CHAPTER-III

CHANGING STRUCTURE OF THE VILLAGE ECONOMY

Since the beginning of the Nineteenth century the Indian village has been the subject of discussion by British administrators, scholars in diverse fields, and Indian Nationalists. The village acquired the status of a self-sufficient and unchanging category during the colonial period. Apart from the questions of empirical validity, the colonial construction of Indian village had great influence on the later imaginings of India. Oversimplified account of the village in pre-British India was repeated by writer after writer for the next 150 years. "The influential account of the Indian village was in Sir Charles Metcalfe's Minute is included in the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons Committee of the 1832 (Vol. iii, Appendix 84, p. 331). Metcalfe revived Munro's characterisation of village as 'little republics' which were 'almost independent of foreign relations', instead of the unchanging internal economy of the Fifth Report, Metcalfe used the expression, 'having nearly everything that they want within themselves'. The village in India, where life was described as 'self-sufficient' 'unchanging' and 'peaceful', is a presupposition with no substantial evidence. As Srinivas rightly pointed out, "The erroneous, idealized, and oversimplified view of the Indian village first propounded by the early British administrators was later cast into the framework of universal history by Marx and Maine." 

161 Srinivas, M.N, Indian Village Myth and Reality, 1955
The appearance of self-sufficiency was enhanced by caste-wise division of labour. A closer look at the village will, however, reveal several loopholes in self-sufficiency. Even a basic commodity like salt was not produced in most villages, and many spices also came from outside. Iron, indispensable for ploughs and other agricultural implements, was not available everywhere, and iron-smelting was localised industry. Sugar-cane was not grown in all villages and it was the biggest source of jaggery, widely used by the peasantry.163

During the last six decades, rural India has undergone tremendous changes. Changes brought in through Panchayatiraj and development institutions have greater impact on socio-economic and power structure of village. The twin shackles of India’s villages, caste and agriculture, no longer exercise a strong hold. The association of castes with specialised occupation is also loosening today. Panchayatiraj, rural development and population pressure have brought a whole new range of occupations which is free from purity-impurity considerations. The village level worker, agricultural assistant, tractor driver/mechanic, school teacher and contractors and such other occupations have become quite common in rural areas. These occupations are actively sought after because of the security of job, regular income and the prestige attached. However some traditional occupations in villages are still governed by caste norms. While there has been some degree of loosening of norms that govern inter-caste relations and there is greater degree of freedom in the choice of occupations, slow growth of agricultural and increasing scarcity of land forced the villagers to take up activities other than agriculture. Even in the past there was considerable occupational mobility across caste boundaries.164 -The unequal distribution of village resources like land and water is also encouraging villagers to make their living from occupation other than agriculture. Gradually, these endogenous and exogenous factors have been restructuring the occupational pattern of the village where more and more villagers looking elsewhere for both livelihood and respect. Slowly, the villagers are moving from their agrarian pasts to a non-agrarian present and

164 See Panini, M.N, Working Paper Series on Caste, School of Social Science, JNU.
future. I want to study how recent changes in agriculture and related activities have affected the village social life in this chapter.

The structure of economic life in the remote villages of the Kalahandi district can be illuminated by examining some statistics. We shall have a brief discussion on demographic data of the village that alone tells a part of the story. The village is the universe of my study. It is located 22 km from the district headquarter, Bhawanipatna on the way to Khariar. Although the poverty and famine of Kalahandi has always been attributed to hydrological drought, the village under study does not fit the image rightly. Indeed there is no scarcity of water in the village which is beside the river Tel, the biggest in Kalahandi district. There is also a stream that flows next to the village. There are at least five ponds and 25 wells in the village. In my field study I conducted interviews of members of all 492 households of village Paria to gather information on their occupations, income, expenditure and other socio-economic related issues. The table (3.1) shows the detail description about the population of village Paria.

**Table 3.1: Population Composition of Paria (in 2004-05)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.C.</th>
<th>S.T.</th>
<th>O.B.C.</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>502</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>1058</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own source

The total population of the village is 2166 persons with 492 households and 7 ethnic groups in the village. 49 percent of the village population belongs to Scheduled Caste (SC) category which consists of two communities, Domb (agriculture by occupations) and Mahar (basket makers). The second largest population with 43 percent belong to Schedule Tribe (ST) category which again is divided in two communities, Sabar and Kondh (agriculture and related activities). The other backward caste (OBC) makes up 8 percent of the total population, which comprises of three communities Gouda (milkmen), Sahu (trading and money lending) and Mali (gardeners). There is a clear
demarcation in the residential settlement based on caste and community. The Dombs occupy the southern side of the village known as harijan pada, while the remaining six groups live next to each others' colony from south to north starting from Goud Pada, Malid Pada, Sabar Pada, Mahar Pada, Sundi Pada, Majhi Pada and the extreme west the Mal Pada a settlement extension of Sabar community. However in mundane interactions the village as a whole is divided in to broader Padas, Bhal Pada (residence of the good people), and Domb Pada (residence of the untouchables). Apart from these traditional occupations, the villagers earn their livelihoods through numerous activities. Some of the new occupations have become so much associated with a particular caste that it is regarded as the exclusive occupation of that caste. However, data collected in the village shows major changes in the occupational pattern.

3.1. Occupation Structure of the Village Paria

There are significant changes found in the occupational patterns of the village. Perhaps the most significant change has been in the pattern of employment. Wage labour and agriculture are by no means the only economic activities available to the villagers, though one might well get such an impression from government documents and media report about Kalahandi. There are a host of alternative or "informal" sources of income that may supplement or even exceed income from wages and crops. In the village Paria, I found that people making their living not only through wage labour and farming, but by making baskets, selling beer, running small shops, selling firewood, trading animals, working in government projects under the "Food for Work" programme, making charcoal, dispensing traditional medicines and cures, fetching firewood or water; building house, making furniture. Of all these pursuits, basket making, migration and owning shop are by far the most significant sources of livelihood. The other occupations also made substantial and consistent contributions to more than a few households. For the poorest households, these other resources may be all that stands between them and destitution and hunger. Indeed, my findings show that, the main source of livelihood for 54 percent of the population is derived from off-farm employment and wage labour outside the village. This is a factor that the census enumerators have not quite grasped, they still project 71 percent of the village population as farmers and hence the census figures are probably not
very appropriate. The importance of occupational changes in the village is not fully captured by census figures, or by statistical surveys that I have discussed under labour economy.

Despite occupational diversification, agriculture still emerges as the single major livelihood option in the village with 46 percent of population deriving more than 50 percent of their incomes. Except for the SCs of the village, the rest attribute agriculture to be one of the major sources of income. There are statistics that point to the slow growth rates of agriculture and to the increasing migration from village. I have found in the village 22 types of different non-farm occupations that provide livelihoods to 56 percent of the village population. Among other reasons, the skewed distribution of land in the village possibly could be one of the important reasons for the gradual changes of the village occupation. In the village 145 households are landless (29.47 %), 277 small holders (56.30%), 38 marginal holders (7.72%), 25 medium holders (5.01%) and seven big holders (1.5%).

Agriculture in Kalahandi has always lurched from crisis to crisis. Owing to this uncertain state, the people have developed various alternative sources of livelihoods along with farming and wage labour. Drawing on this approach, I made an attempt to show the different source of income generation, improved assets, reduced vulnerability, and the sustainable use of natural resources in the village.

3.2. Caste and Community Based Occupations
The occupations mentioned in the table (3.2) are widely distributed across community and caste. Agriculture and migrations are the common occupations in the village, where all castes and communities practice it. The occupational specialties are basket making, barbering, trading, herding, fishing, carpentering and playing music. These occupations are exclusively practiced by separate castes and communities. There are no social norms constraining occupational choice but considerations of clean and unclean occupation

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165 In my operational definition, 'landless households are those who do not own any cultivable land; (may have homestead land), 'small farmers' and; 'small holders', with 0.4 to 0.8 ha; 'marginal holders' 0.8 to 2 ha; 'medium holders' 2.0 to 4.0 ha; 'the big holders' more than 4 ha.
influence choice. Some of these occupations are locally considered to be unclean and are confined to certain castes and the others are traditional and skilled based which simply cannot be taken up by others. For instance, the Mahars, the Dombs SCs have occupations. The Mahars weaves baskets, an ancestrally acquired craft. Seventy-five families in the village have been earning their livelihoods from this craft. The Mahars consider themselves as superior to the Dombs because the latter pursue some ‘unclean’ occupations. The Dombs, other SC group, take cooked food and water from the Mahar but the latter cannot take these things from Dombs without being polluted. The

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>No of Households</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Caste/Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Basket Making</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>Mahar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Migrants (wage labourers)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Masonary/Carpentry</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>SCs/STs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Shops</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Livestock Trader</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>SCs (Dombs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Mahua Selling</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SCs (Dombs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Government Service</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Grain Trading</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Driving (tractor/truck)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Basket Selling</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>SCs (Dombs/Mahars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>STs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Fitters</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Medicine men/ Quacks</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Contractors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Naria (cow herding)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>SCs (Dombs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Occupations</td>
<td>No of Households</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Caste/Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Lea/Chuda (Itinerant sellers -puffed rice)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>SCs (Dombs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Employment in private trading houses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Factory employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Boat sailor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>No bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own source

_Dombs_ are engaged in a wide range of occupations from agriculture to trading livestock/poultry keeping, but occupation such as playing music, scavenging, livestock trading are locally considered to be unclean. The other castes/communities in the village feel themselves polluted if they play musical instrument which are played by the _Dombs_. There are ten households in the village who exclusively play music. Again cattle (cow/buffalo) trading is also exclusively practised by the _Dombs_ although in the past it was practised by the STs as well, I was informed. Twenty-five men over 35 years of age are engaged in cattle trading. Regardless of its return, the trade is locally considered to be unclean. These are petty traders buying and selling animals within the locality. "It is a tiring job and there are also insecurities, if an animal dies we go bankrupt but when things go well the returns are satisfactory" the traders commented, "When the cattle dies, it becomes unclean and nobody other than the _Dombs_ in the village touches the carcass" they commented giving reasons as to why the others do not take up this job. Livestock trading other than the trading of cows is taken up by all castes even by the OBC the higher caste in the village. Villagers’ opinions on clean and unclean are not congruent, but one can assume from their beliefs and attitudes that underneath the polluted and non-polluted tasks lie the community identity tagged with occupations.

The villagers used to practice caste/community based occupations, where the reminiscent does still exist in the village. It is widely believed that the _Dombs_ were
landless immigrant of the village who used to perform all “dirty” and “unclean” occupations. They served as musicians, scavengers and the weavers in the village and these occupations till recently are exclusively practice only by the Dombs. Weaving has lost its viability due to well recognised reason, the arrival of British manufactures cotton fabrics that destroyed the spinning-wheel. My informant told me that weaving was only dignified occupation among the Dombs and so widely entrenched with the community that the eligibility of the bridegroom is determined if he knew the skill and for bride if she knows how to make thread. Weaving was practiced in the village till the early 1990s. My informant gave two names of Dombs (Dina Haripal and Kusru Haripal), who used to weave cloths in spinning-wheel. Due to social awareness and gradual economic progress owing to migration, occupational diversifications and impact of awareness campaign like the Mahima dharma Dombs gradually refuse to perform unclean jobs like scavenging, tanning and sweeping. The other communities in the village, threat in them with physical abuses, social and economic boycotts for refusing to perform the same. The incident reached its climax in 2002, when the Dombs felt discriminated in the Laxmi Pooja which was organised by the villagers. In a Jati Sabha (Caste Panchayat), the Dombs issued a decree all such unclean jobs. In all village festivals like nuakhai (harvesting festival), podmara (sacrifice a male buffalo for rain god), Choitra (worship of village goddess for preventing sickness and diseases), marriage and death, playing music is inevitable and it is exclusively performed by the Dombs. (a group of 5 to 6 male play different instrument namely Dhol, Muree, Tasha, Nisan, Taal and Jhumka. For a short function they earn Rs. 800 and for playing music for one day they earn Rs. 1500 as a group. Although playing music is not so well respected in the society, it is a lucrative and relatively well paid job in the village. Even today only the Dombs play the musical instruments and if others attempt to play musical instruments they are outcasted. The Dombs had played important part in village economy, as plough-servants and casual labourers with whose help the

166 Nuakhai- is a major festival of western Orissa. It is celebrated in an auspicious day in the last week of august. The agrarian festival celebrated each year gives an opportunity to the family members to unite on this particular day and pay gratitude towards their ancestral gods and goddess. The inhabitants also thank almighty for a good weather and a successful crop. The first prasad (sacred ingredients) prepared out of the nuan dhan (new paddy) was offered to the presiding deity of the village called ‘dharni khunti’ in the presence of hundreds of devotees. The farmers perform the same in their respective houses also, Nuakhai is observed welcoming the new rice-paddy of the season. This is an agrarian festival, celebrated at the occasion of first harvest.
other communities are able to manage labourer crisis at the time of sowing and harvest. They used to work under different kinds of labour contract like (a) *halia* - annual agricultural labour in the lender's house; (b) *Goti* - free agricultural services to the village headman (Gountia).

*Mahar* with 75 households in the village have been weaving baskets of various sizes for generations to cater to the needs of farmers. All of them live by making artifacts with bamboos, earlier collected from nearby forests but now bought from the middle men. They make essential articles such as different kinds of baskets, fish traps, winnow, and sell their products in the village, shanty and weekly market. Very few basket-makers own any real property (in the village ho is land and permanent structures like house) attached to it in the village and all of them live in hand to mouth basis. While the basket-makers make essential articles for the villagers, they are not regarded as properly belonging to the village. Many of them do not own land not even homestead land. As a result many migrate but very few return to the village. As many as ten families, the community members recalled, have not returned for more than two to five years. Their occupation has been getting setback for variety of reasons that I have mentioned under sub-heading migrations. Their economic situations, as they and the villagers said, remain the same as it goes “*genti ke senti acchun*”. Another group of SCs (*Dombs*) sell baskets which they buy from the tribals located around 12 to 15 km away from the village. These baskets are big containers called “*topa*” or “*kunli*” which the farmers use for keeping grains. Seven households engage in this occupation throughout the year.

*Sahus* are small minority in the village, with 11 (2.23 %) households having only 56 members. All *Sahus*, in general, are well off economically. Seven families are rich modern farmers having tractors, pump sets, possessing land between 45 to 50 acres. But the rest four families were relative well off in the village. The *Sahus* came to the village as a *Kuthi wala* (mahuwa seller). Still two families practice their traditional occupation. Over the years they expanded into agro-business and eventually to moneylending which is an entrenched part of agro-business in the region. With their monopoly over agro-

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167 See Chapter V for details
business, moneylending and cultivation of commercial crops, over the years they have emerged as one of the prosperous castes in the village. No households solely dependent on agriculture but an amalgamation of different activities such as owning a grocery shop provide pump set on rent, and the like. Hence not a single migrant is found among them. They are modern farmers who use different technological inputs in farming such as tractors, pump set, pesticide and fertilizers agriculture. Being economically secured, they take chance to activities that pays them well. All six regular moneylenders and five occasional moneylenders belong to the same community. All of them have thriving agro-business and are successful cash crops growing farmers. These rich farmers in the village are minimally effected by drought, poverty and scarcity. It is a widely held belief that drought and distress often bring prosperity to the moneylenders. There is a local saying, “Gountia ke raja karabar lagi sina makar asiche”, (the drought has brought kingship to Gountia).

3.3. Changing Inter-Community Relationships

For generations inter-community relations in the village are maintained through participation in the economic, social and religious activities, although unequally. Traditional norms do not allow certain community/caste to exchange drinking water and cooked food with those communities in a village and apparently a distance is always maintained especially with untouchables. Accepting these norms the untouchables also do not offer cooked food to other castes. The former accept the food as well as their own subordinate status. In the caste system even the poorest of the higher caste consider superior to the untouchable. But interesting point to note is that one can find the elements of caste among the tribals, in the village Paria quite a prominent feature in the village. In the village the STs were the master of Domb untouchables and of other castes like Mahar. The STs could be master of untouchable because they have certain character is far of a dominant caste like, Kond and Sabar constitute high proportion of the population of Kalahandi (STs constitute 28.84 percent of total population), 80 percent of the immobile population of the village, with only a small proportion being dependents, greater part cultivate their own land.

The community attitude has been changing along with the changing socio-economic situation of the village. *Kond* were traditionally a community of agriculturalists engaged in different agricultural pursuits. Land is their main resources of regular economy. The landless *Dombs* used to work under them and performed all “unclean” occupations but this practice declined with the arrival of different occupations as we have seen that there are 22 major types of occupations in the village. Since *Panchayat Raj Institutions* (PRIs) overrides the traditional caste *panchayat*, monopoly of power and patron-client relationship has been weakening in the village.\(^{169}\)

Caste states in the village sustains as long as it has strong affiliation with political and economic power. Due to changing economic structure and increasing of farm occupation, caste hierarchy as well as the traditional power structure is changing in the village. In village Paria OBCs are the highest caste, followed by STs namely *Sabar* and *Kond*. The village elders recognize that the *Konds* are the original inhabitants of the village. Except the *Sabar*, villagers accept that the village *Gountia* prior to the present one was a *Kond*. For long these two tribes have been maintaining social distance between themselves and with other communities to claim superiority over each other. Both tribes strictly follow the instructions of their respective community *Panchayats*. *Kond* and *Sabar* do not exchange cooked food and water. Although both communities have been engaged in agriculture, each tries to outdo the other in all spheres. Both the communities extravagantly spend on all social ceremonies such as marriage, village festival. For instance, Nanda Sabar, mortgaged his half an acre of land to an SC (later the land was confiscated as he failed to pay back the money) to bear the expenses of his daughter’s marriage. Gradually it turned out to be conspicuous consumptions and expenses like this cost them dear. Marriage influences land mortgage/sale quite significantly, given its association with a community feast. Failure to observe such ceremonies often leads to social ostracism. Since *Dombs* are the lowest caste in the village, each tribe tries to keep as much distance from it as it could. In this social dynamics OBCs became the reference group and the *Dombs* became the negative reference group for the tribals. So, the *Dombs*

\(^{169}\) See Desai 1994 (Re-print), also See K.L. Sharma 1997.
are not allowed to pass through the residential area of the STs, even though the OBCs don't strictly prohibit them. Even today, one can find elderly people of ST community taking a bath if they happen to touch or come across SC members. This social stratification between the tribes comes as a blessing for the Dombs. Subsequently important socio-economic changes took place in the village. To keep their status intact, the STs did not follow any new occupation or get any opportunity like loan or assistance from state but only the prescribed ones. Occasional monsoon failure, sickness and labour surplus in the village push them to economic hardship. Quite often they sell productive assets like livestock and mortgage land or even sell it. The village experience shows that jamin bandha (mortgaging land) is the first stage of jamin bika (selling of land). As a matte of fact people do not want to sell their land but the initial mortgage push them into debt trap and eventually they lose their land. The village land record shows that, 90 percent of the land transactions that had taken place in the last twenty years is that of STs. But in the land transactions both buyers and sellers are STs. This can only be solved when one goes to the filed and verify that either the record holder is the real owner or else how many STs are becoming landless.  

There are provisions in Orissa preventing the sale of ST land to non-ST as Kalahandi comes under 5th Scheduled area as specified the Constitution. The 5th Schedule provides protection to the adivasi people living in these areas. No land in these areas is allowed to be transferred to non-tribals without state permission. Unfortunately, the rule under the Benami Transactions Prohibition Act, 1988, has been circumvented through benami practices. No steps have been taken to implement the rules and confiscate property acquired by illegal means under the Benami Transactions Prohibition Act, 1988, In this process the distribution of village wealth tilted towards SCs with other advantages.

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170. I was told by the village elders that the original inhabitants of the village were STs, even Gountia before the present one was an ST (Kond). Originally they were the owners of all land in the village as long as their memory goes back. Two incidents that has changed the fate of the village are; one, wife of the Gountia fell in love with an SC halia (labour). With the fear of persecution they ran away from the village with gold jewellery and many precious thing; two, before the incident the Sahu (the present gountia) came to the village and opened up his liquor shop where he fetched his first acre of land with a bottle of wine in the village. Eventually, he own major portion of fertile land in the village. For more on land transaction from tribal to non tribals see report of NGO Agragamee http://www.agragamee.org/discussion_foodsecurity.htm
The gradual diminution of status of the dominant STs and of the earlier village oligarchs who controlled the agrarian economy of the village have brought about a number of changes at the cultural level too. On the other hand SCs are beyond all these constraints and enjoyed every opportunity that came their way. Their migrant remittance, loans and other assistance from government had improved their economic conditions. The land ownership pattern among caste groups has been undergoing changes over time. The STs in the village have loosing their land, to a considerable extent to the hand of OBCs and SCs. In the last ten years, on an average one percent of land, has been transferred annually from ST to SC and OBC. In the process the Scheduled Castes (Dombs) have been gaining access to the village resources. The purchase of land has been made mostly by the Dombs whose overall landholding has been increasing. This has happened because of the following reasons; first, occupational diversification in the village, where the SCs lay their hand or whatever comes on their way, wherein the Sundi take control over the increasing non-farm employment agro-business, moneylending, and thikadar (contractors); second, SCs were the first migrant labour from the village during the severe drought in 1985. This came as a blessing in disguise as there as mass migration to far off places. However, the STs remained in the village even by selling out the productive assets and the last resorts like land and cattle, as it was a taboo for them to migrate and leave their “bhitamati” (mother land/ land where one is born); Third, the propertied STs and OBCs in the village can no longer exercise economic domination over the landless poor as they are no more dependent. Those who migrate are independent of local power relations. They are free in a sense. Wealth in the village is concentrated into a few hands than it formerly was. Fewer STs are in a position to act as patron and more of them have to enlist as plough-servants or casual labourers. Within a more diversified economy, the Dombs can make a living without depending so much on their former Kond and OBC masters. As a result the old power structure in the village has been changing overtime. Moreover, a large number of SCs had left the village in search of jobs outside with the utter disapproval of the landowning OBC and ST. This was the patron-client relation has become extinct.
Community relations took a new turn when a conflict arose between the STs and SCs (Dombs). In the year 2002 during Lakshmi Pooja in the village the SCs felt discriminated against in cooking and serving food in the Pooja which is organised by the villagers. The following day they called for a Jati Sabha (Caste Panchayat) and passed a resolution that no one from their community will accept any cooked food, accept discarded goods of the STs, lift carcasses or transport dead animals and do such other unclean jobs and if any member disobeys he/she or else they will be excommunicated from the community. Ever since the community relations in the village has never been the same. The point to be illustrated here is that the practice of untouchability is not operated within the social sphere; instead it gets reinforced by economic and political power. Today the SCs, have access to land and other village resources and also testing political power as well (in the last five terms SCs were elected as Sarpanch). The SC/ST hierarchy on the ground was not an outcome of ideological acquiescence or religious scripture but an outcome of an unequal distribution of wealth and power in a closed agrarian economy. Now, SCs in the village do not recognize the superiority of ST (once they did) and have been asserting their identity by establishing their own deity, club, acquiring education and through migration.

3.4. The Labour Economy

Internal labour migration is emerging as an important livelihood option for millions of people of rural India. Recent research has shown that rural-urban migration is on the rise, particularly from underdeveloped and remote areas. Existing evidence shows that internal migration in India is a complex phenomenon that is shaped by agro-ecological, social, economic, political and historical factors. Labour migration in India is a complex phenomenon that is shaped by a combination of factors and its patterns and outcomes vary between locations. The state of Orissa, in general and KBK region, in particular figures prominently among the Indian states with high rate of migration from the countryside. Migration from rural Kalahandi has in fact peaked after 1985’s severe droughts, when there was a mass exodus from the villages. Patterns in the village indicate

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that although most migration is distress-induced in the first place, it evolves over a period of time into a more regular livelihood option. The official surveys do not fully capture the magnitude of migration, especially the seasonal streams, let alone its determinants, impacts and policy implications. In this context, a growing body of village-level studies takes on added importance as it brings out the complex dynamics of labour mobility and its policy implications. Migration from village is perennial, but it reaches the peak during lean agricultural period i.e. from November to June. Destinations of short term migrations usually are Raipur, Hyderabad and Sambalpur. On the other hand, the villagers prefer to go to Mumbai, Surat, Ahmedabad, Bhilai for long-term migration. Following discussion shows how migration evolves over time and its impact on the village economy and society.

There is no official data on the number of people migrating from Kalahandi. ‘It is a cumbersome task to deal with, moreover it is next to impossible to count how many people are migrating from the district’ the labour officer responded to a query. In fact, there is no procedure or method evolved to estimate the quantum of migration. The Department of Labour Government of Orissa, which is entrusted to collect data on migration workers, has no clue about the migration pattern. The Labour Officer gives the following reasons for lack of data: First, many of the migrants keep on moving from one place to another i.e., they are not permanent migrants to any particular destination; and second, the labour office cannot do anything for “illegal migrants,” it only enumerates when people migrate through registered labour contractors. The office has registered only five groups of migrants from the district during my field study (April 2005). In 2001 Census, the village households have been divided in the following five categories:

**Table 3.3 Occupational Status of Village Paria (Census-2001)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Status</th>
<th>Numbers of Households</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukbasi (landless)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chasi (Cultivators)</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>71.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>492</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.96</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 2001, Chheliamal Panchayat Census Enumerations, Village Paria.

There were two types of migrations pattern in the village: short-term migration and long term migration. The table no. 3.3 shows comparatively a regular pattern of long-
term migration but the exact number is higher than the data provided in the table. Short term migration usually takes place in the agricultural off seasons when there are no agricultural activities in the village. Villagers migrate to nearby towns like Raipur or Sambalpur for short duration and usually employ themselves as masons, fruit vendors, rickshaw pullers, and at construction side. Or else they go to catchment area of Hirakud dam in the harvesting and sowing seasons as agricultural labourers. If there is slackening of wage labour in the village, they go out for about fifteen days and come back home in to meet emergency needs like, to pay debt or on conducting ceremony. The second category is long-term migration, when most of them are landless or small holders who migrate to far off places like Mumbai, Surat, Ahamedbad, Kullu, Kashmir, where they. The long term migrants work most part of the year, returning to their own village only for local festival like Nuakhai, Chaitra, and family gatherings.

The census enumeration underestimates the number of migrants from the village Paria. For instance, only 55 migrants were enumerated both under ‘short-term’ and ‘long-term’ categories, in 2001 Census. But there were 80 long term migrants as per my data collected from the village. These migrants stay at their destinations for years and still out of the village, I was informed by the villagers. It also corroborate with the village record kept in the Ambedkar club of the village. Then and now they are the same people and by 2004-05, 33 more villagers joined with them stretching the number to 113.

Even the migrants to avoid having their migrant status recorded as it deprive them from certain local benefits. They also take sufficient care to keep their migrant status unknown to others. As many as 90 percent of the migrants are fearful that once their name is included in the list they are likely to fall prey to police persecution and extortion of money.
To migrate to foreign land, that is to a country where the local language is not spoken is a taboo among the tribals. Moreover, tribals valued their lands and forests as abodes of their ancestral spirits so much that to migrate is to give up one's relations with one's ancestral spirits. As a result, the tribal used to sell their animals or their jewellery or mortgage their land when they are hard up instead of looking for employment elsewhere which reduces their social status. They were reluctant to leave the village and migration is a means of last resort for the tribals. And even when they have to migrate they prefer to keep intact their tribal identity, purity and sentiment, by following established migration routes to Sambalpur, Bargarh and other places in the command area of the Hirakud Dam to work on land during sowing and harvesting seasons or to work in brick kilns. The tribals are now realizing that it is necessary to go out to better one's economic prospects.

There is a particular pattern of migration based on community and age. The SCs have no such inhibitions in migrating outside. A young SC between 18 and 25 years of age thinks in terms of migrating to Surat, Mumbai or even Kullu where they can earn more for a longer stretch of time. Those in the 26 to 45 age group may prefer Raipur, Hyderabad and or some other nearby town to either work in brick kilns or to pull rickshaws. They prefer to be away from home for shorter stretches of time than those in the younger age group. There were 80 SCs absent from the village against 26 STs and 7 OBCs.
Initially a few villagers went to these places with the labour contractors, then many followed, them if the wages, working conditions, conveniences to the destination and the remittance from the migrants were good. While migrants were from all over village and localities, however the places of emigration were often highly localised and sometimes a whole village migrated to the same destination. Destinations were also often highly localised. They migrate mostly to the place where their friends, relatives or neighbours in the village are already there. This process took the form of chain migration where the early migrants pass the information to the prospective migrants in village about the employment opportunities and accommodation from relatives and former neighbours who were already working at the destinations. As a result there is a strong links with the place of origin and destinations through their kinship ties. This makes it easier to keep in touch, through frequent visits and by regularly sending money to relatives who had stayed behind. At the destinations also there is family life that is, living with uncles, brother, cousin, brother-in-law, I was informed. All these members reside under one roof, pooling their labour and sharing their food together.

The Mahars (SC) are basket weavers. They have been displaced from this traditional occupation for a variety of reasons. One, they are now not allowed to go into the forest to collect bamboos from which they skilfully draw out thin strips and shape the stems that are required for the baskets. Their baskets used to be in demand from the agriculturalists to store their produce. Today, traditional baskets have been displaced by factory-made plastic containers. For the new cash crops such as cotton, sunflower and groundnuts traditional baskets are not suitable. In any case, these crops do not require to be stored within the village because the practice is to sell the crops in the fields soon after harvesting or to sell standing ripe crops to be cut and transported. Hence, the Mahars have been forced to migrate to look for another source of livelihood. Increase in prices of raw materials, tough labour and low productivity slashes their profit margin drastically. "We find very tough to earn Rs.100 a day. After buying of Rs. 40, we both husband and wife have to toil from dawn to dusk to make three kulla (winnow). If it is a medium or small, one can make two or three pieces, depending on skill and speed." said Panra Mahar, an expert basket weaver. The shortage of raw materials had turned the situation
worse. "Bamboo is available after rainy season, and the price of bamboo goes up as the season proceeds. Our survival will be difficult during off seasons," craftsmen said. Marketing is another tough task for them as usually these poor craftsmen get meagre income in agricultural off seasons. I came across Pabitra Mahar, another basket weaver from the village who narrated his experience vis-à-vis the forest laws. He had to go into the forest to get bamboo for basket making. For entering forests, permission is necessary but seldom given to the Marhar. Pabitra was not given the permit eventually, but the next day he sneaked out to the forest (they usually do) to get the raw materials. While returning with the bamboo, his bicycle was seized since he could not produce the permit. He was ordered to pay a fine of Rs. 500 for which he had to mortgage his half an acre of land. It happens quite frequently, as the forest department does not give them permission and it is hard for Mahars to sustain without weaving basket. “When you escape you are lucky, you get work for 3-4 days, or else you lose seven days of your work, also pay fine of Rs. 500. It all depends on bhagya (luck).” But he went on narrating the suffering of Mahars due to the ‘discriminatory’ forest law. As he put it, “we face all these problems because we are poor, given the fact that truck-loads of bamboos are carried away every day from the forest for different paper mills”. Even some NGOs like Agragamee and Parivartan raised the environmental issues of transporting bamboos from the district. The NGOs claim that in few years’ time this area will be converted into desert government does not pay any heed. Although, modern transport and communications have no doubt opened markets to several craftsmen but it prove costly to the Mahar in the village. Due to the influx of well finished factory products, many traditional occupation and artisans are becoming unemployed. Potters, ironsmith and basket makers are worst effected in the region. Since the factory products are handy, that can be used for multipurpose and are pleasant looking, many villagers desired. A basket maker expressed his dissatisfaction, “ever since the village road is constructed, numerous well finished utensil and steel pots are coming to the village. They look good and durable, so most of the villagers are going after that, except some poor people who are still relying on us because they cannot afford.” He was looking forward to migrate as he said, “since our opportunities are shrinking in the village, many mahar (basket makers) have been migrating to other places in search of job, so am I”. For him, tiny plot of land and some cattle are obstacles
otherwise he would prefer to be a migrant labour. Since, the traditional occupation is going down; many mahars are leaving the village to earn their livelihood somewhere else. The traditional livelihood of the Mahar has been declining and consequently more people are being included in the wage/migrant labour.

There are three OBC communities in the village, the Gouda the Mali and the Sahu. The traditional occupations of Goudas were agriculture, supplemented with cow herding and selling dairy products. The sole reason of their migration was increasing population and decreasing numbers of cattle in the village. The population growth in recent decades increases the pressure on land and there is production induced stress. The main reason for their absence was long-term migration for work to distant urban areas, a common phenomenon in areas where agriculture cannot provide sufficient employment to landless labourers.¹⁷² As we have seen, the village land is not evenly distributed between different communities and the people. Land is becoming more and scarcer in the village as I could find. The increasing pressure on land reach to such an extent that villagers started cultivating on sacred groves, cemeteries are being used for cultivation. For generations it had been kept apart form human activities. Even today, some people purify themselves with water, if they happen to pass through cemetery. However, due to the growing scarcity of land, even cemeteries have been brought under cultivation. Ten years back all landed households used to have cattle in the village the simple reason was manure and traction, I was informed. There were no chemical fertilizers or tractors in the village moreover during the planting season, when the need was the greatest, most people were busy to hire or lend cattle. So to take the best advantage all landed households kept cattle. "...over vast areas, sowing and harvesting operations, by the very nature of things, begin simultaneously with the outbreak of the first showers and the maturing of crops respectively, and especially the farmer has got to be put through quickly during the first phase of the monsoon. Under these circumstances, reliance by a farmer on another for bullocks is highly risky and he has got, therefore, to maintain his own pair."¹⁷³ My informants as well as some Gouda who were there in the village suggested the reason that

¹⁷² See Reuben et al. 2001
the decline of cattle wealth has spurred migrations among them. All the seven migrants from the OBC community belong to the Gouda caste. There has been a decline in the number of cattle in the village. Due to reason like fodder scarcity, lack of pasture land, and different cattle diseases like foot and mouth disease which is quite frequent in the village. Consequently, these traditional milkmen eventually migrated from the village. Out of 492 households and 347 landed family units in the village only 133 households (Cow- 124, Buffalo- 22, and Cow and Buffalo- 24) have cow/bullock in 2004-05.

3.5. Migration and Feminisation of Agriculture/Households

Ever growing pressure on land and the gradually declining subsistence agriculture has brought certain changes in the occupational structure in the village. The last 20 years of land transaction pattern shows that from 1985 to 2005 about 180 acres of land has been mortgaged/sold for as many as 175 times; 135 times out of this have gone to the moneylenders of the village. In this transaction process 50 former landless especially SC joined the landed group but the overall the member of landless people has increased to 145 in 2004-05. There is a declining trend in the wage employment, especially in agriculture sector. This has been noticed in the national level also although it is not so vivid. "The sharpest decline has been in agriculture, where wage employment in general has fallen by a rate of more than 3 percent year between 1999-2000 and 2004-05."174 So there is clearly a real and increasing difficulty among the working population of finding paid jobs in any form. The overall labour force has increased but the capacity of the village to absorb the labour force has not increased correspondingly. Consequently, migration becomes a viable option for people of all these categories. Due to migration, one significant change, I found, in the village, is feminisation of agriculture and feminisation of households.

The survival strategy of the villagers combines both cultivation of own land, wage labour and migrant remittance. Migration means many able-bodied men leaving the village in search of wage labour; wherein women and children are left to eke out a living for themselves in the village anticipating remittance. In March 2005, I found in the

174 Jayati Ghosh "Being your own boss" Frontline, p. 104, December 1, 2004
village that every other household is having a migrant worker outside the district. As a result, agriculture back home obviously received set back. Migration is a dominant feature of the social life of the village. In the lean periods, the village is drained of able bodied adults as they all migrate. Those who are left behind in the village are preponderantly children (less than 15 years), old people who cannot work (more than 60), women, sick and the disabled. Male migration has contributed to the feminisation of agriculture. Consequently, women's share of agricultural wage employment is rising in the village. This process of feminisation has been taking place along two lines on the 'poverty-push' and the 'demand-pull' argument. Women are more efficient in executing the task that comes with the cash crops which we can call demand-pull. For instance, women are better at the job of plucking cotton, groundnuts from the field than their male counterparts. Men are good at ploughing, threshing and digging which most of the big farmers are now carrying out by tractors. Moreover, demand for supplementary earning is pushing both male and female to wage earning where men prefer to migrate and women take care of household work with some extra wage earning. Consequently, there was drastic increase in the number of women workers in the agriculture sector due to two reasons. One, increasing male migration (113 in 2004-05) encouraged feminisation of agriculture. Two, for the new agricultural tasks like planting groundnuts, collecting cotton, plucking beans and sunflowers, women are more efficient and are hired for the job. I was told that men were not good at doing such jobs and the wages of men were more, so women were preferred. These migrants from the village are who visit the village at occasion and their stay over the village does not exceed more than two months unless they are sick or for other undeniable conditions. This has increased the chances of women becoming farmers and temporary/head of the family in the village. Moreover, unemployment migration and occupational diversification along with widowhood and divorce have created a good number of women-headed households. The research revealed that nearly 14 percent of the households in the village were headed by women (de facto and de jure), during my field study in 2004-05.
Table 3.5 Women Headed Households in the Village Paria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of Women</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>OBC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner's Migration</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowhood</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own Source

These women were aged between 35 and 60, illiterate and were predominantly dependent on wage labour, farming and migrant remittance. Due to feminisation of households, gender based division of labour has now undergone a change. The migration of a male spouse increased responsibilities on the woman, who has to farm the family's land and has to do the work that their male counterparts were doing earlier. Often required to combine motherhood and earning activities, they tend to do domestic work, street vending and farming in case they have land. There are seasonal variations on their activities, like collection of firewood takes place during agricultural lean season between June and December. Since most of the farming job is becoming the job of women, the stressful period is the main agricultural season between July to November. When we travel across Kalahandi, women farmers can be seen working in the fields for seven hours and taking care of their animals. In the peak summer months before the rains, the women make most of the sandy riverbed. They use wet mud of the river banks to repair their huts. They dig fresh pits every day in the riverbed to draw water. This is in addition to their traditional role in farm clearing, transplanting saplings and weeding, the strenuous women's jobs which are grossly underpaid. The growing cash crops increased their share in the agriculture like plucking cotton from the field and harvesting peanuts. Despite the fact that these women perform multiplicity of activities ranging from wage labour to self employment, the economic contribution made by them is grossly ignored. On an average, each woman performing at least four kinds of jobs, such as labouring in the field for wages, working in the family plot, rearing livestock and processing agricultural produces for consumption and for sale. The job of women in agricultural sector has increased in the absence of their male workers as a result, as women are performing extra task.
None of the village community is matrilineal or matrilocal but definitely there is a varying degree of gender relations in different communities. The gender relations among the ST/SC communities are relatively egalitarian wherein among the OBCs the gender relation is more patriarchal and hierarchical. In general, all SC/ST women in the village work in their agriculture and otherwise contribute to the family income. However, women from only poorer households of OBC community work in their field, where I find relatively positive gender relations. Sharing the responsibility and income of the households possibly could be the reason of positive gender relations among the SC/ST community.

Demographic factors like sex ratio could also be significant indicator in shaping gender relations. Overall sex ratio in the village is positive, as against 1015 males there were 1151 females. The STs were highest (total 517 females against 423 males), followed by the SCs (total 556 females against 502 males). However sex ratio among the OBCs is negative (total 78 females against 90 males).

In the village, only five women (widows) who do not have son, have patta (land deed) in their names, although there were a few women hinsadhar (stakeholders), but do not exclusively own the land. This clearly limits their resources and the means of institutional credits are almost not accessed by the women. Women headed households do not keep any livestock but every household owns chicken which is considered a women’s job in the village. Purchasing of seeds, pesticides and fertilizers and selling of crops at mandi (market yard) were the obstacles for the women headed households which cultivate cash crops. This is an out come of the domain of men and women in the social sphere. Most of the jobs done by women still remain within the household wherein traditional men's jobs are outside the house. For instance, purchasing pesticide from cooperative society or selling crops at mandi still confined in the domain of men, which seldom done by a women.
There is an attempt by development institutions to manifest link between poverty, drought and migration by underplaying numerous other socio-economic factors that contribute the most in producing the poverty and scarcity in Kalahandi. They have established a simplistic relation by offering drought and famine as the sole reasons for migrations and consequently occupational changes in the village. As we have discussed above, the emergence of occupational diversification is more than just simple economic opportunities. The nature of socio-economic relations in the village and the power relations between different communities drive many low caste poor out of the village. Indeed slow growth of agriculture has failed to accommodate the growing labour force of the village, but along side there are openings available in and out of the village where the aspirations of the villagers are or at least could be materialized. In short, the alternative to non-farm employment varies, not just with respect to one's economic position, but also with caste related attitudes and prejudices, which the poor suffered long in the past.

Apart from the economic factors, issues of social prestige and self-esteem have played a dominant role in the occupational choice of the villagers. As non-traditional and non-agricultural occupations not only have a high prestige value but also do not have the stigma that some traditional occupations possess in caste society, there is a general inclination to give up one's traditional occupation for a non-traditional occupation. The Scheduled Caste agricultural labourers are tempted to go out of the village to look for employment so that they can escape the tyranny of caste discrimination. Besides, outside the agricultural sector wages are also higher.

The rules of purity and pollution of the caste system have weakened in the village but caste identities and hence caste prejudices are gaining strength. In the village landownership confers prestige and the landless have a low social standing. The latter are regarded as the poor. Yet, in Kalahandi some of the landless are better off than the small landholders who possess social status but lack sufficient income. Often, small and marginal holders encounter economic hardship but the landless in the village have the required entitlements to get over even a severe drought. Being footloose, the landless
migrate to towns and cities and other agriculturally prosperous areas where they get high wages. The small and marginal landholders find that their landholdings are economically unviable even then they forfeit opportunities of earning more by migrating because they are tied to the land and because they nurture a false sense of prestige. On an average a migrant worker from the village earns Rs.100 per day (if he migrates to other state) on a more or less regular basis. On the contrary, in the peak season an agricultural labour in the village earns Rs.40 per day and at work site. Food for Work Programmes the minimum wage is Rs. 55 but regularly the labourers are paid far below minimum (it is only Rs. 35 to 40 at the Watershed projects). In the village the practice is to divide a day’s work into *duie alie/bela* or two halves of the day, *sakal bela* or first half of the day, *uper bela* or second half of the day. The duration of work of *uper bela* is shorter and the wages are lower than the *sakal beal* Most of the labourers of the village have to be satisfied with *sakal bela* only, where they get Rs. 20. Consequently, wage earners of the village receive meagre amount and irregular work than their migrant counterparts. Out of 315, 236 small and marginal holders i.e. 75 percent prefer to migrate but land and ownership of livestock hold them back. If one migrates, one is taking risk of the possibility of one’s land being grabbed by the bigger landholders, for instance, the case of Dhansa Kata. Moreover the last ten years’ land transfer pattern shows that on an average one percent of the village land gets transferred due to indebtedness, owing to social ceremonies and migrations. The village land transfers corroborate this argument. The more fertile plots of the migrants have been transferred five to seven times in the last ten years. In this way the most fertile land in the village is concentrated in the hand of a few. In the village, there are 30 % landless, 63 % small and marginal holders and only 7 big farmers. These 7 big farmers occupy 50 % the fertile land.

Although the migrants earn more than those who stay behind they lack security of job. The jobs they get outside are usually temporary ones and they are compelled to take up any work that comes their way. Some may find employment as construction workers whereas others may find temporary unskilled jobs in different factories. Some of them I met in the village during field study said "*kam karba ke tou jaichun babu, jaien kam milie bie karsun*" (we have gone there to work, so any kind of work that comes we do).
Since many of them are employed in highly risky, arduous and dangerous jobs like drilling, handling of dangerous chemicals and construction of big dams they are prone to accidents or they are exposed to health hazards. And while they are away they have to either live in labour camps or in slums which are not conducive for health. Hence, either their health gives way or they get injured and cannot get back the more lucrative jobs anymore. A migrant labourer’s family may appear to be prosperous and even affluent at one stage but may be reduced within a few years to the life of penury and poverty if the principal earner falls sick or gets injured. For all, in general, subsistence was the basic reason behind their migration but overtime some of them manage to capitalize the migrant remittance when their kin in the village manage to eke out their living without solely depending on the remittance. I found 9 migrants who bought land in the village and around 15 of them bought some sheep and goats. About half of the migrant families now possess gold and silver jewellery, which, they said is easy collateral to get credit in the time of needs. But all these happen when the perspective migrant is at his best productive stage and in good health. Moreover, all are not so fortunate, 5 have lost their lives, 2 have lost their limbs, and many of them have developed respiratory diseases. If one takes account of the temporal dimension, the migratory workers’ prosperity would be a short phase, if one failed to capitalize the remittance. Otherwise this additional source of income has potential to push up the economy of the poor migrants. The village experience suggests that some manage to improve their socio-economic status through migration, but some others remain the same.

Migration has increased the proportion of dependents in the village population. The old, the sick, the disabled, and the unemployed that throng the village try to eke out a living by managing the kitchen garden, and selling minor goods like fruit and vegetables, fish, *lia/chuda* (puffed rice) and by offering various services to the more privileged families.

Against this background of migrant labour from the village and growing demand of cash crops among big-holders, agriculture makes only a small relative contribution to "subsistence". 347 of the 492 households have at least some land; 350 own some
livestock. While another 15 livestock (sheep/goat) - holding households made a total of 362 of 492 households with either land or stock. Since most of the fertile land in the village is confined among the seven rich farmers in the village, the rest, especially the small and marginal holders, have to toil hard on their less fertile plots and spend money on pesticides and fertilisers to cultivate their lands. The general complaint among the marginal and small holders is that life is becoming costlier in the village and agriculture alone is unable to provide them even their basic minimum needs without an additional wage earning. It is found that several factors including, indebtedness, poverty, lack of crop loans and marketing of agricultural products, successive droughts and floods had contributed to migration by landless and marginal holders.

The remittances from migrant labourers encourage the villagers to follow their example. This leads to the further neglect of agriculture. Although the state makes certain provision and provides some incentives such as the free supply of hybrid seeds, introduction of certain new crops and new methods of agriculture, only the wealthy who can afford to take risks because the benefactors. The changing occupational patterns of the village show the slow growth of agriculture in comparison to rapid growth of labour force in the village. In the last ten to fifteen years, I was informed, there has been a general increase in crops growing area, as many barren, forest and even cemetery land were brought under cultivation but there is no corresponding increase in foodgrains production since cash crops are increasingly grown in the village. Cotton sold out from the village was the example. Since cash crops like cotton, groundnuts, sunflowers dominate the village agriculture, foodgrains definitely are in short supply. Although the village may harvest a good crop, it does not get equally distributed in the village (see chapter-vi for detail).

The marginality of agriculture is illustrated by responses to the question of how long the food grown on one’s own fields lasts. For the average 5 members household, in a “good year” home grown food lasts for about 3 to 4 months in the year; for middle farmers the average is still only 5 to 6 months. Moreover the 145 landless households depend on wage labour throughout the year either on migration or on agricultural labour.
It implies that in a good year of monsoon, the landed households, the marginal and small holders in the village produce only one-third of its total subsistence needs, and the rest are bought from the stores. Food scarcity is getting acute for the poor as several local varieties of millet, maize and paddy (jhari, gurji, mandea, kodo, chhetka dhan, bhata dhan), that were grown in upland areas which could ease food shortage in the months of July and August have either marginalised or become extinct. The village elders recalled as many as 200 varieties of different crops once cultivated in the village. Gradually 90 percent these local varieties have not been cultivated anymore. "Those local varieties of paddy and pulses had the capacity to sustain the erratic rain and scorching heat in the reason but the 'sarkari bihan' (government seeds (hybrid seeds)) are very delicate, it either dies or wither, you always need to take care of them like an infant" an elderly farmer informed me. Over last decades cropping pattern has undergone change In this regard 'development' represents a complete reversal of traditional farming methods that promoted diversity as both a means of matching a crop to a particular environment, and ensuring that individual plots would continue to produce over a long period of time with minimal impact. The standardisation of agricultural practices has been threatening the diverse food security of the poor in the village. The arrival of new cash crops replaced most of these coarse grains that were once cultivated on the upland of the village. Moreover, consumption of coarse grains such as jhari, gurji, kodo are stigmatized, hence it is not served while entertaining guests. These crops are not grown anymore in the village and it exits only in the memory of the elders. With the subsequent socio-economic reasons these coarse grains are becoming extinct. However, some of the coarse grains like jaana (maize), mandea (millet) jhajra (sorghum) chetka/bhata dhan (upland paddy) are still cultivated and consumed by the villagers. Only 10 to 15 tribal farmers in the village have cultivated such coarse grain in the last season.

Diversity in food production in the village was more suitable to social set up, labour intensive and environment friendly as well. The maturity period of the subsistence crops grown in the village ranges from two-to-three months (jhari, gurji, mandea, Koddo, chhetka dhan, bhata dhan) to six-months (bad dhan, pyagi, Jhaliemenjo) and harvested at different times that provides regular employment and supply food to many agricultural
labourers. Short-duration rice or *chetka dhan*, which required less moisture and was ready for harvest within 40-60 days of sowing, was planted on the uplands. The need of staple diet rice was managed by *chetka dhan* just before harvest of the long-duration rice. The long-duration rice was planted in the comparatively secure lowland to support the long growth period of 120-160 days. Dryland rice, in combination with coarse grains, pulses and oilseeds, ensured optimum food supply even in erratic rainfall years. Diet was supplemented in the pre-harvest season with different types of fruits, home grown vegetable and leafs. Now the consumption has been drastically falling due to standardisation of agriculture.

There were also the concepts of ‘distress food’ which the poor consume at the time of distress. These foods can be classified in different categories. The most important of these was the ‘wild grain’ which is collected by the tribals from the nearby forests during severe scarcity. The second, different types of fruits and leaves, some of these leaves constitute parts of the normal diet for some poor households in the village. Even at times the rich also consume these fruits and roots for health benefits. The third types are *Kanda* (roots) of different plants and trees. Among them, *Kuliea kanda*, *Pit kanda* and *Raam kanda* were once consumed by most of the village elders. If they are not consumed carefully by extracting the bitter part, they become poisonous, and occasionally, people fall sick after eating them.

These unconventional foods were not considered as food, unless people were at the brink of starvation ‘distresses’. The economic advantage of obtaining ‘distress-food’ free of cost, co-existed with the social disadvantage of being stigmatized as *daridra/bhokmara/mangt khea* (disgraceful/have nothing to eat). It is a social custom that, wild food could not be shared, exchanged or given to guests in the way rice or pulses could be.

The poor ST/SC households face acute food shortages in lean periods and fall back on different coping mechanisms to survive. This ‘distress food’ are collected from Common Property Resources in the village. The three important reasons behind the decreasing consumption of food is (i) there is a declining of availability of ‘distress food’ due to subsequent declining of common property resources due to encroachments by the
rich villagers and deforestation and ban on entering forests; (ii) previously nobody exercised any rights over these roots, fruits, leaves and the bark of trees, because of health and medication usages, now private persons also exercise rights over it. (iii) the economic advantage of getting it free, have a latent disadvantage of being stigmatized as "daridra/bhokmara."

In the Rabi season (September to March), pulses like green gram, green peas, horse gram, arhar are grown in a few patches of land or else the land remains fallow till the next sowing season. Again there is a practice in the village called bohonger chhada or haal chada where the villagers do not take care of their cattle/buffalo right after harvest (February/March). These animals stray into the village fields and destroy the crops grown in the Kharif season. A very few can take care of their crops especially if their land is concentrated on one area. They make watch tower and guard their crops day and night which is unviable for small and marginal holders. As a result these poor farmers prefer to migrate which is more advantageous instead of taking care of little plots of Kharif crops for 3 to 5 months. This implies that those who hold land, and even in the best years, are able to produce only about one-third of their total subsistence needs of rice, pulses and oil. For an average household in an average year, the output from agriculture is far worse than that. The government has initiated two lift-irrigation projects from the river Tel to encourage double cropping but due to erratic power supply it has not been sustainable. One of these projects is exclusively owned by the village Gountia who grows double crops through an alternative irrigation system when there is power crisis. He has Munda (check dam) at upper stream and can bank on relatively costly systems such as diesel pumps to extract groundwater for irrigating his large acres of land but it is expensive and unviable for the small and marginal holders although at times they use the tedious traditional water lifting devices, such as tenda (manually lifting water from well).

So, for the poor the agricultural cycle in the village is one year but for the rich like the Gountia, it is just six months. Consequently, the agricultural assets of marginal and small holders remain unproductive for at least six months. Moreover, that also needs to be taken care of. For instance, a pair bullock has to been taken care of throughout the
year although they have utility for only a month or two (except for the manure they produce or when someone hires the pair). Gradually, small and marginal holding is becoming uneconomical and unviable unless it is supplemented by other source of income like migration or selling of some little goods in the village shanty or weekly market.

75 of the 492 households in Paria reported that they had worked in “Food for Work” at least once in the last year 2004-05. The villagers said, “this is not the kind of work to rely upon. It was done sporadically and was paid in kind with only a small amount of cash thrown in to sweeten the deal. Since we depend on labour, we need work every day and immediate payment to satisfy our everyday needs.” The “Food for Work” has been criticized for paying with poor quality foodgrains and that too in small quantities. Workers were nearly always women from the poorest households who would be willing to do strenuous construction work for ten hours a day while the temperature climbs nearly to forty-two degrees Celsius in the summer. In the two construction sites I visited, there were fifty workers, most of them women, assembled at the work site looking for work. In each site only one half of them could get employed while others had to go back home disappointed. This type of experience is an everyday occurrence at construction site, I was informed. The women expressed, “Sarkari kam re kain bharsa, subudin asuthiba boile ken mase panch din ken mase saat din kam milsi” (you cannot rely on government project. If you keep on coming, in a month you may get work for five-days or for a maximum of seven days). Even then, there were always more workers available than available work as a result of which the wage level would come down.

The State run “Food for Work” programmes on an average provide five to seven days work in a month to just half of the available labourers. In the State run programmes the wage rate is fixed at the minimum wage and the number of hours of work is fixed at 8 hours but it is not so in Kalahandi. While the minimum wage was Rs. 55 in Kalahandi (Orissa), most men reported that they were getting Rs. 35 to 40, with the women paid even lower, Rs. 25 to 30 and the day work stretch up to 10 hours. Despite repeated assurance from the state, the age old convention of wage discrimination still persists in
the village even in the State run programmes. It is worse in agricultural sectors where the labourers are usually paid in kind; men get four seers of paddy and women get half of it. It comes to less than half of the amount paid in “Food for Work” programmes when it is converted to cash. The following four reasons explain the justification behind the payment of wages below minimum.

The first major weakening factor is widespread lack of awareness among the workers. Many of them were ignorant about the existence of such a scheme like ‘minimum wage”; even the few who know about it keep it in the dark to serve their immediate interest. From my discussion with the Sarpanch, I learned that he too was ignorant about the scheme.

Second, availability of surplus labour especially women labour in the village press down the wages where women were regularly paid far below the minimum wages. Illiteracy and ignorance restrict their access to information and understanding of entitlements.

Third, the confusion of where to go for a job card was widespread in the village. Lack of job cards reduces their bargaining power for minimum wages, if at all they get work. During my field study, I found women labourers working for Rs. 20 per day as they did not have the job card. The contractor told me “it is illegal even to employ them in the work site if they do not have a job card.”

Fourth, all three contractors in the village were big farmers and moneylenders who believe that paying the legal minimum wage has been affecting the wage rate even in agriculture sectors. A farmer cum contractor justified below minimum wage, “sarkar beda ta, panchaban tanka gote bhutee ke dele, chasi marbe neikein”, (the government is stupid, if the legal minimum wage is enforced the farmers (big farmers) will die). As he said, it has two severe consequences; first, there is already shortage of labour in the village, second, the increasing wage rates draw more and more labour to the work site.
One can talk about minimum wages only when there is enough opening available or else the minimum wage has always been compromised.

During my field study (2004-05), the Sarpanch (an SC having strong connection with the village Gountia) along with the Secretary of the village Panchayat were sacked by the District Collector for a scam in the food for work programme. It was found that the labourers in the “Food for Work” programme were paid just half the amount of minimum wage and the quality of foodgrains given to them was poor and the quality also less. But the workers were asked to put their thumb impressions on the official documents that stated that they were paid the mandated daily wage. All the workers in the work site have gone through the same experience of exploitation. Although, the issue had been brought up many times but due to strong pressure from the village Gountia and the Sarpanch’s family who have gained considerable notoriety for their corruption, no action had been taken.

In the above discussion we could see how state institutions have overlooked the magnitude of migration and even if recognised, it is only to justify the government projects. The discussion brings me to the conclusion that how migrations over time have evolved as an additional source of livelihood for many poor and landless farmers. Moreover, at times it became the only source of livelihood for the landless.

3.6. Saankar: The Labour Exchange System
Social relations in rural India were organized on the basis of hierarchical inter-caste relationships represented by the jajmani system. This perspective has achieved wide recognition in academic world, and continues to have extensive influence on academic circle in India. The "vertical relationship" of jajmani system is supposed to be a distinctive characteristic of rural India and various kinds of exchange relations are vertically organized on the basis of caste and community. However, the labour exchange system in the village Paria is not solely organized along vertical line of social relationship or it is based on the caste hierarchy. Through my study I have reached an understanding that not vertical, but horizontal social relations based on the norm of reciprocity are of
great importance in the village. Although vertical hierarchy cannot be denied in the beginning, the existing practice of labour exchange is more horizontal.

I attempt to show labour exchange systems that prevail in the village which is locally known as saankar system. It follows basic principles: (1) mutual assistance and cooperation between different communities, (2) exchange of labour, and (3) no use of money or hired labour.

Before going to a detail discussion, let us deal with the conceptual issue. Instead of "sahukar" in the standard Oriya, "saankar" in the local dialect is widely used as a term signifying labour exchange in the village between STs and SCs (Dombs). In the former, contract is normally established between peasants and the moneylenders, a kind of patron and client relationship. But the latter is more of horizontal relationship established between STs and SC where both the parties treat each other equally. Unlike Sahukar where the term is used for trader/moneylender, the term saankar has been used to address the relationship and not to address any particular party in the relation. For example, if A and B are parties to the saankar system both A and B address each other as saankar. In the saankar system labour is exchanged most frequently at the time of peak agricultural season, but is also arranged in various non-agricultural occasions. In the exchange system, if a contact party is a physically weak old person, widow or sick the labour given to them does not have to be reciprocated, which means that old persons are allowed to receive labour one-sidedly from other younger and physically stronger members. The society has developed a crisis management system of its own. Practice such as this plays important roles in subsistence economy despite the spread of the market economy. It is not merely part of the past or confined to backward societies, but a survival strategy evolved in the system to deal with the economic crisis at community level. It must be understood not as an organisation for labour exchange in agricultural

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175 The labour exchange relation between adivasi (tribals) and harijan (SCs) are relatively horizontal whereas ST/SC and Sahukar (trader/moneylender) are represented as polarized identities. In Kalahandi Sahukars are known as Sahu. They belonged to two different castes Teli and Sundhi who dominate local trade and money lending. As a result, the legacy of the Sahukar is endowed with power and privilege. The term Sahukar represents a type of patron and client relationship. However, many villagers often use the term interchangeably, but in practice it carries different meanings and different relations altogether.
tasks alone, but as an organisation for other “socio-cultural” interactions between different communities in the village.

In the village, the system of labour exchange solely developed between tribals and Scheduled Caste namely Kondh/Sabar and Doms, although the existence of such relation cannot be denied among other castes. The system is not merely a form of labour exchange solely for agricultural tasks, but a series of utilities is being carried out. In the social ceremonies and festivals, exchange of gifts and food materials takes place between the parties involved. On the occasion of marriage, and festival like nuakhai they visit each other’s house and exchange gifts and especially male members buy drinks for each other. It extends to providing service in non-agricultural tasks, such as roof-thatching and house-building. During the wedding of a daughter the parents’ Saankar offers expensive gifts like jewellery, clothes and utensils to the bride when she visits his home just before the marriage. In marriage also lot of gifts are given to the girl. Yet again, in case a saankar is childless in the relation, he can adopt a son from the other party (this does not apply to girl child. Till the child grows up, he remains in the new house later returns to his biological parents. Two such boys were found during the field study, which was usually termed as child selling by journalists. This is a camouflaging tradition mechanism, possibly developed, due to an outcome of high child mortality rates which is higher than both national and state average.

In village saankar are most active at the time of rice-transplantation, tilling, weeding and rice-harvesting. During the seasons of sowing and harvesting of the year, most farm households in the village face labour shortage. Since it is the busiest season villagers may not have cash or kind to hire labour. So the system has evolved an indigenous method to deal with the labour crisis in the peak agricultural period, because both rice-transplantation and rice-harvesting are not only highly labour-intensive work, but also need to be completed within a very short time. It is a form of mutual help or reciprocal cooperation, especially in the busy farming seasons.
Then, is *saankar* system going to completely disappear from the village? The answer lies in the recent development. The remnants of the system show that it has sustained through difficulties and made adaptive changes. This is evident from the fact that it has become more and more of horizontal relationship treating both parties equally. Initially, the villagers said, the SCs were treated as the inferior party in the system but as the time passed by the SCs started getting better off economically and the relation became more equal.

In general, all STs/SCs (Domb) in the village, traditionally engaged in the *Saankar* relations. The system is such that only SC can severe the relation since they are relatively the lesser party and it is a matter of prestige for the ST to have such relation since they are the better party. During field study, I found only 15 families which still have active labour exchange relations in the village. Once, every household used to be in the relation. The families which continue to engage in the *Saankar* relation cited different reasons for it. First, some families do not have ready cash to pay for the labour. These families are marginal/small holders who barely earn any cash from other sources. Second, there are jobs which are usually done by the SCs like carrying a massage of death, marriage or birth. But they have job like removing dead carcasses (since 2001, the SCs stopped it). Third, for large number of families in the village, exchange of labour is not only profitable but also is a matter of prestige at least for the STs because it shows that such person is generous and concerned for his *saanka~*. So, they want to continue with this tradition. Fourth, some families did not migrate even during crises and continued with agriculture in the village, so the labour exchange relation remained still intact. Fifth, those were three widow headed households where the onus lies with the party in *Saankar* relation to provide them labour and other help even without any expectation of return.

In the village, the practice of *saankar* has started declining since 1980s. Three significant changes brought enormous transformation in the region. First, railway connectivity and road connectivity within the district. It opens up opportunities for many villagers, especially SCs, to migrate from the village. Second, the most important incident, the severe drought of 1974 -75. In 1985 most of the farmers faced severe
resource scarcity that resulted from crop failures and people started migrating. As it goes 'necessity is the mother of invention' the village poor broke many of the age-old tradition and customs and migrate to feed their hungry stomach. Again in the 1990s changes brought in by the adoption of commercial crops and mechanisation of agriculture also contributed to the declining the *saankar* system in the village. The reason was not that *saankar* had been replaced by hired labour, but that the mechanisation of paddy farming had been advanced swiftly by the rich, who used to provide jobs to the poor. The decline of *saankar* was accelerated particularly by employment of machines in agriculture, by which many males were replaced or they find jobs for very short period in the village. Ploughing, transplanting, harvesting, threshing, and bundling of rice straws used to provide jobs for months for the poor and landless but machines do them in very short period of time. In this way, the village saw a sharp decline of mutual labour exchange and monetary exchange of agricultural labour market has been increasing. With the development of the commercial crops and market economy, this non-monetary system of reciprocal labour exchange has gradually been disappearing. At its present form the system seems to have turned to labourer-buyer and wage-earner relationship confined to a few households. There are no Brahmins, Dhobi, Lohar in the village. On occasions if they are called they are paid in both cash and kind.

A few households in the village stopped the exchange process owing personal reasons like lazy and non-committal, misbehaviour or unequal treatment. In general the changing socio-economic condition is the single most reason.

The village evidence shows that there is a close relationship between population growth and migration. Migration has the potential to reduce poverty and distress, although it often leads to exclusion and exploitation as I frequently heard from the village migrants. Governments, migrant workers and civil society need to make concerted efforts to make migration a less painful and more productive livelihood option. Effective implementation of labour laws and cooperation from the state of origin of migration with the state of destination could protect the migrants from low wage rates. More primary studies are needed for better understanding and mainstreaming migration as a poverty
reduction strategy. Initiatives need to focus on gender dimensions as migration becomes increasingly feminised.

3.7. Livestock Economy

In rural Kalahandi, animal husbandry is an integral part of village economy. While all families irrespective of caste and community keep livestock. Even as it is a universal feature of the village society to own cattle and livestock, different strata keep different animals to fulfil different objectives. For some it could be status symbol, whereas for others it could be an asset that could be sold as the last resort to meet consumption requirements doing emergencies.

170 out of 492 households in the village were keeping cattle cows, bullock or buffaloes. Cow was the most preferred. According to the village elders, in the past every household in the village used to keep them. Now owing to scarcity of pastures and fodder, not all can afford to keep cows. Also, as children now go to schools there are not many in the village to take the cows out to graze. In general, small and medium holders require cows and buffaloes for the manure they provide and for traction. Cow was the preferred animal because besides the milk it yields and the relatively easy availability of fodder. In the village the cow is respectfully referred to as goru maata (mother cow). Cows are considered too sacred to be slaughtered. Further, ever since the Scheduled Caste gave up eating beef under the influence of Mahima Dharma, a new religious movement that has become popular in Western parts of Orissa cows are sold only in the case of personal emergency or destitution. 176 But due to lack of pasture land, their

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176 The cow is literally scared animal among all the domesticated animals. The cow is the surrogate mother as it provides milk, the villagers believe. The ‘milk-debt’ of cow was culturally a very strong more, for that the villagers called it goru maata (mother cow). Beef eating is taboo among all communities. They are the sanctifiers, many rituals and sacrifices needs milk and ghee and the cow from which it produced, even the urine and the dung of the cow use for the same. One can find village women purifying their houses before dawn by sprinkling water mixed with cow dung, the floor of the house also repaired and coated with mud with cow dung. The place where the religious ritual performed is always made pure by coating it with a particular ritual in a holy place called Narshingnath, he is not allowed to join his family. The villagers’ narrated instances, where parents do not allow their children to marry such person, as believe gou-hatya (killing of cow) brings course. However, cows contribute to human material welfare in more important ways than just mere sacred emblem. It produces bullock, cow dung,
fertility and milk yield are low. The landless and marginal land holders find it difficult to keep cows because there are new diseases afflicting them and veterinary services are not easily available. Another constraint is the frequent thefts of cows. These days most of the rich farmers keep Jersey cows for both milk production and as a status symbol.

In March 2005 there were barely ten households producing milk in the village. Many families did not extract milk for the sake of calf that is weak, fragile and prone to many diseases, since the mother cows were not well fed. For agricultural purposes bullock are generally preferred and therefore the primary reason for keeping cow among the village farmers was to get of male progeny and subsequently for milk. It is only the rich in the village who can afford to consume milk since they feed the cows with fodder brought from market. The poor consume milk only when they are sick or when they have guests at home or else they do not extract milk from the cow for the sake of the survival of the calf. The village farmers believe that cow contributes to human material welfare in more important way such as traction, manure and social status other than milk production. Once, the villagers used to sell the milk to Doodwala (milkman, Gouda an OBC) when there was abundance of grazing land and plenty of cows in the village but now the number is dwindling, I was informed. Consequently, milk economy in the village is significantly declining so is the production and consumption. The doodwalas used to process the milk they procure to make sweets, locally known as Khua and Peda. During marriages and festivals these sweets used to be in great demand. But due to encroachment on grazing land, declining cow population and lessening milk production, all doodwalas have become migratory labourers.

Table 3.6 Pattern of landholding and Stock Keeping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of landholders</th>
<th>Buffalo/Cow</th>
<th>Goat/sheep</th>
<th>Poultry/Duck</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landless</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own source

Cutting across caste, community and landholding pattern, there are 191 households which keep sheep or goats in the village. These cattle provide better financial return within a short time period as compared to other animals. Since they could sustain themselves with leaves, small grass and even with leftover food, pastureland and fodder is not a problem. I was told that, on the one hand, the numbers of cattle are declining in the village while on the other hand, there is an increasing demand for sheep and goats, as they are easy to handle, could be traded easily and provide good return. Sheep and goats fetch good returns during the marriage season and during several religious and social ceremonies such as Nuakhai, Choitra (A collective worship for village deity).

First, it is important to note that livestock in village Paria is a major source of income for subsistence goods especially for the poor and that their chief function is to store wealth and market opportunity. The important utility of the cattle is the provision of traction and manure for agriculture and dung for fuel. In general every household in the village keep poultry for eggs and meat and eventually to generate income. The livestock in the village substantially contribute in agricultural production like ploughing, thrashing and for manure and not the primary one of producing goods for consumption or sale, the landless and poor do not keep buffalo/cow; instead prefer to keep chicken and goat which is easily tradable.
The village economy is a combination of both agriculture and livestock. Of the landless households, 45 per cent keep livestock and poultry as assets whereas only negligible per cent of the large farmers in the village keep them for the same reason. There is an inverse relationship between keeping livestock/poultry and landholding pattern for securing assets. The larger the holding, the less is the consideration of security for keeping livestock or poultry. Seven big farmers and moneylenders have been using commercial banks and other institutions for creating assets and they do not need animals for the purpose. I found in the village that more than 90 percent of the villagers do not have a bank account and the few who have opened them have done so to receive loans from the government and to deposit money they get by selling the items that were lying unused at home. The rich keep livestock for manure and traction and for enhancing their prestige in the village. Among the small and medium landholders the animals are both assets and add to their agricultural productivity. For the landless and the poor, sheep, goats and poultry are a source of insurance in the sense that they can sell them when they have dire necessity. They also keep them for it offers an opportunity to make profits during the festival and wedding seasons.

All households, in general, keep chicken/poultry in the village. One can recurrently as people saying, ‘kukda pate naie thile ghar chhina dissie’ (a house that has no chicken is deserted). Market opportunity and home consumptions are the other reasons for keeping poultry. The large farmers keep them solely for home consumption. The

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Landless</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Large</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Securing Assets</td>
<td>45.05</td>
<td>41.00</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manure &amp; traction</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Opportunity</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honour</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Consumption</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own source
prestige value of livestock does not hold for the younger generation. Many young persons in the village are against keeping livestock or for that matter even owning land as they consider them unproductive. They want to persuade their parents into earning more money by doing business or by opening up a shop. Several family disputes have centred around such conflicting views.

For landless labourers and marginal holders livestock may be a "rural bank" as they have no other outlets for productive investment. Since these people have nothing to mortgage in the time of distress, so the stock is a reliable asset for them. It is another reason that the poor sell their animals in time of distress definitely with cheaper price. For the poor the money gained from the livestock must be seen as a part of subsistence income. Cow/sheep/goats are usually taken care of by women and children.

Livestock in Kalahandi is valued for religious, social, and symbolic reasons. The older generation prefers to keep so many cattle they sell the animals as a means of last resort. If a livestock owner is not willing to sell his stock, it is also because of use-value of the animals.

As the modern economy penetrates rural Kalahandi, traditional values are gradually dying out. Yet, 'individual choices only occur within and in terms of a cultural order'. ¹⁷⁷ The livestock in Kalahandi can be understood in relation to a set of societal norms that define livestock as a special domain of property and individuals make their choices within this domain. These cultural aspects come to the forefront in connection with the government's efforts to introduce the hybrid Jersey cove in the late 1990s. The planners offered the Jersey cow as superior to the economically unproductive traditional cows. This attempt failed because in the local culture livestock is not evaluated exclusively in terms of its productivity. People in Kalahandi tend to regard livestock also in terms of prestige. The farmers in Kalahandi are unwilling to sell their unproductive surplus stock because the larger the number of cattle the greater is the prestige that comes from owning them.

Land and cattle are considered as highly valued property in the village. For example, a suitable family to which one can give a daughter in marriage should possess adequate land and cows. The value of bride/groom is enhanced if her or his parents have enough livestock in the family. There is a village custom of the bride’s parents visiting the prospective groom’s household to evaluate the socio-economic condition of the house known as Ghardekha. The father of the groom has to show the land and the number of cattle he owns to the visitors. Only if the bride’s parents are pleased the marriage negotiation is completed.

Long stretched harvesting period used to provide straw and other fodders afresh for domesticated animals longer when there was a phase wise extensive harvest. Moreover new crops like cotton and groundnuts do not provide any fodder for the animals. The shortage of fresh fodder failed to keep the animal in good physical shape that affect the milk production as well. Possibly it has a say for reducing the number of cattle in the village. There are new diseases found among the animals. In the year 2004 hundreds of sheep/goats died, the veterinary office failed to understand what caused the death, years back that had happened to cows and calves. The villagers believed that the domesticated animals developed few new diseases, which was never been experienced before. The growing use of pesticide and fertilizers is danger at times domesticated animals die after consuming the pesticides plants and grass. The animal species are silent victims of such changes. There is also new health risk as villagers are careless about the use of pesticide and fertilizers, like water released from paddy field carry intoxicated materials cause itching, irritation and other skin diseases.

3.8. Consumption Pattern in the Village
A survey on food consumption was undertaken during the filed study in two in two different seasons.\textsuperscript{178} In the slack season from month of March to July, on an average a

\textsuperscript{178} I have attempted to study the consumption patterns of the marginal and landless households in the village. The data on income was collected both in the slack and in the peak seasons and the expenditure was recorded for the month prior to the date of interview. The data was collected on household expenditure and quantitative estimations were made in local weights/measures or grams (not in the
landless household earns Rs. 1050 per month, while in the peak season from August to February it could go up to Rs. 1500 (calculated on the basis of day to day expenditure). In general migration is seasonal in the village and the villagers migrate for six months during the slack period where their household income reaches on an average Rs. 2550 per month. Consequently the expenditure on food and other items among the villagers varied on a seasonal and even on a day-to-day basis.

The landless households in the village spend about 67 percent of their income on food. The poor suffer the most when there are price fluctuations on food because they buy their food on a day-to-day basis. After food, comes expenditure on clothes taking up about 9 percent of the income. Even though they spend a substantial part of their income on clothes, they hardly have more than one pair of clothes. Their expenses on health and smoking/drinking also cover a high proportion of their income. Table (3.8) below shows the basic expenditure pattern of an average household in the village.

Bar Chart 3.1: An Average Expenditure on Landless and Marginal Households

3.9. Expenditure on Health

The marginal and landless households in the village spend as much as 9 per cent of their total household income on health. Among the people, there are prejudices against certain chronic diseases like baath (severe defect inside body), chhau and kushtha (skin caloric values). Both foodgrains and liquids substances are measured in a range of round containers locally called badha, gidha, aada, maan. Many villagers are still not acquainted with the so-called standard measure like litter, kilogram
diseases) Saans (respiratory disease) and the like, hence the expenditure on such diseases must be kept secret. Thus, the stated expenditure is a fraction of total expenditure on health. The poor are compelled to spend more on medical care due to lack of proper medical services of both the modern and traditional kinds.

In the public hospitals the poor face problems at every level. Often in public hospital in Kalahandi, only the “official fees” are waived and everything else has to be paid. The only government hospital in the District Headquarters of Bhawanipatna is so crowded that at times the patients die while waiting for their turn in the queue. So one has to spend the whole day, even several days, to get simple tests done or get medicines. For the poor, who live from hand to mouth and have no paid leave, this is a big indirect cost and it is difficult to take so much time off work.

These pressures inevitably push the poor to the private sector, where the rates are higher. More than ninety percent villagers are forced to turn to faith healers and quacks, more so in the case of poor and landless. The specialists (‘pujhari’, ‘gunea’, ‘guru’) use herbal medicines, divination or exorcism. Exorcism and divination continue to be widely practised among the SCs and STs. People complain that the doctors in government hospitals are haughty and prescribe medicine without diagnosing and talking to their patients. On the other hand, the quacks are more interactive and the poor can haggle over the price of medicines and of the treatment. However, quite often, people end up in government hospitals when their problems get aggravated and complicated. There were five quacks and five faith healers in the village. All these quacks are without formal medical education, besides they have just studied up to matriculation.

This pauperised class has very little access to health care of any form, especially in a place like Kalahandi. This is one of the reasons why health problems become chronic. The problem of access to quality healthcare for the rural poor is rooted in poverty, but not explained entirely by poverty. In fact, as much as 42.5 percent of the poor have met their health expenditure on borrowed money. This in turn increases the
debt, in land mortgage and in the distress sale of assets. Their belief in local faith healers and quacks is an additional factor in compounding their health problems.

The indigenous system of medicine has also undergone a change in Kalahandi. According to the village elders, in the past when an epidemic struck the village, the villagers assembled before grama debi (village goddess) and prayed for her guidance. They performed a community based ritual that was designed to heal the whole social space from the malign influence. Despite the modern medical facilities, the ritual continues to be popular, as it satisfies a demand for community based healing over and above the more individualistic forms of healing provided by modern medicine. The guneas who were earlier highly respected have now evolved a hotpot concoction of herbal medicines, rituals and mantras along with some items of modern medicine. Guneas also use divination and exorcism to treat the disease. Although the indigenous healing methods continue and are still practised very widely among the STs and SCs in the village modern health workers have been unsympathetic towards such practices. Further, the rapid deterioration of the environment has contributed to the extinction of many herbs forcing the indigenous practitioners to resort to dubious practices.

3.10. Expenditure on Smoking and Drinking

Smoking and drinking expenditure exacerbate the effects of poverty and cause significant deterioration in living standards among the poor. An average landless male spends above 7 percent of the household expenditure that is equal to the total amount they spend on education, health and on the repayment of loans. This has immediate impact on the health of the poor and significantly deteriorates the health. Coexisting with poverty is a thriving alcohol and tobacco industry. The use of chewing tobacco, bidis, cigarettes and the consumption of intoxicating drinks and alcohol is widespread. Often new brands of alcoholic drinks are advertised contributing to the menace of alcoholism. It is possible that one may not find a grocery shop in a village but there will definitely be a shop for tobacco and alcohol.
The poor in the village spend most of their income (to be precise 67 percent) on food and other essential goods, yet are still unable to maintain a good nutritional level. But despite the level of poverty, smoking and drinking rates are relatively high. Men aged 20 years and above have the highest prevalence of smoking. Among the poorest 71 percent smoke and drink. The SCs and STs report a high incidence of smoking and drinking. The consumption of tobacco declines as income level increases. One rarely or never gets to see OBC men especially Sahus drinking wine or squandering their income on such obsession. Possibly it could be a positive contribution to their economic development. The highest rate, 59%, is among men of the landless or marginal landholders. Smoking prevalence declines proportionally as income increases, with the lowest rate, 22.3%, being for men in the middle or big landholding categories.

It is important to note that tobacco and alcohol are both cause and consequence of the poverty in the region. It increases the expenditure on non-essential goods, and severely affects the health and well being of the poor. There is no dearth of instances of men going to the extent of selling their belongings to fulfil their craving even when their wives find it difficult to feed the children.

3.11. Declining Common Properties and Indigenous Institutions
Common property institutions are one of the most important institutions for poor and marginalized sections. However, mainstream economic analysis has undermined the role of such institutions. For the first time Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop coined the term common property which is interchangeably used as open access resources. In case of these resources, the property right structure is such that the ownership right is with nobody, whereas the user right is with everybody. It has been argued that vulnerability to famines is increased by the lack of well-defined property rights, and the failure of other means of assuring quasi-cooperative solutions to the problem of allocating common property resources. In agriculture accompanied pastoral economies overgrazing can result deforestation and degradation of soil quality. When these processes have continued

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179 See Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop, 1975
over a long period the ecological system has little assistance. Precisely, common property institutions minimize the distress of the poor. However, encroachment and over utilisation is threatening its very existence. When individual and social coping strategies also fail then the people who depend on the ecological system can be extremely vulnerable to even a modest drought.

There are water bodies in the region which are known in local parlance as *Kata, Bandha, Munda, Bandhali, Sagars, or Bamphi.* These were once common property irrigation institutions essentially developed, planned and maintained by the local communities. These institutions worked as important catalysts for the agrarian sector in the past. But these resources are in a state of decline due to encroachment by the powerful in the village. In the village land record there are still 22.79 hectares of *gochar* (pasture) land and 15 small and big water bodies. However when I surveyed the areas, what I found was few patches of thorny and rocky land not more than two hectares, where nothing could grow except those thorny bushes. This fact corroborates the villagers arguments that there is an increasing pressure on land and the powerful people are encroaching to the territory, which was once open for public use in the village. Although there are still some water bodies in the village that are frequently flooded and some other are exclusively used by the Gountia. One big pond called *Patghar bandh* and a check dam has been encroached by the village Gountia and it has been exclusively used by him. Scarcity of water and pasture land also contributed to the diminishing cattle population in the village.

**Table 3.8: The Status of Common Property Institutions in the Village in 2004-05**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of land</th>
<th>Area in hectares</th>
<th>Total plots</th>
<th>No of plots encroached</th>
<th>No of plots remain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gochar (Pasture-land)</td>
<td>22.796</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munda/ kata/ Bund/ Well/Nalla</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village forest</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31.996</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own source

Common property institutions play a significant role during droughts. People derive as much as 30% of their total income from common property resources. It is the
small, marginal farmers and landless labourers that depend on common property resources for their livelihoods because they lack private property.  

The benefits obtained from common property resources attain greater importance to the poor. To the landless and poor this is the resource to fall back upon during the times of need. Though neglected by the policy makers, Common Property Resources (CPR), plays significant role in drought prone economies. From CPRs income derived per household per year ranged between Rs. 530 and Rs. 830 in different areas. This is higher than the income generated by a number of anti-poverty programmes in some areas. Rural poor derive as high as 30 percent of their sustenance from CPRs, Jodha opined. Again the impact of CPRs management on the poor is not merely economic. It is a step forward towards incorporation of grass roots democracy and traditional wisdom into conventional development culture, as Jodha described in his over cited study. In the dry regions of India CPR includes village pastures, community forests, waste lands, common threshing grounds, waste dumping places, watershed drainages, village ponds, tanks, rivers, rivulets, river beds and the like.

The vulnerability to droughts in Kalahandi increases manifolds due to the significant decline in CPR institutions. The decline of CPR institutions has made the poor more vulnerable to droughts that occur in the area because they are mainly dependent on them. With only 12 percent of land under irrigation and 88 percent rain-fed the poor in the much talked about drought prone region of Kalahandi remain extremely vulnerable to droughts. Slowly but surely the village is changing, although geographically it might still be isolated.

Despite many obstacles village is making headway. Old taboos against holding certain kinds of jobs are disappearing as new avenues are opening up thereby promoting

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183 See Chapter-I
socio-cultural changes in the village. It is against this background that the culture surrounding agriculture must be understood. Since the village economy accommodates different occupations, changes in it surely bring an overall change in the social-cultural sphere of the village. One can find three important structural changes that have occurred as a result of occupational shift in the village. First, there has been an occupational change owing to lack of employment in agriculture. As we have seen as many as fifty-six percent village population is earning their living through different activities. Here it is possible to demonstrate conclusively as my arguments, that the workforce in the village is increasingly concentrated into non-farm and migrant labourers. Third, off-farm employment is gradually rearranging traditional economic positions, caste related prejudice and traditional power structure. It also ensured among the lower caste a sense of self respect, dignity and humanity. Although wages outside agriculture may not be better in the village but occupations other than the traditional ones reassure the lower castes and tribals of their self-esteem and dignity. These new occupations are demand driven and open in nature where people across caste and community have started practising. For instance, once the village Gountia had immense power over the villagers especially over the marginal and landless labourers. They were available to him anytime of the day and on every occasion because he used to give them jobs or credits at times. But now the situation has changed, the patron client relation has crumbled since many labourers got into self employment and became their own boss.

In general, documents prepared by government painted the village as an agricultural economy, and the villagers in general as a homogeneous group having same interest, practicing more or less same occupation that is farming and drought crisis affects them all equally. This simplistic generalisation has not changed. This is rather surprising, given the fact that a substantial number of people are engaged in activities other than agriculture. As we have seen in the village study as many as 56 percent of the villagers derive large portion of their livelihood from non-farming activities. The occupational changes is driven by low wage, decline in the wage employment in agriculture, opportunity of migration and growing demand of non-farm goods in the village. This has significantly increased self-employment among all categories of workers in the village.
The state claims that self-employment is sign of advancing economy, eulogizing it as an outcome of growing economy. But very few have become self-employed in this sense; instead it is the economic compulsion for many that drives them to such occupations. More and more working people are forced to work for themselves because they simply cannot find paid job. Yet government is adamant to recognize the facts. Instead usual concessions are made in terms of old age pension or Below the Poverty Line (BPL) cards, but the kernel of state policy does not reflect any major steps to address the non-farming activities. In any government documents they are all categorized as farmers/wage earners. This is a deliberate attempt of the state to minimize the occupational diversity in the village for the simplest reason that it can make a straightaway policy. Even the state recognizes it behind closed doors as in 2000; the National Agricultural Policy stated that agriculture has become “a relatively unrewarding profession,” though it is kept away from public. The complexity of occupational changes in the village is not fully reflected in the Census, or statistical surveys. However the present study indicates a trend that requires rethinking of the way policymakers have categorized all the villagers as farmers/agricultural labourers and deal with the notions like “workers”, and “minimum wages”. When wages are not received at all in such work, it is difficult to assess the minimum wages. The policy intervention undermines this complex whole and treats all workers as a homogeneous group.

The historic descriptions of the Indian village, first given by the British administrators early in the nineteenth century, still influence the post colonial administrators. One important point emerging from the above discussion is that; the estimation made in Kalahandi is not an accurate one, as it has not done any counting at all. The government survey shows far below the exact number of people engaged in non-farming activate, so are the estimation criteria. Stock keeping in Kalahandi has been labelled as unproductive and obsolete. The declining common property institutions have not fun taken as a point of discussion in government policies. In the midst of drought and scarcity, the problems of health system, sanitation, education and unemployment problems of the educated youths are overlooked. State documents, in general, highlights that sole problems of Kalahandi are agricultural production, and the simplistic solution is
organised around production only. The occupation structure outlined above, however, shows that the villagers practiced at least 22 types occupation. But the development documents easily standardized them as, “the villagers as farming community” and their problems as “agricultural production”.

Despite all this counter evidence and evidence against the homogeneous nature of the village, the development documents continue to project the villagers’ problems as identical. It habitually goes ahead with the standardized policies with all social costs. Yet, it is not to say that the method of estimation and the official procedure is substandard or second grade or negligence on their part. In general, rural development documents in Kalahandi, minimize the diversity (numerous villagers have different problems as there are caste, community, gender and occupational diversity) and maximize the collective representation of problems of the village. Given that, it is easy to apply such formula instead of going through the entire socio-economic complex.

184. See Chapter-V, for detail discussion.