CHAPTER VI

THE KUDARIYA ORGANISATION AND ITS BROAD FEATURES
The caste council at the plane of intervillage intra-caste organization in the Bundelkhand region of Northern Madhya Pradesh is called Kudariya organization. In wider usage, the literal meaning of the word Kudariya is a territorial or regional boundary of a caste which is more or less a fixed boundary. This boundary differs from caste to caste and is taken under the jurisdiction of the Kudariya. In that field dwell villagers more or less in which the members of an endogamous group or a subcaste live. They are divided into different exogamous units. The persons within each such region are banned by certain social norms. These norms are maintained by the Kudariya and its functionaries. The Kudariya gives a planned regularity to these norms and exercises effective control over the caste members. The office-holders of the Kudariya are there by inheritance as well as nominations. Under the control of these authorities the persons are bound by the caste traditions which, when violated by anybody, justify punishment. Thus the caste is regulated according to the norms by the Kudariya organization. The Kudariya is thus the fabric of a caste and in it are knit many villages, forming a particular regional unit. The
members of a particular caste are related to several different villages outside their own, and the persons of the villages are distributed among different exogamous units which together form a unit that is a regional endogamous unit or sub-caste. Through the Kudariya, the members of these castes are bound to caste traditions.

Persons get the membership of the caste by birth in the Kudariya region and within the region the persons dwell with a feeling of brotherhood or kinship ties — related by affinal or consanguineous ties.

The persons of a caste of a village have kinship relationship with persons of the caste belonging to other villages, too; everybody has some rights and obligations towards his caste. Thus the groups of caste-persons belonging to the different villages, do still form a unity among themselves, and preserve traditional norms and customs having social control over the persons of the caste.

Every caste forms the region of its Kudariya, spread to several villages but different more or less from the Kudariya of other castes. For instance, the jurisdiction of the Kudariya of the Kurmi caste is limited to 4 villages, while that of the Kudariya of the Kachhi is spread through 12 villages and that of the Nai to 108 villages. The reason is that the number of these castes (namely the Nai, the
Dhivar, the Luhar, the Dhobi, the Badhai, the Basor) is less in the villages. As such, number of the villages increases in the organization, while, on the other hand, if the number of the caste men is large enough, only a few villages are enough to form a Kudariya as in the case of the Kurmi. Thus, the jurisdiction of the different Kudariyas rests upon the number of their caste.

**A Set of Functionaries of Office-Holders:**

Within the intervillage caste organization or Kudariya organization, the functionaries or the office-holders are found, on two different levels. First is the formal base, called internal organization of the Kudariya and having different office-holders with different but interrelated functions (see Diagram 'A'). The second is the informal organization, which is visually grounded upon a village level or territorial unit basis. This, based upon regional units, is temporary and its main function is to uphold the rights of the regional organization, that is, the Kudariya. Its formation is made temporarily upon the pure intercaste level (see Diagram 'B').

In the following diagram, the internal organization of the Kudariya has been depicted:
(A) Formal Set of Organization: the Kudariya

**Mukhia**
(Chief of the Kudariya)
(Hereditary)

**Badkur**
(Sub-chief)
(Hereditary or Non-hereditary)

**Sangati**
(Supporter of the Chief nominated by the Chief)

**Panch**
(Caste member)

**Mukaddam**
(Inspector of caste feast)
(Nominated by the Chief)

**Sirpanch**
(Manager of caste feast nominated by the Chief)

**Baranga**
(To give secret information to the chief)

**Kotwar**
(To convey message regarding the caste feast)

The chief is known as the headman of the Kudariya, having an effective personality in it, and his residence is called a Chontra, the administrative centre of the Kudariya. He wields influence over the persons of his caste and the
Panchas of the higher castes of the villages coming under his territorial jurisdiction. With the aid of these Panchas, he exercises his rights. The entire machinery revolves round the chief occupying the pivotal position. The Mukhia or the chief expects the support of the Panchas and takes a prominent position in deliberations and discussions in the Kudariya meetings.

The Mukhia arranges the caste-feast during the commensal occasions, supervises it himself or through his assistants, receives secret information, and selects the persons to organize the caste feast.

On the occasion of the marriage feast within the caste region, the Mukhia arranges the pangat or caste feast before marriage and, on violation of the caste tradition by the marriage parties, he gives the judgment which decides the functions before marriage.

On the occasion of a death, he consoles the family members of the dead and arranges funeral rites, like Terahin, Gangajali, etc. It is by the Mukhia that the Kari wife is permitted to join the caste. He can allow caste membership to an outcaste due to such Kari marriages even without caste feast, and this is the special privilege of the Mukhia. In this position, he only takes a formal
or nominal *Kari ki Roti* (readmission feast) to re-admit the concerned person into the caste.

(B) Informal Set of Organization: Village Level

**Same Caste**

- **Panchas**
  - (Hereditary or nominated)

**Higher Caste**

- **Panchas**
  - (Dominant Members of other castes)

**Caste Members**

- (Nominated or selected)

The informal organization is made on temporary basis upon village level or unit level and in it the Panchas of his caste and the Panchas (influential persons) of the higher castes are included. It is organized when somebody violates the caste tradition. After getting information through testimony or eye-witness, the Panchayat is organized immediately. Its main function is to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused and to verify the information through testimony or eye-witnesses; and then the accused is declared a criminal for his unsocial behaviour. Then the Panchayat forwards the file to the caste organization of the criminal, who is to call a meeting of the Kudariya, including the caste Mukhia, the
Panchas as well as the Panchas of the higher caste of the village.

Functions of the Kudariya:

The main function of the Kudariya organization is to maintain the social and cultural ideals among the caste through its traditions. Persons violating these traditions are punished by excommunication from the caste, or given other social and economic punishment so that the other persons may always remember these norms. The caste runs according to some elementary traditions and ideals, whose violation makes the person liable for punishment by the caste Panchayat.

The area of the caste norms is as follows:

Strict Endogamy:

Every caste is an endogamous unit, and it is the responsibility of the members that they should have marriage relations with different exogamous units within their caste. The person violating this tradition is punished by the caste Panchayat.

Restriction on Eating, Drinking and Smoking with Prohibited Castes:

Every caste gives importance to the tradition of
eating and drinking, and so we find caste hierarchy in society. The division of the castes is made on the basis of caste hierarchy. It is because of this relative socio-ritual status system that the people of different castes rather meticulously observe their conventional code of commensal relation. For instance, the Brahmanas do not take meals (kachcha or pakka) with any other castes except their own caste and the other Brahmanas.

In the Kudariya castes, these rules are followed very strictly. For instance, a Nai cannot eat in a Chamar's house, but he can do so in the house of a Brahmana, a Kshatriya, a Jain, a Lodhi, a Dangi. Similarly, a blacksmith or a carpenter cannot take meals (kachcha or pakka) in the house of a lower caste, such as the Chamar, the Basor, the Chadar, etc. When somebody violates these rules of eating and drinking, he is declared an outcaste by his caste fellows.

Restriction on Killing Certain Sacred Animals or a Human Being:

The killing of animals may not be a crime from a legal point of view; but from the ritual aspect, it is not only a crime but also a sin, in case a sacred animal is killed. Against violations of this kind, the Kudariya is authorized to take action.
In the same way, murder of a human-being is an abominable crime and while the assassin is entrusted into the hands of law and punished by it, his relatives and family members are considered to be stained by the sin and they are to undergo some social rituals to regain their normal socio-ritual status in the caste and the community at large. This falls within the exclusive domain of the Kudariya.

**Illicit Sexual Relations:**

The caste does not permit any kind of immoral relations, whether they are with married or unmarried woman, whether within the caste or out of it, whether with a person of lower caste or of higher caste. If any person violates these caste norms, he is punished by the Kudariya and/or the village council, as the case may be.

Elopement with the consent of a woman is also against the social rules and the law. Both the Kudariya and the law court punish such defaulters.

Leaving one's own traditional occupation, if somebody adopts another occupation, he is liable for punishment by the Kudariya for the violation of the social norms.
Civil Liabilities:

It is the social responsibility of everybody that the cases of violation of social and cultural norms are brought before the Kudariya and that the violators of these norms are punished accordingly. Everybody is considered to be the custodian of the norms and values of his caste and the social responsibility to maintain them extends even to the average member of the caste.

It is because of this sense of social responsibility of the men of the caste that they are expected to try to include such persons in the caste who have taken a widow or a married woman as a wife. They are further expected to see that such persons get normalized matrimonially and socially through the tradition of Kari.

If someone has committed the sin of Parag, he should, as soon as possible, undergo the purifying rituals, later give caste feast and the Bhandara, so that he may rejoin his caste and be treated as before in his own caste and in other castes.

It is the responsibility of the kinsmen and the entire local community to prevent and punish such crimes or sins and to get caste feast or the Bhandara performed, to get the rituals executed, and so on. To punish the criminal or sinner is possible only with the help of the persons of higher castes.
Vested with Enforcement Authority:

The enforcement authority is mainly vested in the Mukhia, the Badkur and the Panchas of the Kudariya. Secondly it is in the hands of the Panchas of the higher castes and other influential persons of the village or adjoining villages. The Kudariya functionaries derive moral support and sanction for enforcement of their decision by the involvement of the Panchas and other influential persons of the higher castes.

The authority of the Mukhia is that of the Kudariya. It is in the hands of the Mukhia to judge the unsocial and untraditional actions of the guilty person, to decide the truth and falsehood in the Panchayat, to punish the criminal economically and socially.

The Mukhia is independent in deciding these matters and the Badkur and the Panchas function as his supporters. Their duty is to enforce the judgment and get it implemented by the criminal. On the other hand, authority is vested in the hands of the Panchas of higher castes or influential persons of the village or adjoining village as the criminal, inhabiting a particular village, has his economic and social relations with the other castes of the village. The persons of higher caste cut the social facilities of the culprit
and raise several impediments for him in the village, due to which the latter is compelled to request for the meeting of the Kudariya for justice to be done to him. In the meeting this justice is administered by the Mukhia, the caste Panchas and the Panchas and influentials of the higher castes. Thus, on the one hand, the enforcement authority is vested in the hands of the Mukhia and the caste fellows; on the other hand, it is vested in the hands of the influential persons and the Panchas of higher castes. So the Mukhia can exercise his authority only with the moral support of the persons of the higher castes.

In order to make clear the real position of the enforcement authority, an instance is cited. Maniram Kachhi of the village Badbadi had some immoral carnal relations with the wife of Fulle Chamar of the same village. Though the villagers suspected this, there was complete lack of credible testimony, so no action could be taken against Maniram. By chance, one day Ganesh Kachhi caught him red-handed and the news spread throughout the village. The persons of the higher castes and of his own caste soon banned him in the caste and other castes. Maniram had no other way to extricate himself from this situation except to request the Mukhia of his Kudariya to allow him to be readmitted in his caste and get justice. The Mukhia considered the case with the help of the Panchas and the
persons of the higher castes, and found Maniram guilty. He was to go for the sacred bath and give a heavy fine of Rs. 500.00. He gave a Bhandara to his caste and the satkom feast. He had to give a separate Bhandara to the higher castes and after this he got readmission in his caste and recognition from other castes.

Authority Structure and the Dynamics of Decision-Making

The regulatory mechanism as the authority structure in a village is generally found on both levels — horizontal and vertical. The vertical authority structure is found on the intercaste plane and it expresses itself in and through the traditional village council, whereas the caste organization on the horizontal plane is found on the intervillage plane and it expresses itself in and through the traditional caste council or the Kudariya organization. Intercaste organization is also found between a village and others, and it may be called the intercaste intervillage council or the traditional village council. The modern version of the intercaste organization formed on intervillage level is the very first organizational unit in the process of democratic decentralization, and it is known as the Statutory Panchayat (or the Gram Panchayat).
After studying the village caste structure, the most important aspect that comes out is the authority structure on the village level — a. the traditional village council on the intercaste level (a vertical structure); and b. the Kudariya organization on the intracaste intervillage level (a horizontal structure). Both these councils are very influential and powerful bodies, and it is found that the caste structure exists on both these levels.

In the caste Panchayat, the decisions are taken by the Mukhia with the help and co-operation of the Panchas of the caste; while in the village Panchayat the decision-making authority is vested in the hands of the dominant leaders of the village. The village authority structure is formed with the mutual co-operation of the elders (sawane) and the influential persons of all the castes of the village, including the dominant members of the higher castes. The Sarpanch is the chief of the village authority structure, and the office of the Sarpanch is not hereditary; he is selected from amongst the Panchas and it is with the help of these influential and dominant members that the cases are decided, and the decisions implemented strictly. If the culprit or guilty one is not prepared to accept the judgment, he is excommunicated from the caste and the local community. On the other hand, the caste authority is vested in the hands of the Kudariya, whose chief (Mehtar in popular
usage) is the hereditary Mukhia of the caste and who has
the Panchas of the caste as his supporters. These persons
are the Panchas of their traditional village council, too.
With their support, the Mukhia decides the cases relating
to his caste, and the person who is not prepared to accept
the decisions of the Kudariya, is excommunicated from his
caste as well as from other castes with the help of the
dominant and influential members of the village council.

Dynamics of Decision-Making:

The decision-making pattern is similar both in the
village council and in the caste council. In the caste
council, for instance, the culprit and his family members
are present along with the witnesses, the Panchas of his
caste, and the persons of his own caste and other castes.
The proceedings of the Panchayat are started from the
witness who is asked for the entire description. The
decision is made by the Panchayat and the criminal is
punished, and the punishment is based on the nature of
the crime; generally, socio-ritual and economic punishments
are given in the form of customary usages like fine, and
feast, a Bhandara, a sacred bath, or the deprivation of the
privilege of sharing chilam (clay pipe) or bidi (country
cigar), food and water, or the declaration as an outcaste,
or the denial of the services of the Kameen castes.
In the meeting of the Panchayat the above punishments are given, of course, according to the nature of the crime. Generally, the punishments mentioned above are given, except in the case of Kari (widow or divorcee remarriage not solemnized with full marriage rituals). When such a decision is taken against the culprit, the dominant members of the higher castes and other influential persons from other castes are invited as jurors, and the Mukhia and the Panchas take the decision with the help of the members of the higher castes. If these persons of the higher castes are not invited in the Panchayat, the Mukhia cannot take any decision strictly and firmly nor can he enforce it effectively. In the cases of Kari and Parag, the Mukhia can take the decision even without the presence of the village dominants and influentials. The Panchas of the village to which the culprit belongs, are also present, as they should know whether the punishment is just or otherwise. For these reasons, the persons of the higher castes are invariably invited to become the jurors so that, after the final decision, no question may be raised by anybody belonging to the culprit's village.

**Enforcement of Decision:**

There are several mechanisms for implementing the
decision in situations where the accused refuses to accept it. When a culprit does not accept the decision, the following steps are taken due to which he loses his socio-ritual prestige in the local community:

a. He is banned from the public well.
b. He is prohibited from attending public meetings of his caste or of other castes.
c. The members of his own caste do not take bidi or water with him, and he cannot even sit as an equal among other persons in the local community.
d. Entrance into the temple is strictly prohibited for him.
e. The excommunicated person is not invited to the commensal feasts, such as jatibhoj, satkam bhoj, bhandara, and other public functions.
f. The services of the service-rendering castes (the Kameens) are stopped; and his own services are not accepted by anyone. With this, the culprit becomes an outcaste for the entire community at large.

g. It is also decided that any person found associating with the culprit shall be likewise excommunicated from his caste.
h. If the person who is excommunicated, is to perform a marriage or a sacred function in his family, he is to stop it till he obeys the decision of the Panchayat.

Because of the restrictions mentioned above, the position of the excommunicated or outcaste culprit becomes desperate, as he is cut off from all social relations. Under these circumstances he cannot live in the local community and in his own caste, and he is compelled to leave the village or submit himself to the decision. If the culprit runs away to the city and seeks asylum there, the same treatment is given to his family members, who are declared outcaste, until the culprit or his family members surrender to the decision of the caste council.