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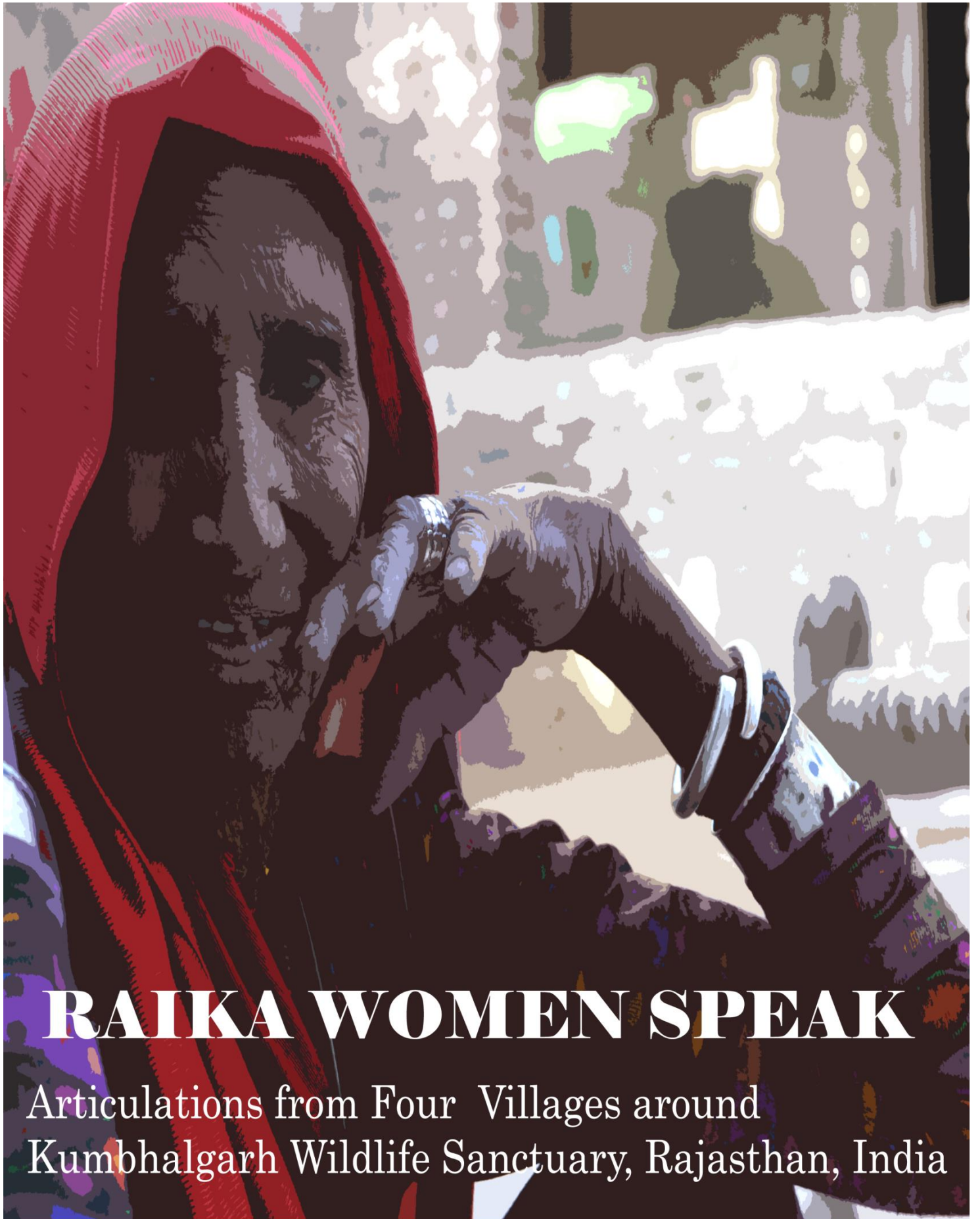


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# RAIKA WOMEN SPEAK

Articulations from Four Villages around  
Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan, India



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This study is part of a global project, the Academic-Activist Co-generation of Knowledge on Environmental Justice or ACKnowl-EJ ([www.acknowledgej.org](http://www.acknowledgej.org)), which is a network of scholars and activists engaged in action and collaborative research that aims to analyze the transformative potential of community responses to extractivism and alternatives born from resistance. The ACKnowl-EJ project is supported through the Transformations to Sustainability (T2S) Programme coordinated by the International Science Council (ISC) and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

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## Abbreviations

ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
CFR	Community Forest Resource
KWLS	Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary
LPPS	Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
FRA	The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act, 2006 or The Forest Rights Act
OBC	Other Backward Classes

## Glossary

*Adivasi* – Tribal

*Ata-Sata* – System of matrimony which means one in exchange for the other

*Bajra* – Pearl Millet

*Chaas* - Buttermilk

*Chai* – Tea

*Chappania Akaal* – Famine

*Dai* – Midwife

*Dhamena* – Daughter's dowry, in the case of Raika, her herd

*Dhan* – Wealth

*Dhuni* – Sacred Fire

*Evad* – Ancestral Lands

*Gauchars* – Grazing Lands

*Ghar Jamai* – System of matrimony where the groom belonging to an economically weaker family pays his equivalent share of the bride-price in the form of services for seven to twelve years prior to marriage

*Ghee* – Clarified Butter

*Jowar* – Sorghum

*Khandani Dhando* - Traditional Business

*Majburi* – Compulsion

*Majuri* – Day Labour

*Mingna* - Goat and Sheep Dung

*Orans* – Sacred Groves where there is a ban on lopping and cutting of trees

*Rabh* – A drink made by boiling buttermilk with maize

*Samaj* - Community

*Sasural* – Marital Home

*Tola*-Herd

# SUMMARY

This study aims to document the worldviews of the pastoralist Godwar Raika women living around the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary in Pali district of Rajasthan. Their articulations provide a glimpse of the changes that have taken place within and around the community over generations and how women cope with shrinking



**Image 1: Raika Women at a send off for the new mother**

commons as a result of exclusionary conservation policies leading to restricted access to commons, privatization of grazing commons and breakdown of the interrelationships among the various communities in the landscape who were earlier interdependent on each other. It explores the agency of the Raika women at different levels - household, community, institutions and discourses and how they negotiate with the changes that occur within and outside their communities.

The main objective of the study is to provide a gendered discourse to the already documented work on the community and understand in the face of State/society-imposed 'development' discourse, how women whose lives are interlinked to the livestock they keep, view them and navigate life through them. Another objective of the study is to document the traditional practices and worldviews that have permeated through generations within the community, and how they impact the women of the community.

The study has been conducted in four villages with eighteen women whose ages are between fifteen and ninety years. The women come from families who practice pastoralism. We have also interviewed leaders and local organizations to get a context of the landscape and the resistance that has been taking place against the conversion of the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary into a National Park with grazing restrictions, which will impact the pastoralist Raika community adversely.

The study is a work in progress.

## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

The current model of economic development based on extractive industrial growth, domination of the state and markets, and a single vision of globalization is beginning to show its inability to fulfill its promises of minimum well-being for all people. Instead, it is putting immense pressure on the earth and its ecosystems, which has led to structural violence against certain communities, threatening to obliterate the diversity of societies, cultures and livelihoods that exist around the world<sup>1</sup>.

However, many indigenous peoples and local communities have been resisting the destruction of their territories, cultures and livelihoods and are finding various ways to articulate their own perspectives and concepts to local and global ecological, economic, social and political crises. These concepts have their roots in communities' relation to the natural environment they live in, and the ways in which they perceive the world. They are explained through communities' perspective about what 'living well' means for them and how they wish to pursue their relationships with external actors including governments and others who have the power to support or the ability to undermine them and their natural environment through unwanted interventions<sup>2</sup>.

During the last few decades, there has been much discourse and writing in India on the struggle of the *adivasi* and other communities dependent upon forests and other ecosystems around them, against industrial development such as mining, hydroelectric dams, and so on. Debates about alienation and injustice caused to such communities by forest and conservation laws and policies implemented through centralized and oppressive bureaucratic institutions have also been initiated.

There has, however, been very little debate and writing on how these communities view 'development' and 'well-being'. Communities themselves have articulated these visions through struggles against extractivism, destruction of ecosystems and exclusive fortress-based conservation models. 'Development' for these communities is chiefly being envisioned by state welfare departments or non-government agencies. It is important to understand how communities themselves envision development or well-being; what are the worldviews of these communities and how they are articulated in their envisioning of their own futures. Thus, the understanding and articulation of alternative worldviews are a crucial component of the global search for paradigms of well-being that are just, equitable, and ecologically wise.

Within the communities articulating these 'alternative' visions, processes of *social transformation* occur as a result of communities claiming justice for themselves and for nature, as part of what can be broadly called 'environmental justice', or 'just sustainabilities'. This *transformation* is a process:

1. In which conditions of injustice and unsustainability undergo profound changes towards situations of justice and sustainability.

---

<sup>1</sup> (Indigenous peoples face growing crisis as climate change, unchecked economic growth, unfavourable domestic laws force them from lands, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>This includes some responses like the Peruvian Amazonian Ashaninka communities federation's articulation of Kametsa Asaiki ('living well') or the Ecuador Andean concept of Sumak Kawsay ('fullness of life' or 'well being') or the southern African notion of Ubuntu, or the Indian concept of Swaraj, among others. These concepts have their roots in indigenous communities' relation to the natural environment they live in and the ways in which they perceive the world.

2. Of emancipation that entails revealing, challenging and dealing with some or all root causes of oppressive conditions. These causes include structural and relational properties of the political, ecological, social, cultural and economic spheres of society, including prevalent forms of discrimination and domination such as (singly or in combination) capitalism, colonialism, modernity<sup>3</sup>, patriarchy, racism, statism and anthropocentrism.
3. Of systemic and radical change, resulting in new (or revitalization of old) relations, structures and cultures (including narratives, knowledge, beliefs, institutions, norms, values, behaviour) that promote different forms of just and sustainable alternatives. It is in contrast with both business as usual approaches, and reformist approaches, which seek gradual change within prevailing structural and relational conditions.

This collective understanding of transformations within communities resisting hegemonic forms of development and environmental injustice has emerged from a global project, the Academic-Activist Co-generation of Knowledge on Environmental Justice or ACKnowl-EJ ([www.acknowledgej.org](http://www.acknowledgej.org)). ACKnowl-EJ is a network of scholars and activists engaged in action and collaborative research that aims to analyze the *transformative* potential of community responses to hegemonic development and alternative transformations emerging from such resistance movements. The project involves case studies, dialogues and analysis on transformation towards greater justice, equity and sustainability in several countries including India, Bolivia, Turkey, Belgium, and Venezuela.

This study of the Raika pastoralist community of the western Indian state of Rajasthan in India was undertaken in this context. The aim was to carry out action collaborative research with the Raika community in villages around Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS) in Rajasthan, exploring the motivations of the community towards a pastoral lifestyle, based primarily on their notion of well-being which prompted them to resist change and interference by external factors, particularly the exclusionary model of conservation adopted by the Sanctuary authorities<sup>4</sup>, besides helping the community articulate its vision of well-being and development. However, this articulation has been overwhelmingly represented both in discourse and practice by the men in the community. While the role of women as keepers of traditional knowledge and maintaining the finances<sup>5</sup> has been largely acknowledged, their social standing within the community has prevented them from advocating for their way of life to the outside world. Understanding the role of women in Raika society and their idea of a '*well-lived*' life could bring out a new dimension to the issues faced by the community and their need to become a part of the collective envisioning process, as well as for the policy makers to take note of.

This study focuses on understanding the motivations of Godwar Raika women to continue a pastoral lifestyle, amidst a changing landscape and environment. It provides glimpses of how the women within the community articulate some aspects of their well-being. This, contribute towards **understanding how women within pastoral communities experience, perceive, view and negotiate the changes that are happening outside and within their communities and support the following transformations:**

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<sup>3</sup> We distinguish between 'modernity' as a colonizing project of cultural and knowledge homogenization and a unilinear view of progress, and 'modern values' that may have positive features such as an emphasis on equality.

<sup>4</sup>This community has been struggling against policies that have led to the loss of livelihood and takeover of commons. Individuals within the community have fought legal cases, and the community has also (with the help of local organisation Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan) articulated the importance of its livestock to maintain the ecological balance of the Kumbhalgarh landscape (Kohler-Rollefson, Rathore, & Rollefson, 2013) and their way of being (Raika Biocultural Protocol, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Kohler-Rollefson, I. (2017). Purdah, purse and patriarchy: The position of Raika women in the Raika shepherd community in Rajasthan, (India). *Journal of Arid Environments*.

- Adding engendered knowledge to the pastoral (academic-activist-pastoralist-practitioner-policy maker) discourse in India, since earlier work has seldom included women.
- Helping inform future mobilizations around pastoral issues in the region by inclusion of women’s voices and demands.
- Connecting women from the community to various processes already ongoing with women pastoralists in different parts of the country.
- Documenting the unique voices of a pastoral community to understand and amplify alternative worldviews on development and well-being.
- Linking this documentation to the national level discourses on pastoral policies, issues and strategies.

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## METHODOLOGY

The initial aim of the study was to conduct collaborative action research to explore the motivations of the Raika community around Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS) to continue a primarily pastoralism-based lifestyle, their notion of well-being, and to explore the possibility of co-envisioning pathways to deal with future aspirations and challenges by keeping pastoralism at the centre of the community.

Subsequently, the research aim was modified to record observations of Raika women around KWLS, on their interactions with ecosystems and landscapes, their livestock, other communities, their role in political and social dealings of the community, their observance of rituals and customs, healing practices, and motivations to continue with a pastoralist lifestyle in the face of many changes, which would provide valuable insights into the uniqueness of their worldview. The initial methodology included structured individual and focus-group interviews with women, as well as sessions to explore mapping of commons and future-building exercises.

However, it became clear during the initial phase of fieldwork that arranging group meetings with the women would be difficult because the daily activities kept most women extremely busy, added to which was the cultural inhibition on women holding meetings. Therefore, the methodology was modified to formulate a comprehensive question guide<sup>6</sup> (with the help of other women researchers conducting research on pastoralist groups and Kalpavriksh colleagues) to record life-stories of individual women and their hopes and dreams for their families and the community. The question guide was used whenever the opportunity arose to have discussions with the women. Several discussions were held with each woman. Observations were made about the landscape and discussions on pastoralism were held with the women and men by accompanying them on their grazing duties inside the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary.



**Image 2: Interacting with women while they went about their everyday chores**

Apart from this, staying with a Raika family in one of the villages and having discussions and conversations with the women of the family, while helping them with household chores, provided valuable insights into their daily lives. The matriarch of the family, Dailibai Raika, who actively advocates the communities' cause was instrumental in opening up spaces to meet women from the community, as was Jagdish Paliwal, former employee at Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan<sup>7</sup> (the local organization working with camel-owning Raika). Accompanying the host family

<sup>6</sup> To access this questionnaire, please contact the authors.

<sup>7</sup> Please see: <http://www.lpps.org/>. The Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan has worked for the Raika community around Kumbhalgarh for nearly two decades. Our initial approach to the community was through LPPS.

to functions to celebrate occasions like childbirth and religious festivals, whenever invited, provided a good opportunity to hold informal conversations with women.

## LIMITATIONS

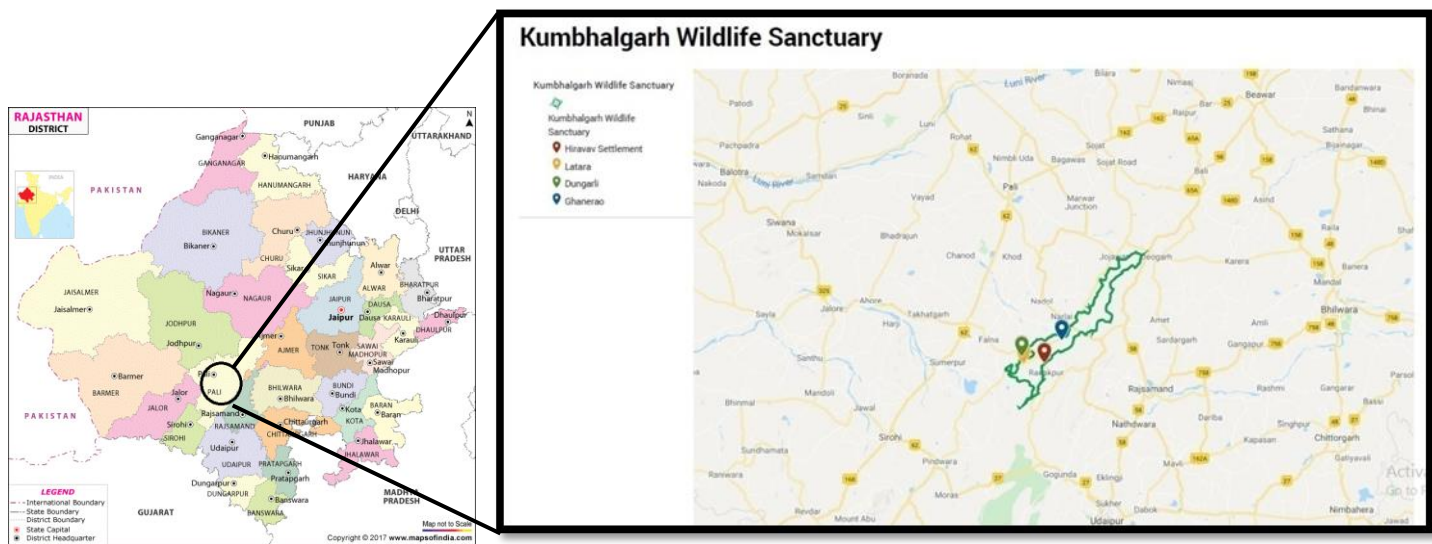
- Trust building with the community and gauging the landscape and the people took time and effort as the local organization lacked human resources and was thus unable to help with study.
- The change in focus of the case study led to a delay in embarking on the field work. The research is therefore a preliminary, exploratory attempt to understand several complex issues that the women face and their motivations for a pastoralist lifestyle. It focuses on eighteen women from four villages, and will be presented to the women for their feedback and clarification.
- It being a preliminary case study, the design of the methodology and scope of the enquiry was not carried out with the involvement of the women in the community. However, the aim is to continue with their involvement in the future, engaging them on issues they would like to focus on.
- Initially, it was difficult to approach women or speak to them, since Raika societal norms confine women to the role of the quiet hosts, while the men speak to the guests. Women were hesitant to speak openly and often would not provide their true opinions even after being acquainted with us during the fieldwork. However, continued association opened up opportunities for familiarizing ourselves and having in-depth conversations with them.
- The interactions of the Raika women with the other communities in the landscape could not be observed and studied, although they did make references to these communities in the discussions. This has translated into a large gap in the understanding of the commons of the landscape. With the continued work that we plan to carry out with the community, we hope to bridge this gap.
- The access to secondary literature on women in pastoralism was hampered because there is a general lack of research on the perspective on women within pastoralist societies, or the role of women from pastoralist communities in resistance, particularly addressing the Indian context.

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## CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION

### Geographical Location

The study was conducted with women from the Godwar Raika community in Hiravav settlement (Sadri Municipality), Ghanerao<sup>8</sup> (Desuri Tehsil), Latara and Dungarli (Bali Tehsil) villages around Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS) in Pali District of Rajasthan. Spread across 610.528 sq km of the Udaipur, Pali and Rajsamand districts of Rajasthan, the KWLS is an important sanctuary that includes parts of the Aravalli mountain range and serves as a barrier to the extension of the Thar Desert to the east along with other forest corridors<sup>9</sup>. The KWLS is divided into four ranges, Sadri, Desuri, Kumbhalgarh and Bokhada. The villages fall under the Sadri and Desuri ranges of the KWLS.



**Image 3: Map of Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary with the Four Villages Covered in this Case Study**

(Image courtesy of Rajasthan State: [mapsfindia.com](http://mapsfindia.com))

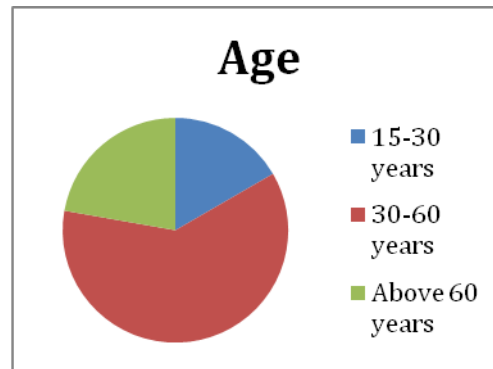
### Key Actors

Nearly eighteen women between 15 and 90 years of age, whose families continue to practice a pastoralist lifestyle across the four villages selected were interviewed during this study. The women were approached through field contacts and contacts of the interviewees. Several women who were approached were uncomfortable about being interviewed, and therefore detailed interviews and discussions could be carried out with only a few women. All the women interviewed, except two, are from families that are sedentary, and herd flocks of largely sheep and goat (some exceptions include cattle like buffalo and camel) around the village commons for 7-8 hours every day. The

<sup>8</sup> The Panchayat is the formal local self-governance system in India. It is divided into wards represented by ward members directly elected by the village assembly or the *gram sabha*. The Panchayat is chaired by the Sarpanch who is the president.

<sup>9</sup> (Assessment of Biodiversity in Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary: A Conservation Perspective, 2010).

families of the two women migrate with their flock for 6-9 months of the year.<sup>10</sup> These families migrate from their villages just before winter towards Madhya Pradesh and return to the villages during the monsoon. Most of the families of the women interviewed have flocks of sheep and goats, while four families rear only goats and buffaloes and one only camels.



**Image 4: Age Distribution of the Women Interviewed**

## Background

The Raika community is a specialized camel and small ruminant breeding pastoralist caste group in the state of Rajasthan in Western India. Oral history suggests that they may have settled in western Rajasthan from Iran or Baluchistan, and eventually moved towards the east of the state, engaged by different kingdoms in Rajputana to care for State camel *tolas* (herds).<sup>11</sup> The origin myth of the Raika reveals that Lord Shiva created them to become caretakers of camels<sup>12</sup>. The Raika are divided into two groups - those concentrated in and around Jodhpur are the Maru Raika and those that stay in the fairly fertile and forested region between Marwar and Mewar are the Godwar Raika. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Maru Raikas were chiefly camel breeders and the Godwar Raikas were engaged in sheep and goat breeding. Eventually, the Raika, were acclaimed for their knowledge around camel breeding and sheep husbandry. The Godwar Raika community, while largely recognised today as a nomadic pastoral group, is believed to have started migrating out of the villages in Godwar during the great *Chappania Akaal* (famine) that gripped Rajasthan around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>.

Today, most Raika have given up any form of pastoralism, while many others around Pali District are either sedentary with small herds of sheep and goat, or practice permanent or 6-9 months of migration cycles<sup>14</sup>. Most also combine crop production with pastoralism, either through share-cropping or on their own land parcels. The reasons are multipronged, and can be traced back partly to the colonial gaze on pastoralism and the resultant change in governance and attitudes towards resources used by pastoral groups, which continues to affect them in Independent India.

<sup>10</sup> For different types of migration practised by the Raika, please see: (Agarwal, 1992)

<sup>11</sup> (Kohler-Rollefson, 2014)

<sup>12</sup> (Raika: Bio-Cultural Protocol, 2009)

<sup>13</sup> Personal communication with Hanwant Singh Rathore of Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan.

<sup>14</sup> There are no official census records of this diversification of livelihoods among the Raika. This is reported by organizations like LPPS and the Raika themselves.

**Commons, forests and the continuing colonial gaze:** In Rajasthani society, village populations were divided into ‘semi-professional’ castes<sup>15</sup> and the system of resource use of each of these castes is highly specialized, yet intricately woven and linked to each other. Throughout India, pastoral groups were often woven into these systems and developed complex inter-relations with communities settled across their migratory and grazing access areas and routes<sup>16</sup>. The use of landscape as commons including forests, village *gauchars* (pasturelands) and stony and gravel lands, as well as agricultural fallows was of chief use to pastoralists<sup>17</sup>. However, the British viewed these groups as wild and lawless ‘anomalies’ and grazing was viewed as a ‘wasteful’ practice that destroyed forests and commons that needed to be tamed for timber production and agricultural expansion for revenue for the colonial State<sup>18</sup>. They formulated complex codes and legislations of forest and commons use to ensure ‘scientific management’ of forests for timber, instituted enclosures for grazing areas within forests and pasture lands, introduced systems of fines and punishments, focused on agricultural development<sup>19</sup>, and exacerbated the ‘rhetoric against herding’<sup>20</sup> that continues up to this day.

This mindset also influenced princely rulers within colonial India. The forests that the Godwar Raika around Bali and Desuri tehsils use were the hunting grounds of the Maharajah of Kumbhalgarh where grazing was commonly allowed. In the late 1800s, the colonial foresters acting on part of the autonomous state of Marwar began erecting boundary pillars around the forests and put in place formal grazing laws<sup>21</sup>.

After Independence, on the one hand, the focus on agricultural expansion and production and diversion of forests and commons for ‘development’ and ‘growth’ has continued, while on the other, concerns over depleting commons and forests has given way to an increasingly ‘fortress-based’ model of conservation, whereby large tracts of land are declared protected areas and all activities including grazing, lopping, collection of forest produce, traditional fire management practices are heavily regulated or banned completely through legal pronouncements of the Supreme Court.

In Independent India, the forests around KWLS continued being used for commercial extraction of timber but were declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1971. Since 1975, parts of the KWLS began to be closed off for establishing nurseries and grazing charges began to be levied<sup>22</sup>. Three years after the KWLS was finally notified in 1986, the government of Rajasthan issued orders banning all livestock from forests. After protests by Raika as well as other livestock breeders in villages around the sanctuary, forests were reopened but some of the protected forests remained closed, thereby reducing grazing areas significantly. The final blow came in 2004 when the Rajasthan Forest Department refused to issue grazing permits for the KWLS when the Supreme Court passed an order prohibiting the removal of any forest produce<sup>23</sup>. Since 2006, all forms of grazing and lopping have been completely

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<sup>15</sup> (Robbins P, 1998)

<sup>16</sup> (Agarwal &Saberwal, 2006)

<sup>17</sup> (Robbins P. 1998)

<sup>18</sup> (Gooch, 2009)

<sup>19</sup> (Balooni, 2002)

<sup>20</sup> (Agarwal &Saberwal, 2006)

<sup>21</sup> (Robbins, Chhangani, Rice, Trigosa, &Mohnot, 2007). It was confirmed by Raika herders when they spoke of haqdari (record of rights) receipts being issued to them for grazing before 1986.

<sup>22</sup> (Kohler-Rollefson, 2014)

<sup>23</sup> In 1996, the Supreme Court (SC) passed an order prohibiting the removal of any time of forest produce including dried and green wood, grass, leaves etc from Protected Areas across India. In March 2000, the Sadri forest office of the KWLS received the order and they issued their own order in Hindi which mentioned prohibition of ‘grazing’ although not mentioned in the original SC order. In 2004, the Central

banned from the KWLS. Ironically, this was also the year when the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (also called the Forest Rights Act or FRA) was introduced and eventually passed by Parliament in 2007. Meant to address the 'historic injustice' meted out to communities dependent on forests for their livelihoods, it recognized grazing as a right and made provisions for recording and vesting rights of uses and entitlements over grazing for both settled and transhuman communities and traditional seasonal resource access of nomadic and pastoral communities<sup>24</sup>.

Village community fallows are an important source of grazing commons available for the Raika. Since agriculture was rain-fed, fields would be available for almost five months of the year (January to May) in the dry-season to graze. However, loss of this important source of fodder for the Raika has snowballed due to change in agricultural policies in Rajasthan resulting in expansion of land taken up for cropping, double-cropping on community agricultural fallows due to increased irrigation networks, and invasion of scrub species (*Prosopis juliflora*) into community grazing lands<sup>25</sup> and takeover and encroachment of village *gauchars* by elite and influential forces<sup>26</sup>. The Raika from Pali district frequently complain of encroachment of commons and forests by *adivasi* groups entering the area from Mewar, who also steal their livestock<sup>27</sup>. Apart from these factors, the changes wrought on the landscape due to a blanket ban on grazing in the forests (although its implementation is ad hoc and arbitrary with illegal fines being developed on the spot by foresters<sup>28</sup>) and the decisions taken by the Forest Department towards protection and management of the KWLS through creation of nurseries of non-native plants, introduction of new species like crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*) and rescue and release of leopards (*Panthera pardus*) into the area has reportedly caused a considerable change in the availability and access to fodder resources for grazing<sup>29</sup>.

*Where do the Raika stand today? – Their Negotiations and Assertions:* Records suggest that the Godwar Raika around KWLS started rearing goats and sheep some 200-250 years ago and undertook long-term migrations with their herd towards the late 19<sup>th</sup> century due to *chappania akaal*, a severe drought in Rajasthan. This migration continued till the late 1950s but only in times of severe drought<sup>30</sup>. However, long term migration from Godwar has increased as has sedentarization of the Raika families. Historically, the pastoral lifestyle practised by the Godwar Raika has been oriented towards the external market<sup>31</sup> with meat, milk, wool and dung being traditionally traded commodities. It is believed that prior to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, wool was not a marketable commodity. Wool eventually became a viable marketable commodity in the late 1980s, but its market value has been on a continuous

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Empowered Committee of the SC taking cognizance of the 1996 order, issued its own orders to all state governments to implement the SC order while also enumerating grazing as one of the activities prohibited in PAs.

<sup>24</sup>Sec the preamble and Sec 3(1)(d) of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006

<sup>25</sup> (Robbins P. 2004)

<sup>26</sup> (Agarwal, n.d)

<sup>27</sup> This could not be corroborated since we did not get an opportunity to speak to the *adivasi* and other resident population in the villages.

<sup>28</sup>Personal communication with many Raika herders and reiterated in (Robbins, McSweeney, Chhangani, & Rice, 2009). Also corroborated by the Range Officer of Sadri, who reported that fines were levied on the spot as per the 'damage' done and 'assessed by the foresters.' He could not explain how the damage was quantified by the foresters.

<sup>29</sup> Most Raika herders including women healers and graziers who enter the forests spoke of a decline in good fodder species and medicinal herbs from areas which were easily accessible before, especially due to an increase in canopy-like species such as *Lantana camara* and *Prosopis juliflora* that did not allow 'good' fodder to grow, and introduction of leopards, bears and crocodiles into the area by foresters in 'cages' thereby increasing number of wild-animal attacks on livestock while grazing. This was however not corroborated by the Range forest officer of Sadri.

<sup>30</sup> (Whyte, R.O. , 1957). And (Robbins, P. , 1998).

<sup>31</sup> (Kohler-Rollefson, 1994)

decline. However, the sale of meat continues to remain steady with high demand. The change in agricultural patterns has put the Raika in the centre of the capitalist market, since intensifying cropland coverage and policies aimed towards multicropping on previously rainfed land has meant that the nitrogen and potassium poor soils of Rajasthan require livestock dung for productivity<sup>32</sup>. This is got through the purchase of *mingni* (sheep and goat dung) from the Raika. The women clean the pens and dung is collected and stored and sold in tonnes to external



**Image 5: Discussion on Mobilization and Access to Commons**

traders who often come into the villages with trucks and purchase it in bulk. Sometimes, farmers from surrounding villages purchase it.

In the last 250 years, the Raika have managed to adapt to these periods of transformation.

They have developed breeds of sheep suitable for sedentary environments and migration<sup>33</sup>,

adjusted their flock

size and breeds to overcome periods of droughts and crises, diversified their livelihood options, and even agitated politically against the policies and legal challenges that they had to face. They have organized themselves politically by forging alliances with various civil society organizations and by the use of law including the FRA<sup>34</sup>. However, the breakdown of the system of reciprocity, the increasing loss of pasture land, the underlying dangers that confront them while accessing it, and the current trend of many younger Raika wanting to switch over to a more settled life, owing largely to the uncertainties of livestock rearing and due to personal aspirations stare the community in the face today.

<sup>32</sup> (Robbins P. 1998)

<sup>33</sup> (Raika: Bio-Cultural Protocol, 2009)

<sup>34</sup>LPPS has filed Community Forest Resource Rights [Sec 2(a) and 3(1)(i)] claims under the FRA for some villages (Latara and Sadra of Latara Gram Panchayat in Bali Tehsil, GudaJatan village of Mandigarh Gram Panchayat and Joba village in Desuri Tehsil) where Raika herders stay. These claims were submitted to the Sub Divisional Level Committees during 2012-2013, but they were not given any proof of receipt. The villages have not received any communication regarding the status of the claims.

**Role of Women in the Raika Community:** Within many pastoralist communities, women have begun to speak out and articulate their vision for the future while emphasizing the need to hold onto some aspects of traditional pastoralist lifestyles. Women pastoralists around the world are advocating for the recognition of their contribution within pastoralist societies, access to grazing lands and commons secured through policies and legislation, their need for education and appropriate healthcare, and appropriate modern technologies<sup>35</sup>. However, the voices of women within the Raika community have not been heard so far, either through academic research or within the arenas the community has used to politically take up its cause. We believe that the articulations put forth by women could bring out a new dimension to the issues faced by the community as a whole, and their vision of the future needs to be part of the collective envisioning process within the community that wants to continue maintaining a pastoralist lifestyle. Further, these articulations when shared with other women within pastoralist communities in India can start a dialogue on well-being.

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<sup>35</sup>*MERA Declaration*. (2012, August 30). Retrieved from International Union for Conservation of Nature: <https://www.iucn.org/content/mera-declaration>

## Key Lessons and Reflections

### 1. Role of Women within Pastoral Households

Around the world, it is believed that **pastoralism is a family supported operation with fixed and well defined gender roles**. Men are chiefly responsible for grazing, selecting breeds, sale of animals, making political and community decisions, and **women are responsible for looking after the young and sick animals, the family and household, and processing animal products**. Within the Raika community too, it is believed that women play a nurturing role, while men are engaged in production and political decision-making<sup>36</sup>.

The woman of the house is also responsible for taking care of household activities, which include **cooking meals for the family, keeping the house clean, fetching water for washing clothes** as well as for **consumption, taking care of guests**, and other such work that often goes unnoticed. Within families that have land parcels, women also contribute towards farming.

*“Taking care of animals is like taking care of children. One cannot do it when one’s woman is gone.”*

-A Raika elder, explaining why he could no longer keep his flock after his wife’s demise.

**Table 1: Gendered Division of Labour in a Raika Pastoralist Household**

Traditional Roles of Men and Women in Raika Households	
Men	Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grazing the animals</li> <li>• Procuring medicinal plants for treatment of animals</li> <li>• Collecting fodder in the forest and growing <i>rajka</i> (fodder species- those who have land)</li> <li>• Shearing of sheep</li> <li>• Deciding and procuring the breeds of animals</li> <li>• Taking an animal that is seriously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milking</b> of goats, buffaloes and cows</li> <li>• <b>Cleaning</b> the pen</li> <li>• <b>Collecting <i>Mingna</i></b> (droppings of sheep and goat)</li> <li>• <b>Collecting fodder</b> in the forest and growing <i>rajka</i> (for those who have land)</li> <li>• <b>Looking after the young, both animals</b> as well as children</li> </ul>

<sup>36</sup>(Ellen, 2001) and (Kohler-Rollefson, 2017)

ill to the veterinarian

- Selling milk to dairies
- Sale of animals
- Taking part in activities of importance to the community
- Managing and making decisions about the finances of the household

- Looking after the sick livestock
- In case of those who have sheep and goats, accompanying or taking them for grazing
- Making produce out of the milk for the household to consume like *chaas*, *ghee* and *chai* (Buttermilk, clarified butter and tea)
- Managing finances of the household

### *Changing Roles*

About five decades ago, the chief livelihood dependence of the Godwar Raika was on breeding large flocks of sheep and goats. The large flock sizes and a chiefly nomadic existence for about 8-9 months of the year meant that camels and donkeys had to be bred and traded to transport material and families from one place to another. From the interviews carried out, it emerged that the change in the type of pastoral lifestyle has led to a change in the type of livestock and cattle being bred.

We interviewed women in the age group of 15-35 who came from maternal families where migratory pastoralism was practised but was given up when they were very young, and who have been married into families where day pastoralism is practised and the type of animals reared are different. Families of most of the women we interviewed, had migrated earlier, but have stopped migrating, sold off a large part of their *evad* (ancestral herd) consisting of sheep and goats, and now have herd sizes of up to 100 or less heads of sheep and goat. Most of the families in addition to sheep and goats have one or two cows and/or buffaloes. These families are now wholly dependent on *gauchars* (grazing land), commons, agricultural fields and forest land surrounding their villages. Some families have completely given up breeding sheep and goats and are now rearing buffaloes and cows instead, while some only breed goats, since they are perceived to be more independent, attuned to recognizing beneficial and harmful food sources, graze leaves of herbs and shrubs and therefore have higher food availability, and are less vulnerable to diseases as compared to sheep<sup>37</sup>.

Largely landless Raika families have begun to purchase small plots of agricultural land, and are moving towards agro-pastoralist livelihoods. There is wider diversification of livelihoods within a household, with sons migrating to cities and towns to seek alternate 'jobs' or to pursue higher education. Another important aspect is that most sedentary Raika families are now keen to educate both their sons and daughters. All the women in the age group of 15-35 whom we interviewed have gone to school, with the exception of one. In economically weaker households,

<sup>37</sup> Personal communication with a goat-breeder Raika from Ghanerao village.

family members are involved in supplementing their income through MGNREGA<sup>38</sup> and other labour jobs as and when available.

Within Raika households this has meant that, older women, daughters and daughters-in-law are expected to contribute towards pastoral, agro-pastoral and other livelihood needs, while also taking on some of the responsibilities performed by men earlier, including grazing and lopping responsibilities. While practising nomadic pastoralist lifestyles, older parents would generally settle in the native villages in Rajasthan and be looked after by the extended community. With increased diversification of the young from a focused pastoralist livelihood, women above the age of 45 within sedentarized households with animals continue to carry out agro-pastoralism related duties along with their husbands.

Young children, especially daughters are taught basic household chores and rituals of everyday animal care like stall-feeding livestock, cleaning the pens, fetching water and feeding it to the livestock and the like. These are specific domains of the women within the household. As they become older, they are expected to take up more tasks related to animal rearing, including assistance in birthing, especially in case of households that have cattle and helping in the processing of animal products. As more young men step out of their houses to earn livelihoods, or in single women households, women have begun to contribute towards grazing responsibilities as well as lopping fodder. This requires a different skill set and they learn it through observation as well as through instruction from the men in their families.

*“I used to get impatient with the sheep at times, since they would keep interfering with my cleaning and would hit them with the broom. My father-in-law told me that touching a broom to the sheep meant that they would surely fall ill.”*

-A young woman who was married into a household with sheep, but did not have sheep growing up in her maternal home

*“When I go out to graze the evad, I observe the landscape to see where there is sufficient fodder. I keep those routes in mind and go there the next day.”*

-A woman from Ghanerao

A change in the animal types reared also means that women have to learn specific skill sets to adapt to the animals being reared. In one case, a young woman from a sheep and goat breeding household was married into a household which has buffaloes. She had to learn to get familiar with the animal and the skill of milking it. She learnt through observation and was instructed by her mother-in-law.

All women interviewed were of the opinion that their mothers did far more household work than they did at their age. The present generation admits that they would not be able to travel long distances like their mothers or grandmothers used to do while migrating with sheep and goats. The women in households that are now sedentary observed that while they now have some time in the afternoon for rest, those who migrated would often have a lot of work tending to the young and sick ones left behind in the pen, the children, unloading and setting up the

<sup>38</sup> Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a labour law that aims to secure livelihoods in rural areas by providing a minimum of 100 days of wage employment to adult members of every household within a village who volunteer to do unskilled manual labour.

temporary settlement and packing up again.

However, younger women who are in households practising pastoralism preferred grazing the livestock and cattle to staying back at home, as they felt that they had more time to themselves when they took the animals to graze. They felt that it was less work than spending a day in the house, as looking after the household entailed a number of additional chores.



**Image 6: Women Healers who pass on their specific skill sets to their Daughters**

It was observed that making products, like **curds**, **rabh** (a drink made from boiling buttermilk with maize), and **ghee** (clarified butter) were **chiefly women's responsibilities within Raika households** and are **learnt through knowledge passed down from the mother or mother-in-law**. These products are made in livestock and cattle rearing households. **Milk and milk products are also becoming an additional source of income** in households that have now begun to keep only cattle. Most of the younger women interviewed could not

differentiate between the specific breeds of animals. However, most **women of all ages had knowledge of herd size, breeding patterns and trends**. Sale of animals is usually the responsibility of the male members and some of the women above 45 years of age also handle the sales with their husbands. Certain specific skill sets like sheep-shearing still remain an exclusively male domain within Raika society.

#### **Decision-making regarding practice:**

**Raika women** have been acknowledged as **'controlling' the economic transactions within the family, including sale of animals through interactions with traders and middlemen, sale of mingna** (sheep and goat droppings) which is a valuable source of manure, especially in sedentarized households and sale of milk and milk products. They have also been credited with having full control over the purchase of goods for the family<sup>39</sup>.

*"Raika men are as straight as a cow, but Raika women are as cunning as a fox."*

-A Raika proverb<sup>1</sup>

However, from the interviews we had with the women, we observed that **only older women above the age of 45 carried out actual transactions of animals in the absence of their husbands**. Younger women were unaware of prices

<sup>39</sup> (Kohler-Rollefson, 2017)

of the animals and did not participate in their sale or purchase. Where livestock flock sizes were up to 50 heads of sheep and goat, **sale of *mingna* and milk and ghee (within the village) was controlled by the women**. However, if a household shifted to rear cattle instead of sheep or goats, the sale of milk was controlled by men as the surplus milk was sold in dairies in the nearest market.

**Interaction with Other Communities:** Raika women interact with a host of other communities within the village. **They sell small quantities of milk and milk products when surplus**, to members of other communities within the village. **They also undertake additional day-labour (*majuri*)** whenever it is available and required for the family. ***Mingna* is traded with traders and farming communities from outside the village**. Nowadays, since there is increased sedentarization and each household is involved in looking after their own flock, sheep-shearing as a communal activity within the Raika has reduced. Muslim sheep-shearers usually make the rounds of the villages and are asked to shear sheep and are paid per sheep sheared. Raika women healers are sought after to heal many ailments, especially reproductive ailments of women from within the village and surrounding villages.

## 2. Gendered knowledge of Access to Commons

**Table 2: Details of Commons in the Four Villages around Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary**

Village	Approximate number of households <sup>40</sup>		Status of commons			
	<i>Raika households</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Forest land</i>	<i>Oran</i>	<i>Village Fallows</i>	<i>Gauchar</i>
Hiravav (Sadri Nagar Palika)	60	65	Part of KWLS	Mamoji ka Sthan	Not available	Not available
Ghanerao (Panchayat, Desuri Tehsil)	90	10,000	Part of the KWLS	Not available	Available	Available but declining, some restriction of use in place
Latara (Panchayat, Bali Tehsil)	200	600	Part of the KWLS	Not available	Available	Available, and strict restrictions of use in place

<sup>40</sup> These figures are based on interviews with the women. They need to be corroborated with the census data.

Dungarli (Panchayat, Bali Tehsil)	40	500	Not available	Not available	Available, largely used for grazing	Available, but information on status could not be collected
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Out of the four villages we visited for interviewing women, three villages are quite old with a history dating back to nearly 150-200 years. Hirabaug on the other hand, is more recent, where the settlement took place just a century ago. This is primarily a Raika village where nuclear families migrated from other villages due to the proximity of the land to the forests. This village does not have a *gauchar*. Raika families in other villages have shifted villages and also inhabited *gauchars* to be closer to grazing resources and also due to non-availability of land in the village to keep livestock.

Out of the eighteen women interviewed, all women had a fairly wide-ranging knowledge of the common resources around their village. While ten of these women, in the age group 15-50, still access the commons for grazing, collection of firewood and medicinal herbs, four women in the age group 20-35 do not graze animals and 4 women above 60 years have stopped going into the forests due to their advancing age.

**Forests<sup>41</sup> and orans:** All the women we interviewed who accompany the males in the family to the forests to graze or extract firewood and medicinal herbs reiterated that forests are important for the well-being and survival of their flock and families. Older women above the age of 45 also spoke of forests as being repositories of food and fodder during times of drought. The synergistic relationship between wild animals and the Raika was especially spoken of by the women who herd animals. They opined that wild animals would attack sheep and goats, but this was essential for the survival and good health of their flock, as well as for the survival of the forests and the wild animal themselves, pointing out to a synergistic existence.

They recalled that the community would take special care of the forests during the drier months ensuring that the spread of wildfire is controlled. Women described the forest as a 'peaceful' place that allowed them some time to themselves when the animals were grazing. *Orans* are sacred groves where there is a general ban on lopping and cutting trees. Certain restrictions are placed on women regarding access to parts of the *oran*. For example, women are forbidden from entering the area where the sacred fire or *dhuni* is lit, when they are menstruating. However, for Raika women, *orans* were very often the only source of refuge for families on migration, and especially for pregnant women and ewes who gave birth there. So these restrictions were not followed strictly by the community.

Women in Latara and Ghanerao considered *gauchars*<sup>42</sup> as important sources of fodder and also safer places to graze livestock compared to the forests, particularly so in the last decade.

<sup>41</sup>Here, 'forest' is land legally defined as forest under the Indian Forest Act, 1927. Most of the forest land that these villages use is under the KWLS.

<sup>42</sup>*Gauchars* or grazing land belong to village panchayats.

**Agricultural fallows:** Women above the age of 45 remember agricultural fallows as an important source of fodder for livestock and food for the Raika families. Farmers used to provide for the services of the Raika in kind and give food grains like *bajra* (Pearl millet), *jowar* (Sorghum) and wheat and sometimes vegetables in exchange for the flock fertilizing their fields.

**Animals as commons:** Like several pastoral societies around the world, the Raika view and value their animals as *dhan* or wealth. Women, especially the ones who graze sheep and goats and are used to looking after the young and sick animals in the family, frequently describe a sense of attachment to their herds. They keep sacred herds, herds for the daughter and sacred breeding rams. Herds, while essentially viewed as a single family unit's *dhan* (wealth), are also shared with other members of the community in times of crisis, or if one loses one's herd to pestilence or thieves, or if one has given up the pastoral lifestyle but wants to re-establish a herd.

*"I have been surrounded by animals since being born. Whenever I have to travel to places without animals I don't feel at home. It feels like a part of me is missing."*

-Raika woman from Hiravav village

While the herds are passed down from father to son, the *dhamena* (daughter's herd) is usually given to the daughter of the house when she is sent off to her *sasural* (marital home).

*'A cow for the daughter to drink milk in her sasural (husband's household).'*

-A Raika phrase used for the *Dhamena*

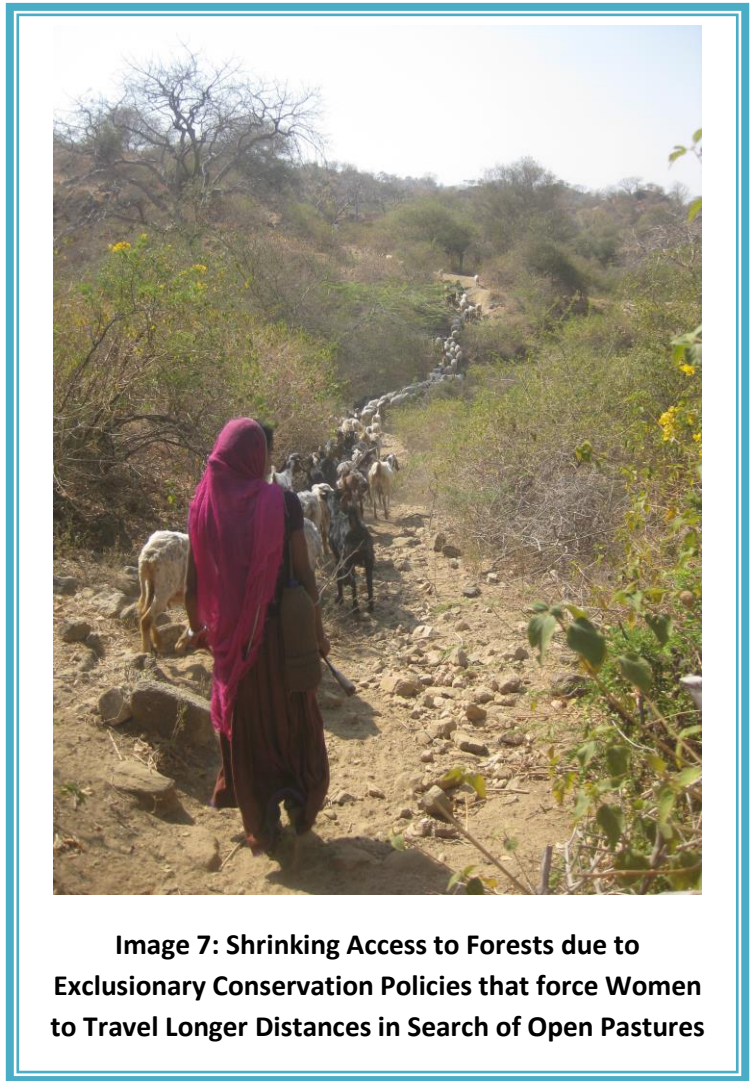
The fathers and brothers either pledge a cow (more recent phenomenon) or separate a few animals from each of their herds as a gift to the daughter. Other families from the village or from the immediate family can also contribute to this herd. Even as the herd breeds and grows, it remains the daughter's herd in her marital home. Each Raika family can also set aside a particularly strong ram from a good breeding pedigree as a sacred ram, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva and cannot be sold. Within the Raika community, rams with a good pedigree are also shared for breeding. There is a strong disapproval of selling female animals, which was likened by many women to selling one's daughter for profit.

### Changes in the Commons – How they are Affecting Women

**Agricultural fallows:** Fallow land, as stated earlier, was a prime source of fodder in the dry winter and summer months before the monsoon. The increasing privatization of land and changing crop patterns meant that these fallows are now available for barely two months of the year and, the Raika have to travel further from the villages to search for fallows. Women revealed that they had to negotiate with farmers, and that they also had to help clear the land and lop the overgrown trees on the fields to prepare the land for the next agricultural cycle in exchange for grazing their flock on the land. In one instance, one of the younger girls was stung by bees while clearing the tree branches on one of the fields that her family had gone to graze in. The younger women also expressed unhappiness at being driven away by farmers who did not want the Raika to enter their fields. There is also loss of a valuable source of healthy and rich food that used to be obtained in exchange of fertilizing the fields with droppings.

**Forests and orans:** Women from Hiravav revealed that since they did not have a **gauchar**, forests were their chief source of fodder. However, most women from Latara and Ghanerao did not go into the forests for grazing and lopping due to **fear of wild animals and thieves**. Few women were of the opinion that wild animals, especially **leopards were becoming more aggressive towards humans and were not afraid of people**. Women healers reported **loss of medicinal herbs and plants** from nearby areas and said that they had to go deeper into the forests to collect them. Women reported that while the forest officers did not harass them with fines as they did to the men, they were asked to refrain from entering enclosed nurseries and turned out from forests regularly.

**Gauchars:** All the women reported **loss of gauchar land due to encroachment**. Some village panchayats have started actively protecting the *gauchar*, and part of the protection activities include demarcating areas that are kept enclosed for regeneration. Since women cannot go into the forests, they sometimes need to graze their herds stealthily in the enclosed areas of the *gauchars* for fear of fines by village committees. Both Latara and Ghanerao panchayats do not have a single Raika representative in the ward panchayat and are thus not able to bring up grazing issues.



**Image 7: Shrinking Access to Forests due to Exclusionary Conservation Policies that force Women to Travel Longer Distances in Search of Open Pastures**

### 3. Agency of Godwar Raika Women

Women are often tied to the system of family and division of labour within households in pastoralist societies. Thus, while decision-making and planning around livestock often involve women, within the Raika community, marriages and relationships are often a community concern. Within the Raika community, a girl child plays a vital role in establishing marriage institutions, since the community has a practice of bride-price. In the *Ata-Sata (one-in-exchange-for-the-other)* system, a male member and female member from one family are pledged to the female and male member of another family respectively<sup>43</sup>. This was initiated probably to eliminate the bride price that both the families had to pay for the respective brides. The second system which was common earlier but is not so popular with the younger generation is that of the *ghar jamai*, where a groom from a family which is economically weak has to work for the bride's family seven to twelve years, learning the trade from the father-in-law and offering his services to prove his worth, which is equivalent to the bride-price. The groom is usually young when he goes to

<sup>43</sup> These could be siblings from one family being married to siblings from another family, cousins, uncles and nieces, as long as both the families exchange brides.

become a *jamai* in the household and once the stipulated time is over and the father-in-law is convinced of the person's abilities, he is married to the daughter of the house. The groom can then either continue to stay with the family or separate with his wife and the livestock from her *dhamena*. In the third system, a family, in which there is no possibility of *ata-sata*, has to pay an enormous bride-price. While the systems of marriage may center on the girl-child, the decision of whom she gets married to often rests with the head of the household, usually the male member. Most of these marriages are decided before the child is old enough to make his or her own choice. These systems are also very rigid, and the community usually socially boycotts the family of men and women who marry outside the Raika community<sup>44</sup>. Divorces, if any, have to have community approval, and also elicit heavy fines to the 'community'. Our interviews with the women revealed that they were unanimous about young people having the freedom to choose their own partners. Women also felt that they should be able to have the agency to get married after getting to know the person. Only one of the young women interviewed was married late in life (at the age of 27) and insisted on meeting and talking to her prospective groom before she decided to get married to him. However, both the young woman and her in-laws were of the opinion that this was an extremely rare instance in the community.

Personal and reproductive health care is seldom addressed while researching issues specific to women. Women from nomadic pastoralist communities rely on the knowledge passed on from one generation to another<sup>45</sup> and have limited access to state-sponsored healthcare. Within the Raika community, women use various terms to indicate the arrival of menstrual periods including *kapda-aana* (often used by older women) whereas the younger Raika women call it MC (menstrual cycle), since it is referred to as that in schools. Most of the younger women interviewed between the ages of 15-35 years were told about reproductive cycles by their peers and friends, or by female relatives whom they were closest to, and invariably hid the onset of menses from their family. This is due to the fact that the onset of menses signifies that the woman has attained puberty and will be sent off to her marital home in a few years time... However, some young mothers have started explaining the process to their young girls. In the past, women employed traditional methods to achieve reproductive and maternal well being. Older women fashioned sanitary towels from old cloth. There were midwives, traditionally called *dais* who would assist women throughout the period of pregnancy, aid in birth and postnatal care of the mother and child. Nomadic women have shared their experiences of giving birth while migrating from place to place – they were assisted by other women in the group or sometimes even managed on their own. In families that followed the sedentarized form of pastoralism, a few changes were reported in the menstrual as well as maternal health practices of the women over generations. Through the interviews it was observed that the older Raika women have relied on traditional knowledge in assisting with childbirth and pre and post natal care. The *dais* were regularly consulted and childbirth would often take place at homes. The traditional midwifery knowledge was passed down from one generation to the other. Currently, Rajasthan has a high maternal mortality rate<sup>46</sup>. Several factors have contributed to this, including weak health of pregnant mothers and high rates of female infanticide and foeticide. To combat these issues, the State has launched various programmes that provide easier access to maternal healthcare in state as well as private hospitals. To prevent any more incidences of infanticide or foeticide, the Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) members are trained to register every pregnancy, miscarriage and birth. Over time, the women were incentivized to give birth in hospitals to help reduce the state maternal and infant mortality rates. It was clear that many younger Raika

<sup>44</sup> (Kohler-Rollefson, Purdah, purse and patriarchy: The position of women in the Raika shepherd community in Rajasthan (India), 2017)

<sup>45</sup> (Ganesh & Gogte, 2017).

<sup>46</sup> See: <http://niti.gov.in/content/maternal-mortality-ratio-mmr-100000-live-births>

women in sedentary households are opting to use these hospital services available for prenatal care as well as childbirth. This is also because they have easier access to hospital services and schemes. However, they acknowledge that over time the transmission of traditional knowledge around reproductive health has reduced. The



Image 8: Older Raika Women Guiding Mothers through the Postnatal Period Ensuring that they get Much Needed Rest

women who were interviewed stated that there were lesser numbers of younger *dais*. While it may not be the norm, one older Raika woman observed that cases with complications during traditional childbirth were on the rise, which have often lead to death due to which women opt for hospital services. On the other hand, there were also cases of death of women due to negligence by hospital staff. There is a divided opinion whereby women have been navigating both the options for pre-natal care. However, certain traditional practices are still prevalent for maternal healthcare. Expectant mothers are usually guided by the older Raika women of the family and even those who have travelled to cities often come back to be surrounded by the family during the nine months of pregnancy. The women are fed nutritious food that will ensure a healthy foetus and this is the time when they get the required rest. Pregnant women also often consult the *dai* for issues during pregnancy, provided a *dai* still resides in their villages or close by.

**Access to education:** The Raika have begun to place increasing emphasis on educating their children induced by the gradual breakdown of the pastoralist way of being, which has been exacerbated by various factors including decreasing pasture land, privatization of commons, various state policies that often leave out the pastoral communities, and also due to aspirations of the young Raika<sup>47</sup>. Affirmative action as provided by the State allows the community to access seats that are reserved for the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) within educational institutions as well as government jobs<sup>48</sup>. The Raika are mobilizing themselves around the issue of reservation for jobs and education. Raika families seek educated grooms for their daughters since it indicates a 'stable, settled' life and better economic prospects. These factors have led to aspirations amongst the younger Raika men to leave nomadic/semi-settled pastoralist lifestyles and get jobs or start their own businesses in cities and towns. Since the state does not provide accessible education to nomadic families, Raika families practising permanent or semi-permanent migration enroll their children into formal schooling and leave them in the village with sedentary nomadic families or aged family members.

<sup>47</sup>Kavoori (2007)

<sup>48</sup> In 2008, a law was enacted to provide four communities, including the Raikas with the Special Backward Class (SBC) status which reserved five percent seats. This was implemented in 2009, however was put on hold after the High Court issued an order of the violation of exceeding the 50 percent ceiling as per the Indian Constitution. In September 2015, a bill was passed in the Rajasthan State Assembly as the Special Backward Class (SBC) Reservation Act to reinstate the five communities to the five percent reservation, which was struck down again by the High Court in December 2017. For more details please see: <https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/5-castes-including-gujjars-re-included-in-obc-list-in-rajasthan/677292/>

Young Raika girls we spoke to perceive education as an important tool to navigate through the various oppressive institutions that they interact with on a day-to-day basis, and as a means to secure a better livelihood other than day-labour jobs. However, women who have successfully finished with high school are now being discouraged from interaction with the outside world, including going to the nearest town to pursue higher education, for they are still confined within the informal institutional barriers of the community where it is predominantly the men who decide the fate of the women. There are exceptions, where the *samaj* (the elder men within the community) still holds an upper hand, and young girls who are educated are often hesitant to take up jobs. There are instances of girls who after receiving formal schooling are staying back at home taking on the existing gendered role within the Raika household, which includes taking care of animals and taking on all those activities that contribute to pastoralism. In economically weaker Raika families, in the absence of young men (leaving the house for better job prospects), the lives of younger Raika girls are tied down to pastoralism. For example, in one household, a twelve year old girl would accompany her father to graze the family flock on the days she did not have to attend school, and tend to the young sheep and goats and procure lopping for them most afternoons when she would come back from school. She was recently pulled out from school to help the family with grazing responsibilities.

### *The Raika Caste Panchayat*

The Raika Panchayat or *Samaj* (community) Panchayat has emerged as a caste based institution that deals with conflict resolution within the community. The institution is currently convened to discuss issues like failed marriages, divorces, land and other disputes between two parties within the community which they cannot resolve themselves. The Panchayat consists of male members from twelve villages, out of whom four are elected to preside over the meeting and pronounce arbitration to the issues presented. A woman has no avenue to participate in these meetings. Any decision that the Panchayat takes is taken by men and often the gendered nuances and arguments within each are left out. People are discouraged from going to court to seek redress.

Most older Raika women feel that the judgement that the *Samaj* gives usually benefits the larger community as a whole. While some of them may not agree with the judgement, they feel that they can do very little. The threat of being removed from the community has led to women depending on the men to decide their fate with very few or no avenues of representation. Some of the young women as well as men we spoke to are of the opinion that there is rising dissent against the *Samaj* as there are increased incidences of corruption and low accountability, that the judgements pronounced are often unjust and the person who is not guilty has to pay huge fines to the *Samaj*.

### *Participation in Aspects of Raika Struggle over Forests*

While Raika women have stepped out of their homes in large numbers during protest demonstrations over prohibition of grazing in KWLS, except for the lone voice of Dailibai Raika, no other woman has represented the community in leading these struggles. They are also not actively present in village-level institutions. This could be due to the fact that women are not encouraged to speak up in the presence of Raika men, socially. While Hiravav, Latara and Ghanerao had prepared claims for CFRs under the FRA, none of the women, except Dailibai Raika were aware of this. Women, while aware of village level forest management committees or *gauchar* protection committees in the villages, revealed that it was not possible to express their concern regarding access to these resources and that it was the men in the family who generally represented these concerns to the committees or state institutions.

#### 4. Dreams and Aspirations – Hopes of the Women

Women over the age of 40 felt a great sense of pride in identifying themselves as the community that specialized in the *khandani dhando* (traditional business) and acumen of breeding animals, and at the same time expressed a sense of helplessness about being unable to ask the younger generation to carry forward the legacy of the business due to tremendous pressure from external factors towards giving up their pastoralist lifestyle.

Women below the age of 40 identified the pastoral lifestyle as something that is being done out of compulsion (*majburi*) to feed their families because they have neither the skill nor the education required to pursue other occupations. However, they also reiterated that it was better to pursue their *khandani dhando* over having to do manual labour because it afforded them dignity and the ability to take their own decisions about their livestock and also put their children through schools, despite leading a life full of hardships. Some of the women also revealed that the younger generation that could not pursue higher education or secure good jobs in cities worked for minimum wages in cramped spaces away from their families, and learning skills of rearing animals could give them a dignified life closer to their communities, if they chose to return.

**Access to and Use of Commons:** Women from pastoral families would want the forests to become safe and accessible spaces since they feel that forests have become unsafe (owing to greater number of wild animals and thefts), thereby preventing many women from venturing into them. Hence, commons like *gauchars*, village agricultural fallows and *orans* are important spaces for the Raika women who take their animals there for grazing or even collect firewood or fodder. Women we spoke to felt that all these spaces needed to be opened up and restored, with reasonable restrictions placed on their use.

**Education:** All women felt that girls needed to complete high school to be able to interact with the larger world and to navigate the changes that are rapidly taking place around them. Some women also mentioned that girls needed to be allowed to pursue higher education in the face of a rapidly changing environment. Most people in the community feel that illiteracy is the primary reason the State has been able to manipulate and curtail their rights over forests. Most of the younger women expressed that being educated would help them address this inequality of power.

**Marriage:** There was a unanimous understanding amongst women that the young people within the community should be allowed to choose their own partners. It was observed that the incidence of divorce was very high within the community, and women attributed it to the non-consensual nature of the marriages, that is older people deciding for their children when they were very young and unable to comprehend or make their own choices. Most women felt that it was very important to be able to choose someone who would treat them with respect. However, they did not consider any alliances being formed outside their community as favourable or desirable. This can be associated with the strong caste system prevalent in the villages, where such a move would invite ostracization of the families.

**Conflict Resolution:** Younger women were of the opinion that they should be allowed to participate in customary institutions, including the Raika Panchayat, to get direct representation instead of the men deciding the future for the entire community.

## Transformation and the Present Context of the Raika Women

The Raika in the current context face a dilemma. Can and do they wish to continue their pastoral way of being along with their livestock, with dignity, as the world around them becomes more consumeristic, market-oriented and resource exclusive? In the past they have adapted to continue with a pastoralist lifestyle, in the face of privatization of land, fragmentation of commons and politics of control over natural resources, whether it is by diversifying into other jobs within a household or through legal measures, through community mobilization over issues of education, livelihood, land as well as grazing rights or through electoral processes where representatives from the community are contesting elections to procure seats in the state assembly to take up the issues of the community at the state level, or through dialogues with pastoralists in other states (like Gujarat). However, at the current juncture, the community stands at crossroads. Within this context, the present study has attempted to understand the lives of women within the community. It is a preliminary attempt to understand the transformations taking place within and outside the community.

### Transformations are integral

The Raika have been undergoing transformations for centuries. The transformations were induced by natural or human-made causes, which would compel the community to adapt to the situation at hand, to ensure that their way of living continues. In the case of drought in the early 1900s, the Raika, left their semi-sedentarized settlements and crossed state boundaries to access fodder. There are families who continue to migrate eight months a year to another state. The impact of drought meant that there was a shift in the roles and responsibilities within a household, the breeds of sheep, goats and camels they kept, forging new alliances with communities that they were to encounter en route and to tread 'lightly'<sup>49</sup> in the landscape. When state policies became exclusionary and conservation policies at a national level refused to acknowledge the role of pastoralists in the landscape, the Raikas living around KWLS, found ways to negotiate, so that they could continue grazing in the wildlife sanctuaries, whether it is through challenging these legislations in courts or by rallying against the declaration of national park.

### Every single transformation affects members within the community differently

Transformations that take place within the community impact groups (based on gender, age, economic status, etc) within the community and individuals very differently. Understanding a community's notion of well-being from a gendered lens, threw open a worldview that is not vastly different from what the men in the community have to articulate to outsiders. The articulations by these particular women enables us to understand how those transformations have impacted lives of women and affected the role they played in the community with respect to decision making, within households and how they interact with the outside world.

With respect to the women, the change from a nomadic to a settled form of pastoralism has in one way provided them the stability of a homestead, but also produced instability in terms of loss of commons and to some extent loss of autonomy in decision-making regarding economic spending and charting their future.

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<sup>49</sup> The term, 'living lightly' first emerged when an exhibition curating lives of pastoralists from all parts of India was organized in New Delhi in 2016. The term symbolizes the interconnection between the pastoralist communities with their ecosystem, and contrary to the larger belief that they are destroying the ecology, aims to provide a glimpse of how they have always been 'living lightly' on the earth.

### **It is difficult to label any particular transformation as positive or negative**

Thus, the community is constantly undergoing transformations and it is inherently a part of their lives. The ability to adapt to any kind of situation is what enables the Raika to persist with the pastoral way of being. The transformations that the community undergoes, is sometimes a culmination of smaller reformative changes or changes that are beyond their control. These changes over a period of time, inadvertently affect their livelihood and way of being. When one tries to view the history of the community from the late 1800s, it seems like the changes happening were either sudden, for example the decision to migrate to other areas in search of fodder in the event of a severe drought, or gradual like adapting and changing the breed of cattle and embarking on different patterns of migration.

Reflected in the case study, the community is in a constant state of transition and moving from nomadic to sedentarized forms of being has varied effects on women. While Raika women, especially those who are sedentarized are being linked to pastoralism, their agency is also undergoing changes as some of them get access to education and are finding avenues to express their voices and reflect on individual and collective freedom. To be able to ascertain the value of these transformations as negative or positive is very difficult.

### **Transformations in Process: Changes in natural environments due to state interventions. What is the future?**

From the articulations of the Raika (both men and women), the **State's role has had a damaging effect on pastoral livelihoods.** The State's view of **conservation has been hostile to the pastoralist view of the landscape and resources.** At the present juncture, the Raika are unsure about the overall health of the forests within Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary. The women have repeatedly spoken about the changes in the quality of vegetation and overall biodiversity of the forests. Their **increased dependence on the almost non-existent commons** (like the protected *gauchars* and village fallows) has made them aware of the overuse of these resources. **They express their helplessness in being unable to handle and change these situations.** They have already stated that this change in the landscape has depleted their food and medicinal resources and caused uncertainty and danger to their access to and use of forests. Any future policies regarding Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary as well as the overall landscape, in which pastoralism have flourished in the past will require a completely new approach to include the needs of the Raika.

## Conclusion

Women have been an integral part of most environmental justice-related transformations, resistances and conflicts. There are several instances of movements where women have been at the forefront, resisting the destructive and extractive notion of development. Despite efforts at various levels, women's agency is yet to be recognized and their voices are yet to be heard. Engendering spaces of decision making institutions, both formal and informal which affect the well-being of humankind as well as the biodiversity, are still largely male dominated and sometimes some participation from women remain merely tokenistic or the women are impeded from making any changes from within as the system itself is inherently patriarchal.

In the Indian context, there has been very limited work done on women whose lives are interlinked with the animals that they keep. These women have limited avenues to raise their concerns. The knowledge that they have inherited over time through experiences and that has been passed down from one generation to another is slowly fading. Development as we see it today has made tremendous changes on the agency of the Indian pastoralist women. This study has enabled a glimpse into the lives of the women, what has changed over time, how that has impacted them and their families, what dreams and aspirations they have and what are the avenues where they can address their dissent especially when it affects their livelihood.

From this case study, it has emerged that the contemporary challenges that the Raika face has impacted the women even more as this has created a change in their role within the household as well within the community. The Raika woman today is even more intimately involved with taking care of her flock, as men migrate to cities for jobs. Young Raika girls are taught how to take care of the animals and have limited access to education as both work and the community obstruct their right to individual choice. It is still the men who are addressing their concerns on a policy level and women are often left out from these conversations though they are equally impacted by loss of commons and exclusionary conservation policies.

While there is a large shift within the community to leave pastoralism as a way of being, there is also resilience amongst the Raika women who associate their dignity with the animals. They are finding ways to dissent with the existing systems, for example, by stealthily grazing their flock in village *gauchars* where there is prohibition on grazing put into place through committees where the Raika are not represented.

It is imperative to have the voices of pastoral women represented in the articulation of what 'development' means for the community as a whole.

## Annexure 1

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS, POLICY CHANGES AFFECTING THE RAIKA AND ASSERTIONS MADE BY THE RAIKA TO SECURE THEIR LIVELIHOODS

APPROXIMATE TIME PERIOD/DATE	EVENTS
Around 711 AD	Bactrian Camels arrive in Pakistan
From 979-1025 AD	Raids by Mahmud Ghazni of Afghanistan into Rajasthan.
1266 AD	Pabuji brings she-camels to Rajasthan
Fifteenth Century (1401-1500)	First Rehbaris or Raikas came to Bikaner with Rao Bika. Subsequently they moved out to other places where their services as camel herders were required.
Late 1800s	The Rehbaris had evolved into two distinct divisions, the Maru and Chalkiyas or Pitalias (because they wore brass ornaments). The Maru deal chiefly in camels. The Chalkiyas abound in Godwar and keep large herds of sheep and goats.
1898-1930-31	Different Rajputana kingdoms kept State Camel <i>tolas</i> (herds). Regency rules mandated that Raika could look after 50 state camels and keep their own herd and they were given special grazing permissions. The kingdoms stopped keeping State Camel <i>Tolas</i> during this time, since the population complained about grazing.
1899-1900	<i>Chappania Akaal</i> hit Rajasthan. The Godwar Raikas started breeding camels around this time because they had to migrate to Malwa (present day Madhya Pradesh) and areas of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra to gain access to grazing.
1927	Indian Forest Act, 1927 was passed.  Enabled the British Government to regulate the cutting of grass and pasturing of cattle in 'protected forests'.
Late 1940s	Creation of the Rajasthan Canal or the Indira Gandhi Irrigation Canal  Reduction in pastoralism due to encroachment of grazing land by farmers due to its proximity to the canal.
1953	Rajasthan Forest Act was passed.  Enshrined traditional rights of locals to dry wood and grass, grazing in forests was legally allowed through fees paid for each animal, tree cutting or coppicing was prohibited.
1971	Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary established over 582 sq.km of Pali, Udaipur and Rajsamand districts. Grazing allowed with a fee but prohibited during the monsoon.
1974	Madhya Pradesh Grazing Rates Rules was passed.

	<p>Provisions made for issuing grazing licenses, transit grazing licenses (for transit of cattle through Government forests) and grazing rates (with distinction being made between ‘foreign’ cattle and livestock from adjoining states and cattle from Madhya Pradesh.</p> <p>Prohibitions placed on grazing in closed coupes, areas under plantations, and such other areas as were declared as closed for grazing by the Divisional Forest Officer.</p>
<b>1975</b>	<p>During the Emergency<sup>50</sup> a twenty point programme was started which included protection of forests and establishment of nurseries.</p> <p>In Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, grazing fees were levied and grazing was prohibited in parts of the sanctuary.</p>
<b>1979</b>	<p>Madhya Pradesh issued a notification under Rule 7 of the Madhya Pradesh Grazing Rates Rules.</p> <p>The notification increased the grazing fee levied on ‘foreign cattle’ and put restrictions on their stay in the state and also prescribed routes to be followed by the cattle of Rajasthan and Gujarat while in transit through the State of Madhya Pradesh.</p>
<b>1980s</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. World Bank funded the programme for the establishment of the Aravallis National Park. The Raika wrote to the Minister of Environment against this. He replied that they should stop keeping sheep and focus on education.</li> <li>2. A Writ Petition was filed by Lakshman and Others<sup>51</sup> (nomad grazers of Rajasthan and Gujarat) against the state of Madhya Pradesh in the Jabalpur High Court saying that the notification issued under Rule 7 of the Madhya Pradesh Grazing Rules of 1979 contravened their fundamental rights.</li> <li>3. Pasture and sheep development programme was developed in Rajasthan. It was initiated in order to settle mobile pastoralists, provide pasture for animals, plant trees and keep animal numbers in check. The demonstration pasture areas did not survive.</li> </ol>
<b>1982</b>	Hybridisation programme was started by the Rajasthan government.
<b>1984-1989</b>	Draught hit the Marwad region, which forced rearers to sell sheep stock eventually reducing the reproductive capacity of the flock.
<b>1983</b>	<p>6th May: Judgement of the Jabalpur High Court in the case of Laxman and Ors vs The State of Madhya Pradesh in which pastoralists from Rajasthan and Gujarat petitioned against the notification issued in 1974.</p> <p>The court quashed the levies on foreign cattle and declared the imposition of a time period for grazing of such cattle in Madhya Pradesh as unconstitutional.</p>
<b>1986</b>	30th June: Notification passed by the Madhya Pradesh state government under Sec 26 (2) (a) of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 making rules regulating grazing (pertaining to Rule 4 and Rule 8). It said that the state

<sup>50</sup>Kohler-Rollefson, I.(2014).

<sup>51</sup> Lakshman and Others vs. State of Madhya Pradesh WP(C) 504/2002 (1983) 3 SCC 275.

<https://indiankanoon.org/doc/704062/>

	government would specify entry and exit points and route/routes to be followed for grazing of cattle of adjoining states.
<b>1990s</b>	The government of Rajasthan issued order banning all livestock from forests. In July, many animals belonging to the Raika were seized. The Raika took part in major protests. After the elections, forests were reopened but several areas inside the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary remained closed.
<b>1994</b>	Raika included in the OBC list of Rajasthan along with Banjara/Baldia/Labana, Gadia-Lohar/Gadaliya, Gujjar/Gurjar and Gadaria/Gaadri communities.
<b>1996</b>	The Supreme Court (SC) passed an order prohibiting removal of any type of forest produce including dried and green wood, grass, leaves from protected areas.
<b>1999</b>	An Udaipur based Raika sentenced to 6 months imprisonment and Rs. 1000 fine by the Rajasthan High Court for selling camel milk. The HC decided that camel milk was hazardous to human health and therefore selling it was a criminal act. The justification was the absence of camel milk from the Rajasthan Dairy Act. The Raikas collected Rs. 20,000 for bail and hired a lawyer to petition in SC. SC overrode the judgement of the HC.
<b>2000</b>	<p>1. 14th February: The SC order on prohibition of dead, diseased, dying or wind-fallen trees, driftwood and grasses from a national park or game sanctuary was reiterated again.</p> <p>2. March: The Hindi translation of the SC order that reached the Sadri range forest office mentioned 'grazing' as prohibited activity although the original order did not mention it.</p> <p>3. A PIL was filed in Rajasthan HC by the Raika of Jojawar village in Pali district, stating that forest regulations were responsible for decline of the camels in Rajasthan.</p>
<b>2002</b>	Satbir Raika, Chairman, Rajasthan <i>Rabari Bhed Evam Unt Pashupalak Sangh</i> and Others filed a PIL in SC objecting to the Madhya Pradesh state government fixing routes for grazing foreign livestock in the 1986 notification, brought out under the Indian Forest Act <sup>52</sup> .
<b>2003</b>	<p>1. Mobile Indigenous Peoples run-up meeting to the World Parks Congress: Formal declaration about benefits of mobile people to the rest of society-approved by delegates of WPC.</p> <p>2. March: Rajasthan HC granted favourable order in the 2000 matter of the Jojawar Raika stating that camels were important and needed a place to graze and that customary pasture rights should be granted to camels.</p>
<b>2004</b>	March-April: Rajasthan Forest Department refused to issue grazing permits.

<sup>52</sup> *Satbir Raika vs State Of M.P. WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO.504 OF 2002*

<https://indiankanoon.org/doc/124308612/>

	<p>2nd July: The Central Empowered Committee<sup>53</sup> of the Supreme Court ordered all state governments to implement the 1996 order of the SC through a letter. The letter enumerated grazing as one of the activities strictly prohibited in PAs (not enumerated in original order).</p> <p>The Raika Sangharsh Samiti was formed. The Samiti wrote to the CEC to enumerate in detail which activities were permitted and which prohibited in Protected Areas.</p> <p>The Rajasthan HC approached the SC to clarify its stand on the March 2003 order in the Jojawar Raika case.</p>
<b>2006</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A PIL was filed in the Supreme Court on behalf of the Raika requesting the SC to clarify if it upheld a ban on grazing, since it had been allowed by the High Court in the matter of the Jojawar Raika in 2003.</li> <li>2. April: Due to the PIL filed by the Raika, the SC ordered the CEC and State government to file responses on Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary by July. Grazing was still completely banned in Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary. A member of the CEC visited Sadri on a fact-finding mission.</li> <li>3. 13th July: The CEC filed its report on Raika land holdings and livestock numbers, and attributed all other village cattle also to the Raika. The report argued for regulated grazing in Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary and asked the Chief Wildlife Warden to carry out an assessment of the carrying capacity of the Wildlife Sanctuary.</li> <li>4. 4th August: In the hearing on the case, the CEC report was tabled.</li> <li>5. September: The Chief Wildlife Warden and PCCF prepared a report, saying that in order to protect one of the last remaining stretches of the Aravalli, grazing should not be permitted in KWLS area.</li> <li>6. December: The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act was approved by the Parliament of India.</li> </ol>
<b>2008</b>	<p>The Cabinet of Rajasthan state brought out a law to grant Special Backward Class Status to four communities including the Raika, to grant 5% quota to these communities in government jobs and educational institutions.</p>
<b>2009</b>	<p>The law was stayed by Rajasthan High Court since total reservation exceeded by 50%.</p>
<b>2010</b>	<p>The Raika held a rally in Sadri demanding the implementation of the FRA and demanded the withdrawal of the decision of the Forest Department to levy a fine of Rs. 11 per day per sheep/goat.</p>
<b>2011</b>	<p>January 28th: The Supreme Court delivered what is now known as the 'Commons Judgement'. It mandated that Gram Panchayats have no</p>

<sup>53</sup>The Central Empowered Committee

	authority to allot, lease, sell or dispose commons (any common-use spaces including village ponds, wastelands) to anyone. It also said that the government can only allot commons for socially and economically weaker sections of society.
<b>2012</b>	February: The Rajasthan government floated a proposal to declare the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary a National Park. The Raika held a massive rally in Sadri against this decision and demanded the implementation of the FRA.
<b>2015</b>	The Rajasthan Special Backward Class (SBC) Reservation Act was passed which moved five communities including the Raika from OBC to Special Backward Class.
<b>2016</b>	December: The Rajasthan HC struck down the Rajasthan Special Backward Class Reservation Act, 2015; saying that there was no provision to exceed the reservation cap in the constitution (exceeded to 54%).
<b>2017</b>	<p>May: The Rajasthan State Government re-included the 5 communities in the OBC category.</p> <p>October: The Rajasthan assembly passed the Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions in the State and of Appointment and Posts in Services under the State) Bill, 2017 which increased reservation from 21% to 26% which now sets reservation in the state at 54%.</p> <p>October: The SC passed a judgement in the Satbir Raika case of 2002 in which it stated that although forests need to be protected, a State Government cannot prohibit cattle and livestock from moving from one place to another.</p>
<b>2018</b>	5th July: A Raika-Maldhari Parishad was held in Bali, Pali District in which the Maldhari Sangathan from Gujarat was also invited. This was essentially a gathering aimed at impacting the state elections and pressing for the demands of the pastoralist community, including grazing rights.

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