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**“THOSE PLEASANT GREEN MOUNTAINS”:
MEMORIES OF MIGRATION, PLACE AND
THE ENVIRONMENT OF A PASTORAL NOMADIC
GUJJARS OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

Pastoral nomadic Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir¹ are known for their unique tradition of undertaking seasonal migration. They bank on having sufficient livestock, an extended family network comprised of well-defined family-clan-tribe relations with its own set of rights and obligations. Movement is integral to their social, political and economic life. They often remember the ‘good old days’ in their everyday conversations, the tedious yet fulfilling journey they seasonally undertook up on the mountains during the summers and the network of family and friends whom they met there, which gives them a sense of belonging and solidarity. This paper looks into the connections between the land and the people, the various memories attached to the routes and people they came across during their seasonal migration. Today they remember all these aspects vis-à-vis the struggles they face in the present times. Remembering the past is an essential part of their lives as it is what gives them a sense of identity and an outlook for surviving in present times. They are often marginalised at different quarters of their lives even as they struggle with the problems of sedentarisation process started by the state. There is a need to understand them better to be able to relate with their problems and one way is to listen to how they tell us of what makes them who they are, and how they see the world around them.

Remembering is about having memory of something that has happened. Memory is different from knowing, as it is an experience performed by the mind (Fentress and Wickham 1992:25). Individual memory is not one’s own as it is socially controlled. It is individuals as group members who remember (Halbwachs 1980: 31-48). When we deal with people’s memories in collectivity, it is also known as social memory. Social memory can be often selective, distorted and inaccurate and also can be extremely exact sometimes. It also identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for future (Fentress and Wickham 1992). Understanding people’s ‘memories’

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have always been part and parcel of anthropological studies. Many times the idea of culture and memory are closely intertwined as when we look at anthropological studies, we find that studying culture is all how people or communities share about their lives they always hint on the past experiences or memories about how they lived in the past and compare it with the present. As Gable and Handler (2008) opined that the terms “culture” and “memory” are parallel concepts, which sometimes tend to illuminate and sometimes get obscured and can disturb in actually understanding and interpreting what people are doing. In this light, we also find that when the Gujjars talk about their memories of their lives, they are also more or less in terms of how they *used to do* things, which is nothing more than their cultural traditions.

Studying or understanding about memory has its own challenge. One reason is that it is difficult to extract our past as not only present factors tend to influence or distort our recollections of the past. Also, the past factors tend to influence, or distort our experiences of the present and serve to legitimate a present social order (Connerton 1989). Remembering also involves travelling back along a chain of memories and if shattered and the links held separately, we won't be able to remember at all (*ibid* : 6). Since memory is a hybrid sense of intertwined process, so no single theory can encompass the diverse ways in which remembering takes place (Cole 2004:112). One important suggestion by Connerton is that the past and recollected knowledge of the past is conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances (1989:5). All these show the variety of ways memory is recollected, which help societies to keep in touch with their identity and the past. Narrating a community's own experiences about their life through the ethnographic lens may not completely capture their feelings and experiences. However, the questions asked of the people makes them remember their past. It urges them to share the older experiences and moments bringing out their emotions and many times helping them critically analyse their past as well.

When it comes to understanding memories of pastoral communities, we cannot undo also the aspects of their seasonal movements, which are part of their lives and memory. A unique constellation of ecological, political and affective factors determines the patterns of movements for the pastoralists and in that way there are enormous variations in the pattern of mobility (Dyson-Hudson 1980: 17-18). With these movements memories are built and shared over generations. In the case of the pastoral Gujjars, these can be mostly in the form of stories and of events that have touched their lives deeply; remembering the routes which their forefathers have taken; their resting and grazing spaces and their interactions with the local populations, etc. In addition to all these aspects, the narratives of memories are most often embedded stories of their struggles apart from the good old memories about their lives.

In this paper we will look into the way the pastoral Gujjars expresses about a collective memories of the past, as individuals as well as collectively,

in different situations, bringing into light the various struggles they face in the present context where they feel dislocated and uncared for. I will bring into focus the experiences of socio-cultural memories associated with their journeys shared by Bakarwal Gujjars of Jindral Tehsil, for whom seasonal migration and rearing cattle are their lifeline, which they practice still although faced by difficulties. I will also simultaneously focus on memories of experiences shared by a *khanabadosh* Dodhi Gujjar community especially of Rakh Baroti settlement in Samba district, Jammu, who remember their earlier place of settlement, displaced due to the Kargil war in 1999. Their attachment with the land and routes of long ago are not the same ones today, but have not been forgotten either. For any pastoral community, the assets and resources that are vital to them are pasture lands, migration routes and water-resources. When one of these gets disturbed, they are affected not just physically but also emotionally.

The paper also focuses on the fact that the notion of ‘remembrance’ in relation to ‘communities in motion’ remains a less studied and under-theorised area. We find that most of the focus among nomadic communities is on socio-political, economic and ecological issues. Gujjars and Bakarwals are today facing the brunt of modernity which, in the pretext of making their life better, is actually harming them as they are becoming more marginalised and excluded. It is through this medium of remembering they are asserting the identity of their rights which is so much in their hearts and mind, which is not to do with a physical ownership of land or the mountain. It is more an intimate association with the land, routes and mountains, for whom, they are the keepers and watchers, and for whom, they are the voice and without this tradition they cease to be nomads, as Gujjars, in the real sense.

The Gujjars: A brief socio-economic profile

Gujjars are found today in different parts of North India, i.e. in Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. In Jammu and Kashmir, they constitute the third largest ethnic group with a population of 7,63,806 according to the 2001 census². In Jammu, they are mostly found in parts of Rajouri, Udhampur, Poonch, Uri, Ganderbal, Anantnag, Daksum, Narang and the Kandi areas. Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir are mainly Muslim and follow their religion devoutly. They are divided into three major groups based on the animals they rear – the sedentary agriculturalist called Muquami or Desi Gujjars (sedentary), the Bakarwal who rear *bakri* (goats) and the Banihara or Dodhi Gujjars who rear buffaloes and live in forest. Generally many scholars like to use the term Gujjars inclusive of all these groups, the Bakarwal, the Dodhi and the Desi Gujjars³. Those Gujjars who still undertake their seasonal migration like to call themselves as *khanabadosh*⁴. In this paper, wherever the term ‘Gujjar’ is used it is inclusive

of the Dodhi, Desi and Bakarwal and wherever there is need for specification, the terms Dodhi, Desi and Bakarwal are exclusively used.

The *khanabadosh* Dodhi Gujjars are mostly found in different parts of Jammu, like Bari Brahmana, Bishna, Satwari, Vijaypur, R.S Pura etc, where they spent their winter months (October to April). In summer, they move with their buffaloes and family, crossing Jammu town, Nagrota, Udampur, to Patnitop and then go via Doda to reach Baderwah and even to Kishtwar areas. Gujjars migrate for long distances generally covering 200 to 300 kilometres in each trip between their summer homes and winter and staying for six months in each place. In Kashmir valley, the Bakarwals are mostly found in places like Anantnag, Pulwama, Rajouri, Shopian, Sonamarg, etc. They generally spend the winter (early November to mid-April) in Jammu areas and the summer (late May to late October) in the mountain and alpine pastures of Kashmir. On the other hand, the Bakarwals migrate northward from their winter regions over the Pir Panjal Range; most routes skirt the Kashmir basin peripherically to reach an altitude of 3000 m, or at the most 4,500 m (Rao and Cassimir 1985:227). They mostly live on the products of their cattle through their daily activities of selling milk and milk products. Also some of them still resort to their traditional means of transport like using horses and walking on foot during their seasonal migration, apart from using modern means of transport. People's stories about their past revolve around physical movements and their association with *pahar* (mountain), their cattle, their *deras* and their beliefs and practices. All these give an idea of their own perception about their identity, their experiences and condition, which distinguishes them from the rest. Many Dodhi Gujjars as well as Bakarwals today have also been impacted by sedentarisation. Those who have been sedentarised are referred to as *zaminadar* or Desi Gujjars.

Understanding their memories

A closer analysis of the narratives of people in the following paragraphs will display their aspects of how they remember the past, and their association with the landscapes, caravan, endogamous clan units, routes, etc. Today many of them have constraints in undertaking seasonal migration because of various reasons, and thus they remember the past with nostalgia collectively, especially the older generation. Most of the conversations with them were done in Hindi and Urdu which they spoke mixed with bits of Gojri, which is their mother tongue. The ability of knowing multiple languages has been credited to their mobile tradition which exposes them to many different cultures as they move from one place to another.

Memories of *Pahar* (Mountains)

“voh kitna hara pahar tha. Itna shail aur thanda pahar. Voh dino bahut Allah ka barkat tha...”

(Those were pleasant green mountains. So beautiful and cool mountains.
Those days were filled with Allah’s blessings...)

These words speak for most of the Bakarwals who often reminisce about the mountains as an abode of refuge and providence. Though many of them still undertake their seasonal migration today to the mountains yet their experiences of that of the present seem to be different from that of the past. Bakarwals often undertake their seasonal migration for their cattle every year from Jammu areas crossing dangerous terrains of Poonch, Rajouri regions to Kashmir valley and much beyond. Migration for them is tough as they generally move on higher altitude regions and use tents as their temporary shelter. They have hundreds of sheep and goats whom they look after as their own children and for their sake that they undertake such tedious journeys seasonally. The journey involves travelling together with family or clan members, generally in broad terms called *dera*. There are many routes which the Bakarwals take for their seasonal migration to higher altitudes and back.

*“Kitne hara aur accha the Baderwah ke Pahare, mein bata nahi sakte. Oof!
bahut thand the pahar mein. aur mein jab chota tha mere poora parivar jate
the udhar. Toubah! Aaj ham idhar hein, itne garmi mein aur ham Baderwah
nahi jate aab. Bahut mushkil hein.”*

(How green and good were the mountains of Baderwah I cannot express it.
Oh! it was so cold in the mountains. And when I was young, all my family
members used to go up there. Alas! today we are here in this dry, hot place
unable to move out because of many restraints.)

These words were spoken by elderly Gujjar lady from Rakh Baroti settlement in Sambha district, who have stopped undertaking their seasonal migration to Baderwah *pahar* (mountains) for more than ten years now. Most of the *dodhi* Gujjars move to the Pir Panjal ranges and Laddadar mountains of Jammu and Kashmir for their summer settlement. These Gujjars are presently residing in a settlement called Rakh Baroti which is situated 1km away from Vijaypur town in Samba district which is 30 kilometers away from Jammu.

They also like to assert their identity with the *pahar* they earlier were going to. They often comment saying,

*“ham Baderwah ke mittii se janam hooa hein, ham Baderwahi hein aaj bhi,
jahe ham aaj waha nahi jate, hamare majboori hein. Hamara pardada log
waha jaate the kai saalo se.”*

(We are born from the soil of Baderwah; we are still Baderwahi even though
we no longer migrate there in the present times due to various difficulties.
Our ancestors have been going to that place since so many years).

The above statement is expressed by many elders from Rakh Baroti Gujjar settlement in Sambha district of Jammu. Their affinity towards the mountains of Baderwah speaks of a tradition that is so close-knit with nature and the land that provided them of their needs for hundreds of years, which sadly they can no longer see today. Their close encounter with nature and those

encounters of nature constitute their memory artifact. For instance, the mountain becomes the *memory artifact* — a living museum of a landscape where people are passing through and generations are seeing those mountains where their memories are also nurtured. Many of them were born in the mountains and died there too, their cattle were also nourished in these mountains, as they claim even today that they cannot find such pure and green fodder for their cattle anywhere else than in these mountains. They have also strong beliefs with regard to the spiritual beings in these mountains (like *jinns* and *jogins*) that are seen as elements of fear and blessings for them. The water sources as well as the air in these mountains are considered to be pure which refreshes them. Today sadly they no longer are able access the mountains because of several reasons. One of the reasons is that, the government encourages them to settle down in one place by giving them amenities. One out of such many places are the Gujjar colony in Jammu, where the people were given land for staying and now two generations are staying in the locality. Likewise there are several smaller areas all over Jammu where many Gujjars have settled, some in government given lands, while some in lands of people of the neighboring communities with whom they have good relationships for years together. However the interesting aspect of their lives is that they tend to live dual lifestyle of being in one place, yet not fully giving up their nomadic tradition, which is their identity. Though exact statistics are not available as to how many are fully sedentary or purely nomadic, a large chunk of the Gujjar and Bakarwal population still undertake their seasonal migration every year. Secondly in the recent times physical movement with the cattle is difficult due to the inconvenience caused by traffic and the general population on the road. Also there are many who stay back for the sake of their children's education are engaged in other alternate jobs which have discouraged them from undertaking migration to the mountains. Although they no longer go there, there are visible expressions of nostalgia as they remember their lives then.

Memories of 'kafila' (caravan) and dera (family units)

“pehle haam char char panch dera ek acchi jaga meidan dekte the, Laddadar se Udhampur se upar..waha das din bhi rehte the bahut sare ghas the, maal ke liye, pani bhi the ziada, zamine bahut nahi the, aur abadi bhi kaam the...”

(In the past four five *dera* together used to look for a nice spot during the migration, beyond Laddadar and Udhampur, we used to spend even up to ten days. There were plenty of grass for the cattle, water was available in plenty, land was not so much and people were less.)

Mr. Abdul Rouf, an elderly Bakarwal from Jindral narrates the importance of the *kafila*, which consists of four to five *deras* moving together for their seasonal migration, passing through numerous routes and forests and towns too. The *deras* are family units consisting of married and unmarried children, which is their extended family. Dodhi and Desi Gujjars and Bakarwals are organized

on the principle of *dera*. They say *kaaha dera dhalo ge?* (Where to put the dera?), which is generally what is commonly understood, but for them it means *kis dera se ho?* (Which extended family do you belong to?). The idea of collective identity is linked with *dera*. Only members of the same *dera* journey together and share the same group identity. In other words the *dera* includes the people, their possessions and everything they move with. Their socio-cultural and political aspects revolve around their *dera*. Much of their experiences of memories are therefore fostered by this shared identity and physical movement. Trailing from the low lands in summers to the hills or mountains, for their cattle, is a routine activity which is an essential exercise for their survival. The yearly migration looks fun and easy for outsiders who click pictures and pass by, as they in their simple clothing and essential things trod the roadways passing by heavy traffic and gaze of people on the roads. Mounting their horses and bullock carts with the basic essential commodities like cooking pots, blankets, clothes, etc, they either move to some nearby areas (which they are doing in the recent days) or most of them retreat to distant places high up on the mountains which takes at least a month to reach by foot. Few members of the *dera* choose to stay back in the winter location while the rest of the family travels. People reunite with their consanguine and affinal relations in the summer location and usually that is what they generally look forward to. To be able to share, laugh, cry about things that have happened in the whole year, the marriages, the deaths, the family affairs and news of the outside world are something that do when they meet.

The memories of *kafila* is also constituted of their companions like their cattle-sheep and goats or buffaloes, who travel with them and for whom they undertake this tedious journey. They look at their cattle as their mode of survival and sustenance and maintain a mutual harmonic relationship with them. They often give names to them, treat them as their own children and take care of them immensely. They are known to be remarkably good in identifying their sheep and goats or their buffaloes from among hundreds of the other cattle. The remembrances are also of the cattle which were lost in one of the terrible storms during their movements on high altitude in one of those ordeals in the mountains.

Bakarwals often say, “*Baer bakre ke bina ham khatam hojayenge.*” (Without our sheep and goats, we will be over). Another common feeling they share regarding their tradition is by saying,

“Yea ham doa karte hein ki jesa hamare ye rivaaz hai vo aesa bane rahe, Hamare buzoorgo / pegambaro ka ye pasha hein..barkat bhi bahut thi. Ye hamara baer bakra ka pasha tha na, is mein kharcha kuch nahi tha. uss zamane mein. App toh ziada kharcha.”

(This is our prayer that this tradition of ours continues...our forefathers/prophets livelihood it was...it had lot of blessings. In this tradition of keeping sheep and goats, we did not have to anything in those days. Now we have to spend more)

Similarly the *khanabadosh* Dodhi Gujjars often say, “*Ham hein hamare dangar keliye*” (we are because of our cattle). “*maize hee hamara sabkuch hein*” (Buffaloes are everything for us).

Memories of *rasto* (routes)

“Hamare buzoorgo ne yei route diya tha...hamare jaga allotmein hein garmi ka aur sardi ka bhi, koi doosra Bakarwal hamare allotment mein nahi jaye ga..jaha hamare buzoorgo ne banaye hein uuhsi route mein ham hete hein.”

(Our forefathers have given us this route, we have our own allotments for our winter location, other Bakarwals cannot come to our allotments, what our forefathers have given only take the route.)

These words are of an elderly Bakarwal, Abdul Rouf, who is explaining about the *rasto* (routes) they take for their seasonal migration every year. From Bari Brahmana their family begins their journey, crossing Reasi, then through Kalakot they reach Rajouri, after which they reach Thanamandi where the Shadara Sharif shrine is located. They proceed on to Ratansha, Chandimar, Chatapan, crossing the Pirpanjal range, then reach Doobjee and then Shopian. After which they reach Pulwama and then proceed to Pampore bypass and reach Nishat area where they spend some more time, before they proceed on further for their Dara, Hari Ganiwan, Gund, Kullan, Sonamarg (from where the Srinagar Ladhakh highway starts) -Sarbal (summer). These places are in the Kashmir valley. Abdul, an elderly Bakarwal, who is also the elder of his *kafila* moves from Jindral (in Riyasi) which is his winter home, to Sonamarg during the summer month as a routine every year. According to him, it has been their ancestral route which they have been using since 200 years ago. Not all Bakarwals go to the same location, and have their own routes which they have been travelling since many generations. They still show the importance of a tradition of seasonal migration as they remember the routes they take precisely. The Bakarwals call their seasonal movement *radari*, which they undertake from the lower plains of Jammu to higher altitude like Sonamarg, Pahalgam and Warwan. They often say,

“Chalne ka haam bolte hein radari..Jese hamare movement hojate hein.. Aam lok chal ne ya safari kehte hein..haam radari kehte hein..”

(Our ‘movement’ is called *radari*...like or movement happens..common people call to walk or safari...we call it *radari*...)

Another elderly Bakarwal explains to make things clear by giving example of a dialogue to the researcher saying,

“aaj hamari raadari shuroohogayi..” (Today our *radari* starts); “*Aab hamari raadari Kashmir se jammu khatam hogaya aaj september mahina mein.*” (Now our movement finished from Kashmir to Jammu in September); “*Ham sab yaha Jammu agaye Bakarwal.*” (We Bakarwals have come here in Jammu); “*Aur March-April mein hamari radari yahase shuroo hajaye gi Srinagar ke liye*” (And in the month of March-April our movement will start for Srinagar).

It is very interesting to note the use of the word “movement” to explain about *radari* by the Bakarwal elder. This shows that at one point they keep their ancestral heritage and knowledge about their movement, at the same time there is the influence of language (English or Hindi) in their conversation, which is brought in by such physical movement and interaction with others.

Many are the memories they have with regard to their physical movements, some of which are often so difficult to forget. They are constantly reminded of the spaces during their movements, in places where they rested for a day or two, with their entire family and the cattle, which were generally places not so crowded with people, but more of an open sky, with the coolness of the breeze and echoes of the singing of the birds in the trees and the moonlight sky. One of the elderly Bakarwal remembers,

“pehle haam char char panch panch dera ek acchi jaga meidan dekte the, Laddadar se Udhampur se upar..waha das din bhi rehte the bahut sare ghas the, maal ke liye, pani bhi the ziada, zamine bahut nahi the, aur abadi bhi kaam the.”

(In the past three to four households together used to look for a nice spot during the migration, beyond Laddadar and Udhampur, we used to spend even up to ten days. There were plenty of grass for the cattle, water was available in plenty, land was not so much and people were less).

However, today they lament over the fact that they cannot even spend a night now on the way in those spaces, as the population has increased and there is less fodder for their cattle and more lands have been occupied by people for their houses and cultivation of food and cash crops like wheat and rice and maize have increased. Also they complain of other problems they encounter during their migration in connection with their memories.

“hum logo ko raaste mein gali dete hein, mar pit karte hein, hamara maal chori karte hein...ye aisi zabardasti kai log karte hein hamare saat...pehle zamane mein aman ka zamana tha..us vakat log kam tha..Bakarwalo ke saath bahut ziaakti hote hein aaj.”

(We are often scolded on the way, they fight with us, our cattle gets stolen...people forcefully do all this to us..In the past there was peace...there were less people then...lot of injustice happens to us Bakarwals)

These are some of the current challenges they face during their movements, over their rights to move in the same physical routes which they have been using since several generations. Today space is an issue which they grapple with as they move around with hundreds of goats and sheep, alongside facing taunts and unwelcome gaze by people around them. They remember those days when there was peace and even freedom for them as they moved in these routes.

Also, the memories about their experiences of the past in terms of their association with land, cattle and their people is cherished immensely while on the other hand they also remember events in their lives which were

not pleasant and which is as a result of the way the state looks at them and treats them. Most of the Gujjars lament about their lives in the present times and complain of the state's apathy towards their welfare, further highlighting their distrust towards the state. One such case will be highlighted where the Gujjars of a particular settlement were displaced and rehabilitated, but without any concrete planning for their welfare and development. The memory of the whole ordeal still is fresh in the minds of most of the people who have experienced the event.

A memory of being displaced

"it was night time when we were forced to flee from our village in Ramgarh by the army because of the tension due to war. We quickly packed whatever we could and take our cattle and ran away from the place. We walked the whole night and reached this place where we are now. I really miss the old place. The land there was good with lot of fodder for the cattle. Now it is deserted and we are not allowed to go back."

This statement is of an elderly Gujjar woman from Rakh Baroti settlement, regarding their situation that completely changed their lives. These Gujjars are presently residing in a settlement called Rakh Baroti which has around 111 households. Gujjars in Rakh Baroti settlement were originally displaced from Abdullah basti in Ramgarh district (1453 kms away from Jammu) which is in the Indo-Pak border, during the Kargil war in 1999. The villagers were asked to vacate the village in the middle of the night by the armed forces due to the sudden tension that broke out in the area. The government rehabilitated them in Rakh Baroti, and they have been in this village for the last 12 years. Such kind of displacement was forced upon the people and they had to flee without any choice. According to them, the government has rehabilitated them in this place, but they do not have the assurance if they can reside here permanently.

Abdullah Basti, was a place for them for generations where they had their memories attached to their houses, grazing lands, availability of water and the socio-cultural spaces they shared with one another. It was their winter settlement (October to mid-April) and from where they used to migrate to the mountains of Baderwah (A small valley town in Doda district of Jammu) for their summer months with their buffaloes. Most of them are third generation Gujjars whose forefathers migrated to and fro from Abdullah Basti to Baderwah. Therefore they are also known as Baderwahi Gujjars and differ from other Gujjars of the region in the way they dress and also slight variation is seen in the way they speak. The land and the routes from there which has been since generations have lost their significance as firstly, they are no longer in Abdullah Basti, and secondly, the way the government has tried to rehabilitate them at the present place makes their journey to Baderwah difficult. In fact, almost 80 per cent of the villagers have stopped migrating to Baderwah since 1999, though few migrate to the Laddadar mountains like Sanasar and Patnitop areas. Many elderly people remember the good times

they had when they undertook seasonal migration. The spaces for grazing as well as the houses in the mountains are generally far apart from each other with two or three huts of the same family clustered together. There is also the privilege of continuous water source from the mountains and also less interaction with the people and city life. They are accustomed to such settlement spaces, and which they find it difficult to suddenly adopt this sedentary kind of lifestyle which they never could imagine would happen at such short notice. Even after more than ten years of their rehabilitation in this settlement, their condition according to them has not improved due to negligence and apathy of the state towards them. Since they are mostly cattle herders, they love being close with nature and graze their cattle high up on the mountains and green pasture lands. They often think about going back but are in a state of disillusionment.

They often remember the earlier times when they used to migrate extensively on foot, which involved resting on the way, cooking food and even in some cases pregnant women also delivering on the way. Many elderly women also claimed that their lives were better in the olden days as they could manage to walk even for weeks without any hindrance. Sahen Bibi says,

“aaj kal ke jawan larka larki bahut kamzor hein. Ham jab jawan the, bahut takat the aur itne lambe raaste pedal chalte the jo aajkal nahi karsakte. Yea aaj kal ka hawa aur pani kharab hein.”

(The younger generations are no longer strong but have become weak. How we used to work and walk for miles in past is unthinkable today. It is because of the water and air that has become bad)

Thus we also find that the use of trucks and other means of transport have increased in recent years as travelling on foot becomes challenging due to the heavy traffic, congestion of roads, etc. While the recent trend is that many *dodhi* Gujjars do not go to very far places like in the past but they migrate to nearer places, may be just about 4-5 kms away from the village in some local zamindar's land where they get the permission to graze their cattle for the summers. Though a symbiotic relationship seems to persist, it is the *zamindars* that actually seem to get more benefit than the Gujjars. Their memories also are also of their valiant encounters with militants in the jungles and stories of how they and their forefathers protected the country against the infiltrators. They will often say,

“Haam Gujjaro ne bhi goliya khayi hein jab Hindustan aur Pakistan ke beech larayiya hoa tha. Ham apne desh ke liye larye aur army ko bhi mada ki. Ham Hindustan ke liye he kui ki ye mitti se hamara janam hoa aur sab kuch diya.”

(We Gujjars have also taken the bullets during the war between India and Pakistan. We also fought for our country and have helped our soldiers. We stand for India for this is the land we are born and have provided for us.)

Many of the elderly Gujjars and Bakarwals remember how when their people were involved in protecting the country indirectly helping the Indian soldiers

during attacks from the neighbouring country like Pakistan. This also gives a glimpse of their attitude of nationalism and patriotism even in the midst of all the struggles they face as a community which is hardly recognised by the state.

Conclusion

Physical movements of the pastoral nomads are crucial not only for their livelihood purposes but they also shape the socio-cultural and psychological aspects of their individual and collective identity. Memories are created, lived and experienced through these physical movements. The study reveals that the memories which the pastoral Gujjars have in relation to the *pahar* (mountains), *rasto* (routes), *radari* (movement), the *kafila* (caravan) or the *dera* (family unit), give them a sense of identity, a tradition which is theirs and makes them unique. It is their memory that links them with ancestral knowledge—the notion of heritage, without any official ownership. For example, they claim the *pahar* (mountains) to be a place which is a living entity which they have enjoyed for generations and which have nurtured them and their cattle, something that they hold closely to their hearts in their memory. Similar is the case with the *rasto* (routes) they take, the spaces where they camped for days while undertaking their seasonal migrations. The Bakarwals will say that no two *kafilas* will travel in the same route, indicating a sense of ownership over the *rasto* (routes) which is their in their minds for generations and is held closely by them. It is through their membership of a social group—particularly kinship, religious and class affiliations—that individuals are able to acquire, to localise and to recall memories (Halbwachs 1992). Another aspect that needs to be focused is that communication across generations is impeded by different sets of memories. Across generations, different sets of memories, frequently in the shape of implicit background narratives, will encounter each other, so that, although physically present to one another in a particular setting, the different generations may remain mentally and emotionally insulated, the memories of one generation locked irretrievably, as it were, in the brains and bodies of that generation (Connerton 1989:3). This we find among the Gujjar too, where the memories of the past are more real to the elderly people than the younger generation, who seem to be less inquisitive of the past they belong to.

In spite of the fact that many things have changed in their lives today, the elderly members of the community still continue to have the utopia of the past. Now that the state tries to settle them, it also intervenes in their natural memory course, which is what their identity revolves around. Modernity becomes an intervention in their tradition. The state and its modernity idea of progress is to create a 'settled', 'stabilised' societies so that it can control and govern on the pretext of giving more freedom and access to the people. However we find that the idea of asking the pastoral nomads to settle down is

a major intervention in their traditional lifestyle and thus has fall outs. Nomads are nomads because they do not settle down at any one place; their collective identity and their collective sense of unity comes through this tradition of physical movement. In all the narratives above we find such strong memories of their nomadic life which they link with their collective identity, which is their sense of living and survival.

As Gable and Handler (2008) put it that, modernity has been associated with loss and nostalgia, though it harps on the idea of progress. The narratives of the pastoral Gujjars too reveal their despair and nostalgia over the changing times and the struggles they face with regard to the intervention of the state. Some of the consequences are visible today as with the constant threat to their traditional occupation, they face problems like displacement, unemployment and poverty, marginalisation, exploitation, etc. The consequence will be likely they will be in a situation where they will be unable to cope with the changes and assimilate more other things which may disturb their true identity and the rich tradition that they boast about. These are evident with lots of cases of sedentarisation of these people without proper consideration of their socio-economic and political security, sometimes even by force, as in the case of the Gujjars at Rakh Baroti where we find them displaced without proper amenities planned for them. As Mr. Rafiq, a Bakarwal puts it, “*we will not be able to adjust to sedentary life and we only know how to rear sheep and goats and so in other kinds of jobs we will fail.*” Also the way *khanabadosh* Gujjars and Bakarwals are being looked down by local population because of their lifestyle and association with cattle, also makes them feel excluded and unhappy. The real question still remains that if nomads are made to stay at a certain place, how will their memories ever be constituted if the basis of their memory was these very physical movements? And these physical movements gave them their identity, a sense of dignity and economic stability, besides recognition as a social group with a unique tradition. We find them deeply rooted to their environment and it is not just their shift from nomadic lifestyle to a semi-nomadic or sedentary lifestyle that has affected them but nowadays various other problems like displacement also is seen to take a toll in their lives, thus impacting the way they remember their spaces, culture and tradition. Thus understanding the aspects of their lives, especially the good old times, are some of the way the community gathers a sense of pride and something to hold on to for their identity, in this changing world which does not recognize them or feel for them. Maybe as anthropologists we empathize with them of their prevailing situation and what more can we do then discuss their problems to a wide audience. At least their voices will not go unheard.

NOTES

1. This paper is based on the ethnographic research carried out among a Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir from the summer of 2009 till 2011.

2. Interestingly the 2011 census have been unaccepted by most of the Gujjars and Bakarwals stating that they were not adequately covered within the census as a result there has been displeasure over the entire issue and also suggestion by few organizations there for conducting "special census" on them. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/states/other-states/article2235769.ece> (accessed on June 2012)
3. Gujjars and Bakarwals are considered one tribe, but in the anthropological sense, they do not necessarily have a totally cohesive tribal structure. There are a large number of languages and cultural points of similarity and history that make them all "Gujjar" as compared to "Kashmiri", "Dogra", or other Indian.
4. *Khanabadosh* originally refers to the gypsies or the people on the move. This transhumance form of pastoralism or nomadism is organised around the migration of livestock between mountain pastures in warm seasons and lower altitudes in the rest of the year.

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