Chapter IV
“The government has become the biggest NGO these days”\textsuperscript{34}: tactics of state-fabrication in the mission mode

I. Introduction

It is 2.30 in the afternoon of the month of \textit{jyestha}\textsuperscript{35}, and I am sitting in a tiny stand-alone room with naked, non-plastered brick walls in the village of Mahulpani in Kalahandi that houses the office of the Sānjore Microwatershed Development Committee, a village-level institution set up under WORLP. There is a crowd of women belonging to self-help groups sitting just outside the door of the room. Inside the room a couple of middle-level project staff are trying to prepare business development plans (BDPs) for dozens of largely illiterate project beneficiaries who have already taken grants and bought goats for farming. The Kondh secretary of the committee rushes into the room and tells me, ‘Āsun, bhāuja jugichhe’ (Please come since your sister-in law is waiting). This is a call for having lunch at his place. But he pointedly ignores the project staff who must also be hungry, and who have no other way of getting lunch in the village so late in the afternoon, and had indicated to the secretary in my presence the previous day that they would want him to make arrangements for lunch. I feel a little awkward, but feel that flight is the better part of valour, and leave the room for lunch.

This incident from doctoral fieldwork raises a set of important questions. Why did the BDPs need to be created after the distribution of grants when they should have been made long before the event? How is it that most of the grantees have been able to buy goats when goats are officially seen as ‘the bane’ of watershed development projects in India? How is it that a lower-level project functionary is able to defy his seniors by withdrawing even the basic courtesies of village society, such as offering food, that too in public? To ask in summary, how has the workings of government and the process of

\textsuperscript{34} Quoted in Nagar and Raju 2003: page 3.
\textsuperscript{35} Jyestha is a month according to the lunar calendar. It is one of the hottest months of the year in most parts of Odisha just before the onset of the monsoons; spread over May-June.
state-fabrication changed by the mushrooming of ‘missions’ in India over the last 25 years?

The dominant narratives surrounding the state in India can only partially and inadequately engage with these sets of questions, and there is a need to reopen this debate in a foundational sense. As already discussed in Chapters I and II, elaborations of the passive revolution formulation and its political society extension have informed discussions surrounding the recent changes in state-fabrication in India. Following the policies of liberalisation of the economy adopted under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in the period 1991–96, the changes in the realm of the political have been framed as that of changing relationships between state, market and society (Menon and Nigam 2008). This reading can be read as a part of a wider international literature in which the state is seen as increasingly withdrawing from various kinds of production and provisioning (Gordon and Whitty 1997; Yun 1999; Jilberto and Mommen 2002). The space ceded by the state has been seen as being occupied by market entities such as corporations and non-market entities such as NGOs (Baijal 2002; Kamat 2004; Mukherji 2004; Dolhinow 2005; Tooley and Dixon 2006). This literature on the state and the political in India can be located within the larger international critique of the neoliberal trend in public policy since the 1980s (Radice 2008). Apart from state withdrawal, this international critique has also involved interrogating the adoption of corporate mechanisms of governance etc being adopted by governmental organisations, and a broader trend of corporatisation of earlier services provided by the state (Joseph 2007). An important example of the latter in India can be seen in the corporatisation of the various state electricity boards, starting with the electricity board in the state of Odisha (Dubash and Rajan 2001).

II. Mission mode of statecraft and five tactics of state-fabrication

Two themes are, relatively speaking, underdiscussed in the debates surrounding the recent changes in governmental action and organisation. The first concern is about the formal aspects of state-fabrication. The second concern deals with the ways in which
these changing processes are perceived by people, and the ways in which people act upon and shape these changing governmental imperatives. To recapitulate the arguments made in Chapter II, beginning with sometime in the 1980s, the state in India started operating in the mission mode. This was associated with a shift from symbolic to quotidian logistics of state-fabrication, and with respect to regimes related to the perceptions of the state by communities this shift can be seen in terms of the growth of regime of tactility. This chapter details the rules of operations and modes of availability through which the state appears in specific local contexts of the emergent quotidian logistics of state-fabrication.

In the locality and the context that this thesis deals with, that is, watershed development through WORLP in Kalahandi, the changes brought about by the mission mode of state-fabrication can be understood through five principal tactics of operation. The first one is that of multiplication of nodes of contact with society, the second is the expansion of the body of the state by incorporation of other types of agencies such as NGOs, the third is pluralisation of logics framing governmental action, and the fourth is that of provisionalisation of governmental practices, and the fifth is the textualisation and visibilisation of governmental processes. This is not to say these are the only five tactics that are available, or that these five are always dominant, but that in this specific context these five seem to give shape to governmental practices and perceptions of the state.

The material offered in the following sub-sections in this chapter tries to side-step the debates surrounding state-formation by offering a formal description of tactics involved in the mission-mode of state-fabrication. Each of the following sub-section of this chapter details out one such governmental tactic. Some of these sub-sections also show that such tactics are not uniformly successful in achieving the stated goals. At each stage these are contested and sometimes subverted by people belonging to various social groups by their own sets of tactical actions. Therefore, these governmental tactics, even when successful, can be seen only as contingent achievements. In seeing governmental tactics as a significant aspect of the mission mode of state-fabrication this thesis broadly
borrows from the use of these terms by de Certeau (1988). He uses tactic as an aspect of acting in time that lies beyond ‘the proper’ which is the location of strategy and strategic intentionalities. By reading governmental action as a species of tactic and not strategy this thesis tries to move beyond the readings of governmental actions as being suffused with strategic intentionalities that originate in certain bounded spaces. The operation of these tactics combine to produce a web-like weaving of the state, and feed into the quotidian logistics of state-fabrication. By doing so this thesis is able to provide a formal description of processes related to the state.

Multiplication

*Multiplication of nodes of contact between state and society*

By self-definition a node (in the context of this thesis) is a point of contact between state and society. With the growth of the missions in various sectors (including those dealing with watershed) there has been a mushrooming of such nodes at various levels. For example, missions are not only formed at the levels of the central and state governments but also at the district level.

At the levels of the state, district and blocks, OWDM, DWM, Kalahandi and the PIAs have been created as parallel structures to the already extant soil conservation department. The most interesting innovations have happened at the village level. Depending upon the arable area, one or more villages have been combined to form Committees. Each Committee has around 500 hectares under its command. Each committee is a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, and has a president, secretary and around 10–12 committee members. Each Committee has an office and four CLWs. Thus, there has been a growth in the number of institutions at various levels at which governmental institutions used to exist earlier as well as a growth of new institutions at lower levels. These institutions act as the nodes of interface between state and society.
An aspect of the multiplication of the nodes of interaction between state and society is the dramatically increased number of direct beneficiaries. The livelihood promotion budget of WORLP, comprising of the revolving fund for the SHGs and the livelihood grants for individual households, is more than a quarter of the total budgeted amount of the project. The minimum amount that can be distributed as livelihood grants is Rs 4000, although sometimes committees distributed Rs 3000 per grant to maximise the coverage of beneficiaries. On an average, around 150 households belonging to the poor and very poor categories have got livelihood grants in the microwatersheds (MWSs) of the PIAs under study. The number of households covered under the revolving fund component is at least 100 in most MWSs. Even allowing for some overlap of households that have benefited from both RF and livelihood grants, this is a larger number considering the fact that most MWSs have around 400–500 households.

Such penetration of the government through newer organisational forms and processes has sometimes been framed within narratives of extension of state power (Ferguson 1996) or its obverse—state withdrawal and erosion (Gordon and Whitty 1997; Yun 1999; Wegren 2000). In contrast to this, the material presented in this section details the processes involved in the multiplication of the nodes at which the state comes into contact with society. One of the ways in which this multiplication happens is by a process of penetration by dispersion of new kinds of institutions. The multiplication of nodes of contact between state and society has not necessarily translated into greater effectiveness in governmental practice. But it has involved the state seeping into the social and getting imbricated into multiple networks of actors and agents and their tactical usages. What follows is a case that illustrates such a process.

*Imperfect translation of governmental imperatives: case of toilets*

During the course of fieldwork, one of the major initiatives of the PD, DWM, Kalahandi concerned the construction of toilets for watershed committee members. In the monsoons of 2009 many lives were lost due to dysentery, diarrhea and other related gastro-intestinal diseases in the district. One of the two blocks where intensive fieldwork was undertaken
was affected with several people dying. The official in charge for the district (called ‘point person’ for the district in bureaucratic jargon) in the state secretariat, a senior IAS officer, came on a visit to Kalahandi immediately, and after field visits and reviews of the works of the various departments in the district headquarters of Bhawanipatna gave a slew of recommendations. One of the more concrete targets that he gave was to cover all the villages with toilets to prevent further deaths from diarrhea in the next monsoons. Since the watershed mission is seen as having a good outreach in the rural areas, to around a quarter of the villages of the district, and has significant amounts of funds at its disposal, the district administration gave the responsibility of building new toilets to the District Watershed Mission, and it was asked to coordinate its activities with that of the Rural Water and Sanitation Services (RWSS) department in the district.

From this point onwards toilet building became a major thematic focus of the work of the Committees. Thus, despite all the narratives of participatory decentralisation that one heard from higher level officials, the reality was that if the PD or other senior officers wanted to push something onto the agenda of the village-level committees they could do this with ease. But this pushing down was not a one-sided process, and such imperatives were appropriated and ‘used’ at each level to further the agenda of various social actors for a variety of reasons.

The PD was generally seen as an efficient and capable man who was not corrupt. But his clean image and his propensity of giving ‘impossible’ targets to staff was interpreted variously by different social actors. For example, many of his colleagues saw it as a deliberate building of an image to be able to get a plump posting in a bilateral/multilateral organisation later on. It was also another way for the beleaguered PD to spend some money; the collector had reportedly expressed his displeasure to the PD for not being able to spend the money allotted to him by OWDM. The PD in his part promised all the PIAs that the cost of the toilets would be picked up by the PD’s office itself although there was much confusion later regarding this. After the toilet initiative was started, for the first couple of months, every time the PD would attend a meeting he would bring up the issue of the toilets as one of the first things on the agenda even though
it was not there in the agenda prepared for the meeting. It was very clear in the way the PD pushed the initiative that this was something very close to his heart.

Initially the toilet initiative was pushed quite heavily by the PIAs-in-charge concerned including Mr. Patra, the head of the NGO PIA, as he wanted to score ‘development points’ in the mission by being one of the first movers in constructing toilets. There was the added reason as he was assured of prompt response from the RWSS as the engineer concerned in the block was a friend of one of his staff members.

The secretaries of the Committees saw it as one way of getting contracts for 12–14 toilets in their village that they could easily supervise and get a little money on the side. All the committee members saw it as getting one more benefit from the watershed project. For those committee members who had not got any benefits till date, it was seen as one way of salvaging something out of a fire or as one committee member put to me graphically, ‘ghar podinu jen tā bi milile sār’—whatever one salvages out of a house on fire is good.

But there was a minor problem involved; this was a problem not only for Mr. Patra, but for all PIAs across the district. It was a small matter of shortage of bricks. Because of the late rains that year (2009), sowing and other agricultural processes got delayed by four to five weeks across the district. This meant that most of the bricks that were constructed in the summer of that year, and had not been carted off for usage or sale, were now surrounded by growing or maturing crops of paddy and carting them away in these conditions was impossible. If each village was constructing, say, 150–200 toilets, then getting bricks from large suppliers inside or outside the district would have been a feasible solution. But one was looking at only 10–15 toilets per village. The PIAs or the PD office could not take the responsibility of supplying the bricks because the project structure (due to ‘decentralisation’) did not allow the ways in which such a route of sourcing bricks could be legitimately accounted for. Thus, despite the continuous exhortations of the project director, till the end of the monsoons there was no movement regarding the construction of toilets. The only village in which toilets were constructed
during this period of time was in the village of Baxi by a state-level NGO through another governmental initiative; this was possible because they built toilets for the whole village, and Baxi is a small village.

Thus, the same formal structures that made for the deployment of a tactic of multiplication of nodes at the various levels of government also made translations of certain governmental imperatives difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, extension of the state does not necessarily involve the expansion of its power.

Expansion of the body of the state

Apart from multiplication of the nodes through which interactions between state and society, the mission mode of state-fabrication has also involved an increase in the number and types of institutions that fall under the ambit of the state. Watershed development in the mission mode has involved the incorporation of what were earlier seen as non-state actors and institutions into the body of the state. These have been generally studied as Government Organised NGOs or GONGOs that are formed by states to get access to funds and expertise that are relatively inaccessible to governmental agencies and to venture out into unconventional areas of work (Chen 2006). These are generally more prominent in relatively undemocratic countries (Mulligan 2007).

But of late, these have started rapidly growing in number in democratic countries such as India as well. The growth of NGOs in India has been seen as a part of a broader shift towards neoliberal governmentality (Sharma 2006, 2008; Gupta and Sharma 2006). This thesis tries to take the discussion surrounding GONGOs forward by detailing processes through which NGOs are increasingly used as an organisational form for the expansion of the state. The following discussion gives an account of this by using the DWM, Kalahandi as an example, and shows the ways in which such a process of expansion opens up possibilities for tactical action by subaltern social groups.
“The government has become the biggest NGO these days”: expansion of the body of the state through NGOs

In the context of DWM, Kalahandi and WORLP, the expansion of the body of the state has happened through two principal ways. One way has been the ‘outsourcing’ of government’s work to NGOs and other institutions. In the case of the WORLP in Kalahandi, three of the six PIAs are NGOs. Apart from the actual implementation of the project, some of the other ancillary work, such as that of training of lower-level project staff, has been outsourced to NGOs and academic institutions. Apart from outsourcing, projectisation in the mission has involved using the organisational form of the NGOs by the state to extend itself on the ground. For example, although village-level committees are all registered as societies under the Societies Registration Act of 1860, and are technically NGOs, they have been initiated as part of a project (WORLP in this instance). For all practical purposes they are a part of the state. But this is not merely a matter of extension of the state into lower levels. As already discussed in Chapter II, even at the level of the state government, the project holder of WORLP, OWDM, is also a society. This means that the state is morphing by creating NGOs, and funneling a large part of its activities through them. Thus, the very understanding of what constitutes a ‘governmental’ organisation is changing and expanding. This expansion is as much in the real world as it is conceptual. In a sector like watershed development this ‘institutional expansion’ has also meant that the actual potential and possibilities of interacting with the state have also increased substantially.

This shows that there has not only been an expansion of the type and number of institutions and the conceptual space of governmental institutions, but also the potential for the actual incidents and spaces in which people come into contact with and perceive the state. Sometimes the expansion of the body of the state to reach into village society by incorporating novel institutional forms such as microwatershed development committees is framed within narratives of elite capture (Baviskar 2004; Chhotray 2004, 2007). The case presented in the following sub-section, that of the tanks and the Committee in the village of Mahulpani, illustrates that sometimes even subaltern groups
not only respond to governmental initiatives and bureaucratic fiats of decentralisation and participation, but are also able to creatively use the spaces created by the project to chart out innovative courses of action.

The case of the tanks and committee of Mahulpani

Mahulpani is a village in the project area of an NGO PIA, and the work of WORLP is managed by a Committee that comprises of this single village. The village of Mahulpani has six numerically important jāti groups; these are Kondh (technically classified as a Scheduled Tribe), Dom (a Scheduled Caste group), Kulthā, Teli, Gaud and Sundhi. The last four jāti groups are classified as Other Backward Classes (OBC), and amongst these four jāti groups the Gaud are the poorest and the most marginalised, not merely in this village but generally in the district of Kalahandi as well. The village does not have a single household belonging to the general category. Over the last three generations a significant amount of land alienation has taken place from the Kondhs, Gauds and the Doms to the three other OBC jāti groups, but the trend seems to have stemmed over the last 30 years or so. As far as popular memory goes, most of this alienation took place in the decades immediately preceding and succeeding independence. Although some Kondh families still retain a big part of their landholdings, many have become marginal farmers or agricultural labourers, and severely resent this process of alienation.

Both the president and secretary of the Committee are Kondh. From the very beginning of the watershed project, the OBC farmers have pushed for investments in existing and new water harvesting structures such as tanks. It should be mentioned here that, relatively speaking, the project documents themselves focus more on tanks/water harvesting structures as compared to wells. But only one new tank was constructed by the Committee in Mahulpani, the principal beneficiary of which was a Kondh farmer, although some OBC farmers also benefited. No investments were also made in de-silting existing tanks.

36 For data on the profile of secretaries and presidents of the ten committees of the NGO PIA under study, please refer to Appendix 4.
The Kondhs in Mahulpani are divided into two rival groups, with the president of the Committee belonging to one group and the secretary belonging to the other. But it was widely known that both these groups got together to oppose plans of building tanks through the watershed project that would end up disproportionately benefiting the richer, landed households belonging to Kulthās, Sundhis and Telis. The secretary and the agricultural CLW, both of whom were Kondhs, repeatedly said during fieldwork, “teliā mune tel dhāli kari kān lābh?” (why should one pour more oil on someone whose head/scalp is already oily?).

Despite repeated resolutions in Committee meetings, by the time of completion of fieldwork towards the end of February 2010, work had not started in any of the tanks in the village, and the Kondhs had been successful in stalling the work from starting. First, although most jātis in the village have households that use wage-labour as a livelihood strategy, the largest proportion of labourers are Kondhs and Doms; and work on tanks is labour intensive. Thus, the secretaries and presidents always found it easy to convince their extended kin members to not come to work on the tank sites. Second, there was a general prejudice at the highest levels of the project administration against undertaking big projects of earthwork as such investments were seen as potential sites of corruption. Thus, digging more wells also found favour with higher officials as compared to constructing/de-silting tanks. Third, the digging of wells found more favour amongst Committee members compared to work on tanks, since the benefits from the latter are widely and thinly distributed. On the other hand, by distributing wells, allies can be built as it is seen by the beneficiary as a favour that she received from a Committee member individually.

The combination of all these factors allowed the Kondh president and the secretary of the Committee to prevent the resources of the project being spent on tanks that might end up further marginalising their community in the village. As this sub-section has illustrated, the expansion of the state through the incorporation of organisational forms such as NGOs at the village-level for delivering projects does not
necessarily lead to processes of elite-capture. The expansion of the state also lends itself to manipulations of marginal communities such as the tribal Kondhs, who occasionally use these very structures to further their own ends. This cannot be merely read off as local politics. It has to be seen within the broader context of emerging tactics of state-fabrication.

Pluralisation of logics of state-fabrication

Attendant upon these processes of multiplication and expansion of the body of the state has been pluralisation of the logics that are associated with governmental operations. The state that now seems to not only multiply and expand, also seems to lend itself to a plurality of modalities and logics of various social agents. The postcolonial national state purportedly drew its legitimacy from two separate yet related modes of operation. The first was through the practice of electoral democracy in which the state claimed to represent the nation through the logic of representation. The second was the use of the language of development to both create and operate the domain of scientific planning to act upon society (Kaviraj 2010a, 2010c) at a distance through symbolic logistics of state-fabrication.

_Governmental logics of participation and targeting_

Participation has been seen as a part of a broader trend towards governance reforms and decentralisation across nations since the 1980s (Crook and Manor 1998). During the same period, in many fields of natural resource management, participation of communities increasingly became popular as a policy prescription in India as well as other regions of the world such as Africa (Kolavalli and Kerr 2002; Nelson and Agrawal 2008). Often such participation of the community in natural resource management is envisaged to be enabled by single-purpose user committees. These user committees are seen to be depoliticising entities that purportedly subvert the functioning of multipurpose local government (Baviskar 2004; Manor 2004). Thus, the logic of participation in single-
purpose committees and the logic of representation in multipurpose local government in authority are often seen to be at loggerheads with each other.

With the increasing importance of the mission mode of state-fabrication there seems to be an increasing conflation between these two logics. For example, the village-level watershed committees of WORLP, which are apparently tools for enabling participation, are created with the logic of representation; adequate representation is attempted to be ensured to various groups such as women, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In the 20 watershed development committees in the two PIAs that were studied for doctoral fieldwork, all the committees had representation of various social categories such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women depending upon their presence in the village.

With ‘elite capture’ increasingly framing narratives surrounding such morphings of the state (Platteau 2004; Iversen et al. 2006; Dasgupta and Beard 2007), targeting is another logic that seems to be associated with modes of operation of state power. The logic of targeting partitions communities into distinct groups based on governmental categories and then makes certain interventions contingent upon the membership of these groups (Ahluwalia 1993; Bigman and Srinivasan 2002). To give an example, households in the project villages in WORLP are divided into four groups: ‘well-off’, ‘manageable’, ‘poor’ and ‘very poor’, and specific programmatic interventions are then targeted at each of these groups.

*The cultural logic of bhāg*37

Generally the watershed-plus approach on which WORLP is based is supposed to take into account the inequities attendant with the traditional watershed approach based on land. As detailed earlier, it is the tactical and creative appropriation of local actors and the contingent nature of project interventions that helps take preliminary steps towards equity, and not merely the specific design or the official intervention strategy of the

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37 Bhāg is an Odia word that means reasonable and rightful share.
project per se. Multiplication of the nodes of contact between state and society and expansion of the body of the state makes for the multiplication of certain governmental logics such as participation and targeting. It also makes for the infiltration of certain vernacular cultural logics into the domain governmental action. In doing so, this sub-section follows the lead of Li (2005) who argues that contextualised local knowledge, practices and logics often lead to outcomes that cannot be totally explained through the tactics of state-fabrication. Bhāg can be seen as one such logic.

This section tries to answer the question that arises out of the discussions of the previous sub-section - if some, no matter how marginal, appropriation and usage of project structures by non-elite groups is observed, how is this phenomenon possible at all, and how do we understand such a finding. Widely shared cultural notions of bhāg (rightful share) can be seen as a register of conduct providing an ethical space for locating such anti-disciplinary tactics. The decentralisation of watershed development through Committees and the concomitant watershed-plus approach is premised upon the idea of appropriate targeting of the poor and reaching out to marginalised communities. The argument is that the government finds it difficult to reach out to target communities and that decentralisation helps to do this efficiently. But the governing logic of the Committees is not that of appropriate or proper targeting—it is, as articulated by Committee members and secretaries, one of bhāg. The way benefits accruing from the watershed project were distributed across various sections was premised upon the logic of bhāg.

In a meeting of the Committee of one of the villages in the project area of the NGO PIA once the subject of distribution of the NRM funds came up. At the beginning of the discussion one of the women members of the Committee, Sarala, said that as per the project rules (prajekt niyam) anyone who wanted to construct a well in his backyard and not in the farm lands should not be allotted a well. This was a rhetorical point as the president of the Committee himself had got a well allotted to him, and had constructed the well in his back yard. Sarala belonged to a faction of the village opposed to the president. Since wells are supposed to be constructed for the purpose of cultivation and
not for sourcing drinking water in the project, the member had a point. But no one picked up the issue and let it pass. The Committee realised that it had money for constructing only eight wells. Since the village had four major hamlets, it decided that each hamlet should get two wells each. A woman Committee member, Sati, contested this by pointing out that earlier her hamlet was given one well less than their share, and this time they should be allotted one well more. She expressed this demand in the idiom of getting the rightful bhāg for her hamlet—she said, ‘Mui mor padār bhāg magunchhe, bhik magunchhe ki!’ (‘I am asking for the rightful share for my hamlet, not for alms!’). Others pacified her saying that whatever has happened has happened, and one cannot keep on harping back to the past; she was promised that her hamlet would be compensated in some other way. This settled the matter for the time being.

After this division between the hamlets was agreed upon, then a list was made of names of those who had applied for wells, and beneficiaries were chosen based on the explicit reason of their competence as cultivators, the additional reason (implicit) of their closeness to the Committee members, and due to other sundry reasons. One of the criteria that governed the distribution of benefits at the sub-hamlet, inter-household level was the prior receipt of benefits of the project by the extended households. If one of the brothers (who had divided family property amongst themselves and now headed nuclear households of their own) had got some major benefit, then generally his brothers were not allowed any major benefits. Even at this level of ‘sharing’ what governed the distribution of project benefits was a notion of bhāg at the inter-household level. It can be argued that in fact this is merely another example of elite capture. The logic of bhāg is in fact amenable to elite capture at the higher levels of the project, and one alternative meaning of bhāg is in fact the sharing of spoils. But in the villages, partly due to the very wide spread of benefits of the project, the dominant aspect of the logic of bhāg that governed their distribution was the vernacular notions of sharing.

Thus, participation and targeting are increasingly important logics that are imbricated in processes of state-fabrication. As this section has shown, representation and participation are not necessarily at loggerheads with each other with respect to
practices on the ground. The increasing importance of participation in fabricating the state has not meant the fading away of the logic of representation; there is a certain hybridisation of these logics in practice. An important effect of the increased salience of participation has meant that the space for the articulation of vernacular logics such as bhāg is made possible.

Provisionalisation

Along with multiplication, expansion and pluralisation, provisionalisation is another important tactic of state-fabrication in the mission mode. The idea of the state is generally sustained by a certain imperative to portray itself as a permanent entity that lies above society (Migdal 2001). The state is seen as an agent of change, but not necessarily as a temporal artifact. Narratives surrounding the state in the postcolony have increasingly been told through the tropes of state failure or state withdrawal (Strange 1998; Scott 1999; Saha and Mallavarapu 2006; Bates 2008). What this sub-section argues is that due to the multiplication and expansion of the body of the state and the pluralisation of its governing logics there has been a certain provisionalisation of the state as a material fact, although this may still not bring into question the abstract notion of the state as a permanent entity.

In most small towns and cities in India, the state is made visible and available locally to people by its material body, primarily offices. In most small cities and towns government offices of various kinds ranging from the post office to the police barracks provided the landmarks around which people lay out a map of their everyday lives and experiences (Gupta 1995).

But in WORLP, only the office of the Project Director was a semi-permanent one, since it had been rented out from another governmental body. The offices of the block-level project implementing agencies were operated in rented houses and these were frequently shifted. Although WORLP is a government project and its project holder, OWDM, is a permanent body (a registered society), there was a thorough casualisation of
work practices due to the projectisation of the watershed development work. This meant that low-level functionaries had been on periodic contracts, and some of them had been serving in various watershed development projects for nearly 10 years. Due to these and other reasons it can be argued that provisionalisation is one of the tactics of the mission mode of state-fabrication. In terms of the broader shift that frames the narrative of this thesis, the shift from the symbolic logistics of state-fabrication to the quotidian one, such provisionalisation of the state is important. Whereas state presence was premised upon its visibility earlier, it is no longer exclusively so. As the state reaches into the interstices of village society, it is more ‘felt’ rather than ‘seen’; the provisionalisation of the state aids in such a process.

Textualisation

Textualisation is another tactic through which the state is fabricated in the mission mode. This is linked to the imperative towards provisionalisation—one of the important ways in which the state persists and is made available as a coherent entity persisting over time is through textualisation and by making such textualisation visible. For example, the project experience of WORLP has been extensively documented through working papers (more than 60), newsletters and handbooks, and monthly progress reports.

In the Indian context, this process of textualisation has already been noted and documented by some scholars studying Indian society. Readings of the textualising tactics of the state in India have been deployed to understand the complicity of citizens and lower-level bureaucrats in the self-sterilisation drive during the 1975–77 emergency by looking at files dealing with land-allotments for the self-sterilised (Tarlo 2001), the failures of mythologies of statehood in the context of anti-Muslim violence in Bombay by looking at the work of the Sri Krishna Commission and its report (Hansen 2001b), and in understanding the state as a form of regulation oscillating between the rational and the magical modes of being (Das 2007: 162-183).
Reporting success stories

The following discussion locates itself in the strand of scholarship as exemplified in the work of the above-mentioned scholars in seeing documents as an important part of the processes of state-fabrication. But instead documenting and detailing the contents of reports, newsletters and other texts produced by the project, this section tries to map out the processes involved in such imperatives of textualisation. A large part of such an imperative is not only about documenting activities of the state but is also about tropes of governance such as transparency that are premised upon making social processes legible.

From the district office (especially from the PD) there was a constant demand for documentation and reports. One of the routines of textualisation involved documenting what were known as success stories. These success stories often involved recounting in a short narrative form (in a before and after format with photographic documentation) the positive changes brought about in a ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ households (according to the categorisation of WORLP) with respect to livelihoods.

One of the key informants Mr. Rahul Patnaik was in charge of documentation of WORLP, and one of the tasks he had taken on himself was to produce DWM, Kalahandi’s newsletter. One of the key items carried in these newsletters is success stories. This newsletter had been very sporadic in nature, not being published for many months at one go, and copies of many of the early issues were very hard to come by. It was only after Mr. Patnaik joined the project that its production started again. There was an imperative to produce success stories. The textualisation of ‘success’ was an important part of the project. In every review meeting the PD would always ask for success stories to be submitted. In fact according to him, each village should be able to yield at least 50–100 success stories at any given instant. But when it comes to actually archiving these success stories, there seems to be a great institutional inertia to do so.

One of the functions of the imperative to collect these success stories is to narrativise (even if in a rudimentary way) what the staff have to submit in the form of numbers in a routine fashion. Numbers can also be invented; but each success story has to
be (by the narrative logic) accompanied by a photograph of the beneficiary as well as of the benefit(s), for example, a herd of goats or a small shop. This means that it forces the collector of these stories to visit the field site more often than would have otherwise happened. An important result of this imperative for collecting success stories is that it helps in normatively ‘defining’ what is and what is not ‘success’. Thus, the collection and circulation of these stories makes the messiness of project practices available for regulation.

Apart from success stories, another text created through the project was wall paintings with a deep yellow background listing out the various expenditures incurred by the project through the Committees. The secretaries were regularly exhorted by senior project staff to update these paintings so as to be able to maintain what was termed as transparency. In the three PIA offices visited for doctoral work, not one had these wall paintings. This desire to visibilise happened primarily at the lowest level of the organisational pyramid, the site at and through which decentralisation is supposed to take place. But such demands are not always met with acquiescence. One of the ways in which this imperative for textualisation and visibilisation is challenged is, through what the locals term as, lukibā—literally, hiding or making oneself invisible.

*Lukibā as everyday tactic*

A large part of the regular textualisation of project processes happened because of the need to satisfy the demands made by auditors (both external and internal) on a regular basis. When the external auditors came for their regular auditing, they did not check the records of each and every Committee. The PIA suggested a few committees and then the auditors chose amongst these. These Committees were invariably the better performing ones, both in terms of work and in terms of maintenance of records. These Committees and their secretaries then had to do additional work in terms of being present when the auditors visited. They also had to be open to scrutiny at a level that other committees were not expected to, and to go through drills till the actual audit happened. The
secretaries and presidents tried to deal with these demands with a ruse as old as history—
lukibā.

The first time the researcher came to know of this practice was also one of its most creative usages encountered in the field. It was into the first few months of doctoral fieldwork. That day a team of internal auditors was to come to the PIA office to check for discrepancies in the records of the various Committees. Four Committees were identified as successful whose records could be presented before the internal auditors for perusal. All the four secretaries were informed over the phone, so were the presidents of the Committees. But soon enough, by the evening of the day before the day of the audit, the PIA started becoming a little nervous about the actual arrival of the functionaries, and asked Jasobanta Pradhan, a WDT member, to go and get the secretaries from two of the four Committees. On the day of the audit, Jasobanta dutifully finished his breakfast around nine o’clock and left for the villages on his motorcycle. We went on waiting for both the visiting auditing team and the secretaries. Both seemed elusive. After sometime the auditing team called up the office and told that they would turn up only after lunch. That seemed to give some elbow room to the PIA staff.

Meanwhile, Jasobanta was not reachable on his phone. By around quarter past eleven he returned on his motorcycle. The story he had to tell about one of the secretaries was a hilarious one. He could not find Mrutyunjaya, the secretary of the Committee in Mākhankhunti village, at home. While coming back, he had a fit of inspiration and went to a village close by that happened to be the village of Mrutyunjaya’s in-laws, where the latter was found sleeping. On being found there, he was sheepish and agreed to follow Jasobanta after a bath. He followed Jasobanta on his own motorcycle, but at a key turning on the way he took the ‘wrong’ turn and disappeared yet again—thus, lukibā was fashioned into an art form. This then in some sense subverts the textualising logic of the project that is explicitly premised upon introducing ‘transparency’ into project processes and practices.
Conclusion

The preceding sections of this chapter have extended the argument made in Chapter II that over the last two and half decades there has been the growth of the mission mode of state-fabrication in India that has involved the growth of various missions in a large number of sectors of governmental activity such as health, education, livelihoods and natural resource management. This chapter has provided a formal account of the process by giving details of the tactics through which the state has been morphing. The deployment of these tactics is simultaneously contingent upon changes in the body of the state and the ways in which it interacts with society.

In the context of the work of the District Watershed Mission, Kalahandi, and of WORLP the growth of the mission mode of state-fabrication has involved the deployment of five principal tactics through which the state has morphed: multiplication, expansion, pluralisation, provisionalisation and textualisation. But the deployment of these tactics, by allowing for the transformations of the body of the state, opens up spaces for articulations of practices and logics of a variety of social groups.

The effects of such a morphing of the state can be understood through two tropes. The first trope deals with the increasing convergence between governmental and non-governmental organisations in terms of their mode of operation. The second trope deals with the emergence of ‘the social’ as a site and object of governmental actions. These two tropes are described in the next chapter.