

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF RAIKA CAMEL PASTORALISTS OF RAJASTHAN

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## ABSTRACT

A total of 60 Raika pastoralists families owning camels were randomly selected from 4 purposively selected villages of Bikaner district. The quantitative and qualitative data were collected through structured interview schedule, observation and discussion. The finding revealed that majority of camel owners belonged to low socio economic status, medium level of family education status and large land holding with joint ownership of land and camel herd among family members. Although agriculture was found to be their major family occupation, however, all the Raika families were engaged in camel husbandry as one of their major source of family income. Sheep, goat and cattle were other common livestock species which they reared. Buffalo were found in negligible number among pastoralists. The average size of camel herd maintaining by selected families was 6.65. Majority of them had traditional type of equipments for camel management and utilised non-institutional source as compared to institutional and mass media sources for getting information related to camel husbandry.

Key words: Camel, Raika pastoralists, Rajasthan, socio-economic profile

Camels are considered as fairly constant resource for income generation among rural population of the Rajasthan. Camels are mostly reared by Jat, Muslims, Bishnoies, Rajput and Raika community people in Rajasthan and Rabaries in Gujarat. Khanna (1990) and Kumar and Yadav (2007) have also identified that Raikas as major camel breeding community in Rajasthan. The Raika camel breeders of Rajasthan believe that their caste was created by God Shiva in order to take care of dromedary camel (Köhler-Rollefson, 2001). The identity of this social group is still closely based on their historical connection with the camel. The Raika take pride in the fact that for them camel breeding is not just business but their heritage and they traditionally sell neither camel milk nor other camel product. Camels are also given as a dowry to their daughters in marriage. Until the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Raika supervise the camel breeding herds of the local Maharaja, who needed continuous supply of these animals for warfare. At the beginning of the century when the feudal system was dissolved and royal herds were auctioned off, most of these were acquired by the Raika. They started supplying male camels as draught animals to farmers and small scale transport entrepreneurs (Köhler-Rollefson and Rathore, 1996). They have lot of traditional knowledge about camel breeding,

feeding, management and health aspects etc. The Raika relationship with camel is based on cultural and moral ground rather than purely economic (Rathore, 2001). Continuing drought condition, reducing pasture lands, mechanisation of agriculture system, reducing the size of family structure, migration from native tract, boom of information technology etc. All of these factors directly or indirectly affecting the camel farming among pastoralists. Keeping in view of above facts present investigation has conducted to study the socio-economic status of Raika camel breeders.

## Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in 4 villages from 2 tehsils of Bikaner district of Rajasthan. These were selected purposively for study on the basis of existence of maximum Raika pastoralists. A total of 60 families were selected randomly from 4 selected villages with probability proportional to number of Raika families residing in the village. Quantitative and Qualitative data were generated through personal interview schedule along with participatory observation, interaction and discussion with key informants, aged persons, housewives and traditional healers. Data thus generated were analysed by calculating simple frequencies, percentages, means, etc. along with descriptive analysis.

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## Results and Discussion

### Socio-economic profile

The information on socio-economic profile of families were collected on different parameters such as age, education status, size and type, occupation, land holding, gross income, division of labour etc.

#### Age

The age wise distribution of the respondents is presented in Table 1. It indicates that majority of respondents (51.67%) belonged to middle age group (37-54 yrs), 20% to young and the rest belonged to old age categories.

#### Family education status

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (55%) had medium level of family education status. Thirty and 15% had low and high education status scores, respectively. About 40% of the respondents were found illiterate, 55% were educated upto primary and middle and the rest 5%, respondents who were found educated up to 12<sup>th</sup> standard. Patel *et al* (2008) also reported that most of the Kutchi camel breeders (96%) were illiterate and very few traditional breeders had education up to primary (2.7%) or secondary (1.35%) school level.

#### Family size and type

Table further indicates that majority of the respondent families (66.67%) had 5-8 members living under same roof whereas 23.33% of families had up to 4 members. Only 10% of the families came from large size having more than 8 members. Nuclear family system was found more prevalent among about 77% of Raikas and the rest belonged to joint family system.

#### Family occupation

A perusal of Table 1 indicates camel husbandry was found to be the major occupation amongst about 28% families, 45% families, however, had agriculture as their primary occupation. Marketing of camels and carting were the two major ways of earning through camel husbandry. Landless families (15%) were mainly engaged in wage employment and 12% of the Raikas were engaged in government jobs. Patel *et al* (2008) also reported that camel rearing was not enough to support family hence, majority of camel rearing families in Kutch district of Gujarat adopted mixed farming system.

#### Family land holding

Table 1 clearly shows that majority of the Raikas (73.33%) belonged to large farmer's category.

**Table 1.** Socio-economic profile of respondents. (N=60)

Variables	Number	%
<b>Age (yrs)</b>		
Young (18-36)	12	20.00
Middle (37-54)	31	51.67
Old (55-72)	17	28.33
<b>Family education status</b>		
Low (<0.06)	18	30.00
Medium (0.07-1.38)	33	55.00
High (>1.38)	09	15.00
<b>Family size</b>		
Small(≤4 members)	14	23.33
Medium (5-8 members)	40	66.67
Large (>8 members)	06	10.00
<b>Family type</b>		
Nuclear	46	76.67
Joint	14	23.33
<b>Family occupation</b>		
Camel husbandry	17	28.34
Agriculture	27	45.00
Govt. service	07	11.66
Labour or other independent occupation	09	15.00
<b>Family land holding</b>		
Landless	08	13.34
Marginal (≤2.5 acres)	-	-
Small (2.5 - 5 acres)	04	6.67
Medium (5 -10 acres)	04	6.66
Large (above 10 acres)	44	73.33
<b>Gross family income /month</b>		
<Rs.3000	08	13.33
Rs.3001-5000	33	55.00
Rs 5001-7000	10	16.67
>Rs. 7000	09	15.00
<b>Type of house</b>		
Hut	11	18.33
Katcha	16	26.67
Pucca	05	8.33
Mixed	28	46.67

Although they had above 10 acres of land but most of them were had joint ownership. Moreover, land productivity was found very low due to less rainfall, less irrigation facilities and major portion of their land was dry. About 13 per cent of the respondents were found landless while rest belonged to other categories. Findings of Patel *et al* (2008) also supported the study that traditional camel breeders in Kutch district of Gujarat has appreciable land holding. In contrary to this Köhler- Rollefson (1992) point out that

Raika gradually being forced out of their traditional occupation because of their landlessness.

### Gross family income

Family income of majority of the respondents (55%) ranged between Rs. 3000 to 5000 per month. About 13% of the families had their earning even less than Rs. 3000. Rest of respondents had their monthly family income more than Rs. 5000. It indicated that in general, Raikas had very low economic status. The family income was generated by camel carting, ploughing on other farmers fields, selling and purchasing of camel at the time of village fairs.

### Type of house

Majority of Raika families (46.67%) were residing in mixed type of houses followed by those spending their lives in Kutcha or mud houses (27%). A good number of families (18.33%) were also living in huts. Only 5 families had pucca houses that too belonged to large farmer's category (Table 1).

### Livestock holding

The data on livestock holding was documented in terms of average herd sizes of camel, sheep,

goat, cow and buffalo separately owned by the respondents.

### (a) Camels

Table 2 revealed that average camel herd size among the selected Raika families was 6.65. The average female camel per family was found more (4.41) as compared to male camel (1.25). It indicated that Raika are interested more in keeping female camels probably due to fact that females can be utilised for milk, transportation and increase size of herd. Most of them owned Bikaneri breed of camel, barring few who were also keeping Jaisalmeri breed. Majority of families (66.67%) had single/ individual ownership of camel while 33.33% also had joint ownership of camel herd. Tandon *et al* (1997) reported that 60% farmers in Bikaner district maintained 4 camels per family. It indicated that Raika generally keep more number of camels in comparison to other caste categories. A survey conducted by the National Research Centre on Camels, Bikaner on traditional camel management in Kutch district (Anonymous, 1992) revealed that the herds size of camel varied from small (5-15) to large (80-150) and few herds had more than 500 camels.

**Table 2.** Livestock holding owned by the respondents

(N= 60)

S.No	Types of animal 1	No. of owners 2	No. of animal 3	Total animal 4	Average animal owning families 5 (3/2)	Average animal per families 6 (3/60)	Average animal in all families 7 (4/60)
(a)	<b>Camels</b>						
	Adult male	35	75		2.14	1.25	
	Adult female	45	265	399	5.88	4.41	6.65
	Young male	25	36		1.44	0.60	
	Young female	12	23		1.91	0.38	
(b)	<b>Sheep</b>						
	Ewe	24	394		16.41	6.56	
	Ram	20	24	525	1.2	0.40	8.75
	Lamb	21	107		5.09	1.78	
(c)	<b>Goats</b>						
	Goat	27	322		11.92	5.36	
	Buck	15	28	410	1.86	0.466	6.83
	Kid	19	60		3.15	1.00	
(d)	<b>Cows</b>						
	Lactating	29	85		2.93	1.41	
	Heifers	12	25	143	2.08	0.41	2.38
	Calf	22	33		1.50	0.55	
(e)	<b>Buffaloes</b>						
	Lactating	09	12		1.33	0.20	
	Heifers	04	06	23	1.50	0.10	0.38
	Calves	03	05		1.66	0.08	

### (b+c) Sheep and Goats

The average size of sheep flock among the respondents was 8.75 as compared to goats i.e. 6.83. It indicated that sheep were reared more than the goats by the Raikas due to the fact that shearing of wool from sheep was one of the major source of income among pastoralists.

### (d+e) Cows and Buffaloes

Table 2 further indicated that the average number of cows per family was found to be 2.38 while number of buffaloes was found almost negligible i.e. 0.38. It indicated that buffaloes were reared less by Raikas as compared to cattle. Difficulty in management due to hot climatic conditions and costly feeding were the reasons reported by the respondents.

### Material possession

Table 3 showed that more than 30% of Raika families had plough and axe as main agricultural implements followed by land levelers that too kept only by 5% families. Camel cart as means of transportation was kept by about 33% of the families followed by bicycle (18%) and two-wheeler motorised vehicle (12%). Among means of communication, more than 30% of families had radio whereas television set and telephone were owned only by negligible number of families.

None of Raika family had refrigerator, chaff cutter, gas stove, tractor or any other electrical implements. It indicated that Raikas were using most of traditional implements and technical tools.

### Urban Contact

Eighty per cent of the respondents reported that they rarely visited cities or urban areas with their family members except during the occasions of animal fair or to attend ceremonial functions of their relatives. However, 65% of the respondents often

Table 3. Equipment/ materials possessed by respondents. (N=60)

S.No	Equipments/material	f	%
(i)	Camel cart	20	33.33
(ii)	Cycle	11	18.33
(iii)	Radio	20	33.33
(iv)	TV	02	3.33
(v)	Motorised vehicle	07	11.66
(vi)	Plough	23	38.33
(vii)	Axe	20	33.33
(viii)	Land leveler	03	5.00
(ix)	Telephone	01	1.66
(x)	Tractor	-	-
(xi)	Refrigerator	-	-
(xii)	Chaff cutter	-	-
(xiii)	Gas Stove	-	-

Table 4. Information sources utilisation pattern of respondents. (N=60)

S.No	Information sources	Frequency of utilisation		
		Regularly(f)	Sometimes(f)	Never(f)
(a)	<b>Institutional sources</b>			
	Village panchayat personnel	—	12(20.00)	48(80.00)
	Extension personnels	—	6(10.00)	54(90.00)
	Vet. doctors/compounder	—	20(33.33)	40(66.67)
	NRCC scientists	2(3.33)	8(13.33)	50(83.34)
(b)	<b>Non-institutional sources</b>			
	Other camel owners	52(86.67)	8(13.33)	—
	Village key personnels	12(20.00)	39(65.00)	9(15.00)
	Vaids/ traditional healers	10(16.67)	50(83.33)	—
	Own family members	47(78.33)	13(21.67)	—
(c)	<b>Mass media sources</b>			
	Radio	—	16(26.67)	44(73.33)
	TV	—	2(3.33)	58(96.67)
	Newspaper	—	21(35.00)	39(65.00)
	Farm publication	—	5(8.33)	55(91.67)
	Animal fairs	—	41(68.33)	19(31.67)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage



visited urban areas with other villagers to purchase seeds, fertilizers, cattle feed etc. It was observed that the respondents who were engaged either in government service or camel carting occupations, used to visit alone (40%) to nearby city or town more frequently than others.

### Information sources utilisation

#### (a) Institutional sources

A perusal of Table 4 revealed that veterinary doctor/ compounder (33.33%) at village and tehsil levels followed by village panchayat personnel (20%), NRCC scientists (13.33%) and extension personnels (10%) were the institutional sources of information sometimes utilised by the respondents. Barring 2 families, who were regularly consulting NRCC scientists for receiving information related to camel husbandry, rest of the families were not using such sources of information regularly.

#### (b) Non-institutional sources

Regular discussion with other camel owners (86.67%) followed by own family members (78.33%) were the major non institutional sources of information used by Raikas regularly. Vaidis / traditional healers were the non institutional sources, consulted by majority of the Raikas at most of the time.

#### (c) Mass media sources

Among mass media sources, animal fair was the major source of information utilised by about 68% of the respondents followed by reading newspaper (35%) and listening radio (26.67%). Thus, the data clearly indicates that non-institutional sources of information were utilised more by the Raikas as compared to institutional and other mass media for receiving camel husbandry related information.

### Division of Labour

Involvement of male and female members of Raika families was studied in various outdoor as well as indoor camel husbandry related activities. Table 5 showed that taking camel to grazing pastures, bathing, ploughing, carting, training to camel and milking were the activities performed exclusively by male members of families. Treatment of sick animals through indigenous preparation, grooming, watering, cutting and transportation of fodder for camels were performed mostly by the male members of Raika families where the involvement of females in such activities was found less. Activities like collection of dung for fuel, processing of milk and feeding

**Table 5.** Division of labour among Raika families. (N=60)

S.No	Types of activities	Involvement	
		Males (%)	Females (%)
(i)	Preparing feed for camel	35(58.33)	25(41.67)
(ii)	Taking animal to grazing pastures	60(100)	-
(iii)	Cutting and transportation of fodder	40(66.67)	20.(33.33)
(iv)	Chaffing of fodder	-	-
(v)	Feeding of camel at home	25(41.67)	35(58.33)
(vi)	Watering of camel	45(75.00)	15(25.00)
(vii)	Cleaning of camel bara/ open shed	4(6.67)	56(93.33)
(viii)	Milking	60(100)	-
(ix)	Processing of milk and its products	-	60(100)
(x)	Dung collection	-	60(100)
(xi)	Bathing of camel	60(100)	-
(xii)	Grooming of camel	48(80.00)	12(20.00)
(xiii)	Selling and purchasing of camel	55(91.67)	5(8.33.00)
(xiv)	Taking camel for ploughing	60(100)	-
(xv)	Taking camel for carting	60(100)	-
(xvi)	Taking camel to vet. hospital	60(100)	-
(xvii)	Care of sick animal	15(25.00)	45(75.00)
(xviii)	Care of animal during pregnancy	11(18.33)	49(81.67)
(xix)	Care of new born calves	8(13.33)	52(86.66)
(xx)	Preparing and giving indigenous medicine to suffering camel	56(93.33)	4. (6.67)
(xxi)	Training of camel	60(100)	-

animals at home were independently performed by the female members of Raika families. On the other hand, cleaning of camel shed, care of animal during pregnancy, sick animal and care of newborn calf were the activities performed by more number of female members as compared to males. Children were also playing crucial role in supporting to their parents in many of the activities like preparing feed for camel, taking them for grazing, collection of dung, grooming, bathing and cleaning of camel shed etc. Thus, it indicated that women of the Raika families were not involved in outdoor camel husbandry activities. Their involvement was highly restricted only to the activities performed at home. It was interesting to note that the involvement of females was found more in activities related to other livestock, species as compare to camels like sheep, goat and cattle.

Cultural norms, customs, prevailing purdha system (women keeping face covered) etc may be the reasons for low involvement of females in outdoor activities.

### Conclusions

The study concluded that Raika community of Rajasthan had low socio-economic status and used traditional type of equipments for camel management and daily requirements at their home. They have large land holding and categorised under category of large farmers but low and erratic rainfall and joint ownership of land and livestock among family members results of this their economic condition was poor. All of the selected Raika families depend on camel husbandry as their family source of income besides agriculture. The Raikas engaged in camel cart occupation were able to earn for their family but other families also possessed other livestock's such as cow, sheep and goat for their sustenance. Most of them utilised non-institutional sources as compared to institutional and mass media sources to receive information about camel husbandry. It reflected that they had less knowledge about recent scientific methods of camel management that would be more beneficial for them.

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