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# MIGRATORY PATTERN OF RAIKA PASTORALISTS IN BIKANER DISTRICT OF RAJASTHAN

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper provides an over view on migration system of Raika Pastoralists in Bikaner district of Rajasthan. Raika of this region fall in category of semi nomadic pastoralists because they adopt migration for passing adverse climatic condition specially drought that frequently occurs in this region and cause heavy economic and biological losses to camel farmers. They follow no particular route and area for migration. The route is selected after thorough discussion with family members and other pastoralists in the village and according to the probability of getting good pasture and more water for animals. Though, they face many problems during migration but they perceive it as essential for saving their camels and other livestock from adverse situation.

**Key words :** Camel, migration, Raika pastoralists, Rajasthan

Pastoralists are traditional people, their economy and culture are based on livestock raising. They have clear perception of their ecological limitations and have a strong motivation for animal rearing and survive under adverse conditions. Consequently, they evolved various adaptive behaviours characteristics, which included migration, diversification of herd, adaptive strategies to escape food and fodder scarcity. They conceptually have four key functions viz. harmonious function with different eco-environment, survival, adaptation and ability to cope with change with environments and maintainance or preservation of natural resources (Khanna, 1998). Pastoral system broadly classified into three categories including nomadic, semi nomadic and stationary or sedentary pastoralists (Shah, 1992). In India, nonmigrant or stationary pastoral communities are more common in the southern and eastern halves of the country. Most common of these communities is variously called as Golla/ Gaola/Gauda (Sastry, 1995). Majority of the pastoral communities of India are located particularly in the northern and western part of the country covering the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat. They are also found, though relative in less concentration, in south (Singh, 1988). Gurjar and Bhakarawal of Kashmir valley are semi nomadic while Gaddi of Himachal Pradesh; Gurjar of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana; Kumaoni, Jadhas, Marchyas and Khas of Uttaranchal; Raika and Rabari of Marwar (Rajasthan); Bharwad and Rabri of Gujarat; Dhangar of Maharashtra, Golla, Kuruba and Lambada of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka (Sastry, 1995). The predominant camel pastoralists are Raika community people in Rajasthan and Rabaries in Gujarat. These pastoralists share many common features. Few other camel pastoralists are Bedouins in Saudi Arabia, Somali and Rendille in Africa.

In desert areas of Rajasthan, Raikas are major camel's pastoralists. The Raika camel breeder of Rajasthan believes that their caste was created by God Shiva in order to take care of dromedary camel (Kohler-Rollefson, 2001). The identity of this social group is still closely based on their historical connection with the camel. The Raika take pride in the fact that for them camel breeding is not just business but their heritage and they traditionally sell neither camel milk nor other camel product. Camels are also given as a dowry to their daughters in marriage. Until the beginning of 20$^{th}$ century, the Raika supervise the camel breeding herds of the local Maharaja, who needed continuous supply of these animals for warfare. At the beginning of the century when the feudal system was dissolved and royal herds were auctioned off and most of

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them were acquired by the Raika. They started supplying male camels as draught animals to farmers and small-scale transport entrepreneur. They have lot of traditional knowledge about camel breeding, feeding, management and health aspects (Rajput, 2003). The Raika relationship with camel is based on cultural and moral ground rather than purely economic (Rathore, 2001 and Rajput, 2003). Change in land use pattern and continuous draught condition in Rajasthan, reduce the availability of grazing pasture and drinking water resources made difficult to manage large camel herd with sedentary life. Adverse climate conditions forced Raika to migrate from their village in search of food for their livestocks. Thus Raika of Rajasthan are categorised under semi nomadic pastoralists. Some other farmers in dry region of Rajasthan also migrate with their animals to other places during the scarcity of feed and fodder for their animals (Bharara, 1989). These migratory households some time also carries the animals of other households on payment basis (Bharara, 1987).

**Materials and Methods**

The present study was conducted in four selected villages of Bikaner district viz. Gadwala, Kesardesar Bohran, Bajju Tejpura and Charanwala in state of Rajasthan. A total of 60 camel owning families were identified randomly with probability proportionate to total Raika families in four selected villages. Qualitative data were collected through observation, interaction dialogue, detailed discussion with key informants, aged persons, housewives and migratory families on various parameters like route, distance and time of migration, number of family members migrate, decision about migration and reasons for migration etc.

**Results and Discussion**

Camel rearing was found fairly constant resource for sustenance of Raika in Bikaner district of Rajasthan. Extreme temperature, sand storms, low and erratic rainfall are the characteristics of this region. All the Raika families residing in selected villages (Gadwala, Kesardesar Bohran, Bajju Tejpura and Charanwala) were entirely depend upon camel and sheep husbandry besides agriculture.

Raika of Rajasthan categorised as "irregular nomadic pastoralists" because they suffer from great hardships during hostile climatic conditions and famines. Scarcity of grazing pasture and drinking water predispose camels to various diseases and high mortality. They adopt migration for saving their animals from adverse conditions. Before migration, all family members sit together and jointly take decision about the migration plan, including duration, route and other possible problems. In the study area two or three adult male member of a family from each of selected villages used to migrate. During migration entire family does not move out. Females, children and some aged persons are left behind to look after houses, their immovable property and their belongings and livestock. Only male members of the family migrate with their camels. Some villagers and other pastoralists owning small herd also send their camels along with migratory groups for this they pay about Rs. 100/- for each camel to the migratory Raika. Generally 150 to 200 camels make a migratory camel group, local termed as "Tolla". At the time of Dipawali, Raikas bring some of their camels to tehsil market on occasion of "Kartik Purnima" mela for selling them. After mela, they set out for migration during the months of January or February. Temperature falls in these months and trees and other desertic bushes normally shed off their green leaves and branches, hence very little fodder was available for camel browsing. Then Raika collect their camels and start to migrate. They follow no particularly fixed place and route for migration. The areas and route is selected according to the probability of getting good pastures and more water. Normally they move upto 400 km.

The study revealed some of the common routes of migration followed by Raikas were :

When they move towards Jodhpur, they pass through Gadwala, Deshnok, Nokha, Nagour, Gotan to Jodhpur (approx. 338 km).

When they move towards Sriganganagar, they pass through Gadwala, Loonkaransar, Mahjan, Suratgarh to Sriganganagar (approx. 232 km).

Migrating towards Jaisalmer, they pass through Bajju, Charanwala, Nachna, Mohangarh to Jaisalmer (approx. 328 km).

When they move towards Nagour, they pass through Gadwala, Deshnok, Nokha, Sribalaji to Nagour (approx. 122 km).

Raikas generally start their journay early in the morning with praying to their local God 'Pabuji'. They carry some of essential articles during migration like few utensils, blanket, lathi, torch, water ketli, some ration and money. Ration usually consists of bajra, wheat flour, onion, gur, sangari, kachari, salt, mirchi,

ghee, oil, gram and moong etc. They pack them into a single bag and load either on camel's back or camel cart. Drinking of raw camel milk on the way is their major food and energy source. They maintain regular economic relationship with villagers as well as traders in town or villages through periodic visits. Whenever, money is required, camels are sold to needy villagers or merchants. The selling price range between Rs. 6,000/- to 15,000/- depending on the body condition and age of the camel. Wherever, good pastures are available, they halt for few days. Raika let loose their animals for grazing on pasture. After reaching at the desired place, one group member is left behind to take care of entire herd and remaining members of group return back to their home. Duties of the members to look after the herd are exchanged turn by turn after every two weeks on shift basis. Camels are mostly graze on trees and bushes like Khejari (*Prosopis cineraria*) leaves, thorny branches of Jharberi (*Colygonum poligonidies*) and Ker. Some of desertic grasses like Sewan (*Lasiurus sindicus*), Khimp, Sinia (*Crotolaria buria*) and Bakaria are major part of camels grazing. Some times village farmers requent to Raika for halting camp/staying at their fields. Raikas were paid by them either in form of cash or provide some rations. Farmers were get manure of Raika camel herd while grazing on their fields. In this way both were benefited. According to them they were facing hardship in different ways. They generally travelled long distance in search of good pasture along with their animal herds. Continuous long traveling exhausted their animals and this situation become more adverse due to starvation, its lead to animals more susceptible for various diseases that causes mortality among them. Migratory system of livestock farming is fight with great hardship and some of animals die as a result of starvation and large number have to be sold at distress price on migratory route (Bharara, 1987). Rehman (1995) reported that Gurjar and Bakarwal tribe of Jammu and Kashmir faces problem of productivity losses in their animals due to tremendous stress during migration. Besides these Raika also reported some other problems like damage of small plants and water pipe lines by their animals in other farmers fields, its some time create tense situation, fight among animals leads to injuries and fractures, less availability of local herbs for treatment and some time their animals get accident with motor vehicles on the route of migration. In spite of above these problems Raikas perceived that migration is essential for passing adverse climatic conditions and save their livestock. Usually they come back along with their camels when the feed conditions in the village become normal. Raika pass an average of three month during migration. Bharara (1989) also reported that farmers return to their native places after migration, when there was sufficient availability of feed and water particularly during monsoon and rainy season.

## Conclusion

Raikas were following exclusively traditional way of camel management and keep their camels under semi-intensive system. Raikas were found to be irregular nomadic pastoralists. Migration pattern indicates that they were forced to migrate with their camel herds due to scarcity of grazing pastures and drinking water for animals. They used a consultative approach of decision-making involving all family members and moved individually rather than group. Only male members of family used to migrate. They follow no particular fixed place and route for migration. Although they facing too many problems during migration but they adopt it as a tool for passes adverse climatic situation and for saving their livestock. When feed condition in village becomes normal they return back to home along with their camels. The authors have tried to understand future dynamics of the pastoral way of life, the pastoralists own perception about mobility. Still there is need to study further with larger areas about pastoral mobility in context of their livelihood strategies. Extensionists and other people working in pastoral areas should be encouraged pastoralists to draw benefits from the prevailing development programs in their areas by various government and non-government schemes. Taking into account livelihoods of the Raikas, their camel wealth and biodiversity of the desert, programmes with emphasis on natural resource management, such as watershed, promotion of livestock cropping systems, management of common property resource like pastures etc. in a participatory mode should be initiated. This will ensure food-feed security for the Raikas and their animals as well right in their own villages.

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**Corrigendum**

Kindly read the following legend for figure nos. 3, 4 and 5 in paper entitled, "**Standing castration in camels**" which appeared in Journal of Camel Practice and Research Vol 11 No. 2 p 125-127.

1. Legend of Fig 3 - Intratesticular injection of 2% lidocaine.
2. Legend of Fig 4 - Incision of the scrotal skin.
3. Legend of Fig 5 - Exteriorization of the testis

The error caused is regretted.

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**Corrigendum**

Kindly read the changed legend for figure no. 3 which was supposed to appear on page number 150 in the paper entitled, "**Effects of diet supplementation on camel milk during the whole lactation under Tunisian arid range conditions**" which appeared in JCPR December 2004, Vol. 11 No. 2 pp. 147-152 but unfortunately there was a repetition of figure 2 in page 150 too. Please read the figure 2 on page 150 as figure 3 and read its title as "**Camel's milk Minerals contents (means ± SD) during lactation: Group I (?) and Group II (¦). SD: Standard deviation, error bars represent SD (only positive or negative values are presented for clarity"**.

The error caused is regretted.

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