

A photograph of two young girls from the Kutchh region of India, standing in front of several camels. The girl on the right is wearing a vibrant red and pink patterned dress with intricate embroidery and multiple colorful bangles on her wrists. She has her hair in two braids and is smiling broadly, holding a wooden stick vertically. The girl on the left is wearing a dark blue dress with colorful patterns and also has bangles. She is holding a wooden stick horizontally and looking towards the camera. The background shows the heads and backs of camels under a clear blue sky.

**BIOCULTURAL  
COMMUNITY  
PROTOCOL**

*of the Camel Pastoralists of Kachchh*



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*The views expressed in this document are not necessarily shared by  
the organisations that generously supported our work.*

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# BIOCULTURAL COMMUNITY PROTOCOL

*of the Camel Pastoralists of Kachchh*



Prepared by  
*Kachchh Unt Uccherak Maldhari Sangathan*  
*(Kachchh Camel Breeders Association)*

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" Kheermenu Makhhan Kadhiyon Na.  
Ghaghe Ke Vekiyon Na.  
Ne, Pakhe Ke Chhadiyon Na.

Jade He Thindho, Tade Kayamat  
Achindhi "

...

Never separate butter from milk, never sell clothes  
the women wear and never give up building the  
house with grass and straw.

Whenever this happens, know that danger is close.



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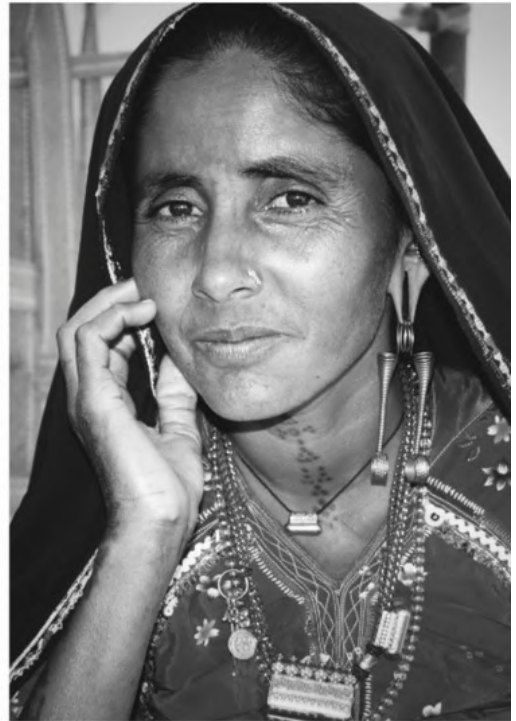
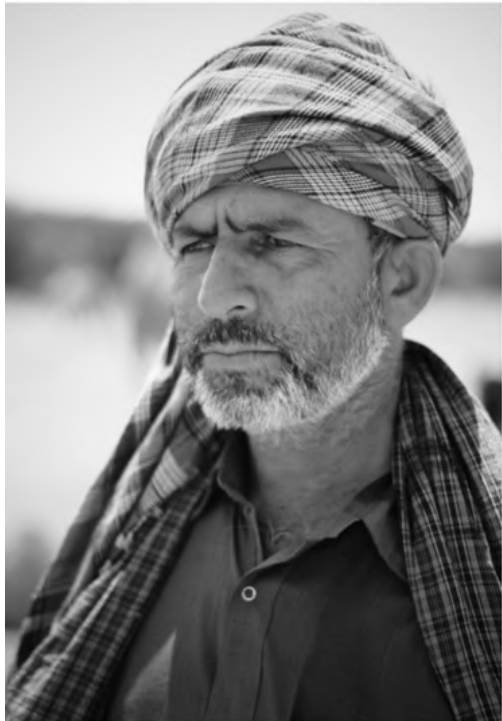
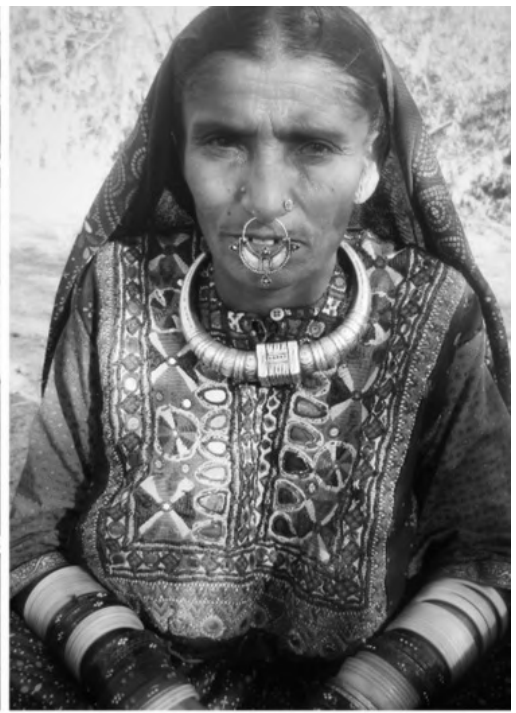
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# INTRODUCTION

" That place, where camels, buffaloes and cows share pasture, where milk and chhaas flow like water, where the Maldharis make their home. Ah! That is Kachchh. "

## Who we are

We are the *Unt Maldhari*, or the camel pastoralist communities of Kachchh district, Gujarat, India. We are made up of three main communities – the Jats, the Rabaris and the Samas. Between us we keep approximately 10,000 camels and are spread across the district making best use of the grazing area available to us. We keep two breeds of camels – Kachchhi and Kharai. Our Kachchhi breed is found in inland terrestrial ecosystems. It feeds on a wide range of plants including trees, shrubs and herbs. Our Kharai breed is found specifically in and around the coastal belt of the district. It feeds mainly on marine mangroves and other saline plant species.

We have lived in Kachchh for many generations, roaming the land, learning it, and protecting it to the best of our ability. Our lives, and those of our camels have adapted and evolved along with the

range of ecosystems found in our district, forming a complex web of inter-relationships that sustain us all. We have been consistently undervalued and today we face challenges that threaten the existence of our culture and livelihood. Today, only 198 Rabari, 62 Jat and 13 Sama families continue to rear camels.

**This is the biocultural community protocol of the camel pastoralists of Kachchh. In it we articulate the importance of our animals to our culture and to the world.**

We show the significance of our ways – the light footprint we leave on the land. In light of the challenges we face, we identify our position under national and international law, and posit our roadmap for the future – one in which we can exercise our right to maintain our way of life.

## The Kachchh Region

Kachchh is located in the north-western wing of India, close to the Pakistan border. Covering an area of 45,652 sq. km., it is the largest district in the country and comprises 24% of the total area of Gujarat. The name comes from the Sanskrit 'kachchhua,' meaning tortoise, which the district resembles in shape.

Kachchh is a unique arid ecosystem where grasslands edging the 'Rann' saline desert are accompanied by a marine mangrove ecosystem along the coast. The district is virtually an island, surrounded as it is by the Ranns and the sea. It rests at the confluence of two distinct ecosystems, two cultural influences, and



*Jat woman with her daughter. Aliyabet*





intertwined relationships of faith and religion. It harmonizes two cultural legacies – the first, Sindhi pastoralists who trace their ‘homelands’ to Baluchistan and Central Asia, and who primarily rear camels, cows, buffaloes, and horses. The second are Hindu pastoralists who raise camels, sheep and goats.

Many of our ancestors arrived in Kachchh as migrants from other parts of the country. An

enduring history of migration and mobility has made Kachchh a meeting point for cultures, languages, religion, and politics. As a result, a vibrant tapestry of people and communities has emerged.

Communities here may have very different views and lives, but have formed unique relationships and bonds of the sort unseen in other parts of the country. Such is the case with us.

## The Jat Community

Our forefathers came to Kachchh from Haleb in Baluchistan 500 years ago. We fled following a feud between the King of Baluchistan and some members of our community. Before they left, our people sold all their small ruminants and cattle. They replaced these with camels, to transport them on the long journey ahead and to allow them to maintain an animal centred livelihood later on. They then traversed Sindh, eventually coming to settle in Kachchh.

Over time we spread ourselves across the district with our camel herds. Some of our community members moved to the Banni region to raise cattle and buffaloes. About 250-300 years ago, a number of our kinsmen seeking mangroves for their Kharai camels moved out of Kachchh to other coastal parts of Gujarat. We maintain links with these community members who are now settled in Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Khambhat (Anand), Jambusar (Vadodara), Dhandhuka (Ahmedabad) and Aliyabet (Bharuch).

## The Rabari Community

We once belonged to the Jaisalmer area of Rajasthan. It is said that we left our homeland over a conflict with its King, who wanted to marry a Rabari girl. We did not agree to the marriage and so we left Jaisalmer. Our community dispersed into various parts of Gujarat, including Patan, Mehsana and Kachchh.

We settled across the expanse of Kachchh, from Lakhpat to Vagad. Our lifestyle has been largely nomadic – we move with our camels constantly – but in recent years, many of our community members have begun to settle. We are divided into 16 main castes that are further subdivided into 133 sub-castes (see Appendix 3).

## The Sama Community

Our ancestors migrated to the Sindh region of Pakistan from Arab countries in the 1300s, where they ruled for almost 200 years. They were originally Hindu Jadejas who converted to Islam during the time of Mohammad-bin-Kasam. They

moved from Sindh to Kachchh and established the town of Khavda in the Gujarati year Vikram Samvat 1314. Livestock keeping was our main occupation even then, and we grazed our animals on Kalo Dungar and Gora Dungar, two hills in

the Khavda area. Later on, most of our community members became agro-pastoralists, and began to practice rain-fed agriculture

alongside cattle and buffalo herding. Today, only 13 families of our Sama community still practice camel breeding.

### *Jam/Jamotar system of the Sama community*

The Sama community uses the system of Jam and Jamotar that has existed since the time of princely rule. The Jam is an appointed person in the community who is responsible for tax and revenue collection. He also holds considerable power in decision-making, particularly when the community faces social or political conflict. The current Jamotar lives in Jamkunriya village. He was nominated a year ago following the death of the previous Jamotar.

## Camels – Our Common Link

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Our lives are centred on camels, which have always been the common link that fostered the deeper relationship we share today.

On the origin of the Rabari community, legend has it that the Goddess Parvati once made a toy camel and requested her husband Lord Shiva to usher life into it. Lord Shiva did as she asked, and also created a man who could take care of it. That man was named *Saambhad*, and his successors are the Rabaris - our lives continue to be closely interlinked with camels. The camel is sacred to us due to its association with *Momai Mataji*, the goddess worshipped by our people.

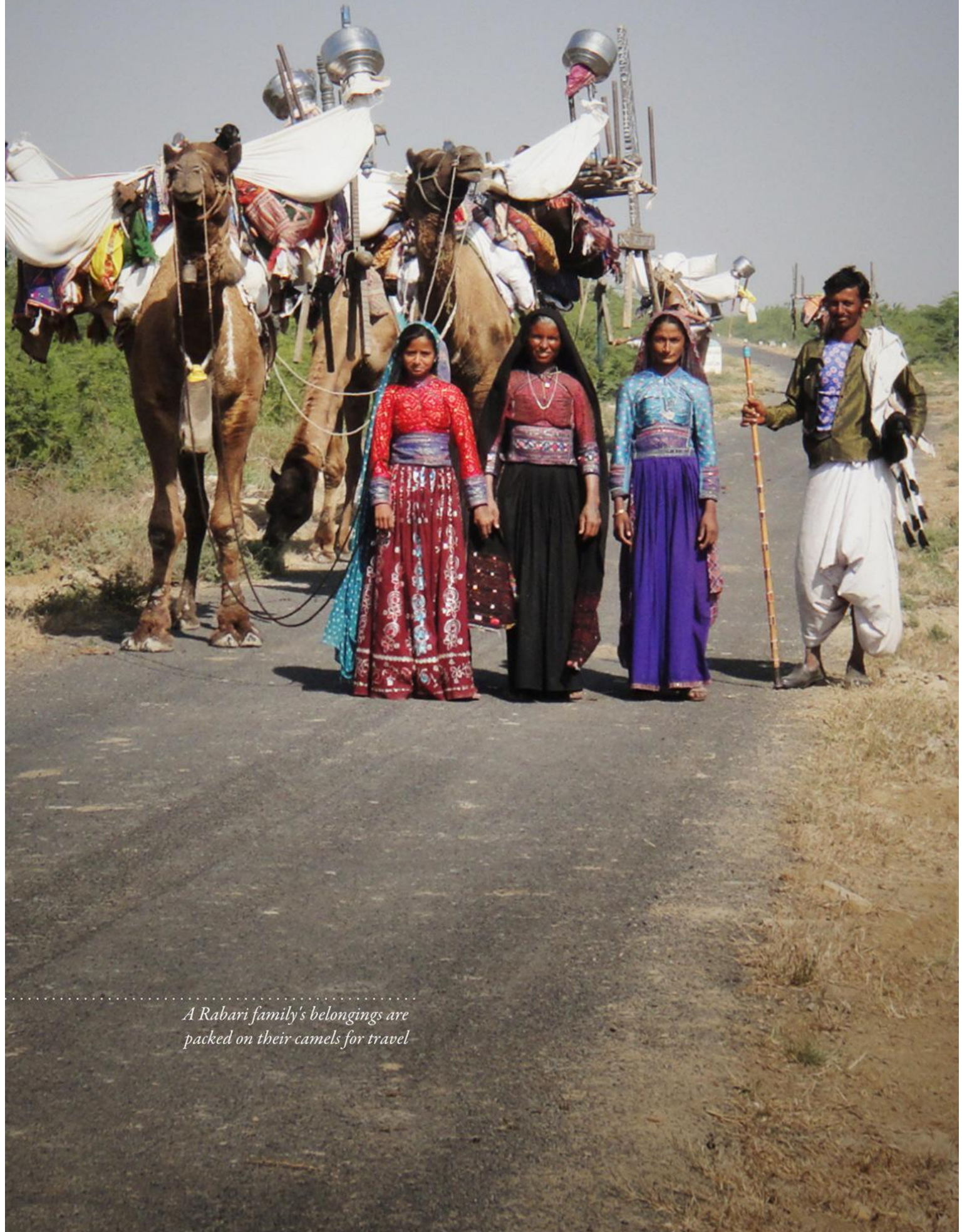
There is a story that tells of two Rabari brothers who disagreed over who should own their single camel. They went to Savlapir, a Muslim saint who today is revered by the Jat community, to resolve their dispute. Savlapir fashioned a camel out of a beehive and then asked the two brothers to choose between the living camel, and that made of beeswax. The elder brother immediately chose the live camel and went away with it. The younger, named Devidas Rabari, was given the wax camel with the blessings of the saint. Savlapir told him to make his journey home, and to let the camel follow behind him. The camel

would multiply into a large herd, he said, as long as the man did not look back as he went.

The younger brother did as Savlapir said, although late in his journey he gave in to temptation and looked behind him. At that point, the camels stopped multiplying, though he was left with a sizable number to take home.

Savlapir told Devidas – should he find himself with too many camels, then he may entrust them to the care of the Jat community. This advice has endured –even today many Jats care for camels entrusted to them by Rabaris, and the communities maintain strong ties (see Appendix 4).





*A Rabari family's belongings are packed on their camels for travel*





## *Kachchh Unt Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan*

Kachchh Unt Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan (KUUMS), the Kachchh Camel Breeders Association, was registered under the Society and Trust Act of India in 2011. Its objectives are to conserve camels and their grazing resources; increase income for camel breeders by developing a market for camel milk and wool products; improve the health of camel herds and to register the Kharai camel as a distinct Indian camel breed. 370 camel breeders, including 136 women, are members of this Sangathan.

Today KUUMS works closely with Gujarat's Department of Animal Husbandry and Sahjeevan, a local NGO who facilitated the formation of the Sangathan. Together they work to organise health camps for the camels, coordinate with local dairies to establish a camel milk market, and collaborate with State agricultural universities and research institutions for the characterisation and registration of the Kharai camel breed.

KUUMS is the sole representative body of the *Unt Maldharis* who are the subject of this biocultural community protocol.

	Taluka	Members		
		Female	Male	Total
1	<i>Abdasa</i>	15	23	38
2	<i>Anjar</i>	8	9	17
3	<i>Bhachau</i>	31	40	71
4	<i>Bhuj</i>	16	34	50
5	<i>Lakhpatt</i>	25	77	102
6	<i>Mundra</i>	7	14	21
7	<i>Nakhtrana</i>	24	31	55
8	<i>Rapar</i>	6	10	16
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>370</b>

Table 1: KUUMS Membership by taluka

# OUR CULTURE

# 2

" This is the best way, to move from place to place, meet many different people and to keep good relationships with other communities. Why should we want to live any other way? "



*Jat women packing a camel for travel, Abdasa*

## Jats

The Jat community is divided into four castes – Fakirani Jats, Daneta Jats, Hajiyani Jats and Garasiya Jats. Of these, it is the Hajiyani and

Fakirani Jat communities that carry the traditional livelihood of camel breeding.





*The pakkha's interior has ample space for our belongings. From start to finish, these structures are built entirely by the women.*



## Lifestyle

We are pastoralists by occupation and lead a nomadic lifestyle. Although our herds include cattle, sheep, buffaloes and goats, customarily we have always been camel breeders first. We move around with our camels constantly, both within and outside Kachchh. Members of our Fakirani Jat caste move with their families. Women play a prominent role in the care of the herd, looking after new-born camels and collecting grasses for feed.

Camel milk, *rotlo* (wheat or millet bread) and tea are staples of our diet.

## Housing

Our traditional dwellings are known as *pakkhas*. We build them just before the onset of the monsoon. They are made of *kal* (reed grass), jute ropes and wood. The construction of these houses is work done by women. They buy the wood and the rope from the markets of nearby villages and towns, and collect the grasses locally. Once the grasses have been collected and dried, they are tied together with jute rope. Rope is similarly used to bind together logs of wood when erecting the frame of the house. The walls are then inserted by tying the bundles of grass to the wood. The roof is constructed at the end. We cover both the floor and the roof with plastic sheets to ensure that the *pakkha* is waterproof.

Depending on the quality of the grasses used, *pakkhas* are rebuilt every one or two years. Although changing times have prompted more and more members of our communities to move into pucca (made of long-lasting building material, i.e., concrete, brick etc.) homes, it is not uncommon to see a *pakkha* alongside a pucca house in one of our villages. Largely, we prefer our traditional style of housing and move into pucca homes only for the duration of the rainy season. Otherwise, we continue to dwell in *pakkhas*.



*A pakkha in various stages of construction.*



## Clothing and Embroidery

Men of our community wear loose pyjamas and kurtas, with a turban. Our women dress in a long frock called a *ghagho*, which features heavy embroidery on the front. Women also wear an *odhani* over their heads and heavy jewellery. This most commonly includes a thick silver necklace (*hansi*), nose stud (called *bhuli* if silver, *shiri* if gold), earrings (*kuki*, usually gold), and silver bracelets (*chuda*) and anklets (*pani*).

Between house work, women of our community embroider clothes, quilts and if unmarried, their wedding clothes.

## Religion and Festivals

We are followers of Islam, and revere a Sufi saint named Savlapir. 400 years ago Savlapir lived with his herd of camels on an island in Kori Creek, not far from Koteswar in Lakhpat taluka, Kachchh. A descendant of Savlapir, Agakhan Savlani who lives in Pipar village, Lakhpat taluka, is the spiritual leader for Jats today. Some of our major festivals are:

### Savlapir no melo / Savlapir's Fair

This fair is organised by the Fakirani Jat community. It takes place every year on the third and fourth day of the Chaitra month of the Gujarati calendar. Both Hindu and Muslim people of all castes attend the fair and offer their prayers. Prior to Independence the fair was held at Savlapir's home, on the island in Kori Creek, across from Koteswar. At that time, Jat breeders from Sindh in present-day Pakistan would travel by boat to attend and offer their prayers. Today, the fair is held elsewhere in Lakhpat taluka.

### Dadi Morai no Melo / Dadi Morai's Fair

This fair is organised by the Hajiyani Jat community.

Dadi Morai was a female saint who granted wishes to her followers. Every April we organise a fair at Dadi Morai ni Dargah in Lakhpat taluka, Kachchh. We come together for two days, to offer our prayers for the wellbeing of our families and livestock. We also offer up camel milk to the

saint. Through the day, the *maulvis* at the dargah offer religious discourses. By night we celebrate at musical concerts organised specifically for this gathering.

## Marriage Rituals

Our community practices traditional Muslim marriage rituals. We follow an endogamous system of marriage, wherein cross-cousin weddings are common. Our spiritual leader, Aga Khan Savlani, decides the date of marriage. There is an extended time period between the wedding and the day that the bride moves into her husband's home.

The bride embroiders her own wedding clothes, and makes quilts and pillow covers to take with her to her new home. As gifts, she receives jewellery, quilts, clothes and vessels from the bridegroom's family.

## Decision making processes

We look to a group of elders known as the *Panch* for community based decision making. We have a system by which villages where members of our community live are divided into clusters. Each cluster is represented by a *Panch*.

The *Panch* makes decisions about intra-community issues. They settle disputes, but can also determine larger scale, community-wide practices. In the case of inter-community disputes, the *Panches* of both communities arbitrate together. Thus the *Panch* is also instrumental in maintaining good relations with other communities that live in the vicinity.

## Community History/Record keeping

The Aga Khan, our spiritual leader, keeps records of his own, and holds the stories and legends that concern our people. Outside of this, we do not keep detailed historical records of our communities and genealogy.



## Rabaris

### Lifestyle

We lead a semi-nomadic lifestyle. Men travel widely with our camels for nearly 8 months every year while our families remain at home. While on the road we subsist primarily on *rotlo* (wheat or

millet bread) and camel milk. Our women decorate the camels on special occasions, but otherwise have no specific role in the work of camel breeding.



*A Rabari family on the move. Much of Kachchh's landscape is dominated by the shrub seen here - Gando Baavar*

### Housing

The traditional dwellings of our Rabari community are known as *bhungas*. These are circular huts with conical thatched roofs. The hut is made of wood, mud and grass. We use wood from local trees such as *mithi jar* (*Salvadora oleoidis*), *aankdo* (*Calotropis procera*),

*khari jar* (*Salvadora persica*), *desi baval* (*Acacia nilotica*) and *gando baavar* (*Prosopis juliflora*). Grasses from *khipdo* (*Leptadinea reticulata*) or *sangetro* (*Crotolaria burhia*) are used to make the thatch. The wood and grass are dried entirely before construction commences. The structure of





*A cluster of traditional bhungas*

the hut is made with wood and covered with mud. Later, the rood is thatched. The bhunga's interior is typically decorated, often with traditional mudwork designs inlaid with mirrors. Over recent years, and particularly since the 2001 earthquake, many in our community have built and moved into pucca houses.

## *Clothing and Embroidery*

The men of our community wear a *dhoti* with a gathered white shirt called a *kediyu*, as well as a white turban. The women wear a *ghaghro* (a long gathered skirt), with a *kanchni* (blouse) and an *odhani/ludi* that covers the head. Women of our community customarily dress in black, with heavy jewellery made of either gold or ivory.

Rabari women are famous for their unique style of embroidery that is brightly coloured and intricately designed. Some variations of embroidery within the community are *babrio*, *ekaltangi*, *farfario*, *chainido*, *mokhri*, *kangri*, *kamal*, *sankdi*, *limburitek*, *goltek*, *kagdatek* and *kalitek*.

## *Religion and Festivals*

We follow the Hindu religion and celebrate all Hindu festivals. We also celebrate special days dedicated to our saints and Gods by holding large melas or festivals. At these melas, we bring

our camels and make offerings of camel milk to the Gods for the wellbeing of our families and our animals. Some of our major festivals are:

### **Thavar bhopa mela**

Thavar bhopa is named for a person who performs rituals. The festival takes place at the temple near Julrai village in Lakhpat taluka, a famous sacred site in Kachchh. Thavar bhopa came from Tundavandh village and is of the Rabari community. The festival is attended by Rabaris from across the district. It is held on the fourteenth day of Bhadar.

### **Sanosara mela**

This mela is held near the *Momai Mata* temple in Sanosara village, Bhuj taluka. Rabaris from all over Kachchh attend this festival, which is also held on the fourteenth day of Bhadar. Devotees offer *kheer* made of camel milk to the goddess *Momai Mata*. Women play *rass*, sing traditional songs and play folk music.

## *Marriage Rituals*

Our community follows traditional Hindu marriage rituals. We choose to hold weddings on the festive day of Janmashtami, which falls during the Hindu month of Shravan (August-September in the Roman calendar). Janmashtami is considered auspicious as it is the birthday of Lord



Krishna. This date is also favoured because it falls during the monsoon season, when the *unt maldharis* cease travelling and return to their homes. *Vijaya Dasami* and *Dussera* are also considered auspicious days and often chosen for weddings.

In our community, engagements take place early, and the wedding follows some years later. In the past our marriage celebrations lasted nearly ten days, although today they last no longer than two. As befits tradition, the bride embroiders her own wedding clothes. Her parents traditionally give the bride gifts of jewellery, quilts, clothes and vessels.

Camels have always held a special place in our wedding celebrations. At one time, the bridegroom arrived at his bride's house seated atop a camel. The bride's family would gift camels to their son-in-law. Today, the groom's

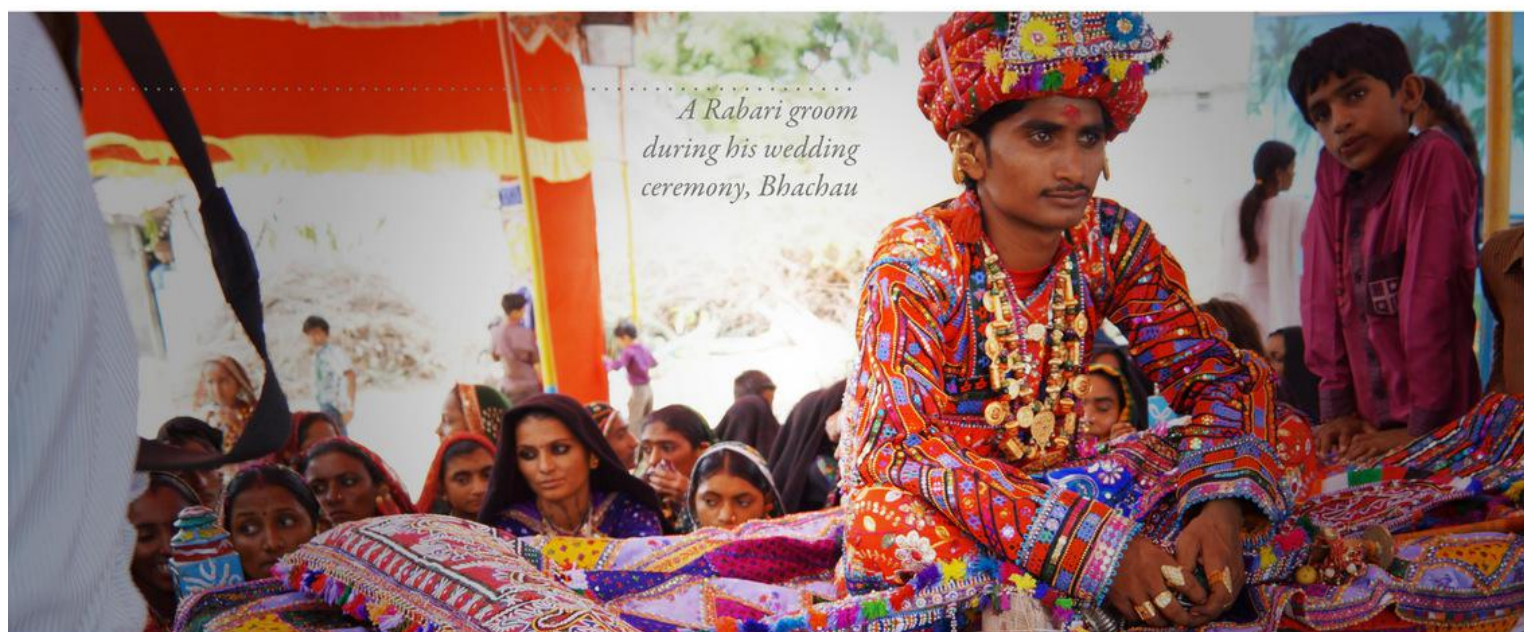
father gives each of his sons a portion of his herd at the time of their wedding.

### Decision making processes

Like the Jats, we also follow the *Panch* system of community decision making.

### Community History/Record keeping

Our genealogist, known as the *barot* or *bhat*, maintains the history of each family in the community. Each of our 16 castes has a different *barot* who maintains a family tree of each family in that community. The *barot* visits us once every year to keep track of new family members. Traditionally, the *barot* was given a camel for his work. Today, in return for this service, we pay him in cash and kind.



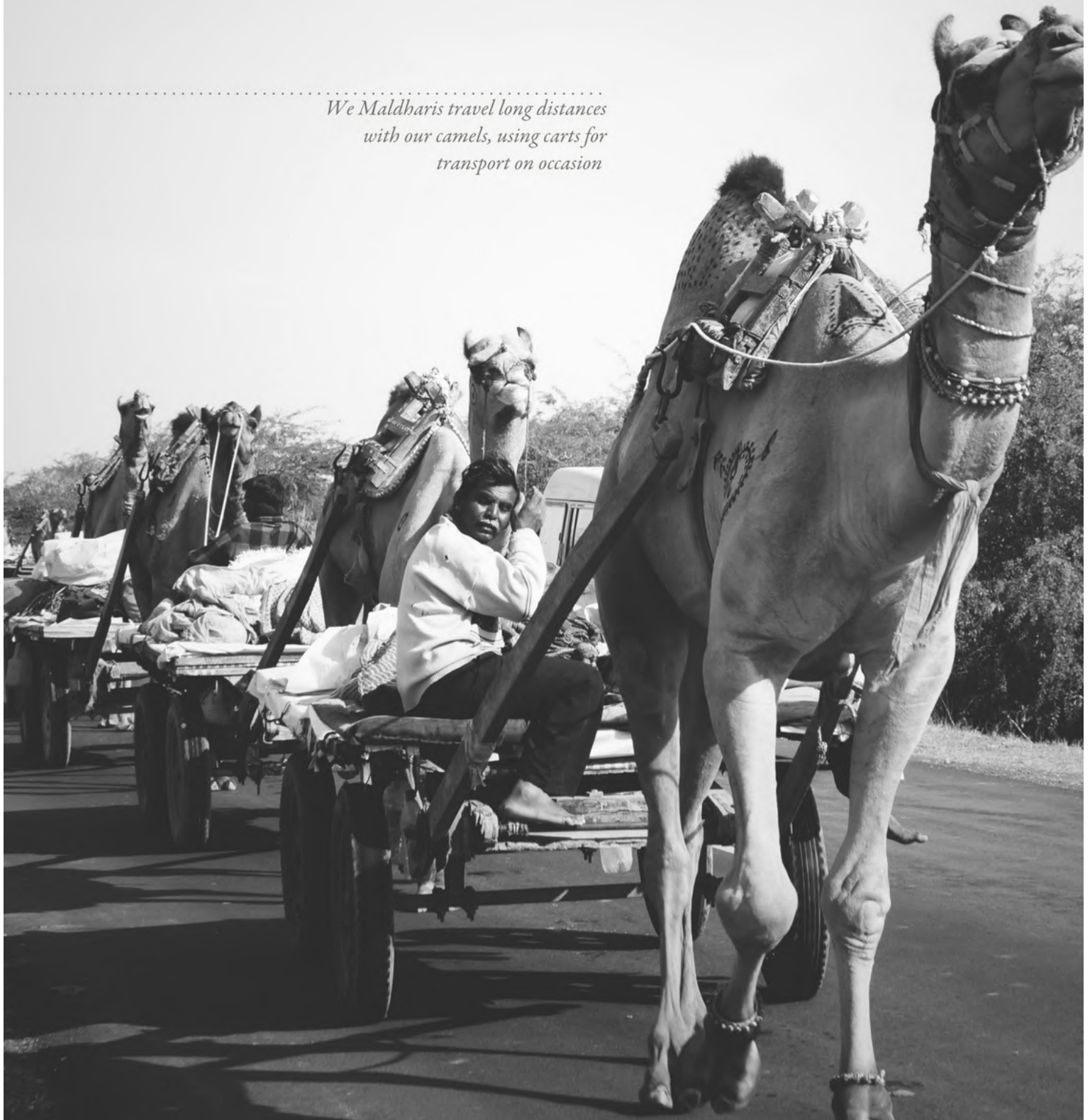
*A Rabari groom during his wedding ceremony, Bhachau*

### How the Barots came to be

The *barots* came into their profession as a result of the events that drove us from Rajasthan. When the king of Jaisalmer asked for the hand of one of our daughters, we asked him for some time to think it over. The King agreed, but asked that we leave a son of each of our 16 castes with him as insurance. We did as he asked, and were forced to leave them behind when our elders decided against the marriage, prompting our migration to Gujarat. In time, the King freed our sons, who followed us to our new home. Our elders would not integrate them back into our community, but offered instead to allow them to serve as our genealogists. The *barots* today are descendants of those 16 men.



*We Maldharis travel long distances  
with our camels, using carts for  
transport on occasion*



# OUR OCCUPATION

" Higher prices for our milk would mean that our Sangathan's membership would double. People would return to camel breeding! "

We are camel herders first and foremost, an occupation that stretches far back into the times of our ancestors, long before they migrated into Kachchh.

Within Kachchh, we have historically moved from place to place depending on the season, to avail ourselves of the most grazing resources. For the Jats, this way of life has continued largely

unchanged. In some Rabari and Sama communities however, life has become semi-settled. In many cases, people have branched out into keeping other animals (cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep), and incomes are increasingly supplemented through jobs in private companies. However, our lives are still arranged around the maintenance of our camel herds, which are integral to our continued survival.

## Camel Breeding as a form of livelihood

Camel breeding and the sale of male camels and camel milk form the basis of our livelihood. In our communities, our needs are limited to the bare necessities – food, clothing and health related costs. Our incessant movement has ensured that we live in houses that are easy to construct and do not require large investments in building material. On average, we have found

that a monthly income of Rs. 2000-2500 suffices to cover the needs of a 5-person family. An annual income of Rs. 25,000-Rs.30,000 is dependent on the size of the herd and thus cannot always be met through the sale of camels alone. Many people have turned to wage labour to fill the gap. Table 2 demonstrates the breakdown of income by source in camel breeding families.

	No. of camels	Average no. of camels sold annually	Average income from camel sales (Rs.)	Average income from wage labour (Rs.)	Total income (Rs.)
1	0-15	3	25,000	15,000	40,000
2	16-30	5	40,000	15,000	55,000
3	31-50	8	70,000	12,000	82,000
4	51-80	12	80,000	10,000	90,000
5	>80	15	1,00,000	10,000	1,10,000

Table 2: Average annual income of camel pastoralists in Kachchh



## Camel sales

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Generally, we do not sell our female camels due to their association with our goddess, *Momai Mataji*. We sell our male camels when they are about one and a half years old. The price we receive varies by season, increasing when the monsoon has been good, and decreasing in times of drought. Male camels sell for anywhere between Rs. 10,000 – Rs. 15,000. Female camels can bring Rs. 8000 – Rs. 10,000. Prices are particularly high for male camels that have been bred specifically for reproduction – such camels can cost more than Rs. 25,000.

We are best known for our male camels. Buyers come to Kachchh from as far as Rajasthan and Haryana, as well as other districts in Gujarat to purchase them. Buyers from different states usually resell the camels they purchase in Kachchh at Pushkar fairs. Some breeders in our communities maintain regular contact with buyers from other states, and act as facilitators for other camel breeders.

There was a time when camels were in great demand. From prominent roles in armies, to agriculture, transport and a significant presence in the Indian border security force, male camels were sold in large numbers and commanded correspondingly high prices. Today, although still in use in many parts of the country, camels are less in demand than ever before. The general decline in sales has pushed some Maldharis to sell female camels also. Our female camels command a very specific market. We largely sell them to Rabari breeders from Banaskantha and Sabarkantha in North Gujarat, where they are used for large-scale milk production. Although this does add to our earnings, we are no longer able to solely depend on camel sales for income.

## Milk sales

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Traditionally we only consumed camel milk as a part of our diet, and considered its sale improper. While a large number of breeders continue this tradition, many of us now sell camel milk due to

changes in our circumstances brought on by falling camel sales.

Due to low quantities and some social taboos, many dairies do not purchase or sell camel milk. We have thus made arrangements to sell our milk locally, usually to tea stalls and hotels. This has been particularly profitable in Abdasa, Mundra and Lakhpat talukas where the entry of large-scale industries has significantly increased the number of these establishments that buy our camel milk. Some breeders mix camel milk with that of buffaloes and cows before sale, however this is not a widespread practice. On average, we receive Rs. 15 per litre of milk.

## Buffalo, Cow, Sheep and/or Goat Breeding

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As camel breeding cannot fulfil our income and livelihood needs, many camel breeders have turned to raising other animals to supplement their incomes. Our preferred breeds are the Banni buffalo, the Kankrej cow, Marwari sheep and Kutchi goats.

Buffaloes and cows particularly are a natural choice for us, as their milk fetches good prices from local dairies. We also keep herds of sheep and goats alongside our camels. In a further example of the unique relationship between our communities, oftentimes Rabari breeders who keep different kinds of animals will bequeath their camels to Jat communities for grazing, while they maintain their cow and buffalo herds.





*A Rabari family with their herd of sheep*

	Taluka	Total no. of breeders	Breeders with camels only	Camels, cows and buffaloes	Camels, goats and sheep	Camels, and wage labour	Camels and farming
1	Anjar	8	6	0	2	4	0
2	Abdasa	28	11	8	9	2	10
3	Bhuj	41	37	1	3	7	14
4	Bhachau	42	22	7	13	12	18
5	Lakhpat	91	45	27	19	38	29
6	Mundra	12	9	3	0	0	0
7	Nakhatrana	50	32	5	13	2	13
8	Rapar	20	0	0	20	5	5
		<b>292</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>89</b>

Table 3: Number of camel pastoralists engaged in diversified livelihoods

## Other Occupations

### *Farming*

Of the nearly 400 camel breeders in Kachchh, some own land that is suitable for irrigated or dry land farming. Dry land farming is the most prevalent form of agriculture seen in Kutch. In most cases, the breeders do not practice farming themselves, but rent their land to people of other communities.

### *Wage Labour*

Many members of our communities have turned to wage labour as a means of supplementing family income. We typically find work either on farms, in construction or with one of the many industries that have come to Kachchh. In the case of those communities that dwell near the coast, many people are engaged in the collection and sale of scrap material. Typically, in a family of 5 or more people, 2-3 remain with the camel herds while 2 more will find wage labour work, which can earn Rs. 100-150 per day per person.



.....  
*Camels halt for water at midday*



# OUR ANIMALS

# 4

" Camels graze on all kinds of plants, both good and bad. It doesn't matter what goes in. What is special about camels is that no matter what they eat, they always produce life. "

## Camels

Depending on where we live within the district, we keep one of two unique breeds of camels – Kachchhi or Kharai. The Kachchhi camel is the most prevalent, accounting for 80% of the total camel population of Kachchh. The Kharai camel

makes up the balance, and is typically found along the district's coastline. Although the average herd size is about 30-40 camels, herd size can be as low as 5 and as high as 100.

## Kachchhi Camel

Kachchhi camels, named for the district, are vital to us. They are found in the inland terrestrial ecosystems of the district. They are physically strong, and well adapted for the arid climate and the uneven terrain of the region. There are about 8000 Kachchhi camels in the district today.

### *Physical features*

The Kachchhi camel has a large body, with a medium sized head and a thin neck. It has pointed ears that stand up straight, and grow a small amount of wool. The chest pad is large and wide. The Kachchhi camel has large, thick legs, with a large footpad. The tail is short, and the udders round and pendulous with tube or funnel shaped teats. In colour the Kachchhi camel ranges from wheatish to dark brown, while a small number are black, white or grey. It has thick, coarse wool.

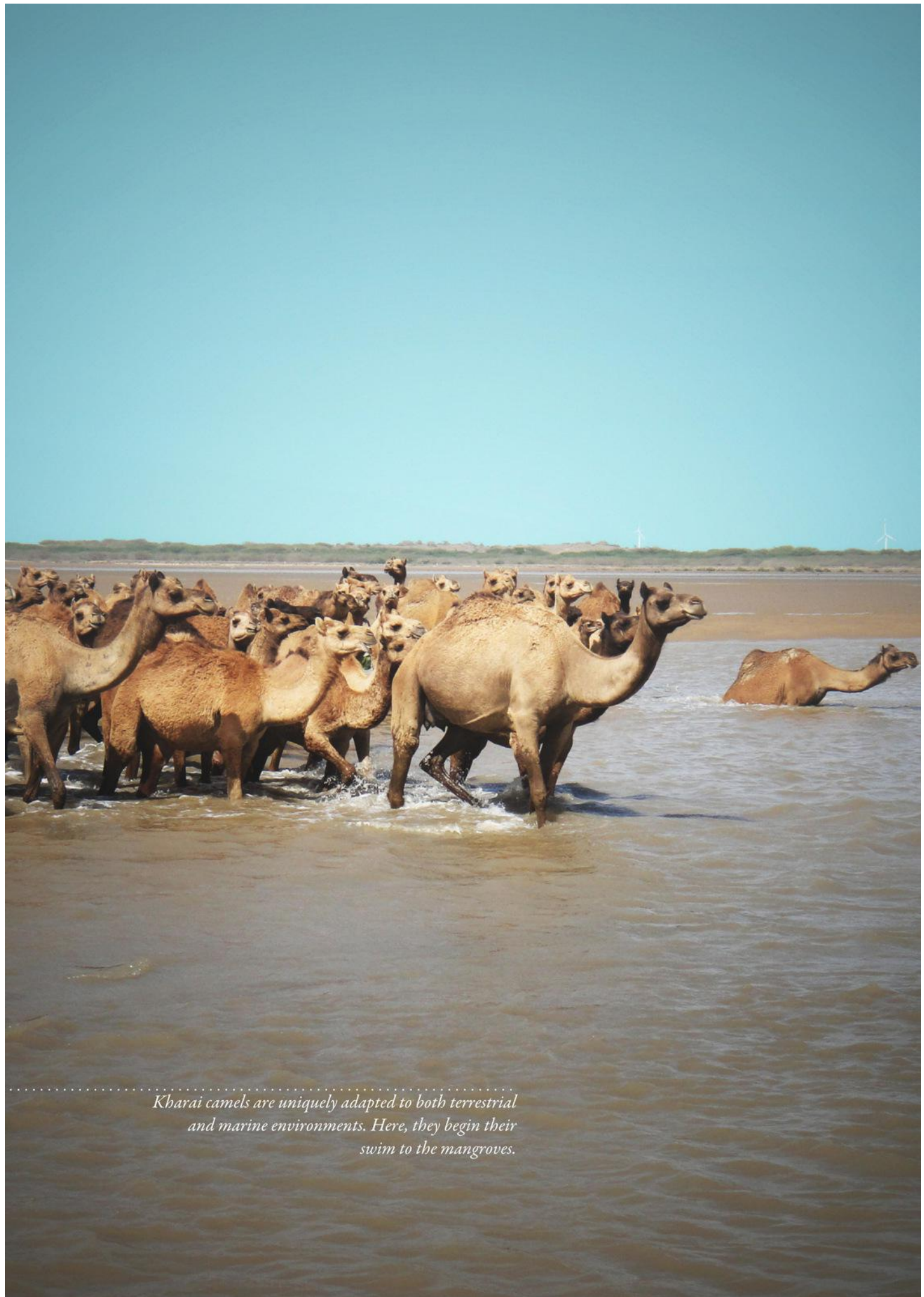
### *Grazing Patterns*

Kachchhi camels are brought to water every alternate day, although they are capable of lasting longer periods without. They typically consume 70-80 litres in a day. Kachchhi camels graze on trees and fodder native to the drier and hillier regions of the district. Kachchhi Camels feed on a vast variety of plant species. This contributes to the remarkably high nutritive value of their milk.

### *Use*

Kachchhi camels are used for heavy and long-distance transportation as well as for milk production. Following her first delivery, a female camel produces an average of 3 litres of milk per day. This increases to 3.5-4 litres daily following a second baby.





.....  
*Kharai camels are uniquely adapted to both terrestrial  
and marine environments. Here, they begin their  
swim to the mangroves.*



## Kharai Camel

The Kharai camel is bred by the Fakirani Jat and Rabari communities. 'Kharai' means salty in Kachchhi – this breed is so named because it feeds primarily on plants that grow on saline land. It is adapted to, and moves comfortably between the arid climate of the interior, and the humid climate along the coast.

Kharai camels are found exclusively in Gujarat with a total population of only 5000. Their numbers have declined steeply since the mid 1990s (see Chapter 7: Challenges). 2000 are found in Kachchh, distributed across four talukas. A number of Jat breeders moved to Saurashtra and other coastal regions of South Gujarat over 300 years ago in search of fodder for their camel herds. Approximately 3000 Kharai camels can be found in those places today.

### Physical features

This breed is slightly smaller and shorter than its relative the Kachchhi camel. They have large heads and a thick neck. Their ears are woolly, slightly flattened at the tip and stand up straight. They have a small, short chest pad and medium sized, gently padded feet that are well adapted for the wet, sandy land of the coasts. They have short tails and round, pendulous udders with tube or

funnel shaped teats. The Kharai camel is usually either a brown-black mix (called *Chavaro*), or dark black in colour. The wool is much smoother and finer than that of the Kachchhi camel.

### Grazing Patterns

Marine mangroves are the primary source of fodder for Kharai camels. They also feed on smaller salty shrubs that grow in desert areas. The camels swim 2-3 kilometres out to sea by themselves to graze on mangroves. They live on the *bets* (islands within the mangroves) at sea for 2-3 months at a time during the monsoon, at which time they can drink rainwater that collects on the ground. In drier seasons they return after two to three days of grazing to find drinking water. At times of the year when the herd includes very young camels, the breeders travel with the camels, ensuring that the herd swims together so that the young ones are not put at risk.

### Use

Kharai camels are used for milk production and transport. They are also commonly seen in the border security force, police forces and in tourist targeted desert safaris.

## Health and Common Diseases

Common diseases affecting adult camels include trypanosomiasis, mange/skin infections, arthritis and gastrointestinal or respiratory infections. In the past, we did not take any prophylactic measures or vaccinate our camels against diseases. While we do have traditional health practices, our herds often faced serious health problems.

Calf mortality rates were high due to diarrhoea and premature births. Recently, with the establishment of our camel breeders association, we have begun to coordinate with local NGOs to run regular health camps for our camels across the district.

## Other Animals

Many amongst us have chosen to diversify our animal herds in order to gain supplementary income. In addition to our camel herds, we also raise cows, buffaloes, sheep or goats.

**Cows :** We breed the Kankrej cows of Kachchh. Physically distinguished by their crescent shaped horns, Kankrej cattle are famous for their milk production and for the strength that makes them



suitable for work on farms. They are inexpensive to feed as they graze on open fodder land. Each cow produces an average of 8-10 litres of milk per day. Kankrej cows reach reproductive age at about 3.5 years. They typically give birth to a calf every year.

**Buffaloes :** We breed the Banni buffalo of Kachchh and in some cases, the breed known as Kachchh's Kanchan (a cross between the Banni buffalo and the Surti/Jafarabadi buffalo). The Banni buffalo is native to the Banni region of Kachchh, and is a recognised unique Indian buffalo breed. It is a nighttime grazer, and feeds on open fodder land. Like the Kankrej cow, Banni buffaloes also reach reproductive age at 3.5 years and birth a calf every year thereafter. Banni buffaloes produce an average of 12-15 litres of milk per day.

**Sheep :** We raise the Marwari and Patanwadi breeds of sheep. The Marwari breed resembles the black-headed Persian sheep but is smaller in size. The Patanwadi breed has a brown to dark brown face. The colour extends down the neck, and is also seen below the knee and the hock. This breed is valuable for its milk production and prevalent through western and northeastern Gujarat.

**Goats :** We breed the Kutchi goat, which is native to this part of the country. These goats can be grazed on open fodder. They are medium sized, and usually black in colour. Both male and female goats have horns. Largely raised for milk, these goats yield about 1-2 litres of milk per day.

### Conserving local animal genetic resources and gaining breed recognition for the Kharai camel

The rich livestock diversity of Kachchh can be attributed to the hard work of pastoral communities who have long conserved and protected both animal and plant genetic resources in the region. The most interesting of these is the Kharai camel, which may be the only camel breed to be eco-tonal, in that it is capable of survival in both marine and dry land ecosystems, and is adapted to shifting between the two. The Kharai camel has a unique grazing pattern – it swims over 3km in the sea to reach the mangroves that are essential to its diet. The camels spend the monsoon months entirely in the bets/islands in the mangroves. In drier months they travel with their breeders for 2-3 days at a time before returning in search of drinking water. This association with the ocean means that Kharai camels can tolerate water with very high Total Dissolved Solid (TDS) content – up to 10,000 ppm. Kharai camels are unique by any measure. Although their very existence remains unknown to many scientists and academicians, they have long been recognised and valued by the camel pastoralists in Kachchh. KUUMS is currently in the process of filing for formal recognition of the Kharai camel breed by the Indian government.

	Taluka	Name of village	No. of Camel Breeders	Camel population	Caste/Community
1	Abdasa	Mohadi, Laiyari, Bhagodivandh, Valavarivandh	12	575	Fakirani Jat
2	Bhachau	Jangi	43	788	Rabari, Fakirani Jat
3	Lakhpatt	Dhrangavandh, Thero, Gugirano, Medi	13	560	Fakirani Jat
4	Mundra	Tundavandh	4	250	Rabari
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>2173</b>

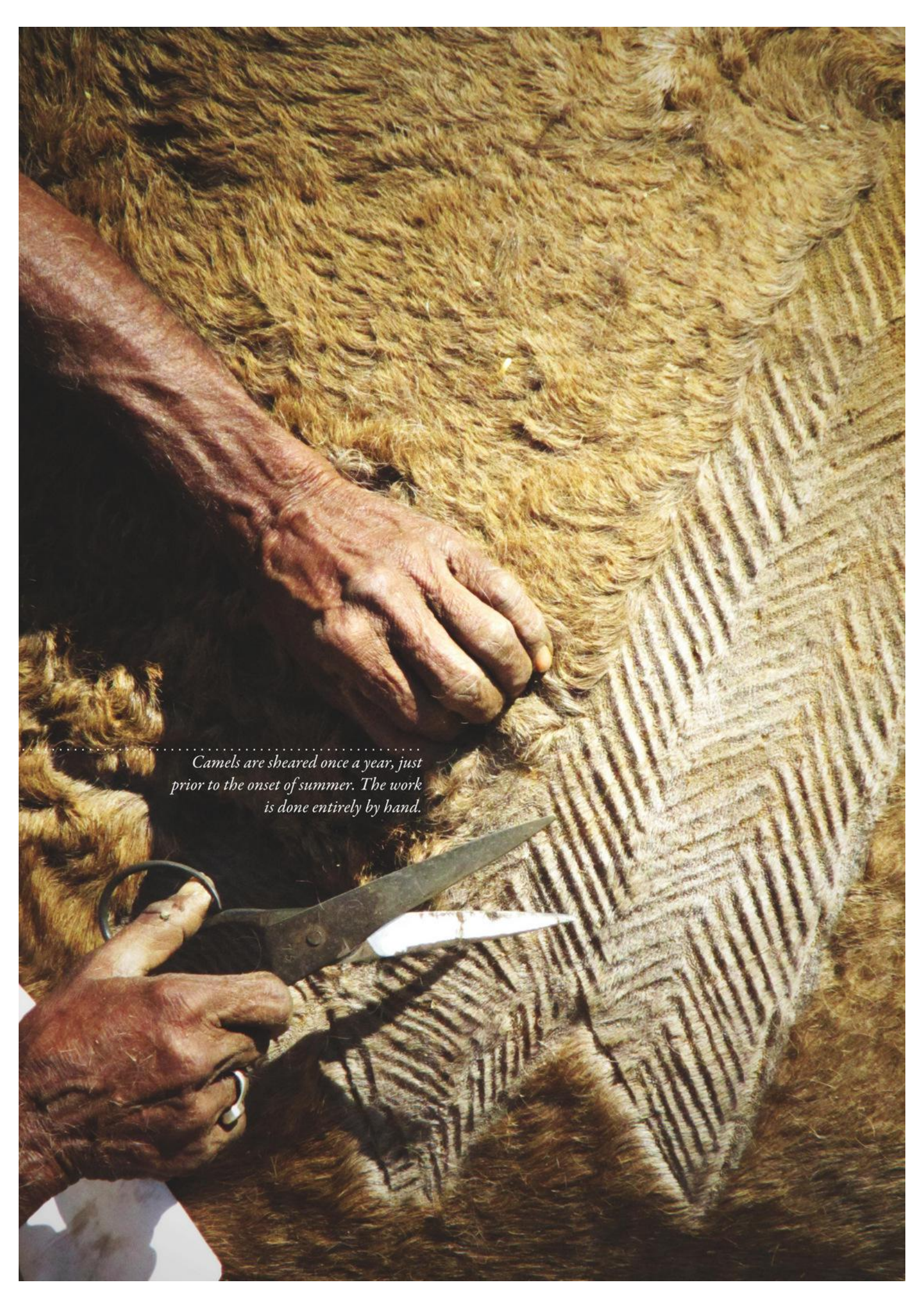
Table 4: Distribution of camel breeders and Kharai camel population in Kachchh



.....  
*A Jat Maldhari family sets up  
temporary shelter while migrating with  
their camels.*







*Camels are sheared once a year, just prior to the onset of summer. The work is done entirely by hand.*



# OUR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF CAMEL REARING 5

" Our elders have knowledge that has passed down for generations and even today, we turn to that knowledge first. There are no doctors where we spend our days. This is how we ensure the health of our herds. "

## Marking of Camels

We have always branded a symbol on our camels to be able to identify our herds with ease. When a camel is sold, it maintains the symbol marked

on it by its original owner and another is not added.

## Breeding Practices

Male and female camels both reach reproductive age at three years. The pregnancy lasts one year. On average, following the first delivery, a female camel gives birth every two years.

We believe that a purebred camel is best equipped to survive in the harsh environment we live in. We are extremely well versed in the work of camel breeding, with a bank of traditional knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation. Nowhere is this clearer than in the methods by which we ensure the purity and strength of our two camel breeds and accordingly, the herds we raise. More than 70% of us keep a breeding male for our herds.

Male camels must meet a certain set of criteria before being chosen as a breeding male – we consider the camels build, hump thickness, body colour, thinness of skin, length and thickness of

the leg, size of the chest pad, and scrotum position, length and development. We also consider the camel's health, the health history of its parents, and the mothers milk production. Those we choose for breeding are given supplementary fodder – usually mustard oil, groundnuts and a local plant called *guvar*.

A breeding male is kept with a herd for three to four years. At the end of that time, we sell it to another breeder, and procure a different male camel. We do this to prevent inbreeding.

Another method we use in the prevention of inbreeding is in the naming of our camels. A baby female camel is always named after her mother. This ensures that when the young female camel reaches reproductive age, it will not be accidentally mated with its own father.





*A camel is treated at a  
health camp, Nakhatrana*



## Traditional medicines

As camel breeders we are constantly on the move to find grazing resources for our herds. As our camels depend on plant species that exist in remote parts of Kachchh, the provision of veterinary health services can be very difficult. We rely on our Indigenous Technical Knowledge

(ITK) of health practices that have been passed down to us, and attend regular health camps organised by KUUMS to educate ourselves further on how best to care for our herds. See Appendix 5 for a list of traditional remedies for common ailments.

## Entrusting camels to another's care

Jats and Rabaris have a long shared history, which has bred a unique relationship and a strong sense of trust. Rabari breeders often entrust their camels to Jats, especially if they own

Kharai herds (Jats are considered to be well acquainted with the sea), or are engaged in alternative livelihoods.

## Traditional uses for camel wool

Camels have very high quality wool, and it is possible to collect about 1kg of wool from each animal (between the ages of 1-3) per year. In Kachchh, we use camel wool to make *cheko/veno*, which protects the udders prevents calves from

suckling. We also use it to make *dhaman* – a rope used to tie the camels' hind legs together so as to hold it in place while milking. We also make bags with camel wool mixed with that of sheep and goats.

## Identifying individuals within a herd – a case study

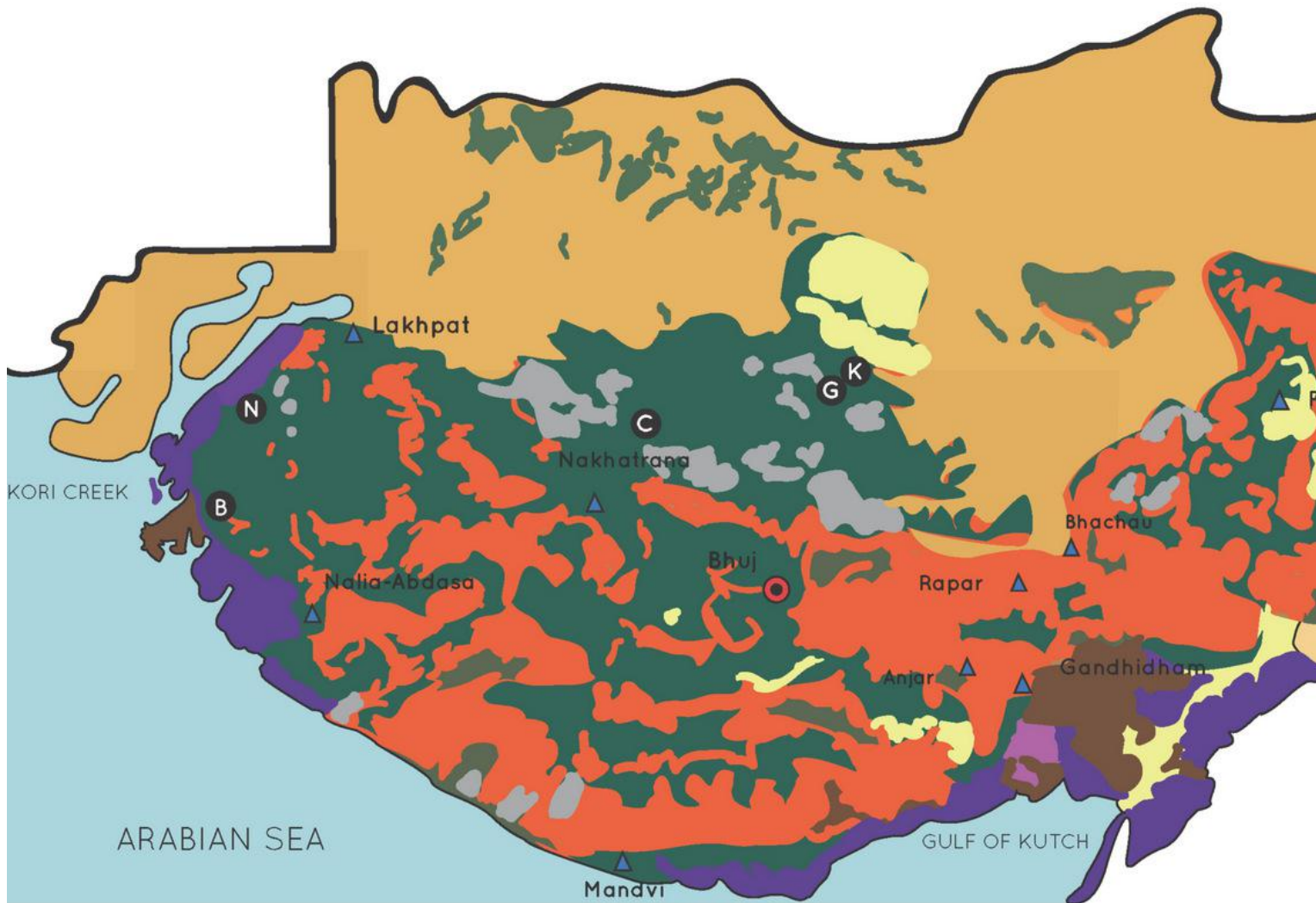
During the drought of 1999-2000 Mamad Khamu Jat, a camel pastoralist from Bhangodivandh, had 40 Kharai camels in his herd. There was an outbreak of dermatitis among his camels, and he couldn't afford to treat them. At the time, Kalabhai Rabari - a Rabari breeder from Jhulrai village – was on his way toward Patan, where he planned to sell some of his camels. He met with Mamad Khamu, and they agreed that Kalabhai would take eight camels from him to sell in Patan, and bring him the earnings on his way back. One of the camels Kalabhai took from Mamad Khamu was a female named Dhradki. Dhradki got separated from the herd while in Patan, and despite looking far and wide, Kalabhai was unable to find her. He returned to Kachchh one camel short.

About three months later, toward the end of the summer, Mamad Khamu was grazing his camels near the boundary of Nani Ber village. He spotted what he was certain were the footprints of the camel lost in Patan, although on searching he couldn't find her. A week later, it rained. As is normal for Kharai camels, Mamad Khamu's herd swam out to sea by themselves to graze. When Mamad Khamu went to the *bet* some days later to check up on and milk the herd, he discovered his lost camel Dhradki among them. Mamad Khamu's ability to identify a single camel by its foot prints alone is a rare skill, but one that is shared by a number of Unt Maldharis in Kachchh. It exemplifies the attention he pays to his herd, and their centrality to his life.





PAKISTAN

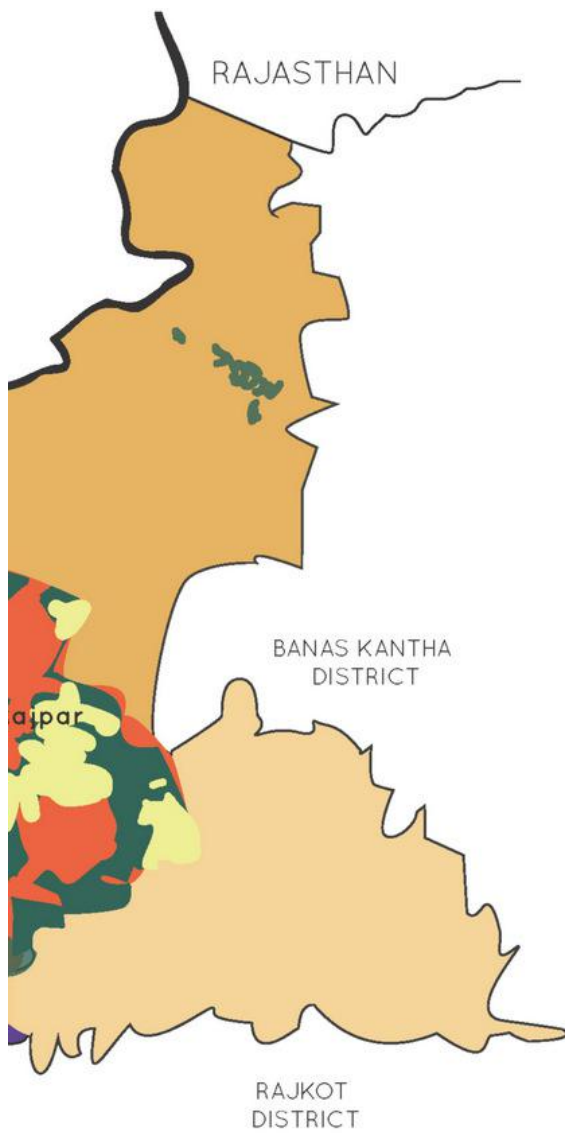


# GRAZING RESOURCES FOR CAMELS IN KACHCHH

















# 6

" Give our camels land to graze on and water to drink,  
and we will want for nothing more. "





### SANCTUARIES AND ECOLOGY

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  LITTLE RANN OF KUTCH    |  NON-AGRICULTURAL                             |  THORN FOREST |
|  GREAT RANN OF KUTCH     |  UNCULTIVABLE WASTE LANDS                     |  ARABLE       |
|  MANGROVE RESERVE FOREST |  CULTIVABLE WASTE LANDS                       |  MUDFLATS     |
|  INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY |  KUTCH BUSTARD SANCTUARY                    |  |
|  MAJOR TOWN            |  NARAYAN SAROVAR SANCTUARY                 |  |
|  DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS |  CHARI DHANDH WETLAND CONSERVATION RESERVE |  |
|   |  BANNI PROTECTED FOREST                    |  |
|   |  KUTCH DESERT WILDLIFE SANCTUARY           |  |

The breeding tract of the Kachchhi and Kharai camels is spread over grazing areas in different talukas and coastal stretches in the district. Camels mostly feed on different trees, shrubs and climbers from gauchar, pasture land and forest areas. Their movement has become restricted as natural and traditional grazing areas have been converted into conservation or protected areas, diverted for industrial activities, or encroached on for agriculture. Protected Areas (PAs) such as the Narayan Sarovar Wildlife Sanctuary (NSS), Banni Protected Forest, Kachchh Desert Wildlife Sanctuary (KDWS), Chharidhandh Conservation Reserve (CR), and Mangrove

Reserve Forests all encompass traditional camel grazing land.

We have identified 13 important clusters of grazing area. These clusters are located across the district. Each cluster consists of various grazing areas having diverse resources. For greater clarity in explanation, within this chapter these clusters are categorised under the regions of Western Kachchh, the Coastal Region, Eastern Kachchh and Central Kachchh.



## Western Kachchh

Jadva, Mata no Madh and Morgar, located in Abdasa and Lakhpat talukas, are the most important grazing clusters in Western Kachchh. Grazing areas here are sparsely vegetated, and can be categorised as forest area, gauchar and government wasteland. The predominant species seen here are *Acacia nilotica* (Deshi baaval), *Acacia senegal* (Gorad) and *Euphorbia caducifolia*

(Thuar, Thor). Co-dominant species occur dependent on soil characteristics, moisture content and the topography of the area – these include *Prosopis cineraria* (Kandho, Khijadi), *Prosopis juliflora* (Gando baaval), *Salvadora persica* (Kharijar) and *Capparis decidua* (Kerad, Ker). Table 5 lists commonly found plant species in these grazing tracts of Western Kachchh.

Plants of Western Kachchh		
Type of Plant	Common Name	Latin name
Trees	Deshi Baavar	<i>Acacia nilotica</i>
	Gorad	<i>Acacia senegal</i>
	Thuar / Thor	<i>Euphorbia caducifolia</i>
	Kandho / Khijadi	<i>Prosopis cineraria</i>
	Gando Baavar	<i>Prosopis juliflora</i>
	Kharijar	<i>Salvadora persica</i>
	Kerad / Ker	<i>Capparis decidua</i>
Climbers & Twiners	Tindora	<i>Coccinia grandis</i>
	Vagval	<i>Cocculs hirsutus</i>
	Dhokariyal	<i>Commicarpus verticillatus</i>
	Fotariyar	<i>Ipomaea pes-tigridis</i>
	Ankh Futamani	<i>Mukia mederespatesis</i>
	Mungariyar	<i>Rhynchosia minima</i>
	Dhodhiyar	<i>Pentatropis spiralis</i>
	Dudhiyar / Chamar / Dudheli	<i>Pergularia daemia</i>
	Fang Val	<i>Rivea hypocrateriformis</i>
	Gadu Val	<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>

Table 5: Plants of Western Kachchh

These three grazing tracts are also home to herpetofauna such as the Indian chameleon (*Lilo Kachindo*) the Eastern Red Sand Boa (*Andhari Chakor*) and Spiny-tailed lizard (*Sandho*). Some of the birds found here are the Crested Lark, Painted Sandgrouse, Red-vented Bulbul and Common Stonechat, and threatened birds such as the Great Indian Bustard, Lesser Florican and Houbara Bustard.

The western clusters are also home to a range of mammals – herbivores, carnivores, omnivores,

granivores and scavengers. Some notable mammals are the Golden Jackal (*Siyar*), Nilgai, or Blue Bull (*Roz*), Chinkara (*Haran*) and *Canis lupus* (*Bhagad*).

Here, large-scale mining, industrialisation, agricultural encroachment, restrictions on access by the Forest Department, invasive species and a lack of water around grazing areas are major constraints to their livelihoods.





*Kharai camels grazing in the mangroves*

## Coastal Region – Mangrove Forest

Mohadi, Aieda-Laiyari, Pipar, Tundavandh and Jangi-Bhachau have been identified as the most important clusters containing grazing resources for Kharai camels. All fall along the coasts in Lakhpat, Abdasa, mundra and Bhachau talukas. Grazing areas here fall under the categories of forest area, gauchar and government wasteland. These grazing areas are dominated by a single species – *Avicennia marina*, locally known as *Cheriya* or mangroves. The region also features other saline plant species such as *Salvadora persica* (Kharijar), *Suaeda nudiflora* (Lano), *Suaeda fruticosa* (UntMorad), *Atriplex stocksii* (Khati Palakh), among others.

The coastal region of Kachchh is home to the highest number of Kharai camels, which feed on mangroves for 6-7 months out of each year. Pastoralist communities have pointed out that allowing Kharai camels to graze on mangroves maintains the height of the trees, as well as supports the sprouting of new leaves. Additionally, the footprints left behind by the herds serve as micro-catchments for water, thus supporting the growth of young saplings.

The mangrove ecosystem is connected with several creeks that serve as the winter habitat for many species of migratory water birds including the Lesser and Greater Flamingos, Indian Reef Heron, Curlew, Avocet, Waders, Terns and Gulls. During the winter, thousands of flamingos visit the region. Several creeks here also support the Eurasian Spoonbill, a threatened species. The entire area also boasts a diversity of flora and fauna, and is a highly productive fishery resource.

The main threat to the mangrove and creek system is unplanned industrial development along the coast of the district, and the consequent restriction of coastlines by industries, the Forest Department and the Border Security Force. Such restrictions are cutting Kharai camels off from their primary source of food and disrupting traditional migratory routes, resulting in a high level of livelihood insecurity.



## Eastern Kachchh – Vagad

The southern part of Kachchh lies on rocky tableland locally known as Vagad. In the Kachchhi language *va* means wind, and *gad* means 'of stone'. Vagad is a rocky region, prone to windy weather, with hills of moderate heights. In the Eastern part of this region, Balasar-Bela-

Khadirand and Kanmer-Rapar, in Bhachau and Rapar talukas, have been identified as clusters holding important grazing land. The vegetation primarily comprises trees, shrubs and climbers.

Plants of Eastern Kachchh		
Type of Plant	Common Name	Latin name
Trees	Deshi Baavar	<i>Acacia nilotica</i>
	Gorad	<i>Acacia senegal</i>
	Kharijar	<i>Salvadora persica</i>
	Kandho / Khijadi	<i>Prosopis cineraria</i>
	Mithijar	<i>Salvadora oleiodes</i>
	Neem	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>
	Kadam	<i>Mitragyna parvifolia</i>
Shrubs	Gando Baavar	<i>Prosopis juliflora</i>
	Thuar / Thor	<i>Euphorbia caducifolia</i>
	Gangani	<i>Grewia tenax</i>
	Luska	<i>Grewia villosa</i>
	Liyar	<i>Cordia perrottettii</i>
	Chani Bor	<i>Ziziphus nummularia</i>
Climbers	Dhodhiyar	<i>Pentatropis spiralis</i>
	Dudhiyar / Chamar / Dudheli	<i>Pergularia daemia</i>
	Fang Val	<i>Rivea hypocrateriformis</i>
	Dhokariyar	<i>Commicarpus verticillatus</i>
	Magriyar	<i>Rhynchosia minima</i>
	Pinjoro	<i>Maerua oblongifolia</i>

Table 6: Plants of Eastern Kachchh

This region, as well the Greater Rann of Kachchh (GRK) was declared the Desert Wildlife Sanctuary in 1986. Unlike the GRK, the Little Rann of Kachchh is quite rich in biodiversity and is famous for the last remaining population of Wild Asses. The mixture of saline flat land and raised bays of this region provide an ideal habitat for many other wild animals including Chinkara, Caracal, Ratel, Desert Fox, Desert Cat, Indian Porcupine, Saw Scaled Viper, Krait, Cobra and several species of lizards including Spiny-tailed Lizard.

The number of native trees (fodder resources for camels) has declined sharply in the last couple of decades. One of the major factors for the decline is the cutting of trees for charcoal making. The Forest Department also denied access to forest resources for grazing in certain forest areas of this region.



## Central Kachchh - the Mainland

Chari Dhandh-Tham, Burkal, Muru-Aaiyar, Javahar Nagar, Sanosara and Pachchham are very important clusters containing grazing areas for camel pastoralists in Bhuj and Nakhtrana talukas. Grazing areas in these clusters can be categorized as forest area, gauchar and Government Wasteland. In the central region, the co-existence of thorn forests along with the mosaic of wetlands and savannas form a distinct ecological matrix, rarely seen in the district. This distinct assemblage provides a diversity of habitats to many rare and threatened species such as the Caracal, Chinkara, Indian Wolf, Ratel, Leopard, Wild Boar, Desert Cat and Spiny-Tailed Lizard.

There is a long history of co-existence between wildlife and camels in these grazing areas. Grazing areas in and around Chhari-Dhandh,

the largest wetland in Kachchh district, is a very important grazing patch for camels. The Dhandh is bordered by stands of *Prosopis juliflora* (Ganda Bavar), *Tamarix* sps. (Lai), *Salvadora persica* (Khari Jar) and *Salvadora oleoides* (Mithi Jar) interspersed by numerous *Suaeda* (Lano) shrubs. In years of good rainfall, the Dhandh becomes the wintering ground of enormous flocks of Common Cranes (25,000-40000), Dalmatian Pelicans and some Rosy Pelicans. About 32 species of Raptors, 16 species of waterfowl, 2 species of Cranes and 31 species of *Charadriidae* have been recorded as present in the Dhandh.

This central region of Kachchh is largely covered by thorn and scrub forest, and is notable for supporting the largest population of Guggur (*Commiphora wightii*), a local medicinal plant.

Plants of Central Kachchh		
Type of Plant	Common Name	Latin name
Trees	Deshi Baavar	<i>Acacia nilotica</i>
	Gorad	<i>Acacia senegal</i>
	Kadvo Sargvo	<i>Moringa concanensis</i>
	Kandho / Khijadi	<i>Prosopis cineraria</i>
	Neem	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>
Shrubs	Gando Baavar	<i>Prosopis juliflora</i>
	Thuar / Thor	<i>Euphorbia caducifolia</i>
	Gangani	<i>Grewia tenax</i>
	Kundher	<i>Premna resinosa</i>
Climbers	Dhodhiyar	<i>Pentatropis spiralis</i>
	Dudhiyar / Chamar / Dudheli	<i>Pergularia daemia</i>
	Fang Val	<i>Rivea hypocrateriformis</i>
	Guggur	<i>Commiphora wightii</i>
	Magriyar	<i>Rhynchosia minima</i>
	Pinjoro	<i>Maerua oblongifolia</i>

Table 7: Plants of Central Kachchh

The primary challenge faced in this region is the proliferation of Gando Baavar, an invasive species that is changing the structure of the natural ecosystem. Additionally, some of the grazing

areas, particularly gauchar land, are being encroached upon for cultivation. This has resulted not only in a reduction of grazing areas, but also in serious habitat fragmentation.





# CHALLENGES

# 7

*" When the land was open for our herds to graze on, that was a happy time. Today, things are much more difficult. "*

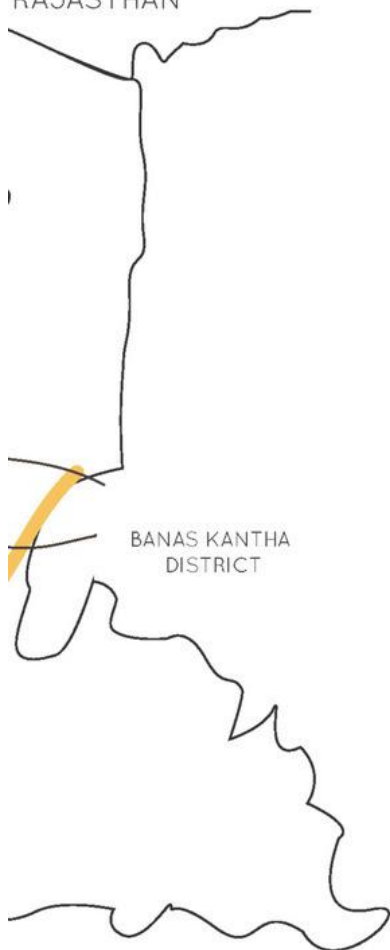
## Reduction in Camel Sales

The camel is no longer in great demand either for agriculture or as a mode of transportation. Fewer male camels are sold, and they fetch a far lower price than they once did. Falling sales are further impacted by breeders' dependence on

middlemen. At one time, Animal Fairs held in Gujarat and Rajasthan attracted huge numbers of both buyers and sellers but today a lack of demand has shut most of these fairs down.



RAJASTHAN

BANAS KANTHA  
DISTRICTRAJKOT  
DISTRICT

## PASTURE LANDS IN TALUKAS

GRAZING  
PASTURESMAJOR  
TOWNNATIONAL  
HIGHWAYSDISTRICT  
HEADQUARTERS

INDUSTRY

INTERNATIONAL  
BOUNDARYMAJOR  
ROADS

## Declining Grazing Resources

Our primary challenge lies in the availability of grazing land. Unt Maldharis living in some villages have held grazing rights in the past, ranging from rights granted to Laiyari village by the Maharao of Kutch in 1791, to grazing permits from the Forest Department in the 1980s. However, this has not been the case for all of us. Since Independence, changing land use patterns have shrunk our traditional grazing areas. The result of which has been a steady decline in the numbers of our herds, and a slow shift by many from our traditional livelihoods to other jobs. The reasons for these changes in land use are manifold. Encroachment and agriculture have taken over some, while government support for industrialisation and mining has vastly expanded the presence of industry of prior grazing lands. Additionally, huge tracts of

Kachchh have been cordoned off as protected areas, cutting off our herds' access to the pasture within. A more detailed description of these issues follows below.

### Industrialisation

Industrialisation has received sweeping support in the state of Gujarat over the past decade. This has been particularly destructive in Kachchh, where steel and thermal power plants have appropriated large areas of supposed common property. This land was essential grazing land for our local pastoralists. It is now unsuitable for grazing – its natural value has been destroyed – and has been rendered inaccessible to us as well.



## *Mineral excavation*

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Of the 21 commercially valuable minerals found in Gujarat, seven can be found in Kachchh – lignite, limestone, bauxite, gypsum, bentonite, china clay and silica. The land is extremely mineral rich, to the extent that in Lakhpat taluka, 1200 km<sup>2</sup> have been set aside for mining alone.

The process of mineral excavation typically strips the land's upper fertile layer of soil. In Kachchh, where much mineral excavation takes place on species rich grassland, this devastates large tracts of what was otherwise used as pasture.

## *Industrialisation near Jadva*

Jadva, located in Lakhpat taluka, is home to a camel rearing Rabari community. In the past, there was ample grazing land and a plantation surrounding the village, however two decades ago the Sanghi Cement Company leased much of that land. Today, those grazing areas are being mined for Gypsum, at depths of 50-100 feet. This has both significantly reduced the quality and traversable area available to local camel breeders, forcing many to leave the livelihood.

## *Reduction in Mangroves*

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Mangrove reduction is seriously threatening the survival of the Kharai camel, which depends on them as their primary source of feed. Two cyclones hit the district in the late 1990s – the first in Kandla in 1998, and the second in Abdasa-Lakhpat in 1999. Both decimated hundreds of mangroves in areas that have not fully recovered to date.

A large portion of Kachchh's industrialisation has

occurred along its coast, particularly in Mundra, Abdasa and Lakhpat talukas. In all these places, large-scale construction of jetties has led to the destruction of vast swathes of mangroves. A number of companies in a few different industries are responsible – Adani Power, Adani Port and Tata Power in Mundra; Anjan Cement and Deepak Cement in Abdasa; and Sanghi Cement and Sanghi Steel in Lakhpat.

## *Proliferation of Gando Baavar*

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*Prosopis juliflora*, or Gando Baavar as it is known locally, is an invasive species that has decimated the natural grasslands that once covered a large part of the district. Originally introduced by the Forest Department in the 1970s, Gando Baavar was planted with the intention of preventing further desertification of the region. Today it covers 70% of an approximate 5000 km<sup>2</sup> of grazing area in Kachchh. It is responsible for a steep decline in the number of indigenous grasses

and plants best suited for grazing by camel herds. In addition to the problems it poses to grazing and the local ecosystem, Gando Baavar is today also used extensively for illegal coal production. A by-product of this activity is thoughtless destruction of indigenous species that survive alongside the Gando Baavar. While we have raised concerns about this activity with the Forest Department, we have yet to see them take action to prevent or stop it.





*The Sanghi Cement plant is unmistakable against the skyline near Jadva village, Lakhpat taluka.*

## *Conversion of Grazing Land into Protected Areas*

A large percentage of Kachchh has been cordoned off as protected land by the Forest Department, either as Sanctuary or Reserve Forest. Protected Areas are closed for grazing, resulting in yet another significant reduction of grazing area available to our herds. We are often accused of overgrazing and degrading the environment we live in, but this is inaccurate. Simply put, we move our herds too often to overgraze a single area. The existence of protected areas is deleterious to the welfare of our herds. At times, we have found ourselves in conflict with forest officers as we attempt to graze our camels on this land. On many

occasions, this has led to the arrest of members of our community. Given our shrinking resources, there is a pressing need for some amount of grazing to be permitted on this land.

This problem is not restricted to inland Kachchh. To tackle the reduction in mangroves, the Forest Department has engaged in planting mangroves along the coast of the district. This plantation exists within the narrow corridor that is the natural path by which Kharai camels enter the sea – access to this has been blocked as well, cutting Kharai camels off from their grazing areas.

## *Border Security along the coast of Kachchh*

Due to Kachchh's close proximity to the Pakistan border, extensive stretches of the coast have been declared sensitive areas by the military, especially in Abdasa and Lakhpat talukas. Security check posts are ubiquitous, and movement in and out of the ocean is closely monitored. This extends to camel breeders and their herds, and often our

Kharai camels are blocked from entering the sea. This too amounts to reduction in grazing area, and is contributing to reduction in herds and a shift away from camel breeding as a form of livelihood.



## DEPLETING CAMEL HERDS

A fundamental outcome of the decline in grazing resources is a steep drop in the numbers of camels in Kachchh. Tables 8 and 9 show samples

of five villages in the district dealing with lowered camel populations.

Kharai Camel			
Village Name:		Tehara	
Sr. No.	Name of Owner	1995	2012
1	Jat Nurmamad Jedu	80	6
2	Jat Bhachaya Khamisha	100	5
3	Jat Gulu Khamisha	50	40
4	Jat Ali Judu	25	0
5	Jat Nashima Usman	60	0
<i>Total</i>		<b>315</b>	<b>51</b>
Village Name:		Gugirano	
Sr. No.	Name of Owner	1995	2012
1	Jat Pandhi Kabal	80	15
2	Jat Jiyad Abdulla	100	20
3	Jat Kalu Kabal	40	25
4	Jat Nashiba Kabal	20	2
5	Jat Salemamad Jushab	50	30
<i>Total</i>		<b>290</b>	<b>92</b>
Village Name:		Dhrangavandh	
Sr. No.	Name of Owner	1983	2012
1	Jat Mamad Hasam	30	0
2	Jat Mubarak Malaya	45	0
3	Jat Usman Juma	40	0
4	Jat Bula Jushab	35	0
5	Jat Haji Usman	60	0
6	Bhagiya Haji Mamad	40	0
7	Jat Nashib Kabal	60	0
8	Jat Salemamad Kabal	40	0
9	Jat Fakir Isha	50	0
10	Jat Sale Isha	35	0
11	Musa Haji Sale	60	25
12	Jat Seru Sale	70	35
<i>Total</i>		<b>565</b>	<b>60</b>

Table 8: Sample showing a trend of declining Kharai camel populations in Kachchh

Kachchhi Camel			
Village Name:		Junagia	
Sr. No.	Name of Owner	1983	2012
1	Rabari Budha Natha	115	50
2	Rabari Vanka Kama	60	0
3	Rabari Vanka Parbat	50	0
4	Rabari Bhara Vela	25	25
5	Rabari Madharveli dayaram	15	0
6	Rabari Puna Vedh	25	25
7	Rabari Vira Vela	25	25
8	Rabari Deva Parbat	40	13
<i>Total</i>		<b>355</b>	<b>138</b>
Village name:		Jadva	
Sr. No.	Name of Owner	1995	2012
1	Rabari Lavaji bhoma	300	5
2	Rabari Devasi Kana	250	20
3	Rabari Pabha Uka	500	100
4	Rabari Rana Kana	100	5
5	Rabari Jaba Kama	300	100
6	Rabari Wela kama	50	10
7	Rabari Mola Kama	50	10
8	Rabari Mala Jeha	400	15
9	Rabari Jeva Veja	30	12
10	Rabari Vira Vanka	30	10
11	Rabari Hajan Vanka	25	10
12	Rabari Mamu Jiva	40	10
13	Rabari Prabhu Vanka	60	4
<i>Total</i>		<b>2135</b>	<b>311</b>

Table 9: Sample showing a trend of declining Kachchhi camel populations in Kachchh

### *Industrialisation and related shrinking coastal access*

The village of Tunda Vandh in Mundra taluka provides a cautionary tale for communities that may fall victim to future unplanned industry expansion. Populated by Rabari families who rear Kharai camels, the location was originally settled for its proximity to the coast. Once renowned for the quality of its camels, the pastoralists of Tunda Vandh have seen their livelihood all but disappear in the wake of recent industrialisation.

Today, two thermal power plants lie directly to the east and west of the village, occupying former grazing sites. One is owned by the Adani Company, and the other by Tata. Thermal power plants require a large amount of purified seawater, for which purpose large canals have been constructed from the sea into the power plants. These have entirely cut off the camels grazing routes, forcing the pastoralists to migrate in search of different grazing sites.





### *Kharai Camels in Aliyabet*

A branch of our Fakirani Jat community settled in Aliyabet, Bharuch district of Southern Gujarat 250-300 years ago, after leaving Kachchh in search of new grazing areas for their Kharai camels. Today, about 100 families of this community live in Aliyabet, with about 1090 Kharai camels.

Aliyabet lies within a reserve forest that stretches over an area of about 5500 hectares. Geographically, it lies at the delta of the Narmada River, where alluvial soil deposits previously allowed dense mangrove forests to flourish. When our community members first settled here, there was ample grazing available for our camels. Following the construction of the Narmada Dam however, the mangroves have vanished, and today only two types of grasses (Lanu and Kharia) are found in Aliyabet. In the absence of the river, drinking water for the camels has become a severe problem. The breeders now graze their camels 20 km from the nearest village in the western end of Aliyabet, where some saline plants still grow. They travel to their village, Ambheta, every three days for drinking water. Even in Ambheta there is no local water source – it has to be supplied by tanker.

As a result of these issues – scarce grazing resources, limited drinking water, rapidly diminishing returns from camel sales – only 15 of the 100 families in Aliyabet are still engaged in their camel breeding livelihood. The breeders anticipate that their children will move into other occupations rather than take up camel breeding.



नंवर २०५१

श्रीमद

Evidence of grazing rights given to the Unt Maldharis of Laiyari village, Abdasa, by the Maharao of Kachchh in 1791

३॥ माशाराणधिराणमिराणंमाराराओश्रीदेमपुण  
 पुजावतंश्रीणजेउजंदरस्थानेश्वरन्तारीणजेउपणत  
 वारावेरारावजेरेमांरवारीदेवीदरितधारणामपुण  
 मांणीयाप्रातधारवारीराषडाउहोयारेछेतेनोछापो  
 रसवंतरिणैनाअरीउविद्विधवारनोश्रीदीय  
 वरिपासेछेतेमांजारीनांमेनकरवारीदेवीदरानं  
 णीवादानेआवजोदीयपुछेनेबाडीजारावरेमां  
 देवीदरिवाप्रातधारवपारवारीशुरुतेपाधरियरे  
 तेछापोतथापुजरीश्रवंतरिणैनाखीणणठेसुद  
 रवायारनोपुजेदनेनेतांणगाओछेणैरिजारांमां  
 णेअदांमतयारेछेतेणयारेतेमांशपुतंमेणतोनी  
 उठेनेरिजारांमांयरवामुश्रीररेतेनेमंनेपुरणने  
 रवारीश्रेमांणीयाप्रातधारवपारिदांमतयारेछे  
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# OUR RIGHTS UNDER INDIAN LAWS AND POLICIES

# 8

As *Unt Maldharis* we carry rich traditional knowledge of our animals and of the Kachchh region. Along with our herds, we form an integral part of the local ecosystem – one that is not often recognised by the government or other local actors. Our nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles

lead to our frequent marginalisation or outright exclusion from the policy process. However, we are committed to the conservation of our land, its associated biodiversity, and our livelihood. Below we outline the Indian laws and policies under which we lay claim to certain rights.

## *A. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Rules 2008, and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Amendments Rules 2012*

Despite being spread across the district, our communities enjoyed freedom of access to grazing resources for many years, with rights sanctioned by the ruler of the time. While some of these rights may not exist in written record today, the Forest Rights Act 2006 clearly recognizes the rights of pastoralists to access forestland, and provides an avenue through the Forest Rights Rules to gain recognition for previously unrecorded rights.

The Forest Rights Act applies not only to forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes, but also ‘other traditional forest dwellers’ who are dependent on forestland to meet their basic needs. *Unt Maldharis* fall under this category. In accordance with the Act’s requirements, we can establish that we have resided in and been dependent on forestland surrounding our places of residence for 75 years prior to 13/12/2005.

The Act introduces the concept of **community forest resources** and **community forest rights**. *Section 2(a)* defines ‘community forest resources’ to mean:

”Customary common forest land within the traditional or customary boundaries of the village or seasonal use of landscape in pastoral communities, including reserved forests, protected forests and protected areas such as Sanctuaries and National Parks to which the community had traditional access.”

*Rule 12(B)(2)* of the Forest Rights (Amendment) Rule 2012 mandates that the District Level Committee shall facilitate the filing of claims by pastoralists, transhumants and nomadic communities before the concerned Gram Sabhas.

*Rule 13(2)* of the Forest Rights Rules 2008



provides that evidence of traditional access rights can be established by showing:

- “a) community rights such as *nistar* by whatever name called;
- b) traditional grazing grounds; areas for collection of roots and tubers, fodder, wild edible fruits and other minor forest produce; fishing grounds; irrigation systems; sources of water for human or livestock use, medicinal plant collection territories of herbal practitioners;
- (c) remnants of structures built by the local community, sacred trees, groves and ponds or riverine areas, burial or cremation grounds”

Under *Chapter II*, the Forest Rights Act provides 13 classes of forest rights for communities. Of these, the Unt Maldharis claim the following:

1. Community right of uses or entitlements such as fish and other products of water bodies, grazing (both settled and transhumant), honey, gum, charcoal, and traditional seasonal resource access of nomadic or pastoralist communities (Section 3d);

2. The rights in or over disputed lands under any nomenclature in any State where claims are disputed (Section 3f);

3. Community rights such as *nistar*, by whatever name called, including those used in erstwhile Princely States, *zamindari* or such intermediary regimes (Section 3b);

4. Right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use (Section 3i);

5. Right of access to biodiversity and community rights to intellectual property and traditional knowledge related to biodiversity and cultural diversity (Section 3k);

6. Any other traditional right customarily enjoyed by forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes or other traditional forest dwellers, as the case may be, which are not mentioned in clauses (a) to (k), but excludes the right of hunting or trapping or extracting a part of the body of any species of wild animal (Section 3l).

## ***B. The Forest Conservation Act 1980***

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Large parts of the land inhabited and grazed by Unt Maldharis is protected forest. Additionally, mangroves are designated reserved forests and as stated earlier, are threatened by the excessive industrialisation of Kachchh's coastline.

The Forest Conservation Act of 1980 mandates restrictions on the de-reservation of forests and the diversion of forestland for use toward non-

forest purposes. State Governments are not allowed to lease any part of protected forests for industrial use without the prior consent of the State and Central Government. Additionally, a circular issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests on 26/02/1999 stated that any projects attempting to divert use of forestland must obtain clearance from the Panchayats of affected villages.

## ***C. The Biological Diversity Act 2002, and the Biological Diversity Rules of 2004***

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The Biological Diversity Act of 2002 (BDA) aims to fulfil India's commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Act provides for the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits

arising from such use and that of associated traditional knowledge.

The Act and the Rules established the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA). The NBA regulates access to biological resources and



associated traditional knowledge for commercial and resource purposes. The NBA is also empowered to advise the Central Government on any matter relating to conservation and sustainable use of resources and traditional knowledge, and to arbitrate fair benefit sharing.

The following areas of the BDA are particularly applicable to us:

*In-situ conservation and protection of traditional knowledge!*

Under *Section 36*, the BDA mandates that conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity be promoted through in-situ conservation. Environmental Impact Assessments are required for all projects that involve public participation. The Central Government is tasked with ensuring the respect and protection of associated traditional knowledge of local communities in accordance with the recommendations of the NBA. This includes

*Protection of endangered species!*

Under *Section 38*, the Central Government is required to preserve and protect those species that are on the verge of extinction.

*Biodiversity Management Committees!*

In order to ensure the effective fulfilment of the role of the NBA at the local level, local bodies such as municipalities and Panchayats are required under *Section 41* to assist in the formation of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs). BMCs work on conservation, documentation and sustainable use of resources and traditional knowledge, and must be consulted for any decision regarding use of biological resources and knowledge within their jurisdiction.

As stated under *Rule 22(6)* of the Biological Diversity Rules 2004, the primary function of the BMC is to prepare a People's Biodiversity Register in consultation with local communities. This Register shall contain comprehensive information on availability and knowledge of

local biological resources and their associated traditional knowledge.

*Fair and equitable benefit sharing!*

Under *Section 21*, the NBA's approval of any application for access to biological resources and associated traditional knowledge will be contingent on two major points. First, the terms must be agreeable to the local community. Second, a clear system of fair and equitable benefit sharing must be negotiated. The benefit claimers in question will be identified according to the Peoples Biodiversity Register under the jurisdiction of the local BMC.

**The Biological Diversity Act and Rules therefore provide certain rights to Unt Maldharis:**

1. The right to be consulted prior to any project that may affect our livelihoods, our animal breeds and associated traditional knowledge;
2. The right to conservation and sustainable use of our animal breeds;
3. The right to give prior informed consent and negotiate mutually agreeable terms when any of our animal genetic resources or associated traditional knowledge is accessed;
4. The right to a fair and equitable share in any benefits arising from the utilisation of our animal genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge;
5. The right to a Peoples Biodiversity Register that will document our diversity of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge;
6. The right to a BMC to advise the NBA on how our resources and knowledge can be conserved and sustainably used; and
7. The right to carry on our traditional lifestyles, which involves continued access to our grazing lands in order to conserve the integrity of our breeds and associated traditional knowledge.





## *Geographical Indication (GI) of Kutch Embroidery: Implications for Camel breeding communities of Kachchh*

The women of our Rabari and Jat communities create exquisite embroidery. This work makes up a significant portion of Kutch Embroidery, which holds the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, conferred by the Indian government under the Geographical Indications Act 1999. The GI tag is internationally recognised and an important achievement. It recognises the uniqueness and value of the embroidery work we produce in this district, and can increase its market value, which is already substantial due to high demand.

More importantly, GI confers collective intellectual property rights over traditional knowledge to the communities producing that work, and those rights can potentially be held in perpetuity. Thus it is a means for protection of that knowledge. However, while GI is a clear indicator of the value and demand for pastoral crafts, it cannot protect the production process or the knowledge embodied in the good – both of which develop from the community's cultural livelihoods.

The protection of our cultural livelihoods, achievable through the rights we claim in this protocol, is thus vital. It will entail not only the protection of our herds, our land and our preferred way of life, but also the protection of an internationally recognised and highly valued craft. Our embroidery work stems from our way of life, and it too is threatened as our cultural livelihoods continue to erode.



# OUR RIGHTS UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

# 9

We identify the following principles and rights we are entitled to based on international law (see Appendix 6 for further detail):

## Principles

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1. We are the creators of breeds and custodians of our animal genetic resources for food and agriculture (*International Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources, Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*);
2. Our people and the sustainable use of our traditional breeds are highly dependant on the

ecosystems within which we live (*Convention on Biological Diversity, Agenda 21, Rio Declaration*);

3. Our traditional breeds represent collective property, products of traditional knowledge and our cultural expression (*Convention on Biological Diversity, Agenda 21*).

## Rights

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We have the right to:

1. Make breeding decisions and continue to rear the breeds we maintain (*Convention on Biological Diversity*);
2. Participate in policy formulation and implementation processes on animal genetic resources for food and agriculture (*Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Convention on Desertification*);
3. Receive appropriate training and capacity building and equal access to relevant services enabling and supporting us to raise livestock and to better process and market our products (*Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Convention on Desertification, Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*);
4. Participate in the identification of research needs and research design with respect to our genetic resources, as in mandated by the principle of Prior Informed Consent

(*Convention on Biological Diversity, Agenda 21*);

5. Effectively access information on issues related to our local breeds and livestock diversity (*Convention on Biological Diversity*).

We call on the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, specifically under Article 8(j), to recognise our contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in Kachchh, Gujarat's diverse ecosystems. We also call on the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation to acknowledge the importance of our animal genetic resources and to recognise livestock keepers rights.





## *7 Rights of Livestock Keepers*

The term “Livestock Keepers’ Rights” was first used during the World Food Summit at FAO in 2002 in Article 9 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. They have also been referred to in the Global Action Plan for Animal Genetic Resources, but with little elaboration as to what those rights are.

Extensive community-based discussion with livestock keepers from over 20 countries has yielded 7 rights that are considered cornerstones for livestock keepers. These are:

1. Recognition of livestock keepers as creators of breeds and custodians of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture.
2. Recognition of the dependency of the sustainable use of traditional breeds on the conservation of their ecosystems.
3. Recognition of traditional breeds as collective property, products of indigenous knowledge and cultural expression.
4. Right of livestock keepers to breed and make breeding decisions.
5. Right of livestock keepers to participate in policy making processes on animal genetic resources issues.
6. Support for training and capacity building of livestock keepers and provision of services along the food chain.
7. Right of livestock keepers to participate in the identification of research needs and research design with respect to their genetic resources so as to ensure compliance with the principle of Prior Informed Consent.



# WE CALL FOR AND COMMIT TO

# 10

" Many people say camels are best left to the past, but fossil fuels will run out eventually, and what will we do for transport then? Really, camels are the future. "

## **We Unt Maldharis call for:**

### *1. The right to Govern, Protect, Manage and Conserve our traditional lands*

As pastoralists who fall under the category of Other Traditional Forest Dwellers, we are entitled to govern, protect, manage and conserve forestland under the Forest Rights Act 2006. We therefore call for the recognition of our rights of utilisation, protection, management and conservation of community forest resources.

### *2. Access to grazing resources, especially along the coast, and control over our traditional grazing lands.*

As detailed in this biocultural community protocol, loss of grazing resources is severely affecting both our food security and the very survival of our livelihood. We call for renewed access to and rights over our traditional grazing lands.

We have a great need for increased access the coasts of Kachchh for the survival of our Kharai camel herds. We therefore also call on the National Border Security Force to issue permits to those Unt Maldharis with Kharai camels, and give them freedom of access to the mangroves.

### *3. Inclusion in in-situ conservation projects*

Funds intended for in-situ conservation projects are funnelled into farm based conservation

programmes. We call for the recognition of our valuable contributions to the conservation of plant and animal species in the Kachchh region, and targeted inclusion of our communities into in-situ conservation projects. This is particularly relevant with regard to mangrove conservation. Kharai camels are integral to the mangrove ecosystem in Kachchh, where their movement and browsing assist the healthy growth of the trees. We carry generations of traditional knowledge that would greatly assist the government in its conservation effort.

### *4. Fair sharing of benefits gained from the sale of camel milk and camel wool*

Camel milk is highly nutritious and recognised for its nutritional value. It does not, however, command a price appropriate to its value. We are currently working to develop better market linkages for both our camel milk as well as the wool we shear from our herds. We call for a fair share of the benefits gained from these markets.

### *5. Recognition of our unique breeds and the value of our livelihood.*

We have been largely side-lined in the policy process due to a devaluation of our way of life that has only grown in the past few decades. We practice a way of life that carries immense value. Our camel herds are essential not only to our livelihood, but to the ecosystems we exist within.



.....  
*A Maldhari travels with his herd of Kharai camels  
off the coast of Kachchh.*





Unt Maldharis hold irrevocable ties to this land, which will suffer without us. To this end, we call for the government to recognise our unique camel breeds, and to reattach significant value to our pastoral livelihood.

**We also call on the National Biodiversity Authority to:**

1. Recognise our local breeds and associated traditional knowledge and to include it in the Peoples Biodiversity Register (under Rule 22(6) of the biological Diversity Rules);
2. Facilitate the set up of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC) and support them in ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of our breed diversity and traditional knowledge (in accordance with Section 41 of the BDA)
3. Strengthen in-situ conservation of our breeds and include them in the BMC (Sections 36 and 41 of the BDA)
4. Advise the Central Government and coordinate the activities of the State Biodiversity Board to protect our customary grazing rights so as to safeguard our traditional lifestyles and ensure the conservation and sustainable use of our breed diversity and associated traditional knowledge (Section 36, BDA)
5. Ensure that our prior informed consent is taken through the Kachchh Unt Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan before any decision that might affect us is taken.

## **CONTACT US:**

### **Kachchh Unt Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan**

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### **Our Commitments**

We, the Unt Maldharis of Kachchh, commit to:

1. Upholding our obligations under the Forest Rights Act to conserve and safeguard our traditional grazing lands and their biodiversity, as we have done for centuries;
2. Conserving and developing our unique camel breeds, and gaining formal recognition for them from the State and Central Government.;
3. Protecting the indigenous flora and fauna of Kachchh;
4. Protecting and ensuring sustainable use of the commons, which comprise our traditional grazing lands that span across the districts' terrestrial ecosystems, the Chhari Dhandh wetlands, the mangroves that line our coasts and our sacred groves, and the biodiversity found within them, so as to ensure conservation for future generations;
5. Preserving and building on our good relations with other pastoralist communities in Kachchh. Continuing to share resources and grazing lands, and maintaining links between our communities;
6. Preservation of our culture and our way of life.





દ્રરર રશ.નં. ઁક/રરઁ/કરક તા-૩૦/૯/ર૦૧૧

સોસાયટી રશ.નં. ઁજ/ર૦૯ર/કરક તા-૩૦/૯/ર૦૧૧

# કચ્છ ઉંટ ઉછેરક માલધારી સંગઠન

## Kachchh Camel Breeders' Association

175-Jalaram Society, B/h. Vishwamangal Appt.,  
Vijay Nagar, Bhuj 370 001 Kachchh- Gujarat  
Mo.no. 98791 23135, E-mail: kuums2011@gmail.com

૧૭૫, જલારામ સોસાયટી, વિશ્વમંગલ એપાર્ટમેન્ટ પાછળ,  
વિજયનગર, ભુજ ૩૭૦૦૦૧ કચ્છ ગુજરાત  
મો.નં. ૯૮૭૯૧ ૨૩૧૩૫, ઇ-મેઇલ: kuums2011@gmail.com

### Regarding the Recognition of the Biocultural Community Protocol of the Camel Pastoralists of Kachchh.

We are the Unt Maldharis, the camel pastoralists of Kachchh district, Gujarat, India. Camel rearing is our traditional livelihood. Together we have formed the Kachchh Unt Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan (KUUMS), our Kachchh Camel Breeders Association is a registered society under Indian law.

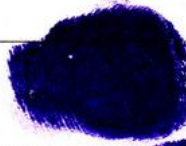
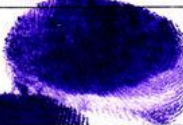


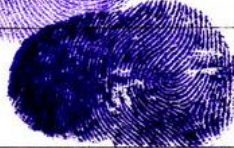


KUUMS, with the full involvement of its members, has recently prepared the biocultural community protocol of the camel pastoralists of Kachchh. Within it we describe our history, social customs and traditions, animal breeds, traditional knowledge, ways of life and the ecology of our traditional grazing lands. We detail the challenges we currently face, as well as our rights under national and international law that relate to the maintenance of our way of life. We describe our needs, as well as our solutions to issues we face, and the commitments we will hold to in order to maintain our land, culture and livelihood.

Today, at our KUUMS meeting dated 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2013, we, the Unt Maldharis of Kachchh express our approval and support of this document.

This biocultural community protocol is a written document, prepared collectively by the Unt Maldharis of Kachchh, which we are presenting before the government, policy makers, legal experts, researchers and society at large. We call on the government to approve and recognise the biocultural community protocol of the camel pastoralists of Kachchh.

No.	Name	Village	Position	Signature
1.	RABARI BHIKHABHAI VAGHABHAI	JANGI, BHACHAU	PRESIDENT	
2.	RABARI MEENABEN HAMIRBHAI	JADVA, LAKPAT	VICE - PRESIDENT	
3.	SAMA UMAR HASI	RABVIR, BHUT	SECRETARY	
4.	JAT BHACHIBAI GULMANAD	JHATAVAVANDH, ANJAR	ASSISTANT SECRETARY	LIT of કચ્છી બંધ
5.	JAT NURMANAD MERU	JHATAVA VANDH, ANJAR	TREASURER	

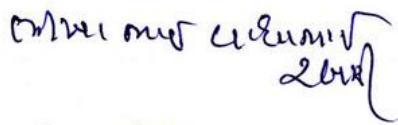


6.	RABARI JIVABHAI KANABHAI	SANGHADA, LAKHPAT	MEMBER	 R.H.T of 391018
7.	JAT RABHAKHIYA HATIMERANA	NORGAR, LAKHPAT	MEMBER	 R.H.T of 202241
8.	RABARI VALIBEN RUPABHAI	JANGI, BHACHAU	MEMBER	 L.H.T of 610101
9.	RABARI SOMABHAI MEGHABHAI	LANARI, ABDASA	MEMBER	 R.H.T of 210101
10.	JAT SAKINABEN ABDULLABHAI	AIYDA, ABDASA	MEMBER	 L.H.T of 210101
11.	RABARI <del>VALIBAI</del> VALBAI RANABHAI	UKHEDA, NAKHATRANA	MEMBER	 L.H.T of 610101
12.	JAT HUSSEIN ISMAIL	JATAVIRA, NAKHATRANA	MEMBER	x 32201 22201/22
13.	RABARI DEVIBEN PACHAN	SANGHARA, BHUS	MEMBER	 L.H.T of 610101
14.				
15.				

President

Secretary

Bhikhabhai Vaghabhai Rabari



મુખ્ય  
કચેરી ઉચ્ચક માલધારી સંગઠન  
ભુજ-૬૨૭.



Umar Haji Sama





# Appendix 1

## Methodology

The information set forth in this biocultural community protocol was collected through focus group discussions, household surveys, participatory mapping exercises and interviews with community members. A team from Sahjeevan, an NGO based in Bhuj, as well as the camel breeders association - Kachchh Unt Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan (KUUMS), coordinated this process.

Household surveys were conducted to understand the socioeconomic status of the camel pastoralists. These surveys covered 291 camel breeder households across 8 talukas, and included Jat, Rabari and Sama communities.

Focus group discussions were conducted with the Jats and Rabaris in Lakhpat, Abdasa and Bhachau talukas of Kachchh. Focus group discussions were also conducted with Jats who keep Kharai camels outside Kachchh, in Bharuch, Anand, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar and Rajkot districts of Gujarat.

Consultations on community history were conducted with the *barots* (historians of the Rabari community), and Aga Khan Savlani, the spiritual leader of the Jat community.

Participatory mapping included focus group discussions, botanical and ecological surveys, and documentation of traditional knowledge on selected medicinal plants.

No.	Activity	Details	Number
1	Meeting with Executive Body of KUUMS	Pre – planning & Consensus Building	3
2	Focus Group Discussions with Communities – both, elder and younger members	History, Culture, Social Structure & Institutions, Festivals, Breed and Breed Conservation, Health, Indigenous Traditional Knowledge, Issues and Threats, Natural Resource Mapping	14
3	Personal Interviews	With Religious leader of Jats – Aga Khan; President of KUUMS Sri Bhikhabhai Rabari; and a Jat camel breeder	25
4	Participatory Mapping Exercise	Grazing Land Mapping Exercise	5
5	Household Surveys	Socio Economic Status of Camel Breeders of Kachchh	291 HHs
6	Participation in Cultural Events	Events were organized by Jat and Rabari communities	3



# Appendix 2

*Table of location, occupations and numbers of camel pastoralists in Kachchh*

No.	Community	Location in Gujarat (by district and taluka)	Primary Occupation	Secondary Occupation	No. of families practicing camel rearing
1	Rabari	<u>Kachchh:</u> Lakhpat, Abdasa, Nakhatrana, Bhuj, Bhachau, Mundra, Rapar	Camel rearing	- Cattle, buffalo, sheep and goat rearing - Daily wage labour	198
2	Jat	<u>Kachchh:</u> Lakhpat, Abdasa, Nakhatrana, Bhuj, Bhachau, Anjar <u>Bharuch:</u> Vagra <u>Vadodara:</u> Padra, Jambusar <u>Anand:</u> Khambhat <u>Ahmedabad:</u> Dholka, Dhandhuka <u>Bhavnagar:</u> Along the coast of the Gulf of Khambhat	Camel rearing	- Cattle and buffalo rearing - Daily wage labour - Fishing - Sale of scrap material	62
3	Sama	<u>Kachchh:</u> Bhuj	Camel rearing	- Cattle, buffalo, sheep and goat rearing	13

# Appendix 3

## *List of castes of the Rabari community*

There are 16 major castes of the Rabari community.

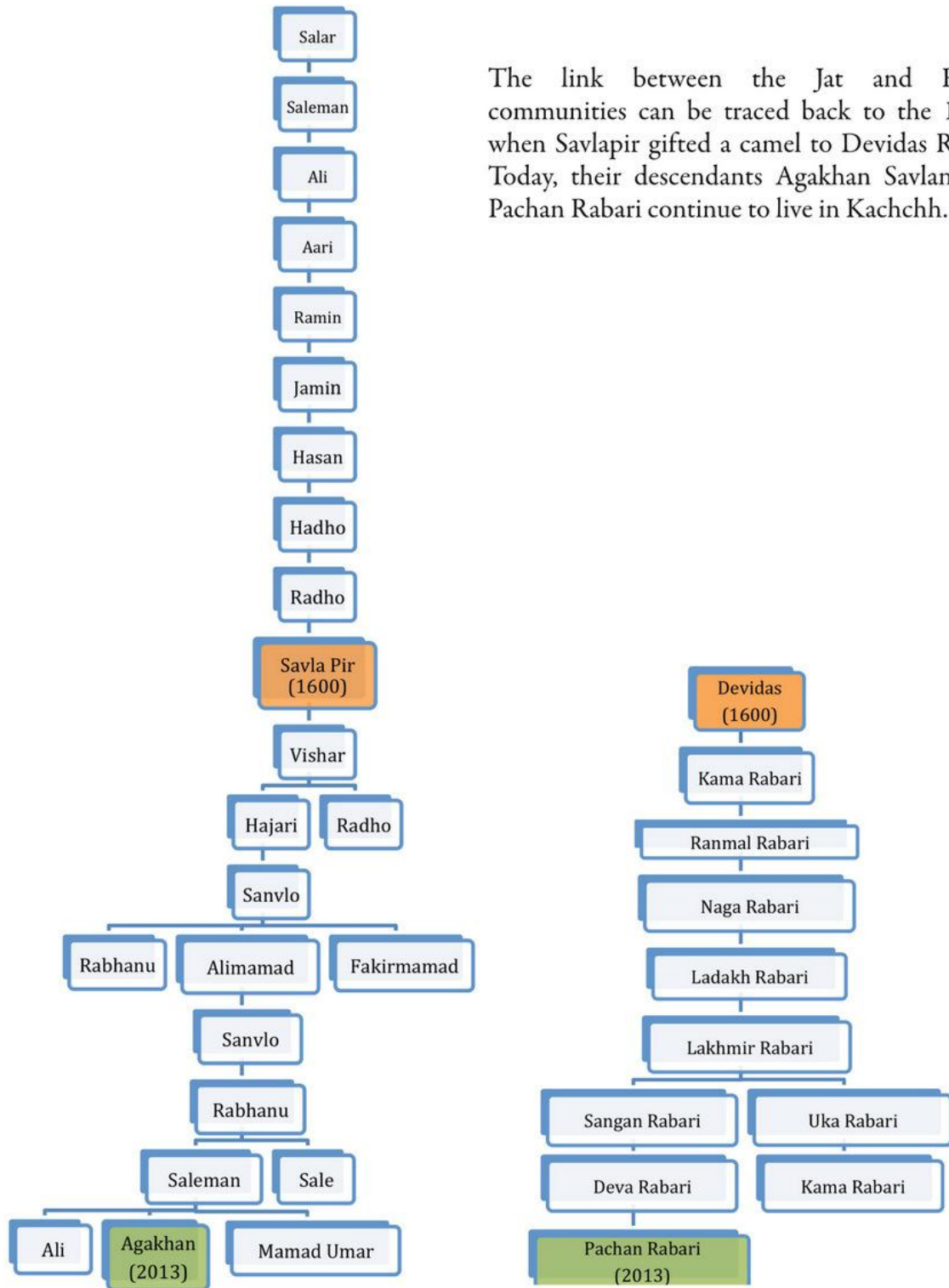
1. Solankis
2. Saambhal
3. Chauhan
4. Parmar
5. Nago
6. Aal
7. Ajaan
8. Khambhla
9. Luni
10. Bhadka
11. Karamta
12. Gogor
13. Motan
14. Morya
15. Bhungar
16. Gharsar

Of these, a total of 133 sub-castes have emerged, which are called *vishoter*.



# Appendix 4

## Generation Chart showing the Relationship between Jats and Rabaris



The link between the Jat and Rabari communities can be traced back to the 1600s, when Savlapir gifted a camel to Devidas Rabari. Today, their descendants Agakhan Savlani and Pachan Rabari continue to live in Kachchh.

# Appendix 5

## *List of traditional medicines for common ailments in camels*

These are the methods we practice as remedies to common ailments, and as alternatives to allopathic treatment.

### ***Removal of placenta (Jar na padvi tatha bagad kadhvo)***

200gm of jaggery is mixed with 100gm of opium seeds. This is dissolved in 1 litre of water and used to help with the removal of placenta and lochia in camels.

### ***Indigestion (Apacho)***

The animal is fed 50gm of asafoetida mixed with 50gm of jaggery to help improve its appetite.

### ***Diarrhoea (Jada)***

Feeding a camel 250-300gm of castor oil can help with the prevention of diarrhoea. Another remedy is 500gm of dalda ghee, which has astringent properties and helps to soothe the intestinal wall.

### ***Fracture (Asthibhang)***

100gm of glyciriza is mixed with milk and ghee and fed to the animal. This helps to heal the bone tissue.

### ***Open wounds (Ghav)***

A paste of butter and turmeric is applied to open wounds to speed the healing process.

### ***Common cold/Rhinitis (Sharadi)***

This is treated with turmeric (100gm). Another treatment involves having the animal inhale the air generated from burning of opium seeds in a beaker. This assists with alleviating congestion.

### ***Mastitis (Aavno sojo)***

Treated by mixing 3 bolis of camphor with 100gm each of dry coconut and raw sugar. The mixture is diluted in a litre of water before treating the animal.

### ***Dermatitis (Charm rog/khaji)***

There are three main ways to treat dermatitis – Applying a mixture of tobacco and mineral oil to the affected skin

Application of coconut oil

Application of buried engine oil to the affected skin

### ***Constipation (Kabavijat)***

100gm of salt diluted in water and administered orally helps to relieve constipation.

### ***Ephemeral fever (Tutiyo valo)***

10gm of opium seeds taken orally can relieve a fever.

### ***Dermatitis of the tail (Puchhadi sadi javi)***

The affected tail is immersed in hot oil to treat the infection.

# Appendix 6

## *Our Rights under International Law*

We the Unt Maldhari in this Biocultural Community Protocol identify the following principles and rights based on international law:

### **Principle 1: We are creators of breeds and custodians of their animal genetic resources for food and agriculture.**

Over the course of history, we Unt Maldhari have managed and bred camels, selected and used

them, thus shaping them so they are well-adapted to our environment and its extremes. Keeping these breeds is a vital part of our culture and livelihoods. Yet these breeds and our livelihoods are under risk through loss of access to our traditional grazing lands.

This has endangered our food security and our way of life. As recognized in the Global Plan of



Action for Animal Genetic Resources and the International Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources, livestock keeping communities are thus the creators and custodians of the breeds that they maintain. We have therefore earned certain custodianship rights over these breeds, including the right to decide how others use the genetic resources embodied in our breeds.

*Principle 1 is supported by:*

Point 9 of the International Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources recognizes that the “genetic resources of animal species most critical to food security, sustainable livelihoods and human wellbeing are the result of both natural selection, and directed selection by smallholders, farmers, pastoralists and breeders, throughout the world, over generations”.

Point 12 of the International Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources recognizes “the enormous contribution that the local and indigenous communities and farmers, pastoralists and animal breeders of all regions of the world have made, and will continue to make for the sustainable use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture”.

Part I Point 10 of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources: “all animal genetic resources for food and agriculture are the result of human intervention: they have been consciously selected and improved by pastoralists and farmers since the origins of agriculture, and have co-evolved with economies, cultures, knowledge systems and societies. Unlike most wild biodiversity, domestic animal resources require continuous active human management, sensitive to their unique nature”.

**Principle 2: The Unt Maldhari and the sustainable use of traditional breeds are dependent on the conservation of our ecosystem.**

Our traditional breeds are developed through the interaction between our camels, the Unt

Maldhari and our natural environment. This natural environment is conserved, inter alia, through traditional practices of the Unt Maldhari, and traditional breeds lose their specific characteristics once removed from this ecosystem. The Unt Maldhari therefore have a right to access our natural environment, so as to ensure the sustainable use and conservation of our breeds and the environment.

*Principle 2 is supported by:*

Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity: “genetic resources should be conserved in the surroundings in which they have developed their distinct properties”.

Article 10 (d) of the Convention on Biological Diversity demands that “local populations are supported to develop and implement remedial action in degraded areas where biological diversity has been reduce”.

Chapter 15 (5) (g) of Agenda 21: requires States to “Take action where necessary for the conservation of biological diversity through the in situ conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats, and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings.

Principle 22 of the Rio Declaration: “Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development”.

**Principle 3: Our traditional breeds represent collective property, products of indigenous knowledge and cultural expression of the Unt Maldhari.**

We have collective custodianship rights over our breeds and the genetic traits of these breeds. However, it is crucial that our unique Kharai camel breed be recognized, and that these rights be supported and promoted by the government. Our government must therefore respect, preserve



and maintain the knowledge, innovations and practices of the Unt Maldhari, who embody lifestyles relevant for sustainable use and conservation of livestock diversity.

*Principle 3 is supported by:*

Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: “Contracting parties shall...subject to national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.”

Article 10 (c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: “customary use of biological resources is protected and encouraged in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation and sustainable use requirements”.

Chapter 15 (4) (g) of Agenda 21 calls on governments at the appropriate level “to recognize and foster the traditional methods and knowledge of indigenous people and their communities relevant to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources”.

Chapter 15 (5) (e) of Agenda 21: Governments should “subject to national legislation, take action to respect, record, protect and promote the wider application of the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles for the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources.”

**Based on these principles articulated and implicit in existing legal instruments and international agreements, the Maldhari who belong to a traditional pastoral community and adhere to ecological principles of animal production affirm the following rights:**

***1. The Unt Maldhari shall have the right to make breeding decisions and breed the breeds they maintain.***

This right is supported by:

Article 10 (c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: obliges Parties to “protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation and sustainable use requirements”.

***2. The Unt Maldhari shall have the right to participate in policy formulation and implementation processes on animal genetic resources for food and agriculture.***

This right is supported by:

Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: obliges Parties to “promote the wider application of the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities with their approval and involvement”.

Article 14(1) (a) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: obliges Parties to “introduce appropriate procedures requiring environmental impact assessment of its proposed projects that are likely to have significant adverse effects on biological diversity with a view to avoiding or minimizing such effects and where appropriate allow for public participation in such procedures”.

Article 3 (a) of the United Nations Convention on Desertification: compels Parties to “ensure that decisions on the design and implementation of programmes to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought are taken with the participation of populations and local communities and that an enabling environment is created at higher levels to facilitate action at national and local levels”.

Article 10(2) (f) of the United Nations Convention on Desertification: obliges the “effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non-governmental organizations and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes”.

***3. The Unt Maldhari shall have the right to***



***appropriate training and capacity building and equal access to relevant services enabling and supporting us to raise livestock and to better process and market our products.***

This right is supported by:

Article 12 (a) of the Convention on Biological Diversity obliges Parties to 'establish and maintain programmes for scientific and technical education and training in measures for the identification, conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and its components'

Article 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity obliges Parties to 'adopt economically and socially sound measures that act as incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity'

Article 19 (1) (e) of the United Nations Convention on Desertification obliges parties to promote capacity building "by adapting, where necessary, relevant environmentally sound technology and traditional methods of agriculture and pastoralism to modern socio-economic conditions".

Strategic Priority 6 of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources requests governments to "Support indigenous and local livestock systems of importance to animal genetic resources, including through the removal of factors contributing to genetic erosion. Support may include the provision of veterinary and extension services, delivery of microcredit for women in rural areas, appropriate access to natural resources and to the market, resolving land tenure issues, the recognition of cultural practices and values, and adding value to their specialist products."

***4. The Unt Maldhari shall have the right to participate in the identification of research needs and research design with respect to our genetic resources, as is mandated by the principle of Prior Informed Consent.***

This right is supported by:

Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (see above) and Article 10 (d) which says Parties shall "support local populations to

develop and implement remedial action in degraded areas where biological diversity has been reduced".

Chapter 15(4) (g) of Agenda 21 require states to "Recognize and foster the traditional methods and the knowledge of indigenous people and their communities ...and ensure the opportunity for the participation of those groups in the economic and commercial benefits derived from the use of such traditional methods and knowledge".

***5. We have the right to effectively access information on issues related to our local breeds and livestock diversity.***

This right is supported by:

Article 13 (a) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: obliges Parties to "Promote and encourage understanding of the importance of and the measures required for the conservation of biological diversity, as well as its propagation through media, and the inclusion of these topics in educational programmes".







## CONTACT US:

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