CHAPTER IV
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There are over 50,887 villages in Orissa, out of which 46,553 are inhabited and 4,334 are uninhabited.

In all the villages of Orissa, the village settlement, as a unit of social organisation represents a solidarity different from the kin, the caste, the class and plays a vital role in socialisation and social control. Each village is symbolic with the presence of federative caste structure and it is integrated into its economic, social, ritual pattern by ties of mutual and reciprocal obligations sanctioned and sustained by generally accepted conventions. Inside the villages human sympathy and occasional help are unique because of the presence of economic, social and ritual co-operation and interdependence among the castes. Important administrative functions are performed by the village council, composed generally of the village elders. Notwithstanding the existence of groups and factions inside the settlement, people of the village can, and often do face the outside world as an organised, compact whole. During a fight with a neighbouring village they stand united. The first impression that one gets regarding their attitude is one of extreme constriction, suspiciousness and guarded behaviour. When their initial reserve is broken down, they reveal themselves in a totally different light as emotional, communicative, and at times even boisterous. In their inter-
personal relationship people are hypercritical and very sensitive. Conformity to social norms is idealised and emphasized.

KESHARPUR

This village is situated in the sub-division of Nayagarh, under Sarankul Police Station in the district of Puri. The Sarankul Police Station has 118 villages under its jurisdiction, and 35 villages come under the range of 500-999 population. Kesharpur is one out of these 35 villages. Sarankul is situated in $85^05'\text{E}$ and $30^030''\text{N}$ at a distance of 14 Kms. away from Nayagarh town on the Nayagarh-Aska road. The population of the village stands at 633 out of which 310 are male and 323 are female as per 1981 Census. The average rainfall of Sarankul is around 1330mm annually. In Puri district there are 23,039 Scheduled Castes (Hadies) whereas in Kesharpur their number is 90. They constitute 12 per cent of the Village population. The soil of the village is laterite and alluvial. To a certain extent we find black cotton soil which is suitable for cultivation of pulses like Biri and Mung. River Kusumi is $\frac{1}{2}$ Km. away from Kesharpur with a lift irrigation point for production of pulses and sugarcane. Kesharpur is situated at a distance of 12 Kms. from Nayagarh and 8 Kms. from Sarankul. Dimisar village lies east of Kesharpur while Binjhaagiri hill lies in the west. Sanagorada and Nagamundali

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lie on the north and south of Kesharpur respectively. This village is at the foothills of Buddhagiri Hill, which is spread over 635 acres having a height of 280 meters from the sea-level.

Kesharpur is comprised of 132 households. In the village, people from different communities live. When one enters the village, while coming from Nayagarh, one crosses the Harijan (Hadi) street first, with a separate tube-well for the Harijans. Like the structure of other villages of India, the Harijans of Kesharpur remain in the outskirts of the village. The village is divided into two parts. The upper part belongs to the Telegu-Oriyas and the lower part to the other castes. The Telegu-Oriyas who are a minority have substantial control over land and they occupy high positions in the government structure. They exercise considerable influence in the village affairs. The other castes such as: Khandayats, Cowherdsmen, Dhobies, Fishermen, Barbers, Hadies, do live in the village. The Dhobies constitute 3 families and reside in the lower part of the village. There are 4 public tube wells in the village for drinking water purpose. Three of them are located in the high caste street and one is in the Harijan street.

There was no tube-well in the Harijan street till 1984, and the Harijans were habituated to using unhygienic drinking water from the river Kusumi and a nearby tank which dried up in summer.

There are six government tanks and two private tanks. In the tank bathing ghats are separate for different
communities. The village is having one Bala Binodana Kendra, one Mahila Samity, one Anganbadi Institution, one Youth Club named Bapuji Gram Sevak Sangha. These look after different welfare programmes of the village. These organisations have their office bearers for efficient functioning. Surprisingly in none of these organisations we find any Harijan representation. Probably this is because, Harijans constitute a minority and most of their male members are away from Kesharpur. They work at Calcutta and Bhubaneswar to earn their livelihood. The village is having one upper primary school, one middle school and one high school. The village is having one confectionary shop and 4 other shops. All shops belong to village high castes.

The villagers celebrate some important festivals like Ganesh Puja, Saraswati Puja, Gobardhana Puja, and Sankaranti Puja in Ramachandi temple. Goddess Ramachandi and Mangala are worshipped by the villagers. Harijans are not allowed to worship. On the day of Pana Sankranti, the villagers hold community feast, but the Harijans take their food after the high castes. In the evening of every Sunday the villagers celebrate Trinath Mela Puja where none of the Harijans is allowed to participate. God Bhagabata is worshipped in the village Bhagabatghar where the Harijans are prohibited to enter. Hadi Harijans have separate Goddess in their street. Hadi Harijans are not allowed to participate in the village drama.
The village has the system of private money-lending. The money-lenders charge exorbitant rates of interest while lending money to the Harijans. This varies from 50 per cent to 75 per cent annually. Money-lenders belong to village high castes. The village has a common fund from which all villagers take loan paying 25 per cent interest annually. Only those villagers who possess land are entitled to take loan. When fish is caught from the ponds, villagers having land are entitled to a share. These above arrangements benefit only two washermen Harijan families among the Harijans of the village. The village gives paddy loan at 25 per cent per annum, from which Harijans are also deprived.

The village is under Kalikaprasad Panchayat and is divided into two wards, 9 and 10 respectively. Banamali and Padmanava are the two ward members. Both belong to village high castes. The village has a traditional and informal panchayat which looks after the welfare of the village. The panchayat consists of five members. It is headed by the gramani (in Mahabharat and Ramayan times the village head was known as Gramani). Since 1961 elections were held every five years to choose the panchayat. But as people could not retain faith in the leadership for five years, the five years term was abandoned. Since 1977 there have been regular annual elections in the village to choose the Informal Panchayat. No one announces his candidacy. There is no canvassing. On the election day a piece of plain paper is handed over to every adult member (18 years and above), who is required to write five names secretly as his choice.
for the informal panchayat. In another piece of paper he writes two names, one for keeping village accounts and the other for paddy accounts. In the evening the votes are counted and five persons securing largest number of votes are chosen for the Informal Panchayat and two persons securing largest number of votes act as accountants.

The political system in the village has been able to retain the faith of the people in the power elite to a large extent. The power elite as it is elected every year, has a feeling that it enjoys confidence of the people. Mass participation in politics increases the legitimacy of the political system and strengthens its effectiveness. The decision of the informal panchayat enjoys the sanction of the village council. There is no credibility gap between the leaders and the masses. Democratic politics has proved to be the creative force behind Buddhagram's (Kesharpur) transformation. Political participation if not accompanied by institutionalisation of the system leads to decay. Hence the village has ensured that every year political choice of the village is institutionalised. As a result of the operation of adult franchise in the political system of the village, considerable shifts have occurred in the social base of politics. Sections of the people who had been hitherto denied access to political power have realised the power of numbers. Participation in government has led to a heightened sense of responsibility, awareness of the problems of government and hence a degree of realism. It has led to chastening of hostile and negative attitudes held for long as a result of
being continuously deprived of power. Control of government power by different groups has led to greater accommodation and appreciation of opposite points of view. An important development is the discarding of the confrontation system and the emergence of a consensus system between the various groups.2

The village is fortunate to have a voluntary organisation named "Friends of the Trees and Living Beings". This organisation on 2nd October 1986 received the 'Prakruti Mitra' award of the government of Orissa and on 9th November 1986, received the 'Brukshya Mitra' award of Government of India. The organisation is working under the able guidance of Muliya Udaya, Shramika Jogi, Sevak Bhikyakari, Sangrami Biswanath and several others. Narayan happens to be the friend, philosopher and guide of this organisation and the real motive force. The organisation arranges regular meetings, distributes pamphlets, and literature concerning different awareness programmes involving forest, nature, wildlife, ecology, environment etc.

The number of Hadi Harijans stands at 90 at present. Infant mortality and widespread acceptance of sterilisation for family planning is the reason for their low population. The motivation for sterilization has sprung from poverty. The government gives Rs.210/- as a reward to a person who adopts sterilisation. This little money acts as a powerful inducement to Harijans for sterilisation. This

speaksof the abject and absolute poverty of Kesharpur Harijans. "The only thing they share in common is poverty and social disabilities arising from the fact that, until lately, they were untouchables. But social conservatism dies hard and legislation alone cannot overnight change the deep-rooted complexes of thought and behaviour, which are the heritage of many generations of a caste-ridden social system. Caste still retains its endogamous character in Kesharpur and traditional rule prohibits the Harijans to draw drinking water from the village public tube wells, to enter into the village temples, to take drinks, snacks and groceries directly from the hands of the upper caste shop-keepers, to inter-dine and inter-marry with high castes, to get the services of priest, barber, washerman and cow-herdsman. Some progressive Harijans resent these disabilities, but continue to confirm to these traditional norms due to their dependence upon high castes.

Most of the Harijan children attend school in name only, playing truant so consistently that they derive little benefit and eventually stop going there altogether. Only five Harijan families possess land. Harijans live on daily agricultural labour. The women labourers get Rs.10/- and men labourers get Rs.15/- per day. The Harijans are underpaid because of their weak economic bargaining power. They donot get work throughout the year. Some of the days they simply starve. Male members of most of the families go

to Bhubaneswar and Calcutta to supplement their income.

To Dhobi Harijans are in government service. Hadi Harijans
dispose off the dead cattles in the village. They do not
refrain from taking carrion, since this constitutes a source
of food supply for them. The Hadies cure hides. They earn
a part of their living by playing drums and pipes at cere­
monial occasions of village caste Hindus. They make baskets
from Bamboo and sale them in the market.

The Harijans in Kesharpur have accepted their
inferior status though they have made efforts to improve
their lot. They have failed to make an open revolt against
their disabilities. The high castes have adjusted their
attitudes and curbed some of their earlier excesses and
injustices. However, they still object to being touched by
a Hadi Harijan. There is only one Harijan activist who is
rediculed by the village high castes. He is in his thirties,
but even older Harijans listen to him. The contention of
M.N. Srinivas that the introduction of Adult Franchise and
Panchayati Raj since independence has resulted in giving
a new sense of self-respect and power to 'low' castes, parti­
cularly Hadi Harijans, who enjoy reservation of seats in
all elected bodies from the village to the Union Parliament,4
was not echoed here because of their small numerical stren­
gth in the village and poverty.

A most important thing necessary for a village is
social cohesion. Disputes are not decided in the villages

4. M.N. Srinivas, "Social Change in Modern India", (Orient
and people go to the court and police to decide their disputes. In the process the hard earned income of the poor villagers is drained off the village and the urban centres prosper at the expense of the villagers. Kesharpur has not gone to court and police for the last 33 years. Social cohesion can come through social mobilisation. Villages with social cohesion achieved political organisation or political institutionalisation. Political organisation got sanctioned by the political participation of the people. All this created political will, political will got transformed into economic development. In villages where the social activists were actuated by spiritual, moral and humanitarian values and got it accepted by the masses, there was sustained development of the village. In villages where there was no such moral atmosphere, there was no social cohesion, political organisation, economic development.

In Kesharpur 1954 was a watershed. Some educated and well meaning and forward looking youngmen of the village decided to stop the rot. They were the critical factor. They appealed to the good sense of the villagers to bury their past bitterness and to unite and work for common welfare. The effort of the youngmen had considerable success.

Two social activists of the voluntary organisation "Friends of the Trees and Living Beings"; a school teacher

and a University Professor have given vital leadership in awakening the Harijans. In 1960, the University Professor convened a meeting of the Harijans in his own house, though many high castes did not like his action. The purpose of the meeting was to motivate the Harijans to fight against their disabilities. In 1983 he took a Harijan boy for education to a destitute home. He fed the Harijan boy along with his own children. In 1984, a dispute arose between Harijans and high castes over the drawal of water from the village public tube-well. Harijans drew water by themselves breaking the earlier practice i.e. Harijans used to stand at a distance and the village high castes used to pour water into their containers. This annoyed the highcastes and they threatened the Harijans with dire consequences. The Professor took the matter to the notice of the bureaucrats and due to his untiring efforts a separate tube-well could be installed in the Harijan street. In 1984, the Welfare Extension Officer of Nayagarh came to the school to disburse the scholarship money. He was a Harijan. The Peons of the school when they came to know his identity refused to wash his plates. At this the said school teacher (social activist) apologized to the officer. Hence in 1985, on the Independence Day, the school teacher invited one Harijan to hoist the flag. In 1987, the voluntary organisation organised an orientation camp for family welfare in the village for women. The highcaste women of the village left the meeting protesting against the presence of Harijan women. Till 1987, the Harijan students in the schools used to take prasad during Pujas outside the school Varanda. But now, due to the efforts
of the school teacher they are taking prasad along with caste Hindu children.

The condition of the Harijans leaves much to be desired. They still spend an indolent life. Their houses are dilapidated. Their children look dirty and are in rags.

JARI

Jari is situated at a distance of 3 Kms. from Singhpur town (a commercial place in Jajpur Sub-division which has transport links with Cuttack, Calcutta and Rourkella everyday) of Cuttack district. It is 15 Kms. from Binjharpur Block and Tahasil. This village comes under the reserved (for Harijans) constituency, Binjharpur. The average annual rainfall in this Block is 1399 mm. The total population of the village stands at 4127, according to 1981 Census. At present the population stands at 5000. It consists of 965 households. Out of which 500 houses belong to the Harijans and 465 belong to the high castes. The Harijans constitute approximately 51 per cent of the population. The village is located on the bank of Kharasrota river. It is connected to Singhpur town through a fair-weather road. During the rainy season villagers cross Kharasrota to reach Singhpur.

Jari is a multi-caste Village. High Caste Communities like weavers, mali (worshippers in the temple), barber,

carpenter, confectioner, cowherdsman, khandayata, brahmin comprise 465 households, whereas Harijan communities like Washerman, Gokha, Pano, Kandara comprise 500 households. The washermen donot accept food and water from the other Harijan communities. There exists untouchability among the Harijans. The washermen live in cooperation with the high castes in the village.

Different castes occupy more or less separate localities in the village. The village is divided into different streets (Dandas), such as Gokha Danda, Bilasahi Danda, Jena Sahi (Street), Rath Sahi, Dhoba Danda, Sahu Danda, Jamidar Danda, Mali Danda, Pakua Danda, and Harijan Danda. The Jamidar Danda is centrally located and well protected. The Harijans reside in the outskirts of all dandas. When the village was set up by high castes in the last part of the 19th century, (as reported by some villagers) Harijans were brought to work as bonded labourers.

The village is having two Lower Primary Schools, one Upper Primary School, one Middle School, and one High School to meet the educational needs of the villagers. Jari Upper Primary School has on its rolls 255 students. Out of 255, 102 are Harijans. In the M.E. the enrollement is 88. Out of them 33 are Harijans. The High School has on its rolls 237 students out of which 37 are Harijans.

The villagers get their drinking water from the public wells, tube wells and the river. However, majority of high castes have made their separate arrangements. In
every danda there is the provision of public tube wells. The tube-wells located in Harijan residential areas give saline water. Hence the majority of the Harijans draw their drinking water from the river. They are not allowed to draw drinking water from the public wells and tube wells located in high caste streets. The villagers take their bath in the river. Separate bathing ghats for high castes and Harijans are there on the river. Separate burial grounds for high castes and Harijans are at the end of the village.

The village is having a number of temples where the Harijans offer their prayer from a distance. Harijans have their separate temples to perform their rituals. Village Temples are managed by the high castes. The village does not have a common Bhagabat Ghar. (Bhagabat Ghar is the Community Hall, where the Scripture Bhagabat, written on Palm leaf, translated into Oriya by the celebrated poet. Jagannath Das of the 16th century, is worshipped and recited every evening. Jagannath Das is a household word in Orissa, the most outstanding author in the national consciousness of Oriyas. The Oriya Bhagabat bound together, a dismembered people for centuries and became a banner of their national existence. It is one of the rare cultural phenomena in the world that within hardly two centuries Bhagabat and Bhagabat Ghar became an integral part of individual's and community's life in all the Hindu Villages of Orissa. It is or was till recently a multipurpose village institution, the village

7. See M. Mansingh, "History of Oriya Literature", (Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1962), pp.97-100.
school, the village library, the village guest house, the village recreation centre, the village hall, all combined into one. It was the recreation centre for the adult members. It was here that the adults used to learn the process of socialisation. It also enhanced spirit of co-operation and fellow-feelings among the young generations. It was a centre of integration with the ethos of the Community and merges in its larger interests and prospectives. It was a meeting place for the village council. It acted as a court house where conflicts of interpersonal and interfamily matter could be decided. It was a rallying point for the entire village).

Bhagabat God is worshipped separately by the high castes and the Harijans. Though Harijans are allowed to listen Bhagabat in high caste danda, they donot sit on the common place meant for the villagers. The Harijans are given prasad after the Bhagabat is over, from a distance. The Bhagabat recitation is done everyday in high caste danda, while Harijans do it for a month during the month of Kartika. The high castes though invited never attend the ceremonies of the Harijans. The villagers celebrate important festivals like Dola and Akhandalamani Puja. These festivals are celebrated separately by the Harijans and high castes. During Dola festival God and Goddess of high castes come out from temples in different palanquins. The Gods visit every street except the Harijan street. The high caste youths perform functions like drama, dance, music and other entertainment programmes. The Harijans are denied parti-
The village has Sub-Post Office, one Stockman centre for animals, one Public Health Centre, one Co-operative Society, and one Police Outpost. The Police Outpost in the village is under the charge of an Assistant Sub-Inspector. Jari has an Informal Panchayat for itself. As this Panchayat is under the complete control of the high castes, Harijans have dissociated themselves from it. The Informal Panchayat i.e. the Village Council is known for adjudicating decisions in favour of high castes, even though they are at fault. Hence it has lost its credibility for the Harijans. Still then certain disputes are referred to the Village Council when directed by the official Panchayat.

Majority of the families have abandoned their traditional occupations. The families which still depend on their occupations are the Kumbhar, the Barber, the Washerman, the Cowherdsman. Agriculture forms the mainstay of the villagers. Land ownership is the most important basis on which the position of any family is rated in the matrix of social relations. The Khandayats of the village possess 60 per cent of the village agricultural land. Rest 40 per cent is distributed among other high castes and untouchables. Lands under the possession of Harijans are of poor quality and are vulnerable to floods. Villagers visit the nearby Singhapur town almost daily, to sell some of their agricultural produce and to purchase commodities.

The Co-operative Credit Society is another institution that plays an important role in the lives of the villagers, although its clientele is restricted to cultivators.
The Society disburses loans to the members on easy terms and usually distributes seeds and fertilisers. The management of the Society remains with the village high castes. The Society is running on loss due to alleged misappropriation of funds by the management.

The village is having 18 shops. The Harijans own five and rest belong to the high castes. The government ration items are sold in a high caste shop. The high caste shops very often sell commodities at a cheaper rate. They throw from a distance the grocery packets into the hands of the Harijans. The tea-shop keepers serve tea in separate tumblers to dalits. They are not allowed to use the bench nor are they allowed to enter the hut. However, some distinguished personalities among the Harijans donot suffer from this disability.

The village is the head quarter of Jari-Nau Banka Gram Panchayat. The government plans for the development of the village are channelized through the Grampanchayat. The Villagers have benefited from different welfare programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programme, National Rural Employment Programme, the Carefeeding Programme, Food for Work Programme, the Anganbadi and Adult Education Programme. But the lion's share has been usurped by the high castes. Jari Nau Banka Panchayat is comprised of 21 members including the Sarapanch. Ten ward members belong to the Harijan Community and 10 Ward members belong to the high castes. The Sarpanch belongs to high caste community.
This Panchayat in its history was headed only once by a Harijan (Golakh Mallik) in 1985. The Village Panchayat, a democratic institution was expected to remove inequalities but it has become the means for creating further inequalities. The village has a common fund from which loans are advanced to the people at lower interest rate than the market rate. Money lenders have different rates for different people depending on their economic bargaining power. It is always higher for the Harijans.

Majority of Harijans are agriculture labourers. They are given wage at a lower rate than the rate prevailing in the market. The women labourers are paid much less than the men labourers. The rate of drop-outs in the school among Harijans is much higher in comparison to the high castes. This indicates their inability to spare them for education. A Harijan child is looked upon as an economic asset by his parents as soon as it reaches the age of 10 or 12 years. Among Harijans the younger ones are showing interest in business and politics. They are working for political parties and the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Among Harijan elites we find two factions. The weaker faction is patronised by the high castes and the stronger faction has a larger mass base. Whenever the security and interests of the Harijans are adversely affected, the protection comes from the stronger faction. But whenever they receive economic benefits they stand behind the patronised elites, because the high castes route the benefits through them.
Prior to Independence in the Sub-Divisional
Headquarter Jajpur, Cowherdsmen tried to raise their
social status by wearing sacred thread, a form of sanskritisation. This had a tremendous impact upon Jari. The
cowherdsmen of Jari launched a movement for an upward move­
ment in the caste hierarchy. They were backed by the Dalits
in this move. This was resisted by the Khandayats. They
stopped employing the Harijans in their fields. The barbers
and washermen of the village were pressurized not to serve
the cowherdsmen. However, when a high caste Pyaree Mohan
Mohanty was murdered, the Khandayats obliged the cowherdsmen.

After Independence Jari Harijans were mobilised
under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das, Nabakrishna Choudhury,
Rama Devi, Santanu Das, Rajkishore Bose, Sunaram Soren,
Banka Behari Das, Anadi Das, Prahallad Mallik (all eminent
freedom fighters). The Harijans stopped providing free labour
to the high castes and demanded wage. So for the first
time they received money in exchange of their labour. A
few Harijans who got claim over lands due to share-croppers
movement received the sandy and upproductive lands from the
high caste landowners.

Jadumani Mangaraj, a leading member of the Hindu
Mahasabha, convened a meeting of caste Hindus in connection
with the celebration of a Yangyam (sacrificial ceremony).
The Dalits were prevented from attending the said ceremony.
This created a bitter rift between the Harijans and caste
Hindus. The Harijans were allowed entry into the premises
of the Yangyam in 1954 after a strong protest. Earlier the
Dalits had successfully entered the famous Biraja temple of Jajpur town under the leadership of Nabakrishna Choudhury (who subsequently became the Chief Minister of Orissa) and his wife Malati Choudhury.

Till 1950 it was the convention in Jari that after the marriage of the daughters of the feudal lords, some maids from the poorer families accompanied their daughters to their father-in-law's place. The son-in-laws kept illicit sex connection with these maids and in the process bastards were born. These bastards were taken as untouchables. In 1952 Jari Dalits along with the above said forced untouchables protested against the practice and were successful in stopping this practice. This movement in Jari is known as 'Bastard Movement' (Barna Sankar Andolan).

In 1959, the Harijans demanded to pour Ghee on their own (not through priests) on the Yangan fire. The high castes immediately got organised and Harijans were driven out from the premises of the sacrificial altar. In view of the economic subservience of the Harijans, they unilaterally withdrew their demand. Since 1959 the Dalits are celebrating their separate Yangan.

Harijans became increasingly conscious of their self-respect and identity. In 1978, under the leadership of two educated (a business man and a government employee) Harijans, the Harijans organised a meeting and demanded wage as per market rate. They decided not to work in the fields of caste Hindus. So the caste Hindus employed
labourers from neighbouring villages and stopped employing Jari Harijans. Majority of the Harijans starved. Later on, the Harijan movement collapsed. A compromise took place and there was a slight upward revision in the wage rate. This fell short of the market rate.

In 1985, under the leadership of a Harijan (Golakh Mallick), the Harijans refused to work as palanquin bearers during marriages of high castes. Immediately after, the caste Hindus stopped coming by rickshaws pulled by the Harijans and invited the labourers from the neighbouring villages to work in their fields at a higher wage. The economic hardships inflicted on them forced them to hunger and they were forced to withdraw their demand. But there was strong resentment at this humiliation and they looked for an opportunity to retaliate.

The High Castes have a feeling that the increasing Dalit resistance is the result of their improved economic status. The Dalits forcibly occupied 50 acres of no-man's land. They constructed a separate temple for themselves. In 1980 a Harijan boy (Daria) eloped with a high caste girl and later on married her. The Congress party has extended political support to this marriage.

In July 1986 a Harijan boy (Babuli) eloped with a high caste girl (Bharati). A violent clash took place between the high castes and the Harijans, on 11 and 12 September 1986, over the issue. Four persons were killed, three from the Harijans and one from the high castes.