differently, some may use family labour, while some others hired in labour. The different behaviour of different households depends on a number of factors like composition of the households, their social status, cultural restrictions, ideology of work, scope for employment and wage structure in wider arena, monsoon and market value of agricultural product etc. At the same time, the smaller farmer or landless may sell their labour in *toto* in the local region, only under conditions of coercion within the immediate agrarian system and/or a near total absence of other avenues of living. It may be stated here that land size and labour relation may only broadly relate to each other, and the rate of exploitation of labour has autonomy of its own.

The ones whose land is rocky generally resort to working as agricultural labourers. Despite the fact that labour activities are part of their economic strategies, it differs in frequency from Sahariya and Kathodi tribals of Rajasthan who claim wage labour as their prime occupation. Unlike Sahariyas and Kathodis, Damors do not migrate with their families for contract labour. They are mainly hired as local labour and not as migrant or attached labour. Damors are poverty stricken like Sahariyas and Kathodis and are included in the 'poverty square' of India, measured according to the four indicators- infant mortality, female literacy, number below poverty line and per capita net domestic product, that is centered mainly in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh (Chambers et al., 1989: 26). However their condition is better than these two tribes having infant mortality rate of 142.86 in comparison to Sahariyas' 263.16 and Kathodis' 272.73 per thousand. However it is still very high when compared to Indian

average of 67 per thousand live births in 2001. Damors' Female literacy rate of 10.5 is between Sahariyas' rates of 4.2 to Kathodis' female literacy rate of 13.2 per cent (Bhasin, 2000, 2003). Damors are better placed than Sahariyas and Kathodis in view of the fact that they still rely on cultivation as their primary source of income. Damors inhabiting this area have been greatly influenced by Gujarati farmers. To augment agricultural production few Damors have started using improved seeds, manures and implements. The production strategies of the household are oriented towards meeting the subsistence needs of the family—the ideal state in which a family can support itself entirely from its own harvest and have little surplus to fulfill its other economic obligations like payments to artisans and service castes. To fulfill the basic needs, a family has to extract as much out of the land as possible. The hilly area is altered through leveling and related operations to make plough agriculture possible. Damors have mastered the technique of drawing traditional plough with the help of bulls on these sandy slopes. The Damors cultivate hardy, drought resistant and quick maturing crops. Staples like maize, wheat, rice and barley are grown, along with local crops (Kulth, *gochari*, *chhota* maize, *gojara* and *chhota dhan*) and pulses.

The variety of crops, together with the practice of manuring, fallowing, crop rotation and crop-mixture, all enhance the productivity and reliability of food supply. Andres (1966: 183, c.f. Berreman, 1978) prefers the term 'crop sequencing' to 'crop rotation' and 'vacancy' to 'fallowing' because he believes that these are not intentional practices of crop management, but rather are necessary responses to climatic and environmental factors. Without machines, these activities require the coordinated efforts of manpower. The social structure and organisation, which is the instrument of coordination, is consequently the key to successful agriculture at this level. Among Damors, extended joint family emerges as a legally independent group, more or less self-sufficient unit. Practically every household is a farming unit with every member taking on responsibilities as soon as he or she is old enough and the sequence of agricultural tasks and rewards dominates the economic life of the village. All households try to optimize the ratio of people to resources. The labour force can be maximized in these patrilocal families by

marriage, birth, adoption and incorporation. Polygyny is not ideal but is practiced when the elder or younger brother dies leaving a wife behind or the wife is barren. Incorporation of young male relations, orphans and son-in-law through a typical form of marriage where the boy has to work as a helping hand in the house of his would be father-in-law for a specified period are the means to supplement labour force of the family. All men, women and children, old enough to work participate in economic activities.

In contrast primary source of income of Sahariya and Kathodi tribals is labour. They are working as migrant and attached labourers. As they migrate *en masse*, they have not been able to take advantages of settled life and development schemes.

For Damors, the monsoon season is a period of hard work and low food availability. The tribals, who own land and cultivate it themselves, grow crops, which are grown under rain fed conditions. Even irrigation from the wells becomes effortless during rainy season when water level is higher. As all Damors do not have pumping sets and manual irrigation is not all that easy. Those who are looking for work find local employment largely during monsoon sowing and harvesting and at the end of the winter season. The wages fluctuate according to the season and the crop. Labour season is slack during the intervening two months and during these months their condition is bad. Borrowing or taking loans is an important strategy to which destitute Damors resort to.

Loan is taken both in cash and kind. The sources of borrowing are local moneylenders or *Bania*, relatives and friends, loans available under various schemes and other sources like grocery shop, cloth merchant or jeweler. The interest rate for cash is 120 per cent per annum and for grains it is 50 per cent. To an extent the Damors are dependent on loans to meet their requirements. Since they are not in position to return any substantial amount of the loan taken in time and they have to take loans from the same source even before the previous loans are paid back. They have a traditional way of getting monetary help through an institution '*Halsed*'. '*Halsed*' is a bilateral arrangement where in a Damor in need of money will approach another Damor who is in need of labour. The terms and conditions are decided beforehand. The recipient

would work for a specified time on the fields of the man who is giving the money without demanding any payment. After the completion of the labour term, the labourer is provided with a *dhoti*, a pair of shirt and food for the time he has served in the fields.

Apart from coping with economic necessities, the Damors have to deal with conflicts that are outcome of their ecological and socio-economic circumstances. Inter household disagreement; looting, fights, property damage and discrimination against wage labourers by landlords are recurrent sources of conflict. Partition of parental property, disputes over religious invasion, and accusing women of practicing black magic are widespread as well. For the people staying in the area, the death of cattle or other domestic animals, drying of trees, sickness or death in a family and land disputes are reason enough to brand some tribal woman a *dakin* or witch. Under the state government scheme, tribals who are landless have been granted land on '*Patta*', which they are not allowed to sell. The quality of land being poor and lack of the irrigation facilities has resulted in abandoning fields by some tribals. These fields have been taken over by other people who have resources to develop these poor lands. Conflicts over land and water are dominant in the study area. Boundary and demarcation change in ownership rights, looting of crops, tenancy rights and tenants eviction, development infrastructure on particular sites and obstruction of paths and public land encroachment are most frequently reported land conflicts in the study area. Major disputes erupt especially in dry season on sharing of drinking and irrigation water. Fights are initiated when different people want to use water for different purposes. Other major areas of conflicts are related to non compliance with maintenance of irrigation and drinking water systems, the ambiguous roles and responsibilities of water consumers; use of the same communal land by community members for grazing, collection of litter, and alignment of irrigation channels. Government developmental schemes have initiated several conflicts because of their technocratic, top-down, bureaucratic and political nature. Misuse of financial resources and kickbacks, abuse of authority and nepotism have created many problems.

Damors practice both formal as well as informal conflict resolution practices. The formal

practices follow official procedures, guided by government rules, regulations and laws. Informal practices are customary practices that do not fit in the legal framework. Most social and resource conflicts in the study area are resolved through informal practices. Elderly and socially respected people, teachers, faith healers (*Bhopa*), priests (*Pandit*), *Mukhiya* (head of the village) and local tax collector (*Patwari*) are the principal players in resolving wide range of local conflicts. They have the time, credibility and compliance to be part of the resolution process and their verdict is time-honored by the villagers. These informal traditional practices are a blend of local customs, values and feeling of common living. Damors prefer these informal councils instead of formal conflict resolution practices that are expensive, inaccessible, and biased in favour of the powerful.

The present position and conditions of the Damors 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. Unequal distribution of land and instruments of production, unequal distribution of income and the rate of exploitation of labour characterizes the difference between tribal and non-tribal communities that inhabit these villages. These iniquities are associated with the forces of money lending on the one hand, and political power, education etc., on the other hand. The dominant castes have better access to the co-operative and bank credit and subsidies, while the tribals tend to rely on non-institutional credit nexus.

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