

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



THE PLURIVERSE OF DISASTERS

KNOWLEDGE, MEDIATION AND CITIZENSHIP

A thesis by

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Abstract

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This thesis looks at a variety of stakeholders and how they inform the conversations around disasters and disaster sites. In particular it focuses on the way knowledge frameworks of different actors informs this dialogue and defines the nature of their response. The thesis argues that this has an implication for debates on democracy, governance and citizenship.

The thesis looks at four sets of actors: individuals confronting and coping with the everydayness of disasters.; the states of Gujarat and Orissa in India which innovate in the face of disasters to either create a techno-managerial response and institute different methodologies or use the existing structures to embed themselves further and perpetuate the poverty and disaster industry; the Christian and secular humanitarian groups: the former make a transition from charity to rights discourse while intervening in disasters. The latter focus on building methodologies which institute certain norms of responding to disasters and catering to those it considers as more vulnerable when disaster strikes. The thesis finally turns its attention to the response of four Hindu groups who draw on civilizational categories to engage with issues of pain, suffering, healing. Each stakeholder, the thesis argues, in articulating its response to disasters, presents a ‘counter model’ or at least a complementary understanding of how to think and respond to disasters. This plurality of engagement by questioning the preconceived frameworks adds not just to the democratic imagination but also to the debates on what constitutes governance and citizenship.

Methodologically, the thesis is an ethnographic exploration located in two sites in India: Gujarat and Orissa. It keeps storytelling, ethnography, analysis, policy documents together and tries to show that they become a weave in disaster studies.

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All errors in the thesis are mine alone.

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1. Introduction

The India Disasters Report (Parasuraman and Unnikrishan 2000) points out that disasters affect over 56 million people and kill over 5000 people annually in India. Statistics by themselves are impersonal and somehow suggest that disasters are associated in memory, only as occasional events or as moments of crisis. However, statistics do bleed, especially since disasters have become part of the quotidian, normalized part of existence in South Asia. It is this logic of the everydayness and mundanity around disasters that I seek to understand.

1.1 Pluriverse of Disasters: Knowledge, Mediation and Citizenship

My interest in studying disasters started over ten years ago. I was walking the streets of Cambridge in November 1999, when I noticed posters on display at an Oxfam window asking for donations for relief work in the cyclone-hit areas of India. I was intrigued by the posters, but my attempts to search for more information on the disaster through TV news and newspapers did not reveal much.

When I arrived in Delhi a couple of days later, the media was full of reports of the cyclone.

The core of the discussion was centred around the meteorological (in)competence of the State. India's leading defence expert, K. Subramaniam wrote an article in the *Times of India*, exonerating the State meteorological department. He claimed that not only had the electronic systems of the State anticipated the disaster but that sufficient warnings had also been broadcast to prepare the public about the impending disaster. However, in his piece in *Frontline*, the noted journalist Praful Bidwai soured things a bit by contending that the broadcasts had been so sanskritized and technical that the ordinary man could not follow them. Not to be left out of the discourse, the Indian ecologist Vandana Shiva subsequently wrote that the cyclone was the result of the arrogance of modernity towards

nature. Our interest suitably whetted, my colleague Shiv Visvanathan and I decided to visit Orissa, not as aid workers but as listeners and recorders of the event.

On reaching Orissa, we found that the people were not bothered about the weather forecast. What became relevant to them was not *information* but memory. Many of them said that they had got the cyclone warning, but failed to react because, they argued, “We have lived through earlier ones, how would we know this would be different?” When asked whether the cyclone had been predicted, others said, “Yes, of course. The *Achutananda Malaika* had predicted it”, referring to a traditional 1000-year old book, a bit like Nostradamus, which still dominated the folk imagination.

We also encountered something else – a range of organizations involved in the relief and rescue operations at the site of the disaster. As one of the forest officers working in the government secretariat put it:

“What rescued Orissa, apart from the army, were the most reviled and fundamentalist groups—the Catholics, the RSS and the Ananda Marga. They did what few NGOs would do. They removed dead bodies and carcasses, which had rotted in the cyclone. What was most polluting, what was the task of vultures, hyenas and social scavengers, they did, quietly, efficiently and with dignity. They removed hundreds of bodies all over coastal Orissa, with gloves, if they had them, with bare hands if they had to.”

We would encounter these organizations again a year later when the Gujarat earthquake struck in 2001.

1.2 Framing Research Questions

The plurality of these organizations and their performance needs to be acknowledged both as story and as sociology. The questions I seek to ask here stem from a struggle with theory, especially its silences (see Chapter 2), as well as from visits to some disaster locations. These questions are three-fold:

- i. How does the framing of disasters change with the narratives and questions that various groups ask of disasters?
- ii. How is the social constructed by these organizations?
- iii. What are the implications of these constructions for democracy, governance and citizenship?

My thesis, to put it succinctly, is, therefore, an exploration of the manner in which disasters are conceived, categorized and conceptualized by the multiplicity of organizations working at the disaster sites. It argues that the ‘old’ managerial model of disasters hitherto captured by and captive to the ‘3R sequence’ of rescue, relief and rehabilitation is being reinvented. The field exhibits a remarkable diversity of civil society groups including international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), cultural and religious groups, and aid agencies, which use disasters as a ground for debating the issues of pain, suffering, rights, governance and citizenship.

Great disasters, like great novels, display their own uniqueness and complexity. And like novels, disasters too tend to be read and re-read, with other kinds of narratives being inscribed on them. These narratives are imbued with gossip, rumour, information, knowledge and science, along with issues of skilling, deskilling, survival and subsistence. This becomes clearer if we examine excerpts from some of the interviews that I conducted after the Orissa cyclone.

“On 29th the super cyclone affected 11 districts. According to the government, 9000 lives were lost but according to our calculations, it is 20,000 in Jagatsinghpur district alone and about 400,000 livestock. Our groups have buried 6120 carcasses and 1280 bodies. Our workers worked from seven in the morning, walking deep into the interior, or using country boats, handling carcasses. Our workers would leave in the morning at seven, each with a water bottle, and would come back at eight at night. They would not eat till they came back. They did cleaning and sanitation work in 1076 places and clothes distribution in 1046 places. We had 12,554 workers in all. We are planting 200,000 coconuts and an equal number of papayas. Out of 12 districts, we have identified 74 blocks and we are working in 123 villages only. We want to build 70 schools and have chemicals to cure saline paddy fields. We have requested agricultural inputs for the villages. We are planning for one cyclone shelter in each area. The shakha is our network and we want to show that Orissa is not alone.”

*- Rajendra Prathihari, the head of UBSS
(Wing of the RSS for the states of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh).*

These organizations introduce into the definitions of the problematic, varieties of conceptual tools like philosophies, alternative ontologies of the individual, and diverse ideas about pain and suffering, which pluralize the public space of disaster by embodying what Allen Newell and Herbert Simon have called different ‘problem representations’ in their book entitled *Human Problem Solving* (1972). It goes beyond the grain of management theory, focusing not just on efficiency and predictability but also on how the diversity of performances and philosophies offers the survivor, as a client consumer or a citizen, access to different definitions of the world. The emphasis is not just on problem-solving in a standardized mode but also on the availability of alternative languages and therapies for communities caught in a problematic situation.

In order to understand such phenomena, my thesis treats disasters as a rule game. It thus becomes an exploration of how disasters are conceived, categorized and conceptualized by the multiplicity of organizations working at disaster sites. In the process, it hopes to visualize the grammar of each organization as an anthropological perspective. Methodologically, it is an application of conventional sociology to the domain of disaster studies.

With these preliminary comments, I can now turn to the structure of the thesis.

1.3 Towards a Thesis Outline

The analysis unfolds as a narrative in seven chapters.

Chapter Two: Disaster Literature within Social Sciences and Sociological Imagination, sets the stage for the sociological enquiry. It maps the technical–managerial discourse that was the hallmark of disaster studies. The issue of disasters gained special attention from a social science perspective during the mid-twentieth century, as a result of the interest displayed by the US government in the behaviour of populations in the event of a war (Quarantelli 1987; 1988a; Quarantelli and Dynes 1970; 1972; 1977; Tierney 2005; 2007). This technocratic approach permitted disasters to be treated as a specialized problem for research by scientists, engineers and bureaucrats, and therefore to be appropriated as a discourse of expertise. Such a process quarantines disasters in both the literature as well as practice (Hewitt 1983: 9–12). In this chapter, I attempt to go beyond the standard literature on disasters and try to read it in three separate but interlocking grids. I examine the various constructions of the social and the societal within the archive of disaster studies. The chapter then explores certain key concepts which have to be read across this triptych of columns, particularly resilience, vulnerability, adaptation and risk in relation to suffering. The review subsequently moves from the social and the cognitive to the political, and assesses disaster studies as a series of texts endeavouring to understand citizenship, state and democracy. Having mapped the course of this chapter, let me now outline my research questions and the literature framework for my research.

While the first part of my literature review is delineated and framed as sociology of knowledge, the second part can be seen as politics of knowledge. I examine the possible theoretical frameworks that inform my research work. Each of these theories has its proponents and critiques. I hope to illustrate through the review, that they pave the way for an analytical framework that allows me to engage creatively with the various issues and questions that I pursue during my research. Relying on the works of Bateson (1979), Marglin and Marglin (1996), Nandy (1995; 2002), Visvanathan (1984; 1986; 1997; 2002)

and others within the alternatives framework, I proceed to use the idea of organizations as ‘epistemic middlemen’ to analyse the consequences of how categories shape strategies, tactics and choice. This enables me to use them as fluid perspectives for reading the environment as an ecology of debates. These organizations become a sort of taxonomic frame for understanding categories like time, space, scaling and audit, and how the framing of these practices affects disaster management on the ground. At the level of the frame, disasters can thus be stated as signifying a problem in the sociology of knowledge and the politics of governance.

Chapter Three: Reflections on Method, details the methodology of this research. In keeping with the nature of the study, the methodology needed to facilitate both flexibility and an open-minded approach to the conceptual paradigm inhabited by the organizations. This study becomes an exercise in traditional ethnography, or what anthropologists call fieldwork. But it is fieldwork with a twist. At one level, it is a study not of a distant culture but of my own society. Yet, as I pursued my research, the realization dawned on me that my own society has become a global space, impacted as it is by different cultures. The disaster management organizations I am studying are local, international, secular and fundamentalist. They centre around the ideas of care, charity and philanthropy, stemming from Hinduism and Christian ethics, as also from secular humanitarianism. The sites for the fieldwork I chose are situated in the states of Gujarat and Orissa. While Gujarat lies on the west coast of India, Orissa is on the east coast. Both the states routinely face cycles of drought, floods and cyclones. However, the large scale death and destruction that occurred during the cyclone of 1999 in Orissa and the earthquake of 2001 in Gujarat have changed both the imagination and the definition of disasters at both the at state and national levels. The research questions listed above stem from both a struggle with theory (see Chapter 2), especially its silences, as well as the performances and practices of these organizations at the disaster locations.

I have undertaken qualitative research not just as a functional frame but as a heuristic of understanding that is more in consonance with the issues of knowledge and practice

which I seek to understand. As explained in my chapter on methods, I have used interpretive terms such as ‘epistemic middlemen’, ‘tacit understandings’, ‘thought experiments’ and ‘alternative rationalities’ as key words. Without being a ‘methodological fundamentalist’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: xi), the overlapping epistemologies that I seek provide a gradient of worldviews. My narratives shuttle constantly between the emic and etic worlds. My chapter on method also addresses questions of access, the nature of this access, the self-presentation of the various groups to the researcher and the self-reflexive nature of the engagement.

Chapter Four: From Coping to Reconstruction, is the first of the four chapters based on fieldwork. Erving Goffman in his *Asylums* (1961) presents an analysis of coping, which looks at the ‘adjustments’ or lack of them made by the inmates to what is seen as normal behaviour. The first thing to be noted, he argues, is the prevalence of make-do’s. In every social establishment, the participants use the available artifacts in a manner and for an end that is not officially intended, thereby modifying the conditions of life programmed for these individuals. This chapter argues that if an ethnography of disaster begins with the survivor rather than the aid agency or the NGO (non-governmental organization), one could provide a totally different understanding of the survival narratives and an understanding of policy in disasters (Agamben 1998). I want to extend this understanding to the disaster situation in order to capture the levels of survival at subsistence conditions. The life of camps shows that people innovate even under extreme conditions. Bare life is fraught with improvisations, which we need chronicle and perhaps even appreciate. In a similar way, the chapter chronicles the phenomenon of survival not just as a behaviouristic response but also as an innovative response to a difficult environment. While organizations have their own epistemic frames, individuals working both individually and collectively also devise such frames. In many cases, communities and individuals have found their own solutions. Some live a bare life existence (Agamben 1998), while others find ways of subsistence, and still others adopt migration as a strategy, in effect, a strategy of ‘make-do’ or *jugaad* (innovative ways of coping) and

coping in the ‘everydayness’. For example, in Orissa, the manner in which individuals define the term ‘disaster’ may not concur with the official definitions of the term. In many villages, for instance, villagers told me that floods were ‘good’. They saw them as a blessing, as because of the floods (occurring in a 3–4 month cycle), they were able to grow certain crops like *kala chana/peeli daal*/potato and many other cash crops. The coping mechanism evolved and during the course of this evolution, made for a fascinating study. While in Orissa it was the women who seemed to be reworking the ‘everydayness’ and framing the coping strategies, in Gujarat, on the other hand, a collection of communities were ostensibly working out different forms of strategies for coping with the disaster. Many communities in Kutch, in fact, perceived an earthquake as an ‘opportunity’ to rework their ‘everydayness’.

Chapter Five: On Disasters and the State, examines how the idea of what I call the ‘multi-hazard state’ has developed and is being consolidated in Gujarat. In the last section, as a counterfactual, I explore how an engagement with the scene of disaster in Orissa led to the emergence of different kinds of structures. I call this the ‘stakeholder state’. This chapter is divided into six parts. It begins with an ethnography of the Second National Congress on Disasters Management held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi. The panel and the performances enacted during this Congress become a sort of cultural representation, a collective projection of the relation between a disaster and its various ‘stakeholders’ or the people and entities that are individually and collectively impacted by the disaster—the state government, the World Bank, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), corporate houses, NGOs, activists, and researchers. I move on to a more detailed description of the connections. The next section describes and examines the language embedded in the Gujarat State Disaster Management Act 2003 (GSDM Act), and then explores how the state government, along with the World Bank and the UNDP, produces a new social contract for the state. I show that the nature of problem-solving is no longer local and concrete. It is a map rather than a territory. I also acknowledge that the study is concentrating not merely on the crisis period, but on the ‘everydayness’ of the

governance of disaster management. The next section explores the banal logic of training for handling disasters by focusing on two training sessions in detail. It tries to document how training becomes an archive of State intentions, and that it is training as a ritual and a language that helps create the 'multi-hazard' state. As critical as training is the idea of audit. Indeed, audit and training are the twin structures around which the new methodologies of governance are worked out. This section examines the audit on housing after the disaster and then explores how the ideas of political economy propagated by the World Bank and UNDP enter this perspective.

The next section recounts the story again, this time by focusing not on methodologies but on institution-building through the biographies of various individuals. It begins with an imagination of drought and then proceeds to an overall reflection on disasters and the making of the multi-hazard state. This section re-examines the possibilities of state-building as part of a pluralistic exercise. It shows how the World Bank creates a set of methodologies which become a set of nodes around which emerges a network of possibilities. The World Bank only seeds the ideas; it is up to the State to choose the relevant concepts and indigenize the process of institution-building on the basis of these concepts. The section shows that each of the methodologies, be it related to training or to audit, needs to construct its own idea of the social. In that sense, I show state-building to be a porous and inventive process wherein instead of creating deterministic worlds, the participants twist the ideas put forth by the World Bank, subjecting them to the vagaries of translation and domestication. A concept in governance is not a technological vector. On the contrary, it has a sociological career subject to the logic of the user. Definitions in themselves create frameworks of possibilities, reciprocities, responsibilities, and maps of commitment and indifference. Such an understanding of state-building prevents the propagation of pre-emptive ideas about the state and instead views state-building as a situated exercise within the pluralism of democratic ideas.

The final section looks succinctly at Orissa and suggests that the logic of the state cannot be frozen into a linear narrative. I call this the 'stakeholder state'. It has to allow for

plurality, for multiple directions and for elective affinities of various kinds. Unlike Gujarat, the logic of disasters in Orissa leads to the consolidation of vested interests (De Waal 1997; Sainath 1996; Klein 2007). This state has been framed as a stakeholder state. Unlike the multi-hazard state, which is open-ended in terms of methodologies, Orissa is akin to a network of stakeholders, including contractors, bureaucrats, consultants, NGOs, politicians and the media, all of whom have enforced the old definition through enormous power and money. They become custodians of the old paradigm not only as a knowledge system but also as a set of vested interests. This creates a tacit form of corruption whereby new knowledge finds it difficult to enter the system. Data, which is actually horrifying, is instead harnessed to perpetuate the problem. I explore this entire process by borrowing the idea of baroquization from Mary Kaldor (1981).

Chapter Six: Organizations as Epistemic Frames-I Constructing Communities: The

New Humanitarianism, examines the first set of organizations and discusses their responses to disasters. These organizations can be divided into three classes. The first category comprises Christian religious groups that dominate the sphere of disaster management. This includes the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and CARITAS, which operate through the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI). The CBCI functions as the 'social arm of the church in India'. It frames its approach within the categories of compassion, charity, and aid to spread the 'gospel values of love, equality and peace'. This section also assesses the recent attempts to move beyond the framework of 'gospel compassion' to the entitlements and rights framework. The shift comes in the light of the growing tension between some Hindu right groups and Catholic groups on the issue of conversions undertaken by the latter. The second category deals with organizations attuned to a secular or humanitarian framework. Included within this list are: Oxfam/Action Aid/CARE, and their local partners, Self Employed Women for Action and Development (SWAD), Udyamma, Unnati and Development Science Centre (DSC)). The third category deals briefly with two consultancy groups, TARU and All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), and two evaluations. It also probes into the

methodologies that they evolve in the process of providing consultancy services and of evaluating the functioning of these secular humanitarian organizations while maintaining the demeanour of neutrality. The chapter also explores how Catholic groups are more integrated and attuned to the international treaties and regimes framework, than their Hindu counterparts.

Chapter Seven: Organizations as Epistemic Frames-II: The Civilizational Imagination, is the second chapter on organizations. In this chapter, I view organizations as epistemic middlemen, and examine the idiom, the ethic, the philosophy and the style of a second set of organizations that display a ‘religious or cultural affinity’. These organizations derive their inspiration from Hindu and civilizational ideas. Each group articulates its response to disasters while presenting itself as a living experiment or a ‘counter model’ with at least a complementary understanding of how to respond to disasters.

Disasters focus not only on the collapse of the social but also on its re-invention. By seeing disasters as constructs, the social too is no longer a given, but something that is invented and approximated. Each organization, by itself and in relation to others, becomes a ‘thought experiment on the social. The standard question, “What holds a society together?”, is re-played in playful, inventive forms wherein disasters can become innovative ways to rebuild or re-invent the social. This search leads me to the response to my second research question: *How is the social constructed by these organizations?*

The chapter is organized into five main sections. It examines four groups. They all derive their inspiration from the ideas of Hinduism. The focus is not the organizational structure or logistics employed by the organizations, but on the frameworks within which their perceived action and practices are constituted. The various organizations covered include the Ramakrishna Mission (RKM), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)/*Seva Bharati*, Bachasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), and Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT). Here, I must emphasize three issues. Firstly, I

have sought to read each organization in terms of its self-presentation. Secondly, I retain the language of this presentation. Thirdly, I have allowed each organization to provide its own reading of the (disaster) events it had intervened in.

Chapter Eight: Democracy, Governance and Citizenship, is the concluding chapter. It draws together the various conceptual threads of chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 to return to the following research question: *What are the implications of the way the social is constructed by various actors for democracy, governance and citizenship?* I have made an attempt to show that the disasters which were initially seen as natural or ordained, returned to their embeddedness in the social in the subsequent understandings of the particular events. I also argue that a reconstruction of disaster as a social experiment leads to a reworking of the ideas of care, suffering, rights, democracy, citizenship and governance. In this context, time becomes crucial and an emphasis on the multiplicity of times poses a challenge to the conventional nature of the policy cycle. My narrative was a panarchic one. The movement from survival to State policy is not one from simplicity to complexity but an attempt to show that each level of the narrative has its own ethics of scale. The problem-solving nature of each chapter shows that the latter has its own position in the logic of survival and that each level needs to be represented in the mnemonic's of policy which we call strategy. The conclusion examines each category as an interlocking connection of stories wherein the survivor is presented as a thinker, a person of knowledge who is reconstructing life and philosophizing about it through the availability of epistemic frames provided by the multiple organizations involved in the relief work at the ground level. I also demonstrate that while disasters, poverty and development are overlapping discourses, they still need to be seen as autonomous fields. My study, therefore, traverses the panarchic chart to show how debates on disasters create epistemic frames which operate at various levels of analysis, including those of the civilizational, the nation-state, the civil society, and the community or the *samaj*.

I emphasize the inventiveness of each organization and the unintended consequences of different actions. I show in particular that while cultural groups provide a civilizational

critique of charity, humanitarian groups make an inventive transition from Christian idioms to the new pluralism of the rights discourse. I finally argue that the logic of state building in a disaster situation operates in terms of Weberian affinities (Bruun and Whimster 2012). In Gujarat, it creates the multi-hazard state, while in Orissa, the disaster leads to the involuted consolidation of the stakeholder's stake.

In the final section of the conclusion, I examine the nature of my contribution both to the understanding and ethnography of disasters and to the importance of creating an interdisciplinary understanding of disasters. I show how my contribution is an addition to understanding disasters as a new site for the imagination of citizenship and to the manner in which disasters add to the democratization of democracy. The current ideas of democracy tend to look at citizenship under normal conditions. Crisis, violence and disasters are part of normal life in the Third World. To ignore disasters in framing a theory of democracy is to truncate the democratic imagination. Citizenship cannot be a standardized term under normal situations. I extend the logic of the Sphere charter to argue that crisis defines the nature of citizenship and serves as a litmus test for democracy. I would like to suggest that the debate on various categories goes beyond the disaster site and is relevant for defining the categories of welfare and well-being.

2. Disaster Literature Within Social Science and Sociological Literature

My engagement with the literature focuses on one abstract question. How is the social understood in disaster studies? I read the literature on disasters on three separate but interlocking grids. First, I examine the various constructions of the social within the archive of disaster studies. I then explore certain key concepts which have to be read across this archive, particularly resilience, vulnerability, adaptation and risk in relation to suffering. Finally I move from the social and the cognitive to the political to look at disaster studies as a series of texts which attempt to understand the concepts of citizen, State and democracy. I explore the ideas of knowledge, cognition and perception that have tacitly anchored disaster studies either as policy or as management.

2.1 The Search for Definitions

The definitional question, “What is a disaster?” has engaged a whole generation. As Quarantelli and others (Dombrowsky 1981; 1995; Dynes 1970; 1993; 2000; Perry and Quarantelli 2005; Quarantelli 1998; 2005) point out, the professional understanding of disasters, which began in USA, was basically a definitional exercise. However, these definitions need to be historically situated and sociologically understood.

For the social sciences, the issue of disasters gained special attention during the mid-twentieth century, as a result of the interest of the US government in the behaviour of the population in case of war (Quarantelli 1988a; 1988b; Quarantelli and Dynes 1970; 1972; 1977; Tierney 2007). This approach involved a series of studies about individual reactions and collective perceptions (Drabek 1986; Mileti and Passerini 1996). Generally speaking, in the US, social science research focused upon the reactions or responses of the population in case of emergencies and war-like situations. This technocratic approach permitted disasters to be treated as a specialized problem for research by scientists,

engineers and bureaucrats, and, therefore, to be appropriated as the discourse of expertise. Such a process quarantines disasters in thought as well as in practice (Hewitt 1997: 118 – 21; 1983: 9 – 12; Bankoff *et al.* 2004). This approach also renders culpable such affected populations and especially their governments, which are blamed for the lack of knowledge and disaster ‘preparedness’ (Varley 1994: 3). The idea that disasters are simply unavoidable physical events that require purely technocratic solutions remains the dominant paradigm within the United Nations (UN) and multilateral funding agencies such as the World Bank (Varley 1994: 3). This view has remained enduring and influential at the ‘highest levels’ of national and international decision-making, as evidenced in the UN resolution declaring the 1990s as the ‘International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction’ (Hewitt 1997: 118; Cannon 1994: 16–17; Lehat 1990: 1). The research cohorts that developed around these original questions gradually became two ‘funded’ research communities, which settled at the Disaster Research Centre (DRC) at Ohio State University in 1963 and the Natural Hazards Center (1976) at the University of Colorado. Disasters were seen as physical events that impinged on the society. The systems theory was frequently used in early disaster research. Extreme events were seen as disrupting ongoing societal systems and subsystems, requiring adaptation on the parts of affected social units. The systems concept was embedded in the classic definition of disasters as “[a]n event concentrated in time and space, in which a society, or relatively self-sufficient subdivision of society undergoes severe danger and incurs such losses to its members and physical appurtenances that the social structure is disrupted and the fulfillment of all or some of the essential functions of society is prevented” (Fritz 1961: 655).

Sociological research on disasters was also determined by the natural hazard perspective of geographers like Gilbert White (1974), who conceptualized disasters around hazards cycles like water resources, floods and other environmental issues. The research conducted by the Natural Hazards Center focused on human and societal adjustments to hazards through instruments such as land-use planning and development restrictions,

mitigating the impacts of extreme events through measures such as building codes, spreading risks through provisions of insurance, and focusing on different units of analysis ranging from households to entire communities.

Disaster research in the US unravels further from the professional interests of particular disciplinary communities. Stallings (Stallings 1995; 1998a) shows how in the absence of public concern, scientists, engineers and governmental agencies literally became the 'earthquake establishment', a professionalized social movement that defined both the problematic and the requirements of the field (Tierney 2007). The hazards paradigm emphasized the geophysical and technological understanding of nature. Given the externalization of disasters, environment and society are constructed as oppositions (White 1974) and nature becomes the enemy. As a result, social understanding becomes secondary and society, viewed in terms of communities, the public or populations, appears as a passive victim to natural and technological forces (Hewitt as cited in Quarantelli 1998: 78).

Reflecting on its applied origins, the field focused on describing and categorizing social behaviours and processes that are common to disaster events, and on identifying best practices for managing hazards and disasters. Early research reports included discussions on the implications of research on disasters for nuclear war planning. A strong consensus was built up among core researchers concerning conceptual frameworks, research methods and appropriate topics of study (Tierney 2007).

Beyond the physicalism of the paradigm, a deep commitment to positive science marginalized the focus on social questions, playing down the importance of language and meaning. For the DRC group, definitions had to 'define a specific reality' and their scientism also demanded that definitions had to be based on a 'consensual view of reality'. This was seen as a guarantee of progress. But such positivism simplified the nature of society, disallowing contestations at the level of the discipline and society. The perspective that society itself could be a series of contestations was to emerge much later.

Only then could disaster studies move from single definitions of reality to a more linguistic understanding of the world. J.S. Kroll-Smith and V. Gunter (1998: 170) show that the interpretative voice was missing in disaster studies until the appearance of Kai Erikson's *Everything in its Path* (1976). The interpretive voices challenge the earlier studies by showing a disaster as a site for multiple memories, multiple contestations and multiple realities, which do not easily submit to a univocal policy framework: Dynes (2000) shows how the interpretation of responses to the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 reflected the broader transition from religious to secular worldviews which was occurring in Europe at that time. Klinenberg (2002) showed in *Heat Wave* that extreme natural events could cause natural deaths without being defined as disasters by the government, the media or even disaster research itself.

2.2 The Natural and the Social

The predominant part of disaster studies deals with a preoccupation with nature and its behaviour. Typically, disasters have been seen as a part of man's confrontation with nature by the scholars following the natural hazards perspective. More recently, many scholars in the classical sociological traditions have argued for the reciprocal view of nature and society. Particularly outstanding among them have been Michel Serres (1995) and Bruno Latour (1993; 2004).

In his *The Natural Contract* (1995), Serres points to a critical deficiency in the social contract tradition. Conventionally, agreements occur between potential citizens. Serres argues that environmental threats reveal the dangerous partiality of the contract by treating nature as passive, available only for manipulation and destruction. He emphasizes the necessity of redoing the contract 'with nature as an active party' and adds that reciprocity with nature must replace mastery over it as the regulative norm of human activity. Serres argues that "the social contract is always local, defined by territory, place, locality, while the natural contract necessitates a planetary notion of nature" (1995:

116). He sees the need for this ‘planetariness’ as a Pascalian wager. Pascal argued that belief in God can be seen as a wager. If one believed in Him and if He did exist, one inherited a system of meanings. In case He did not, one did not really lose anything significant. Serres argues that if the environmental danger were to exist and we act against it, and nothing happens, we go on as before, but if we lose, we lose everything.

In *Laboratory Life*, Latour and Woolgar (1979), drawing on the work of Gaston Bachelard, advance the notion that the objects of scientific study are *socially constructed* within the laboratory – that they cannot be attributed an existence outside of the instruments that measure them and the minds that interpret them. They view scientific activity as a system of beliefs, oral traditions and culturally specific practices. In short, science is constructed not as a procedure or as a set of principles, but as a culture. Later Latour and Law (Law and Hassard 1999) underplay human interests in the constitution of knowledge and emphasize ‘actants.’ Actants are nodes in the networks of humans and non-humans that privilege neither. The dynamics of the theory go beyond the scientist to link nature, technology, ideas and social interests. A scientific ‘fact’ emerges as a coalition of these entities.

One could suggest that disasters may be seen as a collection of ‘actants.’ For example, a typhoon could be seen as a connection between a particular form of nature, the particular type of science and the coalition of scientists addressing the problem, a particular form of governance, and a certain form of management, with all of them linked to a particular kind of community and its culture. By implicating policy, science, technology, economics, real estate and ecology, we assemble disasters as a more complex constellation of ‘facts’ beyond the usual man versus God or man versus nature dichotomies. Science studies see disasters as a crossover of the natural, technical and the social, thus creating a more complex narrative. The policy implications are profound. How would the National Relief Code (1927) or the Sphere Charter (1997) be read if conceived around the idea of actants and not merely around individuals?

In *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), Latour suggests that nature and science have been kept apart by modernity. For modernity, nature required an independent existence. Secondly, the political ideology of science allows scientists to set themselves as the only spokesmen to represent nature to laymen. One consequence of such an argument is that politics appears to be removed from the laboratory and nature is devoid of political representation. Nature and society are separate constitutions and phenomena such as disasters get poorly treated in both. Latour challenges this double injustice by creating the idea of a parliament of things.

I must emphasize that disaster studies do not wish away the natural. Rather the natural comes back in a whole series of variegated ways through notions of political economy, technology and ecology. One of the interesting ways in which nature has been constructed can be seen in the work of ecologists like C.S. Holling (1973; 1994), Lance Gunderson and C.S. Holling (2002) and Carl Folke *et al.* 1995; Folke 1996). Holling and his network of collaborators, which is more popularly referred to as ‘The Resilience Network’, make the following points directly or indirectly:

- i. Eco-system resilience is far more complex than unifactorial resilience and has different policy implications.
- ii. Time and varieties of time are crucial to the construction of the social and ecological.
- iii. Scale is fundamental because scale allows for diversity and a panarchy of solutions. A socio-ecological system becomes a diversity of problem-solving situations that are not reducible to one level of reality or one form of knowledge.
- iv. Diversity is not mere redundancy but crucial to the resilience of systems.
- v. All socio-ecological systems are not merely adaptive but open to surprise (Gunderson and Holling 2002).

The appearance of varieties of the social can be traced to a series of major works on disasters. Kenneth Hewitt (1983; 1995; 1997) was among the first of the disaster experts to bring sociology into disaster studies. His *Regions of Risk* (1997), which is a contribution to the sociology and geography of disasters, traces its own lineage to the work of Gilbert White. Central to Hewitt's argument was the idea of vulnerability, which emphasized the reciprocity of the social and the natural, rather than the standard focus on technological fixes and transfers. Hewitt claims that the idea of technological control leaves little in the ecology of our understanding to the accidental and the unpredictable.

Sen (1982) and Blaikie *et al.* (1994) extended the injection of the social into the 'natural hazards' imagination. If Hewitt emphasizes the social vulnerability, Sen and Blaikie create a political economy of famines/disasters. Blaikie notes that in evaluating disaster risk, the social production of vulnerability needs to be considered to be as important as the question of natural hazards (Blaikie 1994: 21). Risk thus becomes a compound function of hazard as an extreme natural event and the varying degrees of vulnerability of people spread out in space and time. The understanding of the processes of vulnerability sensitizes the researcher to the wellsprings of the social in disaster research. Blaikie relates vulnerability to political and economic processes, thereby creating a more dynamic view of the social in terms of access. He connects disasters to the nature of the household, to the question of political economy, to ideas of property and marginality, and to the very idea of the physical habitat itself. Disasters originate in social conditions and processes that may be far removed from the particular events themselves such as deforestation, poverty, social inequality, low capacity for self-help, and the failure of social and physical protective systems. These conditions are produced in turn by social change at the regional, national and global scales.

2.3 Construction of the Social

In elaborating the problem that I am formulating, I seek to differentiate between three key terms, that is, sociology, society and social. My argument is that the career of disaster retraces the debates around these key terms. Disasters not only replay classic controversies but also reinvent the debate around citizenship, survival, governance and democracy. In the next section, I shall elaborate on these terms and emphasize why the framing of the social by disasters becomes a critical question.

Emile Durkheim's *Rules of Sociological Method* (1895 [eighth edition 1938]) articulates what sociology means as a science. It was a search for a method, a way of studying in reality and a way of defining it. It necessitated the making of cognitive space and the creation of rituals which minimized invasions from other competing professionals like psychologists and economists.

In his great monograph, Durkheim declared that sociology was the study of social facts *as if* they are things. A social fact, said Durkheim, possessed three attributes which provided a certain objectivity and access in terms of study. A social fact possesses exteriority, generality and constraint. Durkheim argued that society was an autonomous reality. It is in this context that Durkheim articulated the idea of the individual as the *homo duplex*. According to Durkheim, an individual has two aspects. At one level, he is made up of sensations, and at another on conceptual thought and moral activity. Sensory tendencies tend to be egoistic and may even be against society. In that sense, moral activity prevents a submission to the impulses and treats our dependence on society as liberation.

Society is not a simple aggregate of individuals. It is an emergent entity, which is derived from the combination of actions of a number of people rather than the actions themselves. The relation between the individual and society is a subtle one. While discussing moral obligation, Durkheim argues that constraint exists whereby an individual follows a normative procedure through a stream of sanctions or punishment, whereas obligation

cannot be restricted to this negative definition. Society, he feels, is a differentiated entity. As society moves from the mechanical to the organic solidarity, “moral obligation derives from the recognition of the individuals themselves that particular norms and values are legitimate, that is, that it is reasonable to follow them. In so far as society is a moral force it is a benign one.”(Durkheim 1969; Dodd 1999: 15). The founding fathers of sociology provided, as it were, different perspectives on society and sociology. If Durkheim articulated this through the *homo duplex*, Marx offered the idea of *homo faber*, of the man, the maker.

Marx offers an interactive theory of society based on two propositions. His philosophical anthropology argues that man must labour or dominate nature in order to survive. Secondly, man must interact with the other. In remaking matter, men make and think about society. For Marx, the creation of wealth is not only socially consequential but actually consists of the social and not just economic relations. In fact, even his concept of alienation is based on the reification of the social. Reification treats as natural what should be seen as social constructs and social relations, which can be modified. For both Marx and Durkheim, society was a totality. For Marx, consciousness is determined by social being, For Durkheim, the type of society determines the type of moral consciousness (Giddens 1995).

The third point of this triad is Max Weber, who sees modern society in terms of the rationalization of culture. Reason en-culturates both the mode of calculation and the domain of value. Weber explores the irony of reason where project begins as a Calvinist response to religion and ends as an end in itself (Weber 2001).

One must emphasize that for all his scope, Weber never proposes a general theory of society. For him, a general theory of history would miss specific cases. For Weber, society could only be understood through partial heuristics called *ideal types* (Weber 1949; 1992; Gerth and Mills 1946; Lassman and Speirs 1994; Shils and Finch 1949). Weber seeks a halfway house between the generalizing theories of Marx and Durkheim,

and the methodological individualism that emphasizes the individual. One sees in the efforts of the founding fathers three ways of constructing sociology, each of which articulates sociology as a hand-maiden of modernization, a commitment to a particular idea of science, a pursuit of modernity in terms of grand narratives. The model of sociology is tied to a concept of society. Each creates an idea of a problematic called society before elaborating on sociology as a problem-solving exercise. This creative tension between sociology and society creates a discipline wherein society and sociology are being constructed again and again. Sociology thus becomes a constant series of thought experiments, wherein the ideas of discipline and of society are constantly reworked. The paradigms of sociology are constantly rotated, re-read to create a kaleidoscopic list of new combinations and possibilities.

In the next section, we shall examine four representative efforts to redefine sociology and society. We shall explore the writings of Bourdieu, Certeau, Bauman and Goffman to set out the wider problematic of sociology with which disaster research seeks to embed itself. All four are critical because they seek to restate the problematic of society.

For Bourdieu, sociology seeks to uncover the buried structures of the social universe. The structures of society lead a double life existing in objectivities of the first order and second order universe. The first order of society is constituted by the distribution of material resources. The second order, as a symbolic template for practical activities, exists in the form of a system of classification. "Social facts are objects which are also objects of knowledge within reality itself because human beings make meaningful the world that makes them" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 6).

A science of society thus always demands a double reading. The first act of reading treats society as a social physics, an almost material structure that can be grasped from the outside and elaborated independent of the representation of those who live in it. The danger here is of reifying structures, of confusing the model with the reality. In order to avoid reductionism, the sociologist must recognize the role of the consciousness and

interpretations. This creates a social phenomenology relating to the role that “mundane knowledge, subjective meaning and practical competitive play in the continual reproduction of society” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 9).

Bourdieu argues that viewing societies as a whole or regressing to a methodological individualism creates a vacuous idea of society. He shows that the mechanical opposition between the individual and society empties society, for society exists not in the opposition but in the relational field. The stuff of social reality lies in the relations. Society is no longer a seamless interpretation of parts integrated by functions, a common culture or an overarching authority, but it is an ensemble of autonomous spheres, each of which possesses its own regulative principles. Society cannot be reduced to an overarching social logic but is a space where various possibilities are enacted.

De Certeau (1988), who complements Bourdieu’s problematic from another angle, emphasizes the conflicting nature of the social. He sees the social as a site for strategic deployments wherein both the strong and the weak must exploit the social, “manipulate it, to turn events into opportunities” (de Certeau 1988: XIX). In emphasizing the social as a site of contestation where everydayness becomes tactical in character, de Certeau visualizes the social agent as a ‘trickster’. The everydayness of the social is “full of clever tricks, hunter’s cunning, maneuvers, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries” (1988: XIX). Society as a realm of contestation sees power not as static but as full of the microphysics of infinitesimal battles and local stabilities. Ruse, metaphor, translation and invention produce their own silent histories. De Certeau adds that society is consumed in different ways. Society is not just the production of norms and contestation around how these norms and values as facts of power are interpreted and consumed. Consumption is as much a theory of the social and its theorization as production or distribution of norms.

If de Certeau is engaged in seeing how society is consumed, Bauman raises the question of how it can be represented. For Bauman, the idea of society can be generated through the experience of being in the world. Bauman argues that sociology has outgrown or has

to outgrow the world that defined the 'orthodox consensus' of what constituted society. The orthodox answer came from Talcott Parsons, who rephrased the Hobbesian question by asking, "how the actions of voluntary actors are not random but lead to a patterned behaviour" (Parsons 1964). Parsons argued that such a pattern emerged as a result of a system with two dimensions: structure and culture. This picture of reality has changed. Being in the world no longer partakes of hardware reality where society was patterned after an administrative office. However, as social reality moved from the solid to the liquid phase of modernity (Bauman 2002), the old notion of the social that defined modernity changed. The old modernity set about the task of exploring the way in which free will is deployed in the production of regularities, norms and patterns. Such an ordered view of life was also the basis of a view of social engineering. Such a view of sociology and society led to the fordist factory and the corporatist state.

The old notion of society now seems to be dead or dying. The question that arises now is how the social can be reborn or resurrected. Bauman argues that constructing a new model of society necessitated thinking about major sociological categories (Bauman 1992: 53). Sociology, which developed as a service discipline of modernity, could not continue to pretend that business was as usual.

The re-visioning of sociology has to begin with a reworking of concepts. Firstly, Giddens substitutes structuration for structure, arguing that one needs "a different concept of social analysis better geared to theorizing about an unpredetermined flexible social reality" (Giddens 1984: 55) that is open to plurality. (see Giddens 1991; 1993; 1995; 1996; 1998; 2001.) Secondly, there has been a realization that the theoretical idea of society approximates the reality of the nation state. In a postmodern world, this model of society comes without conviction. The society that we talked about is a defined coordinated space with a hegemonic culture. Thirdly, can one retain the concept of rationality, given the growing irrationality of governing inter-state spaces? Bauman, following Elias (1978), asks that rationality, as sociologists define it, depends on the regularity of setting that only a monopoly of power can bring about. Bauman re-works the new problematic of

the society. How do we create concepts of society, which are plural and describe societies unfinished in the global scale?

The society is also seen as a narrative, whereby the social splits dualistically and drastically into the micro and the macro, or less imaginatively, between abstract theories and tired empiricism, both of which leave sociology impoverished. The unitary notion of the old models of society yields to a plural idea of society not merely as an idea of unity in terms of how wholes are conceptualized (Lyotard 1992; 1997). Postmodernism responded to the grand theories of society with highly diversified views of society. Two things change in the later constructions of society. Science is no longer positivist and the metaphors update themselves to include the semiotic and the cybernetic.

Bauman's problematic of the social as being elusive, lacking in representation, and requiring plural perspectives adds to the richness of the problem of society and its categories that are being developed here. The last problematic we consider is Goffman's symbolic interaction (Smith 2006). Goffman (1959; 1961; 1967) sees the eccentric and the marginal as a way of studying the social by de-familiarizing the society, and shows the power and dynamic of its grammar.

Goffman shows that the distinction between the normal and the pathological often destroys the social between it. He argues that one can learn a lot about the social from extreme situations. His emphasis on face-to-face encounters emphasizes the communicational aspect of it. His interest in agency, deviancy, tensions and ambiguities is also about testing the limit of rules as a social fact. While his fieldwork shows a contrarian impulse, he has an almost Durkheimian regard for the power of routine and ritual in shaping thought and conduct (Smith 2006: 3). Yet Goffman's studies of face-to-face interaction do not fetishize micro and macro differences. He never claims that the micro helped build the macro foundations, but in his typically ambiguous style, he sees it as a juxtaposition. For Goffman, the society is a generic term but the social is 'one species of the social order'. Each part takes in the idea of the normative whole and yet

each has its own defining characteristics. For example, materiality creates one aspect of the social, while communication as conversation can create another. All are rule-based but allow for creativity within and beyond limits. The metaphor of the game allows for the externality of the rule, the sanction and yet the possibility of interpretation even of cheating, which partakes in the social while seeking to defy it. The social repeatedly becomes a site for the creativity and limits of society. Order is not a goal but a continuous process of construction.

The relation between the abstract and the concrete is also important. The concrete or actual society is a mix of realities. While we can capture the Durkheimian imprint of ritual, we can also record the varieties of alienation in the social. The social is a dialectical term, perpetually combining opposites like macro–micro, normal–pathological, individual–social, order–disorder, and ritual adherence–individual alienation into a rich pluralistic soup that we call society. Yet the Durkheimian is present in the very moment of deviation. Just as Durkheim shows the social determination in the act of suicide, Goffman shows how the eccentric, the idiosyncratic, the managerial bear the stamp of the normative ordering of conduct (Smith 2006: 34). Goffman shows how the self itself is a construct made up of layers of the social. In *Asylums* (1961), he demonstrates how an asylum strips these layers of the social in what he calls humiliation rituals. These are inverse rites of passage, which strip the individual off the social. A disaster performs a similar function. Whether it is a camp, an asylum or a cyclone, the victims/inhabitants are often reduced to approximations of bare life. Goffman makes a second critical point. He notes that society has to define you as ‘insane’. It is an act of social labelling. Similarly, a disaster is only a disaster when a society and bureaucracy define it as such. Vulnerability becomes the key term and what we need to explore is the social as an imagination, as behaviour in extreme situations. Coping invents the social both as expected ideas of the social and memories of the social. Between role expectation, role tension and role definition, the survivor begins tinkering with the social. He realizes

that the social, even if tenuous, is something that he is implicated in. Its very fragility demands repair and invention.

Goffman's ethnography of total institutions is of great relevance to disaster studies. Goffman is able to see both the fragility and the resilience of the social, even in extreme situations and in total institutions. In that sense the social never disappears but is made and remade in disaster situations. Secondly, Goffman's idea of the make-do, the improvisation that extreme situations demonstrate, is relevant for the social. The remaking of the social in disasters also begins with slivers and morsels, fragments of the social around which new roles and institutions are built.

In the above section, I have elaborated the varieties of the social and in the next few sections, I shall examine the key terms around governance, rationality and suffering before I address my research questions more systematically.

2.4 Vocabularies of Governance

In the previous sections, I have tried to show how the pursuit of definitions and a critique of the definitions led to a slow transformation of how disasters came to be conceptualized as a problem. I have so far read it one as a movement from the natural to the social, and two in terms of the different contestations of the social. In this section, I relate this to the wider issues of governance, policy and democracy. This can be approached through an examination of four key concepts in disaster research. These are *adaptation*, *vulnerability*, *risk* and *resilience*. They should be considered as an interlocking network of concepts rather than as a set of monadic terms. In examining the four terms, we must note that each of these terms emerges from a different disciplinary matrix and, therefore, creates a different set of disciplinary logics. In considering the four terms, we see a movement visualizing disasters from the natural to the social, from hazards to disasters, from the technical to the social, and from management to governance.

The first term we can consider is adaptation. This word most popularly used in geography and systems theory. It is often constructed as a behaviouristic term, defining the response of a system to an external threat and its consequent adjustment. Adaptation theory, when it began, discussed equilibria of a simpler kind. The debates on complexity theory were still to be absorbed and internalized as policy. As a result, its notions of time were restricted, mainly to the short run. Inevitably, the policy sequences outlined on the basis of adaptation were necessarily truncated and the notions of governance were more managerial.

Teddy Cannon (1994) argues that while hazards are natural, disasters are not. He states that when one recognizes the complexity of social processes, one realizes that they generate unequal exposure to risk by making some people more prone to disaster than others. These inequalities of exposure are a function of the social relations of a society. An appreciation of the way human systems “place people at risk in relation to each other and their environment is a relationship that can best be understood in terms of an individual’s, household’s, community’s or society’s vulnerability.” (Bankoff *et al.* 2004: 2) Vulnerability is not so much a property but a relational term, which is sensitive not just to size but to scale. In that sense, vulnerability as a measure is obtained by examining social differentials from a global to a local level. The idea of vulnerability operates both on the axis of the brittleness of a system and its idea of recovery. In that sense, it is an open-ended term and includes voice and memory as key concepts. It also recognizes agency because vulnerability can only be defined in relation to the “capacity of a population to absorb, respond and recover from the impact of an event.” (Cardona 2004: 43) In that sense, the notions of time get variegated.

While vulnerability represented an attempt to rework complexities of the social into the natural, the idea of resilience was developed by ecologists to understand the notions of complexity in nature. Resilience is open to levels of size, scale and time. It is also sensitive to the varieties of knowledge and how they mimic problem-solving activities. While it is a much more open-ended term than adaptation and is much more sensitive to

local knowledge, it still signifies an expert's understanding of the recovery process. It has absorbed a much more nuanced and contemporary idea of the notions of nature in science (Gunderson and Holling, 2002).

Of all the four concepts that link knowledge, democracy and governance, *risk*, as Omar Cardona emphasizes, is a curious concept. "It represents something unreal, related to random chance and possibility; it's something that has still not happened. It is imaginary, difficult to grasp and can never exist in the present, only in the future" (Cardona 2004: 47). Cardona adds that risk is always associated with decision-making and discussions regarding risk impinge on reflections on the nature of scientific knowledge.

Risks can be defined as "the probability of physical harm due to a given technological or other process" (Beck 1992: 4). Beck argues for the need for a new approach to science, which faces the disjunction between the growing capacity of technical operation and the growing incalculability of consequences. Secondly, the "calculation of risk established by science and its accompanying legal institutions has collapsed" (Beck 1992: 22). One consequence is that "science's monopoly on rationality is broken" (Beck 1992: 29). Competing claims and interests are always being articulated and science confronts the event that there are no experts on risk. The irony is that the framework of probability statements cannot even be refuted. Instead the official purity of expertise becomes "a polygamous marriage with business, politics and ethics" (Beck 1992: 29).

It is crucial to understand that disasters, as cosmic and political performances, hide the backstage of debates. These debates centre mainly on the scrutiny of the nature of science and knowledge at the following levels:

- i. The power of expertise and its status is open to question.
- ii. The contradictions of rational behaviour and its consequences need to be considered.

- iii. There is also recognition that everyday knowledge viewed as ‘coping’, ‘bricolage’, ‘muddling through’, ‘satisficing’, ‘recipe knowledge’ (Lindbolm 1959; Schutz 1976; Simon 1986; Strauss 1966) are also rational approaches to the survival of subsistence communities. The split between ethical and cognitive knowledge needs more than the usual band-aids of dualism. The challenge is to invent forms of cognition for uncertainty and an ethics of responsibility that accompanies it.

The fate of knowledge and decision-making is debated and risk, more than any other concept, opens up issues of ethics, science and politics to a variety of contestations, which need to be understood in multidisciplinary ways.

2.5 The Challenge of Suffering

If Holling, along with his Resilience Network, thickens the natural by deepening the complexity of the ecological, the work of Kleinman (1991) and Kleinman *et al.* (1997) broadens the idea of the social through a systematic discussion of language. A society is always a linguistic community around which one constructs a moral universe. By focusing on the diversity of the ways in which pain and distress are experienced, these authors add to the social by showing that ideas of poverty and dependency might be restricted codes in contrast to the language of suffering, which may be seen as an extended code (Wilkinson 2005).

Thus far, we have concentrated on the appearance of the social and its relation to the natural, and then proceeded to discuss the diverse ways in which the social is understood. What the reader confronts now is the invention of the new forms of the social, especially in the form of humanitarianism. The study of disasters alternates fascinatingly between enriching the social and then enriching the natural, and finally the relationship between the two.

Wilkinson points to the classic dualism in the study of pain and suffering. He argues that it derives from the Cartesian split between the mind and the body, “where pain is read as physical or physiological entity, while suffering encompasses the very idea of personhood” (Wilkinson 2005: 210). Pain is connected to a physical pathway, while suffering is held to be a state of mind or consciousness (Wilkinson 2005: 22). It can be suggested that poverty and underdevelopment, by their definition, are closer to pain because of their proximity to the physical, while suffering is a question of outlook. But in serving to bridge pain and suffering as a false dualism, Kleinman and Das realize that the language of social science, like any other technical, expert-driven language, is too orderly to facilitate an understanding of the meaning and dynamics of such disorderly systems.

Suffering is a framework of life experiences. It therefore it needs voice. Writers on social suffering aim to highlight the extent which the experience of human suffering involves far more than the biomechanics of pain, the sheer number of people killed in conflict zones, or a calculated level of disability, scarcity and want. In these writings, an attempt has been made to reflect explicitly on what suffering does to a person’s humanity, and on how people experience, interpret and live through the social significance and moral meanings of their injuries, pain and material deprivation and loss (Wilkinson 2005: 84). Social suffering not only becomes a reflective domain but it also provides voice and meaning to experience, denying any form of reductionism to pain and discomfort. It demands thick description and rich ethnography, which pushes the phenomenology or lived experience of pain away from the objective studies of poverty or underdevelopment (Scarry 1985).

In *Disasters, Relief and the Media* (1993), anthropologist Jonathan Benthall analyses the diversity of issues facing relief agencies and journalists who report on disasters such as the Nigerian Civil War of the late 1960s and the Armenian Earthquake of 1988.

As a critic of the ways in which the media reports natural disasters, Benthall suggests that disasters and emergencies became defined as disasters only by the world’s media. So

powerful is the media in swaying public attention and attitudes that it has the power, through an act of endorsement, to define what constitutes a worthy cause or a dangerous situation: “Disasters do not exist—except for their unfortunate victims and those who suffer in their aftermaths—unless publicized by the media. In this sense, the media actually constructs disasters” (Benthall 1993: 27).

In *Distant Suffering* (1999), Luc Boltanski addresses the historical legacy, philosophical contradictions and political challenges of humanitarian movements that seek to alleviate suffering. While addressing the question of the spectator, Boltanski starts by clearly distinguishing what he calls the politics of pity and politics of charity from the politics of justice.

Two key texts provide a point of inspiration and departure for this genre of work—Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution* (1963) and Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (1989). Arendt pinpoints the beginnings and influence of the politics of pity for the modern consciousness that emerged during the French Revolution, and Taylor articulates the quest for authenticity as part of contemporary subjective experience. As Arendt first diagnosed it, the ‘politics of pity’ distinguishes between those who suffer and those who do not. It encourages one to focus on the spectacle of suffering, while substituting action with the observation of the unfortunate. The politics of pity is different from the politics of justice. The politics of justice tests those who suffer in order to determine what is just. In other words, a politics of justice seeks justification. People must be positioned as victims to earn justice, while a politics of pity does not question whether the misery of the unfortunate is justified. The urgency of action needed to bring an end to suffering always prevails over justice in the politics of pity. Unlike pity, it engages with the person suffering. But pity is not always a bad thing in this analysis. Pity generalizes in order to deal with distance, and in so doing, it may help one discover emotion and feeling for others that may translate into speech or action. A spectacle of suffering may end with a commitment to involvement.

Reflecting on this, Michael Ignatieff (1998) argues that “the idea, that we owe an obligation to all human beings by simple virtue of the fact that they are human is a modern conception. Universality comes late in the moral history of humankind, once Judeo-Christian monotheism and natural law have done their work. Even when these traditions have established themselves, people go on finding ingenious ways to evade their implications” (ibid.: 287). When we make the misfortunes, miseries, or injustices suffered by others into our business, some narrative is telling us why these strangers and their problems matter to us. These narratives – political, historical and ethical – turn strangers into neighbours, aliens into kin.

In confronting the pain of others, social science creates a more universal notion of humanity. It emphasizes what Ignatieff called ‘the need for strangers’ (1998). The moral meaning of disasters gives rise to a new notion not only of humanity but also of humanitarianisms, thereby creating new notions of the moral community. There is a need to explore what new notions of this community have been ushered in by modern disasters and what concepts, models, and metaphors have brought about the institutionalization of these perspectives.

2.6 Alternative Rationalities: Bricolage, Coping, Satisficing, Muddling through

Disasters have often been constructed in terms of scientific practices, unfolding as a professional narrative around a naturalized event. The response is evaluated in technocratic terms and visualized as a managerial narrative. Such forms of description tend to dominate the domains of both science and policy. However, actual survival, that is, the way in which local people cope with emergencies, depends on local knowledge. Blaikie *et al.* (1994) point out that people themselves have extensive local knowledge of how to anticipate and manage disasters but the idea of local knowledge and its role in policy still needs to be developed. As Dorothea Hilhorst (2004) contends, local

knowledge is neither homogeneous nor owned as a common stock by the community. Alternative discourses might develop around the same concepts with people using them according to the contingency of the situation. Hilhorst adds that local knowledge is not a pure entity but is composed of bits and pieces of information and insights from different perspectives. The study of disasters has to face not only the question of local knowledge in diverse communities but also the fact that even in scientific communities, one faces responses to disaster that may go beyond the standard models of rationality.

These forms of survival threaten the scientific monopoly of rationality wherein everyday understandings of people and society used recipes of 'bricolage' (Strauss 1966), 'satisficing' (Simon 1986), 'muddling through' (Lindblom 1959) and 'coping' (Schutz 1976) to respond to various forms of crisis.

If risk confronts the invisible problems of science, coping reveals the embodiments of knowledge in a practical sense.

One can argue that this reliance on our embodied perceptual and coping skills is nowhere more evident than amongst the survivors and 'managers' of disasters. The rituals of coping reveal that survival strategies go beyond rationality frames embodied in standard policy documents. Another such example can be cited in the notion of satisficing: Satisficing (a portmanteau of 'satisfy' and 'suffice') is a decision-making strategy that attempts to meet the criteria for adequacy rather than to identify an optimal solution.

A disaster victim behaves in a similar way. He may not wait for thatch or wood or even corrugated iron to rebuild a house but may settle for simple polythene sheets. The first three may be ideal material but within the immediacy of disaster, polythene makes sense. The survivor works like a handyman adjusting to the environment and to its possibilities in the concrete. What the bricoleur and the survivor do is to see each aspect of nature as a variety of possibilities. He does not wait for the ideal raw material but optimizes within

the ecology available. One sees it particularly in the context of the use of local herbs and grasses to fight hunger in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

In *Asylums* (1961), Erving Goffman provides a brilliant analysis of coping through an ethnography of make-do's. Goffman compares the 'adjustments' of asylum inmates or lack of them, to what is registered as normal behaviour. The first thing to be noted, he argues, is the prevalence of make-do's. In every social establishment, the participants use the available artefacts in a manner and for an end that is not officially intended, thereby modifying the conditions of life programmed for these individuals.

Such an ethnography, which begins with the survivor rather than the aid agency or the NGO, can perhaps provide a different understanding of survival narratives and the understanding of policy in disasters. Bare life (Agamben 1998; 2005) has its improvisations which the organizations could chronicle and comprehend. The ethnography of disasters reveals that a lot of survival and subsistence models are based on the ideas of coping.

Between coping and bricolage as an ethno science, disasters reveal a different way of celebrating knowledge. The bundles of coping, make-do's, muddling through, bricolage, 'cobbling together' do not constitute science in a formalized, abstract, theoretically coded sense. Until now, disaster studies have been represented largely as a managerially-oriented technocratic system. When the old scientifically legitimized, democratically anchored distinction between the expert and the layman breaks down, then certain ideas of rationality collapse. This brings into focus not just a crisis of knowledge but what Beck (1992) insists is a challenge for ethics. How do we cope with disasters when the certainties of technocratic governance are no longer available? How does policy prescribe in abstract terms when valid knowledge in these situations often appears as a rule of thumb? Disasters, by refocusing on knowledge, demand not just a reflexive science but also a reflexive idea of citizenship, which sees the survivor as not just a victim but a person of knowledge.

2.7 Reflections

The review of the literature presents an intriguing set of issues. The sense of the social eluded disaster studies for a long time. As a result, studies of disasters were either subject to naturalistic biases or prone to various forms of scientism. The residue of both these biases is still found in the literature on disasters. The discovery of the social did not create an over-determined model of sociology, but diversified its interpretations.

The literature on disasters reveals that in constructing the social, disaster studies not only become more reflexive around scientism but also need to become more open to the many-layered world of science, which brought, in its train, words, worlds and concepts like risk, uncertainty and ignorance. In rediscovering science, we confront once again the complexity of the social and its myriad filiations to nature.

In a scientific sense, disasters begin like detective stories. We are interested in why they happened. We immerse ourselves in etiology, the dynamics of cause and effect. But as we proceed, we realize that the epistemologies of knowledge are not enough. A disaster as a mode of being becomes a consequence of the questions that we ask of it. In that sense, disasters maintain the ontology of the social. It is not just that you cannot take disasters for granted; disasters as riddles unsettle the nature of the taken-for-granted, exposing the fragility of the social and the brittleness of certainties around knowledge. Reconstructing life after disasters is even more problematic. What is normalcy? A return to the original condition? Disasters thus become dramas in discovering the social. We return to the normal by rediscovering the taken-for-granted. So, paradoxically every return is part metamorphosis.

At the level of governance, disasters become gauntlets of competencies, the new initiation rites of governance that so many states have been known to fail. When push comes to shove, who is a citizen? What kind of entitlements does he need to retain citizenship during disasters? The rise of civil society formations, the proposals of the Sphere Charter

(1997), the presence of fundamentalist groups articulating a different notion of meaning raises the question as to whether disasters can be reduced to the issue of governance and political economy. The density of ethnographic narratives that slip between the two official domains reveals that a lot of events occur in ‘the third world’ between the two domains, where greater focus is needed on the informal economy of disaster, tacit knowledges, the styles of coping, the parallel economics that sustain life. One has to ask which ideas of nature, what kinds of materiality, what levels of scale, time, and memory put a disaster together?

The ritual of a review of literature enforces a final politics of choice. What framework does one opt for? What discipline does one represent? The plethora of schools is obvious. But the problematic of disasters scales this problem in a different way. At the level of the survival and the survivor, I will adopt the ‘social suffering approach’. It allows for a multiplicity of voices. At the level of representing the disaster, the idea of disasters as actants allows the researcher to put forth a more complex and nuanced narrative of society as a set of assemblages together. The approach would allow me to explore the epistemology and ontology of disasters, and the social mix of natural and material. Finally, at the level of the frame, disasters can be stated in terms of a problem in the sociology of knowledge and the politics of governance. The challenge is in creating a panarchy (Gunderson and Holling 2002), a nested, scaled set of narratives that niches each theory. They are fragments of a social whole that need to be put together. They are competitive at one level but the logic of the sociology of knowledge demands a plural ecology for these theoretical forms, at least for disaster studies (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Categories, Policy and Governance

	Social Nature	Idea of Expert	Time	Science	Control
Adaptation	Naturalistic	Yes	Short-term	Normal, Expert-oriented	Centralized
Vulnerability	Hybrid	Mix of Expert/Layman	Cycles	Multi-disciplinary, Voice	Decentralized
Resilience	Hybrid but emphasis in complexity	Yes	Panarchy	Complexity Oriented	Polyarchy
Risk	Constructed	Ambivalent Multiple	Long-term	Hybrid	Precautionary

Source: Author.

In terms of policy and governance, they are four terms: adaptation, vulnerability, resilience, risk struggling for the same space, but their theories of control and governance (as one can see in Table 2.1) are radically different. The question one has to ask is: Do these terms represent different social orientations to problem-solving? The question that follows is: Do different agencies using these terms create different styles of policy and governance with varying consequences for democracy? These are questions that I plan to explore.

2.8 Research Questions: Organizations as Epistemic Middlemen?

My first question is based on the sociology of knowledge and it deals with the role of organizations at disaster sites.

The domain of disasters is marked by the presence of a variety of organizations. Beyond state agencies, the local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs), there is a diversity of international groups like UNICEF, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), and Medicin Sans Frontieres (MSF), among others. There is

also an array of religious and cultural groups, including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Ananda Marga, CARITAS India, Chinmaya Mission, Ramakrishna Mission, the Church Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), and the Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind, embodying a range of approaches to disasters. Their responses and the questions they ask of the disaster can be seen as epistemic experiments, which redefine the keywords of a disaster discourse. These organizations are not just modes of doing and managing; they are, in a more distinct sense, performing or appearing to perform a wider function. The plurality of these organizations and their performance needs an acknowledgement, both as story and as sociology. The questions I wish to ask stem both from a struggle with theory (Drabek 1986; Gilbert 1995; Mileti 1996; Quarantelli 1988a; 1989; 1991; 2004; Quarantelli and Dynes 1970; 1972; 1977; Tierney 2007) as also its silences. The first research question looks at problem-solving cognitively in terms of both theories of knowledge and as practice (Dreyfus 1991; Goffman 1959; 1961; Simon 1986). The literature of disasters has seen the disaster situation as structurally dyadic, often top-down linear relation between the State and the citizen, who is visualized as a victim or a survivor. The literature emphasizes policy and voice. The first question thus looks at how standard ideas get redefined and reclassified. It also asks whether plurality adds to problem-solving or creates conflict situations which diminish the possibility of solutions. The focus on presence, plurality and framing leads us to issues of time, narrative and scale (Cicourel 1975; Kleinman *et al.* 1997; Munn 1992).

- i. *How does the framing of disasters change with the narratives and questions that various groups ask of disasters?*

If frameworks represent a relation between knowledge and power, how do alternative framings change the way in which we define disasters? (Bowker and Star 2000; Marglin and Marglin 1996.) How do these framings affect their definitions of marginality? What kind of gate-keepers do these organizations become? Does plurality add to problem-solving or does it create conflict situations which diminish the possibility of solutions?

My second question relates to the varieties of knowledge that exist in a disaster situation. In recent decades, several publications, both in the domain of studies on vulnerability and broader social science, have pointed to the extensive knowledge that people have to cope with a crisis. This includes ingenious practices to regulate the size of herds by nomadic peoples to overcome periods of drought (Blaikie *et al.* 1994: 64–69; Bankoff *et al.* 2004b). Large populations, whose everydayness deals with disasters as part and parcel of their lives, handle these situations by using their own capabilities, skills, talents, knowledge and technologies. Most of this literature argues that coping strategies are the results of a process of experiments and innovation through which people build up the skills, knowledge and self-confidence that is necessary for them to shape and respond to their environment. These are forms of improvisation that demand a sociology in their own right.

Disasters, as texts, are pretexts for understanding the construction of the social. The idea of the social does not take society for granted. Instead it sees society as something constructed and yet views that construct as being autonomous of the individual. The social is more than the individual. In a Durkheimian sense, it is general, external, and defines the individual (Durkheim 1915). The logic of society is being perpetually constructed and dismantled. While the social is something that every classical sociologist has sought to construct, there is a sense that the whole has always eluded them.

My search is more modest. I sense that there are sites wherein the social is defined, constructed and reflected upon, and that disasters have become one such critical domain wherein a society's idea of roles, institutions, responsibility, power and values is worked out. Disasters are becoming sites where the social is not only being constructed but has become a domain for a reflection of what society means and what the various relationships that constitute society entail in terms of power and values (Alexander 2003; Moscovici 1993).

In fact, disasters should be seen as more than sites where order breaks down. Disasters focus not only on the collapse of the social but on its re-invention. If disasters are seen as constructs, the social too is no longer a given, but becomes something that is invented and approximated. This creates an ontology of social life at its most intriguing. Each organization, through its policy, rituals, and techniques, re-creates or diverges from the 3-R sequence as experiments around the social. Each organization, by itself and in relation to others, becomes a ‘thought experiment’ on the social. The standard question, “What holds a society together?”, is re-played in playful, inventive forms where disasters can become innovative ways to rebuild or re-invent the social. This is not just a process of re-invention but also an attempt to re-theorize the notion of the social not just in terms of stability but the wider notions of fluctuations and recovery, and an understanding of complexity that the social needs.

ii. How is the social constructed by these organizations?

My third research question follows from the earlier questions of reframing disasters and of re-inventing the social. The drama at the disaster site, creates constructs, hypotheses and questions with implications for governance. By outlining the *impact* of these organizations, their very diversity, and their areas of competence, we move to a definition of governance to include forms of competence beyond the State. The literature of disasters centres around the entitlements of a victim (Sen 1982; Blaikie 1994). However, the availability of competence is also crucial. In their use of language, these organizations invent or propose models of governance around new keywords such as: justice, hospitality, liminality, normalcy and memory. In doing so, they not only outline rituals of competence but also articulate a theory of welfare and well-being. An ethno-philosophy is being conducted around many critical words. As these words are tested out as life-worlds, one witnesses the possibility of a more sustainable model of governance. A study of disasters can emphasize the life-giving links between governance and democracy.

- iii. *What are the implications of these constructions for democracy, governance and citizenship?*

What does the presence of diverse organizations mean? What do their methods entail and what constitutes their implications and impact in a wider sense? Table 2.2 Stating Questions Framing Relations, is an attempt to outline the nature of the problematic. In a simple but hopefully not simplistic sense, the questions fall across the power/knowledge axis, the order–disorder polarity and the democracy–governance hyphen. Each square identifies a critical issue, which is explored later. All three are crucially connected but can be read separately.

Table 2.2: Stating Questions Framing Relations

Power – Knowledge	Framing Disasters	Problem-solving Middlemen as Epistemic Gatekeepers, Classification and Definitions
Order – Disorder	Constructing the Social	Classification, Time, Narrative
Governance / Democracy	Keywords of the Polity	Competence, Scale, Audit culture, Responsibility, Accounting

Source: Author.

In the following sections, I will provide a possible set of theories that could help engage with the research questions listed above.

2.9 Framework for Analysis: From Sociology of Knowledge to Politics of Knowledge and Governmentality

Thus far, I have argued that the site of disasters is being reconfigured and re-enacted by the practices of various global, local, secular, and religious groups, the State and civil society. I have outlined the literature on disasters studies, which falls primarily within a technical– managerial framework. I have argued that we need to be sensitive to the wider STS literature which looks at how the natural–social and technical are being co-produced

or socially constructed. We also need to be sensitive to literature on social suffering and alternative rationalities. In the previous section, I outlined the main research questions that will guide my research work and suggested that the lens of the sociology of knowledge is needed to engage with this topic. My commitment to this is determined by the manner in which the politics of knowledge is located within a wider social imagination.

In the following sections, I examine the possible theoretical frameworks that would inform my research work. Each of these theories has its proponents and critiques. However, I hope to illustrate through the review that they pave the way for an analytical framework that allows me to creatively engage with the issues generated and the questions that I pursue in the field.

This section first proposes that organizations operate as epistemic middlemen through the organization and classification of issues and practices at the disaster sites. Time becomes another classificatory structure for normalizing and diversifying the narratives at the disaster site. The second part moves from the issues of the production of knowledge to questions of politics of knowledge, especially in terms of the experiences and narratives that get articulated in the domain of policy. Each of these approaches comes with its own set of merits and limitations. None of the listed theoretical frameworks provides a comprehensive theory to understand the discourse of disasters. What they provide us with is the lens and the mirror for reflection.

2.10 Organizations as Epistemic Middlemen

Disaster sites encompass a dialogue of not just religions but of the sciences in two senses of the term. There is first the dialogue of interdisciplinarity between various sciences within a paradigm, and secondly, the dialogue between modern Western science and medicine, and the other forms of knowledge. We see not only an array of medical systems

and psychologies at play but also a tacit or overt discussion as to whether a right to relief involves a right to one's own ideas of healing, suffering and cure. The social scientist Zia-ud-din Sardar (2004), while referring to the National Health Service, claimed that for a Muslim citizen in England, a right to health involved not just the right of access but the right to his epistemologies of healing. Such a concept of plurality as a part of our entitlements is a tacit presence in disaster discourses.

This work seeks to capture the heterogeneity of this world and explore its implications for disaster management as a policy discourse. It will explore not only how the polyphony of debates on the ground question or thicken the monologic nature of disaster policy but also how these practices may offer new norms, new idioms for constructing citizenship, well-being, and welfare in general. Disaster discourses, in fact, go beyond the bounded world of governance and add to the wider imagination of politics. These groups become, as it were, the middlemen of the knowledge being produced at disaster sites.

I wish to exorcise the term *middlemen* before using it. The idea of the middleman generally presupposes an exploiter, someone who lends at exorbitant rates in times of crises, a person who is an extortionist by strategy and orientation. The middleman in a classic sense is an institutional blender, a fixer evoking a style of problem-solving. I would argue today that organizations as middlemen are epistemological fixers and blenders of ideas, who create a variety of entrepreneurial orientations around key concepts. Organizations are no longer seen as frozen narratives, or scheduled classifications around settled categories, but as fluidly reworking themselves around key concepts. They translate, invent, re-orient issues by creating new kinds of operational codes around them. By reshuffling and questioning categories, they create what can be called 'thought experiments in knowledge'. They are epistemic scramblers, filters which rework the standard monolithic discourses of policy into a variety of dialects of style, strategy, knowledge. The role of these organizations as 'shufflers' of categories and knowledge is significant, central and fascinating.

The production and constitution of knowledge, which is central to STS, operates at several levels. Earlier, disasters were constructed as naturalistic processes managed through a technocentric, almost economic perspective. There was a scientism present in the discourse, which is what made the prediction of disasters such a central act of the State. At a more everyday folk level, disasters present a more plural blend of discourses where knowledge, rather than being professionalized, was seen more as folklore, or what Alfred Schutz called 'recipes' (1976). Meaning and definitions were created not only from scientific concepts and their popularized extensions but also in terms of religion, myth, rumour, folklore, technical formulas and recipes. The everyday discourse also focuses on religious cosmology and ethno-science. The organizations mediate these two levels in different ways. They translate, hybridize, hyphenate both the life-world and the system. They mediate between science and religion, science and folklore, management and everyday tactics, creating in the process a cultural hybridity which is fascinating. This entrepreneurship of combinations is what makes these organizations so central to the study.

Consider the level of policy and management. Disasters in terms of policy management have standard protocols, sequences, missions, relief codes, defined in a management language of expertise. However, at the ground level, the everydayness of disasters is replete with scavenging, foraging, the make-do, bricolage, or to use local idioms, the idea of *jugaad*, positive tactics for survival using whatever is available to enable some form of individual and systemic survival. The organizations at the disaster site take a variety of positions on all these frames.

How do these groups define and classify the categories of disaster differently? I hope to show that these actors are diverse but self-reflective, creating a set of complementary and competitive discourses on the nature of disasters. They reflect different world events and, script the response to disaster management differently. These worldviews exist as bundles of concepts, tactics, epistemologies, styles, attributes of the body, economy, and technology, as ideas of pain, healing and suffering, and as notions of justice and well-

being. The research also seeks to examine how these concepts combine to create epistemic bundles about disaster management as a mode of governance. If governance is no longer the prerogative of the State, then the role and ideas of these diverse agencies becomes critical in redefining disaster management. These groups are not only handling disasters efficiently but there are also differences in the way they understand and narrate disasters. The cognitive models of these different groups relate to issues like life-worlds, lifestyles and even to questions of the life-cycle. Each group is like a dialect, some speak the *esparanto* of relief, but each represents a particular worldview that we need to grasp and analyse.

One way of articulating this is to look at the basic model of disaster management—the tripartite sequence of rescue, relief and rehabilitation (3Rs). The above sequence presupposes closure, a belief in the efficacy of management, which leads to a return to normalcy. The model is basically managerial, instrumental and pragmatic. But what Levi Strauss said about totemism can be applied to disasters. Addressing the naiveté of certain functional anthropologists, he claimed that totems are not only good to eat, but good to think with (1963). Adapting it to the current issue, we can say that disaster management is not only a code of action but also a mode of thought. One can apply this to a standard 3R sequence. The sequence is formulaic and desemanticizes the issues around disaster management. We have to return to the proposition that disasters are social constructions, which are invented and re-invented. The anthropological unfolding of disasters as social reconstruction is done through this variety of disaster management groups, with each carrying its own mindset, techniques and style. However, the field is relational because each group is not merely in a competitive complementarity with other groups; their conversation creates a different picture of the whole domain necessitating a re-reading of the wider domains of policy, democracy, governance and well-being.

The pluriverse of organizational groups demonstrates that not only are disasters social constructions, but they also reveal that the social is subject to multiple narratives,

definitions and epistemologies. It is the unravelling of this reality that constitutes the basic focus of this exercise.

2.10.1 Codes for Normalcy: On Classification and Standards

Classifications are not mere segmentations of a universe. They are, as Bowker and Star observe, “powerful technologies embedded in working infrastructures, they become relatively invisible without losing any of that power” (2000: 319).

Classifications should be recognized as the “significant site of the political and ethical work they are.” Bowker and Star add that “everyday categories are precisely those that have disappeared into infrastructure, into habit, into the taken for granted” (2000: 147). As Cicourel notes, “the decision procedures for characterizing social phenomenon are burned in the implicit common sense assumptions about the actor, concrete persons, and the observer’s own view about everyday life. The procedures seem ‘right’ or reasonable because they are rooted in everyday life” (Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981).

Closely associated with classification is the idea of standards. Standards are agreed upon rules for the production of textual or material objects (Bowker and Starr 2000: 150). Classifications and standards are the tacit ways in which a disaster is reworked to normalcy. Behind every disaster is a set of protocols, languages and taxonomies through which a disaster is understood and processed. These protocols include everything from the recognition of a crisis or emergency, to the protocols of the National Relief Code (1927). In India, the declaration of a flood or a cyclone as a disaster area is a political bureaucratic act. Classifications and protocols are needed for a disaster to be recognized as one. Maps are necessary for a disaster territory to be officially carved out. This often includes a contouring of disaster areas in terms of the levels of impact. Even recognizing a victim as a victim involves protocols. For example, during the Bhopal gas disaster in 1984, a victim was not recognized as a victim until he had a ration card (Visvanathan 1986). A victim thus needs an official imprimatur. The bureaucracy immediately classifies the population into officially and unofficially recognized victims. This creates a

formal and informal economy of disasters, as it were. Maps in this sense become doubly important because often, many marginal groups like fishermen, migrants and itinerant labourers get left out of the classification. If you are not part of the revenue map, you may not even exist officially. As a survivor, you then become part of the silences of a disaster. In fact, this is precisely what happened during the Orissa cyclone of 1999. An official way of seeing and classifying becomes a way of not seeing and not recognizing the victim. One should also note that many of these new cultural organizations operate in the crevices of this classificatory world.

In a disaster situation, classifications and standards become doubly problematic because it is precisely everyday life and the standards it evokes that have been disrupted. The hermeneutic circle we call a disaster is precisely what organizations seek to interpret. The question becomes even more critical when we realize that since classifications and standards are associated with normalcy and everydayness, what happens when everydayness breaks down? A disaster thus becomes a test of standards. More crucially, we have to ask whether we need standards that go beyond the everyday life for disaster situations. This is precisely what NGO groups in recent times have pointed out in the Sphere Charter project initiated in 1997 by International Red Cross (France) to develop a set of minimum standards in core areas of humanitarian assistance. The aim of the project was to improve the quality of assistance provided to people affected by disasters, and to enhance the accountability of the humanitarian system in disaster response. The vulnerability of the victim and the disruption of everyday life raise special questions about welfare and well-being, especially about women, children and other marginal groups. The efforts of the Sphere Charter (1997), a collective of over 150 international NGOs, to specify calorific intake or standards of hygiene in a disaster situation can be seen as being representative of these efforts. Considering a contrary case, we may recollect how a minister of labour claimed after the Bhopal disaster that 'labour standards' were not applicable to Third World societies like India (Visvanathan, 1986).

A study of standards, laws and policy codes has been an underdeveloped part of disaster studies. It is around these tacit and often unstated understandings that governance is constructed. It is not just a much-touted question of safety but of new norms for crisis. If standards and protocols are part of the taken-for-granted, the disaster becomes a disruption of the social that needs an epistemic understanding. The need for this was emphasized by Howard Becker. He observed that “epistemology has been a... negative discipline, mostly devoted to saying what you shouldn’t do if you want your activity to merit the title of science and to keep unworthy pretenders from appropriating it. The sociology of science, the empirical descendant of epistemology, gives up trying to decide what should and shouldn’t count as science and tells what people claim to be doing science do” (cited in Bowker and Star 2000: 150).

The disaster site, which once appeared like a top-down discourse, another lab-to-land-affair with conventional ideas of innovation is now emerging as a symposium of ideas and narratives. The variety of classifications generated has consequences for the policy situation.

These categories define not only membership in terms of who belongs and who does not belong to an act of disaster management; they also become acts of filiation. Filiations, as Bowker and Starr point out, are threads which connect categories and persons working out consequences. Filiations define and connect categories.

It is not just a question of labelling but the levels of ambiguity about the kind of category a person belongs to. Categories like victim, patient, survivor, poor and marginal have diacritical marks. The label, the census and the map decide who is suffering and for how long. Erving Goffman, in his *Asylums* (1961), argues that the career of a patient begins when he is recognized and labelled as a patient. The role of a disaster victim like the role of a patient, involves rites of passage, which determine how long a certain role is permissible. Within a disaster domain, this involves discussions about crisis and normalcy, and medicalization and de-medicalization of categories. Is survivor trauma a

medical psychiatric problem or is it hypochondria? These discussions involve professional and bureaucratic judgement. In a disaster situation, they are surrounded by zones of ambiguity. Such decisions are not only located at the professional level. When does mourning or grief end? Or more critically is the inability to mourn a sign of normalcy?

These are not only individual choices but also collective ones. The link between individual biography and collective framing is fraught with moral choices. How do policy and society combine individual biography and choices with the social? Narrative articulates one of the great collective dilemmas of a society. As Bowker and Star note, "Classifications and standards give advantage or they give suffering" at both the individual and collective levels. "Jobs are made and lost; some regions benefit at the expense of others" (2001: 56). The collective nature of classification is tied to other sets of categories, one which formulates the social, and the other, an eclectic set of techniques around number, map and the body.

Memory is a kind of horizon for narratives, both individual and biographical, and for collective history. Policy often hides the profound dialectic between the two. Policy as frozen memory follows standardized genres of narrative and contains the residues left behind as generalization after individual memories have been bleached.

Memory often becomes a rhythm of time, a mnemonic for prediction. Folk memory often predicts and marks a disaster in terms of these cycles of crisis and normalcy. In fact, disasters often form a calendrical marker with children's ages being calibrated in terms of the last flood or cyclone. However, memory is not just an act of recollection; it involves abbreviation, erasure and amnesia. Even standardization semantically impoverishes the content of memory. If policy is a form of trusteeship of social suffering, one must read policy texts and expert documents in the form of mnemonics of that suffering or its erasure (Kleinman 1991; Kleinman *et al.* 1997). This memory is both oral and textual, and the relation between the two needs an examination. The disaster site is today a cluster of

oral memories not only of the victim but also of the diverse groups of expertise, which form and constitute memory. In this context, the plurality of memory may seek to prevent the erasure, the obsolescence, the triage that often follows a disaster. Memories of suffering like memories of underdevelopment need this plurality of archives as checks against forgetting.

Tied to narrative are the categories of number, census and map. Each as an administrative category defines the intensity and impact of a disaster. Numbers and statistics are officially required to classify disaster. Number is such an intense part of policy narratives and it, in turn, produces the narrative of logistics wherein a disaster response becomes a set of production statistics specifying the tonnage of objects employed. Number is also linked to scale, which raises issues of problem solving. Do disasters, which are not official, lose the claim to be disasters? Do official maps and official censuses determine narrative or are they becoming contested sites where story-telling in a different form challenges official interpretation?

The nature of narrative too is a choice of categories. Often the official narratives posit agency around the State. If we map disasters around the idea of actants as a heuristic (Latour 1999; Law 1999) it shows that disasters are no longer official givens. A disaster is a negotiated narrative between forms of nature, types of technology, the variety of interest groups, and policy texts at a disaster site. The diversity of interest groups at a disaster site not only creates a domain of contestation but also democratizes narratives and tactics by proving that civil society seeks to multiply life chances through a pluralization of story-telling. Camus' statement in *The Plague* (1948) that statistics do not bleed is particularly apt in this context.

2.10.2 The Pluralisms of Time: Time as a Classificatory Practice

Julius Roth in his book *Timetables* (1963) shows how patients entering a hospital come with expectations of stay and departure. As they continue staying in the hospital, their expectations of time keep changing as they suture different bundles together. Patients

who enter such sanatoria are often surprised to find that they are given no exact date for their release. Lack of information over this issue leads to frantic activity. Roth's principal concern is to indicate how important timetables are in most areas of life and to demonstrate the concern that arises when the stages which constitute them are ambiguous or non-existent.

The disaster victim is in a similar situation, knitting bundles of time together. Here, one must follow Durkheim and the *Année Sociologique* school (1932),¹ and differentiate between social time and individual time. 'Social time' (Munn 1992: 95) emerges from collective representations and their rhythms in different periods of life. As Munn states, "These categorical divisions (day, seasons, festivals and the calendar) form a meaningful qualitatively named rather than an abstract, homogenous temporality" (Munn 1992: 5). Such a notion of collective, qualitative time allows for different rhythms than those of a standard sequence. Calendars of disaster, as constructed by victims and survivors, have a different sense of objectivity, grounded, as they are, in the morphology of local social life. Differentiating between personal time and social time allows one to differentiate between individual and social mnemonics, allowing for two forms of remembering. A suturing of official time and individual memories is one of the great problems entailed in comprehending any disaster.

Time reckoning thus also becomes a political classificatory activity because one has to decide when a rehabilitation sequence is complete. The politics of the variety of times is a major way of reconstructing the narrative of disasters. In order to acquire generality, policy sequences of disasters de-semanticize and impoverish the ideas of time in disasters. A recovery of these processes is crucial not just in an ethnographic sense but

¹ In 1896, Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) and his nephew Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) began to recruit a group of young scholars to collaborate in publishing the journal *Année Sociologique* (Sociological Year), their goal was to invent a new 'science' called 'sociology'. Comte had already coined the term 'sociology' during the mid-nineteenth century. It was through the *Année Sociologique* that sociology as a scientific discipline and field emerged. Additionally, the journal began a transformation in other social sciences in France and abroad, including anthropology.

also in terms of understanding the contested notions of a disaster. It demands an act of mapping natural time (body time, ecological time), social time (daily activities, probably linked to natural cycles), bureaucratic time (prescribed time for relief operations, forms, loans, and doles), technological time and cosmic time. To this, one adds the time of memory, the trans-generational time of ancestors, and also body time, the time of repair. Without this incorporation of the ethnographies of time, the 3R sequence appears too standardized, hiding contestations of process at every level. Policy seems to operate more on linear time or clock time and the heterogeneity of the disaster as a process is lost.

The complexity of a disaster and the varieties of socio-cultural time that it contains are hidden behind typifications, which simplify the policy sequence. Hence, little attention has been paid to time as a central problem of disaster management. The Rescue, Relief, Rehabilitation sequences create a simplified, linear description, which abbreviates attention to various processes of temporality constructed during the career of disaster. The 3R sequence focuses on the structural duration of the 3R cycle rather than on the heterogeneities of local time, timetables, plans, stories, expectations, biographies and narratives. A disaster is not a simple-stranded sequence but a blend of chronologies. The policy sequence also emphasizes global time as an aggregate of experiences and ignores liminality.

One of the challenges this research faces is to rework the 3R from linear sequence to a rite of passage model (Van Gennep 1909; Turner 1969). This allows for a return to normalcy but also recognizes the time in-between as *liminal* time, which allows for the ambiguity of identities, statuses and expectations. Liminal time marks the disaster victim as being distant from the normalcy of citizenship and consumption. Like a patient's role, the victim of a disaster is marked. Liminal time defies clock time and cannot be seen in atomistic repetitive or standardized units. By allowing for a multiplicity of times, one challenges not only the singular narrativity of the 3- R policy sequence but also the recognition that rehabilitation does not return time to normalcy. One moves in terms of time from n_1 to n_2 with the scars of repair and memories of the struggle to reclaim normal

time. In that sense, rehabilitation is never totally complete; it is either asymptotic or re-invented in terms of a mix of old and new times. Memory not just as history but as orality, story-telling, becomes a crucial frame for viewing the 3R sequence. One of the questions one has to ask is how far does policy carry the mnemonics of disasters. The idea of multiple time permits recognition heterogeneity of sequences and allows for a more pluralist approach to policy.

Every act of agency, even of waiting, is an attempt to stitch together bundles of time. In a study of recovery after a hurricane, Smith and Belgrave (1995) point out that recovery is never complete, it is always asymptotic, and everydayness and the rituals of everydayness that together constitute what we might call normalcy are achieved through a sense of approximations. They observe that disasters disrupt reality and the rituals that sustain it (Smith and Belgrave 1995: 247). A pervasive subjective sense of competence, efficacy, and self-worth are situated in the matrix of everyday life. A return to everydayness is itself a composite of processes. The taken-for-granted world of normalcy has to be reconstructed, piece by piece, shade by shade. In fact, the first few days after a disaster are devoted to getting by (Smith and Belgrave 1995: 250). The things we usually take for granted like water, food or health take a much longer time to be restored. Time budgets get infinitely elastic. Getting by becomes a major undertaking. Routines have to be reconstructed. The return is not to normality, but to partial forms of normality. The stock of knowledge one previously had in maintaining the original reality may be inadequate. Returning to the new normalcy requires reskilling.

Policy is often constructed as a system of formally articulated rules, which lack what Geertz (1975) called 'thick description'. However, unless one understands recovery as an approximate process in terms of the life-world, that system called policy adds little to understanding. The power of many organizations lies in mediating the lifeworld and the system for the survivor. Some organizations can popularize the scientific and technical implications of a disaster; while others can locate it in myth and religion, or in local stocks of knowledge. These accordion-like transitions of time returning to the normal

create a knitting of different stocks of knowledge by the pluriverse of organizations. By contouring the varieties of time, the organizations understand the hybridities of knowledge – science, recipe, formula, technique, theory, voice—which go into the rituals of recovery. This act of entrepreneurship helps a collectivity recover the idea of the normal and the diversities of the social that make a society. As Smith and Belgrave remark, “Catastrophes... can obliterate the social world to the extent an alternative reality must be constructed and individuals must be re-socialized to this new reality” (1995). By binding time and knowledge differently, these organizations aid in this socialization process.

Everydayness also provides a sense of micro-perspectives (Adler and Adler 1987). In fact, a critique of disaster policy as embodying the assumptions of a macro-sociology can begin with an understanding of everydayness. Such a policy, as the Adlers point out, is “deterministic and stereotyped providing social life with a mono-casual gloss, an overtly passive view of the action and an overt emphasis on the *Homo economicus*” (1987: 218). A micro-sociology of time, especially in terms of everydayness, creates multiple views of the *homo sociologicus*, and of the intermediary institutions of society. These different organizations not only construct time differently, but may also have different concepts of the social. In addition, the survivor confronts at least two sets of situations in a disaster—firstly that rules have broken down and secondly that rules and roles have to be reconstructed. Everydayness, as a bundle of multitudes of time, allows for this understanding. It provides a variety of dialects to enrich the standardized vocabulary of the 3R sequence. For instance, it shows, as Goffman (1961) and others have argued, that the victim, rather being passive, can manipulate roles, rules and images to enhance survival. Cognitively, each organization in a disaster theatre is a mapping of micro-acts, which constructs overlapping regimes of the social.

Accompanying the idea of everyday life, and providing a sense of the scale of both recovery and rescue, is the idea of trophicity (Hicks 1975). In biology, trophicity refers to a chain of being, a flow of energy, wherein different creatures lived in terms of different

packets of bundles of energy. The human being consumes vast quantities of energy, but the dung beetle could live on human excreta. However, today especially in disasters, where survival is at the level of bare life (Agamben 1998; 2005), there are groups that live at a lower level of subsistence. Trophicity allows one to understand how groups survive on so little. This is not poverty but bare survival (Dandekar and Rath 1971; Douglas 1976; Nandy 1995; 2002). Many studies on drought have suggested that several cultural groups, which have their roots in the locality, have a better grasp of survival in terms of trophicity (Blaikie et al. 1994). The political economy of trophicity needs to be confronted because it is different from the understanding of poverty. For example, during the Orissa cyclone, I heard a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) worker talk of a pregnant woman who survived atop a coconut tree eking out life on rotten coconuts and salt water for a week. I can recount another story told to me by an Anand Marga worker about people who lived and cooked amid dead bodies, numb to their environment (Interview 1999).

2.11 From Sociology of Knowledge to the Politics of Knowledge and Its Relation to Governance

2.11.1 Scaling Narratives

As structures of analysis, neither the micro, nor the macro are self-contained levels of analysis. The micro and the macro are not aggregated, they are integrated. At one level, it is the challenge of the relation between story and policy. The story does not lose its singularity; policy does not lack generality when the two are implicated in each other. The relation between individual symptoms and health policy is one such example. As Cicourel (1975) remarked, “The mental models of language used by patients, nurses and physicians to represent diseases and symptoms are not always in correspondence with public health conception of disease.” The physician–patient interview and medical history can be viewed as routine examples of continual micro–macro integration, which combines various levels of complexity. The substantive content of the discourse becomes

the vehicle for tracing the ways in which micro events are transformed into macro structures. The transformation permits certain symptoms and illnesses of a patient to be coded and then aggregated over large samples and correlated with different variables. Policy as macro narrative and case history as micro narrative are not related by aggregation. Micro is transformed into macro by the processes of interpretation and translation, and through leaps of complexity, which allow for the autonomy of each level. This involves mediation and translation of categories.

Scale emphasizes the nature of contingency in narrative, which includes the unexpected, the emergent and the surprise. Consequently, alternatives and alternative narratives become a part of any policy discourse. The question of scale challenges the opposition of the local and the global. This involves not just a search for social science that is plural but a 'natural' science that is based on multiple perspectives (Sutearu 2005: 117). This needs a multi-scale approach, which Holling called an understanding of panarchy, where the same problem emerges through different solutions (Gunderson and Holling 2002). As Latour maintains, "There is no zoom going from macro-structure to macro-interactions" (1999: 245).

The act of narration in this plural regime of disaster management is no longer from the viewpoint of the expert gaze as an observer. Both the observer and the spectator exhibit an objective curiosity. The observer objectivizes the event clinically by viewing the victim as a collection of symptoms, a set of naturalistic signs to be read off and prescribed to in terms of the logistics of tonnage.

The spectator may be invasive in the way his gaze focuses on the disaster. His curiosity is intrusive and could lack compassion. While talking to the survivors of Hurricane Andrew, Smith and Belgrave describe "empty handed voyeurs adding indignity to the pain of those already living there, creating resentment" (Smith and Belgrave 1995). They quote the victims as complaining of "individuals and families gawking at the misery of others for

their own entertainment”. One victim complains, “They didn’t bring us food... They didn’t come down and say, ‘May we help you’” (ibid.: 255).

Between the objectivization of the expert as a scientist and the voyeurism of the spectator stands the listener, the witness, and those who use their location in a disaster to consider themselves as sites, persons both participating and being acted upon. The witness is a trustee of memory, an embodied archive of events while a listener adds to the eye of the witness, the power of the ear. To sight, he adds the ability to listen to voice. Policy documents as constructions of expertise often avoid or ignore such other perspectives. It is this multiplicity of narrative positions that organizations bring to the policy exercise. Now there is no Archimedean point to bring about change but a variety of positions, each of which knits narratives in its own way. Each in constructing the actants of a disaster brings different perspectives on number, body, technology, nature and suffering. The question then is: What is scaled up? What gets translated, mediated, interpreted by whom and how? What are the different practices that entail this scaling up?

2.11.2 The Culture of Governance: Audit as a Cultural Artifact

In the preceding sections on time and narrative, I have attempted to rework the domain of disaster studies to show how the practices of knowledge get constituted merely to come back to a crucial issue: What does the domain of disaster studies, seen through the plurality of organizations, both as lens and mirror, mean for governance? Since governance is no longer confined to the State, the availability of competence extends to a range of civil society organizations, which redefine competence, performance and policy around disaster management.

An audit is a theory of measure. The procedures of assessment have social consequences, locking up time, personnel and resources, as well as locking into the moralities of public management. Yet by themselves, audit practices often seem mundane, inevitable parts of a bureaucratic process. When one starts putting together a larger picture, they take on the contours of a distinct cultural artifact (Strathern 2000: 2). Equating audit to evaluation

could be as misleading as defining IQ as intelligence. It could also create strains in a theory of responsibility (Jonas and David 1984).

Common sense of disasters, especially the media, emphasizes the role of responsibility. More technical studies, especially those that deal with aid in disasters, insist on processes of accounting. Audit encompasses both responsibility and accounting to understanding the culture and method that go into such an evaluative frame.

Garrett Hardin, in *Filters against Folly* (1985), emphasizes that audits have three aspects: 1) numeracy; 2) literacy; and 3) ecolacy. To these, we can add a fourth, democracy. Literacy is sensitivity to past problems, a cybernetic mnemonic for future planning. Numeracy is about measure, but measure can be innumerate. For example, Gross National Product (GNP) can be misleading as a measure of welfare, as production tonnage is about the quality of aid. Ecolacy refers to nature and the equilibriums of sustainability that it demands. Democracy emphasizes participation, representation, pluralism. These discourses of organizations demand a redefinition of such issues. Cultures of audit can, in fact, fail governance. They face a new context of evaluation in this new milieu.

Each organization is a mode of thought and code of conduct predicated on a theory of science, management and politics. Each is a particular form of belief in practice. The praxial nature of these organizations is central to this thesis. As organizational forms, they represent a variety of lifestyles, a variety of worldviews on science and religion. To use Bourdieu's (1977) felicitous title, they are *Outlines of a Theory of Practice*. By studying them, one can elaborate a theory of governance. Since they emerge from a variety of belief systems, they add to and redefine the ideas of philanthropy, charity, aid and humanitarianism.

Their worldviews affect the political economy of disaster, challenging or questioning the present relation between disasters and development, vulnerability and poverty.

This debate can take place, for instance, through notions of hospitality. In India, many organizations use food as a model of transactions. Food as offering, *prasadam* (offering of the Gods), food as located in the *langar* (originally a Sikh form of serving food to everyone, which recognizes the equality of all), introduces the idea of the gift (Mauss 1925). The idea of the victim as guest and also the notion of the survivor as stranger and a special kind of citizen revive an idea of hospitality as opposed to a contract. This political economy is also sensitive to the ecology and economics of survival. To the official logistics of aid, it adds the model of the festival and the informal idea of the *bazaar*. The citizen becomes a consumer with a wide availability of choices. Consumption during disasters oddly raises questions of both survival and lifestyle. Plastic bottles of water, new kinds of food, new technologies and medicines enter the disaster site, redefining perception. By moving between gift and contract, do these organizations widen both the moral and political economy of disasters? (See De Waal 1997; Klein 2007.) As epistemic forms, they rework the disaster site as an intercultural, interdisciplinary knowledge system with profound implications for policy and governments.

As organizational forms, they represent NGOs, GONGOs, the Ashram, the Army, the Missionary group, international agencies and humanitarian groups. They raise questions of the value of life in disaster situations, relate rehabilitation to questions of compensation and justice, question the everyday vulnerability of citizenship as a category, and redefine the nature of rights, vulnerability, sustainability, subsistence. An entire thesaurus gets redefined in the act of disaster management.

By their very diversity, these organizations raise the question of scale and open up the nature of problem-solving in disaster situations. The range of organizations creates a kaleidoscope of empirical questions around these issues, and amplifies the ambit of critical, philosophical and political questions. The disaster as site seen through the discourse and practices of these groups not just provides a critique of management, but also allows a critique of management and knowledge to add to the wider debates of the polity. In that sense, disaster becomes thought experiments in political theory.

2.11.3 Reflections

I have delineated the approach as sociology of knowledge in the first part: it is about classification, categorization and standardization. It is about how knowledge is produced in disaster sites. Who produces it and the practices constitute it. In some ways, it engages with my first two research questions. Even how a disaster is constituted may differ. While Scientist A could see it as an event which could be scientifically managed and contained with technical knowhow, a religious organization may see it as part of a larger mythical cosmological design. One must, however, point out that the two rationalities are not necessarily in contradiction with each other. I remember interviewing a group of villagers in Ersamma in the cyclone-hit area of Orissa. When asked about the cause of the cyclone, one of them said, “*Paap*” (sin), and everyone nodded their heads vigorously. They all agreed that it had been predicted in a text, the *Maillaika*, which is a thousand years old. When asked for the solution, they all agreed, “There should be more radars”.

The second part of the framework links up to the politics of knowledge and governance. What gets scaled up, by whom, how and why? Which codes get normalized by which organization? Who normalizes what code and what are the practices that normalize them? How do the different worldviews interact in that process of constitution of this knowledge? What are the implications of these multiple forms of interaction for governance, democracy and citizenship? For example, the same competence and skills that are brought to disaster sites are employed in the larger dance of democracy, whether it is mobilizing the voters or reworking the terms of engagement with the political.

3. Reflections on Method

The primary focus of this chapter is to inform the reader of the techniques that I feel would be useful for the research questions that I have framed. The chapter addresses the question of field, techniques, ethics, access and reflexivity. It also reflects briefly on the desirability of qualitative research on issues.

The chapter is broadly divided into three parts. In the first section, I reflect on the journey which helped me frame the research questions that inform my thesis. The following section re-introduces the research questions. I then try to justify the choice of qualitative research before going into the related issues of ethnography and techniques deployed in the field. The final section reflects on the issues of access, ethics and reflexivity.

3.1 Arriving at Research Questions: The First Round

Disasters have an epic quality to them, not only in terms of the characters they summon but also because of the long *duree* of the event. Narratives of disasters usually focus on the spectacle itself, with its drama of suffering, rescue, survival and victimhood. Unfortunately, this creates a standard split in narrative, between the spectacle of the disaster and the banality of its aftermath (Visvanathan 1986).

My initial experiences of natural disasters also have a split level quality. I worked in Orissa after the 1999 cyclone and in Gujarat after the 2001 earthquake. My first encounters were naive but moving. I went with the intention of spending a week in Orissa, and stayed on for several months, not just because of the starkness of the mass death following the cyclone but also out of a sense that I was being ambushed by the complexity of the event. I found myself in a similar situation after the earthquake in Gujarat in 2001. The immediacy of a disaster summons the entire sensorium. What begins as visual drama soon demands the ear. Suffering is not merely something one

witnesses but also an episode one listens to. Ethnography, even of the casual visitor, becomes a ritual of mourning, an outpouring of grief. Death and dying leave traces on you that are difficult to erase. There is a smell to dead bodies in sea-water and the sight and smell of bodies being pulled out of the rubble after a fortnight are difficult to forget. When one touches the body, the flesh flakes off like pieces of mica. Nor is it easy to erase the memory of a dog feasting on a dead baby's body that it has dug out of the rubble. A researcher gets implicated in those memories.

Disasters in India are presented as simplistic skits, with the army rushing to the rescue and the State, through the District Collector, emerging to provide a few minimal doles. In fact, many disasters are seen as calendrical events. Often in villages, when the field worker asks the age of the child, the dating is done in terms of the last flood. Disasters become convenient markers for everyday narratives.

My first exposure revealed that the drama of disasters went beyond the State and the army. It involved a multiplicity of organizations from the standard voluntary sector, and also from cultural and religious groups. Initially, I saw this cacophony of voices as a backdrop as I focused more on the survivor. But the plurality and presence of these groups gave me a sense that a new drama was being scripted. I slowly inched my way to an understanding where the prosaic logic of the aftermath began commanding more attention. The presence of international agencies like Medicin Sans Frontiers (MSF) and UNICEF also added a global dimension to the rescue and relief process. My survey of groups revealed elements of a circus. I also sensed elements of a morality play with groups defining themselves against each other. I realized that time and memory and the senses had critical roles to play.

Amidst all this, there is also the question of time. Watching the survivor respond to the disaster, I began sensing that disasters should not always be seen as episodic events. They cascade into each other and often a disaster creates a prolonged crisis with little hope of return to normalcy. I was quickly abandoning my stereotypes of disasters as I realized

that disasters are no longer crisis apparitions but parts of a quotidian world. Time, as I later realized, was even more complex than I had initially sensed.

I came back from both disasters with a baggage full of questions, which I needed to digest. I nibbled at the popular literature on disasters and found it superficial. I realized I needed a more professional perspective, a network of concepts, a disciplinary matrix, which would let me view these questions more vigorously. This was to provide the initial building blocks for my thinking on disasters.

A ritual of reviewing literature helped me frame the research questions that I wished to explore. The rituals of defining research questions, however, demanded another rite. It involved a review of literature, as I have already outlined in the earlier chapter. The objective of the search was to assess how the social is understood and constructed in disaster studies. I read the literature on disasters (within the broader social science literature) on separate but interlocking grids. It examines the various constructions of the social and the societal within the archive of disaster studies. It looked at the idea of the social. It then explored certain key concepts, particularly resilience, vulnerability, adaptation, and risk in relation to suffering. The literature review subsequently moved from the social and the cognitive to the political, and looked at disaster studies as a series of texts which attempted to understand citizen, the State and democracy. In doing so, it examined the idea of knowledge, cognition and perception that has tacitly anchored disaster studies either as policy or as management.

3.2 Framing Research Questions and Methodology: Qualitative Research

The questions I wished to ask emanated both from a struggle with theory, especially its silences, and from visits to some disaster locations. I have in the previous chapter (see Section 2.8) already explained the rationale that led to the framing of these questions. Let me re-state them. The questions were three-fold.

- i. How does the framing of disasters change with the narratives and questions that various groups ask of disasters?
- ii. How is the social constructed by these organizations?
- iii. What are the implications of these constructions for democracy, governance and citizenship?

Having specified the three main questions guiding this research, I will now consider the type of methodology needed to address them. The following section suggests that ethnographic methods offer an appropriate tool to explore some of the kind of analysis I am seeking to undertake.

3.3 Between Survey and Qualitative Research

The first question is one of methodology rather than of a specific method. Would such a study employ quantitative or qualitative methodologies? The question is often cast in polarities of hard and soft, masculine and feminine, turning the quantitative domain into a patriarchal preference (Harding 1987).

The choices are much more pragmatic and functional. Quantitative data, in disaster management focuses on census information, and measurement of economic damage like the crops damaged, property decimated, and cattle destroyed. The quantitative dimension centres on insurance and compensation, more often on tangibles. The quantitative is a perspective wherein number or numeracy as logistics or size signals competence in terms of a response to a disaster. However, this study focuses on worldviews, experiences, discussions, tactics, rituals, mourning and suffering. It demands sensitivity to language, silences, body language, and to affectivity. Second, the study deals with emotional spaces like grief, loss and mourning. I also wanted to probe tacit knowledges, and go beyond the available stereotypes, wherein conversation and listening demand some sense of encounter. A survey suits impersonal space and limited encounters. This study is both

exploratory and intensive. Such a decision puts us in the domain of qualitative methodologies like open-ended interviews, participant observation, life histories, and discussions around key words which can be both emic and etic. The informal economies that emerge during the disaster need a slow painstaking ethnography. Anecdote, story-telling and discussion become the pragmatic norm of such a study.

I sought to conduct qualitative research not just as a functional frame but as a heuristic of understanding more in consonance with the issues of knowledge and practice that I was seeking to understand. I realized that I had adopted my method intuitively in terms of what Denzin and Lincoln called the metaphor of the bricoleur and the quilt-maker (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 4). A *bricoleur* builds his world as Levi Strauss (1966: 17) points out with odds and ends, the left-overs. One rebuilds a society after a disaster with the make do, the left-overs, the fragments. Levi Strauss calls the bricoleur ‘the Jack of all trades’ and in one sense, the study of disasters demands that the researcher becomes a Jack of all trades of the various forms of qualitative research – assembling text, montages, interviews, stories, rituals, protocols, codes, technical manuals and legislation, as s/he reconstructs the world, both in its stages of stability and recovery. The metaphors shift to a more gendered form as I summon the metaphor of the quilt. The quilt patch matches societies constructed after a disaster. The qualitative researcher as a quilt-maker deploys various strategies using “the aesthetic and material of her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods and empirical materials are at hand” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 4). In that sense, my choice of qualitative research was in keeping with the optimum availability of tools. However, it is not merely a question of whether the tool fits a range of problems, but also if it provides some sense of the beauty, the symmetry of tool and the problem.

3.4 Ethnography

This study is in an exercise in traditional ethnography, of what anthropologists call ‘fieldwork’, but it is a fieldwork with a twist. I am not studying a distant culture but that of my own society. Yet I realize that my own society has become a global space where different cultures have had an impact. The disaster management organizations I am studying are local and international, secular and fundamentalist. They centre around the ideas of care, charity and philanthropy, stemming from Hinduism, Christian ethics and also from secular humanitarianism.

3.5 Field Site

Theoretically, I was confronting disaster sites as a diverse domain with a plurality of organizations providing competing or complementary models of the 3R. At a strategic level, time and diversity become critical. Along with the plurality of organizations, I faced the question of time and official time as defining categories. For example, drought can be episodic or endemic. I have to ask whether areas of chronic, endemic drought like Kalahandi in Orissa or tracts near the Thar Desert are disaster areas. Is endemic drought defined as a disaster area only if the State defines it as such? The choice of the disaster site itself becomes an invitation to contestations, creating a self-reflexive entry into the politics of knowledge.

My choice of sites (in this case, organizations working in disaster sites) can be seen across both grids. The first is the endemic axis while the second is the emergency axis. On the endemic axis, the disaster is no longer episodic; it has been so prolonged as to be normalized. In an empirical sense, the State and its agencies of development signify a continued presence, in some senses, a pervasive one. Other organizations do exist but they are smaller in number, probably less advertised in the media.

On the emergency axis, we have the classic disaster, beginning as the promise of an occasional event. The sense of crisis is episodic. The State, apart from the army, exists often as a figure of absence. The study picked two sites, both operating on the endemic as well as the emergency axis. You have to be sensitive to ambiguities while recognizing that the world of disasters needs some form of contouring. The field sites I choose are the states of Gujarat and Orissa. Gujarat is on the west coast of India and Orissa is on its east coast. Both states face routine cycles of drought, floods and cyclones as part of their everydayness. They are normalized part of existence. However, the large-scale death and destruction in the event of the cyclone in 1999 in Orissa and the earthquake in 2001 in Gujarat have changed both the imagination of disasters and the definition of disasters (both at the state and national levels).

My second consideration was part informed by the list of organizations that I had encountered in two emergency situations in the Gujarat earthquake and the Orissa cyclone. The number of organizations is impressively large. The debates and discourses may be of a diverse kind. I study them not in terms of the geographical locus in disasters but in a more general sense as groups with expertise in dealing with disaster situations. My fieldwork also took me to Delhi, West Bengal and Mumbai, and other registered offices of the organizations, moving well beyond Gujarat and Orissa.

3.6 Plurality of Organizations

I have argued in earlier chapters that disaster sites have become a site for varied forms of dialogues encompassing not just religions but also the sciences. There are a variety of organizations with an equally varied set of practices which offer new norms, new idioms for constructing citizenship, well-being and welfare in general. My research seeks to capture the heterogeneity of this world and explore its implications for disaster management as a policy discourse. These groups become, as it were, the middlemen of

the knowledge being produced at disaster sites. I call them the epistemic middlemen.

Table 3.1 depicts the range of organizations that figure in the study.

Table 3.1: Table of Organizations

Organizations	Affiliation
Swaminarayan	Religious, civil society, local, global
RSS	Religious, civil society, local, global
Ramakrishna Mission	Religious, civil society, local, global
Ananda Marga	Religious, civil society, local, global
Oxfam	Secular, civil society, global, local
Action Aid	Secular, civil society, global, local
CARE	Secular, civil society, global, local
Caritas	Religious, civil society, global, local
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	Religious, civil society, Global
Unnati	Civil society, local, secular
TARU	Civil society, local, secular
AIDMI	Civil society, local, secular
World Bank	Global + ?
UNDP	Global + ?

Source: Author.

As Table 3.1 shows, it is difficult to pigeonhole any of these organizations into one category. For example, Ramakrishna Mission, Swaminarayan (BAPS), RSS may have Indian–local origins, however, their presence, constituency and reach is global. On the other hand, organizations like the World Bank and UNDP have their origins in different international arrangements arrived at by the nation-states post-World War II, however their interventions are at the local level with largely standardized policies across the globe. How does one then read these organizations? Can one read them as hyphens, hybrids or glocal pluralities? My study is an exploration of these range of organizations in order to systematize a perspective on them.

3.7 Techniques

3.7.1 Participant Observation

The methodologies of participant observation go back to Malinowski. Participant observation, as Faubion (1993) points out, requires not just some fluency of language but also an interest in everydayness. It also demands an understanding of both the etic and emic perspectives, a sense of both distance and intimacy. You become close to the subject as other and then ritually distance yourself in a more professional language. Ethnography objectifies story-telling, captures local narratives in a grid of social science theory. It demands what Clifford Geertz (1975) has called *thick description*. As Faubion puts it, the field worker can hardly ignore the language of his interlocutors, so s/he should address it not as an autonomous system but rather as ‘so much’ significant potential, not as a map or a predictive rule book of cultural practice but as a repository of orientations which might as often be bent or broken as obeyed (1993).

One of the difficulties of understanding in fieldwork is to differentiate between common sense knowledge of the typical and ordinary and the sense of breakdown. Alfred Schutz (1967) notes, “the individual approaches the world with a stock of knowledge composed of ordinary constructs and categories that are social in origin. These are images, folk theories, beliefs, values and attitudes” (Holstein and Gubrium 2005: 485). These stocks or recipes objectify the world and typify it. In disasters, we need to look at dismantling of a system partially or fully. Does the past serve as a model for reconstruction or is reconstruction asymptotic? It is in this context that I try to use biographies, lifecycle sketches and story-telling to capture disasters as a twice-told story of fragmentation and building. I also try to capture the process of typification, fragmentation, re-typification with its sensitivity to language, time and memory.

This understanding of normative practice, of everyday life becomes even more complex as disasters, if prolonged, become the everydayness of some societies. However, I am

creating an anthropology not of communities alone but of organizations within the communities affected by disasters.

I wish to examine the organization as a site for the thought experiments it performs. I want to look at the internal dynamics and behaviour of these organizations, especially in terms of their discourse on various categories. However, I would like to emphasize that I do not want to counterpose field and organization as if one is open and the other closed. Bruno Latour has already challenged this 'here–there cartography' or the territorial cartography of the organization. He argues that it need not be seen as a bounded space. It is open, porous, and connected by a chain of practices with other parts of the disaster process (as cited in Massey 2003: 64). While undertaking the fieldwork, I hope to challenge the imagined spatialities endemic to these forms of fieldwork wherein field is 'out' there and organization 'in' here. Latour's attempt to link field and study could be a model for linking field site and organization to see how one looks at such imaginaries.

3.7.2 Interviews

Beyond the ritual of observations of daily practices, the researcher needs to employ interviews. As a participant observer, s/he can follow conversations as free-floating entities. As interviewers, we carry out purposeful conversations in which one person asks prepared questions (the interviewer) and the other answers them (the respondent). Interviews stand halfway between observations and experiments, and as a genre, vary in form, as in structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. A structured interview is a closed interview. It defines its terms and bounds the universe of interrogation. Structured interviews follow fixed questions. The oppositions between structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews constitute a false polarity. The cognitive and methodological distancing is more tactical, almost a heuristic. Structured and unstructured interviews are metaphorically more like dominant and recessive genes. One partakes of the other. The label emphasizes the dominant strain but it can never deny the other. In that sense, semi-structured interviews also seek order and regularity but

allow for more tactical flexibility in understanding them. The search for rigour is present in both but the choice of method is different.

As an interviewer in the field, I had various options before me. I could use a personalized interview technique or I could focus on group interviews with the group comprising a number of people familiar and at ease with each other either in terms of experience, background, gender or status. Thirdly, I could opt for the focus group that garners information about one particular topic. But such a situation has its own hierarchies, its own structures of dominance which I wish to avoid. I outline the methodological range possible as a listing of available repertoire but in terms of choice, the personalized informal interview picks itself. Focused interviews might suggest themselves while discussing policy implications but the informal interview is in consonance with participation observation. Both focused and informal interviews become twin methodologies for entering and engaging in a crisis-ridden field.

Given the open-ended nature of my study, I use semi-structured but open-ended interviews. Although Silverman (2001) cautions against “the romantic impulses of identifying experience with authenticity”, which can drive the researcher when using ‘open-ended interviews’, I feel this is necessary for several reasons. Firstly, I am looking for definitions of a situation. Secondly, as an exploratory exercise, such methods provide a form of preliminary mapping. Three, given the wide differences in ideology and style, I feel that the respondent should be given some feeling of control, some sense that the interviewer is not predefining a situation or imposing his categories on the field. It allows him/her the freedom to construct and define his world, something crucial to a ‘social constructionist’ approach. For example, Gray (1992) showed in her study of women’s relations to video technology that women wanted to tell stories and therefore needed open-ended questions. A closed or structured interview is not open or anticipative about such a flexible world. A closed interview presupposes preliminary knowledge, defines or lists possible responses, fixes or maps the array of answers possible. Such an approach of using a pre-arranged list of answers gives little freedom or flexibility to the respondent.

The semi-structured interview is not an anarchic enterprise. It is open-ended, not based on previously established categories. It possesses what scientists call the property of emergence, surprise (Georgescu-Roegen 1971). It allows the serendipity and yet, I feel, its demands on memory, empathy and the act of listening are enormous. There is a change in power relations. Structured interviews are in the form of stencils; the direction of the narrative is often anticipated. The informant may not allow for the availability of time that an unstructured interview needs and it emphasizes the vulnerability of the researcher. Body language becomes a form of communication, even silences become part of the unstructured interview as a mode of communication. Such interviews are not only dyadic encounters. They may be encounters with groups at a station, a wayside *dhaba*, a relief camp. In this sense, such interviews may be closer to what Fontana and Frey (Fontana and Frey 2005: 709) call the polyphonic interview, wherein the researcher, rather than interviewing, records a multiplicity of perspectives from multiple respondents.

I am not claiming the epiphany that Denzin claimed for it (Denzin 2001) or the transformational experience others expect. But I feel that the unstructured interview helps capture the drama of survival in a more novelistic way. Yet I do not want to romanticize such a method. I realize that many of the groups one would engage with are powerful (in terms of background) or hostile in attitude. I recognize, as Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 113–29) argue, that the interview is a negotiated accomplishment. It is also a recognition that the interview as a technique recognizes that reality is not given but a practical production of joint meaning. It is literally co-produced.

3.7.3 Discourse and Textual Analysis

Beyond interviews, which allow for story, everydayness and open-endedness, one comes to language. Do words used by different organizations mean the same?

The significance of text and discourse analysis as a ‘constitution of social order’ then becomes a critical part of the techniques. No discourse, as Ricouer (2003) suggested, can be radically stripped of its presuppositions. One has to explore the categories, the

metaphors, the modes of rhetoric that underlie a text. Texts as discourses reflect modes of hegemony that one must analyse. Using Ricoeur and Foucault as models, I assess various policy documents as texts reflecting relations between knowledge and power. A discourse is a relation between what can be said and what is unspeakable. In that sense, one needs an analysis of its statements, its silences and the tacit understandings which underlie its policy statements.

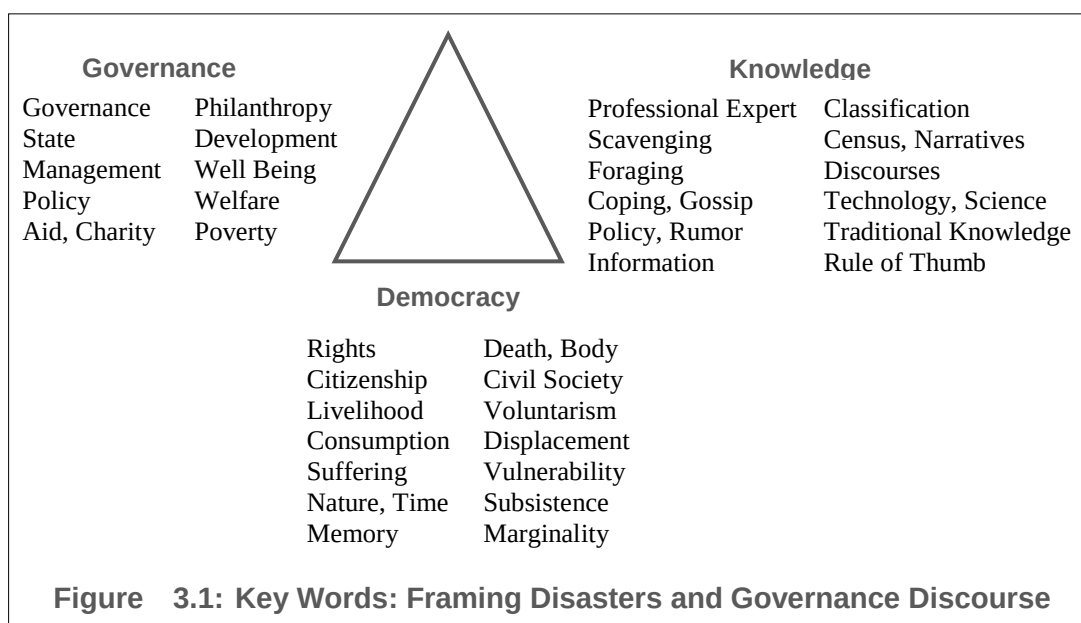
In the study of disasters, I refer more specifically to texts as a general rubric to cover policy documents, commission reports, major items of reporting, standards, legislative codes, technical manuals, religious discourses, mimeographed instructions, field manuals, the National Relief Code, the Sphere Charter, the World Bank reports and a variety of reports by consultants. I believe that these documents as texts and handbooks form the logo-centric discourse of disaster.

Foucault (1980) argues that discourses are not mere bodies of ideas and ideologies but practices that systematically form the objects which they speak of. In this context, he speaks of practices of the self. He argues that these are not things that an individual invents but that they are patterns which he finds in the culture, and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture. What Foucault suggests is that a text has an externality, a relation between power and knowledge that is constituted and needs to be captured. In this sense, disasters like madness or sanitation are discourses and discourses of disasters emerge through the linking of epistemes. For example, Foucault demonstrates in *Madness and Civilization* (1988) that madness emerged as a discipline by a combination of forces, which included ideas of seclusion, rules of jurisprudence, norms of industrial labour, the norms of bourgeois morality and the discourses of psychiatry.

Disasters have become similar sites where a disaster is seen to emerge from an interlocking of different sciences, ideas of development, theories of humanitarianism, notions of medicalization, ideas of law. The National Relief Code, the Sphere Charter, the simple field manual that the relief worker carries, all reflect and participate in disasters as

discursive practices. It is this that I wanted to capture. Through textual analysis, I try to pinpoint the links between educations, economics, science, politics, literature and journalism that interlock to create disasters as a discourse.

The study also needs a list of what Raymond Williams (1985) calls *key words*. However, these key terms cannot be defined formally. For example aid, philanthropy, charity, humanitarianism are all forms of care. I employ the linguistic idea of the *shifter* (Silverstein 1976). Linguists use the idea of the shifter to suggest that the meaning of a word is not the stated definition but its meaning in use. It suggests that the meaning of the word changes in terms of the contexts and we need to map this (see Figure 3.1).



Source: Author

3.8 Field, Access, Ethics and Reflexivity

3.8.1 Field Sites and Access

When I started my DPhil on disasters, I decided to study what I pompously dubbed as the ‘pluriverse of disasters’. In the interim, I realized that I had become an outsider in terms of time. I had witnessed a fragment, left the field and was returning almost 4–5 years later, convinced in a Heraclitean sense that you cannot enter the same river twice. I was not only entering at a different time but in a conceptual sense, I was entering a disaster downstream, focusing not on the disaster or its immediate aftermath. I gradually realized that even the concept of flow had changed. The disaster as a chain of being did not follow the official 3R sequence but was morphologically different.

I also realized the bracketed nature of fieldwork, which is a professional rite of passage. I was a liminal creature in a professional sense. Yet, I realized how different a visitor is from a fieldworker. There is a casualness to the former’s status. The visitor is the Simmelian stranger, here today and gone tomorrow (Simmel 1959). The fieldworker, on the other hand, is a more embedded creature, condemned to details, caught in a grid of opportunities. As a researcher, I am an academic who confronts the native and the layman. As a fieldworker, I am confronting not an exotic culture but my own. I am studying not an alien site but my own neighbourhood. Third, I am not looking at normalcy, but a crisis situation rife with pain. Fourth, the nature of language demands that I read the situation emically and etically. My common sense initially provided me with a grid of oppositions that would blend into dialogue. I began by realizing that the reified nature of dichotomization triggers the beginning of reflexivity. What John Barnes (1971) said of dichotomies like tradition and modernity is relevant to the nitty gritty of fieldwork. He observes that in order to “escape from the amusing but sterile ballet of symbols into which history and anthropology, synchrony and diachrony, continuity and discontinuity, reversible and irreversible time dance endlessly around each other until the audience decides to go home, we have to break down dichotomies, establish continua and feed in more facts” (Barnes 1971: 545). Access is critical to ethnography, the strategy,

and tactics, the understanding of mechanisms that “can help ethnographers engage skillfully and flexibly with new people and situations” (Harrington 2003: 595). We must begin by recognizing that the canonical formulations of access might be dated. They are often based on the relationship between a white male ethnographer and ‘native exotic’ others (Smith and Kornblum 1989). Studying one’s own society in a post-colonial era carries with it a new baggage of problems. The old hierarchical or cooperative model does not work. The relationships are more multiplex and dense, the power games, more subtle and symbolic. It is more as if the anthropologist as stranger asks for the gift of information. Here, “participants often have the upper hand, acting as gatekeepers and defining the terms on which researchers can gather data”. (Harrington 2003: 598).

The ethnographer as self has overlapping identities of native, of woman and of ethnographer. In fact, the multiplicity of facets can be an advantage, allowing, as they do, a variety of angles with which an informant can be approached (Hogg and Abrams 1990; Tajfel and Turner 1979). The greater the number of identities, the more potent are one’s potential symbolic assets. The ethnographer can use an assortment of faces to approach the informant without violating ethics or losing face (Duncombe and Jessop 2002). It is a question of which part of herself the researcher presents and to whom in the everydayness of ethnographic life (Goffman 1959; 1961; Schlenker 1980). Access is a more clinical process than entry or rapport and more broad-based than the latter. Access involves a whole bundle of learning rituals, codes which one masters as a form of competence. With access, you have not only the acquisition of consent, but also the right to observe what you want, go where you like, obtain the necessary texts and perform adequately for the period of time that you needs to function. There is a process where you negotiate for information, a research relationship might have routines but these are different from those of an ordinary life. So a mere common sense approach will not do as there is an ‘artificiality’, an ‘officialness’, a contractual residue to the relationship. Yet, the very strangeness in a Simmelian sense produces confidentialities one may not receive in everyday life.

Each organization creates its own rituals of entry. The way you access it becomes a hallmark of the style of the organization. When I started my interview of the RSS, I checked their website and rang up their head office in Nagpur. I explained the nature of my research and asked for contact names in Ahmedabad. The volunteers there gave me the number of Hegdewar Bhawan, which houses RSS, and asked me to ring up Girish Bhai, and then quickly gave me his mobile number.

Girish Bhai Patel told me matter-of-factly that he was busy with an audit for two days but gave me an appointment for the next day. He told me that the Bhawan (building) was near the old cattle market and I eventually tracked it down, discovering a guard standing pathetically with a .22 rifle. I kept wondering who he could defend with that.

I then walked into a hall. It was bare. The furniture was minimal. A few men in khaki shorts and simple white vests were moving around, looking distracted. I asked where the media centre was. They asked me to call at 1230 hours. Girish Bhai was waiting. I went in and said *namaskar* and then thanked him for meeting me. He responded dismissively, saying “Why do you thank us? We are only doing our work.” We then fixed to meet on 25th August. In the meanwhile I was told to meet Mukundrao Deobhankar at the RSS media centre. I called the RSS media centre. The phone was picked up with a greeting of *Namaskar*. I explained that I had been asked to contact Mukundrao Deobhankar. I was told that he was not there and that if I left my number, they would call me when he came in at 1230 hours.

I was driving down to Gandhinagar when I got the return call at 1230 hours from the media centre. I was asked once again about the purpose for my call. I told him that I was a PhD student working on disasters, that I had seen the RSS work in Orissa and Gujarat post the disasters, and that I wished to understand how they work as an individual and as a collective. I asked if I could get some material on their work and activities as I also wished to understand what compels them to do this work.

“Of course”, I was told. “I suggest you come down to our office for a face-to-face meeting.” Whenever I thanked them, I got one response. “No no. Why thank us. It is our work to give you the information.” I encountered the precision, politeness and the humility (even though there is a sense of reservation) when they deal with me. The response would be very different with Swaminarayan (BAPS), where the organization with all its restrictions would open its “doors” in all ways “possible”.

3.8.2 Biases of Gender and Time

I did encounter difficulties as a woman and as a professional. Negotiating entry with some religious sects, while not difficult, had to be ritualized. I had to ritualize encounters, as monks are often barred from talking to women directly. This was specifically the case with Swaminarayan (BAPS). This demanded the ritual of a curtain creating ‘invisibility’ in a ritual sense for the encounter. Oddly, the strangeness that sociologist Simmel talked about creates rituals of hospitality. The tactical issue is how to extend hospitality in terms of food and time right across to information.

The exchange approach emphasized by Peter Blau (1964) and others where one obtains something by giving something may not be necessary. The gift of information acquires its reciprocity through the counter-gift of listening or even the return gift of public attention. An interview becomes a symbolic marker of status, a ritual recognition of a place in the pecking order. In the writings of ethnographers, too much is made of role-playing. Role is important but network and genealogy may be more tactical. How one deploys family, status, friendship links, official affiliations, defines how one is mapped, embedded in research, which one has to tap into. Harrington is right in seeing it as a symbolic drama where one presents an ‘acceptable’ self. As he suggests, identity is symbolic currency. By circulating the various aspects of one’s self, one can negotiate the universe of information that one needs to traverse in (Harrington 2003: 603). But Warren’s caution that the “fieldworker is a research instrument who cannot fully control his or her social placement in a field” (2001: 203) is welcome. The emic word *jugalbandi* is more appropriate, a matching of skills and competence where one gives, shares, takes. Fieldwork in India is

more a duet than a unilateral transmission from the informant as a soloist. It also becomes a balancing of familiarity and distance. One needs to maintain distance so one is not forced to be naïve and one precludes familiarity so one is not taken for granted. Yet familiarity is necessary because one needs the economy of trust and cooperation to move with ease (Hogg and Abrams, 1990). Yet as Goffman (1959) states, “The self must remain incomplete, a set of lines, dots which the individual must rely on others to complete”.

The performative nature of the encounter must rely on the unstated and unsaid to create the final picture of ease and trust that fieldwork demands. The socio-drama is clear, the symbolic nature of the encounter a challenge. But by facilitating an authenticity of identity, while creating a multiplex self, the researcher can create an acceptable figure that informants can identify with. By emphasizing negotiation, s/he does one does not emphasize power. The researcher realizes that the skill with which s/he uses her background creates a bargain that even the informant enjoys.

There are other questions requiring sensitivity. One is the problem of positionality. I was studying my own society. The problems stem not from colonialism or ethnocentricity or the ritual distance of an outsider but from the positionality of class and gender. Would my middle class bias affect the understanding of such events? More particularly, would my liberal or (anti)-secular sensitivities filter my reading of fundamentalist perspective? Would my urbane-ness distance me from the rhetoric of religion, fundamentalism and ideology? I keep a diary to reflect on my body language to these groups and look candidly at the problem of studying people that I would have a grudging respect for.

There were three other questions that taught me that reflexivity is not a fixed property but a continuous sense of craftsmanship, a process rather than a badge.

I return once again to the question of time. I realized that the older model of disasters was a strict timetable. It offered little flexibility to the survivor and did not challenge the

imagination of the administration. The disaster specified certain administrative sequences which unfolded like rigid rituals in time. The 3R sequence, almost touted like a legislative act, epitomized the indifference in the earlier policy understanding.

The multiplicity of time in the new understanding of disasters became ethnographically and theoretically important. First, disasters need not exist only in episodic time and then return in a standard time cycle to normalcy. Second, disasters foster a crisis everyday, embed the survivor in liminal time, the time of betwixt and between. Third, as you categorize suffering, you realize that waiting, delay, silence need their own stories. Fourth, the policy narrative itself seeks to emphasize mitigation, building thus an anticipative time into time of memory of the survivor and the official history of the disaster as caught in policy narratives. As I proceeded ethnographically, I realized the varieties of temporariness from the decision frame of coping to the act of waiting to move out of temporary shelters like tents, an act that might be delayed by even six years.

A calendar of the variety of disasters that a society faces, including droughts, floods, cyclones, earthquakes, in different sequences becomes a social need, part of the *Panchang* of social life. It is almost as if the time of disasters needs to be added to astrological, religious and secular time to help define the social as a construct. Disasters, at least as a mental map, become necessary not just to map the wider swings and flow of time but the time of everydayness in decision-making. The time horizon of subsistence groups is different from the time horizon of a policy-maker outlining a theory of well-being. The clock and calendar time of policy documents, which work with Western bureaucratic time, have to be hybridized with the diverse lived time of disasters. This includes trauma wherein a person might repetitively and almost redundantly live the event. I realized that a thesis exploring the ethnography of framing needed mental maps of time, which the ethnographer has to keep testing as a part of reflexivity. The temporality of disasters is critical for ethnographical reflexivity.

3.8.3 Beyond Ethical Guidelines

I must refer to the ethics and the protocols of research. The Social Research Association (SRA) ethics protocol (p. 30) (see <http://www.the-sra.org.uk/documents/pdfs/ethics03.pdf>, accessed on 20 July 2010) identifies vulnerable populations “as children, those with intellectual disability or those in dependent relationship to the researcher or commissioning body”. Vulnerability however, may not just be about physical disability. It is also about people living on the fringes of ‘poverty’ or in bare life survival modes (Agamben 1998). The nature of engagement, consent and encounter demanded here may take different forms. Every effort was made to “enable participation” (SRA, p. 37) and to be sensitive to those who are marginalized because of caste, religion or gender.

The SRA guidelines (p. 30) point out that in order to protect the researchers from accusations of failing to serve informed consent, the practice of having subjects sign a consent form has evolved. As the ethics document itself points out, a “signed consent form might only be appropriate for longitudinal and/or more intrusive studies”. In case of my study, explicit consent, written or oral, was difficult to obtain because of both the nature of the population that I was studying as also the nature of the groups that I was engaging with. Consent is more likely to be of a more tacit nature and based on trust. The participants in this culture will be more familiar with this. As the SRA’s ethical guidelines recognize, the very idea of ‘infringing’ into the ‘private space’ would vary from culture to culture.

I believe that the participants involved in the study need to be provided with the dignity of conversation as well as be assured of the right to privacy if they desire it (SRA, p. 31).

As the SRA claims, research can never really be entirely objective, and social research is no exception. The SRA also sensitively points out, “Ethical conduct of individual research is in the last instance about *actual conduct*. It depends less on what professional

bodies of social research assert (p. 23)". Ethics ultimately, is autobiographical and context-sensitive.

There was a major gap in my work that bothered me in this context. It had to do with the question of the body. Disasters evoke the body and the metaphor of the body. The variety of bodies that confront the ethnographer is stark. S/he sees the naked body, the starved body, the pregnant body of a woman who had survived by hanging on to a coconut tree. S/he sees mass death, the body rotting in saline water, the bodies of dead cattle. S/he also encounters again and again the traumatized body, condemned to autistic silence or rituals of repetition. Disasters present both the stark squalor and the dignity of the body. More mundanely, disasters, in their search for normalcy, seek to discipline the body.

I found that I could not focus on the sociology of the body in disasters. I am sensitive to the poetics of the body, the richness of insight and analysis available in the works of Rich (1986; 2002; 2003), and Butler (1993). There is a power to that kind of writing. One recalls a paragraph from Rich (1986) where she writes:

"To write 'my body' plunges me into lived experience, particularity: I see scars, disfigurements, discolorations, damages, losses, as well as what pleases me. Bones well nourished from the placenta; the teeth of a middle-class person seen by the dentist twice a year since childhood. White skin marked and scarred by three pregnancies, an elected sterilization, progressive arthritis, four joint operations, calcium deposits, no rapes, no abortions, long hours at a typewriter – my own, not in a typing pool, and so forth...." (Rich 1986: 215).

I must confess that the juxtaposition of bodies I saw at the disaster sites was more compelling. Somehow, it seemed too intrusive to write about. I was reluctant to even use my camera. I think what the ethics code says about consultation becomes a tacit understanding here.

3.8.4 Tales of Reflexivity

I realized that reflexivity, rather than being a property was a gradual process of awareness. Let me briefly capture a few stories that reflect some of the challenges a researcher faces in the field.

I visited a coastal island in Orissa. The only access to this island is by crossing the river. On the other side is the sea. And the sea had come in. Almost every home in this village lost family members. In fact, I have not spoken to a single person in this village who had not lost members of their family. The village had only one *pucca* (cement) house. But it is not the event that stays on in the memory of the people. It is what followed after the cyclone and the tidal wave receded and the village was still marooned. One woman in particular was inconsolable. She wept as she recalled how her children had begged her for food. She painted a graphic picture of how her children had put their heads in her lap and said “Ma, we are hungry. Please give us food.” “Their heads were in my lap. They were looking at me... begging me. But there was no food,” she said, weeping inconsolably. In three days, she saw her three children die one after another because of starvation.

I continued with my trip of the island village talking to the survivors there. Most of them were women. After a couple of hours when it was time to have lunch, I was told that lunch arrangements had been made for me in the village. A sumptuous six-dish meal including some fresh prawn curry with fresh prawns from the *gheri* (enclosures) had been prepared for me and the persons accompanying me I was served food by this same woman. She put up a huge pile of rice in my plate and served me the various dishes she had prepared. I wondered what it meant in an everyday sense to remember that day when she had no food for her children. Here she was serving me this sumptuous meal and forcing me to have another helping.

Another encounter has stayed with me. As I was travelling in Ersamma block in Orissa, I was talking to women and children who had lost members of their family. These encounters were facilitated by Action Aid (AA), which had worked in these locations.

Jayanti Raut of AA acted as a translator in some cases. She helped me ‘access’ many of these women. She told me that she had been working in this area for ten years now. She knows the history of most women here or the kind of challenges they face. I spent a lot of time ‘accessing’ many of these women with her help. A few days later, back in Bhubaneswar, I was writing about this in my field notes. On a hunch, I called up Jayanti to thank her for her help. I told her it had been most useful and the work she was doing was humbling. “Ma’am,” she interrupted me hesitantly “I wanted to talk to you about myself.” “Yes,” I said, expecting her to say that she wanted me to communicate something to AA. “I also lost everything in the cyclone”. “What?” I said incredulously. “My husband was swept away. I had had a baby just ten days ago. My child and I survived on the tree. But I lost my husband.” She broke down. “I just want to bring up my child and live a respectable life. That is the only aim in my life now.” She told me, “I wanted to talk to you. I really wanted to talk to you.” We didn’t get a chance.

I realized that reflexivity is much more complex than I had initially assumed. I began to confront the possibility that ethnography goes beyond looking and listening to the silence of the witness and the survivor. I had to be sensitive to body language and the idioms of silence. I had to be open to the unstated and the suppressed. I realized that ethnography in that sense becomes an ethics of memory wherein the ethnographer has to fine-tune the varieties of narratives hidden in a survivor’s story.

There were also moments of irony. I must recount one story that occurred during my travels with AA, which has continued to work in Ersamma ten years after the cyclone. On one particular day in Ersamma, I was travelling with the workers of AA, which has opened an office in the Ersamma headquarters. The office is well-equipped for an overnight stay. Through the day we travelled to various parts of the district, meeting different individuals with whom AA continues to have links. We stopped at several villages and I was very keen to meet people apart from those that AA had lined up for me in a particular village. So the list of people we met grew. The AA representative was very

keen that we visit one final village that day. It was some distance away but she was insistent that we must go there.

As we approached the village, she directed us to head to the school of the village. The school was bustling with activity – unusual, as it was late evening. The first thing I noticed was a group of women and children who had gathered in the courtyard of the school. There was a flurry of activity. I saw two little girls, perhaps not more than 7 – 8 years old, dressed in their Sunday best. One had flowers in her hand the other had a garland. So I was garlanded and given flowers before being led away to a room. One part of the room had a mat which was empty, but the room was full of at least 100 women. I was told that they had been waiting here for the last four hours for my arrival. Before the implication of this could even sink in, I was told that the children would perform for my benefit. So they danced and sang for my benefit while I realized that I would be a participant in exactly what was an anathema to me. I was then asked to ask ‘any’ question I wanted to the women. They would answer. I had been unaware that people had been lined up to perform for me. I was feeling like a colonial anthropologist with images of the ‘natives’ being lined up for interrogation. I was trapped in a position I detested ethically and politically. I found difficulties in negotiating that space without hurting any sensibilities.

I realize that tales garnered in the course of fieldwork border on the confessional. I also realize that writing them out has a cathartic function. In the midst of a scientific professional exercise, one shared doubt points to the vulnerabilities of your own concepts and methods. Yet, one of the things I learnt from my work on disasters was precisely that vulnerability emphasizes openness. It outlines fragility to also record resilience and agency. The fieldworker in that sense is like the survivor. She realizes that her study is both a lens and a mirror. It is a way of studying the world and also an opportunity to look at one self. In confronting the Janus face of her work, she celebrates the very nature of the rituals she has engaged in.

4. From Coping to Reconstruction

In the previous chapters, I have tried to present a framework of analysis that would inform my research. I began with an autobiographical statement and review of literature while attempting to locate my research within a wider context. I then formulated the research questions which I sought to explore during the course of my fieldwork. This chapter is the first of the four empirical chapters that follow my formulation of the research problem.

This chapter explores the rudiments of survival in terms of coping. I articulate the dynamics of coping in terms of the voices of the survivor. I try to show that disasters operate at the level of bare life. Secondly, I also try to describe the destruction of the social and trace how recovery in disasters is an attempt to rebuild material life and reconstruct the social. Thirdly, I show how the rebuilding of the social after the disaster often juxtaposes the old and the new fragments of the social. I then explore the tensions between the two.

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1998) raised the issue of bare life in relation to the existential situation in camps like Auschwitz and Dachau. Bare life, once a state of exception, began to overlap with large parts of the political and social realm. The question one must confront is as to what happens when bare life extends beyond the camps. Agamben explains that if anything characterizes modern democracy, it is the ability to go beyond the baseline. It wishes to substitute for bare life, a sense of emancipation, the need to put freedom and happiness as an additional shell, a bulwark against the vulnerability of abject survival (Agamben 1998: 11). This leads us to the idea of coping and its centrality in survival during disasters.

Coping as an idea has been used in many diverse ways. In psychology, it traditionally refers to ways of responding, approaching and living through grief, or through intense

periods of suffering. The label ‘coping’ is also used to refer to certain forms of decision-making under severe constraints, when in survival conditions we make choices which are less than optimal or even satisficing conditions. In such a situation, we do not even abstract a situation into a heuristic or decisional calculus, the survivor reacts intuitively in terms of the tacit knowledge of his body. He merely adjusts by creating a temporary minimal act of equilibrium with his environment. Coping also refers to certain forms of relations to technology. If technology is seen as a chain of being, a spectrum, then a Schumpeterian innovator transforming the environment comes at the end in his promethean power, while coping as adjustment is minimal, almost tiredly modest. As Goffman says in his *Asylums* (1961), coping deals with the technology of make-dos. It assembles a minimal system for survival—rotten coconuts for food, a banana leaf as a roof, old abandoned rice as a meal for the day. Coping reminds us that the self is a collection of envelopes. The body is a shell, identity is a skin, property guards against the vulnerability of the self. Technology and community add additional layers of protection.

Agamben’s idea of bare life refers to a situation where life is stripped of all these layers of self and protection. It is the ultimate abjectness of the camp where the body has lost its last reserves. At that moment, the act of survival, the desperate act of prolonging being is called coping. It is literally skeletal, the bare resistance of bare life seeking that minimal continuity of life. One does enough to survive, eke out a living at a level of existence where even subsistence or poverty appears as a form of surplus. Coping is that minimal act of agency, that poetics of resistance, of survival that demands its own grammar, economy, language and semiotics. Coping as an activity links bare life, subsistence and survival in extreme situations to the normalcy of poverty or marginality. Coping overlaps with subsistence, with poverty, with bare life, in a kinship of tactics but is yet different from each of them.

The analytic significance of this chapter is to explore how the individual survivor works out strategies of coping and survival. I try to argue that the survivor is a theorist. In rebuilding his/her home, and reworking his/her life, livelihood, s/he reworks and designs

the social. S/he realizes that the sociological assumptions about family, State, neighbourhood, gender may become more tentative after a disaster. By splicing it, reworking society and its remnants like a quilt patch, the survivor reworks the social, constructing new ways of relating to existing institutions and even building new ones. In a more specific sense, this chapter tries to capture the voices of the survivors, and the commentaries of listeners, witnesses and activists to try and understand the construction of the social at its most rudimentary level of survival. It explores the way people and communities organize themselves to build their own strategies for coping outside and beyond the formal institutional levels. In doing so, this chapter engages with the second research question as to how the social is constructed by various players in the field. In order to address these questions, I have organized the chapter into five broad sections. I start with a brief reflection on the idea of survival and vulnerability. I enrol Himanshu Khatua, a journalist, filmmaker and Director of the Kalinga Institute of Technology (KIT) in Bhubaneswar as my double: as witness, as listener, as chronicler of the narratives of a disaster event to help me construct the narratives of the survivor. I then address the issue of women who are often referred to as the 'vulnerable' population not just in the literature but also by a range of organizations in the preceding chapters. I examine how this definition of vulnerability is not a monolithic concept but plays out in the larger social context. The next section examines the category of refugee and migrant as survivors. This is followed by a section about the Self-help Groups (SHGs) constituting a circle of the social that has emerged to cope with the challenges thrown up by the everydayness of disasters. Finally, I reflect on the voices of various activists who point to the tension between the varieties of the social, wherein old models and assumptions come under strain as the survivor attempts to rebuild. The family which was protective now turns exploitative. Secondly, the disaster opens out new opportunities, creating new role definitions in the process.

4.1 Survival and Vulnerability

A cyclone does not merely destroy nature; it destroys the layers of protection around an individual. S/he is at his/her most vulnerable, completely open to the forces of nature and completely exposed as a weakened body, unable to resist any form of violence. However, when one encounters the rudimentary, one realizes not only how brittle the social is but also how the social can seed itself on the tiniest of possibilities. The social is usually seen as a whole, as a collective articulation of norms, as a defined network of roles, rights, duties and obligations. We begin to isolate the individual and try to understand how this being creates a life-world around him/her. Language becomes important because it is through language and the dramaturgy of the body that coping begins creating morsels of the social.

The first thing that one notices about disasters is the silence of the dead. They have little to say, and the little they have to say is represented through the smell of death and decay. There is a second kind of silence, which is the silence of a survivor suffering from trauma, or one who is just too tired and overcome with grief or with the fatigue of survival. That silence has a different grammar, it needs to be listened to and decoded in a different way. Sometimes, it is the silence of courage. However with many, it is the silence of despair.

The drama of survival inevitably involves the drama of searching. The maps in the survivor's mind have been dislocated by the cyclone. I recall one particular instance just after the Orissa cyclone in 1999. I was travelling along the road in a jeep, finding our way through the fields. As was the norm during this trip, we decided to give a 'lift' to an old man who was headed in the direction in which we were travelling. During the conversation, he told us, "I am here to look for my brother and his family of seven. But I cannot find the village. All the markers, the trees, the houses, the village has disappeared. I can't even locate the village where I grew up and lived for most of my adult life".

I will cite another instance involving a respondent from Gujarat. He was a doctor working in the temporary hospital at the jubilee ground in Bhuj. All the stories he narrated started from the fifth day of the earthquake. It was in the course of the conversation that I discovered that he had lost his parents and siblings who had been buried under debris. For the first four days, he was just waiting outside the collapsed building hoping to recover their bodies. On the fifth day, after ‘recovering’ and ‘cremating’ their bodies, he went straight to help others. His stories thus always started from the fifth day. This made me realize how maps of space and time become crucial in any narrative.

4.2 The Himanshu Khatua Story

My first witness, Himanshu Khatua, is Director of the Kalinga Institute of Technology (KIT), Bhubaneswar. Himanshu begins with his own experiences as a prelude to his narrative and then tries to capture what he calls the ‘unending pathos of isolation, the suffering and the pain of the survivor’.

Once the cyclone abated (on the second day), Himanshu and his friend went in search of the latter’s sister, who had been ‘caught’ in the cyclone at the port town of Paradip. He recalls the struggle to get there, “The petrol pumps were not operational, roads were blocked, the sides of the roads had huge trees which prevented any mobility, and there was hardly any path to go to Paradip. Two of my friends went on a bike but there was no fuel, and there were huge queues in front of petrol pumps. We needed at least five litres to reach Paradip. We were hungry, we had no food, and people were rushing in and crying, searching for their lost ones. It was mayhem.” They somehow escaped through the blockage. “There were four of us and we lifted trees that blocked our way.”

He recalls, “When we reached Jagatsinghpur, our bike had a puncture. There were no facilities, we had to drag our motorcycle for many kilometers and then we stopped at a village. Then we moved ahead. As we moved along, the full scale of destruction became

obvious. Beside the rail tracks were dead bodies, just dead bodies, dead bodies of animals and human beings twisted and lying together. The water was salty. After thirty-six to forty-eight hours, the smell of rotting bodies..." He pauses in his narration, almost reflective. "My skin was itching. It took us twelve hours to make a journey which one normally did in two-and-a-half. We waded chest deep in water."

"We searched through the house where she was supposed to be. We knocked on doors where we thought she could have taken shelter. We eventually found her in a school." Searching for her also took them to the hospital which was crowded with people. "In the hospital we met a staff nurse who had been working non-stop but had nothing to eat, we gave her some biscuits and she offered us some black tea because there was no milk. The lady said, 'People were blocking the roads because they were hungry. I thought they wanted to loot but all they wanted was food.' I was really tired. That evening we slept on the roadside."

Himanshu Khatua tells me that these images continued to haunt him. The cyclone created the effervescence of the social in the first moments of desperation. Then, he feels, factionalism entered when the NGOs intervened. "These NGOs started a new politics. People were fighting over things." They discovered that they fell into different categories. "Someone was not on the BPL (Below the Poverty line) list, some had no grounds to claim compensation and some outsiders came in enthusiastically to claim compensation for their relatives." The cyclone became a character in his imagination. It was then that he thought of making a documentary on the survivors, with a focus on the women. The documentary was a reflection by a male documentary-maker reading the cyclone through the eyes of the several women he had met during the post-cyclone period.

4.3 Women and 'Vulnerability'

Khatua tried to locate people who had a memory of the cyclone: widows, girls and young children, still struggling and surviving. He then tried to follow a few characters, film them through various phases. His narrative captures the vulnerability of woman through different aspects of the social. He becomes the voice, the story-teller, the narrator of what he called the different kinds of loneliness and vulnerability of the woman.

In one particular interview, the woman, speaking in Bengali spoke of her loss, "Twenty-four people died in our house. I had a house with a thatched roof. My two sons were swept away. My middle son was with me. I was on a tree. All my three sons died. A person rescued me. I first lived on water from a *narial* (coconut). A snake and I lived together on the same tree. When I got down, my throat was dry. I went to my in-laws' house and no one was there. I went to my house and no one was there. I lost everyone." She broke down and covered her face, "I am now suffering from brain fever. I received two cheques of seventy-five thousand rupees each. One cheque was grabbed by my husband's brother because I had taken shelter in his house. He was exploiting me. He was forcibly telling me to give up the cheque and the claim. He was also asking me to adopt a child for money, the compensation that the orphan would get." She breaks down, weeps, inconsolably and says repeatedly, "I was inside the house when the water came. All of us went to the roof-top but the roof was floating. One by one, all my family members disappeared into the water. I grabbed a tree and was saved."

Himanshu intervenes with his own thoughts at this stage. "We have to ask what kind of suffering this is. Do they experience the disaster? There is no understanding of what these people are going through and, therefore, there is no sense of the nature of intervention." Khatua adds, "Many of the widows got married to the younger men in the post-cyclone period." In a clip that would follow, the camera pans to a woman, 'My husband beats me up. I made a mistake by getting remarried. I was thinking of the past, the loss of my

husband and child, the ones I lost. But my new husband takes my money and beats me. He took one hundred thousand rupees as dowry.’”

Khatua recalls, “Once I heard that there was this woman who had ostensibly received an offer of a huge sum of money from foreigners.. She then started getting proposals for remarriage. She thought the money would come to her but finally she got nothing. The money had created a fictional world in her head.”

Khatua recalls that most women were wary of being photographed. One of the women mentions an interview that she had given in a magazine, “One magazine published about me but I did not gain from this publicity. Rumours started about me. This man came in short pants, gave me chocolates, and took my photograph. I told people not to take my photograph. If you take my photograph, people will say you are taking the photo to get me married. I am listening to all such kind of talk and have to deal with the stigma of it.”

Khatua shows me a video interview with a woman standing outside a hut, which has a board saying, “Built by INDIA TODAY–CARE”. She asks him, “Why are you taking photographs? What will you do with the footage?” Khatua responds by asking them whether they doubted his ‘intentions’. The women assured him that they did not but then added, “You will not be here to pick up the pieces. Before taking any step, we have to think a hundred times. We are four widows and together we do some farming. If I do not do anything, how will we eat? There is no one in my house. I cannot get married; if I do, I will hear taunts. If I get married and the man exploits me, I will fall into the same darkness again. I have been to the radio station to give some interviews. To forget something, I must do something. I must do something.” She repeats again. She thinks further, and almost in a disconnected way adds, “They are registering marriages in the temple now. Nobody says a husband has to take care of the wife. It is like cutting a finger. If you join it back, it is still a joint, that is what a second marriage is like. I think of it as my fate, my *karma*.”

Khatua adds as an aside, “Many of the widows got married to the younger men in the post-cyclone period. Most men married to get hold of the compensation the women had received.” This is borne out by my interviews with the workers of Action Aid and other humanitarian agencies working in this area. Some like CRS also hint that incidences of woman and child trafficking rose post the cyclone. Part of their response strategy now seeks to address these issues.

Khatua ends his documentary with a few comments about his own understanding. He observes, “Men are pretentious. But women are free and frank. You need to be patient to get the truth out of them. It is difficult to get into the inner world of a woman. You will see a lot of emotional changes in front of the camera. Yet all the women open up, they come out and share. There were women who had not stepped out of their homes and would have never stepped in front of a camera. The cyclone changed all that. It empowered women. This is what I have tried to explore.”

I began with fragments and stories from Himanshu Khatua’s documentary because the video creates a microcosm of the social after the cyclone. It captures the anomie, the breakdown, the vulnerability and the stubbornness of people, desperately fighting for survival. The social is constructed like a slow jigsaw puzzle. Little acts of survival, a few tactics of affiliation, a negotiation here, a friendship there and life begins again. The Self-help Group (SHG) became a critical way in helping rebuild the social in a quiet way.

Khatua’s observations, scattered through several loosely structured interviews and the voices of his characters, reveal to us that the social in a disaster, at the most rudimentary act of survival, is almost like a tentative secretion. Between the losses, the abandonment, the separation, the grief, the isolation, one reaches out for someone who has suffered similarly. It is not the old normalcy of the social, as now one has to reconstruct the social through a rite of passage.

In a society where being a widow means exclusion and social sanctions, widows realize that it is not easy to get remarried. The ones who did re-marry realize that they had re-entered the social only because of the rapacity of a male, hunting for the compensation that these women had received in lieu of the deaths of their family members in the cyclone. The SHGs create a normative idea of the social. There is a sharing of memory, a togetherness of bodies huddled together, a remembrance of the sense of waiting, and the silences of isolation as one among them reaches out to another survivor. It is like little fragments joining in the memory of a social that both remember. In fact, it is as if individuals as fragments or morsels coalesce again to create little strands of the social. Coping not only creates survival, but is also an attempt to remember the social and to retrieve it. In fact, it is memory and survival that helps us recreate the social. However, before I dwell on the world of the SHG and how it creates the social world for coping, let me briefly dwell on the other geographies of vulnerability.

4.4 Refugee and Migrant: Survival at the Margins

Himanshu Khatua captures the geographies of voice by mapping out the varieties of vulnerability that policy needs to look at. The survivor and the marginal do not constitute a black box of categories. We need to open them up and examine the varieties of vulnerability and the layers of the social that people desperately cling to.

Khatua shows that there are marginals even within the margin. We need a classification to identify the specific nature of loss. He lists out the varieties of suffering: “While doing this story, I found that the people who suffered the most were the Bengali refugees. These were refugees who came in 1971 from Bangladesh and settled in Bengal and Orissa, attracted by the huge coastline. They loved water, they lived near water and they settled all across the coastline, in clusters and not in villages. They loved fishing, they also started cultivation. They created embankments, which did not allow the sea-water to

come near, and so the mangroves died. These were hard-working people but the embankments were a blunder.”

“Next on the list were illegal migrants on the coast. The governments wanted to dry them out and many people, who came from this area, also suffered.” Marginals without entitlements become even more vulnerable.

While talking to survivors, I visit an island village Dahiwar, where I am told that 75 per cent of the residents here are Bengali migrants. They do not have ration cards, nor do they have any citizenship rights. Most of them had crossed over in a boat. Several of them are seasonal migrants who come during the cutting season. A woman tells me, “There were 587 casualties in families, 21 families totally perished.” Another woman recalls, “There was nothing here. People were living on trees. There was water everywhere.” Yet the narrative was not merely one of numbers. It also pointed to the loss and guilt of the survivor.

Pratima, a woman standing on the side, tells me that eleven members of her in-laws’ family died. “No one survived. My husband and I survived because I had gone to Ersamma to get my salary and he works outside. My husband was very upset. He cannot read Bengali. So he did not know the news. He searched for his family for a very long time. He asks me, ‘Why did you not shift my family?’ How was I to know that the cyclone would be so strong? I survived only because I had gone out. There was no *prachar* (communication). Even if there was, it must have been on the main roads. Moreover, we did not think that it would be strong. But that chapter of life has not closed. I remember. My husband says the same thing. He keeps saying, ‘You survived but you destroyed my family.’ She pauses and then adds, ‘We have never gone back to the land where our families perished. The land is there, so is the destroyed place but we never go back there.’”

Radha Kumar Mandal, another survivor, murmurs repeatedly the number, 'Twenty-seven'. I realize she has lost 27 members of her family. She starts her recollection of the events from 15 days after the cyclone. She had gone to her parents' home for a visit. She lost all members of her family except her 11-year old son who had gone along with her. She tells me, "I came back to find nothing. There was nothing except bodies here. The Army came and helped us clean up the area."

Overhearing the conversation, another woman intervenes, "That is what the situation was like at that time. There was nothing here except bodies. Many bodies did not even have clothes on them. And the *sarees* were hanging around trees."

I travel to another village a few hours away. I understand that most of the residents there are migrants from Bengal. When I arrive, I am greeted with monosyllables. "What is *takka* (money) to a person who has lost a son or a daughter? What does money mean then?" Some of the other women creep forward to join our conversation. One of them tells me that she had been taken for dead and was thrown off the bridge. Someone noticed her moving and fished her out.

I travel to another 'migrant' village. The villagers here are worried. They tell me that the sea is coming in. The sea was 2 kilometers away when they first moved to this village. It used to take them at least an hour to get to the sea. The sea, as I observe, is now on their doorstep. The tide has been stopped by building a sand bag embankment. They are reluctant to tell me that they are Bengali migrants until I spot their *sankha* bangles and ask them if they are Bengali. It takes them a couple of hours before they feel they can trust me and admit that they are 'Bengali'. But they add, "We are Oriya also."

They are afraid. They recall the cyclone of 1971 in which many people died. They tell me that the 1971 cyclone was so bad that there was not a single dog or jackal left. The then chief minister had to bring dogs from 'outside' to eat the carcasses that were lying in the fields. They keep telling me, "We are not safe here. We have lost our courage... the sea

keeps coming in. All that we can do is pray to the God. On full moon day, most of us don't sleep. We are afraid that one day, we will also disappear. Some of us survived the cyclone in 1971 and subsequent ones in 1984 and 1999. We have requested the government to shift us or build a cyclone shelter for us, but the government won't listen to us. Give us a sea embankment." The villagers are aware of the criticism that they are responsible for the destruction of the mangroves which the environmentalists argue has allowed the sea to move in and made the coastline vulnerable to cyclones and erosion. Many of the women I met in the village repeatedly told me, "We did not kill the jungle."

Babaji Pradhan was 20 years old when the cyclone of 1971 struck. He tells me, "I saw a family of 100 being swept away in front of me. People in this area survived by holding trees till the tide receded. They lay there along with the dead bodies on the top of trees. All houses got washed away. There was nothing left after 1972. And no one helped."

Sujana Mallik, who was 40 years old at the time of the cyclone in 1971 (and is now 80), tells me, "Thousands of people were washed away in silence in 1971. They are not in the government records. It will happen again." They add that because they are migrants, they were not counted.

In this section, I have tried to enrol individual voices to illustrate the poignancy of pain and survival. This indicates that suffering needs a map rather than an omnibus set of categories. The narrative begins as a litany of number and then differentiates itself by tracking the varieties of marginality: as a migrant. The voices capture the bottom line of subsistence from which begins survival as an exercise of rebuilding.

4.5 The Self-help Group

4.5.1 Organizing Selves

The importance of Self-help Groups (SHGs) needs to be emphasized. They create, as it were, the first circle of the social, providing the first shield against vulnerability. In fact,

what survivors tell you about disasters reminds you of the Chinese symbolism around it. The ideogram of disasters signals both crisis and opportunity, and the crises of survival in disasters have led to new opportunities for women. Coping begins with simple things like loans, doles, acts of sharing. These are the first rituals and the SHGs build on them. The narrative captures the constant shift between objective status and subjective perception.

Aarti Panda, a survivor, says, “I cannot say how and what happened but I think it’s only because of the SHG that I have worked and survived. I cannot forget...” She points out to various women. “See there, that woman is secretary of a 16-member SHG. They have a poultry farm, all women. I have learnt to live in that. When tears were my only source of support, they (points to the women) taught me to live. I have one son who survived. He has an epilepsy problem. But I have learnt to survive. Action Aid also helped me by giving referral support to my son. But the SHG was what helped me survive.”

Savita Mandal talks about how the SHG meant moving from the *ghunghat* (veil) to the world outside.

Sitaram Das says, “I have created a Self-help Group of women who were affected by the cyclone. In our village of 300 people, 150 were swept away. Some women in our group have lost all six children.” She points to a woman standing at a distance, “She had four children. Three were swept away.” She continues in the same vein, “We have three groups of fourteen women each. Most of these women are widows. And then I lost a child and she lost hers. So we support and counsel each other. We took help from groups like AA to see how we can create these groups. The husband of one of the women came to take her. I told him it’s her right, this SHG. We will support and help her.”

Dayanti Mandal, who lost three children, along with her husband recalls how becoming part of the SHG helped her rebuild her life and her house. Her daughter slipped into depression after having lost the rest of the family. “I cannot forget the cyclone,” she says. “It changed my life. But I feel happy talking within the SHG.” A group of villagers

mention an SHG which has helped them save money. They now lend among themselves. “After several years, we have forty thousand rupees in the bank. One of us borrowed ten thousand rupees for a daughter’s wedding. Another one, fifteen thousand to build a hut. Another borrowed seven thousand for a cow.” As the transactions begin, the social gets constructed. Everydayness begins with the ability to start work. One villager tells me, “I can grow my vegetables now, I can get ten to twenty rupees everyday, I can make three hundred to four hundred rupees a month and repay the money I have borrowed.”

The next section seeks to illustrate how the SHG as a construct, as a quilt patch, creates new roles, new definitions. In the act of rebuilding, one questions or modifies old assumptions that are inherent in a society. There is an element of surprise as the survivor, on the road to recovery discovers new definitions and possibilities for herself.

4.5.2 SHGs and Their Unintended Consequences

A woman from the village of Champahaat on the road to Ersemma explains that SHGs trigger networks of the social, creating a density of overlapping networks. The stories almost follow a similar grid, providing a ‘before’ and ‘after’ picture of the social and the difference that the aftermath of the disaster has made to women. “Before the cyclone, women only did housework. None of the women went out. Ninety-nine per cent of the women in our village have not been out of the house except to the hospital. They have not even been to Balikuda, the block headquarters, 4 kms. from here.” There are also unintended consequences. Women have become political forces in a way they never imagined. The story of the *paani panchayat*, as a catalyst and a trigger, gives one an indication of this consequence.

I visit a woman’s SHG created by an NGO, Unnayan. After the earthquake, Unnayan started a programme of the *paani panchayat* for the farmers to try and provide them access to fresh water to facilitate agricultural production. As part of the project, Unnayan insisted on having four women in the *paani panchayat*. The project of *paani panchayat* (fresh water communities) involving the local farmers failed but something else emerged.

One of the women recalls,

“All these houses that you see in the village were then kuccha (mud) houses. Only 15 per cent of the houses were pucca (made of burnt brick/cemented). When the cyclone came in 1999, there were only 2 pucca houses in the entire village. There were 50 people in each house. Just enough for people to stand packed together, on stairs and the first floor. We were waist deep in water. We were hungry for five days. On the sixth day, we had coconut water. If one person died, there was no sadness. It was as if each was a separate self. Most of the cows and goats died and only a handful of them must have survived. The houses were smashed. There were no roads. Only boats could come into the village. Relief came through helicopters. Then the NGOs came. The relief was coming from the NGO and also from the block level [the administrative division]. Then ward members were given responsibility. There were floods everywhere. Because of saline water, the land was salty and crops would not grow. So the first suggestion was to create a paani panchayat (fresh water communities) with the hope that it would help farmers. After the cyclone, there were initially four paani panchayats. Each paani panchayat had 25 members. Unnayan wanted women representatives on the paani panchayat, and 4 – 5 women were invited to be part of it. And then some of us requested Unnayan through the women members to do something specifically for the women. You see we were suffering. The idea of an SHG was proposed. Today there are ten women’s groups with twenty-two members each. That time it was difficult to step out of our houses. No one knew what an SHG was. You know the taboo of the women stepping out of their homes. There were three married women and the rest were unmarried women. The SHG asked us to put 20 rupees every month into a savings account. We did not have that kind of money.”

One of the women sitting there pipes in, “We had to save 20 rupees per month per member. We have to do it. If we don’t do it, we can’t do anything. We can keep a handful of rice, by eating less... Save it. So we decided that we women would fast but we would save 20 rupees per month. And we did.”

Some of the projects initiated by the group failed, but this did not daunt them. They embarked on another project, ‘Golden Grass’ by using this grass to produce products that many women made traditionally as part of their dowry. They decided to grow it. But there was the issue of land. The issue was solved by using *badi* (common land). It was very dirty.” The village used the land for defecating. “We ladies cleaned it up and then we were trained in using golden grass to make baskets and hand fans.” The women got Unnayan to enrol designers and marketers to understand market trends. The women tried

to understand the market that they were catering to. Unnayan helped them with the training by using government support. One woman told me, “We have worked so hard. There was no shame. We were told to market what we had made. If we went alone, it would have looked bad and we would have been stigmatized. So twenty-two members would go out together.”

I am told that after the super-cyclone, almost every woman in this village had to step out of her comfort zone. The women had no way of going out to earn money. They were without any power. Everything was with the men. But things have changed now.” Another woman recollects, “Our power has increased with small initiatives of doing things together.” She adds, “After these initiatives we joined a bank. We now have a cheque book and a pass book. My husband had never given me money.” One of the women giggles with delight as she relays this information. “We were able to go out of the house and also go out of the village. We understood our power. We now feel we can do something. Now at least the men let us think. Now we have formed a *Shanti Sena* (peace army) to sort out family issues and other issues. Earlier they used to dominate over us. Now the Shanti Sena sorts out some of these issues,” she continues.

“We have done a lot of things post the cyclone. Including *gherao* (encirclement as protest) of the block, District Rural Development Authority (DRDA.)” She laughs again, sounding very delighted. “You see our village got flooded some years ago. Our drainage did not work. Still water means no crop and that meant hunger. We had been requesting the government for some time to help us drain the water so that we could cultivate a crop. But our requests fell on deaf ears. So all the women of the SHG went to gherao the DRDA. So they immediately sanctioned 20 lakh rupees [Rs. 200,000 or US \$3,586] to put the drainage system in place and then this year we had a crop. We (women) have now also become members of the agricultural committee at the block level.”

Another woman, Sushmita, reiterates the point, “After the cyclone things have changed. Even Naveen Patnaik (the state Chief Minister) will not do anything without considering

our view now. I have got power now,” she reiterates. “I stood for elections in a seat where earlier a man had contested and won. The women from the SHG asked me to contest. They supported me. I won the election!” Basanti Das, the founder-member of the first SHG, says, “Earlier, we did not know anything about the world outside. The problem was that we had to borrow money from the moneylender. Now we borrow it from the SHG. This has given us the leeway to have money for the education of our children. We can now educate our children, eat and are seeing the world.” Banojaswamini pipes in from a corner, “Peace has come to my house and the village has progressed due to the SHG. I have been a member of this SHG for 8 – 9 years. I have really worked hard to raise my children.” Kamudini Rawat, who is sitting in one corner of the room, tells me that the SHG meant stepping out of the house; going to the bank; learning how the bank works. “I look at the passbook of the SHG and we have one lakh rupees [Rs. 100,000 or US \$1793] in the account. I just couldn’t believe it. So much money - it’s unbelievable.” She laughs again in delight. “Before, I did not know that I could go to Mumbai and see the Elephanta Caves. Golden Grass has enabled me to travel. It has opened out the world to me. Golden Grass has made all this possible.” The humble Golden Grass project, coupled with the initiative of these women, becomes a magic wand leading to the beginning of women’s empowerment.

I heard similar stories while travelling with Benapani Misra of SWAD (Self-Employed Women Action and Development). She takes me to a village where SWAD had helped create an SHG for women after the flood. Most of the women still live a subsistence existence. An incident of a child being bitten by a snake triggered the women of the SHG to get together to clean up the local pond. The move was resisted by the local authorities and panchayat members, who saw it as a threat to their power base. The women say that at that moment, their only concern was that their children should be safe. “There was an overgrowth in the pond and it was a fertile ground for snakes. Children played around this pond and there were several incidents of snake-bites. We did not want any money for cleaning the pond. We did it just to keep our children safe.” Once they cleared up the

pond, it became a space for other possible activities. The women's SHG now leased the pond (with the help of a local NGO) to cultivate fish. In a couple of years, this became a lucrative business. I am told that once the potential wealth of this entrepreneurial project was realized by the local power elite, they tried to dislodge the women's SHG. However, the latter persisted and learnt to access resources from the government to pursue their "business interests". The women from this SHG would use this to lobby for regular visits by the *anganwadi* (health centres) workers. Stories like this are heard in abundance as one travels through Orissa. What struck me was that in Orissa, it was the women who were driving this change. The change was triggered simply because it meant survival for their children and them. It meant food; it meant a possible better life.

The survivor realizes that the road to citizenship is paved with entitlements. Entitlements as opportunities, as bundles making for competence, enhance citizenship as a skill, as the ability to harness opportunity. It is a recovery of agency in a creative everyday sense.

4.6 Remaking The Social: Coping

I have argued that disasters become a site for re-constituting the social. The poor and the socially stigmatized families realize that they do not have to return to the old kind of society. As my conversations with many Dalit families proved, disasters become an opportunity for remaking the social. There is a sense of subsistence which cannot be ignored. However, subsistence can sometimes convey a sense of normalcy where the basics are covered. But the bareness of life is always there. Stories of coping and survival mingle with stories of recovery to reconstruct the narratives of the social. In this sense, survival is a skill and any form of relationship becomes a form of social capital.

The bareness of coping is caught in some of these narratives. As one villager says, “When we see a crop is gone, we begin eating rice broth. We use *jowar* (millet) dust and boil it in water and eat it. We can also use horse grain dust, boil it into a paste and eat it. Sometimes, we do not even get green chilies but we add salt to the paste and have it with green tea. When there is no tea, we use *madranga*, a green leaf, which grows wild in the area.” Another woman, who is from the Asthrang area, known for its fishing, tells me that she knows a technique to catch fish with her hands. A man, who is listening, says, “Earlier we ate crab, we would use it for our curry but we do not see them often. With the pesticides and medicines used in the field, they are disappearing.” The old man sadly adds, “The old varieties of fish – *ulua*, *singhi*, *gunia*, *kantiakau*, and *baligarah* have disappeared or are barely available.” A roll call of fish becomes a roll call of disappearance.

I also want to very briefly ask another question: Who defines what is a disaster? I travelled through several villages. Take the example of Krishandasapur. It is a village between two rivers. It has 152 households and nearly 800 people live here. Only 9 people are ‘employed’. Most residents are agriculturists. I was told that 55 per cent of the villagers are landless (share-croppers). They said, “We enjoy 4 months of woes but those four months of woe mean eight months of joy”. “What does that mean,” I asked? They

replied, “From *Aashad* to the month of *Karthik* the floods come. It is because of floods that we have crops like *kala chana*, *peeli dal*, vegetables. During those four months, our only access to the world outside is in *dongas*. There are just a couple of *dongas* in the village. We store the *anaj* (grain) for those four months well in advance. Of course, some families suffer more than the others but the villagers support each other. It is routine. It happens every year.” Some of the women I talk to invite me to come and stay and experience the floods with them. “Come and stay with us those four months and see what the experience is like. We will take care of you,” they assure me.

This is not an isolated story. I travelled to many other villages which face a routine cycle of floods. Several of them told me that the floods are not all bad. I was also told about how the crops are stored for that period. They show me how the house designs have traditionally catered to deal with the months of flood, and for storing food for that period.

I realize that coping is almost episodic, it moves from event to event, day to day, and it is difficult to create a map of the future. Time gets cut into little slices as survival is cut into little slabs. With coping, the survivor begins with the most elementary of technologies and creates the most rudimentary networks of the social. But that is where survival begins. By the time the NGOs enter, the encounter is often between two kinds of social – a brittle social, struggling to survive, and a fixed idea of the social, determined to help and understand. There is a clash of competence that we need to grasp. Basant Mohanti of CARE talks about how CARE tried to strengthen the social. In fact, the strengthening of the social is also a discovery of the vulnerability of the social. The volunteers realize that they have a lot to learn. Mohanty explains, “Livelihood is fragile in many of these regions. Do you know these are sea-coast communities, and the sea-coast communities are marked by diversities? They are dependent on twenty-eight or twenty-nine varieties of fishing nets. Even we did not realize this. When we first provided nets, there was an intense dissatisfaction. So we had to organize a net *mela* (fair for selling different varieties of fishing nets). The communities had a choice to go and buy whatever net they required. Different fishing communities showed preferences for different kinds of nets. It

was similar to the problems in Sunderbans. We made our carpenters available. We realized that the communities in the Sunderbans have a different design from those in the Puri coast. They have a different design, a different type of net and they catch different kinds of fish. We were not aware of this till we reached the ground.”

4.7 Tensions in the Social: Reflections from Unnati

The narrative so far shows that survival is a recognition of the bottomline. The story then pursues the career of the survivor to show how in rebuilding his/her home and work, s/he rebuilds the social networks around him/her. They are not the old institutions. The survivor creates a bricoleur of relations, with fragments of the social cohering into small niches for sustenance. Our narrative depicts how the social is repaired, re-invented as a mix of old and new after the disaster. The voluntarism that comes after the disaster adds to the intensity of the social by inventing new forms of association ranging from youth clubs to grain banks, creating spaces of autonomy, which are parallel to or hostile to the traditional forms of control. What we witnessed in Orissa, we saw in a more intensified form after the Gujarat earthquake.

The voluntary groups add that there is need for a wider network of problem-solving. The NGOs come in with different specializations. The State and the army enter with their own competence. But the excess of logistics suddenly creates a root transition from starvation to dumping.

I interviewed Binoy Acharaya of Unnati, a group that carried out an enormous amount for urban reconstruction by re-inventing the social. The narratives of voluntarism add a new slice of the social. But they also raise the issues of governance and expose the links between political economy and governance.

Binoy Acharaya talked about the tensions within the social. He hinted that reconstruction was not a glue that put society together. Sometimes, fragments of the society could not be put together again, and you had to face the contradictions of the social. Voluntarism becomes the new social skill for mediating between the various dialects of the social and constructing a social based on a new idea of participation, entitlements and human rights.

Acharaya remarked, “We focused on the most vulnerable. Adhoi was a prosperous hill town, which was affected during the earthquake. There were 117 Dalit weaver communities here. They had taken shelter in another person’s land after the earthquake. But after one month, they were asked to vacate. They were asked to leave because they were getting support from Christian groups. So they had to find a new place.” Acharaya added that one must be unsentimental about marginality. He claimed that, “If we focused on Dalits, single women and Muslims, then even there one had to be alert. Let me tell you a story. There was once a widow who had three sons. They were hefty looking lads. The sons were using the mother. They would make her wait on the highway and ask for a tent. Each tent cost twelve to fourteen thousand rupees. They would then sell the tent. So this woman had been turned into a beggar by her own family. We realized that it is the marginal who get left behind, especially those who have no documentation, no access to power. There was an inequality in distribution. Some places were flooded with material while others had none. Some places had three fabricated schools while others had none.” Acharaya added, “There is something like disaster aid economy. Most of the money goes to the supplier and contractors and it overwhelms the local economy. In Bihar, during the annual cycle of floods, people have always managed without government or NGO support. In governance, earlier the ‘project management’ was by managers. Now the focus is on enabling people’s processes. A tent costs Rs. 14,000 [US \$250], a pre-fab house Rs. 40,000 [US \$717], a contractor house Rs. 120,000 [US \$2151]. But the outcome is zero.”

In this section, I have moved beyond the invention of the social at the domestic or the personal level to highlight how the civil society and community invent the social. The

NGO mediates between the State as classically governmental and the family. New experiments do not always work. Sometimes, they fold back and enforce older inequalities. Here, what one sees is a consolidation of the old social rather than new ways of harnessing crisis as opportunity.

4.8 Governance and the Social

Governance itself is a form of the social. It is the competence about handling the social. Vivek, an architect, involved with Unnati, commented that governance had to be invented as a part of the social and one of the credits of Gujarat state was that the NGOs managed to catalyse the process. Vivek remarked, “Governance arises sometimes in response to culture. In Gujarat, people are very entrepreneurial. The response is almost proportional to the loss. People try and recover from the loss. In Tamil Nadu, the response was very different. It’s focused on fishermen, Dalits and marginals. The political culture is very different and governance responds to that. In Gujarat, the system is very responsive but it is still a very hierarchical system. It is the entrepreneurial spirit among the people that has led to owner-driven housing. It was then that the State was responsive in terms of leadership and bureaucracy. Governance needs to be re-looked at and reformulated.”

Gujarat was more inventive about recovery as the communities were more inventive and entrepreneurial. There was an urge to go beyond the past. In fact, unlike Orissa, where collective memory still remains, wallowing in the disaster, because people saw little change in the social, except at the micro level, in Gujarat, it is the disaster that helped globalize the state and create new inventions of the social. Sonal Mehta, a physicist and a space technologist, commented,

“People have moved beyond the disaster. Earlier, there were several lifestyles: agriculturalist, pastoralist, and others whose livelihood depended on natural resources. Today, thanks to the disaster, you can see a globalizing Kutch, Banaskantha, Sabarkantha. There is now heavy industrialization in Gujarat. So there are positives and negatives of this. Many people have abandoned traditional livelihood systems. So the cost is not really tangible. It is about

uprooting a system. Many have become urban workers. They live in virtually dehumanized conditions in the city. Many of these people were earlier nature-dependent. But life is not the same now. Life is always changing. One should always have choices. And some control over the decision-making. But for most of them, it is not about choice. Life has forced them into a situation. It is not a romantic life. They earn 150 rupees at the end of the day.”

4.9 Some Concluding Comments

In this chapter, I have tried to trace a trajectory from survival and coping to the initial logic of reconstruction by articulating voices and by showing how voices capture, in their various fragments, the pain and isolation of survival, which in turn, becomes the beginning of the social. This chapter attempts to look at the brittleness of the social and examine how resilience begins with slow efforts, little mappings of the social. Survival, in fact becomes, through coping, a new cartography for the social and sets the prelude for later discussions.

At the outset, I had tried to demonstrate that disasters have often been constructed in terms of scientific practices, unfolding as a professional narrative around a naturalized event. I had also claimed that such description tend to dominate both the domain of science and policy in disaster management, but that the actual survival, that is, the way in which people cope with emergencies, may depend on a variety of knowledge systems. I had argued that these forms of survival may threaten the scientific monopoly of rationality where everyday understandings of people and society used ‘recipes’ of ‘bricolage’ (Strauss 1966), ‘satisficing’ (Simon 1986), ‘muddling through’ (Lindblom 1959) and ‘coping’ to respond to various forms of crisis. If risk confronts the invisible problems of science, coping reveals the embodiments of knowledge in a practical sense. One can argue that this reliance on our embodied perceptual and coping skills is nowhere more evident than amongst the survivors and ‘managers’ of disasters. The rituals of coping reveal that survival strategies go beyond rationality frames embodied in standard policy documents. Disasters, as I see it, have become discourses that mediate between

subsistence, poverty and development. One can conceptualize the policy implications in terms of the relation between the three terms: poverty, subsistence and development.

Subsistence refers to simple economies where surplus is almost non-existent. In anthropological literature, it signalled the problem of what are simple economies and whether the categories of modern economics could be applied to coping. If subsistence is still a liminal category, ambiguous in its economic status, poverty has a hallowed history in political economy and development theory. It is subject to metrics like the poverty line, measured as lack or deficit and is an object of policy. It is a revenue category. The ethnography of disasters reveals that many forms of survival and subsistence elude the revenue village, referring to modes of life which are so marginal as to evade the dignity of census categories. The third category, development, arranges states of poverty and employment as states of lack, lack of capital, technology and employment, and creates a sequential history where one moves up in grace, surplus, progress, as one is moved or moves across these sequences.

The discourse on disasters conducts a double manoeuvre here. Firstly, it removes the idea of subsistence from its stereotypical picture of life in a simple economy. Disasters point to the complex, diverse range of economies of coping, of foraging, of scavenging, of eking out survival. The political economy of survival in subsistence, as argued by Polanyi (1945) or Dalton needs to be redefined for disaster studies. We have to examine in particular the ethnographies of coping and its implications for citizenship, survival and policy. Survival is an art, a craft form, and an ethno-science. Survival is a struggle against the constraints of environment and technology. It is based on coping and the rationalities of coping. Simultaneously, it indirectly challenges the poverty and development discourse, which has often been economistic. Poverty conceived in economic terms often becomes a numerical metric. Poverty focuses on the political economy of employment and unemployment, on the lack of surplus, on lack, in general. The political economy of poverty does not quite cover the anthropology of subsistence and survival in disasters. Further, the idea of development often becomes an ordained sequence from under-

development to development, measured by standard economic indicators. Disaster management cannot be reduced to a development project. There is a danger of the 3R cycle of rescue, relief and rehabilitation being reduced to a development sequence.

The anthropologist of disasters finds that the concept of poverty needs broadening. Poverty is read as a gradient and the survivor of a disaster moves at levels of existence, which need a wider repertoire of concepts, a phenomenology that sees survival as a way of life, which combines and goes beyond poverty, subsistence, vulnerability and bare life. The existentialism of survival goes beyond lack as a metric to a combination of lack and bare life. People survive in poverty but the vulnerability of people in a disaster situation threatens their chances of recovery and survival. Poverty may have a normalcy, a predictability, a homeostatic stability that the survivor lacks due to his/her vulnerability. We need concepts, even home-made ones, to sensitize ourselves to situations that are not often conceptualized in standard textbook situations. Often, subsistence and survival operate in less than poverty situations. Survival needs to be disaggregated from poverty, which is seen as a homogenous category. This study of disasters reveals that the survival of widows, orphans, the disabled, landless and displaced are separate and overlapping stories, and existential statuses. Survival operates around the shadows between subsistence, starvation and disappearance. Poverty is a category that falls under the rubric of development or governance. Survival and subsistence operate in the penumbra around it. Even if abject in biological or cultural terms, survival and vulnerability convey a sense of an agency. They need an anthropology of concepts that captures this dynamics, this phenomenology of suffering and survival. Recovery from survival does not follow a standard development sequence. The logic of survival rituals needs a different discursive space beyond the conventional 3R sequence of rescue, relief and rehabilitation.

In conventional discourses, poverty has made the transition from 'fate' to a socio-economic scenario. There is no essentialist theory of poverty. It has political and economic causes. For a long time, disasters were seen as natural events, acts caused by nature or ordained by God. The naturalness of disaster events was generally accepted.

The perception that disasters could be humanly caused and humanly perpetuated took a long time to penetrate the discourse. In fact, even the reverse idea that disasters affect the social and provide insights into the social was a recent breakthrough. Once we see disasters as social events, the nature of the social in disasters needs its own analysis, demanding a different repertoire of concepts. It is not merely that the collapse of the social is a part of the social. Disasters, in turn, remake the social, redefine and question it in ways that demand a new understanding (see Cannon 1994).

Earlier, I have tried to illustrate how a disaster victim behaves in a similar way. S/he may not wait for thatch or wood or even corrugated iron to rebuild a house but settle for simple polythene sheets. The first three may be ideal material but within the immediacy of disaster, polythene makes sense. The survivor works like a handyman adjusting to the environment and its possibilities in the concrete. Similarly, when floods become a way of life, the survivor modifies his/her house or survival strategies accordingly. S/he copes with hunger by eating grass or using and accessing what is available in nature. What the bricoleur and the survivor do is to see each aspect of nature as a variety of possibilities. S/he does not wait for the ideal raw material but satisfies herself within the ecology available. We see this particularly in the use of local herbs and grasses to fight hunger in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

Between coping and bricolage as an 'ethno-science', disasters reveal a different way of celebrating knowledge. The bundles of 'coping', 'make-dos', 'muddling through', 'bricolage', 'cobbling together' do not constitute science in a formalized, abstract, theoretically coded sense. Disasters, by refocusing on knowledge, demand not just a reflexive science but also a reflexive idea of citizenship, which sees the survivor not just as a victim but a person of knowledge.

Of late, it has been fashionable for social scientists to use the emic term *jugaad*. This is a folk term, implying improvisation under constraints. It has been used to refer to management under scarcity, or working with technology, which are regarded as

obsolescent elsewhere. Jugaad refers to these acts of improvisation. Improvisation under constraints becomes critical. The concept is used more as a semaphore, an Indian word in an intercultural management vocabulary. In policy terms, we can think of a gradient of levels wherein coping and make-dos refer to immediate survival and subsistence at the relief level, wherein we make do with whatever there is. Policy at this level can be seen as muddling through. I am keen to emphasize that disaster management reveals itself as a quilt patch of rationalities, localized and pragmatic. Muddling-through works. What this array of concepts, coping–satisficing–optimizing, adds is a gradient of diversity to Disaster Management, erasing or questioning a linear, homogenous, centralized, planned model. Instead of one policy language, what we actually confront are hybrids, pragmatic rationalities, which need to be listed and listened to in hitherto pristine narratives of policy.

If coping, for all its internal diversity, is the most rudimentary but life critical response of Disaster Management, the voluntary groups that dealt with disasters, provided a richer repertoire of concepts, practices and life worlds at the next level. They added to the richness of Disaster Management as a discourse, locating it beyond the nation-state, security and the techno-managerial discourse into a diversity of contexts. This included the civilizational and the ethical, and also the production of new civic epistemologies (Jasanoff 2004).

In the following three chapters, I will look at the various ways in which the social gets configured at disaster sites by the State, a variety of organizations ranging from religious and cultural groups to international humanitarian agencies. In these chapters, I will try to illustrate how these organizations are re-inventing the social by debating issues of pain, suffering, healing, vulnerability and community, and engaging with questions of governance and citizenship.

5. On Disasters And State Building: The Multi-Hazard State

The previous chapter tried to capture the voices of the survivors, witnesses, activists and commentaries of listeners to understand the construction of the social at its most rudimentary, at the bare level of survival. It tried to explore the ways in which people and communities organize themselves to build their own strategies for coping outside and beyond the formal institutional levels. In this chapter, I examine the construction of the social at the other end of the spectrum: the state. I describe how the idea of what I call the ‘multi-hazard state’ has developed and is being consolidated in post-earthquake Gujarat. As a counterfactual, I also explore how the engagement with the disasters in Orissa has led to the emergence of a different kind of structure. This state uses new vocabulary to reinforce old paradigms not only as a knowledge system but also as a set of vested interests. I call this state, a stakeholder state.

This chapter also examines how international organizations like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or World Bank become epistemic middlemen post disasters in constituting certain practices. In doing so, I continue to engage with the second research question that I set out at the beginning of my research: How is the social constructed by various players in the field?

This chapter is divided into eight parts. The second section briefly contains the ‘mapping’ of a national conference on disasters. The next two sections describe the language of the Gujarat State Disasters Management Act (GSDM Act) and then explore how the GSDM Authority (GSDMA), along with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) produces a new social contract for the state. Audit and training are the twin structures around which the new methodologies of the state have been worked out as a technology of accountability and governance. The analysis continuously moves between policy documents and individual reflections.

Sections 5 and 6 on audit and training explore how certain ideas, language and concepts enter through these practices. Section 7 re-tells the story by focusing not on methodologies but on institution-building through the reflections of a bureaucrat. It begins with the imagination of drought and then proceeds to an overall reflection on disasters and the making of the multi-hazard state. The last section looks succinctly at Orissa, at the existing framework of response to the endemic cycles of drought and floods, the structures of vested interest it creates in perpetuating and maintaining these frameworks, the new vocabulary and institutions which are domesticated to 'help' existing interests.

5.1 Conferences As Collective Representations: Notes On The National Disaster Management Conference

A national conference is a collective representation. It represents the making of a consensus, either as the definition of a problem or by stating policy directives to be followed. A conference becomes a combination of a future constitution and a syllabus, blending a vision of politics and the academe. It becomes a harbinger of a new social contract, suggesting change through the introduction of new concepts and acronyms, where glossaries become litmus tests of change.

The second National India Disaster Management Conference was held in November 2009 at the palatial Vigyan Bhawan in Delhi. The choice of the location, Delhi and Vigyan Bhawan is significant. Located in Lutyens' Delhi, Vigyan Bhawan is normally the venue for various national and international meetings like the Commonwealth Head of Governments Meet (CHOGM), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the seven-nation-meet, among others. It breathes a deep sense of the official, a sense of the nation-state creating a public space for rethinking disasters within a wider theory of state-building, development, welfare, science and globalization.

The entry itself was marked by security checks, X-ray and baggage searches. The centre has a plenary hall, having a seating capacity for over 1200 delegates and 6 smaller halls having capacities for over 65 delegates to over 375 delegates. The entire space was dedicated to the ‘congress’. The delegates in the plenary hall were arranged in a hierarchy of importance and priority, a rainbow of shades from the varieties of the official to the unofficial. Inevitably, the unofficial and a large part of civil society get relegated to the back of this enormous hall with a seating capacity of over a thousand people. One thing is immediately clear. Disasters and disaster management are now to be treated as a crucial part of the core competence of the Indian state.

The dais had nine people. On the extreme right was Dhar-Chakravarti, Executive Director of the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), an Indian civil service officer. The rest of the panel included G.K. Pillai, Union Home Secretary, a senior official in the department dealing with disasters; Aruna Roy, a legendary activist from the Rajasthan-based grassroots organization, the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) and winner of the Ramon Magsaysay Award; Nitin Desai of the Prime Minister’s Council on Climate Change and once Maurice Strong’s deputy during Rio; A.S. Arya, Professor Emeritus at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee, a doyen of earthquake and construction in India; Amit Mitra, Secretary General of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI); Roberto Zagaa, Country Director, India, World Bank; Margareta Wahlstorm, UN Assistant Secretary General, Disaster Risk Reduction; N.C. Vij, Vice Chairman, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), and a retired army general; and Santosh Kumar, a professor at NIDM, who was present to give the vote of thanks. You got a sense that the domain of disaster management is being assembled and actors constituted to play discursive roles on a public platform.

The conference on disasters was both a wish-list and a checklist of activity. In fact, if we map the presentations in a circle (see Figure 5.1), we get an overview of the domain.

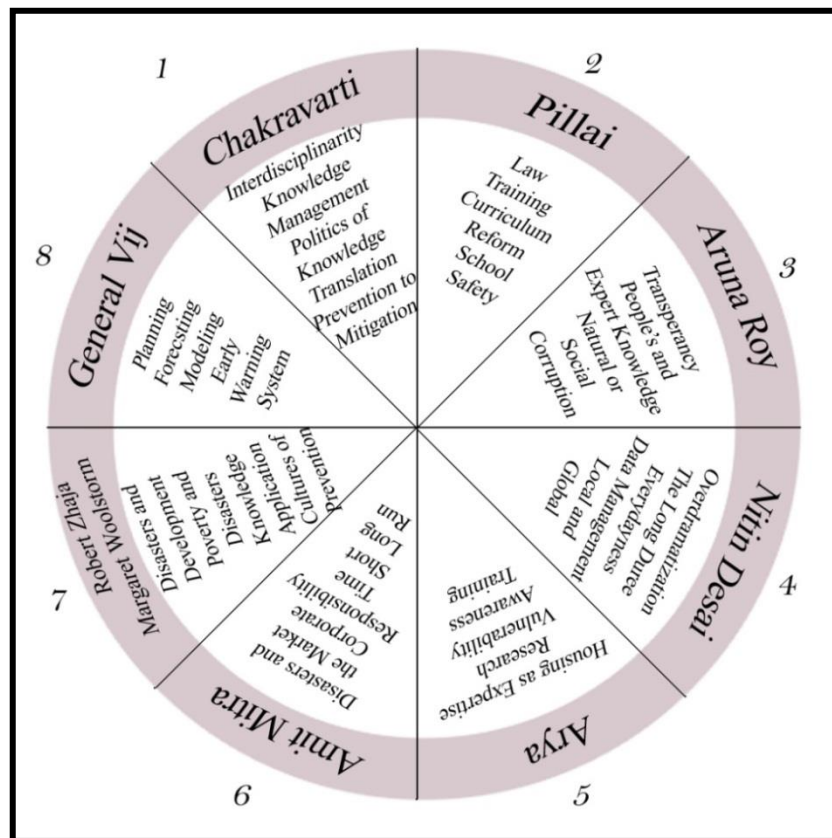


Figure 5.1: The Stakeholders and Key Concept

Source: Author, Based on Fieldwork Observations.

It revealed the variety of stakeholders and the diversity of perspectives and policies contained in a disaster management policy. It is time to make a list of key terms that have been seeded here: Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), mitigation, forecasting and early warning, knowledge management, communications and IT, corporates, community preparedness, vulnerable groups, education, training, curriculum, capacity building, civil defence, transparency, insurance and risk transfer, accountability, best practices, scaling up, the role of NGOs.

It is an enormous stockpile of ideas, a basket of intentions. What the rest of this chapter seeks to do, is systemize and ground these ideas in terms of policy narratives, connectivity and preferences. The next section begins with the legislative act.

5.2 The Making of the New Contract

In the preceding section, I suggested that disasters are sites for new assemblages and thought experiments. I could argue that the state and disasters exist almost in mutuality. The state has to manage disasters but in managing and rethinking disasters, the state reinvents itself. The logic of the planned Indian state emerged as a response to the floods of North Bengal. The state incorporated the idea of planning both from the Russian–Leninist Revolution and the American Tennessee Valley Authority ideas of TVA (Visvanathan 1984). Similarly, I argue that the multi-hazard state was a development of the response to the earthquake of 2001.

Any framework of policy needs to create an architectonic of concepts by arranging them in a sequence. In the following section, I examine how a particular language filters and determines the manner in which the state of Gujarat reworks itself to respond to disasters. Each project, each initiative embodies not just an activity of the state but a metaphor coding its future responses to the world. The symbols signal collaboration between the state, the World Bank, ADB and UNDP to create a new form of social contract. Keywords become crucial and can be both life-denying and life-giving. Concepts create not just a vocabulary of thought but also what Heidegger (1971) would call a possible ‘dwelling’ for a new world. The state is philosophically shrewd and realizes that in order to transform word into world, it must create rituals of familiarity, a sense of everydayness, a glossary of meanings, and a thesaurus of synonyms that make these words come alive but in a non-coercive manner. Words like ‘capacity building’ acquire a new life. In fact, management concepts proliferate, creating networks of meaning that allow the state to live and project new possibilities. Each report, each document is but an example of the state reworking itself linguistically and conceptually. A new generation of acronyms provides a new demography of life forms, which unfold as development projects. The changing vocabulary of the state is seeded or absorbed from World Bank and UNDP documents. These institutions are not just funders but glossary banks, which create a thesaurus of words that helps create the new idioms of the state.

There are three circles of concern. Spatially, the core circle reflects the material system and infrastructure. The second circle reflects the domain of community, introducing the issues of ownership and participation. The third circle reflects both scientization and institution-building, emphasizing the creation of a central authority for disasters.

5.2.1 Material Realities and Conceptual Orders

The World Bank and ADB submitted their preliminary Gujarat Earthquake Damage Assessment and Recovery Plan on 30th March 2001. The preliminary report articulates that “The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have estimated that ‘improved reconstruction’ in the Indian state of Gujarat devastated by the January 26, 2001 earthquake, will cost about Rs. 10,600 crore (US \$2.3 billion).² The earthquake caused massive loss of life and injury, leaving over 20,000 persons dead and 167,000 injured. It left nearly a million families homeless, and destroyed much of the area's social infrastructure: from schools and village health clinics, to water supply systems, communications and power.”

In the Gujarat Earthquake Recovery Programme Assessment Report (2001), ‘presented to the governments of Gujarat and India’, the two multilateral banks put “the total loss of assets, including private assets, at Rs. 9,900 crore (US \$1.8 billion). The bulk of these losses are in the housing sector (Rs. 5,200 crore/US \$932 million).” The impact on Gujarat's fiscal deficit was expected to be Rs. 10,100 crore (US \$1.8 billion) over three years.

The report's narratives begin with a sense of the physical and the material. The initial emphasis is on the numerical size and scale of the disaster. The narratives focus on the houses damaged and schools destroyed. The sheer physicality of the rubble that lay on

² Equivalent Currency Unit: Indian Rupees (Rs.) Year Exchange Rates (16 August 2012): US \$1.00=Rs. 55.78 (for entire thesis the amount has been adjusted accordingly).

roads and around houses is repeatedly emphasized and photographs brought from different locales are exhibited as evidence. The reports emphasize the immediacy and urgency of practice. Doing precedes reflection. The emphasis is on housing, irrigation, and roads, and material culture dominates the social at the inception of these narratives. Time is seen as urgent, even immediate. There is a recognition that deaths occur in the short run. Immediate delivery dominates any discussion of future deliverables. The report is tabled in March 2001, two months after the earthquake.

Beginnings, as Edward Said once wrote, are crucial (Said 1975). They shape the smell of discourse, creating anticipations in the narrative sequence. The contract with the World Bank is an agreement for a credit for US \$442.8 million as the first instalment to India for the Gujarat Emergency Project.

The contract is a multi-layered one. At one level, it is a project of recovery built around housing, roads, irrigation and infrastructure. At a second level, it seeks a better framework for disaster mitigation and risk management. In moving from layer one to layer two, a new sense of the 'improved' state and the social is created. One moves from the old model of rehabilitation, which is a model of repair to a model which seeks 'better modes of governance and an improved sense of the social. In the minutiae of the details, a social theory of a different state is crafted tacitly and quietly. The language is matter-of-fact and the evaluations unsentimental like moving from one Meccano set to another more 'improved one'.

The language of the first layer is heavily quantitative. It is a census of material structures to be restored. The lists are explicit. See Table 5.1

Table 5.1: Census of Structures to be Restored

Task Undertaken	Numbers
Houses Reconstructed	13,500
Houses Repaired	75,000
Masons Trained	5000
Roads Improved	700
Public Buildings Retrofitted	2000

Source: GEERP 2001.

The assessment report outlines immediate needs, damage assessments, and a medium-term recovery strategy for each sector. Time becomes a crucial part of the narratives of the pedagogic transformation of the state, which is seen as a phased implementation of World Bank concepts and ideas. The short-term phase focused on priority areas to address *basic human needs* and begin reconstruction. The medium-term phase completed reconstruction. The third phase visualized an apex, organized body which formalized responsibility for the future through the creation of the Gujarat State Disaster Management Agency (GSDMA). This final phase focuses on capacity building and the creation of institutions that accelerate disaster response and risk mitigation. The technical or managerial nature of the language hides the full transformation of a multi-hazard state.

In particular, the new report suggests that an approach based on consultation with and participation by the affected communities must be at the heart of the recovery program, including, as far as possible, rebuilding of their own houses by individuals in their original location.

The report gives a sense of a state going to school under a demanding but nuanced headmaster, in this case, the World Bank. This headmaster is always keen to devise frequent tests and evaluations, and is constantly raising the bar by creating new quality standards. The state of Gujarat appears as an apt and innovative pupil, and the process in its mutuality invents a better ‘social’, futuristically tuned to market processes.

The classification and corresponding idiom of activities change. Classification represents the reign of quantity, where size and scale sound like production data. Deliverables are crucial. The processes need to redeem the material structure of society, roads, buildings, school buildings and irrigation. In eliminating intermediate structures, the Bank becomes both midwife and middleman for a new vision of the state. But the magic of transformation lies in the details, even if there is bureaucratic dullness to them.

The document, however, is explicit that a restoration of a material base is only the beginning. The reconstruction needs to go beyond rehabilitation, repair and compensation to a reworking of the social. If the language of the first part is dryly numerical, the second seeks a sense of the qualitative. The emphasis is on the community, the creation of a state-wide emergency network and the establishment of Disaster Management Committees in 10,289 villages (Government of Gujarat: 2003: 3). The emphasis moves from building and rebuilding to institution-building. Implicit in this is a twofold contract: one between the state and the people about a new model of governance and the other between the state and the World Bank to create a new grammar of governance.

5.2.2 Reworking The ‘Community’

The language of the second circle is more qualitative. It is also more social. It demands new definitions and new relationships between the state and governance, and between the state and society. The community is no longer seen as a passive recipient of dole. It is read as active and new set of terms like transparency, ownership, third party audit are imported to define community. Every level of community is now a learning activity read in terms of information, communication and education. Knowledge is fundamental. It is no longer just a noun but a verb. Capacity building becomes a central word in reworking the community.

The Bank agreement presupposed the establishment of village-level sub centres (GEERP 2001: 5). A state was defined in terms of the new codes of responsibility to establish village level sub-centres to build capacity for earthquake-resistant construction. The

invention of the new state was conjoined to a definition of time. The new state handled emergencies in the long run by anticipating disasters and minimizing them. The old state responded in a knee-jerk fashion to emergencies with an as-is-where-is theory of institutions.

The skilling, however, is not just technical. Social skilling takes place through the formation of self help groups (SHGs) to monitor the programme and be responsible for disaster preparedness in the future (GEERP 2001: 5). It also demands strengthening of local government mechanisms to undertake social audit and insure transparency. It requires training to acquire gender sensitivity for all functionaries involved in communities. The emphasis is on community-based programmes to identify risks, vulnerable areas and people. Vulnerability is elaborated as a list including women, the old, children and the disabled. Here, the social in all its varieties of transparency, ownership and audit becomes not only central but also a form of knowledge which is strengthened through consolidation, representation and the institution of local warning systems and local drills. Not all of this is oral or tacit. It involves, as the report itself acknowledges, “large volumes of print and audio-visual materials” (p. 5).

The change in vocabulary is the marker of the transition. This vocabulary signifies the language of management and community. It emphasizes technique and method, new modes of evaluation like social impact assessment, third party audit, institutional capacity, building codes, community-based disaster planning, the creation of vulnerability maps. The second emphasis is on household insurance, the ownership of the construction process, and elimination of intermediaries, emphasizing a search for participation, transparency, voice, speed and audit, and gender equity. A sense of infrastructure and social infrastructure blends to create an idea of an ‘improved’ society. Risk management, including crop insurance, became a state responsibility.

A disaster is not just an imagination but what Castoriadis (1998) calls an imaginary, a set of futuristic concepts, and a shifting horizon for improvising new institutions.

5.2.3 Institutionalization

The nature of transformation is different from the earlier Transfer of Technology (TOT) model where the emphasis was on techniques, substitution and economy (Visvanathan 2002). Here, the rituals of transfer are more immaterial. Concepts are transformed where raw vocabularies create new worlds. Secondly, it also involves the rituals of training, mapping and standardization. Thirdly, there is network of methodologies, which evaluate the process. These processes and methodologies self-consciously transform paradigms from the traditional model of disaster management, which merely restored damaged things, into a model that seeks to create a 'better society'. A whole new network of institutions is created to anticipate or minimize the impact of future disasters.

The next component on which a model of disaster management thrives is the foundation of awareness-raising, education and training. In order to complement the awareness of the people, a professional emergency management problem is outlined in the third phase (GEERP 2001: 6).

Emergency management as visualized by the World Bank agreement (GEERP 2001) operates at two ends of the disaster spectrum: 1) pre-disaster emergency preparedness; and 2) post-disaster emergency response and training. The report notices that responses to disasters at either end were based on isolated action by many isolated entities. It seeks to transform this through the synergy of a professional state emergency management system. It attempts to consolidate many forms of coordinated competence ranging from search and rescue operations, to consolidation of fire-fighting equipment and use of information technology. It also involves the evaluation of a communication system of control rooms and a communication network. To this is added a list of essential equipment comprising research vans, hydraulic rescue tools, rescue and fire brigades. The state emerges as a network of audits and methodologies. The process of technicization and scientization is clear. It also entails professionalization wherein expert knowledge recognizes local knowledge but is super-ordinate to it. A network of management methodologies creates a feedback of audit, review and accountability. Standardization is a

norm and research-based knowledge encompasses the empirical and the experiential. The state emerges as a set of scientific and methodological constructs. In that sense, the project as reconstruction rebuilds a better society and a more fitting state. At the centre of the new multi-hazard state is the GSDMA.

The project became the microcosm of a new state. A multi-hazard state was created around available best practices. The promulgation of the Gujarat Disaster Management Act (GDMA) was a major achievement. It created a state-wide legal and institutional framework for disaster management in Gujarat.

5.3 The Gujarat Disaster Management Act: Towards Definitions

The Gujarat State Disaster Management Act (GSDMA), 2003, is a forerunner of the National Disaster Management Act (NDMA), 2005, and a paradigmatic change from the Indian Relief Code, 1927, which has its roots in the colonial idea of handling natural emergencies. The latter deals with drought and flood, the proverbial forms of disaster. Drought is virtually endemic in many areas, and floods, for many, are seasonal. The Gujarat Act goes beyond the rudimentary nature of the Relief Code and sets the stage for the idea of a multi-hazard society.

The Act as text can be divided into five parts. The first part is an exercise in definitions, while the second is a sketch to create a network of words which label and list the disaster management process, the third is a legal roster of stakeholders. The fourth part specifies the formal list of authorities and outlines the creation of the disaster management authority. The final part specifies the relation between the new GSDMA and the various aspects of 'traditional government'.

In analysing the Act of 2003, sensitivity to words is critical. These are critical as definitions, signals, ideas of performativity, and also as attempts to link word and world

to legalize a new paradigm. The Act, in fact, could be dubbed as a word-skeleton, creating a connectivity of words, promising or being the harbinger of a new social contract. Words become crucial here not only because they hint about the promise of a new action but also because as a network, they constitute a word-map of structures and intentions.

5.3.1 Definitions

The text begins with a definition of disasters balancing on the cusp of a set or overlapping 'either-or's'. The Act claims that disasters are either actual or imminent events, natural or otherwise, which cause or threaten to cause violence. The main emphasis is on the impacts.

The claim of Gujarat Act No. 20 of 2003 to a legal space comes in terms of impacts (GSDMA 2003: 5). A disaster is defined as any event which impacts society through widespread damage to property, moveable or immovable, and/or which creates widespread loss of human life or injury or illness to human beings. It is any event which can damage or degrade the environment or whose impact on a society is such that it incapacitates the power of a community to cope with it. A disruption of normalcy and the inability of a society to return to normalcy become a critical element of the perception of disasters.

The response is no longer knee-jerk but planned, continuous, integrated. The process is institutionalized under the term 'disaster management', endowing the activity with a systemic quality. Disaster Management (DM) has a rationalized quality in the Weberian sense as showing forethought, organization, calculation and predictability in terms of collective anticipation (Weber 1978). The emphasis is obviously not on the sporadic or the spontaneous or even the informal or the unintended. Disaster management, in that sense, is an act of capacity building for emergency preparedness, which anticipates, mitigates and reflexively assesses its own abilities at post-disaster reconstruction.

5.3.2 Lists and Activities

The list of activities has to be seen more systematically. Lists are important not only as classificatory exercises clustering similar terms but for the various forms of performativity entailed in them. The list on DM elaborates various overlapping forms of competence and sensitivity. The list opens out the worlds of response that the word ‘disaster’ entails. Present in the word list is the normalization of the disaster over time. Time and the varieties of time put together a list of worlds in chronological order. The GSDM Act, by opening up the disaster, outlines a wider theory of competence, knowledge and responsibility for the state vis-à-vis disasters.

The list of words and the prosaic definitions attached to it are worth examining as a set (GSDM Act 2003: 5 and 6):

- i. *Prevention*: Attempts to avoid the occurrence of a disaster.
- ii. *Preparedness*: The readiness which enables stakeholders to mobilize, organize and provide relief while dealing with an impending or real disaster.
- iii. *Mitigation*: Involves measures aimed at reducing the impact or effects of a disaster.
- iv. *Relief*: Includes measures taken during or immediately after a disaster to diminish or alleviate suffering.
- v. *Rehabilitation*: Any activity which seeks to restore normalcy in the conditions caused by the disaster.
- vi. *Reconstruction*: Repair and construction of any property in the aftermath of a disaster.
- vii. *Regulation*: Any provision made under the Act.

There are certain tacit dimensions to the list. The physicalist language, which still sees damage as material or physical, is endemic to the document. Reconstruction is still repair of property rather than of any institution.

The spectrum of activities is much wider and includes both ‘pre-’ and ‘post-’ disaster situations. The time of disasters is not only more complex but has greater depth.

The social contract immediately expands from a knee-jerk minimalist response around the dole to a wider sense of the managerial, if not the social.

Finally, there is an official listing out of stakeholders. The stakeholder is listed not in terms of impact or vulnerability but in terms of official authority or competence.

5.3.3 Defining Stakeholders and GSDM Authority

The word ‘stakeholder’ (GSDM Act 2003: 6) includes: 1) Any state government; 2) Any statutory functionary; and 3) Any voluntary agency, local or foreign, and in a miscellaneous sense any person identified by the authority to participate in any manner in activities related to disaster management.

Once the definitions are stated and activities listed, the nature of authority, both old and new, has to be specified. The list moves across the standard administrative hierarchy from the state government, Heads of state departments, the Commissioner, the District Collector, to the local authorities (GSDM Act 2003: 6). The only new element is the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDM Act). It acts as a kind of brain, providing knowledge, coordination, planning, education and awareness to the everyday units of government. While it is critically catalytic, it is still embedded in the structures of governance. It is established to create new kinds of connectivity vis-à-vis disaster management. The effort is to combine the legal, managerial and the technical to cope with the ‘de-normalization of society and nature’. The matrix of agencies within which it is embedded makes it a key element of governance.

The GSDMA was established by an official gazette notification as a corporate body, with perpetual succession. It can be sued in its corporate name. The authority would consist of the chairperson and not more than 14 other members from a specified list. This included

the Chief Minister, two ministers nominated by him, the Chief Secretary of the Government, the Revenue Secretary, the State Relief Commissioner, the Director General of Police and any officers as appointed by the state government.

Embedded strongly in the traditional bureaucratic framework, the GSDMA was visualized around the following functions as the brain and ganglion of the state, local authority, stakeholders and communities. The GSDMA was expected to be “the central planning, coordinating and monitoring body for disaster management” (GSDMA 2003: 18). Its activities were to encompass post-disaster reconstruction, rehabilitation, evaluation and assessment. The past, the imminent present, the present, the probable futures were under its ambit. It was responsible for informing both the state government and the general public about advances in disaster management (GSDMA 2003: 19). The GSDMA was also to act as an archive, memory, and repository of information concerning disaster management. In order to promote this, it was authorized to establish a research institute.

The GSDM Act has a precision and conciseness yet possesses a fluidity that the later National Disaster Management Act (NDMA) does not. The latter, enacted in 2005, appears as a poor imitation of the harbinger. At one level, the *homo juridicus* is not immediately apparent in the text. It still seems a response to the emergency summoning of the forces of law and order. The world triangulating law, science and management methods, acquires a visibility in the subjects and organizations that emerged with the GSDM Act.

This becomes more substantive as it unfolds through the world of training, research, standardization, maps, the forms of technical audit and assessment necessitated by this world. The state becomes a learning state, a set of technical coalitions figuring its way through the new knowledge economy of disasters. The classical or residual view of disasters anchored on the imagination of drought and flood exists but built on it are the new arrivals of the multi-hazard state.

5.4 The GSDM Authority: The Act of Muddling Through

The first recollections of state response have an urgency to them. Yet, the language signifies the idiom of habit, of recipe, of concern and large-scale methods of coping. It is the language of a responsive administration. But science, large inputs of technology, even efforts to rethink the paradigm are still remote. It is the entry of the World Bank and the UNDP which catalyses these perspectives and allows the reformers within to realize that a new age of disaster management is arriving. As one reconstructs it, one realizes it was a growth in fragments. It is best to recollect it through the narratives of those present at the beginning.

In the following section, I look at snippets from five narratives: Sheetal, an assistant manager in the housing vertical at GSDMA who joined GSDMA 2–3 months after the earthquake; P.K. Mishra, a senior bureaucrat, and CEO of GSDMA during the phase of reconstruction; Vikrant and Jignesh Yadav, officials with the community and social development response programme supported by UNDP; Ranjit Bannerjee, the current CEO of GSDMA; and finally B.K. Rastogi, scientist and Director of the Institute of Seismological Research (ISR) founded after the earthquake in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The policy for all its collective biography comes alive through individual stories of ‘muddling through’ and reflecting it.

5.4.1 Policy through Autobiography

Sheetal captures the initial days of the organization, the heroic period of the organization before it managerialized itself. She gets tearful as she talks of the first three days, of being in a daze in a city “whose connectivity had gone dead”. The city, rife with rumours, buildings destroyed, the surreal tilt of buildings that had cracked open. What impressed her about ‘those early days’ was the way everyone worked: “No one went home before 2–3 in the morning. People had lost their house, their family members. They cremated members of family and came to the office to work the next day. It was as if work was the only commemoration possible.”

GSDMA was declared as the nodal agency for post-earthquake reconstruction on 8 February 2003. Until 2003, everyone did everything. Multi-tasking was the order of the day. Then ADB and the World Bank became the chief providers of funding. “Those were days when Sahu, who was then commissioner of industry, was placed in-charge. Sahu took decisions literally on the run backed by his assistant Hema.” The governing body met often. Sheetal opens her computer to let me glimpse the frequency with which the meetings used to take place.

“There was little formal knowledge at that time. There were general resolutions but we had to interpret these general resolutions. We had to decide who was eligible for assistance and of what kind. The Chief Minister (CM) would head the meetings, initially everyday, then every 3–4 days, finalizing issues, taking decisions immediately.” The first transition to routinization was from the frequent to the infrequent meeting. Sheetal confesses:

“The Earthquake caught us by surprise. There were no precedents to go by. There was none of the certainty of the relief manual of a drought. We had to devise our own packages. We studied the work done in the Orissa Cyclone and even Latur earthquake. The GSDMA decided to go outside and we even poured over the report of the earthquake in Turkey. We then decided to go our own way and produce a different model altogether. We wished to emphasize some aspects. One was people’s participation. There was no one type of compulsory housing design they had to follow. It had failed elsewhere. They were also offered the option between rehabilitation and relocation which involved displacement.”

Sheetal described the whole process as an educational one, undertaken on a giant scale. “Posters were printed as full page advertisements. Third party audit was introduced. What came next was certification and insurance.” Town planning, almost non-existent, was introduced in the four devastated town areas of Bhuj, Rapar, Bachhau and Anjar.

Each technique was quickly knitted into the new fabric called ‘disaster management’. Sheetal paused and then concluded, “It is not so easy. How do you convince fishermen or people in coastal areas that their traditional knowledge is not enough? If you warn them

about a cyclone, they will tell you they know the sea and have seen many cyclones.” In a very common-sensical way, Sheetal’s conversation quietly conveyed the new ideas of knowledge that were creeping in. Audit, certification and insurance were all rituals of a new disaster state. Sheetal suddenly stopped, laughed, shrugged and said, “Your little notebook and your recorder is not enough to contain all our experiences.”

As I move from department to department, sketching out fragments of the multi-hazard state, I realize that while it seeks particular forms of competence, it also seeks an overall gestalt. The state is virtually using its responses to disaster to create a new site of meaning. Governance not only provides a new grammar of administration beyond the old edifices of the state but also helps articulate a new grammar of state-building. The state is not identified as a collection of identifiable structures but also as a network, a mentality, an assemblage flowing into the corporation, the community and the forms of voluntarism. This change is captured in terms of a new language. This was captured through the three interviews of P.K. Mishra, Vikrant Yadav and Ranjit Banerjee.

P.K. Mishra is an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the 1973 batch. An authority on agricultural insurance, Mishra completed his PhD at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), Sussex “in a record time of under three years” supervised by Michael Lipton. Mishra emphasized two points. First, disaster management, for all its dreams of control, cannot fully control nature. Nature always surprises beyond planning. Second, the state needs to become the repository of the memory of disaster and to prepare for disasters.

He talks of a particular cyclone when he was the District Collector and he had adequate warning.

“Nature always surprises you, the cyclone changed course midway. What is this forecasting that all of you talk about? We establish storm warning announcements and yet discover 400 bodies at the end of it. What can one do if the fishermen are already out in the sea from a fortnight ago. Or are from another area? Disasters always leave you in suspense.”

Governance is about credibility, a formal name for trust. Trust, Mishra emphasized, is linked to memory. Government, he claimed, has to become the new repository of memory. It is difficult for NGOs to remember. Memory for them extends to the lifetime of the project. Mishra argued succinctly that between memory and trust, a new idea of governance was being created.

Narratives in organizations are like relay races. One fragment as memory hands over the torch to the other. Vikrant and Jignesh Yadav, who were both enrolled to participate and roll out the Community and Social Development Response programme supported by UNDP, provide another fragment of experience. They map the changes in the mentality of the state.

Yadav stated that the programme initiated wanted to create an involvement at three levels: preparedness, capacity building and awareness. Preparedness planning went beyond the earlier concepts of disaster management planning.

“Mere planning does not make people ready. Preparedness planning was systems planning. The Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management (GIDM) was responsible for training as a part of the new strategy and consultations were conducted at the district level. The model of preparedness was shown to the people. Information management was an important component.”

One had to realize that the state is a perpetual geology of layers. Plans had to catalyse the *taluka* or block level, the urban local bodies (ULBs), and eventually seep into the village.

The UNDP programme, with the GSDMA as the nodal agency, began in February 2002. It fanned out to 26 districts. Fifty *talukas* were identified as ‘more hazard-prone’. The GSDMA conducted the risk and vulnerability analysis (RVA) of each district prone to multiple hazards. At about the same time, 38 cities were identified for the Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Reduction Programme (UEVRP) in India. Six cities were identified in Gujarat. The project attempted to establish a techno-legal regime. It updated city level by-laws. In Gujarat, the focus was not just on earthquakes but also on floods.

Surat as a city was legendary for its floods. Eventually, the focus spread out to all aspects of a disaster.

The UNDP deputed officers in each of these cities and they worked in consultation with the GSDMA. Vikrant Yadav sees change as perpetually dynamic and insists that Community-based Disaster Planning (CBDP) cannot be approached as a programme. It is a process – ‘a process of involvement’. His aim, he says, was “to involve the people as stakeholders. After all, they are the ultimate beneficiaries.” His language is managerial and he speaks about “how difficult it was to streamline a people’s implementation strategy”.

Jadav emphasizes that it was difficult to have one uniform perspective. There were recognizable differences between urban and rural systems, even city to city. Not only were the methodologies different but the focus of the site also varied. “In rural areas, the focus was on the revenue village, in towns, the administrative unit became the ward. You know how our villages and towns are!”

He adds a word about the tentative nature of such work. The word method, he said, freezes expectations, creates a stereotype of consistencies. The process was more one of trial and error, especially in Surat. He asks, “How do you mobilize a city, where there is little uniformity? Fifty per cent of Surat is migrant labour from Bihar or Orissa. So whom should we train, whom are we spreading awareness amongst? They are being constantly replaced by others.”

He emphasizes a second difficulty. He says, “In a village, a crowd gathers easily. All that it needs is curiosity and one can convert a crowd into a thinking community. In cities, community participation is the biggest challenge. We need to persuade the ward corporates to accompany us. Without their support it is not easy to go into the neighbourhoods. So how do you carry out these programmes?” He points to cite the idea of Surat as a critical site. “Over the last ten years, we have faced every kind of disaster.

Surat is prone to floods. Industrial hazards are also recognizable. 30% of the Major Accident Hazardous (MAH) units are present in Surat. Every problem is very different. A large part of the population is Oriya. This means talking of awareness in Gujarati is meaningless. We have to re-do all documents and training programmes in ‘their’ language.”

As each functionary tells his or her story, one realizes that they are chronicling the making of a new state catalysed by disasters. The transition begins gradually and then quickens both managerially and scientifically. This is evident in Jignesh Yadav’s observations. His focus is solely on communication. Yet communication is a highly technical affair.

Yadav began with the urgency of ensuring back-up during disasters. “Video Home System (VHS) while reliable had a limitation of 25 kilometers. What one required was hybrid technology allowing a switch from the Global System Mobile Communication (GSM) to Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) to satellite.” He noted that “earlier we only had the State-owned telecom company Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and one private player. Today we have three four private corporate players and greater flexibility.”

Centralization of data is emphasized to avoid duplication. But there is also a recognition that the technical does not always solve the problem of data. “The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) had physical, manual and auto data. The question became as to which of these should one rely on. It was also a question of personnel. The IMD needs a staff of 24,365 to monitor the outposts. The data has to be in real time. It cannot be pasted and posted over the week. Information not passed immediately can become a source of critical delay.” Yadav repeatedly talked about a “reliable, robust communication system that stays operational during emergencies”.

Ranajit Bannerjee was the CEO of GSDMA when I did my fieldwork. He had returned a couple of months earlier after a three-year assignment with the World Bank in Washington. He has a PhD from the London School of Economics (LSE), an M.Phil from Oxford. He informed me that he was in Balliol College, that he was among those who protested and petitioned against the idea of the Said Business School in Oxford. He is proud of the GSDMA and emphasizes that “all GSDMA documents are in the public domain”. He ensures me that I have full access to any document or person I wish to talk to. I met him innumerable times during the course of my fieldwork.

He argued that the new history of post-earthquake Gujarat had to be located in the previous history of Gujarat. Only then can one understand the fractures and the continuity. “Gujarat,” Bannerjee claimed, “has a fairly long history of disasters. The earthquake in 2001 was different because of the sheer scale of destruction.” It is the enormity of the disaster that triggered the setting of the GSDMA. Gujarat became the first state to set up a statutory-backed Act.

Bannerjee recounted the standard achievement. “Ninety-eight per cent of the houses were rebuilt. There were 13,000 extra school rooms.” He added that this effort was no ordinary Public Works Department (PWD) contract but a reconceptualization of governance so that the reconstruction could be far better. The word ‘*better*’ was repeatedly emphasized. This was not the repair model of the relief code but a new outlook wherein disasters give you the opportunity of creating and innovating a different world.

Bannerjee added that a number of awards from major international agencies had testified to this sensitivity. “But all this is history”. Bannerjee said it proudly as if he were both acknowledging and brushing aside an old memory now turned mnemonic. But it is in the above list that the roots for paradigm change lay. It is the above attitudes that could help effect a paradigm change from reconstruction to disaster preparedness and mitigation. He told me that the Institute of Seismological Research instituted under the GSDMA is the first institute of its kind between CERN and Osaka. Science was the order of the day and

the training and educating the state stakeholders in the Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management (GIDM) in state-of-the-art was critical. He told me that it was being planned as a deemed university.

The paradigm was legitimated by the new alliances with UNDP, ADP and the World Bank. Technology and science become the second form of legitimation, embracing GIS-based platforms, the dream of pin-point exactness, efficiency in micro-planning. Vulnerability hazard mapping was the order of the day. The areas it covered ranged from infection, drought, chemical disaster, cyclone, floods, tsunamis, to even terror that could create serious accidents. Connectivity was both technical and symbolic. At the technical level, it included the Internet, cellular and satellite.

The Institute of Seismic Research (ISR) was established under the GSDMA. The ISR Director, Rastogi reiterated what I had heard from several sources by now: “ISR was the only organization for seismic research located between Europe and Japan.” Rastogi candidly and unequivocally talked of ISR in this context. Science was not just a reason for the state. “It provided the rationale for marketing and investment decisions. The ISR had 2 goals: the monitoring of the earthquakes and the pursuit of fundamental research for understanding seismic process.”

The institute has been deeply involved in vulnerability mapping. But seismic microzonation is a critical part of its activity. Rastogi explained that:

“Gujarat is offering tax holidays, inviting Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The petroleum industry is prominently located here. There are future plans for airports. The future eco-city of Dholera is being planned here. The Tatas are planning a city. So are the Japanese and the Taiwanese. One needs reliable data on ground conditions.”

Bad data is not only misleading but can lead astray the best laid plans of mice and men, especially investors.

The symbolic power of this institute and science stems from the very organization of the institute. The architecture of the institute is tripartite, dividing itself visually into three segments, formally labelled as the past, present and future. The past researches the history of the earth, boring in deep to study the formation of soil over millions of years and the implications of this. The present monitors the everydayness by mapping minute-by-minute seismic activities from its stations in Kutch. The future devotes itself to forecasting and predictability. Between the past, present and future, science offers new mechanisms of control to the multi-hazard state. However, as Ranajit Bannerjee emphasized, technology, science and management are not just prosthetic extensions of the state-as-self but forms of cognition, of institutionalized sensitivity. Connectivity in all its forms, including real-time mapping, retrofitting, the focus on mangrove cover, the new calendars of time to embrace climate change, all created a quickness that was life-giving and added to the speed of response of a state that thought in future time and in anticipative time. Governance in that sense was for him that mix where the ideas of power interacted with the power of ideas. It reflected scale but scale applied to ordinary events.

5.4.2 Repair: Rescaling Narratives / Politics of Scaling

Reading through the GDMA and listening to these narratives, I sensed that disaster management is, at one level, a word game. The emphasis is not etymological but on a neighbourhood of words and their semantic field of implication. Something about all the words, especially the glossary of disaster words, points back to the original idea of repair. Repair is a modest word, evoking everydayness, continuity, even invisibility in an incremental sense.

Graham and Thrift (2007) invoke the idea of the earthworm. Their consistent unremitting gustatory work evokes the senses of repair in that humble sense. Focusing on repair bring these everyday processes to light. The everydayness is not understood until there is a moment of crisis, like a disaster or a breakdown. Graham and Thrift (2007: 2) refer to the work of Heidegger to create a space of understanding. The everyday, said Heidegger,

involves the world as ready to hand. Such things only come to visible focus as things when they become inoperable. Things reveal a large part of themselves when they break down. Disasters magnify the importance of repair and create a wider thesaurus of synonyms, a list wider than relief, reconstruction, restoration and rehabilitation.

A whole world is destroyed and the relationship to a wider world is disrupted. The earlier model of the disaster had a limited notion of repair as restoring or redeeming a damaged fragment for further use. The current model is more reflexive, exploring how in the process of repair one improves existing tools, situations, definitions. The idea of problem-solving is more differentiated and encompasses a wider range of time (Graham and Thrift 2007: 4).

Maintenance and repair also illustrate the importance of the labour and ingenuity that goes into tools, methodologies and institutions. These concepts emphasize the importance of varieties of problem-solving. It is particularly sensitive to improvisation, of fudges and shortcuts. It also points to the varieties of knowledge and conversation present in such processes. In that sense, disasters, like breakdowns, become moments when societies learn to reproduce themselves. Rehabilitation and reconstruction are not processes that restore or replicate a previous condition. They are also speculations of alternative ways to reconstruct that condition. These concepts do not only merely create an alternative set of questions within which to locate an object while resituating it. "Maintenance and repair becomes not just secondary or derivative activities. They become one of our chief means of seeing and understanding the world." (Graham and Thrift 2007: 5) In that sense, repair, relief, restoration, rescue, rehabilitation become different ways of seeing the world and the Disaster Management Act bundles these range of activities into a synergized perspective.

A variety of improvisations, variations and innovations are entailed in disaster management. It involves an emphasis on recycling, cannibalization and the make-do. After a disaster, not everything is restored to its pristine condition. Infrastructure rather

than being seen as a monolithic entity becomes a variety of technological circuits. The built environment, often a backstage of the social, appears upfront. A wide variety of reports and audits emphasize the connectivity between the technical and the social. Disaster management reworks the relation between vulnerability and resilience. The ethnography of irrevocable collapse is accompanied by a focus on prosaic acts of repair.

Disaster management and the legislation around it help us understand the cultures of repair that continuously underlie society. The catastrophic and the prosaic blend in fascinating combinations. Repair becomes a base for a wider theory of disaster management, emphasizing not only muddling, coping and improvisation but also a feedback on the new methodologies of post-disaster maintenance. It links the techniques of coping to the wider acts of systems thinking, new methodologies of audit, accounting and responsibility. But the very varieties of repair become a yardstick for the power of the imagination. However, DM in India does not as yet include ethical repair (Davis and Womack 2001).

Ethical repair, a term used more often in ethnic studies, has been frequently applied to the violence of riots and atrocities. But the neglect and injustice during disasters also necessitates a concept beyond compensation. The gas disaster in Bhopal could have benefited from the concept of ethical repair. Here, the perpetrator of a disaster learns to live again with the victim. The notion of audit and accountability enters a wider universe of repair as healing and forgiveness. Ethical repair presupposes memory and healing, an existential sense of suffering. But the methodologies of repair often built into disaster management are more impersonal, toolkits to maintain a management system rather than therapeutics of healing. Audit remains a mnemonic of impersonal repair.

The idea of repair along with relief invokes the older idea of disaster management. The new explosion of words around disaster management invokes a different set of connotations. One word that captures this new sense is the word 'design', as thought through by Bruno Latour. In his introductory statement to a design conference (2009),

Latour does not refer to disaster management but his ideas can be adapted creatively in this context. Between the everyday idea of repair and the Latourian idea of design reside many of the new ideas of disaster management.

Design today is a post-promethean language. It is modest, precautionary, speaking the language of audit and risk. Design, to Latour, always involves an afterthought. It necessitates a re-looking. Design, in that sense, is always redesign. “There is always something that exists first as a given...” (Latour 2009: 4). The task of design is to make that something more livable, more acceptable and more user-friendly than what already existed. Disasters in that sense become a pretext for design, unlike repair, which evokes the idea of everyday maintenance. Disaster management as design summons the substitutable and the sustainable. It suggests a coalescence of materiality, morality, method and sociality. Design involves an assemblage of tactics, concepts and methods. It includes the fabrication of both things and society. The new idea of disaster management evokes just that hybridity of the material and the social. Like in design, in disaster management too, there is no return to the original. Change is taken for granted but looked at critically. The audit as conversation, method and feedback, as a revaluation is central to design and disaster management. As Latour observed, “There is always something remedial in design” (Latour 2009: 4) It is an after-thought but never a secondary activity. There is a sense of internal critique to the new ideas of disaster management because in design, as in disaster management, you always ask whether it has been done properly. “The spread of design to the inner definitions of things carries with it not only meaning and hermeneutics but also that morality and materiality are finally coalescing.” (See Latour 2009: 4.) This is precisely what standards, and especially, audit, do. They build a continuous sense of revaluations. Audit and the audit cultures of our time are such frameworks and disaster management is replete with such methodologies. These methodologies institutionalize a mentality, combining the technical and the ethical, Prometheus and Hermes. The physical and the social blend, creating a variety of ‘indicators’, evaluations where the social and the physical swing like images in

holograms. It is the culture of audits in disaster management that captures the spirit of design as a new management mentality. One can consider the KPMG report on disasters as an example of this.

5.5 The Logic of Audit

In the last section, I examined the rituals involved in the making of a new post-disaster state: I examined how new legal, technical and social structures were constituted and new categories, methods and techniques were instituted. It involved reworking and seeding of a new language of governance, which entailed sensitivity to vulnerability, gender, access, participation. The process of auditing outlined in the following section continues to consolidate and standardize some of these practices.

This section is divided into three parts. The first part examines the World Bank documents that institute audit as part of 'good governance'. Audit is a scrutiny of governance where participation constitutes a normative value. In the second part, it moves on to examine the practice of audit as BME audits GEERP (2001) activities as part of an attempt to build a 'new improved society' post the earthquake. The third part looks at another effort by the National Council of Cement and Building Material (NCCBM) to develop a technical audit and quality assurance practice which goes beyond the technical.

An audit is a theory of measure. In a conventional sense, it suggests a mode of accounting, a balancing of income and expenditure (see Chapter 2 on the literature review). However, an audit is not restricted to being a functional tool to measure efficiency and productivity. It is not just a method. An audit is a mentality, evoking both a mode of thought and a code of conduct. Today, an audit, as an anthropologist would dub it, is a travelling fact, acquiring a variety of meanings and associations, and creating a wider constellation of meanings. Within disaster management as a discourse, audit as a perspective owes much to World Bank documents. These reports deserve scrutiny

because they created the outlines and assumptions, which were later incorporated to become an integral part of the multi-hazard state.

5.5.1 Audit as a Cultural Artifact: World Bank and Audit

In 2008, the World Bank produced a reflective document called *The Political Economy of Policy Reform* (World Bank 2008). The monograph was a recognition that “understanding the political context of reform process is important for engaging effectively in policy dialogue” (World Bank 2008: 1). The report was an attempt to answer “why policy reform processes sometimes start, stop, reverse or go off track despite their content, design and implementation appearing technically sound.” The Bank felt that one major means of arriving at an answer lay in understanding the political economy of reform.

The authors of the monograph saw political economy as a study of the interaction between political processes and economic variables. The report argues that there were two basic ways of conducting political economy as a mode of understanding. The first was the rational choice approach, and the second, the power-based approach (World Bank 2008: 4). The first focused on how individuals engaged in cooperative behaviour while still maximizing their interests. Such an approach, critics argued, did not focus on “powerful interests that favor the better off, while losers remain in their original position or end up even worse off” (World Bank 2008: 5).

The monograph argues that it would follow a power-based approach. Such a perspective examines “how actors use their position to protect or strengthen their interests” (World Bank 2008: 5). Unlike rational choice, the power approach is more sensitive to contexts. In particular, it specialized on stakeholder analysis, which revealed social fault lines among communities, whether as consumers, producers or interest groups. One insight, the approach could quickly argue for, related to the importance of time. There was a realization that “reforms were never linear and that sustained reform was more like a marathon rather than a sprint in nature” (World Bank 2008: 7).

Such a perspective soon worked in tandem with the World Bank's preoccupation with 'good governance'. What the World Bank eventually created was an architectonic of sensitivity, a list of variables arranged systematically to understand: a) the process, and b) the impact of a reform. This wider architectonic became the macro-model of an audit, providing the wider sensitivities that governance, as understood by the World Bank, required. The emphasis was still on decision-making rather than on political struggle or competition. "Decision-making was seen as a process of negotiation between interest groups based on access to information and power relations" (World Bank 2008: 11). The emphasis was not on conflict but on change "through information flows, voice and public debate". Audit has become an evaluation in the wider sense of that process. It became an index of the effectiveness of governance. It evaluated the effectiveness of partnership, policy design, participation within the logic of a consensual framework (World Bank 2008: 12). It is an attempt to understand and evaluate the mechanisms that underline such a process. It is not just about accounting as a financial tool but also about accountability as an institutional ecology, moving beyond efficiency and productivity to examine the social in terms of equity, participation, communication, gender sensitivity. It is a method and a mirror to the idea of governance.

This becomes more evident if we study the second monograph that the World Bank produced in 2010, creating a governance manual of disasters, *Safer Homes, Stronger Communities* (Jha *et al.* 2010). This monograph amplifies the earlier ideas vis-à-vis the domain of natural disasters. The report lucidly links together a way of assessing the damage done by disasters to a model of assessing the nature of the response. Response is seen as a spectrum of activities, all of which need to be evaluated. An audit examines and evaluates a form of governance. It selects certain processes, connects them, and creates an intermediate idea of a preferred form of the social. It becomes a 'before-after' picture, looking at social as a form of reconstruction, evaluating the improvements or deficits in the formal circuit of the social. The circuit of governance in most World Bank manuals outlines this visually. The World Bank manuals specify six dimensions of governance,

that create a circuit of the social, which audits examine for connectivity and effectiveness, not in the language of productivity but in terms of new visions of the social (see Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2: Governance: Six Dimensions

Source: Jha *et al.* 2010: 30.

The document constructs and applies this wider vision in the context of housing and community reconstruction. Let us elaborate this perspective because it can become a template for evaluating audit reports in Gujarat. The political economy of the World Bank unfolds and documents itself in a form of audit. It connects democracy and governance, wiring them to each project. These two form meta-narratives, infecting each project, providing a wide spectrum of assessments and evaluations which when bundled up constitute the audit process. Reconstruction is a rubric that evolves on five axes. These five principal areas are: 1) institutional, 2) financial, 3) community participation, 4) reconstruction, and 5) risk management. Linking all the five is the pervasiveness of audit as 'a monitoring and feedback system' (Jha *et al.* 2010: IX). It is not necessary to specify the details but certain broad principles need to be outlined to capture the spirit of audit as evoking both feedback and monitoring.

Institutionalization deals with regulation. The local administration has to decide whether one keeps to the old rules or creates new codes for building and environment. In formulating these, participation is considered as a normative value. The report insists that the survivor be considered as the first responder to the disaster, and that reconstruction is not the third phase of disaster management, or even an afterthought. Reconstruction as a policy must begin on the first day of the disaster. The report, therefore, integrates three versions of time: the habits of the past, the problems of the present, and the anticipative time of policy. In this context, two other factors become critical: the report contends that risk management becomes fundamental. As a methodology and a perspective, risk management allows the administrator to be alert to corruption and governance, and to seek a minimization of the impacts. The report states that environmental and social risk management is a part of financial probity. Finance thus becomes an overarching factor to indicate that obviousness of finance should not blind us to the fact that shortage of resources is not the greatest risk in managing the financial aspects of reconstruction (World Bank 2008).

The manual realizes that every reconstruction project is unique but that audit provides a skeleton to evaluate the effectiveness of the project on a broad series of fronts. All the above perspectives are then applied to housing reconstruction as a problematic, summoning case studies from across the world.

The manual emphasizes that time is a form of accounting since “reconstruction is a continuous process that begins immediately after the disaster and continues to last for years” (Jha *et al.* 2010: 7). Speeded-up time in itself is an audit gain. Audit as time becomes a cycle of: 1) assessment; 2) planning; 3) project development; 4) implementation; and 5) monitoring (Jha *et al.* 2010: 7). Assessments of various kinds like rapid need assessments and coordinated assessment constitute part of the long chain of audits.

The assessments show that a house is not only a material entity, but also a network of connections. Rebuilding a house implies restoring that fabric of social and economic connections. Audit is an evaluation of that restored connectivity. It is a tuning fork for a new sense of the social, which is still being worked out in many countries. Audits outline and remind the administrator that the new contours of the social, the technical, the financial, the institutional, and the sustainability audit are but fragments of audit, a series of assessments both spelling out and evaluating the components of the new social.

I will now try to examine the documents of audit in Gujarat to analyse how they stand in comparison to World Bank manuals from which they derive both instructions and inspiration. We shall consider the BME report on GEERP activities.

5.5.2 Audit for ‘New Improved Society’

The Gujarat Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation programme was formulated with assistance from the World Bank and ADB, and was visualized as a massive exercise in rescue, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction (GSDMA 2007: 5). It comprised a number of sectoral components, including housing, health, education, power, sewage,

agriculture and livestock, rural water supply, water, livelihood support, and infrastructure, social and community development, among other things. The benefit monitoring evaluation conducted by KPMG, a consulting company, was an attempt to quantify, in monetary and non-monetary terms, the nature of GEERP interventions. The overall hypothesis was that the mechanisms that GEERP set in place have increased the social well-being of the affected communities.

A new language emerges. Social well-being is seen in terms of the quality of life (QOL) indicators. The QOL immediately changes the nature of the game. Performance is not an abstract idea or a production quota. It is a relationship. Impact is measured in terms of impact on the people. Numbers now measure outcomes based on principles such as relevance, accessibility, quality. The qualitative acquires a different priority. Here, one needs to go beyond utilitarian calculations where outcomes emphasize capabilities. The emphasis is not on primary goods or resources. *Capability* allows for alternatives and alternative functioning, which a person can choose to have (see Nussbaum and Sen 1993: 3). There is a sense that ‘outcomes’, unlike impacts, are not physicalist and solely material. It explores the relation between choice and consequences.

By emphasizing capabilities, the report does not evoke the older conception of disaster management, which talked of a return to normalcy, a return to the ‘as-is-where-is’ of prior times. It is now talking of well-being. Governance is about well-being. Each word evokes its own world, changing the meaning of the social contract. Community participation itself now emphasizes four terms – transparency, access, equity and participation. There is a quiet transition from the idiom of government to governance.

The word *participation* becomes crucial because it emphasizes both access and capability. Capability becomes a bundle of potential competencies. Participation in that sense is an environment that allows for a certain kind of action. For example, are institutions transparent enough for people to obtain the list of housing beneficiaries, and

the variety and mode of instalment payments? Alternatives and access to information are central to the capabilities approach.

The report, as an example of audit, suggests two things. Firstly, audit is an attempt to create the socialization for the new social by creating a word map of meanings. Secondly, audit demands a socialization of a society into a scientific perspective, where training into the language of the new metric becomes critical. Amartya Sen argues that the emphasis should be not on primary goods but on what goods do for human beings (Sen Nussbaum and Sen 1993: 19).

The survey itself is a gigantic act of logistics as the three stages of BME survey cover 20,000 households. Beyond the ideas of marketing and census, a society and its academic institutions become used to the new language of social science and the methodologies and metrics required for it.

In Gujarat, a university with a Gandhian genealogy was used for such activities. The Gujarat Vidyapeeth acted as the survey agency and enumerators were trained for data entry. As illustrated in Table 5.2, the sheer scale of each stage shows the size of the new studies.

Table 5.2: Sample Survey
(Data Size in Terms of Households Surveyed in Different Rounds)

Pilot Study	8000 Households
1st Sample Survey	8000 households
2nd Sample Survey	4000 households
3rd Sample Survey	8000 households

Source: Author, Based on GEERP Data.

The Vidyapeeth was selected because of its large pool of manpower, and the enumerators' command of the language and exposure to the field. Such large surveys not only became a pedagogic programme in QOL indicators, an open publicity for the

earthquake programmes, but also diffused the idea of audit. The capabilities approach gets extended not only to the survivor but to the bureaucrat in the State secretariat, the politician and the academic creating careers around a new sensitivity to metrics. The quality assurance for data collection is elaborate. It is as if the method of measurement reflects the mentality of the audit with its ritual of scrutiny and back checks. Social science and society confront the logic of the new world while discovering their new role in it.

Yet, such audits can become ironic. Despite the sense of scrutiny and critique, audits appear and are reported like a celebration of the new rituals of the state. Each state-sponsored audit appears to be self-congratulatory. It is a legitimization of its 'successes', turning disaster into an "opportunity for a improved society" (Ranjit Bannerjee, interview). But audits also create a sensitivity. They point to ironies and paradoxes between equity and access, dominance and participation.

5.5.3 Beyond the World Bank Idea of Audit

I have already suggested in the earlier sections that the institution of the multi-hazard state expresses itself through a variety of methods, techniques, symbols, which reveal new aspects of state-building. Disasters are conceptualized in more formal scientific terms. I have also tried to demonstrate that the emphasis on post-disaster reconstruction summons new forms of feedback and audit, which raise the possibility of new forms of feedback and participation with civil society. I have tried to illustrate that the archives of reports around these activities are not mere technical manifestations, instead they are expressions of the state working out new responses to the social contract. Disasters become new ways of inventing the social through new experiments around the managerial and the techno-legal. One example of such a technical report is the Model Technical Audit and Quality Assurance System for Housing Construction (NCCBM Report) (World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2001) [also see Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA) Government of India website: <http://www.gsdma.org>].

Housing is a critical component of any act of reconstruction. The state of Gujarat realized that there was a need for a comprehensive plan for large-scale rehabilitation and reconstruction in six districts. But the nature of the plan was different. The state government decided to encourage public–private partnership. It also welcomed a large number of voluntary agencies, corporations as also other state governments to participate in the programme.

The National Council of Cement and Building Materials (NCCBM) was a major partner in reconstruction efforts. Its efforts to develop third party audit, especially its technical audit and quality assurance (TAQA), deserves a close reading. As NCCBM itself recalls, “the TAQA system was a unique program in many ways” (NCCBM Report 1.1). Its application moved beyond formal housing to the unorganized building sector in rural areas. It also involved a high level of coordination with other state departments and what it called ‘involvement of the rural masses’.

The report begins with the census of the impact. The earthquake affected 7633 villages in 21 out of the 25 districts. The affected population accounted for 45 per cent of the total population in these districts. The collapse of tens of thousands of houses damaged household assets, community assets and the productive systems. The scale of the disaster initially overwhelmed the local administration, which was used to dealing with a different order of emergencies. It raised the following questions, which had to be answered in a processual way.

Firstly, who decides about the process of relocation? It was decided that the *gram sabhas* (all adult members of a revenue village) would do it through a majority vote. The government would provide land for relocation (NCCBM Report, 1.3) This raised a legal question. In case of relocation, would the inhabitants retain ownership of spaces in the old village? It was decided that since the state government would provide equivalent plots in size, along with construction assistance, the spaces in the old village would revert to the state (NCCBM Report, 1.3) This raised the third question – would the state provide

infrastructure in the old villages should any minority community decide to stay back? It was decided that investment in infrastructure would focus on the new village and no such facility would be extended to the old village (NCCBM Report, 1.3).

The next question related to whether voluntary agencies could adopt villages in a long-term partnership. It was decided to include villages that had suffered more than 70 per cent damages as long as they drew up an implementation plan with the village.

It is interesting to note that these issues do not figure in the earlier documents. This reflects a change in mentality and attitude, an opening for dialogue, for participation, for collaboration with known-state participants. This discussion is also not tainted by 'isms' and ideologies. The state appears less monolithic, less hierarchical, a set of collaborations rather than impositions without losing its sense of decisiveness.

The next crucial issue was damage assessment. The government instituted a participatory damage assessment scheme involving officials, voluntary organizations and the victims. About 2000 engineers were deployed for this purpose. There was a transparency in the conduct of surveys, which made assessments in the presence of voluntary organizations. The village *sarpanch* provided the details and supplemented it with photographic evidence. More interestingly, re-surveys were carried out in cases of dissatisfaction with the initial survey. The damage assessment extended from housing to schools, district hospitals, water supply, telecommunication, electricity to government buildings. Damage assessment was followed by damage classification. This was followed by a rehabilitation programme based on four sets of packages evolved by the GSDMA. Following this, a comprehensive rehabilitation programme was initiated under The Gujarat Earthquake Reconstruction Program (GEERP). GEERP was devised as a steady answer to current limitations. It was recognized that the current emergency response system was totally inadequate for dealing with a catastrophe of this order (NCCBM Report, 1.6). Housing construction constituted the most important component of GEERP activity. The NCCBM

Report was, in that sense, an assessment of GEERP activities. The GEERP programme was one of the longest such projects undertaken anywhere.

The following three types of audit were involved: a design audit, a construction audit, and a technical audit.

Design audits emphasized user preferences (NCCBM, 3.61). Many beneficiaries had specific preferences regarding house form, geometry and shape which catered to their activity patterns, life style patterns, climate and culture. Consequently, type designs had to be modified to suit user preferences. The report also recognized that housing designs had to be sensitive to the needs of women. Consultations with women members were necessary, especially with respect to kitchens, water supply, storage and environmental sanitation.

A materials audit was necessary to ensure that building materials met quality standards set for earthquake-prone areas. The NCCBM had to ensure that materials not conforming to standards were not allowed in the construction. The report realized that unsafe materials were often used for economic reasons, especially in the rural areas. Enforcement mechanisms had to be created through the government to restrict them.

The NCCBM had identified 13 major audit points and 13 ancillary audit points to capture and retain earthquake-resistant features. An audit process becomes more than a one-time affair. Such a frequency of audit could not have been initially easy. Initially, the beneficiaries resisted such an elaborate process. They perceived it as a delaying tactic, which slowed down the payment of financial assistance from the government. However, when the engineers persisted, their attitude changed and the beneficiaries started cooperating. It became a process of education wherein engineers had to persuade house builders of the importance of meeting quality standards.

The spread of these technical audits also required an understanding that the management was not a top-down linear affair. The TAQA system employed and encouraged multi-level discussion, effective monitoring and timely communication with stake-holders. Scrutiny and feedback became a crucial part of the system of recommendations for rectifying problems and bottlenecks. Systems, in fact, became a metaphor for such modifications.

These methods were supplemented by a field survey (NCCBM, 3.61), which covered 200 households in four towns and eight villages. It sought to understand how far housing had benefited the recipients by locating their answers in a socio-economic context. One survey, in particular, had to estimate the quality of living space and the problems faced during reconstruction. The survey found that in both rural and urban areas, 95 per cent of the houses were owner-constructed. The remaining 5 per cent were NGO-built. In rural areas, 32 per cent of the houses were designed by a professional architect or engineer, while 70 per cent were built to owner preferences (NCCBM report, 5.4).

The benefit assessment was majorly stakeholder-driven with the programme effectiveness benefiting the project authority, the demand for quality materials benefiting labour, and capacity building and housing being read as social gains. The rapid technology transfer to masses was seen as a major advantage, as 99 per cent of the beneficiaries were able to correctly identify all the earthquake-resistant features in the newly constructed houses. The other gain was institutional, as the training programmes for 800 engineers and 900 masons signified a 'visible increase' in capacity building.

The positive attitudes to audits and codes make for an interesting study. These are read not only as governmental intrusion but also as signs adding to the quality of life. Audit as method becomes a new and internalized form of cultural awareness. One senses that the growing network of audits acquires a being of its own. The language of audits becomes one more dialect of efficiency and accountability. Methods appear like a new expression of governance, a collective mnemonic of new attitudes and new questions. In the next

section, I examine how the rituals of training create a regime of new concepts and the socialization to a new mentality. I want to show how training creates the everydayness for future paradigms.

5.6 The Ethnography of Training

The training programmes for Disaster Management were convened at Sardar Patel Institute of Public Administration. It is the premier public administration institute for the state. This training programme catered basically to *mamlatdars* (revenue officials).

5.6.1 Scoping

After the registration and introduction, each of the trainees was handed two slips, one yellow and the other pink. The pink slip asked them to list out ‘hopes and expectations’, while the yellow was an invitation to list ‘fears’. The fears were immediate and were about the organization and logistics of the seminar. The trainees listed anxieties about meals, accommodation and travel arrangements. The pink slips showed a wider structure of doubts under the category called ‘expectations’. The participants wondered if it was a user-friendly exercise.

The coordinators reminded them that they had to fill an evaluation form on the last day. They also added that participants who came with a ‘know-all’ attitude would not benefit from the seminar. They were also reminded that while they were high on experience, they could be low on knowledge, especially about new concepts of DM. Further, they were warned that it would be deceptive to think that the “Internet is all”.

5.6.2 Planning as Solution: Seeding Terminology

The coordinators began by emphasizing the importance of the plan. Planning always adds value and perspective, regardless of whether a plan is used or not. There was a chorus of scepticism among the participants who felt that such things were theoretical, that “we know, it does not work”.

The coordinators gave them a sheet with an outline of a box and asked them to draw a picture, any picture that entered their minds. Some drew a picture of acid levels rising, some of the sun rising, others of fish in water. After collecting the various efforts, the coordinators asked the trainees why they stayed inside the box when no one instructed them to. They contended that disaster management demanded out-of-the-box thinking.

There was a split-level drama to the training programme. At one level, the coordinators went on relentlessly emphasizing official knowledge. At another, a chorus of dissent, an array of *sotto voce* comments met each contention. For instance, the mamlatdar of Daman and Diu, a sharp-looking woman, responded by saying that training cannot capture ground level reality. “Paradigms were fine but exemplars were better. They provide a profound teaching experience.” She cited the commissioner of Surat who has handled both floods and plague, as an example. He had the nuggets of insight, the texture of knowledge that was desperately needed.

An air of indifference marked the participants sitting in the last 2–3 rows. Women sat contentedly, reading books and magazines that they had borrowed from the SPIPA library. The topics ranged from fashion, cooking, religious texts and even the latest book by Chief Minister Narendra Modi on leadership.

Protima Singh stepped up next and proceeded to talk on disaster management plans. Power point presentations followed power point presentations with alarming frequency. There was a textbook echo to the presentation. Official training seems to demand a recitation of key words: vulnerability, hazard, risk, disaster mitigation.

The presentation moved to definitions. Disaster was defined straight from the 2003 GSDM Act. “Disasters create a break in normal functioning. Disasters demand classification and currently there were 31 different kinds of disaster, along five main axes.” A diagram followed. It signalled a new paradigm. It was a picture of sequential arrows arranged in a circle tracing the move from DM as mere response to DM as

preparedness. It signalled a transformation of cultures. The state has to create a new culture of preparedness. This is the new lifecycle of disaster management. This following sequence was to be flagged again and again through the four days.

“Response→Recovery→Mitigation→Risk Reduction→Prevention→Preparedness”.

As I listened, I realized that classifications and lists move beyond words by amplifying them into a universe of responsibility and discourse. Training programmes tacitly elaborate a new contract, a syllabus creating virtually a new civics. Words and lists provide the new litany of that framework. The last major word on the list is ‘preparedness’. Preparedness involves a whole new class of responsibilities and it elaborates a huge collection of checklists.

The next presenter, the Director of GIDM, Jagdish Gandhvi, once again spells out the elements of Disaster Management. Traditional DM, he claims, has been focused on emergency relief only. The emergence of the welfare state and the nation state entailed new responsibilities. What reinforced and redirected these responsibilities were science, planning and management. They changed the contours of responsibility and effected a new paradigm shift. Checklists become, as it were, a verbal mapping of the new paradigm, a statement of intentions and activities that the state must carry out. It is a claim to a new competence, which its functionaries must internalize. The coordinator presents it as a new literacy. He calls it the 4Rs – of reduction, readiness, relief and recovery.

The audience is sniggering restlessly by now. They see the lecture as a redundant exercise. Yet they, and even the ethnographer, seem to sense that redundancy and repetition always claim the important. It is almost as if the official has to be boring. It marks a sign of *gravitas*. What we have by now is a textbook of civics, of the key terms, a list of procedures, and an emerging framework of responsibility. The parroting of the GSDMA goes on. Yet the very manner of repetition of keywords, lists, checklists,

procedures becomes invocations of the new multi-hazard state. It is a repeated recitation by new priests as trainers to familiarize people with the language of disaster management.

Gandhvi then spells out the grammar of risk management. He outlines risk identification through maps, GIS, vulnerability analysis, risk analysis, evaluation of direct–indirect effects. He talks of risk reduction, citing elements from the GSDM Act, and then proceeds to response and relief. He comes up with another list. The key terms listed by him are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: List of Key Terms Used during Training for Risk Management

Command and Control	Evacuation	Search and Rescue	Cordoning and Security	Shelter Management
Situation Analysis	Triage	Need Assessment	Food and Water Supply	

Source: Author, Based on Fieldwork Observation.

Recovery follows relief. He includes three activities within recovery, restoration, reconstruction and rehabilitation. Normalcy is defined differently. It is not a restoration of the old condition. It involves innovation and an upgradation of old services. It is through such a definition of normalcy that one moves to sustainable recovery and the sustainable future as an attempt to meet the needs of the present “without compromising the needs of future generations”. Disasters become slowly embedded in the language of sustainable development. Between a new vocabulary and a new paradigm, a new mentality is seeded. Sustainability is the attempt to make communities more resilient.

Resilience becomes a keyword. It is defined as the capacity or potential to adjust or deal with disasters. It has its own list of characteristics. The new multi-hazard state appears like a dull script, a checklist of activities, and a glossary of key terms. Examples are few and definitions abound. One recalls the distinction between ‘system’ and ‘life-world’.

The word ‘system’ outlines the formal, official and scientific outlines of a phenomenon. It is often definitional. The word ‘life-world’ includes lived experience, tacit knowledge, and bodily experience. It is while playing with the distinction between system and life-world that I realize that no matter how ineptly done, training is the attempt to bridge system and life-world. It involves a slow tacit act of translation and internalization. Even critique becomes an act of involvement, a key part of this process. It is not the formal that is important; it is the tacit, subconscious elements that slowly come to the fore, creating ganglions of familiarity, acceptance and operationalization. However, the first day signalled this only in fragments.

The next day begins with an elaboration of the DM plan and its importance. Protima Singh, the coordinator, lists out the organizational aspects on the board (see Table 5.4). The list includes a range of concepts that are deployed for disaster management.

Table 5.4: Concepts Deployed during Disaster Management

Unified Central Command	Control Room, A Helpline	Vulnerability, Identification	Risk Reduction
Coordination	Fixing Responsibility	Method	Budget

Source: Author, Based on Fieldwork Observations.

By this time, the repetition of lists has led to a sideshow of comments, questions, even sniggering. The mamlatdars complained that the lists are not quite narratives, and that they do not capture ground level experience. As a part of the revenue department, they are deeply located in the grassroots. Their stories and the nature of their problems feel different.

One of them recited the story of an eight-year old child, screaming for help outside the debris of a building after the earthquake in 2001. She was begging every passer-by for help. She could hear her parents, who were caught under the rubble, shouting in distress. The child kept a vigil, constantly begging for help. Two days later, the voices faded into

silence. The mamlatdar asked, “How and where does disaster preparedness respond to such a situation?”

Another mamlatdar recited the story of a search for a boat during floods. A crane was needed to obtain the boat, and a crane is never available at the taluka level. This leaves one helpless in the act of procurement. By the time the boat arrived, the water level had gone down! The mamlatdars felt that the experience was located at the *taluka* level. The bureaucracy remains helpless when the equipment is located at the district level. This mismatch between competence and equipment is not and cannot be anticipated in any DM plan or any resource planning map.

5.6.3 Definitions, Plans and Standardization

Gandhvi then raised three important issues. He suggested that post-earthquake planning had aided the transition from the unintended to the intended city. Town plans emphasize reconstruction and conform to the UNVRP, the UN vulnerability reduction programme, and acquire a new vocabulary in the process. We can see a community created around new concepts of urbanism. Surat was repeatedly cited as an example of such a situation.

Gandhvi then claimed that for writing a plan, an expert was essential. An expert provided the neutral space which could eventually articulate the claims of different stakeholders. Expertise was not mere knowledge but dynamic knowledge in the service of balancing a variety of interests.

Plans, said Gandhvi, should develop standard formats. There is a tacit distinction between standardization as an affirmation of quality and standardization as a question for homogenization. Standards are minimum claims to quality, a language that can imply plurality. Standardization becomes, as it were, an expert’s dialect, creating a language of competence. Standards are symbols of the competence of the state. They testify not just the quality of the product or process; they are ‘techno-legitimations’ of the state. He then added that plans should be comprehensive, simple, flexible, preferably presented in bullet

points, projected in active voice, direct language and in short sentences. Plans, in that sense, are not merely forms of expertise but models of communication.

Listening on the second day, I sensed that despite the critique, there was greater involvement. A certain framework was being developed. First, there was a vocabulary of terms and concepts, with clear definitions. Second, this language of expertise is global, a techno-managerial dialect, which has key words, sustainability and standards. These are worked out as a communicational model. Plans based on expertise are managerially simplified to be comprehensive, easily understood and applicable. Gradually, a new grammar of competence begins to emerge. It is still caught between the global theoretical idiom and its need to be translated and internalized into local idioms. We can sense a politics in the process. The trainers are offering a map and asking the trainees to commit to the language, claim a stake in it so that the map eventually becomes territory. The politics of training involves all the tacit negotiations required for that transformation.

The third day began on an even more technical note. Mr. Kunjal Rao, head of the UNDP project office at Pattan, talked about three topics: Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Analysis, and the DM Plan and the Disaster Risk Management Programme.

The lecture introduces the audience to a host of UN organizations, to a spate of acronyms and a vocabulary hovering around three key terms, Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability. The triptych of words virtually becomes three panels of reality, determining three ways of seeing a disaster. But the lecturer realizes that ordinary language, especially the local idiom, could be different in nuances and therefore consequences. The technical word carries with it as an entailment, the equipment and paraphernalia of an international circuit of professionalism.

Rao began easily by suggesting that if you ask people what risk was, they would say *jokhum*. But the meanings in English and Gujarati slide past each other. He explained that the word 'river', for instance, could be read differently. For the local people, a river is a

mother, a gift of life, a lifeline. The lecturer argued that at flood time, they see the river as a hazard rather than only a way of life. He then tried to distinguish between hazard and disaster, equating hazard with possibility (*sambhavana*) and disaster with something impending. Risk, he then added, was the probability of harm, of harmful consequences, expected losses of death and injury. In a culture of commerce, risk needed to be measured and even monetized.

He argued that perceptions of risk and hazard are cultural. If you point to a hut in Kutch and a *kuccha* (mud house) one at that, the observer might call it a way of life, a *parampara*, and not treat it as a secular problem. Words have consequences. Concepts in English need to be treated in translation. For example, the word for vulnerability is *asurakshit* which conveys insecurity. It does not have the double edge of the objective and subjective that vulnerability conveys in English and in social science. It is the same with the word 'resilience'. In Gujarati, the easy equivalent is *samvedan-sheelta*. This actually conveys 'tolerance'. Words bypass each other in a transfer of technology ritual creating limits to understanding. He added that culture is crucial. Sugar is a hazard to a diabetic but he has to see it. Vulnerability, he added, was a technical subject and disasters deal with vulnerability and hazards.

The presentation sounded like an official litany. The audience had switched off. Most had their mobile phones out and were busy sending text messages. Some were running in and out, indifferent to the presentation. The last 2–3 rows were in a world of their own, content in their glossy magazines. The lecturer was intoning the importance of mock drills. He had made important points about mapping, zoning and classification, but the audience sat indifferently. Five of them were reading other books while another five were engrossed in their mobile phones. In fact, 12 out of the 32 participants were fast asleep.

The mamlatdars felt that the logic presented did not quite empathize with their world. What I witnessed during the programme was a battle of two kinds of professionalism, one anticipative and the other hands-on, but confident of its sense of problems and narratives

on the ground. The objection of the latter was to ‘theory’. They argued that theory, as policy, often carried irrelevant information. It was interesting to note that every time they objected to theory, they came up with a story. It is almost as if the official idea of policy did not quite weave into the biographies of these officials, shrewd with ground level experience.

J.J. Jadeja, a mamlatdar remarked that gossip was also information. Rumour moved people more than data. He recited a story to illustrate it. Jadeja’s *tehsil* was next to another with a large irrigation dam. One day, he suddenly witnessed 20,000 tribals, who had left their villages and moved to high ground. There was a rumour that the dam had burst in the Jalod tehsil. He immediately phoned the collector who denied the occurrence of such an event but rumour has a power that the communication experts of Disaster Risk Management (DRM) do not quite imagine. In fact, many added that, more lethal than rumour was the pestilence called the mobile phone. They complained that it was a particular affinity of the media and the politician. It allowed for bullying and harassment. In fact, most mamlatdars confessed that they switched off phones during emergencies to concentrate on the work at hand. This move, they noted, had the imprimatur of the DM and the collector. The chorus of dissent in terms of whispered voices and loud conversation was literally becoming disruptive. One person felt that theory was lifeless. The DM, he felt, needed passion. It had to be an emotional challenge. Mere repetition did not always legitimize the official. Others added that this new world of theory came 20 years too late.

Yet even such statements become a fragment. Training is seductive in its own way. It invites people to talk together, discuss, repeat and play with words and vocabularies. It creates vested interests around words and around groups built around the word. What begins as an exploration of words silently develops into a new language community. The dialects on the ground weave into the new official discourse, creating new careers for officials who become the vectors of state building.

5.7 Reflections of a Bureaucrat: Jagdish Pandya

The multi-hazard state is not an instant creation. Because of the import of concepts, it took time to internalize both as ideas and as a set of innovations. Its making can be constructed from its narratives and memories of its key participants. I want to emphasize the self-reflectivity of these bureaucrats and the manner in which they perceived continuities and discontinuities between old and new regimes. One of the senior people most cited in everyday conversations is the current manager of BIZAG, the Geo-Information Institute, Mr. Jagdish Pandya. Mr. Pandya has had a chequered career. He was earlier in the revenue department, worked as a district collector and functioned as a mamlatdar in many villages. Pandya's career of disaster management is located within the core competence around drought.

Jagdish Pandya began by emphasizing that in order to understand disasters, one must see 'scarcity'. He added that he had 'seen scarcity'. He is uncomfortable with the word 'drought', which he points out does not figure in any policy document. Drought, he felt was something constructed. He claimed that, "drought begins with a memorandum. Drought needs a file, a case history. It requires a report, demands periodic assessments. Memorandums are real pictures of what happens on the ground." He then adds, "There were no rules for preparing a memorandum. It was rule of thumb. We had to list past histories, provide assessment of damages. Drought was real." He paused and wryly said, "What made it real was the money required." He then recited a story. It was the time of the 1982–85 drought. He was asked to prepare a crisis plan and request the Central Government for grant-in-aid for drought relief activities. He submitted his assessment to his seniors. It was a small budget, for Rs. 500 crore (US \$90 million) that he had calculated laboriously and manually. The senior official sent it back asking him to re-do and double it. What you ask is not what you get, he said. "Today," he says, "we even ask for a 1000 crores [US \$179 million] and get it. Our calculations are now done by computer. We can churn them out. But there is a system of asking and giving that we have to master. But there are no rules."

Pandya shifted gears. He smiled wryly and added that since droughts were constructs, one had to differentiate between political and real scarcity. Drought, Pandya declared, needs a master plan. It has to fit within certain formats. Pandya claimed that we were still living on the genius of colonial administrators. He referred to the work of Anderson, an officer in the colonial era who created the classification around agricultural land, a household name whose initials were literally irrelevant. “Anderson developed a classification of land with eighteen formats which even included the cattle system. It included all kinds of land, even wasteland. It provided a perfect fit for classification and assessment. Till today we are still running on it.” Pandya dubbed it as a work of colonial genius. He referred to the fact that a committee was established to study whether the Anderson system needed modification, even asking whether 17 or 19 categories would fit better. “But 18 it was and 18 it stayed. Today whether we work by hand or computer, the system holds. It is what we apply.”

Drought or scarcity management to Pandya is a mentality. It involves tacit knowledge, rules of the thumb that the *tehsildar* (the local officials) knew well. Consider patterns of rainfall. Pandya elucidates:

“It is not easy to define a rainy day. Yet rainfall determines the master plan, and determines how to create employment for the needy.” A variety of decisions are involved. One has to create village profiles, provide serial numbers, and elaborate the number of man-days of work. One has to then specify what kind of work is allocated to whom. For all this, local people have to be consulted about building roads, village tanks etc. The list of work generated has to be computed in terms of man days. The PWD then steps in to plan and provide estimates of apparent costs. This is followed by technical and administrative sanctions. There is a separate format for cattle, as the state provides grass subsidies. There are usually grass depots in villages. Ration cards called green cards are provided to the owners of cattle. There is a gradient of provisions. If big farmers need grass, they can buy it. It is not given. There is usually subsidy in the first and second years but it is dependent on government policy.”

The narrative shifts to cattle and the preoccupation of cattle claims its own ethnography as cattle-keeping is a culture of its own.

“There is culture of maintaining cattle in institutions called the panjrapol. Sick, aged, stray cattle are maintained in them usually by the Jain community. The Jains have a certain competence abetted by their own religious imaginations. People come and leave their cattle in the panjrapols. It is a venerable and venerated institution. Government subsidizes them at times of severe scarcity and occasionally trusts run cattle camps on Government land. But it is the Jains that provide the core competence. They are the best experts. Most panjrapols are run by Jain trusts. The Jains are a rich community. They all donate a few days of income to the panjrapol”. In an emergency, it is estimated that they can raise Rs. 5-6 crores [US \$0.90 – 1.08 million] in a day to protect cattle. For them, it is a religious duty which they do not even announce to the media.”

During the narrative, which shifted from level to level and anecdote to anecdote, Pandya made a fascinating observation. *Panjrapol*, he said, represents only one expression, one form of institutionalization of a deeper relationship between man and animals, particular cattle in Gujarat. He captured that spirit in a few moving stories. He began with a story from the city of Anjar about three years ago. There was a drought in Anjar.

“A man came to the panjrapol and left two of his bullocks weeping and crying at the parting. Even the cattle were weeping. The story had a sad ending. The man could not bear to leave them behind. He went to the market, brought some poison, came back, gave it to his cattle and then consumed some himself. People love their cattle, often proclaiming endearments meant for husband and wife. Recently a woman lost her cow and she jumped into a well. Such was her sense of loss and we have to acknowledge this. Panjrapols are generally sensitive to such issues, and even to issues of livelihood.”

Pandya added that when the earthquake came, the government moved beyond the mentality of the file. “Immediate decisions were taken. The difference in Gujarat was that oral decisions were taken. Word of mouth was binding. There were no files. I was in the Housing Department. The Collector would sometimes issue the money before the file was complete.”

Jagdish Pandya’s narrative unfolded in layers. What began by emphasizing the centrality of drought and floods gradually moved to the implications of the earthquake. His narrative itself started interweaving the different genres of disaster management. He too emphasized the sheer scale of the challenge. “After the earthquake, 2,33,000 houses collapsed and 10 lakh [1,000,000] were damaged. The entire communication system went

dead. The earthquake was unprecedented.” As the bureaucrat in Pandya confessed, it had no protocols, no manuals, and no standardized procedures for coping. In that sense, the earthquake and its demands exposed the illiteracy of the state.

“When the earthquake happened we could not follow the same principle. The government did not know what to do. Houses collapsed and the sheer enormity was stunning. There was just Mr. Sahu and me at the GSDMA. We didn’t have a formal office. We used the one outside his room. It had functioned as a visitor’s room. Sanjay Joshi joined us soon after. The scenario was devastating. The Government realized that it had to create some policy like a net to grasp the situation. The GSDMA was set up to give it flesh.”

Pandya attempted to put it into context. “For floods, there is a manual.” Manuals, he conveyed, were reassuring. They were handbooks of the state. They specified responses and allocated responsibility. A handbook signals the grids and codes of state activity providing both the clarity of goals and the methodology of action. A handbook is a statement that anarchy or disorder is over as the state has covered the problem with a grid of methodologies. An absence of a handbook often creates a deep sense of lack and anxiety. A hand book specifies hierarchies and the chain of command.

“In a manual everything is prescribed. There is a prescribed form for assessing damage. In the initial format, we list the number of members in the family, the nature of loss. We also include the number of utensils lost, even the loss of livelihood. There is a maximum time limit within which this has to be completed. The assessment has to be received by the TDO within 24 hours. The next team takes over and makes the payments. Cash amounts are formally prescribed. It is Rs. 20 for the elderly, 10 for a child. Grants are made for flood and livelihood. The mamlatdar and the TDO are also responsible for evacuating people from low lying to high lying areas. They can utilize public transport or request for private transport.”

Pandya repeatedly focused on categorization. “In Gujarat we have floods, drought, cyclones, some man-made disasters, and a few accidents. Some things are a bit unclassifiable like the Plague that hit Surat.” Pandya felt that eventually all could be categorized. Between classification and procedure, the state domesticates any new problem. Classification and standardization become to Pandya the protocols of the state at an everyday level. He also talked about the relief manual for scarcity, which spells out wages, nature of work, norms for creating work, etc. As an afterthought, Pandya added

that there was no memory of an earthquake, and as a result there was no place in the manual for it. Like P.K. Mishra, Pandya believes that the state must become the repository of memory around disasters. He recalls:

“I remember walking through Adhoi. Adhoi is a town which has been kept in the original state after the earthquake struck. I felt it should be maintained that way so researchers could research on it. Remember what happened to Kutch. We must not forget. I thought of it as a museum. It was a fragment because all of Kutch had become Adhoi. We need to remember.”

Pandya then suddenly leaped time and said:

“Ours was one of the fastest recoveries in the world. In 3 years 90% of Kutch has been rebuilt. In contrast, Latur has not yet recovered. One reason why it happened was that we consulted the beneficiaries. In Latur, no one consulted the people. Not that [there] were no failures. Often one sees houses which are completely unoccupied. These were constructed by NGOs. These houses lacked a local imagination. There was no space for cattle or fodder. Of course there were mistakes.”

The process of muddling through proceeded till the Act of 2003 came into being. Legislation, says Pandya, provided clarity of action to the lower bureaucracy and provided the way for the future planning for disasters.

5.8 The Other State: The Stakeholder State

In the preceding sections, I have tried to illustrate how: (i) The process of policy-making is a process of muddling through before some parts get frozen into formal frames; (ii) At another level, the impact of the intervention of the World Bank, ADB and UNDP led to the inauguration of the multi-hazard state; (iii) The inauguration of the multi-hazard sensibility introduced new terms, definitions, and methodologies; and (iv) These sets of methodologies become the nodes around which a network of possibilities emerges.

As regards the impact of the intervention of the World Bank, ADB and UNDP in terms of the inauguration of the multi-hazard state, I have re-read the possibilities of state-building

as a pluralistic exercise. I argued that the World Bank only seeds the idea while it is up to the state to choose concepts and indigenize the process of institution-building around these concepts. I also show that each needs to construct its own idea of the social through the varieties of methodologies, whether of training or audit. I attempt to illustrate how the transition from a drought-oriented to a multi-hazard state occurs. I emphasize the non-linearity of the process and the importance of translation in creating a socialization of the bureaucracy for such an idea, and how language and ritual create bureaucratic structures of legitimation. Innovation blends old and new around critical structures offering new forms of core competence. I show state-building to be a porous and inventive act, wherein the ideas of the World Bank, rather than creating deterministic worlds, are subject to the vagaries of translation and indigenization. A concept in governance is not a technological vector. On the contrary, it has a sociological career subject to the logic of culture. Such an understanding of state-building prevents pre-emptive ideas of the state and looks at state-building within the pluralism of the democratic frameworks.

To illustrate this I will turn to the other state which was part of my fieldwork: Orissa. One question that I had to inevitably confront was: Is the state of Orissa different, and if so, how? The Orissa ‘super-cyclone’ of 1999 had preceded the Gujarat earthquake by about fifteen months. Despite my efforts not to ‘compare’ the two, the logic of fieldwork made one ever-present in the other narrative. This was compounded by the constant comparisons that were made by civil society actors, bureaucrats and many journalists whom I spoke to and interviewed. There is little doubt that the imagination of the super-cyclone had added to the imagination of disasters and to state-building at both the state level in Orissa and at the national level. The prognosis, however, differed considerably.

In the following section, I look at the nature of state response to disasters in Orissa. I explore how the logic of everydayness of drought and floods in Orissa has created a structure of vested interests. I argue that the ‘new’ terminology and training are used to perpetuate the existing framework of vested interests and, in turn, leads to the

perpetuation of the stakeholder state, unlike Gujarat, where it reworks itself as a multi-hazard state.

5.8.1 Way of Beginning...

I went down to Orissa in November 2009 for my fieldwork. At least two of the issues that were being debated were of immediate interest to me. One was the debate on how to define what constituted 'Below the Poverty Line' (BPL) status. The other was the demand in the state legislature to officially declare Orissa 'drought-hit'.

Defining BPL is about classifying and categorizing members of the population who are entitled to claim certain 'benefits'. Ashis Nandy, the political psychologist, once observed that defining poverty is a political enterprise (2002). In 2009, two official reports were at the centre of debate: The Saxena Committee report and the Suresh Tendulkar Committee report.

The Saxena Committee had recommended individual calorie intake as the criterion for poverty estimates. On the other hand, the Suresh Tendulkar Committee had suggested that the estimates should be expenditure-driven. It argued that the per capita expenditure on food, clothing, education, and health should be critical. The implication of the recommendations was that if the state accepted the Saxena report, then 84.47 per cent of the state population would have come under the BPL category as against the existing 47.81 per cent (based on some other earlier criteria). If the recommendations of the Tendulkar report were accepted, the BPL population of the state would increase by 10 per cent to 57.2 percent. This was before the current debate where the Planning Commission suggested the availability of Rs. 32 or below as the threshold to define the household poverty (*The New Indian Express*, 16 December 2009).

While the debate on the poverty line and drought raged on, I can recall a photograph carried in one of the media reports. It was of a barely clad skeletal couple, who had been airlifted out of Bolangir district. They were suffering from starvation. The comments by

the members of the media centred on the airlifting of the couple. They argued that the money would have been better spent providing them timely food aid than on airlifting them out of Bolangir. Another section of the media wondered why such grand gestures were being made when a “large section of the population” in Orissa was facing a similar situation. It was, they argued, part of the everydayness of disaster relief.

5.8.2 The Logic of Everydayness of Disasters

Droughts and floods are part of normalized existence in Orissa. They are no longer headline news. A quick survey of the academic and popular literature on Orissa reiterates the recurring presence of droughts and floods.

Akhil B. Ota in his paper, “Orissa Drought”, presented at a conference organized in Bhubaneswar by Centre for Development Studies, Swansea, United Kingdom and Institute for Socio-Economic Development, Bhubaneswar, India on Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction: Lessons From Eastern India, 25–27 September 2001, writes:

“Drought is not new to Orissa and its people. Each year in some region or the other drought is occurring, but with varying magnitude and proportion. Historical data reveals that the first recorded drought of severe nature that struck the State was in 1866. Since, then drought of moderate to severe nature has been experienced 17 times. This indicates that drought of moderate to severe nature occurs in Orissa once in almost 8 years duration on an average. The time line of drought reveals that drought of severe nature has been experienced by the state on 4 occasions – in 1866, 1919, 1965 and 2000-2001. Although several severe droughts have occurred in the past, the drought of 2000-2001 assumes great significance. Truly speaking, even after 53 years of India’s independence, Orissa continues to be a drought-ravaged state. As early as 1866 (mentioned above), the year of great famine to even as recent as 1999, the year of super cyclone and the current year 2000, floods, cyclones, droughts and famines have consecutively devastated the state, affected lakhs of the inhabitants and served as a severe blow to the growth of this backward state. Unfortunately, the killer cyclone of 1999 was followed by a devastating famine as a result of severe drought in 28 out of 30 districts. As has been mentioned earlier, droughts however, are not an unlikely or strange phenomenon of this state.”

Without analysing the historical detailing of the floods, let me very briefly look at some of the events and stories around certain events in September 2010, which reflect some of this everydayness.

Debabrata Mohanty, a local journalist, reported from Bhubaneswar on 4 September 2011:

“Orissa on Saturday declared drought-like situation in 16 of its 30 districts. Last year, 17 districts were hit by drought. CM Naveen Patnaik, who reviewed crop-loss due to lack of timely rains in July and August, said that a drought-like situation prevailed in 16 districts despite rains in late August. The CM announced a package for the affected farmers, including 30,000 diesel pump sets at subsidized rates. By mid-December, 10,000 defunct lift irrigation points would be made operational.”

Barely a few weeks later, the newspapers would report about the ‘flood fury’ in the Mahanadi and other rivers, wreaking havoc in Orissa, which had “submerged about 2,600 villages spread over 19 districts and left eight dead even as the state government today stepped up relief and rescue operations for 11 lakh [1.1 million] affected people”. A week later, the statistics of the number of people affected would be revised to 20 lakh [2 million] affected and the number of those dead would be reworked at each district level. Even the Orissa Disaster Rapid Action Force had casualties.

Mayadhar Nayak, in his guest column in *The Telegraph* (dated 24 October 2011) titled, “Boon Then, Now Bane” moaned about the lack of response from the state:

“Year after year, calamities such as floods, droughts and cyclones continue to wreak havoc in the state, causing great loss to life and property. The recent devastating floods got me thinking whether there was any escape from the seemingly perpetual threat.”

I met Gopalkrishna Panda, a professor at Utkal University, who has been commissioned by the Orissa State Disaster Mitigation Authority (OSDMA) to generate a vulnerability map of Orissa. He told me that not much has been done in terms of vulnerability mapping of major events that impact the state. I asked him about drought. He replied:

“Yes, drought is an important and serious situation. We get drought and floods in the same situation in Orissa. Most of the western districts experience this situation. There is failure of rain in cropping season but with 3-4 days of rain there is flooding... Droughts are difficult to map. We don’t have adequate data on droughts in the state.”

“What is adequate data?” I asked him. He listed information on loss of crops, lack of drinking water, loss of cattle, forced migration, distress sale of household goods. “But we don’t have data on that but those situations are politicized. Lot of political and media voices come in but the event is not tackled. We have very little data on crop loss.” He told me there are a few field sites for NSO data but that they do not match the criteria needed for drought situation assessment.

“Droughts are politicized. If in a village, there is a mass scale force migration. It is normally the very poor who are afflicted. For the poor, it is a very severe crisis. You must have heard of women and children being sold. Then there is immediate media coverage on the issue. But... you can’t have scientific analysis till you go for closer analysis. A closer analysis is needed to see if the migration from the village is because of drought or mobility.”

I narrate these stories to share the quotidian nature of ‘disaster’ that the state faces.

5.8.3 Everybody Loves a Good Drought: And Regular Floods!

Droughts and floods create the everydayness of Orissa. P. Sainath’s book *Everybody Loves a Good Drought* (1996) becomes a short-hand, a semaphore telegraphing a certain view of drought. He argues that drought is among the more serious problems that the country faces. He then almost cynically adds, “Drought relief ... is rural India’s biggest growth industry.” The poor in fact, call the drought season *teesra fasl* or the third crop.

Sainath’s is not a sensationalizing book. The scandal of misgovernance arises from the myriad layers of data and the enormity of anecdotes he compiles. Drought relief, he observes, is sheer cornucopia. A great number of activities are bundled into any contract that is handed to any private party. The hamper includes projects to lay roads, dig wells, hire water tankers, build bridges, repair tanks. This is not small change. It is more than the annual state budget of the animal husbandry department. He cites the example of an anti-drought project inaugurated by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, in 1996, budgeted at Rs. 4557 crores (US \$817 million). The project involved spending the sum over six years at roughly Rs. 750 crores (US \$134 million) a year to spend on a few districts (Sainath 1996: 317).

Strangely, the choice of determining whether an area is drought-prone or not is not automatic. It is, as Sainath details, a political decision. It is also a political decision with a rainbow of financial consequences. The chosen area becomes a multiple beneficiary with grants from the anti-desertification scheme, the employment assurance scheme, the drinking water missions and a host of similar projects. The wish for drought becomes intensive as people naturally wish to benefit from this festival of projects. In fact, one soon discovers that there is little relation between drought and the presence of drought-related projects. The powerful in the area are able to appropriate not only such projects but also the benefits they offer (ibid.: 319).

Drought, observes Sainath, is a complex phenomenon. There can be an agricultural drought even when there is no meteorological drought. Rather than differentiate the two from hydrological drought, it seems easier treat them all as a whole. Once the space is created, the spiral of the drought scam reaches global levels.

Sainath adds that when projects come, all three groups benefit from it. There is a network of sentimentality, which creates a chain of being, of embarrassment, from the local district to the state levels, where the messages get a more forceful push from urban correspondents. The state makes its pitch to the Centre and the flow of *manna* follows in the reverse direction along with consultants. “Projects are drawn up with their assistance for fighting drought in the district or for water resource management or for anything at all.” (ibid.: 323) Expertise, hints Sainath, becomes its own form of appropriation. Water or money for water flows where the expert advises, not where the peasant requires it. A whole network of loyalties develops around the false drought, making it more real than the general drought. Everybody loves a good drought, especially if they have created it down to the last capillary, replete with well-intentioned funds. Drought, Sainath shows, is a game of definitions played by lobbies, with the state and its segments seeing in it an opportunity, a self-fulfilling prophecy of development funds. The levels of conspiracy vary but state and society become an interlocking hierarchy of competitive groups battling for funds. Drought is the grease for state-building in a poor state.

The assorted nature of Sainath's anecdotes hides a tight argument. He argues that there is no connection between drought and drought projects. Second, drought is not an obvious phenomenon and the process of declaring a locality a drought area is a political decision. This sets in train a series of lobbies and interests, which seek to benefit from the drought and the economy. Drought might affect the poor but the travails of the poor might provide an opportunity for the rich to get richer.

The logic of the stake-holder state builds on a similar module. One must understand the nature of subversion of the use of ideals and rhetoric to attract funds. A disaster has to be a spectacle, a focus of attention in order to attract aid. The disaster has to simulate the logic of concern and care, a pretence to be concerned about one's own citizens. Language plays a critical role by creating the rhetoric of aid. Like droughts, regular floods create their own economy around embankments, saline spurs, link roads, flood management, etc.

5.8.4 NREGA and Relief Structures

Food for work programmes are part of the relief structure in drought and floods. They are as normalized and everyday as the disaster events themselves. I had, in an earlier section (on Gujarat) gone into considerable detail on the reflections of M. Jagdish Pandya, a bureaucrat in the Gujarat government, about the role that food for work programmes play in relief work when a region/state is facing drought. In recent years, the programme has been revamped as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) with a two-fold focus: to create a rights-based employment for the poor and to create 'durable assets' for the community. These include embankments, roads, ponds, etc.

NREGA, as an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur report points out, potentially carried enormous significance for Orissa. With its twin objectives of creating rights-based employment for the poor and durable assets in rural areas for sustainable livelihood, NREGA was expected to bring about a marked improvement in the livelihood conditions amongst the poor. The policy impetus of the programme was to target poverty and

provide livelihood to the 'poorest' sections of the society. Orissa has faced the problem of unemployment and perennial seasonal migration of unskilled workers, especially tribal people, to nearby towns and outside the state. The introduction of NREGA was also supposed to be a tool to reduce and possibly eliminate this seasonal migration (IIT Kanpur report, p. 119).

The next section collates the observations of some of the evaluation and audit reports on NREGA in Orissa to show the systemic nature of corruption through which the stakes in disasters is built and perpetuated.

5.8.5 Report Finds Massive Corruption in Orissa NREGA

Let me first proceed to Parasuram Rai's report on NREGA (<http://kalahandia.blogspot.in/2010/12/rural-job-scram-survey-report-on.html>). Parasuram Rai is a 'right to food' campaigner and Director of the Delhi-based Centre for Environment and Food Security (CEFS). Rai's report shows how Rs. 500 crores (US \$89.6 million) worth of funds for rural employment had been siphoned off by bureaucrats. Rai (2010) argues that it has become another money minting machine for corrupt *babus* in Orissa. The money meant to provide subsistence meals for 4–6 months never reached the people.

The methodology was simple. Imagine that you are a poor illiterate tribal (*adivasi*) in the Kalahandi district. You are allotted a job card and given employment for 21 days and paid a sum of Rs. 610. The records, however, show a different set of payments and entries. The payment is recorded as Rs. 6310. The remaining Rs. 5710 has been siphoned off by government officials.

Rai reports the story of Chandra Majhi. He had not received any employment under the rural scheme. His job card showed that he had 108 days of employment and received Rs. 5940. Rai argues that there are hundreds of such cases. In fact, 13,000,000 households were supposedly given wages under NREGS in 2006–07. Government records show that

during the above period, the government had provided Rs. 799,000,000 (US \$14 million) worth of employment to 1,394,169 households. This turns out to an average of 57 days of employment during the year.

However, a random survey of 100 villages conducted in the six poorest districts of Orissa reveals these claims to be bogus. The survey estimates that Rs. 733 crores (US \$131 million) had been siphoned off. The survey, which was conducted by the CEFS, where Rai was the principal investigator, showed that not more than five days of average employment had been given to needy families in the 19 NREGA districts. In fact, the investigation discovered that 37 villages out of the sample of 100 had received no wage employment whatsoever. Rai calculated that if the money had actually been paid, it would have meant Rs. 5000 paid to each family over a 4–6 month period. For a subsistence culture, that is a princely sum. To cite the CEFS survey, its findings are:

“Shocking, scandalous and outrageous. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in Orissa has been virtually hijacked by officials responsible for the implementation of this scheme. Our survey findings have revealed that there is participatory loot, plunder and pillage in Orissa’s rural job scheme.”

Rai also observes that the provision of social audit included under the NREGA did not apply to any of the 100 villages surveyed. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been completely sidelined during the NREGA scheme.

Jean Dreze and Christian Oldgies in their article in *Frontline*, February 2009, are more cautious when ‘evaluating’ NREGA. They observe that there was a major setback in Orissa, where employment generation per rural household apparently declined from 21 days in 2006–07 to eight days in 2007–08. Orissa was the focus of a wave of embezzlement reports in 2006–07, and there are at least two possible reasons for this employment crash the following year. One is that there was a substantial reduction in the fudging of employment figures, owing to greater vigilance. (There is some independent evidence of this from recent social audits initiated by the National Institute of Rural

Development). This could bring down the official employment figures even without any reduction in actual employment. The other possibility is that employment actually declined, perhaps because the corruption scandals had some sort of ‘dampening’ effect. It is quite likely that both factors played a role.

I furnish these stories not to talk of corruption but to draw attention to the entrenched system of stakeholders who have, over the years, created a framework within which vested interests continue to use the disasters to perpetuate their own perspectives. The state becomes an assemblage of beneficiaries who, in turn, act as benefactors to their clients. In fact, the word ‘survivor’ or ‘victim’ becomes a misnomer. What we see is a clientele. The new stakeholder state is reminiscent of the old (feudal) *jajmani* system, where an elaborate set of economic ties built around ritual occasions fostered a caste system. The language of the new shareholder state works similarly. Every project is a ritual of integration. It is not just a patrimonial model of contractors and bureaucracy. It is a way of thinking where the old model of the beneficiary dominates economics and thought.

At this stage, I will turn very briefly to the Orissa State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA).

5.8.6 OSDMA: Ring Back the Old

It is in this existing framework that the Orissa State Disaster Mitigation Authority (OSDMA) was set up by the Government of Orissa on 28 December 1999 (in the intermediate aftermath of the super-cyclone in 1999). It was registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 on 29 December 1999 as “a non-profit making and charitable institution for the interest of the people of Orissa, with its headquarters at Bhubaneswar and jurisdiction over the whole state.” The OSDMA articulates itself by defining Orissa as a state susceptible to multiple disasters due to its location and geography, which sets the rationale for its being:

“Orissa is vulnerable to multiple disasters. Due to its sub-tropical littoral location, the state is prone to tropical cyclones, storm surges and tsunamis. Its densely populated coastal plains are the alluvial deposits of its river systems. The rivers in these areas with heavy load of silt have very little carrying capacity, resulting in frequent floods, only to be compounded by breached embankments. Though a large part of the state comes under Earthquake Risk Zone-II, the Brahmani Mahanadi and their deltaic areas come under Earthquake Risk Zone-III covering 43 out of the 103 urban local bodies of the state. Besides these natural hazards, human-induced disasters such as accidents, stampede, fire, etc, vector borne disasters such as epidemics, animal diseases and pest attacks and industrial / chemical disasters add to human suffering.”

The OSDMA has the mandate “not only to take up the mitigation activities but also the relief, restoration, reconstruction and other measures. These activities cover the entire gamut of disaster management including preparedness activities.” The OSDMA website seeks to frame these experiences with two quotations. The first is from John Milton and it reads, “Accuse not nature. She had done her part, do thou thine.” Framed as an alternate is a ponderous message from Winston Churchill, which claims, “To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day.”

The cosmopolitan air of the quotes extends to the initial invocation that accompanies the text of the Orissa State Disaster Management Act. They invoke in their own creation myth other famous declarations, to create both a genealogy and a sense of kinship. The Orissa Disaster Management Act begins by citing the declaration at The World Congress of Natural Disasters at Yokohama in 1994, which prioritizes disaster mitigation over emergency response.

The OSDMA text recognizes that “Orissa is a disaster-prone state. The recurring disasters like food, drought and cyclone have a crippling effect on the economy.” The Act reflects the decision of the state to have its own specific disaster policy and to provide the necessary guidelines for disaster management. It was visualized as a proactive policy to make people disaster resilient.

As a piece of thinking, it is both fascinating and futuristic. The OSDMA document articulates a huge shopping list of principles, seeking to promote a culture of prevention and preparedness, thereby shifting to a multi-hazard approach on disaster management. It demands a shift from a relief-based to an entitlement-based approach to human assistance. It recommends a sustainable development approach based on involvement of the community. It expresses a need to integrate the disaster management perspective into the wider agendas of development policy and planning. It recognizes the importance of high-level standards but also acknowledges the need to localize them. It promises to be environmentally sensitive and to include people as partners and evolve disaster management as a distinct part of the educational system. It emphasizes the need for protection of women in all stages, and recognizes the high vulnerability of the elderly, the physically and mentally challenged. It also insists that all forms of humanitarian assistance should be both predictable and equitable. As a collection of ideas, the OSDMA text is almost immaculate. It oozes the best ideas of Amartya Sen and other development theorists and its rights-based perspective seems promising. It is also enlightened in its demand that risk transfer through insurance premiums should be based on equity criteria.

Organizationally, the Act holds that the revenue department of the state will be the administrative department for general guidance and it allocates to the OSDMA, the determining role in pre- and post-disaster phases. It leaves the lead role during the response phase to Special Relief Organizations.

The OSDMA Act was a pioneering piece of legislation. We must record its other breakthroughs before we discuss its unfulfilled promise: OSDMA was the first to set up the Orissa Disaster Relief Action Force (ODRAF). It was established because of the recognition that the cyclone left the transportation network in shambles. “Truckloads of food, medicine, shelter materials and other life support systems could not reach affected people as relief lines could not be cleared of fallen trees and debris” (see <http://www.osdma.org/ViewDetails.aspx?vchglinkid=GL011&vchplinkid=PL034>, accessed on 05 February 2012). In response, the Orissa Government created the Orissa

Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), carving out three units from the Orissa State Armed Police. During the first stage, they were set up at Cuttack, Jarsguda and Koraput. Given their effectiveness, I am told, that five more such units are being planned.

At first sight, the OSDMA seems a genuine pioneer and a distinguished precedent to the GSDMA. I must note that the irony of Orissa is that it began as a pioneer in disaster management. What was witnessed was a slow subversion of mechanisms to consolidate the old institutional frame.

5.8.7 Baroquization

The ethnographer has to read and listen between the lines. There is something amiss in the official narratives. They seem to reflect more and more of the same: the language of DRR, DRM, CBDP, vulnerability, participation and mitigation is evoked. However, unlike Gujarat, where I encountered new methodologies and institutions, I sense that the language is the same but the content is different. The cast of characters in terms of consultants, bureaucrats and NGOs appears the same but the plot does not seem to move. I interviewed Sampad Mahapatra, a journalist with NDTV. He remarked, “A text on floods, cyclones and drought written in the last century and the reports now seem almost identical.” One wonders whether there is a flaw in management or memory.

Decline might be a wrong word. It might be too etic in its emphasis, reflecting an outsider’s view of corruption. What we are confronting is a process of baroquization. The idea of baroquization as a process was developed by Mary Kaldor in her *The Baroque Arsenal* (1981). A classic study of the development of the tank after World War II, Kaldor shows that generals tend to reproduce the last war when fighting the next. Secondly, in investing in the past, they look at all new innovations in an old frame. The old frame, as a part of vested interests, tames any innovation. As more and more money is spent on the tank, the machine baroquizes itself. Baroquization is a process wherein more and more money is spent to deliver less and less. As investments increase, efficiency

stays constant. The vested interests prosper through increased affluence but there is little advance in terms of warfare.

As we start examining the various projects in Orissa, we notice the following trends. There is no sense of innovation or institution-building. In Orissa, we see a paradigm in crisis, but one which is content to build epicycles around itself. Each epicycle is seen as a further consolidation of investment. One gets a feeling it is not the problem that one solves but the problematic one sustains as a vested reflection of community investment. Every problem raised has the same PWD solution of repairing embankments, building roads, creating spurs and shelters. There is a split between projects and the overall programme. The tactic seems to multiply investment, increase the quantum of projects. The old paradigm of DM was not just a mode of knowledge; it was a collection of stakeholders committed to the old way of defining a problem. There is a circuit of consensus, a vested interest around a chain of problem definitions.

Kamal Mishra, an IAS officer, reflected further on the nature of disaster management. As a bureaucrat, he understood how law and finance could be barriers. He explained that legally any institution can be statutory or non statutory. “The OSDMA was established in 1999 and it was registered as a non-statutory body. Remember the National Disaster Mitigation Authority came into being in 2005.” Precursors, he pointed out, make decisions which are fateful. OSDMA, being a tentative creation, accepted a lot of World Bank conditionalities. “But more lethal than that is that the OSDMA has no permanent cadre of employees. The staff are all on temporary deputation. They are not a legal entity. The rest are consultants who survive on a term to term basis. The OSDMA has no independent budgetary functioning and thus performs on the basics of project functioning.”

Even innovative structures become problematic. I interviewed Nikunj Sundaray, the managing director of OSDMA, an IAS officer of the Orissa cadre. “The OSDMA was among the first agencies to model data,” he informs me. “ODRAF a dedicated force for

disaster rescue was another of the first innovations” instituted by the state of Orissa. Yet, creating these battalions became counter-productive. Disasters are usually occasional and are punctuated by large gaps. Unless a society is disaster-prone, it creates a peculiar kind of unemployment. “The force sits and cracks its knuckles, waiting. Such waiting can be counterproductive. Such absentee time can be a source of irony.” Sundaray added that “despite the best of preparedness and planning, I feel disasters prefer to come in the evenings or on holidays becoming acts of ambush”.

Sundaray mentioned that the externalities of one system can infiltrate another. “Context provides its own problems. Democracy and its electoral rules can be counter-productive for disaster relief.” He cited an example:

“We were on duty on March 31. It was election time and flood time. The election code of conduct specifies that no relief be allocated or distributed during an election campaign. It is seen as interference and can be severely penalized by the election commission. Yet people were suffering and starving. We decided to apply the logic of functional systems arguing that the integrity of disaster management had priority. Suffering and starvation should have priority over the norms of election time but its not always so.”

Innovations rather than adding to new forms of institution-building consolidate old systems. The first such move was through rhetoric wherein an old feudal system creates a spectacle of cosmopolitanism. Every cycle of reform becomes an epicycle to be consolidated through the old paradigm. Irony, subversion and iatrogeny become standard rituals. The idea of baroquization, it appears can be applied to Orissa.

Sundaray is, however, keen to emphasize that despite such constraints, the OSDMA had done well technically. The ODRAF had five units and was expanding to eight. They were guided by the vulnerability Atlas, which amalgamated a variety of disaster data. It had created the hazard history of 23,000 villages in Orissa and provided training at various levels. Mishra again hinted at the gap between technical achievements and the tension with wider contextual pressures.

Sundaray repeatedly emphasized the role of context. “Culture and politics are both contexts. Contexts can change the logic and grammar of our work, even misrepresent it.” He used context both negatively and positively but his attitude was pragmatic. The externality is what you have to contend with. He advises some pragmatic steps. Like any new domain of expertise, disasters created a flood of acronyms and jargon. He said that unless it becomes a part of folklore, jargon should be avoided and acronyms should be taboo. He then referred to the “real context, the politicians. Ours is a society in perpetual interface with politics and the politician.” He was suggesting that more than language, it was the idiom of politics that one needs to master. There is a sense of change but a change that reinforces the old. There was a suggestion that the current sense of the problematic holds reform at bay. It consolidates the stakeholder state. In the next section, I systematize the idea of the stakeholder state before contrasting it with the multi-hazard state.

5.8.8 The Stakeholder State

The stakeholder state is a complex and systematic commitment to an old paradigm of disasters. It lets in new ideas only as far as they can sustain old vested interests. As Sampad Mahapatra, an NDTV journalist and other observers in Orissa have pointed out, there is a buzz of activity, in the new system: a flood of new investments and consultancies. Reports are written, experts make recommendations, and yet the lot of the people does not improve. Even the best of NGOs and cultural groups do not break through. On the contrary, the poverty NGOs move in. As Mahapatra and the UN Report on Drought state, while the poor move out, the poverty industry moves into Orissa.

As one tries to segregate the various projects for disaster management and poverty alleviation, one senses the sheer quantum of investment. Yet the best of problems and the proposed solution remain surreally the same. There is or appears to be something anachronistic, as we seem to be confronting not the making of a new kind of state but witnessing the old PWD state involuting in numerous folds but still insisting on an older style of problem-solving. Society and the nature of disaster appears to have changed but

the problematic of disasters remains fixed in organizational amber. We obtain some sense of what Ambika Prasad, the Orissa State Director for UNDP, terms as “the problematic nature of the problematic”. Prasad referred to the Vulnerability Atlas, which the UNDP had prepared along with OSDMA, and said:

“It is not just that the nature has become more problematic. Today disasters no longer refer to just floods. Through development projects, we add to it. Roads are a man-made problem. There is no passage in roads. This creates the problem of flooding. Mud houses are a problem as they collapse easily. We have destroyed the mangroves for prawn cultivation. In Southern Orissa, tribals face even greater vulnerability with Cholera. Malaria is also rampant. The number of working days comes down with chronic poverty and malnutrition.”

Prasad nuanced his argument by adding that “the problem of North and Central Orissa is slightly different. These areas are rich in minerals. Here, there has been displacement on a large scale. Mining and railways even as projects for development have created a displacement which only adds to the scale of disasters. Sadly, the state exacerbates the problem by ignoring rights for tribals and right to forest. Development consolidates disaster by perpetuating it. There has been no headway. Initially, 48% of the people were below the poverty line, but this has now changed to absolute poverty.” Prasad was referring to a desperate situation being close to or approximating bare life. “Yet it’s the state that plays the landlord. Government is the dominant land lord as it owns 83% of the land.” Prasad raised the need for a Relief and Rehabilitation for industrial policy to rehabilitate those displaced by development projects, as follows:

“There is no positive change. Tribals can obtain rice from the Public Distribution System (PDS) but cannot access health and other facilities. The nomadic tribes have lost rights over the forest. Theirs is a life of subsistence even with the PDS. The Markhatiar, a nomadic tribe, has been reduced to mere 236 people, who now survive on monkeys. It is a vicious cycle of multi-hazards and multi vulnerabilities with migration as an answer. We need to look at development as political change and create capacity building in NGOs and civil societies and then scale it up.”

But NGOs become forums, wherein old work is pegged to new programmes. I attended several workshops organized by civil society actors in association with donor agencies to

seed the vocabulary of disaster management. In one such seminar that I attended, XIM, Bhubaneswar had invited an NGO, a corporate representative from WIPRO, one politician who exuded ease, one mediaperson, and a few others from civil society. These forums integrated every key word from Rio to Copenhagen. The language was similar to the one we had heard in Gujarat. The seminar became a ritualistic exercise, a masonic set of symbols to indicate that only the initiated had been included. In this sense, all the usual concerns like children, hygiene, health, and environment became grist to the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) mill. As a result, everything was related to the topical fascination with millennium goals. It was an act of translation to the latest official concerns, where you related not what was important but instead what you felt was important to the MDG.

As one of the persons in the UBSS (RSS sister organization in Orissa) whom I interviewed told me about the Director of a leading NGO:

"We were in the same class. He was a very poor student, but now he is worth 200 crores [20 billion]. I don't have anything. This is the logic of NGO world in Orissa and also the ethics with which you work. NGO world is all about making money in the name of Social Service. If 100 rupees are given for a cause, 60 go for the organization and only 40 rupees go to the people."

The NGO has sadly become an intrinsic part of the stakeholder game in Orissa.

5.8.9 On Disasters and State: Some Reflections

In the preceding sections, I have tried to re-read the possibilities of state-building in post-disaster situations as a pluralistic exercise. I show how the World Bank, ADB and UNDP create a set of methodologies which become the nodes around which a network of possibilities emerges. I illustrate that the ideas can only be seeded; it is up to the state to choose concepts and indigenize the process of institution-building around these concepts. A concept in governance is not a technological vector. On the contrary, it has a sociological career subject to the logic of the user. While Gujarat begins from the imagination of drought, the events surrounding the earthquake trigger it to an overall

reflection on disasters, enabling the making of the multi-hazard state. In Orissa, on the other hand, the state becomes the custodian of the old paradigm not only as a knowledge system but also as a set of vested interests. I have called it the stakeholder.

Before I proceed to systemize the differences between the two in a table, I need to make a few conceptual distinctions. The first is the distinction between a stakeholder state and a shareholder state. A shareholder state seeks the welfare of the community, most or all of whose members are represented through a participative process. A stakeholder state seeks the welfare of a few vested interests of contractors, bureaucrats, consultants, NGOs, politicians and the media who have enforced the old definition through enormous power and money. They become custodians of the old paradigm not only as a knowledge system but as a set of vested interests. It creates a tacit form of corruption wherein new knowledge finds it difficult to enter the system. Data is harnessed to perpetuate the problem. Alex de Waal, in his work *Famine Crimes* (1997) on Africa, shows that humanitarianism as a career is a technocratic exercise operating in terms of consultancies. The lifestyle of these professionals also alienates them from suffering. By constructing their work as apolitical, as an extension of an economic theory, they are unable to take positions which suffering requires. Preferring to work with failed states and elites, they turn corruption into a cornucopia, an extension of failed development. De Waal's work focuses on the production of catastrophe. Sainath (1996) in his monograph argues how disasters are consumed and milked by a small group of vested interests. Sainath's work focuses on the logic of drought. Between Sainath and De Waal (1997), the stakeholder state is unravelled with an eerie ethnographic intensity. It is not so much a defeated state as a cunning state, which uses humanitarianism, development, the flow of aid to sustain its own way of being. The epicycle grants the continuity of the old paradigm, ensuring that the new can only enter if it is in the service of the old.

The multi-hazard state is more open-ended in terms of methodologies. It is not a mechanical aggregation of levels. Narratives are not additive like building blocks. The narratives demand mediation, transformation, translation and even localization. We see it

in the relation between biography and policy, between local knowledge and official terms. Even the consequences of words change according to the context. Dictionary definitions do not suffice. Each word as text, context becomes a travelling fact, changing meaning in depth and intensity as it moves across different levels. Each concept as an organizational cluster is a negotiated set of meanings. The difference between the multi-hazard state and the stakeholder state begins to emerge more clearly. The differences between the two can be listed out (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5: Disasters and State: The Multi Hazard and the Stakeholder State

	The Multi Hazard State as a Shareholder State	The Stakeholder State
1	Recognition that old solutions will not work	Emphasis on old solutions. Domesticates new solutions to old frameworks
2	Openness to audit and problem-solving	Vested interest in old solutions as a consolidation of investment
3	A sense of people's response; Tries to institutionalize participation methodologies	Indifference to marginals, especially their migrations
4	Capacity building of community	Capacity-building of vested interests
5	Institution-building, projects growing into programmes and institutions	Lack of progress, separation of project from programme
6	Audit cultures capacity-building to combat corruption	Corruption as the circuit of the state

Source: Author.

At a methodological level, this chapter looks at the making of the state as a composite of narratives. State-building is seen as a combination of stories, anecdotes, reminiscences, bureaucratic reports, laws, training rituals, schedules, case studies, audit reports, annual reports and conference proceedings. State-building as a problem-solving exercise as reflected in the above narratives, which also reveals a way of integrating the macro and the micro. Policy is never singular. It is a bundle of rituals, which means different things at different levels. Emergency at the panchayat level might imply a concrete sense of responses, while emergency at the state level might be an abstract code of strategies.

While organizations might be hierarchical, state-building, to use C.S. Holling's term (2002), can be panarchic, signalling a new linkage between governance and democracy.

In the following chapters, I continue to use this network of narratives, reports, case studies, anecdotes to see how various organizations construct their idea of social in a disaster.

6. Organization as Epistemic Frames – I

Constructing Communities: The New Humanitarianism

In the previous chapter, I tried to read the possibilities of state building as a pluralistic exercise. I tried to demonstrate that the logic of State post disasters cannot be frozen into a linear narrative. I highlighted the various processes and rituals that went into the making of the multi-hazard state in Gujarat. I sought to show how new legal institutional processes get triggered. Training and audit become normative tools for governance. A vocabulary is configured around certain practices of institution-building. Terms like vulnerability, disaster risk reduction, mitigation, preparedness, mapping and planning acquire a new resonance. I looked at Orissa and argued that unlike the multi-hazard state, which is open-ended in terms of methodologies, the state of Orissa is a network of stakeholders: contractors, bureaucrats, consultants, NGOs, politicians and media, who have reinforced the old definition through enormous power and money. I argued that the state becomes a custodian of the old paradigm not only as a knowledge system but also as a set of vested interests. I refer to it as the stakeholder state.

In the following chapter, I will build on the research questions I sought to answer in my previous chapter: How is the social constructed by a set of organizations? How does the framing of disasters change with the narratives and questions that these set of groups ask of disasters? In doing so, I also begin laying the foundations to answer my third research question: What are the implications of these constructions for democracy, governance and citizenship?

The organizations I explore are Caritas and Catholic Relief Services (CRS); Oxfam, Action Aid, CARE; and the partner organizations of the last three. The chapter is organized into three broad sections. I begin with the traditional idea of Christianity as espoused by groups like CRS and Caritas. I show how they sublimate this into the more secular language of rights and entitlements. I then move to a second set of groups like

Oxfam, Action Aid and CARE, which can be seen as dialects of one language with an overlapping vocabulary of concepts. Each becomes an attempt to forge a new humanitarianism through the language of social science and its methodology to the extent that methodology substitutes for religious or political ideology. The chapter shows that while the framework of charity/aid is not erased, its concerns are reworked, translated through social science idioms. The third section discusses ‘partner organizations’ like TARU, AIDMI and Unnati. These “partner organizations” perform a gardening function. As evaluators, as mediators between local and global groups, they domesticate the efforts of the NGOs, standardizing idioms and methodologies. In so doing, they facilitate the movement to a new perspective.

At the time when I was doing my fieldwork, many of these groups were seeking to make a transition from an aid, charity-based or missionizing Christianity approach to ‘secular’ humanitarianism, in challenging the ontology of citizenship.

These organizations show that the current definitions of citizenship are outer-directed, focusing on migrant and refugee, rather than inner-directed. The latter view focuses on the substantive character of citizenship, demonstrating that citizenship is not a homogeneous entity. For marginals, the vulnerable, minority groups, citizenship in terms of rights and entitlements is a nominal category, often empty in terms of everyday content. By focusing on citizenship as actual being, they contribute to the thickening of the concept. By using disasters as a site, they open up the idea of humanitarianism in new ways. In fact, they facilitate the transition from charity as love or compassion or caring based on Biblical edicts or Papal Encyclicals or aid to humanitarianism as an enlightenment idea based on a definition of rights. In doing so, these groups provide a more open-ended idea of democracy in post-disaster situations. I begin my descriptions with Caritas.

6.1 Caritas: The Framing of Gospel Love

Caritas India is the official organization of the Catholics Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) and was established in 1962. Caritas produces some of the most transparently reflective documents on disasters. In fact, disasters become the opportunity for reworking the Caritas imagination.

Caritas recognizes that the roots of its imagination are located in the Bible. Its website states that its vision is the “formation of a just and sustaining social order where gospel values of love, equality and peace are nurtured and lived”. It goes on to state that Caritas India aspires to “alleviate human suffering and misery in a spirit of charity and compassion, give concrete expression to Christian love so that all may individually and collectively grow into that fullness of humanity as at creation”.

The above point was reiterated by many others whom I interviewed. Sunil Mammen from Caritas, Delhi, says that the motive of the organization is “to follow Jesus, do work of charity and work of compassion”. A senior member of CRS (Catholic Relief Services), who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, “We work through the church. They are our partners. We also have some non-church partners. We build their capacity in terms of finances, reporting and proposal writing. But we and our partners are all on the same page in terms of faith.” Vineet, who is responsible for the Caritas Ahmedabad chapter, explains that “Caritas works with local diocese where the Bishop is the head. The social wing of the diocese responds to disasters. After the earthquake, CRS and Caritas worked in partnership for rehabilitation of villages. We then shifted from rehabilitation to livelihood generation and income generation schemes. From 1990 to 1995, Caritas India supported 679 emergency projects for a total amount of Rs. 37 – 48 crores [US \$6.6 million – 8.6 million], of which 87 per cent was for rehabilitation and 13 per cent for relief. Emergency intervention programmes for 1995–2001 included a total outlay of 845 projects.”

The philosophy of the Bible is not cited directly but worked through a filter of other documents, which embody Catholic social teaching. Central to this is the compendium of the social doctrine of the church, and particularly Papal Encyclicals. Caritas recognizes that while the Bible is “the source of revelation and the basis of faith”, it is not a manual of morality. It constitutes “a part of reference that assures us of our identity and provides a basis for Christian debate”. The key words around which Caritas reworks its religious ideas are solidarity, justice and charity. “In a recent encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI defines solidarity as foremost, a sense of responsibility on the part of everyone with regard to everyone”. To desire the common good and strive towards it is “a requirement of justice and charity”. A critical part of striving for justice and charity is to define the community that is ‘needy’.

Caritas argues that its idea of a dynamic community is not a sentimental one, as it is sensitive to power. Its idea of the caring community confronts poverty, marginality and vulnerability. Father Regi, Director of the Association of Bengal Collaborators for Development (ABCD), Kolkata, says that the pointer is in the gospel message, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in” (Matthew 25:35).

A spokesperson from CRS who spoke on condition of anonymity, when asked about the focus on the ‘needy community’, elaborated that it “means the poorest”. S/he points out that “By the national government criteria, it can mean Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and some Other Backward Caste (OBC) groups. It also includes orphans and single-headed households (widows).” The SCs, also known as the Dalits, and the STs and OBCs are groupings of historically disadvantaged people that are given express recognition in the Constitution of India. The SCs and STs make up around 15 per cent and 7.5 per cent, respectively, of the population of India according to the 2001 Census. S/he points out that the definition can be very context – and location (geographic) – dependent in a country like India.

As the document on the Participatory Action Research clearly outlines, Caritas India is “committed to professional partnership with organizations working towards the restoration of human dignity for all, with preferential option for poor and marginalized” (website PAR: <http://www.caritasindia.org/EventDetail.aspx?Eid=5>, accessed on 20 May 2012). The website outlines that PAR: comprises: (i) Action-oriented study processes centred on local issues and marginalized communities; (ii) People in diagnosis, problem-finding, and problem-solving processes leading to learning; (iii) Long-range, cyclical, self-correcting mechanisms for maintaining and enhancing effectiveness, and encouraging continuous learning without any external support for the same process.

Caritas’ annual report on PAR draws attention to its campaign that was undertaken with the partnership of Caritas, India, CRS and Christian Aid by Seva Kendra – the Diocese Social Service Society (DSSS) of Patna and Bihar Social Service Institute of Patna, Jesuits between 2006 and 2008. Over 60 faith-based and secular organizations partnered in this campaign to ensure the rights of the Dalits, tribals, minorities and women, especially their right to work, right to governance and right to information as part of its new strategy. It documents reaching 12,183 villages and 11,245,100 people during the financial year 2009–10. They claim that of these more than 60 per cent of the people were women and nearly 70 per cent were from tribal and scheduled caste communities (Annual report supplement 2009-10: p. 4).

The emphasis on community as philosophy and strategy needs to be understood within the shifts in the recent context. Father Regi of the Seva Kendra in Kolkata says, “In the past, we went where there were Christian communities, or to the hamlets. Now we don’t insist on that.” The word ‘community’ for Caritas includes people and community-led organizations.

6.1.1 From ‘Charity and Dependence’ to ‘Empowerment’

Caritas recognizes that while communities have their own coping mechanisms, these need to be streamlined and augmented. The paradigm shift is primarily a movement from the

charity and ‘dependency’ model that dominated since the inception in 1962 till recently to a model of self- reliance. The organization realizes that this involves a change in the mindset of implementing agencies and the mentality of the people.

CRS reflects on this need to change strategy. As a CRS spokesman put it, “CRS is the Caritas of USA. If you know Caritas, then you know how CRS works. It is basically the same way of working, both in overseas and domestic policy. But we needed to see how fair our interventions have been. We have been around for a long time: 1970s, 1980s, 1990s. There is now an increasing demand to know what we are doing and the impact of what we are doing. What has been accomplished and what has been learnt. Moreover, there have also been changes in how government and other civil society groups respond to emergency situations.”

The CRS spokesperson continues, “We created a sense among beneficiaries, a sense of need, as if they were entitled to the support/charity they were receiving. There is a realization of what we have been doing. There is also a realization we need to move beyond charity.” I asked her what the shift was. “Its no longer ‘dump the money, resources and leave mentally’. We have now moved on to a more community-based approach, which is anchored on rights-based approach.”

Rama of CRS, Orissa sums up the shift:

“CRS is a catholic organization that started working in India after [the] Bengal Famine in 1942. The church’s mandate is to help those affected by emergency. Most of the work then was food relief. We started as a food organization. We then moved into educational institutions and orphanages like the home run by the mission of charities. There is now a strategic shift from being a food organization to development.”

Vineet from Caritas, Ahmedabad, points out:

“Six years ago we moved to development. In charity, you are giving. You are giving as human being. Development, in this sense, is indirect but there is no long term plan or vision in this. So our vision and mission changed approximately six years ago (interviewed in 2009). We wanted to focus on

empowerment, mind change, because there were no structural changes that were taking place. [A] majority of the poor and marginalized were still not getting access despite charitable projects. Development needed systematic planning and empowerment of especially the weaker sections of the society. So we moved to rights based approach. There was a transformation in approach to teach people about governance issues and the barriers to empowerment.”

Caritas adds that the methodology of changing involves a change in models, methods and mindsets. “Communities battered by disasters or having the mentality of dependency with little self-confidence are led through a process of change in small steps until they become capable of taking initiatives with self-confidence.” This trajectory from a theory of care to the idea of humanitarianism involves a notion of community and a preoccupation with social science. The tactics are based on advocacy, standards and frequent assessments. Between tactics and methods, Caritas unfolds a new concept of its learning organization. It re-assesses its own role in a limited sense as supplementary in nature to the role of the government.

Positioning itself as an NGO, it argues that “it does not and shall not assume the basic responsibilities of government”. The Caritas spokesperson adds that Caritas responds to a disaster when there is a breakdown beyond local capacity and when there is an appeal from the district, state or Central government for support. The Caritas policy is then elaborated in terms of: (i) its theory of the community; (ii) its methodology of organization; and (iii) its code of conduct. The transition to humanitarianism is first achieved in the language of policy change.

6.1.2 On Disasters and Their ‘Management’

Caritas India is aware that since its inception in 1962, it has been extensively involved in emergencies, reconstruction and rehabilitation scenes all over India (Caritas documents). In a recent document put together on the 50th anniversary of Caritas, India, it says:

“Caritas India has been continuously present in many of the dioceses in one form or another, implementing various projects over many decades. It was present in Kanyakumari in the early 1970s, implementing a disaster relief project and continuing with assistance for boat building in the interest of consistent income generation. The Indian government has recognized the work

of Caritas India as laudable in the rehabilitation work done for earthquake-affected victims in Latur (1994) and Gujarat (2000); tsunami-affected victims in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh (2005) and Orissa super-cyclone victims (2000). Caritas India has also tirelessly engaged itself in the rehabilitation of the earthquake victims in Kashmir (2005) and victims of Bihar floods (2008).” (Towards Inclusive and Equitable Development: 40).

Caritas seeks to create what it perceives as a ‘caring community’. Its magnitude of improvement intervention in recent times has created a re-reading of disasters and its role in it.

Caritas defines a disaster in terms of impact. The first impact is in terms of the destruction of people, property and structures. The second is the effect on people’s ability and competence to respond to the situation. Caritas divides disasters into two categories – natural and man-made. In the first, it includes floods, cyclones, earthquakes, drought, epidemics, famines, tsunamis and landslides, while in the second, it lists civil disturbances, terrorism, insurgency, industrial accidents, and fire.

In its meditation on disasters, Caritas recognizes that geography becomes a fact of culture; it realizes that “India is seen as one of the most disaster-prone countries in South Asia”. Caritas argues that there has been an increase in the frequency, density and magnitude of disasters, which is affecting the demographics of the vulnerable in India. There is a complexity to the cause, which needs more understanding.

However, moving from the complexity of cause to the contouring of effects, it shows that there are three circles of impact. “Disasters affect primary resources, namely life, water, land and biomass. It also causes damage to forests, greeneries, livestock, wildlife, population and property. Further, disasters also negatively affect economies, education, infrastructures, health, sanitation and employment.”

Caritas documents (Organizational Development Manual, undated, Delhi; also Caritas Internationalis Emergency Manual and Toolkit) go on to say that “it dawned on the organization through its experience in the field that a much better approach for managing

disasters would be to prepare the local people to respond to emergencies. This is crucial because in the first one [to] three days, the people are isolated from any kind of government or NGO help reaching them.” This, they claim, has meant more investment to create capacity at the community level. Caritas reaffirms that “all projects are targeted to deliver and reach out to the most marginalized and deprived in the remotest parts of the country”.

6.1.3 Towards the Practice of Community Empowerment

As part of its reworked strategy to work at empowering communities at the community level, Caritas has developed what it considers to be a unique model of community through its Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) programme, facilitated through its partner networks in West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh (AP), Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Building on the international conventions like Community-based Disaster Planning (CBDP), they argue that it is a community that responds first to the disaster. A community understands local opportunities and constraints. Communities can be modes of governance, a different way of organizing from most top-down risk management programmes. The latter fails to address specific local needs, is ignorant of local resources and capacities, and “may in some cases even increase people’s vulnerability. Once one pulls the community to the centre of process and action, external institutions become mere facilitations. Self reliance helps empower a people.”

As I have pointed out earlier, the word ‘community’ includes people and community-led organizations. Different organizations construct the idea of community differently. Caritas’s idea of a dynamic community is sensitive to power. Its idea of the ‘caring community’ confronts and includes who it sees as needy, poor, marginal and vulnerable. Beyond that, community is essential to the logic of practice.

Caritas's sense of community is articulated in the language of governance. The emphasis is not on the communities, on affective ties but on the competence, agency and autonomy that governance welded to a community provides. Caritas's idea of community-managed disaster risk reduction is seen as superior to earlier disaster models in purely governance terms. Since governance or the language of governance provides the thesaurus of key terms, numbers, standards and accountability becomes critical in evaluating CMDRR. Caritas' blending of care and mathematics is fascinating. It claims that its strategy for the marginalized is based in the belief that families and communities are potentially capable of managing hazards. It then states that the key strategy is based on a simple mathematical formula:

$$\text{Risk} = \text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability} \div \text{Capacity}$$

The formula defines risk as a scope or the consequences of loss of life or damage to property or environment, a hazard as an event that has the potential to cause injury, death or damage. Vulnerability becomes a set of prevailing conditions that adversely affect the individual, family or community and capacity it simply adds is the ability to cope with a situation. So the focus has to be on building community capacity, which would lead to risk reduction.

There is a sense of sublimation to the equation here, a tactic of sanitization, which wants to create a new objective space around suffering. If we treat number as metaphor or a trope, then we see that it helps make a transition from theology to the secular space of humanitarianism. In this new construction, while the global is articulated philosophically, the local becomes methodological. Social science as methodology almost sounds salvational. Social science provides a discourse, a framework of concepts that enables a transition in organizational perspective. It provides a more neutral, secular frame for expressing care: a switch from theology to humanitarianism: from an ethics of philanthropy and charity to a methodology of accountability. The idioms are more open-ended.

At a different level, it also becomes a way of recasting its interests, its target constituencies where Christianity and conversion previously constituted a crucial part of its preoccupation. What was overt as a strategy is now submerged, and the constituency is recast in sociological terms as Dalit, tribal or marginal. The concerns are the same, the idiom changes in response to controversies about conversion in India. Interestingly, the new idiom is not the language of Liberation Theology but that of social science. Social science articulated as standards, measures, and lag provides a different context for intervention. Between the language of humanitarianism and social sciences, Caritas ushers in a ruthless managerial perspective. Caritas now sounds like an NGO with a behavioural science perspective. Its managerial policy document reads, “Caritas India acknowledges peoples’ right to receive humanitarianism assistance of internationally recognized quality and standards” (Caritas India Disaster Management Policy Draft, no date: pp. 4–5). It adds, “Programmes that meet the needs of disaster affected population must be based on a clear understanding of context. Responses depend on a number of factors, including organizations capacity, area of expertise, budget constraints, and familiarity with region and security risks to staff. The response standards detailed here are designed to clarify ‘who does what and when’ and enabling mechanisms should be established to enable agencies to provide assistance impartially and without discrimination.” It suggests that a “monitoring system should be established early in the process to measure continually the progress against objectives and to check on the continuing relevance of the program within an evolving context”. Management modules are transparency, time, needs assessment, monitoring, evaluation, capacity building linking relief and rehabilitation to development. The Caritas policy document goes on to observe that “the ever mounting volume and periodicity of disasters remind us to put in place an effective functional system capable of meeting the growing demand for support and services (ibid. p. 5).” Caritas adds that “current disaster management requires multi-sectional expensive management, finance, sectional experts, communication”.

This vocabulary stands in marked contrast to that of the Hindu groups that we meet in the next chapter. The Hindu cultural groups speak civilizationally. They emphasize organization as a point of community skills. They use ethic as a substitute for methodology and certification by experts as a testimonial for the relief work done. With Caritas and CRS, the impersonal topic of need assessment comes to the fore. It is almost as if a new social contract articulated legally and methodologically substitutes for the earlier regime of charity and philanthropy. The policy report insists that “much emphasis should be given to a mean accurate scientific assessment of the disaster situation”. The sense of methods, standards, and timeliness gives Caritas a mode of involvement that sounds more universal than its earlier framework of Christian charity.

6.1.4 Towards Action Research: From Christianity to Humanitarianism

To its sense of social science as language and methodology, Caritas adds action research. Caritas claims that “research is one of the key approaches adopted by Caritas India in its development interventions. Transcending the conventional understanding of research as an academic exercise (it) envisages research, as a process that is initiated at the grassroots level, in a participatory manner, addressing local realities of people and linked to global issues (see <http://www.caritasindia.org/Research.htm>, accessed on 15 February 2012).

Action research becomes a mode of evaluating good governance through information gathering and assessing tribal development. Deeply concerned about ethnic and religious conflict, especially between Hindus and Christian in the tribal belts, it suggests “action research for peace building.” Peace, it claims, “is a state of well-being characterized by trust, compassion and justice (see <http://www.caritasindia.org/Research.htm>, accessed on 15 February 2012).” It adds that peace is threatened by “myriads of conflicts that are more visible than ever before in India” (ibid). Its *proformas* for action research exemplify the best of social science manuals.

Caritas’s research and managerial guidelines should not hide the rhetoric of concern or the theological basis from where it stems. It articulates this wider framework superbly at

the macro-level in its documents on climate justice. If its manuals are local and methodological, its documents on climate justice reveal the macro-perspective that provides the framework for interventions. Climate justice, as Caritas argues, has a particular strength “to develop moral arguments” based “on Biblical and catholic social teaching to drive political and social action that will transcend narrow personal and national interests in favour of the common good (see <http://www.caritasindia.org/Archive/Newsletter25CaritasICaritasNewsletter44.pdf> , accessed in November 2010).” It argues that while creation is God’s act, humans are responsible for maintaining a healthy environment. It then notes that climate justice needs a change in mentality leading to a change in lifestyles. As an indicator, Caritas commits itself to work for the global agreements that will keep the mean surface temperature below 2°C increase on pre- industrial levels.

Caritas argues that climate change demands a search for solidarity that works for the common good. It emphasizes two forms of justice, firstly, justice as a relation between poor and rich nations, and secondly, intergenerational justice. In emphasizing this, Caritas claims that the Synod of Bishops was ahead of the economists. Nearly 40 years ago, the second Synod claimed that those who are already rich would be bound in future to accept a less material way of life, in order to avoid the destruction of heritage which they are obliged by absolute justice to share with other members of human race.

Caritas realizes the suffering that weather change is already creating in poor countries and invokes WHO’s controversial estimate of 150,000 people dying every year because of climate change. It argues that climate change compounds poverty because it reduces the asset base of poor farmers, fishermen, pastoralists by destroying forests and disrupting the hydrological cycle. It might create the ‘environmental migrant’ rendered stateless by climate change.

Caritas India’s website recognizes that as such forms and scale of destruction were unknown in Biblical terms, the Bible does not offer directive norms, that it is not a

manual of morality. But it realizes that the Biblical ethic can provide the tenor for action research. With the covenant after the flood, men are responsible for creation and no longer given the full right of disposal. “Men are to act as custodians and shepherds (see <http://www.caritas.org/activities/climatechange/BiblicalPrinciples.html>, accessed on 10 August 2012). Climate change becomes a form of pastoralism but is now articulated through management and science. It needs a dialogue of disciplines to create a social ethics.

The Christian narrative reveals that humanity was created in God’s image and thus the person becomes the focus of dignity, an unconditional value that precludes any exploitation. If solidarity is a universal goal, then vulnerability and marginality prevent solidarity, the crystallization of the human person. Climate change threatens the right of human persons to life today. The common good in a Christian and humanitarian sense “requires solidarity with the poor who are often without resources (see http://www.caritas.org/activities/climate_change/BiblicalPrinciples.html, accessed on 10 August 2011].” It adds, “The commandment to love our neighbour invites us to consider the poor and marginalized of other nations as true brothers and sisters who share with us the one table of life intended by God for the enjoyment of all”. The Biblical covenant and the humanitarian charters converge in this common concern for solidarity and the vulnerability of the poor and marginal. It states the obvious that “the first to suffer from climate change are the poorest countries. Livelihood, livelihood sustainability and the future thinking about livelihood and justice inspire its local preoccupations. Climate change as global suffering finds its focus at the local in livelihood management.

6.2 Introducing Vulnerability

In the following section, I elaborate the NGO response performed thorough different project implementations. I look at Action Aid, Oxfam, CARE and their partner organizations. I then set up a matrix of comparisons. The purpose is to show the dialogic complementarity and the evolution of key ideas in each group.

While the Christian idea of charity and aid is often summoned by these organizations, what also emerges is a sense of constitutionalizing of some aspects of it. Each of the NGOs in this chapter focuses on vulnerability. Each sees vulnerability as a dialect of suffering and each group produces its own variegated response. Each reflection has its trademark project wherein problem-solving around the new ideas of disaster management are resolved. While Action Aid focuses on addressing the issue of psycho-social vulnerability through their project Sneha Abhiyan (campaign of love), Oxfam focuses on what it sees as an initiative to create a far-sighted society competent to cope with disasters in the long run. It focuses on its core competence of water, sanitation and hygiene through its project WATSAN. CARE, on the other hand, focuses on livelihood. Each one of them also builds participatory methodologies in alliance with their local partners like Unnati, SWAD, TARU, AIDMI as part of their attempt to institutionalize democratic inclusiveness and mitigate vulnerability.

Disasters as a narrative quickly move beyond the reactive responses of rescue, relief and rehabilitation. NGOs realize that disasters demand further reflection on the nature of the social, on the need for more long range responses. They move from deficit or lack to differentiated articulation of responses. In chronicling these reflections, one witnesses several developments, focusing on three aspects. Firstly, it is a meditation on the genealogy and consequences of key words. Secondly, there is a move by some organizations from the disaster response as a reactive toolbox to a broader anticipative theory of disaster mitigation. Thirdly, disasters become interesting meditations on citizenship where the fate of the survivor as citizen creates a discourse on vulnerability.

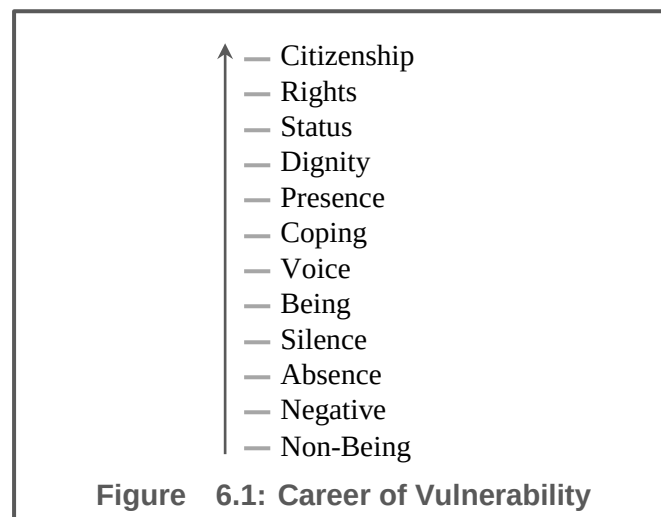
Disasters demonstrate the fragility of citizenship and the assumption that citizenship is a normal condition of democratic life. Disasters challenge the idea of citizenship as a homogenous, generalized public good, publicly accessible and available. Moreover, women become an important category. By gendering citizenship and introducing the category of time and the life-cycle, it demonstrates that citizenship is not a taken for granted state. Its ontology as being needs substance. Disaster also reveals the gaps in the studies around citizenship and vulnerabilities. Studies of disasters show that children, women and old people have their own forms of vulnerability.

Vulnerability as an organizing category provides for a new discourse on citizenship and democracy. The nature of modern vulnerability also demands a disaggregation of the types of vulnerability. By confronting these, I circle back to an examination of how each group looks at the ancestral idea of charity and philanthropy.

I want to begin with the idea of vulnerability itself as it unfolds in disaster sites.

Studies of vulnerability in disaster situations do not see vulnerability merely as lack or deficit. Vulnerability becomes a lens for understanding the dynamics of citizenship (Bankoff, 2004a; 2004b; Bankoff, Hilhorst and Frerks 2004b; Blaikie *et al.* 1994). By focusing on vulnerability as a normal state, one realizes that citizenship can be paper-thin, that ontologically citizenship was weak as a form of being. By focusing on exclusion, vulnerability becomes a way of reworking the definition and practice of citizenship. Vulnerability becomes a way of testing the strength or weakness of citizenship by showing that normal and crisis periods often overlap and that the normal period gave token acknowledgment to some forms of vulnerability. Once vulnerability becomes a way of approaching the ontology of citizenship as a form of being, disasters become a new way of inaugurating citizenship. If citizenship as inclusion guarantees against certain forms of 'non-being', vulnerability points to the weakness of a citizenship as an idea. Vulnerability in disasters creates or points to a thesaurus of other vulnerabilities. The marginal, the minority, the displaced, the disaster-prone, the informal become other

categories of vulnerability. Vulnerability thus becomes an omnibus category for forms of being which have not acquired citizenship. Figure 6.1 tries to explore this journey. I must point out that it is not necessarily a linear journey.



Source: Author.

In the following section, I elaborate Action Aid's response to the idea of vulnerability in disasters.

6.3 Action Aid

Action Aid (AA) was founded by British businessman Cecil Jackson-Cole as a child sponsorship charity (originally called Action in Distress) in 1972, with 88 UK supporters sponsoring 88 children in India and Kenya. It saw itself as an organization fighting poverty in various parts of the world over the past 30 years. In its website, it describes itself as standing “alongside poor and vulnerable people in over 40 countries, helping their fight against hunger and disease, seeking justice and education for women and children, holding companies and governments accountable and preparing people to cope with emergencies” (see website: http://www.actionaid.org.uk/100041/our_history.html, accessed on 15 May 2012.)

The AA annual reports add another variant to this exploration of categories of vulnerability. In these documents, vulnerability becomes the substrate for a ritualized theory of citizenship. It is not a search for homogeneity or a unitary idea of citizenship. An understanding of vulnerability is the civics out of which a new composite theory of citizenship is laboriously constructed. AA's reports look at a whole variety of such sites, creating, as it were, sociographies of vulnerability. I could create Figure 6.2 based on who I perceive AA thinks of as the vulnerable:

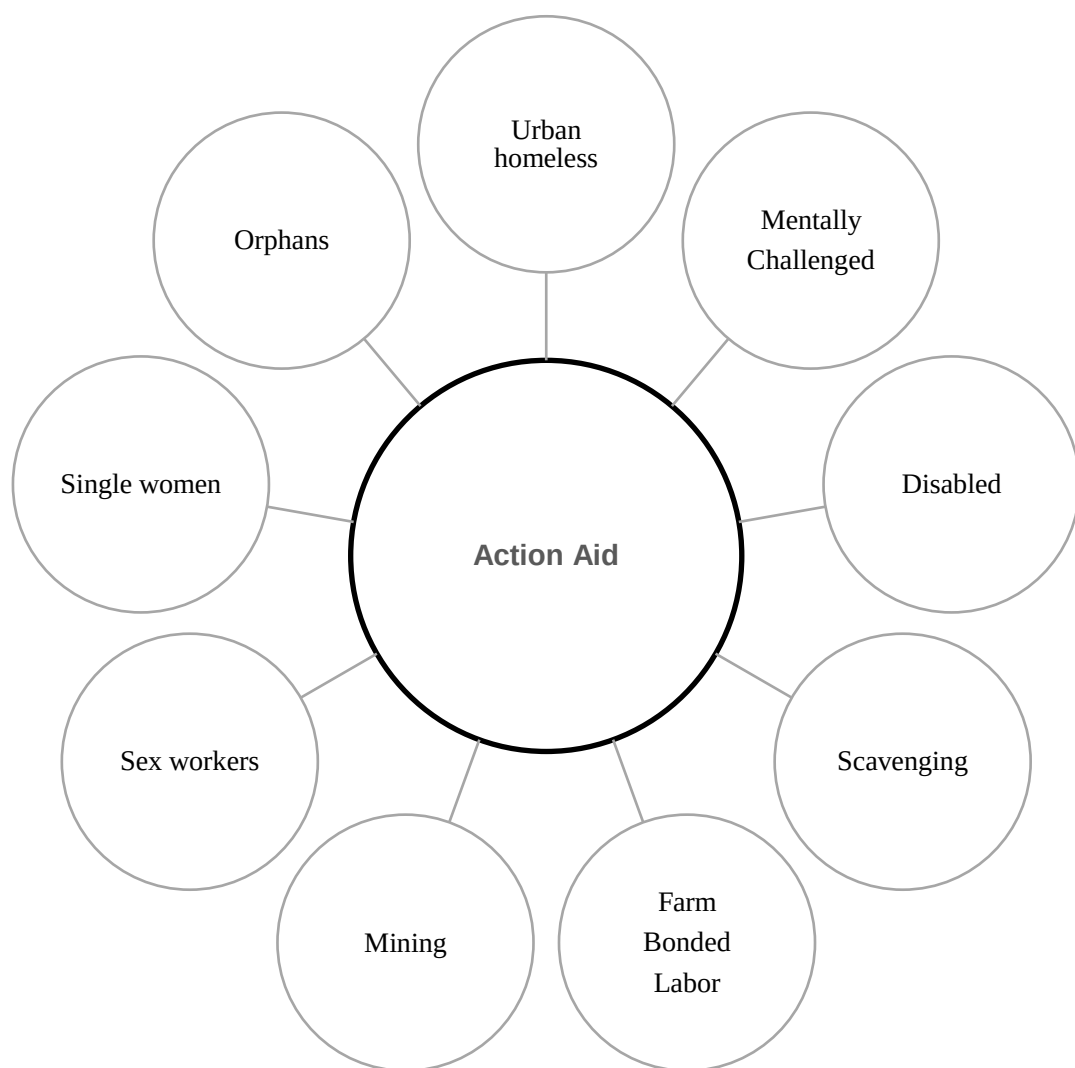


Figure 6.2: Action Aid: The Socio-graph of Vulnerability

Source: Author

One must emphasize that vulnerability has a geography, that vulnerability needs a census, a taxonomy to rework the ideas of citizenship. The early idea of citizenship (Smith 1995; Faulks, 2000) was based on the theory of inclusion. It failed to look at the logic of exclusion and the varieties of exclusion. In its reports, AA states that in its journey around the problem of rights, it has engaged with nearly eight million people “Dalit, tribal, sections of rural and urban poor, women, children and minorities (Action Aid Annual Report 2010)” and supports over 300 civil society groups. In their second circle of vulnerability, AA includes those in vulnerable situations: people living in chronic hunger, ill-health, migrant and bonded workers, the urban homeless, trafficked persons, the displaced people affected by disasters. They constitute the roll call of the invisible, the marginalized and the stigmatized.

The new vulnerability (see Figure 6.2) is a category that has to be contoured beyond poverty. Poverty and patriarchy constitute but two strands of the vulnerable world. Vulnerability helps create the definition of AA constituencies. Rights do not begin with individuals now but with backward groups, minorities, the urban poor, the informal sector, and sex workers. What began as an act of caring, of taking sides, is now permeated by the human rights discourse. Solidarity with the vulnerable creates the framework of values. AA thinking creates, as it were, a constitutionality for an alternative or subterranean world that the discourse of citizenship has to consider.

Most political science literature sees the State as a guarantor of public services – education, health, drinking water, sanitation, transport, judicial services. The denial of these makes the poor a different class of citizens from those in the upper and middle classes. AA thus focuses on rights of those sectors where citizenship is still a promissory note. The trajectory of being is one way of building a theory of vulnerability. It is highly individualized. There is a second approach which looks at the division of labour and what Emile Durkheim (1984) would have called the forced division of labour, the pathologies of work at different sites. A listing of these creates dialects of vulnerability on a variety of sites. The model of caring is still retained in its notion of rights. AA takes the

responsibility of the State seriously and realizes that the provision of entitlements is crucial for survival.

An entitlement is a claim to competence. A bundle of entitlement guarantees access to rights. The ration card and the ID card together create a frame of entitlements, of membership as a guarantee of access. AA has worked hard to obtain birth certificates for homeless children, identity cards for ragpickers, ensuring ‘food for work’, medical certificates for AIDS patients, BPL cards for the slums.

Entitlements also challenge the code of exclusion. Empowerment and enhancement add to rights. Rights then become a many-layered exercise, where rights are no longer monadic or individual but demand core connectivity where the right to work becomes part of the wider right to livelihood. This, in turn, is connected to food, health, education, housing and security, the core rights that constitute the AA strategy for citizenship.

There is a double strategy of solidarity for the excluded combined with accountability and transparency for State activities. There is an understanding of the ironies of development. The earlier argument about development and disaster is re-read through the co-production of the two. There is a clear-cut realization that State projects can be both ironic and iatrogenic. Located within market forces, their impact of livelihood might be devastating.

6.3.1 Trauma as the New Social: Sneha Abhiyan

For AA, the tragedy of the Orissa disaster revealed the psychosocial vulnerability of a people. It recognized that vulnerability ranges from the physical and material to the social. It starts with a list of the “situation at a glance”: number of villages affected: 7921; number of people affected: 15 million; number of houses damaged: 14,86,595; human casualties: 10,000+; livestock casualties: 3,70,297.

Action Aid’s own search, however, lay in unravelling the nature of silent suffering, of pain and grief, which are not recognized. It identified trauma as a form of vulnerability

that threatened the core competence of the group. While secondary traumas like loss of habitat, resource base and livelihood were recognized, we needed to understand trauma itself. Trauma had to be seen as normal and pathological. The initial “emotional reactions of irritability, panic attacks, sleeplessness, and withdrawal from the other, anger, anxiety attacks” had to be recognized as a “normal response to an abnormal experience” (Sneh Abhiyan 2003: unnumbered).

While contributing to the massive reconstruction efforts centring around the three R’s of rescue, relief and rehabilitation, Action Aid realized the dangers of giving an inadequate importance to psychosocial stressors following a disaster. Realizing the neglect of the psychosocial consequences of disasters, Action Aid set up Sneha Abhiyan (a campaign of love), to ensure the rehabilitation of the most vulnerable survivors of the super-cyclone in Orissa. The initiative was carried out in collaboration with local partners, the Nature Club and the Open Learning System. The project moved between emphasizing the rights of the vulnerable and ensuring psychosocial rehabilitation by strengthening the caring responsibilities of communities. Table 6.1 gives a sense of the scale and scope as it appears in the Action Aid documents.

Table 6.1: Project Overview, Sneha Abhiyan

Project locations (block, district, state)	(Blocks 2 Nos.: – Ersamma and Balikuda, District – Jagatsinghpur, State – Orissa)
Number of villages covered directly under the project	129 nos. (Ersamma – 62 and Balikuda – 67)
Number of families under direct coverage	5361 nos. (Ersamma – 1563 and Balikuda – 3798)
Total population under direct project coverage	24,605 (Ersamma – 10,975 and Balikuda – 13,630)
Persons with Disability** (Male and Female)	Male – 395, Female – 193, Total – 588
Social Group, the project works with (Dalits/Tribals/ Muslims/Women/The Urban Poor/Informal Sector Labour/Most Backward Castes (MBCs) (fisherfolk) etc.	Dalits, Tribals, Muslims, Women,
Specific Partner Communities within the Social Group	Women, Orphans, the Uncared for, the Aged and Public Works Departments (PWDs)
Key Rights-based Theme Focus of the Project	
Year of Start of Project	2002
Year of Programme Review	2005
Year of Withdrawal Plan	2008
Year of Impact Assessment and Exit Audit	2011
Case History level	638
Funding Agreement (Yes/No)	Self-implemented project
Year of Expiry of Funding Agreement	2012

Source: Adapted from AA report: Project Overview, Sneha Abhiyan, 2009.

Action Aid realized that trauma affected the most vulnerable among the survivors: the children, the women, especially widows, and old people who were left without the care of the family. It sought a holistic approach and in doing so, it realized that charity and the life-world of responses it generated might not be adequate. It, therefore, sought to go beyond mere identification and labelling. It meant that the community and its caring

responsibilities had to be strengthened. In doing so, Action Aid realized, that often tacitly, it had to unravel concepts like rights, dignity and caring to elaborate a richer idea of citizenship in disasters. In recognizing the problem, it had to create learning situations where lay people as volunteers were exposed to a professional understanding of trauma. Implicit in this ‘campaign of love’ is the sense that love and caring need to be professionalized. Caring also requires a new sensitivity within an emerging democratic code.

The Sneha Abhiyan began by identifying widows, orphans and people without shelters and setting up forty-four shelters. Thirty-five of these were set up in the Ersamma block with direct action and intervention in the placement of Sneha Karmis (community volunteers) in each of these shelters. Action Aid ensured that each of these volunteers had received training in counselling and play therapy. The volunteers stayed with the victims for a 24-hour cycle. A doctor provided regular checkups; more severe cases were immediately referred to hospitals. The Sneha Karmis (volunteers) were trained in Primary Health Centres (PHCs). Children were provided with playful and recreational activities and textbooks so that they could continue their education. Legal advice and aid for widows and children were ensured to guarantee fair compensation. Psychiatrists were also engaged for periodic visits to provide expert advice and checkups to persons being attended upon by the Sneha Karmis.

The perspective that Action Aid devised was to see psychosocial care as a part of overall relief. The Sneha Karmis were first trained as a group of twenty trainers and allowed to ventilate their own traumatic experiences. There were then offered scenarios for understanding the disaster in physical, psychological and socio-economic terms. Role-playing and games helped create an understanding of critical situations. Trainers were taught to apply skills at the community level.

The care of children was emphasized in particular. A child counsellor trained the group for one month. The training was carried out in a decentralized manner for each Gram

Panchayat (GP). “In total, five two-day workshops were held in nine GPs covering fifty-two Sneha Karmis in all.” Similar training was provided by a lady psychiatrist for widows. Special attention was paid to understand “the need for grieving as a step to acceptance and adaptation to the loss of relationship property, role and position”. The Bangalore-based institute for National Institute for Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) developed special manuals as an aid for survivors and the community. What was particularly impressive was the evaluation study conducted by Action Aid to evaluate its project. The following analysis is based on these reports.

6.3.2 Identifying Trauma

One has to recognize that the recognition of trauma is new, not just in India but also internationally. Trauma as a psychic impairment first received its legal due after the Buffalo Creek (Erikson 1976) disaster in 1976. A flood disaster, which affected 625 survivors, Buffalo Creek marked the first recognition that survivors could claim compensation for psychic impairment. In fact, of the total compensation of 13.5 million dollars granted, 6 million dollars were distributed for psychological damages.

In tracing the career of the nature of trauma, AA not only provides a reflection of psychosocial damage, but it also shows how new concepts and new concerns create new forms of caring and their consequent professionalization. There was a recognition that disasters affect not just the survivors but that disaster relief work also affects the therapists psychologically. One required a psychological screening of relief staff in disasters. There is a recognition that one needed to understand the local rituals of coping. The ethno-science of coping needs the professionalism of trauma analysis. The analysis needs a mix of lay and professional rituals in confronting trauma. The emerging vocabulary and the sensitivity to time are captured in the case histories documented by AA. Also, what begins phenomenologically as an act of listening slowly globalizes into a science as the scale of disasters explodes. There is a changing sense of the professionalism and pastoralism demanded of caring as it enters new domains of suffering.

The report itself wonders whether the psychiatric labelling of trauma has negative consequences. It decides or cites “that the recommended approach to mental health care is to focus on the existing community resources and to provide the services without the psychiatric label” (Sneh Abhiyan 2003). It seeks a skilling of the community or at least its leadership to provide initial crisis intervention and emotional relief services. The report then moves on two axes, a discourse on care and a methodology of studying care, which has internalized a social science vocabulary.

The first part provides an interesting ethnography of trauma and the need to read its range of symptoms as it emerged over time. The unfolding of practices sees the development of a new kind of pastoralism and its professionalization. The fieldworker later witnesses its embeddedness within a particular concept of citizenship.

The report provides a time sequence. This is crucial not just because trauma has a structure but also because it demands a different narrative of care. An ethnography of loss becomes one of the most important narratives of care.

The first three months after the disaster (Orissa cyclone, 1999) “saw most of the people crying, sobbing, stupefied and numb”. A few were talking irrelevantly. Some showed traces of forgetfulness. About 30–40 per cent of the women in the hard-hit areas were frequently losing consciousness. Widows and mothers were listening to the voices of dead relatives. Some reported their presence around them and even felt their touch. There was a sense of hopelessness. Some were irritable, others angry, abusive and even violent about trivial matters. To the sense of hopelessness and helplessness, one adds the burden of ‘survivor’s guilt’. Death wishes, suicidal ideas, attempts and pacts were common. There was an expectation months, in fact, even two years after the cyclone, that people would come back alive. There was a sense of dislocation about the real. The report indicates that there was a substantial increase in the consumption of country-made liquor.

The report shows that vulnerability is both general and particular. The generalized language of vulnerability and loss needs dialects of care and therapy for different fragments. The vulnerability of the child, the widow, the disabled, the old and abandoned, creates a subculture of a different set of stories and enactments. Care is a general concept but you need to care for each group in a different way. It is the Tolstoyan adage of the normal being all alike, but each class of survivor being unhappy in a particular way. Time, the passage of time, the sequences in the passage to normalcy must be understood. Caring demands its own scripts and drama. Children, in particular, suffer from nightmares, somnambulism; some, in fact, became mute, refusing to eat, often showing signs of social withdrawal.

While the materiality of the disaster summons almost magisterially the miracle of logistics embodied in the three R's, the question of psychological begins as a nudge. A hint becomes a persistent symptom often preventing a return to normalcy. The need for a listener and the simple drama of listening was intense. The survivors needed to talk to someone from outside. As all the neighbours had similar stories, the survivors found it difficult to share their experiences with each other. The redundancy of sorrow in a group almost became a form of social 'noise'.

At the end of three months, the disaster as a socio-drama flattens out, relief measures usually decline in intensity, the problems of victims with psychiatric distress becomes more significant. Similar was the case with the survivors of the Orissa cyclone. The report shows that grief and mourning did not bring ritual closure. In fact, "the mourning for the dead continued. Dissociative conclusions, unresponsiveness, death wishes, suicidal ideas, self injurious behaviors were commonly observed". Worries predominated; "worries about how to survive, how to build the home again, questions of livelihood" became repetitive. Memories of the cyclone became a problem. Music cassettes on the cyclone did not bring relief but amplified distress. People quarrelled with each other and showed little sympathy for anyone else in distress. They stole each other's materials. Some turned intensely ritualistic, 'illicit sexual relations were reported

frequently: elopements, re-marriages, marriages to men with first wives previously unknown became frequent". Vulnerability created its own insecurities, both social and material. Widows felt the need for security, companionship, care. The incentive was the compensation they had obtained which men preyed upon. "Sex was a way to security, biological need and companionship." AA documents a large number of cases where the women were 'lured' and became victims of physical violence once they were 'ripped' off the compensation they had received for the dead.

Children enacted the 'missingness' of parents. "Emotional, physical and sexual abuses of orphans and adolescent girls by their caretakers were reported." Children had no interest in studies, games or group activities. There were fears that the cyclone might come again. KD, a "15-year old beautiful girl" of village Ghasua belongs to a BPL family. No one knew what happened to her in the cyclone. But reports indicate that she developed a phobia for water. Whenever she sees water, she pulls up her dress sleeves. Counselling did not help despite all efforts. The reports argue that this increased her vulnerability. "A middle aged man, Parnahari Dasm, a married man with 2 girl children, on seeing KD, physically assaulted her". Cases like this are rampant in post-cyclone Orissa. AA is mindful of the added vulnerability that these incidents create and tries to create legal and administrative support for the 'vulnerable' section of the community.

Evaluation reports show that there was some change after the intervention of Sneha Karmis. Normalcy in terms of school attendance, care of self, regularity in household chores began to increase.

A year after the cyclone, normalcy had returned to some. There were still victims with dissociative symptoms. Survivors with excessive dependency were more obvious. The incidence of illicit sexual behaviour was as high as 30 per cent amongst those surveyed. At least 5 per cent of the children had clearly identifiable depression. Abuse of orphans by relatives and caregivers led to some incidents of suicide.

What one confronted was a society that did not recognize trauma or the psychosocial problems of vulnerable groups. AA realized that citizenship could not be a function of definitions of normalcy alone. One needed some mechanism where rituals of caring returned people to normalcy. One needed to educate a society about stress management, about the validity of coping methods. One needed psychiatric professionals, not just as early warning systems, but as groups which could add to the coping systems of a society. As an initiation rite, the return to normalcy was not easy for these groups. The psychosocial survey becomes a vulnerability map of society showing that citizenship had to be reworked for these deprived categories. A universal and abstract notion of rights did little for these (vulnerable) categories of people.

6.3.3 Vulnerability and the Sociology of the Concrete

Vulnerability needed a sociology of the concrete and the particular, if a disaster management policy were to be effective. As a narrative and a discourse, what begins as a phenomenological construction acquires rigorous methodological overtones. Vulnerability is domesticated into a science, where signs and symptoms are assembled carefully. What is, however, interesting is the fact that social science translates the movement from sign and symptom to a paradigm shift in policy. The first move is to link individual symptoms to new development indicators like the quality of life and quality of community life. Welfare and the intensity of the social diminish for these categories in terms of access and equity.

As the report indicates, “the psychological needs in the survivors’ community even at the end of two and a half years is much greater than that of any normal population”. The report also indicates a higher female preponderance in psychological morbidity. Worse, disability among survivors, as measured through the WHO disability assessment schedule, is high. Normalcy of various kinds, including concentrating, maintaining friendship, standing for long periods is difficult.

Yet the report shows that the disruption is not all negative. There is recognition that disruption creates opportunity not just for a new idea of the social but also for a richer theory of citizenship. The idea of the social and the individual have to combine in a new theory of the collective.

In coastal Orissa, which is predominantly agrarian, the family has been the unit of care and the caring unit. Families were generally undivided. Each family has an assortment of parents, sons and grandchildren, widowed or separate daughters. In some cases, as many as forty-five members, stayed in a house.

The report realizes that the family protects against vulnerability but may also be the tacit source of this vulnerability. It stands almost Janus-like, embodying a variety of tensions. The report recognizes that care and coercion may go together. Separation of families is socially frowned upon. It is almost taboo. “So despite the inconvenience, people used to adjust in the same house...” We also need to consider the fact that the breakaway group of the family might lose a share of the property along with the goodwill. Litigation then becomes the only option. The joint family still provides shelter for orphans and widows. A widowed sister-in-law still remains a respected figure for the younger brothers, their wives and family. Take the case of Mamta Kar, age 54, of village Ramtara. A cyclone widow with four children, she became a victim of domestic violence by her in-laws. The evaluation reports reveal that over a continued period of time, she lost control of her agricultural land to her in laws. But when an entire habitat is destroyed and families are decimated, the new becomes logical and possible. Division of families and agricultural land becomes more frequent.

Here, one has to understand the logic of what has been called the disaster market (Klein 2007; De Waal 1997). People saw the availability of aid and relief agencies as untapped opportunities. As the unit of relief was the family, “the more, the division in the family, the greater was the benefit.” The villagers saw new possibility in division. Litigation became common. The spontaneous solidarity after the cyclone gave “way to an

atmosphere of hatred and suspicion”. Disaster relief became a market. AA found that many families tried to send their old parents to Mamata Grihas (abodes of affection). There was a general feeling of opportunism, suspicion and anomie.

The disaster also broke the structures of patriarchy. In a traditional patriarchy, women were confined to the house, and were dependent on male members, be it their husbands, brothers-in-law or fathers. The vulnerability of women without the support of men was intensified. The perceived lack of adult men’s support also rendered minor orphans equally vulnerable. Take the case of 7-year old RK, daughter of ‘cyclone widow’ CK of a Dalit community. The girl child was “tortured and sexually abused by Baidhar Mandal aged 23, a married man”. Social taboos around the incident had many village people taking the side of the “guilty family”. AA talks of its battle to even air and talk about the care.

The report realizes that a disaster like the Orissa cyclone opens out layers of vulnerability, each affecting a particular stage in the time cycle. Reading the report, one realizes that care and vulnerability are two terms that need deconstruction. The thesaurus of care has to be wider as vulnerability begins to reveal a surprising diversity of situations. It is almost as if disasters prompt new definitions of the social. The old emphasis on the return to the original condition opens out to the necessity of new responses. Vulnerability now demands more than therapy or relief. It demands a recognition of new responses, new trends, the new stresses that it added.

Consider widow remarriage. The absence of male support with its accompanying sense of security and intimacy drove women to seek solace from a male neighbour or relative. But the latter saw widows as commodities. In many of these new relationships, men wanted women to part with a large share of the ex-gratia payments [Rs. 75,000 (US \$1345) per person], which had been made as part of compensation for deaths of immediate family members. When the latter refused, they had to face violence. AA archives talk of LC, aged 30. A cyclone widow, she has two children. She used to earn a living through prawn

cultivation, and she also got interest from a bank deposit of her husband's death compensation. She was wooed by a person called Sukho Sahoo, a married man with four sons and a daughter. Promising marriage, he managed to get the money she had received as compensation. Once that happened, the relationship became physically violent. AA archives note, "The case is of emotional exploitation... the loan system against the ex-gratia compensation by the bankers created more destitution for the unsuspecting vulnerable women than development. All the issues related to exploitation in any form, sustainable livelihood and land have serious implications for the survival of vulnerable people". The widows, the report argues, are in a quandary. While the general community perceives women without male support as vulnerable, their new-found 'lottery' of ex-gratia money creates jealousy.

Traditional livelihoods were also subject to change. The community's economic life was supported by a diversity of patterns. Fishing, cultivation of paddy, vegetables and fruit crops were complemented by betel, coconut and cashew as cash crops. Salinity after the cyclone wiped out betel and cashew. Coconut trees were destroyed in the cyclone. When land became unsuitable for paddy, people became susceptible to the quick returns of environmentally hazardous prawn cultivation. The ecological destruction of plantation cover created a temperature rise, which was not conducive to betel vine cultivation.

A disaster management NGO discovered that it had to become a development agency. It began with an understanding of coping structures but sensed that more is required. During the first few weeks, people dug out wet rice and washed it in water full of floating animal corpses and dead bodies. Single survivors found it difficult to cope. Without Mamata Grihas (shelter houses/abodes for nurturance), many women would not have survived. For cyclone widows, orphans, the mentally challenged, the Mamata Grihas were critical. As relief measures decreased after a few months, food for work (FFW) became critical. FFW guaranteed subsistence. AA workers ensured that single women were taken care of. But this created wider resentment in the community, which felt that Mamata Grihas

provided a better quality of food in greater abundance than was available to the rest of the affected population.

As the Sneha Karmis moved to a long-run strategy to engage with the survivors of the cyclone, they realized that families with ‘person power’ could build shelters for themselves but single unsupported women were helpless. The Sneha Karmis realized that a house was a psychological necessity. A cyclone shelter added a sense of security. It signalled future preparedness in villages where a mention of a cyclone creates panic. When the Sneha Karmis asked men about future coping, they shrugged helplessly. One complained that there were some cyclone shelters in other villages, but access to them was difficult. Another talked of a cyclone shelter that was two kilometers away in another village. The latter village had primary access and control over the structure. The villager asked, “Why will they allow us to get into the building until and unless they are sure of extra space in the shelter...? So instead of dying in another village, we prefer to die in our own village...”

AA’s report is not only an ethnography of doing but also a self-reflective essay on care, aid and vulnerability. Solidarity does not stem from aid but communication. The methods of psychosocial care varied with stages.

The initial months after the cyclone were marked by listening, discussing loss, with repeated discussions about the reality of the situation. It was as if repetition helped people externalize some forms of pain. Crying and sometimes crying with them helped. Work and activity became critical. It created less dependency, a focus on the world outside, a sense of control after weeks of helplessness. Work gave a sense of hope. Religious activity including *bhajans*, *saraswati puja*, *japas* gave a sense of hope that God cared. Songs depicting the cyclone helped people cry. Community participation in mass mourning and even an occasional community feast created overtures to normalcy.

What resilience needed most was work, the resumption of livelihood activities. Individuals who lost everybody were grouped together to simulate families. Self-help groups (SHGs) became critical for engaging in rehabilitation, problem-solving, legal matters and even banking. Rallies were organized to encourage children to return to schools. Plays, especially mythological in content, were great morale boosters. Role-plays were taught as devices for coping.

The list of activities is long but what emerges is that by marking trauma, one realized that vulnerability goes beyond materiality. AA sought to break the social taboos against psychiatric illness around the idea of madness (*pagalpan*). The folk category *pagal* (mad) which labeled ‘this’ section almost dismissively, was sought to be recovered to create a different idea of normalcy. Vulnerability was conceived not as an abstract idea but as the being of particular categories and a way of reworking citizenship of marginal groups, of talking of sexual exploitation, creating a language of women’s empowerment, a new sense of autonomy against relatives and local bigwigs, of gendering survival in a post-disaster scenario. Most importantly, AA and NIMHANS tried to create an expertise with the ‘layman/ woman’ to cope with the issues of pain and emotional well-being.

In the next section, I shall examine another variant of the humanitarian project by examining Oxfam. Oxfam’s attempt to read humanitarianism as method provides another reading of the discourse.

6.4 Oxfam

Disasters are events which require reflection. The response also demands a continuous change in method and philosophy. The moment from the old philanthropic model, based on giving, to the new managerial models, based on evaluation, assessment and distribution is a marked one. The emphasis of the secularized NGOs is not on religion, ethnicity, or ideology but on objectivity, delivery, and justice. The shift is not so much

one of rhetoric but of methods and the repeated emphasis on methodology as strategy. There is a major effort to show that humanitarianism as a system is a logic of caring, established and delivered through method.

6.4.1 Social Science as Methodology

Oxfam is no different. Founded in Oxford, UK, in 1942 as the *Oxford Committee for Famine Relief* by a group of Quakers, social activists, and Oxford academics, it is now Oxfam, Great Britain. The original Committee met in the Old Library of University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford and its aim was to relieve famine in Greece caused by Allied naval blockades.

Oxfam's involvement in India began in 1951 when it was constituted to fight famine in Bihar. Bihar at the time was 'one of the poorest and most populated states in India'. Bihar and famine would bring Oxfam back to India in 1965 to address drought due to bad monsoons. Bihar had a population of 53 million, of which 40 million relied on subsistence farming to live (Black 1992).

Oxfam India was established on 1 September 2008 under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 2005, as a non-profitable organization with its head office in Delhi, and is now a member of the Oxfam International Confederation. This was marked by Oxfam's 60th year in India. When I did my fieldwork in 2009, Oxfam was in the midst of transforming itself to becoming Oxfam India. While it appeared to be feeling some pain at cutting the umbilical cord to Oxfam GB, it was also clear that it wished to continue to build on and leverage what it perceived to be its core identity: WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene). It had also taken a strategic decision to move out of the state of Gujarat, which it saw as a 'developed state' and to refocus its energies on 'poor' states like Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand. Its strategy was to continue to focus on improving emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction systems, and to build capacity of partner organizations, vulnerable communities and local state governments in the focus states in order to support innovation, adaptation and

contingency planning. Oxfam personnel were also keen to point out that Oxfam India supported programmes that “reach 1 million disaster-affected/vulnerable people directly each year” (AIM 3 LOGIC MODEL).

In 2001, post the Gujarat earthquake, Oxfam realized that disasters in areas like Gujarat often constitute an interlocking matrix of events. Gujarat was already ravaged by drought before the earthquake struck. There was a possibility of another drought if the monsoon failed or a period of high intensity rain. Either event could be disruptive. With the water resource management in disarray due to the earthquake, there was a possibility of secondary disasters like damage to agricultural output and epidemic outbreak, including malarial and diarrhoeal diseases. In fact, Oxfam realized that the historical pattern of the region created its own set of vulnerabilities. What it sought through its methods was to create a humanitarianism which would give Gujarat relief from the burden of history. Oxfam realized it could only do so if it went beyond the normal Oxfam method and became a form of initiative to create a far-sighted society competent enough to cope with disasters in the long run. Oxfam’s report on water and sanitation, 2001, is an example of such efforts.

Oxfam’s interventions created, through a network of partnerships, a graded series of events, each anchored in a time period. The first and standard phase was emergency response, which was immediate and covered 12 blocks in three districts of Kutch, Rajkot and Sundernagar. It involved the distribution of food, millet, lentils and oils to 5000 families in 45 villages. The emergency response also involved the provision of temporary shelter, blankets, warm clothes and kitchen utensils. But Oxfam realized that methodological reflexes begin at this very moment. What is generally perceived as a moment of disorder or anarchy, tolerating asymmetries of distribution, now faces the objectivity of assessment.

Oxfam recognized that the overall logistics of tonnage hides inequalities, even an indifference to vulnerabilities. Oxfam argued that the focus from the inaugural moment

must be on traditional vulnerable groups and individuals. Such a category included widows, the disabled, nomadic populations and salt workers. Here vulnerability was triangulated between the isolated, the remote and the excluded. In practical terms, it meant remote hamlets (the *vandhs*) in Ratan and Bachau.

Since humanitarianism is the invention of the outsider, the organized stranger, Oxfam realized the need for a normative model that combines the universalist standards with the local idiom. It understood the fundamental need for independent assessment. Humanitarianism, for Oxfam, centred around autonomy and partnership, but both centred around equity based on independent monitoring. Humanitarians sought a distance from a patronage of constituencies. Method and objectivity became fundamental to Oxfam's strategy. It sought to work on water and sanitation, and its WATSAN (2010) programme sought to ensure that communities could maximize the use of facilities and "take action to reduce public health risks heightened by the current situation" (Oxfam, GB 2010, Minimum requirements for WASH programme, January: 58). WATSAN's work on water supply and drainage helped reinforce the efforts on housing. Restoration of piped water supply to resettled groups based on Sphere standards became the goal. While the design model was universalistic, Oxfam was sensitive enough to realize that a mismatch based on ignorance of local wisdom, practices and technologies would be a disaster. Local acceptability was critical. Design models required local feedbacks otherwise technical inputs confronted simple non-acceptance.

In the following sections, I shall elaborate further on Oxfam's WATSAN project (Warner 2001).

Most projects after disasters begin as a battle of competing assessments of asset loss. Preliminary assessments by World Bank placed losses at Rs. 9,900 crores (US \$1.7 billion) in assets and Rs. 10,000 crore (US \$1.8 billion). Methodology entered at the outset as the World Bank Team had to distinguish between same standard replacements costs (that is, costs for restoring assets to the standard that existed before) and improved

standard constructions cost (that is, costs which respond to a standard). Onsite damage assessment placed total primary loss at US \$3,189 billion, secondary loss at US \$635 billion and tertiary loss at US \$2097 million. Present in Oxfam's methodology is the belief that rigorous assessment not only allows for objectivity, and better efficiency in distribution but it also increases long-range life chances. Further, Oxfam always saw itself as a part of a collectivity of partnership organizations. It emphasized that emergency response "was always a spectrum involving community resilience, civil society initiatives, government interventions and donor responses. Humanitarianism enters when local people are unable to cope with large scale disasters" (Warner 2001).

Oxfam saw itself as a partnership organization at several levels. Firstly, at the international level, it sought the mobilization of resources as part of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), a consortium of leading, independent, humanitarian agencies including Action Aid, British Red Cross, CARE, Christian and Save the Children, World Vision and a few other agencies. Oxfam coordinated the WATSAN segment of inter-agency meetings.

Oxfam then committed itself to a public health programme with the objective of ensuring increased access to adequate water for health, sanitation and hygiene. Partnerships were forged at the community level between DEC and local community groups, and linkages were established with village panchayats and community level committees established through a network of local NGOs. Care was taken to ensure the representation of all caste groups and 20 per cent membership for women. By the end of the first week, a cargo-load of emergency and sanitary equipment was flown into the state. A second cargo of equipment was flown into Bhuj by mid-February. A hundred volunteers were trained as experienced trainers to address the issue of health promotion and integrate health systemically and systematically into disaster response.

Method becomes a form of assessing, evaluating and ensuring care. The Oxfam methodology of Situation Analysis and Needs Assessment (SANA) is replete with

methods. Within four days of the earthquake, a team of specialists joined a Multi Sectoral Assessment (MSA) team that focused on the rural areas not covered in the earlier emergency survey. Such an assessment involves an understanding that even emergency responses must be timely and tactical. They seek to proceed with a dynamic situation where situation analysis and need assessment change as the days go by. The team completed the rapid assessment across Kutch, Rajkot and Surendranagar by 31 January, barely four days after the earthquake. Based on this, it was decided to focus efforts on the worst affected parts of these districts. This was followed by a need assessment identification. The survey found the needs of communities living in remote villages as particularly acute as many had not received any assistance since the day of the earthquake. Dependent on external assistance for water supply, they had been affected by the drought prior to the earthquake. Their reduced coping capacity had made them more vulnerable to the earthquake (Warner 2001).

Oxfam realized the need to develop a result-oriented approach. It undertook a quick situation analysis and an exercise in prioritization. Such an exercise was necessary to avoid duplication of work, and to identify sectors that needed more attention and communities which found access to relief difficult. The methodological surveys became a metonym for justice and equity. An immediate relief response had to be supplemented by an assessment of food and livelihood security at the household and community levels. Out of this emerged the four-week Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) response plan, which included research and capacity building, and the training of village volunteers to work in tandem with Oxfam and its NGO partners.

Through a process of technological advice and an intensive process of local consultation, the emergency WATSAN scenario was elaborated. Water supply, especially in the Kutch area, was ground water-dependent. Water, power supply and sanitary facilities had broken down in most areas affected by the earthquake. There was a total damage to water storage and supply systems in five talukas and four towns including Bhuj, Anjar, Bhachan and Rapan. Surface water schemes (dams, pipelines, pumping stations) were

affected in various degrees. While underground tanks made of reinforced cement could tolerate high seismicity, most masonry structures, including pump houses, staff quarters and small tanks, had collapsed.

The two years of drought had affected the rural population consisting of pastoralists, subsistence farmers, salt workers, daily wage workers and petty traders. Large numbers of people were living in the open in makeshift shelters, which had a high density. The disposal of solid waste had become acute and required urgent attention as it was attracting rats and flies. The prospect of diarrhoea appeared greater than the usual trend and malaria was another serious threat. Malaria in the region followed a 4–7 year cycle. The last epidemic in 1977 was a devastating one with vector control strategies failing to cope with the situation. It was felt that the WATSAN strategy had to be stepped up to ensure dependable water supply and safe drinking water, and to prevent the outbreak of epidemics. The Oxfam approach based its assessment on consultation with the marginalized groups and intense discussion with village communities.

Distribution needs a target of affected communities and targeting needs a scale of priorities. In order to bring about greater objectivity, vulnerability assessments were carried out on the basis of the wealth ranking of households. Critical parameters included landholding, cattle, type of house, food consumption, or days of starvation, migration and gender. Based on these considerations, 10,000 households were targeted across the three districts of Kutch, Rajkot and Surendranagar. The efforts in Kutch focused on 200 remote villages, which exhibited adverse human development indicators such as low literacy and high mortality. Besides isolation and remoteness, some degree of social and political exclusion became the criteria for consideration. Another important focus was gender mainstreaming by paying systematic attention to women's needs and by increasing woman's participation in decision-making. Conventionally, women tended to be excluded from village level decisions. Oxfam intervened to ensure that women's groups participated in strategic initiatives including the monitoring of individuals and community assets. Lata Krishnan of Oxfam told me how they insisted on women's participation.

They recognize that it often creates tension both within the family and the village. She, however, claimed that this kind of ‘social engineering’ is a necessary part of what Oxfam stands for.

Social science as method becomes an avenue for justice, which can be both objective and transparent.

The beneficiary selection process carried out involved a whole array of methods including:

- i. Social mapping to outline community stratification;
- ii. All community representation;
- iii. Consulting women to incorporate gender concerns;
- iv. Intensive door-to-door assessment;
- v. Meeting village committees to cross-check information;
- vi. Creating MOUs from villages about being beneficiaries.

A world of social science methodologies unfolds, which involves transparency, representation, independent assessment, participation, consultation, equity, partnership. It is reciprocity of democracy, governance and social science built around disaster sites. Oxfam was particularly keen to emphasize that humanitarianism as a system was based on the best of social science guaranteed to create equity, avoiding patronage of any constituency. The humanitarian groups as the outsiders could avoid local patronage and local factionalism. Emphasis was placed on close monitoring of beneficiary selection where method provided a defence against patronage and nepotism.

Oxfam realized that equity as delivery needed standards. It sought strict adherence to International Committee Red Cross (ICRC) minimum standards in humanitarian response as enumerated in the Sphere Charter (1956), and a general conformity to the spirit of humanitarianism.

As a feedback, Oxfam went beyond standards to institutionalize a range of evaluations, both internal and external, including a DEC external evaluation, an Oxfam internal evaluation, a strategy review and a cost-effectiveness exercise. Such evaluation exercises also revealed the tension between the universalistic and particularistic. “Oxfam became concerned with the difficulty in rigorously following the ICRC code and in complying with the Sphere Standards.” Sphere Standards were difficult to comply with at the local level, as materials did not comply with the norms of the Sphere Charter. There were also some doubts within the monitoring team whether some of the ‘targeting’ or ‘selection of beneficiaries’ was consistent with the principle of non-discrimination enunciated with the ICRC code, or with the Oxfam approach to use vulnerability based targeted approach among those affected”.

6.4.2 DRR, WASH and Vulnerability

I would like to end this section with some snippets from a trip I made with the Oxfam evaluation team. Under evaluation were two projects: Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) as implemented in a school in village Dhitpura in Panchayat Santoshpur, Orissa, an evaluation of a DRR and WASH project being implemented in a hamlet in block Jaleshwar, Gram Panchayat Paiksida. The latter is in a tribal belt of Orissa.

The evaluation included stopping at a warehouse in the village. An important component of DRR is preparedness, which presupposes the ability to respond. The latter, in turn, relies on the availability of tools and material needed to respond. As part of its planning, Oxfam maintains a list of stocks with its partner groups. The Oxfam evaluators cross-checked the list. The warehouse had dry rations and an inflatable boat, amongst other things. The second stop in the village was at the local school, which was a recipient of funds for DRR activities. The students provided a map of the risks in and around the school. This included a coconut tree, a pond, snakes, electricity poles as a potential source of ‘risk’ for the schoolchildren. The children had also created a map of their locality. When asked if they had any questions, most children recalled the floods that they had experienced while growing up. Some of them had a memory of living on the bridge

nearby while the water swirled around for days. The question they had was how could they prevent floods? Could the map help them to stop the floods? I could see the Oxfam evaluators struggling to respond to that question. There were innocent questions about food, of everyday living, of how what they had learnt could help. There were few answers that any of us had. We clapped enthusiastically at the lovely maps, and their understanding of the manuals provided by Oxfam, congratulated them and then moved on.

We then set out for our second village. There is no road or regular means of transport to this village. Walking through the fields, we reached it two hours later. The village has little contact with the outside. On the way, I realized I was travelling to areas where communities still lived on barter system as a means of exchange. One of the persons we encountered on the way was a 'basket weaver', who gives the baskets he makes in exchange for grains, etc. Money has entered the economy but still nibbles at the peripheries.

About twenty men and women had gathered at the hamlet. Most of the houses had thatched roofs and survival appeared to be at the subsistence level. I was told that the hamlet consisted largely of landless labourers and daily wagers, and that most of the residents were tribals who lived off the forest nearby. Oxfam's insistence on mapping in this village was interesting. We got down to evaluating how far this village had met the Oxfam criteria for preparing for DRR. The first thing the evaluators looked for was the mapping exercise. How had the village mapped itself? Where were the vulnerable communities (old, single women, children) marked in the map?

Bhaskara asked the group that was waiting to 'perform' for the Oxfam evaluators: "Where are we sitting on the map?" So, one by one, a few members who were sitting were called upon to identify their houses on the map. Most failed. When asked to do it on the piece of paper, they turned the piece of paper around, trying to make sense of it. But Bhaskara was insistent that the village members needed to know which house is which on

the map. “Map,” he told them would “help you identify the vulnerable: the handicapped and the old”. The villagers sitting there told him that they knew. They pointed out to the houses and reeled off the names and members of the family. One of the old women sitting there pointed to the houses. It was oral memory. She could probably remember a couple of generations. “No, no...” Bhaskara insisted on the vulnerable being identified on the map. “Show me where are those houses and residents on the map,” he insisted. The map got passed around the people who were sitting there. Most looked at it, turned it around and passed it on to the next person. There were clearly two styles of cognition at play here. The villagers knew who lived where and had a different way of mapping, while Oxfam wanted them to create maps in a more abstract way.

At this point of time, Bhaskara saw a pond of water where a couple of children were bathing. “Why is that pond of water there?” He asked. “It will create diseases like malaria.” “Yes,” said his colleague Shambhu. “You must get active and pump that water out.” A sermon followed on why it was bad to bathe in the same pond and use the water for other purposes. They were told to use the hand-pump provided by their partner organization, Unnayan, with funding from Oxfam under the WASH mandate.

The evaluators were getting restless. One of them was keen to leave. After half an hour, we were on our way back through the fields. There was an irony to the entire encounter. We were sitting in a village where most people lived on a subsistence level. While most people there wanted to talk about means of livelihood, we wanted to talk about mapping. Livelihood for them was survival. For Oxfam, there was a format of what mapping should be and the populations had to fit into that. I was told this was a ‘good’ VDC (Village Development Committee). Now they had to prove to the evaluators and me, an external observer, that they “were a good VDC.” The irony wasn’t lost on me as we talked of Disaster Risk Reduction and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

In the next section, I shall describe CARE's role, focusing on its understanding of livelihood and how livelihood as a critical space bridges the analytical frames between poverty and vulnerability

6.5 CARE

CARE was founded in 1945, when 22 American organizations came together “to rush life-saving CARE packages to survivors of World War II”. CARE describes itself as “one of the world's largest private humanitarian organizations with a mandate to lead humanitarian organization(s) fighting global poverty” (see <http://www.care.org/about/history>, accessed on 15 May 2012). With its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, CARE is “part of an international confederation of 12 member organizations committed to helping communities in the developing world achieve lasting victories over poverty” (ibid.)

CARE sees itself as “placing special focus on working alongside poor women because, equipped with the proper resources, women have the power to help whole families and entire communities escape poverty”. Women, it claims, are at the heart of “CARE's community-based efforts to improve basic education, prevent the spread of HIV, increase access to clean water and sanitation, expand economic opportunity and protect natural resources. CARE also delivers emergency aid to survivors of war and natural disasters, and helps people rebuild their lives” (<http://www.care.org/about/history.asp>, accessed on 15 February 2012).

When I did my fieldwork in 2009, CARE was facing budget cuts in India. There was some despondency about it. But they were at pains to tell me that they were continuing their work through partner organizations. They were especially insistent about two interventions: the initial response post the 1999 cyclone and how they mobilized even the

national railways to transport supplies to the disaster-hit area; second, their attempts to create livelihoods. I will focus on the second.

6.5.1 Unravelling Livelihood

Livelihood as an analytical category provides an intermediate space between the conceptual frames of poverty analysis and vulnerability. The two frames overlap, cover similar worlds, but are read differently. Livelihood seeks an emphasis on vulnerability, violence, marginality. The invisible communities not included in the governance discourse acquire a place in this more embedded concept. Because of the emphasis on resilience, recovery and rehabilitation, the idea of vulnerability creates a more action-oriented frame. The State, the NGO, the survivor are all actors, the scenario is more verb-oriented. Livelihood becomes a site, where a network of activities comes into play. One perceives this sense of purpose in CARE's Livelihood restoration projects in a series of interventions it made in Orissa.

The project deals with the question of how food security and agency can be restored to subsistence farmers in a biomass society devastated by a cyclone and a sense of local community created in this process. CARE realized that official death statistics give a misleading or incomplete idea of the food security scenario. It had to consider not just people or animals but the destruction of an entire natural resource-base: 20,000,000 hectares of agricultural land had been inundated, forest cover and trees had been completely destroyed. The cyclone had destroyed infrastructure and wiped out personal assets like livestock, houses, seeds (CARE, India 2002: 1). The death toll had not been fully assessed. The non-government assessment of the damage estimated the death toll as 22,000. Even the latter estimate seemed flawed. A substantial migrant population of fisherman unrepresented in official statistics had to be considered (CARE 2002: 5–6).

In May 2000, UNDP warned of impending famine-like conditions developing in coastal Orissa as the standing paddy crop had been totally destroyed. While relief operations commenced in full swing, CARE began the Livelihood Reconstruction Project wherein it

undertook the task of supporting the livelihoods of the worst affected communities in 10 blocks of four districts of coastal Orissa. It sought basic substance and minimum subsistence for 111,500 families, the 'poorest of the poor' as the Report called them (CARE 2002: 2). CARE emphasized that no single agency could do everything, that a range of interventions was needed, given that all families were not affected in the same manner. The project began with the following objectives: the immediate revival of production for 72,000 households involved in agriculture and fishery, income generation for 15,000 households and the creation of productive assets for 24,500 households. CARE adopted a partnership approach, which included three specialized technical agencies and 30 local NGOs. This also included strong ties with milk cooperatives and the local self-governing bodies like the *panchayati raj* institutions (PRIs). The strategy was to be need-based and locality-specific.

In order to anticipate such a wide-ranging strategy, CARE revisualized the idea of vulnerability in terms of three dimensions: livelihood, demography, and the impact. The three-fold list (see Table 6.2) enabled a discussion of specific beneficiaries in each community. The CARE list of dimensions is listed below (CARE 2002: 3).

Table 6.2 Dimensions of Vulnerability

Vulnerability Dimension	Example
Livelihood (Pre-cyclone)	Landless farmers (Sharecroppers) Daily wage earners Seasonal migrants Fishing families Small holders (<1 acre)
Demography	Women-headed households Old and infirm Families with pregnant mothers and/or large number of non-earning dependants Families which have lost an income-earner
Impact of cyclone	Houses destroyed Lost personal belongings Lost source of income No assets or liquidity

Source: CARE, India (2002) Rural Livelihoods Project.

This list was followed by a reflection of post-cyclone interventions in terms of the old model of technology transfer (Visvanathan 2002). The linearity of the old model was to yield to a circle of multiple stakeholders. The idea of transfer gave way to dialogicity between the technical partner and the participant beneficiary. In between them were the intermediaries, the local implementing partners. There was a double sense of dialogicity in consultation and participation. Transfer was built on the double planks of governance, embracing both the local and community, which was inclusive of the marginal.

CARE faced the challenge that fund flow to the Livelihood Restoration Project could only take place in the latter part of August 2002. The *Kharif* cultivation in Orissa, however, starts around mid-June before the onset of monsoons. CARE decided to proceed full throttle “at the risk of stretching its physical and financial resources”. Foregoing the *Kharif* intervention would have not only gone against the interest of the community but would have also created a dampening effect on the programme (CARE 2002: 7). CARE formulated an intervention strategy after a first-hand interaction with the affected people. CARE documents stress that “all the targeted beneficiaries were not only small and marginal but also the most vulnerable”. It was a five-part strategy of livelihood support for the subsistence sector (CARE 2002: 6).

Firstly, CARE supplied seeds for *Kharif* sowing as the first of its interventions. The programme was restricted to 40,000 beneficiaries in the first round, though the number was increased for the *Rabi* season (winter crop). Agricultural experts from the UN, Government of Orissa, and the local agricultural university were consulted about the variety of seeds required for the different types of land cultivated (CARE 2002: 7). Secondly, while pursuing the paddy seeds programme, CARE thought pro-actively of working out the concept of a ‘seed village’ moving out to create a seed bank. Thirdly, CARE felt that a seed bank alone could not leverage the possibilities of food security. It sought something proactive wherein the beneficiaries contribute out of the harvest, an equivalent quantity of grain to pooled community resources. Out of this emerged the concept of a Community Grain Bank. If the seed bank was for perpetuation and

production of the crop, the grain bank was food stock for consumption of the community. Fourthly, beyond food, there was a concern with livestock. Livestock is used for both ploughing and milk generation. Over 300,000 milch and draught cattle were killed during the disaster. For the small farmer, buying a pair of bullocks became a major investment. Letting their land lie fallow would have created further disparities. Since the Kharif season had already begun, CARE deferred its draught support programme. What it provided instead was a tillage support programme involving tractors, power tillers and bullocks for 3,100 beneficiaries in five blocks. Finally, aware that the cyclone dealt a blow to small, marginal, and medium and large families as well as a community which remains particularly prone to natural calamities from cyclones to pest attacks, CARE negotiated a process by which farmers could access crop insurance. CARE also worked to create a long-run framework for more optimal access.

Each particular decision grew from a concrete response and evolved into a policy mitigating vulnerability in the long run. The move was from reactive to proactive, knee-jerk action to reflexivity. The question is: how does one read such a programme not just managerially but in terms of the CARE philosophy of livelihood management? CARE provides part of the answer through a study that it commissioned to evaluate its livelihood work in Bolangir.

From CARE's perspective, livelihood is more than a job. People become the starting point of a livelihood approach. A livelihood is visualized in terms of the assets required for a means of living, both natural and social. It refers to both competence and the assets that maintain the competence. CARE has a sense of process here in understanding how assets are obtained, the competences they provide, the difficulties of obtaining assets, and the political economy on which assets are based. Assets include physical, material goods like land, social capital, including the networks and neighbourhoods you can access. The CARE idea of livelihood also reiterates a notion of time. Livelihoods have to be sustainable over a certain period. It also senses both vulnerability and capacity building in systematic terms, where competence is more than individual. Competence goes beyond

coping as survival to capacity building to the ability to survive and anticipate a disaster. This becomes critical in an informal economy where livelihood strategies become collaged to include an array of tasks. There is also a sense that poverty is expensive when provisions are not based on indigenous skills and resources.

One example of the CARE approach can be understood through its experiments in watershed management. CARE realizes that water resources signify a point of food security where access to safe affordable drinking water is important. CARE created watershed management as part of this attempt to exemplify its philosophy.

Like other NGOs in the domain, CARE would argue that each disaster is different in its own way. However, they would also agree with AA that some things are uniform: the responses are uniformly ad-hoc; the uniformity also lies in the high visibility especially of brick and mortar, the corruption and exclusion of vulnerable groups, or taking no notice of the dignity of the survivor. Livelihood security is addressed through safety net mechanisms without addressing long-term solution problems through a systems approach. They are aware that relief is a buzzword which dries up after few months. Combating vulnerability demands an understanding of how to make livelihood sustainable

6.5.2 The Bolangir Project

The CARE intervention used the Food for Work (FFW) programme to shift from relief and rehabilitation to sustainable livelihood. Its intervention took place in Bolangir during a severe drought.

Bolangir is one of the worst affected districts in terms of food security. It is part of the infamous KBK region (Koraput, Bolangir, Kalahandi). It is an area that has experienced perpetual drought for several decades. Here, 92 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. “Drought covers a rubric of impacts. It creates malnutrition, starvation, it triggers migration. Negative social consequences follow due to loss of livelihood and

includes prostitution, sale of children, bonded labour, distress sale of farm implements, and a disintegration of family life”(Oomen 2001).

Droughts in Bolangir have frequently led to displacement, both temporary and permanent, of a large number of people from their traditional work-base. Although out-migration started in Bolangir after the severe drought of 1965, it reached ‘dangerous’ proportions after the 1996 drought, dubbed as the *drought of the century*. It was reported in various quarters that about 40,000 people migrated out in 1996–97. A recent study reveals that about 60,000 people migrated out in 2001. The drought in 2002 probably sent about 100,000 people out of the district to work for survival. These migrations have continued over the last decade.

Several studies have shown that migration is institutionalized in the region by labour contractors, who exploit landless agricultural workers and the marginal farmers who are the most affected by drought. The contractors control those who work for them. Most of their wages are already hypothecated to the ‘labour contractor’, who has lent them money to pay off the moneylenders in the village.

CARE intervened in one such drought situation. Anticipating a disaster, the district administration requested CARE through its Food For Work (FFW) to undertake a project in five drought-affected blocks in collaboration with the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO). What follows is an analysis of the evaluation report by a well-known Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) sociologist of this intervention by CARE.

The CARE project shows that vulnerability is tied to agriculture both as a fact of ecology and as a fragment of political economy. Agriculture depends on rainfed paddy crop and, therefore, drought creates food insecurity. Land reforms have had little impact with 70 per cent of the land being owned by 33 per cent of the people. The CARE strategy was four-fold: (i) Make the area drought-proof; (ii) Provide nutrition security; (iii) Build

community assets; and (iv) Minimize migration. Vulnerability had to be seen at both the group and community levels. Combating vulnerability required the creation of layers of competence from the individual and marginal groups to the community as a whole. Survival of the poor, particularly poor tribal people, had to be built around core competencies for the community. Beyond immediate relief, CARE sought long-term solutions in water harvesting structures. This would provide employment, revive skills, create community involvement, and resuscitate local knowledge. The revival of any aspect of the commons utilizing common property resources was a strategy for livelihood sustainability and for addressing the problem of vulnerability.

The JNU study of the Bolangir project provides an interesting evaluation. What it unravels is CARE's construction of vulnerability. The study, in that sense, is more than a report card. There is a realization that drought in Bolangir was almost a way of life. Starvation was routine and drought recurred frequently. This created a cycle of suffering. CARE realized that justice had to be rooted to the land and the ways of improving the quality of land in terms of water retention. Watershed management became a point of entry for ecological and social regeneration. The wisdom was basic: depleting vegetative cover depletes social cover.

Watershed Management (WSM) had to cover both the technical and the social. The technical style had to be labour-intensive so that earth workers could use unskilled labour. It had to revive traditional engineering skills, and be located upland where a majority of the beneficiaries lived. Asset generation in terms of ecology and societal skills was primary. This would allow the community to combat the recurring nature of the crisis.

Method becomes primary to CARE activity. CARE realized that government support was necessary and that while the government had enhanced the FFW from 400,000 to 11,000,000 lakh (1100 billion) human-days, the FFW, like many bureaucratic projects, was anchored on indifference. It sought the minimal relief but had no lasting social impacts, nor was there a sense of transparency and accountability.

CARE was deliberate and systematic about the logistics of its operation. It focused on the most severe drought areas where the crop loss was over 75 per cent and migration exceeded 40 per cent. It chose five blocks – Patragarh, Tureikal, Muridahalm, Bangomunda and Agarpur. All these blocks had a high degree of landless and small farmers, a larger tribal population and a high incidence of malnutrition. What was crucial was not just the choice but the transparency of the selection. In making this choice of blocks, it combated the effects of local factional politicians, which usually favoured the rich and powerful.

CARE sought to create a new sense of partnership with the government and local NGOs to precede the revival of the community through the creation of social capital, community assets and social justice. In order to break the asymmetry of location, CARE planned to construct upland bindings (for watershed programmes); a departure from lowland binding, which would be favoured by the FFW. The binds arrest rainwater flow and recharge the fields. This underlined that the poor and marginal farmers lived upland. They were thus made direct beneficiaries of the project. Under this new arrangement, the poor farmers could work on their own fields under the FFW programme. The short- and long-run benefits now belonged to them.

The project was executed in two phases. The first phase was of recovery, which included the excavation of old water bodies and the construction of new harvesting structures. Phase two focused on restoring, preserving and strengthening community assets. Many migrants returned on hearing the news of work opportunities in their own villages. At a more social level, the CARE approach sought a transition from charity to dignity. Dignity was not just an abstract term and the project emphasized the dignity of labour. Food became “an entitlement of their labor not to be patronage of the State or CARE”. The contrast is between welfare and workfare. Welfare often stigmatizes the dependents as part of a dependency syndrome, while workfare shows that they are no longer free riders but individuals paid wages for work.

Combating vulnerability is a fine-grained process. Questions of location specificity, equitable use and common ownership constitute the outer circle of guarantees. There were gender biases, which had to be fought. Work could not be for males alone. The domains of inclusion had to include women, widows, old women, that is woman as woman, woman as socially marginal and as economically weak. Inclusion had to be welded to participation where village level discussions had to develop a micro-plan for participation. The participation of the women was crucial as drought affects them the most. Women were organized into Self-help Groups (SHGs) to enable and facilitate their participation. We need to understand the division of labour occurring here. In villages, women collect water, walking miles to do so. However, they do not create the sources of water, a task left to men. CARE thus initiated a new form of participation, which affected the vision of community. Projects had to bring women into the panchayati raj process. The trend thus goes beyond participation and partnership to institution-building. For CARE, building these processes into institutions was critical for the implementation of the project. Yet change is not easy and what made it difficult were the mind-sets of those in power and their hierarchical idea of benefits and organization. The top-down approach of government officials inhibited community empowerment. Given the iniquitous nature of benefits, communities feel reluctant to mobilize.

The JNU report adds that institution-building had to differentiate between tier and layer as levels in selecting the appropriate institutions for the projects at hand. On the one hand, there are the traditional institutions of family, kinship, caste, tribe, religion. On the other side, there are modern democratic institutions like the panchayati raj. The challenge is how to weld the two. The CARE project, in creating watersheds, traces the career of vulnerability and the alternate trajectories of capacity building. Hence, the deconstruction of vulnerability is as key a process as the reconstruction of capacity development. One also needs a diversity of institutions. SHGs which can federate in different ways become one variant. But 'layer' as a tactic has to meet 'tier' as a supplement. If SHGs constitute the layer level of grassroots development, the layer has to open to the regional and the

national policy making institutions. Here ‘tier’ becomes significant. District level committees, *zilla parishads*, NGOs should foster autonomy and reciprocity between layers. Capacity building interlocks tier and layer to create new structures of response.

Capacity building then has to be read within the broader agendas of development. Ecology as a nesting process emphasizes local but is summoned by the global. Watershed development becomes a point of entry to a more comprehensive idea of development.

An ethnography of the project has to go beyond policy and look at local nuances. CARE understood the importance of rituals. Wages were given as food not cash. As a result, men could not waste their earnings on drink. There was an emphasis on a wider idea of reciprocity. Workers donated a portion of their wages to the disabled and the weak who could not work. The community was conscious that no one should starve. Building on this was the idea of the Grain Bank, built on a fistful of rice from each worker. The grain became a safety net and a rotating micro-credit system. The grain bank allowed support for the sick and invalid. The poignancy of such solidarity is captured in an extract below. Sapur Majhi, a 78-year old woman testifies:

“When food for work started, everyone was happy, but not me. I thought that they will give food only to those who work. How could an old lady like me work? Although one could not work in the field, they had given me rice and dal every week. Every week during food distribution, everybody contributed a handful of rice and dal. From the community contribution, they gave food to old people like us. They said it is from the Grain bank. They did not leave the old and disabled to starve”.

Sapur Majhi added that when her sons abandoned her, she survived with the help of the Grain Bank.

The importance of assertiveness training was recognized by CARE. There was a general recognition that trauma was more than loss and it needed a therapy beyond mourning. There was a transition to recognition not just of dignity but of rights. There was increased

awareness of children's rights, the rights of widows, even of old age, while intervening. There was a sense that the powers of coping needed the aid of professionalism.

The evaluation report ends on a positive note about CARE's intervention. I must, however, add that even the most preliminary inquiries around the Koraput Bolangir Kalahandi (KBK) region would probably reveal numerous reports of entire families wiped out by chronic malnutrition. People were getting trapped in a "negative spiral of poverty, malnutrition, starvation, unemployment, ill-health and severe immune deficiency till death comes to their rescue, releasing them from this unbearable misery". In March 2010, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was compelled to appoint an inquiry after cases of starvation deaths were reported in Bolangir. The NHRC has made special recommendations to provide free cooked food to old, infirm and destitute people. As Devinder Sharma, a Delhi-based food policy analyst put it, "The problem is not so much about how many schemes there are. It is about how many get implemented and reach out to the people they are meant for. There are 22 Central Government schemes already in place that could benefit the people but actually do not."

6.6 Partners

In the previous sections, I have listed three sets of organizations – Caritas and CRS, Action Aid (AA), Oxfam and CARE. I have tried to explicate the projects approach that they engage in while attempting to mitigate 'vulnerability' and mainstream 'marginals' into the democratic process. I have also tried to illustrate how each one of them build and maximize on their own set of competencies. I must clarify here that except for Caritas and CRS, which work with the social service wing of the local Diocese, the other set of organizations build 'partnerships' with other organizations working at the 'local grassroots' level. These organizations (AA, Oxfam, CARE) provide their partners with technical and material support to carry out the mandates of the project that they fund. I spent time with several of these partner groups in Gujarat and Orissa: Unnayan (Oxfam),

SWAD (Oxfam, CARE, Concern Worldwide), Unnati (Oxfam, Action Aid, CARE), AIDMI (Oxfam, Action Aid).

Partner selection is an important process. The ethnography of partnerships itself reveals a great deal about strategy. I will, for the purpose of this section, look at some cases to see the role that these partner organizations play in enacting the vision of the funders. I must clarify that many of these local organizations are partners of one or more of the ‘international’ NGO groups listed above. What ties them together is a commitment to a certain framework of participative democracy.

6.6.1 Housing and CARE

My first case of partnership centres around housing projects initiated between CARE and the Ahmedabad-based NGO, Unnati in Gujarat, post the earthquake in 2001. The Gujarat government’s owner-driven rehabilitation policy had provided an impetus to post-disaster reconstruction. However, the complexity of urban areas, especially the heterogeneity of stakeholders involved delays in the rehabilitation process. We shall try to understand how participation and consultation create empowerment. One realizes that no concept in a disaster regime is non-embedded. Each word is a concept, a method, a community, a story, and case studies become a combination of all four elements.

During the early rehabilitation phase, CARE had built 4999 houses in partnership with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). The evaluations that followed appreciated the technical features of the houses, but “categorically pointed to the need for more community participation in the construction process”. CARE tried to internalize this critique in its later projects. Unnati, its partner in the region, was enrolled to ensure community participation. Unnati, in turn, would involve other local partners during the process. Three organizations played a central role in this story: Unnati, BHADA (the Bachau Area Development Authority) and CARE. CARE was the designate coordinator and financial facilitator, BHADA assigned governance and administration, while Unnati became facilitator for government–community interfaces.

Critical to the CARE–Unnati role in the Bachau housing reconstruction was the idea of community. Community for CARE–Unnati is a construct. Community referred not to society in general but to marginalized groups and individuals who lack the entitlements that make citizenship possible and coping easier (Unnati, N.D.: 1). The tacit prefix to the word ‘communities’ was the term ‘marginal’ or ‘vulnerable’.

Marginality, they argue, creates vulnerability, denies access, and prevents entitlements. Marginalized communities are those that lack membership into the legal and official. The list had Dalit, Koli, tribal, nomadic tribes as well as daily labourers, agricultural workers, salt pan workers. Some forms of livelihood become forms of exclusion. The list also includes single women, orphans, the old, socially disprivileged caste groups. It is in this context that CARE–Unnati and its associates argued that housing could no longer be a passive noun. It needed to be a verb. When a house is seen as a noun, it is a passive object, a space. When housing is a verb, it becomes a process not an end-product, a vehicle for delivering justice, not only a mere good. Such a sense helps create and empower communities, promote sustainability, encouraging participation. It also links participation to funding, where funders realize that housing is a long range process, which has to incorporate the idea of the house as part of an equitable, sustainable, participative community that allows for livelihood generation.

Vulnerability delays access, delays life chances. In Bachau, vulnerable households were left behind in the reconstruction process. Three years after the earthquake, many of these households were still living in temporary, unauthorized, sub-standard structures. The loans that they obtained went into other expenses. As a result, these households were not eligible for further loans. The role of Unnati and other local organizations like Eklavya was to identify such households and return them to the civic process. As individuals, they were scattered. In fact, they did not constitute a community. Hunnar Shaala, another organization, knitted these different caste groups – Kolis, Rabaris, Bhils – into a constituency and a community. It was not just a mere quest for construction. A house is an ecology, it connects to livelihoods. Designs had to cater to livelihood activities and

create a knowledge community with new skills. Hunnar Shaala realized that housing was a site for a spectrum of development activities. Housing in that sense becomes a pretext for building a community. A community as a sustainable entity can survive after the NGO leaves. It is in this context that the NGOs worked to decentralize decisions to the lowest possible level, from the secretariat to the *Otalas*, traditional platforms or public spaces where social functions were enacted (Unnati, N.D.: 53).

The Gujarat government's owner-driven rehabilitation policy provided an impetus to post-disaster reconstruction. However, the complexity of urban areas, especially the heterogeneity of the stakeholders involved, delayed the rehabilitation process. There was a section of marginalized people who, while entitled to compensation, had no entitlements to land on which to build a house. The logic of the loan process demanded such legal deeds. CARE–Unnati decided to support the building of 287 houses for those groups, who, without legal entitlement to land could not obtain loans toward construction costs. Unnati sought a dialogue between the marginalized people of Bachau and the government. Through a process of negotiation and dialogue, an agreement was reached whereby people living illegally on land could purchase a plot. While Unnati identified the beneficiaries, CARE provided support for construction. Snehal, an extension of its rehabilitation initiatives, entered into a dialogue with Unnati. All the partners worked together to make the process more flexible and responsive (Unnati, N.D.: 16). Unnati initiated the relevant paperwork for land regularization, consulted the community, arranged for contractors, and worked with BHADA in facilitating the demarcation of boundaries.

Governance is not an easy task. It is a form of literacy, an act of competence. Government, as a part of this process, demands trust. Unnati discovered that the communication gap between the people and the government was widening. Unnati organized multi-stakeholder meetings, which included various local communities, NGOs and the government.

The building permit system was a complex and costly affair in Bachau, almost impossible to access or unravel for the poor. People's applications were rejected as they failed to comprehend regulations and, therefore, did not build up to required standards. The Urban Development Corporation's proposal for development ignored the needs of the vulnerable people and communities, which led to desperate protests by these communities. Unnati worked as a communications facilitator, convinced that "two monologues do not make a dialogue". This dialogue eventually led to some recognition of the needs of communities and their acknowledgement in the urban plan. The three groups (UNNATI, BHADA and Snehal) set up the Nagarik Sahyog Kendra (NSK) to facilitate a balanced dialogue between people and government. Problem-solving involved not only communication but the institutionalization of the mechanisms of problem-solving. The NSK recognized that marginal communities have poor access to information. NSK's regular *Falia* or community meetings created an open information process (Unnati, N.D.: 23). NSK made imaginative use of techniques and mediums including events like *padyatras* (marches), demonstration constructions, a regular newsletter and mobile exhibitions to make its presence felt. *Nagarvani*, its monthly newsletter, was distributed in 21 different locations where locals were known to congregate.

Meanwhile, Unnati's advocacy argued for a simplified and cheaper building system. BHADA, in response, eventually revised its application form and its fee structure. It also provided an in-house design service to discourage unscrupulous operators charging exorbitant fees. Initially, even this new service cost Rs. 3000, far beyond anything the marginals could afford. Eventually Eklavya, another partner NGO, set up a unit inside BHADA for Rs. 300. Governance sometimes involves the recognition that poor pay more for the same services.

Urban decisions blend the individual and the collective, often with controversial consequences. One of the most contentious of post-disaster construction issues focused on whether housing could be constructed on old sites. The Government and many funding agencies saw relocation as a simpler and cleaner process, and preferred it. Unnati, in

response, did not jump the gun. It conducted a series of surveys to understand the problem. It realized that people preferred in-situ construction because it did not affect their livelihood activities. Unnati facilitated *Falia* meetings and interviews where government officials discussed policy with affected people. Unnati systematically advocated land regularization and in situ construction, which BHADA and the Collector of Kutch, eventually accepted. There was a second problem. People living informally could not afford to pay market rates for the land they occupied. Unnati, through a dialogic process, created an understanding of people's real ability to pay and plots were eventually marked between Rs. 7500 and Rs. 10,000 (US \$135 and \$179) for 50 sq. m. Meetings were held in neighbourhoods and in the evenings when workers could attend them. Unnati thus became a conduit for trust and voice, which helped create a more sensitive decision-making process (Unnati: N.D.: 25).

The project witnessed a similar dialogue during the design process. The trio of organizations summoned Hunnar Shaala, a Bhuj-based organization of construction and housing experts to help resolve technical problems. Design is more than a technical process. It is a dialogue between client and designer. It begins with a realization that people have different wants, different aspirations. More matter-of-factly, we have to realize that a home is a multi-dimensional event, simultaneously spatial, economic, social and cultural. The process of rebuilding had to enable people to rework their individual designs within housing specifications. People had to be exposed to earthquake safety and the varying nature of materials. A participatory process, thus initiated became a festival of discussions.

Hunnar Shaala offered their models on the basis of traditional housing designs. Scale models were made and designs presented to the community. All three allowed house owners to customize the design of their houses. It was a win-win situation where Hunnar Shaala could incorporate existing standards, and CPDP, safety needs, and it also allowed Eklavya to build a range of sites. Design literacy became a democratic process where access to housing, standards in construction, and literacy about construction were

synergized. Technical Standards and local tradition could co-exist. The community, the network of NGOs, and the hierarchy of bureaucrats are able to discuss housing, which builds a home, governance and citizenship. What was particularly problematic was the nature of informal settlements. Real-life instances have their own surprises. Consider the following example.

Kanjibhai, a mason, lived in a tent and wished to regularize his house. When the site was inspected by BHADA, the plot was found to be smaller than the standard 50 sq. m. required. The land was also on an eroded slope of a hill and the surveyor refused to regularize it. He thought it was unutilizable. Eklavaya's architects drew designs to demonstrate that the land could be utilized. After strenuous efforts, BHADA officials agreed to regularize it.

What we witnessed in the housing partnership was two forms of synergy – the invention and empowerment of what is euphemistically called ‘communities’ and the synergy of NGO networks. Between the two, they created a model of democracy that recognizes a skill called governance based on trust. The strengthening of individuals and communities is thus a critical part of the housing process.

The CARE – Unnati – BHADA – Eklavya – Snehal – Hunnar Shaala collaboration was narrated above as a story of a partnership, a narration of the creation of a community. But it is also the story of mainstreaming of policy. Scaling is a crucial part of policy. An event or a number of events has to be generalized as a trend, that is, a collection of stories has to be rendered into a fable and translated into policy. The engagement has to be retold in this context. (Rebuilding Bachau 2002: Unnati) as story of urban reconstruction and planning (Rawal and Prajapati 2007).

Planning and urban reconstruction in Bachau, a 'C' class town, was conventionally bureaucratic and planner-led. Unnati wanted to mainstream a people-owned and people-

led policy, which was transparent and not restricted to a few cosmetic consultations. (Rebuilding Bachau 2002: 3). To do so it decided on the following set of tactics:

- i. Security of the land tenure for poor.
- ii. Maximizing pro-poor components in developmental investments.
- iii. Community-based disaster preparedness with focus on vulnerability.
- iv. Strengthening local self-governance.

These tenets were already part of the then Draft National Slum Policy. Unnati sought to create a local and state framework to facilitate the institutionalization of this policy. It realized that urban planning works in terms of two communities – the rich and the middle class, the highly visible and vocal and the marginals, who are part of a virtually invisible, informal economy. Unnati reset the focus on community-based disaster preparedness with an emphasis on mitigating vulnerability. To do so, it had to revive local self-governance. Local self-governance for Unnati was a bulwark against the marginalization of the weaker sections. Planning was organized around the idea of a homogenized clean Bachau. The post-earthquake plan aimed at creating sanitized areas suitable to attract investment. Provision for unorganized activities, which constituted nearly 50 per cent of the workforce, was non-existent. The development plans did not indicate any approach for reducing urban poverty. There was literally no effort to build social assets for the poor that would help them handle disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes and drought. Ironically, the amount of Rs. 75 crores (US \$13.4 billion) to be invested in infrastructure, would add to the tax liabilities of the poor.

Unnati tried to show that categories of the excluded or marginal are not always visible as a group. They were superfluous to the planning process. Unnati had to focus on a land use plan that acknowledged squatter settlements. Public consultations by Unnati helped alter part of bias, specially about land inhabited by the poor which was being acquired for offices. Unnati created a lesson in governance by providing critical review, evaluation and feedback. It documented land use, spatial linkages, identified bottlenecks, created

community consultation and facilitated disaster mitigation into town planning. It demanded a consistent and continual representation of the urban poor in all issues. A system of multi-stakeholder dialogue became the norm, a ritual part of the urban process. As a result of this, the draft development plan was modified. Stakeholder analysis created an equitable frame for policy. *Maldharis*, shopkeepers, labour, small hawkers, vendors were no longer part of a list of the excluded but integral to the city. Professionalism now backed the interests of these communities so that urbanism had the beginnings of a ‘pro-poor’ perspective. Local issues were reworked into the administrative, legislative and legal process. As a result, case studies became generalized into administrative fiat-simplifying permits, ritualizing the inclusion of the urban poor in maps, simplifying the building permit system, and creating some elements of a pro-poor focus. The scaling was at the middle level but it is the middle level world that needs to be reformed to increase the life chances of the vulnerable.

6.6.2 The Anatomy of a Manual: Between Scale and Policy

The work of organizations like Unnati not only points to the importance of scaling local issues but also emphasizes the symbiotic and symbolic role that groups like Unnati, Self Employed Women and Development (SWAD), All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), TARU play in legitimizing, formalizing the activities of secular NGOs. In a technical sense, such groups are seen as evaluators, standardizers, advocacy forums but in a political sense, they formalize the role of NGOs as alchemists of marginality. They create, through their roles, a network of relevance, policy formation wrapping up a process begun by NGOs. They perform the role of supplements and complements, putting a final seal of completion on a policy cycle initiated by civil society NGOs. By knitting together the conversation of NGOs and evaluating and standardizing them, they function as translators, updating and generalizing case studies into suggested tables of policy. This leads us to our second study of partnership.

Particularly relevant in this context is the role of organizations like Unnati–Disha–Grass–Arpan. The review of The Gujarat State Scarcity Relief Manual by these groups on

drought relief was a classic test case. Oxfam supported their initiatives in reformulating Relief Policy.

The group realized that policies as memories are incorporated into manuals. A manual becomes a framework about vulnerability. Its exclusions and inclusions determine who shall survive and for how long. What the groups sought was to use recent memories of drought and alter the administration of suffering.

Drought is almost a continuing scenario in Gujarat. In 1999, drought affected 25 million people or roughly 50 per cent of the state's population and also affected 12 million cattle in 9341 villages. Despite the scale, the response was slow. By the time government relief took off, 45–55 per cent of the village population had left the villages in search of relief. The delay, the mismanagement, this group of NGOs argued, necessitated a relooking at practices and processes. The NGOs sought to embroider or graft their experiences and suggestions on to the policy document.

Since the local administration, particularly in emergencies, whether declared or undeclared, is rarely reflexive, the groups sought to re-read the manual in terms of new events in drought management. Their tactics sought “a limited review of the government drought policy and practices” through “a distillation of the experiences of partner NGOs working in relief” in terms of concepts, methods, responses (Mishra, *Exploring Drought Relief Policy* 2003: 4). They saw the ritual as one of updating policies, by re-examining techniques, procedures, criteria and the nature of relief management. The Manual had been last updated in 1982. Tied to it was an appendix of 130 Government Regulations (GRs) adapting the manual to the changing socio-economic scenario (Mishra 2000: 5). These GRs, the NGOs pointed out, dealt more with pecuniary benefits (wages, cash doles, rate for cattle) or modes of material distribution (fodder, water, food) or administrative arrangements. They failed to revise or annotate the policy on drought as the centre-piece of the disaster management framework.

The document weaves together the recommendations of 104 NGOs about the Gujarat State Scarcity Relief Manual. The manual was seen by this group of NGOs as a wonderfully detailed document, humane, but starved of new mechanisms, concepts and methods. It required new standards of governance and a new framework of accountability to the community and to democratic institutions. (Mishra 2000: 8).

As a classificatory system, a manual outlines a division of labour and a chain of responsibility. It was an administrative document that needed a legal system seen as a framework of accountability. It had to have a sense and a sensitivity to human rights and to new standards of delivery. There was little scope for decentralization and measures like appointing a minister, as head of a district relief committee, reinforced centralization.

The first challenge was to the very the mentality of the existing framework. The manual treated drought as an isolated calamity of episodic frequency. As a result, little attempt was made to address the long-term issues of drought or of integrating relief with rehabilitation. Given the nature of the communication system, a district collector need not rely on the density of reports to assess and declare drought. There was also the question of time. “A short-term emergency response was not appropriate to a cyclical and chronic problem. For instance 60% of the government finances went to short term, immediate relief measures like water tankering and fodder distribution” (Mishra 2000: 10). There was little sense of anticipation and even less of future planning. Finally, in terms of local governance, the provisions were grossly anachronistic. This was a document unable to respond to a society in transition, which could blend the popular and the bureaucratic. There was no sense of the NGOs, no devolution of financial powers. NGOs were treated as extensions of a regime. Recommendations regarding labour-intensive works or irrigation were rigid and almost fundamentalist. The provisions allowed only for manual labour. NGOs, in turn, asked for a ban on irrigation and requested a recharging of the groundwater. They asked that the taboo against machinery use be made flexible. The distance from relief sites had to be reduced from 5 km to 2–3 km to make them more accessible.

More conceptually, drought had to be seen through a range of scenarios. Scenario building and mathematical tools were needed to supplement the traditional reading of signs, but it was the definition and declaration of drought that was seen as conceptually and politically problematic. As Achyut Yagnik of SETU argued, “The manual is oriented to agricultural drought when drought is often hydrological. Hydrological droughts are often out of phase with meteorological or agricultural droughts” (Mishra 2000: 15). Finally, the system of intelligence was slow in response and did not bear in mind that the relief was meant for people living in small micro-villages. The mandatory waiting time of two months before declaring the drought appeared self-defeating.

Administrative consequences followed from this list of critiques. The NGOs felt that the estimation and declaration of scarcity should be by a state-level autonomous body, a composite of GO, NGO and academe. The collector's office had to be decentralized to the zilla panchayat level. Wages had to be liberalized and ‘appropriate standards’ set for women. The manual had to meet the Sphere Charter of standards to be minimally humanitarian. What is interesting to watch, as we move along the mosaic from shelter to drought, is how policy is built at the micro and intermediate levels as an embedded activity rather than an abstract enterprise.

One sees a similar but more intense analysis in TARU's study of drought supported by AA. A study of the ethnography of policy advocacy, it seeks priorities through the creation of typologies based on village studies and to create priorities for action. It shows that while action plans have to be made at the village micro level, the strategies should address processes which transcend the village micro-shed level. It emphasizes that vulnerability has an ecological component and, therefore, any action which increases the vulnerability of agriculture should be avoided. It suggests that drought-proofing should operate at the subsistence level of firewood, food, fodder and the distribution of land because larger programmes are likely to be cornered and appropriated by powerful groups. Drought-proofing should be based on farmer management systems. In this context, it suggests that the choice of technology for resource use, especially water, must

be understood and managed by rural communities themselves. It sees drought mitigation as a skill-generating exercise, which prevents the migration of small and marginal farmers, realizing that drought often reduces the human resources of a district to unskilled manual labour. Between community and equity, locality and skill generation, the NGOs seek to create a model of governance where diversity and standards weave micro and macro policy together. (Drought Proofing Action Plan – TARU Action Aid 1994, Vol. 1, see especially pp. 79–86).

The NGOs lay an emphasis on community, consultation and participation. These groups are masters of coalition-building, not as leaders, but as intermediaries. As middlemen, these groups integrate local battles and insights and international documents, standards and treaties through an act of coalition-building. These organizations present themselves as organizations experienced in the field, adding value as they can provide international partners within local insights of what happens at the grassroots level. Through this transfer of perspective, the organization includes all existing perspectives in a single evaluation, enabling it to weave local considerations into a global project. Its community based actions are essential to steer local capacities, evaluations, bridging between global information and regional initiatives. (AIDMI Annual Report 2007–2008: 9).

Another tactic seeks to respond to the Hyogo Framework of 2005. Convened in Kobe, Japan, Hyogo was the first attempt to create an overall framework to reduce disaster loss, to lay an emphasis on disaster mitigation rather than disaster response after the event. Capitalizing on the third priority of the Hyogo Framework for Action, where information and motivation are the main tools to reduce vulnerability, they present themselves as a knowledge integration mechanism, which uses the tools of training and evaluation to create a holistic policy function. Take the example of AIDMI (All India Disaster Mitigation Institute) in Ahmedabad. Between April 2007 and March 2008, AIDMI conducted 56 local training courses, covering over 1600 participants. Trainings had been held for a variety of stakeholders, including panchayat leaders, school-teachers, NGOs, administrators. A training kit is provided to all participants to create modules of

information. The work of this range of groups creates a consensus around policy advocacy, a knowledge framework where civil society meets the State in dialogue.

6.6.3 Toolkits and Standardization: Towards Participatory Frameworks

Critical to groups like Unnati, TARU and AIDMI are attempts to create what they dub as the participatory frameworks and toolkits. These groups realize that they mediate between the State, a variety of NGOs and the community. They become trustees of measure and memory, and try to create an understanding of how to assess disasters through an approach which is participative and built around vulnerability frameworks (Unnati 2007a: vi). Disasters need a mnemonic, not only as a trigger or an encapsulation of memory but a mnemonic which becomes a heuristic for the future, a measure of sensitivity, a ritual of sensitization. This culminates in efforts to create manuals and toolkits, which encapsulate and institutionalize the memory of managing disasters. This might become clearer as we proceed with this section.

UNNATI's "Assessing Damage after Disasters" (2007a) is one such effort. The workbook is a set of concepts, a collection of ways to conceptualize and operationalize responses to a disaster. It combines a philosophy of disaster management with a handbook of methodologies. The manual realizes the difference between said–unsaid, objective–subjective in a disaster especially around the concept of loss. Loss and losses cannot remain at the level of the inarticulate. The scale needs a sense of measure but these measures are not just indifferent numbers but categories for assessment arrived at after consultation and participation with the community, especially the community of marginals. It acknowledges that the idea of loss is complex but, in an everyday sense, it has to be operationalized and translated into the language of damage assessment. The handbook recognizes difficulties in this translation. "From the past experiences, it has been learnt that damages are measurable, but without getting into the subjective dimensions, human suffering cannot be fully understood" (Unnati 2007a, Ahmedabad).

The toolkit argues that assessing damage is a classificatory act but holistic enough to realize the connectivities in society, which have to be both comprehensive and multi-sectoral. Damage assessment reflects the new NGO perspective anchored on: (i) vulnerability reduction; (ii) social inclusion; (iii) community participation; and (iv) gender equality. Damage assessment is customized as a sensitivity to these contextual needs (Unnati 2007a: ix).

The manual begins with its fourfold charter of concepts, emphasizing that as a glossary, it seeks to increase the life chances of the communities it is committed to. The glossary defines a dictionary of possibilities. Firstly, it states that vulnerability is the likelihood of harm and damage to life or conditions conducive to well-being. It recognizes that vulnerability has many reasons and emphasizes that the new humanitarianism has to be anchored on vulnerability reduction. A categorization of the vulnerable and a census created in consultation with the local community is the first step in damage assessment. Secondly, it emphasizes that the methodology of assessment needs a sense of social inclusion, otherwise assessment becomes an act of erasure, of exclusions traditionally, customarily, and historically practised. It reinforces an older power structure. Thirdly, for this process to be authentic and embedded, it requires community participation. Community participation empowers by providing information and consultation for decision-making and collective action. Finally, it emphasizes a gender perspective to make visible women's roles and women's contribution to the economy of caring for the children, the elderly and the disabled (Unnati 2007a: xii).

The document's ideas of social justice move from concept to methodology. Once the concepts are clear, methodologies can be specific and embedded. The handbook asserts that post-disaster management can be broadly divided into two parts: situation assessment and needs assessment. The need for an assessment methodology based on community participation is important for creating credibility, for both the community and humanitarian response planners.

The situation assessment deals with the question of “what has happened” by providing a description of the situation on the ground, especially in relation to infrastructure, population, while the need assessment addresses “what needs to be done” and articulates priority needs, secondary threats, resource availability. It also provides a frame for long-term rehabilitation as a part of development strategies. Time is a critical element in such an analysis and the toolkit insists that the assessment be made at different time intervals. We should begin with an initial rapid assessment and culminate in detailed multi-sectoral assessment done about a fortnight or a month after a disaster. All the secular humanitarian agencies that I spoke to during my fieldwork were keen to emphasize this trajectory of assessment.

Human life and the safety of humans is the prime objective of any humanitarian response. Assessment once again is central to that. Assessing loss to human life needs categorization in terms of the extent of injuries from minor damage to permanent disability. Assessment is also embedded in a forensic–bureaucratic concept and requires official certification for compensation. One has to register formal police complaints to access government assistance. Fairness and credibility demand a disaggregation of categories. Data has to be segregated in terms of gender and age. Family details have to be comprehensive, specifying dependents and earning numbers to estimate impacts on the family and its support system. It has all the complexity of a minor census. Attention has to be paid to groups, which often tend to be left out of the enumeration process, especially migrant workers, unregistered informal sector workers, tourists. Those who immediately abandon a habitat and leave little information of return behind also have to be included.

While assessment looks simple, we have to recognize that official figures either over-estimate or under-estimate loss. Gujarat began with a figure of 100,000, which the government corrected to 30,000.

Assessment in a methodological sense or even a logistical sense becomes a checklist based on more comprehensive categories and an imaginative act of mapping.

There is a realization in these documents that mapping is not tracing. A tracing is a mechanical replication of old categories and contours. A map is inventive. It rediscovers the community and its connections on a new axis. For example, in the housing reconstruction project in Bachau, Unnati–CARE–BHADA seek to create a new socio-geography of connections beginning with housing. A house becomes a composite of vulnerabilities based on different factors. You have to be informed about the quality of construction, the technology, the type of dwelling, the location. The socio-geography also has to capture a sociology in terms of location, urban–rural, types of ownership, functional usage, number of inhabitants per dwelling unit and only then does the categorization in terms of damage begin. Houses are not homogenous entities. Even the diversity of materials – mud, bamboo, wood, brick and reinforced concrete – signals the complexity of assessment in establishing the relation between disaster and the vulnerability of shelter (Unnati 2007a: 12). The handbooks add that such information-gathering should be transparent and participative.

Mapping begins with habitat mapping, showing where different stakeholders are located because location is strategic. Such a map should be shared with the community. This is followed by a village transect providing a comparative view of damage allowing one to establish patterns and differences. Between habitat mapping and village transect, the political economy of location becomes clearer. For example, pucca houses belonging to affluent Patel caste families looked inviolate, while huts near drains had collapsed completely.

Supplementing these is photographic documentation and the classic household survey. This is followed up with an assessment of infrastructural damage, especially to roads, basic services, healthcare units and religious places. Infrastructure mapping also provides insights into the distribution of services.

From the technical and the material, the mapping moves to environmental assessment. This involves not just a survey of food, water, energy but also a mapping of water and

carbon cycles, and biodiversity. It emphasizes that the destruction of trees and soil degradation is also about mainstreaming social justice. Resource mapping constructs nature as a community and is concerned about the fate of mangroves, sea turtles and coconut plantations. Such a mapping is necessary because nature determines livelihood and assessments of livelihood loss. Livelihood assessment includes direct and indirect damages from loss of land to loss of skills. Such livelihood assessment is not merely presented as a disaggregated form but combined with occupational network analysis (Unnati Xerox Internal notes material unpublished, p. 43). The mapping proceeds to establish not just connectivities in ecology but also those around health, not just as symptoms and epidemics but through a mobility map of health services. Such connectivities emphasize the new demands for governance (Unnati Xerox 51). Along with ecology, health and livelihood, the mapping adds a new category – the psychosocial. It makes trauma a part of the everyday glossary of disasters, showing that it is a normal response to an abnormal experience. It creates a new literacy of pain and suffering around disasters.

The handbooks and manuals (Unnati: 2007a, 2007b, 2008) turn disaster management into the new common sense, legitimizing the rethinking of the NGOs. The manual, the map and the handbook function as the equivalent of a textbook legitimizing this new common sense. Groups like Unnati and AIDMA look small but they play a crucial function in the aftermath of disasters by coordinating the new reflexivity, the new ideas beyond the 3R domain.

6.7 Commentary

In the preceding sections, I have tried to show how various organizations, while responding to disasters, rework and seed a varied network of concepts and methodologies. I have also tried to illustrate how these concepts and methodologies shift the emphasis from aid, charity, from helping the ‘poor’ to the concept of rights and

entitlement. I have tried to demonstrate that this idea of rights and entitlements is a move away from the earlier idea of development, which had a more uniform sense of citizenship. The current idea of development takes the survivor and marginal more seriously.

In the following section, I try to pull the various strands in the chapter together and see how these concepts are contoured and the nature of connectivity of these concepts.

6.7.1 Social Science: A Network of Concepts

The first thing that strikes a researcher is that the key word the NGOs explored in this chapter is not ‘the society’ but ‘the community’. The community refers to those who are perceived as being ‘outside’ or marginal to the society. In the words of Amar Jyoti Nayak, the state head of Action Aid Orissa, “Community for us is those who are affected. And more specifically among those affected, those who belong to the marginalized section of society: women, Dalits, tribals, orphans, Muslims, the disabled, the single women, the old.” Then he adds, “We say take sides. Disaster has a differential impact. Those who are historically discriminated (marginalized) are doubly impacted. So, the programme is purposively targeted to them. Otherwise it will not reach them. In our strategy, we call it ‘differential impact’. We believe in a rights-based approach.”

This view is echoed by most secular humanitarian agencies. Even Caritas and CRS, while emphasizing the Biblical language of compassion, love and charity thread it with a political, constitutional and social science language. Instead of ‘blessed are the weak’, the documents seem to say, ‘blessed are the vulnerable’. Vulnerability is a polyphonic concept, as it strategically evokes suffering, concern, care and ethics, and yet can be seen behaviourally in terms of biological, psychological and economic indices. Vulnerability, in fact, becomes a multi-faceted terrain where new methodologies for charity, social justice and democratic participation are created.

There is recognition that the community is not static. It's dynamic. Community will invariably change "things that you give them. They will modify it." As Nayak of Action Aid pointed out:

In many places in Orissa and Gujarat, there are issues around the access for the single woman. If a woman's husband dies, social rituals won't permit her to come out of the house for 21 days. But if the community says it can happen, it happens. Women have to come out. The strength of the organization is that they support each other. Their feelings for each other are very strong. They are much stronger in the women."

There is also an acknowledgement that the community represents ideas of coping and knowledge which the NGOs can build upon. By emphasizing the community, the NGOs seek to limit their role to facilitators. A self-reliant community is a sustainable community.

More particularly, categorizing and classifying marginality helps create discrete strategies for each group. Consequently, vulnerability is no longer seen as a lack, but a site for a new dynamics of citizenship. Social science creates a thick definition and a thick description of citizenship in disaster situations. By focusing on each of the vulnerable categories, that is, children, the old people, widows, the minorities, discriminated castes, it shows that the return to the social for each category is different, thus creating a richer theory of citizenship. Vulnerability becomes an omnibus category for those who have not yet acquired and who are having difficulties in attaining or retaining the entitlements that accompany the status of citizenship. Citizenship is no longer an as-is-where-is category to be treated with indifference beyond nominal entry (Ong 1999; Melissa Leach and Ian Scoones 2003).

For example, one of the critical innovations for AA was to take the critical term 'vulnerability' and link the word to a variety of life worlds. AA, in its pursuit of justice, creates a powerful social science, which is able to link vulnerability in its varieties of exclusionary practice to a wider, embedded, fine-grained analysis of citizenship as a category. AA's project, Sneh Abhiyan provides, as it were, ethnographies for a rich

ontology of citizenship by emphasizing its geography, its taxonomy, and its contexts. AA creates, as it were, vulnerability as two circles of hell. In the first are all those listed in current categories as: Dalits, tribals, minorities, women, and the urban poor. In the second, AA includes other varieties of the social also suffering from exclusion, invoking the vulnerability of ill-health, bonded labour, sex workers, the urban homeless, the displaced after disasters, and trafficked persons. Trauma is a new word, not just a reference to the emotional status of the survivor but also necessitating a new category of responsibility, legality and citizenship. By creating a cadre of workers and a category of reports around trauma, AA creates, as it were, a new category of pain, caring and responsibility; it demonstrates how caring requires new forms of sensitivity within the democratic code. In its study of disasters, AA showed that citizenship could not be confined to the categories of normalcy but had to focus on the normalcy of distress. It demonstrated that the abstract universal category of rights did little for these categories of social.

Vulnerability for AA is a lens and a kaleidoscope to deconstruct suffering and to create a conceptual census of the varieties of violence. Its embedded experience allows it to demonstrate that each form of violence stems from a particular form of exclusion. Vulnerability becomes the way of classifying and coping with the exclusionary economies practised by the classificatory systems of power where the minority, the migrant, the marginal, the obsolete, the war-impacted and the displaced find themselves in a common vocabulary of concern.

On the other hand, CARE's ideas of linking livelihood to vulnerability, violence, and marginality, provide a hybrid space between poverty and disasters: livelihood provides a more nuanced idea of damage, reconstruction and rehabilitation than the category of the job. Livelihood allows for a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach, which maps time cycles and the variety of stakeholders. Livelihood as a concept links political economy to the democratic domain through processes of consultation and participation. Each concept not only redefines the world but also specifies new methodologies and rituals for

handling it. Livelihood also provides a sense of new agency and connectivity by linking disaster anticipation to sustainability. The concepts of livelihood and vulnerability together thicken and nuance the poverty discourse, adding, hybridizing a sense of life world to the notion of poverty as an economic system. By combining the subjective–objective–numbers-lived description, they hyphenate agency and constraint, creating a varied sense of the vectors of the system.

By hyphenating livelihood to the concept of vulnerability, the NGOs show that vulnerability is not just about the inability of a society to cope, but it is also about the elasticity, the resilience of a society or community to recover. Vulnerability as a mapping of the community shows the variety and diversity in a society's susceptibility to disaster or violence. Not every one is excluded or marginal in the same way. The varieties of mapping from habitat, to location, to material, shows the density of tactics employed to combat vulnerability. Each map creates an entry into a different aspect of the world of vulnerability. Vulnerability then links to capacity building self-reliance and sustainability by creating a chain of concepts which build nuance into the act of recovery. Each idea of materiality from housing to water to urban planning needs its own neighbourhood of concepts.

A political economy of rights must include and theorize about both circles of the excluded. It shows that vulnerability goes beyond the standard theorizing about poverty and the poor. These varieties of mapping create a new constitutionality for the excluded. This signifies not a mere shift in voluntarism, but adds, as it were, a new perspective to citizenship and democracy.

6.7.2 Methods and Access

Once social science concepts create connectivity between life world and system, methodologies provide a measure of effectiveness. Method anchors the social science of caring. The objectivity of the social science method for these groups is to guarantee inclusion and justice.

Social science concepts are enrolled and sought to be institutionalized through manuals to guarantee democracy through transparency, participation, accountability, but the move from dignity to status as citizens is achieved through the idea of rights and entitlements. Both the concepts of rights and entitlements demand an active civil society and an idea of accountability and responsibility from the State.

Social science is seen by these groups as a method for guaranteeing equity. To the idea of equity is added the methodologies of feedback. Standards, audits and the range of assessments create the objectivity of evaluation. Justice is translated into the social science of evaluation. The notion of livelihood spans vulnerability and recovery. Projects have to be evaluated for efficiency, inclusion and sustainability. Social science provides the most secular universalist language for justice, particularly the concepts, methods needed to measure and evaluate such phenomena.

The choice of problems is both critical and strategic. Oxfam's strategy of water management is an outstanding example wherein its methodological reflexes emerge at the very moment of the disaster. A moment of disorder and anarchy is domesticated through the methodologies of assessment, of who needs what, when, how much and for how long? Methodologies of assessment become the new tactic of humanitarianism, avoiding the old sins of sentimental excess and benign neglect. Vulnerability assessment allows a new ranking of households and includes key parameters like starvation, food consumption, migration and gender. The use of social science methodologies distances us from vested interests and political factionalism, creating a transparency of representation, independent assessment, consultation, equity and partnership. Scientific rigour and democratic openness create new standards for problem-solving in disaster situations. Patronage and nepotism are ritually distanced through resort to social science and methodologies. It is a conceptual and methodological relay race, wherein each of these organizations takes over and provides a new reading of the social and citizenship.

What is the impact of such tactics? Will it bring change? Yes, argue many of the NGOs. We have to treat the community as a dynamic actor. The presence of women and Dalits is challenging the framework. These NGOs argue that there is a need to create institutions, put into place various knowledge-building processes by employing humanitarian aid to create not just physical capital but also social networks. AA's Nayak points out, "In the fishing community, leadership is with the men, with caste leaders. Fisherwomen are left out. They say we won't allow women because we use abusive language, while talking so it's no place for the woman to be. We worked with them for several months to include them in the processes." He cites the case of the project Sneha Abhiyan in post-cyclone Orissa. Many cases of human trafficking came up. So the challenge AA addressed was: how does one help those orphans, women who are subjects of that trafficking? What solutions needed to be instituted so that the orphaned and single women could stay together? The answers resulted in women being rehabilitated within the community.

In some quarters, however, there is an acknowledgement that some flexibility and reflexivity are needed around how these seemingly progressive concepts and standards are applied. The question that many critics and several of the practitioners ask is: 'Who sets these standards?' The Government brings its own standards, while the NGOs bring their own standards. Should those intervening in emergencies follow the standards set by the Sphere Charter or should the local government's norms be followed? Standards for safe building, for earthquake safe-housing, for tsunami warning systems, nutritional requirements: most of the standards are set by 'relevant' agencies. When you go for public-private models, will these standards drive the process? How and who will you drive the process? How will you make it work? Many among these groups acknowledged that most sphere standards are not customized to local contexts. The criteria of what is 'minimum' need may be culturally-driven. For example, in coastal areas, people in Orissa eat rice. The food standard may be very different in another area. Should those contexts be compromised? Surely not? Nayak of AA recalls a story in this context: "I remember what my auditor once said while examining our books. You have given rice and fish to

the disaster-hit in the coastal areas. He said, ‘Fish?!! Fish? For relief food? How can you give fish for relief ... Where is the money for fish?!’ The auditors forgot that fish and rice is the basic food for the people of the coastal region. What did he expect me to give: nutritious biscuits!?’ The point he was making was that while fish may be a staple diet for one community, in another community, it may be considered a luxury to be consumed occasionally in some other regions of the country.

I must add that methodology is not merely in terms of techniques of assessment and evaluation but also in terms of a methodology of participation and collaboration. Collaboration recognizes the limits of each particular group and seeks a synergy of the plurality of collaborative groups’ reflections and creates the richness of the social. Empowerment is not just a technique but also a goal. In fact, what is more powerful is that each word is connected to a method, a community, a theory of governance.

The work of CARE–BHADA–Unnati on housing illustrates that governance is a form of literacy, a generalized form of competence, which must extend beyond the State. Collaboration, like participation, is an avenue towards empowerment and governance. Disasters become attempts where problem-solving becomes a new style of democracy and governance. Each site picked by the NGO becomes a theatre for such experiments. Housing is no longer an act of administrative fiat, of merely reconstructing the physical. It becomes a new way of constructing the social, a new way of building communities, a new way of conceiving, conceptualizing homes as artifacts and communities. Housing becomes a new way of including the excluded and demonstrating that inclusion needs varieties of methods and rituals before it recreates empowerment.

Social science also combines transparency with participation; it focuses on the nature of inclusion, representation, elucidating the categories of marginality through economics, livelihood, ecology, gender. Social science methodologies then work out the rituals of participation and the accompanying indices of evaluation. By opening up information, aggregating representation, facilitating consultation, social science facilitates both

governance and democracy (Caritas N.D. (Caritas, N.D., Organizational Development Manual, Delhi; also see Caritas Internationalis Emergency Manual and Toolkit). A new kind of social contract is created which avoids patronage and uses social science categories to facilitate universalism (Unnati 2007a; 2007b; 2008). Vulnerability assessments create maps to monitor the nature of marginality. By introducing standards, it creates an objective notion of caring. By insistence on monitoring, it marks the career of justice in a community.

The use of social science methodologies distances us from vested interests and political factionalism, creating a transparency of representation, independent assessment, consultation, equity and partnership. Scientific rigour and democratic openness create new standards for problem-solving in disaster situations.

These groups reveal that they have internalized the best of Indian social science from Upendra Baxi (1988; 2007) to Amartya Sen (1982) by extending the idea of entitlements to those who do not have certificates of citizenship. By concretizing rights around housing, health, food and education, they provide an embedded theory of citizenship.

Summing up, there is a synergetic but plural effort by these organizations to transform a discourse both in an abstract sense and by creating a language in the concrete by realizing it as an outline of practice. It is a masterpiece of problem-solving, where each group reads the problem in a particular way and yet contributes synecdochally to the forging of a new humanitarian style based on social science concepts, methods, standards and reflexivity. The approaches add not just to a new notion of disaster management but also show how this plurality of problem-solving through partnerships and participation creates the framework where governance adds to the democratic imagination by reconstructing the dynamics of citizenship. I shall discuss this relationship between vulnerability and citizenship in my conclusion.

7. Organization as Epistemic Frames – II

The Civilizational Imagination

In Chapter 4, I tried to capture the voices of the survivors, the commentaries of listeners, witnesses and activists to try and understand the construction of the social at its most rudimentary, at the bare level of survival. I tried to see how people and communities living at the subsistence level organize themselves to build their own strategies for coping and surviving outside and beyond the formal institutional levels. In Chapter 5, on State and Disasters, I explored the various processes and rituals that have gone into the making of the multi-hazard state in Gujarat and the shareholder state in Orissa. I also sought to show how disasters sometimes trigger a new legal institutional processes where training, scientific institutions and audit become tools for governance. A vocabulary is constituted and domesticated by the State or vested interests (for example, vulnerability, disaster risk reduction, mitigation, preparedness, planning, participation, community-based planning etc.). In Chapter 6, I examined a set of organizations informed by Christian ethics and ‘secular humanitarian’ ethics. I tried to examine how the social is constructed by these set of organizations. In doing so, I also tried to hint at the implications this had for constructions of the idea of democracy, governance and citizenship.

In the following chapter, I will examine a second set of organizations which draw their inspiration from the Hindu civilizational ethos. In engaging with these organizations, I continue to respond to the first two research questions that I outlined at the outset of my thesis: *How does the framing of disasters change with the narratives and questions various groups ask of disasters?* and *How is the social constructed by these organizations?*

Disasters, I have argued, focus not only on the collapse of the social but also on its re-invention. By seeing disasters as constructs, the social too is no longer a given, but something invented and approximated. This creates an ontology of social life at its most

intriguing. Each organization, by itself and in relation to others, becomes a ‘thought experiment’ on the social. The standard question, “What holds a society together?”, is re-played in playful, inventive forms where disasters can become innovative ways to rebuild or re-invent the social.

In order to address these issues, I organize this chapter into five main sections. I examine the idiom, the ethic, the philosophy and style of four groups, which display a more religious or cultural affinity. They all derive their inspiration from the ideas of Hinduism. Each group, in articulating its response to disasters, presents itself as a ‘counter model’ or at least a complementary understanding of how to think and respond to disasters. My focus is not the organizational structure or logistics that the organizations employ, but the frameworks within which their perceived action and practices are constituted. I look at the Ramakrishna Mission (RKM), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)/Seva Bharati, Bachasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) and Ananda Marga. After a description of each of these institutions, I discuss how each organization provides a unique understanding of disasters. I must emphasize three issues. Firstly, I have sought to read each organization in terms of its own presentation of self. Secondly, I have retained the language of presentation even if it is a bit dense, and a bit archaic. Thirdly, I have allowed each organization to provide its own reading of the earthquake even if it appears a trifle redundant. In the next section, I begin with how BAPS narrates the disaster and locates itself within that context.

7.1 Inspired Relief: Bachasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS)

7.1.1 Locating BAPS: The Bhakti Tradition and Its Avatars

The BAPS owes its origins to Bhagwan Swami Narayan (1781–1830) (Mukundcharandas 2002). The current avatar, Pramukh Swami Maharaj (also referred to as Bapa, Swamishri) is the fifth in this lineage of gurus. Born on 7 December 1921, he became the spiritual guru of BAPS in 1971. Under his tutelage, BAPS is today a spiritual empire which

includes 600 *mandirs* (temples), in India and abroad, a network of 9090 international *satsang* centres in 45 countries, a cluster of schools and even two information technology centres. It claims to run over 160 humanitarian activities ranging from medical activities which involve 10 hospitals and a network of 14,626 doctors, treating 464,125 patients (Kachchh 2002); its social activities lists include women's upliftment, healthcare, disaster relief and tribal welfare, de-addiction camps, etc. All these activities blend spiritual concerns with worldly responsibilities collectively called *Seva* (service). Each of these activities is seen as a vehicle for devotion, a search for God (Swaminarayan Bliss 2003).

The philosophy of the Swaminarayan underlies the spiritual endeavour called *Sadhna*. It seeks perfection and in that sense, is neither mundane nor religious. It is the realization of spiritual experience. *Sadhna* for the Swaminarayan involves *Bhakti* (devotion) and *Satsang* (congregation). The idea of *Satsang* also denotes congregational *Bhakti*. "Devotees offer worship, celebrate festivals and participate in community activities. Devotion grows when people interact with other devotees. Working in harmony creates a unity whose sole effort is to please the *satpurush*, the spiritual guide who re-creates the *nomos* of the community (Ishwarcharandas 1979) Such a congregational exercise is one of the easiest forms of devotion." This process involves the presence of not just the Guru but also of the community. We shall later see why this becomes important.

A social scientist attempting to capture this is often at a loss in seeking to balance the demands of social science against the language of devotion. In examining narratives of BAPS work on disaster relief, I must posit a caveat here. Informants and the language of documents provided by BAPS often related identical stories. In fact, the language was the same, often recited out in full paragraphs. I have blended both oral and textual narratives in the descriptions below.

7.1.2 Sanskar and Human Existence: Ethnography of the Temple

I rang up the Swaminarayan offices at the Akshardham and was asked to go to gate 4, the VIP gate. Akshardham is treated as a high security zone, with the Government of India

providing security as it was a site for a terrorist attack in 2002: 29 devotees were killed and another 79 devotees were wounded, one state police officer and a commando also died in the action that followed. I was informed that Nishit was to be my escort. A computer engineer by training, Nishit is a full-time volunteer. I entered a huge hall, reminiscent of a five-star hotel lobby. My escort asked me how much time I had “to listen to the history of the *sampraday*, the vision, the creation, the inspiration”. I realized that the Akshardham is a source of pride combining “the best of traditional architecture with the most modern of technology including dioramas, displays, and audio visual shows” (Swaminarayan Bliss 2005: 66). The Akshardham is a masterpiece of architecture, which is also an architectonic of faith. The scale inspires hyperbole. It is a collective representation of a civilizational self. Yet as I listen to my guide Nishit, I realize that myth, culture and history are blending in a polysemy of cultural forms. Here a myth is being presented as history. There is a certainty and definitiveness about dates.

The temple, explains Nishit, is divided into three parts. The past, which is an outline of the Indian civilization, the *mandir* (temple) itself as representing the present, and the future, which is a research centre for civilizational alternatives.

I enter the section on Swaminarayan after looking at a synopsis of the whole exhibition. The first thing I witness is an eight-tonne sculpture of a man chiselling himself out of a yellow boulder. The message Nishit tells me is about “man-making. You are the stone. You are the chisel. You are the sculpture. You can mould yourself better.” (See also Swaminarayan Bliss 1993.)

Nishit talks about the inadequacies of Michelangelo. “While dying, he said, ‘I have not done enough for the salvation of my soul’.” He adds, “A moulded life is priceless.” He continues, “Even sculpture needs a model. Sages and seers are our models.” He suddenly cites the management expert Stephen Covey to claim that during the last 150 years of history, “we have developed skills but not character. Skills are necessary, but skills

without character cannot help society.” Nishit tells me, “Swaminarayan was incarnated to destroy the ‘I-ness’ and ‘my-ness’ of which had come into our society.”

I begin realizing that the journey through the edifice is a pilgrimage; an act of transformation, a semiotic soup of messages seeking to build a different person. There is one issue that Nishit keeps emphasizing, that is, the importance of the ideal devotee. He claims that the glory of the *param brahma* is revealed only through the ideal devotee. He explains that the power of voluntarism (*seva*) comes from the relationship between Guru and the devotee. The devotees’ relationship with the divine creates the ideal dyad as a microcosm of the ideal society. Here God is seen as incomplete without the devotee and the power of the devotee stems from what he adds to God, a sense of mystery and wholeness captured in the quotation, “Krishna on his own is incomplete. Even a God feels bereft without a devotee. It is by being Radha, that you know Krishna.” (See Swaminarayan Bliss 2005.)

BAPS archives (Swaminarayan Bliss 2001b) recall the day of the earthquake. What follows is a brief synopsis of how the event is constructed.

At 8.46 a.m., 26 January 2001, Swamishri was having breakfast in Bochasan mandir. It was gruel with water, as the whole idea of taste itself is shunned by the monastic order. Suddenly the ground shook. On realizing that it was an earthquake, Swamishri calmly started chanting the Swaminarayan *dhun* and told the *sadhus* to go out.

Within a short time, phone calls from Amdavad, Sarangpur, Bhadra and Gadhada informed Swamishri about the earthquake. On arriving in Atladara that evening, Swamishri obtained further information and gave instructions for relief operations.

On 27 January, Swamishri had 10,000 food packets prepared at the mandir in Atladara and had them transported in a military plane from Vadodara to Bhuj. Swamishri instructed sadhus and volunteers from Gondal, Sarangpur, Bochasan and Amdavad to

rush to Bhuj immediately with relief materials like milk powder, fresh water pouches, tarpaulins, *shamianas* (marquees), foodgrains and electricity generators. He gave instructions about relief operations and added that hot-food kitchens should be started on a big scale.

The logistics of distribution was becoming both elaborate and systematic. BAPS provided relief materials to 407 villages. The central control room for supply of relief materials to Kutch, Rajkot and Surendranagar was established at Ahmedabad. BAPS mandirs in these cities served as the supply chains. The logistical rituals were clearly visible. “Every morning at 8.00 a.m., thirty ten-tonne trucks would leave fully loaded for villages in Kutch. Each truck was assigned to a specific village. At each village, the chief official was contacted, every family identified as needy was provided adequate supplies.” The team returned late at night. The inventory of essentials distributed included blankets, clothes, tarpaulins, tents, torches, toothpaste, oil lamps, candles, matches and footwear.

7.1.3 On Site: Representation through Relief and Food

BAPS sees the earthquake as a historic event. Quoting Churchill to evoke the occasion in their booklet on earthquake relief work, they [BAPS archives] say: “Never in the field of human conduct was so much owed by so many to so few.” What Winston Churchill said of the Royal Air Force (RAF) pilots in the Battle of Britain is equally true of BAPS (Swaminarayan Bliss 2001: 3). For BAPS, it was a war of faith but the battle centred around the attempt to restore the survivor’s faith in himself.

The BAPS approach is expressed in the distribution of food. Food is a tangible object that expresses the values of a culture. The BAPS mandir at Bhuj realized that food would be the immediate necessity. For BAPS, food was a security, a therapy, a provision of dignity, which is conceptualized as more than food. It was a ritual of communication and empathy. For BAPS, there was no question of serving cold food in plastic packets. Food had to be fresh and hot, and served with dignity. *Khichdi* was prepared for 3000 people and by midnight on that first day, 6000 people had been served. As they [BAPS

volunteers] repeatedly point out, “On the first night there were more than 1200 well-to-do people who had taken refuge at the BAPS mandir in Bhuj”. Night brought a sense of despair. When a fighter plane raced across the sky, people felt that there was another tremor. Every time the survivors rose in panic, BAPS served hot tea to “calm their nerves”. On the first night, tea was served 14 times (Swaminarayan Bliss 2001b: 7).

Food was a ritual of assurance, of community, a return to some semblance of normalcy and everydayness. “On an average, 37,000–40,000 meals were served every day.” Some survivors were too shy to be seen begging. “These people had never gone out seeking food. There was shame associated with it. Swamiji silently instructed that tiffin boxes be filled generously with food. No questions about their names were to be asked. About 300–400 tiffin boxes were packed and sent daily to various homes or shelters.” Another informant revealed, “In fact, in the early hours, because there was no water, electricity and other facilities, BAPS volunteers like other organizations distributed food packets”. Pramukh Swami intervened quickly, observing that food had to be served hot, because it signalled a sense of caring. “Food packets are fine, but they are cold. If people get hot meals, they will feel better. When a mother serves cold meals three times a day, the family members feel that she has no love for them, whereas serving only a cup of warm milk makes all the difference.” (Swaminarayan Bliss 2001b: 3.)

The sadhus who once travelled the difficult terrain of Kutch, delivering discourses, now focused on serving food. For a fortnight from 26th January onwards, BAPS operated 11 relief kitchens catering to about 37,000 people daily. Even government officials and other volunteers often had their meals at the BAPS centre. As ‘normalcy’ returned, these kitchens were closed with the exception of Bhuj, where the service continued longer. When people began returning to their homes, grains and fresh vegetables were provided to these families. For BAPS, it is food that embodies its ideal of service.

On the first two days, the sadhus, volunteers and others camped in the open because of sporadic rumblings and quakes. To give a sense that they were not alone, the Swamishri

advised the sadhus that they must also sleep outside with the survivors. It was then that the sadhus also realized that the quota of one blanket a person that they had distributed was not enough to brave the cold winter night in the desert of Kutch. Another blanket each was distributed the next day.

I talked to a member of BAPS from Canada, who was a consultant to the Canadian Government. He related that the first time he came into contact with BAPS was after the Gujarat earthquake. “I came here to see what they do and how they do it. I am not a religious person or even a spiritual one.” His problem was more practical. There are three Gujarati temples in Canada and they had collected enormous money after the earthquake. “We had collected 2.5 million dollars. This was adequate for immediate relief. But we wanted to send more for rehabilitation along with the Canadian Government. There were many corporate groups that also wanted to help. We shortlisted 65 different organizations, of which BAPS was one. The Canadian Government wished to give it to an NGO, a professional NGO, but we wanted something local and Indian. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has promised a matching grant but insisted on the transparency of project management. BAPS promised to adhere to it.”

What struck him as a diasporic insider–outsider was the selflessness of the volunteers. He said, “Seva creates a difference. *Seva* makes a difference. I saw people who worked non-stop, a man who had worked non-stop cremating people. Another, who was cooking non-stop because the line of those hungry seemed limitless. BAPS provided enormous emotional support. In fact, sometimes when I watched their selflessness, I wondered whether and how it could sustain itself. I wondered if something more professional and distant made sense. Seva is everyday but never routine.”

He kept circling back to the idea of service. Service, he felt, was culturally coded. “Christian groups”, he noted, “don’t work the same way. When they serve the Lord, they are peddling conversion. Look at what *World Vision* and *Lutheran International* are doing. There is enough documentary evidence to prove their insistence on conversion.

Disaster management should help people but not insist on changing their cultural life. Conversion is ideological implementation. Conversion is a bargain. It is not selfless. To insist on Mother Mary's picture in front of your house is an imposition. Yet the trouble with Indians is that they will domesticate even that into their pantheon."

"Look at banners, ads, media hype of Christianity that *World Vision* engages in. In fact, before handling the houses they insist that the beneficiaries Christianize their name. This is taking advantage of misery." The selflessness of BAPS came from a different energy. As a donor, he was surprised that BAPS had virtually zero administrative costs. "Oxfam and BAPS operate differently. Oxfam is virtually corporate, with paid professionals. Voluntarism is a job, a career. Even if humanitarian, it is managerial. BAPS is different. It is service. Let me tell you that some of the people you see, can easily migrate and settle down to 100,000-dollar jobs. Yet the thought does not enter their minds. All they seek is to serve the guru. It is a different world." No one is paid and yet the competence is impressive. Job and service, he felt, were two incommensurable worlds in collision during the earthquake. Disasters became a site for smaller civilizational battles.

The 2002 BAPS calendar 'appendix' lists out the magic of service in numbers – 1.8 million hot meals served, 409 remote villages reached, 45,000 patients served through mobile hospitals, 1529 earthquake-resistant houses built. The quantum of relief from 1,404,815 water pouches and 916,720 packets of biscuits are listed with care. It is a statement, that love and devotion scaled up is service. It is semiotically effective, as the enormity of the disaster meets the magnitude of the response. It is impressive even as it verges on the sentimental. Between picture and anecdote stands the fable. BAPS recreates the legend of service. Service, as the BAPS message conveys, is not social work. The organization seems to hint that social work is a dismal science, a protestant science that smells of duty. Duty transcends itself as devotion, a joy in service, an effervescence growing out of charisma and faith. Even the sociologist used to routinization is impressed.

7.1.4 Empathy and Dignity during Survival

Using the metaphor of war again, BAPS archives say that Bhuj and other Kutch towns and villages were so badly battered that they resembled the bombed cities and towns of World War II (Swaminarayan Bliss 2001b: 5). This needed organizing on a war-footing. BAPS realized that with every day, some semblance of normalcy had to return. For normalcy to return, dignity had to be maintained.

BAPS members are at pains to emphasize that they were doing Seva to their guru and that the guru was very particular that the aid should not be considered as charity by the recipients. Nothing was done to make them feel that their helplessness was being exploited.

For BAPS, the dignity of the survivor was critical. One cared, one listened, one offered with grace. A small incident captures the nuances of care that Pramukh Swami brought to every detail. When distributing a relief kit containing rice, edible oil, the swamiji insisted on including toothpaste. On being asked why, he replied, “A man who has not brushed his teeth may not like to talk to you” (Swaminarayan Bliss 2001b: 5). In another instance, a volunteer relates how Baba insisted on putting the *bindi* in the relief kits so that the married woman would not feel bereft of what was a symbolic and psychological marker of her identity. In order to make sure that food had the zest of taste, the swamiji suggested that a packet of *bundi* and two pickled chilies be provided with it.

BAPS realized that relief was still nibbling at the edges of the catastrophe. After arranging a mass memorial at the Jubilee ground in Bhuj, long range plans for rehabilitation encompassing the physical, material, the psychological and the spiritual were drawn up. BAPS sadhus and volunteers provided emotional, psychological and spiritual counselling, helping the survivors move beyond the initial shock of the disasters. The sadhus realized the importance of the rituals of mourning. Grief needed a public enactment. A public *yagna* and prayer was held, especially for those who had not been cremated. This helped assure the latter’s relatives about the destiny of their souls.

Particularly critical was the idea of satsang. It provides the sense of the community, the variety of discourses on meaning, the everydayness of assurance, the social needs. In a satsang, the community cocoons the individual, speeding up the process of social repair. What is critical in the satsang are the discourses of the saints. They help provide a texture of meaning.

I interviewed several individuals over the course of months during my trip to Kutch. Lata Behn is a BAPS volunteer who took me around some of the BAPS-rehabilitated sites in Kutch. On the day of the quake, her family was getting ready to go to the mandir for seva. Her son was taking a bath. They suddenly felt the *zameen* (ground) move. Everyone scrambled on to the first floor of the house. The daughter, however, wanted to wait for her brother to come out and to precede her. They saw the stairs collapse and swallow her just as she followed her brother. She was dug out from under the debris with the help of BAPS volunteers later in the evening. She died a couple of hours later.

There was so much death that even the basic material for cremation was not available. When Pramukh Swami heard this, he said, “She was a *satsangi*. Give her proper *agni sanskar* (fire cremation with wood).” The family takes great solace in the fact that she got a proper cremation due to Baba. “We did not do any crying and mourning. We got involved in doing seva for the others. Those who did not get satsang don’t have the *shakti* (power) to hold themselves together.” She adds as an afterthought, “There are many who did not get *satsang*. You will see that they got mentally disturbed.”

I met Manjula Behn in Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, Bhuj. It’s a township built by BAPS to rehabilitate the earthquake survivors. As has become the practice, most survivors start by reciting the names of the people they have lost. “We all got buried under the rubble; me, my husband, my two sons. My son and husband died. My husband had had an accident a couple of months ago and was immobile. He was in the living room on the sofa. I had just given him food and a bath. Then the earthquake happened. He understood and pushed me under the bed. The beam fell on him. His blood came on my

hand. I could not move my hand or feet. I was taken out after five hours. I had two sons. One was 17 years old. He was studying science, very intelligent. He too died. Another one is physically and otherwise challenged. He survived. Such is the *maya* (illusion) of the God.” “How did you overcome this pain?” I asked her. “Oh! It’s the satsang. *Santo ka pravachan*.”

“*Sadhu ka pravachan* (sermons of the sadhus) that is what helped. Day in and day out the *sants* did *pravachan*. “If water falls on stone consistently, even it gets marked. After three years of hearing the *pravachan* morning and evening (for the period during which they stayed in tin city set up by the BAPS). See if you fill water from the well, the rope with which you draw the water marks the side of the well. So are *satsangs* and *pravachan*.”

BAPS archives talk of how the fragile and sensitive issue of redeeming the victims and their relatives from the emotional void and anguish was met through care, prayers, devotional songs, discourses and personal counselling by the BAPS sadhus and volunteers, all part of the grammar of the satsang as a logic of community. The archives mention several instances. A lady in her early forties had lost her family in Bhuj. She would gaze vacantly and silently. When served food, she would look at her plate and mutter something. At times, she was seen squatting out in early hours of the morning making heaps of sand and muttering, “This is my home”. The Sanstha took care of her and “provided her moral, social and spiritual inspiration” to overcome her loss.

I was told several tales of how Pramukh Swami Maharaj would himself console the relatives by either phoning them or through personal meetings. He realized that while grief and mourning were important, life must go on. Six months after the earthquake, he told his sadhus that everyone should come out of mourning. He asked them to make *laddus* (sweets), offer a prayer signalling the end of the mourning period.

7.1.5 Rituals of Normalcy / Return to the Daily: Seva, Livelihood and Healing

Seva becomes the great healer. Stories of seva as healing are present in abundance and presented as testimony to the healing power of service. “When you really hurt, help others. Don’t sulk, serve. Giving helps overcome our own grief” is what ten-year old Sandip articulated. Sandip an ardent football player, lost use of both his legs after being trapped in the house that collapsed. His father is a famous doctor who runs his own hospital in Bhuj.

The archives (Swaminarayan Bliss 2001b: 12) recall the dedication of 30-year old Vasudev from Bhuj. The bodies of his mother, sister-in-law and young niece had not been recovered even weeks later but he was serving others in the camp from the first day. As one of them said, “The service may not make a dead person alive, but it sure stops the living from dying.” BAPS documents a young lad of 25, bedridden with both legs in plaster and head damaged who was seen just days after the earthquake enthusiastically serving while lying in the bed: “I tear the newspapers for the people to eat from when they come to the kitchen here. It’s the only thing I can do lying down, but wait till I get up on my feet again!” (ibid.)

BAPS claims that giving is also an art. To give what others ‘need’ is an art of the heart, they argue. BAPS reached 409 remote villages, distributing home to home, hand to hand. Apart from medicines, clothes, blankets and food packets, BAPS gave candles, spectacles, toothbrushes and even nail cutters. More than 55,000 pairs of slippers and shoes were also distributed, sensitive to the sizes people wore. Seva thrives in caring about the details.

If seva helps the return of the daily, BAPS realizes that work restores the normalcy of the everydayness. One way of defeating depression was to encourage people to earn. With that as the intention, BAPS provided means of livelihood to thousands by gifting

handcarts to vendors, cycle carts to transporters, sewing machines to tailors and embroiderers, work tools to carpenters, goldsmiths and cobblers.

Jamunabhai Dev Soni is a silversmith who had lost his house and all his tools. He told me that he did not feel like going back to work. “Even the *subziwala* (vegetable vendor) I had bought vegetables from, just minutes before, he got buried before my eyes,” he recalls with a distant look. Almost a year later, he was gently persuaded to start the *dhanda* (vocation) again. The tools were provided by the BAPS Sanstha. When I met him at around 22:30 hours, he was engaged in work with his young son acting as the apprentice. His faith has only got reinforced after the incident. He likes the house that he has been given. He feels that it has better construction and “*yahan ka hawa pani zyada accha hai*” (The air and water, that is, the ambience is better here.)

The network of BAPS volunteers doing seva is tremendous. BAPS archives indicate that they have over 60,000 volunteers and the numbers are growing. BAPS has over a million devotees who follow its way of life. This has also led to the creation of structures of standardization, so that all ‘devotees’ know what the practices of the sampraday (community) are. There are rituals by which this relationship is managed, structured and standardized. BAPS has a set of texts: *Vachnamrut*, *Shikshapatri*, *Swamini Vato*, which are marked as the religious texts of the Sanstha. They are available in English, Hindi and Gujarati, both online and for sale at temple premises. There are various rituals of daily, weekly and monthly conduct, which the devotees are encouraged to imbibe and follow. They are part of what frames the way *sanskars* (values) are imbibed. Food, community work and participation in *satsang* with the family are part of the enactments outlined. There is an attempt at standardization: the texts, the ritual performances, the *satsang* are all part of a specific curriculum. The texts are available in Gujarati, Hindi and English. These texts are the bases for exams that are conducted and graded. There are clearly marked stages of exams through which one progresses. BAPS has a separate department that conducts these exams. The papers of the last few years are available online.

7.1.6 Reading BAPS: Epistemologist of the Social

BAPS is a spiritual empire, yet it rivals any corporate network. BAPS reflects the theory of organizational management whose efficiency and brand value is legendary. The BAPS logic of management, especially its sense of the logistics of food and distribution, has been so impressive that Anil Gupta, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad, wished to turn its supply chain management during disasters into a case study.

Epistemology provides a way of mapping the world and traversing it. It is a theory of managing, coping, where the logic of both is not merely in terms of material objects but psychosocial issues. Epistemology is not just a way of managing the world by defining it and the approaches to it but of owning up to the world. The language is crucial as words link up to the world, creating a map which defines territory, provides the everydayness of coping, the management of routine. In defining the life world, BAPS uses a civilizational language. It is contoured first in terms of cosmology, second in the construction of the social, and third, in terms of its definition and handling of the disaster situation. Techniques and methods get validated not just instrumentally but also in terms of wider frames.

In a cosmological sense, the Guru is the source of the divine. The etymology anticipates the epistemology. The Guru is a light guiding one through darkness. The social has to be one with the cosmos in the same way as the devotee is one with the Guru. The relation between the Guru and the devotee is in the language of oneness. The rhythm of the cosmos provides a sense of the social. The social seeks the validation of the cosmos through *sadhna* (spiritual discipline) and *bhakti* (devotion). Yet there is always a sense of the community.

The epistemology creates a congruence through what I can only call the spiritual politics of de-individualization. Society and Guru demand selflessness. Service is a sign of grace. One does it selflessly, silently. The logic of market, the boy scout's pride in being good is

irrelevant when what you do is for the Guru. The Guru is the ultimate sublime and work, including service, is a sublimation in Him. While there is a spirituality to it, there is a ruthless practicality. What is disrupted in the devotees' submission to the Guru is the erasure of 'I-ness' and 'My-ness'.

This entire philosophy is caught in a network of rituals specified in texts, which serve as handbooks of spiritual management. In that sense, the idea of service is culturally coded. Service is a sign of grace and devotion before the master. It is not an act of philanthropy which gives to others as a form of self-aggrandizement. The devotee's service is performed in silence and selflessly. What the community celebrates are the consequences of service. Ritual as epistemological standardization operates through keywords like *sanskar*, *bhakti*, *satsang*, a theory of the community where the spiritual guides, sustains the spirit and meaning of the community. Service is never only professional, it is a craft in devotion of the Guru sustaining spiritual rhythms rather than organizational routine. Logistics, management, austerity are the key but defined in spiritual terms of asceticism, caring, devotion. The zero overhead that the organization is proud of stems not from the logic of management but is a consequence of devotion. A devotee's life is a pilgrimage, not a career. Professionalism emerges from service, not the oneness of ambition. In that sense, *seva* is never routine.

Lets us consider BAPS' response to disasters. The response begins with concern and care for man and animal, embodying a deep sense of their suffering. Suffering is a challenge to the social where what the disaster destroys, the devotee in the community (the *satsang*) puts back together. There are two points of method that we must note here. In confronting suffering, one realizes that suffering can disrupt the social. What is restored to the individual is the dignity of a person in a community. Suffering calls for an intensification of the social. The idea of empathy and solace identify the inter-subjectivity of grief. Service, in that sense, is a re-embedding of the social. One cocoons the sufferer in dignity and warmth, yet service does not amplify the ego as I. What is done only adds to the

grace of the Guru. In that sense, it is a reiteration of an encompassing unity of the divine and the social.

The reading is not only an etic one, it is emic in the understanding of the informants. Such an idea of service is different from charity, which is seen as being located in Christianity and individualism. Charity amplifies the 'I', creates an asymmetry with the sufferer and a distance, a hierarchy between the receivers and givers. Service is not giving. It is sharing. For the sadhu, service encompasses both the giving of discourses and the distribution of food.

BAPS is unique in combining two Weberian categories – charisma and bureaucracy (Weber 1978). One is centred in the person, the other is rule-based management, which is both rational and impersonal. But the BAPS devotee sees no contradiction. He attributes the logistical skill and competence of BAPS to the Guru, his sense of the divine expressing itself in the spirit of details. The devotee does not construct management impersonally but has the vision of an ideal volunteer as an extension of the Swamiji. The bureaucracy and the logistics of management are constructed as an extension of spirituality. There is a split-level reading where the best of science, management and technology is encompassed into the ethics of service, which provides a spiritual meta-narrative that informs the grammar of management.

It is this double mapping which creates the power of these religious epistemes. For example, in a disaster, the secular sequence of rescue, relief and rehabilitation is also read as a psychosocial travelogue. The BAPS senses both anxieties, the anxiety of the survivor about his fate in the first few days and the anxiety of the survivor seeking to return to normalcy. It focuses on these while working on the return to normalcy as a consolidation of the social. The sufferer feels the warmth, the empathy of the community as it restores his sense of dignity through the provision of warmth, hospitality and meaning through discourses. Warmth and rituals of hospitality create the social code. What enhances it is the sense of detail, the care about small things, a chilly, a tube of toothpaste – all

signalling the cosmos, and the community that the survivor is part of. Grief requires mourning but grief also requires a return to the normal. The rite of passage from disaster to normalcy is not only managerial but is also soaked in the epistemology of the social. A set of keywords – listening, warmth, empathy, hospitality, dignity, solace – create a thesaurus for service which differentiates it from the logic of charity.

The language of competence is celebratory, an advertisement for the cosmic and civilizational self, never for the ego of the person. A recitation of civilizational achievement locates the individual biographies of devotion within the annals of the great exemplars. The devotee's pursuit of the Guru is read as a miniaturization of this wider pilgrimage. Spirituality is not a withdrawal from society but an amplification of everyday competence.

In the next section we shall describe how the RSS constructs itself.

7.2 Thinking with the RSS: The RSS as an Organization

7.2.1 The Rise of Seva Bharati

The RSS was founded in 1925 by Keshava Baliram Hedgewar (1889–1940). Hedgewar was in search of a symbol of unity and vehicle that could “unify a nation”. He created the **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh** (RSS) (National Corps for Volunteers), conceptualizing it as a cultural organization rather than as a political entity. The RSS was banned in the aftermath of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in 1948 and went into limbo for a few years. It grew under the leadership of M.S. Golwalkar and V. Savarkar to become the public organization that it is today. Part of the reason for its return to legitimacy was its role during the Emergency and during the Sikh agitation. In the first, it showed itself to be a major force of resistance against the suspension of civil rights. In the other, it was responsible for sustaining a sense of everydayness through the long years of trouble. The RSS lost some of its sheen after the Gujarat riots of 2002 (Swayamsevak

2000; Anderson and Damle 1987). The RSS works under various names. While Seva Bharati (literally translated as ‘service to Bharati’, the other name for the female form of India as mother goddess) is the social wing, that too mutates into different names in different states.

Seva Bharati traces its history to 1979, when veteran social worker and the then RSS Sarsanghachalak, Shri Balasaheb Deoras addressed a mammoth gathering of volunteers at Ambedkar Stadium, Delhi, on 8 April 1978 where he called upon them to start service activities among the neglected sections of the society. He asked the volunteers to raise the self-respect of the socially and economically deprived people of India. This speech is considered to be the initiating first step that led to the inauguration of Seva Bharati: a formal structure would help coordinate the service programmes across over the country. Seva Bharati *swamyamsevak*s (volunteers) are at pains to explain that they are “inspired by RSS” and that it is the official community service umbrella of allied organizations. The *Akhil Bharatiya Seva Pramukh* of RSS guides the organization and is also represented in the *Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha*, the ultimate decision-making body of the Sangh.

On its website Seva Bharati introduces itself as “an Indian non-governmental organization (NGO) in India”. It claims to have 13,786 projects in education, 10,908 in healthcare, 17,560 in social welfare and 7,452 self-reliance projects that range from medical assistance, crèche, library, hostel, basic education, adult education, vocational and industrial training, to upliftment of street children and lepers. Through these projects, Seva Bharati aims at making the underprivileged sections of the society self-reliant.

7.2.2 RSS: Responding Is ‘Natural’

One of the first meetings I had was with the media head of RSS in Gujarat, Mukund Rao Deobhanker. The interview began matter-of-factly. Mukund Rao sounded almost dismissive of his organization’s work. “The RSS does not feel it is doing any extraordinary work. But there is a difference in style,” he explained. “There is a one-ness

about what we do. We are not individualistic like the West. We work but we do not wait for our work to be lauded by others. That is the trouble with our NGOs. They pine for publicity. There is no continuity in their work as they move from event to event and project to project.”

He described the RSS’s “work as a flow, as natural”, almost something obvious in its simplicity. “Our people are committed to work. This is based on a different idea of caring.” He contrasted a mother’s care to a nurse’s care. “The nurse is a professional. She does eight hours of work but there is little emotion attached to it. It is a job. But it is not so with a mother. She is not trained like the nurse but she does it out of love. She can stay up the whole night caring for a child. Her care flows out of love. That is seva. Disasters are not something separate. They form part of a larger framework.”

Shyam Parande, one of the trustees of Seva Bharati, explained this in terms of an organic metaphor, of society as a kinship of parts in mutual reciprocity. “When society is seen as an organism, pain and caring become crucial. Look at Gujarat, even civil society arose to help and even the victim displayed concern and hospitality, always asking the visitor whether he was hungry or needed water. True it was chaotic, anarchic, and almost celebratory, in the way a crowd in India is. But since the emphasis is not on the individual, the social bonding was strong. There was a sense of the spiritual whole.” Parande argued that the power of the social was recognized and re-invented with ease. When the social appears organic, healing appears easier. The body as organism becomes a powerful metaphor of recovery. “Every fragment is seen as part of my body, as my own family. Service is not an obligation. It is a duty, a natural expectation in a family. It is treated as normal and no one glorifies it.” For Parande, it does not require the invention of humanitarianism. The RSS sees society as an organic system, a family. Humanitarianism is for strangers, as Vivekananda said, “You cannot help, you can only serve.”

For the RSS, individuality and humanitarianism are both artificial. The first denies the social, the other is an artificial idea of the social in that it is episodic and partly exclusive.

When society is a family, it sees humanitarianism as the artificial import of strangers. Humanitarianism is both a false distancing and an artificial concern, which demeans the organicity of the social. The RSS is openly challenging the ethic of Christianity as charity and the ethic of humanitarianism as aid and philanthropy through the ideology of service.

7.2.3 The Sangh and the Shakha: The Arms of the Social

For the RSS, the amplification of the social occurs in the Sangh and the *shakha*. The Sangh is a way of life and the shakha, the organizational cell, the unit of socialization for patriotism. A citizen is a patriot. The social, to be social, has to be doubly contoured as social and national. Patriotism is the epistemic frame of this double sociality that the shakha and the Sangh provide. Disasters become one of a range of crisis events that the RSS handles as routine. The shakha is conceived as a social gymnasium where the volunteer is no longer a self-seeking creature. The logic of this is created by imbibing the spirit of exemplars. In that sense, the shakha creates an epistemic frame, which challenges the disruption of the social that a disaster could create.

Unlike the voluntary group, the shakha provides no career. For the RSS, the social cannot be a formula. It is tacit, it is a sense of a presence, it cannot be a schedule of training. The organization is a fine-tuning of the social for any contingency. It is a domain where the social is created through the selflessness of service. There is a redundancy of rituals, which continually recreates the social. To the RSS, the social *is*. One cannot acquire it through voluntarism, any more than a Hindu can be changed into a Christian. Volunteerism and conversion both signify the mask of the incompletely social or the artificiality of the coercively social. While the RSS downplays the individual, it valorizes the exemplar (*mahapurush*) as the epitome of the social. Volunteerism is a form of social contract, which creates artificial sociality. It is community that creates the truly social.

The RSS shakha in that sense is a search for social solidarity. But the solidarity one seeks is based not on selfishness but on self-reliance, and in a Durkheimian sense, not in the mechanical replication of the social but in the logic of difference. Each locality or cadre

can create its own dialect of problem-solving within the broader logic of the social. The rituals of solidarity provide the standardization, the logic of self-reliance, the variation in social dialect. It is the organic solidarity that Durkheim wrote about in *The Division of Labour* (1984). Socialization creates a sense and presence of solidarity in a sense that is different from training. One trains for a career, not for a way of life. The shakha is an epistemic frame for the social.

In the next section, we shall look at the various reminiscences reminisces of how the RSS sees itself responding to the various disasters.

7.2.4 Reminiscences around Disaster Response

The Seva Bharati website claims that “25,000 volunteers, including 600 doctors, from Seva Bharati worked to rescue and rehabilitate the victims of Gujarat earthquake in 2001. Nearly 10,000 operations were performed and over 19,000 patients were treated of injuries and other ailments.” Citing the popular news magazine *Outlook*, they go on to reiterate that “literally within minutes RSS/Seva Bharati volunteers were at the scenes of distress. Across Gujarat, the (RSS) cadres were the saviours. Even as the state machinery went comatose in the first two days after the quake, the cadre-based machinery of the Sangh fanned out throughout the state. Approximately 35,000 RSS members in uniform were pressed into service.” Reports by the rival news weekly *India Today* dated 12 February, 2001 are also cited to reinforce the point.

K. Srinivas, District Collector of Ahmedabad, is also quoted as saying, “This is an old tradition in the RSS. To be the first at any disaster strike: floods, cyclone, drought and now quake. In Kachchh (Kutch), too, the RSS/Seva Bharati was the first to reach the affected areas. At Anjar, a town in ruins, the RSS was present much before the army and took the lead in finding survivors and fishing out the dead.”

I meet Lakhannayak, *pranth-gram vikas pramukh* (state village development head) of the RSS. He has been in charge of creating model villages which embody the culture of the

RSS, replacing the legendary 3-R's with the five S' of *sanskriti* (culture) *sanskar* (cultivation), *suraksha* (security), *swasthya* (health) and *swabhlamban* (self-reliance). He wanted to seed these model villages of culture and scale-up the project later.

Lakhannayak was the *zilla pracharak* (head preacher/trainer of the local wing of RSS) at Jagatsinghpur, Orissa, when the super-cyclone struck. He reminisces, "For 2–3 days, there was no radio or TV. All messages were word of mouth. There was no electricity, no water. The roof of the room kept shifting because of the velocity of the wind. The wind was strong enough to rip off your clothes if you walked or even stepped out. The wind was tossing asbestos sheets like frisbees." He recalls stepping out once the wind became less ferocious.

"Looking at the town, we could see that numerous trees had fallen. We were all hungry but the only thing to eat was coconut. As pracharaks, we decided to move out and collect information. I was responsible for eight blocks. The Collector (government head of the region) pleaded helplessness. I decided to move *panchayat*-wise collecting information. In fact, the government relied on us for information. We made three carbon copies of the information and provided it to the Collector. Eventually, we covered a 1000 of the 1317 villages in the area. The government had dissolved. There was no sense of department, no presence of the file. The Collector claimed that his mind was not working. He had to pay daily wages for the work done. He had to give Below the Poverty Line (BPL) rice to the people, which was available. He was hesitant, asking as to who would provide security. We were entrusted with the task of guarding food with our *dandas* (staff which is part of the ensemble of the *swayamsevak*).’ Lakhannayak presents the *danda* almost as a multipurpose instrument for protection, as a drain cleaner, "A bit like us, seasoned and reliable," he says.

Thirty *swayamsevak*s were enrolled to organize the people into a queue, using the *danda* to control and discipline them, and kerosene, candles and baby food were distributed. He argues that it was only after the *swayamsevak*s had waded through, that the rest of India

sensed what was actually happening here. “But entry was difficult,” he recalls. “Trucks were forced to drive over bodies till we cleared them with our dandas. Bodies were littered all over and we used our dandas as brooms shifting 50–60 bodies to the side. They were bloated as water had seeped into them. The Collector/local administration was still at a loss as to how to deal with the situation,” he notes. “Clearing up was not easy.” He tells me, “It was the smell that was tough to combat. At home, when a single rat dies, it is almost unbearable. Here the bodies, human and cattle had piled on. The stench pervaded the entire atmosphere. Once while setting fire to the bodies in a field, we discovered a person half dead in them. We had to drag him out and call his family. He was half-burnt.”

Even in a crisis, there was a matter of fact everydayness to these stories, a facticity, a ‘take it or leave it’ attitude. Commitment, initiative was taken for granted as a part of the logic of training. The shakha provided governance when the State was shaky. Civil society provided a scaffolding for a shaky state as it nervously recovered from the cyclone.

Sushanta Kanhar, another senior swayamsevak, unravelled the implications of such a culture for disaster management. Kanhar was discussing the Orissa cyclone and he observed that “the priority was to reach the people. But there was a huge communication gap. Local volunteers stepped out to clean roads, trees and electric poles.” He emphasized the role of the local. “You could not move ahead by a metre. Such was the devastation. Our *karyakartas* began clearing the roads. It was surreal. The tidal wave was 30 feet high and moved inland for 20-30 km. The water in its fury had smashed everything. The dead were lying like stunned insects on trees and fields. They included animals, cows, buffalos and ducks. The challenge was how to clear the dead bodies. They had decayed. The smell was not coming only from one or two bodies and worse there was no wood to cremate them. We used whatever we had, including petrol, and cleared it. We cleared roads, bodies, trees so that we could reach the survivors. They were hungry. We gave dry food

to them. The medical team landed up three-four days later. This was crucial to contain illness.”

Kanhar stopped to reflect on what he said. He noted, “The discipline of the shakha gives us the feeling that the world is ours. By serving humanity, we serve God. We are a disciplined organization taught to deal with events.”

Parande argues that it was a sense of family, of extended bonding that provided both a sense of care and the will to go on. “Any other culture would have been traumatized by the suddenness, the loss, the scale. Yet people were on the streets working and not demoralized. This activism of the everyday and the urge to help others enabled people to come out of the disaster quickly.” “The State”, claimed Parande “is a later entrant and a late enabler. The initial work is done by cultural and voluntary groups.”

“During the Gujarat earthquake, this quick response translated into the circus tent in Bhuj, being converted and maintained as a hospital for 3–4 months by Seva Bharati to help the survivors.” He claimed that organizations like BAPS, RSS, Baba Athavale’s group had similar philosophies. They were rooted in Hindu philosophies. “These work in the empathy mode, not in the salvage or salvation mode of Christian groups. We do not mobilize or convert them. We treat them as part of the family, sharing their loss and grief. In India, disaster, not charity, is seen as beginning at home. We act as if our brothers and sisters are affected, helping them perform the last rites, providing empathy yet we are pragmatic. We realize a disaster in a family has to be overcome. People realize that way that they are not the only ones suffering, that there are others. A disaster is about loss and damage among ordinary people. Neither the community nor the family appeared demoralized. We did not glorify suffering nor sentimentalize it. Among the RSS workers were many people who had lost members of the family. They cremated them and returned to work the next day.”

He located the role of the RSS within this perspective. He claimed that the RSS functioned as “a trigger to natural feeling. It creates an awareness which operates at two levels. The first is dormant and gets aggravated in extreme situations. The other level is a higher level of awareness at the social level and of social issues. The RSS provides the second trigger of brotherhood and belonging. Even if a remote part gets pinched, one tries to take care of it. It is this awareness of one nation, one society, a common heritage and a common culture. It is with this that all of us are bound. The RSS is a miniaturized Hindu society. People may not agree with us but they will trust us.”

Parande said, “Indian advertisements recognize the power of what we are saying. The most powerful advertisements are those with some kind of family context.” They emphasize respect for others, respect for the sister and the mother. There is a continuity of tradition and this is precisely why he contends that organizations that operate with a sense of familial values operate successfully.

7.2.5 Sangh, Shakha and Sanskar: The Sociologic of ‘Man-making Machines’

I talked again to Mukundrao Deobhankar. Deobhankar explained, “To understand Seva Bharati, one needs to understand the Sangh. The core competence, the almost vitalistic force lay in the Sangh.” The Sangh was a way of life and organization. “The Sangh created a oneness, a oneness one cannot achieve without training. One cannot achieve it through education. It is a oneness that comes in living it out. It is like a family. There is an intensity to the family and when there is a crisis, people find a way through it. Management comes later. Management theories are retrospective theories and disaster management like all management looks back at a disaster.” He dubbed disaster management as rituals of retrospective reference. He saw it as one facet of the Sangh and its basic unit, the shakha.

Abhay Pati, a swayamsevak, explained it in another context. He claimed, “Our shakha training is not only for disasters. It is an introduction, a training for patriotism. Look at

the idea of physical fitness: one can be the gym and then there can be the army. But surely both physical trainings are not the same. The shakha is not a gymnasium and training in the shakha is different from training in the army. Just as a gymnasium emphasizes health, physicality, we emphasize the country, the nation. The shakha is our gym what drives us in *desh bhakti* (patriotism). There is a difference in the *chintan* (thought) that moves us. The difference is in the mind, the *bhavna* (sentiment). For us, a volunteer is not a self-seeking creature. He does it with a *bhavna* (an emotion). A volunteer cannot live for himself. He is inspired by sacrifice, by the lives of the *mahapurush* (great men) around him. Think of Gopa Bandhu, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Savarkar.” He recited a litany of names from the national movement, invoking each as an exemplar. Between patriotism and nation, the RSS creates its axis of values. “We are 200 per cent for society, for humanity.”

The world of the RSS is woven around the shakha, and its ideas of *seva* and *sanskar*, and how it is imbibed there. This was elaborated in a different way by Rudra Narayan, who was responsible for the orphanage after the super-cyclone. He also looks after the health vertical of UBSS (RSS) in Orissa.

For Rudra Narayan, “Seva is social. The nation helps focus the social and creates a space for it both as locus and trajectory and as an affinity of emotions. Serving man is serving the nation.” This, as Narayan himself acknowledged, is a variant of Vivekananda’s ‘serving the poor is serving God’. Thus, the societal and the national combine to create the shakha’s sense of duty. He sees *seva* as almost primordial, a social instinct for which there was no real language. By service as duty, the individual becomes a part of society. Every act of service is an act of social renewal. “This is why the RSS glorifies its mahapurush, its exemplars because they enact society in memorable performances.” The social contract loses its sense of machine-like instrumentality to provide the organicity of the whole.

Deobhankar attempts to explain the inherent power of the shakha. “Its intensity comes from sanskar. Sanskar is not education. Sanskar has nothing to do with power. It is a matter of practice, of values. Helping each other is a value. Think of drought. The rich may not be generous but the poor will always give, will always share. That is sanskar. It is internalized. Let me give you an example. Once I was travelling in a car with this extremely rich businessman and his mother. A beggar stopped us near a traffic signal. His mother asked him to give the beggar some money. Unthinkingly he threw it at him. It fell outside his bowl. His mother reprimanded him and asked him to get down from the car and offer it gracefully with respect, with dignity. Giving, I realized, was an art. That is sanskar.”

Deobhankar cites another example of a young boy aged 7–8 years, who boarded a bus that he [Deobhankar] was travelling on. A few stops later, another boy boarded the bus. Shortly it became apparent that he did not have money to buy his tickets. Despite his pleas, the conductor and the driver wanted to “kick him off” the bus. The young boy who had boarded earlier, intervened and offered to pay for the ticket. Deobhankar cites this as the sanskar of the young boy, a value system that no lessons in literacy can teach. He argues, “It is the sense of oneness and goodness in you. It is inherent. Our idea of society is different. It is unlike the West, which thinks man as bad or driven by interests. Such a theory sees goodness as special, almost unique. It greets altruism as a surprise.” He stressed that ours is not a Hobbesian world. Communities are not driven by contract. “The cyclone showed us this. Ours is a world where an ‘I’ is always converted into ‘we’. Training can’t do it. It is not a formula. A shakha can. He saw it as a forge or a crucible almost alchemical in its powers. It is the nature of mango to be sweet. You can’t interrogate its sweetness. The shakha is never large. We never went for quantity, ours was a search for quality, which is why our numbers tend to be small. Sanskar provides neither career or position. It is not a schedule for training. A *sarvodaya* leader once said that the acronym RSS stands for ‘Ready for selfless service.’

Rao asked me to meet Latabehn Shah. She is a Jain woman who runs a small institution called the Bal Sanskar Kendra. It's an institution which seeks to imbibe values in young children. Mrs. Shah made an important distinction. She said, "The RSS is driven by society. Society is its God." She saw her own Bal Sanskar Kendra, an institution for children, as providing the rituals for society, for creating the sense of the social in a child. The *kendra* improvises stories, games, anecdotes about leaders, songs to create a sense of the unity of the social. She gave a simple everyday example. On a particular day, everyone in a shakha cooks a meal carrying it in tiffin boxes. All the boxes are laid together and each person takes a meal from a box other than his own. A meal becomes a ritual of unity, providing a sense of the whole, emphasizing unity by allowing for a reciprocity across difference. Such efforts imbue one with a sense of the whole.

As the narrative unravels, we see the logic of an organization being explicated. Its philosophy is clear. Around the hub of patriotism, it builds the swayamsevak. Next to his passion and commitment, the volunteer appears as a diluted creature. Trained to move with speed, the RSS empowers the local to maximize help. It builds its identity on culture and constructs its differences out of a reading of other cultures, especially Christianity, which it both respects and is critical of. Yet this is an organization culturally trained to handle extremes, built for multi-tasking, confident that the local will always obtain its direction from the wisdom of the central. It is an organization built on the logic of caring, of service but it constructs these categories not as careers or professions but as commitment to a value frame.

Girish Bhai Patel explained, "The RSS is a sangh (collectivity). Its organizations like the Seva Bharati are instruments. When the earthquake struck, we set up 10 centres for relief with Ahmedabad as the headquarters." He reads the items as if it were a shopping list. News had reached every local body and rescue work was on by 10 a.m. We asked the state authorities for permission to shift people. We arranged for food – *bajra roti* (millet bread) and onion – to be served immediately through the affected area. By 10:30 a.m., the swayamsevaks needed more concrete advice of what to do from the central body. They

began by restoring electricity. By 5:30 p.m., a team of doctors had reached Bachau. These were our national medicos composed of 10–12 doctors who stayed on for two months. These doctors are usually couples. We find that couples work more effectively, both with each other and the patients. Every state sends a couple for a week and they are rotated.” There was something terse and matter-of-fact about the narrative. It emphasized doing. But doing is embedded in a philosophy. It was like handling a crossword puzzle. If one has the right concepts and the right pieces, one can move to a solution with speed. Speed is something the RSS is proud of.

“Each day by seven’ o’clock, each area had to specify its requirements. By nine, the trustees would examine the various requests, demands for food, materials, cloth, and medicine and clear them. By 12 at night, they would be dispatched to each area, so they could reach the next day by seven.” If care was embodied in logistics, the RSS seemed to be masters of it.

Patel explained that the organization had to move between the immediate and the future: “Relief was pouring in from all over India and yet there was no information about where the trucks were coming from and what they contained. Swayamsevaks stood on the roads and diverted the trucks in the right direction till a management system could be established. We had to develop systems of audit and accountability for this scattered domain.” He cites the challenge they faced when deciding what they should do with the orphans post the earthquake in Gujarat. We decided that no child should be sent out of the district and should be kept in the community. And we were successful. Almost no child was sent outside, except the two sent to Bangalore.”

In this section, I have tried to reflect on how the RSS sees itself as a man-making machine. Its volunteers seem to imbibe certain sanskars (values) through various mechanisms like the shakha and even the bal sanskar kendra. They are the “gym of the organization”, which emphasizes nation and seva. The autonomy of the local is

emphasized as a key component of being able to respond to varied situations and challenges.

7.2.6 The Competence of the Local

The organization prides itself in both decentralization and speed, its ability to create a sub-culture of competence wherever it goes.

In the RSS, the local moves first. Kanhar emphasizes the creativity of the local, “Organizationally, a swayamsevak does not wait for instructions. He has the local knowledge and he is trained to move immediately and autonomously. The institutions follow him. He does not follow the institution. The local moves swiftly to the rescue. It provides the first data. The centre follows more collaboratively with the local. We don’t advertise all this. Service is about doing, not showing.”

Parande claimed that at its core was a Hindu cultural competence. The RSS, Parande insists, is “nothing beyond Hinduism. It cannot transcend Hinduism. It is a bit like the *garba*.³ People perform this dance individually but the effect is read collectively.” The RSS cadres, Parande argued, demonstrate this culture. He claimed, “It is the most democratic, the most theoretically attuned and the most geared to implementation. The best part is that it deliberates before a decision is made but once it is taken, everyone abides by it.” For Parande, “the cadres are strong. The person on the ground is a local character, rooted to the locality. The cadres create a cascading effect. In times of trouble, the local RSS man becomes a magnet for help. He creates social trust.” Parande claimed

³ A dance performed individually but as a collective. The name *garba* comes from the Sanskrit term *Garba* (‘womb’) and *Deep* (‘a small earthenware lamp’). Many traditional garbas are performed around a central lit lamp. The circular and spiral figures of garba have similarities to other spiritual dances. Traditionally it is performed during the nine-day Hindu festival Navarātrī. Either the lamp (the *Garba Deep*) or else an image of the Goddess Amba is placed in the middle of concentric rings as an object of veneration. People dance around the centre, bending sideways at every step, their arms making sweeping gestures, each movement ending in a clap.

that “the shakha surrenders to society. Its concept is not unlike a child’s cosmos of concentric circles where individual, family, society, universe are separate domains. For the RSS, the four constitute a continuum and the shakha reinforces and sustains this sense of belonging. “An individual socialized into the shakha is inspired for social service. He is not doing what he is told to do. He is a volunteer, a thinker, an innovator ready to cope on his own with extreme situations. The shakha and the Sangh are constructed as extended families where you create a self inspired for social service.”

“Rooted in a locality the volunteer commands trust and resources.” He is a designer at a conceptual and philosophical level and can play both manager and leader in a Druckerian sense (Drucker 1955: 137). Parande made a distinction between the style of BAPS and the RSS, on one hand, and that of NGOs and the RSS, on the other. He claimed:

“BAPS is more spiritual. Here service lets you attain spirituality. The RSS is ruthlessly social and more matter-of-fact about service. BAPS is a religion; the RSS never goes beyond the social. For BAPS, service is an avenue to salvation. Once a person comes out of BAPS, he may not be able to react as an individual in disaster situations. The RSS person can react spontaneously and intellectually. BAPS is more effective in presenting its self. The RSS is not good at crystallizing itself. Its ideas are like the Upanishads. It leaves the detailing to others.”

He explained “We have the skills for these efforts” and claimed, “We are not a banner organization which turns up displays of activity for money. But our work has been certified by the World Bank. Our administrative costs are less than 4 per cent, while NGOs claim 20 to 40 per cent. This is despite the fact that we also recruit expert engineers. But we are clear, we oversee the experts. Ours is an organization that smells of the soil. It is native, it is rooted. We are close to society. We can smell trouble and fix it. The RSS is a man-making machine. We help make a man and his character, not his career. Our shakha builds mind and body; we weave the personal and the national to create *neeti* (an ethical political framework).”

I sensed that Parande’s analysis was acute and intuitive. Following Durkheim’s distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity, the RSS displays organic

solidarity and BAPS comes closer to mechanical solidarity. In BAPS, the individual is a clone of the Guru. The RSS follows exemplars but allows each locality to innovate and exploit differences. It is the social as gestalt that is different in both groups. BAPS creates a uniform rhetoric. RSS in its very inarticulateness allows for the experimentation of difference. The diverse power of localization creates an organization whole that is richer but inarticulate in its richness. We can conjecture that God creates the singularity of BAPS as a group, and the very idea of the social diversity that makes the RSS a different model of the organization as the organic whole by using an army of local differences to create a more pragmatic unity.

7.2.7 Discussing Styles of Voluntarism

It is within the spirit of patriotism that the voluntarism of the RSS elaborates itself. A volunteer for the nation cannot be confused with a volunteer for an NGO. The frameworks are different. The spirit that inspires has different sources. Sushanta Kanhar referred dismissively to voluntary groups like Oxfam, Lutheran Society, Action Aid, Care. He described them as voluntary groups that volunteer late. “They arrive at the disaster site after two months. Why were they silent? Their aim is the same, ‘conversion’, while we argue for our common humanity or brotherhood.”

The RSS’s objection to conversion and the missionary style is obvious and overt. They claim, “We have no religion, but the voluntarism of Christian groups is narrow, selectively seeking conversion. In their hospitals, only Christians are treated free. We argue for *Vasudev kutumbham*, the idea of the world as family. They insist on denominational differences. The difference between them and us is like the difference between the Thames and The Ganges.”

The metaphor of the two rivers evokes the differences between two styles of voluntarism. The worlds the two rivers invoke culturally are different. From their viewpoint, the Thames is provincial, a little narrow river, known for its pretty bridges. The Ganga on the other hand is a cosmos. “We call it mother. The Ganga is holy and all encompassing”.

Reverting back to the nature of RSS's work, Kanhar continued, "Once we cleared roads, animals, bodies, we reached those we had to keep alive. The next requisite is sanitation. But sanitation is not of the cosmetic kind." He referred dismissively to an NGO programme called WASH, which provided a few chemicals. "It is too hygienic. Cleaning dead bodies and carcasses demanded a different set of rules. The sheer smell invades and colonizes your sense of being."

Navin Prasad, a Secretary of Seva Bharati, held, "it was not just a choice for community" that was the motivating factor. The RSS argued that it has always been motivated to pick the most inaccessible parts. "We always go to the remotest parts. In Orissa, we sent 40 teams to remote villages and 60 teams were deployed for the removal of carcasses and dead bodies. The sea water had destroyed the fields. We deployed 170 tractors in nine zillas and worked with the farmers till their crops reached home, even supplying them with water pumps." Speed is a part of service. What guarantees speed is the autonomy of the local. "Our volunteers always arrive first on the site. Time is crucial for survival and the first three hours are critical." We also emphasize that we do not work for money. To give monetary help is not *seva*. To create the mindset of beneficiaries turns people into beggars. *Seva* stems from *bhav* (feeling). *Seva* is what gives a society together. But *seva* is not charity, it is service not help. A society becomes handicapped through charity because charity disrupts the dignity of the social. Charity is an unjust form of distribution. As excess, it breaks a community. *Seva* is not for *sahibs*. In fact, we insist on the dignity and reciprocity of work. We tell the people that we have not come to help, that each family must donate one person for labour. We insist on local contributions, in that sense *seva* is participative. The beneficiaries get to own the work. We provide receipts for everything. In fact, it often leads to a naiveté in our accounting with our people providing bills for 40 paisa for *paan* (betel leaf) and 35 paisa for cycle repair. They noted even the minutest details accounting for crores in a two-rupee worth notebook. Somehow, we now sense we lack in the way we present ourselves. We just do. To advertise what we do is alien."

A point echoed by Kanhar, who says, “There is trouble about our service. You cannot advertise yourself. Today organizations follow publicity. We do some publicity but more to let donors know what we are doing. We prefer to work in silence in areas where the government cannot reach. We know times have changed. It is the time of print and e-media. We realize that communication is now different. Yet there are problems. How can you video an event when bodies are piling up and people are dying? Documentaries and documents demand their own ethics, their location in time. People are crying. You can’t think of a video then.”

7.2.8 Constructing the Social

If language is a part of epistemology and also of the construction of the self and the social, any evaluation of the RSS must consider language. If the language of BAPS is civilizational, colourful, an exercise in its protean creativity, the language of the RSS is terse, almost indifferent. One celebrates the nature of devotion as the other shrugs off the logic of duty. Both talk of service, but the formal and the tacit grammars are different. One appeals to the divine, the other to the social. One constructs civilization and myth as the logic of historical narrative, the other locates the social in the finality of the nation state with reference to its glorious past. If one searches for the divine, the other is an articulation of the logic of the national and the nation state. The meta-narratives of one are spiritual, for the other, society as nation-state is God.

Each cultural group is a claim to competence but the trajectories of competence are different. The RSS’s presentation of itself smacks of a delivery service, which prides itself in punctuality, professionalism and an ascetic code which is so austere, it is almost archaic. Its logic is almost perverse. Its advertisement for itself is that it rarely advertises itself. It claims it is *there*, always first among equals. It provides details like a social service network but its vision and methodology are more encompassing. The dominant metaphor is that of a beehive without drones, a collection of worker bees organized around self-reliance.

Like all groups, it sees itself as a style. But its style is not a costume ball, or a cosmetic rhetoric. It is normative. It is contra-individualistic. The RSS epistemology is profoundly Durkheimian (Moscovici 1993: 31–37). It sees the isolated individual as a failure of society. In fact, it often merges the social with the natural, often terming the social as instinctive, equating duty to mothers care, a sense of nurturance rather than the impersonality of professional care or the egoism of philanthropy. Its sense of the social is organic and it sees its tasks as amplifying the organicity of the social. To the RSS, it is the social which creates a sense of spirituality (Seshadri, 1988). In the next section we shall describe the Ramakrishna Mission.

7.3 The Ramakrishna Mission

7.3.1 The Mission as Organism: Representing Relief Activities Beyond ‘the Facts and Figures’

The Ramakrishna Mission (RKM) is a registered society of monks. The organization derives its name from the religious leader Ramakrishna (Mumukshananda 2006). After Ramakrishna’s death in 1886, a group of his disciples under the leadership of Vivekananda established a monastic order. In 1893, Swami Vivekananda had addressed the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. His speeches had had a tremendous impact and re-opened the ideas of Indian culture and religion to the West. On his return to India, Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission. The *math* and the Mission are twin organizations through which the order works. The math is an institution of monks and the Mission, a society through which the monks and the lay devotees conduct various forms of social service.

I will not attempt to write a comprehensive history of the RKM’s work on disasters. The Mission’s publications provide a comprehensive history of various interventions over the past one hundred years. (Swami Bodhasarananda 2006). Several monks (for example, Br. Somnath) have written dissertations on the relief activities of the Mission as part of their training as monk in the order. This section seeks to understand certain common themes

and ideas invoked in the Mission. The description of these thematic moments captures the significant episodes of disaster relief and a language of understanding.

There are multiple ways in which the RKM represents its work. One entails dividing the relief activities through a 100-year history of relief and rehabilitation. In another way, it upholds its pioneers as exemplars in the domain. The documents provided an archive, which constitutes not just a collection of exemplars in spirituality but also anecdotes that function almost as case law, clarifying the method of the monk.

A graph (Figure 7.1) and table (Table 7.1) in the report I was provided by RKM reflects how the relief activities have grown exponentially over the years in terms of scale.

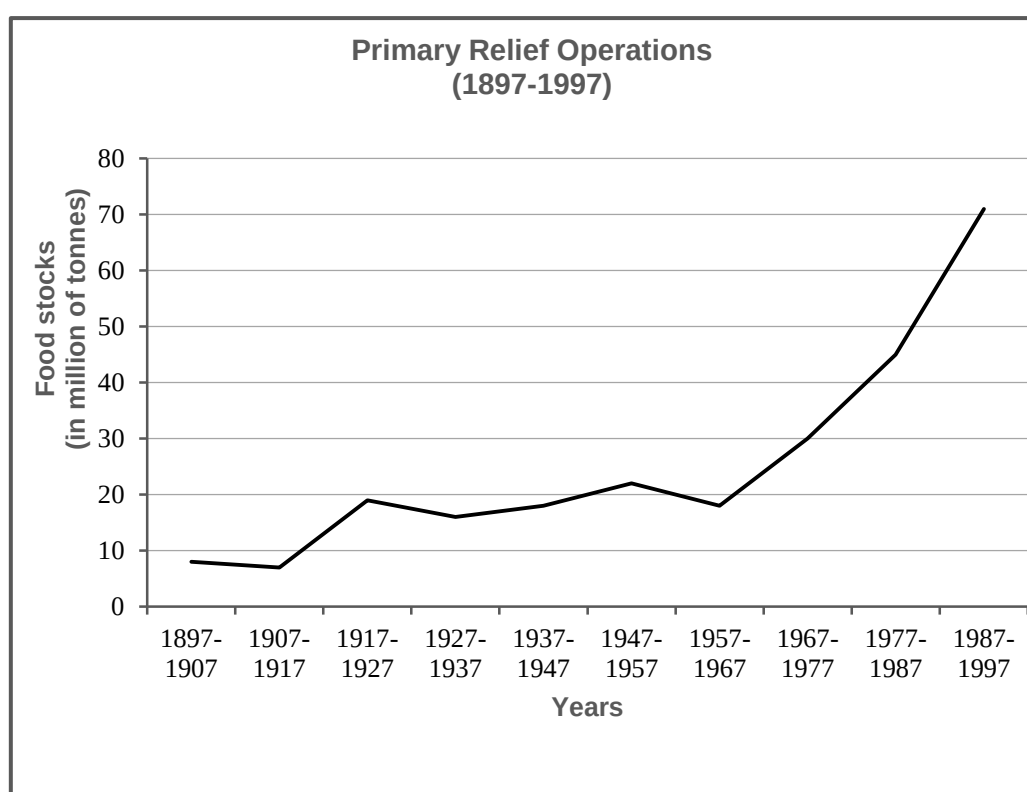


Figure 7.1: Primary Relief Operations (1897–1997) of RKM

Source: Adapted from Somnath Br. (Unpublished).

Table 7.1: Categories of Relief Interventions till 2004

Sl. No.	Major Categories of Relief	Nos. till June 2004
1	Floods	117
2	Fire	48
3	Cyclone	40
4	Drought and Famine	35
5	Riots and Disturbance	24
6	Distress	22
7	Medical	21
8	Refugee and Evacuee	17
9	Tornado	11
10	Earthquake	8

Source: Adapted from Somnath Br. (Unpublished).

The monks I spoke to were, unanimous in their opinion that there are “things that no figures” can reveal. Those are issues related to public trust, the public perception of RKM among the common man, the dedication of the monks to humankind, the impact, moral and societal, of these relief interventions, or the value of receiving a contribution of rupees five (about a penny). (Parmarthachaitanya 2006).

The philosopher of religion and polymath, Raimundo Pannikkar, makes a distinction between an organization and an organism. Pannikkar argued that institutionalization freezes an organization. He claimed that an organization runs with the help of money but an organism runs with the help of life (Sunirmalananda 2006: 730). The monks suggested that Ramakrishna was the life of the order. The Sangh becomes his body. Sociologically translated, the order of monks had to avoid becoming a cult or a church. The cult overplays the personality of the founder. It becomes narcissistic while an organization becomes embroiled in politics. The mission has always distanced itself from politics.

The next section looks at the archive, which is a record of exemplars in spirituality and stories from various relief activities. For the monks in the Ramakrishna order, these stories function almost as case law clarifying the methods, providing inspiration and serving as a benchmark and idiom of how to approach disaster relief (service).

7.3.2 Jiva as Shiva (Humankind as God): Evoking the Pioneers

The RKM records the first organized relief operation on 15 May 1897 by Swami Akhandanandaji at village Bhavta (District Murshidabad). Ramakrishna monks point out “that in many ways this relief work contained most of the features that are found in the relief activities today” (Gopalananda 2006: 296). The archives go on to say that the ‘heart-rending’ conditions of the famine struck people and the service of the Mission, in spite of its meagre resources, moved many people and they came forward to help. Swami Vivekananda himself reportedly sent Rs. 150 (US \$2.7) and two monastic assistants for the work. The relief work received publicity abroad. This was significant because it was seen not just as a local activity but as an achievement having wider resonances.

The first operation started with the distribution of rice among 18 famine-stricken families. This distribution of rice continued for several months in and around Mahula village. The situation worsened when an earthquake and then a cholera epidemic hit the villages. Akhandananda is said to have continued his relief work. Finally, the relief ended with the distribution of a large number of clothes and a mass feast. The Mission’s documents are keen to point out that the majority of the beneficiaries were Muslims. As a result of the famine, many children were rendered homeless. Swami Akhandananda started an orphanage and a school for the orphans of this famine. Significantly, in 1944, the idea would get institutionalized as Ramakrishna Mission Boys’ Home, Rahara.

In August 1897, Swami Trigunatitananda started ‘Scarcity relief work’ at Dinajpur. Records indicate that by the end of August, he had reached 42 villages, doling out rice to about 300 people. Within two months, his relief extended to 84 villages. He went about his relief work systematically: determining the need of each family by going to each one of them in their huts, keeping records and distributing rice according to their need. (Gopalananda 2006: 298).

If Swami Akhandanandaji and Swami Trigunatitanandaji exemplified the idea of relief work to the needy during famines, Swami Saradananda is attributed with “conceiving”

the subtle distinction between real help and indiscriminate charity. RKM archives record that in September 1918, a relief operation was initiated for the flood victims at Rajsahi (now in Bangladesh). The operation continued for three months. When the people were able to recover, the relief was closed down. However, certain organizations began criticizing the Swami for “withdrawing too early”. Unrelenting, Saradanandaji announced, “The Mission very well knows in the light of its previous experiences, when to start a relief service and when to terminate it. Those who want to continue the relief work for a longer period out of newly born over-enthusiasm ought to learn more” (Gopalananda 2006: 299).

The archives argue that his position was later substantiated by a famous social worker, at the RKM Convention of 1926 (Ramakrishna Mission Convention 1926 archives). “...Our relief operations should be that of just of helping one, who is struck down, to stand on one’s leg and rendering only such help as would not impair one’s self-respect and spirit of self-help. If we do more, we may not only do an indirect disservice but may be using the funds at the expense of others who may be in a greater need of just that help elsewhere or in future. ... This principle also applies to the inadvisability of continuance of relief operations longer than is absolutely necessary....”

In 1900, when the plague created a “great havoc” in Calcutta, the Mission rushed out for relief work, and Swami Sadananda and Sister Nivedita played the leading role. The well-known medical practitioner, Dr. Radha Govinda Kar wrote, “... When I went to visit the [cholera] patient again in the afternoon, I saw Sister Nivedita sitting with the child [attacked by cholera] in her lap in the damp and weather-beaten hut in that unhealthy locality. Day in and day out, night after night, she remained engaged in nursing the child in that hut.” (Gopalananda 2006: 300) During the plague epidemic in 1900, Swami Sadananda cleaned up about 1300 slum dwellings, 40 pucca houses and surrounding drains, a total about 14 cartloads of garbage. He had only a few volunteers to assist him. Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes, “If the stench of the garbage accumulated in a narrow lane repelled even the practised sweepers, [Swami Sadananda] would nonchalantly snatch the

basket and spade from them and set about removing the decomposed heap till the sweepers too would step forward. ... At the end, he would congratulate them and embrace them warmly. ... Or if there was an uncared for patient, he would nurse him to recovery.” Even Sister Nivedita applauded his service, “I know, one disciple ... who was so with the impulse of this reverence that he sucked the sores of the lepers to bring them ease” (Gopalananda, 2006, 300).

These stories are constantly narrated and enacted by the monks, who talk of the pioneers, the exemplars to be emulated.

There is also a recognition in RKM that disasters can be man-made. Haunting the memory of all modern disasters is the Great Bengal Famine of 1943–45. The British had anticipated a successful Japanese attack on Bengal. As part of their retreat, they had initiated “a scorched earth policy” to deprive the enemy of food. “Supply of food was cut to the bone and starvation, death and destitution stalked Bengal with the death toll climbing up to 3 million. Yet the British still refused to declare a famine lest they be legally responsible for the suffering. In one of the great understatements of modern policy, the disaster was re-classified as distress” (Prabuddha Bharata May 2006: 3, 303). One of the monks, recollecting a scene in Nagaland, reminds us that the following extract is not a description of a Nazi concentration camp but of the grim realities witnessed by monks in a relief camp at Dimapur, in Nagaland:

“There were days when a thousand people would be brought in trucks and unloaded at our camp, much like cattle. On one day, twelve hundred people were brought, of these, nine hundred died. They had arrived when on the verge of death. Seeing this I thought I would go mad. It was simply intolerable. Tired after the day’s hard work, I would return to our resting place and sit down alone. It would be quiet all around as if it was a crematorium ground. Occasionally a distant wail would break the silence. It gives me a shiver even now.” (Prabuddha Bharata, Editorial May 2006: 13).

The philosophical genesis of disaster relief is sought in Vivekananda’s meditation on the poor. The Mission, as an exercise in monkhood, sought to differentiate itself from the conventional monk through the idea of service. The poor, for Vivekananda, represented

an avenue to spirituality. In a letter to a devotee, Alasinga Perumal, he wrote, “I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth. However sublime be the theories, however well-spun may be the philosophy... I do not call it religion so long as it is confined to books and dogmas.” In 1894, he wrote to Swami Ramakrishnananda, reiterating, “Whoever will be ready to serve him...no, not him but his children.... the poor and the downtrodden, the sinful and the afflicted, down to the very worm -- who will be ready to serve these, in them he will manifest himself.”

For Vivekananda, the poor become a subject for both sociology and philosophy. He meditated on the idea of compassion and charity, two ideas he was strangely dissatisfied with. He thought compassion was alien to human beings. He felt that it was foolish to speak of compassion. One does not distance the receiver, does not hierarchize him but greets him with reverence. To say, “Here takes this and go away, was not charity but an expression of the arrogance of the heart.” Vivekananda cited in support, the *smritis*, where the giver is lower than the receiver for at that moment of receiving, the receiver is for the time being, God himself. Service for the Swami was the inaugural philosophy of a classless society. It went also beyond the parochialism of any religion. Service which sought harmony was rendered irrespective of creed or faith; it was an idea that challenges the orthodoxies of Christianity.

In a letter to Sharat Chandra Chakraborty on 3 July 1897, he wrote, “This is the difference – the service offered to the beings considering them as human beings is compassion, not Love; Love is that through which one serves the human beings as one's own soul since it is an established fact that self is the most beloved entity. Therefore, it was proper for *Bhagavan Chaitanya* to say ‘loving God and compassion to living beings’ from the dualist standpoint as in dualism the distinction between God and individual soul is accepted. But for us who profess monism, the idea of individual soul is the cause of bondage. Therefore, for us Love is to be inculcated, not compassion. But I feel that even compassion to living beings is a mistaken idea. *We don't show compassion, but we serve.*

Our experience is not that of compassion but loving one and all and feeling them verily as our own selves” (Gopalananda 2000: 295).

The methodology of disaster management is a spiritual search embedded in a sociologically sensitive common sense. For instance, the Mission is apolitical but it senses that one should not make a fetish of its decision not to interfere. Writing a piece in tribute of the *Medicin Sans Frontieres* (MSF), a Mission monk, Swami Amaranda realized that the Mission did not take political positions or display a bias for particular groups. Amaranda felt that in this sense, RKM was closer to the neutrality of the Red Cross, which did not take sides, than to the MSF in terms of philosophy (Amarananda 2006: 368). But Amaranda was sensitive enough to politics to realize that such a position of neutrality may not always work. He saw the MSF as representing an alternative viewpoint, which not only goes to help but responds to the nature of the regime and the causes of the disaster. Such a position combines the ethical and political in a different way. The RKM had to stop its activities in Pakistan and had to cease its work temporarily during the Civil War in East Bengal in 1971, and again in Burma when the Junta challenged its policy of neutrality and autonomy. We can sense in this note a methodology, sensitive to its limits yet open to the new challenges of globalization.

The Ramakrishna monks see these as a framework to be emulated. They provide the stories of the pioneers who are to be looked up to while providing selfless service. The exemplars then are also seen as having provided the vision for service to the needy. There is then a clear awareness that help should never become charity, or destroy the dignity and agency of the survivor.

RKM monks also highlight the changes in monkhood that Vivekananda brought about. While the traditional idea of Hindu monasticism never acknowledged any commitment to society or to the people, (Sumirmalananda 2006: 713), the RKM monks are renouncers but expected to live and serve in the world. As Swami Sunirmalananda puts it, “The monks are exposed not only to traditional learning but to modern scholarship especially

in science and medicine. The monks are never allowed to lose themselves in Harappan civilization or in Bill Gates civilization” (Sunirmalananda 2006: 731). Finally, the Mission’s commitment to scholarship and professional learning has to be seen in a wider context. It has great scholars as part of the Mission. It refuses to consider recruiting anyone as a monk unless he has at least a postgraduate degree, and the degree should have been completed in first division before the age of 30 years.

7.3.3 Recollections From the Earthquake of 2001: Dignity and Agency of the survivor

Brahmachari Somnath in his dissertation (unpublished) recalls 26 January 2001:

“The nation celebrates its 50 years of democracy and the earth tremors in the western region. The province of Gujarat felt the powers beneath the earth and was devastated beyond imagination. The most devastating impact was felt in Kutch (Gujarat), the second largest district in India.”

In the Rajkot Ashram, Swami Pramananda (Subodh Mj.), a senior monk, was in the wide open courtyard facing the temple. He saw the temple tilting to left and then to the right. He looked at himself; he could not keep his feet steady on the ground. His whole body was being rocked, as it were, by a violent force. Then he realized – it was an earthquake. Another *Brahmachari* (celibate student of the Vedas), working in the backyard of the Ashram, recalls that suddenly he heard a noise – a rattling sound. Though the sound was unfamiliar, he thought it maybe a vehicle. “Probably a truck”, he said to himself. Then he felt the ground shaking beneath him. He shouted to the carpenters, who were working under his supervision, “Come out! Come out! It is a *dharatikamp* (earthquake)!” The carpenters had felt nothing, being absorbed in work.

Most of RKM’s documents do not stop there. Invariably, they move on to talk of individual stories of loss and suffering. This is the one aspect that is always documented with poignancy in RKM archives.

“The debris was lying everywhere,” recalls another *Brahmachari*. “The Government tried to pull out as many bodies as possible from under the ruins, both alive and dead. They

finally stopped at 78,000 but the unofficial sources claim that more than one lakh [100,000] died. People had abandoned even their houses. Even those who had intact ones were living outside even though the daytime temperature was at 10°C”.

Brahmachari Parim Parimuktachaitanya narrates, “One of our monastic members recalled how he saw an old man pushing a *thela* (a handcart) at the dead of night.” The monk enquired, “Who are you? What are you carrying?” The man was too stunned to answer. On repeated enquiry, he could only point towards four dead bodies over the cart and murmur softly, “They are my daughters. I’m taking them for cremation.” (Somnath, unpublished.)

Although sensitive to the suffering of those impacted by disasters, the RKM monks are at pains to emphasize the agency of the survivors and the volunteers. The latter are not presented or seen as helpless victims in need of aid. Even if they are suffering, the RKM is keen to see them as individuals with dignity and self-respect who contribute something of their own.

In spite of such great devastation, the people of Gujarat had not lost their self-respect. A monk in charge who was involved directly in the fieldwork narrated two of his experiences. At one place, the devastated houses of the locality were identified and the relief materials were being distributed to them. One of the families declined to accept the help. They said, “Please give them to somebody worse off. We can manage ourselves.” This is not an isolated incident. Swami Hareshananda, who was associated with relief activities in Kutch, reflects that at many other places, “people sacrificed their share for the people who were worse off”. In another incident, in one of the villages, a volunteer had asked the survivors to come in a queue and, quite unconsciously perhaps, said something that reflected pity and contempt towards them. At least the villagers thought so. The village headman (*pradhan*) came forward and declined to accept help. The volunteer team was at a loss. Immediately, they rushed to the monk in charge. He approached the *pradhan* and asked what the problem was. The *pradhan* narrated the event

and remarked, “We don’t want any help from you.” The monk persuaded him to accept relief after explaining the entire situation at length. The matter was sorted out.

7.3.4 The Mission and Methodology: Whom to Serve and How

The philosophy of service, while deeply spiritual, evolves into an everydayness of methodologies that is crucial to understand. Service as an ideal needs information regarding *whom* to serve. The Mission undertakes relief service wherever there is a significant calamity. As soon as the news of calamity is heard through the media and other sources, the Mission immediately sends a team to the affected area to assess the extent of the damage and determine the immediate requirements of the victims. After intimation to the Government administration, wherever required, the Mission begins a detailed survey for the relief work. Identity cards are issued to the most needy and beneficiaries are selected as quickly as possible. Relief materials are then procured and transported to the site. They are then distributed in a systematic way with proper documentation. Usually, the local people who volunteer are engaged for facilitating smooth and safe functioning of the work. RKM argues that the process involved in the primary relief is almost the same as has been employed by Swami Akhandananda and later modified by Swami Brahmananda a century ago (Advaita Ashram 2006; & Anandananda 1993).

The effort starts with a preliminary survey. Once that is completed, food – dry or cooked – becomes the major ritual of distribution. Kitchens are opened to serve *khichdi* (a combination of boiled rice, pulses, mixed with spices and vegetables) to the distressed. Within a few days, the emphasis moves from food to clothing. The mission distributes saris, *dhotis*, children’s garments. A special emphasis is laid on the distribution of saris. A monk noted that women were especially vulnerable during a disaster. Access to clothing provided them with a dignity which let them confront the normal. The distribution of medicine parallels the distribution of clothing. Distribution is based on local help but the norms of distribution require that the act be done irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

The philosophy of method emphasizes an attitude. What is critical is not only the act of providing but also extending the warmth of feeling, to restore their individuality among the survivors. The monks repeatedly emphasize that ‘Late relief is no relief’, explaining that when aid reaches people late, the disaster might have taken an irremediable toll.

The monks add an addendum of equal importance to it. Time is a factor of crucial judgment. They argue that relief must never be late. But once it is judiciously distributed based on actual need, the relief agencies should know *when to leave*. Closure is as much an ethical act as the initiation of relief work. It is not a statement of indifference. It is a recognition that over-subsidization in terms of quantity or time can be equally damaging. It discourages a people from resuming their normal livelihood. “Prolonged relief turns beneficiaries into professional beggars.” To the monk, relief is thus an act of sustaining the self and its self-respect. Prolonged relief is an insult to the dignity of the survivor (Atmasthananda 2006: 290).

7.3.5 Frugality as Method

Frugality with money is also a self-conscious ritual. It is an attempt to avoid waste because the fund is distributed as a trusteeship and is accountable. Talking to the monks, you realize that frugality and prudence are part of a theory of competence. Waste or irrelevance are seen as signs of an absence of craftsmanship. Talking of rehabilitation projects, the monks observed that projects could not be implemented as the planning was done in Calcutta or Delhi, and that the imagination of experts did not extend to the requirements of actual sites. “These professional engineers and architects would seldom give consideration to the needs of beneficiaries, their likes and dislikes, the peculiar local customs prevailing. As a result, sometime houses are used as cattle sheds and pour-flush latrines converted to kitchens and at other times, an entire housing colony is abandoned by the beneficiaries as [it is] too far away from their site of work” (Atmasthananda 2006: 298). For the monk, there is no separate ethics of accountability. In one of my interviews, the monk says that every monk was accountable to three faces, the Swami Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda – The Trimurtis. One of the monks also said that he

saw the mission as a conduit, a channel. “You are distributing people’s money to the distressed, what is your own that you are giving? So you have to give your heart, mind, soul and love” (*Prabuddha Bharata* 2006: 284). Every monk was supposed to be exemplary and the examples set by monks were recited with pride and regularity. Ethics by definition is accountability to God and the God in man.

The identification with suffering (empathy) is a lived kind. It is an attitude that is built on austerity and moves to sacrifice. One anecdote, repeatedly retold about Swami Akhandananda, captures this spirit. In 1907, there was a terrible famine in Bengal and Orissa. The newspapers were full of the distress of the people in Murshidabad in West Bengal. The swami learned that millions of famine-stricken people were living only on the leaves of plants. He began wondering, “How can I relieve them of their misery? And if relief is not possible, how can I share their distress?” (Swami Anandananda 1993: 196). He began long periods of fasting. He would only eat vegetables of the kind available to starving people. He lived in this state for five months “looking like one of the starving people”. By the end of the year, fortunately the crop prospered. The Mission continued relief operations for five months, saving about forty five villages in the area.

The idea of service and the notion of change implicit in it have to be contextualized. Vivekananda had his own insight into the changing nature of the world. He compared it to a dog’s tail. He claimed that no matter how many times we straighten it out, it remains curly. Yet he argued that in attempting to change the world, we change ourselves. The world would continue to be a mix of good and evil. Improvement is always temporary, a restricted alteration. We are not straightening the dog’s tail, but at least we have the solace of keeping it clean, of letting it wag happily for a while.

Another principle emphasized by the monks I interviewed was the idea of minimum overheads coupled with the maximum utilization of funds. The lifestyle of the monks, combined with their technical skill, reduces the administrative set-up cost to a minimum.

Such an attitude, when converted into a normative policy, creates a sense of trust among the people.

A few days before my interview with the monks of Belurmath, I met the psychoanalyst Ashis Nandy. Nandy informed me that even Jyoti Basu, the Communist Party Marxist (CPM) leader, claimed that despite “his ideological differences with the Mission, he would trust them with money. They were responsible for every penny and its efficient use in a way unmatched among relief groups.” For the Mission, such a trust goes beyond the scrutiny of audit. A philosophy of responsibility goes far beyond audit in its self-vigilance.

7.3.6 Further Reflections on the Moral and Political Economy of Service

I reached Belurmath on 30th December 2009. The temple at Belurmath is a remarkable structure evoking both the Hindu temple in terms of the Gopuram and the Church in spatial terms. The math is a composite of architecture styles, an invocation that all religions have a space in the essential unity of spirituality. The central structure – the *Garbha Mandir* – is well-lit. It is not prey to the darkness or even the closure that Hindu temples had to resort to during the Muslim invasions. It is almost as if brightness evokes “the all embracing openness in the religion”.

Swami Suvirananda, the head of relief section of RKM, was waiting. He had already been briefed about me. He has spent 36 years in the monastic order but traces a 42-year old association with the Mission. “Ever since school I wanted to join the Mission. It was a calling, an eternal summons like a clarion call. I had to go. But I was asked to complete my graduation. To qualify for monkhood, you have to be a graduate. I did my Masters in English and walked straight from the exam to the Mission.” He dismissed his past before monkhood with that explanation. It is as if at the moment of entry, the person becomes a persona, the monk. “Ask me about what I do now. For me, the service of *jiva* (living) is the service of *Shiva* (God).” He echoed the philosophy of the Mission by saying, “the idea is to serve the downtrodden. There is no need to find God, one finds the divine

through the service of man.” Almost redundantly, he said, “God is best manifested in man, in service to man, whether it is cleaning a road, or teaching or administration. Practical Vedanta is finding God in doing anything. Digging a tube well in Kalahandi where there is not a drop of water is practical Vedanta.” He ordered tea and then observed, “A PhD is no answer to the questions of philosophy.” The meeting ended soon after with both of us acknowledging the ritual quality of the initial encounter.

I visited Swami Nandkumar, the deputy head of the RKM relief section. I felt that every visit was a treat. I was treated with utmost courtesy but I also felt like a child who had to come with the homework done. “Service,” he explained, “is intuitive, natural and spontaneous. A mother’s love needs no explanation. Imagine there is a marriage in the family. Everyone contributes his bit without thinking. Service is the philosophy of the heart. Where does planning come in? Relief old style was seen as *prasadam*. Of course, we use our professional skills to deter waste.”

“The mission,” he said, “had numerous volunteers. There is an immense network spread out in each locality. During a disaster, we use them by rotation. We deal with the everyday. We begin with food packets, move to clothing. Clothing is crucial for dignity, especially for women. Nakedness is vulnerability. From food and clothes, we move to repairs like water pumps. We move matter-of-factly. Once people are on their feet, we move on. To keep on giving them beyond need is to create a group of beggars. We admit that the decision is subjective but we realize a gift overdone is a gift destroyed.” He hinted that “service has a ratio, a proportion. One has to be there at the moment of crisis because the government is always late.”

He tried to explain the economy of service, which he considered as a moral economy that demands frugality. “Our job is to serve. We are responsible for what we obtain. The money we have should obtain the best bargain. We save, we conserve because it is a trusteeship. Trusteeship goes beyond trust. Our asceticism has to blend with frugality. Take blankets. We realized that when blankets were made, huge scraps of warmth were

left over. We obtained these scraps and had them turned into jackets. It makes a wonderful piece of clothing. What costs Rs. 400 [US \$7] in the market, we make for Rs. 100 [US \$1.2]. We have no overheads, unlike the NGOs. Our administrative costs are minimum.” Service, Swami Nandkumar seemed to suggest, is the economy of trusteeship, which avoids pilferage and wastage. “Service avoids the middle man.” Yet he added, “it is grounded in the facticity of need.” We carry out immediate surveys, provide differently coloured cards to people. The cards classify them in terms of need. We use maps, employ those provided by Google and hand maps made by our volunteers. Service,” he added “was neither a job or a profession.” He then clarified that disaster relief constituted a small portion of the service that the mission undertook.

Nandkumar observed that for the NGO, disaster becomes a reason for being. “NGOs are byproducts of the disaster. They always advertise their work. Without such recommendations, they cannot survive.” He laughed and noted, “the NGO is the dog’s tail that wags the disaster body. But ours is a bigger world of culture, of faith, of a commitment to a culture and its spiritual renaissance.” Words, he suggested, were crucial. Relief does not evoke the same world as service.

Swami Nandkumar continued, “Service is its own joy. It is hard work. One dines at five in the morning and then at twelve in the night. There is a joy”, but he cautioned, “no sentimentality. Time and again, we have been accused of stopping relief. But this kind of sermonizing adds little. We are not there for charity. Service is an economy. Waste allows need to become greed. Waste creates dependency. Yes, sometimes we make mistakes. We stopped giving relief cards to a woman once without realizing she had just given birth to a baby. We realized we should have continued to provide once we realized that she needed the extra care and food for the baby.

7.3.7 Return after Ten Years

Another monk I met was Swami Priyarupanandji. I had met him earlier in Orissa in 1999. I rang up RKM. The Mission is deeply conscious of time. It is important that you call at

certain times. When I arrived, the senior monk was busy. A younger monk offered me *prasad* (sacred offering) and kept me company as I waited.

He appeared quietly. Swami Priyarupanandji smiled in recognition. He said, “We met 10 years ago, after the cyclone. You came with another gentleman. I gave you both a lot of details.” I told him I needed some documents and he replied, “Yes I will provide it. Come tomorrow, the documents will be ready.” The first encounter was over in twenty minutes. There was something terse, almost cryptic about it. The junior monk sensed my confusion and offered solace and *prasad*.

I went back the next day and Swami Priyarupanandji offered me more details. I was supplied all the facts and figures of the work undertaken in Orissa, the dates, the progress reports, etc. (see Prabhananda 2003: mimeo). He seemed to downplay the Mission’s goal. “A lot of people did commendable work then. The Ananda Marg was impressive in the way it handled dead bodies. They carried special chemicals for clean disposal of carcasses and dead bodies. People from Andhra also did good work. I remember it was *saptami* or *ashtami* (seventh or eighth) when the cyclone struck. A hundred houses were immediately demolished. We had set up camp at the campus of the University of Behrampur.” He quietly added, “Human beings are living God: *prana pratishtha*.” He said, “Service is both belief and conduct. Mere aid or help is not enough. One has to serve with the right attitude. That is the tradition we have always followed. It goes back to the way Ramakrishna served the poor. Nivedita followed this in the plague. The monks merely relive this tradition. The math in Chennai performed the same kind of *seva* after the tsunami. We also did relief then. Subhodananda did remarkable service. Meet Gopalananda, he will tell you all about.” I blinked till I realized he was speaking about Swami Nandkumar. Monks always have two names and often they are used interchangeably.

There was something about the matter-of-factness, the baldness of his narrative that puzzled me. It was a bit like a roll call, bare announcement of name, time, place and

event. It was then that I realized that each story was a part of a seamless chain of being. Each story was a simple variant of the earlier story. Each was recited in a bland way. There was little digression, almost no detail. It was as if the frugality of narrative itself was a part of the economy of the Mission's style. Each monk was an exemplar of service. Each monk did what he was supposed to, each followed an example. Each set an example and each example followed the earlier example in quiet continuity. Each exemplar enacted the original act of service. There was no need for more detail. Each story was immaculate in itself. The chain of exemplars captured the continuity of narrative and the rationale for the math.

I sensed here that suffering as a way of relating is different from the attitudes that accompany poverty or vulnerability. Suffering as a mode of perception possesses empathy. It is not convertible into the social science objectivity of the other two categories. The latter can be sociologized. We can create a political economy around it, where knowledge and objectivity become their own form of distance. Concepts like poverty and vulnerability invite the social science project. Suffering in its demand for directness, for the immediacy of the encounter, hints more at a Buberian, "I and thou". Suffering demands the letter, the diary or the story. Or more tears, signalling the recognition of the despairing God in man. Yet there is a detachment to the narrative, to the sense, that suffering, like any narrative, is suspended in time, a sense that the sanity of everydayness will return and when that happens, the monk, recognizing its signs, will move on.

The monks felt that there was an intrinsic link between the way they told the story and the way they saw suffering. They argued that suffering had to be felt, seen, touched, and absorbed in a certain way in which it summons the sensorium. Many of the examples come from the poor but suffering goes beyond poverty. Subsistence has its joys, which the asceticism of the monk can understand and empathize with. Suffering seems to imply its own semiotics. The suffering one sees signals the God in man. Serving the suffering allows for salvation, a communion with God.

7.3.8 Discussion: Deciphering the Ramakrishna Mission

The Ramakrishna Mission is probably the most civilizational of the four groups in its logic and attitude. To the pracharak and the devotee, it adds the polysemy of the monk, offering another dialect as an alternative to the Christianized and secularized logic of contemporary voluntarism.

The presentation of self is altogether different. If the RSS emphasizes an almost Judeo-Christian pre-occupation with time and efficiency, the BAPS, a civilizational sense of competence, the RKM has an obsession with the archive and the story. It sees the past as a corpus of exemplars. The exemplars articulate the vision of the founder, and the current monks reiterate the exemplariness of the past.

Service and suffering are key concepts. The ultimate idea is of the *Daridra Narayan* (God in poor). He embodies a notion of suffering which goes beyond economized categories like poverty or sociologized categories like exploitation or vulnerability. Suffering is an opportunity for service. Suffering is a sign of God in the poor, the miserable, the weak. Suffering becomes a way for the ascetic monk to enter the ordinary world and serve God. Here, service seeks the divine in man to serve God.

Service for the RKM is a civilizational challenge to charity. Charity is seen as an arrogance, a self-styled asymmetry of the giver over the receiver. For the RKM, the receiver is superior to the giver, for in that moment of reciprocity, he is God. Such a philosophy alters voluntarism from the hegemony of the powerful to a sense of equality. To serve is not to endow but to share. Compassion like charity is the recognition of the divine at a distance. What one has to grasp is the definition of service as *seva* rather than *daya* (compassion). It is not merely theological or spiritual but creates an ethic, which encompasses both an attitude and a set of methodologies that apply to disaster management. It creates a style, which is not only austere but transparent. The Mission's idea of service eludes the spectacle of emotionalism, the melodrama which the current charity uses to summon aid. With charity, one either emotionalizes or technocratizes

disaster. The epistemic vision of the RKM is detached rather than sentimental or objective. As a result, it is always clear when service should stop. There is none of the erratic surplus or the scarcity of aid. Service is the epistemics of ratio, of proportion. Service thus goes beyond compassion because while compassion could be episodic or exclusive, service extends to all humans as equal manifestations of God.

There is a twin articulation of perspective. At one level, the RKM's idea of service is a search for spirituality, and yet it is anchored in the everydayness of the suffering of the poor. It does not create a split-level world between the spiritual and the secular. Nor does it create a distance between giver and receiver. There are no hierarchies in this attitude of reverence. Yet, one must not see it as mere rhetoric. The spiritual philosophy creates a distinct methodology of honesty and responsibility, which goes beyond audit, a ritual of closure which creates self-reliance rather than perpetuating dependency and professional aggrandizement. The methodology is embodied in a style of austerity and an economy in the logic of problem-solving. Frugality, in that sense, is an act of trusteeship, which goes beyond the cultures of audit. For the monk, there is no separate ethics of accountability. Ethics emphasizes not accounting but accountability to God and to the God in man. Here, methodology does not get scienticized or objectified or prey to any social science theory. It seeks neither the logic of conversion or transformation.

In the next section, I define the role of the Ananda Marga.

7.4 Ananda Marga

7.4.1 The Organization

Ananda Marga was established by P.R. Sarkar (1921–1960) in 1955. The organization was founded with the two-fold ideas of liberation of the self and service to humanity. The philosophy of P.R. Sarkar has been dubbed as Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT). It is a search for economic liberation seeking to go beyond materialist socialism. PROUT

is the vision of a decentralized economy. It argues that centralism could not eliminate exploitation or guarantee increased purchasing power. PROUT is critical of centralized forms of planning, where the planner is remote from the productive activity. PROUT advocates the power of locality over its resources. In this way, production does not create profit for a few. PROUT is a vision of a world where local people work in local enterprises. It is an argument that nature is bountiful and yet unfortunately she has not provided guidelines for distribution. In that sense, it is a search for economic democracy, which guarantees minimum rights to all.

In 1960, an order of monks and nuns was introduced into the organization to spread the spirit of *sadhana*, service and sacrifice. Sarkar was keen that the idea of service should not remain a barren religious idea of a theoretical concept. He established the Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT) (see <http://www.amurtindia.org/>, accessed on 15 January 2011]). It operates in 160 countries serving people in the aftermath of disasters. The AMURT style is distinctive, almost less than frugal. These stories are part of the creation myth of AMURT. Once AMURT was formed, there was uncertainty among the volunteers about the source of funding. When approached about the problem, P.R. Sarkar responded by donating the sweater he was wearing. Sarkar hoped that AMURT would face the future more optimistically and work with whatever they had.

What characterizes AMURT's volunteers is the speed with which they move into a disaster. The volunteers tap into the local network and work within the cultural and social framework of the people as much as possible (see AMURT 2009). Central to the idea of the Ananda Marga and AMURT is the notion of service. For the monks of AMURT, to offer something to a person and expect something in return is to engage in a commercial transaction. Such a relationship exists in the world of commerce and contract. Service has to be selfless. It is of two types: internal and external. Internal service leads to fulfilment and external service leads to universal welfare. The eventual vision is to have a team of dedicated volunteers who have the spirituality and the morality to make a difference in the service of humanity.

7.4.2 Encountering Ananda Marga: Materiality of Body

AMRUT stays an 'elusive organization'. The Ananda Marga, at first, appears more as an imaginary than a concrete organization. The Ananda Marga you meet is an imaginary that you construct, inherited both from gossip as you are growing up and from the various reports you have read in the newspapers. It is a metaphor, a newspaper snippet, a rumour, a stereotype traded in conversations. You begin with an imaginary and the encounter with the imaginary continues at one remove as you seek to enter it. Ananda Marga initially evoked tantric practices, immolation protests, practices of worship involving human skulls. In some senses, it continues to be seen as an elusive organization, even its ashram is located in Pundang, a rather inaccessible part of West Bengal.

I first encountered AMURT over a decade ago in 1999. Orissa had been struck by the 'super-cyclone'. The scale of devastation had been tremendous. The narratives in Delhi were fixed on questions of blame and responsibility, on what had gone wrong with the warning system and a range of questions related to science and communication. I was keen to make sense of what was happening in the areas impacted.

I recall travelling with a team of Ananda Margis from Bhubaneswar to Ersamma, greeting them with all my scepticism in 1999 (27 November). The conversation was easy and open, and even carried a lightness of being. The Margis talked of *kuccha* (mud) houses, which they felt could still be built. They were concerned that the NGOs from outside would replicate a miniature city with their dream of *pucca* (cemented/burnt brick) houses, which would destroy the local architecture and ecology. They talked of their philosophy of PROUT, of how Sarkar, their founder, wanted their work to focus on suffering in calamities. They admitted candidly that they were poor, unable to procure large volumes of relief materials. So they did what they could with their hands – just removing dead bodies. We could still smell the stench of carcasses as we proceeded. We reached Ersamma, which was the landfall point of the cyclone and found a crowd waiting in the AMURT camp.

From here the road narrowed further as we bounced towards Padampur, where we caught up with an Ananda Marga carcass-removal party. Dead bodies lay half-burnt on both sides of the road, the bones visible. We saw bodies huddled in the paddy fields, spread like strange images after a storm. The Margis were upset. They complained that many NGOs had left the bodies covered with just a few inches of topsoil. The ground, they said, was not suitable for this and the dogs kept digging up the bodies. Then they pointed out something we had not quite noticed, that “the vultures, the jackals, the hyenas, all the natural scavengers are missing”. “You have to burn the bodies,” added another Margi. “It is the only solution. It is not easy. It takes three hours to burn one. Even the army accepted it as the only solution. But yes, there are religious doubts and observances. But a little science like using limestone during disposal goes a long way.” It ensured that there were no breakouts of epidemics.

I saw the Ananda Margis work with their bare hands, handling bodies which were now a couple of weeks old, bloated, flaky and buttery, but still preserved because of the salty sea water. I can still remember the stench. However, the Margis got down to the task at hand with no sign of unease or reluctance. Sometimes, they waded in water to grab the floating bodies and drag them to the corner before they were burnt with limestone and the materials they were carrying. Disposing of the ones there, we took the boats again across the waters in search of more bodies.

I recall my conversation with one of the volunteers in 2009. His name was Pramod. While travelling in the car, he started talking about his experiences as a volunteer. “I have myself picked up thousands of bodies with my hand...thousands...thousands”, he told me quietly. “There were bodies all over. Some volunteers used gloves. But I used bare hands to lift those bodies and cremate them. You don’t know the state of those bodies. Some volunteers had masks to cover their noses and mouths. But I didn’t use any. After disposing of many bodies, some of the flesh of the decomposed bodies would be on my hands and I would feel thirsty. I would just open the bottle (made a gesture of pouring water into his mouth) drink some water and continue. That spirit comes from our

Supreme P.C. Sarkar. Everything belongs to him”. I was told that the trees, the nature, the dust, the body alive or dead, all belong to him, so there was no space for fear, hesitation or discrimination.

The Marga's perspective often centres around the body. Swami Priyakashnandaj tried to explain the metaphysics and dynamics of fasting. Most of the sanyasis fast for at least 60 days a year. Sentient diet and fasting are considered as an integral part of yogic practices. Sentient diet is a vegetarian diet which is also devoid of particular vegetables which disturb the mind for spiritual practices such as onion, garlic, leek, chives, mushroom, etc. The relation between eating and fasting is a complex one. “The human body has to eliminate its sense of toxicity: not just biological and physiological but also psychological. Fasting is cleansing. *Upavasa* literally means to live near God. Moreover, the belief is that such a purification creates empathy. One sees starvation and hunger not as objective facts or statistics. One has to be hungry to understand hunger. One needs the authenticity of a lifestyle to understand subsistence. It is only then that one can see the other with empathy. Fasting, for the Ananda Marga, has a *tantric* angle to it.” Tantra exponentializes things, creates a spiritual speed that hastens experience. “At a more mundane level, every year for seven days, we live as beggars. All we get is one piece of cloth. We learn to beg, we eat what we receive, sleep in the open no matter what the weather. It helps us learn about the suffering of the poor.” The Acharya reflects, “I have to follow that lifestyle. Only when I know their difficulties can I serve them. So I must be ready to adjust to any situation. One must merge ‘I-ness’ with supreme *Dhyan* so that anything you do is in the service of that Supreme.”

7.4.3 Empathy: Suffering, Food and Fasting

Sadhna (meditation) is at the centre of how the monks prepare themselves for a life of empathy and service. I met Acharya Ramanand, head of AMRUT in Purulia at the Ananda Marga Ashram in 2009. The ashram reflects a certain frugality, which is in contrast to the characteristics of many of the organizations I have interacted with during the course of this fieldwork. It was nearly New Year and the Margis were having a big

gathering. Over 600 Margis (Dadas and Didis) from over 60 countries had come for this week-long gathering. Acharya Ramananda invited two others to join the discussion. I asked him about their philosophy. He said, “Our philosophy is a new sadhna. It is a new paradigm, an integrated theory that the mind makes the consciousness. Mind evolves through several stages. For us, it is practice that creates the paradigm and lets us ask what we will evolve into. Evolution now allows you to choose your own direction. Here our meditation makes us closer to the cosmos.”

This point was reiterated in a different way by Swami Priyakashnandji. “Ours is a belief in social justice. It stems from a love for each man.” Every society, he claimed, needed a moral basis for social life. Meditation he claims provides this sense. “Meditation produces both empathy and sympathy. Mere sympathy is not enough. It barely touches the skin.” He continued, “For us, service is a mission. Then you live for that mission. Human life is an ideological flaw. Life represents ideology and you should live for ideology and fight for that ideology and if necessary, die for that ideology. Without ideology, there is no life. What is Guru bhakti when one has no ideology? If Sadhna provides us strength, our ideology provides the frame for continuity, the source of continuous inspiration. The two together help us engage with suffering. I remember during the Orissa cyclone, the Sadhus marched knee-deep in water. They were surrounded by carcasses and dead bodies, but they got on with the work. That is service. The NGOs are not doing that. They are not in the collective service of the Guru. The Guru–*shishya* relationship is critical. It is the relationship of Eklavya to Drona. Eklavya cut his thumb and gave it to his Guru without a second thought when the Guru demanded it. That is the fire of devotion one must strive for. And the struggle must be to establish *dharma* and fair play” (AMURT in Action 2003).

The conversation invariably turned to the response of the West to suffering, more specifically to the famine in Africa. “There was talk of suffering in Ethiopia, in Sahel. People in the West wanted to respond. My understanding is that there the West is playing God, when all it has to do is play man. If every one of us is among God’s children, why

punish them? As a God, I might think of compassion differently. But as men, all we have is empathy.” He stated, “Meditation concentrates and focuses the mind. Living and catering to one another is the beginning of the sociality. Caring is a pilgrimage of togetherness. Caring is a social responsibility. The economics of caring is central to our philosophy and practice. For us, serving the suffering is serving God. It is *karma-yoga* (action oriented) not *gyana yoga* (knowledge acquisition). Our bhakti is to the cosmic father. I remember once Kabir asked, ‘if God and the Guru were in front of you, whom would you acknowledge first?’ The answer is the Guru, because he is witness to the greatness of God. The bhakti is always to the Guru. The economics of love demands no return. There cannot be returns to selflessness. We are not NGOs. We are not paid Rs. 15,000 [US \$269] a month. All we can do is thank the Lord for allowing us to serve, for disasters are routines of nature.” For the Ananda Marga, empathy is primary. It is a deep form of consciousness that creates the right response to suffering as the right response to life.

He smiled, “An NGO is a profession. Look at their overheads. For us, if we collect any money, every penny must be used for the cause for which it has been collected. When you serve people in difficulty, you serve God. Life must be grounded in moral principles or one can be tempted easily, if not by 100 then by 10,000 rupees [US \$179].”

He talked to me about the trauma of 1999. He recalled, “Electric poles looked squashed and squeezed as if they were towels. The coconut trees were sans leaves. I can understand losing a crop but losing a family hurts more. Then there are memories.” He spoke of a woman, a Didi, who was in Ersamma. “Savita lost her entire family. She was horrified. She could not save a single member of her family. All she could clutch on to was a small boy. They were stuck on this coconut tree for over 24 hours. She had lost everything but she clung desperately and tenaciously to the boy. Just then, a poisonous snake also took refuge on the tree. Boy, snake and Savita clung together. Yet maybe in a moment of calamity even the most poisonous of animals become friends. But then, it is only those

who survive, tell such stories. She has now dedicated her life to the organization. She manages one of the orphanages.”

I must admit that every attempt to understand sadhna as practised by Anand Margis, their concept of meditation – tantric meditation – only evoked a smile and the answer, “You have to do it. It cannot be explained. How it transforms and changes you is something you can only experience.”

There are, however, certain memories that haunt the Ananda Marga: its confrontation with the communist government in West Bengal when it faced repression for its views; the ban during the Emergency. Most Dadas and Didis I talked to, recall with ‘pain’ that on 30th April 1982, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)], the ruling party in West Bengal, killed 18 Dadas and Didis in Calcutta. There were reports that the latter were raped and their breasts cut off.

7.4.4 Discussion: Decoding the Ananda Marga

In comparison to the other three organizations, which are deeply embedded in the social matrix and the social imagination, the Ananda Marga is more elusive, in fact even marginal. It is poor, rudimentary, in fact, its philosophy and method begin with the body. Tempered in tantric practices of the body, the Marga is adept at handling the mechanics of disposing dead bodies. The Margis perform some of the polluting tasks with some of the most rudimentary of tools, bare hands. The organization’s philosophy of PROUT, with its affinity to nature, responds to this immediacy of suffering. It challenges charity by claiming that it demands reciprocity in return. The Marga defines any expectation of return, as the rudiments of commerce. In that sense, service is the methodology of a spiritual economy, which goes beyond the gift, signifying the classical idea that the gift (Mauss) demanded a return, a reciprocity which brings it close to commerce and contract. The PROUT philosophy is a search for a new paradigm. It sees humanitarianism as a Western idea of playing God. Gods might have a right to compassion but all man can offer is empathy. The Marga’s categories of meditation and caring are seen as

pilgrimages to the new idea of the social. The right response to suffering is the signal of a right response to life. Such a sense creates a new sense of the social by providing a grammar. For instance, sympathy is seen as cosmetic and episodic in PROUT but empathy is the beginning of social justice. The body is the metaphor and site for the social. Experiments like fasting create a new logic of the body. Between the authenticity of body and lifestyle, a new vision of society can be created. Disasters in that sense are experimental sites for a new idea of the social.

7.5 Comparisons as Conclusion

In the above four sections, I have provided a dense but succinct description of four cultural organizations and their responses and reading of disasters. In this final section, I want to thread together some common themes running through each discourse.

All the four organizations discussed have a history within the annals of Hindu social reform. In that sense, Hinduism is a meta-narrative for all four groups, and each organization as an epistemic frame is a dialect, a variant, an organizational framework, embodying the ideas of Hindu philosophy and Hinduism as a way of life. Except for the Ananda Marga, the other three are several decades old, with the RKM and BAPS having been established over a century ago. Many of the debates about society that they have engaged in are part of Hindu social imagination. What is new or recent is the application of these ideas to disaster management. Both their density and their diversity change disaster management as a cognitive space.

I conclude by arguing that the organizations studied as epistemic frames are middlemen in a particular sense. They take the idea of service and transform it into a collection of dialects, providing a variation in ethic, methodology and style. I have tried to illustrate

this through the practices of the groups. Their language and practice constitute a classificatory structure for normalizing and diversifying the narratives at the disaster site. As translators of the world seva, they are philosophical and sociological middlemen. They also perform a second act of interpretation, maintaining an overall conflict of interpretations where disasters are read differently.

I have used the word ‘epistemology’ to define these perspectives. Epistemology is not just a validation of knowledge but also a way of conceptualizing knowledge and validating it in practice by linking it to livelihood, lifestyle and the practice of life. The question of epistemology shifts the question of knowledge from the individual to notions of collectivity and method. As Tsoukas reminds us, “questions of epistemology – what is knowledge, how can it be obtained and how knowledge claims to be justified – are no longer the prerogative of philosophers and social scientists alone but of organizations too” (2005: 3). Invoking Bateson’s (1979: 346) classic definition of how collectivities know, think and decide, he argues for the need to look at epistemologies of organization. The emphasis is not on the external structure of organizations but on how organizations organize knowledge to domesticate a wider intellectual space and explore the consequences of knowledge. For example, by emphasizing suffering through a theory of love and service, we get a detached perspective, which avoids sentimentality or the objectivity of social science. More particularly, how do organizations act as epistemic interpreters? I see them as trustees of certain forms of knowledge, which provide a lived heuristic of disaster. Disasters are not only sites for management, but loci of interpretations, which lead to a different behaviour. I describe this in the following pages.

When we look at similarities and differences, we can tabulate them as follows in terms of the lists printed in columns (see Table 7.2). But there is a deeper connectivity that we need to grasp. Consider first the theory of the social each represents.

Table 7.2: Epistemic Frames: Civilizational Groups

Subject	Name of the Organization			
	RKM	RSS / Seva Bharati	BAPS	Ananda Marga
Nature of Service	Serving humankind	For a self-reliant nation	For the Guru	As part of being one with the cosmos
Political Framework	Indifference to politics	Culture as politics. Hindu nation	Culture as civilizational. State as a vehicle of culture.	Culture as economy
Service	Seva	Seva	Seva	Seva
Agent	Monk	Swayamsevak	Devotee	Sadhak
Vision of Society	Social as civilizational	God as society	Congregation as communitas	Social as de-centred
Symbolic Centre	Food as symbol of caring	Body disposal speed	Food as symbol	Body disposal as USP
Content	Ascetic	Frugal	Middle-class	Subsistence
Style	Style is indifferent	Matter-of-fact, understated	Spectacle	Certificate-hungry

Source: Author

For the RKM, the social is civilizational. For the BAPS, the social is spiritual, for RSS, God is society, especially in the avatar of the nation state, and finally for AMURT, the social is a point in the evolutionary schemes as the body evolves towards justice. Interestingly, none of these stay merely rhetorical. Each converts its sense of the social into a programmatic for sustaining the social.

Each of the groups uses service to define the social as an ideology and as a ritual of activity. For BAPS, the rhythm of the cosmos provides a sense of the social. The social seeks the validation of the cosmos. There is always a sense of the politics of de-individualization. In fact, each of these domains sees individualism as a Western or

modern pathology. The RSS is equally clear that the idea of seva is anti-individual. BAPS sees in the disaster the possibility of alienation and individualism and through the satsang seeks to intensify the social. For the RKM, suffering is an opportunity for the social. In giving during the disaster, one intensifies the social. All four are not only anti-individualistic, but they also seek either a sense of community or fraternity through a basic sense of dignity. For all four, disaster management is a ritual for repairing dignity. The essential humanity of the person overwhelms or encompasses his other identities in terms of citizenship, sect or status. Service, in that sense, emphasizes the essential dignity of man before his God. In fact, there is an attempt to naturalize, to see it as a skin. BAPS spiritualizes service as one-ness with the divine. The RSS sees the social as natural and constructs service as almost instinctive. The AMURT reads service as an evolutionary opportunity to mend the social, while for the RKM, service is the very grammar of the social in the divine. To serve is to serve the God in man.

What we have here are four Durkheimian ideas of the social, four dialects which capture different idioms of the social. BAPS is spiritual, RKM civilizational, the RSS socio-political, AMURT, an evolutionary political economy. The social has to be a habit and individualism is a collection of bad habits that alienate man from society. Each group thus becomes an epistemic inventor and repairs the social. The disaster is seen as an opportunity, a routine event or tear in the fabric. It is a test of the social and the ways of intensifying the social. Oddly, all four groups see disasters as cosmically or socially routine. The disaster is a part of life. It might threaten livelihood and life chances but these are parts of the rhythms of any society.

The four groups also emphasize that no individual should lose his/her dignity in a disaster, that is, a disaster must not be a moment for social humiliation or social inequality. The humanity of the person as a social being must remain intact in a disaster, and if not, then the idea of service is a way of sustaining the social. By emphasizing dignity and divinity, each group challenges the current notions of charity stemming from Christianity and secularized versions of Christianity. The four groups claim that charity

disturbs the social and even challenges the social identity of the victim. Aid is unequal but both aid and humanitarianism are artificial ideas of the social. The dialogue of disaster management is a dialogue of civilizations. There is a sense that disaster management cannot be reduced to techniques because techniques need to be derived from the heuristics of the social.

Within the heuristics of the social, a language, a style, a methodology of approaching disasters need to be included. All four groups are austere in terms of their lifestyles. Austerity stems from a frugality and renunciation. For *a sevak*, a devotee, a monk or a sadhu, austerity is natural. The language of cost-benefit is alien because their notion of responsibility stems from a religious ethic. While AMURT is almost skeletal, with its members working literally with their bare hands, BAPS is silently devotional but is celebratory in its sense of what a congregation can achieve. In fact, its festival is a celebration of the nature of the social and its consequences. The RKM sees disasters as routine, a dislocation in the fabric that needs to be repaired. There is a detachment about the attitude of each group. The categories they operate with create empathy, not objectivity or sentimentality. This is one reason why their relation to disaster victims is everyday, allowing for closure. The RKM, in particular, is keen not to enforce dependency. The RSS sees the relation with the victim as a collaborative act. Each family is requested to donate labour. The rudimentary lives of the AMURT sadhus make dependency and conspicuous consumption a remote possibility.

The nature of the lifestyle embedded in the category of service also defines responsibility. For the RKM, the responsibility is to Vivekananda or Ramakrishna, for BAPS to the Guru, for AMURT to the master. Each creates a social ethic, which subsumes methodologies. In that sense, the idea of responsibility as a social ethic encompasses any idea of audit. In fact, transparency is natural. Each group treats the money it has as an act of trusteeship, a gift to enhance the social. Hence, responsibility cannot be a technique, unless it is first a spiritual exercise.

As each group speaks a dialect of service, the rituals of disaster management find their own idioms. For BAPS and RKM, food is an idiom of community and caring. It is a mark of hospitality. All groups emphasize the care with which food is cooked and served. Cold food is an insult to the fraternity of the social. Food is never a dole. Food creates a circle of equality. Food is always celebratory. No matter how simple, even a bajra roti (millet bread) and an onion, food is never a dole or a ration. If BAPS and RKM use the idiom of the food, RSS and AMURT use the idiom of the body. Disasters create death as pollution. The mass presence of carcasses is obvious. Both groups bring a ritual of dignity to death, providing not only the last rites but also an understanding of grief. All four groups see mourning, grief, loss, disgust as social categories to be handled by the community.

We have a framework of categories, spread like a net, a lens through which disasters are perceived. The language defines the ontology of person and body, and the techniques of disaster relief, ways of containing the disaster. All groups, no matter how religious they may be, are open to science and technology, and yet do not allow it to become an act of conspicuous consumption.

The presentation of the self in service is different. The RSS is taciturn in its advertisement, the BAPS celebratory. The RKM sees it as a routine act, where disaster management is part of a wider civilizational repertoire. Each is a culture of competence, whose definitions of the self are cultural or religious. Culture provides the idioms of self and competence. The disaster becomes a test, a thought experiment to this sense of social competence.

The organizations provide knowledge of how to read disasters. The epistemology of disasters is concerned not only with the interpretations and the management of disasters but also as meaning systems. In this sense, epistemology is linked to cosmology (the relation of man, nature and God) and to ontology (a theory of being). Each organization is a connected network of discourses and practices, a mode or thought and a code of conduct. The initial idea is to see a disaster situation as a market of competing

rationalities, of competitive interpretations of the disaster and its management. But such a model would be misleading. The emphasis is more dialogic, it is a debate of meanings, of mental models of management. But the entrepreneurial genius of the organization lies in a model of map-making, where each survivor is giving a map of disaster, a language glossary of key terms, and a sociology which defines the nature of community.

Four overlapping styles, with a common civilizational idiom, create a philosophy of disaster management, stemming out a wider discourse on social reform. The categories in most cases are at least 100 to 200 years old. But when applied to disasters, they create a new matrix of questions, which voluntary groups and the State have to engage with. They become four discourses of civil society, which go beyond the carnage for riots, or the competence of the technocratic to posit a civilizational critique of caring, charity, welfare and rights. This allows us to carry the debate on poverty, vulnerability, survival and bare life in terms of the multiple frames of concern, pluralizing what was for long a monopolistic definition of suffering. It is not only a battle of civilizations but also a narrower battle over how to look at governance and caring.

As conceptual middlemen, each of the four groups seeks to extract meaning from disasters, by locating disasters as ways of being and life. They create networks of meaning and competence around food, clothing, shelter, and ideas of normalcy, recovery, healing, and aid. They create not just codes for perceiving disaster but also handbooks for managing them. They offer miniaturized lessons in citizenship and competence. Since disasters are no longer homogenized by management models of the State, what we see is a set of multiple realities, with each organization serving as an invitation to that particular mode of reading. Here, the idea of the middleman goes beyond its stereotypical uses in political economy, where he was seen as parasitic, exploitative and maximizing his profit while increasing the suffering of others. Here, the group is more altruistic. Its entrepreneurial abilities are philosophical and managerial. It provides new modes of understanding disasters and the societies in which they are embedded. But the middleman is a Schumpeterian of a different kind. He does not indulge in the creative destruction that

made capitalism so innovative. He embraces creative construction through his theories of breakdown, relief, care and healing. As epistemic middlemen, they treat the space of disasters as a cognitive space, embedded with memories, modes of meaning, coping, suffering, and knit them into core meaning and core competence into models of life and modes of behaviour. This process challenges the taken-for-grantedness of current meanings and models, and challenges them to a dialogue of interpretations, thought experiments, practices where disasters are reworked as meaning systems. As epistemic middlemen, voluntary groups are catalytic. They are both exemplary and paradigmatic. But the conceptual skill arises in turning the disasters into a plural space of meaning.

The word 'plural' is important for emphasizing that these organizations do not create an epistemological anarchy, but a diversity which demands dialogue, debate, interpretation and choice. Instead of salons and coffee houses, voluntary groups in disaster have become the new vector of philosophical debate and sociological competence of welfare, competence and well-being. They provide an invitation to incommensurability, translation, hybridity, and assimilation and hyphenation, and create an invitation to conceptual cross-pollination. Each NGO represents an academy of ideas and the disaster situation becomes, by argument, ideology, policy or practice, a debate between different academies of thought around the issues of disaster. A confederation of NGOs is as much a cognitive space as an interdisciplinary or intercultural debate between different academic departments. Problem-solving acquires a fecundity not witnessed earlier. As one observer noted, if the State, its bureaucratic organizations and international agencies reflect the officialdom of policy knowledge, the cultural groups reflect the variety of dissenting academics, which seed and transform such official knowledge through the logic of lived differences. The epistemic group performs the traditional roles of shaman, priest and trickster within the cognitive space of disasters guaranteeing their openness and plurality.

In disasters, a conversation of religions and social reform takes place around categories of aid, charity and philanthropy. The style of the multi-hazard state is being questioned not

to replace it but to ask whether it provides an adequate framework for citizenship. These emerging debates around disasters have become a site for a new socio-drama about responsibility, democracy and citizenship. It is a debate that needs to be chronicled and understood.

This chapter closes the ethnographic stories around my fieldwork. In the final chapter of this thesis, I will draw together the main themes that emerge out of this research and outline their implications for democracy, governance and citizenship. I will do so with reference to the existing literature in social science, which has informed some of the research in the thesis. I will particularly highlight the importance of the politics of knowledge and how classification shapes choices. In my restatement of arguments, I will also evaluate the findings from my analysis against contemporary ways of studying disasters and the usefulness of moving away from those approaches. I will then identify key opportunities for research in this area.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Reading Literature

Conclusions evoke a ritual of stock-taking: of reflection on the point of origin, the journey travelled, lessons gained, mis-steps along the way. This demands re-looking at what has been achieved in terms of the research questions asked, literature reviewed, framework adopted, and my contribution to the domain.

This thesis began with a survey of literature, which captured disaster studies as a discursive frame. The review sought out the genealogy of disaster studies and tried to elaborate my location in science studies, development and alternatives as an enterprise.

The classic approach to disasters in the mid-twentieth century, I illustrated, was, by origin and intention, a technocratic exercise. It was behavioural as a perspective and sought crowd control in unstable situations. (Quarantelli 1988; 1988b; Tierney 2007) As a study of emergencies, it became an expert domain of scientists and engineers (Hewitt 1983; 1995; 1998; 1999). Disaster studies became a specialized domain seeking technocratic solutions for physical events. At the policy level, this was exemplified by the policy resolutions of the UN during the International Decade for National Disaster Reduction (Hewitt 1983; 1995; 1996; 1998; 1999; Cannon 1994). The metaphors of understanding were systems-oriented, the emphasis was physicalist, and the communication was top-down. The emphasis was more on hazards, the focus on adjustment and on adaptation to hazards. The hazards paradigm was a geophysical, technological, understanding where nature was conceived as the enemy (Quarantelli 1988a; 1988b; 1998).

My review chronicled four sets of transitions, which provided for an alternative way of reading disasters. The first involved a movement from the hazards approach to the disaster perspective, where the relation between nature and society was more reciprocal

(Holling 1973; Serres 1995; Latour 1993; Folke 1995; 1996). The second involved a change in the scientific research itself in terms of the eco-system perspective, which refused to reduce disasters to one form of knowledge. There was then the broadening of the social as political economy (Hewitt 1983; 1995; 1997), the widening of the social through ideas of vulnerability (Blaikie 1994) and entitlements (Sen 1982). Disasters incorporated a wider perspective, which embraced the issues of poverty, vulnerability, deforestation. The third transition was a reading of disaster research through the lens of science studies. In this reading, knowledge became more critical and issues like rationality (Simon 1986; Lindholm *et al.* 2002; Goffman 1951; 1961), risk (Beck 1992; Douglas 1976) became important. I then made the final transition, disasters seen as sociology of knowledge to a politics of knowledge perspective (Bateson 1979; Nandy 1995, 1996; 2002; Visvanathan 1986; 1997; 1984; 2002; Marglin and Marglin 1996) partly in framing my questions. The research frame I chose incorporated these perspectives of literature and reworked it to justify a choice of questions and research methods. I argued that disasters could no longer be conceived in terms of merely scientific practices unfolding as a professional narrative. The movement from hazards to disasters had created a pluralistic interdisciplinary view of disaster studies, where the social had a complex life world, where knowledge was no longer restricted to science and scientific models of rationality (Hilhorst 2004).

Disasters as a mode of thought has made the transition from episodic to normal, natural to social, rehabilitative to mitigative, technocratic to participative, from a security focus to a sustainability philosophy. Disaster management is no longer just a mode of doing, or a way of reacting. Disasters have become a site for new modes of reflection, for new categories of thought, for new philosophical battles between groups competing for legitimization. Disasters have become sites for a new theatre of ideas where democracy, citizenship and governance are being reconstructed in cognitive terms. My work is a detailed exploration of this transition around an ethnographic study of two sites in Orissa and Gujarat.

I began with an acknowledgement that disasters are a quotidian part of existence in South Asia and a sense that it is this everyday-ness that I must understand. I also realized that this everyday-ness is thick with a whole array of philosophical and sociological questions that I had to systematize. I decided to focus on how disasters are conceived, categorized, conceptualized by the multiplicity of organizations, including states working at disaster sites. I suggested that a new kind of philosophical drama is being enacted and the classic debates on democracy, welfare and citizenship are being re-invented. To grasp this, I formulated three research questions for mapping my research problem.. These questions became the tuning forks for my empirical and theoretical research. These questions were:

- i. How does the framing of disasters change with the narratives and questions various groups ask of the disaster?
- ii. How is the social constructed by these organizations?
- iii. What are the implications of these constructions for democracy, governance and citizenship?

The three questions are not atomistically different. They form a network redefining the whole. The first raises issues of framing, of language, of knowledge, asking whether alternative framings help redefine, re-conceptualize disasters. I see this as a broadly epistemic question at a collective level. The plurality of the organizations I discuss perform the role of epistemic middlemen and they do so in a panarchic sense. The same problem is solved in different dialects and at several levels. The multiplicity of problem-solving allows for an increase in life chances by increasing and pluralizing the solutions available.

What we see is a multiplicity of narratives through a multiplicity of organizations. There are fundamentally three sets of epistemic narratives. The first by religious and cultural groups, inspired by Hindu reform, the second by Christian groups seeking a new secular humanitarian discourse on which to anchor their theology and ethics. Thirdly, the State itself is a knowledge entrepreneur, especially in the way it responds to science. Policy in

disaster becomes a way of measuring state literacy on science as rationality, risk and technocracy. What we have here is not a top-down narrative but a circus of debates cutting across the civilizational, the national, the religious, the secular, the managerial, and creating a thesaurus of concepts and a plurality of practices, which turns the disaster site into a celebration of plural epistemologies, creating multiple discourses, which not only define disasters but also recreate a new imagination, pain, poverty, development and suffering.

If the first answer is epistemic, the second centres on the social. The redefinitions of the social create and re-invent society. The new discursive forms break away from the 3R model of the social. Disaster processes are not elastic returns to the social. In fact, the social gets redefined in two ways – firstly, by showing that not all disasters return to the normal, and secondly, by showing that it becomes an opportunity for creating new versions of the social. The social is not a homogeneous unity but a collage of slivers and fragments, which gradually coalesce into unities. Thirdly, the nature of knowledge in disaster situations extends beyond science. I suggest that coping is not only a form of knowledge but a way of bricolaging the social.

Finally, I explore the ways in which disasters create and enrich the nature of citizenship, governance. The following sections seek to explore each of my research questions. I wish to emphasize that these three questions are three ways of telling the story around different axes. Knowledge invents the social and yet is embedded in it.

8.2 The Construction of the Social

One of the complex questions that my research confronts is related to the idea of the social and how definitions and redefinitions of the social alter the way we frame the narrative of disasters.

At a fundamental level, disasters are no longer seen as natural phenomena and elaborated as an act of God. Nor are disasters reductively reduced to crowd management exercises (Quarantelli 1998; 2005; Tierney *et al.* 2001; Tierney 2005) within a techno-managerial perspective. Thirdly, there is also a recognition that the old view embodied in the 3R construct is not longer valid. Society does not always return to normal after a disaster. In fact, disasters become a quotidian part of the normal, and an integral part of a society (Parasuraman and Unnikrishnan 2000). This is either because of the scale of the disasters or because of the fact that disasters often cascade into each other. Often, in South Asia, a drought follows a flood before the society encounters a cyclone. The calendrical rites of disaster can no longer be restricted to the singular annual or episodic narrative of the disaster.

At another level, policy documents on disasters often treat the social as one homogeneous whole. When society is treated en-bloc, one misses out on the question of levels or even the sense that membership in the social might be fragmented. The discourse of disasters marks the transition from the old idea of the social to the new and multiverse idea of the social. I must admit the old idea of the social does not disappear. It remains as a residual layer, present in people's perceptions and in traces of policy.

My thesis, in many ways, is an exploration of the varieties of social that a disaster invents, works on, and the implications of this process for citizenship, governance and democracy. My argument is framed in the following way. In the next few sections, I discuss the varieties of the social and the invention of the social by the survivor, the NGOs, the religious groups, the State. I then explore the implications of these experiments for a wider frame.

At the outset, I must clarify that disasters in disrupting the social also question the hierarchical definition of order. Society is no long conceptualized as a top-down command system where decisions are made at the top and enacted below. Society, to cite the work of the ecologist C.S. Holling (1973; 1994; 2002), is now a panarchic entity.

Panarchy offers a different model of decision-making and problem-solving, two issues which are central to disaster. Firstly, it challenges the old decisional frame of disaster policy where policy moved across a chain of command. The new heuristics of problem-solving demonstrates that the same solution does not work at every level of society or for every kind of disaster. This statement raises three issues. First, policy is no longer a monolithic narrative. Voice becomes crucial and with voice, the multiplicity of rationalities that go into the act of subsistence, survival and the fragments of the social constructed as a consequence also acquire importance. Thirdly, the notion of narratives cannot be aggregated from the micro to the macro. We confront a plurality of languages and stories, demanding, in turn, a more complex idea of disasters. The social is thus not a homogeneous entity, a uniform slab but a variegated layer of life-worlds integrated into a plural form (Cicourel 1975).

I began with survival at the barest level. I trace the moral career of the survivor in the aftermath of a disaster situation. I argue that we have to see the survivor as a person of knowledge with a memory of a society and an ecology that has been disrupted. The survivor responds in an everyday intuitive sense. The survivor is a composite of roles. S/he is a citizen, a witness, a technologist, a trustee, located in a network of social networks as social capital and memory. S/he is also a theorist and a social engineer, reconstructing society, nature, habitat, and gradually livelihood in the aftermath of disaster. The fabric of the survivor's life has been impoverished and what I trace are the dynamics of survival after disruption.

I begin with coping. Coping refers to the fundamental, almost intuitive act of survival at less than subsistence level. There is an abjectness to the body on its last reserves. Coping is that desperate act of prolonging life. It is literally skeletal, seeking the minimal continuity of life. The survivor does enough to survive, eke out a living at a level of existence where even subsistence or poverty appears as forms of surplus. Coping is that minimal act of agency, that poetics of resistance, of survival that demands its own grammar, economy, language and semiotics. Coping as an activity links bare life

(Agamben 1998; 2005), subsistence and survival in extreme situations to the normalcy of poverty or marginality. Coping overlaps with subsistence, with poverty, with bare life, in a kinship of tactics but is yet different from each of them. The debate on disasters links the abjectness of survival in a catastrophe to the abjectness of the *Homo Sacer* (Agamben 1998). Subsistence and vulnerability raise questions about the calorific content of citizenship. At what level of bodily survival does the modern idea of citizenship begin? What does eking out on seawater or on a few leaves say about survival and citizenship? Are conditions of trauma the right space for citizenship? If citizenship is about welfare, well-being or even the good life, then what does it say about the indescribable horror of survival in disasters? (Chapter 4.)

The idea of coping explores the topic of the social in subsistence societies. But coping as theory and practice provides a bridgehead to the varieties of theorizing about poverty, subsistence and development as forms of the social. The first few weeks of the Orissa cyclone witnessed such acts of survival. The survivor becomes a social theorist, rebuilding society and reflecting on it.

8.3 Reflections on Coping

Coping also refers to a life-world of minimality, whose modes of adjustment, agency, resistance, even its calculus of survival, has not yet graduated to the dignity of a subaltern status. Coping is an orally expressed wisdom, hardly mentioned in texts or recognized in policy documents. The creativity of disaster studies lies in giving dignity to this life-world, whose humble techniques and desperate reflexes allow for life. It is a culture of its own, demanding its own modest ethnography. Disaster studies, by focusing on the intense vulnerability of people in disaster situations, bring a focus on a life-world, demanding the dignity of citizenship and the recognition of policy to this situation. They add to science

and management forms of knowledge that are not even recognized as such. In doing all of these, ethnographic accounts of coping breaches one of the greatest silences about suffering and marginality in modern life. The life-world of coping in disaster situations links survival to other issues of knowledge, participation and empowerment.

Coping I argue, should not be seen as the isolated response of isolated individuals in disaster situations. By focusing on the vulnerability of individuals, it highlights how the classifications and categories, current in concepts of democracy and development, create a backstage of forgetfulness. My research shows how people, especially migrants from fishing communities, who are not part of a revenue village, often fall out of the map of governance (Chapter 4). Secondly, by categorizing these individuals into social identities, it builds a new idea of the social, creating forms of empowerment, which add to the resilience of these groups. In constructing survival, the rituals of coping help construct communities. Marginal groups and marginal individuals create fragmented groups, networks, which establish temporary sites for empowerment. Here the concept of coping, which often portrays or refers to isolated individuals in distress, moves from the idea of the lone individual to groups of such people, creating a new strand of the social that is not based on usual categories of membership. Here, the social is patched up, constructed out of strands or slivers of members, often ignored by society. One saw in Orissa how marginals, orphans, widows, the landless forge small networks of solidarity, which allow for resilience, resistance and a hope for normalcy. It is as if the social itself is a bricolage, patched up from what is left or available. It is this almost rudimentary sliver of the social, probably the simplest form of institutionalization, that policy-making needs to consider more systematically. The role of Self-help Groups (SHGs) in Orissa is a specific case in this context. They re-invent the social around fragments of suffering and survival. The sharing of trauma almost provides a material base for a new set of relationships, allowing for recovery and reconstruction.

The construction of the social at this fundamental level is often ignored by policy documents. There is a need to respond to the vulnerability of the social, and while

engaging with vulnerability, to look at the entrepreneurial nature of the survivor in inventing the social. By recognizing the agency of the survivor, I feel that policy documents must build frameworks around such enterprises. This facilitates the transition to normalcy and recognizes the holes in policy-making. I show how policy-makers and NGOs often enter with a pre-fabricated model of society, indifferent to the emergence of the social at this rudimentary level. This was particularly obvious in the case of livelihood issues like nets (CARE in Chapter 5) or on the nature of the community at the urban level (Unnati in Chapter 6). The role of SHGs as the building blocks of the new social must be recognized. SHGs (Chapter 4) create new notions of competence and entitlements. The old system of constraints, of role expectations, which marked the previous set of institutions, need not carry over as a conceptual or institutional baggage. Policy has to understand and codify this grammar of change.

More critically, the very normalcy of disaster demands that one give a new content to citizenship. The Sphere Charter has specified the entitlements of a disaster victim as a citizen. There is, however, more than calorific content to citizenship. What the Sphere Charter is referring to is citizenship as a form of being, of presence at the social level, when disasters often subject survivors to forms of benign neglect or disaster fatigue. The idea of coping reveals the entitlements, the creativity, the sense of the social of categories, which are often treated as sub-social or even bare life. The *idea* of coping adds new depth to democratization by creating imaginations that see beyond citizenship as a fixed entity of entitlements and competence in a normal situation. The usual development sequence in the discourse of citizenship has an external and an internal aspect. Externally, citizenship is seen as a movement from exile or refugee or migrant to citizenship as a legal and political status within a defined territory. Internally, we give content to citizenship in terms of roles and rights by gendering it, by adding a notion of livelihood and political economy, by defining it in a variety of cultural contexts. The question that disasters raise is: "What happens to the category of citizenship beyond the standard normalcy of statuses and entitlements?" By asking what kind of citizen a disaster victim is, we raise the issue

of rights in particular contexts. This also raises the question of theorizing about citizenship in abnormal situations. Giorgio Agamben, in his *States of Exception* (2005), describes conditions of emergency where the rights of citizens are suspended for reasons of State. What my research visualizes are conditions of crisis, abnormality, emergency-like disasters, when the vulnerability of survivors needs an enabling environment of citizenship. We have to add rights and entitlements of a particular kind. Disasters thus become a challenge to the imagination of everyday governance by showing the quotidian nature of disasters and the issues they raise for governance. Specifically, the ethno-science of coping, bricolage, has to be woven into the techno-managerial discourses of disaster management.

Of late, it has been fashionable for social scientists to use the emic term *jugaad*. This is a folk term implying improvisation under constraints. It has been used to refer to management under scarcity, or working with technologies which are regarded as obsolescent elsewhere. Jugaad refers to these acts of improvisation, of making-do. The concept is used more as a semaphore, an Indian word in an intercultural management vocabulary. Improvisation under constraints becomes critical. In fact, in policy terms, we can think of a gradient of levels where coping and make-dos refer to immediate survival and subsistence at the relief level, wherein we have to make do with what there is. Policy at this level can be seen as muddling through. I am not being dismissive. What I am trying to emphasize is that disaster management reveals itself as a quilt patch of rationalities, localized and pragmatic. Muddling through works. What such an array of concepts – coping, satisficing, optimizing – adds is a gradient of diversity to disaster management, erasing or questioning a linear, homogenous, centralized, planned model. Instead of one policy language, what we actually confront are hybrids, pragmatic rationalities, which need to be listed and listened to in hitherto pristine narratives of policy.

The SHG also raises another important question. One of the unintended consequences of the invention of the SHG is the struggle, the tension between the old and the new social,

for example, between the patriarchal family and the new SHG, where widows and orphans have obtained a greater financial and organizational autonomy. Governance in a post-disaster situation becomes a political choice between two forms of the social. Disasters, by raising these issues, highlight the everyday conflicts of governance.

If the SHG and the idea of coping demarcate the idea of the social at its most rudimentary level, the organizations, religious and cultural, at the disaster sites, reveal a new horizon for the debate on disaster management by providing a new vocabulary of activity, a definition of method, an idea of organizations as epistemic entities and lifestyle. Each group, in pursuing its goals, invents other layers of the social.

One of the fundamental questions that my thesis posits centres on the cognitive role of organizations at disaster sites. In that sense, my thesis reads the behaviour and the practice of these organizations as epistemic experiments. As epistemic experiments, both at the discursive and performative levels, they go beyond the problem-solving practices, the fables described in literature. The latter conveys a sense of hierarchical groups operating top-down. The emphasis is on the dyadic relation between the State and the citizen. My epistemic groups occupy intermediary spaces between these two, creating other alternatives, possibilities a dyadic top-down world may have ignored. Beyond the problem, they redefine the social by reworking categories. Epistemic groups provided a new thesaurus of words, which redefine worlds. The social is no longer singular, or given; it is reworked in terms of different paradigms of knowledge.

8.4 Epistemic Middlemen

My study covers four organizations with a Hindu religious affinity. For each of the four – RKM, RSS, BAPS and AMURT (Chapter 7) – I describe their sense of their everyday self, emphasizing, that for all four, disaster relief was only a part of their overall repertoire of competence. Disaster relief had to be located within a wider religious and philosophical gestalt. What I immediately noticed is the logic of scale. Each of these organizations, especially BAPS and RKM, can operate on a massive scale. But what makes the logistics of distribution memorable is the style of caring, the language and rituals of hospitality in which it is articulated. Hospitality as a language transforms the asymmetry of aid, the hierarchy or even indifference of the dole. In many empirical cases, the victim as the recipient is seen as superior. S/he is met with dignity and honoured for allowing the opportunity of service. While the idiom is different, the logistics are impressive. Organizationally, these groups are as impressive as any State, corporate or voluntary group. However, they follow the logic of a different philosophy. Hospitality and service as frameworks transform the ideology of aiding. New definitions and new realities outline a world with different practices.

Ethnography demanded a study of the language and rituals of presentation. Each act, each tactic becomes a vignette of philosophical practice. I saw this particularly around food. Food was a civilizational construct. It was polysemic in its messages. It conveyed care, dignity. Hot food as a message conveyed the honouring of a guest. Cold food in plastic packets signals indifference or impersonality. The numbers served become not only an index of an organization's competence but also a celebration of a community of hospitality. Food reiterates the sanctity and vitality of the social.

Each group carries what might literally be called an imaginary schedule of the rituals of time in a disaster, the gap between normalcy and return. Each has a formula for return. BAPS for instance emphasizes dignity as the moment of return. An honoring of food and

help demands as a signal of normalcy, a return to normalcy. A guest by definition occupies a temporary space.

There are literally brand distinctions here that we must emphasize. The emphasis is on the language of service. Hospitality begins with food, but the logic of care moves to rehabilitation, where consultation and participation become critical. You build a community by letting a community restore itself. Here, dignity goes beyond the language of victimhood and helplessness. Dignity is the mark of a person. It goes beyond rights as an entitlement to the very ontology of everyday being. BAPS kits provide for a toothbrush and a *bindi*, so that the survivor feels ready to meet the day.

Dignity summons the listener, listening affirms the other and listening also creates a care for details. These groups realize that the logic of logistics also needs a network of listeners, mourners who understand the rituals of grief and provide the narrative spaces where the survivor can move on. Without grief as a public enactment, the therapy of recovery cannot begin. The presence of *sadhus* creates the rituals of recovery. Hospitality, dignity, mourning are idioms from a different world. They are tacit dialects of civilization, where caring is not charity or philanthropy.

The behaviour of these groups becomes an exemplar for others. Many BAPS and RSS volunteers were also victims. Many of them had lost members of their families. They quietly mourned their own losses for a while and then returned quietly to relief work. Grief gets sublimated into service of others. There is a sense of community, of sharing and giving, of presence consolidated in the idea of the *satsang*.

Satsang involves three ideas, which help rebuild and reiterate the communities' idea of the social. It involves the *darshan* of the *guru*, a sense of his charisma. It includes the *pravachan*, the sermons, discourses of the *sadhus* and finally, a sense of the community, a feeling that a sufferer belongs, that he is never alone. Satsang emphasizes that a community of the living is a community for the healing. Instead of the Freudian couch,

we have the community as a congregation, reworking norms through the rituals of everydayness. The language is of care, prayers, devotional songs, discourses and personal counselling. The rituals have an in-built system that grief and mourning require closure and a return to everyday. The satsang is a therapeutic system in its structuring of rituals. The logic is not of voluntarism but of the language of devotion. Each devotee is an ideal volunteer, a normative extension of the wishes of the Guru who weaves together the cosmic, the divine, and the everyday through his charisma.

The spiritual economy of these groups is hyphenated to a political economy. A return to work and a restoration of livelihood is seen as an index of normalcy. The satsang as a *sanstha* (organization) provides aid for small entrepreneurs to resume work. But, the idea of *seva* goes beyond the routine of normalcy. Seva unites the victim and the relief-giver by asking the victim to help others. Service becomes an externalization of grief. Service recreates the bonds of the social while grief and isolation may be monadic.

I must emphasize that service for all its spontaneity is a ritual that standardizes the norms of the performative code. From the religious text to the supply chain serving a network of villages, there are protocols. For instance, the spiritual and the political economy of the BAPS emerged from a religious tradition. It was a Hindu Bhakti tradition, where renunciation and asceticism created a spiritual discipline, which set the stage for an engagement with the world. These groups created a style of engagement where the devotee or the *pracharak* operated within a lifestyle of limits, while creating service for the other. There is no trace of narcissism, only a collective joy in the ideals and the performance of the organization. These groups are clear that *seva* is not social work, a professionalized career. It is not voluntarism in a secular sense. It is a devotion expressed as service. It is everyday but never routine. It is voluntarism as an evocation of spiritual belief. It is articulate in its philosophy and clear about differences from the Christian ethic of charity and missionary activity. While *seva* confronts charity, a Hindu ethic of tolerance and plurality challenges the idea of conversion. For these groups, disaster management can restore the dignity of a people by re-embedding them in their culture. It

is a mark of hospitality, a sacrament, while conversion is seen as a bargain, a contract, an act of horse-trading, where you trade identity for relief and rehabilitation. Conversion, these groups argue, reinforces the asymmetry of charity where the victim becomes a child of lesser God. In a critical sense, disasters have become sites for civilizational battles at an ideological level, and in the everyday sense.

Comparing the variety of strategies, I realize that epistemology, not only labels, defines reality; it strategizes our ways of coping with the world of grief and survival. What each of these groups claims is a particular epistemology of the social, each located within a civilizational perspective, each contouring the social in its unique ways. For example, the BAPS world is a three-layered one. It begins cosmologically with the Guru as the source of the divine. The social is one with the cosmos, when the devotee is one with the Guru. An empty cosmos is a God bereft of devotees. The harmony between the two creates the community. Both society and Guru demand selflessness. Here, charity or the logic of the market or the boy-scout pride diminishes the social. The Guru allows a social where ‘I-ness’ and ‘my-ness’ are erased. Such faith, such devotion is culturally coded through rituals like sanskar, satsang and devotion defined by austerity, devotion and caring. This is the logic of a world outside professional, social service. It is a spiritual ethics, which encompasses everyday management. Disasters provide for the unrolling of a discourse worked out in an everyday sense.

When extended to disasters, such a perspective sees disasters as events disrupting or dislocating the devotee from the community. When suffering disrupts the social, then service re-embeds it. The logic of this unfolds for the other organizations. They become variations in the kaleidoscope of the social. Each dialect allows for a different kind of particularity. For the RSS, the core is the *shakha*, it is the initiation ritual that intensifies the social as an act of the political.

What the satsang was to BAPS, the Sangh is to the RSS. Both are conceived as machines for making the social. In intensifying the social, one creates a one-ness. It is normative.

Management creates the artificiality of the social. Sacrifices are a part of the social as voluntarism. It is inspired by *sanskar*, a normative way of behaving for the RSS, wherein the community is sacramental and voluntarism is part of the social contract. Voluntarism is seen as a lesser kind of a social. *Seva* is a primordial social instinct, where the social and the national coincide. The BAPS logic has a sense of the spiritual, the divine. For the RSS, the social is the divine. The differences in language reflect differences in the epistemology of the social. BAPS's presentation of itself is colourful, celebratory; the RSS is almost matter-of-fact. While both talk of service, their tact grammars are different. For one, society reflects the civilizational; for the other, the nation state is God. The RSS is profoundly Durkheim (1984). It sees the isolated individual as an alien to be rescued. The metaphor is that of a hive. It sees charity as sentimentality, because it trivializes disasters, converting suffering into a spectacle. Disasters for it are a part of life and need to be handled accordingly. The search for solidarity that the RSS seeks is that of organic solidarity, not a mechanical replication (Durkheim 1984) of the social but an explication of difference, of self-reliance. In front of the *swayamsevak*, voluntarism appears as a weak form of altruism and of the social. Voluntarism seeks to help, the RSS to serve. Help creates dependency, *seva* creates self-reliance. The epistemology of the social extends itself into the disasters as ways of consolidating the social through self-reliance. In that sense, a disaster is merely an experimental test of its sense of the social.

The equivalent of the *satsang* and the *shakha* for the RKM is the monastery. It is an instrument for service. The idea of service rejects the Christian idea of charity or even compassion as articulated in popular faith. For RKM, service has to be monistic rather than dualistic. Categories like charity, compassion create the other, while in the ideal of service, one caters to the divine in man. As Swami Sivananda said, "God is best manifested in man, whether it is cleaning a road or teaching." What we sense in all groups is the power of the social anchored in the divine, the civilizational or the nation state. The ruggedness of the social redefines disaster management in pragmatic everyday terms, where suffering is seen unsentimentally. It is by creating alternative

epistemologies of the social that these groups have created alternative imaginaries for policy.

The question we must ask now is: “What are the implications of the epistemologies of the social created by religious organizations for the wider debate on disasters? The ecology of the social that these social groups create provides language, a different vocabulary for citizenship and governance. All their worldviews stem from the locus in Hindu social reform. However, now instead of arguing with the colonial mindset, these groups are seeking to create alternative modernities or alternate global views.

Civilizationally sensitive, these groups seek to create a classificatory system, which establishes a different network of relations between the individual person, the citizen community and the State. The civics of behaviour that is articulated and expected is different. The emphasis is on community rather than on the individual. Disasters are thus more a challenge to the community rather than a threat to the individual. Disasters are seen as disrupting the existing social. The community as an ecology of care and concern must immediately cocoon the individual. The axis is person–community rather than the individual/the State or the individual/the society. The community does not wait for the State or see the person as helpless. It has an immediate repertoire of rituals from food, to hospitality, to congregational care, which move into the breach. It also has an emphasis on collective duty rather than on individual rights. It obtains its inspiration from culture and its leadership from the community. While efficient in response, it is also ascetic in style. All these groups perform efficiently on low overheads. Instead of using accounting methodologies, they use an ethics of responsibility to the Guru. The response is also less sentimental. Instead of the excess of inefficiency of aid, there is a sense of distribution. The emphasis is on hospitality oriented to a return to normalcy. Service is more of an ethic, which sees the survivor as superior but ruthlessly insists on the temporariness of his status. The community eggs the survivor to a resumption of normalcy. The survivor always has agency, responsibility and has to donate labour, skills and time to the act of reconstruction. He is not allowed to wallow in victimhood.

The language of articulation is crucial. The ethics of attitudes, the key words that define life-worlds, values, attitudes, and, therefore, determine behaviour, stems from the religious and the civilizational. The focus is always on the exemplar rather than on an organizational paradigm. Language as a glossary of terms creates an alternative grid. If the modern disaster relief sees an opposition between the State and the individual, these groups posit the complementarity of person and community. If modern relief works through protocols, codes, standards and audit, the predictability of behaviours comes from the ritualization of behaviour. Ritual serves as an equivalent of organizational protocols. If modern relief is rights-based, focusing on the individual, the behaviour of these groups stems from an ethics of duty. If relief emphasizes the professionalism of care and social work, these communities reiterate the service of the believer. This signifies not just the competing views of the organization, logistics and time but also two competing ideas of how to interpret, define, and respond to a disaster.

The difference can be represented in the form of two grids. Table 8.1 looks across various themes to the styles of the current relief model, as followed by humanitarian relief agencies and the Hindu religious groups.

Table 8.1: Relief Models of Organizations

Theme	Current Relief Model	Religious Groups
Orientation	Individual	Person
Focus	Rights	Duties
Concern	Compassion	Service as <i>seva</i>
Cognitive Travel	Paradigm	Exemplar
Attitude	Sentimental Humanitarianism	Detached/Time-bound
Rules	Methodological	Ethical
Rites	Protocols	Rituals
Coordination	Organizational	Communal
Style	Professional	Personal
Economy	Wasteful	Ascetic
Survivor	Inferior, Object of Pity and Politics	Superior as an opportunity for service

Source: Author

For example, the *shakha* of RSS challenges the individualism of the West, emphasizing the density of the community sense, which the NGO as an organization cannot sustain, as it moves episodically from event to event. For the RSS, the social is natural and its members compare concern and care to a mother's concern for a baby. This concern and response is tacit and springs from internalizing the norms of a culture. It is anchored in an organismic idea of society, wherein each part seeks a constant membership of the whole. Thus, caring is a sense of the social that sees humanitarianism as alien. The RSS claims that humanitarianism is for strangers, not for a family. It is a handicapped idea of the social to a *shakha*, which carries the cultural genius of brotherhood and belonging.

The frameworks are different. The critique of religious groups of modern relief focuses on three aspects. The idea of service challenges the idea of charity and its extensions into aid, philanthropy development. It also provides a critique of modern humanitarianism as being erratic, impersonal and not fully needs-based. It sees a professional act as opposed to a devotional act as being impersonal, technical and managerial, and, therefore, role-bound rather than holistic in its perspective.

The overall emphasis is on communities rather than on civil society or the State. Communities are repositories of skill, competence, solidarity, while the State and international relief agencies are seen as a second or a secondary line of defence. What we have, though informally, organized are two competing discourses on how to conceptualize, classify and respond to disasters. The ethnographies of the varieties of the social provide a plurality of dialects, where each group creates a philosophical dictionary of terms to encompass the world of disasters.

8.5 From Charity to Managerial Humanitarianism

If the religious and cultural groups concentrate on a civilizational critique of disaster management, re-reading the concepts and implications of terms like philanthropy, charity, aid, autonomy, the voluntary groups used disasters to make the transition from the idea of charity as a Christian religious perspective to a secular theory of rights-based disaster management, reworking the idea of citizenship, poverty and development. The first can be seen as a more epistemological process, focusing on perception, management, lifestyle, while the second process is more ontological. It focuses on the person rather than on the individual, and asks what citizenship means in a disaster situation, which it reads both abstractly as a charter of rights, and in an embedded way as livelihood. This section poses the following questions: “How does vulnerability relate rights to poverty? How does one institutionalize and ritualize such forms of learning into policy behaviour?” The process of unravelling the answers to these questions is a complex one, unfolding both through planned action and also through slippages and translations, as a new discourse incrementally evolves from the old texts of Disaster Management as articulated by civil society.

The Christian roots of voluntarism are obvious in groups like Action Aid (AA), Oxfam, CARE, Caritas and many smaller groups. Christianity as a worldview marked them off in four ways. Firstly, they were marked as ‘foreign’ despite the fact that the advent of Christianity in India was as far back as 51 AD. Secondly, Christian groups have virtually created the paradigm of civil society voluntarism anchored around the idea of charity. Thirdly, as Christian groups, they are committed to some form of affirmative action, as there were a large number of ‘Dalits’ and tribals, who are identified as needy. Christianity had a stake in the politics of marginality, because of its constituencies. Finally, as Christian groups, they are committed to spreading gospel values (sometimes translating into ‘conversion’).

There was a tacit prompting that Christian NGOs, while not denying Christian identity, had to appear more Indian. They had to create forms of universalism that went beyond the Christian idea of charity. Yet they had to embed the creativity of this transition within the texts of Christian cosmology and ethics. Many of the groups realized that bridges had to be built between Christianity and the others that could be validated by the Indian Constitution and the emerging discourses of human rights. One had to ask as to how such groups mediate between Christian theology and the enlightenment ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. Groups like Caritas realize that while the roots of their imagination lay in the Bible, the Bible could not be cited directly in disaster management except as a parable. They had to locate disasters within the emerging social doctrine of the Church. Solidarity is the key to Christian doctrine. Solidarity demands that the spirit of Christian doctrine rework the social not as a theology but as social science. Solidarity demands the caring community and summons the spirit of the Good Samaritan. But the Good Samaritan cannot operate on sympathy or charity alone. He needs to look at the causes of disasters and examine how they damage the social. He has to bring a different notion of agency, where charity graduates from relief to autonomy and in the process, breaking the mindset of dependency. This is not a rhetorical transition but a response to the demands of everydayness, listing specific requirements like food, sanitation, hygiene, water and trauma. Suffering makes a transition to modernity through social science.

8.6 The Role of Social Science: Further Reflections on Vulnerability

Social science enters the fabric of Christian voluntarism within disaster sites in four ways. Suffering becomes a theory of justice around the idea of rights and equality. Secondly, the language of discourse moves from theology to politics. Thirdly, social science creates a framework for responsibility caught in the pastoralism of accountability, audit and transparency. As the discourse moves from theology to secularism, the groups move from charity to a new humanitarianism, emphasizing the right of all peoples to receive succour

during disasters. Fourthly, it weaves into social science the idea of solidarity, creating a hybrid of contract and *communitas*, making Christian organizations accountable. The other does not only have a right to help, but it also has the right to demand an account of behaviour during a disaster, according to certain norms. The above four combine to create charity as the logistics of networks of help built on a managerial grid embedded in the categories of social science. The impetus is Christian, but the methods and framework stem from the language of social science. Politics provides the frame of rights, management, the grids of concepts and a framework of methods, which secularize charity into care, care into standards and intervention into accountability. The introduction of social science creates a more universalistic response to the earlier language of suffering. Management also redeems the current scepticism, even cynicism, around humanitarianism as a modern project.

The tactics are clear. These groups see themselves as addendums to the State. They take State policy seriously, and seek to implement it, systematically exploiting every opportunity. For example, CARE has always adopted a partnership approach, working the reconstruction project with three specialized agencies and thirty local NGOs. These groups are, for example, more critical than oppositional. Yet, they are also anchored deeply in their constituencies, which are deeply Christian and also marginal. They realize there is a political economy to religion and seek to foreground this rather than their religious perspective. In order to accomplish this, they realize that they have to combine their local commitment to disadvantaged groups with a wider language of suffering. Charity as *Caritas* gives way to a theory of rights.

Once the trajectory is clear, the track has to be worked out more experimentally. The politics of framing contains three aspects: political as a discourse, management as a method, social science as the language of feedback serving as a secular map of suffering.

The voluntary groups are aware that while disasters often include the marginal and the poor, disaster management cannot be an annexe to poverty studies. The relation between

poverty and disasters also cannot be enveloped in the development discourse. We need a richer set of concepts to link survival, subsistence, coping and suffering to disasters. The language of poverty in its everyday sense does not capture such a situation. It evokes its own Pavlovian responses about the victims. Two concepts appear as reasonable candidates at this juncture – the first is livelihood, which is embedded in political economy but goes beyond the rudimentary idea of occupation. Livelihood contours work, social location, ecology, access to resources from food to livestock to social insurance and social capital. Livelihood specifies constraints and possibilities, looks systematically at agency and assets at a micro level. Complementing the economic and social demands of the concept is the idea of vulnerability. Vulnerability is a real-time concept, which looks at fragility, agency and competence as a scenario.

Secondly, vulnerability as a creative process examines the varieties of the social. The voluntary groups, instead of looking at standard social strata, looked at slivers of the social, fragments, categories, which often do not receive attention. These include migrants, daily wage earners, landless farmers, the old and the infirm, woman-headed households. It realizes that disaster victims may suffer from new forms of stress like trauma. Action Aid's studies of trauma in collaboration with NIMHANS, Bangalore, carved out a new area of policy (see Section 6.4.1). This helps create a micro-sociology of vulnerability and helps focus on delivery, where it is acutely due.

The concepts of vulnerability and livelihood massage the everyday world of disasters beyond poverty stereotypes. This entails a three-step process; first, the linking of the everyday to crisis situations, especially where crisis becomes a prolonged everyday situation as disasters in India often cascade into each other; second, it asks not just what the entitlements of citizenship in general are, but about the entitlements of citizenship in disaster situations; third, it links rights to guarantees of standards and delivery. This creates a whole new set of social science rituals, which conceive of rights not just as a guarantee of being but as an access to systems of delivery. Disaster aid combines the entitlements of citizenship with the everydayness of consumption. The last criterion

unfolds a preoccupation with social science as a discourse. In fact, if political ideas form the first layer of life-giving concepts around a disaster victim, the second layer is a thickening of social science perspectives.

The voluntary groups realize both intuitively and self-consciously that the transition from charity to rights has specific demands. It involves a movement from the spontaneous and erratic forms of help to some guarantee of continuity and predictability of delivery. Secondly, charity is seen as parochial, in-house and often selective. These groups have to make a transition to some image of universalism as objectivity and some idea of justice for the marginal. Thirdly, voluntarism has to make a transition from the amateur and the voluntary to professionalism as a career. All three transitions are facilitated through a social science perspective. We witness this most clearly in groups like Action Aid and CARE.

Social science, in disaster situations, performs a set of functions critical for the presentation of the new voluntary self in the public life of humanitarianism. Firstly, it secularizes the language of care. Secondly, rather than allowing spontaneous help, it seeks an objective focus through the survey, almost clinically identifying fragments of people affected, and also assessing loss in terms of a network of social science concepts. It seeks an objective assessment of disaster aid. It not only seeks to examine where the social has been damaged and which kinds of social are more vulnerable, but also to entrepreneurially create new forms of the social through networks like the grain and seed bank. It creates a many-layered policy around critical issues like watershed management. It adds to the objectivity of survey and policy planning a sense of justice by identifying the most marginal groups in Orissa. It uses social science to create an image of transparency in selection, thus foiling the factionalism and parochialism of patronage-driven politicians. By focusing on participation, it thickens the social through the creation of SHGs, thus empowering marginal groups. Finally, it summons academic social science to provide objective outside assessments of its activities. The JNU report on Bolangir (see Section 6.6.2) is one crucial example. But social science is not limited merely to a

language of alertness, identification and classification. It combines the objectivity of evaluating suffering in disasters to the objectivity in assessing its own contributions, impact and strategies. Audits, standards become a language of objectivity, while rights and entitlements cover the language of justice. Through the idea of standards, the Sphere Charter for disasters, the methodology of audits, social science creates a language of assessment, which is at the same time normative, technocratic and scientific. Social science managerializes the delivery systems of charity, altering its idioms of discourse.

Social science provides a perspective, an idiom, a classification, a technique of survey, an assessment of methods. It allows voluntary groups to present themselves in a new way in humanitarian life. They are no longer projected as parochial, even if their funding is still from the same sources. Instead of a sense of the New Testament, the project reports sound almost positivist. Social science helps legitimize their old constituencies in the new language of rights. More importantly, it helps them redefine and then aggregate the varieties of the social into a thickness of a richer idea of citizenship. What the NGOs do through practices and habituses is that they create a new revitalized idea of humanitarianism around disaster management, at local levels.

8.7 Towards a Human Rights Paradigm

The voluntary groups of a Christian and a secular kind realize that remaking policy and their worlds requires both a remaking of discourse and a reconstitution of practice. They confront the critique of charity but they also realize that the humanitarianism of the Western kind is not quite adequate. They recognize that charity creates a kind of asymmetry and often degenerates into pity. There is a sense that when suffering is seen at a distance, it becomes both a question of numbers and a problem of sentimentality. They also realize that they must move from a Christian dialect to a more universalist and secular language of concern without falling into the trap of universalism, which tends to see humanity in abstract and often legalist terms. As problem-solvers, groups like Action

Aid, Oxfam, seek an embedded, middle-range solution, where, through practice and advocacy, they seek to redefine policy.

As a collective, they realized that they had to map the world and use certain concepts to differentiate their way of defining the world. As a general strategy, they chose a human rights perspective rather than a humanitarian one. They conceded that the two often merged but the merger was witnessed more in military humanitarianism rather than in the logic of disasters. Critical to this differentiation was the tacit distinction between an atrocity and a disaster. Atrocity summoned the rights paradigm in a different way. It had its own specific demonology, while disasters were open-ended in etiology. Intervention was seen as a part of militarism and aid, and humanitarianism was an extension of military might. In fact, humanitarianism and human rights are blurred in this picture. It allows just wars with all their violence to be seen as humane wars. As Costas Douzinas puts it, this was best illustrated in Afghanistan where aid packages were dropped between bombing raids. As a result, “Cruise missiles and corned beef” mixed up the idea of rights and justice became an extension of military strategy (Douzinas 2007: 9). Groups like Action Aid are ideologically clear that a view of human rights has to break the unnatural coupling between militarism and humanitarianism. Once this de-linking is achieved, humanitarianism can be rewritten in a different dialect.

The first step in this process is to differentiate their idea of human rights as a pluralistic exercise around concrete marginal groups. In disasters, rights are universal claims but are reworked not around individuals alone but around different forms of marginality. Humanity becomes sociologized from an abstract universalism into an embedded sociology. Charity is no longer an amorphous term directed at a population or a people, but becomes a rights issue around a specific community. There is a sense that only if humanity is conceptualized, sociologized and prioritized in terms of the most vulnerable parts does humanity become meaningful. While the idea of humanity is species-specific, rights are properties associated with specific social categories like orphans, widows and the landless. They need both the general idea of rights and specific entitlements. Further,

while charity conveys or foregrounds a sense of helplessness, the idea of vulnerability and rights is richer in conveying both susceptibility to disasters and the resilience of the group. Instead of the contempt or superiority over the victim that charity and humanitarianism evoke, one talks of agency and the reciprocal responsibility of the survivor and the voluntary group. These groups understand suffering but do not use the rhetoric of pain. They de-sentimentalize it through a social science language, which embeds suffering in a particular community, its ecology, its political economy. By doing so, they valorize not the donor but the survivor. There is no Manichaeism, no demonology of any group, only a sociological analysis, which secularizes demonology into exploitation, vulnerability and reads it non-ideologically. Instead of the rhetoric of pity, these reports produce ethnography and statistics. Social science and the language and methods of social science not only secularize charity but also anchor the possibility of a rights language. Livelihood becomes a key category, mediating political economy and rights. The varieties of knowledge from coping to management become fundamental in articulating the relation between policy and survival. There is an ethics of narrative, which allows for a thickening of the layers of the social. The old model of rights counterposes the individual against the State. The ethics of the disaster narrative allows varieties of the social. The vulnerability of the individual is recorded but so is the vulnerability of the fragmented social like orphans, widows, the disadvantaged, the marginals, who need the social provided by the community. Individual pain and trauma are recognized, especially in Action Aid's major study for identifying trauma as a special category of pain and suffering, a syndrome in its own right, a life-world requiring a specific etiology and understanding that does not pathologize it.

The notion of the rights of specific groups creates an empirical specificity, which allows for concrete accountability. There are shifts in the discourse, which reflect shifts in the worldview. When pity or charity encompasses rights, the latter become an object of export, a commodity brought in with aid rather than a set of entitlements and the inalienable right of a group. Instead of being only moral language, the ethical and the

political combine and combine concretely. Pity as an ambience is replaced by concrete policies embodied in a specific politics. Secondly, the idea of rights is not presented as a substitute for governance but as a sensitizing framework for it. Thirdly, there is recognition of the political within a theory of democratic participation rather than through a framework of missionizing Christianity or humanitarianism. In the next section, I examine how the State, in responding to a disaster, also creates varieties of the social.

8.8 The State and Disasters

In this section, I explore the relation of the State and the social around disasters. The standard model of disasters has made a transition from the hazards view wherein disasters were more of a natural occurrence, requiring a technical response. Reconstruction was around materiality and response was around crowd control. Even when disasters were seen as social facts, the 3R model tended to view disasters as temporary disruptions, with society returning to the normal. It was only when disasters became prolonged affairs that the idea of the social became more inventive. The plurality of responses from civil society and community have created varieties of the social around the disaster. The State, especially in pursuit of disaster mitigation, seeks to invent new forms of the social around its activities. The State also becomes a mediator between the old and new forms of the social.

The invention of the social is built into the very definition of the ‘multi-hazard state’. Once disasters are based on a plural model of disasters rather than the traditional model of drought, policy has to invent new spaces more critically, as disaster management becomes a part of governance and a text of State competence, and the State seeks to redefine the social around disasters. Thirdly, the new definition of the social arises from international agencies demanding new methodologies and new institutions from the State to emphasize the new presentation of itself. The multi-hazard State literally signals the new ideas of the social.

The invention of the social is part of the rites of passage for the multi-hazard State. States, inspired or triggered by the scale of disasters make disasters a text and pretext for reinventing themselves. The invention of the social around the State can be considered under seven contexts.

The first is the idea of social engineering. The State invents social methodologies, heuristics, and introduces reform as a part of its disaster response. This involves three particular contexts. The State as a collective body has to not only respond to a disaster but also to build the institutions for disaster mitigation. Science and forecasting become central to such activity. Science not only legitimates the State but also guarantees the stability of the social. Institutions of disaster research like Institute of Seismological Research (ISR), Gandhinagar (Chapter 5) and microzonation projects are needed to assure investors that the State is safe for investment. The very idea of risk management performs four functions. It shows that science is essential but that science may not guarantee the total stability of the social. Secondly, the State, in responding to the disaster, realizes that there are other forms of knowledge beyond the rationality of science and management. Thirdly, the institutions of social engineering realize that even engineering needs different definitions of the social. We need not only a new plan but also a new notion of design, which allows for repair (see Section 5.4.2). It is also a recognition that the State has to be modest in construction of the social. The tentativeness and plurality of the social become a critical part of the multi-hazard State.

Disaster management demands the invention of a new institution. The State becomes an innovator in science and a legislator demanding new forms of social behaviour. However, critical to this new definition is the fact that the State, especially in Gujarat, became a pedagogic State, re-socializing its bureaucracy. Socialization into the new definitions of the State become crucial. Training in this sense, as my ethnography of Sardar Patel Institute of Public Administration [(SPIPA) Chapter 5] showed, that it is a competition between two forms of the social, the old entrenched bureaucratic attitudes, the empirical wisdom of earlier experiences confronting the new demands of disaster management we

witnessed, that training in this sense officializes the new social and negotiates with the old. Training is that ritual of hybridity wherein old and new definitions of the social mix around a disaster. We sense the State in Gujarat wagering on the new social, and we also witness the negotiation with the old social.

If training is an act of initiation, a rite of passage to create new orientations and skills, the new idea of disaster management requires the introduction of methods as standards and audits that guarantee the ritualization of the social. Standards and audits are ways of guaranteeing the new social. In fact, it is the use of technology for guaranteeing the new social that is interesting. The multi-hazard State is contouring of the social. The core concerns are around habitat and infrastructure and the plan is to define the norms of this social. The social becomes a set of additional forms of competence of the State and citizen covered under capacity building as a metric. Language becomes crucial and techno-managerial vocabulary signals the key terms of the new consensus.

The State also seeds the social through acts of community-building encouraged by the World Bank. It works at the same level to create community-based centres for building capacity for earthquake-resistant construction. The idea of vulnerability and the list of vulnerable categories such as children, the old, the disabled helps it create the new communities of entitlement. The overall emphasis is to create an improved society, wherein disasters provide an opportunity to create new forms of the social for anticipating or minimizing the impact of a disaster.

The social is not the mere addition of new methodologies and institutions. It is also an attempt to ask what a decent society is and what processes go into its construction. Democracy is not just a goal but also provides the key indicators, participation, transparency, consultation, panarchy, which go into the making of the style of disaster management. In each of these cases, what we see is not a return to the old social, but the disaster seen as a way of re-inventing its relations with the people through networks, standards, audits and other methodologies.

If the earthquake created a fertile ground for the making of the multi-hazard State in Gujarat, the cyclone in Orissa added to the baroquization of the State, diminishing the possibilities of the social. In Orissa, the disaster consolidated the old networks, reinforcing old interests. It created an involuted idea of the social where the State was indifferent to disaster victims except as a channel for consolidating its own interests. What we see is a diminishing of the inventiveness of the social. Instead, the State in Orissa seeks to consolidate its interests to a point of redundancy. The contrast between the stakeholder state in Orissa and the involution of the state is a poignant reminder that the emergence of the social need not follow the same optimistic sequence in every situation. Memory becomes crucial for the affinities of the social. In Gujarat, community memory wanted to move on. In Orissa, the social and the consolidations of the social only enforced the old story of interests. Even the new was permissible only if it consolidated the old networking power. In the next section, I explore the final ideas on disaster and democracy, using it as the final ritual of summing up.

8.9 Democracy and the Discourse of Disasters

In this thesis, I argued that disasters have become sites for wider debates of civilization and society. The analogy I would like to employ is that of language. The debate and discourse around disasters performs three functions. It creates a philosophical dictionary around key terms of the contemporary discourse by unravelling the layers within each term. Secondly, it provides an experimental site where the meanings of the term are explored in real-life situations not just of normalcy but also of crises and recovery. Thirdly, it explores the nature of these terms not as monadic words but as relationships, defining their meaning in use. Disasters, in celebrating language, allow a celebration of the language of democracy. My thesis explores the life-giving sensibilities of key words

like citizen, suffering, care and governance, and scripts a drama between them by exploring their contexts.

Consider the word 'citizen'. The literature on citizenship (Faulks 2000) has constructed citizenship as an external process of becoming. The drama of citizenship either centres around the rite of passage from the migrant, refugee, exile to the fullness of citizenship, or explores the use of rights to defend citizenship. The debate on disasters peels the internal layers of citizenship by examining the categories of witness, spectator, survivor, and marginal, and examines the internal crisis of citizenship. Sen (1982; 1983; 1988) took the first step when he articulated the concept of entitlements and went on to argue that famines do not occur in a democracy. My thesis nudges the ideas of Sen into the wider context of disasters, going beyond famine, to explore earthquakes and cyclones. By exploring the nature of subsistence and vulnerability in disaster situations, I show that the idea of citizenship needs to be extended internally to a sense of crisis situations. The discourse on disasters as a crisis goes deeper than the debate on emergencies, which discusses the suspension of rights. The debate on disasters highlights the need for a thick description of rights to make it a more life-giving term. By emphasizing voice, agency and knowledge, and counter-posing them with vulnerability, marginality and subsistence, I seek to show that the concept of citizenship needs a variety of dialects to acquire resilience. It also argues that a vision of democracy must include a theory of disasters as part of the new imaginaries of citizenship.

The anthropology of citizenship, I argue, needs an ethnography, of the layers of life, beyond bare life (Agamben 1998). In doing this, we bring nature back in a different way into the social contract. The conventional debate on disasters often focuses on habitat in a material sense. By describing the scavenger and the forager eking out their life in the aftermath of the cyclone, we explore a whole domain of sub-citizenship which democratic theory needs to respond to. Democracy has responded to the threats of tyranny but the debate on disasters shows that there are threats to democracy within the normal quotidian

nature of life. My thesis argues that the voice of the survivor needs to be incorporated both into policy and into a more plural theory of citizenship.

I also argue that the texts of citizenship need to be read in terms of the variety of contexts. One of my key contributions is to use the mechanism of science studies to replay the links between knowledge and democracy. Once we acknowledge that the citizen, the survivor are persons of knowledge, we have to ask what the nature of knowledge is and what we are speaking of. My research shows that the standard oppositions and hierarchies between science and traditional knowledge are inadequate. The debate on disasters creates a plethora of knowledge, many of which are tacit in Polanyi's sense of the term (1944; 1967). An understanding of tacit knowledges is critical for democracy and survival. Disasters go beyond the valorizations of science to examine other cognitions like coping, jugaad, the make-do, tactics of satisficing and muddling through, which lack the textbook articulations of science. They are embedded in voices, body language, intuitive responses, fragments of memory, yet they remain crucial life-worlds in a subsistence and disaster economy. The scavenger, the forager, the survivor embody both forms of knowledge and repertoires of citizenship that democracy has to build into its constitutional and policy self. Disasters, I contend, are not merely adventures in crisis but dramas of knowledge that need to be codified into policy. But my thesis is not just an argument for an ethno-science of disasters. It also shows: 1) the critical role of science as a reason of State, and 2) the role of disasters in extending and critiquing the role of science. For many, the legitimacy of a competent State lies in predicting a disaster. The competence of the State in the new modes of disaster management depends on the use of science not merely for forecasting but for disaster mitigation. There is also the recognition of the complexity and risk entailed in science. A recognition that science has limits in terms of predictability and certainty. Disasters modify the Promethean nature of science not by creating an anti-science narrative but by pluralizing it. The idea of risk shows that some forms of disaster are not predictable and the ideas of design and repair show that technology acquires a

sense of prudence during both disaster management and mitigation. Disasters become a drama of rationalities, which allow for a plurality of cognitive tactics in survival.

We need to make a reference to memory here. Memory is critical in a disaster not just as a basis for grief and mourning but also as an archive of recall, of oral knowledge, which is such a critical part of disaster response. Memory also encodes policy and many policy documents on disasters appear to be the codified memory of another era. For example, drought has served as the model for policy documents and floods have been a part of the folk imagination. While both memories are crucial, one for its textuality in policy and the other for its centrality in the oral imagination, the debate on disasters shows that both can be deceptive, parochial and limited. We need a multiverse of memories of the variety of disasters, which is coded orally, textually and digitally to enact a new legislation. Knowledge and the varieties of knowledge as medium and memory become critical in disasters and, therefore, to the democratic imagination. I have also pointed out how in Orissa, the memory of disasters created an encrusted set of interest groups, which filtered any attempt at innovation. In pluralizing knowledge and layering citizenship, disasters also show that democracy as a language needs a versatility of vocabularies that can originate from a multiplicity of sources.

My thesis discussed the epistemic function of disasters. I argued that epistemology is not just a textbook, abstract, technical theory of the validation and verification of knowledge but a life-world enacting out the possibilities of survival and citizenship. I also suggested that the epistemologies of survival and citizenship emerge at four plural levels, which create a circus of languages and a plural domain of choices, explanations and life changes.

If the survivor and the State provide the first two sets of dialects, Hindu religious reformist groups and Christian voluntarism seed an alternative set of possibilities. The debate on disasters pluralizes survival by increasing the languages of survival care and reconstruction. The first deepening of this discourse comes from the language of Hindu

reform, which rather than being other-worldly is this-worldly. Epistemology emerges as a civilizational response through the agency of devotee, the monk and the *pracharak* interpreting disasters in the language of suffering, service, love. It provides not only a language of service rooted in a community but also an alternating way of constructing a disaster. Instead of the professionalized languages of charity, care and the secular equivalence embodied in the humanitarianism, what we have is a religious idiom of service, which creates with it an ascetic lifestyle, a more economic structure of disaster response and a theory of suffering and care that sees the community as the source of healing and repair. There is literally a democratization and a pluralization of both the language of pain and crisis.

The survivor is the consumer who has a variety of philosophical and organizational choices. The importance of alternative languages and methodologies in a disaster is a new dimension to freedom at the subsistence level. Consumption now is not merely the choice of material goods like housing or food but also includes alternative frameworks of culture within which food and housing are conceptualized.

The religious groups rooted in Hinduism always see Christian belief as their competent double. They respect them, they respond to them and yet criticize them for their commitment to conversion. The Hindu religious groups do not offer a secular critique; instead, they offer a recognition of plurality and multiplicity as an alternative to the secular and the Christian definitions of a disaster.

The innovative and plural nature of this debate is a critical part of the discussion on disasters. Christian groups do not retreat into religiosity. They translate the Bible and its idioms into contemporary dialects of human rights and welfare. Instead of theology, they use the rights discourse; instead of ethics, they use the logic of the social sciences, employing the survey, the audit, the language of livelihood and vulnerability to create a new notion of justice. Justice articulated in the language of political theory adds richness to the disaster debate. The democratization of disasters and the pluralization of

democracy through disasters comes from this thicket of debates. Each perspective, whether from the plurality of Hinduism, or the multiverse of Christian groups, adds to the conceptual, methodological, organizational richness of concepts in a disaster. We have both theories of efficiency and a plurality of care, which shows that the world of disasters, rather than being impoverished, is a culturally a rich world that adds to the imagination of democracy. What Marx said of the philosophy of poverty being the poverty of philosophy (Marx 1955) is not true for disasters. The protagonists themselves are aware that the debate on disasters is as civilizational and conceptually rich as the debate on medical systems in India (Leslie 1992). This richness also gradually extends to policy and governance. The struggle of the survivor shows that his narrative cannot be reduced to subsistence, poverty, or even the development discourse. We need a new vocabulary of concepts, centring on livelihood and vulnerability to approach disasters as an autonomous but overlapping domain. Governance too acquires a richness, which goes beyond the old public administration models of the State. In relation to disasters, governance becomes a network of institutional inventions built by the State, civil society, community and survivor. Secondly, governance becomes a conversation of consultations, participations, evaluations, where methodologies are no longer merely technocratic but also democratic, in the processes of both initiation and evaluation. We must emphasize that these are not monadic arguments but a part of the emergent frame where the civilization, the nation, the community and civil society create a new melting pot of democratic ideas. Instead of the source of origin being the discourse of development, voluntarism or poverty, it is the domain of disasters that has provided the language, the narratives, the grammar, the panarchic models, whereby a debate on disasters becomes a debate on democracy, where the imagination and the imaginary combine to create a new set of pragmatic and possible worlds (Castoriadis 1998). Disasters, rather than being reduced to a litany of sadness and pity, become the crystal seeds of new, emerging, plural theory of democracy.

8.10 Contributions

How does one locate one's contribution to a professional domain? I understand that this is a reciprocal act, saluting the work that has gone before and then claiming that one has added something to it. I see my contribution at two levels: to the theoretical domain on disaster studies; to methods.

At the theoretical level, my work seeks a creative way of linking knowledge and democracy. As a researcher, I play storyteller and analyst to the varieties of theorizing occurring at a disaster site. I have tried to show that knowledge itself is not singular. One confronts varieties of knowledge where the link between knowledge and survival transforms disasters into a contested domain, a site where a whole thesaurus of terms, including vulnerability rights, charity, memory, survival, subsistence, standards, governance, memory, voluntarism, citizenship is debated. I then explored the relation between each word and the worlds it creates as it is worked out in practice. In that sense, I have tried to bring the study of disasters closer to mainstream sociology and science studies.

My thesis also seeks to contribute to a change in the mind-frame of disaster studies by pluralizing it. I had started the thesis by exploring the technocratic managerial mindset of disaster studies in my literature review. My study adds a more anthropological view wherein plurality enters in different ways. My study, anchored in science studies, is interdisciplinary in perspective. I first show that disasters are not episodic events but a part of the everydayness of life and the imagination. This helps me extend the time frame of disaster studies beyond the 3R sequence and emphasize the relevance of multiple times for policy.

Empirically, my work has shown that disasters as a site embraces a multiplicity of perspectives. I show that this multiplicity is panarchic, that problem-solving in policy making cannot have one-dimensional diktats but must realize that the same solution may

not work at different levels. Thirdly, I have tried to emphasize the importance of translation for policy. The same word in different contexts has different careers. By combining emic and etic views, I seek to elaborate the creative role of people in theorizing and reflecting on survival and reconstruction. I have also shown how voluntary groups act as epistemic middlemen, creating in Sheila Jasonoff's (2004), felicitous phrase, 'civic epistemologies' which add to the diversity of governance. I have suggested how openness to varieties of time in disasters can change the idea of the policy cycle.

Once I illustrate this everydayness, I try to demonstrate the innovative plurality of disasters as a site for debates, where thought experiments have been repeatedly tried on each key term. Disasters become a theatre or an ethnographic laboratory for a philosophical dictionary of key terms in social science and philosophy. More critically, I have thickened Sen's (1982; 1983; 1988) perception that famines do not occur in a democracy. Sen attributes this to the power of the press and the role of democratic institutions. I proceed to show that if democracy helps prevent certain forms of disasters, disasters have contributed to democracy by adding imaginaries and by "democratizing democracy", to use Michel Callon's (2001) phrase. I have shown that disasters force the democratic imagination to extend the richness of citizenship from normalcy to crisis situations. By layering it, I show how disasters add to the texture and tensility of citizenship. Disasters studies become a crucial part of the new imagination of democracy.

Studies on Indian democracy illustrate that when people vote, they vote for democracy as a prime value. Elections in India are always a festival even when people have a rather clear conception that elections can contribute little to governance. Yet, they come to vote because they sense the value of democracy as a way of life. In my work on disasters, I take the next step by showing that democracy is also providing playful thought experiments about governance and participation.

I show that disasters have become a major forum for examining both the silences and the languages of governance. I have realized that governance in disasters is a classificatory

act, which often excludes and thereby erases categories of people. People not listed inside a revenue village have no place in the census and as a result, there is no mnemonic of disappearance. Secondly, migrants and nomads often do not figure in the map of citizenship. The activist groups in disasters have contributed much to governance by extending governance to these forgotten or erasable categories. The extension, at least normatively, of the Sphere Charter, which specifies standards of aid and relief during disasters, is a happy consequence of this effort. Thirdly, I have attempted a socio-logic of numbers, by showing that while numeracy is important, it creates a style of logistics to governance where mass rather than scale becomes primary. I have also tried to emphasize the ethics of scale, both in narratives of policy and in the nature of decision-making. Disasters and the understanding of disasters will make *panarchy* (Holling 1973; 1994; 2002) a key term in discussions about governance. Panarchy in policy allows for pluralism, diversity in problem-solving, and sensitivity to complexity. My emphasis on time shows that the standard policy cycle around disasters is both rudimentary and reductive. By merging the difference between crisis and normalcy, I elaborate the demands disasters made on the everyday requirements of governance. I show how texts, including both World Bank documents and Old Drought relief protocols, were reworked to create new models of governance through new vocabularies of governance, where each word becomes an investment in new styles of administration, demanding, in turn, a commitment in terms of new bureaucratic careers. Every new reform becomes a contestation, a wager before it is internalized into tacit protocols, which we take for granted.

Implicitly, I have tried to show that the ideas in disaster management overlap with discourses on poverty and development. Yet, I have also tried to show the debate on disasters as an autonomous discourse. The three discourses share common terms but the fate of the terms might be different. The poor in disasters may respond with less vulnerability than the middle class. The relative deprivation of the poor might provide them with different ideas and skills of adaptation and resilience. Thirdly, I have explored

zones of suffering far below subsistence. In that sense, disasters thicken the idea of social suffering by providing narratives that are different from development and poverty studies.

My research work has emphasized that the importance of the construction, deconstruction, reconstruction and the re-invention of the social is critical to disaster studies. I explored two major thought experiments; one is the multiple definition of the social by religious and cultural groups, which, in turn, guides the way one defines behaviour around duty, hospitality and aid. These redefinitions of the social create alternative frameworks, in turn creating alternative civic epistemologies of how events are defined and approached.

I emphasized the plural nature of the social and showed how conventional voluntary groups redefine themselves in response to this critique, affecting a transition from charity to rights. What was critical in this context was not just the social but also the creative use of social science to create an objective but qualitative frame, which redefines the norms of disaster management. I showed that the survivor, for all his vulnerability, is a skilled tactician with a bundle of tacit knowledge. I have also demonstrated that an understanding of the varieties of social is critical for governance. An embeddedness in the social provides a content to the abstract notion of rights while the universalism of rights might become empty. Each part of the social – survival, subsistence, governance – needs different languages and translations between them. Moreover, the construction of the social from coping to Self-help Groups (SHGs), to networks, to policy indicates that grand narratives are difficult to sustain and that polyphony has become the essence of both story-telling and policy in disaster management.

I have tried to illustrate that an understanding of the nature of rationality is essential to understand the varieties of choice and decision-making in a disaster situation. Here, the decisions range from coping, muddling through, *jugaad*, satisficing, (Lindbolm 1959; Schutz 1976; Simon 1986; Strauss 1966) rule of thumb to policy written in rational terms

of a formal economic calculus. Further, I show that policy has to recognize them all as voices, skills and practices that are relevant for disaster management.

My critique goes further in exploring the unintended consequences of disasters, and these operate at a range of levels. I show how disasters become almost dialectical terms where crisis becomes opportunity. Housewives, widows who earlier lived within the confines of the family become entrepreneurs, confident about new ideas of governance, after the disaster. The survivor sees in disaster not mere survival but a chance to recreate himself. Oddly, it is the aftermath of disaster, which rather than becoming predictable, becomes instead a site for social inventions and their unintended consequences. Disasters even create forms of consumption. Ironically, few studies of consumption look at disasters as a site for new lifestyles or new ideas of consumption. I also emphasized that the idea of reconstruction requires different metaphors. For instance, reconstruction, rather than just being a materialist reproduction of past habitats, now incorporates design, repair and rehabilitation, and thus becomes a much more nuanced process.

I emphasized not just the unintended consequences but multiple affinities. Disasters can create conditions for new forms of state-building or can baroque (Kaldor 1981) the state into a vested interest for crisis perpetuation. By creating a sociology of these multiple rationalities, I have tried to show that governance cannot adhere to a simple model of decision-making. Between anarchy, multiple time, translation, unintended consequences and multiple affinities, governance acquires a range of complexity that is deeply challenging. I realize that science studies add to policy by widening vocabularies and showing the polyphony of problem-solving in society when the social is continuously reworked.

In fact, one of the most unintended consequences of my own research was my discovery of the demands of citizenship. I believe that my study has added to citizenship by demanding that we abandon a homogenous definition of it. The survivor in a disaster

adds a density to citizenship as a role, a state of vulnerability, as a site for entitlements that deserves greater analysis.

I have tried to keep storytelling, ethnography, analysis, policy together by showing that they become a weave in disaster studies. I wish I could have been more eloquent about the silences implicit in a disaster. I realize my ethnography of nature, often a strong point of disaster studies, is truncated. I wish I had spent more effort in creating a sociology of the body. However, I realize that the problem of disasters is wider than the problematic I had chosen. I sense unsaid stories and still latent problems, but I hope my research has contributed in a small but definitive way towards creating a sense of a plural universe demand, an interdisciplinary understanding which adds to the inventiveness of democracy.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary

Aashad: Ashad (Ashada) month, mausam, maas or mahina is the fourth month in the traditional lunar Hindu calendar.

Advaita Vedanta: End or the goal of the Vedas. Advaita (literally, non-duality) is a monistic system of thought. ‘Advaita’ refers to the identity of the Self (Atman) and the Whole (Brahman).

Agni sanskar: Fire cremation with wood

Akhil Bharatiya Seva Pramukh is a functionary who leads Seva Bharti. Akhil Bharatiya Seva Pramukh of RSS guides the organization and is also represented in the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha, the ultimate decision-making body of the Sangh.

Anaj: Grain.

Anganwadi: The word ‘anganwadi’ means ‘courtyard shelter’ in Hindi. Anganwadis were started by the Indian Government in 1975 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme to combat child hunger and malnutrition. A typical anganwadi centre also provides basic healthcare in Indian villages. It is a part of the Indian public healthcare system. Basic healthcare activities include contraceptive counselling and supply, nutrition education and supplementation, as well as pre-school activities.

Ashtami: Victory date for Durga manifested in her killing of Mahishasura. Victory of good over evil. On the day, prayers are held in the morning and people keep fast and worship Goddess Durga. It is considered the most important day of Durga Puja.

Asurakshit: Insecurity/unsafe.

Babu: The term ‘babu’, also spelt as ‘baboo’, is used in modern-day South Asia as a sign of respect towards men. In British India, ‘babu’ was a term used to describe a native Indian clerk. The word was originally used as a term of respect attached to a proper name, the equivalent of ‘mister’, and ‘babuji’ was used in many parts to mean ‘sir’, but when used alone without the suffix, it was a derogatory word signifying a semi-literate native, with a mere veneer of modern education. In the early twentieth century, the term ‘babu’ was frequently used to refer to bureaucrats and other government officials, especially by the Indian media; in this sense, the word hints at corrupt or lazy work practices.

Badi: Refers to land enclosed by hedge. In this case, it refers to the common land of the community used for grazing and common use.

Bajra Roti: Millet bread.

Baligarah: A variety of fish.

Bazaar: A *bazaar* (from Persian), meaning ‘market’; from Middle Persian (*bahā-chār*), meaning ‘place of prices’ is a permanent enclosed merchandising area, marketplace, or street of shops where goods and services are exchanged or sold. The term is sometimes also used to refer to the ‘network of merchants, bankers and craftsmen’ who work that

area. Although the current meaning of the word is believed to have originated in Persia, its use has spread and now has been accepted into the vernacular in countries around the world.

Bhajans: Religious songs sung in congregations.

Bhakti: Devotion.

Bhav: Feeling or sentiment.

Bhavna: Emotion, sentiment.

Bindi: One of the most recognizable items in Hinduism is the *bindi*, a dot worn on women's foreheads. Traditionally, the area between the eyebrows (where the bindi is placed) is said to be the sixth chakra, *ajna*, the seat of 'concealed wisdom'. According to followers of Hinduism, this chakra is the exit point for kundalini energy. The bindi is said to retain energy and strengthen concentration. It is also said to protect against demons or bad luck. The bindi also represents the third eye. A traditional mark, that indicates the marital status of a woman in South Asia in recent times, it has also become a fashion statement and is not necessarily tied to marital status, religious background or ethnic affiliation

Brahmachari: A celibate student of the Vedas.

Bundi: It's a fried snack, consisting of tiny fried balls of gram flour, normally put in yogurt.

Chintan: Thought.

Crore: 100 lakhs or 10,000,000.

Danda: Staff which is part of the ensemble of the swayamsevak.

Daridra Narayan: God in poor.

Darshan: Viewing.

Daya: Pity, compassion.

Desh Bhakti: Patriotism.

Dhaba: In India, highways are dotted with local restaurants popularly known as dhabas (singular: dhaba). They generally serve local cuisine, and also serve as truck stops.

Dhanda: Vocation.

Dharatikamp: Earthquake.

Dharma: Righteous duty; Ethical conduct. Dharma: that which upholds, supports or maintains *the regulatory order of the universe*) means Law or Natural Law and is a concept of central importance in Indian philosophy and religion. As well as referring to Law in the universal or abstract sense dharma designates those behaviours considered necessary for the maintenance of the natural order of things. Therefore dharma may

encompass ideas such as duty, vocation, religion and everything that is considered correct, proper or decent behaviour.

Dhoti: The dhoti, also known as *pancha*, *panche* or *veshti* is the traditional men's garment in India, Bangladesh. It is a rectangular piece of unstitched cloth, usually around 4.5 metres long, wrapped around the waist and the legs and knotted at the waist.

Dhyan: Concentration.

Dhun: Tune; melody.

Donga: Traditional wooden boats.

Ekantik dharma: According to BAPS redemption consists in the realisation of ekantik dharma, comprising righteousness, right knowledge, detachment and devotion to that God.

Falia: Community meetings.

Garba: A dance performed individually but as a collective. The name garba comes from the Sanskrit terms Garba ('womb') and Deep ('a small earthenware lamp'). Many traditional garbas are performed around a central lit lamp. The circular and spiral figures of Garba have similarities to other spiritual dances. Traditionally, it is performed during the nine-day Hindu festival Navarātrī. Either the lamp (the Garba Deep) or else an image of the Goddess Amba is placed in the middle of concentric rings as an object of veneration. People dance around the center, bending sideways at every step, their arms making sweeping gestures, each movement ending in a clap.

Garbha Mandir: Garbhagriha or Garbha griha. Garbha Mandir is the small unlit shrine of a Hindu temple. Garbhagriha or garbha gr̥ha is a Sanskrit word meaning the interior of the sanctum sanctorum, the innermost sanctum of a Hindu temple where resides the *murti* (idol or icon) of the primary deity of the temple. Literally, the word means 'womb chamber', from the Sanskrit words garbha for womb and griha for house.

Gherao: Meaning 'encirclement', gherao is a word originally from Hindi and is a typically Indian way of protest. Usually, a group of people surround a politician or a government building until their demands are met, or answers given. This principle was introduced as a formal means of protest in the labour sector by Subodh Banarjee, the PWD and Labour Minister in the 1967 and 1969 United Front Governments of West Bengal, respectively.

Gheri: Translated as enclosures. Mud embankment, bamboo or net enclosures for prawn cultures.

Ghunghat: Ghoonghat or Ghunghat is a Hindi word which describes a veil or headscarf worn by Indian women to cover their heads, and often their faces. Generally a pallu (the loose end of a sari) is pulled over the head to act as a ghunghat. A *dupatta* (long scarf) is sometimes used as a ghunghat. Traditionally, in some parts of India, a woman is supposed to wear a ghunghat in front of family elders and men guests, her father-in-law, and elder brothers of her husband, except when only in front of other women, her husband and younger male family members. The ghunghat is used to show respect to elder males of the extended family.

Gopuram: It is a monumental tower, usually ornate, at the entrance of a temple, especially in Southern India. This is a prominent feature of Hindu temple architecture. It is topped with the sikhara's amalaka (a bulbous stone finial). They function as gateways through the walls that surround the temple complex.

Gram Panchayat: Gram panchayats are local self-governments at the village or small town level in India. As of 2002 there were about 265,000 gram panchayats in India. The gram panchayat is the foundation of the Panchayat System.

Gram Sabha: According to Article 243(B) of the Constitution of India, Gram Sabha is a "body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised with the area of Panchayat at the village level."

Gunia: A variety of fish.

Gyana yoga: Path of knowledge.

Jajmani: Jajmani system or Yajmani system was an Indian social caste system, signifying interaction between upper castes and lower castes. It was an economic system where lower castes performed various functions for upper castes and received grain in return.

Japas: Religious recitations.

Jiva as Shiva: All life is God.

Jnana: Knowledge.

Jokhum: Closest translation is taking risk or something dangerous.

Jowar: An Old World grass (*Sorghum bicolor*), several varieties of which are widely cultivated as grain and forage in several parts of India.

Jugaad: Innovative ways of coping.

Jugalbandi: A jugalbandi or jugalbandhi is a performance in Indian classical music that features a duet of two solo musicians. The word 'jugalbandi' means, literally, 'entwined twins'. The duet can be either vocal or instrumental. In this case it refers to the nature of engagement.

Kala Chana: Whole grains commonly consumed in India.

Kantiakau: A variety of fish.

Karma: Karma in Indian religions is the concept of 'action' or 'deed', understood as that which causes the entire cycle of cause and effect (that is, the cycle called *samsāra*). Some traditions (that is, the Vedānta), believe that a supreme being plays some kind of role, for example, as the dispenser of the 'fruits' of karma^[13] or as exercising the option to change one's karma in rare instances. In general, followers of Buddhism and many followers of Hinduism consider the natural laws of causation sufficient to explain the effects of karma.

Karma-yoga: Sanskrit origin, also known as Buddhi Yoga or the 'discipline of action'.

Karthik: In the lunar Hindu calendar, Karthik begins with the new moon in November and is the eighth month of the year except in Gujarat, where it marks the new year that falls on Diwali. In the solar religious calendar used in Tamil Nadu, Kartikai begins with the Sun's entry into Scorpio and is the eighth month of the year.

Karyakarta: Literally translated karya (work) karta (doer). Refers to a volunteer or activist.

Kendra: Station or school, or house, centre.

Kharif: 'Kharafi crop' refers to the planting, cultivation and harvesting of any domesticated plant sown in the rainy (monsoon) season on the Asian subcontinent. Such crops are planted for autumn harvest and may also be called the summer or monsoon crop in India and Pakistan. Kharif crops are usually sown with the beginning of the first rains in July, during the south-west monsoon season.

Khichdi: Rice and lentil gruel.

Kuccha: Mud houses.

Laddus: Laddu is a ball-shaped sweet popular in South Asian countries. It is made of flour and sugar with other ingredients that vary by recipe. It is often served at festive or religious occasions.

Lakh: One hundred thousand or 100,000.

Langar: This is the term used in the Sikh religion or in Punjab in general for common kitchen/canteen where food is served in a Gurdwara to all the visitors (without distinction of background) for free. At the langar, only vegetarian food is served, to ensure that all people, regardless of their dietary restrictions, can eat as equals.

Lungi: Loin cloth.

Madranga: A green leaf.

Mahapurush: Literally translated means the 'great man'.

Maldhari: Maldharis (Gujarati) are nomadic tribal herdsmen who live in the Gujarat state of India. The literal meaning of Maldhari is 'owner of animal stock'. They are notable as the traditional dairymen of the region, and once supplied milk and cheese to the palaces of rajas.

Mallaika: An ancient religious text in Orissa.

Mamlatdar: Revenue official at the district level.

Mandir: Temple.

Margis: (Dadas and Didis): Ananda Marga ascetics. The males are referred to as Dada (brother) and the women as Didi (sister).

Math: A math is an institution of monks and the Mission, a society through which the monks and the lay devotees conduct various forms of social service.

Maya: A make-believe world.

Mela: This is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘gathering’ or ‘to meet’ or a fair. It is used in the Indian subcontinent for all sizes of gatherings and can be religious, commercial, cultural or sport-related.

Moksha: Sanskrit term, literally meaning ‘release’ (both from a root *muc* ‘to let loose, let go’), is the liberation from samsara and the concomitant suffering involved in being subject to the cycle of repeated death and rebirth (reincarnation).

Namaskar: Namaste (formal: Namaskar/Namaskaram) is a common spoken valediction or salutation originating from the Indian subcontinent. It is a customary greeting when individuals meet, and a valediction upon their parting. A non-contact form of salutation is traditionally preferred in India and Namaste is the most common form of such a salutation.

Narial: Coconut.

Neeti: Literally translated comes closest to a combination of politics plus policy.

Otala: Traditional platforms or public spaces where social functions were enacted.

OXFAM: Oxford committee for famine relief from a meeting organized by University vicar, Canon Milford, in 1942, to help Greek civilian victims of war. Currently figures as one of the major humanitarian aid agencies.

Paan: Betel leaf.

Paap: Sin.

Paani Panchayat: ‘Pani Panchayat’ is a voluntary activity constituting a group of farmers engaged in the collective management of water resources, and their equitable harvesting and distribution, among themselves in order to improve their economic condition.

Padyatras: Marches.

Pagal: Insane or mad.

Pagalpan: Insanity or madness.

Panchang: Panchang is ancient Vedic astrology that helps you synchronize with your best days and times, ahead of time. Here it refers to the calendrical cycle of social post the disaster.

Panchayat: The oldest system of local government in the Indian subcontinent. The word ‘panchayat’ literally means ‘assembly’ (ayat) of five (panch) wise and respected elders, chosen and accepted by the local community. However, there are different forms of assemblies. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and villages. Modern Indian government has decentralized several administrative functions to the local level, empowering elected panchayats as local governing bodies.

Panchayati Raj institution: The panchayat raj is actually the oldest system of local government in the Indian subcontinent. The word ‘panchayat’ literally means ‘assembly’ (*ayat*) of five (*panch*) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. However, there are different forms of assemblies. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and villages. Modern Indian government has decentralized several administrative functions to the local level, empowering elected gram panchayats. Gram panchayats are not to be confused with the unelected *khap* panchayats (or caste panchayats) found in some parts of India.

Panjrapol: Panjrapol is an animal shelter originally started by Jains centuries ago. It helps animals in distress.

Param Brahma: Brahman or spiritual substratum pervading all existence, is entirely complete within itself. This is why the Supreme Lord is called *param brahma*.

Paramhans: A religious title, signifying one who is master of himself. It can be bestowed on a disciple only by his guru. *Paramhansa* literally means ‘supreme swan’.

Parampara: Tradition.

Peeli Dal: Yellow-coloured pulses commonly consumed in India.

Prachar: Promotion, propagate, publicity, communicate.

Pracharak: Person appointed to propagate a cause through personal contact, meetings, public lectures, etc.

Pradhan: Pradhan literally means ‘greatest leader of all’. The term is generally used to refer to a regional leader or local leader in a particular region.

Prana pratishtha: It is the Hindu theological term for a rite or ceremony by which a deity is infused or brought to inhabit a murti or icon of that deity. According to Gavin Flood, it is “a ritual of consecration in which the consciousness or power of the deity is brought into the image awakens the icon in a temple”.

Pranth-gram Vikas Pramukh: State village development head.

Prasad: Nectarine, religious food offering.

Prasadam: Nectarine, religious food offering.

Pravachan: Sermons.

Pucca: Ripe, firm, durable. In case of the text, refers to baked brick houses.

Rabi: Spring harvest in India and Pakistan.

Sadhna: Meditation, spiritual discipline.

Sadhus: Monks.

Sahibs: Literally translates to ‘owner’ or ‘proprietor’. The term was used popularly in the context of the white colonial rulers. Now refers to those perceived to be harbouring white-collar attitudes.

Samaj: Society/community.

Sambhavna: Possibility.

Sampraday: Closest term is community.

Samvedan-sheelta: Resilience or tolerance and in some the term is used in the context of being enterprising with the intent of being innovative, resilient.

Sangh: Family of associations.

Sankha: Bangles made of conch shell – these are worn by Hindu women as ornaments at their weddings as a religious rite. During recitation of wedding hymns, the father or guardian of the bride gives her a pair of conch bangles. The groom also brings a pair for her. Hindu women wear conch bangles with utmost devotion seeking the well-being of their husbands. Use of broken or cracked bangles is ominous. Wearing conch bangles on her person is symbolic of the purity of a woman's love for her husband. Common conch shells bear an anti-clockwise bend. A clockwise bend on it makes a shell very precious and is regarded as dakhshinbarta or fortune conch. In a religious sense this conch is holy. Lord Vishnu holds such a conch in his hand.

Sanskara: Closest term is values. Enacted in terms of practice. Can be imbibed even in the womb of the mother. It's a holistic framework.

Sanskriti: Culture.

Sanstha: Organization.

Sants: Monks.

Santo ka pravachan: Sermons of/from the monks of the religious order.

Sanyasis: Literally translated ‘renunciation’ or ‘abandonment’. Those who have renounced the ‘worldly pleasures’.

Saptami: Seventh lunar day.

Saraswati puja: Worship of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and learning.

Saree: A sari or saree is a strip of unstitched cloth, worn by females, ranging from four to nine yards in length that is draped over the body in various styles, which is native to the Indian subcontinent.

Sarpanch: A sarpanch is an elected head of a village level statutory institution of local self-government called the gram panchayat (village government).

Sarsanghachalak: The Sarsanghachalak is the paramount leader of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Sarvodaya: This is a term meaning ‘universal uplift’ or ‘progress of all’. The term was first coined by Mohandas Gandhi as the title of his 1908 translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy, *Unto This Last*, and Gandhi came to use the term for the ideal of his own political philosophy. Later Gandhians, like the Indian nonviolence activist Vinoba Bhave, embraced the term as a name for the social movement in post-independence India which strove to ensure that self-determination and equality reached all strata of India society.

Satpurush: Synonymous with the idea of sant or sadhu. Literally translated holy man who embodies God himself.

Satsang: Sanskrit sat = true, sanga = company involves: (1) the company of the ‘highest truth’, (2) the company of a guru, or (3) company with an assembly of persons who listen to, talk about, and assimilate the truth.

Seva: Literally translated service.

Seva Pramukh: A senior functionary in the RSS organizational structure. Normally heading the organizational structure at the state or a region level.

Shakha: A shakha (Sanskrit śākhā, ‘branch’ or ‘limb’) in the text refers to the morning congregation of RSS which is called Shakha. Most of the organizational work of the RSS is done through the coordination of shakhas or branches. These shakhas are run for one hour in public places. In 2004, more than 60,000 shakhas were run throughout India. However, the number of shakhas has fallen by over 10,000 since the fall of the BJP-led government in 2004. According to Vagish Issar, RSS's media representative in Delhi, the number of shakhas has fallen to 39,823, as of January 2010. The shakhas conduct various activities for their volunteers, which include physical fitness activities through yoga, exercises and games. They also organize other activities which emphasize on qualities like civic sense, social service, community living and patriotism.

Shakti: Sanskrit shak – ‘to be able’, meaning sacred force or empowerment, is the primordial cosmic energy and represents the dynamic forces that are thought to move through the entire universe in Hinduism.^[1] Shakti is the concept, or personification, of divine feminine creative power, sometimes referred to as ‘The Great Divine Mother’ in Hinduism. On the earthly plane, Shakti most actively manifests through female embodiment and fertility, though it is also present in males in its potential, unmanifested form.

Shamiana: Marquees.

Shanti Sena: Peace army. It is constituted of women volunteers who try to resolve domestic conflicts through arbitration. The primary purpose is to avoid domestic violence.

Shikshapatri: The Shikshapatri is a small shastra (sacred text) written by Swami Narayan. It has 212 Sanskrit shloks (couplets) in 1826 in the Vartal mandir. The building in which He wrote this, on the first floor, is known as Shikshapatri Bhavan. In 212 shloks, Shriji Maharaj has given a set of rules for all His followers. These rules are given in the shastras of Sanatan Dharma. But Maharaj picked them out specially for us so we would not have to search and read a huge number of texts that would fill a library!

Shishya: The student.

Singhi: A variety of fish.

Smritis: Sanskrit term literally means ‘that which is remembered’, refers to a specific body of Hindu religious scripture, and is a codified component of Hindu customary law. Smṛti also denotes non-*Shruti* texts and is generally seen as secondary in authority to Shruti. The literature which comprises the Smriti was composed after the Vedas around 500 BCE. Smriti also denotes tradition in the sense that it portrays the traditions of the rules on dharma, especially those of lawful virtuous persons.

Subziwala: Vegetable vendor.

Suraksha: Security, safety.

Swabhlamban: Self-reliance.

Swamini Vato: These are talks by Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami, who was the first spiritual successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. These talks were noted by sadhus and devotees during his time.

Swamyamsevaks: Volunteers of RSS.

Swasthya: Health.

Takka: In Bengali, the word ‘takka’ is commonly used generically to mean any money, currency, or notes. Thus, colloquially, a person speaking Bengali may use ‘takka’ to refer to money regardless of the currency it is denominated in.

Taluka: A *tehsil* or *tahsil/tahasil*, also known as *taluk/taluka* and *mandal*, is an administrative division of some countries in South Asia.

Tantric: In a very simplified form, Tantra is a body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the Shakti that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channelize that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways.

Teesra Fasl: Refers to third crop. In some fertile agricultural land, third crop beyond the Kharif and Rabi crops, is possible. This is called the teesra fasl.

Tehsil: A *tehsil* or *tahsil/tahasil*, also known as *taluk/taluka* and *mandal*, is an administrative division of some countries in South Asia.

Tehsildar: is a revenue administrative officer in Pakistan and India in charge of obtaining taxation from a tehsil. The term is of imperial Mughal origin made of "tahsil", an Islamic administrative derived from Arabic, meaning "revenue generating; collection" and "dar", Persian for "holder of a position", together meaning tax collector. The role of tehsildar continued during the period of British Rule and was subsequently used by Pakistan and India following their independence from the British. The deputy of a tehsildar is known as a *naib tehsildar*. In India an official position exists with this same title. In modern India a State is divided into various districts. The district's senior most civil servant is the District Collector, who could be a promoted officer from the state cadre or most likely an IAS officer. These districts are further sub divided into Revenue

Sub Divisions, under an officer designated as Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO). These sub divisions are divided into various *Tehsils* or *Talukas*. The *Teshils* and *Talukas* are under an officer designated as *Tehsildar*. The *Tehsildar* appointment is a formally announced through the official gazette of the state government. The *Tehsils/Taluks* are further divided into Villages, under a Village officer. This hierarchy is mainly used for undertaking the regular administrative activities, including identification and collection of revenue (from land) etc. A separate hierarchy exists for the law enforcement in a district.

Thela: A handcart.

Ulua: A variety of fish.

Upanishads: The Upanishads, IAST: Upaniṣad, IPA: are a collection of philosophical texts which form the theoretical basis for the Hindu religion. They are also known as *Vedanta*, the end of the Veda. In the purest sense, they are not *Sruti* (revealed truths) but rather commentaries which explain the essence of the veda (revealed knowledge). The Upanishads are found mostly in the concluding part of the Brahmanas and in the *Aranyakas*. All Upanishads have been passed down in oral tradition.

Upavasa: Fasting. Literally translated Up + vasa means staying close to God.

Vachnamrut: The Vachanamrut is the holiest scripture in the Swaminarayan Sampraday. It is a historical collection of 273 spiritual discourses given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Gujarati language.

Vairagya: It is a Sanskrit term used in Hindu philosophy that roughly translates as dispassion, detachment, or renunciation, in particular renunciation from the pains and pleasures in the material world.

Vaishnavism: The term ‘Vaishnavism’ entered the English language in the nineteenth century. It was formed by attaching the suffix -ism to Sanskrit Vaishnava (vaiṣṇava), which is the vriddhi form of Vishnu meaning ‘relating, belonging, or sacred to Vishnu’ or ‘a worshipper or follower of Vishnu’.

Vasudev Kutumbhkam: The idea of the world as a family. Literally translated means ‘The universe is one family’, the argument being as follows: Everyone is made up of and also flows in the same one life, the formless element. This common thread of life in everyone is once called Vasudev and all beings are like beads in the same one life thread. Vasudev kutumbhkam means family of Vasudev.

Vedanta: Based on the Vedas.

Vandh: Remote hamlet.

World Vision: A Christian charity. Registered office in UK.

Yagna: Sacrificial fire. Yagna or yajna is an outer form of worship in which offerings are made to different deities in a prescribed and systematic manner by qualified priests to supplicate them. The chanting of mantras while performing the sacrifices is expected to ensure fulfilment of specific desires, the overall welfare of an individual, a group of people or the entire society.

Zameen: Ground.

Zillas: Zilla Parishad is a local government body at the district level in India. It looks after the administration of the rural area of the district and its office is located at the district headquarters. The Hindi word Parishad means Council and Zilla Parishad translates as District Council.

Zilla pracharak: The head of the zilla in the organization.

Appendix 2: List of Acronyms

3-R: Rescue, Relief, Rehabilitation
AA: Action Aid
ADB: Asian Development Bank
AIDMI: All India Disaster Mitigation Institute
AMURT: Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team
BAPS: Bachasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha
BIZAG: Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geo-Informatics
BME: Benefit Monitoring and Evaluation
BPL: Below the Poverty Line
BSNL: Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited
CASA: Church Auxiliary for Social Action
CBCI: Catholic Bishops Conference of India
CBDP: Community-based Development Programme
CDMA: Code Division Multiple Access
CEFS: Centre for Environment and Food Security
CERN: The European Organization for Nuclear Research (French: *Organisation européenne pour la recherche nucléaire*), known as CERN or Cern
CEO: Chief Executive Officer
CHOGM: Commonwealth Heads of Government Meet
CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency
CM: Chief Minister
CRS: Catholic Relief Services
DM: Disaster Management
DRC: Disaster Research Centre
DRM: Disaster Risk Mitigation
DRR: Disaster Risk Reduction
DSSS: Diocese Social Service Society
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization
GEERP: Gujarat Earthquake Reconstruction Programme
GERRP: Gujarat Emergency Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Programme
GNP: Gross National Product
GONGO: Government Organized Non-Governmental Organization
GSDM Act: Gujarat State Disaster Management Act
GSDMA: Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority
GSM: Global System Mobile Communication
IAS: Indian Administrative Service
IDS: Institute for Development Studies
IIT: Indian Institute of Technology
IT: Information Technology
IMD: Indian Meteorological Department
INGO: International Non-Governmental Organization
ISKCON: International Society for Krishna Consciousness

ISR: Institute of Seismological Research
KIT: Kalinga Institute of Technology
KPMG: Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (accounting firm)
LSE: London School of Economics
MAH Units: Major Accident Hazardous Units
MDG: Millennium Development Goal
MKSS: Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan
MSF: Medicin Sans Frontieres
NAM: Non-Aligned Movement
NCCBM: National Council of Cement Building Material
NDM Act: National Disaster Management Act
NDMA: National Disaster Management Authority
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
NIDM: National Institute of Disaster Management
NREGA: National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NREGS: National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
ODRAF: Orissa Disaster Relief Action Force
OSDMA: Orissa State Disaster Mitigation Authority
PWD: Public Works Department
QOL: Quality of Life
RKM: Ramakrishna Mission
RSS: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
RVA: Risk and Vulnerability Analysis
SEZ: Special Economic Zone
SHG: Self-help Group
SRA: Social Research Association
SWAD: Self Employed Women for Action and Development
TAQA: Technical Audit and Quality Assurance
TDO: Taluka Development Officer
TOT: Transfer of Technology
TVA: Tennessee Valley Authority
UBSS: Utkal Bipiti Bipasana Samiti (RSS wing in Orissa)
UEVRP: Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Reduction Programme
ULB: Urban Local Body
UN: United Nations
UNDP: United Nations Development Program
UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund
UNVRP: United Nations Vulnerability Reduction Program
WHO: World Health Organization
XIM: Xaviers Institute of Management

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