



INDIA
GUJARAT

STILL ON THE MOVE

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The Rabari Vagadiya women bring water from the wells or ponds to the camp.

- ▶ The authors accompanied the Rabari Vagadiya herders on their journeys in the Kutch district in northwest India. The work was done in two months but during different seasons
- ▶ Nomadic groups travel slowly for hundreds of kilometres in search of pastures
- ▶ The Rabari Vagadiya herders are among the planet's few remaining examples of peoples that can genuinely define themselves as nomads
- ▶ Their migration routes increasingly collide with with man-made or industrialized areas, and involve long journeys alongside motorways and camps in the vicinity of large factories
- ▶ The families with which the authors lived and travelled represent the last generation of nomads in this part of the world

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During the monsoon, travelling Rabari families light animal dung fires to repel insects.



A Rabari wedding in the village of Kadol. 16-year-old bride Rami is completely veiled, behind her is 17-year-old Momayou.



Abu Bai tries to calm his camel that is frightened by the Bhuj Mumbai highway traffic.



Abu Bai, the caravan leader of the Rabari Vagadiya group of families, lights a beedi, or small Indian cigar.

Kutch is a district of Gujarat, the Indian state that borders Pakistan, where groups of herders live and from where they begin their migrations. The Rabari (in the past they were known as Raika) follow a nomadic existence in this area and travel slowly for hundreds of kilometres in search of pastures. Their pilgrimage never stops, not even during the monsoon season, in spite of the fact that the rains mean that the herders could stay in areas closer to their villages.

Traditionally camel breeders, today the Rabari migrate in small groups composed of a few families, their flocks and some camels to carry the essentials for the journey, such as beds, cribs, clothes and cooking utensils. Their annual routes take them into the heart of an increasingly urbanized and industrialized environment, requiring them to traverse congested traffic arteries and camp alongside motorways.

We accompanied them on their journeys for one month during the autumn of 2017, living alongside them and sharing in family members' daily activities. We returned in 2018 to follow their movements during the monsoon season and to take part in their ceremonies. It was during this period that we realised that we were witnessing an epochal change in today's India and that we were spending time with the last generation of pastoral nomads in this part of the world.



Ravina, a young Rabari Debriya woman, has just awoken in her camp, during their seasonal migration in the Kutch district.



Muri guides one of the camels of the Rabari Vagadiya families during their seasonal migration through the marshy lands of Little Rann.



The encampment of Abu Bai's Rabari family during their seasonal migration.



A group of sedentary Rabari has come to visit the family of Pachan, a Rabari Vagadiya man migrating with his flock, to discuss the nomads' grazing rights.



A caravan of Rabari Vagadiya families on the move during the monsoon season in the Kutch district.



Three Rabari Vagadiya women – Arku Dawabai, Arku Nagi and Ramai – collect water from a cistern in the courtyard of a factory under the curious gaze of the workers.



Lakmi, a member of Abu Bai's Rabari family, leads a camel across the Bhuj Mumbai highway.



Hira Bai, a Rabari Vagadiya shepherd, during the transhumance in the monsoon season.



The flocks of Abu Bai and Walla Bai's families move from their camp in the district of Kutch.



The family of young bridegroom Thavar honour the arrival of the monk who will bless the wedding.



Ramo, a Rabari Vagadiya shepherd, leads his camel in the Kutch district during the monsoon season.



Pachan, the head of the Rabari Vagadiya caravan travelling during the monsoon season, shears a sheep from his flock.



Sunset over a Rabari camp during their seasonal migration.



Rabari Debriya woman Raju makes her camel stand up after having loaded it, during their seasonal migration.



Night camp of a Rabari Debriya family during their seasonal migration.



Ramai, a Rabari Vagadiya woman, at the camp during the monsoon season in the Kutch district.



16-year-old bridegroom Thavar has his picture taken in front of a Hindu temple on the first day of his marriage celebration.



Hira Bai, a Rabari Vagadiya shepherd, milks a sheep from his flock in the Kutch district during the monsoon season transhumance.



A girl watches the wedding of a boy from her family in the village of Kadol.



16-year-old Thavar cradles the money he has received as a wedding gift in order for it to be blessed by the family elders.



Hira Bai, a Rabari Vagadiyaw shepherd, guides his flock past traffic in the Kutch district on the transhumance during the monsoon season.



Arku Nagji carries water collected from a cistern situated in the courtyard of a factory back to the camp.



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