

Schooling, Governance and 'Progress' for the Rabaris of Kutch, India

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Providing education for nomadic populations is a pressing challenge for nation states that have signed up to the international commitment to Education For All, and hope to achieve the Millennium Development Goal for primary education. Education has long been associated with modernization, development and 'progress', and India made a constitutional pledge to universalise elementary education in 1950. With these policy commitments in view, this paper presents a case study of how the transhumant Rabaris of Kutch in Western India construct 'progress' in relation to schooling and community governance. It identifies development policies that are unfriendly to transhumant pastoralists as a key catalyst for the demand for formal schooling among Rabaris. Community leaders are also using schooling as an instrument in efforts to 'modernize' their constituency. But in all of this, education in its broadest sense has been commuted to schooling, and further to a particular model of mainstream, sedentary schooling. The lack of state action in considering alternatives ensures that this model becomes the 'default' education option, and so schooling provided by the state contributes to a delegitimization of the mobile way of life, and pits pastoralism and education as mutually incompatible.

Keywords: Nomads, mobility, Education For All, education, schooling, governance

NOMADS, EDUCATION AND THE STATE

International commitments to achieving Education For All (EFA) were first made at the World Conference on Education For All in Jomtien in 1990 and re-affirmed in Dakar, 2000. The second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of making primary education universal by 2015, which followed shortly after Dakar, affirmed the status of formal schooling as the main vehicle for achieving EFA (GMR, 2002).

Although the scale is almost impossible to quantify (Oxfam, 2003; Carr-Hill, 2005) nomadic communities present a significant challenge to achievement of the

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education MDG. Their mobility alone clearly presents service providers with a major logistical challenge, as mainstream service provision is designed for sedentary populations rather than scattered, mobile groups. Even if mobility can be satisfactorily addressed, state efforts to provide educational services for nomads are inclined to raise more questions than provide answers in relation to the purpose and relevance of formal education for them—and therefore, what constitutes appropriate curricular content, mode of delivery and staffing (Krätli, 2001). Caught up in these debates are differing views on the legitimacy of the nomadic way of life, and the place of nomads within the project of the modernizing state (Klute, 1996).

Some African countries, such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Ethiopia (see Carr-Hill, 2002; Krätli, 2001; McCaffery et al, 2005; Tahir, 1991) have begun to address policy and practice gaps through extensive nomadic education programmes. The Indian state, in contrast, lags behind: despite its Constitutional pledge of 1950 to universalize elementary education, it has yet formally either to recognise the challenges imposed by mobility, or to draw up effective and proactive educational policy responses. Meanwhile the modernizing project of the Indian state is impacting on nomadic groups to an extent that formal schooling is becoming part of nomadic groups' own discourse of 'progress'. Drawing on nearly three years of ethnographic field work among the transhumant pastoralist Rabaris of Kutch in Gujarat, western India, in the 1990s, this paper discusses how schooling is woven into Rabari narratives of 'making progress' in relation to social and occupational identities, and their own structures of internal governance, the community councils; and the implications for achievement of development goals in respect of education.

MODERNIZATION, CHANGE, AND TRANSHUMANT RABARIS' DEMAND FOR SCHOOLING

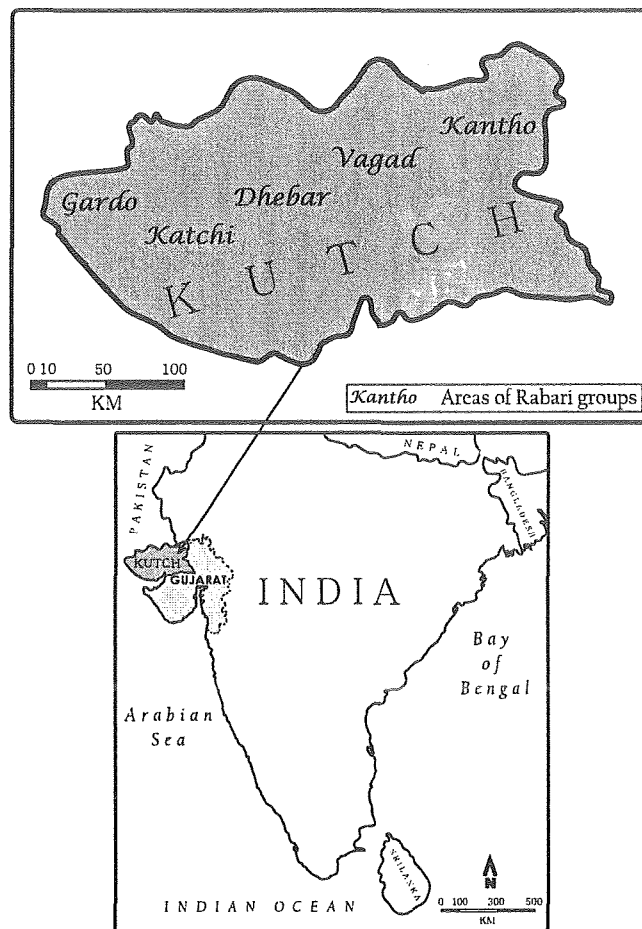
Social organization among the Rabaris of Kutch

Rabaris claim a high Hindu caste status deriving from direct descent from Sambad, the first Rabari, who was put on earth by Lord Shiva to tend Parvati's camels. Traditionally camel breeders, they are all Gujarati-speaking, and are spread in five endogenous sub-groups across Kutch (see Figure 1). Each group can be physically differentiated by jewellery, clothing and tattoos; they have broadly similar social conventions around engagement, marriage, death rites, and so on.

In each sub-group, there are both sedentary and transhumant families. Gardo and Katchi Rabaris are the most sedentary groups, but some are still pastoralists, maintaining small flocks of sheep and goats and migrating locally; others have herds of cows and migrate within Gujarat; a handful of families still have camels and migrate within the State. Among the sedentary families, adults often work as

daily waged laborers; men work as watchmen or drivers; and some of those who have gained educational qualifications work in the formal economy (e.g. as clerks or teachers). Vagad and Kantho Rabaris generally have larger flocks of sheep and goats and migrate in northern Gujarat in good years, and to the south of the State in lean years, returning to Kutch for the monsoon. Many Dhebars have migrated permanently outside Gujarat and maintain large flocks of sheep and goats in other States; pastoralists return to Kutch during the monsoon. In these three groups, the proportion of sedentary families is much smaller than among Katchi and Gardo Rabaris. However, the trend towards sedentarization is reported by Rabaris to be getting stronger, and is closely linked to the actions of agencies of governance at both the state and the community levels, and their—often overlapping—discourses of ‘progress’.

Figure 1: Location of the Kutch region of Gujarat State in India.



Each of the five sub-groups has its own, all-male community council (the *nat*). There are variations across the five groups in the organization of councils, how leaders are elected, and the constituencies they serve, but they all have both normative and regulatory roles. They lay down regulations about appropriate gifts and conduct at occasions such as engagement, marriage and death, and uphold them by presiding over community meetings, to which complaints (typically concerning marriage and engagement, disputes over land, or herd distribution) are brought for adjudication. Every Rabari has the right to be heard by the council, although women do not appear in person, and will abide by its judgements. The council is not recognised by the state as a legal institution, but it is legitimated among Rabaris by long custom, peer pressure, fines and its power to cast out any community member who transgresses its norms. The ultimate sanction of social ostracisation by outcasting is devastating, as a Katchi Rabari woman explained (*italics added*):

Someone who is outcast feels very lonely, he can't get anything done. The children won't get engaged in the community, they can't participate in any ceremony and Rabaris won't go to any ceremony in their home. We can't even speak to someone, we can't even wave, there are no relations, if we do, the community will fine us. It mainly happens because everyone believes in the community decision so, more than the fine, it is the decision which the community has taken that is final, and that is why people don't keep the relationship [...] In the end he has to apologise and come back to the community because he can't survive without it. There will be hardly any Rabari in that situation though. All of us believe that what the community does is right, *there is no need to have relationships with other communities.*

"We have been left behind": Transhumant pastoralism and 'progress'

In keeping with their religious traditions and myth of origin, pastoralism as practised by Rabaris is based on a moral economy (Thompson, 1993). Rabaris see themselves as caretakers of animals whose lives are commended to the mother goddess. The religious foundation of their occupation and way of life is increasingly challenged by the contemporary modernizing context. Gujarat in particular is one of India's most industrialized States, with aggressive agro-fertilizer and large dairy industries, which contribute to shrinking the pastures available to traditional land users such as Rabaris. Officially designated 'waste' land which pastoralists could formerly use is increasingly being sold to industries; and Forestry Department efforts to replenish shrinking tree cover are making it illegal to use these traditional pastures without a licence. The 'success' of agricultural policies which have provided many farmers with irrigation sufficient for all-year round crops, and heavily subsidized artificial fertilizers, is quite the opposite for Rabaris. The almost constant presence of standing crops means that migrating animals now represent a threat, rather than

welcome providers of dung and urine to nourish the ground, for which payment was provided in the form of consumables such as grains.

Pressures engendered by shrinking pastures are generating increasing demands for cash—for example to rent fields, or pay for a Forestry licence (or ‘come to an agreement’ with an officer). Small amounts of cash could be generated by the sale of clarified butter, and when this no longer satisfied requirements, by wool; and finally, by selling animals for the meat market. Rabaris liken the latter to selling the blood of their sons, and this forces a questioning of the morality of a pastoralism that can only be sustained by ‘blood money’.

State outreach services in Gujarat for small animal herders are skeletal, but those that do exist promote profitability (for example by selling wool by the kilo rather than the fleece, or breeds with more marketable wool quality) and are geared towards making Rabaris more competitive in the market-driven economy underpinning the nation state’s development policies. This approach is in direct opposition to the not-for-commercial-profit orientation of Rabari pastoralism.

Shrinking pastures also result in a reported increase in physical disputes over land use, often ending with interventions by low level police officers. Those who appear to put barriers in their way are often of low caste status but—even as low level representatives of the state—enjoy social standing in which formal schooling has been instrumental. Such incidents underline for Rabaris how social status and power in contemporary society are linked to formal schooling, rather than merely caste status. Those whom they trust, such as farmers from whom they rent, and for whom it has become the norm to educate their own children, reinforce these messages through their advice to transhumant Rabaris that they should give up this outdated ‘way of the jungle’, and settle down so that they can get their children educated.

The discourse of development, from government through to farming communities and shopkeepers, equates migration with backwardness, and being sedentary with possibilities for progress. This is the paradigm within which development is conceived (Krätli, 2001), and this discourse is mirrored in the way Rabaris are now beginning to see themselves. The future of pastoralism is all too evidently precarious, and it is not assured by limited state outreach services that, in aiming to increase pastoral productivity, are predicated on an assumption of how pastoralism should ‘progress’ that Rabaris do not share. The absence in the outreach services of any educational component that might address any of these issues is marked.

Transhumant Rabaris view their social and occupational status as being in decline, and multiple pressures on their way of life are making it increasingly difficult to deploy the usual strategy of finding avenues for further adaptability within pastoralism (Choksi and Dyer, 1996). This is prompting an awareness of the need for occupational diversification, facilitated by qualifications gained through formal education. There is strong endorsement of the importance of schooling and a widely shared view across the community groups that ‘education is like glasses’ – it enables one both to see, and to speak the voice of power (Dyer and Choksi, 1998). Rabaris

liken themselves to 'a horse stuck in mud' while 'others have gone ahead, and we have got left behind' because of their lack of formal education.

However, the rigidity of state provision of educational services pits pastoralism and education as mutually incompatible opposites. It reduces 'education' to the prevailing narrow model of formal schooling. For Rabaris then, 'getting an education' involves choosing between several possible compromises relating to accessing formal schools, which intrinsically neither recognise the legitimacy of their way of life, nor offer an education, more broadly conceived, that relates to pastoralism in the contemporary world.

The favoured option is to use one of the handful of Rabari-founded private boarding schools. These adopt the state curriculum, but all teachers are Rabaris and committed to helping 'their' children progress. There are very few places in these schools and their further development depends on private funding, since Rabaris are not recognised as a constitutionally protected Scheduled Tribe. Groups that are thus recognised, in contrast, are entitled to state subsidy and support in establishing boarding schools, and other benefits to facilitate take-up of schooling.

Another option is to use village schools in Kutch. This means parents who wish to continue to migrate have to leave children behind in villages with family members (such as grandparents) to use state schools. Commonly, this is a way for a family to take out an 'insurance policy': one son is sent to school in the expectation that he will use the resulting qualification to get a job within the wider economy, so that should pastoralism fail, he can support his family. Some families have gone further than this, by deliberately making the decision to sedentarize in order to send their children to school, and returning to Kutch to do so. For others, the failure of pastoralism has enforced sedentarization, and so facilitated use of the local school.

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

At another level, the community councils are also seeking to position Rabaris more favorably within the modernising context. They regard formal schooling as instrumental in bringing about change; but they have no experience of any alternative provision to the model provided by the state.

Reconstructing governance structures: Changes to the Katchi and Dhebar councils

Increasing pressures on pastoralism coupled with the gradual spread of formal education across the Rabari community groups are making new demands on community councils. In the past, leaders were either hereditary, or proved their worth by their excellence as pastoralists and depth of pastoral knowledge (personal communication, Gardo and Katchi leaders). Now, as the contemporary context places changing demands on leadership roles, there is an emerging expectation that leaders have sufficient knowledge of how the modern world works to address the declining status

of Rabaris in the broader socio-economic context; and this includes familiarity with the institution of modern education. At the forefront of change are the Katchi and Dhebar Rabaris, among whom tensions about the role of the council and its fitness to govern have begun to raise questions about its legitimacy and whether formal state institutions of governance might be preferable.

Prior to 1993, the seventy-eight villages inhabited by Katchi Rabaris were grouped into five areas (*pada*) around the seat of Varamsida. All *patel* (leader) posts were hereditary, in a line that could be traced back over three hundred years. During the early 1990s, members of a Rabari Youth Organization had been working with leaders' approval to promote formal schooling in the community. Concerned that older hereditary and uneducated/illiterate leaders were not able to lead Rabaris appropriately in the modern context, they suggested that interested people could work alongside the hereditary leaders in a committee. This suggestion was accepted and in 1993, the council structure was changed to a sixteen-member committee, chosen by the community meeting, with a three-year term. The *nat patel* is retained as an honorary post. The sixteen-member committee has a second, five 'executive' member committee, to expedite letter writing and small decisions. Eight members of the new committee had had formal schooling, and one was a secondary school teacher.

The literacy practices of state legal institutions have been introduced: the council will not hear a case unless the plea is presented in writing. Judgements—copies of which are circulated to all listed villages—are also given in writing. This lends an air of legal authenticity to the proceedings, which outweighs its practical significance since high numbers of constituents are non-literate. One such constituent commented: "There was no education before, now a little has come, and with that writing has come. This becomes a document and with that one can prove one has applied and for what reasons. This is used as proof". Funds are formally banked and used with increasing transparency for and by the community, and records are maintained in written form.

There have been similar changes among Dhebar Rabaris, who are distributed among sixty-four villages, each of which has two-three leaders. The villages are organised into four roughly equal groupings (*vai*), each of which has its own *nat patel* and administrative committee. Wherever possible, villagers try to resolve disputes locally: if they cannot do so, they go to the *vai*. A meeting of the full council is the final step. There was no overall *nat patel*; the uppermost governance tier of the *nat* consisted of five men, whose decisions were ratified by a further twenty-five, the leaders of the various *vais*. In 1995, following the Katchi example, Dhebars replaced this tier with a twenty-one-member committee, with official posts. There is one major annual meeting, but the council also meets during the monsoon months.

In both these cases, the council leadership has shifted to accommodate people with the skills that are required to guide Rabaris in the modern context. Such leaders, however, are no longer pastoralists: they are sedentary, politicised, and engaged in 'modern' occupations (such as truck transport, school teaching) which necessitate

sustained interactions with other social groups. These leaders have an agenda for progress that is contested within the constituencies they represent.

Community council agendas for progress

A consistent area of activity for both councils, which is formally documented, relates to the conduct of social events, and curbing the costs associated with social customs.

The Katchis' first written document, of 1952, sets out procedures for engagement, marriage, if a bride is stolen, death after engagement, death ceremonials, re-marriage; relationships permitted with Dhebar Rabaris; rules for small meetings within a few villages to resolve minor disputes; and fines to be imposed for breaking the rules. Formal revisions have occurred regularly since then, and address the same key issues. Dhebars revised their rules in 1962, and the first printed rules appeared after another revision in 1980. They were revised in 1990; in 1995 they were revised four times within the year; and revisions continue. As with Katchis, the thrust of the revisions has been on controlling expense of jewellery, and regulating marriage customs. Fines are the highest of all the sub-groups.

The pruning of costs and regulation of social events in order to protect the community from escalating costs and to ensure the upholding of appropriate moral conduct is a well established concern of the councils. New leaders, however, view some aspects of these customs as symbols of an ethnic identity that is now associated with low social status, and associate transhumant pastoralism itself with backwardness because it is seen to keep people ignorant and in the 'jungle', close to animals, and on the margins of society. Advocating leaving pastoralism is a prominent component of their discourse of 'improving' the community:

If you want to improve this community the first step is to stop them from herding sheep and goats. Once they stop the business, they'll come in contact with people from other communities in the villages. At present, they stay in the jungle and they don't get any day to day news there. When an advertisement comes through the media, seventy crore Indian people will know about the product next day. How will the Rabari know about this? He has no links, no facilities. If there is no facility, how can improvement come about? (Dhebar leader and committee member)

All over Kutch there are Rabaris and in all the villages there is a Sarpanch. Under the Sarpanch is a committee. Now our Rabari, who is a leader of our whole community, will not be asked by the Sarpanch what needs to be done. Why not? Because he knows that these are all animals and there is no point in asking (sedentary Dhebar male).

Progress, therefore, entails leaving pastoralism, which necessitates sedentariza-

tion. Being sedentary facilitates another aspect of 'progress', which is 'being educated' – by attending school. A Katchi leader, himself a school teacher, said:

We think that Rabaris won't be sedentary as long as they have their animals: we think we should be their enemies and make them sedentary because until they are there is no chance of any improvement. But we have no alternative for their survival to offer them. [...] I am not saying they are poor in income. But they are socially backward. [...] New thinking will only come if they become sedentary, then they will be able to develop themselves. If we go on talking about education, they will not do it, as they live in the forest and their concentration is on animals. They can die for them. As long as this feeling and orthodoxy is there, nothing can be done. We need to bring them out of the jungle first.

Being educated itself is seen as a good because, in the view of an uneducated Gardo hereditary leader, "if they were educated, there would be chances of change". Without education, "Rabaris are not in a position to think about other things so they accept things that have been there for a long time" (educated Katchi leader). A progressive Dhebar leader said:

Other communities used to have laws like ours, and they have gone through changes. They could do this because they got education, and especially their women got education. They started accepting new ideas, good ideas, with the education of men and women. [...] The whole thing goes back to education. Today, if we got all the women together, all the old people, all the young ones, unless they understand, and are convinced, nothing is going to work.

Regulating social customs

Alongside advocating sedentarization as means to 'progress', leaders are proactive in relation to reforming social customs—to an extent that their activities have been taken by some to be an attack on Rabari ethnicity. This is refuted by one reforming, educated Katchi leader: "Customs are not your ethnicity. But in the name of ethnicity, our community is still living with these customs. As times change, customs change. Ethnicity remains. They [customs] need to be changed." The giving and wearing of jewellery is, along with embroidery, one of the most obvious tangible symbols of being a Rabari, and both of these customs have been targeted for reform. Reforms in the early 1990s were practical and not particularly contentious, as a Dhebar leader narrated:

All men used to wear earrings but now we have stopped that. If you see the older people you'll find the hole, but not among the younger people. [...] Nowadays mothers are convinced, children don't wear them so they have

stopped having the hole made in the ear. Women used to wear a big necklace with a big silver pendant, we have stopped that too. They used to wear very heavy anklets, we have stopped that. Their toe rings meant they could not wear shoes so they got thorns in their feet, so that has been stopped too. Things which were inconvenient have gone now, that is the main gain.

The sub-texts of later, more stringent reforms ostensibly targeting jewellery have made them more difficult to implement and have required both persuasion and exercise of authority. The idea that sustaining old customs is marking Rabaris out as being behind others is used as an advocacy tool, “We start by telling them to see, other communities are doing things this way, why aren't we? We can only bring change after looking to other communities. Others don't wear this type of jewellery, or these clothes, so we talk about these communities first, and then talk about change” (Dhebar leader). Ultimately, however, council authority is invoked to impose fines and punishment on those who transgress.

Among Katchis, for example, all women except two unmarried girls who accompany the groom have been banned from marriage processions, ostensibly to reduce the costs of feeding guests at a wedding. A sub-text of this ban has been to deprive women of the opportunity to showcase their jewellery, thus easing the passage of rules reducing the amount that may be worn, and thus the expenditure associated with this custom.

The Dhebar council has been particularly concerned about very high bride prices, which can amount to over Rs. 10,000,000, much of which will take the form of jewellery to be worn to display wealth. Since the giving of jewellery begins at the engagement (which may be before a child has reached the age of five, although child marriage has now been successfully banned), some older Dhebar men do not even manage to complete engagement rituals. Others may have a very young wife, whose original intended husband could not afford to continue and was bought out by the richer man, who paid the fine her father would incur for breaking the engagement, and then an agreed price for the newly eligible girl. Since men do not like to admit they cannot afford the money, and need time to accrue it, it became customary to blame delays on failure to complete embroidery of the dowry. The girl would not leave for her in-laws' place until the dowry was ready, and it would not be ready until her price had been paid. Although embroidery was a symptom of the problem, not its cause, the Dhebar council banned it. This led to serious physical disputes between council leaders and their constituents and several outcastings, although all those who were ostracised in the end paid the fine for re-admission. Although the issue of bride prices has not been solved, and many Dhebars feel that they now look as if they are all in mourning, the ban has been upheld.

The implementation of these reforms has highlighted differences among the constituencies the councils govern. Young transhumant Rabaris, who are not formally educated, are inclined to respect the experience of elders and abide by what the council says, as are older non-literate, pastoralist men who—even if they are married

with four children—feel they are ‘too young’ to participate actively in the council: “We can go, but the elder ones are there, they make the decisions, we go to eat”. Young, sedentary and educated Rabaris in contrast have learned about the idea and institutions of democratic governance at school, and are more likely to challenge authority figures. They doubt whether the council dispenses impartial justice, and are frustrated if they speak out only to find their right to do so called into question: “They tell us, what do you young people know, you have only studied, you are young and we have experience because we have seen many things”.

Although the Dhebar council has initiated more swingeing reforms in its customs than the Katchis, the process of re-integration of community members returning to Kutch has strengthened community bonds. Returning Dhebar pastoralists seeking to diversify occupationally need the support and guidance of sedentarized peers, and in these circumstances, the penalty of outcasting would be a huge risk. In the short term, there is likely to be from many men an endorsement of recent rulings that prune costs, and assist in unifying marital partners earlier than is the case at present. In the longer term, the stability of the council is probably less assured. Council leaders recognise the irony that the education they advocate may in the longer term lead to the demise of the council structure itself:

Until now our *nat* has survived and it will as long as 80 percent are illiterate. They all accept what the *patels* say. The educated ones don't always agree all the time, they oppose the decisions that are taken. But they are not yet very powerful, the majority is illiterate and falls with the traditional *patels*. The ratio is imbalanced at the moment, but when it equalises, changes will come, whether the *nat* initiated them or not, they themselves will do it. It is going to happen, slowly the *nat* will go, like it did among the Desai Rabaris; what has happened in Gujarat will happen here [Kutch]. Today if 1000-2000 people get together and agree that what a *patel* says is right, no-one will argue. But from the day they each begin to think and assert themselves, it will not work.

Women perceive the council to be a male domain which they influence in absentia by telling men their views, which they believe their men will represent, but in which they do not seek to participate. It is crucial that older women in particular understand and support the rulings, since they are widely deferred to as the guardians of social customs even if they have no direct voice in their formulation—or indeed, in the view of one educated Katchi Rabari woman—any voice at all:

As soon as they come from meetings the men do inform women because it will be women who do all the ceremonies. Once they get home they discuss everything—previously this was the rule and now it has been changed, they tell everything. There is no question of participation because women are not prepared for this kind of thing.

Only one leader recognised as problematic the lack of any female representation within the council, even at the level of attending meetings, and linked this to increasing tensions over the legitimacy of the council's rulings:

The reasons why rules are broken are that we don't take women into confidence. [...] We have never even felt that we need to ask how women react to these changes in the rules and regulations. We have never called them or asked for their opinion. Women have not had the right to vote in the past: in the same way we have asked for neither their suggestions nor their opinions. In fact we need to know about these things now.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting the international and national discourse concerning the right to Education For All, there is a strong trend among transhumant pastoralist Rabaris to link formal schooling with their notion of progress. The qualifications provided by schooling offer the promise of occupational diversity should pastoralism fail. Having 'an education' via formal schooling is a symbol of having 'gone forward', which is a state that Rabaris desire. Formal schooling has also been a powerful force in re-shaping both the structures and agendas of community governance—yet those who have gone through its processes may well pose a threat to the fabric of community leadership and traditional authority.

The newly formed councils are becoming more politicised, but efforts to lobby government have focused on obtaining for themselves what might be seen as an official label of disprivilege, Scheduled Tribe status, which the state is highly unlikely to confer upon them. While such labelling is understood as an instrumental measure which is primarily intended to provide Rabari children with educational opportunity, it is ironic that 'progress' appears to require acquiring an official designation of disprivilege. The steady drift of sedentarization and take up of formal schooling might be seen by councils as a sign of 'progress', but there is also emerging evidence of growing disillusion among the constituency when the expected jobs do not materialise, so Rabari school leavers have neither skills as pastoralists, nor a job in the modern economy.

In relation to the Rabaris, the state that has, after all, repeatedly pledged its support for the notion of universal primary education, Education For All and similar policy targets, is more noticeable for its absence of action than its actions. This absence of action appears to be significantly shaping the course of Rabari 'progress'. Rabaris remain a group that is officially invisible to the state—they do not appear in Census returns; they do not keep animals that conform with the large dairy model and thus contribute to the modernizing agricultural project of the state; and most importantly, they are not officially labelled as needing the succour of the state. In

respect of education, the lack state proaction in relation to non-sedentary groups firmly places the onus on Rabaris to fit in with whatever 'mainstream' provision the state makes available. The demand for this provision then becomes self-perpetuating, with no interruption to the dominance of a model that serves the purpose of encouraging sedentarization.

The idea of 'Education For All' demands that this 'default option' is no longer allowed just to happen. The debate that is happening in some other countries over what might comprise appropriate form, content or processes of education for nomadic populations is leading to experimentation, credible alternatives, and critical questioning of what education actually means. These processes validate pastoralism, and are based on the premise that a mobile way of life is legitimate. This is a necessary starting point for the generation of a discourse about the purpose of education that is crucial in relation to nomadic groups' entitlement as state citizens to their right to an education. This discourse is a reminder that the EFA project should not simply be commuted into Schooling For All. Contributing to the discourse, and considering how to respond practically, is a call for action, not inaction, on the part of the state.

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