

THE RABARI: A PASTORAL NOMADIC COMMUNITY

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Abstract: The present study is an ethnographic work on the Rabari, a pastoral nomadic or semi-nomadic group of cattle and camel herders living in a number of states in western and north-western India. It traces the routes of migration of these people from place to places stretching over a number of states in North, West and Central India. Apart from giving demographic information, the study discusses the different aspects of the livelihood, social organization and religion of this people based on empirical observation. The development schemes introduced by the government have brought many changes in their way of life. The paper points to the conflict between their traditional practice of grazing and recent forest policy that possesses a challenge to their survival.

Keywords: Rabari, Nomadism, Pastoral, Migration, Livelihood, Social Organisation and Development.

INTRODUCTION

Nomadism is a way of life of people who do not continually live in the same place but move cyclically or periodically. It is distinguished from migration which is non-cyclic and involves a total change of habitat. As per Adam Cooper (Cooper: 1954:390-391) nomadism does not imply unrestricted or undirected wandering; rather it is based on temporary centers whose stability depends on the availability of food supply and the technology for exploiting it. In his reckoning, the term nomad encompasses three general types: Nomadic hunters and gatherers, Pastoral nomads and Tinker or Trader nomads (Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol-8:753).

India alone is estimated to have a nomadic population of at least 60 million (between 7-10 per cent of the population) (National Convention, 2005 and Krätli & Dyer, 2009).

The Rabari community (also spelt as Rabari) is a nomadic pastoral community indigenous to north-west India, particularly modern-day Gujarat. Traditionally, the Rabari kept camels but in recent times they maintain flocks of sheep and goats as well. For decades Rabaris have been camel herders wandering in the arid regions of Gujarat and Rajasthan in search of food and water for themselves and their animals.

The Report of the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs), known as the Renke Commission Report 2008, also suggests a change but in a somewhat more supportive manner: "Basic civic amenities be provided to the DNTs living in colonies and clusters... (but) times have changed and the communities have reached a dead end, where they cannot continue with their wandering lifestyle. Any more... top priority should be given to create new

settlements where activities like housing, education and creation of the source of income will be started simultaneously.”

According to Campbell (1880: 80) Rabari link their origin with Lord Shiva through their mythical ancestor Sambal, whom Shiva created out of his sweat along with the camel. Another version is Shiva that Goddesses Parvati look after the camel until one day she refused to do it any longer. So, he made doll out of grass, put life into it and entrusted camel to its care- that of the first Rabari.

According to another account, Shiva gave Sambal tree to his assistant Ganas and *apasaras* (celestial damsels), as wives and from them he had a son and four daughters. Shiva then asked Sambals, now when he had a large family, he should leave his celestial abode and live outside. From that time onwards Sambal was known as Rahbari, i.e. he who lives outside (Enthoven 1922, 1990:116).

Raika is the initial name of the Rabari. According to the informants when this universe was created, Lord Shiva and Parvati were worried about camels and sheep that who will look after them. Then they asked each community for this responsibility but every community denied for it. Hence finally goddess Parvati made a statue and Lord Shiva made it alive. But to continue the lineage Lord Shiva sent one Apsara named Rai, among the seven Apsaras. So whoever have the ancestry of the Apsara Rai are called Raika [Rai+ Ka(belongs to)].

It is also learnt that after many years some of them migrated from original place to another place they are being called Rebari {Re + Bar (Re: living+ Bar: Outside)}

Rabari community is the subgroup of *Maaldhari* community. *Maaldhari* means (*Maal*: Property/ Cattle and *Dhari*: Holder/ Owner) who owns the cattle. There are several communities named: Bharwad, Rebari, Charan, Aahir, Gadvi etc. Here, those who look after sheep and keep camel for transportation are called Rebari, those who graze Gir cow are called Bharwad.

Rabari of Gujarat and *Kathiyawadi* Bharwad have ‘Mama-Bhanja’ (uncle-nephew) relation. Other names given to Rebari are Devasi and Desai.

Those who are from Gujarat are called Rabari but the Rabari who reside in Surat, Patan and Veraval districts of Gujarat are called Desai. Those who are from Rajasthan are called Raika and Dewasi. Rabari of Gujarat, prefer their name as Rebari. Rabari of Rajasthan prefers their name as Devasi as first preference and the second preference is Rebari.

PATTERNS OF MIGRATION

In the Kutch district, the Rabaris follow three distinct patterns of migration, which are season-based movements: small-range migration within Kutch; long-range migration between Kutch and Gujarat hinterlands, and circular migration within a delimited area, outside Gujarat (Salpeteur et al., 2015).

The Rabaris are divided into sub-groups based on geographical location, which

are known as parganas. Three major sub-groups residing in Kutch are the Dhebarias, Vagadias and Kutchis.

The Kutchi sub-group in contemporary times leads sedentary lifestyle but still keeps animals like cows, sheep, goat and camels in certain cases. They reside between Nakhatrana and Bhuj talukas.

The Vagadia sub-group resides in the Vagad area near Bachau taluka. They migrate only within the Gujarat state.

The Dhebaria sub-group resides between Anjar, Mundra and Bachau talukas. The Dhebriars are known for their hospitable nature, and thus derive their name from Dhebar. Dhebarias prominently migrate with their *maal* (cattle) on a national scale to states such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Among all the Rabari sub-groups, the Dhebarias are credited with having achieved the most extensive scale of migration.

The story of their arrival in Kutch, Gujarat, is a story of momentous migration from the Himalayas to Punjab, Haryana, Mathura, Rajasthan and, finally, into Kutch via Pakistan. The community is known by different names in different states, like Rabari in Gujarat, Raika in Rajasthan, Pal in Punjab, among others.

In terms of original home of Rabaris several theories are propounded and their folklore states that they came from parts of Rajasthan and from Baluchistan towards Kutch. The original home of Rabaris was Marwar. According to one account, the Rabaris of Kutch had their home in Jhalra Patan in the time of Allauddin Khalji. In one of his expeditions to Rajputana he heard about the extraordinary beauty of a Rabari girl of that place and wanted to marry her. The Rabaris crave a short respite to consider the matter, giving their bards as hostages. They then secretly left the place (Davidson: 1993:87).

According to present study all of them have migrated from Jaisalmer Rajasthan during princely period. Some of them settled in Jodhpur and others moved towards Kutch at the time of Khilji rule. Some of the Rabaris migrated from Jodhpur and Kutch to the Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra state around 70 years ago.

Rabari of Rajasthan has migrated from Jodhpur, Pali, Jalor, Chiroi, Badmer and Pindwada districts. Most of them are from Pali and Jalor districts. They around Itarsi, Khandwa, Baitul, Bhopal and Jabalpur of Madhya Pradesh and Amravati and Akola districts of Maharashtra within one year as per season and crop pattern. So, they graze their cattle in Maharashtra only four months of a year and rest of the eight months they move to Madhya Pradesh.

Rabari of Gujarat migrated from Anjar, Bhachav and Gandhidham tehsils of Kutch district. Some of them had migrated through Madhya Pradesh around 70 years ago. At first they entered Khandesh region, then they moved towards Vidharbha and Marathwada region and some of them moved from Vidharbha to Chhattisgarh and some others from marathwada to Andhra Pradesh. Now, those

who are in Vidharbha and Marthwada according to season and cropping pattern are moving around Wardha, Nagpur, Chandrapur, Bhandara, Gadchiroli, Gondiya, Yavatmal and Naded districts. So, this section of the Rabari graze their cattle only in Maharashtra for whole year.

The Rabari often ascribes their migration out of Kutch to the area being a drought-prone region, which affects the availability of the grass, fodder and water essential for their animals. Hence, main cause of migration is availability of grazing land, fodder and water in forest as well as agricultural field.

This migration does not help them in improving economic condition because Sheep rearing is their subsistence economy.

The Rabaris mostly migrate in groups, composed of individual families. Whole family migrates except Children who are studying and very old age person who cannot move. Due to this migration factor, the families of this community have disassociated and segregated. Because those who are studying and those who are very old have to stay at their native places and female of the family has to stay with children and old person to look after them. We did not find any complete family together during our study except those who have very young kids below 5 years.

Geographical distribution of given community in Gujarat is Anjar, Mundra, Gandhidham, Bhachav and Bhuj tehsil of Bhuj District. In Rajasthan the maximum distribution is in Pali and Jalor district and some of the population is in Jodhpur, Chiroyee, Badmer, Pindwada. In Maharashtra, their main distribution is in Nagpur, Wardha, Amravati, Akola, Bhandara and Nanded. And also their distribution is in some parts of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh of India.

The Raikas are mostly concentrated in the border districts of Pali, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Jalore and Bikaner. A very small proportion of them (less than 1.5 per cent according to one estimate) are predominantly nomadic, travelling with and grazing their flock of sheep, goats and a few camels across states often for as many as 12 months in a year. Some among them avoid Madhya Pradesh (MP) and prefer to go through Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Haryana.

Dialect

They use Hindi and Marathi language to communicate with other communities. And Rabari of Gujarat use Kutchi-Gujarati Dialect to communicate within the community. And Rabari of Rajasthan use Marwadi to communicate within the community.

Rabari of Gujarat has Kutchi dialect which has Abugida script which is normally known as Gujarati script. And Rabari of Rajasthan has Marwadi dialect and they use Devnagri script.

They do not have particular code or sign language but they use different sounds to command sheep and camel.

CHARACTERISTIC DRESS PATTERNS

Lehenga- choli and chunni is the common dress pattern of Rabari women and *Dhoti, Angarkha* and turban is the common dress pattern of Rebari men. Regarding women, they strictly follow their traditional culture. Married women cover their face with *Chunni* in front of all male who are elder than husband at husband's family. Husband does not utter their wife's name and vice versa.

Women from Gujarat commonly wear black colour lehenga and chunni which is made up of wool, long blouses of various colours at the front with typical stitching pattern. All married or unmarried women use same dress pattern. Widows wear black colour blouses with same stitching pattern. Women wear very less and simple ornaments. Male wear complete white outfit with a little embroidery on it and the white turban.

The cause for wearing black among Rabari women of Kutch is that long ago when all Rabaris lived in Rajasthan, the King of Jaisalmer fell in love with a beautiful Rabari woman, but her family said: "Even though you are our king she cannot marry outside caste". This did not please the king, the Rabaris knew they have to flee, and sitting together in a circle they threw salt in cup of water and drank it vowing never again to taste the salt of that country. As they fled the Raja dispatched his soldiers in hot pursuit. There was a massacre and rather than succumb to the king, the young woman prayed to the Mother Earth to save her. The goddess obligingly opened and swallowed her. Ever since the rabaris who made it to Kutch have worn black as sign of mourning and the place where the woman died is sacred to them. For that historic disjuncture there are virtually no marriages between the Rabaris of Rajasthan and those of Kutch (Also referred in Randhawa, 1998:116).

Women from Rajasthan wear colourful outfits mostly made up of velvet or cotton with lots of ornaments. Unmarried girls wear fully covered blouses and married women wear normal short blouses. Widows give up all the ornaments and mostly prefer dark outfits. Large white or sky blue coloured bangles till shoulder are the necessary ornament for married women. Men wear white outfits but the red turbans hence they are also called Laal Pagdiwale.

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

To show the age-wise and sex-wise composition, only the population of Rabari of Gujarat has been classified because Rabari of Rajasthan stays here only for four month and rest of the major period they move to Madhya Pradesh.

The total population of the Rabari community in Maharashtra in the year 2020 is 572 persons, out of which 302 persons constituting 52.80 per cent are males and 270 persons constituting 47.20 per cent are females (see Table: 01) showing details of age group wise and sex wise composition of the Rebari of studied villages in Maharashtra Maximum number of persons of 67 are in the age group of 05-09

years, of which 39 persons (12.91 per cent) are males and 28 persons (10.37 per cent) are females, while minimum number of persons of 08(1.40 per cent) are in the age group of 75-79 years, of which 03 persons (0.99 per cent) are males and 05 persons (1.85 per cent) are females.

TABLE- 1: AGE GROUP-WISE AND SEX-WISE COMPOSITION OF THE RABARI IN THE YEAR 2020

Sl.No	Age group	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1	0-4	34	11.26	24	8.89	58	10.14
2	5-9	39	12.91	28	10.37	67	11.71
3	10-14	32	10.60	23	8.52	55	9.61
4	15-19	34	11.26	30	11.11	64	11.19
5	20-24	19	6.29	24	8.89	43	7.52
6	25-29	27	8.94	20	7.41	47	8.22
7	30-34	17	5.63	19	7.04	36	6.29
8	35-39	18	5.96	16	5.92	34	5.94
9	40-44	15	4.97	19	7.04	34	5.94
10	45-49	22	7.28	14	5.18	36	6.29
11	50-54	9	2.98	7	2.59	16	2.80
12	55-59	6	1.98	8	2.96	14	2.45
13	60-64	7	2.32	15	5.55	22	3.85
15	70-74	4	1.32	7	2.59	11	1.92
16	75-79	3	0.99	5	1.85	8	1.40
17	80+	6	1.99	5	1.85	11	1.92
	Total	302	52.80	270	47.20	572	100

[Source: Primary data, 2020]

The sex ratio of Rebari is 894 per 1000 male according to the present study in Maharashtra, 2020 which is less than the sex ratio of Maharashtra state i.e. 925 per 1000 male and also less than the National sex ratio i.e. 944:1000.

Literacy

According to primary data (2020), 171 persons (33.33per cent) are literate (including drop out population), of which 106 persons constituting 39.55 per cent are males and 65 persons constituting 26.53 per cent are females. 342 persons (66.67per cent) are un-literate out of which 162 persons constituting 60.45 per cent are males and 180 persons constituting 73.47 per cent are females.

Sex wise data of education reveal that there are about 48 persons (9.36 per cent), who are in primary level of education, out of which 26 persons (9.70 per

cent) are males and 22 persons (8.98 per cent) are females. As many as 48 persons constituting 9.36 per cent reported to have secondary level of education, out of which 34 persons (12.69 per cent) are males and 14 persons (5.71 per cent) are females. About 03 individuals comprising 0.58 per cent reportedly have high school level of education, out of which all 03 persons (1.12 per cent) are males. Only 01 boy is in graduation level and only one girl is in technical level of education which is reflected in Table No.2.

TABLE 2: SEX-WISE EDUCATION LEVEL OF THE RABARI IN MAHARASHTRA

Sl No.	Education level	Total	Percentage	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	Non literate	342	66.67	162	60.45	180	73.47
2	Primary	48	9.36	26	9.70	22	8.98
3	Secondary	48	9.36	34	12.69	14	5.71
4	Higher	3	0.58	3	1.12	0	0
5	Graduation	1	0.19	1	0.37	0	0
6	Technical	1	0.19	0	0	1	0.41
	Total	101	19.69	64	23.88	37	15.10
Excluded up to 5 years of children		59	10.31	35	11.59	24	8.89

[Source: Primary data, 2020]

Dropout Rate

Present study found that maximum 58 (11.31 per cent) persons out of which 33(12.31 per cent) males and 25 (10.20) females have dropped out after secondary level of education followed by 08 (1.56 per cent) per cent out of which 5(1.86) persons males and 03 (1.22 per cent) females have dropped out after primary level of education. About 04(0.78 percent) persons, all are males have dropped out after higher secondary level of education. (See table no. 3)

TABLE 3: DROPOUT RATE OF RABARI IN MAHARASHTRA

Education level	Total	Percentage	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
Primary	8	1.56	5	1.86	3	1.22
Secondary	58	11.31	33	12.31	25	10.20
Higher	4	0.78	4	1.49	0	0
Graduation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	70	13.65	42	15.66	28	11.44

[Source: Primary data, 2020]

In comparison to Rabari of Gujarat, Rabari of Rajasthan have low drop-out rate. During the present study it has been observed that some boys from Rajasthan are getting professional education like Pharmacy and some are getting basic degree like BA. In case of Rajasthani Rabari, access to education for girls is very low because they do not believe in keeping girls away from parents.

On other hand the girl children of Gujarati Rabari are having more access to education because they do not have any problem if girl live away from parents. Gujarati Rabari gives same preference to girls and boys in case of education. Their annual expenditure on education of one child is ten to twenty thousand rupees.

Marital status

The sex wise marital status of the Rabari community of Maharashtra in the year 2020 is shown in Table .04. From the table, it is observed that there are about 281 persons, constituting 49.13 per cent of the total population is unmarried, out of which 166 persons (54.97 per cent) are males and 115 persons (42.59 per cent) are females. There are as many as 262 persons who are married constituting 45.80 per cent of the total population of the Rabari community, out of which 131 persons (43.38 per cent) are males and 131 persons (48.52 per cent) are females. There are about 24 individuals comprising 4.20 per cent of the total population of the Rabari community who are reported as widows and only 5 persons (0.87 per cent) are reported as widowers.

TABLE 4: MARITAL STATUS OF RABARI IN MAHARASHTRA

	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Married	131	43.38	131	48.52	262	45.80
Unmarried	166	54.97	115	42.59	281	49.13
Widow	0	0	24	8.89	24	4.20
Widower	5	1.65	0	0	5	0.87
Total	302	100	270	100	572	100

[Source: Primary data, 2020]

Marital Circle

They do not have intra-clan marital relations but they do have inter-clan marital relations within the range of 25 kms. They prefer to marry within the same Tehsil.

Girls get engaged (*Sambandh*) at the age of nine to sixteen and boys between twelve to twenty years of age. They get married once girls reach 18 years of age and boys 21 years. If once girls and boys get engaged, they cannot break the tie at any cost.

Exchange marriage (*Atta-Satta*) is preferred by Rabaris.

Widows generally remarry, where the best suitor is supposed to be the husband's younger brother. The rule of divorce is also common and both men and women are free to untie the marital knot. A divorced woman is allowed to marry second time.

They do not have marital relation between Gujarati and Rajasthani Rabari because their natives are very far from each other.

LIVELIHOOD

The traditional occupation of the Rabari community is cattle herding. The community primarily maintains flocks of sheep and goat in present times, but their history states that they were originally camel herders. The Rabaris undertake large-scale migration to various parts of Gujarat and other states of India to graze their animals.

Sheep are main source of their livelihood. The new-born male lambs are sold after 4 months of birth and keep the female lambs with them. Farmers and Rabari enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, grazers provide the farmers with dung fertilizers in exchange of grazing privileges.

They also earn during summer season by staying in agricultural fields, here sheep dung is a good organic fertilizer in cheap rates for the farmers and hence farmers pay per night for Rabari's settlement in their agricultural field. Here Rabari earns 1500-2000 Rs. Per 1000-1500 sheep per night. This is the only season Rabari get a chance to earn money from cultivators. According to farmers it helps in fertilizing the land for next three years.

The sale of wool from sheep and goat has diminished exponentially for the Rabari. Earlier city traders used to send people to cut wool for which the Rabari had paid; but in present times wool does not fetch any price. In such a condition, the Rabari themselves cut the wool and either use it to make rope to tether the lambs or choose to discard it. Nowadays, due to availability of factory made blankets, nobody is interested to buy it.

Employment cycle

Since Rabari are pastoral nomadic community they engaged in grazing activity

for whole year. Their movement pattern is completely depended upon agricultural calendar. As per cropping pattern they move one place to another. They organize and reorganize the groups according to situation and season.

At present they are organized into small groups of 2-3 households. It has been observed that one small group consist minimum four members which include one female and three males. Where female look after all household chores, two males are engaged in sheep rearing and one male remains engage in searching of new grazing and staying place. In this small group one lady look after the group members in Maharashtra and other lady look after the children of this group who are studying at native places in Gujarat.

After cotton harvesting i.e. after Holi Festival to June month or till start of monsoon they will re-organize their groups which will include 8-10 households. At this period cultivators ask Rabari to stay in their fields with sheep for land fertilization purpose.

Once monsoon starts they re-organize their groups into big groups of 90-100 households and stay in barren lands near urban areas and forest areas. This is the toughest period for them for grazing because all agricultural fields get engaged in new cultivation of different crops. They have to move towards forests due to scarcity of grazing land and fodder but forest department does not allow them. In such situations they have to bribe forest officials to graze their sheep in forest areas. This is the main reason of grouping large number of households so that they will have minimum shares in bribing. Also more physical power of men can protect cattle from wild animals. All households contribute money to the leader and he handles all the movements and stay.

The men of the family are the only producing members and in few cases male kids of age above 12 years can also be considered as producing members but the female and kids are the consuming members.

Division of labour

The roles for women and men in each *beda* are distinctly defined.

The eldest male member of the family keeps searching for next grazing place where they consider the facility for fodder and water.

The sole responsibility of the Rabari men is to graze their cattle and look after the business end of their profession, which is selling the lam, milk and wool among other produce. Any particular Rabari *Maaldhari* (cattle herder) may sell a part of his cattle a minimum of two times. The price for a particular sheep or goat depends on two factors, its age and health, usually fetching around ₹3000 to ₹5000 per animal. The Rabari shepherds, who maintain flocks of sheep and goat, do not sell the milk on a large scale. It is predominantly used for their own family's usage.

Other male members are mostly involved in grazing activity which includes

male children above 12 years.

The Rabari women are responsible for camping and decamping up the *beda*. The diligent Rabari women look after the cooking, cleaning, washing, tending to the children, grazing camels and tending to the young lambs, churning buttermilk, making ghee, curd and butter. The ladies look after complete domestic work, fetching or arrangement of water, collecting wood for cooking purpose, grazing camels, transportation, packing, unpacking and settlement and other household chores.

Responsibility of buying daily basics or expenditure is on both male and female as per convenience. Women do not interfere in any strategy making related to sheep rearing. Also men do not interfere in what women do or how much they spend.

The status of women among Rabari is almost equal to that of men, because according to men, women are the part and partial of their livelihood as women look after everything that men need during this livelihood pattern. Hence women do not feel oppressed or disrespected in this community.

Despite of having nomadic life women have not experienced any molestation or harassment from men of other community as well as own community yet.

They accept girl child happily and they give her good necessary upbringing. No female foeticide has been observed till now. But they prefer male child over a girl child because boys can help them in sheep rearing and girls will get married and leave their houses. Hence they want at least one male child to look after the parents and the property in their old age.

Ownership

They mainly own sheep and male camel. Sheep for earning purpose and camel are for transportation purpose. Rabari divide their cattle among the siblings where they give some sheep to the sisters and parents and from the remaining Sheep brothers divide equally. This is mostly after marriage of elder brother.

Vulnerability

During their transit they face uncertain incidences like accidents of sheep by heavy vehicles, theft, diseases of sheep. Accident of sheep has become very common phenomena during transit. They lose minimum 40-50 sheep at a time. And this results into big loss in their economy.

They still believe in supernatural power, they relate every situation and incident with god, according to them whatever happens is god's willing. They counsel themselves by believing on this.

It has been learnt with Rabari of Rajasthan that during stay they face the incidents of theft. In the night group of people mostly from the Bhill, Banjara and Kanjar community come in pickup vans with weapons like bow and arrow and attack then take 15-20 sheep, this happens mostly in Alirajpur and Jhabua district

of Malwa region.

Sometimes when farmers spray poison in and around field for protection from wild boar but accidentally sheep graze on that land and die ultimately.

As per mentioned above they move according to season and especially during rainy season they loss 10-20 per cent sheep due to diseases. And this phenomenon affects their economy. In rainy season they move towards forest but as per forest policy they cannot enter into forest area because 'sheep eat tips of the new branches which inhibit growth of plants. And also land becomes hard due to long stay of sheep because of which grass and plant cannot grow on that land' - according to forest officials. Hence it can be said that sheep rearing in forest area can be harmful for environment. As per mentioned they are not allowed in forests according to forest policy but they have no option left to survive during rainy season but to go into the forest. They have to pay money regularly to graze their sheep in forests as bit guard level forest workers exploit them economically. Sometimes forest officials cease the sheep for 7 days and finally auction them.

Hence whatever they earn in rest of seasons they have to spend it all during rainy season just to graze their sheep in forest area.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Being a nomadic community, they do not have any fixed territory. They move from one place to another according to ecological condition. Dyer and Choksi (2006:163) write how Rabaris used to sustain migrating animals by offering farmers the dung and urine as fertilizer in exchange for resting places along migratory routes. The farmers welcomed them and even gave them gifts.

Even though they are in Maharashtra for last 70 years they still feel that they belong to Gujarat. But they maintain their harmonial relations with local people wherever they move. In Pawnar village a family from Teli Community has established a brother-sister relationship. That family built a *Samadhi* (temple) after the death of a Rabari person in this village.

Rabaris are like threads linking peoples across landscapes. The traders who buy lam from them, shopkeepers who sell groceries, shops that charge their mobiles, priests in temples along the route who offer solace and advice, chemists who are their doctors as well as veterinarians, and farmers who invite them to settle on their land just ahead of ploughing. These are all relationship networks created by the Rabaris.

Social Grading

The Rabari social organisation is characterized by a clan system: the clans are locally called *atak/shak*. In Kutch they are divided into thirteen *atak/shak* or sub-divisions. But during present study Ajana, Karotra, Karamata, Siwadia, Aal, Baar, Khatana,

Khamblia, Garsar calns (*atak/shak*) have been found. Among these clans Siwadia, Aal and Baar consider themselves as brothers so they do not have marital relation within them. It has been found that in Rabari of Gujarat, pronunciation of clan name changes according to the gender such as Ajana - Ajani, Karotra - Karotri etc.

Social Designation

Rabari are the part of Hindu caste system. During discussion it has been learnt that they rank themselves just below to the Brahmin in the caste hierarchy. And Rabari of Rajasthan considers themselves as Rajput which comes under Kshatriya.

At group level Rajput Rebari and Desai feel superior to any other group of Rabari

Rabari are not discriminated or excluded from access to sources of water; place to worship; schools; and public places. But informants claim that in urban area like Nagpur city they face a little discrimination.

Social control

The Rabari do not have traditional Panchayat system but they are united under some leadership. The head of the group is called *Patel*. The *Patel* is unanimously elected, and needs to possess a particular set of skills. The first and foremost quality that the members of the group seek in their *Patel* is trustworthiness. The *Patel* needs to be very articulate, and must maintain contacts with various villages and other groups along their route of migration. He needs to negotiate and deal with the panchayat, sarpanch of the village or individual farm owners to seek permission to graze in areas in or around their lands, also dealing with forest officials, government officials and NGOs. The most important skill expected from a *Patel* is his ability to scout for and identify the best and most suitable areas to camp and graze for his groups. The basic requirement of any particular camping site is availability of water, grass-fodder for the animals and its proximity to a village where requirements ranging from rations to medical needs can be met. The *Patel* may retain his status as long as his group trusts him. There is no fixed tenure or regulations for electing the *Patel*. If the group begins to lose trust in their *Patel*, the elders gather and identify worthy individuals, one of whom is then elected as the next *Patel* of their group.

There are 3-4 group leaders at Maharashtra. Around 90-100 small groups come under one group leader.

Everyone has Aadhar card, Voter Id card some of them have PAN card and ration card and health card of their respective states i.e. Gujarat and Rajasthan. Very few of them are holding Aadhar and Voter Id of Maharashtra state.

They are taking efforts to buy a land in Maharashtra so that they would show the domicile evidence of Maharashtra state and would have appeared on the state community list. During our present study we observed that some of them

have purchased land in Makardhokda, Samudrapur and Chandrapur. They have purchased land in Makardhokda in 1960 and at present it has become 17 families within 60 years. In Samudrapur there are 60 plots of 10X10 Sq ft purchased by Rabari community in 2009.

RELIGION

The Rabari are devout and fervently religious people, and follow the Hindu religion. The most revered deity, or in the colloquial language their gurudwara, is Vadvala (Vadvara) Dev, which is the trinity of Ram, Lakshman and Janaki (Sita). The primary gods worshipped by the Rabari community are Shiva, Ram and Hanuman. Navmi is their primary festival. Apart from these festivals, Diwali, Holi, Navrati and Dussehra are always widely celebrated.

Rabari strongly believe in Saint Ramdevbaba. They visit Ramdevbaba temple Wani in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra every year on *Magh, Shukl paksh, Duj*(2nd moon) i.e. 26th January 2020 of that year to put their wish and they believe that *Ramdevra* fulfils the wishes. Maximum devotees ask for son or children to the Ramdevra and they got their wish ('*mannat*') fulfilled. Ramdevbaba temple at Wani, *Magh, Shukl paksh, Duj*(2nd moon).

The Rabaris also worship kuldevis or their clan deities. Kuldevis of the Rabari community are based on the clan. Khodiyar Mata is the deity of Ajana clan; Sheshma is the deity of Karotra clan; Shakat (Shakti) Maa is the deity of Karamta clan; Lebojmaa is the deity of the Siwadiya, Aal, and Baar clans; Mohmaa is the deity of Khatana clan; Chamunda Maa is the deity of Khamblia clan and Momai is the deity of Garsar clan.

The Rabari also worship several community heroes such as Pabu Dada, Goga Dada and Vachra Dada. These heroes are often individuals who have sacrificed their lives to protect animals, or who have performed acts of great valour for the well-being of the community.

Commemorative hero stones, called *Samadhi*, are installed on the outskirts of the villages by Rabari. A *samadhi* is installed to commemorate community *Bhagat* at Pawnar Tehsil of Wardha district. It has been seen during present study that there are about thirty *samadhis* have been installed at Ramtek of Nagpur district. They consider Ramtek as a holy pilgrimage at Maharashtra.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMMES

There are no developmental programmes for the Rabari of Maharashtra from government. It might be because they are not considered as residents of Maharashtra till now. Also they are not able to avail any government facilities like ration, pension, education, health, housing scheme and sanitation etc.

The NGOs like Centre for Peoples Collective is looking forward for

utilisation of fur of sheep for making fertilizers and milk for chocolate making and Sangharshvahini samiti is working for their rights regarding grazing.

No effort has been taken by community for development in Maharashtra but there are some people in Gujarat who are taking efforts to provide good education by opening residential schools.

CONCLUSION

In the present context nomads such as the Rabaris, however, see their transhumant lifestyle as the cause of their being “left behind”. Dyer and Choksi (2006:171) write that, it is this mobility rather than the rigidity of government provisions and the nature of development policies that is viewed by pastoralists, rural communities and educational managers as the reason for Rabaris’ backwardness

Present primary data also suggests that they are not getting minimum civic facilities due to nomadic nature. They do not have houses they stay temporarily in any agricultural field and government land. They have two or three cots which they use as their house. Kitchens are open, they use small cot to arrange utensils and for hearth Rabari of Gujarat use three stones and Rabari of Rajasthan cut a big iron pot and use it as a hearth. Woods are the main source of cooking for both. They do not have any access to the electricity, they use torch whenever they need at night. They charge their mobile phones at the nearby households of other communities. Wells, deep wells, river, ponds and water tanks of public places are used as source of water.

Due to their nomadic nature there is no access to schools in Maharashtra hence they study at their native places where schools are provided by community and government at free of cost.

And because they have to send their children far from themselves for studying, prefer sending them after 5 to 6 years of children’s age. Some of them stay in hostels and some of them stay with their local guardians (relatives) then no matter if it is a girl child or male child.

There is high drop-out rate among Rabari of Maharashtra because they are being called back to assist their parents, Boys for sheep rearing and girls for household chores. And those who are not interested in education are called back after 5th- 8th standard. But in some cases those who are studying well they are getting opportunity to study further.

According to the study it can be concluded that there is conflict of interests between livelihood pattern of Rabari in Maharashtra and forest policy. Forest policy does not allow them to enter in forest region for grazing and Rabari cannot survive during rainy season without grazing their sheep into forest. It will be hard to fulfil the need of grazing if they go back to their native with their cattle because of lack of grazing land at their native place.

Licence for grazing in the forest during rainy season and cattle insurance are the most important thing that they need more than any other of government facility. They say “We can manage all other things only if we get licence and insurance facility from the Government”.

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