



# Land Cover/Land Use Change: Exploring the Impacts on the Sahariya Tribe in Baran District

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## ABSTRACT

The present study explored the changes in forest cover in one tribal region, village of Khanda Sharol, within the state of Rajasthan, India; and examined how these changes have affected access to and the use of Non-timber Forest Products (NTFP) by Sahariya tribal households. The study also examined the implications of changes in the access to and use of NTFP on the livelihood of tribal members and the feasibility of continuing a community-based management system for the sustainable production of NTFPs.

This was a descriptive study. Historical, as well as current data was collected through surveys and interviews. A family information report survey covering various dimensions was administered to each of 365 households of the Khanda Sharol village. Individual interviews and focus groups with tribal members were conducted to gather information regarding NTFP collection patterns (past and present) and details of forest proximity.

This collective study indicates that there was a decline in forest cover which resulted in a loss of compilation of NTFP. Furthermore, there was a decline in the livelihoods of the residents of the village, although a direct and unequivocal link between change in forest cover and livelihood patterns cannot be established. These relationships are complex and simple causal relationships cannot easily be drawn. Nonetheless, this research has been able to identify how changes in the forest cover over the past 50 years have affected access and use of NTFP of the tribal households in the village. In turn these changes suggest shifts in household economic production which then can be tied to poverty, health and education of tribal members.

Key words: Deforestation, BAIF, Non-timber Forest products, Livelihood and Communal land management. iii

## KEY WORDS;-

the feasibility, household, Rajputana', comprises desert, Aryans, wilderness

## Study Area

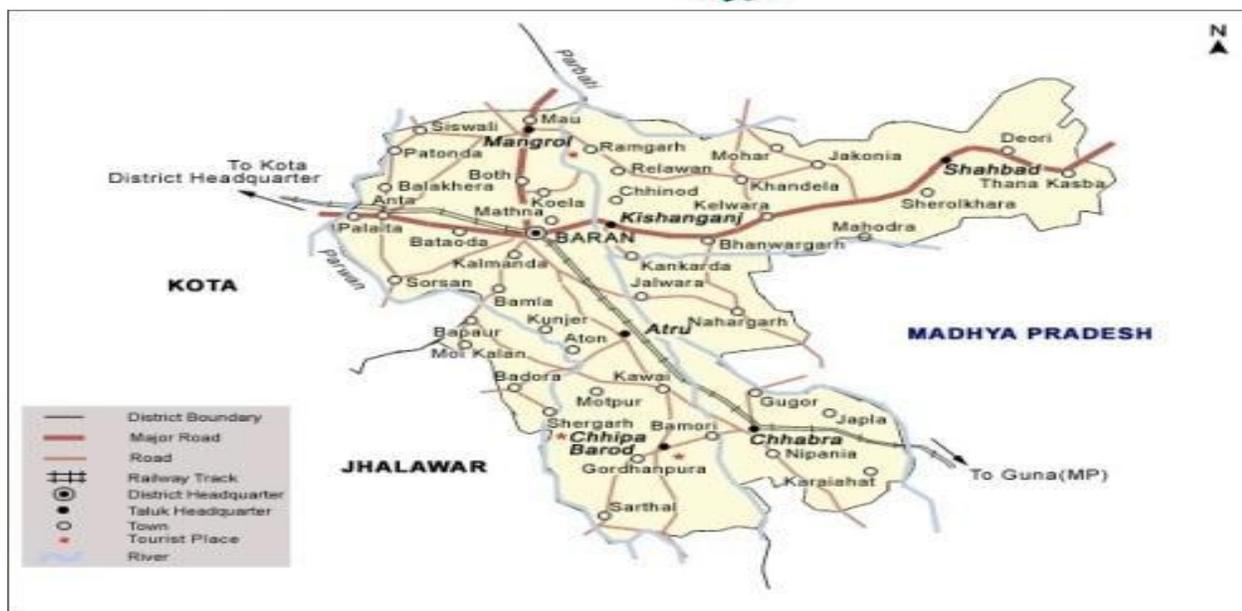
This study was conducted in Khanda Sharol village located in Baran District in the state of Rajasthan, India. Prior to 1950, Rajasthan was known as 'Rajputana', the state of the Rajputs to recognize that most of the princely states in that region were ruled by Rajput kings. In 1950, many princely states were integrated together to form the state of Rajasthan (Johnson, 1996). Rajasthan is located in the north-west arid part of India and is the largest state in India with a geographic area of 342,239 km<sup>2</sup>. The area of Rajasthan is equivalent to that of Norway, Italy or Poland (Countries of the World by Area, 2011). Rajasthan constitutes 10.4% of India's total land area, and shares an international border with Pakistan to the west and north-west (Forest Survey of India, 2009). To the north and northeast Rajasthan borders the states of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh; to the east and south-east the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and to the southwest the state of Gujarat .

Rajasthan is divided into four major physiographic regions: i) the western desert (the Thar Desert) with barren hills, rocky and sandy plains; ii) the Aravalli hills running south-west to north-east starting from Gujarat and ending in Delhi; iii) the eastern plains with rich alluvial soils; and iv) the south-eastern plateau (Forest Survey of India, 2009). The state has varied climate ranging from semi-arid to arid. The temperature in the state ranges from sub-zero to 50° C and the average rainfall ranges from 480 to 750 mm .

The majority (91.88%) of the people living in Rajasthan are Hindus, and Hindi is the most commonly spoken language (Joshi, Srinivas, & Bajaj, 2003). The indigenous peoples of Rajasthan speak either Rajasthani or Marwari, although Hindi is the official language of the state. The total population of the state is over 68.6 million (Census, Government of India, 2011). The rural population composition is over 51.5 million (75.1%) (Government of India, 2011c). Rajasthan has less than one-third (29%) of its households living in urban areas and the remaining 71% of its households are in rural areas; on average each household has five members (Government of Rajasthan, 2018).

The main cities of Rajasthan are Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Kota (which is the nearest city to Baran district, where the research site of Khanda Sharol village is located). Ninety-three percent of the Sahariya Tribe members live in Rajasthan and the remaining 7% are spread across the country (Sharma, 2005). The average decadal growth rate of population in this state is 21.44% (see Table 2.1). Since 2001, Rajasthan's population density has increased from 129 persons per square kilometer (Government of India, 2001) to 201 persons per square kilometer (Census, Government of India, 2011); Baran District, located in the south eastern plateau of Rajasthan and bordered by the state of Madhya Pradesh, has a population of over 1.2 million and population density of 175 persons per square kilometer (Census, Government of India, 2011). Table 2.1 shows a comparison of population, sex ratio and decadal growth in India, Rajasthan and Baran District, home of Khanda Sharol Village, the site of this research. According to the provisional census report of 2011, decadal growth in 2001-2011 registered the sharpest decline since independence.

	Total population		Sex ratio (female per thousand man)		Decadale growth(Percentage)	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
RAJASTHAN	56507188	68621021	921	926	28.41	21.44
BARAN	1021653	1,223,921	909	926	26.08	19.82



### Forest Cover

The western half of Rajasthan comprises desert, whereas forests are generally found in the eastern and southern parts of the state. Approximately 9.57% of the state's area is recorded as forests (Government of Rajasthan, 2019). In comparison to other states of India, Rajasthan is deficient in natural forest resource (Forest Survey of India, 2019). The floral wealth of Rajasthan is rich and varied; however, Vyas (2019) states that the natural forests of Rajasthan are lowest in terms of area as well as productivity. Moreover, the forests are disproportionately distributed in the various districts of the state. Fifty percent of the forests are over the hilly areas spanning eleven districts including Baran (Government of Rajasthan, 2019). Dense natural forests have been turned into protected patches, mostly confined to various national parks and wild-life sanctuaries. There are five national parks and 26 wildlife sanctuaries covering an area of 9,395 km<sup>2</sup> (Forest Survey of India, 2019)

### Baran District

Baran District has a geographical area of 6,992 km<sup>2</sup> with a forest cover of 1,089 km<sup>2</sup> (Forest Survey of India, 2019). The forest cover includes 149 moderate dense forests (lands having tree cover with canopy density between 40% and 70%) and 940 open forests (lands having tree cover with canopy density between 10% and 40%) (Forest Survey of India, 2019). Baran has eight tehsil, Shahabad being one of them. Shahabad Tehsil has a total of 236 villages including Khanda Sharol (Sharma, 2005).

### Khanda Sharol Village

Khanda Sharol Village in the Baran District is located at 25° 09' N latitude and 77 ° 06' E longitudes (Figure 2.2 -Satellite image). This village is in close proximity (a radius of ten kilometers) to six other villages (Ghesua, Kaloni, Bichi, Mamoni, Indira colony and Dhikwani) in the Baran District. The village has 365 households with a total population of 1,983. Khanda Sharol Village has two elementary schools (Grade 1-7) and one high school, one health centre and an 'Angan wadi' (government run wellness centre which provides nutritious food packets to children and pregnant women). One elementary school is exclusively for the Scheduled Tribe children. To understand the village composition of the different castes present, it is important to understand a little bit about the background of the caste system in India.

#### Background information on Indian Caste System

The nomadic people of India called the Indo Aryans were divided into four castes or social categories. The divisions were based on inherent qualities or career potentials of each individual.

The four castes were (Bhaskarananda, 1998):

- 1) Brahmin or priestly caste (learned people who could give moral and spiritual guidance; example, priests and teachers)
- 2) Kshatriyas or military caste (people capable of martial qualities; example, warriors, kings and administrators).
- 3) Vaisyas or merchants caste (people gifted with business shrewdness; example, merchants)
- 4) Shudras (all others belonged to this caste; example, farmers, artisans, labourers, and others).

Over centuries, the Aryan society experienced considerable change under various rulers, including the Greeks, Huns, Arabs, Turks, Afghans, Persians, Mongols (Mughals), Portuguese, French and British (Bhaskarananda, 1998). Muslim rulers, from Muhammad of Ghor to the Mughals such as Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, ruled over portions of India for over 600 years. By the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, the British assumed power; however British government relinquished its hold on the subcontinent in 1947 when India gained its independence (Majumdar, 1960).

#### Present Demographics

Khanda Sharol has a total population of 2474 people including 1020 men, 954 women and 500 children under the age of 18 (see Table 2.2). Among the four communities of people in the village ST members are considered as the lowest in the group, the second are the SCs, then OBC. Others are non-Hindus in the community and do not belong to a caste; they represent 0.65% of the village's population and rank the highest in the social and economic hierarchy.

**The sahariya-** The name Sahariya is said to be derived from the Arabian word 'Sehara' or 'wilderness' (National Informatics Centre, 2011). The above-mentioned Muslim rulers (see Section 2.5.1) found the Sahariya tribes people residing in the jungle, and reportedly gave them their present name 'Sahr' which means 'Jungle' and accordingly they came to be called 'Sahariya' meaning residents of the jungle (Sharma, 2005). Sahariyas are believed to be the first settlers in Rajasthan; hence the Rajasthan Government has declared this area as the Sahariya region (Government of Rajasthan, 2002) Residing in communities with non-Sahariya members, the Sahariyas mostly live in a separate area in the village which is called 'Saharana'. In villages, ties to the caste system are very strong and people belonging to the same caste live in close proximity (field notes, 2010). Sahariya tribes practice Hinduism as their religion and speak a dialect influenced by Hadoti (a dialect of Rajasthani language) (Survey Results 2010).

In a recent study, Sharma (2005) found that 90% of the Sahariya tribe were labourers, 4% owned land, and 6% had other jobs (e.g. a security guard, other government job). Men, women and children serve as agricultural labourers for landlords or money lenders. Although the Government of India had fixed a sum of 78 Rupees (Rs.) per day as minimum wage for Sahariya labourers to improve their economic condition, they are often paid as little as Rs. 50 per day as there is no means of enforcement (Sharma, 2005). Consequently multiple members of a family, including children, work to meet the most basic of household needs. When a Sahariya is sick or is unable to work on a given day it is not uncommon for double the amount of his daily wage to be deducted from his pay (Sharma, 2005). These conditions limit any opportunity to save income, most often forcing a majority (70%) of all Sahariya households into debt (Sharma, 2005). To get rid of these debts they have to work as an indentured labour for the remainder of their lives and in some cases the debt of a passing parent will be transferred to their surviving children. My study examines in particular the livelihoods of the Sahariya tribe – the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes (Untouchables) among other residents of Khanda Sharol village. The next chapter presents the literature review relevant to this study.

### Conclusion

As stated above, this research is a descriptive study which presents the 'lay of the land' as it currently exists. The data can be used in the future for a longitudinal study to examine changes in the livelihood of the members of Khanda Sharol village when the communal land is in full production. The next chapter presents the results of the current study

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