CHAPTER VI

THE INFORMAL SYSTEM - 1
Some Informal Relationships

The people of Oriental, as a result of their being 'thrown together' in the same place of work, developed certain relationships, apart from those included in the formal and the institutional systems. I have suggested the term informal system for the former set of relationships. The informal system of Oriental had two main aspects. One, there were friendship, economic and other social bonds among the employees. Secondly, there were informal aspects to the formal groups and categories in the factory, described in the third chapter. In the first part of this chapter (i.e. presently) I will describe some informal bonds I observed among Oriental employees. In the second part, I will bring out the informal relationships corresponding to formal divisions such as employer-employee, staff member-worker etc.

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I

During the eight hours of a day's work, employees were by and large confined to their respective places of work. Here, each worked in the company of others belonging to his functional unit, performing similar or closely related tasks and sharing common experiences - the heat of the
furnaces, the noise of machines, the indulgences and 'tempers'
of the boss, and so on. By virtue of proximity and common
experiences, the members of a functional unit developed close
contacts with one another. Eventually, they formed relation-
ships of mutual help and joking. I give below two illustra-
tions of the patterning of informal relationships among
members in a functional unit. The units chosen are the core-
section in the Foundry and an assembly section in the Switchgear
Shop.

The core-section prepared earthen cores of the different
parts of pumps and electric motors. The cores were made with
the help of wooden patterns of the respective parts supplied
by the Pattern Shop. The patterns were filled with a special
mixture of sand and clay which was prepared in the clay
section of the Foundry. Then, the core-makers pumped air
into the moulding-boxes. When the clay stuck up as a core,
the latter was taken out of the pattern box. After this the
core-binders refined the cores, polished them and bound them
with wire. Subsequently, the cores were dried in a furnace
(drier), and then the finished core was sent to the moulding
section for moulding work. The work in the core-section was
thus relatively simple; it involved simple hand-activity
without needing precise measurements and machine-operation.
A novice could learn the work in a few days.

The supervision in the core section was entrusted to
a non-technical staff member formally designated as clerk.
He distributed work to the workers, controlled their speed
and general behaviour while at work and kept records of the work done. Under him, there was a mistri who ensured that the work done by workers was according to technical needs and guided the work of new workers. He was promoted to mistri-ship from the rank of worker. Besides, there were sixteen core-moulders and binders and three helpers in the core-section. They worked in close proximity with each other. And, since their work was simple, easy and free of noise, they could talk while working and work while talking without affecting their output in a significant proportion. Moreover, most of these workers had been working in Oriental since long. The average length of their service was twelve years. Three had served for more than 20 years, thirteen for a period between 7 and 20 years and only three had put in less than 7 years in Oriental. The core-section was unique in this regard. No other functional unit had as many old employees and as few new-comers as the core-section. The reason probably was that though the other parts of the factory expanded from time to time, the core-section had no scope of expansion. On the other hand, those employed in the section, having specialised in core-making for long, had neither the desire nor any scope of going elsewhere. This constancy of personnel made the core-section a distinct unit in view of its own members as well as of other employees. The core-section became a closely-knit friendship group. Four workers, who were more outspoken than the others, took the lead in matters – whether it was a gossip about somebody...
or a dispute arose among workers or between workers and the management. These four workers set the pattern of behaviour for the members of the core-section. They freely joked at each other and teased the supervisor or indulged in gossip about some employee or employees. They had found from experience that the supervisor was a mild and unassuming person and did not resist any teasing by them. These workers often touched the limbs of the supervisor to provoke him or addressed him in the singular, which is a mark of disrespect towards superiors.

During the recess, those who took their lunch within the factory sat in the core-section premises and dined there. In the remaining period of the recess they played cards or talked about some incidents in the factory or outside. If one of the workers finished his day's work sooner than others, he went round the core section and helped the other colleagues finish their work, mixing talks with work. At times, all of them finished their work half an hour or so earlier than the scheduled time. In that case, they all went for a wash together and after finishing the wash they returned to the core-section and again started talking, occasionally enjoying tea offered by one of them. A part of their group-norm was that they hardly loitered out during working-hours. As one of their leaders told me, "A member of the core-section leaves his place of work only for a specific work - to respond to a call from an officer or for natural calls etc. We hardly go to the canteen for tea or snacks even during the
allotted time." Usually, at tea time they purchased tea from the canteen boy when he went round the workshop. In two cases, two workers purchased daily one cup of tea in common, shared it and shared also the expenses on it.

The solidarity of the core-section workers was put to test in 1946, when the Management introduced the scheme of piece-rate bonus as an incentive to workers to do maximum work. The workers in other functional units cooperated with the Management in this scheme, but the core-section people did not cooperate. When they heard about the time-study of their jobs and the piece-rate bonus, the leaders thought that the Management wanted to deprive them of the joy and ease with which they had been working so far. They further believed that the bonus for more work would be given only for a few months; subsequently, they thought, the Management would argue that the workers were capable of doing the extra work they did, as would be proved by the records, and the bonus would be stopped for ever. Thus, according to these leaders, the piece-rate was a sort of alluring net spread by the Management to extract more work from the workers. They, therefore, put up resistance against the Management's attempts to take the time of their jobs. When the Chief Engineer went to the core-section with the stop-watch in hand, the workers deliberately slowed down their work and gave lame excuses when called upon to explain. Moreover, they harassed the Chief Engineer by teasing him indirectly or by throwing balls of earth on him. The leaders gave a
slogan to the others—"temptation, urge to follow the temptation, physician and death". This meant: "if you accept the temptation offered by the Management (i.e. piece-rate bonus), you will fall sick (due to hard labour) and probably die (as your health would have been worn out)."

The Chief Engineer got tired of this group and had to give up taking time of jobs therein. The workers became proud of their victory and found out a name for the core section—the invincible fortress (ajaya killo).

The Management resorted to other ways. The workers were called individually to the office and given lump sums of money in anticipation of raising the output. Some workers were attracted by this but some others, in the words of an officer, "took the money and kept at the same level of output". In course of time, however, the core-section workers saw the others making handsome incomes by way of piece-rate bonuses, and succumbed to time study and piece-rate. However, their initial resistance gave them a new tradition—that they could successfully fight the Management. The name "invincible fortress" persisted and the workers of the core-section seemed to be very proud of that name when a member of another functional unit used it to refer to them.

In the beginning of the piece-rate bonus scheme the workers in the core section pooled their bonus earnings voluntarily and distributed these earnings equally among themselves. This was to keep the extra earnings of different members at the same level, again manifesting the informal
solidarity of the group.

One of the four leaders of the section was a devotee of Lord Dattatraya (the Trinity God) and in propitiation to him ate only one meal on Thursdays (this is one of the ways to worship the Hindu Gods - some of them are associated with particular days of the week). On one occasion he proposed to the other colleagues that a sum of ten rupees or so be kept apart from the pool of their piece-rate bonuses and utilized to purchase a picture of Lord Dattatraya for the core-section. They all agreed to the proposal, although six of them had little knowledge about the God in question and one had even changed over to Christianity. They bought a framed picture of Datta (abbreviation for Dattatraya) and installed it on a wall in the section. Afterwards, they raised a fund for a daily worship of the God. Some 44 workers from the core-section and other parts of the Foundry contributed 0.25 rupee per month. This amount was used for offering incense, flowers and ghee-lamp to the God every morning before starting the day's work. They also offered a small quantity of food to Datta every day (penda - a milk preparation) and distributed it (as prasada) to all the members of the worship-fund. This worship of Datta then became part of the activities of the core-section workers. At times if a worker was suspected to be telling a lie in some matter, he was asked to put his hands on the picture of Datta; and it was believed that none could dare utter a lie while laying hands on the God's picture. The success of
a worker in the day's routine work was also often ascribed to the god's will and blessings. As one worker put it, "We offer him (Datta) food every morning and he, in turn, gives us our daily bread (i.e. we get our wages on account of his grace)."

The core-section was thus a very close-knit informal group. Its members were bound by manifold ties - economic, ritual and recreational. By 1957, however, the informal bonds in the group had somewhat loosened. One reason for this was the installation of a new device for core-making. The Company secured special dies for some cores, especially for the cores of bowls of turbine pumps. Cores were prepared by means of the dies. This required more specialized skill and attention. Three outstanding workers were selected for die-core making and their place of work was away from the main core-section. Hence for these men (one of whom was a leader of the original core-section group discussed above) it became difficult to maintain contacts with the other members of the group during working hours. Secondly, as the time-study and piece-rate bonus secured ground in the factory and in the core-section, the workers had to be rather more attentive in work, since they slowly became interested in the money they received as piece-rate bonus. This also weakened the informal affiliations in the core-section. At the time of my fieldwork, the solidarity described above was slowly becoming a thing of the past and a part of the losing tradition of the core-section. As I often heard:
How to express our experiences of the days gone by!

We were a pretty jolly and powerful group then and could do what we liked. Now, you see, the bonds are weakening and individual workers have started looking for their personal interests rather than for the interests of the group. Formerly, this Brahman worker often entertained us by reciting devotional songs and telling religious stories; and we gladly gave him what we could afford in return. This time-study has deprived us of all that joy and ease of work."

Another functional unit where I observed informal bonds was the oil-immersed contactor section in the Switchgear Shop. The work in this section was divided into processes following one another, according to the parts of the contactors to be assembled. A group of twelve workers handled the job; one man assembled a small component of the contactors and handed it over to the next man for further assembly who did his part of the process and handed it over to the next man, and so on, until a piece of contactor was fully assembled. The job involved skill in handling materials and the screwing machines, and the speed of work depended on dexterity of hand.

In contrast with the core-section group, the present group consisted of young boys having high-school education who joined Oriental to get into skilled industrial jobs. At the time of my study, only two of the boys had put in more than a year's service in the factory. All of them were still apprentices; only two received a wage of 0.75 rupee
per day while the others received only the dearness allowance. These boys were quite young, with an average age of 20.3 years, and were junior members of their respective families, so they had little burden of family-maintenance. They were therefore rather care-free about their earnings. Most of them lived as neighbours in the town and were friends. They were interested in sports such as hockey and cricket. The senior-most member of the group joined Oriental first and then succeeded in getting the others recruited to the factory.

The above factors made the workers of the contactor section a socially and culturally homogeneous group; in the factory also they worked with great ease and joy. They freely joked at each other and helped each other in work (when someone was found to lag behind). If one of them went out to drink water, he would bring water for his colleagues. What is more, the supervisor of the section and also the foreman of the Switchgear Shop mixed very freely in the informal relationships of the workers, although they dealt with them formally and strictly in matters pertaining to output and quality of work. That is, the workers saw their immediate heads participating in their informal relationships and at the same time being serious and formal in taking work. Eventually, the workers and the bosses developed a fondness and love for each other and, as the foreman told me "I can now take any amount of work I wish without raising a single voice of opposition from the boys." The workers, in turn, regarded their foreman as one of the best foremen in the
whole factory. The foreman constantly criticized the Management for extracting mass production work from the boys who earned insignificant income (since they were employed as apprentices). In his view, a worker earning a rupee per day did work worth 100 rupees. When I inquired whether the boys themselves realized this, he said, "Oh, no, they are all young boys with little family burden, and they often work just for the fun of it, mixed with a desire to learn new things. And it is good for the Management that the workers do not realize the relation between their output and income. If they realize it, they won't work earnestly and sincerely as they do now." The boys themselves appeared to be aware that they did a lot of work for the Company with little or no wages. However, they justified this on the ground that the present work was very useful for their training in the job and therefore they were not grudging about their work.

II

There were manifold economic bonds among Oriental employees. These bonds cut across functional units as well as across line categories.

In the first place, there were five workers and seven staff members who had some additional sources of income such as land, houses, business or inherited surplus cash which they wanted to invest. These employees lent small sums of money to other workers and staff-members who could not live within their incomes. Around 92 per cent of the
workers I interviewed purchased their daily necessities such as foodgrains, spices, clothes etc. on credit, and paid up the bills on the pay day. Consequently, their wages or salaries were exhausted within a week of receiving them. When they needed money, they borrowed from the rich employees mentioned above. The debt was usually paid up on the next pay-day. However, the deficit of money soon reappeared for the debtor and he was again compelled to borrow, in some cases a larger sum than previously. This established a continuous chain relationship of borrowing and repaying between the creditor and the debtor. Most creditors charged interest on the sums they lent. The rate of interest varied. In some cases a person borrowing ten rupees was asked to return eleven rupees in the next month - an interest rate of 120 per cent per annum. Although some borrowers grudged against such high rates of interest, they nevertheless kept up borrowing since it gave them a reassurance of getting money to spend, for they could not obtain loan from any other source. A more or less stable relationship was established between the creditors and their borrowers. The creditors were held in special regard by the borrowers, whatever their position in the line-structure. Two engineers in workshops, however, lent small sums of money to needy workers without charging any interest. These officers were much respected by the workers.

There were three supervisors in the Foundry and a clerk in the Scheduling Department who sold some household
articles such as soap, tea, ghee etc. to the workers of the factory. They opened a small improvised shop just outside the factory gate after the close of the main shift. The workers purchased the goods on credit and paid the bill on each pay-day. The sellers made good profit in the business and were assured of the credit they gave to the purchasers. It would be difficult for any purchaser to escape the seller on the pay-day since they knew each other very well. The purchasers would be afraid that people would talk of them if they did not pay up their dues in time. The creditor could also easily persuade the clerk in charge of wages and salaries to deduct the credit-amount from the purchaser's wage packet. On the other hand, the purchasers purchased the articles because they got credit which nobody else outside the factory would offer them. There was thus a mutual advantage in the business.

The Employees' Cooperative Credit Society was another agency creating social and economic relationships among employees. The shareholders in the society were entitled to borrow money from its funds, and repaid the loan in monthly instalments which were deducted from their wages or salaries. While applying for the loan, the borrower had to find two other shareholders to stand as sureties for the loan. The sureties were frequently the borrower's friends from the same functional unit, or relatives, neighbours etc. from other units. Sureties were considered to be doing favour to the borrower and expected a reciprocal favour when
they wanted to borrow money. But that was not all. In some cases, a shareholder in need of money who could not borrow because he had not finished the repayment of an earlier loan, found out another shareholder wanting to borrow a loan. The former then stood as surety for the latter on condition that the latter would give him a part of the amount borrowed. The official burden to repay the loan was then on the borrower, whereas the surety only paid his part informally to the borrower. I know of two cases where the surety did not repay his portion of the loan punctually, while the borrower had to pay for him. A quarrel between the borrower and the surety ensued and it became the common talk of the employees in the workshops.

In two workshops, the Foundry and the Machine Shop, informal cooperative credit societies were formed by the employees. They called these societies 'internal societies'. They voluntarily contributed five rupees per member per month and when anyone wanted money, he borrowed from the common fund. The funds and accounts were maintained by the head of the workshop in one case and by a trade union representative in the other. This voluntary fund opened additional opportunities for the contributors to save money and to borrow money in urgent necessities. The yearly profits accruing to the fund were divided among the contributors in the form of small brass utensils. These informal funds created new economic bonds among employees in the respective workshops who became members of the fund. There was, however,
a suspicion towards the person who collected money for the fund and maintained its accounts, that he utilized the fund of the internal society for his own purposes. One of the two internal societies mentioned above broke down during my fieldwork and the other lost a majority of members - most of whom had promoted the society - and became very weak.

III

The employees of Oriental distinguished themselves on the basis of relative length of service in the factory. They made a dichotomy between old (i.e. long-service) and new (i.e. short-service) employees. This dichotomy of old and new is always relative in actuality; an employee of ten years' service would be an old one in relation to another of four years' service but a new one in relation to a third who had put in fifteen years' service. In practice, however, employees with around ten years' service or more regarded themselves as old employees and others as new ones. Old employees distinctly remembered the important past events that occurred in the factory and the landmarks in its development and communicated them to their new colleagues. I often saw old employees from different functional units gathering in or near the canteen and discussing the harshness of supervisors before they formed the trade union, a memorable accident, the acts of some former 'kind' foremen and engineers or the resistances the workers put up when the Management introduced the piece-rate bonus scheme. When a new employee
entered the job in the factory, the old employees tested his sincerity to the informal functional group, showed him the ways of work and behaviour in the workshop (e.g. whether the supervisor's orders were to be obeyed and in what situations; whether work was to be done according to time-study or not, and so on). In some cases even a supervisor or foreman who joined as a new employee learnt some aspects of work, administration and behaviour from old employees in the lower categories - mistri or worker. Often new employees had to conform to the standards of old employees, whether they themselves accepted the standards or not. For instance, in the core-section and in the Electric Shop, new employees complained to me that though they could earn full piece-rate bonus by doing full work, they were prevented by old employees from doing so. The latter, it was believed, were afraid that if the new employees did full work, the Management would be induced to demand the same quantity of work from old employees as well. This would curtail the time of leisure for old employees which they had demarcated for themselves. At times new employees complained that the old ones did not allow them to work more than what they (old employees) did out of sheer envy - lest the old employees should look inferior in the eyes of the Management. A general attitude of new employees towards the old was that they were evasive and dogmatic about work, and that they did not want to teach work to newcomers. The old ones, in turn, thought the new employees joined the factory only for money,
not to learn work; they did all work hurriedly and spoiled it and considered themselves more sophisticated. As an old employee said, "we do not teach work to newcomers, not because of envy but because we don't have time to do so."

This old-new differentiation existed even at the level of officers. For instance, when the foundry Manager joined Oriental, the other old heads of workshops and departments tried their best to drive him out. In the words of a worker in the Foundry:

"When the FM (abbreviation for the Foundry Manager) came here, these four old officers who think the factory to be their fathers' property made an all-out attempt to drive him away. They instigated us against the FM. Also, they collected the waste of metals from every corner of the Foundry and showed it to the managing Director, saying "look here, sir, the wasteful handling of property by your new FM, whom you are paying a fat salary." Fortunately the managing Director realized the importance of the FM's work and the envious old guards could not succeed; nor did we cooperate with their plot, since we also knew the efficiency and kindness of the FM in no time."

I have taken this statement as authentic, because it was supported separately by other employees in personal interviews, without my having hinted at the subject. Also, in my talks with the officers in question, I could easily find a mutual sense of dislike, sometimes even disgust, between the old officers on the one hand and the new ones on
the other. The latter were rather "bookish, snobs and impractical" in the eyes of the former whereas they regarded the former as rough, greedy and unsuited to their jobs, "existing not by virtue of their work but of personal favours."

Four of the old officers mentioned above formed a distinct group. They belonged to the same caste as the Managing Director although two had higher status than the other two in the caste. They had all taken diplomas in engineering and had reached their present positions from very humble jobs. Since all the four had put in more than ten years' service in Oriental, they had evolved a strong friendliness among themselves, which was further strengthened by the fact that they all stayed very near the site of the factory - two in Oriental quarters and two in houses provided by the parent factory. I often saw them together in the canteen also. Three of these four officers were rather disliked by their subordinates, for they were considered to be "very very rude and unkind to subordinates". In the words of an employee, his boss (one of the four officers in question) was "of the type of men who do not mind eating beside the dead body." The employees had a strong belief that the four officers always took decisions regarding their work in consultation with each other. And they were considered as taking all decisions in such a way that they were against workers' interests and pleased the Managing Director. One of the four was himself regarded as a kind
and considerate officer, but since the other three always gave him advice on which he acted, he could not remain good. These four were considered to be bad and malicious lieutenants of the good managing Director. The employees said: "So long as these four officers rule in Oriental, there are no hopes for us."

There were informal clubs organized for recreation running in the factory. One of these was called the Friday Club. It was instituted in April 1957 by two clerks in the Sales Department. Its membership consisted of twenty-nine staff members, of whom twenty-six were clerks from various departments and three were draughtsmen in the Designs Department. The only activity of this club was to provide light snacks to its members on every Friday during the recess. Each member paid a fee of 0.50 rupee per month. The members met in the staff lunch room for the Friday snacks. They remained together for ten or fifteen minutes - as long as they ate snacks - and then dispersed. There was no other interaction between them as members of the Friday Club. During my fieldwork, I never saw or heard of them expressing any concerted opinion or coming together for any joint action in relation to the management or other employees.

Moreover, there was an Office Club which had as members clerks from various departments, including some members of the Friday Club. The function of the Office Club was also to provide snacks to its members once a month. There was also a Workshop Staff Club whose membership was confined to
staff members working in or connected with workshops. This club was not snacks-oriented; its members arranged joint dinners at irregular intervals. Occasionally, they gave farewell parties to some officer or engineer leaving the factory or going abroad.

The three clubs mentioned above were thus purely recreational - or, to be more exact, purely refreshmental. They had little connection with the overall working of the factory.
In the formal sense, Oriental was just another engineering factory, existing as a part of the wider society, where the employees sold their labour for wages or salaries. However, the history of the factory over the twenty years of its existence and certain features characterizing it made it a unique entity in the minds of the employees. The special history and features of Oriental created among the employees a group-feeling and a sense of belongingness to it. The factory became a large informal group with its own traditions and characteristics.

In the first place, the Managing Director, who was regarded as the virtual owner of the factory (as shown below) was considered by the employees as an exception among industrialists in the region. He had "the rare combination of a proficient engineer and an able administrator". Other industrialists, especially mill-owners, possessed wealth and capacity to run factories, but little technical knowledge and could therefore be easily befooled by the employees, unlike the Oriental Managing Director. He was also considered to be kind and considerate to the employees. "Even a labourer
can see our Managing Director any time" - this was the attitude of the employees.

Secondly, the incentives such as attendance bonus, piece-rate and efficiency bonus given to the workers of Oriental were not received by workers in other factories. In this respect, the employees regarded Oriental as unique in this area. The Time and Methods Study Department in Oriental made the employees proud of the factory. The following comments will demonstrate what the employees thought about Oriental:

"Oriental can now stand in line with Tatas (referring to the Tata Engineering Works in Jamshedpur in Bihar)."

"There are only four factories in India comparable to Oriental; in our region, of course, it is the best and biggest factory."

"The amenities provided to us are certainly far better than in any other factory in this area."

"Although wages and salaries in Oriental are poorer than elsewhere, this factory is preferable because there is more security of job here."

The Management regarded the employees of Oriental as quite intelligent and well-behaved as compared with employees in other factories. "I have no labour problem", the Managing Director said when I first met him. "And he is right in saying so", several employees in effect told me, "as far as possible we solve our petty disputes within the factory. In all these years since the inception of Oriental, there has
been only one major strike in 1948 and a brief partial slowdown of work in 1955." This congeniality of employer-employee relationship gained further weight from the fact that workers of Oriental were more educated than those in other factories, because a majority of jobs in the former were skilled jobs as against predominantly unskilled jobs in textile mills and chemical factories. It was generally believed that educated workers are more understanding and less quarrelsome than uneducated workers. Hence Oriental workers were regarded as more civilized and restrained in behaviour than others. A worker, for instance, advised me: "If you go to textile mills, you will get to know a lot more about factory workers than what you will learn here. There, workers are all gamblers and drunkards and heavily in debt; they are dirty and quarrelsome." This distinctness of status attached by Oriental workers to themselves became evident when a quarrel occurred between two workers wherein they used obscene language for each other. A third worker, who was witnessing the quarrel, remarked:

"What! have we turned millhands? If we use such obscene language, what is the difference between mill workers and us?"

The work in Oriental was also considered to be superior to work in other factories, since the Management of the former had introduced some latest techniques and machines. Both engineers and skilled workers thought that the experience gained in Oriental was very valuable for their
future prospects. On several occasions I heard the employees saying that the accuracy of measurement in Oriental was to the last milimeter, whereas in most factories they were never precise beyond an inch. Once when the Workshop Superintendent was trying to convince some workers that they were far better off than their counterparts in other factories, the workers at once replied:

"You cannot compare the work we do with the work in other factories. Our work involves milimeter-precision. They do not mind even a discrepancy of an inch."

There were several cases of an engineer or technician leaving Oriental after a few years' service on securing a much better job elsewhere. For instance, a technician working in Oriental on 225 rupees per month after three years' experience was selected by a large firm in Bombay on 400 rupees per month and in two years reached 700 rupees. He repeatedly told me after leaving Oriental that it was his experience in Oriental that led him to such a nice placing in a short time. Job in Oriental was thus a stepping-stone to higher jobs for many employees.

Another feature of Oriental giving it a special prestige was its emphasis on designs of materials. In the words of a staff member, "Other factories also produce electric motors as we do. But they do not give enough importance to designing. If a spare-part is broken, they call for the whole motor for repairs, involving much hardship to the customer. If some part of our motors breaks, the
customer has only to give us the specifications of the motor he purchased. From this we find out the designs of the part to be repaired and do the job in no time."

These ideas of prestige regarding the factory were not just confined to the employees of Oriental; they had spread outside too. Several employees told me they heard about the prestige of Oriental in their far away native towns and then tried for and secured jobs in it. Besides, as we have already seen in chapter IV, many workers left Oriental after serving for some time and went to other factories but in course of time returned to Oriental because they found that the latter was far better than other factories in several respects.

There was also a general sense of satisfaction and well-being among the employees, since they could see that Oriental was a rapidly developing concern. They frequently talked about the 'enormous' growth of production which was evidenced by the amount of goods stacked in all workshops and complaints about shortage of space everywhere. The skilled workers also occasionally talked with pride that their officers were being more and more preoccupied with research and development schemes. Oriental had grown from a small repairs workshop into a modern factory manufacturing various items and was constantly expanding. The old employees had seen all these changes and some had actively participated in bringing them about. The emphasis on research and development was evident from the fact that some of its
manufactures were 'firsts' of their kind in India. The following comments in a leading English newspaper will testify to my contention:

"Striking testimony to the international standard attained by Indian technology is seen in the news that what is easily the largest slipring electric motor manufactured in India so far has recently been completed by an Indian firm, Messrs............ of ........... The fact that this engineering triumph breaks the manufacturer's own all-India record of 1955 is a tribute to the progressive spirit that today animates Indian enterprise. The latest motor, however,............ certainly scores a new high ........... Designed to drive one of the compressors of a prominent glass factory in India, this motor called for unusually accurate machining of heavy parts, necessitating the evolution of special machining procedures and checking gauges to ensure flawless concentricity. The designing of the cooling system represents a definite advance as compared with that of the 1955 motor, while the problems presented by the machining of various components ...... have been successfully dealt with, resulting in a slipring motor equal in performance, smooth operation, reserves, of power and easy instant starting to the finest that have been ever imported into this country of ours."
(Emphasis mine).

Moreover, the Managing Director was fond of emulating other prosperous factories in India and abroad. For instance, the fact that he allowed me to do sociological research in
the factory was itself a testimony to his varied interests. While I was working in the factory, he created the post of a personnel officer whose job was to control recruitment of personnel on the basis of psychological tests. Some employees welcomed these new features; others criticized them as just the fads of the Managing Director. However, they all indicated that these were the things which happened in Oriental and not in other factories. It was a part of the tradition of Oriental.

There were some rituals observed in the factory. On the Dasera day (tenth day of the last month of the Indian lunar calendar) employees in each workshop arranged a social gathering. First, workers worshipped their tools and/or machines by offering them coconut or simply vermilion and rice-grains (this is a usual way of worshipping deities). The Managing Director and other officers visited the jovial festival parties of employees in various workshops and took tea or snacks with them; sometimes they were entertained by songs and light music. In some years some workshops even performed the puja (worship) of Satyanarayana (the god of truth) and even held bhajana and kirtana (mass worship with songs and music). The Management granted some money every year from the Company funds for this day.

On the 26th of January every year, the Company gave a grand dinner to all its employees. In 1957, the employees gave a variety entertainment in which staff members and workers jointly participated. An interesting item in the
programme was a song composed and recited by the Chief Engineer. The theme of the song was "May Oriental make further progress!".

The group-feeling among the employees was also seen in the fact that when an employee fell seriously ill or suffered an accident, others provided monetary and manual help to him or his family. In November 1956, a worker in the Repairs and Maintenance Shop died of electrocution while working in the factory. The workers of Oriental assisted his family in his funeral ceremonies, helped his wife in clearing legal and other matters and floated a fund in which most workers and staff members contributed a day's pay. Similarly in 1957, employees of different workshops contributed to a fund to help a worker of the Fitting Shop suffering from tuberculosis.

II

We have seen in chapter III that Oriental was owned by a joint stock company which worked through the Board of Directors which in turn worked through the Managing Agents. In reality both the Board of Directors and the Managing Agency were dominated by the family of Hari, mentioned in Chapter II. Four of the five directors and all members of the Managing Agency belonged to Hari's family. As we have seen, it was largely due to the efforts of Hari and his sons that Oriental, as also two other factories in Rajnagar, came into existence and prospered since then. Also, the
bulk of the capital of the Company was subscribed by them. Since the voting rights of a member in a joint stock company are proportionate to the amount of capital subscribed by him, the members of Hari's family could dominate the Board of Directors and secure the managing agency of the Company. This kind of business management is fairly common in India, and the lineage or family having predominant financial interest in the business is popularly regarded as a "business house" which owns the business. Oriental was thus regarded as owned by the family of Hari. This recognition of ownership attached to the family was partly related to the fact that the credit of the Company in business circles and among banking institutions depended on the credit of the lineage controlling it. The shareholders of the Company not belonging to Hari's family implicitly conceded that the Company belonged to the lineage. This is evident from the statements such as "I have purchased --- shares in the company of ---" (giving the name of the lineage or of its chief members). Many shareholders knew little of anything about the activities of Oriental. They only knew that they had so many shares in the Company and that they received so much interest on their investment. "The rest is up to the owners to care."

The Managing Director, who acted as the representative of the Managing Agency on the Board of Directors, was in effect the representative of the family mentioned above which 'owned' the factory. All important decisions in respect of the business of Oriental and its development were taken by
him, though his decisions were based on the advice of technical experts and had to be formally endorsed by the Board of Directors. As the chief executive of the factory he was associated with the day-to-day activities of employees. He was thus the obvious symbol of the 'owning' lineage for the employees. Employees, therefore, generally regarded him as the 'owner' of the factory, almost as if he were the proprietor of the business of Oriental. A common term used to refer to him was Seth, meaning employer or master. Even a trade union leader once wrote to him, "It is your factory and you are free to dismiss your workers." (Emphasis mine).

The employees' regard for the Managing Director as the owner of the factory gained further weight by the fact that in certain respects he worked unlike all other employees. While entering or leaving the factory premises he passed through a gate which was not allowed to be used by other employees. Unlike them, he did not register his time of arrival to the factory. Also, he spent only four or five hours daily in the factory, and sometimes much less, while others were expected to work for eight hours. He was not bound by the leave regulations applying to other employees. The peons in his office put on white uniforms whereas other peons in the factory wore khaki uniforms.

We have seen above that one aspect of the tradition of Oriental was the employees' contention that their 'master' (Managing Director) was better and more progressive than other employers in Rajnagar. I often heard comments such as:
"Our Seth is a very shrewd man. Before approaching him for any work, you have to be well-prepared to reply to his questions."

"The Seth is a lover of cleanliness. When he takes the round of the workshops, he notices even small dirt and disorders and gives instructions to relevant officers."

The relationship between the Managing Director, as the owner or employer, and other employees, was formally a contractual relationship holding as long as the latter were employed in Oriental. However, several employees regarded their relationship with the Managing Director as a social and religious bond transcending even their present existence.

When a staff-member was criticizing the Managing Director for taking undue personal benefits out of the Company resources while giving inadequate salaries to employees, he remarked:

"Why blame him? After all, we must have done some wrong to him in a previous birth and he is only repaying us here."

Another employee said:

"The Managing Director is born in a rich family of a high caste because of his meritorious deeds in the previous birth; he is continuing his good deeds in this birth by giving wages and salaries to all these employees. It is as though God had ordered him when he was born: 'Go to the earth, start a big factory and support all these people.'"

Some skilled workers (a carpenter, blacksmith,
wiremen etc.) and labourers were occasionally called upon to go to the house of the Managing Director in connection with his household requirements. When a worker was asked to attend to this work, he considered it as a matter of pride and thought he was honoured, though it meant some extra work without extra income. This also indicates that the employees regarded their relationship with the Managing Director as different from a contract.

It is significant in this connection that traditionally the word Seth (used by employees for the Managing Director) suggests a master-servant bond implying a variety of social and religious ties. Sometimes this bond is held in society as a fictional kinship, the master being looked upon as father of the servant. This idiom was occasionally used by Oriental employees to visualize their relationship with the Managing Director. For instance, a worker narrated the following incident:

"Once Seth became very angry with me for my trade union activity. He called me and said: 'Leave my factory at once'. I said I won't. Growing more angry he asked: 'Is this your father's factory?' I calmly said yes. His anger still increased. I then explained: 'Because you are maintaining us workers, you can be called our father. That is why I say this is my father's factory'. Upon this, he was much pleased and asked me to resume my work."

However, all employees did not postulate their relationship with the Managing Director in terms mentioned
above; and those who did postulate the relationship in that way did not do so all the time. All employees were aware, albeit in different degrees, that the Managing Director belonged to the category of very rich men - the capitalists. In fact, several employees, while talking about the Managing Director or members of his family, referred to them as "these capitalists". In the minds of most employees, there were certain attributes of the capitalist class which they had learnt by reading books, magazines or newspapers, by contacts with trade union leaders or with those who had contacts with trade union leaders, or by "seeing the ways of our Seth". These attributes were: 'Capitalists usually became rich by exploiting others - whether in agriculture, or in trade and commerce or in industry. They were always interested in seeing that their wealth multiplied and therefore continued to exploit those who worked under them. Due to their wealth, they could wield utmost influence in the society, particularly on the government and therefore the entire legal machinery of the state was geared to their benefits'.

These attributes were applied by Oriental employees to the Managing Director. There was a story among employees that Hari, the father of the present Managing Director (who was a founder of three factories, including Oriental) killed the original founder of XY (the parent pharmaceutical factory) by throwing him into a furnace, and then became the sole 'owner' of the factory. He grew rich from liquor, which was
the main item of production in the beginning. Thus, the wealth of the Managing Director's family was gathered by 'unfair' means in the employees' view. The Managing Director, being a rich man, was "selfish and money-minded". Though he was only a part of the Company - including many shareholders - and got a huge remuneration and commission for the work he did, he 'squeezed' as much money as he could from the Company funds. The motor cars he used were Company property. He recently built a "palatial" house which was largely built with materials and manpower of the Company.

Many employees thought that the Managing Director took away a considerable portion of the Company profits by unfair means and then showed small profits in the annual balance-sheet, so that employees could not demand much by way of profit-sharing bonus.

The employees thought that their Seth and other members of his family would go to any extreme to safeguard their personal interests. I heard about the following incident on various occasions: When Oriental workers first formed a trade union, the Management put up a retrenchment notice for some workers. One day, a worker was copying the notice from the notice-board. In the meantime, an unknown man came with a stick and broke the legs of the worker. The assailter was hired by the Seth in order to suppress trade union activities." Similarly, when I explained the purpose of my research to a worker, he at once retorted, "We have already heard that our Seth has taken a written
promise from your university not to publish the information you collect here."

The political views and activities of the Managing Director were also interpreted by employees as moves calculated to fulfill his selfish interests. In 1956, there was a widespread agitation in the Gujarati-speaking region to secure a separate linguistic state out of the erstwhile Bombay State. The Managing Director sided with this agitation and soon became the president of the local wing of the political party formed on the issue. Employees considered his moves as designed to achieve benefits for himself and other capitalists. For, "once the regional (linguistic) state is formed, these industrialists will wield more power on the new government than they could on the Bombay Government. They will then get more licenses and more tax reliefs and thus add to their wealth by exploiting more and more people like us." This attitude of workers gained emphasis from the fact that in August 1956, the new party called a day's general strike in Gujarat region. The Oriental Management asked employees to participate in the strike and make up for the ensuing loss of production by putting in an extra hour of work for the following eight days. "It is difficult to believe", a worker said, "that our Seth would ever ask us to go on strike. These rich people are the professed enemies of anything like strike. When they ask us to go on strike, there must be selfish interests hidden in it."

After a few months of this, the Managing Director
withdrew from the political movement mentioned above, incidentally when the movement itself was suffering strong reverses. Also, a minister in the Commerce and Industry ministry of the Central Government visited Rajnagar just before the Managing Director drew himself out of the political movement. A worker explained his resignation as follows: "You can now calculate the move. The Seth has suddenly snapped his relations with the agitation. For one thing, he saw the waning influence of the movement on the public. Secondly, the minister who came to Rajnagar the other day is a friend of our Seth. He must have threatened the Seth to withdraw government orders for Oriental goods unless he went out of the agitation. The Seth was thus forced to give up his political activities."

Thus the Managing Director's joining the agitation as well as leaving it were regarded by employees as motivated by self-interests.

III

In the above discussion there is an implicit assumption. In showing Oriental as an informal group and in describing the informal relationship between the 'employer' (the Managing Director) and the employees, I have postulated all employees as members of a group. In Chapter III I have shown the formal division of employees into functional units and line categories. I will now describe the informal relationships that evolved among these formal groups and categories.
The different functional units were, as shown in Chapter III, convenient groupings of activities and of personnel based on technical considerations. Activities of different employees in a functional unit were inter-dependent in some cases and similar yet independent of each other in others. However, employees in each functional unit had their distinct traditions and a set of common beliefs and attitudes which made it a distinct social group.

In the first place, there were the informal relations, myths and rituals woven around a functional unit, as described for two sections of workshops in the first part of this chapter. Employees of a functional unit showed a distinct consciousness of the type of work they did and its physical conditions. Work in the Foundry was associated with very hard labour. If you asked a Foundry employee about his work, he would usually reply "I am lifting iron bars (lattha) in the Foundry" or "I am carrying heavy iron-vessels (dabalāh) in the Foundry (referring to the carriers for molten iron). As compared with this, the work in the Machine Shop was regarded as cleaner, less strenuous, but involving more talent (precision, proficiency of handling machines, knowledge of their settings etc.). The work in the Electric Shop and Switchgear Shop was also 'intelligent' work; yet most of it involved assembling of finished parts. Therefore, the Machine Shop employees regarded their work as more skilled than that in the other two units just mentioned. They expressed this by using a piece of information borrowed
from foreignreturned engineers: "The work of assembling parts was mostly entrusted to girls in Germany and other countries. It is simply automatic, once you pick up the technique." Similarly, the work in the Welding Shop was "injurious to eyes". In the Repairs and Maintenance Shop, one had the opportunity to learn a variety of skills, whereas in the Electric or Switchgear Shop one could learn a specialized job. In the Pattern Shop, it was not possible to standardize timings of jobs by time-study, since a carpentry job might take "ten minutes or two hours". Therefore, it was very easy to cheat the supervisor in the Pattern Shop. "You could show you worked for two hours while you might have done nothing at all."

Those functional units in which jobs were predominantly skilled were regarded as prestige workshops in comparison with others. Thus, the Machine Shop possessed more status than the Foundry. The employees in the former regarded the latter as the workshop of uneducated unskilled workers who were "uncivilized brutes". Sometimes unskilled workers in the Machine, Electric or Switchgear Shop were transferred to the Foundry if they were found unsuitable in the former. Workers regarded such a move as punishment by the Management to the transferred workers. Foundry workers who wanted to get their relatives or castemen into the factory said they were trying to put the relatives etc. in the Machine or Electric or Switchgear Shop. Thus, Foundry employees implicitly recognized the higher status of the other units.
Some functional units were associated with particular language groups. The Foundry was considered as the workshop of Bhaiyas; the Electric and Switchgear workshops were regarded as Marathi-workshops. Employees frequently projected their conceptions of a language group on to the workshop which was considered as dominated by that group. Thus, "Bhaiyas are dirty folk and are very rough in manners. They can do any amount of physical labour but do not have a drop of intelligence." Hence, the Foundry was a dirty workshop; a suitable place for rough and unintelligent people. A talented worker never liked to work in the Foundry. "Marathis are very self-conscious and have a strong community spirit. They hate Gujaratis." Therefore, a Gujarati worker's position was always unsafe and insecure in the Electric and Switchgear workshops. A Gujarati worker who was transferred to either of these units from another workshop regarded his transfer as a major punishment by the Management.

Another aspect of group-feeling among members of a functional unit was the fact that employees in each unit attached a special importance to it as part of the factory, and took pride in it. Employees in the Pattern Shop and the Foundry said the bulk of production started with their unit and others depended on them; the Sales Department employees said all work started with the orders received by their unit; the Stores personnel said all workshops depended on them for the supply of raw-materials and tools; the Packing and Painting Shop employees said their work was the crux of the
factory activities; the Designs Department employees said designing was at the basis of work in the factory like Oriental; the Personnel Department people said they dealt with the most important of all questions - the incomes and welfare of employees; the Scheduling employees said sound scheduling was the main prerequisite of sound business. And so on.

Corresponding to the 'ethos' of a functional unit, there was the belief among its employees that they were the most efficient lot of employees in the whole factory. The Management prepared a chart of relative efficiency of different workshops every month. This was calculated on the basis of the idea of a fair day's work decided by time-and-methods study. The relative efficiency as calculated by the Management depended on several factors besides the actual productivity of workers - such as, availability of raw-materials, sound functioning of machines, orders received from customers etc. However, the employees believed that if their workshop was put in the front ranks of the efficiency chart, it was their own achievement. I often heard from workers of the Foundry, Fitting, Electric, Switchgear and other workshops that their respective units frequently took the lead in the efficiency chart. If sometimes the workers had to admit that their workshop was low in efficiency in a particular month, they did so but they held other units responsible for the default. For instance, a worker in the Electric Shop said, "Last month our efficiency was low
according to the chart. But what can we do? The other workshops, on which we have to depend for castings, do not work enough and we have to suffer due to them. Look at the castings we get from the Machine Shop. They do their part of the job, but the castings are not properly cleaned by Foundry workers. Hence we have to clean them here, which takes away considerable time." Similarly, Switchgear employees complained that Foundry people did not attend properly to Switchgear parts since these parts were very small and hence did not enable Foundry employees to earn adequate efficiency bonus. That is, Switchgear work suffered due to others' negligence.

Besides the idea of a functional unit being more efficient than others, and associated with this idea, was the belief among members of a functional unit that they were discriminated against in matters of wages, increments and promotions. In fact there were skilled and unskilled workers in all functional units in different proportions and the amount of wages and increments in a functional unit depended on the skill and 'efficiency' of individual workers. The differences of incomes arising out of this fact were used by employees to postulate beliefs of discrimination. Foundry employees said the Management always favoured the new workshops - Electric and Switchgear. There, an employee was given a higher start than his counterpart in the Foundry and subsequently got more increments than the latter. Similarly, Machine Shop employees believed the increments
given to them were 'much less' than what other workshops (i.e. employees there) received. On the other hand, the Electric and Switchgear employees said the Management did not care for them; they only cared for the Machine Shop. Machine Shop employees earned more piece-rate bonuses than Electric and Switchgear workshops. On the other hand, the machine shop employees said a large number of workers in their unit were apprentices; an apprentice did as much work as a skilled worker after two or three months' training; however, the Management gave meagre remuneration to an apprentice, which meant the Management got more production with less labour cost - at the expense of poor apprentices who were working because there was no alternative. Similar attitudes were held by Electric and Switchgear workers about apprentices in their respective workshops.

The beliefs and attitudes of employees of a functional unit regarding their work and incomes can now be summarized in the following terms: In each unit, employees in effect said, "Though we work more, we get less wages than people of other workshops." The employees of a functional unit thus regarded themselves as a distinct group in the factory.

In some cases, the attitudes of discrimination by the Management on the part of employees of a functional unit were explained away by means of certain attitudes towards themselves. Employees believed they had to suffer because there was a lack of unity among themselves in comparison with other workshops. Thus, the Machine Shop employees said there was
more unity and agreement among Foundry, Electric and Switchgear workers than among themselves. Electric Shop workers believed they were not as united as Switchgear workers. As one Electric Shop worker put it, "Switchgear workers are most united. They hardly mix with workers of other workshops. In the canteen or in the lunch recess, you will always find Switchgear workers discussing their own matters. Sometimes, they go on short excursions in which all workers join - whether Gujarati or Marathi, young or old. The Switchgear Shop is the Russia of Oriental. They have their iron curtain." Switchgear workers, in turn, believed that the model of unity was the Fitting shop. "There, the workers have decided among themselves that no one should work more than what would earn a piece-rate bonus of 1.50 rupees per worker. And they all stick to their self-imposed rule."

It is interesting to note that this attitude of regarding others as more united than one's own group is a reflection of attitudes prevailing among linguistic and caste groups outside the factory. Whenever such a group sees others enjoying comparative advantages in society, it is usual for its members to say that they have an inborn lack of unity or 'community spirit'. Paradoxically, the attitude of lack of unity held in common by the members of a group demonstrates unity. Such attitudes held by the members of a functional unit in Oriental also, therefore, proved that they regarded themselves as a unique group.
We have seen in Chapter III that an important distinction among employees made by the Management was that between staff members and workers. The differential arrangements made for staff members and workers indicated that the former were accorded higher status than the latter. As a rule, staff members performed more respectable jobs than those of workers and exercised authority over the latter as delegated by the Management. In the works committee, staff members were nominated by the Management whereas workers were nominated by their trade union. From the workers' viewpoint, staff members were closer to the Management than they and, by virtue of the authority they possessed, symbolised the Management. Therefore, workers transferred some of their attitudes towards the Management to staff members. A worker expressed his dissatisfaction towards the Management thus:

"The Managing Director, the Workshop Superintendent, the Foundry Manager, the Foundry Engineer, the supervisor of my section - none of these listens to my complaints. They are all one."

Workers thought that staff members' interests merged with those of the Management - to achieve maximum output at minimum cost. By doing so, staff members could win the favours of the Management who would then raise their (staff members') salaries. Numerous stories were current among
workers regarding the harassment of workers by staff members, both in the past and at present. Engineers, foremen and supervisors did not allow workers to go out even for natural calls, did not recommend leave for workers even in cases of genuine sickness or unavoidable social commitments, and shouted brutally at workers. Many workers vividly described a 'custom' (they used the Gujarati term *rivāj*): if a supervisor or foreman acted too harshly with some worker or workers, the latter would write on the lavatory-walls that so-and-so (the supervisor or foreman) would be offered garlands (*fool-hār*) outside the factory gate in the evening. 'Offering garlands' was an idiom used by workers for beating and physical manhandling. The fear of the physical and numerical strength of workers would act as a sanction against the behaviour of staff members towards workers.

Many skilled workers in Oriental believed that the technical knowledge of officers and other staff members was merely 'bookish' and failed in practical situations. "The ideas of our officers often do not work" was almost a slogan with skilled workers. A pattern-maker described the failure of the Foundry Manager's plan to save wood; in his opinion the failure was due to "the neglect of the simple fact that the climate in Rajnagar is different from that in Germany, where he learnt the plan." A core-section worker described how he solved a problem (regarding the core of a pump-impeller) by his practical experience when all officers including the Foundry Manager had failed. They were highly pleased with
him on this and persuaded the Management to grant him a substantial ex gratia increment in his salary.

Workers moreover believed that whenever an important suggestion regarding production techniques was made by a worker, the supervisor or engineer of the workshop impressed upon the Managing Director that the suggestion was made by himself (supervisor or engineer). A worker in the Foundry said: "The Foundry Manager is a very shrewd man. Ordinarily he sits in the office and guides Foundry work from there. But as soon as he learns about an innovation or useful suggestion made by a worker, he rushes to the Foundry, sees the value of the innovation or suggestion, at once calls the Managing Director and tells him 'I have done this'. The Managing Director then praises him and gives him a rise in his salary. The poor worker who does the actual work remains unnoticed." "You know, these staff members speak English. They talk with the Managing Director in English. Since we workers don't understand what they speak, the staff members can take credit for everything we do. But when a job gets spoiled, the blame is invariably thrown on workers. Workers are incapable and negligent in the eyes of staff members. And we cannot convince the Managing Director as to who is responsible for a good or bad work. For he has more faith in staff members than in us and would always accept what the former say. Again, we have to work day after day under the self-same staff members; hence if we say something against them, they might subsequently harass us on petty matters."
Workers also believed that when the production of the factory increased, the management gave credit and salary-increments to staff members - engineers and workshop heads. "You see, staff members are given special increments every now and then; workers get nothing beyond their usual increments of two or three naye paise per day in a year. Even in respect of the annual profit-sharing bonus, we workers fight through our trade union with the management to get maximum bonus; however, the major part of the bonus goes to staff members. Since bonus is proportionate to salary, staff members earn much higher bonuses than workers. So we invite the management's antagonism, and staff members enjoy the fruits."

Workers thus regarded staff members as a group favoured by the management as against themselves. In this context, the special arrangements made by the management for the staff in recognition of their higher status were also regarded by workers as the management's favouritism for staff members. "Staff members get more paid leaves than we; they are not searched at the gate..." - these were matters of continual grumbling by workers. This gave rise to some other beliefs among workers about staff members. For instance, a worker said, "If once they search the persons of staff members at the time of leaving, the management will find that our big officers are big thieves. They take home several valuable things belonging to the company. If a worker steals a small thing, he is dismissed for misconduct; staff members
steal big things and the management allow them to do so." Other relevant beliefs were: "Most staff members work in air-conditioned rooms; workers are not given even simple fans, though production depends more on workers than on staff members." "The calendars published by the company are given to staff members but not to workers; even in such small things staff members are favoured." "Even the canteen contractor discriminates between staff members and workers. The 'special tea' given to staff members is superior to that given to workers, though the price is the same for all." "Staff members are extremely hot-headed people, since they are educated!" "I am sure staff members are illegally using the money of the Employees' Cooperative Credit Society." And so on.

Workers thus postulated their resentment against staff members by accusing the management of favouritism. Their criticisms against the one were also by implication directed towards the other.

Staff members, in general, agreed with the belief that they were symbols or parts of the management as against workers. Apart from the formal indications of their higher status, their main distinction was that they had not involved themselves in a trade union as workers had. It was the confirmed opinion of staff members, especially of supervisory staff members, that workers were "brutes, rascals and good-for-nothing folk." An engineer told me, "O! you are making social study here! Our Managing Director has taken a fancy
to such modern things now. But he does not know that by doing so, he is only encouraging workers to sit on our heads. It is we, not he, who have to handle them." Another staff member said, "These workers are so backward that still if someone is injured, they put common earth on the wound and then go to the dispensary. Some workers even dictate medicines to the doctor or compounder. Workers deliberately work slowly. They play mischief with machines and tools. Workers are irresponsible."

Lower-paid staff members showed their distinctness from workers by envying them for what they received. "Though workers say they are poorly paid, they get uniforms, attendance and other incentive bonuses etc. which staff members do not get. Workers have just a habit of grumbling, whatever they get."

The above discussion indicates that staff-members and workers were two distinct groups of employees in Oriental, each group having its own appropriate ways of behaviour, a distinct recognition by the management and a set of beliefs and attitudes in respect of the other. In important respects, staff members merged with the management. This, however, does not mean that all staff members and all workers regarded each other in the terms I have described above. Workers knew and recognized the intellectual, technical and human qualities of the supervisors and officers under whom they worked. Thus workers of the Foundry frequently praised the abilities of their officers. "X is such an able officer
that even though he sits in the office most of the time, he knows what happens in every nook and corner of the Foundry. He is one of the ablest persons we have seen. He may scold you in connection with work, but the next moment he will talk with you like a friend. When he goes abroad or on leave, the Foundry is at sixes and sevens." A worker in the Machine Shop said, "Our foreman looks like a devil when he is angry with a worker, but there is no ill-feeling in his heart. He is very kind to all of us." Similar feelings were expressed by workers for many other staff members. In general, my observation and interviews suggested that workers liked and respected those staff members who, in their opinion, had an adequate combination of qualifications, experience and ability to control the subordinates. The foreman of the Fitting Shop had a degree in commerce. The workers severely criticized him and the Management because they believed he was employed due to his kinship with a top official. They said he was useless as a foreman, he merely kept records of work in the workshop. They almost took him for granted. Similarly, two supervisors in the Foundry were recruited to their jobs without any technical qualification. They were recruited through kinship channels and then trained for their respective jobs. Most of their subordinates said they (supervisors) had little knowledge of their work. I often heard the famous Gujarati cliche about these supervisors: they have been made police officers on the merits of their ability to drive away dogs (kutarān hāṅkatāṁ havāldāri
Staff members with qualifications but too strict in their dealings were highly disliked. Many workers said they did not like the presence of an engineer who, in their opinion, was too harsh and overly outspoken and had no sympathy for anyone. On the other hand, they also disliked a superior who was too mild. The mildness of an engineer was interpreted by the workers as absence of knowledge and ability.

Although workers as a group were critical of staff members, many workers made implicit or explicit attempts to cross the boundary of status. The most explicit of such attempts was made in the middle of 1956. A group of highly skilled and semi-supervisory workers approached the Management to recognize them as staff members. The Management partially accepted this move by recognizing eleven workers as employees of what was called the third-category. They stood between staff members and workers in several respects, as shown in chapter III.

Some of the skilled workers who could not formally raise their status merged themselves with staff members by suggesting that the work they did was no less important than staff members' work. A worker in the cell-moulding division of the Foundry said, "Though I am officially called worker, I am practically a supervisor in my division. No supervisor knows how to handle cell-moulding." Similarly, a marker in the Machine Shop said, "The draughtsmen in the Designs Department make drawings on paper with pencil, while I have to do actual marking on machine-parts. My work is far more
technical and precise than theirs. However, they are provided the best lighting and other facilities, while I have to work under insufficient light among other workers."

"Staff members" and "workers" were blanket terms. Each included a number of status-categories corresponding to the line-structure, as I have already shown in Chapter III. The status-differentiation between these categories was in some respects recognized by the Management. The 'officers' were served tea in tray, whereas others were given tea in cups only. Once some staff members formally suggested to the Managing Director that all staff members should be entitled to take tea in tray. The Managing Director replied that tea in tray was only for officers.

Officers moved with a certain air of their own. When, for example, I requested an officer to spare some time for me, he at once asked, "Which other officers did you interview?" Another officer said, "What if the Managing Director has permitted you to interview us? We officers just do not have the time for such things as your interviews."

Similarly, other categories of staff members had their distinct patterns of behaviour and attitudes towards others. Each category separated itself from others on the basis of the type of education, nature of work, and salaries. Graduate engineers and workshop heads regarded themselves as higher than diploma-holding technicians. The Labour and
Welfare Officers, the Cost Accountant and the Store-keeper regarded themselves as superior to clerks and technicians. The clerks doing specialized work in workshops and the Designs, Purchase and Sales Departments etc. regarded themselves as superior to "ordinary clerks" who did not have any opportunity to use initiative.

Clarks, assistant officers, assistant engineers etc. believed that officers were unduly favoured by the Management. A clerk in the Sales Department said:

"Officers in the Sales Department earn sizeable commissions on the orders they secure for the Company. Once I told my boss I knew a party interested in Oriental goods. He asked me to secure orders. I was successful. When I inquired about the commission normally given on orders, I was told that as an employee of the Company it was my duty to bring orders whenever I could. Without expecting any commission. When officers bring orders, it is a 'favour' to the Company; when we do it, it is a 'duty'. So officers can earn commission on orders we bring."

It was frequently rumoured among non-officer staff members that officers were in the habit of taking home the stationery and metals (tin, brass etc.) belonging to the Company. "These big officers are big thieves", said a workshop head. It was also believed that officers in Oriental were too rude and impolite, not only to their subordinates but also to the customers.

I also heard frequent complaints that officers and
assistant officers took credit for the work actually done by their subordinates. A workshop head said that once he made a very important suggestion, but his officer conveyed it to the Managing Director in such a way as if he had made the innovation. Clerks often said their superiors threw their own faults on them (clerks).

An individual staff member demonstrated his belongingness to his own status category by criticizing employees of both higher and lower categories. Clerks with a technical bias severely criticized other clerks. The Cost Accountant said the clerks under him were thoroughly unintelligent; they did not know even such a simple thing as overhead expenses. The Store-keeper similarly criticized the clerks in his department as dull and interested in harassing him.

Moreover, since the line structure in Oriental was considerably fluid, as shown in chapter III, it was possible for some employees to raise their status. However, all staff members could not raise their status. Such persons nevertheless made efforts to regard themselves and to be regarded by others as belonging to a higher category. This was done by showing oneself as 'different' from the other members of one's category and by postulating similarities with higher categories. One could show superiority over other members of his own category by criticizing him or bossing over him whenever an occasion arose. For instance, a chargeman in the Foundry always bossed over another chargeman by speaking of him as an ignorant and useless
fellow. Once there arose a big controversy between two assistant officers, one of them saying he was on the level of assistant officer, whereas the other said he (the first) was just a specialized clerk. Two heads of workshops were much perturbed by the fact that the Management regarded them as foremen, whereas most of their equals were formally called engineers. The Labour Officer severely criticized the Welfare Officer and vice versa. Either claimed he was superior to the other. The first said the other was absolutely useless to the factory; the Welfare Officer stressed that the Labour Officer had no formal qualification and had risen from clerkship by means of flattering officers. I even heard them openly addressing each other as "fool and idiot".

Since Oriental was an engineering factory, employees with engineering qualifications at all levels - officers, assistant engineers, or supervisors - assumed a superiority over non-engineering personnel. All engineering hands thought they had a higher status than others. The first question many employees asked me before they knew me was: "Are you an engineer?" On their part, non-engineers heavily criticized engineers. For example, a technical clerk said:

"In Oriental, as soon as a clerk or assistant officer raises his head by virtue of his practical experience, an engineer is thrust over his head and then he is suppressed forever."

Another staff member said:
"Engineers are all bookish. They have very little intelligence. Their heads have only "three screws". The supervisors are more talented than engineers."

Another person asked me:

"So, you are a sociologist! Why don't you go back, have an engineering qualification and boss over us all? Our factory is ruled by engineers."

The different status categories among workers had also their distinctive informal characteristics. Semi-supervisory and highly skilled workers moved with an air of superiority over others. They frequently remarked that unlike other workers they had no time to indulge in gossip and trade union activities; they were always worried about their work. They thought that unlike the management and staff members they were interested in the quality rather than the quantity of work. Most highly skilled workers were not ambitious to become mistres or chargemen, because by changing over to the latter jobs, their relation with their work would become indirect. They were also aware that they were not easily replaceable and therefore could bargain comfortably with the management in matters of wages. Skilled workers thought that their work involved heavy responsibility and that they were held responsible for the acts of their semi-skilled and unskilled colleagues. Skilled workers also thought that they disliked flattering their bosses, whereas unskilled workers always liked flattery. Skilled workers asserted their superiority over semi-skilled
and unskilled workers by patronising them or by showing pity on them. Several skilled workers lent small sums of money to other workers, which the latter considered as a favour. In 1957, soon after the Diwali holidays, the skilled workers (karigars) of the Electric Shop made a collection of money from among themselves and distributed brass water-bowls as gift to the unskilled workers in their workshop. This gift, in the words of one of the givers, was a token of our appreciation for the work they (unskilled workers) do for us throughout the year. Often skilled workers showed pity over other workers. A semi-supervisory worker said: "See these poor moulders. They get one rupee per day for donkey's work". Another skilled worker said: "We feel so much for our poor helpers. They are very inadequately paid by the Management." Also, skilled workers received some services from their unskilled colleagues. The latter brought water from the water-cooler or tea from the canteen for the former.

Workers, like staff members, could raise their position in the line structure. Those who could not formally do so (by learning skilled jobs or otherwise) tried to raise their status by considering themselves as superior to their equals and equal to their superiors. Semi-supervisory workers criticized each other; each said he was more proficient than others and looked down upon them. A mistri in the Foundry said another mistri had little knowledge about his work; he had become mistri by flattery. Another worker, who had just become mistri said: "other workers cannot tolerate my
becoming mistri. They envy me and hence harass me. The others said, "since he became mistri his mistri-ship has gone into his head".

Many unskilled workers asserted that they were really doing skilled work, though the Management regarded them as labourers, and thus tried to raise their status in the factory. Others did so by emphasizing that their bosses had great faith over them and entrusted them work involving responsibility. A skilled worker asserted his superiority over his equals thus: "My colleagues are just simpletons. When the Management introduced First Aid training for workers, I saw its usefulness and cooperated with them. Others did not understand its value and opposed it and called me a puppet of the Management."

VI

The workers who acted as representatives of Oriental workers in the works, production and canteen committees and the trade union described in Chapter III formed yet another informal status group. The membership of these bodies was partly overlapping. Nine workers acted as representatives on one or more committees - one each from the Pattern, Machine, Fitting, Welding and Repairs and Maintenance Shops and two each from the Foundry and the Electric Shop. The representatives were originally working as informal leaders. They championed the cause of other workers in their dealings with the Management. They had more contacts with trade union
leaders in Rajnagar and were more conversant with the ideology of an egalitarian society and more conscious about workers' rights than other workers. They were thus the embodiment of workers' opposition to the Management. Eventually, as the trade union and other committees developed, these workers showed a readiness to become formal representatives of workers, and got themselves elected as such. The representatives then became the formal channels of communication between the Management and workers. This intermediary role of the representatives and the fact that they could approach and talk with the Management and sit with officers on committees gave them a higher status than other workers. The latter recognised the higher status of the representatives, which was seen in the services they performed for them — bringing tea or water for them or executing errands from one representative to another. As a worker said: "the representative is superior to the most skilled worker. He must be respected by others". Some workers sought the advice of representatives even in their personal matters and internal disputes.

Representatives always asserted that in becoming representatives they had by and large sacrificed their personal interests in the interest of Oriental workers. For, as representatives they had frequently to oppose the Management explicitly and thus invite the wrath of the latter who consequently discriminated against them in matters of wages, increments and promotions. They (representatives)
also moved with a consciousness that they knew a lot more than other workers about management - worker relationships, modern politics and modern society. They therefore moved with a special air in the factory, disseminating the information they possessed to others and expecting high regard from them, sometimes solving others' disputes, sometimes even delivering unsolicited advice. Representatives usually looked upon others' workers as 'unintelligent labourers' not knowing their own interests and hence needing guidance in all matters. If a worker entered into an argument with a representative, the latter would say, "You are a fool. What we say and do is the best thing for you. We have experience of handling things which you don't have".

Though workers respected representatives in a sense, their common attitude towards them was that they did not really represent workers. Workers frequently pointed out to me that the representatives did very little work in the factory and spent most of their time in talking, advising and solving disputes. Workers believed that the Management feared a consorted opposition sponsored by representatives and hence they favoured representatives in matters of wages, increments and output. Representatives, in turn, worked in the interests of the Management rather than those of workers.

In support of this argument, workers narrated the story of three skilled workers who were formerly working as representatives, but eventually abandoned that role and became highly skilled workers with sumptuous incomes. Thus, in the
belief of workers, the representatives and the Management were virtually allies of each other. The implication is that other workers separated the group of representatives from themselves and put it closer to the Management than to themselves. "Representatives" was a cadre with a distinct position in the factory.

VII

In the present chapter I have described all the informal relationships - interpersonal and intergroup - which I observed among Oriental employees. From the fieldwork I did, I have not been able to understand the social function of some of the informal bonds I have mentioned, particularly the creditor-borrower, the commercial and the recreational bonds described in the first part. The only thing that can be said about them is that they created alliances of employees cutting across formal divisions and thus differentiated the employees in a formal group.

For the rest I have tried to demonstrate the existence of several informal groups in the factory. Some of these groups corresponded with formal groups (the factory, employer-employee, line-categories, functional units and workers' representatives). Others cut across formal divisions (viz., those based on age, length of service etc.). The members of each of these groups were bound with one another by strong informal ties. Each group had evolved an exclusiveness and identity with a set of actions, beliefs and
attitudes. Each member of the group wanted to be its good member. He knew that unless he conformed to the norms of the group, he ran the risk of being bullied by the other members, which might endanger his work in the factory. I have seen core-section workers spoiling the work of a fellow-worker when the latter worked beyond the limit set by the informal group. I have also witnessed severe teasing of a worker by his colleagues when he refused to participate in a joke. For this reason, the members of the informal group took pride in being regarded as such and implicitly showed dislike for others. They accepted the norms of the informal group and considered behaviour and attitudes governed by these norms as correct behaviour and attitudes. For example, for a member of the Electric Shop the belief that the Management favoured the Machine Shop was a rational belief. Or, for the members of the core-section, time-study was nothing but a trap laid by the Management.

This belongingness to the informal group gave a new meaning of 'work' to the employee. He worked not only for his economic necessities - as an economic man - but also as a member of the informal group. He looked upon his work not simply as a job, but as a job to be done in the company of others. Many workers said they liked their jobs mainly because they had good company in the factory. Some workers even said that they found Sundays and holidays boring because on these days they missed their factory friends.
The employee did not regard himself as an employee but as a member of some informal group - a status category or a functional unit. The norms of the informal group were as important to him as the formal norms described in Chapter III. That is, the norms of informal groups, like the norms of the Indian society (as shown in Chapter V), coexisted with the norms of the industrial society implicit in the formal system of the factory.

In the case of informal groupings of the nature of friendship (i.e. those based on age, length of service, common interests etc.), the informal relationships partly served to explain away the sense of dissatisfaction among employees towards the Management described in Chapter III. When a worker thought he was discriminated against in the matter of wages, increment or promotion, he would start talking about the 'improper' functioning of the Management with the members of the informal group. At times, the worker with the feeling of discrimination stressed that he was so good a man that he worked well inspite of the Management's improper treatment. In fact, talking about discrimination practices of the Management was a standard topic of discussion within the informal group - it was a part of the tradition of the group. This gave the worker a self-importance and minimised his dissatisfaction with the Management. The worker, as it were, 'gossiped away' his dissatisfaction.

The other thing I have shown in this chapter is the
phenomenon of status-raising at various levels of the factory hierarchy. In the minds of employees, there was a stratification of positions in respect of jobs as also in respect of functional units. An employee tried to place himself on as high a position as possible. The most important basis of stratification appears to be the skill required in a job. At the level of staff members, the engineer was the model to be emulated; at the level of workers, the highly skilled worker was the model. The status-raising phenomenon discussed here may be a reflection of the status-raising phenomena existing in the society outside the factory, but this question lies outside the scope of the present inquiry.

**NOTES**

1. I have no precise data regarding the amounts of shares held by the "owning" family and by others. This was partly due to the complexity of share-holding and partly to the reticence of people on such delicate matters.

2. This refers only to the time spent by the Managing Director in the factory premises. Actually, he had to look to the factory affairs for a much longer time.

3. Subsequently, Oriental staff members formed a trade union as a part of the trade union of workers. However, staff members constantly clamoured for keeping the activities of their union separate from those of the workers' union.