

KHANABADOSHI: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC HISTORY OF MOBILITY IN RAJASTHAN

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Abstract

Nomadism is as old as the history of mankind. Nomads are found in most parts of the world. Quest for various things like food and other necessities have made people to move from one place to another. Throughout India, large numbers of nomads have been moving and have played definite role in the set-ups in which they operate. India is a unique array of nomadism. The Vedic literature refers to numerous categories of nomads.¹ Nomads have been classified on basis of their occupation and the period of movement. Some scholars classify them as true nomads and semi-sedentary nomads. Misra has made two broad divisions namely symbiotic nomads and natural nomads. All the nomadic communities can be classified under four major heads, namely; Hunter-gatherers, Goods and service nomads, Entertainers and the Religious Nomads.

Keywords: Nomads, pastoral nomads, skilled nomads, service providing nomads, Rajasthan

Many erudite scholars have championed the social and economic history. But it is incomplete until the role of the nomadic groups is included. Coming specifically to the region of Rajasthan, I am sure all the academic brethren will agree that so far we have not paid attention to these wandering contributors (counterparts), who bothered least to record their socio-economic actions and get their efforts registered, as they were enamoured with their own world that was on the move. Surprisingly, the region of Rajasthan has been the most popular site amongst western scholars to get an insight into the textures of nomadic life.

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Historically, the medieval kingships were based on symbiotic nomadic relationships. The Mongols were nomads and their empire continued to expand on basis of the nomadic associations. The great military commander Timur consolidated his kingdom only with help of the nomadic groups. Similarly, various others also walked the same path and succeeded. Manz has called Tamerlane as the founder of a nomad conquest dynasty.² By looking at both the Arab Bedouin and the Eurasian steppe nomads, Manz, has demonstrated the significant contributions made by the Bedouin and Turco-Mongolian to the cultural production and political identity in the Middle East. He has highlighted the central role that was played by the pastoral nomads in war, trade and state-building.³ Aparna Rao and Michael Casimir estimated that nomads make up around 7% of the India's population. "There is no official data on the number of pastoralists in India, although a figure of 35 million is often quoted,...an older, much-repeated, statement is that pastoralists make up for six per cent of the population...the actual number is closer to a per cent of the Indian population, or about 13 million people."⁴ Out of this the service nomads (non-pastoral) comprise between three to five hundred endogamous groups with occupations like map-seller, embroidery and needle making, medicine sellers, tattooist, basket maker, hut makers, mud wall makers, epic narrators, fortune tellers, genealogists, dancers, singers, acrobats, hunters etc.⁵

The inhabitants of Rajasthan are not unaware/untouched with the nomads and their lifestyle. Nomads engage in diverse relevant activities and make their presence meaningful amongst local communities and then in local cultures. Barring a few exceptions, nomads in general primarily interact with lower and middle peasantry and lower and middle class of the urban centres. They do add charm to the rural life. In this way, they do get integrated in the different aspects of the sub-urban and rural life. However, generally this awareness is limited to the wandering nature of the nomads and in modern centuries their presence mainly knocks as suspension of crime. Being students of social sciences, some do attempt to crack a conversation with the nomads but again that goes out of window the moment the nomads indicate that they are migrating in search of jobs. Here, it is pertinent to highlight the role of memory as it holds different connections with wide and socially diverse contours of culture and the diverse learning processes that are nurtured in due course of interconnection between the memory, folklore and oral history. In recent years, this trajectory has helped to pen the unwritten histories which were earlier dismissed due to the paucity

of the archival data. It was mainly due to the general belief that the nomads have not made any significant contribution in the making of the pre-modern states. The constant subjugation of nomads to poverty and dismissal of their community rights, common property rights, skills and professional activities in the name of modernity governed by the modern administrative structure is another serious matter to be dealt up, separately.

II

In recent years, sociologists and anthropologists have actively engaged to explore the various aspects of nomadic communities. Due to their efforts the studies and researches around nomadic societies have gained momentum and are becoming popular means to suggest ways forward for the sustainable development of the environmentally tough regions. In this long driven process, the arid, and semi-arid regions have also attracted attention. Under the category of arid and semi-arid regions, Rajasthan and Gujarat has become the research base for a large variety of the social and environmental sciences. The vast stretches of sand-dunes marked with aridity in the region of Rajasthan have attracted unique attention due to its diversities (music, bhat, charan, pastoral-nomads etc.) that are contained in indoors of the Thar Desert. Throughout history, nomads offer a vivid insight into the politics, culture and ideology of the region. Thus, it is important to examine their contributions. Many historical sources distantly indicate to the central role played by the nomads in war, trade and state-building. cursory attempts have been made to put light on the role of the pastoral nomads that too mainly in terms of animal supply for war, provisioning of animal products to the growing and newly established cities, livestock rearing and guidance which made long-distance trade possible.⁶ The history of Rajasthan has been mainly studied in terms of the socio-economic aspects, the role of the states and their administrative structures that constantly worked to maximize the extraction of revenue. The launch of the regional-state centric researches was heavily appreciated as they provided the much needed insight into the 'no-goers'⁷ regions. These researches also became guiding lights for exploring and weaving together the various cultural and economic aspects of the region, its unorganized sectors and un-sedentary human resources. Now, with the changing times the states are promoting the sedentary lifestyle subjected to the agricultural production. Its effects on the nomadic communities have been studied by various scholars. After a

prolonged research engagement with the arid and semi-arid region of Rajasthan, it is evident that the role of the nomadic communities is very significant for maintaining the natural landscapes (pastures) and the region specific economy, i.e the livestock.

Khanabadosh, is a Persian term that has been incorporated into Urdu, Punjabi, Pshto and Sindhi. It literally means house-on-shoulders, *khana* (house) *ba* (on) *dosh* (shoulder). Nomadism (*Khanabadosh*) refers to the practice of wandering or perpetual journeying. It is derived from the Greek *nomas*, meaning to roam in search of pasture. John Durham Peters has pointed out; it has a range of other suggestive etymological affiliations.⁸ *Nomads* are also related to *nomos* (law) and *nemesis*, the root of which (*nem-*) has to do with allotment or sharing. The English term *noma* also invokes a sense of grazing, albeit harshly, across a surface. Such origins are useful for distinguishing this practice from other germane experiences, such as exile. As the exile stands for an impossible home-coming. Nomads carry their home with and for them, it is 'always already there, without any hope or dream of a homeland'. Durham Peters has stated that nomadism is about 'being homeless and home-full at once'.⁹ The Ancient Greeks disapproved of nomadism, deeming it inhumane to live without the benefits of the community or *polis*. For them, a wandering life was the sorry lot of society's undesirables and outcasts. Odysseus is the archetypal abject wanderer here, expressing a conception of this particular modality of travel as a test, 'a driven state of existence, a necessitated, even prophesied suffering'.¹⁰ Contrary to it, in South-Asia the mobility is an essential part of life. Raczek has stated that 'Most of Human history in South Asia has been a mobile one'.¹¹ 'Excluding gathering and hunting strategies, other subsistence activities incorporating high levels of spatial mobility are very old in the Asian subcontinent. Presently it is impossible to accurately ascertain the antiquity of peripatetic strategies in South Asia, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest that they have been integral groups within the larger Asian social system for many centuries'.¹² 'In ancient India, apart from pastoral nomads, there developed a class of spatially mobile specialists... The Rig Veda refers to a number of specialized trades, crafts, entertainers etc.'. ¹³ Similarly, the *sanyasi/vaiyragi/muni/bhikhu* or the one who renounced the worldly affairs was respected by all the religious sects and they were the true wanderers as they never lived in one place. A little more precisely, Nomadism implies the movement of the home and the household, i.e., the spatial displacement of the home base and living establishment. Rather, 'it refers to the regular,

repeated, and frequent displacement of people's household and home base and of their community'.¹⁴ There is no rise or fall in the nomadic culture rather there is natural evolution and development. The shifting between the strategies (stability and greater mobility) of adaptation in response to changes is common. The nomadic strategy is a means by which people adapt to thinly resources and to the variability of resources across space and over time. At time, it is also a strategy for avoiding other deleterious environmental such as extreme heat or cold, disease, and predators. Furthermore, as predators are always a risk, so, every adaptation is also political. Above all, given local circumstances, Nomadism is a means for maximizing culturally defined objectives, production, survival, and independence.

III

This paper attempts to explore the history and dimensions of the nomadism in the region of Rajasthan. *Khanabadosh*, *ghumakad*, *bawariya* and *banjara* are interchangeably used terms for referring the nomads in Rajasthan. Interestingly, the last two terms represent the communities that engage in hunting and trading respectively. "nomads" are not a kind of people, but different kinds of people who use a particular strategy -mobility of the household- in carrying-out regular productive activities and in defending themselves' defines the diversity which is core of nomadism.¹⁵ The nomadic groups of pre-modern Rajasthan can be broadly classified as:

1. Pastoral (*Rebaris, gujar, banjara, jat, Gujar, Johiya*)
2. Non-pastoral (*nut, kalbaliyas, lohar, dum*)
3. Hunters and gatherers (*bawariya, bhil, mer, meena*)
4. Religious (*nath jogis, jaga, bhajani, bhhopa, nimbarkites, ramanadis etc.*) and
5. Professional groups (*kanjar, lohar, karaal, chowkidar-meena, bhad-bhujjiya, sansi, charan, bhat, Maganiar, Mir, Langa etc.*)

Interestingly, even now all these groups can be easily encountered while travelling through the length and breadth of the region of Rajasthan. Most of the above mentioned communities live a nomadic life mainly for the purpose of the livelihood, or to maintain the cattle wealth. It is essential for them to protect their livestock as it is a major component of the economy and their specialized occupations are entirely depend on particular cattle-rearing. It is well established that the nomads are capable of infinite adaptations as per the circumstances. Overall, it can be stated that the migration

pattern of nomads is circumstantial, consequently irregular in timing, direction, asymmetrical, generally given to productive activity which is subjected to constant searching, assessing and reassessing relevant information for attaining favourable results and, it is not at all purposeless and directionless movement. They do follow the customary habits and, co-ordinate and mediate with the village agriculturists and tribesmen as they are essential for breeding and securing the resources like grains, food, water etc. The movement with animals requires different type of preparations as many grazers of the herd procreate while the herds are on move.

In the landmass of pre-modern India, the Nomads were a regular feature of the society. Their presence was requisite due to their skills, which were also their professions and means to earn livelihood. Nomads have been inherent cultural transmitters stimulated by environmental conditions and social dynamics.¹⁶ Along with it their significance on political, social and economic frontiers has been immense. Extending commentaries on the frontiers as mentioned in *Al-Hind*, Andre Wink refers to the desert and its wanders that have been mentioned by the Arab geographers around the frontier town of Hind.¹⁷ Ibn Hauqal mentioned that ‘the *Mids* wandered “along the banks of Mihran” from the boundary of Muslim kingdom of Multan to sea, and in desert between Makran and Qamuhul (Famhal), “the frontier town of Hind”.¹⁸ Idrisi locates the *Mids* outside the desert and confirms the wandering nature of the tribe.¹⁹ Gradually, confirming the activity area of the *Mids* from the ninth to eleventh century, Andre Wink also established that the interstitial pastures along the Indus and the desert were zones of high nomadic activities along the North-western frontier.²⁰ Ibn Khaldun highlighted the significance of desert as an economic, social and political arena. His vision and arguments were shaped by the experiences that he encountered while living by the desert of Cairo (Egypt). For Ibn Khaldun, ‘Civilization may be either desert (Bedouin) civilization as found in outlying regions and mountains, in hamlets near suitable pastures in waste regions, and on the fringes of sandy deserts’.²¹ In desert, animal wealth constituted the main component of economy, followed by the control over the trade routes which were sources of direct income, in form of the goods and money. The groups who controlled trade routes provided security along the routes of desert and charged a fee in exchange of the services extended to the diverse groups of travellers. The acquaintance with the desert routes and along sand-dunes made them well-versed in the path finding exercise through the extensive desert of Thar. This intense effort was

undertaken to earn some means for the living. Thus, raid and trade became important means of survival in this frontier region.

Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch has stated that ethnic names often do not identify a specific racial group, rather, they indicate to shift over space and time to enfold a variety of tribes engaged in similar occupations.²² For example, as per the Arabic and Persian reference, Zutt (Jat) only meant 'migrant buffalo breeders from East to the Indus'. Thus the pastoral communities migrating over long distances were prone to variety of influences. In the arid region of Rajasthan, most of the communities are professionally agro-pastorals. 'In Gongani village, Reika and Jat pastoralists cooperate in various pastoral activities, such as shearing sheep, and in Barmer District, Rajput and other herders combine with Reika to form migratory groups'.²³ However, some communities are nomad-pastorals and banjaras are the most popular nomads due to their wide spread utility in different regions.

The mobility of inhabitants (mainly warriors, pastoralists, traders, ascetics, entertainers, service nomads and bards) has shaped the pre-modern Rajasthan. Often, all these groups negotiated in overlapping capacities. In order, to get a glimpse into the long-term relationship between mobility, history, politics, martially, memory and identity formation around various nomadic communities of Rajasthan, here onwards community specific discussions will be initiated.

Negotiating Conflicts: Banjaras-Service pastoral-nomads

Banjaras are the most prominent nomads of the Rajasthan. Therefore, the nomenclature of this community is regularly used as a synonym of wanderer. Supply of food grains and essential commodities for the urban consumption was an important feature of the pre-colonial life in India. The movement of large armies in the plains and difficult terrains has to be kept well supplied. The procurement of the essential items from the producers for the onward supply has to be maintained by the State. The Banjaras were the people who possessed huge livestock's and which were often used at the behest of the ruler for maintaining the balance between demand and supply. They remained at the centre stage during pre and early colonial times. The Banjaras were essentially nomadic composed of heterogeneous elements. Each group had their own systems of belief, rituals and practices. Thus, the notion of plurality (and tolerance!) was ingrained as a norm of their behaviour. Hence, often they practiced rituals and beliefs of the Hindus and Muslims without any

distinction. Generally, they had simple marriages solemnized by the elders of the community. In spite of subscribing different rituals and religious beliefs they displayed the cohesiveness as a 'community'. C.A. Bayly has argued that the Banjaras were Hindu traders who transported mainly grains and salt on pack-bullocks.²⁴ Bayly, further notes that the zamindars normally sold their grain to the itinerant dealers and Banjaras who would take it to distant markets. Whenever the grain had to be delivered to meet the requirement of the fighting armies, garrisons etc. security was provided by the imperial forces. However, it appears that Banjaras themselves undertook the dual task of transport and safety whenever they were hired by merchants for long-distance supplies. He has suggested that the role of Banjaras was crucial in the economies of post-Mughal states but the Banjaras were subjected to a more limited role in the economy after 1800 in both British and Indian territories. Irfan Habib finds the Banjaras as one of the mercantile communities who combined trading and pastoralism. They are like the pastoral tribes of Sindh, Baluchistan and Himalyas. The role of Banjaras in Indian agrarian commerce was far more important and regular than that of the hill tribes (Bhotiyas in Himalayas, Nahmardi traders of Sind and Baluchistan) living on the margins of the sub-continent. In 1891, in the N.W. Province (U.P.) there were 26, 957 Muslims in a total of 66,828 Banjaras.²⁵ The Bamania Bhat, the Baldiya Bhat and the Gavaria are also included under the category of Banjaras.²⁶ Thus the Banjaras played an important role in the internal trade of the country for many centuries before India's colonization. Tapan Raychaudhuri opines, the Banjaras organized the transport of food stuffs by land on pack-oxen in large camps or *Tandas* ranging between 12000 and 20,000 bullocks capable of carrying 1600 to 2700 tons. The number of pack-oxen used by the Banjaras in a single transaction indicates a high magnitude of this trade. He also suggests an upward trend in the volume of Banjara trade.²⁷ The Banjaras played a crucial role as transporters during the medieval centuries. They had an immense control over large quantities of goods in inland trade.

In north-western India due to lack of water ways Banjaras played an active role. But they were equally active in the other regions. The large number of oxen employed by them made possible to transport large quantities of grains from place to place. Banjaras were first described, with some essential details by Barani in his account of the price-control measures of Sultan Alauddin Khalji (r.1296-1316). The Sultan ensured that the peasants should sell the food grains at low, fixed prices to the *karavanis* (people of the caravan) who would

transport the same to the Sultanate's capital. This arrangement was part of his larger fiscal reforms and military maintenance. The headmen of the karavanis were put in chains until they agreed to bind themselves to lift the grains from the countryside and transport it subsequently to the Sultan's granaries. The women children, oxen and their cattle were kept as hostage for their good conduct on the banks of Yamuna.²⁸ Badauni writing in the sixteenth century was the first historian who mentioned about these transporters by the appellation of Banjaras. He referred to them as grain-sellers, and called them "the Banjaras of the Army". He highlighted the social significance of the Banjaras by citing many instances of their non-arrival and the consequent hardships caused to the waiting army and other people.²⁹ Ferishta also confirmed this assessment by noting the role of Banjaras as suppliers to Sikander Lodi's expeditionary force in 1504.³⁰ Interesting instance is noted by Ibbetson "they have a tradition that Akbar dismissed Chaudhri Shah Quli from his service where upon he turned trader or Banjaras."³¹ Due to the absence of the waterways in western India, the bulk of intra-regional and inter-regional trade and transportation relied on the pastoral groups, such as Banjaras and *Rebaris*. However, the camels were considered inferior to the bullocks and bullock carts due to their slow movement. Banjaras are also called by various other names like Manaris³², Mukeri, Labana³³, Wanjari and Baldia.³⁴ The Baldia is called after the Hindi word *Bel* used for oxen; and Baldia means 'one who employs an ox.' The Banjaras are owners of pack-bullocks. Oxen were used as means of transportation.³⁵ For arranging transportation of goods in bulk the Banjaras bought and sold bulls in large number. Moreover, the Banjaras used to replenish their stock of bulls if emergency so required. For example, in 1716, the Banjaras bought 21 bulls by making heavy amounts to the villagers of pargana Tonk.³⁶ A bullock could travel quite fast and it would normally be less expensive than a cart. The pack-oxen travelled slowly, grazing as they moved in herds³⁷ and no one forbid them from grazing the oxen.³⁸ The Banjaras owned large number of oxen. Each *tanda* had nearly 1,000 to 12,000 oxen. Tavernier gives an astonishing figure of 10,000 to 12,000 oxen in a *tanda*.³⁹ Traveling in India, Peter Mundy encountered a *tanda* of Banjaras consisting of 14,000 oxen all laden with grain. Again on the 25th August 1632, he went past by another *tanda* of oxen, numbering 20,000 laden with sugar.⁴⁰ The large number of oxen traveling at a time in a *tanda* subsequently suggests that large quantities of various goods were transported by the Banjaras. The word *tanda* means caravan. It is clear from the usage of the word in the folk-lore.⁴¹

The disturbances caused by the *bhomia* revolts rendered the trade routes un-safe. It was one of the main reasons for the non-arrival of the Banjaras. The imposition of excessive *rahdari* (transit cess) also dissuaded the Banaras from visiting the region. All these factors put together halted the movement of the Banjaras, thereby causing a temporary set-back to the internal trade of goods in the region. The reasons for the non-arrival of the Banjaras for collection of grain,⁴² were sought to be removed by the state; armies were sent to punish the rebellious *bhomias* and local officials were instructed not to demand excessive *rahdari*.⁴³ The non-collection of grains by the Banjaras from the state granaries were immediately reported to the ruler.⁴⁴ *Faujdar*s were ordered to provide security to the Banjaras in order to restore their movement on the routes.⁴⁵ The local officials who themselves were clandestinely engaged in grain trade also persuaded the concerned authorities to reduce the taxes and duties on the Banjaras in order to provide incentive to them to resume the act of buying.⁴⁶ In another document the *amil* of *pargana* Rewari wrote to the *diwan* of Jaipur state and expressed his concern about the non-arrival of Banjaras for lifting huge quantity of *kharif* grains.⁴⁷ In 1686, Tek Chand the *amil* of *pargana* Dausa reported to the Jaipur *darbar* that about 87239 *mans* of grain was lying at the *pargana mandi*. This glut had been caused due to the non-arrival of the traders for collecting grain. The sale was also affected due to the harassment of the traders at the *chowkis* (posts) on account of *rahdari*. Such harassments usually kept the traders away from the *mandis*.⁴⁸ The Banjaras operated both on short and long distance routes. Interesting observations made by different persons about the Banjara trade indicate a kind of specialization in various types of commodities by each caravan. Accordingly, they specialized in carrying salt⁴⁹, food grains⁵⁰, butter⁵¹, sugar, pepper, turmeric⁵², betel-nut, cotton⁵³, saltpetre specially during seventeenth century. Salt was the most heavily supplied commodity by the Banjaras from Rajasthan. For instance in 1666 nearly 6500 *man* (40 *sers* made up a *man*) salt was sold to Banjaras in a single deal.⁵⁴ In the year 1655, the Jaipur state sold nearly 1,15,000 *mans* of salt for rs. 11950 to the Banjaras.⁵⁵ In 1712, from *Pargana* Chatsu, Banjaras carried rice, *tel*, *gur*, *khand*, sugar, *kirana* and salt. The Banjaras carried grains and salt in bulk.⁵⁶ The arrival of Banjaras was eagerly awaited by local officials for lifting nearly 90,022 *mans* of grains stored in various *parganas*.⁵⁷ According to another report about 6000 *mans* of grain was lifted by the Banjaras in 1665 for further transport to Jahanabad (Delhi).⁵⁸ At times, despite their herculean efforts the local officials failed to

attract the Banjaras. At last attempts were made by them to send some wise men to bring the Banjaras to the mandis (syana admi Banjara ne manawa ne bhejya chhe). Very often the Banjaras were given paagh (a turban) as a mark of honour so that they could collect the grain or salt.⁵⁹ Often, the state officials were penalized for charging excess rahdari from Banaras and for troubling and disturbing the banjaras en-route.⁶⁰ Each Banjara community (carvan) has a Nayak, whom all implicitly obey and trust in all matters connected with their traffic discipline and conduct.⁶¹ This responsible and respectable position was enjoyed by Banjaras even during the early medieval times where the carvan traders (Banjara) are to be received well and honourably (*mana purahsara*).⁶² 'Nomadic mobility, in consequence, has a dampening effect on hierarchy and centralizations, on chiefly coercion and oppression. Tribal chiefs thus must be sensitive and responsible to public opinion of tribesmen'.⁶³

Writing about Banjaras of North India, Robert Vardy notes "banjaras have been on Indian scene for more than seven hundred years. While others have crumbled, these nomadic communities have demonstrated their versatility by surviving several onslaughts against their way of life in the nineteenth century, Banjara *tandas* confronted with extinction, evolved modes of adaptation'.⁶⁴ An interesting and fascinating piece of information based in 18th century in connection of Awadh highlights the efforts made by the Banjaras, to give up its nomadic-wandering character.⁶⁵ With the introduction of railways they gradually lost their importance. Still, their knowledge of the routes especially inside the dense forests and mountainous ranges seems to have been used by the colonial authorities while employing them in the railways. The *Banjaras* as a community have invoked a romanticized description; they were seen as the people capable of procuring/transporting of anything and everything. Thus, Nazir Akbarabadi (d.1835) the people's poet from Agra has composed a long Ode titled as *Banjara*, where he has used the superlatives to describe their ventures. Besides giving a vivid description of the items traded, a description of the size of their *tandas*, their lavish lifestyle has also been talked about. Thus Ode is interspersed with the verses describing the instability of the times and the political upheavals. The Ode ends with the moral that the life itself is transitory in nature.

Shrinking Spaces: Rebaris/Raikas-the pastoral nomads

Besides the banjaras, the Rebaris also engaged in the nomadic

activities. Pastoral nomadism of the Baluchi camel traders, Afghan horse traders and Banjaras has been considered as a major frontier of the north-western India which mainly evolved during the twelfth century onwards.⁶⁶ 'The Raikas are the largest group of nomadic pastoralists in India' and migrate with their sheep for more than two-thirds of the year.⁶⁷ Smith termed the Rebaris as 'the semi-nomadic pastoral'.⁶⁸ Salzman states that in a statistical sense, the Reika are heavily committed to pastoralism.⁶⁹ Srivastava's work confirms that Raika and Rebari are same.⁷⁰ In nineteenth century, there were one hundred and three (103) *khaps* of Rebaris.⁷¹ Most of the Rebari *khaps* were named after the Rajput sects such as Bhati, Parmar, Chauhan, Gehlot, Solanki etc. The term Rabari (*Rebari*) was used in the desert for denting persons who engaged in rearing and tending camels. Besides rearing camels, they also steal them.⁷² The camels were indispensable in the desert because they were used to yoke the plough, draw water from well. The camels who bred in the *thals* of Dhat and Barmer were of best breeds. Rebariyo-ri-baasani (*pargana* Sojat) was a hamlet of Rabari/Rebari.⁷³ A lot of Rebaris lived in the *pargana* Siwan, Jodhpur and Medta. Villages namely: Devado, Baay, Bawalu, Katinod, Samdi, Jagisa Kotadi, Asotaro, Jidotari, Hotalu, Karmawaas, Paadsau, etc. of *pargana* Siwan had the Rebari population.⁷⁴ In village Jadotari, Rebaris lived with baniya, Patel and Brahmans.⁷⁵ Eight villages of *pargana* Jodhpur had exclusive Rebari population.⁷⁶ Mostly they lived in the villages that had population of Jats, Rajputs and Mahajans.⁷⁷ 'Most of the Raikas are concentrated in the area around Jodhpur that once constituted the princely state of Marwar. According to their caste traditions their original home was the Jaisalmer area but they left there because of a dispute with the ruling family'.⁷⁸ While grazing camel herds, they lived entirely on the milk of camel (needs to consume it immediately, can't be kept for long as the worms take over the milk soon) and some wild fruits like *kair*, *dasriya*, *kiploi*, etc. The Thoris were close to the Rebaris as proprietors of camels. They hired camels to find employment as convoys to caravans.⁷⁹ Thoris were mainly popular as thieves 'who will bring you either your enemy's head or the turban from it'.⁸⁰ These demarcations and variations in day-to-day life practices and occupations can be attributed to the limitations, posed by this physical space.

The Raikas narrate a mythological story about their origin.⁸¹ According to them, the first Raika was created by Lord Mahadev (Shiva), exclusively for looking after the first camel that his consort Parvati shaped from clay. As per the popular epic of Pabuji, Raika

Harmal was instrumental in introducing the camel in Rajasthan. Since the time Pabuji got the reddish camel into Marwar, the Raikas became camel-breeders 'and later acquired the reputation of 'camel-riding messengers' and 'postmen'. Raikas received awards and laurels for bringing in messages and turbans of princes and warriors killed in battlefields'.⁸² Thus, the Raikas were the service pastoral nomads but were not in regular services. According to Ibbetson, 'they were skilled camel-keepers, which the Muslims were not, and a story goes that once, when camel milk was prescribed for a Jodhpur princess at Akbar's court, no one could milk a she-camel except a Rahbari'.⁸³ Even today Raika community in particular continue to dominate in traditional camel raising, and increasingly in goat and sheep production.⁸⁴ Maru and Godwar are the two groups of Rajasthan raika. Maru Raikas are distributed throughout the state with thick concentrations around Jodhpur and in Pali district. Godwar Raikas are also known as Pitalia or Chalkia (British Gazetteers) and they inhabit in the southern part of district Pali, Jalore and Sirohi districts. Colonial period describe the Maru Raika as camel breeders and the Godwar Raika as sheep raisers.⁸⁵ However, such clear distinctions are a miss at work.

Adam notes 'people of Jaisalmer depend more on their flocks and herds to supply, them with necessities of life than on agriculture' as the soil is unproductive and season capricious.⁸⁶ 'Even agriculturists lead a wandering life migrating regularly to Sindh', many were graziers and kept herds of camels, cattle, sheep and goats.⁸⁷ The people of desert 'rely greatly on their herds and flocks for maintenance'.⁸⁸ During the famines of 1869-99, Jaisalmer was severely affected, so people migrated to Sindh with their herds which numbered 11,725.⁸⁹ Thus, 'grain was procured from Sindh...migrated to Sindh, where they found employment'.⁹⁰ In famines of 1889-1900, rain was less than an inch. Fifty thousand people migrated to Sindh and Bhawalpur with 12 percent horned cattle and twenty percent camels.⁹¹ During droughts, most of the movement was towards Sindh due to its good water sources.

Through a careful study of archaeological remains, Leshnik has indicated at the pastoral nomadism in the regions of Tilwara and Bagor. To determine the patterns of mobility, range of movement and direction of migration, examination of lithic; non-lithic evidences and pottery has also been undertaken at Bagor.⁹² It established that the inhabitants of Bagor were quite mobile and they regularly travelled to the south and south-east, therefore, Bagor lithics were made of both local and non-local material. The pastoral nomadism represents a mode of life that primarily dependent upon herding of

animals and involved regular movements to new pasture lands. The needs of their animals (on which their livelihood is depends) are the important motivating forces in the life of traditional pastoral nomads, and the tracts they inhabit are those providing the kinds of fodder suitable to the species in the herd. Their periodic movements are occasioned by the need to find new pasture land when grazing is no longer possible in the area currently being visited.⁹³ 'Each year after rains, hundreds of thousands of shepherds migrate from Rajasthan into regions of greater forage. Their migration lasts 7-10 months on the average and spans distances between 500 and a 1000 miles. As a rule, the shepherds migrate collectively and move to a new camp location almost every day'.⁹⁴ 'Semi and fully itinerant members...take animals on migrations lasting from three to nine months'.⁹⁵ Moving from one grazing ground to another, rebaris eventually return to their homes before the rains. Their mobile camp is called *dang* (*dhung*) and it 'may consist of a 100 men, women and children, a similar number of camels and 7000-8000 sheep, resembles nothing as much as an entire village on the move'.⁹⁶ Salzman has also highlighted the organisation of the *dhung* which consisted of fifty families and up to ten thousand sheep.⁹⁷ The management of the sheep and camel differs considerably as the camel pick selectively whereas the sheep are the voracious grazers.

The leader of the camp is called *Nambardar* and the second in command is known as *kamdar*. Both of them perform similar types of duties (establishing contacts with other shepherd herds, merchants, local landlords, farmers and officials and information gathering); *Kamdar* becomes active only when the *Nambardar* is away or unable to perform his duties. The leaders of the individual flocks that comprise the mobile camp are called *mukhiyas*. All the elders of the camp form the council for consultations and decision making regarding the market relations and external affairs and interaction, camp and flock management (security and watch-keeping, time for shearing, host and space for shearing etc.), details of migration such as route to be followed, distance to be travelled, rotations to graze the camel and sheep, camp formation and dissolution. The professional wool shearers called *lavas* are engaged to clip the wool. For meeting the food requirements of the flock the raikas mainly depend on food-gathering and hunting. They collect grains from villages after harvest. It has also been noticed that pastoral nomads subsisted largely on the dairy products of their animals, such as cheese, yogurt, and cheese curds, supplemented with meat from their animals as well as from hunting. House-keeping is an important task of the

flock management and it's generally with the women.

Patron (Jajman)-client relationship

Pabuji is the protector hero (an incarnation of Lakshman) who got recognition for the Raikas. Thus, his worship is central for the Raika community in which the recitation of his heroic deeds and divine status is the central theme. Naik Bhopas are the principal singers of the *phad* (a scroll depicting life and deeds of Pabuji) and the painters of the Josi caste (mainly settled in southern Rajasthan) are dedicated artists to paint the *phad* scrolls. Tod depicted 'Bhopas as itinerant who travel from one village to another with their temple, an euphemism for the par'.⁹⁸ It has been noticed that Raikas are patrons of the Naik Bhopas. Bhopas do not share the *dhani* (hamlet) with the Raikas but the latter are their principal patrons, because Pabu-ji has a special reverential value for the latter. The gifting of the *phad* to the narrator is an important dimension of this patron-client relationship. Generally, for buying a *phad*, either, the community jointly raises the money or Raika caste council (panchayat) sanctions fund. To mark patronage, usually the name of the *dhani* and the date of purchase are recorded on the right side lower corner of *phad*. The inheritance of *phad* is also a common practice. The Bhopa family living near the Raika village is not performing for the same village everyday, therefore, they perform whenever they are invited by any host village. Here, it is evident that the Niak Bhopas were the free-lancer priests or entertainers who travelled with their mobile temple (*phad* scrolls) to give performances. But, their first commitment for performance is always reserved for the patron. The nature and need of bhopa services has made them a semi-nomadic group. With the changing times many of the bhopas have shifted their profession from *phad* singing to the labourer in mines, brick-kiln, industry etc.

In Rajasthan Gujars are also nomads as they take animals to pastures and forests. In Marwar also the Gujars graze animals. As per *Mardumsumari* they came in Marwar from Ajmer and therefore, most of their settlements are on the eastern side and on outside the villages. Bhats mention that the Gujars are an off-shot of Rajputs and therefore their *gotras* are similar to the later.⁹⁹ Another popular nomadic group is Sindhi. Amongst the Sindhis who lived in Marwar, Khadali Sindhi are natives of Khadal, an arid zone. The Khadalis were nomads who roam with their cattle in the forest and sustain themselves on the dairy products. Neither they make houses nor do they settle in villages. Generally, they live one or two miles away from

villages/settlements. They make sheds in forest areas for milking animals and processing the dairy. A good number of them lived in Marwar. In all the seasons they live same occasionally changing locations.¹⁰⁰ Johya (Johiya) of Ganganagar area (Rajasthan) are 'the chief Muslim pastoral tribe of a group collectively known as Rath.'¹⁰¹ They are pastoralists who mainly bred cows and sheep, cultivated dry crops and migrated traditionally for three to nine months. Kaurava tribe was entirely nomadic that lived in the Dhat *thal*. The Census Report of nineteenth century doesn't mention it. They lived a settled life by making temporary huts with the widely available *pilu* grass. They constantly moved with their flocks and encamped on finding a pasture or spring. They rear camel, buffaloes, cow, and goats and sell them to Charans and other merchants for making livings. They were known for peopling the desert through their delightful *amal-pani*.¹⁰² Like Kaurava, the Dhatis also claim for Rajput origin. They also inhabit in Dhat desert. Dhatis cultivated some tracks of land but mainly depending on the pastoral activities. They bartered clarified butter (*ghi*) made from the produce of their flocks for grains and other necessities. They make *rabri* (porridge) from camel milk, as *ghi* cannot be extracted from it.¹⁰³ The tribe of Samaicha was close to Dhatis in its habits. They were popular because they never allowed their animal to die of disease (whenever the hope of recovery is dim they kill the animal).¹⁰⁴ The Rajars raid in the desert borders between Jaisalmer and Upper Sindh. They were cultivators, shepherds, and thieves.¹⁰⁵ Tod has described major cattle fairs of Marwar.¹⁰⁶ No doubt they all are of considerably greater antiquity in the region.¹⁰⁷ The camel and horse figure prominently at Pushkar fair. Zebu oxen are the main animals traded at all animal fairs in Rajasthan.¹⁰⁸ The founder of Bisnoi sect was Jambeshwar. He was also a pastoralist, who took animals out for grazing. Similarly, Karni Mata, a Caharani was also taking out sheep and goat for grazing. The khaps of the Kalbi/Pital are mainly named after the animals. Such as Boka, Malwi, kukal, Paan, Kaag, Tatiya, Harni, Bagada, Bichu, Kal, Muji etc.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps, in the past, they were related to these animals and insects in some or other way.

Rajasthan is rich in artistic traditions and home to a variety of relatively small semi-nomadic caste groups associated with performance. 'These performing communities- be the musicians, poets, comedians, snake-charmers, professional mimics, actors, or genealogist-historians are typically 'attached' to either high-or low-status patrons in a much-eroded but still-extant village economy called *jajmani*.'¹¹⁰ All these communities of desert were also dependent on

the drought animals for their day-to-day survival. Thus, the pastoral pursuits and nomadic endeavors were their necessary mannerisms/habits for subsistence.

Principal-agent relationship: Non-pastoral nomads

The service nomads comprise of several hundred endogamous groups and they embrace a variety of occupations. This group incorporates groups like Gaduliya lohar (blacksmith and tinker), nats, bhopas and kalbeliays (snake-charmers, dancers and balladres), Madari, Bisati, Churigar, Gawar-Gwarni (selling cosmetic items like rubber, *kajal*, *multani*, *bindi*, *sindur* etc.), *bhad-bhujiya* (baker). Most of these service nomads also substantially 'depended on the wild animals and forest resources for their survival'.¹¹¹ They also produce craft-products and provide services. Amongst the service nomads, the Bhiols, VanVagaries and Bawaria are the groups that channelize a possible economic interaction between separate communities that are sedentary. The *Bawaria/bawariya* is one of the most popular non-pastoral nomadic community. The census of India 1881 has described them as a 'hunting community who derive their name from the word bawar or noose with which they snare the wild animals' and their skill in tracking wild animals is notorious.¹¹² With the introduction of the Indian Wildlife (Protection Act) of 1972 all types of hunts have been declared illegal, thus banning and criminalizing the traditional occupation of bawariyas. Demographically, the bawariya community is distributed in the districts of Ajmer, Alwar, Bharatpur, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Ganganagar, Jaipur, Jhunjhunu, Jodhpur, Nagpur, Pali, Sikar, Tonk and Udaipur.¹¹³ Bawariya live in temporary shelters (*dera*). The criteria for selecting a base for *dera* is shade of a tree, availability of water, and accommodative landowners.

Artisans are the other highly mobile groups. Kalbelias are one such group who are recognized as snake-charmers. They are found throughout the Rajasthan. In Marwar, their numbers were high in Pali and Jodhpur. The seat of Kalbelia community is at village Dhikae in Jodhpur. They are mainly divided into two groups. One of these groups is the wanderers and they are identified by their ear piercing, in which they wear earrings made of copper or silver. They mainly earn their livelihood by begging and showing snake shows.¹¹⁴ For the snake shows, they carry two bales balanced on a bamboo stick that is placed across the shoulders. They also focus on production of crafts¹¹⁵ and do engage in hunt, gather and tend animals as per requirement of their mobile community. They eat *shiyal*, *lonki*, *sur*,

*hiran, khargosh, jarakh, nahar, sadha, bhisa, murg, noliya, saanp, gooh, ghohra/ghoura.*¹¹⁶ All these are wild animals. They don't eat *mor, gaay, kabutar* and dead animals. As the snake is regarded as embodiment of god by various communities in Rajasthan, so the Kalbelias are regarded as the priest of snake. Kalbeliya believe in the mythological origin of their community.¹¹⁷ Presently, they carry their make shift snake shrine to the local neighbourhood and the families donate money and milk.

The Lohars are nomad iron-workers who always keep their carts. They travel between various villages' fabricating and repairing iron implements.¹¹⁸ They also sell bullocks after doing *badi*.¹¹⁹ Lohars practice both Hinduism and Islam. The Lohars adhering to Hindism were Malwiya, Maru (Sikligar), Jangada and Lohar gaduliya. Deshi and Multani Lohars profess Islam.¹²⁰ 'Hunter-gatherers, on the other hand, historically lived as separate communities that interacted with villagers in trade forest products, crafts, or labor for farm goods and crafts. Traveling artisans service providers have also had looser ties to the villages where they encamp'.¹²¹ Another popular artisan nomad group is Gawar (Gawariya). They specialise in beating the *munj* (a grass for making ropes), tying *sirkhiya* (sticks for making huts) and comb-making from the horn of buffalo. If they stay in any place for a while, their women go out in the nearby villages and sell combs.¹²² Thus, it is evident that these service nomads were very relevant for the village population in various ways and were contributing significantly.

Guilt and Shame

Describing the nomads, Bharucha states 'Almost 90 percent of these groups consume carnivorous animals. The jackal is one of their ritual foods eaten during marriage, childbirth, or any other auspicious occasion. They are also known to consume fox and wild cat, even though they don't talk about these things...they also consume herbivorous ones like rabbit and deer'.¹²³ It has been noticed that the sedentary groups look at the food habits of nomads with suspicion and they use the names of nomad communities in pejorative sense to convey or indicate at ill manners, unhygienic ways and misdoing. For example, the person who doesn't appear neat and tidy is called *kanjar* or *dum*. Similarly, the ones who often go out without information are referred as *banjara/bawariyo*. The black complexioned are called as

dum, bhadbhujio, lohar etc. Naughty kids and the grownups who don't abide by the advice of the elder ones in family or societal norms are called *nakta* (the nose cut, meaning the one without sense of name and shame). Historical evidences also indicate that nomadism has been a form of punishment.¹²⁴ Demining the nomadic ways, the sedentary society has termed the rebaris as *bhut* (ghost). As the entrance of their houses opens towards the forest, they don't celebrate festivals on the prescribed *tithi*, they don't do perform the post-death ceremony of *Pipal chokha and dharma-karam*, they always live in forest and don't take bath and their looks are horrifying.¹²⁵ Similarly, any person who is not abiding by the family celebrations and rituals of cleaning etc are called as rebaris. Thus, it can be proposed that in order to generate a sense of shame and guilt and to build a psychological pressure for keeping the social actors in group-cohesion the names of the nomads are regularly used as cultural sufferings, which conveys the meaning of savage, violator, unpleasant etc, which are unacceptable and punishable.

Dominance without hegemony: Bards

The question- 'Who is superior?' the king or the priest has always been central to the Indian sociology.¹²⁶ In this debate the Bhats put forward the claim of a third class of person, i.e. bards (record keepers of male line of individual families). There are two types of bhats namely, the *Mukhbancha* Bhats (relies on memory for oral recitation) and the *Pothibancha* Bhat (maintain meticulously written records). Formally, the bhats were acrobats. Komal Kothari states that 'Mukhbancha Bhats, are from the acrobat communities, such as the Nat, the Rajnat, and the Badi. These acrobats recite the genealogies of low-caste communities like the Meghwals...while the Badis operate in the western Desert zone, the Nats function in other parts of the state'.¹²⁷ They demonstrate their supremacy as skilled poets and praise-singers, without whom the king is nothing. Bhat were undeniable political actors who praised the king and established the authority and legitimacy of later.

Bards have been a crucial feature of Rajasthan's political life. In 'taking patrons' names - that is, in praising genealogies and histories- Bhats argue that they give their patron meaning (matlab) and history (itihas), and that they make them happy and even immortal (amar). In the past, bards possessed the power to make or break kingly reputations, to guard or besmirch kingly honour, and thus literally to forge royal identity. As curators of collective memories, skilled

praise-singers vested kings with noble lineages stretching back to the sun and moon. If they felt that their services were not adequately valued or rewarded they had the power to tell the world that their lords were mere pretenders and their titles false or illegitimate. Bhats, don't conceive themselves as inferior dependants of kings. Rather, they advertise that the patrons are dependent on their services. In these terms, a patron's gifts are not signs of lordly supremacy. Rather, they are a tribute and thus an implicit acknowledgement of bardic value.¹²⁸ Be it lord Ram or Man Singh, both are unstable creation that springs out from the rich imagination of the bard. In these terms, the bards are the guardians of the kingly reputations, history, and even truth itself and they stand at the centre of the traditional Hindu polity. 'Bhats, for example, when not wandering, traditionally perform for a formerly untouchable, or Dalit, caste of leather-workers referred to as Bhambhis. As multi-talented bards, Bhats keep Bhambhis' genealogies and histories, but they also poetically praise and entertain their patrons with jokes, music, stories, and dramas. But one also finds high-status bards in Rajasthan- often referred to by the title Charan - who provide their services to persons claiming kingly or warrior status'.¹²⁹

On the other hand, the Charans of Rajasthan were the wandering minstrels and they do not claim a connection to ancient Vedic traditions nor to priesthood. Immersed in Rajasthan's oral traditions, Charans commemorated the battlefield kings and nobles, typically in an archaic dialect of Marwari. Charans received land-grants from their kingly patrons in exchange for their services and were thus akin to landed nobility.¹³⁰ Many Charans were primarily herders and only poets 'on the side'. The most famous Charani of the medieval times is Karni Mata. Charans were also riding into battle-fields with their lords, in order to stimulate their kingly patrons into heroic action through their compositions. Charans, claim to be Kashtriya as they accompany in the battle, which is opposed to the Brahmanical status. During colonial period, Charans continued to perform their longstanding profession- as witness or guarantor. Some were also acting as guarantors of the security of caravan conveying goods in transit. Charans guaranteed the security of contracts and safety of goods in transit through practice of *traga* (threat of self-mutilation).¹³¹

So, very clearly both bhats and Charans are not claiming priestly status for themselves because 'they wield such power over language and representation, are in some regards superior to both kings and priests'.¹³² They also served as messengers between the king and their allies, military recruits and to the tribal forest population.

They suited best for these jobs as bards could travel with immunity in areas where no one else could venture safely. Now a days the elite and the landed bards tied to the king had abandoned their traditional profession and they tend their flocks and lands and are also turning to new professions like medicine and law.¹³³ The destruction of the bardic services in Rajasthan is result of long term changes that happened over several centuries. Post-independence engagements of bhats have been many such as puppeteers, singers of political parties, guardians of local hindu identity etc.¹³⁴ Besides, the bhats and charans there are other genealogists (oral) also in the region of Rajasthan. The modern times have pushed these oral genealogists into dual identities. They do cross the boundaries of time, profession and space for survival. The bhats have taken up the profession of Puppeteers and they try to hide their profession of puppeteer. These bhats are mainly from Nagaur, Sikar, Kishangarh, Ajmer and Churu. 'till quite recently, the puppeteers were primarily identified as nats, who even today are identified with acrobatics'.¹³⁵ The keepers of the Kavadi¹³⁶ tradition are specifically identified as genealogists in Govindgarh, near Ajmer and 'panegyric poets for the Jassa Bhati community, their prime patrons'.¹³⁷ Generally, they keep their profession of kavadi recitation hidden from their patrons.

The Pavia community of Sirohi region is also a nomadic community. They live in makeshift dwellings. Their name is acquired from a sarangi-like instrument which they use while singing their songs on the lives of mythical king such as Harishchandra and saints like Malaygir. The Pavias go from house to house singing the songs before the break of dawn, during winter months and as payment receive money, food and woollen quilts. Their other profession is bone-collection that they hide. During the winter months, they make Sirohi their base and earn by singing in the villages. Other than this throughout the year they wander for the bone-collection. Dakot is another community that engages in performance of the brahmanical ritual functions for the low-caste communities and they travel long-distances for collection of grains, money and oil, mainly as the pacifiers of the Shani-dev. When they move out of their native habitation they perform the functions of brahmin wearing *janeu* (holy thread). Thus, we see these wandering performers/nomads (puppeteers, bhat-nat, charan, pavia, dakot etc.) are not only service nomads they are also entertainers and their engagements are multi-layered and vivid.

Kamad (or *Kamadiya*) was a community of wandering minstrels or jugglers who sing hymns in praise of Baba Ramdeo of Marwar like

Bhopas and *juharve* singers. They worship footprints of the saint. The devotional singers of the Kamad and Meghwal communities purpose that the figure appearing in their compositions as *Nikalank avatar* or Kalki, is Ramdeo himself who had already descended (*avtarit huai hai*) once in the *kaljug* to help untouchables and low caste devotees.¹³⁸ Two fairs are organized at the shrine of the saint. The cult is popular among the untouchables, such as Bhambi (Meghwal), Regar, Berwa, Chamar, Raikas, etc. most of them are leather-workers, pastoralists and weavers. In popular culture, Ramdeo, the Pir of Runicha was regarded as a 'god of the pariahs' (*dhedhon ka deo*). Grave (*samadhi*) of saint is the main object for the cult followers. Both Hindus and Muslims worship the deity alike with invocations like Ramdeo-Pir or Ramshah-Pir.

Skill as Capital

According to the government of Rajasthan, there are 32 nomadic tribes, which include Banjara, Rebari, Sansi, Kanjar, Gadia Lohar, and Satia, among others. However, there are approximately eighty different types of nomads in Rajasthan which includes different communities like Jogi (snake charmer and *jadi-buti* peddler), Mirasi (*bhand*- story teller & *bharupiya*- imposter) Kalbelia, Ghattiwali, Kuchbandia, Bansdewal, Gadolia Luhar, Sansi (unskilled labour) etc. As per *Mardumshumari*, Dholi (dhol beaters), Dhadhi (Sarangi players), Manganiyar (Singers, a off-shot of Dholi), Fadali (fadal players), Kalawant/Qawaal, Langa (Manganiyas of Sindhis), Patar, Bhagtan, Kanchani, Hijara, Kisban, Satiya were the singer groups.¹³⁹ The group of entertainers consisted of Nut, Bhanmati, Bajigar, Madari, Bharupiya. The skill of raring the large herds of sheep, goats, horned animals and camel was an important segment in the economy of Thar Desert. Due to which the desert states were always keeping the nomadic communities in good faith. A miss of it has been recorded carefully. Erskine notes, 'pastoral communities didn't trust Mehta Salim Singh'.¹⁴⁰

Negotiations of Conflicts

Gadit community specialised in transport activities. They used carts for transporting large numbers of goods from the coastal towns (Bhavnagr and Ghogha harbour) to Pali. Further, they loaded the goods on camel and took them to the main land of Hindustan. Thus, they specialized in both animal laden and cart transportation.

Gadits living in Malwa and Gujarat were known as Nagouri.¹⁴¹ The en-route security of caravan was ensured by Meena (in Marwar) and Kohlis (in Gujarat), which generally consisted of hundred carts.¹⁴² Gadits were keeping security in place for transporting the good. So there was little scope for the en-route loss of goods. Even then, if the caravan was raided, then the Gadit got the Mahzarnama registered in presence of Chaudhri and Jagirdar and handed it over to the traders. It was mainly to state that their conflict is registered with the administration. They constantly travelled between Marwar and Gujarat/main land Hindustan. From Marwar they exported wool, cotton and opium and imported edibles, dry fruits and cloth.¹⁴³

Prior to the nineteenth century in Marwar state there was a separate court to resolve the matters related to the *Khat-darshan* communities called *Khat-darshan* Court. The *Khat-darshan* community included ascetics of Hindus, Jains and Muslim saints and fakirs. Along with these communities, the Brahmans and Charans were also included in this group.¹⁴⁴ The communities that have been classified under this group are Jogi, Nath, Masaniye Jogi, Kalbeliye, Aoghad, Aghori, Rawal, Jangam, Sewada, Dhundhiya Tola, Smegee (they don't stay in any place for more than twenty-seven days), Tera panthi, Sanyasi, Shami Dasnami, Gharbari Gusai, Bairagi, Goswami, Sanyasi Tri-dandi, Khakhi, Saadh, Kabir-Panthi, Niranjani Sadhu, Ram-snehi, Dadupanthi, Naga, Satnami, Nanag-Shahi Sadh (Nanak-shahi), Fakir, Pujari, Sewag, Charan, Motisar, Rawal, Bhat, Mirasi, Dom. All these communities are religious groups. *Khat* in Rajsthani means an action that happened in a blink of eye. Perhaps, therefore these communities were classified as *Khat-darshan* as they all are either, ascetics, or wandered, who generally are untraceable.

Conclusion

'India was an information-rich society. From an early period large proportions of the population travelled long distances in connection with marriage, pilgrimage, and networks of trade and marketing. Travelling sufi mystics or Hindu ascetics on pilgrimage carried large quantities of information...(as) periodic migrants'.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, the nomads are also huge repositories of traditional knowledge and mechanisms of survival. Therefore, the spatial dimension of migration varies from region to region, with alternative strategies applicable according to the species to be migrated out for travelling relative distances and to make potential benefits.¹⁴⁶ The modern day governments are making sedentary lifestyle indirectly a mandatory

element of society which is essential for availing the state facilities. Historically, 'Sedentarization is not always a large-scale collective event. In some cases, individuals, families, and small groups drop out of nomadic life and settle. The destinies of those who settle as landlords and those who settle as agricultural laborers are starkly different'.¹⁴⁷ The essentialism and reductionism pushed down by the governments is a distortion of nomadism. 'to understand nomadism truly, we must grasp its dependence on human objectives and upon multiple social, cultural, and environmental circumstances and thus appreciate its variability, its malleability, and its impermanence'.¹⁴⁸ 'In the Great Thar Desert of northwest India, and throughout Rajasthan State as a whole, pastoralists are being squeezed by a paucity of essential resources. Pasture and water, necessities of pastoral production, are less and less available. The combined pressure of increased and increasing human population, agricultural cultivation, forest reserve, and livestock numbers, is reaching a bursting point, and it is the pastoral livestock industry that is at the point of bursting'.¹⁴⁹ The closing of India-Pakistan border is another important factor that is hampering the nomad-pastorals as it cut-off access to the water rich Sind and Punjab, leaving pastoralists of the Great Thar Desert, mainly of Barmer and Jaisalmer Districts, without traditional dry season pastures. It forces them to turn in other directions to take up migrations of greater distances. The rise in population and livestock density per km. is another important factor for squeezing of the pastures. There are debates amongst the scholars about the pure nomadism, which is another question to look at.

Notes

1. Misra, 1986:182.
2. Manz, 1989.
3. Manz, 2021.
4. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/agriculture/how-many-indians-are-pastoralists-no-official-data-but-report-says-13-mln-73598> last accessed on 12th January 2022.
5. Malhotra and Gadgil, 1982:2-3.
6. Choudhary, 2018.
7. Guha, 1999:4.
8. Durham Peters, 1999.
9. Durham Peters, 1999:21.
10. Lindsay, 2019:172-174.
11. Raczek, 2011:24.
12. Berland, 1983:21.
13. Misra, 1986:180.
14. Salzman, 2002:246.

15. Salzman, 2002:261.
16. Choudhary, 2017.
17. Wink, 1999:165.
18. ibid
19. ibid
20. Ibid: 166.
21. Ibn Khaldun, 1980:10-11.
22. Sigrud, 1975:121.
23. Salzman, 1986:50.
24. Bayly, 1983: 221.
25. Habib, 1990: 10.
26. Bharucha, 2003:53.
27. Raychaudhuri, 1982:325-359.
28. Barani, 5.
29. Badauni, 1973:vol. I: 477, vol. II: 240.
30. Varady, 1979:3.
31. Ibbetson, 1980:63.
32. Tavernier, 33 & 35. Irfan Habib suggest the name is misprinted in his text as "manaris". The traveler is talking of the carriers. For further reference see, I. Habib, 'Merchant Communities', 1990:7.
33. Ibbetson, He says that the Labans are generally called Banjaras in eastern district and Labana in the whole of Punjab proper.
34. Gahlot, 1891:443.
35. Various sources tell us about the oxen used by Banjara as means of transportation. 'The Banjaras load the oxen called Balad'. (Jagdish Gahlot, *Marwar Census Report*, 1891:443). 'They carry goods on back of their bullocks' (Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, ed. Saiyid Ahmed, Ghazipur and Aligarh, 1863-64:345). 'They give an ox a load weighing 300 or 350 livers' (Tavernier, 32). 'They bring the drug hither in small caravan of 10-12 oxen' (Francis Buchanan, 203). 'These people go desperately, driving their laden Oxen before them' (Mundy, 96). 'I have seen them with drovers of 500 bullocks' (Russell, 169).
36. *Arsattha*, Pargana Tonk, dt., vs 1773/1716 AD.
37. Buchanan, 206.
38. Mundy, 96-97.
39. Tavernier, 32-33.
40. Mundy, 95-98.
41. Choudhary, 2018.
42. *Amber Record*, written by Ajit Das and Laxmidas from *Pargana Tonk*, dt., *Fagun sudi*, vs 1723/1666 AD.
43. *Arzdasht* written by *Amil Nainsukh* to Sawai Jai Singh from *Pargana Sambhri*, dt., *Mangsir sudi* 2, vs 1766/1709 AD. *Ibid.*, dt., *Posh vadi* 7, vs 1766/1709 AD.
44. *Arzdasht*, written by Than Singh Bhandari, *Amil* from *Pargana Toda Rai Singhpur* to Jai Singh, dt., *Mangsir sudi* 12, vs 1766/1709 AD.
45. *Arzdasht*, written by *Amil Nain Sukh* to Jai Singh from *Pargana Sambhari*, dt., *Mangsir sudi* 11, vs 1766/1709 AD.
46. *Arzdasht*, written by *Amil Nain Sukh* of *Pargana Sambhari*, dt., *Phagun vadi* 6, vs 1766/1709 AD.
47. *Amber Record* written by Gokal Das Ramji from *Pargana Rewari*, dt., *Fagun sudi* 8, vs 1723/1666 AD.
48. *Amber Record* written by Tek Chand of *Pargana Dausa* dt. *Chait sudi*, 4 vs 1743/1686

A.D.

49. Tavernier, 32; Bajekal, 468; Gahlot, 443; Elliot, 55; Mundy, 96.
Arzdasht, written by *Amil*Nain Sukh of *Pargana* Sambhari to Sawai Jai Singh, dt., *Mangsir sudi* 2, *u.s.* 1766/1709 A.D.
50. Mundy, 95.
51. *ibid.*
52. Elliot, 55.
53. Buchanan, 204-206.
54. *Chitti* of Ajay Raj from Kolta, dt., *Kati vadi* 5, vs 1723/1666 AD.
55. *Amber Record* written by Kalyan Das, dt. *Chait sudi* 6, *u.s.*1722/1665 A.D.
56. *Dastur-ul Amal, Ghascharai, Pargana* Chatsu, *u.s.* 1769/1712 A.D.
57. *Amber Record* written by Sanghi Kalyan Das to Ramchand, dt., *Chait vadi* 3, vs 1719/1662 AD.
58. *Amber Record* written by Vithaldas, Vijay Ram of *qasba* Kotla dt., *Bhadwa vadi*, 8, *u.s.* 1722/1665 A.D.
59. *Arzdasht* dt., *Posh vadi* 7, vs 1766/1709 AD. *Chitti* from Kotla written by Ajay Raj, dt., *Kati vadi* 5, vs 1723/ 1666 AD.
60. For details see, Choudhary, 2018.
61. Elliot, 1869:56.
62. Chakravarti, 2002:193.
63. Salzman, 2002:254.
64. Varady, 1979:11-18.
65. Jafri, 2016:194-195. See footnote no. 17.
66. Gommans, 1998.
67. Agrawal, 1993:265.
68. Smith, 1991: 4.
69. Salzman, 1986:50.
70. Srivastava, 1994:591.
71. *Mardumshumari*, 569-570.
72. Tod, 3:1297.
73. *MRPRV*, 1:419.
74. *Ibid.*, 2:232-43.
75. *Ibid.*, 237.
76. *Ibid.*, 1:194.
77. *Ibid.*, vol. 1 & 2.
78. Köhler-Rollefson, 1992:78.
79. Tod, 3:1300.
80. *Ibid.*
81. Choudhary, 2021:105.
82. Srivastava, 1994:596.
83. Rose, 1914:269.
84. Srivastava, 1991; Kohler-Rollefson, 1992.
85. Köhler-Rollefson, 2004:150
86. Adam, 26-28.
87. Erskine, 211.
88. Adam, 28.
89. Adam, pp. 150 & 151.
90. Adam, 147.
91. Imperial Gazatter, Jaisalmer to , 1908
92. Raczek, 2011.

93. Leshnik, 1972.
94. Agrawal, 1993:265.
95. Robbins, 2004:137.
96. Agrawal, 1993:265.
97. Salzman, 1986:54.
98. Srivastava, 1994:598.
99. *Mardumsumari*, p. 44-5.
100. *Mardumsumari*, p. 67-8.
101. Casimir, 1996:156.
102. Tod, 3:1295.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid., 1298.
105. Ibid., 1299.
106. Ibid., 129.
107. Lodrick, 1984:218.
108. Ibid, 219.
109. *Mardumsumari*, 108.
110. Snodgrass, 2004:266.
111. Malhotra, 1983.
112. Dutt, 2004.
113. Singh, 1992.
114. *Mardumshumari*, 248.
115. Mainly making the brush to clean the weaves and some weaving tools. *Mardumshumari*, 250.
116. *Mardumshumari*, 250.
117. *Mardumshumari*, 249. As per them the Pandav prince-Arjun married a *Nagkanya* (snake girl) and the son born out of this union was called Naga. After many years when Arjun met Naga, he didn't accept him as his son. Thus, Naga went into forest and lived as a nomad. As he was son of a *nagin*, thus he knew the art of rescuing from snake-bite and could remove the effect of poison.
118. Misra, 1975.
119. *Mardumshumari*, 464.
120. *Mardumshumari*, 462-65.
121. Raczek, 2011:27.
122. *Mardumshumari*, 581-82.
123. Bharucha, 2003:53.
124. Casimir, 1986..
125. *Mardumshumari*, 570-71.
126. Dirks, 1989:60, Trautmann, 1981:285.
127. Bharucha, 2003:31.
128. Snodgrass, 2004:274.
129. Ibid, 266.
130. Dirks, 1989:67; Quanungo, 1957 and 1969; Russell, 1916; Tod, 1829-32; Ziegler, 1976 and Enthoven, 1975[1920-3].
131. Bayly, 1999:87 and Tambs-Lyche, 1997, chapter 7.
132. Snodgrass, 2004:282.
133. Tambs-Lyche, 1997: 174.
134. Snodgrass, 2004:280.
135. Bharucha, 2003:208.
136. The tradition keepers carry a miniature wooden temple which is in shape of

a cupboard about one and half feet long and about ten to twelve inches wide with large flaps that are hinged together. The indoors are painted with figures of deities, mythical and sacred figures, gods and goddesses. They improvise their recitations as per the patron and do include the local saints and deities as per the requirements of the audience, like they invoke Dhanna Bhagat when they recite for the Jat community or the agriculturist communities. Similarly, Pipa Bhagat and Sen Bhagat are invoked for the Chippa community and the Nai or barbar community, respectively.

137. Bharucha, 2003:210.
138. Khan, 1996.
139. *Mardumshumari*, 363-392.
140. Erskine, 209.
141. *Mardumshumari*, 76.
142. *Mardumshumari*, 74.
143. *Mardumshumari*, 75.
144. *Mardumshumari*, 235.
145. Bayly, 1993.
146. Salzman, 1986.
147. Salzman, 2002:258.
148. Salzman, 2002:261.
149. Salzman, 1986.

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