CONCLUSION

I

The Kisans, at one time known as 'Kuđā', were earth diggers. A comprehensive ethnography of the tribe is not yet available. Whatever little information is available, project them as nomadic in the past. A section of the tribe took to agriculture from earth digging and came to be known as the Kisans. Initially they reclaimed forest land suitable for traditional crops like kudo, māndiā, guűji, suān, etc., horse gram, maize, along with early varieties of upland paddy. But slowly they converted lands suitable for paddy cultivation. Rice being their staple food, they exert a continuous effort to transform all possible land into paddy land. This tendency is also noticeable among all other tribal and non-tribal cultivators of the area. The tools and techniques of agriculture used by the Kisans are similar to those of their neighbours.

The Kisans, however, have not been able to acquire large estates. Some who did, could not hold it longer. Land passed into the affluent caste cultivators under the then feudal tenancy system. Thus, by and large the Kisans have become only small and marginal farmers and landless...
agricultural labourers. Data on land holding, occupations and income in the village under investigation (Chapter II) show the precarious economic condition of the Kisans.

The environmental constraints of agriculture, like diurnal and seasonal variation in rainfall, humidity, temperature and the topography of the area determine the agricultural cycle, cropping pattern and the tools and techniques used. These factors, as a whole, again determine the organisation of manpower which refer to the division of work based on age and sex and the labour base such as the family, mutual cooperation and hiring. Division of work is determined by the nature of work and often culturally standardised. Among the Kisans, however, male and female participation in agriculture in its entirety, do not follow a rigid pattern as in higher caste groups. Men, women, young, old, rich and poor, all participate in agriculture in one or more activities.

Thus, agriculture can be described as the way of life of the Kisans which largely determines the nature of the socio-religious activities of the tribe. There are a number of rituals related to different agricultural operations. The festive months commence at the end of the agricultural activities. The level of their ceremonial enjoyment is directly proportional to the yield in the year.

Land tilling or ploughing is carried through intermittently round the year. It is largely done by the
family labour. Threshing, though, is to be completed as early as possible, is also done leisurely and is completed mostly by family members.

Transplantation, weeding and harvest are time bound seasonal activities and therefore, labour intensive. The major sources of labour in all these activities is again the family. It is supplemented by helping hands from the bāḍ, the pāṇṭhi and the lineage (Table 25, 27 and 30).

Land reclamation, a bi-sexual activity, is male dominated. The female workers are mostly drawn from the family, whereas most males come from the pāṇṭhi (Table 19).

II

Social organisations of the Kisans, as discussed earlier, are based on two principles: formal and informal. The formal organisations are based on kinship in which the nature of interpersonal relations are predetermined. The informal groups refer to relationships based on interactions at the working place, close residence, mutual assistance in the economic activities. These help to develop a collective sentiment and group solidarity and mutual loyalty, giving rise to informal groups where the membership status is largely achieved.

The formal social groups among the Kisan are the family, the lineage, and the clan. The informal ones are the bāḍ and the pāṇṭhi.
The family structure among the Kisan is mostly nuclear. It acts as the basic socio-economic unit. Each family independently holds and controls its share of paternal land. The land record of rights may be held jointly with other members or by the senior-most member living or dead whose descendents are the present owners. Each family largely carried on its own farming. Sometimes joint cultivation is also resorted to by uterine brothers (Case X). Family as the working unit for agriculture, contributes 78.88% workers. Because of the seasonal constraints some agricultural operations are time bound. Therefore, a family depends upon other families for helping hands on reciprocal exchange or on wage. Both these types of labourers are recruited. They mostly come from the community. Only 12% of such labour is found from other castes and communities of the village (Table 40). Lineage and clan also supply labour to a certain extent (Table 40).

The pāṇṭhi and the bāḍ, the two voluntary in-groups play significant roles in supplying most needed labour. These groups together have supplied about 73% (bāḍ = 35.36% and pāṇṭhi = 37.78%) of the total labour employed either on exchange or on wage. The pāṇṭhi, though purely a masculine working group, allows its females to work for their members in various agricultural activities. Similarly, bāḍ, though primarily designed to supply the customary labour needs of the community, do come to the rescue of its members in their labour intensive agricultural operations.
III

The Kisan community in Turei-Niktimal with a large population of low per capita land holding and limited sources of income, is a major source of local labour force. The position of other tribals and non-tribals except the Agariás is not much different. Thus, a large section of the village, the Kisan being the largest, cannot live only on agriculture as it is neither extensive nor intensive. It only generates limited employment. A large section of the village is, thus, underemployed. Many temporarily migrate to nearby towns in search of employment.

The small and marginal Kisan farmers manage their land largely through family labour. In time bound labour intensive operations they depend upon other families of their own community.

Such mutual dependancy has thrown up non-kin voluntary in-groups. The larger kin groups have split into smaller groups to render this mutual dependency functionally intensive. Once split for economic reasons, the unit has come to be recognised as such for the customary ritual or ceremonial activities also. These newly emerging voluntary groups are becoming more powerful and their activities of the community. The new set of relationships, though voluntary, are based predominantly within the frame work of kin and community obligation and loyalty. The culturally defined customary manifest functions of kin-groups are
gradually submerged and more emphasis is laid on the economic functions of such groups. The kinship organisation can no longer be expressed only through kin terminology, marriage, death, adaption and inheritance but also through the complexity of expected and obligatory roles in the total activity engulfing the Kisan livelihood. Kin relations surpass more in economic activities than in social relations.

Because of the continuous process of mutual dependance in the occupational sphere there is a development of collective sentiment of group solidarity and loyalty among the Kisans which has laid foundations for small working groups like the pāṇṭhi. As a working group it plays a very significant role not only in the whole process of agriculture but in most other day-to-day activities.

Thus, the Kisan's group solidarity once expressed through kinship, family, lineage, and clan, ancestor worship, marriage, etc., are now largely expressed through non-kin-groups such as bāḍ and pāṇṭhi that cut across lineage and clan boundaries.

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