CHAPTER – 7

COMPULSIONS OF ‘DEVELOPMENT’ AND CRISIS OF GALESH SURVIVAL

Annihilation of a vibrant ethnicity that is described in this thesis due to pressure of globalization, modernization and so called development is a challenge, that was expressed not only by our research population but is generally being perceived by the researchers working with pastoral communities across the globe. Anthropologist and post-modernist and post-structuralist discourse has actually raised serious questions about the universal construct of notions of development. In current anthropological parlance, it is argued that these notions of development resemble evolutionist (Spencer, 2004) ideas of the 18th and 19th century that visualized the world in terms of dichotomies of ‘primitive’ and ‘civilized’ and constituted the premise of theoretical formulations in the discipline. Anthropologists must also share the onus of being guilty of participating in some of the early intervention programmes in the name of developing the under-developed and evolving an entire subfield of applied anthropology.

The western world’s constructs of parable of development started after world war two with the establishment of institutions like IMF, World Bank and various programmes started under the aegis of United Nations. The World Systems approach and dependency theory (Wallerstein, 1974) constituted the philosophy for dividing the world into categories of nation-states that are developed, developing and Under-developed. If this approach recognized economic differentiation and vulnerability of different human populations, it also assumed a kind of superiority that will dictate how the other ‘so-called fossilized’ people should charter their path of growth. For few decades now this perception of human societies is being questioned even by some economist like Amartya Sen, who in the spirit of several post development anthropologist talked about developing happiness Index to measure the true character of development. Nonetheless, nation-states in their economic pursuits continue to charter an agenda of industrial growth that in their opinion is the only recourse for bringing ‘development’ across their states. So much so that millennium development goals likely to be revised in the year 2015 continue to harp on greater rate of...
industrialization for bringing economic growth, but display it in a conscious rhetoric of 'sustainable development'.

While writing this chapter I am caught between dilemmas of my reflexivity and reflexivity of my respondents who are reeling under the threat of extinction. In the beginning of this thesis it was recorded that only about 40% of the respondents in the sample practiced full time Pastoral Nomadic transhumance lifestyle bringing into contention the fact of 60% having already moved out of their customary economy. It is not that they have not been under threat previously and survived like several other pastoral nomadic communities across the world. The threat now appears more from within the community than from the state alone. Younger generation is looking for better quality of life in more lucrative horizons and not wanting to take to their traditional vocation. Few of them having served their full term work assignments are now engaged in reviving the nascent heritage. But it is difficult to say at this stage, whether a revival movement will occur or not.

In this final chapter of the thesis, objective is to revisit some of the development programmes that the state has undertaken in the past few decades and do an empirical mapping in people's version as to how this has impacted their lives. Some of the respondents in this study were displaced twice for the development of major dam project that is arguably imperative for providing electricity and water for irrigation.

The concerns of the Iranian government regarding the preservation of its natural wealth in terms of rangelands, pastures, jungle areas as well as hilly slopes that were captured in the Plan document prepared in 2004-05 are genuine. The actions necessary for the successful implementation of the plan were prepared and finalized by a panel of experts who had authenticated and at some points even negated the urgency of taking action in some of the areas earmarked for the plan implementation. In the Alburz Dam area the pastoralists had several tales of woe to tell when the case studies were being recorded. The contradictions were rampant. On the one hand there was total dissatisfaction of the people with the vapid projections of the government that:

[1] Too much erosion was happening that was endangering the roadsides and ancient dwellings of the Galesh.
The process of desertification of the once green hill slopes was proceeding rapidly.

The blame was laid at the door of the Galesh as main perpetuators of this denudation because of their animals who were constantly a threat to the already mitigating resources.

The Galesh themselves were also blamed for accelerating the process because of their indiscriminate usage of the jungle for construction and other purposes.

Respondents in the field contradicted these allegations arguing that rampant denudation has happened because of various policies being pursued by the various governments in the past. They argue that the pastoralists had been subsisting on the natural resources since centuries and their institutionalized wisdom had dictated to them to use available pasture judiciously. The changing pastoral lands were used alternately so that the natural replenishment of the lands could occur over time and by the time the turn for using that particular pasture came again it was well stocked for handling the shepherd’s load of animals. Government policies however had ignored this institutionalized wisdom and established their own norms for the use of the pastures (rangeland office notification).

Galesh in the sample population also lamented that several of the traditional pastures of theirs were earmarked for submergence for providing closely interconnected water ways or water systems as a part of a grand scheme to take care of the water needs of the region. This exercise is undertaken irrespective of reports that show that this will result in increased soil erosion and denudation in the upper reaches of the Alborz Mountains. Elaborate plans have been laid out in the World Bank and Iran government document for making dams and waterways so that there are no problems of water scarcity in the region, which had earlier been under threat of drought. Elderly Galesh exercise their native wisdom and argue that this will be a colossal waste of money and will not be able to provide water for meeting the requirement of the local population in the region. In order to examine validity of each of these arguments it is important to review government policy on rangeland.

Government Policy on Rangelands and Livestock Production

For the purpose of realization of the above mentioned nationalization of natural resources the following laws of relevance for livestock grazing in rangelands and forests were passed:
- Forest Nationalization Law 1341 (1962)
- The law about preserving and exploiting from Forest and pasture in the country 1346 (1967)

Some of the salient observations for promulgating these laws were:

- Rangelands comprise of about 80 million hectares of the entire Iran landmass.

- The alpine areas also called the summer pastures or Yelāgh are just about 20 million hectares.

- On the basis of carrying capacity these pastures can probably graze an estimated 45 million AU [animal units] and that too for duration of about 100 days, taking the estimated yield to be an average 270 kg per hectare.

- About 3 million hectares is the summer pasture in the three north provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran and Gholistan.

- Pastoral communities play a significant role in the food production of Iran through the successful and sustainable use of otherwise scarce natural resources by adopting innovative systems for sustained usage.

- While pastoralists in all numbering 1.3 million, are about 2% of the population (according to government figures) they are responsible for providing about a quarter of the livestock needs of the country. Contrary to other arguments, this point asserts the need to recognize importance of pastoral people for Iran’s economy and to meet people’s immediate requirement.

- This document was in continuation of the previous 3rd development plan. The previous plan suggested for the Management of livestock grazing that is for the purpose of issuing grazing permits, controlling when livestock enter grazing areas and how long they are allowed to stay, planned for
  1. Distribution of water.
  2. Watershed and groundwater management for range vegetation.
  3. Stemming urban migration to sustain rural production.
  4. Grants, insurance and facilities for drought-stricken populations.
Having stated these objectives the government document goes on to delineate how it would enable the objectives to be fulfilled in the *Law on the economical, cultural and social development plan* (2004, chapter 5, article No. 69) that provides a framework which is binding for all government agencies. The policy concerning the protection of natural resources was specified by the following benchmarks:

1. Relocation of about 70% livestock breeders along with their livestock numbers who are living in the forest at present.

2. Attaining some level of equilibrium between the rangeland carrying capacity and livestock numbers by attempting to reduce the grazing load by at least 50%.

3. Cancelation of irrelevant grazing certificates.

4. Bringing 100,000 ha of forest under active reforestation.

5. Cancellation of import tax on timber for reducing the portion of domestic timber being used in construction and in the industry.

6. Provide alternative fuels especially to people relying totally on fuel wood for their sustenance.

7. Promote greater participation of the Islamic Councils at the village level and local communities in forest management.

The purpose of these interventions as stated by FRWO was to:

(i) Establish equilibrium between livestock and rangelands.

(ii) Remove scattered single families and domestic livestock located within the forest area.

These measures were suggested with the arguments that:

- Estimates of over-grazing by pastoralists were up to five times the carrying capacity of the land.

- Breeding of free ranging livestock (mainly cattle) is a traditional land use pattern in large parts of northern Iran.
Because of its unsustainable levels, however, it is perceived as a major obstacle to forest growth and regeneration and it is also seen as a major cause of increased sediment run-off and siltation in downstream areas.

The government plan has given its mandate on the programme as:

- Sedentarization of pastoralists.
- Promotion of alternative livelihood systems.

The programme initiatives were described to the pastoralists under the premises that their interests would be duly safeguarded. The government assured the pastoral people that if they give up livestock breeding voluntarily, they would be given

(i) Compensation in the form of cash;
(ii) Compensation in the form of (arable) land;
(iii) Provision of employment.

The state agencies argued that after the introduction of these measures they wanted to achieve a reduction of the livestock grazing in the forest by 2,500,000 heads, but only a reduction by around 366,110 heads was achieved between 2000 and 2004.


The World Bank Mission statement, for the dam argues that Iran is left only with 4% forest coverage, and it is thus, imperative to protect its remaining green cover. To do so the first thing is to plan strategies, for altering the livelihood of millions of pastoral natives of the country. The report also reasons that the government norms and legislations are in place, to prevent extensive grazing and woodcutting in the forest, but there is very weak implementation, of these legal provisions. It also admits that there are several unresolved issues, regarding re-
settlement policies and compensation offered to the ousted. The official position, and that of international experts, is that the Caspian forests are by and large intact, due to humid climate, and hold immense value, to the national and international biodiversity conservation programmes. This ecological reserve cannot be allowed to disintegrate like that. Maybe a valid argument but if one examines exhaustive literature (reference to chapter 3) on the subject of relations between pastoral activities and forestation, as well as relocation of original inhabitants, one finds, several of these observations, made by Iranian authorities and experts, hired by the World Bank team, are somewhat misplaced. The World is united in the belief that Pastoralism as assumed by many (Awad, 1959; Capot-Rey, 1962; F.A.O., 1972-cf Dawn Chatty, 2007) is not likely to disappear, however much the modernist and administrators may wish. There is also strong evidence, to suggest that there is greater loss to the natural environment, because of so-called planned development exploitations than that perpetuated by the pastoral-nomads dependant on these very forests and grasslands (Beck, 1981). It is the human face of development and conservation that needs to enter and dictate an equitable balance in this situation. To be able to weigh the arguments, on both sides of the divide, empirical observations from the field are discussed here, to arrive at middle path that facilitates the desired objectives of the state and immediate needs of the pastoral people.

People’s Perception and Programme Outcomes

The manner in which the program was actually implemented is unpopular among pastoralists in the field. The government documents admit that they were not able to meet the targets because enough funds for its implementation were not available. Many civil society organizations argued that the intervention programme was drawn on misplaced logic that talked only about deterioration of rangelands, desertification and drought, unsustainable use by the pastoralists and overpopulation by the livestock. Pastoralist argument is that their land use practices actually result in regeneration of land and prevent erosion. The civil society argued that it is increasingly difficult to see how the pastoralists could possibly be encouraged to cooperate in a programme that posed a vital threat to their ancient ways of life and livelihoods?
The pastoralist in the field argued that after the implementation of the programmes, their numbers declined significantly (data from the field in chapter 2 supports this). The government, on the other hand, believes that the laws have not been able to achieve the desired results. However, to comprehend the logistics of these arguments, it is important to understand the status of the legal access and enumeration of animal stocks in the actual situation. According to the government documentation on the subject: Prior to the enactment of the nationalization law of natural resources in 1963, the landowners used to have cadastral documents for the lands they possessed. The rangelands were part of their asset so they managed them well both from use and preservation points of view. The landowners leased rangelands to livestock breeders for temporary use. This legal system supported the interests of owners and users in the sustainable management of pasture resources.

After the promulgation of the law, people lost control on the land and it became government property. This resulted in the neglect of the rangeland. But the most arable lands are private, and are better managed. The natural resources as forests, rangelands and deserts belong to the government but are used by people through contracts.

The entire onus of responsibility for the depletion of the natural resources like the natural grasslands has been laid at the door of the pastoralists and yet even the World Bank assaying experts had reported that the erosion levels were much less than ones envisaged. However, ameliorative measures are necessities to ensure that it does not take on the drastic picture presented by the Iranian Government estimates.

Issue of land protection are only one of the many development concerns that have impacted not only the Galesh but also several other pastoral nomadic populations, and their habitats in the Mazandaran province of Iran. Another of these contentious issues is the necessity felt by the Iranian authorities and development professional is the idea of developing large dams. Opinions over the life span of these dams and how much they serve the needs of the people have acquired several contentious dimensions. The Galesh of Mazandaran province has been particularly impacted by the development of Dam near the Alborz range. In most of the case studies generated in the field in particular from Sari and Alashat, it was the impact this dam and displacement and loss of pastureland that was discussed.
Conflict of Contiguity – Dam and Development

The Alborz dam project had initially started as an independent venture of the Iranian government in 1999. Yet in 2005 the World Bank stepped in with a loan agreement for the completion of the project. According to official records like the Dam Development Report, ‘the spatial coverage includes the five watershed regions of Azar, Karsang, Eskelim, Babolak and the Lowlands with an overall area of 51,724.93 ha. It continues, “The area comprises of 45,000 hectares of forested slopes, and about 5,000 hectares of rangeland at varying degrees of productivity. The altitude of the project area ranged from about 55 m in the North in the lower agricultural lands to 3,317 m in the Southwest” (Mission report, May 2007: World Bank). The area to be submerged had thick vegetation and forest cover that had for centuries provided sustenance to thousands of pastoral people and their hordes inhabiting this mountainous range. Livestock management played a crucial role in the area. The World Bank report acknowledged the constraints, “It is indispensable to develop a vision of suitable forest management for the benefit of all stakeholders”.

The Babolak River that lies between the Alborz mountain range South of Ghaemshahr and Babol city in Mazandaran Province is integral to the life of the people here. The waters also feed this river from the three upstream drainages –viz. the Azar, the Eskelim and the Karsang. The Alborz Dam had proposed to construct a diversion tunnel to re-direct the flow of the water to the dam reservoir impacting seriously upon the life of all the people crossing that route on the way to their summer homes in the higher reaches of the mountains. It is essential to underline here that most of the upper watershed is still thickly forested. There are few landslides and little soil erosion.

The natives have given vent to their fears that diverting the water of the rivers would result in soil erosion and make the land desolate and tree less. Many native Galesh has prophesized that this man- made interference with nature would make men pay them dearly. This land, which had nurtured generations of Galesh, is under severe threat of being obliterated before the very eyes of probably the last one to two generations. The debilitating impact is already becoming apparent and many of its repercussions are beginning to show now. The natural pasturelands will be depleted
soon and would probably fail to support even the smallest numbers of animals. Travelling by road to summer homes would be most risky.

However, the Dam plan categorically delineates that the components of the Loan agreement between the World Bank and Government of Iran were to protect its rich forest wealth, given the pastoral lifestyle of a large number of inhabitants of this region. Ministries, involved in the programme, strengthened the stated objectives of the programme. Two government ministries were involved in the implementation of the AILWMP namely the Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture (MOJA) and the Ministry of Energy (MOE) besides there are two implementation agencies, the Mazandaran Regional Water Company (MRWC) for the MOE and in the Upper Watershed area the Main Natural Resources Department (MNRD) under the Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Organization (FRWO) for the MOJA.

The loan agreement between Government of Iran and World Bank in its detailed document has given the details of the strategies for strengthening institutions of local governance and providing alternative livelihood opportunities. According to the document there would be an estimated 15,000 inhabitants, most belonging to traditional pastoral communities, who would be impacted by the displacement. The Chief Minister of the Province had given the following assurances to the pastoralists in November 2005:

1. If they will leave the place and migrate to cities, the government will provide the same area in cities.
2. Government will also provide them agricultural land.
3. Government will provide them good jobs.
4. Government will shift the graves of their Shaheeds (martyrs) to a new place.
5. Government will shift their sacred places to new places.
6. Government promised to provide everything to make their lives better and easy.
7. Government promised to take help from them in nurturing their lands and gardens.
The details of the land acquired by the government for the Dam are given in the Table below:

Table 7.1: Details of Land Bought by Government near Alborz Dam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Village</th>
<th>Total land (Hectare)</th>
<th>Land not Bought</th>
<th>Percentage Bought</th>
<th>Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pashakhula</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafurek</td>
<td>104.6</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chashtkharan</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spukhula</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geshniyan</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hajikhula</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amirkhula</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choksera</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirarkhula</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galeshkula</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (10 villages)</strong></td>
<td><strong>571</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
<td><strong>664</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People from 13 villages of the project area were asked to abandon their age-old homesteads. But only 30% to 40% people from three villages left. Those villages that are still inhabited are Borkhani Nafteshal, Larkhechal, Khhefak, and Galeshkula. Also, Pashakola includes two villages, viz., Borkani and Nafteshal. Only some residents of Pashakola had left for settlement in nearby cities while, others continued to reside in their native habitats defying government orders to vacate the land.

According to the 1375 (1996 CE) National Census 16,576 people lived in the project area and NRO (MORJA) Iran’s Natural Resource Organization claimed that it had rehabilitated more than 80% of the natives who were displaced by the rehabilitation activities.

The options for promoting rehabilitation activities given to those being displaced in particular for the construction of the dam included were:
(i) Cash buy-out of land and grazing rights;

(ii) To swap grazing land currently held for grazing land elsewhere outside of forest area or the area to be submerged for dam construction, and

(iii) The third comprised swapping grazing land currently held for other purposes outside forest areas

(iv) And the last option was to surrender land and grazing rights for obtaining employment for any single member of the household.

Several ambiguities riddle the appraisal report prepared by the World Bank before sanctioning loans and during the period of loan agreement is riddled with these contradictory positions. Some of the specific objectives mentioned in Component One of the Alborz Integrated Land and Water Management Project are:

- To reduce erosion and sedimentation in the upper watershed with a particular focus on protecting the Alborz irrigation water reservoir.

- Restore and protect natural rangeland and forests.

- Increase productivity and incomes of communities and forest cooperatives in the area.

The assumptions on which the project rationale had been based were that:

(i) Increasing erosion and related sediment yields would probably decrease the useful life span of the Alborz dam gradually - if not checked.

Thorough appraisals showed that the actual amounts of erosion and sedimentation, however, were less than what had originally been assumed. Especially the soil loss as a result of erosion was found to be only one third of what was estimated in the Project Appraisal Document.

The estimate for sediment yield is more in line with those of the appraisal. The total average sediment yield arriving at the dam reservoir is estimated at 298,700 m³/year or 73% of the original estimate. World Bank experts and Iranian officials admit that the predominant source of erosion is roads that pass through the forests. Planned
roads are the product of requirements of modern means of transportation and have compelled the pastoral-nomadic and transhumance ethnicities to use the metaled roads and modern means of transportation to ferry their animals. This causes environmental pollution and results in further degradation of natural resources.

The Caspian forest is one of the last indigenous broad-leaved forests stated to be closest to nature. It is one of the few habitats that continue to preserve its pristine character. There is no denying the fact that there is urgent need to conserve it. The question is – can this conservation happen at the cost of native inhabitants of these eco-zones and by destroying traditional economic and cultural hubs? The World Bank Plan document pays lip service to it; when its mission statement enforces the recognition of current boundary between range-and forestland, settlement rights of indigenous populations below the dam as also recognition of usufruct rights for collection of wood and other minor forest produce. The Mission statement further elaborates that the rehabilitation project would restrict grazing only in the vicinity of registered villages along the migration route that falls between lowlands and Alpine summer pastures.

In order to map people’s perception, the case study method was found to be most suited for gathering the maximum information about the current ways of subsistence of the Galesh, the conflict they were having over justifying their land use to the government officials who saw their presence as an on-going threat to the natural resources. It was also a substantially adequate method for gathering information on the Galesh people’s take on how the dam and other developmental projects being earnestly pursued at the state level would impact upon their ancient heritage, their heritage and culture of which they were a living repository. They were wary of carrying on their traditional ways in the changed circumstances. They had withstood many challenges over the ages but were now faced up with the choice of existence or alienation on their home grounds where even their next generation was reluctant to do any handholding leave alone any others.

Several of the case studies have brought out salient aspects of the worries and trepidations they had about leaving their ancestral ways, traditional livelihoods and heritage lands. While some had left and never came back, there were almost an equal
numbers who stayed back and never went away but there was a small trickle of people who went away and returned to resettle once again in their traditional homestead.

Among the various options offered, the one of swapping land currently held for grazing and swapping land for other purposes besides the land outside of the forest area were the preferred options for the local inhabitants. But the respondents in the field had reservations as informed by one of my respondent Aghil Nozari; 65 years old; on being asked if they had to vacate because of the dam, Nozari responded that a part of their agricultural land had been submerged but, “not our home. So I am still living here;” completed Nozari, “While the other people, whose houses were also damaged, were asked to go to Ghemshahr”. On querying further from Nozari about whether those who had been displaced had been offered any jobs, he responded that no jobs were offered. Out of the 13 villages that were submerged, the people from 10 villages evacuated and left to settle in the city. Almost 40% of the people from three villages remained but they were also on the verge of leaving soon. When asked why he and his family had not left; he responded that he had received just about the equivalent of USD 4000 as compensation that was far below the market price of the land that was submerged and the rehabilitation package was meagre. He said he would continue to protest until the rehabilitation package was enhanced.

Al Faradi (name changed) another resident from a village in Sari lamented that he has to hire a truck, which would cost him ten thousand rial, to transport his animal herd, from the summer house to the winter home, because taking animals by road has become hazardous, due to heavy traffic now on the route. Earlier, however, they were able to take the animals, through the thickly forested mountain range on foot, camping on the way. In summers, there are around 50,000 sheep in the summer habitats of Cherat, and it becomes difficult to find enough fodder for all of them. On an average, there are about 200 families residing on any one location in summer homes. Galesh normally leave the women and children in the winter homes, as there are no schools for children in the upper reaches. He said, if he opts to live in the plains, then he has to buy grass from shops and that is exorbitant, way beyond his means. His pain knew no bounds, when he stated that he had lived away from his wife in the last fifty summers of his life. In his summerhouse, he had to cook for his servant too, something he said he never had to do when he was living in his winter
house. The evenings are dark and bleak for most of the residents of summer homes as there is nothing for them to do after sunset.

Al Faradi’s narrative was filled with ruptures that symbolize the average story of this nomadic pastoral/transhumance population. All his children are still studying in the city, and his sons are not interested in following his occupation. His daughter, who is in college, was ashamed of his occupation and her Galesh lineage. His anguish was apparent-when he stated:

“This is the occupation I have ever known. This is what my ancestors have been doing for centuries. I have no shame in pursuing my ancestral profession’. He also regretted that his sons were not helping him. He would normally hire a shepherd, to look after his flock of sheep and other animals, and he has to pay the shepherd five thousand rial a month which is a lot of money; given his meagre earnings from the products of the livestock. Government is deliberately promoting, milk and milk products, manufactured in the processing units.

The respondents were filled with remorse, that because of the government policies, it is hard to sell milk and milk products directly to the consumers. The newer consumers prefer buying milk in packets and processed Yoghurt and Cheese; even though, they know that lots of water has been added to the pure milk that the Galesh were selling. Government has launched an intensive campaign, telling people not to eat meat, because it is not good for their health and if they had to eat, they should eat frozen meat. Imports of frozen white and red meats from other countries were cheaper than the fresh meat supplied by the pastoralists; consequently, this has brought down the cost of their animals and has left many of them in abject poverty.

Voices of Dissent

The rehabilitation story is neither different from other parts of the world-developing nations under structural adjustment policies of World Bank loans claim to follow a voluntary rehabilitation policy but in reality people are forced to vacate their homes and often left with alternative spaces that neither provide livelihood nor any financial return-if the displaced want to sell land allotted to them and move to other places. My respondents were agitated that their native habitats were being forcibly
taken away from them and they were now left to fend for themselves. The government promised land-title deeds but the displaced Galesh told me that they were simply shifted to their present habitat without any financial or any other constructive support.

Hypothetically, the policy documents talk about communal and collaborative rangeland management policies but local people have not become effective partners in any of the implementation strategies or in its conceptualization. On the contrary, the present planning is largely geared towards promoting tourism in these areas. There is universal theoretical endorsement for making environment impact assessment and socio-cultural risk management mandatory for all new projects but the respondents said that in practice there was hardly any follow up of such projects.

Most of my respondents contradicted these propositions arguing that the water from the reservoir was directed to the cities and was given to the industries and the original inhabitants of the region having been uprooted from their native habitats were left to fend for themselves. Some of them refused to vacate their summer homes in the villages even though they had been veritably marked for submergence in the dam waters.

One of our respondents from the village Shahriyakula in Alashat, Abrahim, whose grandfather was forced to move from his native habitat in Sari, because of submergence of his village in the dam waters, was very upset because he was being asked by the government to shift again from his present home. He says the authorities are now telling him that the land on which his grandfather was relocated actually belongs to the government. He was 73 years old and was still working. He described how in the absence of any support from the local authorities, even at this age he has to move his cattle and sheep to the winter abode as there is no fodder available for the animals in the winter months in the vicinity of their summer homes.

**Impact of Industrialization**

Iran evolved a policy of vibrant development by promoting massive industrialization under the regime of Reza Shah. The policy persists and the brunt was borne by the grassland dwellers. It is reported that more than 60% of Iran’s population
lives in urban areas. Iran is on the verge of becoming the third largest producers of cement in the world and already has the status of being one of the largest producers of oil and natural gas. Large industries have also come up in the vicinity of my field sites and have impacted the lives of the local inhabitants in the region. Land is acquired for industries and local populations are displaced. There were two industrial units by the names of Shark Sanati-e-joybar and Shark Sanati-e-Rostamkula that had come up in the Galesh grassland in Joybar. There were two other car-manufacturing units by the name of Shark Sanati-e-Beshel and Shark Santi-e-Shrmast that were built in the heart of the forest. When the Galesh pastureland were acquired, they were promised jobs in these industries and compensation in terms of alternative grassland but as has happened in terms of rehabilitation packages across the world, none of the promises were fulfilled.

Haj Reza Sharifi, Rostamkolah of Ghaemshahr is 79 years old and is no longer working on his farms. He informed that after the Revolution the Government gave them some land for grazing their sheep and a certificate allowing them the use of grassland for grazing 150 sheep. But later Government took the grassland, which was the traditional pastureland and gradually converted it into industrial area. He regretted the fact that the Galesh have complaints but they are not organized and do not have the power or authority to voice their concerns. The government promised that after building the factory, they would be hired there or jobs would be given to the Galesh children. But they had broken their promises. Only two persons from their villages had been employed in the factory as guards.

Reza’s wife had died six years ago but he did not remarry. He was living with his son and sometimes visited his relatives. He was very concerned that the value of money was becoming

One of the respondents who was earlier displaced in the dam development project narrated the following experience to me:

Haj Yar Mohammad Pak lives in Charkh Kati Kaykheil. He is a shepherd. He had 30 sheep and 10 cows but he had to sell them because he did not have enough to feed his cows due to the destruction of his agriculture fields in the dam project. “We had fought with the Industrial Area Manager because he had acquired our lands. They
gave 7 hectares land in compensation but later it turned out that all of the land given to us in compensation belonged to the National Natural Resources fields and jungles. They were merely permits for grasslands”. He continued, “They did not keep their other promises also. The Industrial Area employed no one from the people of the rural area where we live”.

Valliollah Pak lives in village Ballah Charkh Kati. He is 40 years old and has 30 sheep. He said that he had about 200 sheep earlier but because of existing expansion of industrial areas the grasslands were destroyed. This was the main reason why he had been forced to sell off lots of his sheep. He has some farming land however. He has 2000 square meters of land for growing rice. His son has attained a Ph.D. and is teaching in a Government School and is not interested in following his ancestral profession.

Some of the younger respondents or members of the families of the respondents as reported in several of the case studies that are cited in this chapter, were working in milk and paper factory in the vicinity of their winter homes. But most of them worked as casual labour and made meagre earnings. Others like Vallioallah’s son obtained higher education and took to teaching or similar other white-collar jobs.

Voices of Resilience

The narratives from the field if on the one hand were full of experience of remorse and regret for being given indifferent treatment by the development agencies and the state; there were strong voices of resilience. A large number of the respondents, in particular those above fifty years of age did not want to leave their customary vocation, irrespective of the fact that they were let down, both by the state and even by their own children. One of the most significant narratives, endorsing resilience and need for cooperation between the local authorities and the native Galesh came with reason, hope and intent.

Dr. Sharifi of Savadku, (name changed) 74 years old, who is a retired lecturer of an Engineering subject tells other people that, “I am proud to be a Galesh people because my father, Grandfather were Galesh. He gives advises to all manner of
people. I am ready to spend $30000 for establishing a hospital but government has not yet taken any reciprocal steps or approaches. He complains saying that the villages in the hill do not have any formal territorial boundaries. This is also one of the reasons that the government is not able to do enumeration and distinct boundaries between villages could not be drawn.

He continued saying that he was a guide and experienced that about 30% of the people of Lafor area followed his advice but 70% not. He tells people that they need to have running water, electricity, schools, good roads, mobile phones and all kinds of household gadgets. The doctor said, “When I was a child nobody would come to the forest to cut trees. Things have changed and the values too. People are cutting trees at will, particularly during winters to keep them warm. In the absence of strict vigilance by the authorities tree cutting has become far more rampant”. He bemoaned that during his time grasslands were plentiful and readily available all around but now a days almost 50% (decline) are visible. He desired that the government shares its short term and immediate plans and also the long term plans honestly with the people and seek their cooperation in planning and its implementation. He emphasized that the people should be clear about their wants. The government should not give any promise without requisite follow up. He reiterated said, “I know the enterprise resources are limited, what I mean is that the Government should promise to the people whatever they can do and then should deliver on time rather than loose the trust of the people all together”.

Doctor’s children were not staying with him because they were all employed in the urban areas. But they visited him regularly and often helped him in his work to document Galesh history and need to keep the community together. One of his sons is a lawyer, and was involved in following up settlement cases for several of the displaced people from the area. They had even set up a small foundation for this purpose. But narratives of support for the elderly Galesh in its desire to sustain and restore its heritage were far and few. Most other narratives described further; regret that their children are not willing to support their desire to sustain their customary livelihood.
Aghil Nozari; 65 years old lamented that the younger generations was not willing to uphold the former values of their ancestors and are reluctant to experience pastoral nomadic way of life. He reported that he had six daughters of whom three were married and three were unmarried. Two of sons-in-law did not have any jobs after having passed 9th class, but were not willing to pursue pastoralism. “My third daughter’s husband is serving as a domestic servant in a villa instead of pursuing dignified independent life of a pastoral. My other two daughters have finished school and have obtained a diploma and I am hoping to find husbands for them who may like to take over the ancestral occupation”. Nozari, was determined that he would continue to live in the same village. He would live by the traditional folkways and mores of his ancestors. His wife who tended to the household work assisted him. Besides helping around the farm by milking the cattle, working on the honey production, silk production, growing vegetables and rice and looking after poultry. She manages the entire household chores as well as the children, proudly declared Nozari. On a lighter note, when asked how were wives in cities different from the wives in villages, he cheerfully responded, that wives in the cities do only a little bit of household work and are so tired that they need to rest the whole day, but in the villages it is the wife who does most of the work for the family. She is up from dawn to dusk and when someone in the family is sick she keeps an all night vigil to tend to them.

In the previous chapter, status of women among the Galesh was discussed and attention was drawn to the fact that Galesh women were expected to carry the burden of the entire household chores. Nozari’s narrative was supporting that argument. His wife was sitting with my supervisor and me through the interview but did not participate in the conversations. When my supervisor tried to enquire form her about her opinion she simply nodded her head. It shows that women’s opinion is not sought even in situations of crisis, where any dislocation will impact them equally if not more.

Another Galesh shepherd, Hadi Rezaii Cherati (name changed), 55 years old, held similar views and as his name suggests traces his origin from the ancient shepherds who roamed the Cherat peaks. He reported that he was born in Cherat like his father and grandfather before him. He was sure that his family had been living there for the past six generations. He lives presently in Anand during the three months
of summer and then goes to Babolsar. This is generally because the weather becomes rainy and snowy during the cold season and it is not possible for them to live there. They will give the equivalent of about a USD 2000 to some family to maintain their flock during their absence and would allow them to stay in their ancestral house. Once it starts snowing most of the inhabitant's head towards the city. The person whose family has been contracted for looking after his homestead is content to live there during the severe winter season looking after the homestead and the herds, because he is too poor to exercise any other choice.

Rezaii regrets that his children do not want to marry girls from their tribe. His wife was a nurse and is retired now. She helps her husband. His children do not help him as they are against the pastoral way of life. Hadi’s wife likes this way of life, notwithstanding the fact that she served in a city hospital for many years. She says she likes it because he likes it. They had gone to visit their eldest son in Germany two years ago, but stayed there for just one month and returned back to their ancestral home.

Two important observations arise from this case study. First, that some of the Iranian government interventions have certainly had a positive impact on some Galesh families. In this case, the respondent was able to give quality education to his son and his son was working as a scientist in Germany. The argument that the Pastoral nomadic people in entirety were being pushed to the margins is certainly not validated in this, and similar few other narratives. The other important observation relates once again to status of woman. Rezaii is an affluent Galesh and his wife had an independent professional career as nurse in a city hospital. But given a choice, she did not opt to live full time either in the city or with her son in Germany, but returned to be with her husband in the village. Her unassuming answer to the query was that ‘he likes it, so I like it too’ is simple but represents several other women’s voices in the discussion.

Then there was the case of Ghadamali Talebi of Essa Khandagh. He is living presently in a place, which is in Sari city and is called Chafteh Sar. It is considered to be the settlement place of the people who have sheep to tend to. It is located some distance from the city. Talebi is satisfied with his job, he said that he didn’t have
many choices, since his father and Grandfather all were shepherds, and he along with them had been doing this work for about five generations. Following the transhumance practice of the community, he maintained a summer and winter home. 

*Chafteh Sar* is often the name given to any place the place where people who have sheep and cattle live and which is located at some distance from the city or village. 

*Talebi* is proud of keeping sheep. He is a farmer also and has a field on which he grows rice and wheat to sell to people. He has been living here for the past six generations. He said that among the *Galesh* the hilly area is called *Galeshmenzel* or literally ‘Destination of the *Galesh*’ and the plain area is called *Esaghandagh*.

*Priviz Talebi*, is 51 years old and lives at *Chaftesar of Esakhandagn* part of *Sari* city. He is a successful *Chobdar* or businessman who deals in sheep and cows. He is originally a *Galesh* because most *Galesh* men deal only with other *Galesh* men for making any sales or purchases of livestock or even property. He is known as a ‘*Chobdar*’ or someone who buys and sells sheep and cows at a profit. *Priviz* is no longer following the traditional *Galesh* calendar because they no longer have common grazing spaces for their sheep. They are compelled to rent grazing lands for them by paying the equivalent of USD 1000 per year to the district authorities.

These two case studies represent adjustments that several respondents from all age groups among the *Galesh* had made. They persisted with livelihood practises of their ancestors but also extended it to other fields. It was recorded in chapter 4 of the thesis how many of them had become agro-pastoralist having small to medium landholdings. The second case of *Priviz* is more interesting because he is not breeding sheep but is buying and selling cows and sheep for profit. Customarily, the pastoral community took years looking after their flocks and only sold its products. There was an emotional connect, each sheep was named individually and were trained to respond to the calls of their trainer. He changed the ethic of pastoral philosophy and became a merchant. Elder *Galesh* did not approve of his business but admitted that he was making good money for his family.

There are several other narratives that describe the survival of pastoral – nomadism in a province that has sustained this form of economy probably for more than 5000 years against all adversity:
Haji Mohammad Ali Nozari of Cherat of Savadkouh, is 75 years old and still adheres to the ways of his forefathers with a stoic resilience that defies all forms of change. During the summer he lives at Cherat (Yelah) and in winter he lives in the Choobagh part of Sari city near the seaside. He has 110 sheep. Most of the time (which is roughly 9 months in a year) he and his family spends at the seaside in Sari city. He is not swayed by the winds of change sweeping the landscape and continues to live according to the ways of his ancestors.

Haji Hemat Nozari of Shrinbol of Cherat is illiterate and 56 years old; He and his wife are both pastoralists. His wife helps him in caring for and feeding the sheep. They have 60 sheep and graze them turn-by-turn with 30 sheep going with him and 30 sheep going with his wife. He has two children, a son and a daughter. They are both married. The son is working at the milk factory and his daughter is a housewife while her husband is working at the wood and paper factory. Hemat’s son along with job in the factory has also taken to farming. His children live at the village as well as in the city. Their home is in Sari city but they are mostly in the village. Both are ‘Chobdars’ or they buy and sell sheep and meat as a profitable business but they do not keep them for rearing. Hemat’s son and his wife are both diploma holders. Their child is five years old. Hemat had earlier been a teacher but he had retired from service. His wife had also been a teacher but had retired from service. Despite having tasted the best of both the worlds he is determined to stick to the older ways of his forefathers.

This narrative is a classic case of emerging patterns in average Galesh household that the researcher surveyed. Parents left native habitats in their youth to take other jobs in the cities, as in this case they were both teachers. They return to their native habitat when they are about fifty or more in age. Now they prefer to stay in the village rather than city. They want their children to live there and take up the ancestral occupation. Children are not sure and want to experiment with other vocations. They take other jobs and also start farming on small piece of land that they may have inherited or they bought it. They maintain households both in the city and in the village. One reason could be that living in the village is cheaper than in the city but having a home in the city is important for children’s education. This is a state of transient continuity. The flow may not be smooth but has become pragmatic.
The old like Haji Naser Nozari of Shirinbol village has only one hectare of land, which he has put to farming, and has only 30 sheep. He has no certificate for grasslands and has to pool with other shepherders for grazing. Despite all the hardships he is unwilling to give up ancestral pattern of livelihood and survives despite all the adverse circumstances. Haji Ghasem Nozari of Shirin Bol also has only 30 sheep and supplements his income through fishing but will not move to the city or give up his traditional livelihood.

Narratives from Cherat

Cherat was one of the very few concentrated habitats of Galesh left in the Mazandaran province.

It is normal for people from Cherat to sell their land only to other Cherat’s people. The land was given as a legacy and as a part of ancestral heritage to children. Several pastoralists live in Cherat. Cherat is much bigger than Anand—the other field enclave of Galesh pastoralists. Even the population of pastoralists is greater in Cherat. The ways of the Cherat are peculiar to them and according to the claims made by the respondents from the region; these are the original ways and mores of the Galesh. Seyyed Ali Babaii of Cherat, is originally from Vessehkash of Savadkuh. His Yelagh is Vessehkash. He has around 200 sheep. He likes Cherat and prefers it greatly because his sheep can feed better on the plentiful grass, which is available on the slopes of the mountains. A waterfall also exists at Cherat and because of it they have no water problems.

Mohammad Ali Rozari from Cherat was very vocal about his situation. He gave me some important information about the Galesh ways and the Galeshi calendar. He said that the pastoral people and the Galesh distinction would soon become nebulous. The number of Galesh was gradually decreasing with the passage of time. They would ultimately dwindle away, if concerted efforts were not made for their protection in the immediate future. He said that he was not satisfied with the government efforts of making life any easier for the Galesh or trying to resurrect and rejuvenate them in any way. He grieved that the Galesh were on the verge of loosing their ancestral livelihood. They are not even able to find pastureland for grazing their sheep. For bare survival also they have to sometimes rent pastureland from other
people and buy grazing rights, in particular in protected pastures. This rent also works out to be the equivalent of around $550 per hectare/per year. Around 160 households live at Cherat in summer but during winter they descend to the city and all the houses would be emptied of people. Usually one person is put in charge for caring for all the houses in the village.

Rozari rents out his houses in Cherat to other Galesh families during summer. They generally pay him the equivalent of USD 2000 for staying there all through the summer. Their women help them at home and even for carrying out simple tasks outside the house. Since it is a wild forest territory, the Galesh are used to maintaining a large collection of guns as well. There are several wild animals like the fox, wolf and bear rampaging across the woods and pose a perpetual danger to the shepherd’s flocks. It is because of the stealth and cunning of the wild animals that the dogs of the Galesh are very useful and help them in difficult situations. They are very well trained. The shepherds treat their dogs like their faithful friends. These firearms are used not only for self-defence but also during certain ceremonies and at weddings to celebrate and express gaiety.

One of the respected Galesh elders, Shaban Ghanbari is also from Chaftesar Joybar; He informed that they have been in this mode of production for the last eight generations. They have reared sheep and Cows and have been living here after the revolution. They come from Sorkhabad and have their Yelagh there and they also have a special certificate for grazing rights on government grasslands. They have around 60 sheep and 3 cows. They also have land for farming. They are content with their land, which is ideal for growing rice, and they have enough water. “I would not want to change my present form of living for all the wealth in the world”, emphasized the elder.

Abdollah Motolebi originally from Sorghabad lives in this area of Cherat. He is 50 years of age. He has three children and like Galesh from Alasht prefers that they follow pastoral nomadic lifeway’s. His children however are educated and not interested in continuing their ancestral way of life. He keeps sheep at his home near the river. He has enough land for keeping sheep. He does not shift to Yelagh annually.
because he prefers staying with his sheep. He has a help to assist him during the long cold winters and his dogs to provide protection to his flock from wild animals.

The narratives are significant as it draws attention to the fact that it is not only the displaced Galesh who face threat of extinction but even those living in one may say relatively ‘protected habitats’, are also under similar pressures. Rich pastureland is placed under protected forest cover. Mobility between summer and winter homes is constrained and it was noted above in the case of Motolebi, he prefers staying at one place though persists with the practice of rearing sheep. Most of the educated children are not willing to follow ancestral way of livelihood. There is no upfront support coming from the state. Many respondents expressed their distress on being separated from their families while staying in their summer habitats in the upper reaches. There was gradual tendency not to move to these areas but financial constraints and inability to pay for the grass from the market compels them to move to their other home.

Another respondent Haj Reza Sharifi Rostamkolah of Ghensahahr while citing history said that in ancient times whenever they were migrating the Galesh had their wife and children walking alongside especially among the poor families. The rich families migrated on horses. The rich maintained 20 or 30 horses for this purpose and took their wives and children as well as household effects like furniture and items of their needs. They used the Galesh calendar to study when they should begin these journeys. Although Sharifi himself did not use the calendar, he reported that during ied mah they take the sheep after which to stay at the Yelagh where they stayed during (Vahman mah, ied mah and siah mah) then they would come back again. The Galesh also rear some dogs to help them manage the sheep. These dogs are watch guard and most important friends of humans and sheep in the flock of the owner. Galesh make their sheep wear bells that informs the shepherd about their whereabouts.

Amir Kaviyani is a farmer and shepherd but he does not have a certificate for grazing. He has hundred sheep and is in the process of getting one such certificate, which is very important for them. There were some respondents who had served mandatory service in the armed forces and were now back to pursuing their traditional occupation and obtaining legitimate rights to grazing from the state. There were others that had large stocks earlier, but over the years that stocks had dwindled.
though they continue to have grazing license. There was the case of *Haj Mohammad Ghafari*, he informed: “we had 1500 Sheep sometime ago but now the flock had dwindled down to a mere 150 sheep”. *Haj Ghorban Kaviyani*, served in army, returned and inherited 110 sheep from his father but has no certificate of grazing. He maintains a *Yelagh* and *Qeshlagh* like his forefathers. His parents live with him. He has no home in the city. *Norullah Mohseni*, is 63 years old and lives in *Tirkollah*. He is originally from *Veresk of Savadku*. He has 200 sheep also has a degree for grassland.

There were so many narratives of resilience from the field that one was left wondering if nomadism among *Galesh* was really on the verge of extinction as has been feared by many. There may have been some bias in the recordings because most of the interviews were held with the elderly *Galesh*, invariably persisting with their customary occupation. But as is apparent in some of these narratives, there were few having college degrees, others returning to native habitats after doing mandatory service in the army and had consciously opted to continue with their ancestral occupation.

The case of *Rozari* (name changed) was most interesting that exhibited how some people had evolved their entrepreneurial skills and were using it for generating additional revenue for their families. Few others in the sample wanted to pursue their customary occupation but either as a second job or only on part time basis. Those with well-paid jobs in the nearby towns and industries had hired help to take care of their stock in the field and were keeping the convention alive.

The conflict and tension that *Galesh* may have experienced in making transition from ancestral values to necessary adjustment, that were required to provide good quality of life is quite palpable in their narratives. Elders experience pain and younger generation want change. Hypothetically, one is no longer sure if it is a question of survival or sustainability of pastoral mode of production, that by all accounts neither violates environment nor is there any evidence to prove its unsustainability. The arguments provided by the state for its gradual extinction is decidedly not valid. The necessity for development projects like dams and industries that have caused unbearable pain to these simple folks has now become a
questionable premise. But, what surface from these narratives are issues of generational drift and attractions of ‘the other kind of life’ that becomes the pull factor for the younger generation. Galvin (2009:185) endorse these observations: “Although pastoral systems are clearly under numerous constraints and risks have intensified, pastoralist are adapting and trying to remain flexible”. Some of the case studies cited above have already strengthened this argument. In the next section of the chapter, narratives of younger Galesh are documented to evolve a holistic perspective on changing ways of the Galesh.

**Changed Galesh Ways**

Dam development, Industrialization and urbanization have impacted the Galesh social system because of several reasons. First is the fact of ‘fragmentation of the grass land’ and loss of productivity as dependence on it is now restricted. It is stated, ‘When the grassland is fragmented, the grassland’s interdependent spatial units become disconnected thus compartmentalizing important parts of the ecosystem function’ (Hobbes et al. 2008; cf. Galvin 2009:186). In the following case studies, the notion is augmented with the caveat that it is not only the functionality of the ecosystem that gets impacted but also the functionality of the entire social system that is forced to adapt to changing circumstances. It is already documented that Galesh joint households and the concept of common resources is fragmented. Mobility for education and employment has furthered this process of fragmentation. The native values and emotional bonds between members of the community and within the families are also undergoing transformation.

*Parviz Talebi*, 50 years old and lives in Esaghandagh. He is single and running a butcher’s shop independently. The house in the village was solely for maintaining stocks of cattle. His father had been a shepherd following the traditional Galesh ways. But all that had changed when he died and there was no one willing to carry on the ancient traditions. The fragmentation is obvious. Traditional pastoral Nomads from the region not trade their flock for upfront commerce or for profit. It was more like passion and complete cultural and social system that provided livelihood but not with the intent of profit. They would sell their sheep and even goats
only when they had no use for them. But Priviz was rearing them only to sell its meat in his butcher shop. This is a deviant from the traditional folkways.

Hamid Ghaffari, Aged 52 yrs. is an avid beekeeper. Hamid is involved in the honey collection occupation and his wife also helps him. Hamid reported that he had sold 50% of his sheep but even now he had around 60 sheep. He lamented that the holding and maintenance costs of sheep had become very expensive. He confessed that despite having a certificate for holding a hundred sheep for government Grasslands in the Yelagh area. (Selver mountain) he could not aspire to have a successful pursuance of this occupation because:

- It was counter productive
- There were no profits at all.
- The liability, theft and wastage tended to override all income in this occupation.
- Maintenance, feed, protection, guardianship and herdsman ship for their sheep were costing astronomically.
- The youth were totally dissatisfied with this slow pace of living and gains.

Impact of Government Policies on Galesh Life:

The narratives above have clearly demonstrated that the pastoral systems and in this thesis that of Galesh pastoralist in particular in Iran are under threat. Researchers and policy planners and activists all over the world have argued for proactive programmes and policies to protect their economy and culture. It is scientifically validated that pastoral economies are important to sustain ecological balance. As stated earlier in this chapter, the Iranian government unlike many other countries in the world recognises the importance of pastoral economy and admit that they provide 25% of country’s requirement for milk, milk products and meat. Iran has also by and large managed political aspirations of these nomadic populations that were perceived as threat to the centralized state system. In the policy front, post-revolution governments have even announced a ‘national pastoral day’ to acknowledge the importance of these indigenous groups in the country. The ritual
ceremony of Gorashakhni (discussed in chapter 5) that marked the day of mobility from winter to summer pastures is formally incorporated by the state and is celebrated as the day on which entry to the grasslands is opened. But there is a mechanism of control in place vis-à-vis access to rangeland. To determine the grazing capacity of a rangeland, a formula is applied based on calculations originally developed in the United States but used by a large number of countries with significant pastoral populations on the following estimations:

(a) Production of palatable plant biomass,

(b) Proper use factor divided by daily ration of one animal and

(c) Duration of the grazing season

Pastoral experts draw the attention of the state to some anomalies in this calculation. The daily needed ration of forage of one AU [Animal Unit] in Iran is calculated with the constants like 1.4, 1.8, 2.0 kg or 2.1 kg depending on the nutritional value of the plants and taking the average weight of a sheep of 45 kg. They reason that the local sheep have a weight of only 30-35 kg; one sheep would be equivalent to only 0.72 AU or 1 AU to 1.38 sheep. One sheep grazing over the usual 90 days grazing season would be equivalent to 2.16 AUM and this will impact the permit for the number of sheep, as it will be much below the grazing capacity of the rangeland. Similarly for the cows, the AU is calculated assuming the average weight to be 455 kg and an aggregate use is equivalent to 5 AU. The experts say that local breeds of cows in these areas actually weigh between 250 to 300 kg and these calculation constraints the number of cows that a pastoralist can actually take to the field. Additionally while estimating the actual stocking rate the range surveys did not consider the shorter period of cattle grazing (about one month). This means that under the conditions of the summer pastures one cattle should be calculated with only 0.8 AUM. Local policy interventions are required to arrive at a consensus on this issue between the government and the local Galesh.

The concept of grazing capacity is related to several difficulties and should be applied very carefully. It is important to clarify here that while discussing the actual rangeland conditions, the grazing capacity and actual census figures of livestock
numbers are not always reliable. On the one hand livestock breeders may be biased when stating numbers to interviewers. The owners’ statements depend largely on their actual perceptions of how the statement may impact his livelihood, compensation and taxation status (e.g. higher herd sizes for justifying needs for grazing grounds or for demanding compensation in cases of losses due to cataclysms, or understatements for avoiding tax payments). It is obvious form few case studies cited above that when these respondents got licenses for grazing the size of the flock was much larger but over a period, it came down significantly for various reasons. Some were sold because the cost of maintenance was too high for the Galesh and in some cases, after the children moved out elderly couples found it difficult to look after them. Another significant question is the consideration of lambs below the age of six months. According to the national experts these have neither been calculated in censuses nor in the definition of allowable stocking rates.

Local people and pastoral experts caution that any reliable assessment of trends of the rangeland conditions requires data from different time periods for the same sites or at least from the same region. These data must be based on sampling methods, which allow comparison. Under such circumstances the local wisdom of the dwellers of the region can be tapped as also a sharing is done of:

- The institutional memory of the community to understand the patterns of grazing,
- Estimations of re-growth of the local level plants and
- The levels of pasture reclamation rate that were being observed. The perceptions of the local users can provide an approximation.

Some of the case study respondents stated that their numbers had dwindled over the past decades, as had the number of their stock. This was one of the reasons that in their assessment the vegetation cover and production (which they expressed in terms of height) were much better 20 or 30 years ago. They also remarked that several inedible species (spiny cushions in Type I and II and thorny shrubs in Type III grasslands) had increased in greater strength.
Interventions required in the lowland sites, where a large number of Galesh practise agriculture, horticulture and floriculture have to factor in several other requirements of these people.

**Lowland pastures and winter sites (Gheslagh)**

In the lowland areas (up to 150 m and in valleys up to 450 m) the land is used intensively for agriculture. Many Galesh lease out their land after the harvest is done and there are fallow fields of rice, other crops, fodder crops cultivated by the herders as well as other forms of spontaneous vegetation and (barley, alfalfa). One of the respondents as cited above reported that in the absence of grazing permit and the fact that he had no agriculture land, he had to rent pasture land for the fodder needs of his sheep at exorbitant rates. There is no regularisation of this provision and it is not only the residents of Gheslagh that lease out their land but other farmers do the same.

The issues discussed here can be easily resolved by evolving a participatory approach to policy making. Unilateral decision by the state and policy makers drawing inferences from the international models can be counterproductive. Scholars on pastoralism have recommended regional approaches (Blench, 2001; Chatty & Cholchester, 2002) to tackling issues facing these ethnicities. In Mazandaran province, there are no specific programmes to protect the interests of the pastoral people. Presence of civil society organizations and NGOs is not evident. Blench (2001:69) notes that “pastoralists, by nature of their occupation form loose and flexible social groupings. The closer they come to sedentarization on a cline, the more likely they are to form cohesive social structures”. In all the field sites that were surveyed for this study, one came across stray voices of disenchantment with the system, but there were no organized protests-not even in the Sari region where sizeable population was displaced. It was only in one of the villages of the catchment area that one noticed efforts being made by some local Galesh leaders to strengthen their organizational structure and create a sense of collective belongings. Efforts appeared to be more towards strengthening a movement for the protection of culture and heritage and not really an organized movement for seeking their rights. Blench (2001) consolidated the observation that if any kind of formal organizational efforts
are made by the nomads then it is only when they move towards settled agricultural economy. Solitary voice that one witnessed in the field came from these regions.

There is some documented effort available about the concerns being raised by some individuals from the region. Some of the residents from the village *Mochak Posht* located in *Sari* area had been threatened by the dam construction activities. They informed that they had formed an association, which was striving towards saving the cultural heritage of the native *Galesh* who had moved there centuries ago from the *Gilan* province. *Hossanni* [not original name] had talked in detail about the activities of the organization. A former schoolteacher, he had returned to his native village after retirement. His wife was also a teacher in the village school. His association was documenting the cultural heritage of the people of the region. *Hossanni*’s son, a lawyer, lives in Tehran; and he is working on a petition for the Rights of the Native People. *Galesh* living in their summer homes reported that many of them had served in various capacities in the urban areas while two of them had also completed their mandatory military service but had returned to their pastoral lifestyle after retirement. They were among the only one’s who were very vocal about their resentment towards the official policies of the state which they alleged disturbed the roots of the *Galesh* ethnicity.

Head of village (site not disclosed to maintain confidentiality) complained that the government was restricting their ancient ways by telling them that their sheep and cows were harmful for the natural habitat. Incentives were offered to displace *Galesh* to settle and do agriculture. The promises were hardly ever kept and the poor *Galesh* had to do without his sheep and is reduced to live a life of pecuniary working as a slave in someone house or, field or shop. In some cases where jobs were given, these jobs were provided only for 4-5 months. Thus, when the *Galesh* were asked to sell their cows and sheep and migrate to cities for better jobs they strongly suspected that the Government would again cheat them. In some areas marked for development, there is currently impasse as people are refusing to vacate the land that is being reclaimed for development.

*Ghadamali Talebi* of *Essa Khandagh*: When asked what his expectations from Government were, responded that he wanted the Government to support them through
beneficial agricultures. Horticultural and animal husbandry schemes like providing subsidies on agricultural inputs, Cattle feed and such like. His family is originally from Scngedehe near Savadku area and his village is one of those being submerged by the darr. He feels the benefits being given are not adequate. This represents one of the emerging voices; someone wants voluntarily to live a sedentary life doing agriculture but in the absence of land is not able to do so. This reflects the need for the government to develop more people friendly policies. When individuals are making a choice to do agriculture and leave nomadic way of life, minimum support must be provided.

Syeed Jafar Hossanni is aged 60 and he along with Jafar’s daughter complained that: Despite the land being traditionally owned by Galesh, the government had acquired their grasslands and made rosy promises to give jobs to their children but what we got in return was tragic. She found the house given in compensation was most unsatisfactory. She said that they were given tiny dwelling units in high-rise buildings. The apartments too are given on a preferential basis to younger, newly married couples. They are accustomed to living in large open spaces and found these high-rise building suffocating. Also the jobs were an almost fallacy because most of the senior citizens could not work in closed factory environments. Youngsters could not benefit because they were not trained to do those jobs. This was one rare occasion, when daughter of the family addressed her concerns directly to an outsider; probably because she had been studying in a college in the city.

Mohammad Ali Nazoori: wanted the government to take steps to subsidize the food for their cows and sheep (Sapus, Joo) because per kilogram rate of cattle feed was rapidly escalating and presently was around the equivalent of over USD 2 per kilogram and was too expensive for them. Cost of daily living had also gone up and it was difficult to make both ends meet. He is a true Galesh and continues to adhere to the old Tabri calendar that he felt was more scientific than the present day Persian or English calendar. He said that they had been living in that village for more than 200 years. They only left the village when they went for their Yelagh for 3 or 4 months and then they always returned to this village which was their Gheslagh (Rostamkulah). He wanted the state to subsidize fodder for the cows and sheep feed to help the pastoral people. Complaint’s like “we were given 99 years old grassland in
compensation. Just one person was able to use it” add to the tension that exists in these regions.

Expectations that these simple pastoral nomadic people have formed the state are relatively simple. They want food subsidies, quality agricultural land wishing that if they change their traditional mode of production, they would be able to make a decent living. But Galesh residing on various field sites, in the fifty villages that were surveyed for this study, was equally disillusioned. They regretted that the state was not taking appropriate steps to protect their cultural heritage. Promises were made in plenty but the authorities kept few.

The official position of the government for those ousted is that a Basin Water fund had been created for providing Small Grants Programme for developing alternative livelihood proposals. In conversations, these officials revealed that a stalemate seems to have emerged in the blame mongering on that is actually responsible for the depletion and deterioration of the Natural Resources of the nation. The government blames the pastoralists who in turn give their experiences of centuries where they had always taken care to rotate pastures and ensure their longevity every season.

The government emphasizes that it is essentially the lifestyle of the pastoral people that is responsible for the degradation of the forest region. The argument extended by them was that these pastoral-nomadic people are essentially dependent on the forest, for grazing their livestock, and for the construction of their houses, as also for fuel wood. They use up huge stocks of timber annually. Officials further detailed that they had been trying to prevail upon the Galesh to change their lifestyle, but Galesh are adamant and we cannot use any coercive measures to bring compliance.

For transfer and carriage of sheep to good grasslands they have to spend a lot of money and it proves to be very expensive for them. It is not easy for them to rent or buy grassland for their sheep and they also find it extremely difficult to transfer their sheep and cows to the Yeylag by truck. They want that certain grasslands are developed and protected near their Gheslagh to help them live close to their families.
in areas that are close to the Caspian Sea and are fertile. They can pursue both agriculture and pastoralism in these areas.

_Chafteh Sar, Ghaemshahr_ had 210 households and around 1000 people lived there. Most of them were engaged in agriculture and kept cows. _Abraham Mirhoseini_ of _Chafesar in Joybar_ was worried that it was becoming increasingly expensive even to maintain cows. He explained that even 5 kilo feed bought form the market every day was insufficient for Cows. He added, “They were no good if they remained hungry during the lean season”. Survival had become difficult for him as he had no sheep and was completely dependent on few cows. He recalled how his father had reared sheep and cows and lived there for more than 100 years. He proudly remembered that his father was _Galesh_ and also a farmer. He was saddened at the fact that without adequate government support he and others of his ilk would gradually disappear leaving not a trace of their magnificent ways.

_Abdol Rahim Mohseni_, vents his anger at the government when he observed that the government was importing Hoginer sheep and those sheep were infested with some peculiar disease. Many other shepherds had shared his grief with him for having lost their sheep to this alien disease. He lost 35 sheep and believes that it was because of the diseases carried into the region by those foreign sheep. He wanted that the government should support pastoralists like him to take better care of their animals. He informed that there were 22 _Galesh_ households in the vicinity and they all had a similar complaint. He said that their children should be granted jobs by the government if it wanted them to give up their ancestral ways. He was a farmer and a pastoralist but none of his children would follow his calling.

Life was getting increasingly difficult for the pastoralists. There was much the government could do to make their lives better believed _Mohseni_. He felt even provision of good roads could help them. Presently the road was out of repair and this made their transfer of sheep from home to pasture and back very difficult. He said that the sheep were the main source of meat in the area and if the government did not help the _Galesh_, there would soon be a dearth of fresh sheep meat in the markets. This was imminent because the _Galesh_ were struggling to make both ends meet. If there were not many more considerate schemes and polices of the government, the _Galesh_ would
altogether disappear. Their children had refused to follow their ancestral ways but were also ill-equipped for any other form of work. Unless the government took specific measures to ameliorate the situation the *Galesh* would gradually merge with the city folks and lose their rich culture and heritage in the coming decades.

Similar concerns were raised by *Haj Jabbar Delavari*: arguing that given the pathetic state of *Galesh*, many of us wished that the government should take their land, as it would be much safer. They would not always be under threat. He has diversified into construction. He recently built a school and nowadays has the project of *Mehr* Apartments. He voiced his disillusionment with the state and said that all adverse conditions were created to prevent them from going about their *Galesh* ways. He also echoed the disappointment for not getting any jobs in the industry after their land was taken away. Given these conditions, a *Galesh* has no choice but to sell their stock and suffer unwarranted loss.

Another aspect was that the economic non-viability of meat being sold by the *Galesh* because it was expensive even though it was fresh. The import of meat, which is refrigerated for long periods of time, is cheaper. It is imported from countries like New Zealand (Mutton) and Holland (Chicken) and sold at rates almost 20% cheaper than the fresh meat. *Mohseni* felt that if the government supported the *Galesh* instead of facilitating the imports of frozen and preserved meat there would be no scarcity of fresh meat and even its price could be subsidized and *Galesh* will be able to survive.

*Haj Reza Sharifi* pointed out that the *Galesh* were not able to sell sheep wool because there are no buyers. People prefer to buy Australian wool. And if they buy wool from *Galesh* at all, they pay very low price for it. There were rare voices of contentment. One of the respondents from *Chaftesar Joybar* said that the condition of the grasslands was much better for the past three years. He simply wanted better roads and measures to prevent any further soil erosion. He also wanted a well-equipped hospital in the area. Another respondent informed about the landowning practice in the *Galesh* settlements that normally have two landlords owning large stretch of land. They would hire shepherds without any sheep of their own to work on their farms. The respondent was allotted 15000 sq. meters of land by the government and he had marked it as his land for farming.
Iranian history and its relation with Nomadic Pastoral communities can best be described as a turbulent one. The predominant narratives from the Alashat region trace Reza Shah’s genealogy from the Galesh pastoral community of the region (details in chapter 2). The Shah’s policies were found to be impinging upon the available nomadic-pastoral communities to work out sustainable economic pursuits. He was responsible for nationalizing almost all the pasturelands and the creation of natural watercourses as natural divisions for redefining pastureland as agricultural land. The land above the channel was subscribed as pastureland and below the channel where water flowed freely was marked for agricultural purposes (Beck, 1981). The Shah also banned the use of weapons by pastoral communities and created several forest reserves. After the Islamic revolution in 1979-those classified as Nomads (Ashayer) were treated in a much more liberal manner but no specific land use policies were put into practice to facilitate them in any way. Beck (1979: 77) reports that from ‘1980’s until 1995 ‘-a special day was marked as annual day of Nomads that was celebrated in different provinces of the country’.

These changes in policies concerning the pastoralist communities created levels of confusion at various levels because the governments concern for the diminishing natural resources was comparatively much less than the overall concern people had about their own resettlement and rehabilitation from the dam activity areas. This is especially true of those pastoralists who had to abandon their ancestral ways and become alienated from their lands and livelihoods.

Various case studies documented in this chapter have repeatedly asserted the grievances of this simple pastoral nomadic community. In summers, there are around 50,000 sheep in the summer habitats of Shirga and it becomes difficult to find enough fodder for all of them. On an average, there are about 200 families residing on any one location in summer homes or kelum. Galesh are now forced to leave the women and children in the winter homes, as there are no schools for children in the upper reaches. If they opt to live in the plains, then they have to buy grass from shops and that is exorbitantly priced, way beyond their means. The evenings are dark and bleak for most of the residents of summer homes or kelum; as there is nothing for them to do after sunset.
Compulsive sedentarization is happening because cultivation became widespread as people opportunistically planted ‘Shaltuk’ or rice to deal with food gaps created by massive sheep mortality, especially for vulnerable breeds. It could be expected that cultivation would predominate among the poorer rather than wealthier households simply because the poorer households have fewer livestock per capita and less ability to purchase food (Hogg, 1986). We found in our current effort, however, that wealthier and middle-class households were controlling the agricultural land close to Gheslaq. Thus, wealthier former pastoralists are heavily engaged in cultivation as they attempted to mitigate pressure to sell their livestock to buy grain (Desta, 1999).

It would therefore seem that in certain locales a transformation of pastoralism to agro pastoralism is being driven by an increase in the human population and decrease in the number of livestock. Despite the equivocal nature of the sheep and goat data, many households interviewed by the researcher declared that one of their goals has been to increase small ruminant production. Survey respondents commonly expressed a need for opportunities to diversify their economy, given pressures on traditional resources.

Though the government has made several inroads into the acceleration of the sedentarization of the pastoralists there is ample evidence to suggest that Galesh will survive another phase of transition. The voices of resilience in the data were far stronger than those who felt absolutely hapless. The data presented here supports observation of Dawn Chatty (2007) that contrary to popular belief the number of nomads or people who move regularly from one location to another is declining; it is their perseverance that has surprised scholars and troubled politicians and planners of technology driven arcane state structures. There is enough evidence to insist that pastoral lifestyle helps to preserve ecological balance. Beck (1980) who has worked for almost thirty years on Qashqa’i in North-western Iran also questions the Iranian state and other developed economies perspective to interfere and unnecessarily impact upon the lifestyle of nomadic pastoral communities. In her opinion the damage caused to the environment by multinational and large-scale industrial economies is far more than what is attributed to the nomadic–pastoral way of life. This is in contrast to the modern state system’s perception that these economic systems burden degrading
ecological balance. It is in view of these conflicting policies that UNDP, IFAD, FAO are involved in several programmes to support pastoral communities (Dawn chatty, 2007:7). When I started talking about the Galesh in Iran, I feared that the Galesh are on the verge of extinction. Several experts on Iranian Pastoral communities questioned the use of the term Nomads to describe people who were gradually adopting a sedentary lifestyle and abandoning their native habitats. The actual role that these pastoral people play in protecting local habitats is neither recognized by the government of Iran nor by the city or town dwellers. There are no programmes in place to protect their land rights or to provide adequate compensation for pasturelands that are being submerged for constructing dams or for setting up industries. Iran, during the course of its liberal modernizing regimes promulgated Land reforms (1966) and Forest and Range Nationalization Law (Lambton, 1969) that adversely impacted upon the relatively prosperous Galesh in Northern Iran. After the revolution Galesh have lost their prosperous status and those wanting to persist with their customary patterns of livelihood are facing real hardship. One can understand the compassions of a developing nation to evolve its economy and modernise its resources. The Galesh crisis is also genuine. There is need for the state and the representative voices of Galesh to come to an understanding that the dwindling heritage of a culturally enriched community is not lost. It was apparent that the demands that Galesh have are quite approachable for a compassionate state. There can be few proactive measures to come to a middle ground and bridge the communication gap that exists between the people and the state. It is the possibilities of finding these linkages and exploring the way forward from the narratives and details constructed in the thesis that will be reviewed in the interpretations and the final concluding section of the thesis.