CHAPTER IV

REFLEXIVITY AND RETRIEVABILITY: FIELD EXPERIENCES AND CULTURAL PROFILE OF THE STUDY VILLAGES

Research is a scientific investigation of a phenomenon or finding solutions to a problem by gathering empirical data. It is a systematic and objective attempt to study a problem for the purpose of deriving general principles (Theodorson and Theodorson 1969: 347). It is an intensive and purposeful search for knowledge and understanding of social and physical phenomena as well as a scientific activity undertaken to establish something a fact, a theory, a principle or an application (Kumar 2008). Research is to recall, reflect, and re-define empirical reality in its contemporary context. Research design is planning a strategy of conducting research. It plans as to: what is to be observed, why it is to be observed, how to record observation, how to analyse interpret observations, and how to generalize. In Manheim’s opinion, “Research design not only anticipates and specifies the seemingly countless decisions connected with carrying out data collection, processing and analysis but it presents a logical basis for these decisions” (1977:140) For Zikmund (1988:41) research design is “a master plan specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the needed information”. In qualitative research, a research design continues to invent and re-invent itself.

My research journey started with an enquiry into the question of climate change and its impact on the environment, with special reference to society and the people living in it. As a student of anthropology known for its holistic approach in studying human biological and cultural diversity in time and space, I applied the knowledge and skills acquired over the years, in my exploratory journey, to comprehend the subject of disaster in the broader context of climate change. For strengthening my formative understanding, after the pilot survey, I went on an intensive library search and reviewed a large body of literature as recorded in the previous chapter.

This Ph.D. dissertation is mainly based on qualitative approach but when required, some quantitative measures were also incorporated. Secondary quantitative data was procured from official records to establish the level of vulnerability in the field areas. In the Puri district of Odisha, Motto and Arakhakuda villages were chosen.
to locate and find out the hidden texts and context of social vulnerability and its implications for disaster management. Puri district is listed as one of the most vulnerable district among the various disaster prone districts of Odisha. In addition to Puri, districts of Ganjam, Kendrapada, Jagatsingpur, Bhadrak and Balasore are identified as disaster prone areas by the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA). The state has declared these six coastal districts of Odisha highly vulnerable to tropical cyclones, Tsunamis and floods as was discussed in the previous chapter.

The policy makers and planners of Government of India focused mainly on physical vulnerability of disasters. Building of multipurpose cyclone shelters, installing warning systems, making barrier walls or embankments in vulnerable areas and improving building capacities to withstand and cope with calamities as the major priorities in disaster prone areas. The mitigation efforts put in place are in conformance with the dominant school in disaster management studies that argues the primacy of technical interventions, to resolve or to reduce the possibilities of vulnerability (Cannon 1994; White 1974). But these strategies grossly ignore social vulnerability that adversely impacts all mitigation efforts. To tackle the root causes of social vulnerability, such as poverty, poor governance, marginalization, inequality and inadequate access to resources and livelihoods that noble laureate Amartya Sen defines as ‘entitlements’, is also equally important in reducing disaster vulnerability. Economic, social and political factors play a critical role in determining vulnerability both physical and social vulnerability.

I made an attempt to explore some hidden texts of social vulnerability in the coastal villages of Odisha where seasonal tropical cyclones strike frequently. Odisha being one of the poorest coastal states of India is highly vulnerable to natural disasters like tropical cyclone, storm surges, tsunamis, flood, and earthquake. The geographic location of the state on the east coast of India and its climatic condition have meant that the state has historically been highly prone to multiple hazards, such as cyclones, droughts and floods (Bhatta, 1997; Government of Orissa, 2002). Mention may be made of the Orissa super cyclone that occurred in the year 1999. It was one of the worst disasters to strike the Indian mainland. The storm affected 19 million people in almost 18,000 villages in 12 districts. There are different estimates of lives lost. According to OSDMA (2001) about 10,000 people lost their lives and USD 1,600
A lesson learnt from the major disasters such as 1999 Odisha Super cyclone, 2001 Gujarat earthquake, 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, 2010 Ladakh cloudburst and 2013 Uttarakhand flood, shifted the priority to improve the technologies for detecting upcoming major hazards. In addition, on the recommendations of the disaster management authority, building shelters are constructed to withstand high-speed winds and to provide shelter during natural catastrophes and prevent loss of human life. However, proportionate efforts to identify most socially vulnerable communities and factors that lead to greater susceptibility of these vulnerable communities are hardly visible. It is imperative that while acquiring latest technology to detect cyclones, and to put in place warning systems, to forewarn the communities about impending disaster, it is important to analyse which part or section of the community in our so called technologically advanced society is most vulnerable and why it is so? Finding gaps in the societal arrangement or constraints within the structure of societies for coping with natural disasters is equally important along with physical vulnerability.

4.1 FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The first baby step that any researcher takes in a research process is the formulation of research problem. To arrive at a logical research question that is relevant from the perspective of the researcher and also the people, is the major hurdle that a researcher trained in grounded theory attempts to traverse. It is essential to have a clear understanding of the ground reality that exists at the field site. When I embarked on this journey, the conviction that I wanted to explore questions relating to climate change, disaster management strategies in one of the coastal districts of India was crystallized in my thinking. Important question was how to go about it and what site should I explore? I come from Manipur and given the familiarity with the physiography of the area and familiarity with the language, it may have been a natural call to go and study one of the villages in Assam located near the bank of Barak River. A large population of Manipuri migrants live there and practise fishing though they are not traditional fishermen. When I examined the focus of my study, I realise that it was important for me to select a site that has a traditional fishing community and which has witnessed for centuries difficulties of living in the neighbourhood of rivers or coastal areas. The events that followed the super cyclone in 1999 in Orissa...
were challenging me to leave my comfort zone and explore an area that was not familiar.

After thorough search of literature and detailed discussions with my research supervisor, I decided to work in the area of climate change and its impact on society with special reference to marginalized community or groups. Since the environmental impact due to climate change is a vast area, I have narrowed down my research problem to work on the question of social vulnerability. There was enough evidence in literature to show that the marginalized communities are victims of double whammy in situations of natural disasters. Gujarat earthquake and relief operations that followed brought to the fore dark reality that even in disaster situations, caste and other social barriers continued to persist resulting in alienation of large population of Scheduled Caste communities. As an anthropologist my area of interest and special focus was to comprehend various processes of alienation that were operative in the context of a marginalized community in a coastal town. This was regarded as the key question in my exploration as the model of technocratic solutions for meeting disasters, as the dominant model in our intervention strategies at the outset was appearing inadequate to me.

The hallmark of anthropological enquiry is the tradition of the fieldwork (Pelto and Pelto 1976). From my first year in the discipline, I learnt that to do quality research, a researcher has to acquaint and gradually absorb realities of the field situation to understand the ground situation. Fieldwork is a magical word to an anthropologist. The anthropologist seeks to become as much a member of the group as possible- a “marginal native” (Freilich 1970) - to understand behaviour and worldview from “the inside looking out.” While other social sciences utilize a variety of methods, anthropologists have internalized fieldwork.

Fieldwork deals with primary rather than secondary data, emphasizes inductive rather than deductive reasoning, and concentrates on immediate personal experience rather than armchair theorizing (cf. Schensul 1980). Evans-Pritchard (1951: 79) called the field worker a ‘humble learner’ Middleton (1970: 6) and endorsed Pritchard’s view. Distinguished Indian scholar A. Aiyappan according to Gough (1974: 54) regarded his respondents as his Guru or teacher in established knowledge learning traditions of classical Indian philosophy (for details refer to
Srivastva 2004). I realized the value of these profound statements only after I crossed the threshold of learning from the classroom to my field area. In the contemporary anthropology fieldwork has now moved from classic ethnographic accounts to comprehending contemporary issues and problems that confront various cross sections of the society. It was with this training that I moved to the field to conduct my pilot study.

4.2 PILOT STUDY: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

The first field trip was taken in the months of October and November 2010. The pilot study was conducted to gain better understanding of the field site and get a broad idea of the population living in that area. I started my fieldwork on 29th October 2010 in the village Motto of Odisha. My friend who also acts as interpreter and a respondent accompanied me. My friend and interpreter from here onwards will be called Prabhu Pradhan. He comes from Puri district and had studied with me till I completed my graduation. He then moved to Panjabi University, Patiala to do his masters in Botany. He is currently doing Ph.D. from Panjabi University, Patiala. I invited him to act as my interpreter because he helped me resolve my dilemma of deciding my field site. For a long time, I had debated between working in Assam and Orissa. When he described the coastal villages in Orissa and how these were impacted in the super cyclone of 1999, my instinctive desire to work in a community other than my own was firmly established.

On my first field visit to do pilot survey, lack of familiarity with the actual field site compelled us to hire a room in a hotel in Puri town. The village that we had selected to work was nearly thirty kilometres from the hotel. When we stepped out of our hotel, it started raining. It was nearly eight in the morning. In-charge of the hotel explained the route to us that we should take to reach the field site. We hired auto-rickshaw after coming out of the hotel to take us to the local bus stand. We took a bus from the Puri bust stand to take us to the nearest bus-stop in Kathuadi village. The bus-stop was nearly four kilometres from the village. We hired another vehicle to take us to the village. He dropped us about 1.5 kilometres from the village, as there was no

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1 Obeyesekere (1981:11) had advised the future researchers to recall the social background of the interpreter.
concrete road leading to the village. There was a narrow pagdandi (rough pathway) that led to the village.

We reached the village around 10 am and it was still pouring heavily. We decided to take shelter inside a teashop and wait for the downpour to subside. There I met my key informant. My key respondent was around 63 years old and had confronted three major cyclones in his lifetime, i.e. 1967, 1971 and 1999. The first day of the field was a very memorable day. My key respondent that will be addressed as Belu (pseudonym) invited us to his house. On the way to his house, he narrated the stories of how cyclone affected the village and the neighbouring areas. Coincidentally the day on which we landed in the village was the day (29th October) Orissa Super Cyclone devastated coastal districts of this state. Memories of that day continue to haunt the villagers who survived the wrath of that devastating cyclone. Villagers whom we met at the tea vendor and those greeted Belu, were weary that day because of the heavy downpour. In coastal areas this kind of downpour invariably signals possibility of an impending cyclone. Villagers were apprehensive that a cyclone may strike again.

Belu started narrating the first disaster that he encountered in the year 1967. He said, the entire village was completely submerged under water and the only road, which connected the village with other parts of the state, was also under water. The water level was around 5 feet above the land area. Villagers were unaware of the incoming cyclone. They did not receive any warning or information from the government officials that the cyclone was going to hit them with such strong wind velocity. The velocity of the wind was so high that our feeble huts were completely blown away. Massive trees were uprooted and many fell on the remaining hutments. Post cyclone scenario was ghastly. The entire village was submerged in water, debris were scattered all around. There was water all around but the survivors had no water to drink nor did they have any food to eat. In the subsequent cyclones loss of life was minimal but our houses were completely destroyed. Most of the fishermen from the community lost their boats. Rescue teams arrived in the village for the first time few days after the super cyclone of 1999. The rescue workers provided food packets to the villagers. This was the only help that the rescue teams and authorities gave us. Villagers were promised tents and some relief materials. There were promises of some compensation. My respondent further lamented, “Relief material was distributed in partisan manner”. All the villagers we met in the course of our discussions complained that during super cyclone of 1999, only those villagers received the relief material that were known to the persons responsible for distributing these goods. There was never any other compensation offered to anyone in the village. Belu’s narratives lingered in my memory and with a heavy heart we returned to the hotel in the evening to absorb the empirical reality that awaited me.
I decided to go on an exploratory exercise on 1st November 2010 for both the field sites that I had identified earlier. The villages of Motto and Arakhakuda were viewed as presenting two different representations of a fishing community within the precinct of the same district. The fishermen of Motto were from the Keuto community that was indigenous to the region. Fishermen from Arakhakuda migrated from coastal area of Andhra Pradesh nearly 200 years ago and spoke both Telgu and Oriya. The community was called Nolia. Arakhakuda was a much larger village and few families in the village came from other communities. Motto had only about 800 residents but Arakhakuda had more than 4500 people. The villages presented interesting contrast but were equally vulnerable to environment hazards as both the villages were coastal villages and proximity to the sea made them equally susceptible.

With the help of my key informant, we hired an Auto rickshaw for Rupees five hundred for the full day to take us to various important sites in both the villages. First we went to Bali Harchandi temple - one of the revered pilgrimage sites of Hindus in Puri district. We paid homage there, as my Oriya friend said that it was auspicious before I start my fieldwork. This temple is situated near the seashore. Locals have enormous faith in the ability of the mother Goddess to protect them. The nearby villagers believe that this goddess protects them from the natural disasters like cyclone. In their belief this goddess (Mata) walks on the beach with a lamp in one hand and iron rod in another. Whenever cyclone strikes the village, she diverts the cyclone in another direction.

Entering the temple in itself was part of my field repertoire and I went back and wrote in my diary—‘my ethnicity and my elevated position in my caste hierarchy was never as distinct to me as it became today. I became a suspect for my future respondents as I did not share their anthropomorphic features or crudely stated their ‘racial stock’. And then the temple priest of Bali Harchandi temple reminded me that whether I am conscious or not my twice born caste status allowed me access inside the shrine that was inaccessible to hundreds of fishermen given the ascribed category of Scheduled Caste. After offering prayer we came to our first field area (Motto Gaon). The village road was (Kutcha) rough-flooded with water and was in very bad condition with lots of potholes on the road. The road ends one and a half kilometre before reaching the village. After the end of the road we started walking in the jungle. Since there was no direct road link, one had to pass through the thickly wooded area
before entering the village. There were huge trees of Kaju (Cashew tree, scientific name: *Anacardium occidentale*) and Jhabuke (Oriya, Casuarina tree, scientific name: *Casuarina equisetifolia*) standing still, giving company to one who come through the jungle. The villagers owned these trees.

On entering the village, we came across a school located right at the village entrance. It was around 11 am and regular teaching was going on in the school. I met one of the school teachers and I shall name him Samant Kumar. Samant was the only teacher present in the school. He informed that there were three more teachers teaching in the school but all of them were on leave that day. There were 159 children in that school studying in classes from 1 to 8th standard. Single teacher was managing all the children. He kept taking rounds of the classes and one was able to figure out that on that particular day, there was no formal teaching in the school. Samant informed that the school had arranged for Mid-day meal as that was mandated in the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) launched by the central government. All the students came from that village only. Two teachers of the school came from that village itself and belonged to fishing families. The teacher respondent and another teacher of the school came from other villages in the neighbourhood and also originally belong to the fishermen families. School teacher also informed that the electricity to the village came only a year back that is in the year 2009.

From *Motto* village we moved to *Arakhakuda* village that was predominantly inhabited by the fishermen community known as Nolias. As soon as we entered the village, we came across the village cyclone shelter. There we met caretaker of that shelter. He provided detailed information of the families who were victims of the Super Cyclone. He spoke at length about the disaster management programmes and schemes running in the village. He informed that four fishermen from the village died. These fishermen had actually gone to the Sea mouth located at the junction where Chilika Lake meets the Indian Ocean. Some of the fishermen from the village have made temporary quarters there. Whenever they get late, while fishing, they would invariably go and spend the night there. During peak fishing season many men and occasionally families of fishermen from these villages would go and live there even for a month.
4.3 ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

Even though, I had a very positive experience immediately after entering the village because of responsive attitude of my key respondents, one of whom I now fondly address as unice jee, but going forward was not so easy. As soon as I entered the village accompanied by my Oriya friend and interpreter and unice Jee, villagers started probing my identity and purpose of my visit to the village. My facial features made me stand apart. They wanted to know from where I came, what was the purpose of my visit? They were circumspect about my ethnic identity and were apprehensive of my purpose. The major drawback in establishing initial rapport with them was my inability to communicate with them in their dialect. Most of them were not able to speak Hindi and English. Oriya was the major language of communication in the area.

In my formative years in the discipline, I had learnt the importance of knowing the language of the people with whom one would be engaged for generating first-hand information (Leach 1954:311; Obeyesekere 1981:10-11; cf. Srivastva 2004: 20). When I entered my field area, I had the confidence that I will be able to speak the language in few days and will be able to do away with the support of my Oriya friend from Punjabi University who was acting as my interpreter. I must admit before going any further that I have not been able to master the language as many other field workers in the discipline have been able to do. My interpreter accompanied me on all the subsequent field trips, though gradually I could intervene and pose few questions and was able to understand most of the conversations. Some of my respondents were able to speak functional Hindi and talking to them was easy. However, I have been fortunate in one respect and that the villagers permitted me to make videos of the conversations we had with them. They also allowed me to make short films of their fishing activities. These video clips were of tremendous help, once I started transcribing conversations. These videos also helped me infer body gestures to comprehend the intensity of an assertion. I am confident that the translations I have arrived at are close to the narratives as I could reflect on them again and again after looking at these short videos of the conversations.

4.4 FIELDWORK EXPERIENCES: A RESEARCH JOURNEY

After the pilot survey, I went back to the field again in the months of December and January 2011. On this trip I rented a room near the village bus stop to
stay close to both the field sites. By now, I was familiar with the villagers and after having established rapport, data collection was relatively easy. Villagers without any hesitation sat with me and shared their experiences. From October 2010 to December 2011, while I had been engaged in formulating my research design, writing my synopsis and taking mandatory Ph.D. course work, significant developments had occurred in the village Motto. Two kutcha roads to the village were near completion. One was to connect to the nearest Bus stand at Kathuadi where I had rented a small dilapidated room and the other that connected with the block headquarters in the town of Brahmagiri. A major development project initiated by the state Government in the area was that of a polytechnic college in the vicinity of the village. Foundation stone of the polytechnic had already been laid. The locals informed me that the project was against the wishes of the native inhabitants of the village. It will destroy their cashew farms located on the land allotted for the construction of the college. They also regretted that instead of giving them high school, the state was setting up a polytechnic which will not benefit the villagers. Sarpanch informed that a formal protest was registered with the state authorities on behalf of the villagers but there was no response from the authorities.

The Sarpanch of the Motto village introduced me to a man (Name changed: Ragunath Behera) to help in collecting demographic profile of the village. With his help I started a door to door survey to record the total population of the village, number of BPL families, family getting benefits from disaster management schemes etc. Initially, he was reluctant to help me, as it would tantamount to encroaching on his fishing time and causing loss of livelihood to him. He was under enormous pressure because if he did not help me, he will be annoying the Sarpanch. The Sarpanch was the ‘karta dhartha’ (man in control of local resources) and disobeying his orders meant inviting trouble and alienation from any sponsored benefits from the government. Realising the genuineness of his concern, I decided to compensate him by giving him an amount equivalent to his average earnings per day. I paid him Rupees two hundred at the end of the first day and enquired if it was enough and will he be willing to help me in the remaining survey. He was happy to cooperate as he confessed that this was more than he could earn in a day even after toiling hard the entire day with his fishnet.
Next day, we went back to survey the remaining households. Since the roofs of the houses were adjacent to one another, people started to gather there. Each of them eager to record the details of their family first; they thought the information being recorded was part of an official survey to provide some additional subsidies to the natives of the village. A widow was not allowed to give her details to me because she had come from another village and had taken refuge there. Villagers regarded her as an outsider and would not allow her to get any benefits meant for the local people. I kept explaining to them the purpose of my study but most of them did not want to believe me. They thought, I am deliberately not sharing the real purpose of my visit to the area. I did record the details of the widow lady later on a spot far from the village. She continued to believe that, the information she was providing would get some additional benefits for her. I did manage to get the demographic details within three days but it appeared that villagers continued to believe that I represented some survey department of either Orissa government or the Central government.

4.5 ARAKHAKUDA VILLAGE

There was only one bus that would make two daily trips, one in the morning and another in the evening between district headquarters in Puri to the village of Arakhakuda. When we were going towards our field area, we met many women from the village waiting for the bus every day. In the morning they used to come to Brahmagiri, a small town located on the way to Puri and Satapada. They sold dried fish and some fresh fish and with the money that they earned in the market, they would sometimes purchase household items including eatable from the town market. Sometimes we had mundane talks with them inside the bus and these conversations brought plenty of important information. These meetings also helped break the ice with the villagers’ as we would share jokes in a friendly gesture.

From the accounts shared by the village women with me, I learnt that an old lady from the village had lost five children (3 sons and 2 daughters). They were carried away by the high tide on the night of the 1999 Odhisa Super Cyclone. I met this lady in her house in the village. She told me that on that fateful night the entire family was staying near the sea mouth, which is around five kilometres from the village. Her husband tried his level best to save his children but the water current and high velocity winds simply swept the children away. The surviving couple stayed in
water through the night. While talking to us, she was not able to control her tears and said the memory of that night continues to haunt her till today. There were few other similar narratives that were generated from the field that capture the agony of these fishermen and the uncertainty that is part of their vocation and daily life.

I went back to the field again in the months of December and January 2012. By then I had developed good rapport with most of my respondents in both the villages. The village of Arakhakuda was better developed than the Motto village. Villagers had better opportunities for higher education. I made friends with some college students from this village. With the help of these students, I located number of women headed households. These women headed household were mainly that of widows. Their husbands were killed in the super cyclone of 1999. Some of them lost their husbands while fishing in the high sea. These women sell dry fish, are employed as Anganwari workers and helpers, and all of them belonged to the poorest of the poor households in the village that is BPL households. One old widow was reluctant to provide information and even shouted angrily at us. She was unhappy with the local authorities, as her house was not listed in the BPL category. But the local youths who were accompanying me consoled her and promised to help her obtain a BPL card by informing the concerned authorities about her economic status.

Next day I requested my friends from the village to help me to locate fishermen, who will be willing to take me with them through the day for fishing. Village fishermen agreed to take both of us on their fishing boats. Next morning, we left early for experiencing the life of a fisherman in the lake. They informed me that fishing in the lake was very different from fishing in the sea or near the sea mouth. Small boats are generally used for fishing in the lake but large motorized and mechanized crafts are used for fishing in the sea and near the sea mouth. When fishing in the lake, most fishermen prefer to go in small groups but while fishing in the sea, there are large groups of ten to twenty fishermen moving together in one large boat. Fishing is a collective activity and the catch is shared equally by everyone except the owner of the Boat. Boat owner gets two third of the entire catch. Women usually do not go on the boats for fishing. Only one widow from the village did fishing for a living. She never went on a boat but sat near the seashore with her fishing net and would normally catch crabs and small fish. First day on the boat with
them made me realise the kind of difficulties they experience while striving for a meagre earning.

4.6 ENCOUNTERS WITH REFLEXIVITY

I had my first experience in doing anthropological fieldwork for my dissertation in the year 2007. Brief training that I had received before going to the field had not trained me to ask questions about reflexivity. It was during two qualitative method workshops that I attended, while preparing to go to the field for my doctoral dissertation that I learnt to incorporate elements of reflexivity in thesis writing. My course work for Ph.D. also insisted on accounting for my reflexivity in the process of data generation. My first encounter with reflexivity came immediately after entering the field site on the very first day of fieldwork in Odisha. I had never been to Odisha before. I had prepared to come to the field by acquainting myself with the state through the internet and reading accounts about the state and in particular about the fishermen in the area. I come from a state, where Caste is present but many of us have not experienced its magnitude in our daily lives. I have lived in Chandigarh for nearly ten years now and again did not experience it in my day to day or in my student life. I must concede that I was not prepared for meeting caste in such a stark manner in my daily life.

My first cultural shock came on the first day of the fieldwork. It was raining heavily and we decided to have lunch before walking to the Motto village hoping that the rain will subside in the meantime. We finished our lunch, paid the bill and started walking towards the village. After a while I heard a voice shouting behind us. We were surprised as if we had forgotten to pay the right amount. When we went back to the hotel, the owner asked us to wash the dishes in which we had taken our meal. Both of us were surprised even though my interpreter friend is from the same district in Orissa. After washing dishes we moved towards the village Motto. It was for the first time in my life that some hotel owner had asked me to wash the dishes in which the food was served to me. There was more in store for me on the very first day. On the way to the village Motto, a relative of my interpreter friend accompanied us. He was about 65 years old. After walking for few kilometres, I was feeling thirsty and requested for a glass of water. My friends’ relative forbade me from asking for water from the villagers. He said that this is a village of the Scheduled Caste fishermen. If I
drink water in their house, I will be polluted and shall be regarded as a Scheduled Caste. This was my first ethical dilemma on entering the field site. I have never in my life before this discriminated against person of any caste, creed or ethnicity. As an anthropologist, from day one of my socialization in the discipline, it was repeatedly asserted to regard all human beings as equal. Suddenly, I found myself at cross roads. If I drink water served by my respondents, then the villagers will regard me as a member of their community and that I thought would greatly facilitate my field work. But if I did that my host, my friend’s uncle will not regard me as an equal and will not give me access to his views on the research community and may refuse to accompany us. My worst fear was that he might ask my friend and interpreter not to accompany me. If that happens, my fieldwork would be aborted even before it actually started. I opted to remain thirsty for the rest of the day for the sake of pragmatics of fieldwork against my ideology and conscious.

I also had to live with another dilemma. I had to depend on the head of the village council for obtaining details of the village and to comprehend social and political dynamics of the village. As I started interacting with the villagers, I realised that the Sarpanch was giving me certain information, which was not supported by facts on the ground. He understated simple facts. He told me that there were only six boats in the village but according to the local fishermen there were ten boats in the village for collective fishing. Then he informed me that there were three hundred households in the village. The household count that I did for the demographic survey of the Keuto residing in Motto village restricted the number of households to only 191. I really did not comprehend why he did that. There were also some doubts in my mind as to what should be accounted as factual information. My dilemma was further confounded as I realised that whatever set of information is incorporated as data will make the other set of data as false. In the process, I will be raising doubts about the integrity of my respondents. The distrust appeared to be mutual. The Sarpanch did not trust me and had persistent doubts about the objectives of my enquiry. It was difficult to convince them that all the information that was recorded was only for my research work. They also did not believe that, I would not be sharing this information with others. In the detailed analysis of the Motto village, I have relied on the household demographic profile that was collected through survey method research. A close confidant of the head of the village was always trailing us. If we were cautious in our
approach, the people in authority in the village were circumspect about us. My encounters with reflexivity and dilemmas in the field bring in the question of ethics in research.

4.7 ETHICS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The context of ethics in social science has become an important issue. Codes of ethics have been established in social sciences. Its main focus is to protect and avoid harming as well as respecting and taking into account the needs and interest of all participants in the research processes. The kind of research carried out by anthropologists and the settings in which they work; raise a number of important moral questions about the potential uses and abuses of our knowledge. Then, there is the problem of privacy. Anthropologists deal with matters that are private and sensitive, include things that individuals would prefer not to have generally known about them. To write about such important and delicate issues as well as to protect the privacy of the individuals who have shared their stories, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) maintains a statement of ethics, which is regularly examined and modified to reflect the practice of anthropology in a changing world (Haviland et al. 2008:18). Keeping in mind the issue of ethics, before taking interview, I ensured that I have the consent of my respondents. The purpose of my visit and the information I would like to draw from them were discussed in details. Pictures and videos were prepared with their approval. Respecting the privacy of the respondents was the first priority of my research project. Before the commencement of the fieldwork, permission to conduct research was taken from the panchayat member of the village Motto. Details of information required and the purpose of my dissertation was explained to him briefly. He was categorically informed that the researcher was not related with any agencies, NGO’s, organizations of government etc. and that all the responses generated in the field will be used for writing my doctoral dissertation. Likewise same explanation was given to the caretaker of cyclone shelter in village Arakhakuda. In Motto village, in the first phase of data collection, villagers believed that we were mapping the socio-economic condition of the villagers to get them some support from the state. Whereas in Arakhakuda, the caretaker of the cyclone shelter believed that we were part of the inspection team that had come to the village to assess the extent of services that were provided to the villagers. But when he learnt that I am doing research, he readily agreed to help me.
In order to maintain confidentiality of the respondent caution is taken to change the names of all the respondents.

Murphy and Dingwall (2001:339) pointed out four issues of ethical theory, “Non-maleficence- researchers should avoid harming participants; Beneficence- research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit rather than simply be carried out for its own sake; Autonomy or self-determination- research participants’ values and decisions should be respected; Justice- all people should be treated equally.” My experiences from the field draw attention to each of these issues that were confronted in the process of empirical data generation. As argued earlier, each of these issues also brought forth numerous moral questions. With a view to practise maleficence, throughout my fieldwork, I never allowed the head of the village believe that I ever doubted the information provided by him. In order to provide justice to all, I noted all the villagers’ narratives with diligence to ensure that all the perspectives were represented adequately in the data. I had to perform a delicate balancing act to ensure that sentiments and values of everyone in the field were respected. I remained thirsty to respect the sentiments of one of the respondents, though on several other occasions, when I had been alone with the fishing community, I shared water and tea with them. I am not sure the extent to which this research will fall in the domain of Beneficence, but there are several observations and interpretations presented in the chapter on analysis and policy that will be shared with the district authorities and hope some positive outcome will come out of it.

4.8 TOOLS USED FOR DATA GENERATION

Quality of any research is always decided by the tools that were used for data collection. Present research primarily relies on methods of qualitative data generation. For this purpose data is broadly classified into two categories i.e. verbal data and multifocal data. Verbal data includes interviews, narratives, focus group, whereas multifocus/multifocal data consists of observation, ethnography, visual data (photography, film and video), document and online research using Internet (Flick 2006). To supplement primary data, available secondary data is scrutinized to ensure validity of the texts.

I made extensive use of narratives to generate primary data in the field. Narratives allow the researcher to approach the interviewee’s experimental yet
structured world in a comprehensive way. A narrative is characterized by Hermanns (1995:183) ask is the researcher to outline the situation, and then the events relevant to the narrative are selected from the whole host of experiences and presented as a coherent progression of events and finally the situation at the end of the development is presented (cf. Flick 2006:172). Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, relieving and retelling, the stories of the experience that make up people’s lives, both individual and social. Simply stated…narrative inquiry is stories lived and told (Clandinnen and Connelly 2000: 20). Narrative approach is helpful for better understanding of the oral traditions passed from generation to generation. I went to the field armed with this understanding of the narratives. Some vital information was recorded from the narratives shared by the experiences of older villagers. Narratives regarding the circumstances responsible for the death of family members due to Super cyclones were resourced in details to figure out the nature of risk from natural disasters. Going with the fishermen for fishing out in the lake on their Boat, generated experiential narratives in which I also happened to be a quasi-participant observer (Goode and Hatt 1952: 47). Observation implies the use of eyes rather than of ears and the voice. It is accurate watching and noting of phenomena as they occur with regard to the cause and effect or mutual relations. On number of occasions, we sat in a non-motorized boat and sailed in the river to learn how they used to go for catching fish every day. When I went with the villagers for fishing, since I did not know fishing, I recorded the kind of folk songs they sing, noticed their body language while sharing with each other signals of having sited a fish. I also internalized some of the fears that the fishermen may experience, when they are fishing in deep waters.

Participant observation according to Malinowski - the founding father of participant observations as formal method of research is the most vital tool of data collection for anthropologist. According to Gardner and Aronson (1975:360) observation is defined as “selection, provocation, recording and encoding of that set of behaviours and settings concerning organisms ‘in situ’ (naturalistic settings or familiar surroundings) which are consistent with empirical aims”. It is also defined as
a planned methodical watching that involves constraints to improve accuracy (cf. Ahuja 2007:239). O’leary (2004:170) defined observation as “a systematic method of data collection that relies on a researcher’s ability to gather data through his or her senses”.

Due to limitations of time and several health issues, I was not able to live with the community under study and only made recordings of quasi-participant observations in the present study. Quasi-participant observation was also used for observing the life ways and traditions of the community. Village folks would normally gather in the courtyard of the temple to play a game of cards, as a recreational activity. I used to sit with them along with my friend and would engage in mundane conversation.

Besides narratives and observations, I was able to retrieve rich data from various case studies that some of my respondents shared with me in both the villages. Most poignant of these case histories were recollection of the night of every cyclone that they witnessed in their life span. These were intense accounts of fear, loss and tragedy that accompanied unforeseen disasters. I have been in tears on several occasions listening to the accounts of a mother who saw three of her children being washed away in front of her eyes; another one that saw her husband being washed away. And these harrowing tales causing further misery. With hardly any resources, they had to fight for the survival of the remaining family in the village. There were stories of exploitation by moneylenders that come from other villages. There were pathetic tales of daily violation of their fundamental rights. Social alienation that does not even permit them to enter one of the sacred temples in their vicinity, humiliation of being denied water or food simply because they were lower caste, these case histories presented a voluminous body of data for me to examine not only in this thesis but also in the coming years of my academic career.

According to Creswell (1994) a case study is a single bounded entity, studied in detail, with a variety of methods, over an extended period. Whereas Goode and Hatt (1952:333) focused their definition on the notion of a social unit and the manner in which it is studied. A social unit is a ‘real’ individual; a group or events but is treated as a whole (cf. Blaikie 2010). Case study is an intensive study of a case, which may be an individual, an institution, a system, a community, an organization, an
event, or even the entire culture. Yin (1989:24) has defined case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (cf. Ahuja 2007). By using case study method, respondent’s experiences and the ways of tackling natural disasters were obtained and analysed thematically. One of the main research propositions, exploring uses of indigenous knowledge in mitigating natural disasters was collected in details with the help of the case study method.

It is important to underline the fact that every case study results from an in-depth interview. Bingham and Moore (1924) defined Interview as “a conversation with a purpose”. Whereas Gardner and Aronson (1975:527) defined interview as “a two-person conversation, initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on the content specified by the research objectives of description and explanation” (cf. Ahuja 2007:221). With the help of interview guide- unstructured, free flow conversation was conducted with the respondents. Vital information of the nature of disaster and the way of tackling it in indigenous ways were also obtained. The respondents were encouraged to express freely their opinion related with various aspects of disasters.

4.8.1 Secondary Data

Collection of secondary data was started from the very first day when I decided to work in the area of natural disasters and its impact on the society. By accessing Internet, I downloaded many research articles, books and annual reports of NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority). Drafts, GIS maps and annual reports published online by OSDMA (Odisha State Disaster Management Authority). These reports were used to locate the vulnerable hotspots in the coastal districts of Odhisa. Books from A.C. Joshi library, Panjab University Chandigarh, Department of Anthropology, and Department of Social work Utkal University Bhubaneswar were used. Reports from disaster management office (Deputy Commissioner), Puri district, census data from the Census office, Bhubaneswar, Odhisa was quite useful in finding the proper location of the study area. Census list prepared by the Anganwadi workers were photographed by using camera. Benefits received by the fishermen in the form
of various schemes for fishermen impacted by disaster management authorities were collected.

4.8.2 Universe of Study and Sample

The universe of study for the present research work comprised of fishermen living in the coastal district of Puri in the state of Orissa. For specific sample selection, two coastal villages of district Puri that were prone to coastal disasters and had suffered losses in particular, in the super cyclone of 1999, were selected to comprehend detailed narratives of social vulnerability of these coastal populations. The two villages as detailed above were villages of *Motto* and *Arakhakuda*. The village *Motto* was a small village with only 191 (882 individuals) households and was an exclusive Scheduled Caste village inhabited by *Keuto* fishermen. The village of *Arakhakuda* as mentioned in the previous chapter was a much bigger village with a total population of 4575 individuals. It will not be appropriate to call it a mixed village because there were only 14 households of Baniya caste and 4 Brahman families. The merchants had moved to the village to open grocery shops and were actively engaged in the business of money lending. The fishermen of the village comprised of *Nolias* recently declared as SEBC and were not the original inhabitants of the village. Convenient and snowball sampling methods were employed to collect data. Since *Motto* village was a very small village all the houses were clustered within a small complex, I was able to interview at least one member from each family. Because of proximity of the population, details of their education, age and the number of family members were recorded. Whereas in the case of *Arakhakuda*, the houses were spread in a vast area with large population, 252 individuals were interviewed including 121 females and 131 males. The two villages were selected as stated earlier because of their susceptibility to natural disasters. The village *Arakhakuda* also had slightly different socio-economic parameters. The fishermen of *Nolias* community had networks that were outside the state, as they came from Andhra Pradesh. They also had better access to education and relief. These two villages represented interesting case studies of similarities and contrast often defined

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2 These are non-probability sampling techniques. Convenience sampling is a technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Snowball sampling was used to locate the victims of disasters, widows, dry fish sellers, and the educated villagers.
by access to opportunities and infrastructure. It was in the preamble of these experiences that empirical situation was explored with the help of grounded theory.

4.9 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESEARCHED POPULATIONS

4.9.1 Motto Village

“Just as the whole universe is contained in the self, so is India contained in the villages”

Mahatma Gandhi

The Motto is a very remote village situated near the bank of the Indian Ocean (Bay of Bengal). It is around 26 km. far from the district headquarter Puri. This village is located in Brahmagiri block, Rebana Nuagaon Gram Panchayat of Puri district. Near this coastal village of Odisha lies the famous Bali Harchandi temple. This temple is one of the famous and most visited shrines of Hindu religion in Puri district after the Lord Jaganath Temple.

The fisher community of Keuto/Kewata/Kaibartas (Oriya fisher folk) belongs to SC (Scheduled Caste). Unlike many other Dalit communities that have converted to Buddhism, the fishermen of this village follow Hinduism. They are strong devotees of Lord Jaganath (Incarnation of Lord Vishnu) as the supreme God. Besides this, they also worshipped many other Hindu gods and goddesses. Fishing in the Indian Ocean is the primary occupation of the villagers. Agriculture is very rarely practiced by them as there is no suitable arable land. Soil is sandy and saline. Cashew tree (Anacardium occidentale) and Casuarina tree are planted in the vicinity of the village.

In the month of October 2010, I conducted my first pilot study in this village. At that time there was no road connection between this village and other neighbouring villages. Nearest cemented road, which the villagers have to walk, is the road, which connects the Bali Harchandi temple with the Puri city. Motto village is relatively isolated having no direct access to a highway or a road network to other villages. I spent long hours with my friend and also an interpreter, conducting interviews or just extended conversations. Over the days, villagers got accustomed to my presence and talked freely in our presence. Some older villagers talking about their village said, “Our village is a small village, thinly populated by a fishing community and the
government and higher authorities have no interest in us. They paid little attention for the development of this village. That is why till now there are no metal roads which connect to the neighbouring areas”. The villagers used their own mode of conveyance like cycle, two wheelers and most of them generally walked to their destinations. Their poverty and indifference of the state was visible in the dilapidated condition of their living quarters. Large number of these hutments was located near the cyclone prone area. The materials used for constructing houses like thatch roof, muddy floors cannot withstand strong winds. The village was isolated from other villages in the vicinity because of strong caste boundaries. The levels of literacy were dismal and hardly any one of them was aware of any of the available welfare schemes that were launched by the state and the centre from time to time. Very few from the village was able to secure a government job or find any other kind of regular employment.

Irrespective of the fact that all disaster management programmes give maximum impetus to means of communication for conveying warning signals to the local people, village had no access to radio, television or even loudspeakers to receive any warning signals. Even a local newspaper, which is one of the most important communication systems, was not available. Villagers were completely disconnected from the world around them. They had no knowledge of political events, sports, science and technology and daily happenings in the vicinity of their homes, what to say about the global world. It added to their extant vulnerability because they did not receive cyclone warnings and relied only on their folk knowledge. The cyclone warnings telecast or broadcast on the radio hardly ever reached them.

One of the research propositions that I started with stated that the structure of society determines the nature of vulnerability to natural disasters. In the course of conversations the villagers told me that one of the reasons for large-scale disaster in the super cyclone of 1999 was lack of effective communication system that would warn the villagers of impending disaster. In 1999 village had no electricity. The electric poles were installed last year only. Electricity came to the village in the year 2009. Transistor radios were the only source from where they could get any warning about the impending cyclone. Unfortunately, the villagers were not able to register the warnings as in rough sea the volume is low and while fishing; most of them are absorbed in locating the catch. Indian villages are changing fast and when I returned to the village on my second field trip few months later, there were tangible changes.
Foundation stone for a government polytechnic college was laid. The work was in progress to lay a ‘Kutcha’ road that was to connect to Bali Harchandi temple—an important shrine in the vicinity of the village. On the other side of the village, under the cement concrete (CC) roads programme launched by the government, another road was being constructed. This road connects the village to the nearest town Brahmagiri that is also the block headquarter. The village Gram Panchayat member told me that work for the construction of Polytechnic College has begun by clearing the jungle on the outskirt of the village. The villagers including the Panchayat member protested against this clearing. They felt that with dismal level of primary and secondary education in the village, most of the villagers or their families would not be able to benefit from it. On the contrary they will lose important land area in the vicinity of their homes. They felt helpless, as the land being encroached for the construction of the college was not registered with the village.

The tangible development is really not concrete as it was not in correspondence with the felt needs of the villagers. Given the susceptibility of the fishing activity as a sole means of livelihood, villagers were keen to diversify and have small agricultural lands that can provide them minimal food security during inclement weather and in the face of any future natural disasters. But the authorities were inimical to the idea and instead decided to construct a polytechnic that will largely benefit people living in the urban areas who and come from relatively secured economic background. Anthropological critique of development projects has often highlighted the paternalistic attitude, power equations and political priorities deciding development agenda of development agencies, whether it is state or other funding organizations (Barnett, 1977; Mamdani 1972; Mosse 2003; Robertson, 1984; Rogers, 1980). Some of these equations will be examined in chapter 5, where a detailed profile of the village is presented. In the next section a brief demographic profile of both the field sites is presented.

### 3.9.2 Demographic profile of the Village Motto

The village of Motto has a total population of 882 residing in 191 households. Out of these 190 households belong to the Keuto fishermen community and there is only one household belonging to a barber. This barber served the community on specific rituals. He had the special permission to enter the temple to shave heads of
those wanting to offer their hair in prayer or got their head shaved after the death of the head of the household.

Map 4.1: Map showing the village Motto (Modified from Google Earth Map)

The tables 4.1 and 4.2 present age profile distribution of male and female population of the village.

Table 4.1: Female population of the village (N=429)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Below 7</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15-22</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>23-30</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>31-38</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>39-46</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>47-54</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>55-62</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>63-70</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>71-78</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>79 and above</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2: Male population of the village (N=453)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Below 7</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15-22</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>23-30</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>31-38</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>39-46</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>47-54</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>55-62</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>63-70</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>71-78</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>79 and above</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This population table is prepared on the basis of the household survey conducted during fieldwork. In the household survey one member from each family was interviewed. On most occasions, interviewee was head of the household. Age profile reflects that more than 50% of the villagers were in the age group of 7-30. There were only 54 women and 58 men respectively above the age of 55. The minimum population is in the age group of 71-78 with 3 and 2 for female and male respectively.

4.9.3 Economic Activities

Economic sustenance of the village is entirely centred on fishing activities. Fishing is regarded as an exclusive male domain rooted in the constructs of masculinity because of dangers involved in this economic pursuit. Women are confined to domestic domain bearing responsibility for cooking family meals, giving birth and looking after children. These orthodox constructs were often found to be broken, in the village due to the fact that some village fishermen died during cyclone, prolong illness etc. Their widows had to fend for themselves. These women were traditionally not trained to engage in any other profession. They assumed the responsibilities taken up by their husbands and went for fishing to Chilika Lake or rivers but never ventured on sea.

As the main occupation of the people of these areas is catching fish, they have to spend most of their time in nearby sea and river. For them sea is their mother which
provides them food and shelter. Villagers have grown in her lap. Usually villagers go for fishing on the sea, river as well as Chilika Lake. Motorized boats are used for fishing in the sea. 10-20 people formed a group to go for fishing on the sea; whereas small boats are used in the river fishing. These boats are traditional and non-motorized. Local Fish available in the sea consists of Khanga, Kabla, Manja, Sorda, Bekti, Jharung, Balimara, Kankra, Chugundi, Khang Kabla etc. whereas river fish are Elisa, Kokli, Marua, Bauli, Bogla, Patua, Sahal. Paucity of arable land is due to salinity of the soil.

Division of labour is clearly visible in this community. Some children especially those who dropped out from the schools help elders in fishing. Some of the households run by the widows find it difficult to join men on the rough sea and pursue fishing. These women buy fish from the fisherman and resell it in the neighbouring villages. They also sell dry fish in far off villages. It is not practiced throughout the year. Fishing in the sea is regulated and not allowed for several months. Climatic disturbances also hamper routine fishing activities in peak seasons. In this interregnum many men from the village go out in search of jobs to make a living. Some villagers go to nearby villages and several others move to the city. All of them return after the weather settles and resume their primary occupation.

Picture 4.1: Boats used for fishing in the river
4.10 CULTURAL PROFILE

4.10.1 Religion

Hinduism is followed in the Motto village. Lord Jagannath is the supreme god. Besides they also worship many gods and goddesses. Few temples are built inside the village. Bali Harchandi Mata temple (Goddess Durga) near the village is one of the famous shrines of Odhisa’s. This temple is one the most visited tourist destinations of the Puri district. It is ironic that a temple, which receives many visitors from all over the country, has closed its door for the native Keuto because of caste prejudices. Villagers firmly believed that Goddess Durga protects them from the fury of the sea. There is a folklore that every night she walks on the banks of the sea with a lamp in one hand and a long rod on the other to protect them. They firmly believed that she would protect them from any kind of natural calamities. Villagers regularly offer some share of the fish caught by them in the service of the mother Goddess.

There are several other shrines inside the village built by the community of fishermen. Fishermen are allowed access to these shrines but only the Priest belonging to the Brahmin caste can perform the rituals. Dumont while analysing caste system in India argued that the system of structured hierarchies supposed that the Brahmans “possessed Godly power and were the only ones who could perform sacrifices for the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, for which they received gifts from them. In modern Hindu society sacrifice has generally been replaced by image worship, but
Vedic theory continues to provide conceptual model for the system of proliferating castes and sub castes at the local level” (cf. Seymouth-Smith 1986:34). In village Motto, the Scheduled Caste fishing community invites Brahmin from the nearby villages to perform the rituals and offer prayers in these temples. The Brahmin is paid on monthly basis for performing and looking over the rituals and rites of the temple. Since the entire village belongs to lower caste and no Brahmin family can resides there, fishermen have to hire services of a Brahmin from a neighbouring village. According to Dumont, Brahmin was expected to perform ritual services only for the Kshatriya and Vashiya, but with changing times, Brahmins have started performing ritual services for the Scheduled Castes also in return for monetary compensation.

Picture 4.3: Researcher with the priest of Bali Harchandi temple at the entrance of the temple

Rigidity of the caste system is distinctively visible in this part of Odhisa. Before I started fieldwork, I paid homage to the Bali Harchandi Mata. The Brahmin in the temple enquired about my Gotra first and only when he was assured that I belong to a twice born caste that he allowed me to enter the premises of the temple. The Scheduled Caste villagers paying for the services of the Brahmin from their meagre earnings are not even allowed to enter the temple. The priest had no qualms accepting his remuneration from them but was of the opinion that the rigidities of the
caste system should be strongly adhered to, in order to ensure blessings of the almighty. Priests affirmations with regard to the rigidities of the caste system rooted in Brahmanical practise of hierarchical social discrimination brought back Durkheim’s (1912) assertion that “religion is a projection of the social values of the society” and is a means for “making symbolic statements about society”.

4.10.2 Family

Haviland defined family as “A residential kin group composed of a woman, her dependent children, and at least one adult male joined through marriage or blood group” (1993:218). This is no longer regarded as the universal description of a family type. Family development theory argues that the best way to define a micro unit called family is to view it as ‘family members occupy socially defined positions (e.g. daughter, mother, father, or son) and the definition of family changes over the family career. This also brings into focus Talcott Parsons (1943) construction of notions of family of procreation and family of orientation in a typical structural functional referent. Feminist theory have serious problems with Haviland’s definition as they would like to delink institution of marriage from family and often argue for single parent household as family in which one of the parent may not be present. Ethnographers to describe the unit called family at their respective field sites often use the classical constructs of Joint, extended and nuclear families.

I also dealt with this dilemma classifying the micro social unit in my field village. The ‘family of procreation’ in Parson’s terminology was the readily identifiable unit. It can also be described as ‘Nuclear family’. After marriage children move out of their parental household (family of Orientation) to establish independent household. Widowed Women live alone with their children and after the death of their husband do not move residence to live with their parents or in-laws living in the same village. Nuclear families are the norm, primarily because of their economic condition. Majority of them preferred to have nuclear family. The head of the family helps his newly married son establish an independent household and pursue independent economic pursuits. Most of the time it revolves on fishing that is invariably a community activity. Fishermen belonging to one family mostly move together for fishing. But each individual sells his catch separately and will not share his earnings with his parental family. When the season is rough, they move individually in search
of jobs as stated earlier. The additional money generated is only meant for the nuclear family.

**Picture 4.4: Traditional Chulha/Hearth and knife used for cutting vegetables/fodders**

### 4.10.3 Marriage

The micro unit ‘family’ described above acquire legitimacy in this small fishing community by the ‘legitimate sexual union’ between two individuals called marriage. In Giddens opinion, “Marriage can be defined as a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals. When two people marry, they become kin to one another; the marriage bond also, however, connects together a wider range of kins people. Parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives become relatives of the partner through marriage” (1989:384). Endogamous marriage is the prescribed norm in the community. Exogamous unions or marriage outside the village is of rare occurrence. Inter-caste marriage is strictly prohibited in the village. Two types of marriage are recognised in the village. These are called *Solapania* and *Tolakanya*.

*Solapania* is one type of marriage which is commonly performed. In this type of marriage, bridegroom goes to the bride’s residence to perform marriage ceremony. Whereas, *Tolakanya* marriage is performed at bridegrooms residence. This type of marriage is rarely performed in the village. It is only when the bride’s family express their inability to bear the expenses of the marriage ceremony that the *Tolakanya* type
of marriage is performed. The head of the household gives permission to solemnize marriage in the bridegroom’s residence. Levirate and Sorrorate form of marriages are acceptable in the community. The life of a fisherman is constantly threatened and there are significant numbers of accidents and casualties that occur in rough waters. After the death of an elder brother, it is common for the younger brother to marry his widow. However, villagers were reluctant to acknowledge it and one of my respondents was rather upset with me, when I tried to enquire about his marriage to his brother’s wife. He retaliated with anger, suspecting my intent and saying angrily that this may not be case in my society but was common in his community. I pacified him explaining “there is not much difference in the rituals and traditions of one society from the other”. This, I may admit was my first experience that awakened me to the layered reality of ‘othering’.

4.10.4 Dress

Diversity in culture can be seen in varieties of clothing worn by different cultural communities. Dress or clothing symbolizes a particular identity of a society on one hand and communicates different messages, ranging from political beliefs to identification with specific ethnic or religious groups on the other. So clothing provides a basic identity of a particular community. Dress is one of the most important attire of human beings. This also makes a basic difference of humans from other hominids.

In the village Motto, men usually wear Gamsha or Lungi and their upper bodies’ remains naked. Torso is covered by a small cloth in the village premises. They also wear modern dresses like pant, t-shirt and shirt but only when they go to urban areas or on formal occasions. Younger members of the community, in particular those going to senior school or college or working in the city prefer to wear pant and shirt. Women normally wear a dress consisting of Sari, blouse and Petticoat (Saya in local language). Young girls wear skirts, tops and t-shirts. At the time of marriage men wear Pyjama, Kurta and dhotis. Bridegroom adorns Dhala Dhotis (white colour), Sholo (crown made of paper) and Genou (Sacred thread). Bride wears ceremonial Peeli Sari (yellow colour) through the wedding ceremony. Fishermen like to buy new clothes for the family on festivals. Many of them save through their meagre incomes to ensure that they can buy new clothes for the family.
4.10.5 Food Habit

Food is an integral part of every cultural complex. Human beings consume food to get nutrients and yield energy for survival. It has also played a significant role in shaping one’s cultural identity. Food eating habits differ from one region to another, which is also influenced by religious, socio-economic, cultural and ecological factors. Rice is the staple food consumed by the villagers. There is a popular saying among them, “Bhaato, Dali, Tarkari”, which means rice, pulses and vegetable. Rice is consumed both in lunch and dinner along with Dal or sometimes vegetables. They also consume Pakhla bhaato a type of food prepared from leftover rice. Fish is essential ingredient of their daily diet. It is generally cooked in curry form and dried fish is consumed by adding it later in cooked vegetables. It is tragic that this community of fishermen sells good quality fish in the market and consumes only the left over poor quality fish. It is money for survival that is more important than taking care of their health and nutrition needs. Small and leftover fishes are dried in the sun. After drying properly, women put them in baskets made up of bamboos to take them in the village markets. Sometimes they have to walk many miles to find suitable market for the dried fish locally called Sukhua. Women go out in the village markets to earn additional money to support household expenses. Due to salinity of the soil, agriculture is not practiced in this village. Eatable items such as rice, vegetables, condiments, and dals etc. are bought from nearby markets.

4.10.6 Infrastructure facilities in the village

It was surprising to know that prior to the super cyclone of 1999; there were no cyclone shelters in the village. It was only after the 1999 Super Cyclone and the devastation that followed it that the state government of Odisha, awakened to the need for establishing these shelters for the local fishermen and their families. It launched the programme of constructing cyclone shelter in the vulnerable coastal areas to provide temporary safe places to the vulnerable populations during floods and cyclones. In the super cyclone casualties were very high in the absence of any safe shelter buildings in the coastal villages. Indian Red Cross constructed only 23 cyclone shelters during that time, wherein about 42000 people took shelter and survived. So far, 203 multipurpose cyclone shelters, including 65 by Indian Red Cross Society have been constructed in coastal districts of Orissa and have been handed over to the
Indian Red Cross Society assisted by Spanish Red Cross constructed the Community centre cum cyclone shelter of this village (picture shown below). It was inaugurated on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2005. Every year 29<sup>th</sup> October is remembered as cyclone day. This day commemorates the 1999 Orissa Super Cyclone. On this day all the villagers gather together and share sweets and eatable distributed by the state authorities. Majority of the gathering were consisting of children and ladies as the male members were busy with their daily routine work of fishing. The Orissa State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) maintains this shelter. A warning bell is installed in this shelter to forewarn the villagers in case of emergency. The cyclone shelter in the Motto village is maintained by an individual who comes from the other field site village Arakhakuda. The maintenance of cyclone shelters comes under the authority of Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA). The cyclone shelter building was in a dilapidated state as no maintenance work has been carried out for a long time.

**Picture 4.5: Community Centre/ Cyclone Shelter**
4.10.7 Water and sanitation system

Water is essential for the survival of humankind. In rural India, the infrastructure for providing safe drinking water and effective management of human wastes is typically inadequate or completely missing. The inadequate supply of drinking water and poor sanitation system and service delivery and unsafe behaviours are collectively responsible for high diarrhoea incidence, especially among children of the village. According to the information provided by the Panchayat member of the village, there are only seven hands pump for public use. Nearly fifty houses have installed their own hand pumps in the backyard of their houses. Water has relatively high salinity because the village is located very close to the seashore. This water is essentially used for drinking as also for other household chores like washing, bathing and cleaning activities and for the requirements of domestic animals.

Picture 4.6: Hand pumps available in the village

4.10.8 Infrastructure Facilities for Education

The Village Motto has only one primary school, which imparts education to the students till class eight. After completing their lower primary education, children of this village shift to nearby villages for higher education. Under the scheme of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), the mid-day meal is served to the students. The number of dropouts after primary school is fairly high. The information provided by the villagers, suggests that many students would drop out of the school because the senior school was very far and there was no transport facility available to escort children that
Poverty would also drive many of them to take to fishing very early in their lives. Parents were also not aware of the value of higher education and how it can benefit the family in the long run. But the scenario is much better as compared to earlier days. With the programmes *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) launched by the government of India, the school enrolment is now much higher and assured mid day meal till class eighteen courage’s many more children to continue their education. This school was a co-ed school. The school had no benches and desk and students sit on mats on the while attending class. The number of students enrolled in the school was 131 (information provided by the school teacher in 2010).

**Picture 4.7: The primary school of Moto village, Puri**

4.10.9 Transport and communication system

This village has no metal roads connecting to the neighbouring villages and towns. This is a major hindrance in the transport and communication system of the villagers. There is no public transport system plying in this village. Most villagers use their own mode of conveyance for commuting. This creates lots of difficulties for school going children. As stated earlier this is the major reason for high dropout rate for school children from higher education. Those who can afford motorbikes and bicycles, help other villagers, and escort them in case of emergency. For me, lack of public transport became a major hindrance in conducting my fieldwork. I had to hire an Auto rickshaw every day to reach the village, as there was no place in the village.
where one could stay. Travelling to and fro to the village every day was quite expensive for me.

4.11 Arakhakuda Village

My other field site was Arakhakuda Village. It is a coastal village located near the Bay of Bengal. This village is situated in the district Puri, Block Krushnaprasad under the gram Panchayat Arakhakuda. The fisherman community known as Nolia native fishing community of Andhra Pradesh has migrated to several areas of Orissa. One group came to settle near the Chilika Lake about 200 years ago on a sand dune near the Orissa coast (Hunter 1872; Stirling 1822; Taylor 1877; c.f. Mohanty, Mansingh and Das 2004). This sand dune is known as ‘Arakhakuda’. The migration of the community is well documented. O’Malley (cf. Mohanty, Mansingh, and Das 2004:66) writes that “these fishermen were invited in the second half of the 18th century by the ruler of Machagoan, Basudev Mangranj to settle at the mouth of the river Devi to serve him as pirates”. While tracing the lineage of the Nolia community O’Malley believes that they are not only descendants of “Kaibarta and Kandara castes but also trace its origins to Telugu fisherfolk”. The name of the village Arakhakuda is distinctively mentioned in O’Mailey’s documents.

Map 4.2: The Google Earth Image of Arakhakuda Village (Modified from Google Earth)
This village is situated near the Bay of Bengal and is around 45 kms from the district headquarter, Puri. There is only one road that connects this village. Other than that there are waterways but the fishermen are reluctant to use these. The total population of the village comprises of 4575 individuals, showing a healthy sex ratio of males being 50.07% of the total population and females comprising 49.92% of the total population. Majority of the population is in the age range of 18-59 years. Only 0.7% of the total population was above the age of 60 years showing relatively low life expectancy in the region.

Table 4.3: Total population of Arakhakuda Village (As per the information received from the cyclone shelter)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2291</td>
<td>2284</td>
<td>4575</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 5</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-18</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-59</td>
<td>1213</td>
<td>1119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 60</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bar diagram 4.1: Showing age wise total population of Arakhakuda
The caretaker of the cyclone shelter also provided some other information such as the number of widows (109), divorced women (15), pregnant (119), lap baby (361). The number of disabled male population is 163, whereas the female is 76. As per his information, this data was based on the survey of the Arakhakuda village, 2011. Nolias currently residing in the village are divided into two groups i.e. Jalary and Oderloo. O’Malley (1908, cf. Mohanty, Mansingh, and Das 2004) mentions two sub castes Jaliya and Khalsi. O’Malley’s distinctions are apparently not followed by the villagers now. My data revealed that here was no occupational difference between the groups. Both the sub castes of Jalary and Oderloo practise fishing. Another group of the same fishing community is located in the coastal district of Ganjam within the Chattarpur block. It is a large village with 700 households. Priya Gupta (2009) studied the community residing in the village from the perspective of identity and ethnicity and reported that the inhabitants of this village do not recognise sub caste differences as is the case at my field site currently.

Womenfolk of this community wear a nose ring, which is known as Noli in their dialect. Many believe that this distinction coined the nomenclature Nolias for the community. They practiced fishing both in the lake and sea. Small boats made of wood are used for fishing in the lake whereas mechanized large boats are used in the sea. Earlier they used non-motorized large boats made of woods for fishing in the sea. But nowadays with the coming of motorized boats and best quality nets, the quantum of fish caught by the fishermen of the community has considerably increased. With these boats now they can travel much deeper in the sea.

4.11.1 Religion

The Nolias follow Hinduism and worship in conformance with the Hindu tradition many other gods and goddesses. In Hinduism, worship of deities is deemed important for providing material boon and for achieving salvation (Babb, 2002:271). Though there is a Dalit movement that is encouraging Scheduled Caste communities to Buddhism, it has not influences the Scheduled Caste fishing communities in Orissa. Even migrant communities like the Nolias that have come from another state continue to subscribe to their strong Hindu identities and customary ritual practises. They have adapted well to the local traditions also. Even if they are of Telugu origin, this community celebrates local (Oriya) festivals like Ratha Yatra, Mana Basa, Dola Purnima (Holi), Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja, Shiva Ratri, Janmastami etc. In the month of April, people of this village go on a pilgrimage to the famous shrine of
Tirupati Balaji located in Tirumala near Tirupati in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. They brought an idol of Bala Jee from there and installed it in the village for worship. Rites and rituals are performed in the village by gathering all the villagers. Religious ceremonies played a pivotal role in their day-to-day life and have a deep impact on their life way’s. Most of them have firm belief in the village deities and pujas are performed daily. There are several other temples devoted to the God and Goddesses in the village. The caretakers of these temples are Brahmans, who belong to the Oriya community. Two Brahman families reside in the village to perform pujas.

This village is divided into eight Sai depending on the village deities. Namely:

- Mangala Sai (Oriya)
- Basandei Sai (Oriya)
- Lakhminarayan Sai (Oriya: Crematorium ground)
- Basudev Sai (Oriya)
- Bhagwai Sai (Telugu)
- Masanchandi Sai (Telugu: Crematorium ground)
- Bhaidar Sai (Telugu)
- Harchandi Sai (Telugu)

The first four Sai belongs to Oriya people whereas remaining four are Telugu. Since the establishment of this village is believed to be about 200 years old, the Telegu and Oriya residents of the village share numerous cultural attributes.

4.1.1.2 Language

Irrespective of the fact that the village is located in Orissa and the native inhabitants moved here a long time ago, main dialect remains Telegu. This is the language that the seniors in the community are comfortable with, but the younger members of the community prefer to use Oriya though they recognise that Telegu is the mother tongue of the immigrant community. But this language is used by the elder villagers only. Most of the younger men and women prefer to speak Oriya language. This village is surrounded by several Oriya villages and there is frequent intermingling of people from both the communities. The elders often murmur that the younger generation was no longer familiar with Telegu culture and were gradually drifting away from their heritage.

Majority of the youth below 20 years of age used the Oriya language. Their tradition and social institutions like marriage, kinship etc. has changed to Oriya style. Mention may be made of changing their name to Behera. Villagers of Arakhakuda
change their names and surnames to Behera caste which is an Oriya fishermen sub caste. They change their caste willingly. They put Behera in their name. Even if they changed their name, they are still listed as SEBC (Socially and Educationally Backward Classes). Occupation and caste identities are closely linked in Orissa but that is not the case in Andhra Pradesh. In Andhra Pradesh a person is known by the name of a village or street or region. But the Nolias inhabiting this village no longer subscribe to that tradition. One may hazard a caveat and suggest that Nolia provide interesting case study for students of Sanskritization (Srinivas 1956).

4.11.3 Education

The education facilities available in the village are much better than the Motto village. There are five Anganwadi centres for imparting pre-nursery education for children. These centres are divided as:-

1) Arakhakuda A: Rulilakmi Behera is the worker of this centre.
2) Arakhakuda B: Malati Behra
3) Arakhakuda C: Nalini Behra
4) Masanichanda Sai: Malalti Behra
5) Mangala Sai: Jayanti Behra

Besides these centres, there is one Lower Primary School (LPS) and one high school. Arakhakuda Urvati Veha Prathrib Vidyalaya is the lower primary school that runs classes from class I to VIII; whereas Harijan Arakhakuda high school runs classes from VIII to X. Building for another high school is completed. Those wanting to study further have to move out of the village. Many go to the nearby towns for higher education. The schools in the village are affiliated to the Orissa education Board. These schools impart education in Oriya language resulting in loss of language for the originally Telegu speaking migrants.

4.11.4 Economic activities

Fishing is the main economic activity and only source of income for the villagers. Their community is known for massive fishing. They practiced fishing in the Chilika Lake3 and the Indian Ocean. This pear-shaped lake is the largest brackish

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3 Chilika lake is situated on the east coast of India between 19 54' North latitude and 85 05' and 85 38' east longitudes and extends from Southwest corner of Puri and Khurda districts to the adjoining Ganjam district in the state Orissa. It has 132 fishing villages with a total population of more than 0.15 million. http://www.chilika.com/environments.php
Many fishing and non-fishing communities which are inhabited in and around the lake use this natural resource as an input for their livelihood by fishing.

Among the wetlands of India, it occupies a pride place, as the only lake in Orissa out of the two in India declared as a wetland of international importance under the IUCN-sponsored Ramsar Convention (1971) in Egypt (Samal and Meher 2003). Near this village lies the sea mouth which was situated in the Motto village earlier. The sea mouth near the Motto village was choked. Women help with the household chores. Some women sell dry fish in the neighbouring villages and city markets. Many of them travel long distances to sell it. Besides, women also help in drying fish in the sunlight.

**Picture 4.8: Drying fish in the sunlight and a woman with basket of dry fish**

### 4.12 Infra-structure facilities available in the village

#### 4.12.1 Cyclone shelter

There is one multipurpose cyclone shelter in this village. This shelter is located on the outskirts of the village. It is a double story building. The first floor is used as sheltering place in case of emergencies whereas the ground floor is not surrounded by any wall. Nowadays this shelter is also used as coaching centres for the village children. Along with two other graduates from the (caretaker) the shelter used to teach along with some youths. The coaching fees are Rs 50-100 which varies according to the class. The higher the class higher is the coaching fees also. He was
also my key respondent who provided all the detailed information of this village like demographic profile, schemes of disaster management, number of tube wells available in the village, and details of victim’s family during the 1999 Orissa Super cyclone. Another respondent Bapan Behra is studying in B.A. final year in a college in Puri and also teaches the village children. His father is a fisherman. He tries to support his family by joining this coaching centre.

Picture 4.9: The cyclone shelter (Arakhakuda village)

4.12.2 Drinking water

In this village, tube wells and hand pumps are available as sources for drinking water. Water from hand pumps is also used for washing clothes and dishes, bathing and providing drinking water for domestic animals. Some of the villagers use river water for domestic purposes. There is also one large tube well built near the cyclone shelter. This is also quite useful in case of emergencies. Enriched with these field experiences, and after defining with some clarity my research questions, objectives and propositions with the help of literature that I could access that I attempt to describe my field sites and present narratives and case studies to construct emic perspectives in the following chapters.