CHAPTER III

METHODS OF STUDY
The regulatory mechanism and pattern maintenance in an Indian village are generally embedded in the traditional authority structure, and they are expressed in and through the social control exercised by such institutional agencies as the intra-village and inter-village caste councils, on the one hand, and the traditional village council, on the other. These traditional agencies of social control, formal or informal that they may be, function as the judicial bodies competent to pronounce their verdict on social and ethico-religious matters that fall within their conventional and customary jurisdiction.

All these traditional councils operate through the unwritten codes, follow and uphold the age-old norms and values, and regulate the human conduct. They have their own functionaries, often traditionally and customarily designated, who are believed to follow or act according to the principles of natural justice, equity, and good conscience in their judgment.

The structure and functioning of these traditional councils, the dynamics of their decision-making, the territoriality of their jurisdiction, the mode and extent of punishment inflicted by them, the mechanism of enforcement
of their decisions, and the like are the areas which have arrested the attention and interest of social scientists. But all these areas have not very thoroughly investigated in the different parts of the country. An intensive study is, therefore, required to understand the working of these traditional councils on both caste and village levels.

Mode of selection of the universe of study:

When an investigator proceeds about the empirical study of these traditional councils, the first problem that he faces is about the mode of selection of his universe of study. For this purpose there are three alternative methods before the research scholar:

a. the scholar may select any one village, consisting of a good number of castes, following the Kudariya tradition and the rest nine villages he may take at random;

b. he may select out a group of ten villages where the majority of the castes may have a Kudariya association; or

c. he may select any ten villages at random and may study their castes and may discuss which of the castes follow the Kudariya system and which of them not.
This research scholar found the first method more useful for a study in depth and so this work is based on the first method.

The process of rapport:

The author has chosen ten contiguous villages in Sagar Tehsil. One of these ten villages, Barkhuma-Mahant (henceforth known as Barkhuma), is the birth place of the scholar and the homeland of his family. For this reason, it was easy for the author to collect the data, and the villagers proved very useful to him. The author had many of his personal acquaintances and friends in these villages, and it was through the good offices of these friends and acquaintances that the author found it easy to establish rapport with the other village folk at large. In some of these villages he had his own castefolk or kinsmen through whom he got introduced to the village people. In other villages he had several friends and acquaintances of his father; and it was through these persons that the process of establishment of rapport was made easy for him. He could establish his identity as a research worker undertaking the study for an academic purpose, and he was enthusiastically and welcomedly received by his respondents.
The duration of fieldwork:

The research work involved two visits — one from March 1972 to November 1972, and the second from March 1974 to July 1974. During this period, he stayed in the village Barkhuwa-Nahant, and trudged purposefully along the rural lanes for information and observation. During either visit the author had spent many a hot summer day with his informants in their fields; for the summer is the time when the villagers are busy with the post-harvest operations in the field.

It was a real experience to visit these villages during the rainy season. The author deliberately chose the rainy season for fieldwork; for it is during this period in the year when most of the villagers can be found in their villages. Treading along the muddy and slippery rural footpaths (for there are no roads connecting these villages with each other), the author many times got completely drenched before he could arrive at the doorsteps of his informants. My visits to them on such occasions made them more sympathetic towards me, and they gave me the desired information all enthusiastically.

Location of the universe of study:

During the fieldwork, ten villages were thoroughly investigated by the scholar. These villages are located in Sagar District in the Bundelkhand region of North Madhya Pradesh.
Baroda, a medium-sized, multi-caste village, is situated at a distance of about 20 km south-west of Sagar town. This village is connected with Sagar by a metalled road which goes from Sagar to Sultanganj. The other nine villages are: Salaiya, Badbadi, Sanjara, Hinnod, Barkhuwa, Badera, Barkhera, Jamuniya and Chakeri. Within a radius of 8 km from Baroda, all the above-mentioned villages are located; and each of them is connected by bullock-cart track or by footpath.

Salaiya is situated at a distance of about 3 km south-west of Baroda. Barkhuwa is also situated at a distance of about 2 km south-west of Salaiya. About 4 km towards the south-east of Barkhuwa lies Hinnod; and at a distance of about 5 km towards north of Hinnod lies Baroda. Hinnod is also connected by a metalled road that proceeds from Sagar-Baroda to Sultanganj. Sanjara is located at a distance of 7 km south-east of Baroda, and 4 km towards east of Hinnod. Badera is situated at a distance of about 8 km south-west of Baroda, and 3 km to the west of Barkhuwa. Barkhera-Mahant (henceforth described as Barkhera) is located at a distance of 4 km north of Badera, and at a distance of about 3 km north-west of Badbadi. Jamuniya is located at a distance of about 8 km north-west of Baroda, and 2 km north of Barkhera. Chakeri is also situated at a distance of about 2 km north-east of Badbadi, and it is also situated at a distance of about 5 km north-west of Baroda.
Roughly, all these villages are within a distance of about 3 km to 8 km from one another. Lastly, all these villages are roughly located at a distance of about 18 km to 24 km towards south-west of Sagar town. The map of the Sagar District shows the actual geographical location of all the adjacent villages (see Map 1).

In all thirty-four castes, belonging to these ten villages, have been studied. Out of the above-mentioned thirty-four castes living in the ten villages, the majority have the Kudariya organization. All the castes are devoted to their traditional occupations but some have taken up agriculture also. Bidi-making is their subsidiary occupation.

Methods of study:

The entire study is based on participant and non-participant observation, formal and informal interviews, genealogical method, intimate and personal talks and discussions with the members of the different castes.

The research scholar, first of all, collected the data through the method of census and explained to the persons that this study was being made only for an academic purpose and that it would not be put to any other use. It is after this that the persons spoke confidentially about their relation
with the Kudariya organization; and about the villages which come under its jurisdiction, and about the location of the Chontra, i.e., the village in which the Mukhia lived. Thus, from such oral information from several members of the different castes, it was known which castes had a Kudariya organization.

Similarly, the information regarding the list of the villages under Kudariya jurisdiction was obtained through informal interview with several persons belonging to different castes. The number and distance of the villages could be known from the chiefs of every caste through the formal and informal interviews. Actual distances and location of these villages were plotted on the map later obtained from the Patwari. Regarding the inheritance of the position of Chief was known through the conversations with several persons of different castes, and the information was later confirmed by the family and from the dynastic record of the Council Chief.

The cases of the different castes were obtained privately in the oral discussions with their members and they were later confirmed informally by talking to other persons of the caste and other villagers. Some case happened and some were decided during the period of the fieldwork; so they are based on participant observation. On some occasions, the scholar was himself present at the time of deliberations and judgment.
Many cases are, thus, based upon his participant and non-participant observation. During this period, the author could observe at first hand the procedure of the Kudariya's judgment.

It was interesting to note how, when somebody violated the rules of the caste, he was excommunicated from the caste, and how he was readmitted into the caste and the local community only after his performance of the elaborate socio-ritual ceremonies. The scholar observed many cases in which the Satkoms (literally meaning 'seven castes', often employed to refer to the following castes by their generic appellation: Nai, Luhar, Dhobi, Badhai, Chamar, Basor and Parjapet) were forbidden to serve the defaulter; he was forbidden to enter the village temple (where there was one) and he could not use the public well nor could he smoke bidi (country cigar) or chilam (country pipe) with the members of his own caste or of other castes. From these episodes, the scholar came to know the real power of the Kudariya and its functions like the caste feast, the Satkom feast, and so forth. The research scholar came to know these cases through participant and non-participant observation, and the real working of the Kudariya became clear to him.

The cases, collected through participant and non-participant observation methods, showed how wide is the field
of Kudariya authority, which was later on confirmed in the discussions and informal talks with several persons of different castes.

During the first stay, door-to-door census was taken, and with this the author got the information regarding the Kudariya's jurisdiction and the villages under it. Information concerning the Kari or keeping a woman as a wife (remarriage pattern), Parag (killing an animal or homicide) control, caste norms, spheres of Kudariya organization, and the like was obtained in depth during this visit. During the second visit a tour of the centres (Chontras) in different villages was made, and the information about the genealogies of the different Mukhias, Kudariya's spheres, number of villages in the Kudariya's jurisdiction, spheres of authority, and the cases within the Kudariya organization were received from the Mukhiya. During these two long stays, the scholar made several visits to persons in the ten villages, and collected data regarding the different aspects of the Kudariya.