

**STATE, PASTORAL NOMADS AND THE COMMONS:**  
A STUDY OF THE MUSLIM GUJJAR TRIBE IN NORTH INDIA

**PREPARED BY**

**DR. NALIN RANJAN JENA**

**SOCIETY FOR PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN ASIA**

**42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110 062.**

Phone: 91-11-6981908, 6989559, fax: 91-11-6980183

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## ABSTRACT

### **State, Pastoral Nomads and the Commons: Survival Strategy of Muslim Gujjar Tribe in North India.**

Pastoralism, more so nomadic pastoralism dependent on the Commons for survival is facing severe crisis all over the World, today. What threaten such "way of life" are modern Nation-State and their development strategies, on the one hand; and the "tragedy of commons", on the other.

The planners and policy makers in the Third World see nomadic communities as examples of "static" and "traditional" societies, rejecting change and forms of state control. They have been seen as "irrational" because their attitude towards production and herd-management was seen as non-economic. As a result, nomadic groups in the Third World have hitherto most often been completely eradicated by the so called development process.

While the Commons are in a tragic condition because of a variety of modern forces and activities, pastoral way of life is considered destructive to the common resources. Hence, states have been making persistent conscious efforts to discourage pastoral survival strategies by abrogating their traditional rights directly or indirectly, and undermining their indigenous knowledge for management of common resources.

This is a situation in which pastoralism is caught. The Gujjars, a Muslim pastoral nomadic tribe living in the foothills of Himalayas in Northern India, are also facing the same crisis today. They are one of the few Muslim tribal groups in India. They are also one of the diminishing number of nomadic groups who have been able to survive as nomads up to the present.

While the Gujjars have resisted to give up pastoralism and nomadism, they have maintained their cultural uniqueness, and are still living in isolation in the forest. The only economic activity, the Gujjars have been traditionally engaged in, is animal husbandry. Till today their animal husbandry is based on their own traditional knowledge and practices and is forest oriented.

Over the years, their subsistence economy has changed into urban oriented market economy. Their milk production and milk products cater to the urban market.

While this change has unleashed a process of exploitation for the Gujjars in various ways, the state control over forest has exposed them to rampant corruption and subject them to a process of alienation. More recently, the forest area resided by the Gujjars has been declared as a National Park. And according to the legal provisions of national park, human habitation is not desirable inside the forest. Hence, efforts are afoot by the government to displace the Gujjars and settle them as peasants.

This paper analyses the survival strategies adopted by the Gujjars in the face of many threats and pressures, and highlights the linkages between indigenous knowledge and the Commons.

**State, Nomadic Pastoralism and the Commons: A study of Muslim Gujjar Tribe in Northern India.**

Pastoralism is not unknown to the history of mankind. At one time in our history, pastoralism was a dominant mode of production and predominant livelihood strategy. But with the transition from pastoral economy to agrarian and then to contemporary industrial economy, pastoralism is confronting a severe crisis all over the world. There is great pressure exerted by industrial market-oriented economy to absorb pastoralists into the fold of non-pastoral economy through forced commercialisation, devaluation of pastoral products and the like. The other important factor is the development of the modern state or nation-state.

The modern nation-state with clear geo-politico administrative boundaries, which is largely a phenomenon of the current century, has not only proved to be detrimental to pastoralism but also to nomadic pastoralism. Nomadism is obstructed by the very logic of the modern state, which regulates the lives of its citizens, their mobility across the border and also within the boundaries. Nomadic pastoralism is considered as anti-development within the paradigm of development adopted by the modern state, because, nomadic pastoral economy is believed to be non-contributing to the national economy and more so a burden on the resources, especially the "Commons", may it be forest, land or any other resource.

**Nomadic Pastoralism in India**

Most studies of nomadic people have been conducted in areas where the nomadic groups constitute a sizable part of the population to be easily recognizable, and where they have been inhabiting large tracts of land. That is, in Africa, in the Middle East and the central parts of Asia. In South Asia, one finds their concentration both in Pakistan and India. In India, they are largely found in Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh (Gooch, 1989).

These nomadic communities are greatly neglected by planners and by researchers (George, 1985). As already mentioned, the state does not take the onus of development of these people, and regard them as "second citizen". Hence, they are deprived of the state sponsored development programmes. It is not abnormal to find that the nomadic communities do not figure in census, no literacy or education programme exist as no concept of mobile schooling

system exists. The researchers have also not done justice to these communities. Except on Gaddis in Himachal Pradesh, study on other nomadic pastoral communities is sparse.

In India there has traditionally been a division in production between densely populated agricultural areas inhabited by peasants, concentrating on producing crops, and marginal hinterlands populated by nomads, concentrating on the production of livestock (Ibid). The resources they use for their production are the erstwhile "Commons" i.e. forests which are now state property.

Shanti George (1985) who conducted an analysis of Indian dairy policy, found that nomadic cattle-breeders have a "vital contribution to make to the Indian economy". She bases this assumption on their skills in specialized cattle-breeding and their ability to use marginal lands for milk-production which are not fit for producing food for humans. She comments that milk-production conducted by pastoralists, if given the right conditions, compare favorably with milk-production done on the basis of high-yielding crossbreeds.

The skills of cattle-breeding, which the pastoralists have acquired over generations do combine the accumulated traditional knowledge which has undergone immense refinement generation after generation and the natural repository of green fodder, i.e. forests. Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (RLEK) a Voluntary Organisation working among the Gujjars, a nomadic pastoral community, claims that the milk produced by these communities, especially the Gujjars, are pesticide free, a completely biological product as the cattle are fed only natural green fodder.

Satzman (1988) state that there is a multitude of different livestock raising groups in India, showing a very divergent pattern of adoption to change. He agrees with Shanti George that Indian's pastoral nomads are a valuable national resource and that their skills, knowledge and organization would be of benefit, as well as to the wider society as to themselves, if they are helped and encouraged, rather than neglected and considered obsolete.

Herding and animal husbandry is not the only economic practice of pastoralists, rather they are engaged in a multiplicity of economic activities such as farming, handicrafts, trade, transport, smuggling and earlier endeavors like raiding and cattle-stealing. One may find more than one activity being practiced by a pastoral community, but the primary one is animal husbandry. The

Gaddis, the shepherds of Himachal Pradesh are known for their beautiful handicrafts and the Bhotiyas of central Himalayas, are engaged in trade.

The pastoralists in India largely depend upon the forests as sprawling pastures which can sustain large herds are very uncommon. Any attempt to examine the relationship between pastoralism and the forests in the present day has to take note of who owns forest and controls access to such a vital natural resource. This needs an historical appraisal of the commons. The following discussion briefly reflects upon the above questions.

### State and Forests in India

During the Pre-British period in India, forests were never under a centralized authority. People living in the forests had the rights over this natural resource. The main charge on forests was the needs of the local people for personal and community use only. At that time there were only customary regulations on people's rights over forests and forest produce (Kulkarni, 1983). The religio-cultural norms and customary regulation were the 'laws' regulating exploitation of forest and forest resources by the local people.

But after the advent of the British, industrial and commercial interests charged on the forests. The forests were viewed as revenue generating resources and valuable contributors to the Industrial Revolution in Europe. As a result, laws were enacted to 'protect' forests from local interests entrusting the state with the legal authority to exploit forests and forest resources. To this effect, the first Forest Act was formulated in 1865 which was modified and re-enacted in 1878 and 1927. All these Acts declared forests as state property, and extinguished the traditional rights of the local people (Kannan, 1983).

After independence there was some rethinking on the issue of forest policy. The new national forest policy was issued as a Government of India Resolution in 1952. It was declared that the forest policy should be based on paramount 'national needs' (Kulkarni, 1983). 'National needs' did not include the needs of the poor local populace substantially dependent on the forests for their sustenance. Adivasis living in and around forests were discouraged for using forests. The government tried to obtain more and more revenue from the forests and for that purpose forests were diverted for the use of industries. The National Commission on Agriculture (1976) too undermined the sustenance value of the forests for the tribals and viewed

that the tribals' "rights and privileges" have brought destruction to the forests and so it is necessary to reverse the process (CSE, 1985). The Forest Bill 1980 also accorded high priority to commercial and industrial needs as national needs rather than the social needs of the local people (Kannan, 1983).

Barring the National Forest Policy, 1988 all the Forest Acts policies which have been formulated and promulgated in India for the protection, management and development of forests undermined the symbiotic relationship between the tribals and forests, overlooked forest dwellers' customary rights and excluded them.

At the moment, two main sets of contradictory legal and policy approaches of the government for development, management and protection of forests exist. On the one hand, we have National Forest Policy, 1988 (NEP), which is widely considered as the most progressive one as it emphasises to undo the process of alienation created and perpetuated by earlier laws and policies on conservation of forests. On the other, there is another set of laws embodied in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WPA) which envisages protection of wild species and the natural ecosystem. The WPA, 1972 provides legal provisions for constitution and management of national parks and sanctuaries.

Though, the National Forest Policy, 1988 strongly envisages people's involvement in the development, management and protection of forests and recognises the dependency of the tribals on forests yet one finds a contradiction in the policy itself. The policy states that the requirements of fuelwood, fodder, and small timber such as house-building materials of the local people are to be treated as first charge on forest produce. The policy further envisages that the forest communities should be motivated to identify themselves with the development and protection of forests from which they derive benefits. At the same time, the policy (sub-Section 3 of section 3) pronounces, "For the conservation of total biological diversity, the network of national park, sanctuary, biological reserves and other protected areas should be strengthened and extended adequately "(Ministry of Environment and Forest, 1988). In contrast to the essence and strategy of the National Forest Policy, 1988 declaration of national parks, sanctuaries and biological reserves as per the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, neither involves the people in development, management and protection of forests nor does it grant them their customary rights (Natraj Publishers, 1992).

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WPA) is essentially a prohibitive and regulatory apparatus rather than a positive agent of change (Jena, 1993). The WPA, 1972 further excludes people from the process of constitution of sanctuary and national park and their management snapping the symbiotic relationship between the forest dwelling communities and forests and abrogates their traditional rights. The social, cultural, political, spiritual and above all sustenance values of forests and forest produce do not figure as priority on the agenda of 'state-sponsored conservation'.

The WPA, 1972 is based on the assumption that the people are the enemies of wild animals, flora and fauna. Hence, the conservation strategy must equip the state agencies responsible for protection with sufficient legal provisions to protect 'interests of wild animals' from the threat posed by the 'interest of local people'. These two interests, i.e., 'interests of wildlife' and 'interests of local people' are considered to be incompatible to each other. This has resulted in an overt conflict between the local communities living in and around these protected areas and the 'protectors' which ultimately results in degradation of forests.

#### **National Parks and Sanctuaries in India**

National parks and sanctuaries are prominent components of protected areas and important part of broader conservation strategy. Other types of protected areas include natural resources, biosphere resources, etc. The formal goal of protection are specifically national parks, sanctuaries and reserves has been to preserve plants, animals and micro organisms so also the complete ecosystems. At present, national parks and reserves represent the single most important method of conceiving biological diversity worldwide (Brandon and Wells, 1992).

India too adopted the concept of national park and sanctuary and the park known as Corbett National Park was set up in 1935. Since then there has been enormous increase in the number of protected areas.

Within three decades the number of sanctuaries and national parks multiplied seven and fifteen times respectively (Jena, 1995). According to an official source, currently 3.5 percent of the total land surface of the country is under national parks and sanctuaries and it is proposed to increase the area to 5 percent. (Ministry of Environment and Forests, 1992). An expert put the current figure at 4.6 as under national parks, strictly protected

areas (Panwar, 1990). Further calculation shows that, the current forest cover under national parks and sanctuaries is about 20 percent of the total forest area. And this 20 percent constitutes the country's prime forest on which a large number of tribals as well as non-tribals - peasants, pastoralists artisans, etc. are dependent for their survival. (Jena 1994).

Experiences from all over the world, especially the developing countries, show that the establishment and expansion of national parks and protected areas have a critical impact at the local level. Social, economic, political and cultural specificities of the country and communities are undermined and a large number of peasants have been expelled from their settlements without being provided with any alternatives. The local people are prohibited from cultivating even their long established, customary fields as soon as the area is gazetted as protected area. The pastoral, communities are highly discouraged to continue their pastoral mode of livelihood. They are forced to settle down as peasants. On the one hand, their traditional customary rights are abrogated, on the other, the local people receive no tangible benefits from protected areas (Reti, 1986; Dang, 1991; Ghimire, 1991; Stephan and Amend, 1992; Jena, 1993).

National parks and sanctuaries have substantially contributed to the process of alienation for the poorer sections making their survival far more difficult. This has created another arena of conflict between the local people and protected areas. In many places in our country, the conflict has taken the shape of organised struggle and a good number of such struggles have adopted violent means to assert their traditional rights over the endowments of nature, especially forests and wetlands. Very often conflicts over access to and control over natural resources in national parks and sanctuaries become law and order problems and result in physical confrontations between the people and the authorities (Kothari et al., 1989). A frenzied mob set fire to about 10,000 acres of Nagarhole National Park, a well protected park in Karnataka, in retaliation against the alleged murder of a local person. Elsewhere, in Kerala's Silent Valley and Madhya Pradesh's Kanha Tiger Reserve, similar cases of arson have threatened to undo years of protection (Bagla, 1992; Jena, 1993). Gujjars in Rajaji National Park (Uttar Pradesh), Kolis in Bhimashankar Sanctuary (Maharashtra), Maldharis in Gir National Park (Gujrat), and elsewhere people are questioning the very need and rationale of national parks and sanctuaries.



The following discussion will focus on the problems confronted by the Gujjars, the pastoral nomads who are identified as a rare muslim tribe, because of various legal provisions especially that of national park imposed on their "commons", how the state has been treating their "common".

### **Rajaji National Park**

Once the favorite hunting grounds of the Mughals, and historically home to the finest of India's wildlife, the three sanctuaries - Rajaji, Chila and Motichur - of the Dehra Dun Shiwaliks constitute the proposed National Park comprising an area of 831 sq. kms. spread over the Dehra Dun, Saharanpur and Pauri Garhwal districts of Uttar Pradesh (UP) State. Under section 35 (1) of the Wild Animals and Birds Act vide Gazette notification No.3440/xi-v-3.84/76 dt. 12.8.83, the UP Government notified its intention to amalgamate the three sanctuaries into a national park in order to protect it from further degradation. (Dang, 1991)

The park falls between the latitudes  $29^{\circ}50'N$  and  $30^{\circ}15'N$  and the longitudes  $77^{\circ}55'E$  and  $78^{\circ}30'E$ . Geologically it lies in the Shiwalik geological zone. The Shiwalik Range of hills are formed of unconsolidated Himalayan and sub-Himalayan debris which is mainly in the form of alluvial and coarse soils. The Shiwaliks run parallel to the Himalaya, that is from the north-west to the south-east. Younger than the Himalayas, they have a steep aspect towards the plains and an extended and gentle slope towards the Himalayan foothills. This topography forms shallow, longitudinal valleys in between the Himalayas and the Shiwaliks. These are the duns. (Dang, 1991).

The park area may be geologically sub-divided into two categories : the Shiwalik belt-comprising the southern belt along the Shiwalik slopes, and the Doon valley or synclinal belt comprising most of the forest. Most of the precipitation in the former region drains off the slopes while in the lateral forms the seasonal raos (Streams). (Ibid).

There are five principal forest types at Rajaji - (a) Moist Shiwalik Sal, (b) Dry Shiwalik Sal, (c) Northern Dry Mixed Deciduous, (d) Khair-Sissoo, and (e) Lower Shiwalik Chir Pine Forest.

Owing to the diversity of cover, good habitat and availability of food and water, the park has a wide variety of fauna - the prominent wild animals are - Asian elephant (*elphas maximums*), tiger (*Panthera tigris*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), leopard cat (*felis bengalensis*), sloth bear (*Melursus ursinns*),

sambal or swamp deer (*cervus unicolor*), spotted deer (*Axis axis*), barking deer (*Muntjac muntjac*), hog deer (*Axis porcinus*), and nilgai (*Bosephalus Tragocamdu*s).

Along with these wild animals, Rajaji is also the home to the transhumance pastoral Gujjars.

In recent years, the Rajaji forests and wildlife were therein greatly threatened by the presence of 512 licensed Gujjar Pastoral families' along with 4000 licensed buffaloes, says the government. What is grossly undermined is the conversion of forest land for non-forest use by the government for so called development, insensible urban growth around this former resource, and increasing pressure by the peripheral villages as their common property such as pistons and village forests have degraded to the extent of destruction.

While six townships directly charge on Rajaji for timber, and fuel wood, innumerable villages surrounding, Rajaji depend on it (Berkmuller, wd.) Military and industrial set ups (BHEL and IDPI) have acquired thousands of acres of land within Rajaji. Tehiri Dam oustees are settled inside forests. Highways and high powered electric lines pass through Rajaji destroying forest cover.

### The Gujjars:

The Gujjar are spread over most of Northern India, preponderantly in Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. They belong to two different religious communities - Hindu and Muslim. According to the 1931 Census, the total population of Gujjars was 2,038,692. Now the number is not certain as no census was conducted for the Gujjars who inhabit Rajaji National Park.

The following discussion deals with the Gujjar community which is denoted as a Muslim tribal group residing in the forests area that was notified as a National Park recently.

### Origin

The origin of this stock is yet to be established. There are more than one views on their place of origin. One view states that the Gujjars belong to the same ethnic stock as the Rajputs and the Jats, all being part of the great Aryan race (Manku, 1986). While the Rajputs became the ruling class and warriors, the Jats became landowners and cultivators and the Gujjars occupied the marginal areas as pastoral cattle rearers and milkmen. An

evidence of their Rajasthani origin is the fact that the language of the Gujjars called Gujuri is a dialect of Rajasthan (Ibid). Al Azhari (1985) believes the Gujjars are of the Aramaic and Sami races and that they arrived in India from 326 BC to 300 BC in small groups to settle in different parts of northern India (cited from Clark, et al. 1986). The Bhasin (1979) report mentions that the Gujjars are possibly from Jammu and Kashmir or may be from across the western border, who came to Uttar Pradesh in search of pastures.

### **Social and Cultural Profile**

Though the muslim Gujjars are outside of the Hindu Caste system they follow the norm of "gotra", which is a characteristic of the Hindu community. "Gotra" is an exogamous group which mainly governs marital relationship banning marriage within the same "gotra". Like the Muslim community, cross-cousin marriage among the Gujjars are quite common, Marriage in exchange is also prevalent.

Women in the pastoral nomadic community enjoy relatively higher status than their counterparts among settled Gujjars. It is because of their greater role in the process of production (milking, gathering fodder, tending of animals, etc.) The higher status is manifested through the prevalent system of bride-price and the freedom of women to seek divorce.

The exact size of Gujjar population dwelling in Rajaji National Park is not known. But it cannot be denied that their number has multiplied since 1931 when the census was conducted. The study conducted by Clark et al. (1986) reveals that the average size of family living in one dera (house) was 14, although 55 percent of deras had fewer than 10 people. Our study reveals that out of a sample size of 167 households, 72 percent live in a joint family, 26 percent have a nuclear family, 2 percent have extended families.

As far as habitats of the Gujjars are concerned, the deras are located on the side of raos (stream). Deras are located either in the lower section of the raos or close to the rao watershed on the upper valleys. Location is primarily determined by the availability of fodder and water. These, raos or khols are a mark of identity of the Gujjars (Clark et al. 1986).

Panchayats are formed at various levels from local to regional. The elderly and esteemed members of the community are nominated to the Panchayat. Panchayat has the community's legitimacy to

decision on all disputes, marital matches and also to regulate the use of forest by each Gujjar family. Overuse of forest or transgression into other's area used to exact various sanctions from the Panchayat. At present, with the linkage of market economy and increasing degradation of forests by outside forces, the Panchayat is loosing its legitimacy and popular mandate. In spite of this, Gujjars till date shy away from modern law courts.

### **Economy**

As it has already been mentioned the Gujjars living in Rajaji National Park are pastoral nomads. Animal husbandry is the only economic activity they practice. The strategies of the Gujjars have been to specialize as milk producers concentrating on producing for an urban market; they have turned into what might be called, with an expression from salesman "market-oriented pastoral specialists" (Cited from Gooch, 1989).

They have changed from a subsistence to a market orientation, setting their products, both milk (or ghee) and surplus stock and buying food and other necessities for the cash achieved.

As important question which arises here is, what is the cost and benefit of the change of this subsistence economy to a market oriented one?

One glaring consequence of such change is indebtedness among the Gujjars. Normally the Gujjars sell their product to the local Baniya (middleman; moneylender). The Baniya does not pay them in cash. Instead, the Gujjars take fodder, clothes and other food stuffs in lieu of milk and ghee. At the time of marriage and ill health the Gujjar borrows money from Baniya with the contract that he will give all his product to him. This creates a patron-client relationship making the Gujjar vulnerable to exploitation. The Baniya usually pays a lower price for the milk or ghee and at the same time manipulates the accounts which are not intelligible to the illiterate Gujjar.

Another factor of their indebtedness is extraction by forest officials. This extraction has increased manifold after Rajaji has come under the fold of National Park.

### **The Gujjars and ecology**

As the survival of the Gujjars is inextricably linked with their surrounding natural resource,

they are very careful in maintaining the resources, allowing its regeneration. After the 1931 census, 512 families of Gujjars were issued forest permits in Rajaji and the upper Himalayan areas where they graze during the summer. According to the permit, a particular Gujjar family was allowed access to a demarcated area of forest to collect fodder, fuel wood, etc. He was also very keen to protect that patch as any degradation and destruction will harm him immensely.

However, it is true that with the increase of their population with the shrinking size of the forests, the pressure on the forests has increased. Now, one "permit area" is being used by more as their summer destination.

The Gujjars lop fodder trees. Particular trees are lopped in particular months that allows their fast regeneration. Now the dominant argument proffered by the government is that lopping is the cause of degradation of forest. Clark et al (1986) finds, in contrary, that lopping did not have a significant effect on crown cover as lopping occurs in the period before each species' leaf fall. Moreover, there was an increase in ground vegetation in areas with lopped trees which would decrease the possibility of erosion.

In Rajaji National Park, the Gujjars are commonly believed, by the Forest and Wildlife Authorities, to be a serious threat to the wildlife. Clark et al. (1986) finds that the deer species were not disturbed by Gujjar activities - indeed, the deers were reported to feed alongside the buffalo at night.

Transhumance practice of the Gujjars also contribute to the regeneration of forests. It is infact a mechanism to keep the resource base infact.

### **Transhumance and the Gujjars**

As it has already been mentioned, the Gujjars dwelling in Rajaji National Park are nomads who reside in Rajaji during winter, i.e. from October/November to March/April. And in April/May they climb up to upper Himalayas where they find lush green pastures and forest for their herds. It is reported that their buffaloes are also so used to migration that while April comes, they themselves start climbing up.

Now-a-days, Gujjars are increasingly preferring non-migration. Amir Hassan (1986:46) reports in his study that 218 families contacted (in Uttar

Pradesh) 27 families had stopped migrating. Clark et al. (1986) finds that 50 per cent of the dera practice transhumance, whereas our study reveals that 48 percent do migrate. He also found that most families had stopped migrating very recently. Our study finds that non-migrating Gujjar also migrate on and off and leaving one or more than one family & member back in Rajaji is a growing phenomenon. It is revealed by our study that given a preference all the Gujjars would like to migrate. They had to stop migrate because, crossing the State boundaries involves a lot of legal complications. They are heavily extracted by forest officials, police and other officials. The local people up on the hill, do not allow the Gujjars to use "their resource base". Even though, the Gujjars possess permit from the forest department, the local people make them to pay heavy price. It is also alleged by the Gujjars that their unprotected "deras" (houses) which are made wood and grass are demolished and taken away by the people living in the periphery in connivance with the forest officials. When the Gujjars come back to their 'deras' in winter, they find their houses have vanished. It is again a very difficult task for them to rebuild their "deras".

Creation of National Park which legally does not permit human habitation inside the Park, has given an opportunity to the forest bureaucracy to displace the Gujjars and rehabilitate them.

#### **Move to displace and rehabilitate Gujjars.**

The state government have been making continuous efforts to displace the Gujjars from within Rajaji and rehabilitate them as sedentary. A rehabilitation scheme for the Gujjars was prepared by a committee led by C.L. Bhasin, Conservator of forest, in 1979. The committee recommended displacing the Gujjars and to rehabilitate them gradually in a way that would not destroy their identity and culture. The report was not accepted by the government.

The government unilaterally decided to resettle the Gujjars at a place called Pathri block in the Haridwar district.

A new development which is threatening their traditional social, cultural and economic linkages with the commons i.e. forest and their strategy of livelihood is the creation of a national park under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. Before we more to explain what a national park is and what are its consequences especially in for the Gujjars living in Rajaji National Park, it

will be worthwhile to briefly highlight how forests are treated by the state.

### **Conclusions**

The above discussion highlights what has happened to the forests and forest dwellers under the auspices of the modern state. The state has monopolized the resources and imposed an alien paradigm of development. This has not only deprived the marginalised communities of their traditional rights over access to resources which are crucial to their survival. Pastoralists who once upon a time used to enjoy free access to their resources are forbidden now. More so the pastoral nomads, whose transhumance nature is considered as a problem of development, and their economy is considered as stagnating which uses natural resources but does not yield good economic returns. Their traditional skill are considered to be redundant in the face of modern technology and their life style is viewed as ecologically destructive.

In the case of the Gujjars of Rajaji, all these arguments and assumptions do not hold much truth. Shanti George rightly says, given the right opportunity and facilities, these traditional dairymen will prove to be as efficient as the "Operation Flood" based on modern high-yielding breed and technology.

As far as ecology is concerned, they are the stewards with their traditional knowledge of ecology and its management.

Anil Agarwal, a noted environmentalist in India views, "It is a question of managing that resource in a way that it improves the ecological conditions as well as meets the needs of the people. Now there are two ways of managing the resource. One is managing it in the Forest Department's style, which is excluding the people, which in turn will then lead to more tensions around the resource and whenever the Forest Department is politically weak it will lead to the degradation of the resource because the people will increasingly get alienated from the resource. On the other hand there can be another resource where the people themselves manage the resource. Therefore they have a stake and an interest in that resource and they will therefore have a vested interest in its sustainable management.. What I basically feel is that the only way you can deal with national parks and sanctuaries and protect them properly is by involving people in the management. Which means that they should be the beneficiaries of the

resource. Not the world, not the nation, not some great environmentalist or anything of the kind. It has to be the local people."



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