

Pastoral Underdevelopment and the Developmental State: Or why the Government Has Given Up on the Pastoralists of Rajasthan?

Purnendu S. Kavoori*

Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur

Pastoralists and governments have rarely enjoyed a more uncomfortable relationship than they do today. Three historical phases in this relationship are hypothesized, namely a Colonial phase, a Developmentalist phase and an Environmentalist phase. While each of these was characterized by distinct and even contradictory ideological orientations, in practice they merely provided different reasons for pursuing anti-pastoral policies. This paper focuses on the Developmentalist phase of this relationship. It is argued that the mechanics and ideology of development played a critical role in alienating pastoralists and sought to deprive them of a legitimate means of livelihood. However once we recognize that the discomfort between state and shepherd is a historical rather than an inherent antipathy, we take an important step in working towards negotiated solutions. It is nonetheless worrying that in the guise of environmentalism, state-shepherd relations do seem headed for yet another round of confrontation.

Keywords: *Sedentarization, colonization, development, environmentalism, intervention, state, ideology.*

INTRODUCTION: STATE AND SHEPHERD

It is on the face of it not unexpected that in a geographic context as vast and complex as the Indian subcontinent, pastoralists should form a small, almost insignificant, strand in the developmental agenda of the post-colonial Indian State. On first impressions this would seem to be so because pastoralists occupy ecologically marginal tracts vis-a-vis the north Indian Indo-Gangetic heartland. Again this neglect may be due to the 'fact' that as a system of production pastoralism does not enjoy the economic importance in agrarian south Asia that it does say, in Central and Western Asia or North Africa. In our view however, this neglect is only partially explained in such terms. Instead we believe that at a more fundamental level there hangs today a

* Institute of Development Studies, 8-b, Jhalana Institutional Area, Jaipur 302004, Rajasthan, India. Email: pskavoori@idsj.org

question mark on the very legitimacy of pastoralism as a way of life and that pastoral people have been actively subject to a process of repression, within which the ideology of development has formed an important mechanism. Using the example of a particular region namely the desert tracts of western Rajasthan, and the particular instance of an exemplar developmental state, we argue that the marginality of pastoralism within the Indian polity is neither merely economic nor entirely ecological but is in fact the historical result of a particular approach to development.

The plan of the paper is as follows. First we provide an introduction to the pastoral ecology of Rajasthan. Following this we offer an interpretation of the evolution of state pastoral relations in the Indian context, within which 'development' forms one major moment. In the third section we describe the nature of state intervention among pastoralists basing ourselves on primary records of the state bureaucracy. In concluding we caution that the emerging phase that state pastoral interactions now seem poised to enter does not augur well for the future of pastoralism, and needs to be questioned if we wish to create a legitimate space for pastoral peoples.

RAJASTHAN: ITS PASTORAL ECOLOGY

Rajasthan is the most densely populated desert in the world (*Census of India*, 2001). The Arravali hill ranges running northeast to southwest demarcate the arid part of Rajasthan. West of this range lies the *Thar* Desert stretching up to the Indus alluvium. Rainfall is low and erratic. Vegetation is xerophytic. Human settlement has nonetheless a complex history with important regional kingdoms having a long and persistent presence, right through to the British Paramountcy. The greater part of the Thar is open countryside peopled by large and small villages with extensive tracts of land that lie between settlements. These expanses are either devoted to rain-fed agriculture or are open pasture tracts, *dejure* and *defacto*. Dramatic desert landscapes are to be encountered in the extreme west; elsewhere, long stretches of hard-packed flat lands prevail. Saline *Runns* and pans are encountered in patches. The one river that runs across the Thar is saline seasonal and now no longer active (Kavoori, 2003). Cattle, camel, sheep and goat thrive in the habitat of the Thar, although conditions are fast changing.

In cultural ecological terms, most of the Thar forms what is called Marwar. In etymology the term apparently means the 'land of death' or the 'killing land', encapsulating within its territorial definition a distinct ecosystem, characteristic forms of adaptation, and an elaborately defined social structure. The central institution around which society is strung remains that of Caste. Large and small endogamous populations have adapted to relatively distinctive social and ecological niches thereby reducing competition for overlapping resources. Among these are populations that pursue in varying degrees a pastoral way of life as part of a more comprehensive and opportunistic package of adaptation.

Writing over two decades ago, Salzman recognised this aspect in coining the phrase 'peasant-pastoralist' for the shepherd of Marwar (Salzman, 1986). While not everyone is a pastoralist, the option of pastoralism is one that can be exercised by a surprisingly wide variety of caste groups. Thus castes of varying status—from the very top of the social order to those near the bottom—include pastoral options in their overall survival kit. So also there are probably as many pastoralists who are landless as those who are substantial landowners. Populations with characteristically pastoral identities as well as those not customarily associated with animal husbandry will be found keeping large and small herds. Thus a significant portion of the cultivating classes are not just herdsmen on the side, but those for whom pastoralism is in many ways the more reliable and rewarding component of their production system.

The limits beyond which pastoral options cease to be attractive are largely demarcated by the development of intensive forms of agriculture. With electricity has come about a proliferation of deep tube wells. Large parts of the countryside, which were pastureland or single crop tracts, have now been brought under multiple crop regimes. Pasturage has been under constant attrition, not only with the withering of commons (Jodha, 1984), but the enclosure of open fields as well. Furthermore, the north-western boundary of the state has been garlanded by an enormous irrigation system, the Indira Gandhi Canal. As a result of these developments a much larger proportion of the population has begun to practice irrigated agriculture, and among them would be former pastoralists.

However, irrigated agriculture marks a threshold rather than a definitive boundary constraining pastoral practice. At the level of the village the advance of irrigated lands is an uneven and inequitable one. Highly localised differences in topography, geology and drainage act as limiting factors to the spread of agriculture. High rates of ground water extraction have meant that water levels have fallen with alarming speed to unreachable Departments. Salinity is another major constraint in many parts of the desert. Extensive tracts that had in the past been valuable single crop land or useful pasture lands have been reduced to wasteland following their conversion to double cropping using saline water from deep borings. The Indira Gandhi Canal has also its own tale of social and ecological woes, although these have yet to mature in their full implication. Consequently the dramatic expansion of agriculture that the region has witnessed, has not only been uneven and inequitable, in the long run it may well prove to be unsustainable. These developments are an important argument in favour of keeping our pastoral options open.

Consequently, notwithstanding the profound social and economic changes that have swept Rajasthan's desert over the last few decades, pastoralism has in practice remained an important livelihood option. Alongside constraining factors such as noted above, there have been critical transformations in the system of pastoral production itself (Kavoori, 1999; Agarwal, 1999). There are essentially three important changes that need to be noted. One, there has been an important reorientation in

the patterns of migration, two, there have been significant changes in the composition of livestock, and three, there has been a more or less complete commodification of the pastoral production system.

Historically, pastoral migration has been an integral feature of peasant life in the desert. Linked largely to climatic conditions, all of its livestock and much of its human population would seek pasturage by migrating west to what is now Sindh in Pakistan, and southeast into the forests and fields of Central India. These movements would largely be confined to years of scarce rainfall and drought. The situation today has changed considerably. Contrary to expectations, pastoral migrations have not decreased and in many instances have increased. The extension of arable into open pastures and enclosure of seasonal open fallow make it increasingly difficult for pastoralists to graze their herds and flocks in home pastures even during good years. This has resulted in an increase in the frequency and duration of migratory cycles. Although movement to Sindh in Pakistan has been curtailed, alternative destinations have emerged. Two important areas to which pastoral flocks now migrate are the neighbouring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in the north and northeast, and towards Gujarat in the south. Pasturage here is entirely confined to stubble in fallow fields. It would seem this is a new niche that pastoralists are exploiting and forms a part of a transhumant cycle. Secondly to this, nomadism has emerged as a necessary alternative for flock-owners with larger flocks, particularly for those from villages where pastures have diminished to a point of no return. These pastoralists continue to maintain village links, but their flocks no longer return to their home ranges, and are kept on a nomadic cycle of movement between the forests and fields of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Eastern Rajasthan.

A second important transformation concerns the species composition of pastoral livestock. Historically, Marwar was celebrated for its great cattle breeds (Ghotge, 2004). Some of these e.g. the *Rathi* were milch breeds, in the main however it was for bullocks that cattle were bred in the region. The most famous breed of these parts—the *Nagauri*—produces magnificent trotter bullocks but very poor milch animals. Other breeds such as the *Jalori* produce somewhat better milch animals but in the main are traction animals. Most of these breeds can easily be bettered in milk production, by buffaloes or hybrid animals. Today however bullocks have been completely replaced by tractors, and no one wants to bother with keeping them. As a result the rationale for keeping cows has taken a blow. Although sacred in sentiment, by and large cattle keeping is being abandoned, with sheep and goat emerging as the species most favoured by pastoralists. This shift can readily be seen in livestock population figures, where over a period of thirty years from 1966 to 1997, cattle population in the various districts of western Rajasthan has either remained constant or decreased, with small stock on the other hand almost doubling over this period (Sixteenth Indian Livestock Census, 2003).

It is not tractors alone however, which have been responsible for the collapse of cattle pastoralism. The religious taboo on beef consumption has been an impor-

tant impediment in the incorporation of cattle in the market economy. It is not impossible that in the absence of an official ban on cow slaughter, cattle breeders would have reoriented their production to the demands of a growing urban meat market. As things stand this niche has instead been filled by small stock (i.e., sheep and goat). There are multiple reasons behind the shift towards small stock, among which the most important clearly is that there exists a major market for their produce, especially mutton. Systematic networks of traders have developed facilitating the sale and transporting of small stock regardless of whether they happen to be in their village homes, away on a cycle of transhumance or whether they are nomadic. Similarly wool is sheared on the hoof and transported to urban collection centres by traders. The entire enterprise is oriented to production for the market and we are as far as we can possibly be from a subsistence oriented pastoral economy.

The practice of pastoralism has therefore a living presence in the social economy of western Rajasthan, although it cannot in all fairness be said to be thriving. There are important constraints restricting its development that are of an ecological as well as an institutional nature. It is evident nonetheless that to a large measure pastoralism as a system of production continues to retain its viability.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: AN ELUSIVE LEGITIMACY

From an analytical perspective there may be identified three phases in the evolution of state pastoral relations in the context of our study area. These stages are characteristically recognisable in terms of the predominant profiles the state presents vis-à-vis pastoral populations, and may be described as (a) the law and order stage, (b) the developmentalist stage and (c) the environmentalist stage. Each of these orientations arose in the context of particular forms of polity, in the first instance associated with the colonial state and its princely articulations, in the second phase with the newly founded nation state and in the third with the state in withdrawal or retreat. Each phase simultaneously questioned and absorbed the discourses of the preceding moment at the same time that it prepared the conditions for the emergence of the succeeding one (Kavoori, 2005). Let us look at each of these briefly.

Colonialism

Consolidation of colonial rule marked a definite shift in the relations between state and shepherd characteristically expressed in the emergence of sedentarisation as the governing principle of policy. Consequently, although western Rajasthan remained nominally in the hands of princely rulers, the transition from pre-colonial state systems to colonial rule even if by proxy had complex consequences on the lives of Rajasthani pastoralists. In contrast to native rulers who sought to encourage colonisation of sparsely inhabited tracts by pastoralists, the British rarely saw pastoralism as an integral and positive contribution to rural economy. Without romanticising

feudal polity, it is worth noting that there were important factors that had brought together state and pastoral subjects in pre-colonial contexts; pastoralism enjoyed legitimacy and was seen as one instance in a wide range of subsistence strategies incorporating mobility. In contrast it was only too evident that pastoralists did not have a place in the British peace. While the attribute of criminality was never formally attached to the major pastoral populations, the development of a popular association of criminality and vagrancy with mobility or lack of settled existence meant that migratory pastoralists came within the ambit of spoken and unspoken discrimination. Consequently, at the same time that their migratory character made them an object of ambivalence and suspicion, it was their forcible sedentarization, which pushed them into criminality.

Developmentalism

The post-colonial years saw the first challenge to and serious questioning of the legitimacy of the discourses on criminality. The concern for law and order was replaced by a wider concern for the development and uplifting of backward peoples including pastoralists. However, the ideas of development were based on assumptions that treated pastoralism as a residual historical category. Pastoralism as a system of production came to be regarded as inefficient and redundant. Pastoralism—especially nomadism—came to be treated as an undeveloped way of life which people had to outgrow. In practice this meant a reinforcement of the policy of sedentarisation, although an entirely new set of reasons lay behind its advocacy. The attention now centred on questions of productivity, technological advancement, commercialisation, product development, and so on. Sedentarization was thought to be an unavoidable corollary of development. Whatsoever, the particular rationale on offer, whether humanitarian or production oriented, the developmentalist framework completely failed to consider pastoralism as a feasible and rational system of production in its own right. Not only had this taken place, through the process of intervention, developmentalism sought simultaneously to subvert the practicality of pastoralism as a sustainable way of life.

Environmentalism

In the same manner that it was a critique or rejection of the idea of criminality that cleared the ground for the emergence of development as an organising ethical idea, it is from a critique and questioning of the consequences of development that its logical successor—environmentalism—has emerged. Consequently, like the discourses on 'law and order' and on 'development', environmentalism also contributes to an exercise in legitimisation. The moot question however is what does environmentalism legitimise and whom does it render illegitimate?

Unfortunately, ecological disputes are rarely, if ever, primarily ecological. Thus there are no doubt circumstances in which pastoralists have been actively responsi-

ble for the degradation of their environments. However are these circumstances created by pastoralists, or by factors over which they had no control and for which they were not in a direct way responsible. Although it is arguable that pastoralism, especially nomadic and migratory forms of pastoralism, provide for a sustainable and conservative system of resource use, the actual environments under which pastoralists have to survive are invariably impoverished ones. Under these circumstances, pastoralists not only become part of worsening cycles of degradation, they become popularly associated with that process.

INTERVENTION: RATIONALE AND LIMITATIONS.

Keeping in mind the historical sequence presented above, in this section we reflect upon evidence that there has been by and large a great degree of incompatibility between intervention and development as visualised by the state and the practical conditions under which pastoral production obtains. We try and understand why despite the best intentions, interventions among pastoralists never seem to take off, or if on occasion they do find acceptance it is for very different reasons than those with which they were promulgated. The material that we present consists of government documents, namely extracts from records of the Department of Animal Husbandry, and more pertinently the Department of Sheep and Wool of the Government of Rajasthan.

The sub-title of this paper derives from a bureaucratic move that we believe captures a decisive moment in the government's attitude to intervening among pastoralists. The Department of Animal Husbandry as its title suggests is an agency concerning livestock in general. The Sheep and Wool Department is a smaller unit more directly concerned with intervention among pastoral populations. It was constituted in 1963 as a separate cell within the Animal Husbandry Department to begin with and subsequently developed into a larger and independent department as the peculiar nature of the problems it addressed gained recognition. All of the interventions that we discuss in this section stem from the proposals mooted by this department. After a life of about thirty-eight years however the necessity of this department began to be questioned and in April 2001 the department was closed down, or in bureaucratic euphemism it was merged once again with the Department of Animal Husbandry. There is no Sheep and Wool Department any more. This history captures much more than a departmental wrangle, and marks phase changes in the evolution of state pastoral relations. That the state has given up on pastoralists cannot be proved with finality, but it is obvious that there has been a slack in motivation to tackle problems that have been poorly understood to begin with.

Three areas constituting a bureaucratic/pastoral interface are covered. First, we examine the nature and impact of the government's programme to introduce exotic strains in the sheep population. Second, we discuss the various efforts at taking

control of the marketing of sheep products. Third, we look at some governmental efforts at grassland development.

Pastoralists and the Hybridisation Programme

The introduction of a hybridisation programme aimed at 'upgrading' the sheep stock of Rajasthan should not be seen as an isolated effort, but as part of the broader programme of transforming Indian agriculture and husbandry through the introduction of exotic genetic material. In the case of agriculture this strategy saw its most striking fruition in what is usually referred to as the 'Green Revolution'. Similarly, in the case of cattle the introduction of Jersey and other exotic strains into Indian cattle was seen as the basis for creating a high-productivity milk sector. The full consequences of these interventions are still unfolding, and some researchers suggest that these have been a mixed blessing (George, 1985).

Much, if not most, of the bureaucratic literature is marked by a negative view of indigenous sheep-breeding traditions. The following views expressed in a document from the 1950s are an example: "The farmers in these areas have not yet begun to appreciate scientific facts of breeding which were apparent to breeders in other foreign countries two hundred years ago. Even with the same conditions and facilities as are available to farmers, but with the adoption of a definite and uniform breeding policy best suited for their stock, there is a scope for bringing about a high degree of improvement in quantity and quality of wool production, as also in the sheep" (Department of Commerce and Industries, 1950, 1).

Similarly, while recognising the superior breeding skills of nomadic breeders, the general verdict on the management capabilities and stock-breeding skills of indigenous pastoralists was that: "Methods of sheep management and breeding followed by the farmers are uneconomic and antiquated. Their stock is an easy prey to common diseases. No definite breeding policy is maintained and it is common to find all types of breeds in a single flock" (Narayan, 1948, 2).

From the late sixties and early seventies a strategy of introducing exotic blood into the sheep stock of Rajasthan became central to the government's programme of 'developing' the region's sheep 'industry'. The broad rationale offered in support of this choice derived from a perception of sheep pastoralism primarily in production terms; a programme indicated clearly in the title of one of its films "Fewer Sheep, Greater Profits". As a result three foreign breeds, the Russian Merino, American Rambouillet and the Corriedale were selected for inter-breeding (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1981-82). The local breeds selected for crossing were chosen on characteristics that effectively bypassed some of the more generalised breeds of the region. In particular the Marwari breed, which is easily the largest numerically of all the breeds, was ignored. Thus regional selectivity also formed a part of the policy (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1983-84). It would appear that the drive towards hybridisation, at least initially, was aimed not at the low rainfall and non-irrigated pastoral areas, but at the irrigated agricultural areas (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1975-76).

In due course the task of developing an artificial insemination (AI) infrastructure was also taken on in earnest (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1975–76; 1981–82). However, many reservations are amply attested to in the government records. Thus we find it stated that “It will not be possible to cover the entire sheep population through AI by using exotic semen...” (Department of Sheep and Wool, N.D.[a], 5). At less than 250,000 artificial inseminations resulting in less than fifty per cent lambings, over a period of effort extending over a decade and half (1967 to 1984), the effort cannot be counted as encouraging.

Efforts were also made at incorporating hybridisation as an element in other governmental intervention schemes. Thus loans including partial grants were given for the purchase and rearing of sheep, with those responding being encouraged to build hybrid flocks (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1986–87). Earlier, hybrid rams had been distributed to farmers (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1983–84). In few of these efforts, were the results rewarding.

A related set of interventions that were meant to tie in closely with the hybridisation effort was in the area of animal health, which in the main took the form of a vaccination program. In terms of the response from pastoralists, however, this was one intervention, which met with great success. The sheep population covered by the vaccination effort may be estimated at almost 25 percent. Paradoxically it was not the hybrid population that formed the basis of the ‘success story’ of this intervention effort, but the indigenous breeds of sheep, especially those maintained on a migratory basis.

Pastoralists and state marketing interventions

Justification for intervention in market processes was largely formulated in humanitarian terms. Thus it is pointed out that “The sheep farmers continue to be exploited by the middle man in mutton sheep and particularly in the sale of wool” (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1976, 1). Documents offer us detailed views of the mechanics of market exploitation. In the case of wool, it is pointed out that traders book wool by nominal advances and, subsequently manipulate a fall in wool prices and take delivery on reduced prices. Furthermore, the payments are deferred. There are malpractices in weighing procedures. On the existing arrangements for the marketing of animals for slaughter, the documents point out that this trade is the monopoly of a few traders, who book animals on nominal payment leaving them with the breeder for months (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1977).

At the same time there is also a clear awareness of the economic interest that the state has in these interventions. Thus an Annual Report of the Department of Wool and Sheep has the following to say: “The Sheep and Wool Federation was founded in March this year and will take control of wool and ram purchases. This area (animal purchases) is a very promising area, now that the Arab nations are showing an interest in purchasing stock and the demand is rising ...” (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1976–77, 11). The basic strategy for intervention was the formation of co-

operatives. In 1977 the apex co-operative body, the Rajasthan Co-operative Wool Federation was formed, with the aim of "taking control" of the trade in wool, rams and goats (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1978). At the village level, 'sheep farmers co-operatives' were formed under the aegis of the Department of Sheep and Wool. Support was provided through operational and managerial subsidies in the initial stages. An important internal criticism made of these co-operatives was that they focused exclusively on the sedentary sheep population and thus neglected the mobile sector. In response to this criticism the Federation set up migratory sheep-breeders' societies attached to the mobile wool-shearing teams (Department of Sheep and Wool, I.E.).

Tied closely with this wool-purchasing effort was a rather elaborate scheme for introducing modern methods of shearing. (Department. of Sheep and Wool, 1971–72). On the assumption that the hybridisation programme would succeed and spread widely, the Department undertook intensive training of personnel in these techniques, which included sending employees to New Zealand, and inviting shearing experts from there through the FAO. It will suffice to note that the number of sheep sheared annually by the Department, with all the resources at their disposal, was never more than the approximate number of sheep sheared by just one group of about twenty-five traditional shearers, using simple but very reliable technology. In contrast the machine shearing intervention effort suffered consistently—as their own reports admit—from technical breakdowns, parts replacement problems, import restrictions and so on.

Let us now try and see to what extent the aims regarding purchases may be said to have been realised. In 1979/80 the production of wool in the state of Rajasthan was estimated at approximately 12,500 tons and in that year, if the Annual Reports of the Department of Sheep and Wool are to be relied on, there was no reported purchase of wool. Five years later, in the 1985–86 report we are told that the state produced approximately 15,600 tons of wool (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1985–86). In that year, the Federation purchased 175,100 kilograms, or 175 tons, of wool in all. No more than a fraction of the estimated total wool produced in the state. Over the longer term also it does appear that a rather small proportion of the wool was being purchased and sold through the government agencies. An important aspect limiting the government's ability to compete on the wool market has probably been its inability to offer sufficiently attractive prices. This fact is recognised in government documents:

... it would appear that the wool boards purchase prices may not be higher than those prevailing in the market. If this is representative of the situation throughout the state the breeder has no incentive to sell to the wool board. (Planning Commission, 1977, 1)

This apart, the state did not appear to have been able to maintain a high level of purchases in times of low wool prices, which would surely have undermined the

sellers' confidence in state purchasing institutions.

In the case of the marketing of livestock a number of alternatives would appear to have been considered in addition to the purchase of male stock, such as the opening of a central stockyard, multiple slaughter centres in different parts of the state, a freezing plant, and a meat-canning factory. However their impact was limited. Take for instance the figures for the year 1986–87. In this year the total annual stock sales estimated for Rajasthan was approximately 2.5 to 3 million sheep per annum worth between 250 to 300 million rupees (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1986–87). Up to December of that year however the Federation supplied a mere 2,449 live animals valued at 1,352,000 rupees to the Gulf. Similarly, in the supply of tinned and processed meat to the Indian army, the total transactions were worth less than 20 million rupees (Department of Sheep and Wool 1984–85; 1985–86). It is apparent that far from making a significant dent in the region's meat and small-stock trade, much less 'taking control' of the trade the government barely skimmed the surface of the existing marketing system.

Grassland development schemes

The overall context within which the different strategies for grassland development were put forward is that of mitigating migration. The different 'programmes' were seen essentially as 'solutions' to migration, that is, as a way of stopping migration or reducing it. One of the more important interventions was supported by the World Bank, which aimed at building 100-hectare pasture plots in 158 selected villages in different districts of western Rajasthan beginning in 1974. The programme was initiated under the assumption that substantial amounts of unused land were available for such activities. It was hoped that success would persuade local farmers to adopt new methods of rangeland management. The activities carried out in this project involved the selection of plots in the western districts, their acquisition and fencing, followed by development of pasture plots and finally the introduction of sheep. This was a four-year project, in the first year only 100 sheep were introduced, with a maximum of 400 over four years. The sheep were contributed by villagers who were required to become members of a co-operative. In no case however was the target of 400 sheep attained. The state governments' own evaluation is to be seen from the following views of the Desert Development Commissioner as reported in a document:

The D.D.C. expressed the view that due to various reasons the scheme has by and large been a failure. To either close the plots or to take recourse to the euphemism of 'transfer' will be unfortunate and unwise. Realism calls for a continued direct management for the large good of the area and the programme with or without the co-operatives in whose names things have so far been done. (Department of Sheep and Wool, N.D., 1)

Another important and rather more interesting plan to develop grassland re-

sources has been that of developing certain stretches of the Indira Gandhi Canal as a pastoral zone (Department of Sheep and Wool, 1979). Reportedly some 50,000 hectares was available on its left bank in a 2-km-wide strip at the tail end of the canal. It was understood that this area could be utilised for pasturage provided it was developed. It was estimated that about 200,000 sheep could be accommodated here for six months every year. An inventory of areas into which the sheep could be introduced was made. Detailed routes by which pastoralists would arrive were identified. Elaborate plans of health coverage were discussed. However although it is twenty years since the proposal was mooted it has yet to see the light of day.

In sum, it is evident that the official strategy aimed at sedentarising pastoralists. This meant that the majority of shepherding households belonging to the western dry districts, would be excluded from the advantages of intervention such as these were. The nature of much of the co-operative effort envisaged would also have had a limited impact, in that only those flock-owners resident throughout the year in their base villages would benefit. In practice a vast mass of marginal and landless herdsmen and their families practising forms of transhumance or nomadism were effectively excluded. While it is not our contention that this was a deliberate decision, the nature of biases that went into the making of the intervention process rendered it off-course from the very start. In part, an inappropriate understanding of the real-world conditions under which pastoralism is conducted lies behind the failure to attract pastoralists to intervention measures such as hybridisation and 'ranching' type grassland development schemes. It is also possible that those sections of rural society who can invest in sedentary capital-intensive sheep husbandry have more favourable alternatives at their disposal. In effect, the question that suggests itself is, did the planners identify their constituency correctly? Or was it perhaps the case that not only did they use the wrong 'instruments', but did they also aim at the wrong 'target'?

CONCLUSION

It is well known that in many parts of the world where pastoralism obtains, the State is in crisis, even on the verge of collapse. Elsewhere, powerful state structures have come down hard not just on pastoralists but on the practice of pastoralism. Historically however we do know that pastoralists have long coexisted with state systems as also within them. Why is it then that pastoralists and state agents are locked today in seemingly antagonistic postures? Why is it that the fundamental crisis of pastoralism today is not that of rationality but one of legitimacy? In this paper we have tried to work towards building a historical perspective on this problem by showing that this loss of legitimacy represents a particular conjuncture in an evolutionary relationship between state and shepherd and should not be misrepresented as an eternal and ahistorical incompatibility.

It is possible thus to see the pattern outlined above as part of an unfolding dialectic—unfortunately a regressive dialectic—in so far as the pastoralists of Rajasthan were concerned. Although one can easily become over precise in such matters the point at which the Government of Rajasthan formally dissolved the Department of Sheep and Wool marks perhaps a threshold in the shift from one phase—the developmentalist—to the next. The decline and fall of development as a legitimate framework within which to manage pastoral problems was as much a consequence of the envisaged nature of development as it may be attributed to the peculiarities of pastoral adaptation.

As Aronson pointed out quite some time ago “...the intertwining of political and economic aspects of developmental projects is explicit and total. Attempts to account for their failure in economic terms alone often miss this crucial point. Economic failure is in fact matched by political ‘success’...” (Aronson, 1981, 45). One does not however need to subscribe to a theory of conspiracy to recognise that the objective of intervention among pastoralists was not the development of pastoralism. It is only obvious that the policies advocated above would have had but one outcome: the de-pastoralisation of animal husbandry. Rajasthan’s shepherds however chose to keep their pastoral options open, and they choose to do so with their feet, retaining nomadic and migratory lifestyles, at the same time that they rapidly adapted to changing economic conditions. The king’s displeasure nonetheless was earned at some cost: the closure of the Sheep and Wool Department marked the withdrawal of pastoral development as a serious governmental concern.

We stand thus today at the onset of a third and critical phase shaping the future of pastoralism and the lives of pastoral peoples. Much as it assumed to speak from the commanding heights of Planned Development or in the paternalistic name of an Imperial Peace, can one not with some assurance predict that the Indian state will assume a custodial role in matters of environmental protection? However, whereas the constructions on ‘law and order’ and on ‘development’ claimed to speak in the name of human and social justice, the discourses on ‘environment’ speak in the name of an order transcending the institutes of man and society. The implications of this are ominous and need to be challenged.

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