Chapter VI
Vernacular perceptions of state-fabrication: understanding the domain of toutary

Introduction

The argument offered in this chapter is that in Kalahandi the dominant way in which the state is perceived, commented upon, made sense of and understood is through the vernacular domain of toutary. This chapter argues that in the context of Kalahandi, Odisha, it is more useful to undertake the mapping of such a vernacular domain rather than invoke theoretical domains such as political society to understand the emergent mode of state-fabrication, and the ways of perceptions of the state by communities associated with it. It tries to draw a contour of a map towards understanding the domain of toutary. In doing this, the chapter takes the insights by Kaviraj (2010b) forward by contesting his claims. According to Kaviraj (ibid) one can locate the fault-lines of politics in India across an elite/vernacular axis with supra-regional politics revolving around Sanskrit/Persian in the pre-colonial period and around English during the colonial and postcolonial periods. This chapter argues against the presence of a generic domain of vernacular politics across regions in India; it argues for a case of regional specificity. Second, this chapter also argues that such domains are not necessarily always completely reducible to domains of ‘politics’ or of claim-making upon the state. Domains such as toutary are also sites for ethical critiques of emergent forms of state-fabrication and governmental action.

There is a strand of social scientific literature that posits corruption (Gupta 1995) and the general ‘dirtiness’ of politics (Ruud 2001) as the dominant ways in which ‘the political’ and ‘the state’ are cognised in India. In the field sites chosen for doctoral fieldwork, narratives surrounding corruption did not seem to dominantly frame peoples’ perceptions of the various governmental schemes, projects and programmes in as overwhelming a fashion as would seem from the recent literature. Most of the stories that men and women told during communal defecation, in front of bhātis or during self-help

42 Tills of locally brewed alcohol.
group meetings were about *toutary*. Narratives surrounding *toutary* seem to be the frame through which people seem to cognise and make sense of the state.

The way most stories surrounding the ‘Indian political’ get told, the dominant impression that we get is that it is an amoral universe.\(^{43}\) The way people deal with the normative aspect of the state apparatus can indeed be described as amoral. In WORLP people do not pay watershed development fees for the benefits that they get from the project, they sell government grants (for example, subsidised seeds), and they fudge documents. But the concern with ethical practice also seems to be central to what people see as good action. Here perhaps mention can be made of the work of the Japanese sociologist Tanabe (2007) who posits the idea of the moral society to argue that we need to posit this domain to understand the ideas surrounding ethical action as understood and articulated by rural communities, especially the subaltern groups. In doing this he extends the formulation of political society by Chatterjee (2006). Tanabe (2007) argues that the actions of subaltern communities are not always articulated and framed within the domain of ‘politics’ and often invoke a conjoined/hybrid ethical vision which partly borrows from subaltern conceptualisations of morality and partly from constitutional morality to interrogate dominant processes of politics. He sees this as congealing into the domain of moral society as opposed to political society.

What the discussion of *toutary* in this chapter aims to show is that we do not need to posit a different conceptual domain, that of moral society, to understand ethical practice of the people in rural India or the domain of political society to understand the interactions of communities with the state. The perceptions and practices of state-fabrication in Kalahandi, including those in the mission mode deploying quotidian logistics, can be said to congeal into the vernacular domain of *toutary*. These descriptions, perceptions and the domain of *toutary* perhaps cannot take the place of a conceptual or theoretical alternative to the formulations of political society. But they help us build up an alternative case, a point of departure, for taking up further conceptual work.

\(^{43}\) For a strong version of this argument, refer to Brass (1994)
This chapter provides a brief introduction to the social domain of toutary and teases out a few of its key aspects. Three sections follow this brief introduction. The first attempts an expository strategy where toutary is compared to similar phenomena such as politics and corruption, and it is shown that although toutary has many characteristics that overlap with these phenomena, it is not reducible to any one of them. The second section provides an argument through analogy where it is shown that toutary as a domain and the *touter* as an agent can be understood better if we compare villagers’ perceptions with *devi*\(^44\)’s and *devtā*\(^45\), and with *jhākars*\(^46\) as mediators between the domains of the deities and the domains of people. The final section provides evidence for understanding the villagers’ narratives surrounding toutary as an ethical critique of the practices of state-fabrication.

**Toutary: an introduction**

During doctoral fieldwork whenever a villager would be asked about the impact of the watershed project, she would almost always give the answer that it has increased toutary in the village. This was true of villagers cutting across genders, classes, castes and hamlets. All kinds of villagers saw increase in what they called as toutary as the most important effect of WORLP.

But this increasing trend of toutary was not seen in a unique relationship to WORLP per se. The work of the watershed in this case was seen as paralleling many other new governmental interventions in increasing toutary. The MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) of the central government, and the two rupee rice scheme of the government of Odisha\(^47\) were also blamed for increased toutary in the villages. The two-rupee rice scheme was especially blamed for increasing toutary in the villages. The two-rupee rice scheme was especially blamed for increasing toutary in the villages.

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\(^{44}\) In the context of fieldwork *devi* means a female deity specific to a clan or a jāti.

\(^{45}\) In the context of fieldwork *devtā* means a male deity specific to a clan or a jāti.

\(^{46}\) *Jhākars* are local priests who propitiate the deities of the community on ritual occasions.

\(^{47}\) This scheme provides 25 kg rice at Rs 50 to all ration-card-holding families in the KBK region in South-West Odisha and to BPL-card-holding families in the rest of the state.
toutary in the village by increasing labour insubordination and creating ‘free leisure time’ for the sukhbāsis or landless labourers.

Toutary is seen not as a marker and effect of this specific watershed project – WORLP - alone; it is something to do with the increasing penetration of village society by the state that seem to have intensified with emergent forms of governmental interventions, which specifically target new communities and marginal areas through social technologies. As a social domain, toutary is the interstitial space created through interactions of the state with village society. This domain is not a new domain created only by changing processes of state-fabrication since the long 1980s. With the growth of a regime of tactility with the mission mode of state-fabrication, this domain brought about by the intersection of state and society seems to be expanding in size, scope and effects. Corruption as a phenomenon (as far as the perceptions of villagers and lower-level project staff goes) seem to inhere inside the state system whereas toutary as a phenomenon lies at the intersections between state and society.

This domain is populated by a specific kind of social agent who is called a touter. A touter is not a mere fixer or broker or an agent. He seems to do some amount of brokering; but his role and the way he is perceived by villagers is not exhausted by mere acts of brokering. Similarly, the activities of a touter involve politicking but he is not necessarily someone involved in party-based politics. He is all this and more; he is the social agent who lubricates the seeping of the everyday state into the crevices of village society.

Toutary: comparisons with rājaniti, corruption and politics

A story pertaining to toutary

It is a pleasant winter morning in Kusumpadar, a salubrious Saturday morning to be more precise. My basā48 is a largish room in the school compound of the Kusumpadar M.E.

48 Temporary place of residence.
School. The school is an old one, has seven classes, more than 200 students and four regular teachers and one Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) teacher. The headmaster, Mr. Samal, is from the neighbouring village of Kadampada, a dark man in his mid-fifties around five feet eight inches tall, he carries with him an aura of permanent disaffection. I have rarely seen him smile. But when I walk into the school this Saturday morning he suddenly looks up at me and gives me a smile that is disconcerting with its suddenness. I smile back and he beckons me to him. He’s sitting with Narayan Bag, the SSA teacher of the school. Both of them are sitting outside the classroom on a couple of chairs facing each other soaking in the warm January sun and both seem content and at peace with themselves.

I have heard some very interesting stories about Mr. Samal. He is politically well-connected. Reputedly, he is the right-hand man of the sitting MLA from an assembly constituency in Kalahandi. During his earlier posting he used to sit at a hotel in Kumursinga, the closest town (around 8 km from Kusumpadar), and in one year he reportedly went to the school he was supposed to teach at for a grand total of eight days. He seems to have fallen on ‘bad’ times, and I see him in the school almost every day.

After I have stood there for some time I am offered a chair. I sit down and try and make conversation. Mr. Samal says it is increasingly difficult to teach in schools because one cannot discipline students any longer.49 He then suddenly becomes solicitous about my work. This is a bit facile because by now the whole village knows that I have something to do with ‘the watershed’. Moreover he had asked me the same question a couple of weeks back and I had replied in some detail. I again tell him about my work.

He suddenly becomes serious and tells me, “I cannot claim to know about the functioning of watershed projects in general. And I do not know what you have found out or are trying to find out in this village. But in my village in Kadampada the project has gotten into the hand of touters. We hear that the watershed is doing good work in other areas. But I have been running around our secretary trying to get work done. Mind you!

49 Here he used the Odia word ‘sāsana’ that means both administering as well as disciplining.
Not personal work but work that will do good for the whole village. But for the last two years no work seems to be happening in our village.” At this point Mr. Bag chipped in and said, “As you know, my village Sagupalla and Kadampada are part of one single watershed. In our village also therefore all work has stopped. There is no desire to work. Their minds are only focused on toutary [tānkara ta mana khāli jāin toutary re].”

I then asked them whether it is because of the watershed project specifically that toutary has increased in their villages. They seemed to consider the question for a few moments and then Mr. Bag told me, “See sir, toutary has been prevalent in our villages for quite some time now. Our area is especially prone to toutary. Kumursinga is a ‘commercial area’ (used in original Odia). Therefore, there have traditionally been a lot of outsiders. But this has especially become worse over the last 10 or 15 years after the panchayats started getting a lot of money. Governmental money breeds toutary [jeunthi sarakāri tankā seithi toutary].” At this point Mr. Samal pitched in by saying, “Loka bee tike āji kāli sikhita hele, sarkār bisayare jānile, toutary na badhi aau gati achhi?” [People are getting educated and have come to know about the government, there is no way that toutary won’t increase.]

Here Mr. Bag said, “See, our secretary is also a graduate. But you know how these people get their degrees now. Nobody studies, or does anything else. Just copy and pass. [Ei sarkāri kām kāji toutary badhichhe]—toutary has increased due to this work of the government. Education has no meaning. All these half-educated people—touters—are the illegitimate children of the government.”

As the above slice of conversation from fieldwork illustrates toutary is seen to be (a) the result of penetration of rural society by the state, and (b) populated by social actors called touters. The following sub-sections attempts to answer the question: What is toutary? The explanatory strategy used in these sub-sections takes on the task of explaining what toutary is not rather than trying to define or explain what it is. This is

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50 This use of the word toutary in standard usage can mean two things; it can mean that they only want to commit acts of toutary and. The second usage/meaning posits toutary as a separate object/domain/‘art.’
because there are some domains of sociality such as politics, *rājaniti* and corruption that parallel toutary, but as a domain of perception and action toutary is not subsumed completely by any of them. The way the word toutary is used in popular usage carries some shades of meanings that these domains connote, but it is not reducible to any one of these.

**Toutary and rājaniti**

As a child one of my most favourite Odia film songs was a song about *rājaniti* that went like this “pāna guā khaira guākāti āhā ki sundara rājaniti”—betel leaf, areca nuts and the nut-cutter, oh how beautiful is rājaniti. This seemingly nonsensical song has one of the more popular comic actors of the Odia film industry dressed up in the ‘traditional’ garb of an Odia politician going around with folded hands begging for votes.

The song captures one of the two distinct different shades of meaning associated with the word rājaniti in Odia. The first shade is the one associated with party politics in the formal sense. The second one, and the one that has greater usage, is more in the form of a verb and not a noun – rājaniti karibā or rājaniti paseibā that stand for creating dissension cleverly or creating factions for obtaining some objectives.

In contrast with the semantic richness and hybridity associated with rājaniti, toutary is simultaneously more ambiguous and yet simpler in the shades of connotations of social practices and ways of being that it carries with it. Often people were careful to distinguish between rājaniti and toutary. One of the most important and frequent usages of the word rājaniti by people in the field was as a verb. Once I had promised to get some medicine from the district headquarters for an acquaintance Asok from Kusumpadar village. But after reaching Bhawanipatna I forgot the name of the medicine. My mobile phone also lost all charge, and I could not ask him the name of the medicine. On reaching the village when I bumped into Asok, he naturally enquired about whether I had got the medicines or not. On listening to my negative answer and the explanation thereof, he gave me a wry smile and said, “Kāen kāji āgyān mor săthe rājaniti kheluchhan?” [Sir,
why are you ‘playing’ rājaniti with me?] Thus, in this instance, doing politics carries a negative connotation—that of over-promising and under-delivering. But it does not carry the ethical charge of accusing someone of toutary. Given the asymmetries inherent in the relationship between me and Asok, he could not accuse me of doing ‘toutary’, but he could safely accuse me of ‘rājaniti khelibā’ or that of playing rājaniti.

Another story will try to make the differences between toutary and rājaniti clearer. In one of the villages where intensive fieldwork took place I had as my neighbours an elderly couple who were living separately from their sons. Every day before going to sleep, the husband Sudama Sahu would make it a point to talk to me, and one day we got talking about his bārdhakya bhātā. Bārdhakya bhātā is the monthly old age pension of Rs 200 that is paid by the Government of Odisha to the elderly over the age of 65. Sudama and his wife got it for nearly a decade, and one day some 7–8 years back first his and then his wife’s pension were discontinued. He attributes this to toutary and ahangkār.51 He told me that at that point of time one of his sons (he has two sons) got involved in rājaniti with Kadam Majhi, the gauntia’s son. In the process he had to buy a motorcycle by hook or crook, since, as he put it, “Without mobility rājaniti is impossible. After he started riding around on the bike people started feeling jealous and they complained to higher officials. Because of the ahangkār of the villagers I and my wife lost our bhātā.”

His understanding of rājaniti is “eitā gute bhal dhandā nāine”. [It is not a good occupation/business.]

Let me explicate his understanding of the various categories by relating another incident. It is 7.00 am in the morning and after having visited my favourite corner of the village’s fallow lands for open defecation, and having had my morning glass of black tea, I come back to my room for completing my previous day’s field notes. Sudama is waiting for me and asks me for a loan of Rs 100. He has never asked me for a loan and asks for it in a very shame-faced manner. He is nearing 80, and has an older generation’s misgivings

51 In standard Odia ‘ahangkār’ means ego-centeredness. But in the local dialect it refers the desire to put oneself first and not to think of others’ rights and concerns at all.

52 A Gauntia was the traditional headman of the village during pre-independence times in the princely state of Kalahandi. The gauntias enjoyed rights over the best of the village’s agricultural land and were in charge of collecting the rent on the land from the villagers.
about borrowing, especially from a newcomer to the village who is more than 40 years younger to him. I lend him the money without asking for an explanation of the reason for which he needs the money. But he makes me sit and offers an explanation.

It transpires that he has to go to the block headquarters of Kamarlā to pursue his papers for the reapplication for getting the bhātā for himself and his wife. He was supposed to go with Mr. Janārdan Nag (a dalit man around 50-years-old, who is an ex-Sarpanch of the local panchayat, and is active in local electoral politics). The last two times Sudama had talked to him, he had called from my phone. But on both these occasions the ex-Sarpanch had failed to turn up at the promised time. Sudama’s reading was that Mr. Nag feared the expense of money that would be involved in traveling to Kamarlā (a distance of 12–13 km from the village, but a considerable distance considering Sudama’s old age) and had, therefore, failed to turn up on purpose on both the occasions. Sudama’s reading was ‘Eitā ki pilā ei Janārdan! Jadi tike Kamarlā kām ra kājī nāin nei pāri tāhele kentā rājaniti karuchhe ei pilā’. Pakkā toutere gote. Tankāke jagi rājaniti heisi ke? [What kind of boy is this Janārdan! If this boy cannot take me to Kamarlā for this chit of a work, why is he doing rājaniti? He is a confirmed touter! Can one do rājaniti while trying to have one eye on the money one is spending?]

During the course of fieldwork, I never saw anyone being labeled as a touter in public. In fact, it would cause a great offense if someone were to label even a really good friend as a touter in public. This leads to one important distinction between rājaniti and toutary: rājaniti is largely seen as an amoral set of actions and practices, whereas toutary is seen as unethical.

**Toutary and corruption**

Narratives surrounding corruption increasingly frame academic discussions surrounding state–society relations in India (Gupta 1995; Pani 1998; Bhattacharyya and Ghose 1998; Ruud 2000; Jeffrey 2002; Davis 2004; Shah 2009). Corruption is seen as the key trope that frames the perception of the state in India (Gupta 1995). Scholars have also
described the processes of cultural embeddedness of everyday practices of corruption and its performative aspects (Ruud 2000), and it has also been described as a spectator sport (Bhattacharya and Ghose 1998). Other scholars have argued against promoting a culturalist argument about corruption (Shah 2009; Mukhopadhyay 2011). Increasingly ethnographic accounts of corruption are adding to our understanding of state–society relations and corruption is seen as an important trope that frames such accounts (Ruud 2000).

In this context, this sub-section, extending the arguments made in Chapter I, II and IV, posits that narratives surrounding corruption do not exhaust the narrative and theoretical possibilities surrounding state–society relationship in India. Toutary is an important category to negotiate with at such a conjuncture. This sub-section tries to sketch out the reasons as to why narratives surrounding toutary cannot be subsumed within narratives of corruption. The material presented in this sub-section argues that toutary cannot be read as only corruption or misappropriation of governmental funds. Second, it argues that practices that would be read as corruption when they take place deep within the recesses of the state are seen as toutary when the agents of these actions occupy the interstitial spaces between state and society. One of the ways in which the various nuances of the word toutary and the way in which most of the staff working in this project saw this social phenomenon can be mapped out is by looking what happened in the village of Gaudmal.

The work of WORLP in the village of Gaudmal in the project area of CDI had stopped for quite some time. It was often attributed to the lack of focus by the secretary, Sasi, in the work of the Committee. Recently he had left his wife and children, and had got involved in an affair with a recently widowed woman from a neighbouring village. The story doing the rounds was that this had obviously affected the family life of Sasi, and he was finding it increasingly difficult to find time and energy to deal with the work of the project.

53 ‘Corruption’ was often used as an Odia word. Sometimes its various synonyms such as lāmcha or khāebā (literally ‘eating’) were used for officials taking bribes or politicians or government officials appropriating developmental funds.
One day a review meeting of the functioning of the Committees involving the staff of the NGO PIA, and presidents and secretaries of the ten Committees under its management was scheduled at 10.00 am at the local office at Malipada. Not a single secretary, president or CLW had turned up by that time. Nearly half the expected number turned up by around 11.30 am, and the meeting started. It was noticed that not a single participant from the ‘Gaudmal watershed’ had come. After an hour or so of desultory discussions it was very clear that there was something else on the minds of everyone present, and everyone was just waiting for someone to start that thread. In this expectant atmosphere, someone said that he had seen Sasi at Kamarlā, a neighbouring town, the other day, and he pretended as if he could not see him and did not meet his eye. This set the cat among the pigeons. All of a sudden everyone started talking at the same time. The PIA-in-charge, Mr. Samal tried imposing some order, but to no avail. So he let the discussions continue.

It came out that Sasi had been arrested and kept in police custody at the Kamarlā police station due to allegations of financial malpractices or what was called in Odia as herpher, a word that literally means misappropriation. Like most secretaries, he was involved in many other activities apart from the work of the watershed project and farming. In this case he (like many other secretaries) was an insurance agent for many insurance companies. Sasi used to mostly sell policies of the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC). Apparently he had failed to deposit most of the premiums collected from the customers over the last few months.

During the discussion, most of the other people present, especially the other secretaries, did not seem to demonise him at all. In fact, almost everyone was very sympathetic to him; most people attributed his current crop of ‘difficulties’ to his social failing in not sticking to his wife, and for having taken a second wife, a widow with children. Most of the criticism that was deployed against him was directed more towards this ‘social failing’ rather than any ‘moral failure’. It seemed that the local police had got complaints from quite a few of the policy-holders, and he was given time to return the
money to them over a period of few months. But he took the matter lightly, and did not return the money. This forced the hands of the police who were under constant pressure from the customers, and they had to arrest him. The general consensus was not that Sasi was a ‘bad’ man, but that he was a foolish one; that he should have borrowed money from a local sāhukār or moneylender, and paid the money to the customers and a cut to the police, and could have escaped arrest.

Over the next few days, Sasi failed to produce the money even after being arrested. His brother who had a regular government job could have produced bail and had him released. But because of the marital complications that he did not approve of, he did not bother to do so as Sasi was unrepentant about what he had done. He was later transferred to a jail in South Odisha. During the discussion in the training hall, no one accused Sasi of toutary. It was not that only the secretaries and presidents of the Committees expressed such opinions. The staff of SVA also voiced similar opinions, and did not see Sasi as a touter. There seemed to be considerable agreement between functionaries of the watershed mission at most levels regarding the fact that Sasi might be anything, but a touter he was not.

This is of importance because of two different reasons. First, the act itself for which he was arrested (that of misappropriation of public money) was not necessarily seen as an act of gross misconduct, but the purported reason for committing those acts, that of a second family that he had to support, and his abandonment of his first wife received the most amount of disapproval. This is not to say that people approved of the misappropriation; but the cultural form that critique took was to present it as a question arising out of failing to do one’s duty to one’s family. Second, this fact of outright cheating or misappropriation is not seen as toutary, which corroborates the other narratives that have been offered about toutary; if toutary is not merely fixing or brokering, it is definitely not cheating and ‘eating’ of the public money, not if it happens in the context of social agents in the context of large economic institutions. It is only when relationships with organs of the government are concerned, then the stories surrounding toutary begin to be told. Thus, as stories, toutary gapa (stories about toutary)
occupy the space in which governmental organisations, practices, and narratives are dominant and interact with village society.

The next part of this sub-section argues with ethnographic material that if toutary is not mere misappropriation, it cannot also be read off as corruption. Similar practices that were seen by villagers as corruption when undertaken by higher-up officials were read off as toutary when practised by the lowest-level project staff or villagers in the context of project activities.

*The strange case of son-in-law seeds*

Toutary is also used as a justification (along with ‘politics’—the word being used in the original Odia) for the not completely satisfactory impact of the project and the inability of the project staff to follow all the processual requirements of the project thoroughly. For example, one of the biggest examples of toutary that was given consistently by the staff of both the GO and the NGO PIAs was the strange case of seed improvement in the project area of WORLP. Seed improvement has been one of the important thrust areas of the DWM, Kalahandi under the then PD. In the first three years of the work of the project, seeds were one of the biggest items of expenditure. Although Committees were supposed to procure seeds on their own from certified seed providers, what this meant in practice was that the PIA sourced the seeds and gave it to the individual Committees to distribute. It was the duty of the PIA-level staff to do the follow-up and make sure that all the other ancillary activities for increased production took place. The thrust was on garden crops such as vegetables and new cash crops such as sunflower, although some cereals seeds such as wheat were also distributed.

Invariably (apart from a stray case here and there) all the cereal crops, especially wheat, were consumed by the villagers and the other seeds were sold. The seeds were sold because the seeds were provided at 50 per cent subsidy. For example, sunflower seeds were provided at a cost of Rs 450 per packet whereas the going rate in the market was around Rs 900. Therefore, anyone who got a couple of packets, more often than not,
took the packets to some relative’s place and sold them for a neat profit of around Rs 1000 leading villagers to christen sunflower seeds as ‘juāin manji’ (literally translated the expression means “son-in-law seeds”)

But such ‘creativity’ is not the hallmark of peasants only. The very decision to push for new crops and improved seeds has its root in the fact that the officer in charge of selling seeds in the department of agriculture in the district was a friend of a certain highly placed official in the district watershed mission. The push for selling seeds was as much an initiative to help increase farm productivity in the district as it was to help out a friend in need. Whereas GO PIAs made light of such compulsions (perhaps for the simple reason of being used to them), this push to buy seeds from a specific provider riled the NGO PIAs. One of the three NGO PIAs for WORLP in Kalahandi was especially unhappy with this decision because it had its own seed production unit, and it wanted to buy seeds from this unit and not from the agriculture department. Thus, it is not that villagers attempted to use the project structures for their own ends; senior government officials at the district levels and NGO PIAs also were complicit in such processes.

This creative translation of a governmental fiat to ‘grow more food’ into ‘get more money’ was invariably seen as toutary and not as ‘corruption’. Corruption is seen as inhering higher up in the government departments/systems, and not as something that people/project beneficiaries/peasants indulge in, although the nature of the actions might be similar. So toutary can be seen as that domain of practice that comes into being only as a result of interactions with the state or interventions by the state. The narratives surrounding corruption work at a level which is located at a remove from the everyday practices of the villagers. ‘Corrupt’ practices, as already mentioned, inhere inside the government organisations. Therefore, corruption is something that the villagers have to deal with as being external to village society and this seems to be a localised space inside the state system. In contrast, one can, perhaps with some limitations, describe toutary (both as narrative and as a social domain) as the way in which the everyday reasserts itself in a tactical sense.
The next sub-section continues with the style of exposition of the previous ones. It provides ethnographic evidence to argue that although some touters might be involved in some acts of politicking, their actions and perceptions cannot be completely reduced to the domain of politics. The following sub-section tries to argue that although many touters do sometimes work as foot soldiers of political parties and are involved in local political processes, toutary as a domain of activity cannot be completely subsumed within politics. The ensuing sub-section provides some ethnographic evidence behind this assertion.

**Toutary and politics**

I am sitting in a review meeting masquerading as a training programme for all the ‘point persons’\(^{54}\) of the DWM, Kalahandi, in Bhawanipatna. The ‘training’ is being conducted in a musty training room belonging to the Panchayati Raj department in the heart of the town, and not in the PD office that is situated at the outskirts of the city proper. The PD office is too small to accommodate all the expected participants. It’s a pleasant February forenoon, and the staff drops into the office in ones and twos. The training starts after a reasonable number have arrived. After the issue of attendance has been taken care of, the question of coverage of households under the SHGs comes up. The coverage of households in the project villages under SHGs has become an important goal for the watershed-plus component of the various projects in general and WORLP in particular. One of the point persons gets up and says, “Sir, in my villages there is already 65 per cent coverage, so getting 80 per cent or 100 per cent coverage will not be a problem. But people are asking what we will get out of becoming members of SHGs. I have already got most of the projected revolving funds money. I might get a lakh or two more at the most. If I promise money to all of them I’ll most probably land up in trouble as I won’t be able to give loans to all of them.”

\(^{54}\) A point person is a staff of the project, who has been given the overall supervisory charge over one or more microwatershed development committees. The average number of villages per point person is generally around two, with some point persons having to manage a much larger number sometimes. For any cheque of a committee to be cleared it needs the signature of the officer acting as the PIA and the point person. All ‘point persons’ are staff of the Watershed Mission, but all staff of the watershed mission are not ‘point persons’. If a staff has been recently hired or has fallen out of favour of the project director, then she is generally divested of the responsibilities of being a point person.
Then the APD chairing the programme tells him, “Why don’t you get all the money that you have loaned the older groups back? After all, this is supposed to be a revolving fund!” To this the point person replied, “Sir even I know it’s supposed to be a revolving fund. But you know how things operate in the field. There is a lot of political interference [‘political interference’ used in the original Odia]. Last month I went into an overdrive for collecting the amount loaned to the SHGs, and I had planned a campaign for recovery of the SHG loans. But the day before we were supposed to go house-to-house (I had also let people know that if they do not return money on that day cases will be filed against them) in a group to put pressure on people to give the money back, I had the block chairman calling me and virtually threatening me politely to stop the campaign. He asked me whether I had given my father’s money to the groups or paid from my own pocket. In the face of this kind of politics please tell me what I can do. The PD had asked me to call him in case of any problem. I called him and told him everything. But he just gave me assurances. So I had to stop the campaign. What else could I have done sir?”

This is one example illustrating the fact that the PIA-level project staff would not talk about ‘corruption’ or its Odia equivalents (khāebā or literally ‘eating’ and herpher or misappropriation) while describing such phenomena. They would describe it primarily in terms of politics. Instead of ‘the social’ it is ‘politics’ that is talked about as the site of resistance for functioning of WORLP by the PIA-level staff if this resistance is coming from a location outside the immediate project site such as the block chairperson’s office or from the MLA or the local MP. When this possibility of interference in the work comes from a source that is ‘localised’, say a local Sarpanch or a Panchayat Samiti member, then it is seen as toutary. None of the higher-level functionaries (for example, CBT members) generally talked about toutary unless I asked them about it. They framed their perception in terms of interferences with routine project practices from ‘outside’ in terms of politics.

Thus, as the anecdote from the training programme/meeting detailed in this subsection shows, the distinctions between toutary and politics stem as much from the kind
of person who acts or does not act in a specific fashion, as it does from the location of this person in the broader socio-political formation. Narratives surrounding toutary seem to be occurring in descriptions belonging to interference from local processes whereas politics seems to be interference coming from non-local processes.

The various sub-sections of the preceding section have detailed narratives surrounding toutary to argue that although toutary as a domain of perception and social action overlaps with certain other domains such as rājaniti, corruption, and politics, it is not reducible to any one of them. Toutary is not reducible to corruption because corruption seems to inhere inside the state with respect to older modes of state-fabrication whereas toutary seems to be located as a domain of intersection between the local state and village society. Similarly both politics and toutary are seen as forces that affect what are seen as normal modes of functioning of WORLD by the project staff. But toutary seems to stem from the local and the everyday where as political interference is seen as stemming from non-local political actors and processes. Rājaniti is seen as a more or less amoral domain of social action whereas toutary carries a connotation of being unethical. Similarly, although touters do some amount of brokering for the state and villagers, they are not merely brokers or touts because touters do not merely provide a service, but also are closely imbricated in framing the perceptions and practices of the people related to the state.

Of touts and touters

On the face of it the word ‘touter’, although a legitimate Odia word of frequent usage, is derived from the English word ‘tout’. But a touter is more than a fixer or a broker. To mistake a touter for a broker is to mistake an auto-rickshaw for a motorcycle on three wheels. A touter is not merely a social agent with specific social functions in the newly emerging sites and nodes of state-fabrication. The social practices that he embodies and the identities that he engenders constitute a social domain—that of toutary. The following anecdote tries to explicate this affirmation.
It was a cold winter morning and Nilambar (a WDT member in the government PIA) and I were on our way to a WORLP village for work on his motorbike. All of a sudden it started raining and we had to stop in a small tea shop and we started chatting. I asked him questions about toutary and he offered me a ‘hypothetical example’ of a ‘typical touter’. He was a circumspect man and did not want to run the risk of labeling someone as a touter. Instead of offering me a specific example of a specific touter, he started explaining and explicating what he understood by a touter—who counts as one and who does not.

By the way of explanation he offered me the supposedly hypothetical example of a high school dropout who is a touter in his own village. This person had a few acres of ancestral agricultural land, but he was lazy and, therefore, did not want to take up farming (this is one characteristic that seems to be common to most touters; they are all ‘lazy’). He had given out his land for cultivation to a tenant and, therefore, had a lot of free time on his hands. This time, Nilambar said, the dropout utilises for toutary.

On asking what would count as toutary, I was told, “See sir, touters do many things. It is very difficult to give a list no? For example this Santosh Sahu in our village has a lot of connection in the education department. How he developed his connections no one knows, but some say that when he was doing his junior college in Bhawanipatna one of his closest friends was the son of an SI (school inspector) and he picked up most of his contacts through him. The last year he made at least Rs 27,000 during the time of the matriculation examination. He collected Rs 3000 each from 10 parents and told them that he’ll try and ensure that each of their children got at least a second division in the examinations.

Now only three of them got second division, six passed in third division and one failed. After repeated appeals and threats by the father of the child who failed, he

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55 This was another motif that went on repeating itself: sikhyā in its pedagogic form and intent, therefore, did not merely turn one into a touter; its modern formal institutions such as the school/the junior college/the college/and the ITI are also seen as sites par excellence for developing networks and skills necessary for a ‘career’ in toutary.
returned around Rs 2000 and still owes him around Rs 1000. To the parents of the six children who got third division he said that the kids were about to fail, but because of him they passed with a third division. The parents had no way of figuring out the veracity of the remarks of Santosh, and therefore did not argue with him.” But in a school with a high rate of failure this was good showing indeed.

As this vignette shows, touters, in fact, do a few things that brokers do as well.\(^{56}\) But the domain of toutary is not reducible to merely ‘fixing’ in the sense there are no fixed rates that one pays to get a service. It is not the poorest of the poor who always take the help of the touters to get their work done. For example, Bhimā, a Kondh landless labourer, was one of the poorest people in Mahulpani. He was a childless widower, and did not even have a goat to his name. But he got 25 kg of rice every month for Rs 2 per kg under a scheme of the government of Odisha. He did not have bārdhakya bhātā or old age pension to his name, and has generally been pestering (in front of me) the local member of the village council to get the bhātā done in his name. He had been pestering this person for the last year or so without avail. This ward member is active in village and block level politics, but I had never heard anyone refer to him as a touter.

One of his Bhimā’s neighbours called Sukhi, of his own jamā (clan), was a touter (by popular consensus) and reputedly had many contacts in the local administration. On asking him why did he not approach Sukhi for getting his bhātā done he said, “Muin ta sukhbāsi lok āgyān. Touter sāthe mor ki kām achhe kahun? Member ke dhari hele hebā nahele nāhin.” [I am a destitute sir! What do I have to do with a touter? If the member is able to do it, then it is ok, otherwise I’ll let it be.] In fact, it is the slightly better off people who have some knowledge of how the government works tended to use the ‘services’ of the touters. Those having lesser contacts with the formal economy and the state also tend to have less to do with touters and more to do with local politicians, although a water-tight compartmentalisation cannot be posited.

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This discussion surrounding touts and touters has to be seen in the context of a growing body of literature on middlemen in rural areas (Ram Reddy and Haragopal 1985; Manor 2000; Inbanathan and Gopalappa 2002; Simon 2009; Daftary 2010). One of the first descriptions of the mediators between the state and the people was given by Ram Reddy and Haragopal (1985) in which they describe them by the vernacular term *pyraveekar* or as someone who follows up work for people in the governmental setting. But these commentators see these mediators as having roots in a feudal past and as operating at regional, national and international levels. They also see these social agents principally not as mediators between people and an intrusive developmental state but as mediators between local power structures and supra-local political processes.

In contrast to such a formulation this chapter argues that these middlemen mediate between state and the people and are in fact a product of the intrusion of the state into village society. They also fulfill a predominantly local role, and this role is not always one of ‘political mediation’. In arguing so, this thesis locates itself in an emergent body of work that sees these intermediaries as not mere brokers but as mediators (Simon 2009).

**The ‘nature’ of the domain of toutary**

The previous section tried to give an account of the domain of toutary by arguing that it cannot be subsumed within other parallel domains of sociality. The present section tries to understand toutary as a domain and touters as social agents by arguing analogically. The way people talk about touters as social agents and toutary as a domain seems to be analogous to the way they talk about devis, devtās and the domains occupied by them. The attitudes of villagers towards jhākars and the touters, and the perceptions of the people with them point at an important characteristic of both these groups of people: they act as go-betweens across social domains.

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57 A jhākar is a traditional mediator between the devtās and men/women or between the domain of the devtās and the domain of human sociality and has important privileges during rituals in festivals such as dasarā and chaitra purnimā. He is a man and derives his legitimacy from his role as a mediator. But he is definitely not held in any kind of awe.
In the district of Kalahandi there has been a growth in the *pujā*\(^{58}\) of pan-Indian and pan-regional deities called as *bhagwāns* as opposed to the local deities referred to as devtās. This seemed to cut across the experience of all the major *jāti* groups inhabiting the region. Devtās (which are either deities peculiar to the jāti group or are family deities or *kul* devtās) are generally seen as slowly having lost their efficacy to grant benedictions/benefits, and as having become more hidebound and difficult to trust over a period of time. They are seen as more erratic and whimsical, whereas the more pan-Indian/regionally important deities such as Shiva or Jagannātha are seen as being much more benign. One dominant way of seeing these shifts has been that of sanskritisation in terms of understanding cultural shifts (Srinivas 1956). This section argues that one can link this shift in the relative importance of the devis and devtās to the way people perceive the state through the narratives surrounding toutary. When telling stories about the decrease in the efficacy of the devtās, villagers told that it is due to the increase in toutary. The first story that I heard about the decreasing efficacy of the devtās will perhaps be instructive here.

I was eating dinner at the place of Mr. Surjya Padhan, a Committee member in the village of Mahulpani and a successful peasant with a medium-sized landholding belonging to the locally numerous and dominant jāti of Kulthās. He was describing a marriage and told me that Kulthās of their village do not worship any devtās apart from token gifts to the Kondh devtās that are village deities by the virtue of the fact that this is a village with a Kondh gauntia. They also send gifts to the village mother-goddess during marriage ceremonies. I was told that the Kulthās of this clan do not worship devtās any longer, and in their homes only bhagwāns are worshipped. This happened when they were small children during the time of their father. This was the period immediately after independence. Their father was a locally important big man, and was a friend of the gauntia of the village. He gave land to the village for setting up of the village school, and was involved in what Mr. Padhan terms as social reform. He apparently ran into trouble

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58 *Pujā* is ritualised devotion offered to deities by devotees.
with a couple of devtās. Due to inappropriate propitiation of a devi during a pujā, blood reportedly started appearing every morning in the outer courtyard of his home. After consulting a local medicine man, this devi and another devtā were subdued, and then he banned the pujā of the devtās in his jamā or lineage and the pujā of bhagwāns started in earnest.

A few of the other stories I heard from people belonging to other caste groups also followed a similar narrative structure. People also continuously talked about the lessening efficacy of the devis and devtās. They were able to set a precise time period since which the devtās started disappearing and/or losing their efficacy. This is said to start from the time “sheeklee gaonre bulilā” [chains started moving in the village] or the time since when chains used for land measurement were used for settling land in the district. Kalahandi is an erstwhile princely state, and large parts of the land of the state were not settled. This process started in the postindependence period only after the integration of the state of Kalahandi into India. Because iron is supposed to act as a constraint for devtās as a category of beings, these narratives offered, they could not move around any longer. As an effect of being rooted to one place, they started losing their efficacy and began losing their effectiveness to intervene in human matters. But it is not that such narratives of change are easily accepted or that there are no disputes surrounding such a process of change. Let me narrate an anecdote.

It was a late winter evening and four villagers and I were sitting in the small room in Arjun’s home in the village of Kusumpadar. I had just finished my dinner and the rest of them too had assembled for their post-dinner convivial smoking of tobacco. One of the men called Nala and referred to as bhinei or brother-in-law was the maternal uncle of Arjun and was visiting for a marriage. Arjun’s father and two of his paternal uncles from the extended jamā in the hamlet were also present. A conversation began about the impending marriage, changes in marriage rituals, and the amount of money being spent these days on marriages. Then the conversation shifted to the amount of money floating around these days, and the increasing toutary in village society. Bhinei, who was an old man of around 75, extremely articulate, with a keen grasp of scriptures in Odia started
saying that one of the lakhyana\textsuperscript{59} of the increased toutary everywhere was the decrease in the efficacy of the devtās. One of his brothers-in-law started questioning this reading and said, “Bhinei tume thik kathā nāin kahebā. Devtā māne e pate achhan āru tānkara power [originally in Odia] epate achhe.” [Brother-in-law, you are not telling the right thing; devtās are still around, and their ‘power’ still remains.]

To this the bhinei replied “If you say something you must see how true that is for everyone and then only say it, right? The devtās you worship might still be around, but that does not mean, generally speaking, their strength has not diminished. What about the case of our Mā Mangla\textsuperscript{60} Till around 10–15 years back when your father’s grandmother was alive she used to fry kākerā\textsuperscript{61} with her bare hands when anything inappropriate was done, and the devi used to descend into her body. Does that happen now?” To this the others gave shamefaced smiles and did not reply at all. Then the bhinei rhetorically asked, “Why has this happened? This is because people do not have faith any longer due to the increase of toutary in the villages. Only blindly repeating that devtās are still around is not going to help much.”

The villager who had raised the objections started to talk about the experiences of the devi that he has the most experience of (that of Kālikeswari\textsuperscript{62}). He said that he carried the devi with him, and she protected him against all form of trouble. He gave the example of an incident. A farmer from a neighbouring village had borrowed a sum of Rs 10,000 from him some time back. He went on delaying repayment. One day finally he felt that he had enough and barged into the debtor’s village to get his money back after ensuring that the latter was in fact at his home. The debtor apparently gave the money back within three hours of him reaching this village, even though he had been dillydallying for the last three years. The devi apparently started whipping the debtor, and punished him for his transgression. This is what made the latter pay back the money in a tearing hurry. After having narrated this incident he also reluctantly agreed to the fact that all said and

\textsuperscript{59} ‘Lakhyana’ can be literally translated into English as a symptom.
\textsuperscript{60} Manglā is a female deity and is one of the two principal deities of the Sundhi jāti that these four men belonged to.
\textsuperscript{61} A fried savoury made out of broken wheat and sugar.
\textsuperscript{62} Apart from Manglā, Kālikeswari is the most important goddess of this jāti.
done the strength of the devis and devtās had decreased, and most probably this was due to the increasing toutary in the villages.

Not only do villagers see parallels between the ways in which devis and devtās have started losing their efficacy and the ways in which toutary has increased over the last few decades, but they also make the connection between the devis and devtās losing their efficacy and the increased toutary. In many ways a touter is a priest who propitiates the ‘deity of the state’, and the attitude of people towards touters mimics the attitude they have towards jhākars. For example, the jhākar in Mahulpani is, more often than not, seen by villagers as mildly disreputable due to the fact that he loves his bottle of mahuā\(^{63}\) a little too much. After I shifted into the village he told me that I should conduct a pujā for Dharni.\(^{64}\) I readily agreed and gave him Rs 50 to buy the required material for the pujā. I gave him the money in early afternoon. The pujā was supposed to take place in early evening. But he was nowhere to be found. Next day when I came across him while going for my bath in the hamlet’s tank I caught a fleeting glance and got a sheepish grin. Later I found out that he had blown up all the money that he got from me for the Dharni pujā on mahuā.

While returning from the bath I was accosted by another Kondh man who asked me rhetorically, ‘Āgyān did you manage to get your pujā done?’ [Sir did you manage to get your pujā done?] I smiled and said, “No.” He said, “Bloody drunkard! The jhākar does nothing if you give him the money in advance. He blows it all up on mahuā. Devi, devtānka sange kārabāra kale āru kān hebā? [What else will happen if one consorts with devis and devtās?]” This man was not only making the point that the jhākar was a dissolute person, but the cause for dissolution was posited as having to deal with a domain of sociality that is not ‘normal’, in this case the non-human one populated by devis and devtās.

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\(^{63}\) Locally made alcohol brewed from mahuā flowers, of which both humans and devtās are fond of.

\(^{64}\) Dharni is the devi of fertility and general well-being, and is an important devi of the Kondhs of Kalahandi.
'In those days there was not so much government': or stories of toutary as critique of emergent modes of state-fabrication

In many ways toutary is seen as being linked to a domain of social practice that is antagonistic to the older logic of ‘mānya’ and ‘bhay’ that governed social action and political practice earlier. Manua, an elderly teli man around 75 years, had this to say when asked about changes in the way the government worked, “In those days people thought about each other because there was so little money. Congress and Gandhi spoiled everything. There was mānya and bhay then, people used to respect the elderly, and government officials. We used to hide if a police constable came to the village. Now people see a police inspector and roll their moustaches a notch higher and walk. It is not that there was no toutary when we were young. But it was not this bad.”

The stories that people in the field tell to each other surrounding toutary can be read as an ethical critique of development. One of the key tropes that marks those days is that of bhok and bhay. People consistently talk about stories of how most people in the village went hungry in ‘those days’ and how they used to be a lot of bhay around; fear of devtās, fear of outsiders, fear of officials of the princely state of Kalahandi, and fear of the police. But when someone would be narrating the story of material progress (of improved roads, improved farm productivity, the passing away of persistent hunger, etc), suddenly others would start telling me stories about increased toutary and will narrate particular examples about it. It is as if everyone wanted to partake of the fruits of improved material existence of ‘these days’ and were yet unable to do so without having offered a critique of toutary that seems to mark the passing of developmental time.

These stories are told in terms of lack/absence of the government, not merely of changing tropes and perceptions of governance. One statement that many people made

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65 In Odia the word ‘mānya’ means respectable. During fieldwork it was used primarily as a verb in the context of descriptions offered where the older villagers would see the practice of showing respect to the elders at home and the village and towards government officials and the state as decreasing over a period of time.
66 ‘Bhay’ literally means fear; but in the context of fieldwork this word carried the additional meaning of deference.
67 Bhok is an Odia word that means hunger.
was “Sete bele ete besi sarakāra nathilā” (which when translated literally into English from Odia will read as ‘in those days there was not so much government’). The memories that the older people have of ‘those days’ are of sāsan which can be literally translated as discipline or disciplining by coercion. Thus, ‘development’ is not merely seen in material terms. By a large number of people see it as essentially a moral project and offer an ethical critique in the form of the stories surrounding toutary.

The ambivalence of most villagers towards devis and devtās is analogous to the way in which they talk about the extension of the government into their lives. When I asked the villagers this question, “How was politics/administration when you were younger?”, most of them belonging to the older generation invariably replied, “Se samayare sāsana bahuta kadā thilā.” [The discipline was very ‘hard’/‘strong’ those days.] They fault the contemporary administrative system for being dhilā or loose. The criticism of the present state as dhilā also carries within itself the idea that the state now incorporates the social into it in a fundamental fashion.

In this context, the watershed project assumes salience. A lot of people concurred that no other ‘department’ had ever given so many things to so many people. This is credited with raising the level of toutary prevalent in the village. To explicate matters further let me provide some ethnographic evidence. It was a cold winter evening and I had just been sitting around and waiting for a Committee member, Sagar Mājhi, to arrive. He was a marginal farmer owning around 2 acres of land. He was also a member of the hamlet’s bhajan group. That is how we became close. We would often sing together in a local ekśia ceremony or for a Trināth pujā. That day I had been called for a session of bhajan practice. He arrived a little late, and after exchanging the initial pleasantries he sat down and we started talking while waiting for other members of the group to arrive. I asked him, “A lot of people seem to be saying that toutary has increased because of this watershed project. What do you think?” He became a little animated and said, “ Dekhun

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68 Devotional songs written in praise of deities.
69 Ceremony to mark the 21st day of the birth of a child.
70 A popular ceremony in which the deity Trināth, supposedly the amalgamation of the three Hindu deities of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is propitiated.
āgyān, jene tankā rahebā, jene sarkāri kathā rahebā sene toutary rahebā ekā rahebā. Nāin rahi kari upāya ta nāhine.” [See sir, wherever there is money, wherever there are matters pertaining to the government, toutary will be there; it cannot be escaped.] It cannot be said that this watershed has specifically increased toutary. But it must be said that there is a lot more toutary now than used to be say five years back” [the watershed project had started in the village roughly around four years back]. Since he was a member of the local microwatershed development committee, he agreed to the perceived role of the watershed project in increasing toutary in the village, albeit in a shamefaced manner.

When I did not say anything, he continued, “See, nearly 100 people have been given grants. Now you may go and check the actual number from Sarat71. I don’t have it on my fingertips. But out of the 100 who were given goats or were supported for other business ventures, hardly 10 or 15 must have survived. Mostly people bought goats and now most of them are gone. Most people would tell you that the goats died because of disease. But that is not the only reason. The story is that toutary has entered the heart of most people—‘samastankar manre toutary pasichhe’. A large number of people bought goats, sold them off and told the watershed that they died. I was given some money, Rs 4000 to be exact, and I added Rs 3000 to that sum and bought a pair of bullocks with it instead of buying goats. Over the last three years they have stood me in good stead. I used to spend around a Rs 1000 on renting bullocks every year to plough my 2 acres of land. I have been saved of that expenditure. I have also earned around Rs 3000 over the last three years renting out my bullocks when I do not need them. Now they are worth at least Rs 14,000–15,000. But this has involved hard work. The problem is that in this kaliyug72 no one wants to work hard. Everyone not only wants the government to feed them, but also expects the government to digest the food for them. That is the problem. People have become touters because of the government, not because of this project only.”

This conversation shows that Sagar reads a trend of increasing toutary in the area/village. But he does not necessarily attribute it to the watershed project per se; he attributes it to

71 The secretary of the Committee of the village.
72 The age of Kali; out of the fourfold Hindu division of time, this is the last age in a cosmic cycle. This is also the age we are living in now.
the very gestalt of the age that we inhabit, as well to the general logic of the interface of the village society with the state.

This is not to say that this increase of toutary and the increasing interpenetration of the government in village society are seen as something inherently negative by everyone. Most people agree that hunger has decreased over the last 20 years or so, and that things are ‘easier’ now. One constant motif is the ease of communication due to the spread of mobile phones. Growth of new communication technologies, ranging from old ones such tarred roads to new ones such as mobile phones, are spoken of in mostly approving tones. But as already mentioned, these stories of ‘progress’ would invariably be interrupted, often by the same person, by some shamefaced narrative about ethical degeneration, and how things have taken a turn for the worse in terms of mānya and bhaya. This is seen as a direct result of increasing state intervention, and the consequent increase in toutary in the villages. There have been other accounts of the ambiguous nature of such processes of change, for example, Pinney (1999) provides an account of how discourses of kaliyug frame the changes surrounding the processes of industrialisation in and around a small town in Madhya Pradesh in India.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that in Kalahandi the perceptions and practices related to the state, including those associated with state-fabrication in the mission mode as exemplified in projects such as WORLP is framed through toutary. Toutary is a localised, region-bound, vernacular domain of sociality that has emerged out of the penetration by the state of village society, which has intensified under the new modes of state-fabrication. It is narratives surrounding toutary that dominantly frame the perceptions of the state by people in Kalahandi, and the latter is not exhausted by the narratives surrounding politics and corruption.

This chapter has also shown that it is not always necessary to introduce new conceptual categories such as political society or moral society to be able to provide
descriptions of state–society relationships with respect to the emergent mission mode of state-fabrication. Vernacular categories such as toutary can help us with such descriptions as well. The popular narratives surrounding toutary as a domain and touters as social agents also have an analogical resonance with people’s perceptions and practices related to other domains of sociality such as that associated with the local deities.

Toutary does not merely frame people’s perceptions and actions related to the state and its agents. Narratives surrounding it provide a space for an ethical critique of the expansion of the developmental state. Narratives of corruption are attempts at restoring the idea of normative state practice. But stories of toutary rupture these normative narratives by positing a vernacular domain of ethical critique, if not of ethical practice. Thus, this discussion surrounding toutary has enabled to undertake a cartographic exercise of state–society interactions that go beyond the standard formulations of corruption and/or state-failure.