

PASTORAL TIMES

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From Herders to Truck Drivers to Herders

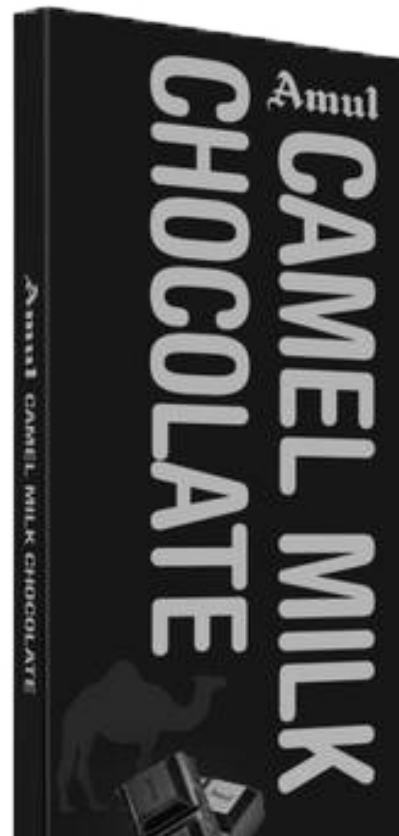
Pastoral Youth in Kutch are herding camels again

Camel breeding, once deemed as an unproductive profession, is now slowly becoming a self-sustaining livelihood options for many young pastoralists who had all left it for other occupations. This new generated interest is mainly due to surge in the demand of camel milk, which was recently certified for human consumption.

Camel herders have now found a new market where they are directly selling camel milk to AMUL cooperative and other Delhi based private companies. AMUL has recently launched Camel Milk chocolate, which is available across India. Aadvik Foods, a Delhi based company that sells a range of products made from camel milk, alone bought 86000 litres of milk in 2017 and paid about Rs. 43 lakh to the herders. "Prospects of having a milk market has opened many doors for the young members of our community who had quit this profession. They are all slowly coming back now." Numamam Jat, the President of Kutch Camel Breeders Association informs.

Pachanbhai Sarang Rabari, a resident of Vyar village of Nakhatrana district recently bought 35 female camels along with his friend Mangalabhai Rabari who bought 25 more. There are many other like them who are leaving their current jobs to return to camel breeding. Devabhai Rabari of Ukheda village has returned to his ancestral livelihood after working as truck driver for 15 years. Before the camel milk got national recognition, the price of a litre of milk was about Rs. 15-20. However, today the breeders are getting Rs. 50 per litre. Surabhai Rabari of Beru village now owns about 80 camels. "I spend about Rs. 15,000 every month on fodder but still the income is good", Surabhai tells proudly.

Originally reported by Mahendra Bhanani for Kutch Mitra, a Gujarati Daily.
Translated in english by Bandish Soparkar



"AMUL has recently launched Camel Milk Chocolate, which is available across India. Aadvik Foods, a Delhi based company that sells a range of products made from camel milk, alone bought 86,000 litres of milk in 2017 and paid about Rs. 43 lakh to the herders."

Photo Credits:
Ritayan Mukherjee



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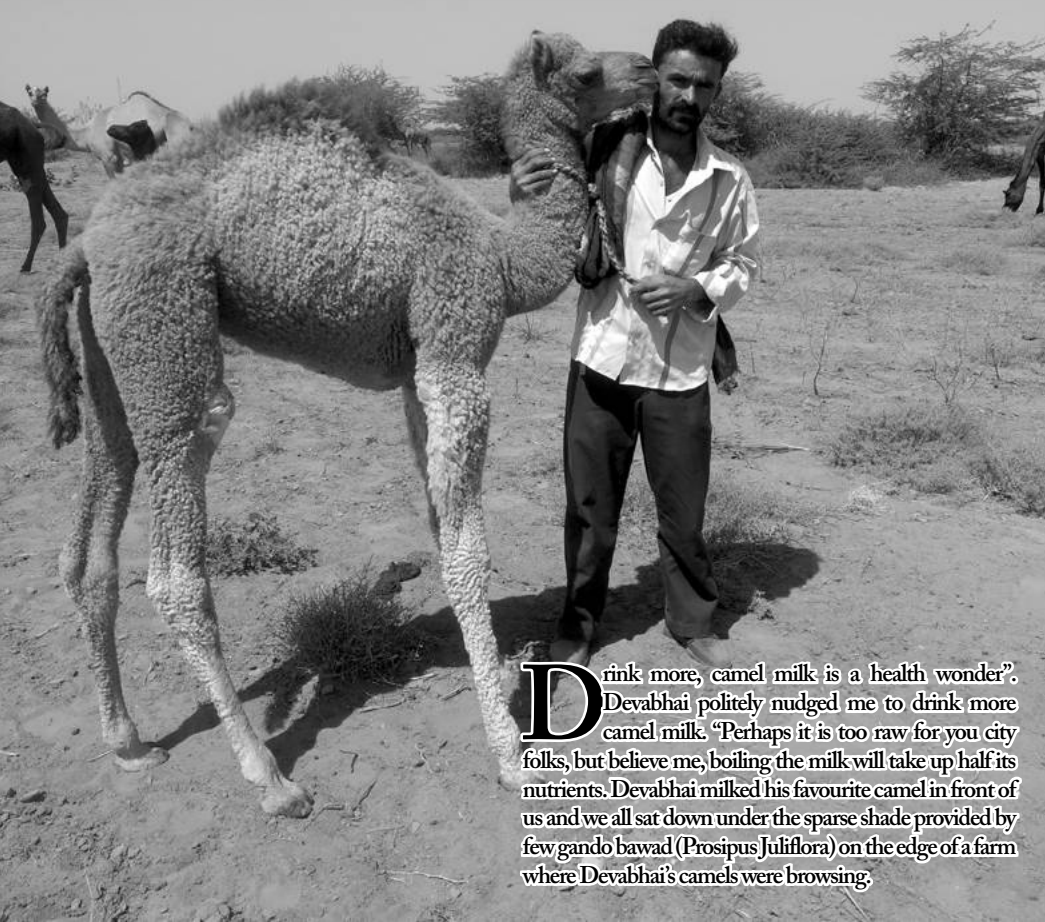
Nostalgia
Trekking up the Memory Lane with the Gaddi Shepherds



Pastoral People

Pastoral youth in Kutch are herding camels again

A Conversation with a Re-Formed Herder
By Bhavna Jaimini, with Mahendra Bhanani



Drink more, camel milk is a health wonder”. Devabhai politely nudged me to drink more camel milk. “Perhaps it is too raw for you city folks, but believe me, boiling the milk will take up half its nutrients. Devabhai milked his favourite camel in front of us and we all sat down under the sparse shade provided by few gando bawad (Prosipus Juliflora) on the edge of a farm where Devabhai’s camels were browsing.

In retaliation to his city folks comment, I drank two full glasses of milk offered to me. Devabhai looked impressed. As I took out my notepad and pen to start the interview, Devabhai looked around, collected few dried branches and twigs, and started a small fire. He then took out a vessel and started brewing tea. Before I began to ask questions, he said, “But first tea”.

Devabhai you left herding 15 years ago, became a truck driver and have now returned to camel herding when many herders across the country are abandoning it. Tell us why?

I was tired of being on the move. ‘Driven banke paisa to kamaya par shanti nahi thi. Nahi us paise mein barkat thi.’ (I was earning money, there was no peace or growth in my life.) So I decided to come back to my ancestral profession. I started herding sheep and goat as keeping camels was still not profitable. My father used to herd camels three decades ago but he left as the role of the camel in fields or as a pack animal disappeared. Nobody wanted camels anymore. My father became a labourer on a field where I helped for a couple of years before becoming a driver. However, times have changed. Due to this increased demand for camel milk, we are herding camels again. I alone have about 35 camels and many of the youth of our community are buying camels.

You said that there was no peace in your life as a driver. Why?

The life was very fast and hectic. I was always on the move, driving a huge truck all over Gujarat. I came home only once or twice during a fortnight. Initially I was thrilled to travel and drive those huge 14 wheeled trucks. However, the initial excitement withered away. I had gained a lot of weight due to my erratic schedule and unhealthy lifestyle. My father taught me to wake at the crack of the dawn, but as a driver I was doing the opposite.

It must have been tough for you to run behind camels with an overweight body.

Extremely! (Laughs). If these camels walk 20 km, the herder has to walk 50, to keep them walking together. Some naughty ones have a habit of straying away from the herd, so one needs to be constantly vigilant and active. I had forgotten the tricks of the trade, but they were all in intact in my blood. Knowledge gained through

generations can’t go away by driving a truck for a few years.

Do you ever miss the old fast days?

Not at all. Being a herder is a demanding job and can sometimes be very trying, but I don’t want to do anything else because ‘yahan shanti hai, jo road par nahi thi’. Its like eating simple home cooked khichdi after eating spicy punjabi food for months (laughs).

You said that your father was a camel herder so you must have spent your childhood amongst the camels. Does your children accompany you with the herd?

Sometimes they come to play with the baby camels but they don’t travel with the herd. I grew up exposed to life on the move but they go to the school everyday because it is important for them to get an education today.

The profession was still there in my blood. Knowledge gained through generations can’t go away by driving a truck for a few years.”

But what about the education on camels which I am sure they won’t get in school?

That is why I try my best to expose them as much as I can to herding but I know it isn’t enough. However, I am hopeful that they will grow up and apply the education to advance our traditional livelihood. It is also important for them to study because otherwise they won’t get married. Nobody wants to give their girls to illiterate herders.

So, its true that herders these days find it difficult to get a bride?

Yes, it is. But I feel its more to do with education than occupation. Everyone wants educated brides and grooms these days, and profession doesn’t matter as long as you are earning enough from it.

Are you thinking of expanding the herd?

Yes, but it all depends on the milk collection. Right now we get about 50 rupees a litre but the collection routine is erratic and needs to be regularised. We can’t make the decision on expansion of herds until we have a sense of the demand. 🐪

Photo Credits: Michael Benanav



Van Gujjars Evicted from Chillawali Range of Rajaji National Park

The last of the Van Gujjars, living in the Chillawali range of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand were evicted and relocated in December 2017. The government was making intense efforts to move the families out of the National Park, but many families were unrelenting as the forests have been home to them and their buffaloes for centuries.

“Yes, the last three Van Gujjar families in the Chillawali range have been relocated to about 50 km from that range of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve this Thursday and now the Chillawali range is free of Van Gujjars”, confirmed the director of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve, Sanatan Sonkar. Till September, around 22 Gujjar families had been left behind in various pockets of Chillawali range, followed

by 13 families in Gohri range and one in Ramgarh range. It was recently in November that the shifting of Van Gujjars from Rajaji Tiger Reserve again gained momentum. It is learned that these Van Gujjars from the Chillawali range have been now rehabilitated to Gaindikhata.

The process of relocating the Van Gujjars from Rajaji had started in 1998 to ensure unrestricted movement of wildlife inside the reserve. The move was resisted by many Van Gujjar families who lost their habitat due to this move and were forced to permanently settle down. Almost 1318 Van Gujjar families have been relocated in the past two decades including 512 in Pathari area and 1998 in Gaindikhata of Haridwar district. 🐪

Telangana government’s sheep scheme pushing ‘Gongadi’ weavers to brink?

For the weavers of ‘Gongadi’ (traditional blankets woven from black wool) that once served the Indian Armed Forces beat harsh winter on the borders, the last spindle for the last of these blankets may have spun. The shepherds face an uphill task to keep the dying craft alive as the Deccani sheep, the source of the coarse black wool that is used to make the Gongadi, is under threat from the state government’s push for increased meat production through distribution of sheep to Golla Kurumas.

Telangana ranks sixth in meat production, producing 5.42 lakh tonnes of meat in 2017 and exporting Rs 101 crore worth meat in 2016. Under the National Centre for Disease Control’s (NCDC) initiative, Telangana government was sanctioned Rs 398.88 crore to eight districts for sheep breeding. As a part of this effort, non-indigenous breeds from neighbouring states were brought in which has pushed the breed and the craft to the brink of extinction, according to shepherds.

“The Deccani sheep have reduced in numbers as the government is promoting the breeds that are not indigenous to the locality,” said Gunda Yadagiri, general secretary for Deccan Gorrela Mekala Pempakadarla Sangham (DGMPS), a society for shepherds from Peddagottimukka village of Medak district, “Now there are a lot of red/brown sheep that produce hair and not wool, the government is pushing this breed, but the blankets cannot be made from sheep hair, it can only be made from the Deccani sheep wool,” he added.

“Earlier 80 per cent of the sheep were black Deccani sheep in Medak and now there are only 10 percent of them,” said Yadagiri, the 35-year-old, who is a shepherd himself and was in the city for a two-day exhibition of Gongadi blankets that ends on Sunday.

In 2004, the shepherds formed the DGMPS with an effort to conserve the Deccani breed and also the Gongadi blankets. The efforts so far have been met with “limited success” says Krupa, working with Food Sovereignty Alliance, an NGO working closely with rural communities. “There is a limitation to the conservation

“The Deccani sheep have reduced in numbers as the government is promoting the breeds that are not indigenous to the locality,”



effort of the sangham as shepherds are attracted to the government subsidy. If the trend continues we can’t save the Deccani breed. The government is pushing the red sheep only for meat and exports and not looking at it from a livelihood or traditional point of view,” she added.

Despite no help from the state, the shepherds are teaming up with various NGOs and have started identifying rams to ensure that the breed survives. However, over the years the cost of sheep-rearing has also shot up making the conservation effort difficult. “The cost of medicines have gone up, there is a shortage of grazing lands and other villages charge a fine if they graze in their lands. Forest department also charges fine for using forest for fodder,” added Yadagiri. 🐪

This article first appeared in the New Indian Express. <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/teelangana/2018/jan/07/teelangana-governments-sheep-scheme-pushing-gongadi-weavers-to-brink-1746598.html>

“Earlier 80 per cent of the sheep were black Deccani sheep in Medak and now there are only 10 percent of them,” said Yadagiri, a 35-year-old, shepherd



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Shifting Pastoral Mosaics in Uttarakhand

A Yak’s place

By E. Theophilus



Yaks are known to be native to the high cold-desert landscapes in Tibet and Mongolia, and perhaps the most recent bovine to have been domesticated. There is reason to believe that it was the domestication of yaks that enabled the inhabitation of much of the high and harsh Tibetan Plateau by humans, well into the current interglacial about 5,000 years ago. While domesticated yaks, along with sheep, horses, and in places Bactrian camels, form the most important component of livestock holdings in Tibet and Mongolia. Even today, these rugged landscapes are still home to the last remnant populations of wild yaks.

Domesticated yaks have also made their way into the southern slopes of the Himalayas, along with people coming over high passes into the cold-desert transition between the Tibetan plateau and the Greater Himalaya. People came mostly to trade minerals, food and raw materials from either side of the Himalaya, and the yak was their hardest and most trusted pack-animal for crossing passes over 18,000 feet high, often in deep snow, precipitous terrain, and extreme weather.

Having evolved in high alpine and cold-desert ecosystems, they are hardy and adapted to most of the severe conditions such terrain has to offer. But while they have been domesticated long enough to have pied coats, and even browns and whites, they are not yet evolved to be versatile enough to withstand altitudes lower than 3,000 meters altitude, or the heat and pestilence of the sub-tropical band of even the Lesser Himalaya.

Domesticated yaks have formed an important component of livestock holdings amongst transhumant pastoralists who spend about half the year at high altitude alpine pastures and settlements in many valleys along the Himalaya. They were also very valued in the pack-caravans of traders from and into Tibet. As long as

“There is reason to believe that it was the domestication of yaks that enabled the inhabitation of much of the high and harsh Tibetan Plateau by humans, well into the current interglacial about 5,000 years ago.”

borders with Tibet were open, yaks were left to winter-out on the Tibetan plateau, where high winds blow away snow onto leeward slopes, leaving much of the dry grass open for foraging.

Mortality of all livestock at high-altitudes can be high due to the various hazards there. Yaks however, can survive unexpected blizzards, and are capable of fending off predators. Unlike many other livestock, mortality of yaks due to foraging on poisonous plants such as aconites in alpine meadows, is unknown. They are therefore, a secure component of livestock holding, especially important to poor households.

Livelihoods of poorer people of these communities were earlier supported by employment in trade caravans, and pooled holdings of livestock. Now, with the cessation of trade, diminished livestock holdings and greatly fragmented landholdings, many have sought earnings from mostly illegal extraction and sale of plants and animals from the 'village commons' for international markets. And landscapes that have been managed collectively for generations as a commons for the communities subsistence needs, are now suddenly open to a competitive scramble for individual gain.

Why did we set up this nucleus herd in Uttarakhand?

Almost all the Yaks in Uttarakhand were progressively wiped out and knowledge and skill of their husbandry was being lost. When hostilities broke out between China and India over Tibet in 1962, the cross-border trade ceased, effectively cutting off the summer grazing and breeding opportunities for yaks in Tibet. The transhumant movement of the trading communities was also disrupted, and since yaks could not be taken to their lower altitude seasonal dwellings in winter, they were left to go feral or perish in the alpine settlements. And perish, they did.

Having been helped by the pastoralists to see and understand the place of yaks in this landscape and in the lives of pastoral and transhumant communities in high Uttarakhand, we began efforts to stem this tide. Our yak herd is managed as a commons - community owned genetic heritage.

Yaks are well adapted to high pastures, grazing lightly on a wide variety of species, occupying different niches from existing domestic stock. Bringing yaks back into herds increases incomes, while not adding to existing grazing pressures. Our herd comprises of offspring from a few residual animals that had crossed over the Himalaya along with people fleeing the Cultural Revolution in Tibet in the early 1960s, as well as others we ourselves have bought and herded in across high passes from Tibet, more recently. This is the only Yak herd in Uttarakhand, and perhaps the only one in the Indian territory with fresh genetic stock from Tibet.

Robust yak herds have the clear potential to diminish conflict between herders and predators such as the leopard and the snow leopard. When leopards kill livestock, the caracas are poisoned by herders in retaliation, resulting in significant mortality of the cats. Because yaks are good at fending off leopards, their presence in herds can reduce human wildlife conflict. There is, of course, growing scholarship now on the serious impact humans are causing on ecosystems by eliminating large carnivores.

Finally, a good yak herd is indispensable as a source

of bulls to produce hybrids. The hybrid of the Yak, called Dzomo for the female and dzo for the F1 or hybrid first generation male, outdoes both its progenitors in certain qualities that are useful to humans - draught power, milk production, wool, and above all, the ability to survive below 3000 meters, at winter settlements.

There are presently 22 yaks of various ages in our nucleus herd. As of now, the herd composition is greatly dis-balanced with a predominance of males, of relatively even age. Yaks are best led by an alpha-male, who should be clearly alpha. Otherwise, as in the case with our herd, males are constantly sparring, and butting each other off cliffs. The off-take of young males to neighbouring valleys has been very low, because people now expect the Animal Husbandry department to buy bulls for them and give it to them free of cost. The possibility of taking excess males to neighbouring Nepal and Tibet, where they are also eaten, is now off the cards with the current fuss about bovines being used for food.

A yak's place in Uttarakhand was always tenuous, and now with drummed up politics on the beef front, and the ma in the moo... even more so. 🐃



E. Theophilus is an environmentalist working in Munsiyari Himalayas. He started a yak raising and breeding centre under the aegis of Himal Prakriti. The centre helps the villagers residing in the high altitude region of the Himalayas to earn their livelihood by carrying loads of tourists or traders on yaks.



“ Having been helped by the pastoralists to see and understand the place of yaks in this landscape and in the lives of pastoral and transhumant communities in high Uttarakhand, we began efforts to stem this tide. ”

Press Release

A new report from the Mediterranean Consortium for Nature and Culture entitled “Mobile Pastoralism in the Mediterranean: arguments and evidence for policy reform and its role in combating climate change.” Offers a refreshing new perspective

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At a time when mobile Pastoralism is frowned and viewed bleakly as an ancient, environmentally destructive and socially backward livelihood, the new report from the Mediterranean Consortium for Nature and Culture¹ entitled “Mobile Pastoralism in the Mediterranean: arguments and evidence for policy reform and its role in combating climate change” offers a refreshing new perspective. The many benefits of mobile pastoralism are detailed in a new report from the Mediterranean Consortium for Nature and Culture.

“Mobile pastoralism is one of the most efficient livestock farming systems. Its role is essential in achieving the most sustainable diets, with attention to animal welfare, and it’s critical for the future of our planet. Not only does it capture soil carbon and produce high quality, healthy food; without it, we would not be able to maintain its associated diverse ecosystems, beautiful landscapes and rich and fascinating cultural heritage.” said co-author, Concha Salguero of Trashumancia Naturaleza, a Spain-based organisation that has been successfully contributing to the revival of the long-distance transhumance on foot in Spain for the past 30 years.

However, in spite of the clear benefits it offers,

“Mobile pastoralism is one of the most efficient livestock farming systems. Its role is essential in achieving the most sustainable diets, with attention to animal welfare, and it’s critical for the future of our planet. ”

Concha Salguero, Transhumancia Naturaleza

including solutions to some of the modern world’s most pressing problems, mobile pastoralism the world over is often mistakenly perceived as unsustainable. This misunderstanding of the practice has resulted in legislation and policies that undermined it and created hurdles to its sustainability. “Harmful policies originate in poor understandings of pastoralist livelihoods and interventions designed externally with little consultation with pastoralists” said co-author Pablo Manzano,

international expert on livestock & environment.

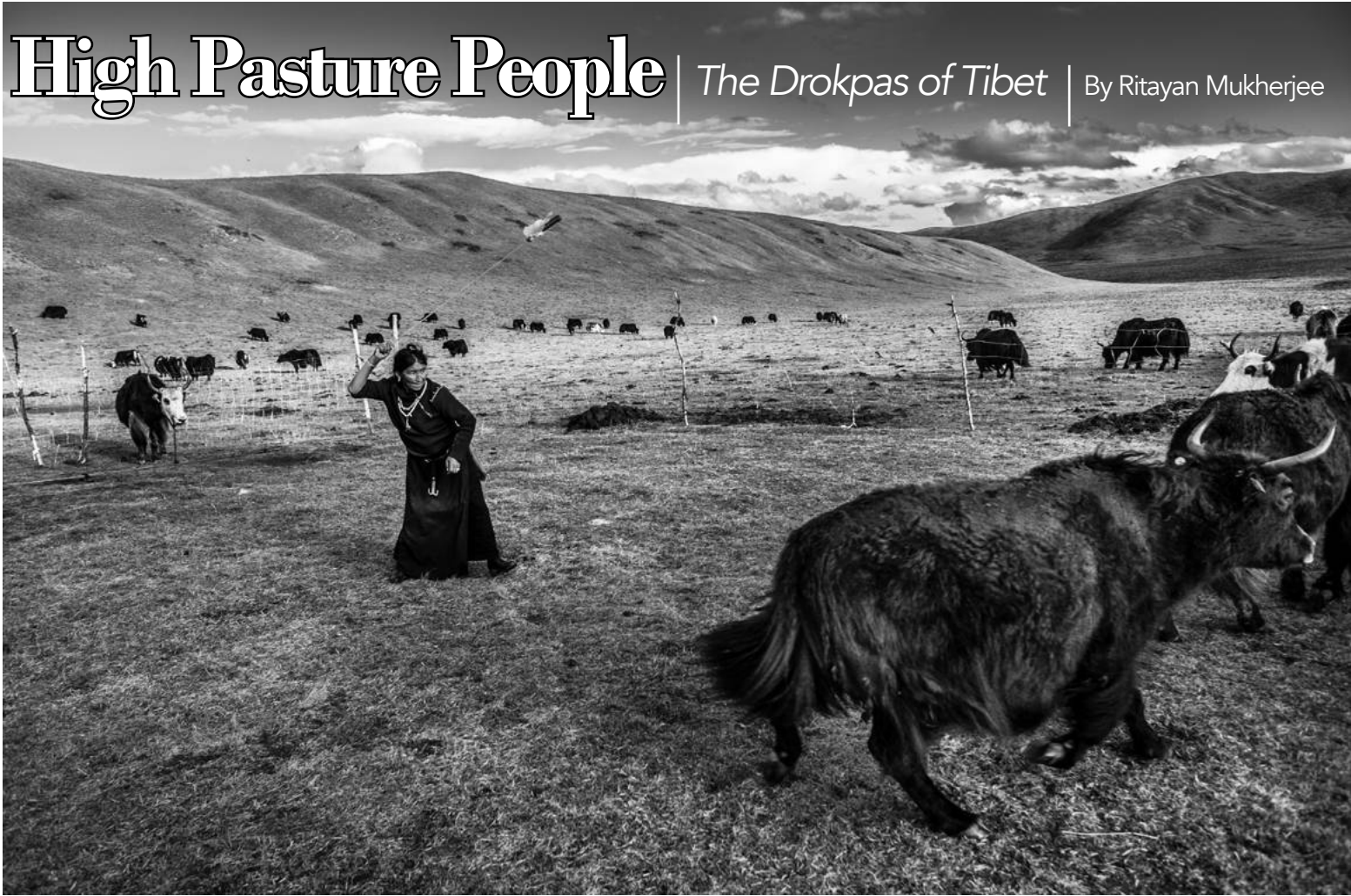
Following years of studies and field-work on mobile pastoralism in the Mediterranean, the Mediterranean Consortium for Nature and Culture’s project coordinator, and director of DiversEarth², Liza Zogib concluded: “we hope that this report, outlining the many benefits of the practice will go some way to fostering a different way of viewing the practice of pastoralism in the Mediterranean and to securing legislation that is informed and supportive instead of ill-informed and destructive”. 🐃

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Mobile Pastoralism in the Mediterranean: arguments and evidence for policy reform and its role in combating climate change is available for download in English here: <https://tinyurl.com/yalgh87o>

1. The Mediterranean Consortium for Nature & Culture, is a collective movement to support and raise awareness for cultural practices that have a positive impact on biodiversity in the Mediterranean. <http://www.medconsortium.org>
2. The Mediterranean Consortium for Nature & Culture, is a collective movement to support and raise awareness for cultural practices that have a positive impact on biodiversity in the Mediterranean. <http://www.medconsortium.org>

Photo Essay



Tibet, the beautiful land of Dalai Lama is home to the pastoral community called the Ndrogba or the Drokpa, which translates to ‘high-pasture people’ in the Tibetan language. They are found in all the regions of Tibet, living at heights above 14000 feet. With an estimated population of 2 million, the Drokpas live a semi-nomadic life. They move with the changing seasons with their yak wool homes rolled and lashed to the backs of yaks in the harsh mountainous terrain of Tibet which brings fresh set of challenges for them every day. Drokpas have been herding animals for centuries now, and not only did they make living out of herding animals, but have created a unique culture and way of life. However, their centuries old way of life is under threat due to many socio-political, economic and environmental reasons.

Drokpas, just like many others ‘unsettled’ communities are slowly disappearing and are being assimilated into the ‘settled’ mainstream cultures. There numbers are dwindling with each passing year. In face of such adversity, some are still resisting to keep their way of life alive, moving one herd at a time. 🐾



Ritayan Mukherjee is a Kolkata-based photography enthusiast and a PARI (People's Archive of Rural India) Fellow.

Drokpa women are excellent herders and often manage the yaks by themselves



Yaks gathered for vaccination by a Drokpa family



Apart from being excellent herders, the Drokpas are also skilled weavers. They use a portable back-strap loom for weaving. Each family has a loom that can be set up at any location. The women do most of the weaving in the summer months and they weave a variety of things including saddlebags, backpacks, ‘tranak’, rugs, and carpets.



Drokpa live in black tents known as ‘tranak’. Strands of yak wool are woven together to make these sturdy tents that gives protection from extreme cold and icy winds in winters



ABOVE: A Drokpa offers prayers to the mountain god at a high pass in Sichuan province.

LEFT: Horses are an integral part of nomadic life. It is a major means of transport across the grassland even though most of the families now possess cars for carrying goods.

Movie Review



WINTER NOMADS

A documentary about horizontal winter transhumance in Switzerland by Manuel Stueder
A review by Dr. Jennifer Duyne Barenstein
Social Anthropologist, ETH Zurich

In winter 2011, during the three coldest months of the year, the Swiss film director Manuel von Stueder and his crew followed the herders Pascal and Carole, their eight hundred sheep, three donkeys and four dogs in their pastoral journey through the French part of Switzerland. The documentary, adopting a “fly-on-the-wall” technique, does not comment or explain what winter nomadism entails, but lets the images of the beautiful snow-covered landscapes and the daily routines of Pascal, Carole and their animals talk by themselves.

What we see are sheep patiently digging in the snow to find some grass; we follow Pascal, Carole and their animals walking for miles and miles, through fields, forests and villages, but also along highways and railways, which remind us that pastoral livelihoods survive even in highly industrialized countries like Switzerland. Their journey



would not be possible without the zealous help of their dogs, which keep the flock together, and the donkeys that carry all their goods. Affection, gratefulness, and an almost symbiotic relationship can be noticed between Pascal, Carole and their animals. We see that sometimes local farmers welcome them with a warm meal and a glass of wine, while in other cases they chase them away because they do not want their fields to be trampled by the sheep. We observe them in the evening fetching wood in the forest to light a fire, melting snow to prepare a hot tea and a simple meal, and eventually setting up their precarious tent, preparing their beds made of sheep skins and woollen blankets, which they share with their dogs to keep each other warm in the freezing winter nights. Their life may appear harsh to urban citizens watching the documentary in a warm and comfortable home, but Pascal and Carole

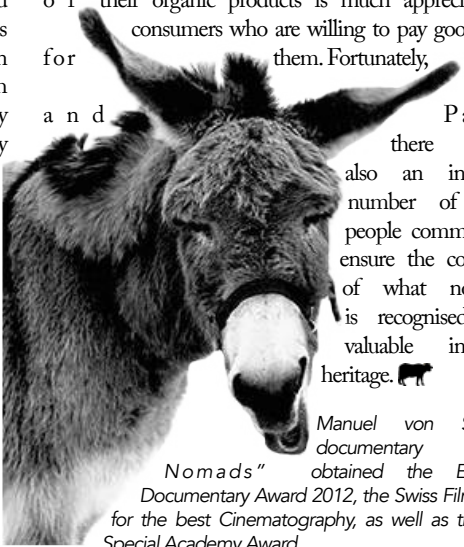
are happy about their choice. Pascal has been a ‘winter nomad’ for over 20 years, while young Carole only recently decided to quit her job in the city to embrace pastoralism. Both left behind the comforts of modern life out of a genuine passion for animals and nature.


This beautiful documentary reminds us that even today transhumance occupies a significant role in Switzerland, where a distinction is made between vertical transhumance, practiced in summer, and horizontal transhumance practiced in winter. In summer, herders move with cows and goats to the higher pastures in the mountains up to 2200 above the sea level, where they produce cheese and butter with the milk of their animals. In Switzerland, as opposed to other European countries where sheep milk cheese is highly appreciated, sheep are primarily kept for their meat and are always separated from cows and

goats, which refuse to eat the grass where sheep have gone through. While goats and cows after their summer in the mountains during the cold winter months are kept in stables and fed with hay, at the end of autumn the sheep are handed over by their owners to a ‘winter nomad’ herder to continue their horizontal journey for another three months until they are ready to be slaughtered. Only the sheep leaders will survive until the next year thanks to their important role in guiding and keeping the flock united.


Pastoralism and transhumance in Switzerland, like in many other European countries, are far from being anachronistic. Nowadays their important role in the conservation of landscape and biodiversity is well recognised, and accordingly herders benefit from substantive subsidies and incentives to encourage them to perpetuate this ancient livelihood strategy. The high quality of their organic products is much appreciated by consumers who are willing to pay good prices for them. Fortunately, like Carole and Pascal, there are also an increasing number of young people committed to ensure the continuity of what nowadays is recognised as a valuable intangible heritage.

Manuel von Stueder's documentary “Winter Nomads” obtained the European Documentary Award 2012, the Swiss Film Award for the best Cinematography, as well as the Swiss Special Academy Award.





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Book Review



Photo Credits: Michael Benanav

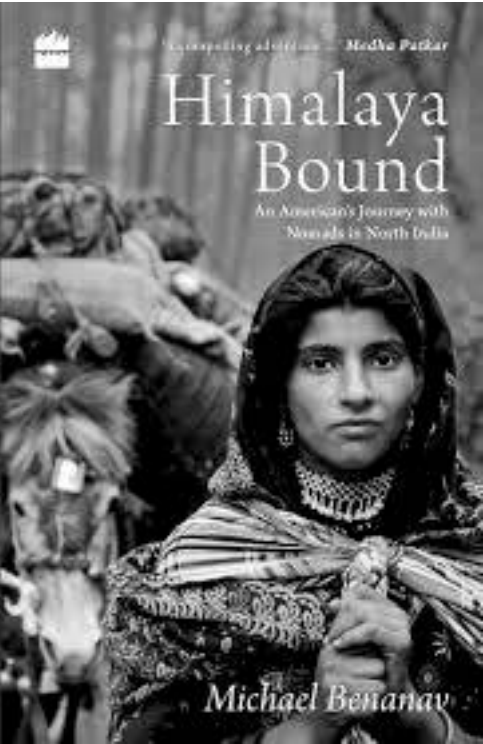
Himalaya Bound

An American's Journey with Nomads in North India

By Michael Benanav

Publisher: Harper Collins India Pvt. Ltd.

Review by Bhawna Jaimini



In December 2017, the last few Van Gujjars families were evicted out of Rajaji National Park. The National Park had been the seasonal habitat of Van Gujjars and their buffaloes for centuries, a habitat on which they can no longer exercise their rights. As the twenty year long struggle of Van Gujjars comes to an end, Michael Benanav's book on the journey he took with the community in 2009, raises important questions about how certain ‘well meaning’ policies impact lives and livelihoods which do not necessarily follow the mainstream development narrative.

I was initially sceptical when I read the title “An American's journey with the Nomads”, thinking it might be rooted in a westerner's romanticism of an indigenous community and its struggles! However, few pages into the book, Michael Benanav's honest and fluid writing broke my pre-conceived notions and allowed me into the amazing journey he took with the Van Gujjars. Van Gujjars are a forest dwelling tribe of nomadic buffalo herders in northern India, who have been resisting the government's ban to graze their traditional meadows in the Himalayan forests. Benanav's account is fascinating, compelling and emotional as he manages to strike an unlikely friendship, breaking multiple barriers that separate his world from that of his nomadic friends. In one incident, the journalist in him pays for this attachment when he is unable to photograph the Van Gujjars who were grieving for an injured calf. Moved by their attachment to their animals, he sets aside his camera to give his friends the privacy they deserved to grieve over an injured loved one.

Himalaya Bound is an important book because it vividly paints the struggles and hardships of a community that wants nothing but to save their buffaloes with little or no help from the so called ‘developed world’. A world that has failed so miserably in engaging with such communities. They consider themselves to be an intrinsic part of the shivaliks and see no reason why they should be evicted from a habitat which has nurtured them for so long. On reading this book, I am left wondering where and why have we failed to see their point? 🐃

About the Author
Michael Benanav is a writer and photographer whose work appears in The New York Times, Geographical Magazine, Lonely Planet Guidebooks, CNN.com, and other publications. He is the author of two previous, critically acclaimed books: Men of Salt: Crossing the Sahara on the Caravan of White Gold, and The Luck of the Jews: An Incredible Story of Loss, Love, and Survival in the Holocaust.

Maldharin & Unt Gyaani

By Arvind Lodaya

Why do humans build museums?

To honour their past!

If they like their past so much, why leave it?

I hurry up the narrow two-lane road, past a long line of idling cars, to see what is causing a traffic jam in a tiny place like Pahalgam. A parade of sheep lead by shepherd dogs approach me, and I scamper out of their way, finding refuge in an alleyway. Two Bakkarwal youth steer the sheep into momentary order, allowing me to escape the chaos by ducking into Troutbeat Café a few doors down. When I was close to them it seemed more chaotic—sheep climbing over each other, bleating, crying, urinating. From the café, it’s a fascinating sight on this summer day in 2014. However, for this pastoral community of Bakarwal shepherds and their sheep, it is just another day as they walk through Pahalgam to graze at pastures higher up the mountains.

Troutbeat Café exudes the charm of an alpine coffee shop at the cusp of high season; the waitstaff beam broad smiles. Their signature dish is fresh whole trout and I tear through the hot, crispy skin, smacking my lips at the buttery garlic flavour. I can taste the sweetness of the river in the flaky, soft meat. My eyes light up when I stand in front of the restaurant’s glass-fronted fridge a little later. Not for the desserts inside, but because I spot in one corner, a cumin Gouda wheel made by Himalayan Cheese, a dairy brand based in Kashmir. I’d heard about how good this cheesemaker Chris Zandee’s Cheddar and Gouda are, and I’ve come a long way to meet him. As a cheesemaker myself, I’ve been following the artisanal cheese scene in India for a while. Dutchman Chris Zandee’s efforts to create a sustainable, community-minded dairy business in Kashmir, piqued my interest. A long string of emails later, I’ve landed in this noisy, bustling hill station about two hours east of Srinagar. Pahalgam is literally “shepherds’ village,” named so because it is the region where numerous Gujjar and Bakarwal herders practice transhumance, moving their livestock seasonally to richer grazing areas up or down the mountains.

... Zandee procures milk from a pool of 150 Gujjar vendors, semi-nomadic pastoralists who rear dairy cattle. His operation is a barebones but stunning setup in Langanbal Village, close to Pahalgam. The tall gent originally from the province of Zeeland in the Netherlands, has spent the last seven years developing a dairy network. By raising the price of milk to respectable levels, he has economically empowered the Gujjars who otherwise depend on rice loans to run their winter pantry. Chris is genuinely enthusiastic about the trickling connections made by operating a fair-trade food industry. He has also helped the local Gujjars increase milk production during winter hulls, and maintain herd hygiene.

Near the Himalayan Cheese “Factory”, I stare at cornfields and the rushing Lidder River. Under the canopy of a broad walnut tree, Chris and I speak about milk, the producers, the terrain, and the terror, but conversation quickly turns to more philosophical matters about life. What I had initially thought was a one-man operation, is in fact a three-person job handled by a trio of Gujjars working under Chris’s supervision. Among them, is Gulaam Hassan Khatana, a lanky man with gentle eyes, who is assisted by Shabbir Ahmed and Amna Gorshi. Together they produce hundreds of kilos of artisanal cheese each year.

“I hadn’t heard of kalari or maish krej, a traditional cheese made by Kashmir’s Gujjars, also called as Kashmiri mozzarella by some people.”



Niyaji vigorously churn the partially skimmed milk with a wooden plunger-like tool.

Breaking Cheese with the Gujjars in Kashmir

By Aditya Raghavan

Until I came here and noticed that Himalayan Cheese sells it, I hadn’t heard of kalari or maish krej, a traditional cheese made by Kashmir’s Gujjars. Some people call it Kashmiri mozzarella. Intrigued by this indigenous cheese, I enlist Khatana’s help to cobble together a trek which I hope will allow me a peek into the Gujjar way of life and the making of kalari. I set out for a two-day trek to Draydaar, along the banks of the Lidder where numerous Gujjar families live during the summer.

“Coming from the city, where instant gratification is taken for granted, the effort required to simply survive in these parts is profoundly humbling.”

Our small troupe also includes Manzoor, Khatana’s talkative nephew, who has just completed his tenth grade, and Nizaqat, Khatana’s son, a quiet seven-year-old who expertly steers the horses that carry our supplies. He also efficiently sets up the tent at night, and makes sure everything is in order. The two-day hike from Aru Valley has me spellbound. Aru, situated about 12 kilometres upstream from Pahalgam is the last point of vehicular access. The Lidder River winds its way through a confluence of two ranges of snow-capped mountains, expanses of green curtains tightly draping their slopes. Occasionally, a thriving patch of wild flowers intercepts this scenery with blotches of yellow, pink, and white. After clearing the tree line, we arrive at rolling hills of green, dotted with flocks of sheep, cows and buffaloes chomping on the herbage, and horses wandering languidly. We are in Gujjar territory. Every gentle hillock is occupied by a family, and each is crowned with a wide log house that blends in with the rocky background of the mountains. I feel as if reality has been suspended, as if I am the only human on Earth and am able to roam this land freely. In these few other-worldly moments, I feel like I have experienced the Scottish highlands, the Swiss Alps, the Milford track, the Muir trail all at once. In this emerald terrain, captive of the mighty Himalayas, I both understand why and feel dismayed at the struggles of vested parties to claim ownership of this glorious land.

... We set up camp at night at the very spot Chris had first pitched his tent, in the tradition of the alpine cheese huts of Switzerland, using basic tools and fresh milk from the pastoralists in the neighbouring meadows. Sipping salty noon chai in front of the campfire, I imagine myself, working out of a cheese tent in the mountains and being remarkably happy with everything around me. Coming from the city, where instant gratification is taken for granted, the effort required to simply survive in these parts is profoundly humbling.

It is a cloudy and chilly morning at the highland meadow of Draydaar, only a few kilometres away from the Kolahoi glacier. Dressed in long, thick, Jedi-like clothing, and flailing sticks with decisiveness, Gujjar young’uns deftly traverse higher reaches of the mountains with long strides. The men spend days working the land, growing staples. Their evening job is to direct cattle herds

back down to their enclosures for the night. Gujjar women work on everything to do with the household as well as on phulkari-style embroidery using yarn spun from sheep. I see these motifs on the men’s hats, women’s dupattas, and on embroidered accessories that adorn the horses travelling with us. In the kitchen of Ghulam Hassan Kohli, another Gujjar with a similar name, I nearly sear my tongue sipping steaming noon chai. “Dheere,” Kohli grins, cautioning me to slow down as he brings over two rotis for breakfast. The day-old rotis are made without salt and I eagerly dunk them into my milky tea. The warmth is a blessing on this chilly Himalayan morning with the



Kalari, the Kashmiri Mozerella

temperature at about 2°C, even though it’s the month of June. Sitting cross-legged on the cold floor I look across at his wife Niyaji, who is occasionally obscured in a flurry of rising steam and smoke. She is vigorously working the milk in a butter chumer-like cylinder with an apparatus I’ve never seen before. Her husband, meanwhile, recounts the early days when Chris first started to buy milk from the Gujjars and produce cheese here. Niyaji’s technique has me excited and perplexed. All the cheesemaking I know of begins with the formation of curds, which happens when rennet and microbial cultures are added to milk. What follows, varies according to the type of milk and cheese being produced. When Italian-style mozzarella is being made, for instance, the curd is heated and gently stirred with kid gloves to preserve the structure of the cheese. The Gujjars obviously do things quite differently. I’m taken aback as I watch Niyaji and her daughter vigorously churn the partially skimmed milk with a wooden plunger-like tool. I’m as intrigued by the apparatus as by the method. Her intricately-carved butter-chumer is made of wood. At its base is a blackened iron pot. The richly detailed vessel is in stark contrast to their spartan dwelling. On transferring the curds into an aluminium pot and working it over heat, Niyaji tilts the pot towards me. She is stirring a hot, molten mass of milk solids. I am stupefied.

“Through milk—from noon chai to kalari, to Chris’s exquisite six-month-aged Cheddar—I have experienced a fragment of Kashmir’s cuisine, and broken cheese with its wonderful people.”

My understanding of the biochemistry of milk is thrown out the window. It looks like stretchy mozzarella curds, ready to be shaped into balls. She takes a blob of hot curd, flattens it out by slapping and flipping it against her palms, the casein network in the milk allowing the curds to stretch out into milk-rotis. Once stretched, the cheese is cooled on the black iron pot of the kalari apparatus. My mind wanders to ancient Italy where cheesemakers like Niyaji, discovered stretchy curds. Perhaps one of them noted the similarity in structure to bread dough and made balls out of it. And bam! mozzarella was born. Here in a remote Himalayan kitchen, I watch the lady of the house fashioning cheese in the shape of the rotis her family consumes. I enjoy another cup of noon chai, a staple in these parts, but this time with fresh, moist, and mildly sour kalari. The cheese has a bit of a squeaky bite to it, reminding me of queso Oaxaca, a stretchy cheese from Mexico. Next, Niyaji goes on to prepare qudam, another



indigenous cheese of the region, prized for its longer shelf life. Qudam has a more rubbery texture but is also a tad crumbly. It reminds me of a very dry ricotta. On the trek back to Pahalgam, I marvel at the beauty of this land, and the incredible exposure to a unique way of life that I’ve just had. As the sky darkens over our camp, I stare at the faint outline of the Lidder, thinking about the many avatars of the river I have encountered on this short journey. Pale blue waters near the Kolahoi Glacier, milky rapids and mini-waterfalls in the Aru Valley, and its fullest expanse in Pahalgam. And through milk—from noon chai to kalari, to Chris’s exquisite six-month-aged Cheddar—I have experienced a fragment of Kashmir’s cuisine, and broken cheese with its wonderful people. 🐏

Another version of the article was written for National Geographic Traveller, India. <http://www.natgeotraveller.in/meet-the-cheesemakers-of-kashmir/>



Aditya Raghavan is a physicist turned cheesemaker

Nostalgia

Trekking up Memory Lane with Gaddi Shepherds

By Vasant Saberwal

25 years ago I was sitting in the office of a senior forest official in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, talking about my desire to undertake PhD field work amongst the Gaddi shepherds. I forget the officer's name, but he was quite clear that I needed to find my way to Bara Bangahal. It is the gadh of Himachali pastoralism, I was told.

A two-day walk up the Ravi River in 1992 brought me on my first visit to Bara Bangahal. It was, and remains, a pastoralist gadh. Not because of the numbers of animals owned by Bara Bangahal, but because the village ends up being the point from which herders from the rest of Kangra access the endless valleys and meadows in these headwaters of the Ravi. I spent two years, in and out of this iconic village, trying to understand the drivers of Himachali shepherding.

Trekking buddies from college were part of many of those trips, sometimes along for the trek, at others helping with field work. In September of 2017, we were returning to Bara Bangahal, entering the valley via the Kalihani Pass, and expecting to exit it via the Thamsar Pass. We experienced all the usual highs and lows of 50-year olds trekking in the high Himalayan ranges – creaking knees, backs out of whack, incessant, cold rain, a brilliant sunset over snow peaks, seemingly endless climbs and mind-numbing descents. And then, five days

into our trek, we turned a corner, and spread out below us, across the Ravi, in the shadows of the evening sun, and seemingly unchanged, was the village that defined so much of what I ended up doing in life.

Bara Bangahal is at once familiar and distant, both intimate and remote. After five days in Bara Bangahal, on my first visit, I finally took a bath in a courtyard surrounded by overlooking balconies, many with casual onlookers. I got used to soaping my behind in public. I spent a week with the worst loosies of my life, wondering how I would climb the 7000 feet to cross the Thamsar Pass, given I could barely make it to the woods for yet another round of watery crap. Nightfall with Mahajan, at a high camp, surrounded by his sheep, other herder camps across the valley marked only by their fires, like twinkling stars that had somehow fallen to earth, and Mahajan extolling the virtues of Curtley Ambrose as the best exponent of swing bowling in the world. A magical world entwined with the utterly mundane.

What would it be like to return after these many years? We descended to the river and crossed the bridge, turning left to head for the forest rest house we hoped to camp next to. It all looked so familiar, wooden houses with large courtyards tiled with slate, used to thresh the wheat or sun the rajma. Not a single house with either cement or steel girders, a straight-forward consequence of the exorbitant costs of transporting building materials – any materials – into this isolated village.

A woman was sweeping the courtyard. I didn't recognize her. We turned down a small alleyway between houses, and looked up to see five men sitting in a balcony. They were familiar but I couldn't recall their names. We met a few herders whose names we knew – Mahajan was still there, rotund as ever. I had heard many years ago that Jeet Ram had died. Ritchu had shifted to the road head, and it turned out that there were many families that came

up to the village only sporadically, on work or to attend a social function. Fewer families actually lived in Bara Bangahal.

Pawna had been a ten-year old girl in 1992. She is now an activist fighting for herder rights to pastures that have been declared a part of a Wildlife Sanctuary. As part of documentation for a claim submitted under the Forest Rights Act, Pawna found there were only 22 families still herding. I hope to find my notes that will tell me how many Bangahali families were herding two decades ago, but presume there were many more at the time.

To herd or not to herd? That is a question that dogs (sorry) pastoralism all over the country. For the most part, pastoralism is remunerative. Goat and sheep prices are through the roof and where pastoralists have access to cold chains, as in parts of Kutch, they receive excellent prices for milk. But pastoralism entails long hours away from home, and often hostile receptions from communities they encounter on the move. On the climb up to Thamsar, we chatted with a Gaddi: "My neighbor gets home from office at 5, his laady (wife) gives him a cup of tea and then the two of them sit and watch television for the rest of the evening. I spend eight months on the move, with no downtime, no family and certainly no television. But I do earn a decent income and not all of us have government jobs."

Pastoralism is very unlike agriculture in that it is both

“Pawna had been a ten-year old girl in 1992. She is now an activist fighting for herder rights to pastures that have been declared a part of a Wildlife Sanctuary. As part of documentation for a claim submitted under the Forest Rights Act, Pawna found there were only 22 families still herding.”



Photo Credits: Hashmeet Singh Khurana

The Todas are the oldest still-existing inhabitants of the Nilgiris highlands, having lived there since ancient times. With their quaint barrel-vaulted temples and houses, their embroidered pootkhull(zh)y cloaks and their magnificent long-horned buffaloes, the Todas have fascinated the world ever since 'civilisation' stepped into the Nilgiris two centuries ago.

The Todas believe that the goddess Taihhki(r)shy created their beloved buffaloes. Over the centuries, their buffaloes have been the focus of sanctity at their dairy-temples, as also the main indicator of wealth – used as payments for dowry, fines, compensations, divorce, etc. Buffaloes are also donated to specified grades of dairy-temples and are used in many rites of passage, for instance those of pregnancy, childbirth, naming and funerals.

Both the Todas and their beloved breed of buffaloes are restricted to the Nilgiris. Goddess Taihhki(r)shy is believed to have separated the Toda buffaloes into two categories – the domestic herds (pehtyehr) that can be milked for secular purposes, and the sacred herds (postehr) that are attached to dairy-temples and are themselves arranged in an hierarchical order according to levels of sanctity. Their culture revolves around these herds, with each of the six grades of dairy-temple having its corresponding herd of sacred buffaloes. Each dairy-temple has a specific generic secular name along with more clan-specific sacred names; similarly, their corresponding buffalo herds too have secular names in addition to clan specific sacred names. Only a man who has become a priest, following the elaborate ordination ceremonies specific to each grade, may milk the corresponding level of sacred buffaloes and ritually process it into butter, buttermilk, curd and ghee. Different clans own specific grades of temple-dairies and each has precise rules of eligibility for a



Dairy Temples and the Sacred World of the Todas

By Dr. Tarun Chhabra

dairyman priest, and all grades of temple have varying ordination ceremonies, the elaboration of which depends on the sanctity grade.

To provide a brief insight into the Toda sacred dairying process, I reproduce the concluding paragraphs from my notes related to the poll(zh)y-grade temple at Melgaa(r)sh clan's seasonal hamlet Nhyoollnn:

“The dairyman-priest next takes a little of the morning's milk, which by now will have coagulated (adrparw(r)sh). He begins to churn this for a short while, after which, using his right hand, he sprinkles a little of this partly-churned adrparw(r)sh onto the sacred karydarw(r)shm vessel three times, uttering the sacred syllable 'arun' each time. Next, he churns the coagulated milk into butter and buttermilk, using the more sacred parwtatt. vessel for the purpose, after which he transfers these products into less sacred errtatt.-grade vessels. Following this, he taps the parwtatt. vessel with his right hand three times. Only now may these dairy products be removed from the

temple, the priest handing them to an assistant, who carries these churned milk products to the awaiting women at the 'buttermilk-pouring stone'.

By now it will already be late afternoon. The priest is free for a short period, until the buffaloes return from the pastures, and may use the time to sweep the dairy-temple premises, using only the tafehitt. plant (Rbodomymrtus tomentosa) to do so. Quite often, the priest does not wait for the buffaloes to return, but sets out to search for the grazing animals and drives them back to the settlement. On their return, the priest herds the buffaloes into the milking ground in front of the temple, where he first milks the sacred animals into a bamboo pebnn, followed by the ritualised domestic ones, using the same bamboo vessel. Once the priest has completed milking the sacred buffaloes, laymen are permitted to milk the ordinary secular buffaloes that have been brought to the seasonal settlement exclusively for domestic use.

The dairyman-priest sprinkles some of his freshly-drawn milk onto the eezb-ka(r)sh stone, saying 'arun' each time. He takes this sacred milk into the inner sanctum of the temple

lucrative and holds the potential for upward mobility. A herder who starts out with 50 animals can grow his herd to 100, maybe 120, over the course of 3 years. And that will earn him 30-40,000 a year. A bigha of agricultural land, by contrast, remains a bigha with nowhere near the earning potential. But herders all over the country today face challenges relating to access to forage, routine theft of animals from mobile rustlers, confrontations with communities competing for scarce forage, an indifferent bureaucracy and a younger generation's aspirations that include spending an evening at home, watching television.

Are there ways by which pastoralism can be made more attractive? Failure to do so will almost certainly accelerate current disenchantment. And that would be a pity. Pastoralists across the country lend colour to our landscape, but far more important, they are productive members of society with few obvious alternatives in the jobless urbanization India is experiencing. In the end herders will make their own choices, but will herders have real options to choose from, including the tough life of a nomadic pastoralist, or will their choices end up reflecting social norms that no longer see mobility as an acceptable mode of living? 🐏

Vasant Saberwal is an avid trekker, baker and the Director of Centre for Pastoralism.

and pours it into the most sacred parw(r)sh tatt. vessel of the higher parwtatt.-grade. Coming out, he quickly herds the buffaloes into the pen and secures the pen-post bars (prayer names: tozhtvoolof, ehbrovolof). This done, the priest stands facing the pen entrance, where he performs the koyemukht salutation. He now loudly chants the specific temple prayer, as he had done earlier in the day (the prayer is composed of sacred chant-words set in couplets and they relate to the sacred sites and natural landmarks located around the area). Only after this may the domestic lamps be lit (only ghee may be used as fuel and the lamp is lit with fire made from firesticks). Until the buffaloes return and the priest has concluded his ritual activities, the houses must remain in darkness.

The dairyman-priest enters the dairy, proceeding to the inner sanctum, where he sprinkles freshly-drawn milk three times on to the karydarw(r)shm, uttering 'arun' each time.”

At most dairy-temples, sacred milk must not be consumed by anybody, not even the priest. The sacred milk is poured into the higher grade vessels placed in the inner sanctum and as it is ritually churned into butter, buttermilk and finally ghee, it loses its sanctity, and is placed in lower grade earthen vessels placed in the outer room and can be distributed to laypeople outside.

The Todas' pastoral way of life, combined with their non-martial, non-hunting, pacifist and vegetarian lifestyle has surely played a significant role in ensuring the survival and prospering of the flora and fauna that surround their settlements. Even today, Todas meet with introspection, rather than anger and a desire for revenge, the loss of a buffalo to a predatory tiger residing in the vicinity of their hamlets.

Today, when the Todas have been coerced into becoming unwilling agriculturists, and plantations of exotic trees and hydroelectric reservoirs have destroyed vast tracts of virgin grasslands and wetlands, it is imperative on the outside world to assist these people in obtaining adequate income from their traditional dairying and pastoral way of life so that their ecological footprints can continue to be gentle. 🐏

Readers who would like to know more about Toda culture, ethnobotany and ways of life, may peruse the writer's book, The Toda Landscape: Explorations in Cultural Ecology (Orient Black Swan and Harvard University Press, Harvard Oriental Series, volume 79).



Dr. Tarun Chhabra, a practicing dentist, who has been studying indigenous Toda ethnography and ethnobotany for the last two decades.



Photo Courtesy: Daily Nation, Kenya



Kenya

Pastoralists turn to apps to find grazing fields

By Brian Okinda

For as long as he has been a pastoralist, 47-year-old Isaac Ole Koyei has contended with the difficulties of finding pasture for his livestock, from his base in Ewaso Kedong, Kajiado County. Ole Koyei's herd which numbered about 630 cattle, sheep and goats, just a year ago, has since suffered an acute decline elicited by inadequate water and pasture, disease, and wild animal attacks.

Trekking to distant lands in search of pasture and water has been his way of life. "It is hard to find pasture and water in this region where everyone is looking for a patch of grass for their large herds of livestock, yet the grazing fields are not getting any bigger" he says.

"Pastoralists post updates on places they encounter danger and adversity, livestock diseases and wildlife through their phones, thereby warning their fellow herders on apparent dangers."

In response to this challenge Project Concern International (PCI), an organisation whose mission is to empower people to enhance health, end hunger and overcome hardship, first created the Satellite Assisted Pastoral Resource Management (SAPARM) to provide pastoralists with community grazing maps overlaid with currently existing vegetation, using satellite imagery.

The maps proved to be unreliable since they lacked detail and were inaccessible to pastoralists on the move. From the ashes of this failed project and in partnership

with USAID, Google and iHub, PCI then launched AfriScout, a mobile phone application that displays current water points, pasture, vegetation, areas prone to diseases, areas where herders are likely to encounter wildlife or hostile conditions, and other circumstances that pastoralists need to know about before migrating.

These are displayed on localised grazing maps accessible through the application, enabling pastoralists to make more accurate and cost-effective migration decisions, improve pasture management and reduce the risk of loss.

"The maps are updated after every 10 days so herders are sure to get accurate information on availability of all the resources their livestock need at the click of a button," says Brenda Wandera, PCI's national programme manager and acting country representative.

Pastoralists post updates on places they encounter danger and adversity, livestock diseases and wildlife through their phones, thereby warning their fellow herders on apparent dangers. Now up to seven million pastoralists in Kenya, no longer have to spend valuable time and money on a wild goose chase.

"I would spend more than Sh15,000 and a lot of time scouting for pasture, and was never guaranteed that I wouldn't find that another herd had depleted the pasture I was eyeing by the time I got there," Ole Koyei says.

According to PCI, pastoralists using AfriScout have registered a 48 per cent decline in their herds' mortality, resulting in savings of over Sh506 million every year. Ms Wandera adds that the app not only improved resilience and rangeland management, but also reduced the need for drought-related food aid for herders using it. 🐮

A longer version of this article first appeared on DAILY NATION, Kenya and is available on the link below.
<https://www.nation.co.ke/health/Pastoralists-turn-to-apps-to>

What it takes to educate South Sudan's 'forgotten' communities

Juba, South Sudan: "We knew nothing before," said Mangar Kual, deputy of Warabiei cattle camp. Situated just outside of South Sudan's Rumbek town, Warabiei is one of thousands of sprawling camps where South Sudan's cattle keepers diligently care for their livestock. Cracking a smile, Kual stares at the keypad on his mobile phone. "Now we can dial our phones and we can write," he said.

For the past year Kual, once illiterate, has attended the cattle camp's new school without walls. Spearheaded by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Pastoralist Livelihood and Education project is an European Union-funded pilot program and the first of its kind in South Sudan. It's aimed at promoting education, specifically for roving and isolated communities.

Photo Courtesy: Wikipedia Commons



"Without literacy and numeracy skills, gains made through pastoralist livelihood support cannot be sustained," said Ezana Kassa, project manager for FAO. FAO's new field schools target South Sudan's cattle keepers and their families by embedding trained facilitators into the communities. As pastoralists are required to move frequently, Kassa said they're often left out of basic services, including education. In order to combat this, FAO has trained 20 facilitators, who live and travel with the communities. Currently, the program is operating in 10 cattle camps around the country,

employing two teachers per camp and educating approximately 1,600 children and adults in total.

Huddled under a tree with 30 other students, Kual rests his gun, which he uses to protect his livestock, on the ground before trading it in for a book for his daily, hour-long class.

"Repeat after me," said Chol Mafet, the camp's 22-year-old facilitator, pointing to the small portable blackboard. "What is science?" The students echo back Mafet's words, likely not yet fully comprehending the meaning of what they're saying. Although school is optional, Mafet, who's been teaching in the camp for a year, told Devex people are keen to learn.

"They ask questions about how to achieve peace and how to live together and how to be healthy and protect themselves and their cattle from sickness," Mafet said.

As the nature of the school is unique, so is the curriculum, which is tailored to meet the population's needs. It's designed to provide context and practical examples including relevant livelihood skills.

"Literacy and numeracy are not taken as side learning," Kassa said. Instead, he said, it's integrated in practical "livelihood discussions so that they are more functional to their everyday use."

"Literacy and numeracy are not taken as side learning, but integrated in practical livelihood discussions so that they are more functional to their everyday use."

Additionally, the teachers are selected from the same community in which they work rather than deploying a professional from outside the town or villages. Potential teachers don't need prior experience, but they do need a high school education. They receive three months of training beforehand and periodic trainings thereafter. 🐮

A longer version of this article first appeared on www.devex.com and is available on the link below.
<https://www.devex.com/news/what-it-takes-to-educate-south-sudan-s-forgotten-communities-91170>



Miriam Talavera with Enrique Izquierdo, the coordinator of the School of 21st Century Shepherds. LINO ESCURI

Worsening drought threatens to end nomadic lifestyle of Ethiopia

Ethiopia will soon face its fourth consecutive year of drought, with the lack of rain hitting pastoralist herders worst. Robust responses by Ethiopia's government and foreign aid agencies, and the absence of war, have prevented a repeat of the disastrous famines of the 1970s and 1980s that killed hundreds of thousands.

Ethiopian officials argue the policy of relocating rural communities to areas closer to roads, clinics and schools -- known as "villagisation" -- drives development, but rights groups say it is forced displacement designed to better control the population.

"Where will I go?" Though they have trekked this arid region with their livestock for generations, some ethnic

Somali herders say they are ready to settle down rather than face what seems like drought without end.

Somali herders can lose everything during drought: from their wealth in the form of animals, to their portable homes, which need pack animals to carry them. Halima experienced all of this. "We lost our animals. Where will I go back to?" she asked, waiting in line with dozens of other women to draw water from a borehole.

The UN believes it will need \$895 million to respond to this year's drought and Ethiopia's parliament this month chipped in five billion birr (\$182.7 million, 148.9 euros) for disaster response, state media reported. These emergency funds pay for food, water and fodder

MEET SPAIN'S UNLIKELY 21st-CENTURY SHEPHERDS

A new program is teaching young people how to breed and care for sheep

By Silvia Hernando

Miriam Talavera went to beauty school. So she's understandably surprised to find herself working under the sun, surrounded by blue turkeys, black sheep and white cows in the middle of a farm. "I would have never imagined" that I'd end up working in the countryside, she says.

The 32-year-old, born near the Western border of Spain in Casar de Cáceres in Extremadura, has volunteered to be one of 11 students at the School of 21st Century Shepherds. The project, based in her town, was launched in 2016 to address the lack of generational initiative in rural professions and revitalize farming knowledge with technological advancements in the field. Other autonomous regions have also joined the movement.

This morning, Talavera has joined eight men and two women -- almost making up every young person in the area -- to visit a farm in the grasslands of Extramadura region where they learn about indigenous sheep breeds. Other days, they work on developmental

aspects of farming or studying pesticides, or learn about sheep breeding, diet and physique. "The old model of the shepherd who spends their mornings with their crook and bag, watching their herd graze in the pasture is outdated and must be reinvented," says Enrique Izquierdo, the school's coordinator. "The latest thing we've been working on is using satellite images to locate optimal grazing land".

"This is a profession you can make a living from," says Izquierdo

Miriam Talavera's plans include farming sheep and perhaps in the near future, creating a dairy farm. "This is a profession you can make a living from," says Izquierdo. Another way is through "star products" such as the famous Casar cheese which is made from sheep's milk from the region. As Izquierdo points out this renowned cheese depends upon "the farmers that produce the milk"

The article was originally in written in Spanish and was translated by Laura Rodriguez. It can be read @ https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/01/18/inenglish/1516279265_141758.html

that keeps people and animals alive, but officials say it ultimately does little to alleviate the privation of drought-hit nomads. Aid workers are trying not only to get emergency food to hungry people but to come up with ways to prevent them from starving in the first place.

Beyond just cushioning people from future droughts, the UN's Ethiopia head Ahunna Eziaakonwa-Onochie said the strategy is to offer services such as schools to nomadic communities that were otherwise hard to reach.

"Somali herders can lose everything during drought: from their wealth in the form of animals, to their portable homes, which need pack animals to carry them."

"Now that they are forced, actually by the circumstances into sedentary kinds of lives, we start to see that opportunity to provide education in a more consistent way for the kids," Eziaakonwa-Onochie said. The nomadic herder lifestyle is common across Africa and has long defied government attempts to change it. But Ethiopia spends more time and money exerting control over its people than most, and officials say they believe they can reshape Somali herders.

"If we give pastoralists water and they don't have to go 50, 100 kilometres to find it, is that not good?" said Anwar Ali, humanitarian advisor to the Somali regional state. "We're not changing the nomadic lifestyle, we are just improving it." 🐮

A longer version of this article first appeared on New Indian Express and is available on the link below.
<http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2018/feb/13/worsening-drought-threatens-to-end-nomadic-lifestyle-of-ethiopia-1772649.html>