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THE HARBINGERS OF RAIN: CULTURE AND DROUGHT IN BLJAPUR, INDIA

BY

Aninhalli Rame Vasavi

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

THE HARBINGERS OF RAIN: CULTURE AND DROUGHT IN BIJAPUR, INDIA

By

Aninhalli Rame Vasavi

In the semi-arid district of Bijapur, Karnataka state, India, droughts are defined and understood in culturally specific ways. Droughts are addressed in multiple domains thereby indicating the larger cosmology within which conditions of nature and human-nature relations are contextualized. In the domain of agriculture the classification of land types, the associating of different crops to different lands, and the evaluation of food crops are premised on a set of cultural precepts. Located within the annual agro-ritual cycle are a repertoire of provisioning transactions between the landed, service, and ritual caste groups of the villages. In addition, an array of rituals ranging from annual rain-crop prophesying, rain-divination, and drought-alleviation rites are conducted at various periods.

While such conceptualizations and transactions attest to the close human-nature relations within the culture they do not necessarily provide an effective mechanism in which drought-related (and hence nature-related) scarcities of resources are addressed. Instead, such cosmological conceptualizations act as ideological foundations which legitimize resource differences within the society. Such factors then provide a basis for noting that, contrary to popular portrayals, some non-western cultural conceptualizations of human-nature relations do not lead to arcadian, harmonious, and sustenance-oriented conditions.

Increasing marginalization, recurring droughts, and widespread food scarcity in the district have led to the establishment of programs and policies to address the situation. Two specific schemes, the promotion of modern agriculture and droughtalleviation programs, act as hegemonic forces which are reordering the ecology, agriculture, and culture of the region. The end result of such reordering is the generation of new social conditions and symbolic forms in the region which attest to the formation of new human-nature and human-human relations.

The dissertation concludes by noting the importance of culture in the conceptualization and appropriation of nature. At the same time it calls attention to the world-wide reordering of nature which thereby has implications for the content of cultures. Copyright by

ANINHALLI RAME VASAVI

TO ALL THE RESIDENTS OF MADBHAVI VILLAGE

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CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasing ecological degradation in India and the widespread stress associated with the depletion of ecological resources, both academic and activist narratives now center on the debate of indigenous conceptions of nature and societal relationship to natural objects and processes. Both the urgency of the issues that an understanding of culture-nature relations can highlight and the fact that "the complex relationships between the meaning systems and natural environments of South Asia remain to be established" (Herring 1991:23) point to the importance of studying culture-nature relationships.

I have chosen to study conceptualizations of societynature relations in Bijapur, one of India's chronic droughtprone regions. Focusing primarily on contexts in which drought and its related effects are conceptualized and addressed, I use drought as a window through which to study a culture's conceptualization of nature. With this in mind, I first delineate the cultural significance accorded to natural objects and processes in the region. Based on details from the domains of agriculture, rain-rituals, and provisioning transactions I indicate that an ethos of substantialism is the framework of significance within which

society-nature relations are constituted and conducted. I observe that such a framework enables people to recognize the various and specific characteristics of different objects and persons and to make links between contexts and actions.

In Bijapur local conceptualizations of drought are closely aligned with the cosmology of the region which emphasizes a non-dualistic relationship between humans and nature. Yet, there are no ameliorative strategies encoded within these cosmological conceptualizations with which the people can overcome drought-related scarcities. Cosmological constructions of society-nature relations, I note, serve as ideological foundations which legitimize resource differences within the society.

Bijapur is subject to programs and policies, such as drought relief works and the promotion of modern agriculture, that attempt to address the problems associated with recurring droughts and widespread poverty and deprivation in the region. The programs and policies of modern agriculture and drought-alleviation schemes act as hegemonic forces and are reconstituting the region's ecology, agriculture, and culture. In attempting to understand and come to terms with such changes, the people draw on metaphors that are based on an ethos of substantialism. Such a framework continues to assert the importance of the links between the land and the people.

The study as a whole elaborates on a regionally specific framework within which society-nature relations (especially in the context of drought) are conceptualized and articulated. It attempts to encapsulate the ideological dimensions of such conceptualizations and the effects of hegemonic forces on local culture-nature relations. The study concludes by noting the implications of the reconstitution of local cultures by larger political and economic forces and the generation of new symbolic forms in a society.

Subject to recurring droughts, the district of Bijapur is host to several harbingers of rain. There are deities who are propitiated for rain, there are hereditary rain-men and ritual specialists who call the rains, there are agriculturists who work their land to enhance the fertility and productivity of the land, and now there are government agencies that attempt to bring rain. Together, these varied harbingers of rain, they produce a cultural fabric that makes Bijapur compelling to study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature pertinent to this study is contextualized and presented in two sections. This section presents an overview of studies and debates relevant to the anthropological problem of locating culture-nature relations. The section that follows reviews studies and

perpspectives on the social contexts of droughts.

SOCIETY, CULTURE AND MATURE

The importance of linking conditions of society to conditions of nature has been emphasized by studies that locate the integral manner in which each is contoured by the other. The framework for such analysis was set by Schmidt's (1971) compelling exegesis of Marx's concept of nature which eschews the mechanical, deterministic construction of nature that is often attributed to Marxist analyses. In contrast to such constructions, Schmidt elaborates on how (for Marx) labor as a mediating force unites nature and society, making them two sides of a single coin, dual partners in a metabolic process where "nature is humanized while men are naturalized" (1971:78).

Several studies (Burgess 1980; Smith and O'Keefe 1988; Redclift 1987) which followed Schmidt locate the significant ways in which nature and society influence and effect each other. These studies note the forces and relations of production, labor process, capital and resource allocation, social organization, and the production process as they relate to the conditions of nature. This dissertation is oriented to the recognition of the inextricable and significant link between conditions of nature and those of society. It asserts that a reading of the conditions of nature and nature's links to the meaning systems of a

culture are as important as interpreting and understanding cultures in their social contexts.

Anthropological literature has added new dimensions to the debate on society-nature relations. Some anthropological studies have questioned the very relevance of positing nature and culture as separate categories (Barth 1975; Strathern 1980). A pertinent question in this regard is: Do all societies recognize domains and categories of nature as being different from those of culture? Addressing such questions, Strathern rejects early anthropological perspectives which uphold a universally valid dichotomy between categories of nature and culture and argues that "there is no such thing as nature or culture. Each is a highly relativized concept whose ultimate signification must be derived from its place within a specific metaphysics" (1980:72).

More recently, Ingold (1992) has eschewed not only theories that uphold a culture-nature dichotomy but has also questioned the relevance of perspectives which either see culture as <u>adapting</u> to nature or those which give primacy to culture thereby portraying nature as being <u>culturally</u> <u>constructed</u>. Ingold calls attention to the "mutual constitution of persons and environments" (1992:40) in the course of a life process. Humams as actors act on and interact with a given environment in patterns that are culturally specific. Yet, such culturally specific actions

recognize the characteristics and the "affordances" or the uses provided by objects in the environment. Such a perspective ties in with my data which indicate that the classification and use of land and other natural resources in the area are hinged primarily on the recognition of the specific characteristics of each object.

In addition to noting the non dichotomy of culturenature relations, ethnographies from several geographically and culturally diverse societies have highlighted that nature and culture are not always constructed in terms of opposition to each other (Shiva 1988; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1976). Hierarchical, deterministic, and antithetical relationships between ecological objects and processes, and geo-physical features of land and culture are not discernable in many societies. For societies whose cosmological and lived realities are embedded in nature, and which have not been subject to an estrangement of nature from culture, or where Western science and technology have not placed nature and culture in terms of opposition to each other, the expressive forms of culture are a myriad of patterns and structures which integrate humans with nature.

Moreover, Indianist perpectives concur with the anthropological stance in which nature and culture are seen as being closely intertwined. Studies of Hindu classical and folk constructions of nature-culture relationhips indicate a close, interdependent relationship between the

two (Gold 1991; Marriott 1989; Ramanujan 1989; Zimmermann 1987). The fundamental and important place that nature as category, process, phenomenon, and characteristic occupies in Indian thought and actions is testified to in studies that note the monism of Hindu thinking in which cosmogonies are "a totalistic homological system. . . in which there is a confounding of the natural, supernatural, the religious and ritual, and the social" (Smith 1989:242).

In Hindu thinking nature is not considered a mere object through which humans make a livelihood; rather, it is a reflexive mirror in which humans perceive themselves. As Gold observed in the villages of Rajasthan, the natural environment is considered to be an interactive agency that "participates in human identities, states of mind and moral enterprises" (1991:4). Such a perspective is largely valid for understanding culture-nature conceptualizations in general in South Asia and for the study of culture-drought conceptualizations in particular. Moreover Gadgil and Guha, who have documented the shifts in the cultural and ecological conditions in various parts of India, have called attention to the ways in which "custom and tradition provide the overarching framework within which human-nature interactions are carried out" (1992:32).

I use the construct "culture-nature" to refer to the ways in which culture (a set of meanings, values and frameworks of significance) addresses and understands

various forms, objects, conditions, and processes of nature. I use a "society-nature" construct to emphasize the ways in which humans, as members of a particular society, appropriate, relate to, and utilize natural objects and processes.

ETHOS OF SUBSTANTIALISM

In the context of South Asia, scholars have identified a close symbiosis between natural objects and processes, and social actions and meanings. Referred to as substantialism (Zimmermann 1987; Marriott 1989), this concept accounts for the ways in which people consider all actions, conditions, words, thoughts, places, relationships, and feelings to have particular substances. Based on this attribution and recognition of substances, people identify specific qualities and characteristics in various domains and actions (Marriott 1989). While the perspective of "substantialism", linked to the ethnosociology of India school, propounds substantialsim as a paradigm to account for and understand all actions and interactions in the context of South Asia, I use the substantialism perspective in a limited way.

I identify the ethos of substantialism as a paradigm which explicates the ways in which the people relate to natural objects and processes and, in some cases, to changing material conditions and values. As a paradigm it provides insight into the interlinking of contexts and

actions, such as the continuity associated between the domains of divinity, nature, and society. An ethos of substantialism also explains the coinciding of the literal (such as the heat of a drought) with the metaphorical (such as the heat of a deity's anger). Finally, an ethos of substantialism provides a format for the conceptualizations of human-nature relations in a non-dictomized and nondualistic perspective.

The cosmological construction of droughts, the agricultural practices, and the rituals performed to apprehend and prevent droughts are presented as being based on an ethos of substantialism. Such a perspective provides an explication for both the general society-nature relations and for the ways in which culture mediates the understandings of droughts. A perspective such as this underscores the cultural basis of understanding a phenomena, such as drought, that was often considered in only natural terms and as determining the society in which it occurs.

As central as the perspective of the cultural constitution of society-nature relations is, it is insufficient to present nature and culture in only their substantive dimensions. What must also be considered are the multiple ways and forms in which nature, as object of livelihood, source of living, and as a dimension of human consciousness, is contextualized, understood, and interacted with by the people. Some studies (Agarwal 1991; Gold 1991)

go beyond the epistemological and cosmological constructions of society-nature relations and elaborate on the forms in which culture-nature relationships have significance for livelihood, consumption, and conservation practices.

Similarly, in the context of understanding natureculture relations in Bijapur I move away from classical terms and models and focus on local, folk models of culturenature relations. I first provide a general perspective on the ways in which natural objects and processes such as climatic cycles, the celestial bodies, the flora and the landscape are understood and interacted with. I then elaborate on the specific type of agriculture in Bijapur and note the cultural basis of its practice. Though conducted through a set of precepts that are culturally ordered, the local agricultural practices recognize the ecological specificity of the region and incorporate drought as a constantly plausible phenomenon.

SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF DROUGHTS

Social science literature has increasingly focused on identifying droughts, more than any other "natural disaster", as products of larger economic and political factors. Studies such as those by Copans (1983), Ball (1978), and Watts (1983a) have elaborated on the forces of colonialism, capitalism, and ongoing "underdevelopment" processes as accounting for the increasing proclivity of

some regions to droughts. Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) point to the importance of understanding the production of drought and other ecological degradation on the basis of a "regional political-ecology". The production of particular ecological conditions are to be understood as results of political and economic forces. The historical conditioning of land-use, shifts in forces and relations of production, and social structural factors are upheld in their study as causative factors in the production of droughts and other ecological conditions.

Following such leads I contextualize the study of Bijapur, and its society-nature relationship with reference to droughts, with a brief review of the historical experience of drought and famine in the region. Using colonial reports and studies I identify the influences of the British administration on the district's village structures and social organizations. I make note of the impact of the colonial reorganization of the villages and its effects on local strategies to manage and address droughts.

Studies of droughts in other parts of the world have also focused on the importance of the relationships between drought and society (Campbell 1990; Glantz 1987; Spitz 1980; Platteau 1990; Watts 1983a, 1983b). They have emphasized both the importance of social and cultural factors in understanding drought-affected societies and the ways in

which droughts impinge on the social and material conditions of societies. In the context of Bijapur I note not only the historical conditioning of the region by political and economic forces, but, also delineate the major social structural and cultural patterns within the region. I identify three cultural strands, that of Virashaivism, Sufism, and pastoral deitism, as forming the underlying grid on which the local cultural complex rests and within which human-nature relations are addressed.

A third and important dimension that recent social science literature on droughts has provided is that of eschewing the paradigms of discontinuity in which societies and natural hazards, such as droughts, are located (Hewitt 1983; Smith and O'Keefe 1988). Hewitt, for instance, noted the tendency of most research to stress the "unness" of natural hazards wherein:

> Disasters are <u>unmanaged</u> phenomena. They are the <u>unexpected</u>, <u>unprecedented</u>. They derive from natural processes or events that are highly <u>uncertain</u>. <u>Unawareness</u> and <u>unreadiness</u> are said to typify the condition of their human victims (1983:10).

Similarly, droughts are often studied and presented as "hazards" that disrupt and pose threats to the continuity of societies in which they occur. Instead of the "unness" often associated with drought conditions, in places where droughts are recursive they are contextualized in established social and cultural idioms. As ethnographies

of societies in Africa and Australia which have a proclivity to drought, indicate, droughts are encapsulated in the larger cultural complex of the society (Munn 1973; Krige and Krige 1947; Comaroff 1985; Frierman 1990). These ethnographies have also noted the ways in which culturally specific etiologies of droughts influence the ways in which droughts are ritually addressed.

Similarly, I note the multiple ways in which droughts are contextualized and addressed in the agricultural and ritualistic domains of Bijapur. Droughts are addressed as constantly plausible phenomena in the context of agriculture and as the results of recalcitrant human actions in the context of rituals. In providing details of the ritual strategies by which droughts are collectively addressed I note the specific cosmology within which droughts are embedded. I then link these cosmological conceptualizations to the implications they have for local scarcity alleviation measures.

Several ethnographies have also detailed the strategies by which various societies address droughts and thereby incorporate droughts as regular aspects of life (Chen 1991; Maclachlan 1983; Watts 1983b). These studies have emphasized the specific ways through which household and community level strategies attempt to overcome droughtrelated resource and food shortages. While I do not detail such specific scarcity alleviation strategies, I describe

and analyze community level food transactions and link them to an analysis of the local moral economy of provisioning.

Linked to an understanding of the local provisioning mechanisms and transactions is the problem of food scarcity and threats to life that droughts pose. The forces of colonialism, capitalism, and the displacement of traditional strategies of adaptation to drought have been highlighted in drought-related literature as factors that enhance the reproduction of droughts and food scarcity problems in different societies (Glantz 1987; Platteau 1990; Spitz 1980; Watts 1983a). Within such arguments it has become commonplace to locate food security problems as emanating from breaks and discontinuities in the traditional social structures that assured provisioning and sustenance to the indigent (Campbell 1990; Greenough 1982; Epstein 1967; Platteau 1990; Watts 1983b).

But Torry (1986b, 1986c, 1987) has consistently questioned the "breakdown" metaphors which associate crises of food security with collapses in established norms of provisioning. He argues for going beyond the dependency and underdevelopment theses of drought production and locates such crises as food deprivation, the withdrawal of food transactions, and the acceptance of such situations, in the existing social structures and cultural codes of societies. More specifically, Torry's arguments highlight the need to question the now generally accepted dictum that pre-

colonial, pre-capitalistic agrarian social formations were based on an ethic of provisioning that effectively contained deprivation and starvation.

My conclusions relating to the local cultural provisioning mechanisms of Bijapur largely validate Torry's analyses. I first analyze the provisioning transactions in terms of being social strategies that take into account the ecological specificity of the region and hence as the social addressing of natural conditions. In addition I analyze the ability of these mechanisms to contain both persistent hunger and drought-related scarcities of food. I assert that in the contemporary period there are no strategies or mechanisms which are linked with the cosmological conceptualizations in which droughts are understood in Bijapur. Finally, I note how these cosmological conceptualizations of drought may themselves be ideological foundations in which resource differences and deprivation among residents of the villages are legitimized. In highlighting the ideological dimension of this societynature conceptualization, I argue for noting a non-adaptive and a non-arcadian component in this society-nature construct. Despite a cosmology which generally and ritually articulates a collective moral onus for the production of droughts, the experience and impact of droughts, especially the hardships associated with resource deprivation, are experienced on a household basis. The lack of fit between

the hierarchical and changing social structure and the cosmology do not render strategies in which drought-related scarcities of resources are addressed.

ADMINISTRATIVE RE-ORDERING OF NATURE AND SOCIETY

Since the nineteenth century both the frequency and spread of droughts and the significant number of people they affect have compelled nation states to take measures to alleviate drought-related distress. Administrative intervention to prevent mass famine, starvation, migration, and dislocation have led to the establishment and entrenchment of bureaucratic apparatii in several droughtprone areas of the world. Such intervention has been particularly significant for the drought-prone areas of India and West Africa.

Many studies and reports have recorded the conditions through which droughts have become recurring phenomena; their social, economic, political, and ecological effects, and the mechanisms and effects of organized relief for areas in which they occur (Dreze 1990; Glantz 1987; Platteau 1990; Spitz 1980). In the context of Bijapur, I note the regional cultural complex and the historical and contemporary conditions that have combined to mark the region in specific terms. As a region that is marked as economically "backward" and which requires periodic state-directed relief Bijapur is subject to government programs which attempt to

"drought-proof" the region and hence re-order the region. As a hegemonic discourse, the administrative re-ordering of the region has implications for the local society-nature relations, and hence on the forms in which droughts are addressed and managed. Focusing particularly on the discourse by which modern agriculture is promoted and made acceptable to the people, I note its impact on the local agriculture and agrarian culture.

As a result of state intervention Bijapur's culture has been subject to alterations in identity and continuity. Such conditions exemplify recent anthropological concerns with the "predicament of culture" (Clifford 1988) in which the representations of a culture, its authenticity, and its continuity are brought into question. What may have been typical, ideal or representative is faced with threats of change, displacement, and assimiliation. New orientations generated by larger economic and political forces and external institutions and values are incorporated into and understood through a pre-existing cultural framework. Such observations tie in with Ohnuki-Tierney (1990) and Comaroff's (1982) theses that the reconstitution of local cultures by larger political and economic forces and the generation of new symbolic forms must be accounted for.

An ethos of substantialism (outlined previously) also provides a format in which the people understand and comment on social and cultural changes. The re-ordering of the

physio-geographic landscape, changes in agrarian precepts, and the restructuring of economic and social relationships are all encoded in idioms and terms that assert local conceptual links between physio-geographic setting and social life, and context and actions.

EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION

Understanding a larger cultural corpus through a prism of droughts poses certain dilemmas. Can a study hinged on cultural analyses re-present or portray the more immediate dimensions of life in a society where droughts are recurrent? How does one re-present other people's life experiences, especially those as harrowing as drought? Can the issues of the synergistic processes of drought--differential allocation of resources, ecological degradation, lack of entitlements to resources, sustenance problems, marginalization, deprivation, stress, and exploitation--be represented in an analysis of the cultural bases of society-nature relations?

In encapsulating such concerns within this study I focus on the ways in which resource deprivation, scarcity, and stress experienced by the people are encompassed and made explicit in a culturally specific form. To note the ways in which these experiences are culturally constructed and expressed is to note the intersubjective and ideological dimension of these experiences.

As an ethnography based primarily on people's experiences and views, and on my observations and participation, I emphasize multiple discourses and sets of social action as sources of data. People's understandings and explanations of everyday activities and life experiences form the basis of local discourses. It is from these discourses that I delineate some specific precepts which embody culturally-based knowledge systems and practices. I note the contexts that these precepts refer to and the ways in which these precepts influence social actions and interactions. I contrast precepts from an older, established cultural corpus with those from a new, externally-induced cultural force to highlight the changes in Bijapur's contemporary society and culture.

I rely on people's recollections and commentaries to contrast present cultural forms and relationships to those of the past in order to provide a diachronic perspective. The shifts in the cultural constructions of the region, droughts, and social relations throw light on the historical changes and the forms by which such changes are understood by the people. I note the forms and patterns of social organization, meanings, and values that are either retained, assimiliated, or dispensed with.

In addition to the narratives and actor-centered perspectives of the study, I draw on images, metaphors, and idioms encoded in everyday speech, poems, and literature of

the region to represent the "structure of feeling" (Williams 1981 in Marcus and Fischer 1986) expressed by the people. It is these feelings and expressions that give voice to the lived realities of existing conditions, changing situations, and fluctuating relationships.

Many of the images and metaphors invoked by the people of Bijapur address human-land relations and cultural identities. Based on an ethos of substantialism these images and metaphors are drawn from the contexts in which people engage in meaningful social actions and interactions. At the same time these images and metaphors provide a conceptual grid through which people understand that very context and come to terms with it.

Although Bijapur is a hierarchical society in which caste and class positions make for a sharply differentiated social world, there exist generalized sets of meanings, values, and ideas that are collectively shared and related to. The sentiments expressed in conversations, poems, and songs, and the metaphors, images, and idioms are largely relevant to all segments of the society. These idioms and expressions are representative of generalized trends, such as the results of agricultural commercialization and the effect of administered relief on the village community that encompass and effect all members of the society.

FIELDWORK

Fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted during the years of 1989 and 1990. I spent the whole of 1989 in the village of Madbhavi, a dry village that is thirteen kilometers from Bijapur town, the district headquarters of Bijapur district.

Having decided to study a region which was incidentally in the state to which I also belong, I expected to be quite at home with the language and culture of the region if not with village life. But, as I was to find out immediately as I settled into village life, my southern Kannada was vastly differently from the Kannada of the North and it took me several weeks to completely comprehend the dialectical differences. Subtle variations seemed to make a sea of difference--for weeks I was confused by the poor response I received to my morning greeting. As is common in my provenance, the Southern region of the state, I greeted people by asking if they'd had their breakfast (<u>thindi</u> <u>ayetha</u>?). I received confused glances and embarrased murmurings. As I was to learn later, <u>thindi</u> in the regional dialect did not mean "breakfast" but tickles!

In addition to the initial dialectical differences, I was not seen as a complete "insider" by the village residents. Apart from the differences in dialect, my ignorance of village life, lack of agricultural and cooking skills, and my status as unmarried and literate set me apart
from them. I was as they referred to me, a "bai" (a marathi term for sister and used in this Kannada speaking area to refer to outside women), one to whom they had to explain and teach about life in the village. Once I was sufficiently profficient in the regional dialect and had learned the subtle but important differences in our use of similar words, I was able to establish a rapport with the people.

Both the nature of the issues that I was attempting to study and being a woman posed several problems during fieldwork. There was no drought during 1989 and observations relating to specific strategies to alleviate drought-related scarcity were ruled out. Further, getting people to talk about and describe previous drought experiences was difficult. Those who had actually experienced severe food scarcity and who had had to rely on borrowed money or work on government relief centers were reluctant to speak about their personal experiences. Some people were, however, more forthcoming and some of the descriptions pertaining to scarcity experiences were gathered from a select few. Questions about land ownership and use, especially tenure relations, were always a sensitive issue. The state had promulgated several land reform and redistribution laws and I was warned that any survey about ownership, tenure relations, produce distribution etc would be sensitive. This and a general lack of emphasis on quantitative data has weakened this

study considerably. Any further research in this area will attempt to make up for this oversight.

Agriculture is the fulcrum of village activities and as a woman it was problematic for me to fully participate in all the agricultural activities. Though women participate in the conduct of agriculture and some are active in the decision-making and management of their units, agriculture is considered primarily a male domain. As a woman both cultural decorum and the need to be accepted by all compelled me to keep primarily to the company of women. However, I did accompany several families to their fields and many men were particularly cooperative in answering my questions and explaining things to me. Yet, I believe that this study would have benefitted more if I had been able to participate in all the men's activities, including being able to fully participate in all the agricultural activities.

Getting acquainted with the men and women who were permanent agricultural laborers was also difficult. Many of the fields were at a considerable distance from the village. I was unable to accompany them regularly and their schedules of leaving for the fields at dawn and returning after dusk made both getting to know them and interviewing them difficult. Two communities of people, also residents of the village I lived in, are not well represented in this study. The Jatghars are muslims, who are primarily engaged in

buffalo trading in the area. Some of the Jatghar men also work as agricultural laborers, but, by and large they do not participate in the cultural complex of the area and occupy a marginal position in the village society. The Lambadi are a tribal people, who were once nomadic baggage carriers. Government programs in the State have encouraged many to settle down in villages, but, their residences are often at a distance from the main settlement areas. They are predominantly agricultural laborers, but, many of them in the village of Madbhavi have resorted to migration and work at large construction sites.

Having spent the whole of 1989 in the village of Madbhavi, I returned to the U.S for the months of January-May 1990 and reviewed some of the themes that seemed pertinent to the study. After completing a month of archival research at the India Office Library in London, I returned to Bijapur in July, 1990, just as a drought was setting in. Attempting to make this a regional study, I travelled extensively within the district and covered the following villages and towns: Honutgi, Kaulagi, Bableshwar, Toravi, Mundugnur, Kanamadi, Nagaral, Uppadinahalli, Mammadapur, Murnal, Gadankere, Sigikeri, Sirur, Gunapur, Madarkhandi and the towns of Banhatti, Jamkhandi, Bilgi, Chadchan, and Bagalkot. Basing myself in Bijapur town, I returned regularly to Madbhavi village and reviewed some of the information, ideas, and concepts with the residents.

Hanumant Halangalli, a young student scholar and poet from the district, helped me as a research assistant and accompanied me during these trips and helped collect and record more interviews and songs about the region.

I conducted informal interviews in many of these villages and corroborated some of the data and some concepts and ideas with residents from different villages. Crosschecking information and ideas within villages enabled me to assess the validity of generalising some of the concepts and meanings to the region as a whole. I was also able to observe the resource use, employment strategies, and migration patterns that the onsetting drought initiated.

In 1989 I had observed Agricultural Assistants (employees of the state agricultural extension service) as they interacted with agriculturists in the villages and in the agricultural fields. Recognizing that agriculture and the promotion of the green revolution package would be a central theme in my study, I contacted the District Agricultural Office and joined the Agricultural Assistants on their field trips. I also participated in a week-long agricultural training program at the Farmers Training Centre at Jamkhandi in which women agriculturists from the district were being trained in the principles and methods of "modern" agriculture. I use the term agriculturists to encompass all people, irrespective of caste and class differences, who are engaged in agricultural activities and the culture

associated with it. This is in preference to the term peasants, associated with self-subsistence cultivators, or farmers who are considered to be those who produce for the market.

In addition to the usual ethnographic methods of participant observation, informal interviews, and informants' perspectives, I have drawn on the views and expressions of several scholars and activists in Bijapur. School teachers, college lecturers, activists, poets, dramatists, and other scholars in the district proved to be invaluable informants on the region and its culture. Their unique position of being active participants within their own culture, and of having a sholarly interest in the region enabled them to have critical and reflecitve insights on the regional culture. In many ways their commentaries on the region, its society, and problems associated with the social and economic changes, were insightful.

I have occasionally drawn on popular literature, published in Kannada and available in local bookstores, bus stops, and bazaars of the district as additional sources of data. These popular books are rich in embodying the regional culture and in dispersing meanings and ideas to the people. Relatively cheap, the books and pamplets are popular with the people and it is not unusual to come across groups of people clustered around a single person who reads aloud from the book while the others sing. I also recorded

songs, poems, and stories in several villages that pertain to the history of the region, agricultural practices, and social life and changes.

CHAPTER LAYOUT AND SUMMARY

This chapter was intended to provide an overview of the theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches that inform this study. A historical and geographic introduction to the district of Bijapur is provided in the following chapter, including Bijapur's cultural specificities and commonalities with the regions in its vicinity, and its history of droughts and famines. Chapter Three elaborates on the ecological context of agrarian Bijapur and notes the ways in which nature is culturally appropriated.

Chapter Four discusses and explains the local agrarian precepts which are predicated on a cultural framework of society-nature relations. That chapter emphasizes the cultural precepts through which agriculture is practiced and the ways in which the ecological specificity of the region and droughts are incorporated in the local agricultural complex.

Chapter Five notes the ritualistic forms associated with the relationship between society and nature. It details the rituals that enable people to collectively address, apprehend, and alleviate droughts and droughtrelated stress.

Chapter Six analyzes the repertoire of provisioning transactions in a single village and relates them to the ecological cycle and social structure. It questions the ability of a moral economy of provisioning to be effective in containing resource inequities and drought-related stress. Chapter Seven details the reordering of the region through modern agriculture that has led to shifts in the landscape and significant changes in the socio-cultural fabric of the society. It identifies the dominant forces, such as the state management of drought-relief, the reordering of the local ecology, and the spread of modern agriculture, that initiate changes in the region's landscape and culture. Chapter Eight further details the conditions of the district during the 1990 drought. It notes the ways in which Bijapur is subject to statist interventions which further induce shifts in society-nature relations. Chapter Nine concludes the study by summarizing the contributions of this dissertation to understanding culture-nature relations in the context of South Asia.

CHAPTER: II

BIJAPUR

Bijapur is the northernmost district of the state of Karnataka, India, and is bordered by the state of Maharashtra (see Figure I). Its eleven talugs or administrative subunits of Badami, Bagalkot, Muddebihal, Bagewadi, Bijapur, Bilgi, Hungund, Indi, Jamakhandi, Muddebihal, Mudhol, and Sindqi cover a geographical area of 17069 sq. kilometers. Its population stood at 2.4 million in 1981 (District Census Handbook 1981) with a density of 141 persons per sq. kilometer. The topography of the district is largely of vast flat plains that stretch into the horizon. With scanty tree cover and sparse shrubs that dot the land, it is the signs of intense human use of the land that give the landscape its character. Parcels of agricultural land, with embankments of various sizes, take on varying colors during the different agricultural seasons. The desolate look of the landscape during the long period of fallow in the hot summer months (April-May) is broken by a green hue of the first seasonal crops of groundnuts and wheat. The landscape gets its richest appearance during the winter season when sorghum, millets, sunflower, and pulses are in full maturity and a full bodied lush green colors the landscape.

Part of the Deccan plateau, lying in the rain shadow of the Western ghat or mountain (1) ranges, Bijapur is subject

FIGURE : I



to low and irregular rainfall. The district's average annual rainfall of 550 millimeters--only half of the average of the state--often falls short in quantity and timing, making Bijapur the most drought-prone region in the state and one of India's most chronic drought areas (District Census Handbook 1981; Singh 1978). Consequently, intermittent droughts, scarcities of resources, and famines have marked Bijapur's history. Five rivers, the Bhima, Doni, Ghataprabha, Malaprabha, and the Krishna traverse the district.

HISTORY AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE

In its history and culture, Bijapur, as part of the Deccan belt, is considered a "shatter zone" (Stein 1980), containing elements of both the Northern and Southern cultures of India. Bijapur's chequered history partially accounts for the region's complex cultural patterns. Between the sixth and mid twelveth century it was ruled by the Pallavas, Chalukyas, and the Kaluchuris dynasties (District Gazetteer 1981). The mid-twelveth century was witness to the rise of the Virashaiva movement and the cultural, political, and economic changes initiated by the movement's philosophy (Ishwaran 1983). The thirteenth century saw the arrival of the Mughals and the establishment of independent Islamic sultanates. Consequently, Bijapur's political,

century was tied to being a "marcher territory" (Fukazawa 1963): subjugated by Mughal invasion, alternating between independent Islamic rule and being ruled by the Mahratta Peshwas. From its annexation to the British dominion in 1818, and its establishment as a separate district in 1885, the political and economic history of Bijapur up to 1947 was tied largely to the colonial administrative policies of the Bombay Province (2).

THE COLONIAL RE-ORDERING OF VILLAGE ORGANIZATIONS

Bijapur's village organization has been subject to several alterations. On the eve of its amalgamation with the British dominion of Bombay Presidency, Bijapur's rural organization had been based primarily on the Maratha administrative system. The positions of the village headman (Patel) and the accountant (Kulkarni) were hereditary and assured them the rights of revenue collection. As a corporate group, members of these heritable offices, called Vatandar, had various responsibilities and obligations towards the village community. The position of the headman (Patel) entitled him to fix the time of revenue payments, to allocate lands for cultivation, and gave him authority to settle disputes (Baden-Powell 1896). Such an office, the Vatandar, was "heritable, saleable and transferable with acknowledgement of State authorities and village assembly" (Fukazawa 1982:250 in Perlin 1985), and also enabled the

village headman and the accountant to receive payment in kind from cultivators and artisans. Such hereditary positions were also associated with the responsibility for the general welfare of the village community.

The British retained the existing organizational structure of village administration but reworked the responsiblities and rights of the <u>Vatandar</u>. The Survey and Settlement of 1835 terminated the rights of the <u>Vatandar</u> to collect revenue and individual cultivators paid revenue directly to the State (McAlpin 1983)). This reorganization was aimed at inducing security of tenure and creating a landed class of farmers who would increase agricultural production and induce economic growth in the rural areas. Such economic and administrative changes enhanced the economic strength and mobility of the elite without any concomitant change in the general economic growth of the villages. These political changes engendered the fragmentation of the village community structure.

In their new positions, as salaried representatives of the Government, the <u>Vatandar</u> continued to enjoy the privilege of having a hereditary office that conferred land rights and a stipend. But as appointed officers and as salaried representatives of the Government, the <u>Vatandar</u> were under no social obligations or moral compunction to be responsible for the general welfare of the village.

The holders of these (the hereditary office) were relegated to being rentiers and pensioners or merely stipendiary employees selected and paid in a slightly anachronistic way. There was no place in the new system for that hybrid figure, part entrepreneur, part official and part territorial magnate..." (Guha 1985:52)

Though this policy was aimed at undermining the authority of the traditional elites, it was more successful in undermining the collective bargaining power of the village and the responsibility of the elites to the people than it was in undermining the elites themselves. Their new de jure status, recognized by the colonial government, enabled the <u>vatandar</u> to perform the functions and duties incumbent with the positions (as headman, and as accountant), without the traditional social obligations. Their officially recognized position undermined their local accountability to the residents of the village and led to the neglect of their traditional obligations of provisioning the village indigent during periods of food crisis (McAlpin:1983).

By the 1940s, the "large, distinct and superficially self-contained" (Charlesworth 1985:70) villages of the Deccan that provided the model for official and academic portrayals of typical Asiatic villages had changed significantly. This was especially seen in the decrease in responsibility of the landed elites to maintain the village's public resources and enable the people to contain

short-term drought-related contingencies within the village itself.

With the post-independence reorganization of Indian states, Bijapur was amalgamated to the then state of Mysore, now called Karnataka. With the contiguous districts of Gulburga, Bidar, and Raichur in North Karnataka, Bijapur shares both a similiarity in the geo-physical setting where droughts are recurrent and a common cultural complex. I identify three major cultural strands in the district. Virashaivism, a syncretic tradition of sufism and popular Hinduism, and pastoral deitism, which combine in the North Karnataka belt to produce a specific cultural complex which differentiates it from the Southern belt of Karnataka.

REGIONAL CULTURAL COMPLEX

The reformist sectarian movement of Virashaivism initiated in the twelveth century occupies an important position in the religous practices and cultural identity of the region. As the birth place of Basava, the founder of Virashaivism, Bijapur is one of the core areas where Virashaivism is practiced through a specific corpus of religous precepts. The adherents of Virashaivism (called Lingayats or <u>lingayataru</u>, from the tradition of wearing the phallic symbol (<u>Linga</u>) around their necks) are encouraged to practice the principles of <u>Kayaka</u> (work) and <u>dasoha</u> (communal sharing), the central motifs of Virashaivism. Ideally, Virashaivism eschews caste segregation and the practices of ritual impurity. Contemporary observations nevertheless reveal the working of caste differences and an assimiliation of popular and classical Hindu rituals by the Lingayats (Bradford 1985; Ishwaran 1983). As Lingayats form the dominant caste group in the region, the practices of Virashaivism, such as the donning of the <u>Linga</u> on themselves, the reciting of the <u>Vachanas</u> (metric poetry of Virashaivism), and the ritually encoded transactions of food and grains, are models for imitation among the other castes.

Sufism, Islamic mysticism that emphasizes emotive ways of relating to god, once flourished in Bijapur under the aegis of Islamic rulers (Eaton 1983). The <u>dargahs</u> or burial sites of the Sufi saints continue to be central places of worship in the district. Ritualized healing and exorcizing of demonic possession are regularly performed at the <u>dargahs</u> of the villages and towns. Combining elements of popular Hinduism with elements of Islamic practice, some <u>dargahs</u> also conduct rituals of "rain-crop" prophesying as part of their annual festivals.

In addition, temples and shrines of pastoral deities dot the regional landscape and indicate the historical significance of the region as a once predominantly pastoral area (Sontheimer 1989). The pastoral deities are associated with the <u>Kuruba</u> or shepherds who are culturally recognized as being blessed with oracular powers and whose knowledge of

the region's ecology and ability to read and predict the weather are well recognized.

The caste groups in the district are the dominant castes represented by the occupation-based sub-castes of the Lingayats, the priests (Jangama), the agriculturists (Panchamashali and Kudakaliga), the merchants (Banajiga), oil-pressers (<u>Ganiqa</u>), and the dyers (<u>Bannagara</u>). In addition, the other castes are the shepherds (Kurubar), barbers (<u>nyakar</u>), clothes washers (<u>Aqasa</u>), potters (<u>Kumbar</u>), stonecutters (Vodda), leatherworkers (Madha), the harijan (Holeya), and the menial domestic servants (Thalwar). The Muslims, predominantly Shias, form a significant proportion of the urban population in the towns of Bagalkot and Bijapur and are also active agriculturists in some of the villages. Another significant group of people are the Lambani, saltsellers and carriers, who were once nomadic (Nanjundayya and Iver 1928). The Lambani have now settled into the rural landscape of North Karnataka and are attempting to carve out a niche for themselves.

HISTORY OF DROUGHTS AND FAMINES

Bijapur's long history of being subjected to drought and famine helps explain the dual use of the term <u>baraghala</u> to refer to periods of both drought and food scarcity. From as far back as the devastating Skull Famine (<u>Dogi Baraghala</u>) of 1791, when the ground was strewn with skulls of the

unburied dead, recurrent drought and plague-related famines are retained in the oral and written history of the region. Apart from localized and shorter periods of scarcity, the periods of 1818-19, 1824-25, 1853-54 and 1863-64 were periods of intense food scarcity and misery for the people (Bijapur District Gazetteer 1981). The 1876-79 droughtrelated scarcities followed the closing period of a shortlived cotton boom, and saw large-scale hoarding of grains and exhorbitant grain prices. Despite government attempts to regulate grain prices, a <u>padi</u>, a measure of grains equal to about four kilograms, of sorghum sold for a rupee and gave the drought of 1876 its designation as the "<u>padi bara</u>" or "padi drought" (Horakere 1987).

After its amalgamation with the Bombay Presidency, the region's rich tracts of black, regur soil were utilized for cotton cultivation. A market encouraged by the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War increased the proportion of land under cotton. For some sections of the district which took to the cultivation of cotton in a significant way, the international cotton boom of the Civil War period led to short-lived periods of prosperity. The recession that followed the end of the American Civil War saw hard times and a gradual return to increased food crop cultivation (Choksey 1955, McAlpin 1983).

More droughts, famines and plagues were to visit the district in the years of 1876-77, 1879, 1891, 1896 and 1898,

making Bijapur the most drought and famine ridden area of the Bombay Province. Compelled by widespread criticism of the devastation and high mortality caused by the midnineteenth century famines, the British administration established scarcity relief measures in the region. Though the first famine relief camp in Bijapur was started in 1832 (Etheridge 1868), it took several years before the program gained widespread acceptance and administered relief became effective.

ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIEF CENTERS

After the amalgamation of Bijapur into the British Empire in 1818, the area's susceptibility to famines came to the attention of the colonial administration, who then made efforts to mitigate the large scale mortality and destitution that these famines imposed. But as colonial records show, the institutionalization of relief was never easy. Colonial attempts to provide public relief in the district during different periods of scarcity was only marginally accepted by the people.

As colonial administrative reports indicate, the relief works were not immediately successful. During the 1877 drought-related famine, the Governor of Bombay noted that the public relief works had not been fully utilized. Instead, "...despite vast loss of crops, despite the misery protracted for a full twelve months, the majority of the

general population, and almost the whole of the peasant proprietors sustained themselves without assistance from the state" (Bombay Government Gazette 1878:117). The Governor added:

> "How strong, then, must have been the selfsupporting power of the people, how large must have been their stores and stocks of food-grains, how extensive their credit, how great their means of purchasing supplies from a distance, how resolute their spirit of self- help" (Bombay Government Gazette 1878:117).

And as soon as it had rained in September of 1877, the people "left the relief works with great rapidity" (Bombay Gazettee 1878). The past ability of village organizations to successfully overcome food scarcities during short-term droughts at the village and regional level is evident from the manner in which the inhabitants of clusters of villages recollect periods of drought-related scarcities. The grain or cereal on which a majority of the people subsisted was chosen as the name by which people recall periods of scarcity. Names such as "finger millet drought" (<u>ragi</u> <u>bara</u>), and "hemp drought" (<u>pundi bara</u>) emphasize the manner and the source through which resource scarcities were overcome in the past.

Pointing to an additional dimension to the people's reluctance to accept relief was another administrator, J. Gibbs:

It is no question whether one and half annas a day or so many ounces of food will keep them alive, when they refuse to take either the one or the other, but prefer to eat, not in this case the bread of idleness but the weeds of the earth, or the scanty morsel which their importunity may wring from someone nearly as destitute as themselves" (Bombay Government Gazettee 1878:940).

The people's reluctance to leave the village and subsist on administered relief stemmed largely from fears associated with being tied permanently to labor pools (3) and to the stigma associated with subsisting on relief. Such reluctance and the associated social stigma can be linked to agrarian values that induce agriculturists to be selfsufficient and to produce and consume their own food. Selfsufficiency and independence even during times of scarcity were markers of the ability and strength of agriculturists. Even today it still is considered a shame for agriculturists to put their "stomach out" (hote horage hakuvudu).

Combined with these values of self-sufficiency and independence were caste taboos pertaining to the performance of manual labor and the receipt and consumption of cooked food. Though all the Lingayat sub-castes performed agricultural work, there were, as there are today, strict rules that restrict the receipt and consumption of cooked food from non-caste members. Strict vegetarians, the Lingayats like Brahmins, consider the breaking of food rules as transgressions on caste identity. Gastronomic regulations combined with the cultural stigma of receiving

relief, and as the Gazeeteer of 1884 observed about the 1879 conditions in the villages:

...when the famine became more intense and charitable relief increased, the great difficulty was to induce people to leave their villages and go to centres of relief. The Kanarese seem to have a high feeling of pride or self-respect. People almost dying for want of food refused to leave their villages preferring to die at home rather than accept general relief among strangers. In consequence of this it often became necessary to establish small relief kitchens in villages to keep alive those who had steadily refused to let themselves be sent to a relief camp" (Gazetteer of Bombay Province 1884: 242)

Pride, self-respect, cultural stigma, and caste rules combined to make the relief works an unattractive option for subsistence. Village residents opted to starve rather than leave the village and subsist on relief.

Compelled by the widespread criticism of the devastation and high mortality caused by the mid-nineteenth century famines, the British administration sought to make scarcity relief more acceptable to the people. By 1877, instead of the centralization of relief and the establishment of Poor Houses, relief was decentralized to the village level, and grains instead of cooked food were distributed. The extension of the philosophy of the British Poor Laws to India meant that, instead of gratuitous dole, the people had to "earn their alms", and the relief works were promoted as employment centers (Bhatia: 1969). As McAlpin indicates, the policies of giving employment instead of gratuitous aid or charity and the generation of employment enabled the people to consider relief work as "congruent with their own orderings" (1983:186).

Working at relief centers, instead of receiving gratutious aid, satisfied local cultural priorities that stressed the significance of working for one's sustenance. The stigma of accepting gratuitous relief or cooked food was removed by the changes in the relief operation and enabled the people of Bijapur's villages to gradually accept drought-relief programs and to participate in the public works.

Yet even at the begining of the twentieth century, the acceptance of relief was minimal. The early twentiethcentury famines, which were not widespread and prolonged, are considered to have been less excruciating than the late nineteenth-century ones. Charlesworth (1985) attributes this difference to the increase in out-migration as people sought temporary relief in areas outside the famine-affected belts. As the Land Revenue Reports noted, the period was witness to "emigration on a large scale... very early in the season" and "the numbers on government works were not very large, as people have now learnt to migrate to great centres of labor" (Charlesworth 1985). Public relief works during the famine of 1907 also faced the same response, and colonial administrators associated the poor turnout with factors such as unattractive wage rates and the general

dislike for construction work. The reluctance to subsist on relief is indicated in that the Poor Houses that were opened in Bijapur town also received little response and were closed after four months (Bombay Famine Report 1907).

Economic and historical studies show that the success of the relief camps and the numbers of people accepting public relief varied with the general economic and administrative structures (Bhatia 1969, McAlpin 1983, and Charlesworth 1985). Changes, political and economic, combined with the alterations of the scarcity relief administration to enable a widespread reliance on external relief. Yet, the acceptance of relief and a gradual reliance on the administration to alleviate food scarcity was induced by changes in the conditions of the village and its political and economic structures.

The early twentieth century also saw recurring famines in 1901 and 1904-06 and extensive stress between 1911-12 (Meti 1966). By the onset of the 1942-43 drought, relief administration was both well organized and accepted and the people remember the drought period as the "millet drought" for the millet that the government had provisioned to prevent a famine.

Bijapur's contemporary conditions of widespread poverty, more acute than in other regions of the state, and recurrent droughts have placed it on the low rungs of economic evaluations. It ranks, in terms of agricultural

productivity, infrastructural facilities, and general social and economic conditions, as the poorest district in the state (Meti 1965). The Krishna River Project, funded by the World Bank and in progress for several years (4), proposes to construct dams in the region and a portion of the district will soon be submerged in the back waters of the dam. Bijapur's marginal position, constructed in terms of how administrative and non-local people refer to it as poor, poverty-stricken, and perpectually in need of scarcity relief, is in marked contrast to its history of having been a kingdom and one that had developed and encouraged significant works of art, religion, literature, and architecture. The chequered history of the region, its rich cultural complex, and the present socio-cultural upheaval initiated by recurrent droughts, and the government efforts to re-order the district make it a region especially worth studying.

Given the central position that droughts occupy in the physical, cultural, and social complex of the region, drought situations provide an ideal window through which to study culture-nature relations. Yet, to understand the cultural bases in which droughts are understood, it is important to delineate the ways in which other natural objects and processes are understood and incorporated into the life of the people.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IN THE BLACK LAND

This chapter elaborates on the patterns and forms in which natural objects and processes are classified, utilized and associated with significance in rural Bijapur. The articulation of the natural or ecological base with culture is observable in the ritualistic demarcation of the village topography, the climate and agriculture based orientation of the regional festivals, and the general attuning of social life to the agro-climatic cycle.

LANDSCAPE AND SOCIETY

The stretches of black soil in the vast plains of Bijapur provide the basis for the popular reference to the area as <u>Karinadu</u> or "Black Land". Embodying the richness and the agricultural prosperity associated with black soil, the term <u>Karinadu</u> evokes among the local people an imagery of an ideal land--one of agricultural prosperity, hardworking people, and an identity with a specific culture. Descriptions of the land as black, fertile, and productive signify idealizations of prosperity, happiness, and wellbeing of the people. A reverse image of the land as dried, parched, and bereft is invoked to signify the condition of the people during droughts. The multiple ways in which land is typically referred to and used indicates a "sense of

place" (Worster 1979) which people have about the land; a sense by which people have feelings of belonging to the land, knowing how to use it, and sharing its uniqueness.

Like the associations of the land with the people, the regional landscape is also marked by a cultural ordering that makes it amenable to interpretation. Since

> ...the so called 'spatial-order' in fact is a societal order, which can be interpreted only as a social product resulting from the complex interplay of human perception, objectives and capacities, institutional rules and material conditions connected with human and physical material substances in space. (Van Passen 1976 in Shields 1991:16)

The interpretation of landscape highlights the societal ordering of space and the constitution of space with meanings and symbols. To residents of the villages, the landscape is not merely a physical or geographic layout but a complex of interrelated resources which they closely understand and relate to. Following are details of the cultural delineation of the landscape and a sketch of some <u>dramatis personae</u> from one village. Madbhavi is a village that lies thirteen kilometers away from the administrative headquarters of Bijapur city, and provides a microcosm of the district's settlement patterns and social structure.

Lying in a dry tract of the region, the village of Madbhavi relies predominantly on dry-agriculture for its economy. From a total of 4665.07 acres the village has 3465

acres of unirrigated land that is cultivated. The settlement houses about 620 households (543 households in the 1981 census) and has a population of about five thousand people (3066 persons in 1981) (1).

The regional caste groups of Lingayats, shepherds, potters, stonecutters, harijans, brahmins, and carpenters are well represented in the village. In addition, a sizeable number of Muslims have been long term residents of the village.

That society is reflected in its landscape is made evident in the village settlement with its segregated castebased sections. Further social and economic differentiation is observable in the housing variations. The settlement, or ur, consisting of closely-placed houses typical of nucleated villages, stands in contrast to the cultivated and uncultivated fields commonly referred to as the adive. The panchayat room, where members of the village panchayat meet, the village's oldest and most sacred well, and a Hanumant temple are also part of the inner core. As the space of the dominant and higher castes, the inner core is also the arena in which significant economic and political transactions take place. The closely built white stone houses of the families of the dominant landed caste, the Lingayats, and the brahmin families, provide a contrast to the predominantly thatch and mud houses of others. With the exception of the three Brahmin families, the residents of

this inner core are predominantly owner-cultivators, who cultivate their own lands with hired labor.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

A: The Village Center and Dominant Castes

Two persons, well-known in the village and representative of their caste and economic positions, are also residents of this inner core. Doddmane Patel is a member of the village's erstwhile <u>Vatandar</u> (hereditary village office holders) family of Patels or village headmen. With the abolition of the <u>Vatandar</u> (2), he and his family members do not have rights to the village headmanship, and his status has declined considerably in the village. He rents out his relatively large acreage of land, estimated by others as being around seventy-four acres, and depending on the type of land, he receives either one-third or one-half of the shares from different tenants.

Doddmane Patel and his wife lead a comfortable life which is rare in the village. Their agricultural income is supplemented by remittances from urban professional sons and their house boasts the village's only television set. Doddmane Patel's economic transactions do not have to consider the frequent droughts; both the large volume of grains he usually receives and his additional source of income assure him of a steady supply of grains. He sells a considerable proportion of the grains in the town market. A

tall, thin man, Doddamane Patel deliberately distances himself from village politics and from discussing any of the issues related to the conditions of the village. Like a dethroned king, he walks through the village in a hurried manner and curtly acknowledges the greetings of the other villagers.

Close to Doddmane Patel's house lives his distant relative, a prominent and popular member of the village, Basavaraj Sindgi. A landed owner-cultivator, he represents a minority of agriculturists who are recognized by government and development agents as "progressive farmers" for their use of the modern methods of agriculture. Basavaraj Sindgi is hardworking and was recently elected Chairman of the village Panchayat. He cultivates his sizeable inherited and purchased lands with wage labor and utilizes modern inputs of fertilizers, hybrid seeds, and pesticides. With his small but well maintained garden lands (thota), he grows turmeric, plaintain, sunflower, fruits, and vegetables for the market. He makes frequent trips to the town of Bijapur, consulting the traders about agricultural prices, buying agricultural supplies or requesting subsidies from the Agricultural Extension Service. With a considerable amount of capital and technology he is also able to rent lands from others which he cultivates on a half-half share basis.

B:<u>Service Castes</u>

Outlining the core of the brahmin and Lingayat houses are the residences of the service castes: the <u>kumbara</u> (potters), <u>badaga</u> (carpenters), <u>agasa</u> (washermen) and the <u>nyaka</u> (barbers). Declining service and trade opportunities have compelled most of the service caste members to take to agricultural labor on a part-time or full-time basis. The bulk of the small owner-cultivators (with less than eight acres of land) and tenants are drawn from this service caste group. They supplement their agricultural incomes by working as wage laborers in the fields of the larger ownercultivators.

<u>C:A Muslim Custodian</u>

Three families of the village's Mullahs (Muslim priests) are recognized as the hereditary custodians of the village <u>dargah</u> (Muslim religious centers). Maabu Mullah's family is one of them, and when it is her family's turn at performing the duties related to the maintenance of the <u>dargah</u>, Maabu cleans and maintains the dargah while her son performs the weekly rituals of worhsip. A pale, emaciated woman, whose face and demeanor reflect pride and gentleness, life for Maabu has been one of great privations. Her family owns no land, and when the remunerations associated with the <u>dargah</u> duties rotate to members of their extended family, Maabu and her daughters subsist by doing domestic chores in the homes of the richer landowners. Her eldest son works as

an agricultural laborer and has recently chosen to set up a separate domestic unit with his wife. Maabu's sources of livelihood are meagre and she and her family have grown accustomed to consuming single meals a day and rely on periodic black tea to alleviate their hunger.

D: A Owner Cultivator

As an owner-cultivator, Keshapppa Kumbar is fortunate to own a total of twelve acres of different types of land. Using his own bullocks and employing wage workers for seasonal and specific tasks, he supervises and cultivates his land along with his sons. The sorghum, wheat, lentil and groundnut produced from his lands are sufficient to maintain his family of six. Memories of droughts and scarcities--when the family had subsisted on single meals a day, when their land had been mortaged to money lenders, and when they had relied on their kin to provide for them--loom large in the economic decisions of the family. As a result, even when agricultural production exceeds the needs of domestic consumption, a significant portion of sorghum and wheat are stored in the family's storage bin (hudi). A generous man, Keshappa Kumbar rarely turns away those in His house is a constant bustle of men and women: some need. eliciting advise, others making requests for loans of grains, and some, like me, visiting and engaging in talk about the village.

A tall, well-built man, Keshappa Kumbar extols the strength that organic grains and traditional diets provided. Like several families whose self-sufficiency of grain production is threatened by potential partitioning of land, Keshappa Kumbar ponders the economic viability of cultivating the land separately. Perhaps he should have sent one of his sons to the town and made him a "<u>sarkari</u> manusha" (government man), he muses.

E: A Shepherd

The shepherds (kuruba) enjoy a special ritual position, and their residences lie outside that of the service caste houses. Declining pasture lands and the non-viability of pastoralism as a full-time livelihood have led many of the shepherds to take to agricultural work. A few of the shepherds own units of cultivable land and are active members of the village political transactions. Shepherds in general and shepherd priests (Pujari) in particular are renowned and respected for their knowledge of the land and related ecological features. They are recognized for their ability to read the weather such as noting the direction of winds and associating it with different agricultural purposes, the forecasting of rains from the size and shape of clouds, and observations of faunal behaviour. The history of the region as having been a predominantly pastoral area and outdoor living probably accounts for the

recognization of shepherds as experts on the ecology. They are also credited with possessing spiritual powers which enable them to "call rains" (<u>male kariyuvudu</u>) and prophesize future rains and crops.

An elderly and respected shepherd, Shivappa Pujari is a lean and angular man, whose brisk walk belies his sixty odd years. Pujari's own forebears were recognized as excellent oracles, and it was his father, as an oracle, who had predicted the coming of the 1942 drought. Shivappa Pujari is never seen in public without his black woolen blanket (kambli), the source and symbol of Kuruba oracular and divinatory powers, draped over his shoulders. For his regular livelihood, he collects sheep from different households and along with members of his caste herds them on the banks of the distant Doni river. The shepherds live along the banks of the Doni during the hot, dry summer months and return to the village as the monsoon sets in. Thus, it is not unusual for Shivapppa Pujari to stay on the river banks for long stretches, when the monsoon is delayed and signs of a drought are evident. For his task of herding and shearing the sheep, Pujari receives grains or wool from those who had assigned their sheep to him.

On returning to the village for the monsoon period, Pujari assigns the sheep to collective pens just outside the village, and joins his fellow caste members in celebrating the month of <u>shravana</u> (July-August), singing devotional

songs in the Kuruba temple, recounting the glory of the <u>Kuruba</u> gods and the famed prophesying powers of his ancestors.

F: Agricultural Wage Workers

Gangawwa Badigyar was widowed at age forty and has since worked along with her son and two daughters as an agricultural laborer. Their meagre land, yet to be cleared of enormous boulders, brings in little produce and is cultivated only in the summer season. Her son has learned carpentry, his caste trade, but orders for ploughs, cartwheels, and house frames are few and far between and he often resorts to joining his family for agricultural wage work. It is a rare day when Gangawwa Badigyar and her daughters do not work. Up before sunrise, they see to the domestic chores, prepare their noon-meal and join the other workers to walk long distances to the agricultural fields. Gangawwa rues these "money eating days" (roka thenuva dina); daughters no longer bring in money at their marriages as she did, and instead must have dowries.

"Making ends meet is itself so hard, why are there these new customs (<u>hosa padathi</u>)?" she asks. She constantly urges her son to seek help from the prosperous garden owners, suggesting that perhaps with some assistance and guidance they too can turn their dry land into a garden. Ever optimistic, she ponders, "Wouldn't that be better?"

In the periphery and markedly separated from the <u>ur</u> are the residences of the lower castes, the <u>madhas</u> (leather workers), and the <u>holeya</u> (untouchables/ Harijans). Few of harijans own any land, though with recent government allocations they have received rock strewn plots that are at a considerable distance from the settlement. The peripheral settlement, as <u>keri</u>, is significantly different from the <u>ur</u>, and, as the space of the lower castes, it also houses the deities considered lower in the ritual hierarchy.

Like most members of his caste, the leather workers, Gurappa Madha and his family of five live in a cluster of huts separated from the main village (<u>ur</u>) of Madbhavi. At age fifty-five, Gurappa Madha and his family depend solely on agricultural work for their sustenance. While his wife and daughter also do agricultural work, they receive half the wages of men. Gurappa Madha remembers the "millet drought" (<u>Sajji Bara</u>) of 1942, when his parents and older siblings had worked on the public relief program. As a teenager, he had worked as a jeetha, when his labor for a fixed period of years was tied to serving a landed household. For performing a wide variety of agricultural and domestic tasks, he had received three daily meals and an annual sum of money or grains.

Agrestic servitude(4) of this kind has subsequently waned, from a combination of greater availability of wage work and an awareness by landless low caste members of the

exploitation inherent in such relationships. Though Gurappa Madha and his family work all seasons, they find it difficult to make ends meet. During the recurring droughts, they have frequently subsisted on borrowed money, decreased their daily consumption to one meal a day, and even turned to wild foods for their subsistence.

A third cluster of settlements that is fast gaining prominence in the rural landscape of Bijapur is the <u>thandya</u>, the residential unit of the <u>lambani</u>. As tribals (5), the <u>lambani</u> are culturally distinct from and fall outside the caste and religion based ordering of the <u>ur</u>. As an increasingly visible group, the <u>lambani</u> are active agricultural workers whose perserverance and political activism are enabling more of them to be owner-cultivators. Adive: Village Lands

In contrast to the settlement (ur), the <u>adive</u> contains the agricultural and pastoral lands of the village that define the way of agricultural life and form the backbone of the village economy. Like the marking of the settlement in caste terms, the <u>adive</u> is also marked by the caste-based appropriation of the cultivable lands. Lands that are more fertile and closer to the village are owned largely by members of the dominant and higher castes (Lingayats and brahmins), who either rent out or own and cultivate the lands, using the labor of the lower castes and the Lambadis. Though members of the <u>Holeva</u> (Untouchable), <u>Madha</u>
(Leatherworker), and <u>Vodda</u> (Stone cutter) castes are predominantly agricultural laborers, there are a few families who own patches of less fertile and far-flung lands that the government has distributed to them. Medium-sized cultivators, drawn mostly from the <u>Kuruba</u> (shepherd), <u>Kumbara</u> (potter), <u>Badiga</u> (carpenter) and other service caste groups cultivate their lands with family labor and depend on exchange labor called <u>muye</u> to cultivate their fields. When cultivators, who cannot afford to hire wage workers, require assistance to sow or harvest their fields they call upon their fellow caste persons or kin to help out. The assistance is reciprocated and relations between the families are considered to be strengthened.

Containing both the <u>adive</u> and the <u>ur</u>, and marking the inside from the outside, is the boundary (<u>seme</u>) that is marked with sacrosanct stones (<u>Seme Kallu</u>) in the four cardinal points. As ethnographies of South Indian villages (Gurumurthy 1982; Whitehead 1921; Daniel 1984) have elaborated, the boundary stone is subject to annual ritual propitiations aimed at warding off evil and maintaining the sanctity of the village. Similarly in Bijapur the boundary is considered the point at which afflictions (<u>peda</u>) enter the village community, and hence the boundary (<u>seme</u>) and the boundary deity (<u>Durgawwa</u> or <u>Seme Devi</u>) are objects of periodic propitiations. The rituals and propitiations seek to keep the <u>devi</u> (goddess) satiated, so that the village and

the cultivating lands are free from afflictions of epidemics and droughts.

THE CULTURAL APPROPRIATION OF NATURE

Like the close delineation of the immediate landscape and settlement into various sections and the attribution of different uses and ritualized significance to them, the winds, the rains, flora, and land are also closely integrated into the cultural corpus of agrarian Bijapur. The embrication of these ecological objects and processes with human activities is evident not only in the syncronization of social activities to agro-climatic cycles, but also in the metaphors of everyday language. A mean person is likened to the thorny acacia tree (jalli), while a cruel person is referred to as being like the bitter neem tree ([<u>Azandirachta Indica Joss</u>]). Several other metaphors, especially those from agriculture, point to the pervasive coinciding of natural processes, objects, and features with social actions and characteristics. A poem that refers to the conduct of social life does so with the metaphors of agriculture:

Same damme annu erada yetha hudu kirathi antha beeja katu vudiyalli niratha nodi beeja bidu mandiyalli Plow with the two bullocks of tolerance and morality, Tie the seeds of brilliance in your pack, See straight and sow the seeds

The close relationship between social-natural categories is reflected in the appropriation of natural objects to refer to social conditions and actions. In addition, natural objects are also seen through culturally specific eyes. As agriculturists in Bijapur look at the early morning sky, they see the pleiades constellation as their seed-drill, the <u>khurige</u>.

Various studies of rural Karnataka have noted the importance of ecology (Beals 1974; Gurumurthy 1980) in the agricultural and cultural complex of the region. Srinivas (1971) and MacLachlan (1983) have also elaborated on the ways in which cultural orientations prescribe agroecological activities. But despite these important links-the syncronization of rural life to climatic and celestial cycles, and the significance assigned to the natural environment--there is no single regional word that corresponds to that of "nature" or "ecology". Agriculturists and other residents of the villages do not have a term that refers to or represents nature as a separate and distinct category. The sanskrit term prakrti, often used to refer to Hindu conceptualizations of nature (Shiva 1988), is not commonly used by the people. Instead, the various natural elements, processes, flora, fauna etc are closely observed, understood, and integrated into the cultural corpus of agrarian Bijapur. Meaning and cultural significance are ascribed to biological, botanical, and

climatic processes in the manner and purpose to which they are utilized. Sorghum, the primary staple in the diet of people, is accorded symbolic significance and is incorporated into the ritual corpus of the people. Similarly the rains of <u>uthri</u> and <u>hasta</u>, that are important sowing rains, occupy a central position in the songs and proverbs of the region.

The rhythm of rural life is structured by the climatic cycle which influences the closely related agricultural and ritual cycles of the region. Based on the monsoon cycle, two agricultural periods can be distinguished in Bijapur (See Figure II). The mungari ("front") agricultural period starts with the onset of the South-west monsoons and stretches from June to October. The period corresponds to the <u>kharif</u> or summer agricultural period identified for other parts of India. Lands that are of red soils and are not moisture retentive are cultivated in this period with crops of millets, maize, pulses, groundnuts, and chillies. The second period is that of hingari ("back") and starts with the onset of the retreating South-west monsoon showers in September and stretches till March. The period corresponds to the rabi or winter agricultural period identified for India in general. Black soil lands that are moisture retentive are cultivated in this period with crops of sorghum, sunflower, wheat, gram, safflower, and sometimes cotton.



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The period in between these seasons is that of <u>besige</u> or summer from April-May when the temperature reaches an average of forty degrees celsus. This is also the fallow period for all the unirrigated lands, and agriculturists take the opportunity to conduct social activities like weddings and pilgrimages.

Agriculturists (raitharu) and shepherds (kurubaru) appropriate and utilize the regional ecology through a spatial and temporal variation that is oriented to the region's ecological specificity and which entails specific social transactions and cultural recognition. While agriculturists cultivate different land types at different seasons, the shepherds vary the movements of their flocks of sheep. During the hot, dry summer months, communal flocks of sheep are allowed to graze on the moist banks of the rivers and they return to the village pen as the first monsoon sets in. As fields are being prepared for ploughing at this time, agriculturists invite shepherds to graze their sheep on their agricultural plots for a day or so. Meals and some grains are offered to the shepherds for the manure that their sheep leave on the fields.

CLASSIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RAINS

Like the demarcation of the two different climatic periods, the rains are also delineated and understood as

corresponding to different agricultural and social activities. As in most parts of India, the popular calendars, village priests, and elderly agriculturists of Bijapur identify twenty seven types of rains. In doing so they follow the classical model in which the names of the rains are derived from the astral (nakshatra) position. This astral position is calculated in terms of the position of the sun in particular zodiacs and the twenty seven stars. While most agriculturists, especially the elderly, are familiar with the names of all the twenty seven names of the rains (see Appendix D), it is the first sixteen rains identified as the "agriculturists rains" (Vokkaligara malegalu) that most agriculturists recognize and correlate to their agricultural activities. Each of these rains are associated with specific agricultural functions (See Figure III).

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FIGURE: III Agriculturists' rains

NAME OF RAIN	PERIOD	AGRICULTURAL FUNCTION
		SUMMER CROPS
Ashvini	April 11-April 25	Pre-sowing rains
Barani	April 26-May 9	Pre-sowing rains
Kruthika	May 10-May 23	Pre-sowing rains
Roni	May 24-June 6	Sowing rains
Mrga	June 7-June 20	Sowing rains
Aridra	June 21-July 4	Cover rains-for growth
Punarvasu	July 5-Aug 18	Cover rains
Pushya	July 19-Aug 1	Cover rains
		WINTER CROPS
Ashlesha	Aug 2-Aug 15	Sowing rains-cotton
Magha	Aug 16-Aug 29	Sowing rains-cotton
Hubbi	Aug 30-Sept 11	Sowing rains-staples
Uthri	Sept 12-Sept 25	Sowing rains-staples
Hasta	Sept 26-Oct 8	Sowing rains-staples
Chitta	0ct 9-0ct 22	Cover rains
Sathi	Oct 23-Nov 4	increases crop disease
Vishaka	Nov 5-Nov 17	removes disease

With the onset of the pre-sowing rains, the <u>ashvini</u> and the <u>barani</u>, the lands are tilled and prepared for sowing. Actual sowing is conducted only after the sowing rains have set in for either the summer or winter crops. Rains such as <u>punarvasu</u>, <u>pushya</u>, and <u>chitta</u> are associated with the growth periods of the crops and are called <u>mel male</u> or cover rains. Though the <u>svathi</u> or <u>sathi</u> and the <u>visakha</u> rains are rarely active in the region they are associated with the functions of increasing crop diseases and removing the diseases, respectively. Several proverbs make note of the links between specific rains to agriculture and hence to the life of agriculturists. The cover rains that are expected between June 21 and July 4 are vital for the growth of the summer crops and their importance is noted in the proverb, "Come the <u>aridra</u> rains and there will be no poverty (<u>dharidra</u>)". Likewise, the sowing of summer crops is dependent on the <u>roni</u> rains and the people consider that, "If <u>roni</u> comes, the streets are full of grain". The unpredictable <u>hasta</u> rain, important for all the winter crops and especially the staple crop, sorghum, is linked to the condition of the agriculturists, "The <u>hasta</u> should arrive, if not the agriculturist gets desperate".

As these proverbs indicate, the observation of the agriculture-related characteristic of the rains, especially the important "agriculturists' rains", and the knowledge of these characteristics is encoded in proverbs. Similarly, the lack of rain or the absence of rain is also addressed in a wide variety of songs and poems which are recited and sung by the people as they perform agricultural work, as women grind grains, and during the collective village-level festivals. Rain lore in Bijapur notes the importance of rain to the maintenance, continuity, and well-being of the land and people.

Poems and songs beseech the rains to arrive and associate the non-presence of rain with social

characterisitics. Delayed rains are addressed as a "moneylender" or as a "step mother". The following song embodies such sentiments.

Baraghala, Baraghala, Baraghala nadare Yavage Daiva Tarughalo Maleraja

Hagalella namana marebyada Maleraja, Mala thaye chale chaluvallo Maleraja Naka hanni Challu bhoomige

Male ella didare yenanthe jagadage Male beeku thama Yellaku thinaku Beleyaka beku bhoothaye

Ara yethanavana erali Ara baravana erali Karabara maduva magana erali Yellaku male beka Drought, drought when a drought sets in when will you have mercy, Oh King of Rains?

Don't forget us King of rains behaving like a step-mother is not good. Send four drops of rain to the earth.

What will happen to the universe without rain? One needs rain for everything. To eat, to grow, for mother earth.

Even if one has six bullocks, or the strength of six persons even if one can rule one needs four drops of rain

AGRO-RITUAL CYCLE

Though the regional festivals, both local and pan-Indian, are located in the full (<u>Hunime</u>) and new (<u>Amavase</u>) phases of the lunar cycles (see Appendix D), the names of the local festivals are derived from either the names of regional flora or mark specific climatic and agricultural phases. These festivals are distinct from life cycle rituals, and as they are based on a correspondence between the climatic cycles, agricultural conditions, and social activities, I refer to them as agro-rituals. The Ugadi (from Yuga or era) festival is celebrated in the month of <u>chaitra</u> (March-April) and marks the end of the winter harvest and the beginning of a new year. June-July, sees the heralding of the monsoons with the <u>Kar hunime</u> (from "kar" the wetting of soil) or the "full moon of Kar", the celebration of "mud bullocks" (<u>Munyethina Amavase</u>) or "New Moon of the bullocks", followed by the <u>Nagara</u> ("cobra") <u>Amavase</u> or "New Moon of the Cobra".

The centrality of the regional flora in the festivals of North Karnataka has also been pointed out by Biradar (1984). As he elaborates, several of the regional festivals are celebrations of the plants of the region and indicate the importance of botanical items in the lives of the people. A series of festivals incorporate the regional flora associated with particular agro-climatic periods. Festivals that are named for and coincide with the growth of regional botanical items are the <u>avatara</u> (beans) <u>amavase</u> (New moon of the beans) in <u>magha</u> (January-February), the <u>Kadligar</u> (pulses) <u>hunime</u> (Full moon of the pulses) in the month of <u>ashada</u> (June-July), and the <u>Banada</u> (from <u>bana</u> or orchard) <u>hunime</u> (Full moon of the orchard) that is celebrated in the month of <u>pushya</u> (December-January).

Two other festivals that mark important agricultural phases are the <u>sege</u> (from the sege <u>or Acacia Concinna</u> bush) <u>hunime</u> (Full moon of the <u>sege</u>) and <u>yell</u> (from <u>yell</u> or <u>sesame</u>) <u>amavase</u> (New moon of the sesame) festivals that are

land fertility rites for the summer and winter crops (these will be discussed in detail in the next chapter). These festivals mark the seasons through specific botanical items and synchronize climatic cycles and agricultural activities to an agrarian social and ritual life.

What is striking about the overall pattern of Bijapur's climate-agriculture-culture complex is the extent to which astrological, climatic, agricultural, and social phases and actions coincide and interrelate to each other. The ecology of the region is then understood and interacted with not as a mere background, but, as one that is integrated into the matrix of human actions and interactions in a substantive and essential way. Noting the importance and significance of the regional natural setting and processes in the life of the people, it will not be out of place to say that it was not only "vedic Hindus (who) see their society as based directly upon understanding nature" (Marriott 1989). In Bijapur, as elsewhere in rural India, nature as represented by the climatic cycles, the regional topography, the flora, and the fauna continues to define and circumscribe life for agriculturists.

The close understanding of the regional ecology, finite categorization and cultural significance assigned to the lands, weather lore of the rains and winds, and utilization of the flora earmark a complex where "culture is enclosed in nature and nature is reworked in culture" (Ramanujan

1989:50). This articulation of the natural with the social, and more specifically the cultural appropriation of land and its use, will be made explicit in the next chapter. The cultural frameworks through which agriculture is conducted and the forms in which droughts are understood and addressed in the domain of agriculture will be elaborated.

CHAPTER IV

SEEING APPROPRIATENESS

This chapter elaborates on and analyzes the local agricultural precepts of Bijapur which highlight a culturally specific "appropriation of nature". The general cultural framework through which society-nature relations are understood is addressed. In addition, the analysis indicates the framework through which droughts are contextualized as recurrent phenomena in the agricultural complex of Bijapur.

Though Bijapur's agricultural practices are based on the recognition of the ecological specificity of the region, they emanate from a set of cultural precepts (1). Such precepts, I indicate, underscore the working and importance of an ethos of substantialism, which denotes the continuum between natural and cultural categories, and social contexts and actions.

THREE AGRARIAN PRECEPTS OF BIJAPUR

Agriculture and its practice highlight the regional cultural complex. Bijapur's agriculture and the agrarian

landscape contain evidence of the influences imposed by various regimes on the land and its people. The terms of measuring the land and produce (2) are remnants of the Mahratta revenue system, while the marking of each cultivation unit with boundary markers, the contour bunds, and acacia trees are markers of the British administration. Yet, despite these overt influences, agriculture in Bijapur is conducted through cultural categories that take into account the ecological specificity of the region. Agriculturists consider land to be a subset of the larger ecology and extend their knowledge of the climatic cycles, flora, and fauna to the utilization of land. The knowledge of agriculture includes an exhaustive and extensive inventory of various land types, crop viabilities, and relevant cultivation practices.

Agriculture in Bijapur continues to be practiced in its essential and original sense as <u>vyavasaya</u> or "endeavour, strenous effort, diligence, industry and perseverance" (Kittel 1988 [1894]). As cultivators reiterate, agriculture for them is "jeevana", "life" itself, whose rhythms and conditions tie in closely with the social life of the agriculturists. Metaphors from agriculture and the social context are used interchangeably by agriculturists. Irrigating the lands is called <u>niru vunusuvudu</u> (to feed water), agricultural lands that are low lying and are therefore more fertile and productive are called <u>madi</u>, a

S t W U i a ir ir ri du Ay Pa Pa Ra Gu and jus soc te_{Vi} knor term reserved for auspicious objects and persons, and propitiatory rites performed at the fields are called <u>shanthi maduvudu</u> (making peace). Like significant social activities and transactions, agricultural work is also subject to the prescriptions of auspicious and inauspicious times. The period of <u>panchka</u> (a five-day celestial position when the stars of <u>dhanista</u>, <u>shatatara</u>, <u>purva bhadrapada</u>, <u>uthara bhadrapada</u>, and <u>revati</u> are overhead), is considered inauspicious for the inaugural of any social or agricultural activity. Sowing and ploughing are specifically not initiated during a <u>pancka</u> period. As the following song indicates harvesting was typically conducted like a social ritual, complete with priests and auspicious women, and during an auspicious time.

Ayanaru karesare	The priests have been
Panchanga tegesyare	called, the almanac has been
Panch muthediru karasyare	read, Five auspicious
Raitharu dina nodi	women have been called
guda murusyare	the agriculturists have fixed a
-	day to start the threshing.

Ideas, values, and meanings relevant to social contexts and actions are extrapolated into the agricultural domain just as agricultural metaphors are incorporated into the social context.

In its localized form, uninfluenced by modern green revolution methods, agriculture in Bijapur is a complex of knowledge and practices that reflects an intermeshing of

cultural precepts and ecological understandings. Three major precepts which enable a cultural "appropriation of nature" (Ingold 1987) are articulated in the meaningful practice of agriculture in Bijapur. <u>Bhumi-guna</u>, (essence or characteristics of soil), <u>hada</u> (appropriateness), and <u>hulige</u> (bestowed abundance) are precepts derived from the larger social and cultural complex and used in a wide variety of contexts. In the context of agriculture, these precepts constitute the overarching framework, markers, and orientation through which people conduct agriculture. The articulation of these precepts in the practice of agriculture also enables the agriculturists to consider droughts as a constantly plausible phenomenon.

BHUMI-GUNA: LAND CHARACTERISTICS

Based on a precept of <u>bhumi-guna</u> (land characteristics), agriculturists identify three main types of lands--<u>yere</u>, <u>maddi</u>, and <u>thota</u>--and assign the cultivation of these lands to different climatic periods. The term <u>guna</u> is drawn from the classical Hindu religious and philosophical exigesis in which the universe and all its beings are categorized as falling into either of the three <u>gunas</u>: <u>sattvic</u> or "quiescent goodness", <u>rajas</u> or "restless activity", and <u>tamas</u> or "lethargic darkness" (Inden 1990). When people identify either humans, lands, or other objects on the basis of its <u>guna</u>, the term is used to mean

0 С t cl cl tł tł Þa re ex ri pr an jo ec th gU(res the Pos SLic component or essential characteristics. The use of the term guna to categorize the land types and the ascribing of qualities to them is representative of what Mary Douglas has observed to be the "imprinting upon naure of the rules and categories which are dominant in social life" (1975: 290).

In categorizing land on the basis of <u>guna</u>, different types of land are considered to have certain essential characteristics. Agriculturists recognize these characteristics and match crops and seasons to them. In this context the precept of <u>bhumi-guna</u> forms the basis for the variations in land-use, selection of crops, and tenurial patterns. Three major types of land are identified in the region.

The yere is the black soil belt and comprises the extensive black-soil lands on the river banks. With its rich, loamy soil the <u>yere</u> contains high moisture conserving properties and is able to withstand short-term droughts. As an area utilized mostly for cultivating the staple food, <u>jolla (Sorghum Vulgare)</u>, the <u>yere</u> lands are not only economically valued, but the possession of them increases the status of a cultivator. For persons like Doddmane Patel and Basavaraj Sindgi, investing in more <u>yere</u> lands enhances resource positions; and for persons like Keshappa Kumbar, the <u>yere</u> provides an assured source of sustenance. Possession of <u>yere</u> lands is considered so important for successful farming and for sustenance that farmers from

ť a 0 ų " nc as Cu рe SO Þe Wi Vi th ar SO Pot ₽u] ons c1] CU] interior villages travel long distances to their <u>yere</u> lands and often set up temporary residential units there during the period of <u>yere</u> cultivation. Queries about bride-grooms and assessments of the wealth and position of farmers are often centered on the ownership of <u>yere</u> lands.

Yere lands that form the banks of the Doni river are upheld as the most reliant providers and a popular saying, "when the Doni grows who will not eat, when the Doni does not grow who will eat?", summarizes the reliance on the yere as the sustenance belt of the region. These lands are cultivated only in the <u>hingari</u> ("back" or post-monsoon period) or winter season (October-February), and crops of sorghum, wheat, safflower, and cotton are grown on a periodic rotation basis. These crops are also intercropped with small amounts of legumes and cucumbers, which, together with sorghum and wheat, form the basis of the staple diet in the area.

Lands classified as <u>maddi</u> are also rain-dependent but are different in that the mixture of black, red, and white soil with various amounts and types of stones has the potential of containing ground water. Crops of groundnuts, pulses, and millets (<u>Pennisetum Millet</u>) are grown during the <u>mungari</u> (June-September-"front" or season following the onset of the North-west monsoons) season. The rotation cultivation of lands and assigning different periods of cultivation to them enables the agriculturists to maximize

, C 1 đ d C ţ t tł P] te gŬ th ha gġ the the moisture available at different periods for the different types of lands. The <u>maddi</u> lands which are of the drier type and unable to retain moisture as well as the <u>yere</u> lands are cultivated immediately at the onset of the monsoons. As one farmer explained to me, cultivation of different fields at different seasons ensures that the <u>thakat</u> (strength) of the land is not absorbed away. Actual determination of what crops are grown in which plot is based on a more intricate classification of the soil-type and stones in the <u>yere</u> and <u>maddi</u> lands and the qualities and capacities attributed to them.

The third type of land is that of the <u>thota</u> or garden lands. These are lands that are cultivated with water, made available by wells or tube-wells, and are significantly different from the <u>yere</u> and <u>maddi</u> in their production and cultivation patterns. Unlike the other two land-types, the <u>thota</u> lands are all owner-cultivated, usually by members of the dominant landed caste, the Lingayats, and utilized throughout the year for growing fast-maturing crops. Plantains, turmeric, sugarcane, wheat, vegetables, and, recently, grapes and pomegranates, are common <u>thota</u> crops and are mostly cultivated for marketing purposes. As units that are based on water-intensive cultivation, <u>thota</u> lands have been subject to the prescriptions of modern agricultural techniques and knowledge. The capacity of these lands to produce crops of marketable value makes them

1 2 3, on te chi Cas rec cha typ targets of modern agricultural methods. A diagrammatic representation of the way in which <u>bhumi-guna</u> classifies, links, and associates soil types to seasons and crops and the resulting agricultural complex can be made as follows.

FIGURE: IV

BHUMI-GUNA: LAND CHARACTERISTICS

Classifies Links soil Associates land on basis types to seasons different of soil crops to characteristics soil types and seasons ---Winter (Oct-Feb)-----Sorghum, cotton 1. Yere -wheat, oilseeds 2. Maddi-----Summer (June-Sept)-----Millet, pulses, groundnuts 3. Thota------Continous production-----Vegetables, fruits, oilseeds, wheat

Just as the decisions of which crops to grow are based on linking soil characteristics to seasons, so also are the rental amounts based on recognizing the variations in soil characteristics and hence of variations in fertility. In cases where lands are rented for cultivation, the recognition of each land type as having its own <u>guna</u> ("self characteristic or quality") also determines the amount or type of rent paid. In <u>maddi</u> lands where production is

S) D) tł 0 Ex ad to fo qu \$ cr pr are (1 st eat WC] gSe to VCI "...e considered to be far less than that of the <u>yere</u>, the rents are usually on a one-fourth to three-quarter basis, the tenant keeping three quarters of the produce for himself. In the case of <u>yere</u> lands, the rents are usually on a half-half share basis or on that of "condition", in which the tenant must pay a specific sum to the owner which is fixed prior to the cultivation of the lands. The <u>maddi</u> lands, whether owned or rented, are usually cultivated with family labor. Extra hired labor, if any, is often paid in kind. In addition to the payment, at the end of the day workers get to take home the roots, discarded plants, and stalks as fodder, and some firewood.

Just as different soils are associated with different qualities, agriculturists ascribe differing qualities to crops, the wet or dry basis of their cultivation being a predominant assessing factor. Crops from local seeds that are grown without artificial irrigation are called <u>javari</u> (local or organic) and are considered to be more tasty and strengthening than the crops grown with water. "Those who eat rice are like birds, those who eat sorghum are like wolves"(3) is a popular saying that connotes folk associations between food choice and strength. My inability to work for long periods in the agricultural fields, helping women pick vegetables or lentils, was attributed to my "weaking rice" (<u>thakat thegeduva bana</u>) diet.

Typically, a low but assured production of food grains

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compels farmers to choose the drought-resisting crops of sorghum and millets over market-oriented crops of safflower and sunflower. Agriculturists prefer pearl millet and sorghum as their staple food, pointing out that they are strengthening and enable them to be strong and hard working. Sorghum is an ecologically suitable crop since it grows with little rain or moisture and is significantly droughtresistant. In addition, since sorghum is an economically viable and a culturally preferred food grain, it is highly valued and is incorporated into the ritual corpus. During life cycle rituals a stalk of sorghum is placed in the sacred <u>kalasa</u> (a metal water container used during rituals) instead of the traditional bettle leaf, connoting the significance of sorghum in the life of the people.

This categorization of land types and crops, and the ascription of humoral correspondence, where crops acquire specific characteristics from the soil which are then transferred to the consumers, has been found to be applicable in the practice of agronomy (Kurin 1983), the classical health science of <u>ayurveda</u> (Zimmermann 1987), and in folk therapeutics in India (Nichter 1986). Such conceptions tie in with the substantialism associated with Hindu categories and processes, which, following Bachelard, Zimmermann (1987:8) notes is one in which "life deeply assimiliates qualities, it firmly links them with substance". Substantialism (4), as the basis of agrarian

p M p S C is ar re to ar an an do Da re 19 CO su be CO Sų te "s (1 practices, is a continuum of the general epistemology that Marriott (1976) and others recognize as the non-dualism and particularism of Hinduism and of social practices in the South Asian context.

As Marriott notes, substantialism is in contradistinction to western dualistic conceptualization and is based on the notion that "natural matter, actions, words and thoughts are all substances and all imbued with relational properties" (1989:2). Human actions are thought to derive their "substance" from the context in which they are acted, thereby firmly linking the variations of actions and actors to contexts. (give egs) Actions, interactions, and conditions in the natural, cultural, and supernatural domains are understood to be interrelated in a symbiotic manner and actions from one domain are considered to be reflected in another (Smith 1989; Gubbanavar 1989; Ramanujan 1989; Murton 1981).

I extend this concept of substantialism, the linking of contexts to actions and actors to substances, to an ethos of substantialism. I identify this ethos of substantialism to be the framework through which the people of Bijapur conceptualize the interlinks of the domains of the supernatural, social, and natural. In doing so I use the term in a manner that is vastly different from that of the "substantialism" that Marriott has propounded. Marriott (1989) relies on substantialism as a paradigm and an

exhaustive explanatory model to understand all Hindu actions, interactions and culture in general. In my view such a model does not adequately account for the historical conditioning of cultural patterns or the ecological, political, and economic forces which contribute to constituting cultures. As criticisms such as Moffat's (1990) have pointed out, Marriott's model does not account for the plurality of India's culture's and is often not empirically viable. Moreover substantialism as part of the ethnosociology school privileges a classic (versus a folk model), male, urban perspective in its paradigm.

An ethos of substantialism in the context of Bijapur's agriculture links the substance of the soil to the cultivated produce and then to the consumers. Agriculture is conducted within this larger, non-dualistic epistemology and upholds a non-dualism between biological and geographic categories and those of humans. Just as various qualities (guna) are attributed to humans and this attribution serves as a framework for assigning roles and occupations, here guna (qualities and characteristics) acts as a framework for categorizing and then assigning use and cultural significance to the various types of lands.

HADA: APPROPRIATENESS

If the precept of <u>guna</u> or essence is the framework through which people associate different types of lands and

crops with different types of qualities, then the actual sequences of agricultural work are conducted through a precept of hada. As "the proper condition, properness or tempered state" (Kittel 1989 [1894]), hada, in the agricultural context, refers to the state of the field or crops which, in relation to different factors or situations, are in the "right time/phase/condition" for conducting different agricultural tasks. Hada as appropriateness in this context of agrarian life is similar to the principle of satmya (appropriateness) that Zimmermann (1980) considers to be the essential basis of Ayurvedic practice; and that of abhirupa or "appropriate form" in the conduct of vedic rituals (Smith 1989). The principle of satmya, as Zimmermann notes, is the foundation of ayurvedic therapeutics which links the specific seasonal condition to the particular constitution of an ailing person. Abhirupa in the context of performing vedic rituals acts as a framework to perform specific rites for specific purposes. Similarly, hada in the context of agriculture in Bijapur is conducted by "appropriately" correlating the guna (guality) of the soils to that of a particular season and then conducting the necessary agricultural activities.

Hada as a condition is a marker in the various agricultural conditions which agriculturists must learn to recognize. The time and stage in which the fields are in just the "appropriate" state to be cleared, or when the

weeding or the harvesting of specific crops has to be conducted, reflect various recognizable conditions which differ from field to field and from crop to crop. <u>Hada</u> as a marker in the context of agriculture is similar to ayurvedic prescriptions (Zimmermann 1980), where a particular therapy is based on correlating the patient's constitution to the season and to the illness. A diagrammatic representation of the schema will highlight the ways in which <u>hada</u> acts as a marker in agricultural activities.

FIGURE: V



In the case of clearing and sowing of fields, the rains themselves have to be of the appropriate type. As <u>hada male</u> (appropriate rain), they must be on right time and in the right quantities for farmers to start work. By correlating the quantity, type and timing of the rain, different fields
attain the state of <u>hada</u> at different times. For example, sowing is initiated only after a succession of gentle but continous rains. When the rains are scanty, farmers with low-lying fields (i.e., those that retain moisture and receive run-off water from the surrounding areas) start work earlier than the others. But if the initial rains are heavy, then the low-lying fields are allowed to dry, and farmers with fields that are of the drier variety or on flat stretches initiate work earlier than those with low-lying fields.

The adage "hada nodi haragu; beda nodi betu" (See the appropriateness and clear, see the season and sow) contains a caveat to agriculturists against investing their time and energy in lands that might, through droughts or excess moisture, lead to great crop losses. Clearing and sowing are never undertaken if there are no rains, and agriculturists wait anxiously for the right amount of rainfall to start work.

When the important sowing rains do not set in on time or when the cover rains are either delayed or insufficient, agriculturists consider the possibility of a drought setting in. If for the summer cultivation, the sowing rains of <u>roni</u> (June) and <u>mrga</u> (July) do not arrive and the cover rains (<u>aridra, punarvasu, pushya</u>) have also failed, then the <u>maddi</u> lands are allowed to be lie fallow for the period. Then if the winter sowing rains (<u>hubbi</u>, <u>uthri</u>, <u>hasta</u>) are

successful, the <u>maddi</u> lands are cultivated along with the <u>yere</u> lands in the <u>hingari</u> or winter period.

A complete disruption of agriculture is considered to set in if all the "agriculturists rains" fail during both the winter and summer agricultural seasons. While short periods of dryness, such as the cessation of rain during the rainy season, are referred to as <u>bara</u> or dryness, the term that best corresponds to the English term of drought with its implications of prolonged periods of rain deficit is that of <u>baraghala</u>. The term is also synonymous with that of food scarcity and famines, and typically agriculturists use it only when the rains had failed during both the agricultural periods.

When conditions such as the complete failure of all rains in both periods prevail, cultivators consider several factors before undertaking agricultural operations: the family's stock of grains from previous harvests, the marketrates of various crops, and the drought-resistance capacity of different grains. A complete stoppage of all agricultural work is one of the options that a complete lack of rains compels. "Appropriate" agriculture works through a series of interlinks. The appropriateness of the season and the soil are linked to the appropriateness of growing specific crops in specific fields. <u>Hada</u> works with the prescriptions of <u>bhumi-guna</u> to fine tune agricultural activities. These variegated practices indicate an

elaborately worked out agricultural complex that, unlike modern scientific practices, does not have uniformity as its basis. As Jodha (1991) argues, traditional agricultural systems contain in-built drought-management strategies which correlate and maximize natural ecological conditions.

Appropriateness in the context of agriculture is an extension of a general cultural tradition that prioritizes appropriateness in various domains. A range of actions from that of domestic activities to social interactions are premised and judged on being "appropriate". Persons are upbraided and scolded when they are without "hada" or when they have forgotten hada. Even activities like cooking require people to make a note of the "hada" of each item that is being cooked. Both persons and rains deviating from their expected roles or timing are called <u>hadaghedaka</u>, or spoilers of appropriateness. This metaphoric reference reflects the importance of social and natural actions and processes to being "appropriate" to their assigned and expected roles and characteristics.

HULIGE: BESTOWED ABUNDANCE

The overriding concern with "appropriateness" in this agricultural complex does not preclude agriculture from having a cultural or economic impetus to "productivity" as increase in output. Though indigenous and non-modern agriculture, especially agriculture that is monsoon

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dependent, is often considered to be "subsistence-oriented" (5), the agricultural complex of Bijapur contains multiple, culturally coded messages of an orientation and an impetus to "productivity". Grain stores and houses are inscribed with the words of <u>shub labh</u> (Lit: auspicious profit) and several songs contain pleas "to bless our village farmers with abundance"(6). More strikingly, agricultural rites in Bijapur conjoin ritual propitiations for abundance with the social and cultural propensity for increases in crops.

The bi-annual <u>charige chaluvudu</u> (to spread or spill a meal) rites are agricultural fertility rites and explicitly connote a strong cultural propensity towards production. Just prior to the harvesting of both the <u>yere</u> and <u>maddi</u> crops, the festivals of <u>sege hunime</u> and <u>yell amavase</u> take place when the <u>charige chaluvudu</u> rites are performed.

The <u>Yell amavase</u> festival falls on a new moon day and marks the maturing of the important winter crops. Celebrated in a more full-bodied way than the <u>sege hunime</u>, the <u>yell</u> <u>amavase</u> festival usually occurs in the period of <u>pushya</u> (December-January) and is a celebration of family and agricultural fertility and strength. It is a time when married daughters are called to their natal home and urbanbased sons return to the family fold.

Members of the cultivating family prepare special food on the day and, accompanied by workers (or in the case of tenants, by owners of the land), perform the rites at the

fields that are standing with fully mature crops. A member of the family first propitiates <u>Lakshmi</u>, a goddess of prosperity, usually represented here with a stone decorated with vermilion and placed in the center of the field or under a <u>banni [Acacia Ferrugnea</u>] tree where the food is offered to her. Then, small amounts of food are sprinkled at the four corners of the fields and the words "<u>hul hulige</u>, <u>hul hulige!</u>" (increase, increase!) are uttered. The group then partakes of the meal on the field and returns home at sundown.

Sege Hunime is similar to that of <u>yell amavase</u> and falls on a full moon day. It marks the mature and ripening stage of the summer crops. Usually celebrated in the month of <u>ashvin</u> (September-October), the festival takes its name from a goddess associated with land fertility. Since the festival occurs within the cycle of the summer crops the fertility rites are conducted on <u>maddi</u> fields that are standing with fully mature crops of groundnut, millet, and wheat. On the day of the festival, those with <u>maddi</u> lands (7) prepare special food and go to their respective lands. They propitiate the land with food and prayers and utter the words <u>hul</u>, <u>hulige!</u>. The family usually partakes of some of the food on the field itself and then returns home.

In comparison to the <u>yell amavase</u> rites, the <u>sege</u> <u>hunime</u> rites are less grandly celebrated and many families do not perform the ritual. This difference in the ritual

treatment of the lands was explained to me as being due to a difference in the importance accorded to crops. Since the important staple crops of sorghum and wheat were grown on the <u>yere</u> lands and production in the <u>yere</u> lands is more reliable than in the <u>maddi</u> lands, the fertility rite for these lands was given more importance. These pre-harvesting rituals are important in the agro-ritual cycle and their performance is considered vital for the well-being of the lands and for the unity of the family and community. The feast of <u>yell amavase</u> is considered so important that those without <u>yere</u> lands are often invited to the feast at the fields by others and a popular saying, "who remains uninvited for the <u>yell amavase</u> feast?"(8) underscores its social importance.

The word 'hulige' is derived from that of hulisu and means "to increase in bulk, to thrive, grow rich" (Kittel 1989[1894]). This incantation is invoked in a wide variety of contexts: in annual fertility rites for sheep, in packing meals, storing grains, and as a good wish in general. As an integral part of the vocabulary of Bijapur's agriculturists, hulige refers to the recognition of the beneficience and advantages of having an increase in output or of being granted large quantities of anything.

Agriculturists also personify the ritualistic chants for productivity by making a <u>huligya</u> idol (9) at the threshing yard. A lump of cowdung, usually from that of the

cultivator's cattle itself, is fashioned into a conical structure and a sprig of grass is fixed into it. Huliqya, as a male god of abundance, is worshipped in a complementary status to that of <u>Laxmi</u>, the goddess of prosperity. People fill their baskets and sacks with grains and are expected to utter "hul hulige, hul hulige", words that are both propitiations and expectations. The incantations for production--"for increase"--in this context envelop a wider audience as it is here that members of the village service castes wait to receive their ava, or annual share of grains. Productivity as expressed in this context encompasses both the economic support that it will mean for persons associated with the land (as cultivator and owner, as tenant or as workers) and the wider village-level provisioning that was normatively associated with agricultural production. Hulige rites signify the culturally recognized source of production and, in propitiating the earth (soil), productivity is the abundance that the earth (as the source of production) bestows. As bestowed abundance, hulige is different from a purely economic orientation to productivity as "worked output" and encompasses the notion that productivity is sacredly mediated and tied to social obligations. As Ludden points out, in its indigenous cultural orientation and in the pre-British context,

"productivity (I search in vain for an equivalent in a South Asian language) was probably conceived in terms of prosperity, wealth, and auspiciousness; like rice, children, water, mosques and temples, festivals, as well as bountiful, magnificient rulers" (1984:59).

Production in this culturally mediated and expressed sense is a socially encompassing dimension with the moral obligations to share and donate (Greenough 1983) being part of its orientation.

However, a generalized, culturally and religiously embedded notion of productivity does not preclude an economic impetus towards productivity as increase in output. As Bourdieu has indicated practices that combine symbolic and productive activities tend to "prevent the economy from being grasped as an economy, i.e., as a system governed by the laws of interested calculation, competition and exploitation" (1977:172). The larger socio-cultural complex, the various ritualistic and cultural idioms, and the social transactions in which traditional agriculture is conducted may divert attention from or camouflage any "production" orientation that may be integral to such complexes. <u>Hulige</u> rites must be seen as incorporating both the symbolic and instrumental dimensions of ritual which form part of a larger "world-ordering" complex of rituals These rites indicate both the recognized (Inden:1990). source of production (the soil) and the social orientation (to meet economic needs and social obligations) of such

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production.

Life in the black land is integrally related to the conditions of the land. As the agriculturists reiterate, what they make of the land reflects on what they are as persons. For those who have access to land, it is their duty to cultivate the land well. A man who does not cultivate his lands or who does not produce the best of what is considered to be its capacity is seen as a dependent, one who "weighs on the land" (bhumi mele thuka) and on the village (10). It is not uncommon to hear landless workers castigate and take the landed to task for neglecting the cultivation or supervision of their lands. Agriculture is both an art and an enterprise and combining both are what makes agriculture a way of life and a source of living.

To eat grains from one's own land is considered to be a sign of independence, a fruition of fortunate endowment, hardwork, and co-operation with fellow agriculturists. A close identity with the land, with the particular culture that the village and the land engender, were the reasons that many a hard-pressed migrant returned. As reflected in the many poems and songs which eulogise the close human-land relationship, the land and humans do not exist as separate and autonomous categories. The being of the land becomes the being of the people.

Agriculture in Bijapur is therefore more than a set of instrumental practices. The cultural basis of conducting

agriculture and its ability to take into account the ecological specificity of the region must be recognized. Simkins, an early observer of the agronomic practices of the Bombay Deccan, recognized the complexity and intricacies of this regional agriculture and called it the "production association", which enables agriculturists to "interpret the soil and climatic factors in the region, and on this interpretation is based the life of the land" (1926:160). In Bijapur, this interpretation is based on the precepts of bhumi-guna, hada, and hulige that are derived from the larger cultural tradition and are given an ecological grounding in the context of agriculture. The same precepts, when utilized for a different ecological setting, result in variations of agricultural practices. For example, the notions of hada and bhumi-guna are also used in the agricultural practices of the southern wet belt but are linked to the ecological specificity of that region. Thus, the actual agricultural cycle, the crops grown, and the methods of cultivation vary from that of the Northern dry belt, though the cultural basis of their utilization is the same.

<u>Hada</u> and <u>bhumi-guna</u>, that are precepts drawn from the larger cultural corpus interlink land quality, crops, and seasons. In doing so they correspond to what Murton (1980) identified as the "webs of association" in Indian agriculture. They incorporate the temporal and spatial

aspects of the ecology and are oriented toward maintaining the ecological sustainability of the region. The resulting agricultural practices of multicrop cultivation, rotation of crops, and fallowing of land are similiar to those of other semi-arid areas in India and of the North-west regions in Africa (11). Locating and addressing droughts as constantly plausible phenomenon, the agricultural complex of Bijapur is evidence that "man's [sic] ability to deal with droughts is largely determined by his culture and social system as they influence farming" (Worster 1979:242).

The manner in which droughts are contextualized within agriculture, and the conduct of agriculture within the framework of larger cultural terms highlights a specific society-nature relationship. Both human and "natural" objects are categorized and interacted with through the same precepts (guna and hada). Prescriptions from the cultural order inform the conduct of both agriculture and social actions. Hence, as several studies have elaborated in the context of South Asia, society and nature are in this culture placed in a non-dictomized, non-deterministic, and non-hierarchical relationship. Worked in within this framework is the ethos of substantialism in which natural objects and humans are ascribed with specific characteristics and interlinked in a significant way.

The next chapter will further elaborate on the integral associations made between natural conditions and social

actions. The cultural conceptualization of drought, its etiologies, and the forms in which it is understood and come to terms with will be elaborated.

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CHAPTER V

CALLING THE RAINS

In this chapter I attempt to discern the specific cultural etiologies through which droughts are understood. I detail the myriad ways in which droughts are ritually addressed and then analyze the ideological bases and results of such conceptualizations. I note that the forms and patterns through which droughts are understood reflect the larger cosmological structures within which the regional culture contextualizes society-nature relations. In addition I argue for noting the importance of changed social structures in the context of the ability of cosmological conceptualizations to be effective mechanisms to contain resource scarcity.

Local culture locates droughts within a cosmological configuration in which the divine, the natural, and human are interlinked. Understanding the multiple rituals and discourses through which the people collectively comprehend, apprehend, and attempt to come to terms with droughts indicates that droughts are understood by the people as more than physio-geographic phenomenon. A range of rituals in which deities are appeased and efforts to reorder the cosmic

order are made indicates the association of collective human moral onus for the production of droughts. In analyzing these rain rituals I attempt to locate the cosmological terms within which droughts are understood. I link the significance of changed social contexts to the meaning and articulation of these rain rituals and hence to the importance of changed social contexts to understanding culture-nature relations.

Recurrent droughts and famines in the region of North Karnataka have left an indelible mark on the collective conscience of the people. Droughts are addressed not only in the agricultural domain but also through a plethora of rituals in which the people locate the probability of rains, their quantity, timing, and viability for the successful production of different crops. As was noted in Chapter Three, detailed knowledge of the various rains and their characteristics are encoded in the everyday language of agriculturists and in the numerous proverbs pertaining to rains (1). Regional popular calendars that guide people's actions in accordance to prescriptions of the almanac also contain predictions for the year's rain and crops. Various rituals, from those contextualized in the regular agroritual cycle to those that are initiated at the onset of a drought, seek either to prophesy or divine the future raincrops (male-bele helike) or dispel the onset of droughts by propitiating appropriate deities and agents of rain. The

multiple modes, times, places, and situations in which "rain-crop" divinatory and oracular rites are performed indicate (see Figure VI) the importance accorded to the rains and to the collective apprehension of droughts.

Anthropologists have observed and recorded the multiple corpus of rituals by which various societies have addressed recurring droughts (Krige and Krige 1947, Munn 1973, Comaroff 1983, Frierman 1990). In Bijapur, a range of rain rituals at both the village and regional level locate and address the etiology and alleviation of droughts (see Figure VI). Both major pan-Indian festivals such as Divali in Karthik (October-November) and Holi in Chaitra (March-April), and local regional festivals are occasions in which "rain-crop" divinations and rain propitiation rituals are conducted. A "rain-complex" consisting of rites and ritual specialists who relate to rain, its prophesying and its inducement, are pervasive in the cultural fabric of the region. At the level of the village the rain-complex consists of "rain-crop" prophesies (Male-bele helike) which are an integral part of the annual agro-ritual cycle, and rain-inducing rites, in which several rain deities are propitiated at specific periods. In addition, itinerant ritual specialists traverse the rural landscape, singing paeans to deities of rain such as the Durg-Murgawwa (a female deity associated with the land and human fertility) and asking people to propitiate the deities for rain and



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FIGURE: VI RAIN RITUALS IN

- 1. Village Level Rituals
- 2. Regional Level Rituals
- 3. Rituals at Onset of Drought

good crops. At the onset of a drought, village-level rituals propitiate specific deities and conduct collective fasts and penances for rain.

At the regional level, agriculturists from various villages of the dry belt gather at recognized temples and <u>dargahs</u> to witness "rain-crop" prophesies. Two <u>mutta</u> (religious centers) of hereditary rain-men (<u>Maleyappa</u>) also conduct "rain-crop" prophesies for the coming agricultural season. The rain-rituals, like the agricultural rites, are located within the agro-climatic cycle. Rituals such as the prophesying of rain and crops for the forthcoming season are held just prior to the start of the winter and summer sowing seasons. When droughts are prolonged agriculturists compel the rain-men to meditate for rain.

Rain rituals are not only discourses on the relations between nature and society. In their content and aim, these ritualized performances also seek to address inter-human relations, reinstate the moral order of the community, and dispel the hardships that droughts portend. The wide array of rain rituals that are situated within the agro-ritual cycle and those that are invoked at the onset of a drought are indicative of a culture's attempt to integrate a geophysical setting and the climatic processes into its own corpus and to understand it in its own terms.

My analyses of rain-rituals first pertains to understanding the local conceptualization of droughts. That

is, how do people understand droughts and come to terms with them? What contexts, actions, and conditions do people consider to produce droughts? From an overview of multiple etiologies associated with droughts, and the rituals through which the people attempt to collectively alleviate droughts, I delineate the cosmological configuration in which droughts are located, understood, and come to terms with. Continuing from these delineations I link the ideological basis of these cosmological constructions to their implications for scarcity alleviation in the villages.

COSMOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF DROUGHTS

In Bijapur, people often construct droughts to be the result of karma: "Why will it rain when we people are full of Karma," "Aren't these times of Karma, how will it rain?" "What Karma have we done, a drought is impending?" In associating droughts with Karmic states of being, of having performed inappropriate moral and social actions, what is invoked is not an individual's state of karma, but the collective karma of a village. The doctrine of karma as a central motif for causal thinking (Keyes and Daniel 1983) provides a range of deterministic frameworks in which individual and collective liability, and vicarious causeeffect relations and conditions are explained and understood among Hindus (Torry 1986b). The karmic framework links not only past actions to present conditions but is also used to explain a range of social actions, incidents, and phenomena.

Yet such an ascription of causation should not be read as indicative of a fatalistic attitude or as the invoking of the doctrine of karma which emphasizes an absolute submission of human conditions to a divine will. As Babb (1983) observed, "to apply the karmic frame of reference to life's problems is to relate them to a higher order of moral responsibility. By grounding destiny in the moral awareness of the individual, karmic theory links the experience of the individual to the general principles of <u>dharma</u>..." (1983:179).

Likewise, a drought is culturally constructed as a comment on the loss or lack of dharmic or morally valuable actions and conditions in the village. Far from being a denial of human responsibility in the production of drought, the association of droughts with cosmological links indicates the larger morally reflexive manner in which droughts are constructed. Droughts are therefore not considered as being above and beyond human onus and accountability. The cosmological construction of droughts places human actions, natural conditions, and divine ordination in a homological and analogical paradigm. People consider actions that have transpired in one domain to have implications in another. For example human actions that negate or defy moral values and codes are considered to entail divine retribution. Similarly, droughts that are

most observable in the physio-geographic domain are also associated with social actions and divine retribution.

Crises such as droughts with their implications of production loss, food shortage, sustenance stress, dislocation, and disturbance are understood as signifying more than a physio-geographic disorder. Just as the classical Hindu texts stipulated a fundamental association between rain and law--"Rain and order go together as do disorder and drought" (Zimmermann 1989) -- agrarian cultural constructions see a nexus between droughts and the ethical life of the community. Various ethnographies from India have noted this tendency among agriculturists to make homologous links between the natural and moral order, especially with reference to locating the etiology of drought (Bharara 1982; Srinivas 1971; Desai 1963). In Karnataka, a survey by Caldwell, Reddy, and Caldwell (1988) on peoples' perceptions of droughts found that forty-three percent of those interviewed considered droughts to be a result of god's wrath and a form of chastisement to them.

This reflexive stance in which human actions are held as being responsible for the production of droughts is emphasized in the manner by which changes in human actions and cultural preferences are integrated into the causative framework for understanding droughts. A particular case in hand is Eshwarappa's (1984) report that the residents of a North Karnataka village linked the decline in rainfall to

trends in human birth control: "We cut off at two children, that's why God cuts off with less rain." The "cut off" on the part of humans referred to the family planning methods of vasectomy and tubectomy--practices that are promoted widely by the government and which have met with resistance or hesitant acceptance by the people. Here the shifts from a normative prescribed cultural value, that of having children, to that of "cutting off at two" is upheld as a sign of a disturbed order.

This example serves not so much as evidence of the continuity of a fatalistic paradigm in which droughts are understood, but, rather the ability of a culture to incorporate changed contexts and actions into its repertoire of causative factors. Causal associations such as these underscore the continuity of an ethos of substantialism in rural India. Actions and orientations conducted in one domain have implications and effects on other domains. Here the nexus between the physiological condition of the people and the condition of the ecology are tied to the cosmological implications of their actions. Such cultural constructions epitomize the culture's ability to integrate geographical conditions into a moral and social context.

A range of rain rituals performed in villages and at regional centers (see Figure VII) in Bijapur represent the multiple forms in which droughts are collectively addressed. The rain rituals directly relate to attempts to (1)





anticipate, through prophesying and divination rituals, the probability and quantity of rain-crops for the forthcoming season (2) appease the rain deities for rain and (3) collectively address the moral and cosmic disorder that is considered to be the cause of drought.

RAIN-CROP PROPHESYING

Several rain-crop prophesying rituals are contextualized within the annual agro-ritual cycle. The most important divinatory and prophesying rites are located just prior to the two sowing seasons. Most villages in the district have a single deity, often from the pantheon of pastoral deities, as their village deity (2). The temple associated with the village deity is maintained collectively by all members of the village. Annual collections of grains and money contribute to the maintenance of the temple and to the conduct of annual festivals in the honor of these deities. As in the village of Madbhavi and Mundugnur, the important "rain-crop" prophesies are conducted during the annual festival of their respective village deities. Villages with a sizeable Muslim population and which have a <u>dargah</u> also perform "rain-crop" prophesies during such festivals as Muharram (3).

Regionally recognized temples and <u>dargahs</u> also conduct "rain-crop" prophesying rituals which attract a sizeable crowd from both neighbouring and distant villages. Two

other regionally well-known religous centers in Bijapur are the Murnal amd Gadankere <u>mutta</u> (religous centers) where hereditary "rainmen" (<u>Maleyappa</u>) conduct annual "rain-crop" (<u>male-bele helike</u>) prophesying. The manner in which these rain-crop prophesies and divinations are conducted and their ability to address the exigent needs of the agriculturists is provided in the following description.

The mutta (religous center) of Murnal Maleyappa (Rainman), a recognized hereditary rainman, is located in the village of Murnal in Bagalgot talug of Bijapur district. Its history dates back to the medieval period and is recorded as having been established by an Adil Shahi ruler, who was so impressed by the powers of the rainman's ancestor that he granted him land and a building in which his descendants continue to live and perform rain-related rituals (4). The center itself embodies the Hindu and Muslim syncretism of region. The architecture of the center is Islamic and the burial vaults of the Rainmen occupy a central place. But the rain-crop prophesying rites and the invoking of the gods are conducted in terms of popular Hinduism. During the annual Holi festival (March-April), the residents of the village of Murnal gather together, and collect grain donations from all the households. On the day of <u>Holi</u>, the rainman (<u>Maleyappa</u>) performs a <u>puja</u> at the local river and five young unmarried girls between the ages of twelve and eighteen are chosen to carry five mud pots

filled with water. Each pot is associated and marked with a particular set of "agriculturists rains" which are important for the region's agriculture (see Appendix C).

Figure VIII : RAIN POTS

NAMES OF RAINS		ASSOCIATED FUNCTION	
1.	Roni, Mrga	summer sowing	
2.	Aridhra, Punarvasu Pushya	summer cover rains	
3.	Ashlesha, Magha	winter sowing	
4. 5.	Hubbi, Uthri,Hasta Sathi, Vishaka	sowing sorghum in wint winter cover rains	ter

As the rain-man (<u>Maleyappa</u>) leads the procession, followed by the girls and accompanied by the village musicians, the audience, drawn from the vicinity and from other villages, watch the pots labelled with the names for the five sets of "farmers rains" (<u>vokkaligara male</u>). Leaks in any of the pots is understood as signifying the specific rain which will be successful. A complete lack of any leaks is considered to portend a drought.

The ritual ends with a commensal meal and agriculturists return to their respective villages, discussing the divination and what agricultural strategies they would undertake. For agriculturists the divination provides guidelines for making decisions relating to the choice of crops and sowing. This acts as a directive for agricultural decisions and practices and is vital in the context of predicting crop loss and hence preventing wasteful sowing and investment. For example, if there are no leaks in the first pot then agriculturists understand this as signifying the probable lack of the summer sowing rains, the <u>roni</u> and <u>mrga</u>. Decisions to sow seeds for the usual summer crops of wheat, groundnut, millets, maize, and pulses can then be made. If there are no leaks in the first pot, but the second pot representing the summer cover rains (<u>aridra</u>, <u>punarvasu</u>, and <u>pushya</u>) leaks, then agriculturists can decide to sow those seeds which require less rain to sprout but which can benefit from and be successful with the cover rains. Similiar decisions can be made with reference to the winter crops and the leaks or lack of leaks in the pots that represent the rains for winter.

To what extent these predictions or divinations are taken at face value and followed is largely a circumstantial matter. Agriculturists who were interviewed spoke of these directives as information that they would keep in their minds. Decisions as to sow or not, which seeds to choose, etc. would be based on actual climatic conditions. An agriculturist from a nearby village who said that he always came to these rain-crop prophecies indicated how he made his agricultural decisions:

> "I keep these divinations (<u>helike</u>) in mind. Must I put wheat and pulses or millet and pulses ...this I will decide only when the rains come or do not come. The <u>helike</u> is to be prepared. Sometimes it (the divination) comes true, sometimes it does not...but, we have to look for the rains all the same".

In addition to the "rain-crop" divination and prophesying rituals that are conducted during the annual festivals and are part of the agro-ritual cycle, there are several rituals in which rain deities are appeased for rain. One such ritual that is also part of the annual agro-ritual cycle is that of "Jokumara".

This ritual is conducted in the month of <u>bhadrapad</u> (August-September) and immediately follows the celebrations of the Ganesh festival. In the village of Madbhavi, the Jokumara ("one who brings joy") idol is made of clay by one of the potters. Members of the <u>thalwar</u> (menial servants) caste take the clay idol with its enlarged mouth and bulging eyes and place it in a basket. Neem (<u>Azandirachta Indica</u> <u>Juss</u>) leaves are placed behind the idol and the mouth is smeared with butter. Placing the bitter neem leaves behind the Jokumara signifies, according to the people, the placing of their difficulties behind him and requesting only the softness of butter for life.

Two <u>thalwar</u> women then go around the village singing a song that asks the people to appease the Jokumara for rains and happiness. The people propitiate the idol and offer grains or money to the carriers. After three days of parading the idol in the village, the <u>thalwars</u> take the idol and leave it with the harijans. They in turn take the idol to a nearby field and beat it. The way in which the idol falls is supposed to portend the rains for the coming

season. Falling on its face implies that "jokumara is waiting for the rains" and hence the rains for the season may not be successful. Falling on its back implies that the "farmers will rub their faces in the ground for want of rains." Only if the idol falls on its side can the agriculturists expect good and successful rains.

The ambiguity seen in the Jokumara rite where the idol is propitiated for rain and yet treated harshly by village residents (who "beat and kill" his image) is explained by a myth that was narrated to me.

> When Ganesha, Jokumara's brother, visited the earth the people propitiated and pampered him. Having received the generosity of the people, Ganesha reported back to his parents, Shiva and Parvati, that all was well on earth and the people were happy. The people were enraged at Ganesh's oversight of their problems and so when Jokumara visited the earth, they paraded a list of their problems, including the demand for rain, in front of him and ill treated him.

The Jokumara rite which is part of the annual ritual cycle in the villages is a well-known ritual in the North Karnataka region. Chidanandamurthy (1977) has elaborated on the differences between the classical and folk versions of Jokumara but emphasizes the importance acceded to Jokumara as a harbinger of rains. He records several village songs which beseech Jokumara to bring rains:

> The sown crops are drying, the mother will give us flour, call the <u>Uthri</u> rains He's climbed his horse my Jokumara" He'll swing his shawl and call the rains

The Jokumara ritual can also be seen as a ritualistic enactment of the deprivation and disadvantages that the lower castes face perenially and which are heightened during droughts. Carrying the Jokumara to the households of the landlords, the lower castes, represented by the menial servants, make known to the others, through their song, the problems that they face. Their needs and requirements are represented as Jokumara's needs. The song emphasizes that "Jokumara ... cries for food, give him food" and goes on to narrate the idol's requirements of food, the crying for food, and beseeches the people to come and feed the Jokumara (5). Food scarcity that is perennial for the lower castes, who also form the bulk of the indigent, is ritually enacted wherein the institutionalized structural inequities, especially the lack of food security, gets expressed through a ritual. The landed members of the village who are called on to recognize the hunger of the idol and feed him are to recognize the hunger of the poor and to feed them.

The appeasing of a range of minor, rain-related deities drawn from the local, popular culture adds to the ritual repertoire of the region. At the initial onset of a drought, itinerant ritual specialists such as the Konji-Korava traverse the rural areas (6). Carrying an idol of the goddess Durg-Murgawwa (the same goddess, Mari, associated with afflicting the villages with droughts,

plagues, small-pox and other human and cattle diseases), a Konji-Korava woman goes door to door singing paeans and invoking the goddess to:

Fill the wells, lakes, and tanks ... bring the <u>roni</u> and <u>mrga</u> rains

The roni (rohini) and mrga (mrgasira) rains are important sowing rains for the summer crops. Village residents propitiate the deity and offer grains or money to the carrier. Similiarly, at the onset of a drought the members of the <u>thalwar</u> caste enconse a frog in mud and fix a sprig of grass on it. A little boy is made to carry the frog in a basket, and he goes from house to house, singing to the Gurji to send the rains. The people pour a pot of water over the Gurji and place a handful of grains in the basket.

People refer to the propitiation of these rain deities as the "begging" (bedu) or the requesting for rains from deities. As specialized deities they mediate between humans and the natural elements and the bringing of rain is a specially vital one. The frog, the symbol of rain, is incorporated into the pantheon of local popular deities. Like the other local rain deities, Mari and Jokumara, the frog has become an idol called Gurji. These deities and the functions ascribed to them underscore the articulation of the divinity-nature-society continuum. They are the

ritualized harbingers of rain who are capable of dispelling the disorder that droughts signify and portend.

The existence and working of a multiplicity of divinatory and prophesying rituals highlight a society's attempt to strengthen its "own powers of comprehension, and to cultivate the potent influences of evil spirits, celestial bodies and other occult forces" (Pugh 1988:294). The need to apprehend the unpredictable rains indicates the importance that the rains have for the livelihood and life of the people. As the Murnal Maleyappa, the "rainman of Murnal", put it, "the need for rain is a universal need" (<u>lokprayag</u>) and a culture seeks multiple ways in which to satiate this need.

Both the etiology and the location of droughts within a cosmological configuration are far from being embedded within a purely fatalistic framework of causality. Located as they are within a paradigm of cosmological configuration, these rituals take into account the close nexus between the moral, social, and physical orders. The range of rituals and etiologies in which the causes of drought are located and understood accede a cultural recognition of the human onus for the production of droughts. As vicarious and distant as the moral and social responsibility for the production of droughts may seem, what is underscored is the rejection of purely naturalistic explanations and etiologies of droughts. In addition, droughts are understood as more

than threats to agricultural production. Rain rituals address not only questions relating to rains and crops for the forthcoming seasons but also attempt to address the moral order of the community. One such ritual is conducted in villages at the onset of a drought and highlights the cultural conceptualizations of drought as moral and cosmic disorder.

DROUGHTS AS AFFLICTION

Like epidemics of smallpox and plague (Nicholas 1981, Marglin 1990) in the Indian countryside, droughts in Bijapur are also constructed as afflictions of punishment from higher order beings. As the word connotes, affliction is contructed and understood as imposed harm, danger, and threat from an external agency or source. All forms of epidemics, such as plagues, smallpox, cattle diseases, and droughts are considered to be afflictions that are threats to the life of the village, to its agriculture, to humans and cattle. Like epidemics, droughts are seen as the manifestations of divine and supernatural anger. Heat, disturbance, death, and destruction are seen as characterizing both epidemics and droughts and as being symptoms of the anger of specific deities.

As <u>peda</u> (affliction), the people consider droughts to be ordained as punishment by divine and supernatural forces for recalcitrant human action. Inappropriate actions, lack

of proper conduct, falling short of ascribed duties, being venal, and failing in moral and social onligations are all considered to be reasons which make a community vulnerable to afflictions. Such afflictions are then either warded-off or removed by the performance of certain rituals.

Affliction is seen as the dislocation of orders; the physical order in which agricultural production and hence the domain of the <u>adive</u> (agricultural and grazing lands) is threatened; the social order of the <u>ur</u> (settlement) in which the peole's actions and interactions are curtailed and lives threatened; and the cosmological order in which harmony between humans and divine beings is disturbed. Villagelevel rituals then seek to alleviate such disorders that "affliction" portends. As a drought or an epidemic of cattle or human diseases sets in, the people in villages conduct rites that seek to dispell the affliction and reinstate the order of the village and cosmos.

In the village of Honutgi, a ritual that seeks at the onset of droughts and epidemics to alleviate the "affliction" is called the <u>male vara</u> or "rain fast." An elderly woman in the village described the ritual to me as follows:

> When the rains have delayed (<u>saledu</u>) or when the cattle get afflicted (<u>peda</u>), then the elders of the village get together and decide that the village people must undertake a fast (<u>vara</u>). On Tuesdays and Fridays, which are Mari's (the goddess associated with afflictions) days, we can eat only steamed cereals. No <u>roti</u> (flattened sorghum bread) is to be made. The gridle is not to be used

on these days. On the last day of the fast, the yound boys of the village pour a pot over themselves. Then they go to all the abodes (<u>gudi</u>) and temples of the village and pour a pot of water over the gods and goddesses. We do this for five weeks. On the last days of the fast, special food is offered to all the deities in the temples and abodes.

There are several symbolic dimensions to this ritual. <u>Vara</u> or fasts (<u>Vrath</u> in sanskrit and Hindi) as penance seek to alter existing conditions which are disruptive and threatening to life. <u>Vara</u> is essentially a transformational ritual that seeks to alter destiny or existing conditions through religious vows and fasts (Wadley 1983). By appeasing deities, attempts are made to eliminate misfortune and in this case the misfortune and distress that an onsetting drought portends.

Emanating from a conceptualization of drought as affliction, the prescribed regimen of a particular fast seeks to alleviate the distress of drought in a manner akin to the treatment of disease. Like the prescription of diets meant to heal disease, the prescribed ritual fast seeks to alleviate the moral and social disease of the community. Examples of such social transgression seen as disturbing the moral and cosmic order are that of the non-performance of particular rituals, the ill-treatment of particular groups of people or the reneging on promises. If the annual festival to the village deity was not conducted due to factions in the village then an onsetting drought is
associated with this failure to have retained and maintained cosmic harmony.

A case of a village leader reneging on promises to a village festival was highlighted during the Muharram festival in Madbhavi. During the <u>Muharram</u> "rain-crop" prophesying rite, the oracle stopped in the midst of the ritual and then leaving the crowd started walking to the house of one of the richer landowners. The oracle stood at the door of the man's house and demanded that the man come out. When the man came to the door, the oracle led him by the hand to the ritual ground. There the oracle proceeded to castigate the man for not keeping his promise of giving a gift of Rs. 500 to the dargah if his wife conceived a child. The man promised to do so, reiterating that the promised gift would be given by the next full moon day (hunime).

Similarly, the fast, during the droughts, that prescribes collective ritualistic actions underscores the attempt to re-instate a collective order to the community. Droughts constructed as resulting from a lack of social unity or lack of moral propriety in the village become occasions for the ritualistic re-instating of village unity and moral propriety.

The cooling of the deity is an attempt to cool both the heat of the deity's anger and the heat of the drought and hence to dispel the drought. As Marglin (1990) notes in reference to the ritualistic healing of small-pox, the

conjoining of the metaphorical (the heat of the deities anger) with the literal (heat of the epidemic or a drought) highlights the non-dualistic conceptualization of such phenomena. Droughts, like diseases, are considered to be symptoms of both physical and moral disorder and the modes to alleviate them are conducted in a manner that addresses both domains.

Addressing and dispelling the heat from one domain, that of the divine, is an attempt to dispel the physical heat of the drought. The cooling of the deity parallels the "healing" of afflictions which is concerned with reconstituting the physical, social, and spiritual order. What is underscored in this ritual, and the conceptualizations associated with it, is the ethos of substantialism and the coinciding of the domains of divinity, nature, and society. Actions in one domain are understood and constructed as being reflected in the other, linking the three domains of divinity, nature, and society in a circular and integral manner.

If an ethos of substantialism forms the basis for the conceptualization of droughts, and for the ritualistic forms in which they are addressed, the question of the results of such conceptualizations and the ideology behind such conceptualizations remain.

COSMOLOGY AS IDEOLOGY

If this cosmological construction and the ritualized addressing of droughts were linked to actual strategies of alleviating drought-related scarcities, one will note a discrepancy between the two. For the ritualistic addressing of droughts in which the rich and poor gather together irrespective of caste differences to collectively alleviate drought is not extended to strategies to alleviate droughtrelated food scarcities. Drought and its effects of loss of crops, unemployment, and lack of sustenance resources implies a stress for all. Yet, there are no strategies for collective provisioning. Instead, as it will be detailed in the next chapter, the people undertake separate strategies at the household level to sustain themselves.

That scarcity alleviation strategies are conducted at the household level and do not incorporate any collective measures to alleviate distress is highlighted in the cases of the different provisioning strategies undertaken by residents of Madbhavi village. Households with considerable amounts of land like those of Doddamane Patel and Basavaraj Sindgi have sufficient resources, either in the form of stored grains or capital to tide over the decline in production initiated by a drought. The medium and small cultivators like Gangawwa Badigyar and others resort to the sale of assets to subsist through the crisis. The landless workers and the indigent, such as Gurappa Madha and his

fellow caste members must resort to either migration or incur debts to survive the loss of employment brought on by droughts.

This disjunction between the symbolic collective liability for the production of droughts and independent survival strategies makes it worthwhile to compare Bijapur's cosmological constructions of drought to cosmologies of other societies in which nature-society relations are also encoded. Reichel-Dolmatoff (1976) notes that the cosmology of the Tukano of the Colombian Amazon contains a blueprint for ecological adaptation. The use of the forest resources, both the flora and fauna, is regulated by their cosmology which stipulates that overhunting causes illness. This cosmology also regulates sex and food habits and thereby maintains a balance between biotic resources and human population. The encoding of close nature-society relations is then linked to specific strategies in which the stipulates of the cosmology are actively played out.

Similarly, in her study of the Tshidi of Southern Africa, Comaroff (1980) elaborates that the Tshidi construct disease as cosmological disorder. Fractious relations between persons and betweeen the social group and the physical and social cosmos are considered to be the causes of cosmological disorder. Healing rituals then provide therapies in which the cosmic order and hence the health of the person are reinstated.

Unlike these cosmologies, which are embedded in societies that are relatively egalitarian, the cosmological construction of drought in Bijapur is embedded within a society that has hierarchy and inequality as its hallmark. Though there is a constant emphasis and reiteration of the continuity and identity between nature and society and the need for the collective addressing of the larger cosmic order, drought-related stress, especially food scarcity, is experienced on a non-collective basis. This is evident from the different household-based strategies undertaken by the residents of Madbhavi village.

In addition the cosmological constructions of droughts that locate the responsibility for the production of droughts in the collective moral domain may act as a basis for negating the responsibility of the landed rich to provision the poor. The recognition of collective liability diffuses and removes the recognition of the social relations of production. Since droughts are understood as caused by moral impropriety, falling short of caste duties, or social disunity in the village, the onus for alleviating food scarcity is also not placed on any specific person.

At the onset of a drought, and at its peak of severe food deprivation, the rich provision only themselves, and overlook the needs of the landless. Land owners who own and cultivate sizeable shares of land do not face the absolute deprivation and threat to life that the landless and other

indigent members of a village face. Yet the differential resource positions goes unquestioned; the poor eke out a living or starve, and the life of the rich goes relatively undisturbed.

COSMOLOGY AND CHANGING SOCIAL STRUCTURES

The legitimation of resource differences and the diffusion of liability provided by the cosmological conceptualizations of drought are enhanced by an increasing schizm between cosmological conceptualizations and the changing village social structures. This is observable in situations in which rituals identify some specific person, such as the village headman, as being responsible for drought conditions and imposes an onus of alleviating scarcity on him. But, changed social structures and social conditions, do not enable the articulation of such dictums. In describing one such ritual, I will indicate the manner in which the disjunction between the cosmological understanding of drought and changed social structures also negate the ability of these rituals to generate scarcity alleviation mechanisms.

The village of Mundugnur is one among the several regionally well-known centers for rain-crop prophesying and lies in a dry tract of Bijapur district. It is here that the temple of <u>Malinga</u>, a pastoral deity, hosts an annual "rain-crop" prophecy (<u>Male-bele helike</u>) ritual on the eve of

<u>divali</u> (<u>Karthik</u> October-November). Well-known for its prophecies, the temple attracts five to six hundred farmers from around the region, who come to hear the prophecies and propitiate the deity for a bountiful harvest. The ritual is typical of the annual rain-crop rituals held in most villages during the festivals of the village's main deities.

On the morning of the ritual, the shepherds (kurubaru), of Mundugnur who are the custodians of the temple, go around the village and collect grains from its residents. In the evening, the custodians of the temple bear the welldecorated deities of Malinga and his associate Bira in palanquins and take them on a procession. They move from the temple to the site of the Hanumant temple, which is also the village's collective meeting area. The carriers of the deities perform a prolonged dance to a crowd awed by the display of wealth and power of the deities. The palanquins are set down on the parapet of the temple grounds. Loud and rhythmic drumming continues for another hour or so. Meanwhile, the shepherd oracle goes into a trance and the ritual officiant showers the audience with turmeric powder. When the oracle rises and walks to the center of the audience, the drumming subsides and the crowd falls into an expectant silence.

Dressed in regular farmer's clothes but covered from his head to knees in the coarse woolen blanket (<u>Kambli</u>) that is considered to be the symbol of the shepherds and the

source of their oracular power, the oracle sits down. He unfolds a cloth in front of him and a mud pot of water is placed in front of him. He slowly places handfuls of grains, wheat, sorghum, and millet in separate piles on the cloth. As his trance deepens, he sways and starts handing out various amounts of the grains to the audience. The quantities and type of grains he hands out are considered to be a prophesy of the grains that will be successful for the coming season.

After handing out the grains, the oracle walks over and kicks the pot. As the pot breaks and water spills out, the audience crane their necks and they understand from the size of the potsherds and the water that is retained in them the probability and quantity of future rains. A sizeable potsherd with water in it is considered to signify a successful rain-crop season. On the other hand, multiple pieces without any water signifies potential drought.

Meanwhile the oracle walks a little ahead and is met by the village headman, who queries,

"Now, tell us, what is it?".

"Ah <u>mayada male</u> (illusionary rains)" the oracle replies. At this the headman's voice rises and he continues: "But why? Have we not served you? Why is there no rain?" The Oracle shakes his head further and the headman continues: "We need rain, how can we get some rain?" The oracle then replies, "There may be rain but it will be out of your

devotion (bhakti)".

The words used by the oracle are ambiguous and typical of "rain-crop" prophecies. "Mayada" or illusionary rains can be read both ways--rains that may come at an unexpected time or moisture-laden weather conditions that will still enable the crops to grow. By prophesying unpredictable rains, the oracle was perhaps influenced by the fact that the season had been particularly dry and the chances of getting sufficient rains were remote.

As the ritual concludes, the palanquins are raised by the bearers and taken on a final circumabulation of the ritual site. Visitors from other villages donate grains and along with the residents of the village start to disperse, discussing the rain prophecies, the probability of rain, and the crops that will be successful. Having discerned for themselves the prophecies of rain and crops in the grains handed out and in the potsherds, agriculturists have the option of basing their agricultural decisions on these prophecies.

Ethnographies of Karnataka, such as those by Beals (1974) and Gurumurthy (1982), have indicated that collective village rituals seek to reinstate a prescribed social order. Rain rituals in particular are related to reinstating the collective unity and order of the village since droughts are often culturally constructed to be the results of a lack of social unity. Ideal and typical constructs of social order

are based on stressing the performance of ascribed castebased duties, leading lives of moral propriety (<u>dharma</u>), and upholding cultural norms and values (<u>nithi</u> and <u>nade</u>). Faults in social conduct, shifts from prescribed and expected normative orders are held as causative factors in the production of distress conditions such as droughts, plagues, epidemics of smallpox, and other life-threatening conditions. This ritual, like other rain rituals, also includes the collective addressing of the moral and cosmic order, but here the responsiblity to alleviate the drought is placed on the leader of the village.

The particular organization of such rituals which places the headman in the center of discerning the cause of the drought also imposes on him the responsibility to alleviate drought-related stress. Such an organizational structure may have emanated from past social and political organization of the village, when the leadership of the village was hereditary and it was the duty of the leader(s) to provide sustenance to the indigent in times of distress.

DHARMAKARYA: AXION OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

At the level of Bijapur's villages, an axiom of moral responsibility refered to as <u>dharmakarya</u> had worked to keep the elite responsible for maintaining the village's tanks, lakes and wells. As moral (<u>dharma</u>) duty (<u>karya</u>), such an axiom was activated during the exigencies of a drought or

under conditions of food scarcity, when the elite landed members of the village were compelled by moral injunction and social pressure to construct tanks, lakes, and wells in the village for use by the general public. As Shivanna (1973) details for medieval Karnataka, and Srinivas (1971) for South Karnataka, the construction of public utility resources such as wells, tanks, rest houses, and temples was considered to be an act of charity which accrued merit for the donors and raised their social standing.

Narratives and folk songs (9) from the region note the important role that <u>dharmakarya</u> played in alleviating drought-related stress and in generally maintaining the vital natural resources of villages. A regionally wellknown ballad, Sann Sose Bhagirathi (10), eulogises the role of a village headman who, in order to mitigate the privations of a drought, orders the building of a lake which, despite persistent and prolonged labor, fails to be filled with water. An Oracle advises him to sacrifice his youngest daughter-in-law as a propitiating offer, and, after the sorrowing headman performs the sacrifice, the lake is filled with water. The ballad emphasizes not a belief that human sacrifices can create miracles but the expectation that a good village leader must be capable of great sacrifice. The contribution of village elites and leaders to the building and maintenance of public resources is evident in that village lakes and tanks in the district bear

names of persons who financed and supervised them.

The social and moral responsibility for the welfare of the village as a whole was assigned to and associated with the leader. Droughts, like other calamities and conditions of deprivation and collective stress, were then associated with a state of disorder in the community, the onus of which fell on the leader. At the performance of rituals the leader himself may have been castigated for lack of responsibility to the community, or even taken to task (verbally) for any of his actions that were construed as a misdeed. In attempting to provide ameliorative guidelines, the ritual would have included directives like the performance of collective penances, or stipulated acts through which the social order of the community would be restored. Dharmakarya (axiom of moral responsibility) through which the rich landowners would have provisioned for the poor during droughts may have been initiated during these rituals.

Dharmakarya as a cultural axiom of elite responsibility for village resources during exigencies may have enhanced the bonding of the landless workers to the landed and the powerful. By catering to the needs of the landless when agricultural work was unavailable and the people's ability to sustain themselves was weakened, the landowners also benefitted themselves.

That patriarchal forms of organization and idioms of moral economy couch terms of exploitation have been made explicit in the works of Bourdieu (1977) and Scott (1976). Pre-capitalist agrarian formations were especially disposed to maintaining these complex relationships in which economic transactions were tied to social relationships and moral obligations. Similarly, the axiom of <u>dharmakarya</u> provided a veneer in which the occasional doling of resources during peiodic scarcity was used to couch long term exploitation. The construction of public utility resources provided a means of livelihood for the indigent and retained labor within the villages. At the same time, this strategy strengthened the position of the village elite as concerned and responsible leaders of the village. Moreover, in periods prior to the 1920s (when the population of the region was sparse [Guha 1985]), rich land owners may have needed to provision and retain the general labor and service population in the village itself during crises so as to be assured of labor.

But the axiom of <u>Dharmakarya</u>, and the minimal survival insurance that it provided, has declined since the turn of the twentieth century. Significant reorganization of the region's villages, by the British colonial policies and the shifts in the regional economy, negated the necessity for village-level strategies to contain the effects of droughts. In addition, increasing population (Choksey 1955,

Charlesworth 1985, Rangasami 1985) increased the availability of labor and made cultural strategies such as <u>dharmakarya</u> redundant.

In addition, contemporary changes in the social structure and organization of the village do not provide grounds for the practice of such dictums even if they continue to be embodied in or articulated in some rituals. Under conditions where the village leaders are elected, the responsibilities of civic and political duties are not stretched to include the moral responsibility for the conditions of the village. Even in cases of the election and establishment of traditional elites into new positions of power and leadership, the changes in the social structure do not carry the weight of moral onus to provision the poor. In the case of the ritual at Mundugnur, though an attempt is made to place the onus for the production of the drought on the village, and the concomitant measures to alleviate distress on a specific person, the changes in the social organization of the village lead to the loss of significance of the ritual. Like the lack of necessity to provision the people during fluctuations in agricultural production, the strategies to initiate drought-related scarcity alleviation measures are also negated.

The declining importance accorded to rain-crop prophecies testifies to the loss of symbolism and social relevance of the rain-rituals. Rain-crop oracles and

divinations that once played a central role in the agrarian life of Bijapur are today considered by its residents to be less "truthful" (<u>nija</u>), and their directives of what crops to grow and which rains will be successful are viewed as less reliable.

Not all agriculturists take the oracle's word at face value, and importance (if any) is acceded to a general comment on the rain-crops for the season. Older residents consider the inability of the oracles to be "pure" (i.e., to lead life-styles considered appropriate to their special ritual status and to be above all corruption) as being a reason for oracles to lack authenticity and accuracy. Older agriculturists cite times when the words of the oracles were regarded as absolute truths, and speak of times when oracles had led whole villages to sowing despite a lack of rain and had later "called rains" to make the season a successful one.

I asked Mr. Manigyappa Biradar, the narrator of the 1942 oraculur rites, why rain-crop prophecies were no longer considered to be as accurate as they were once before. His reply: "How can prophecies be right these days? How? The shepherds, even the Pujaris are no longer followers of their dharma. They must be pure (<u>shudd</u>) in mind. Only then can they make correct prophecies." An oracle's ability to make accurate prophecies is related to his adherence to a prescribed and expected norm of actions. The veracity and

accuracy of the oracles, prophecies, and divinations are themselves associated with the state of people's moral and social propriety. Such shifts are themselves aspects of the shifts in the social and cultural order and they heighten and explain the disjuntion between the cosmological constructions and the social structure.

The conjoining of social, moral, and natural categories in the cosmological construction of droughts embodies dual facets. On the one hand, such cosmological constructions locate and stress the recognition of collective human onus for the production of droughts. This construction then becomes the ideological basis in which droughts and the attending lack of resource and food redistributive mechanisms go unquestioned. As a result, the variations in the experiences of food scarcities is accepted and managed on an independent household basis.

In the domain of provisioning transactions it is not the ecology or the specific drought condition that gets recognized, but, rather, that of the social relations of production and service relations. On the other hand, in the domain of rituals, that is in the cosmological addressing of droughts, it is the relationship between humans as a collectivity and the natural forces that is played out. Rain-rituals are closely related to a specific past sociocultural, economic, and political order in which the differing social relations between persons, and the broader

society-nature relationship were played out. Drought itself is not recognized as a purely natural phenomenon, but, as a symptom of cosmic disorder and is addressed in relation to a reordering of the cosmos.

In analyzing the cosmological conceptualizations of droughts in terms of their implications for the alleviation of food scarcity, I emphasize the need to scrutinize and analyze indigenous, non-western cultural conceptualizations of society-nature relations in a critical manner. Conceptualizations such as the ones observed in Bijapur, wherein society-nature relations are represented as being closely interlinked, have been, with reference to India especially, unrelated to the actual conditions in which they are played out. Hence, such conceptualizations have been upheld as frameworks or ideological constructs which provided the basis for effective resource management and scarcity alleviation. Gadgil and Guha's (1992) work, "This Fissured Land", in which a regional caste system is presented as providing an efficacious organization for natural resource management, comes to mind.

Societies in which provisioning mechanisms have not been effective in alleviating resource scarcity have been seen as results of changes introduced by colonialism or by the intrusion of capitalism. Disruptive and devastating as the forces of colonialism and capitalism have been to the working of village societies and their scarcity alleviation

strategies they have been compounded by local cultural conceptualizations and social structures which legitimize, and sanction differences in resources and scarcity management.

This chapter has elaborated on rain rituals as representing a specific culture's understanding of societynature relations. The analyses indicates that societynature relations are conceptualized within a continuum. The condition of nature is considered to be reflective of human actions. Despite the recognition (in moral and cosmological terms) of such a close nexus between the conditions of nature and society, the substantialism evident in the rituals is not linked to strategies to alleviate droughtrelated crises. The observation of this contradiction emphasizes the need to take into consideration the effect of changed social orders and living conditions in establishing or noting cultural influences of society-nature relations.

The next chapter reviews village-level provisioning transactions and analyzes them in terms of social mechanisms that address drought-related scarcities of food.

CHAPTER VI

AN ENEMY LIKE THE STOMACH

The previous chapters noted the contextualization and management of drought in agricultural practice, and the etiologies of droughts in the ritual repertoire of the region. In this chapter I focus on village-level transactions of food and grain and relate these to the region's agro-climatic cycle and the resource positions of the people. I review the ability of these provisioning transactions to address drought-related food scarcity and hence the ability of the society and culture to take into consideration the ecological specificities of the region. The tensions between the articulation of cultural expressions of society-nature relations and the shifts in the social and economic structures are addressed.

The celestial cycle (reckoned by the movement of stars and planets) and the climatic cycle (marked predominantly by the rains) bind the agricultural cycle of Bijapur. As in other parts of India, the celestial and climatic cycles also conjoin to organize social and ritual activities, and mark various periods in terms of being auspicious or inauspicious for different sets of activities (Pugh 1983). Various

rituals mark significant agricultural transitions: the end of the major winter harvest is heralded as the new year (the <u>Ugadi</u> festical in <u>chaitra</u> [March-April]), fertility rites conducted to propitiate the fields are occasions for family get-togethers, and the slack season between the winter harvest and the summer sowing frees agriculturists for their other social activities. As in other agrarian societies where "the structure of ritual practice is articulated within the structure of farming activities" (Bourdieu 1979:132), life in Bijapur is also entrenched within the agricultural cycle.

While rituals mark the various agricultural stages, agriculture in turn predicates the resource position of different households. The end of the harvest for a wellendowed agriculturist means a rest from agricultural overseeing if not actual work. The slack season is also the period that sees a spurt of social activities: visiting relatives, going on pilgrimages, attending weddings, and conducting political and economic transactions. But, for the landless agriculturists, the slack season spells a long period of unemployment or sporadic employment, making it difficult to meet the requirements of daily sustenance. Households subject to the pinch of unemployment and its consequences of sharp dips in food availability resort to various measures to meet their needs. A flurry of everyday transactions of borrowing, lending, and exchanging

accompanies resource fluctuations. Households that have extra grains sell locally--housewives taking it on themselves to make these small-scale transactions. Neighbours, fellow caste members, and kin borrow from each other and exchange milk for grains, grains for vegetables, or fuelwood for grains.

In 1989, the post-harvest months of April and May were typical of a slack season. In Gurappa Madha's household, only he and his sons found employment--cutting thistle brush in some distant fields. His wife and his daughters stayed home, listless for employment. Physically, it was comfortable for them to stay home from the scorching heat (when temperatures could reach a maximum of forty degress celsus), but providing for the sustenance needs of the family required great economizing and innovative skills. They stretched their food rations, the women consumed only one full meal a day, and they made requests to borrow grains from a landed family. Like them, several other families were subject to the cycle of food scarcity and resorted to various strategies to sustain themselves. Hunger is thus a recurring threat that faces a large proportion of the village residents. As the people reiterate "there is no enemy like the stomach"(1), as hunger humbles the proud, and makes the already poor destitute.

INSTITUTIONALIZED PROVISIONING TRANSACTIONS

A series of ritualized provisioning transactions are conducted at the village level and are situated within the agricultural cycle (see Figure IX). Grains, money, and cooked food move from different households in various amounts and ways to collectively and independently provision members of the service castes and the indigent of the village. In Bijapur, three forms of institutionalized resource transactions are popularly operative: <u>dasoha</u>, or commensal provisioning; <u>aya</u> or transactions between the landed, and service and ritual specialists; and <u>dana</u>, or donation.

DASOHA: COMMUNITY SHARING

Emanating from the religio-philosophical tradition of Virashaivism, <u>dasoha</u> (dasa [servant]+aham [I]) means the submission of an individual to a god (Kittel 1988 [1894]; Kalburgi 1983). As a religious and culturally valued norm, <u>dasoha</u> refers to acts of charitable giving, feeding others, and sharing the fruits of one's efforts (Ishwaran 1983). For adherents of Virashaivism, <u>dasoha</u> is indicative of being responsible and generous members of the sect. <u>Dasoha</u> is an expression of devotion, where one's search for god and guru can be realized through conducting <u>dasoha</u>. "No charity ranks higher than that of feeding others" is a saying that



- 1. Winter Agricultural Cycle
- 2. Summer Agricultural Cycle
- 3. Resource Position if Landless
- 4. Provisioning Transactions

exhorts an ethos of collective sharing and provisioning. In emphasizing the importance of collective sharing, Virashaivism attempted to address the hierarchical economic and social structures of medieval North Karnataka (Narayan 1983, Ishwaran 1983).

In the context of the village, dasoha is the commensal partaking of a meal during festivals of the village deities. Collective provisioning in the form of a commensal meal takes place in the village of Madbhavi during two major festivals and a series of smaller festivals for caste deities. The festival of Amokshidda is held in chaitra (March-April), when the winter harvest is complete and the village takes a respite from a long agricultural season. Amokshidda is a pastoral deity who is also regarded as the main village deity and the shepherds are regarded as the custodians of the temple. As the harvested crops are brought to the village to be stored, the custodians of the temple go around the village collecting wheat, jaggery or cash from all the households. Those who grow wheat and those who have prayed for special favors donate larger amounts of wheat. Landless households which do not have sufficient grains donate money in sums that are within their means.

On the day of the festival, the deity is paraded around the village, after which it retires to the temple. People gather around to witness its last circumambulation and the

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prophesying of the forthcoming rains and crops (male-bele helike). The collected wheat and jaggery (molasses) is cooked to make a sweet dish which is collectively eaten at the site of the temple. While the women of the higher castes, the brahmins and the Lingayats, do not partake of the ritual meal, men of all castes except the brahmins are compelled to be present. The poor get a meal at the temple and are also allowed to take home any of the left-overs from the meal. Gurappa Madha and his family, along with their fellow caste members and their neighbours, the holeya, and the poor Muslims partake of the ritual commensal meal, and are permitted to take a bowl each of the sweet gruel to their homes.

Similar commensal provisioning takes place once every week in the month of <u>Shravana</u> (July-August, a period of listening, from the root word <u>srava</u>, or ear). This is a time of respite from agricultural work when the fields are in a production phase, and the lack of work permits the men to listen to the praises of God. During this period, separate festivals (<u>jatre</u>) for each caste deity are held every week. Each of the caste deities (2), such as the <u>Mari</u> for the Madhas (Leather workers), the <u>Bira</u> for the shepherds, and <u>Dyamavva</u> for the carpenters are assigned a week of worship. During this week the deity is dressed and propitiated with devotional songs and music. Custodians of the deity go around the village and collect grains or cash,

and at the end of the week, a commensal meal is prepared from the collections. Members of the lower castes and the indigent partake of the meal in the vicinity of the temple.

The thalwars (menial servants) of Madbhavi village celebrated the festival of their caste deity, Durgawwa, in the fourth week of shravana (July-August). Like the other caste groups they went around the village and collected money or wheat from the houses of the landed agriculturists and small sums of money from the other service caste and landless households. The deity was decorated and worshipped every morning and evening. The thalwar men collected at the temple site in the evenings and sang the dollina pada or drum songs, which they, and the shepherds, are famous for. The songs extolled the virtues of legendary shepherd oracles who had called rains and saved the village from famine, and of rich, benevolent men who had built lakes during droughts and provided sustenance to the indigent. At the end of the week of worship, a sweet gruel was made from the collected wheat. Members from castes such as the untouchables, leather workers, and the stone cutters partook of the meal.

Unlike <u>dana</u>, or donations that emanate from and reinforce a hierarchical relationship between giver and receiver, <u>dasoha</u> transactions are centrifugal. The grains and money collected are not associated with any one particular donor and the meal made from collections emphasizes the notion of community and collectivity. It is

in an atmosphere of community commensality that <u>dasoha</u> meals are conducted. <u>Dasoha</u> commensality "involves the principle that the individual should share spontaneously with the community a part of the earnings from his honest social labor (<u>Kayaka</u>)" (Ishwaran 1983:62).

AYA: INSTITUTIONALIZED SERVICE PAYMENTS

The institution of <u>aya</u>, well established in the north Karnataka belt, consists of a series of transactions between members of the service and ritual specialist castes who have hereditary rights to receive a fee in the form of land, grains, and food, from members of the landed families. Meaning "a fee" or "unmeasured payment" (Ishwaran 1963), <u>aya</u> transactions connote a link between agriculturists and some service caste households in a village. The <u>aya</u> system, like the <u>balutedar</u> (3) system in Maharashtra, ensured that village artisans and service persons received a portion of the agricultural produce of the village (McAlpin 1983).

Unlike the jajmani system, aya transactions do not entail a specific patron-client network or relationship, and consist instead of the collective remuneration that certain service and ritual caste households receive from all agriculturists within a village. Fuller (1989), one of the few to emphasize the differences between the jajmani and aya systems, notes that the receivers of aya payments have positions as servants of the village as a whole, and the

onus of provisioning them falls collectively on the village.

Land owners, who are endowed with relatively larger portions of land and who produce more, are recognized as the <u>ayadakula</u>, or families who give <u>aya</u>. In the village of Madbhavi, Keshappa Kumbar, Basavaraj Sindgi, and Doddmane Patel are <u>ayadakula</u> families and are obligated to provide grains, food, and meals to the various households that are entitled to <u>aya</u> receipts.

On the other side are households that are entitled to receive <u>aya</u> shares and are referred to as <u>ayagharru</u> or receivers of <u>aya</u>. Receivers of <u>aya</u> shares are usually service and ritual caste housholds such as barbers, carpenters, blacksmiths, washermen, menial servants, basket makers and leather workers (Ishwaran 1963). Not all households of these castes are entitled to receiving <u>aya</u>. Only a few households, based on a recognition of hereditary rights, are entitled to receive different amounts of <u>aya</u>. Like their counterparts, the <u>balutedar</u> in Maharashtra, the <u>ayagharru</u> households in Bijapur district vary from village to village but the most representative ones are from the service castes and the ritual specialists.

In the village of Madbhavi, households representing the Lingayat priest (<u>Ayagolu</u>), the Muslim priests (<u>Mullah</u>), the flower sellers (<u>Hugar</u>), the shepherds (<u>Kurubaru</u>) as custodians of the main village deity, and the menial servants (<u>Thalwar</u>) are entitled to <u>aya</u> shares. These shares

are different in quantity and period for each of the ritual and service groups and are rotated among the households recognized as hereditary <u>ayagharru</u>.

The <u>ayagolu</u> is the ritual priest of the Lingayats and provides services of officiating and conducting the rituals and rites of passage for Lingayat households. Hereditary <u>aya</u> shares for the <u>ayagolu</u> are rotated annually among five different households and when a person gets his turn, he and his family are entitled to cultivate a <u>khurige</u> (four acres) of land and retain the produce for their consumption and use. In addition, the <u>ayagolu</u> receives a handful of wheat or sorghum flour every day from each of the landed households and receives the special meals cooked for festivities. At the harvest yard, a share of grains, usually a basketful, is set aside for the <u>ayagolu</u>.

For their custodial duties relating to three temples in the village and for providing flowers for various rituals, three <u>Hugar</u>, or flower maker households, are entitled to receive one <u>khurige</u> of land which they can cultivate for a year each. The service of the <u>thalwar</u>, or domestic helpers, is called upon during ceremonies both in the households of the landed and during collective village festivals. Washing dishes, cleaning grains, clearing out sites for and after feasts are duties assigned to the <u>thalwar</u>. For this and other menial odd jobs, twelve families of <u>thalwar</u> are entitled to aya payments which they rotate among themselves

for:a year each. On receiving their share of <u>aya</u>, a <u>thalvar</u> family is compelled to perform the work assigned to them and, in turn, receive a single sorghum <u>roti</u> (bread) everyday from each of the landed households. They also receive gifts of money or clothes for work done during weddings and other rites of passage.

The mullah (Muslim priests and officiants of the dargah, the religious burial sites) families, of whom Maabu and her family are representatives, are caretakers of the village dargah and are also considered as <u>ayagharru</u>, or receivers of <u>aya</u>. For the maintenance of the village <u>dargah</u> and for officiating at its weekly worship and the annual festival, the three mullah families receive, in annual rotation, the right to collect grains from all the harvest grounds. In addition, on Thursdays, the day of worship at the <u>dargah</u>, a representative of the <u>ayagharru</u> family receives a single <u>roti</u> (sorghum bread) and light a lamp at the Dargah with a few spoons of oil from every landed household.

Other ritual specialists who are entitled to <u>aya</u> transactions are three families of <u>Kurubas</u> (shepherds), who are recognised as hereditary custodians of the village deity, the <u>Amokshiddha</u> (4). Like the <u>hugar</u> (flower sellers) and <u>ayagolu</u> (the Lingayat priests), these shepherd families rotate among themselves the right to cultivate an assigned piece of land for one year and to receive grains at the

harvest grounds.

For households that receive <u>aya</u> shares, there is a significant increase in the level of their domestic resources and conversely a sharp decline in resources when the <u>aya</u> shares rotate to another household.

DANA: CHARITABLE GIVING

Apart from <u>aya</u> and <u>dasoha</u> transactions, grains that are given to members of the lower castes, the <u>madhas</u> (leather workers) and the <u>holeyas</u> (the harijans) are not considered as part of <u>aya</u> transactions and are instead thought to be a charitable act. Linked to the notion of accruing merit and of performing one's moral duties (<u>dharma</u>), <u>dana</u> is not enforceable through any collective action. As personal charity, it is incumbent on land owners and the well endowed to donate grains to the needy.

In the context of grain donations, <u>dana</u> is restricted to harvest periods: The threshing yard is the site of these donations. Typically, after threshing the pyramidal grain heap was divided into three shares. The top share was called <u>thale rasi</u>, or head pile, and a proportion of the grains from this was kept aside for the temples and the priest (<u>ayagolu</u>). The second share was called <u>nadu rasi</u> or middle pile, and it was from this pile that the <u>aya</u> shares to the other service caste groups, such as blacksmiths, carpenter, and barber, were given. The last and bottom part

of the heap was called <u>kadi rasi</u>, or last pile, and it was a portion of the grains from this pile that was given as <u>dana</u>, or donation, to members of the lower and untounchable castes.

However, harvesting is no longer conducted with such ritualistic rigor and the transactions of ava and dana are made without the attending rituals. As threshing and winnowing activities are conducted, a few members of the lower caste mill around the harvest ground waiting for ava shares to be distributed. After the shares of the avagharru are transacted, the grains from the lowest layer of the grain heap are donated to the waiting lower caste members. As the term "kadi rasi", or "last heap", implies, grains from this level are full of sand, chaff and straw, and it is this that is donated to the lower castes. Unlike ava shares, the agriculturist is not under any enforceable compunction to donate to the lower castes and it is not rare to see the women and children who wait for <u>dana</u> be turned away from the harvest ground. Once I had accompanied an landowning family to their harvest grounds. Though members of the ava families received a share from the grain heaps, two groups of harijan women and children were refused any donation of grains.

Transactions of grains on the threshing floor have been considered the locus classsicus of village level redistribution and hence a microscopic display of rural

social structural relations for India. Studies have also elaborated on the caste-based dynamics and the symbolic meaning and values of such prestations and transactions (Fuller 1989, Raheja 1989). My analysis of these gain transactions and commensality focuses on the matrix on which they are worked, and their functions and effectiveness in relation to provisioning. Correlating these grain and food transactions to periods of scarcity, I evaluate their effectiveness as mechanisms of provisioning.

Several questions are raised in assessing these provisioning transactions: are these transactions related to the ecological particularities of the region, especially droughts, and are they therefore expressions of a cultural attempt to address the geo-physical specificity of the region? Are they articulations of cultural and religious precepts? Do the transactions coincide with periods of agricultural unemployment and food shortage and hence do they fulfill sustenance requirements of the indigent? In general, the question of these provisioning methods as being exemplary of "moral economy" transactions is raised.

An interesting feature of the <u>aya</u> and <u>dana</u> payments is that they are made during harvests which are not periods of resource stress. The harvest season is in and of itself a period of high employment and even the poor of the village are able to sustain themselves. Therefore, <u>aya</u> and <u>dana</u> transactions do not cater to exigent needs arising out of

seasonal fluctuations or differences in resource positions.

As they are located in the regular agro-ritual cycle, these transactions are payments for services rendered to the village as a collective. Occuring at the ends of the harvest season, <u>aya</u> transactions enhance the resource positions of the selected <u>aya</u> households only. To indicate the extent to which these transactions impact on the resource level, I detail the resource position and the contribution of these <u>aya</u> payments to the households that are entitled to them in the village of Madbhavi.

In Madbhavi only a select number of families representing the service castes of the priests, the shepherds, the flower sellers, the menial servants, and the Muslim priests are entitled to <u>aya</u> payments every year. The extent to which <u>aya</u> transactions impact on the household resource and sustenance level is observable in the case of the five different households that received aya payments for the agricultural period of 1990-91. Their resource position was evaluated after the summer harvest in November 1990.

HOUSEHOLD 1: MAABU MULLAH

In early 1989, the resource position of Maabu and her family had been very low. She and her daughters subsisted primarily on the daily meal provided by the family they worked for. Money, if any, came from the occasional sale of a goat or from doing agricultural work in the peak season.

They were hard-pressed to make ends meet and recurring illness compounded to their problems. Occasionally a relative from the town send them packets of flour or vegetables. But in 1990, the <u>aya</u> shares had rotated to Maabu and her family, making a significant change in their daily consumption pattern. During the summer harvest they received a total of four sacks (5) of groundnuts, about twenty kilograms of wheat, and one sack of millet. Maabu was able to sell three sacks of the groundnuts, disperse old debts, and pay for pressing medical requirements of the family.

HOUSEHOLD 2: H. MUTTAPATHY

Another household which received <u>aya</u> payments in 1990 was that of H. Muttapathy, one of the families of the <u>ayagolu</u>, the ritual priests of the Lingayats. The Muttapathy household was entitled to one <u>khurige</u> (four acres) of land, which they cultivated themselves. In addition the male head of the household, as the Lingayat's ritual priest, received the special meals prepared during the festivals and religious ceremonies of Lingayat households. H. Muttapathy made daily rounds of the village and received a handful of sorghum flour everyday from all the landed Lingayat households. During the summer harvests the family received wheat, groundnuts, and millet from the harvest grounds. While this household is able to subsist on

its own lands and income from urban workers, the <u>aya</u> shares enhanced their resource position. Their household of six members was able to sell the sorghum that was grown on their land and used the <u>aya</u> sorghum flour for their daily consumption.

HOUSEHOLD 3: MARIAWWA THALWAR

Mariawwa Thalwar, one of the <u>thalwar</u>, or menial domestic servant castes, also received <u>aya</u> payments in the form of a single piece of sorghum bread everyday from all the landed households. The sorghum bread that they received as their <u>aya</u> shares met only their daily bread requirements. To meet their other expenses Mariawwa and her family of five continued to work as agricultural laborers during the period of <u>aya</u> payments. As part of their service duty the family was called to wash dishes and clean the grounds during festivals and feasts celebrated by the landed Lingayat families or during collective village feasts.

HOUSEHOLD 4: B. PUJARI

In Shivappa Pujari's household, 1990 meant a cessation of <u>aya</u> payments and a significant dip in their level of consumption. The assigned <u>aya</u> land that Shivappa had sublet for cultivation the previous year had rotated to another household, and his domestic stock of grains was sharply depleted. He continued to collect sheep for herding them in
the <u>yere</u>, and received small payments of grains or wool in return. The <u>aya</u> for the shepherds had rotated to Shivappa Pujari's cousin, B. Pujari, who cultivated the alloted land and grew groundnuts and millets. B. Pujari's economic position improved as a result of being a recipient of <u>aya</u> land. His wife told me that their consumption had improved since then. They were able to eat wheat bread more regularly than sorghum bread, consumption of sweets had increased, and she planned to sell the lentils that they had grown on the alloted land.

HOUSEHOLD 5: LAXMAWWA HUGAR

One of the three <u>hugar</u> (flower seller) families that is entitled to receive <u>aya</u>, Laxmawwa Hugar's household cultivated their share of four acres of <u>maddi</u> land. For the summer season they grew groundnuts, sunflower, and lentils. The sunflower crops failed completely (due to the rust disease) but they harvested the groundnuts and the lentils. Apart from the <u>aya</u> lands that they received for the year, the Hugar family also had their own lands which they cultivated in the winter and owned several cows and buffaloes. The produce from the lands and the income from the sale of milk kept the family in a comfortable position. The produce and income from the <u>aya</u> land only supplemented their savings and did not directly impact on their daily consumption patterns.

Having detailed the impact of <u>aya</u> payments for the families who received them, the question of the ability of these aya payments to be effective village-level provisioning mechanisms can be assessed. These five households that are entitled to <u>aya</u> payments are a small proportion of the total village population and do not cover a significant portion of the village indigent. With an average household size of about six persons each, these five households account for less than one percent of the total village population (approximately five thousand in 1990) that receives provisioning through <u>aya</u>. Hence <u>aya</u> transactions cannot be considered to be effective mechanisms that stave-off periodic hunger or structural inequities of resources.

The effectiveness of these transactions can also be assessed in relation to the time or period in which they are transacted. The periods when the indigent and the landless face food scarcity are when employment levels are low during the production periods of July-August and November to January, and during the summer fallow period of March-May (6). There are no <u>aya</u> and <u>dana</u> transactions of grains or food during these periods. In addition these transactions are not invoked during actual periods of resource stress, when droughts actually set in, when crops have failed or during the slack season when the landless are unemployed.

Dasoha, rituals of community sharing, which are conducted during the slack season in the agricultural cycle (shravana, July-August), directly relate to a period of food scarcity. This is the production period for the summer crops and many of the landless are unemployed and the stock of food grains is low in many households. By being single meals, held about once a week for five weeks, dasoha transactions alleviate the sense of prolonged hunger among the unemployed and the indigent. Conducted in an atmosphere of worship, commensality, and co-operation, the meals are effective in dispelling a sense of deprivation among the poor. Many of the poor, especially those from the lower castes who do not face any caste-based restriction on receiving food from other castes, look forward to the weekly dasoha of the village festivals. Whole colonies of the harijans, the madhas (leather workers), and the thalwars turned up for the <u>dasoha</u> meals served during the month of sravana celebrations that I witnessed in 1989 and 1990.

Alan Beals, who observed similar rituals of public feeding in a North Karnataka village, considered these feasts to function "...not so much to regulate the economic system as to provide a flexible set of options that can compensate for problems arising in the operation of regional ecological and social systems" (1974:56). Yet a correlation between actual periods of scarcity and the conduct of such transactions will show them to be provisioning mechanisms

that relate to the specific socio-cultural order rather than being tied to the ecological specificity of the region.

Unlike agricultural practices which contain mechanisms that address droughts as a constantly plausible phenomenon and then contour their actions to suit this, the social provisioning transactions of <u>aya</u> and <u>dasoha</u> do not directly address the fluctuations in food and sustenance levels as fluctuations arising from the climatic cycles. Rather, these transactions of grains and food relate to the enactment of culturally and morally coded idioms that link the landed, service, ritual, and indigent caste members of a village in relationships of differential resource allocation, skills, power, and status.

Aya transactions make it incumbent on the landowning families and households, especially the dominant caste households of the <u>Lingayats</u> whose forefathers were the headmen and leaders of the village, to provision members of the service castes. Such transactions then relate to a specific socio-economic ordering of the village where the service castes provide common service to the landed of the village and in turn receive grains collectively from the landed households and land from the village corporate body.

Transactions of <u>dana</u>, on the other hand, are subject to the whims of the donors, and donations are effected only at a successful harvest. Since such transactions are not incumbent on the performance of any specific service, but

are charitable acts, they are more liable to be broken than the others. The chances of being turned away are high, and <u>dana</u> transactions are few and far between; the ones I observed consisted of two fistfuls of grains to the first few poor who had come to the threshing yard to receive grains. <u>Dana</u> transactions are then largely symbolic, and as the link term, <u>dana-dharma</u> (donation-merit) connotes, giving to the indigent is seen as adhering to a moral code and receiving merit in return.

The co-existence of morally and religiously coded resource transactions, and widespread and persistent poverty and deprivation, requires that these transactions be analysed in terms of their purpose.

A MORAL ECONOMY OF PROVISIONING ?

Pre-capitalistic agrarian formations are considered to encompass provisioning transactions and mechanisms that are based on an ethos of morally induced transfers of resources from the rich to the poor. Studying agrarian transactions and unrest in the context of South East Asia, Scott (1976) observed such "moral economy" transactions to be mechanisms in which ecologically induced risks of agricultural production and a "subsistence ethic" (the emphasis on meeting the household's consumption needs over that of risking production for profit) were addressed. But, as Greenough (1983) argues for South Asia in general and for India in particular, such transactions or the working of a moral economy are not hinged on the recognition of risks emanating from the ecology or from a subsistence ethic. Rather, these transactions are premised on cultural codes, in which it is morally imperative for the landed to provision the poor.

In Bijapur, only <u>dana</u> and <u>dasoha</u> transactions can be read as being aspects of a moral economy, while <u>aya</u> transactions are remunerations for services rendered. Though not linked to risk-alleviations that arise from a particular ecology, <u>dasoha</u> and <u>dana</u> are provisioning transactions that are conducted through moral and religious idioms and entail the expected and normative transfer of sustenance resources between the landed and the indigent of the village. Hence, these transactions can be considered to be a regional variant of a moral economy of provisioning.

Yet these transactions must be reviewed in terms of their capacities to provision the indigent of the village and as cultural strategies to address the ecological specificities of the region. This is pertinent in the face of social science literature portraying non-capitalist, traditional provisioning mechanisms as effective mechanisms in which a minimum subsistence was assured to all residents at all times (7). In times of sustenance crises triggered by droughts, famines, and floods, the invocation of traditional norms of provisioning is considered to have been effective in provisioning the indigent of the societies concerned. In the case of India, the jajmani system, in which landed households as patrons provision their own service-caste households, has been upheld as an effective traditional provisioning mechanism.

Torry (1987), however, questions the ability of such a social institution to have been an effective mechanism of provisioning. Evaluating the capacity of jajmani transactions to have provisioned the poor, Torry notes that their foundations of being based on unequal grounds, and as unequal partners make it problematic for them to be mechanisms that assure a constant source of sustenance. Redistributions of agricultural production and donations of grains are not at the cost of the provisioners themselves. When faced with threats of sustenance, the rich will also withdraw such transactions and retain the food resources for themselves. The cessation of <u>dana</u> transactions follows a similiar line of thinking, and agriculturists as land owners place their own security above the moral prescriptions of provisioning others.

Torry (1986b, 1987) reiterates that the idioms and norms of sharing and provisioning associated with noncapitalistic agrarian formations are limited in their ability to effectively provision the indigent. He notes cases from several ethnographies where the withdrawal of customary payments is the norm rather than the exception.

Moreover, the ineffectiveness of the socially prescribed and morally induced provisioning transactions is enhanced by the very structures of the society in which differential allocation of resources is institutionalized. In the context of India in general, structural inequities enhance and legitimize periodic crises of sustenance. As Torry summarizes:

> "Special about the Indian case is the skewed distribution of food supplies built into the structure of reciprocities. Only a fraction of village households have the land to feed themselves during good years. They remunerate dependent service and labor-caste families with a portion of their harvests but retain much larger shares for themselves. The structure of food sharing is such that a significant proportion of households in many villages normally survives with the tiniest margin of food security. Thus subsistence risks follow caste divisions "(1986b:144).

Institutionalized resource inequities drawn primarily on caste lines account for the persistent scarcity and deprivation in the rural areas. In the case of Bijapur, the higher castes led by the dominant caste group, the Lingayats, own the largest proportion of agricultural lands in the district as a whole. This is also relevant at the level of most villages. The lower castes have by and large been retained for menial and agricultural tasks without the rights to own land. These institutionalized positions and relations will not generate provisioning transactions at the onset of food scarcities triggered by droughts or other sustenance threatening phenomena. In the context of recurring droughts in Bijapur, the capacity of the social structure to address drought-related resource scarcity is neglible. Not only are the transactions not correlated to actual periods of scarcity, (see Figure IX) but the probability of them being withdrawn during droughts is high. Interviews with the residents of Madbhavi and Nagral villages showed that not a single landless household that had worked for a particular family for several years had received any kind of gratuitous relief during periods of severe food scarcity. Loans of either money or grains were made to them, but the workers were largely left to sustain themselves.

That drought-related food scarcity does not initiate provisioning from the landed to the landless workers was made clear by a harijan woman:

> "Each one must look after one's own stomach (<u>hote</u>). No owner is going to give us or any others free grains...that's how it is...we look after our own stomachs.

Moreover, even the minimal provisioning ordained in moral and religious terms is increasingly distanced and negated by changing socio-economic relations. As scholars have observed for other societies, increasing wage labor relations, capitalist and commercial agriculture, and market interventions have posed threats to traditional rights of the poor to receive sustenance and the obligations of the rich to provision the poor (Scott 1976; Wolf 1969; Epstein 1967).

Similarly, in the context of Bijapur, these provisioning transactions are now faced with several changes which further weaken the flow of village level provisioning. Increasing population in the village makes labor easily available, and the number of indigent has also increased. <u>Dana</u>, transactions as both the donors and donees explain, are now largely defunct. Donors stress that there are too many poor people: according to one landed agriculturist for instance, "giving to a few will mean calling all the others and just how many can an agriculturist give to? We need to think of all our own expenses."

In addition, land-owners do not find it necessary to make donations as the large pool of labor does not neccessitate any ritualized or symbolic binding to retain labor. Increasing agricultural commercialization has also led to the development of wage-labor which compels breaks from traditional and customary payments, fracturing ties and bonds between provisioner and receiver. The introduction of mechanized threshing machines in the region further weakens the conduct of provisioning transactions at the threshing yard. Though there are only a few threshing machines, these are rented out to agriculturists who use them for short periods. Soon after the harvest, the stalks with grains are fed into the machine and the grains are immediately collected into sacks. This procedure prevents

the performance of harvest rituals with the pyradimical grain piles and the transactions of <u>aya</u> and <u>dana</u>. Further, the speed in which they are conducted precludes the poor and the ritual specialists from being able to go to several threshing yards to collect grains. An elderly <u>madha</u> widow who had been collecting <u>dana</u> since several years pointed out:

> "With these machines I cannot collect much grains. Threshing is done at the same time in many of the fields.... The machines do the work quickly. While I go to one field to collect grains, many others complete theirs. The sacks are filled and tied. How can I get anything?"

Hunger among the poor is persistent and endemic given the lack of resources, low wages and remunerations, seasonal unemployment, and the high cost of food. Droughts double the pressure on the sustenance capacity of the poor households, reduce food intake, and threaten the populace with starvation. As in Gurappa Madha's household, many of the landless, service caste, and small owner-cultivators face food scarcity not only during droughts but also during seasonal unemployment.

Wage labor relations negate the need to bond workers through assurances of sustenance during food crisis. The decline in <u>aya</u> payments testify to this trend. In the pre-1920 period of low population and problems of labor availability, both <u>aya</u> and <u>dana</u> transactions may have been effective mechanisms of retaining the services of the nonlanded in the villages. Increasing population and the easy availability of labor defy the necessity to use crisis insurance mechanisms to retain labor.

In addition the fissioning of families of joint households into separate households increases the number of households that are entitled to <u>aya</u> payments and negates the capacity of <u>aya</u> payments to be substantial sources of sustenance. Moreover, only a small proportion of the village population is entitled to <u>aya</u> payments, while a larger proportion of the landless and indigent from all castes fall outside the purview of any morally or religiously coded receipts of grains and sustenance. Consequently, a large proportion of the village indigent remain without the protection of any sources of provisioning.

It is a truism that provisioning transactions in precapitalistic agrarian societies are morally and culturally coded and induced. Yet, these transactions are not devoid of the "special logics" by which economic interests are enveloped in religious and moral categories and terms (Perlin 1988). Like <u>hulige</u> rites in which the instrumental and symbolic dimensions of agricultural production are embricated, here the instrumental and the substantive (the ideological, idealized, and the normative) are conjoined. The need to camouflage the exploitation inherent in such institutions of patronage (cf Breman 1974) is doubly enhanced in situations where the relationship between the dominant and dominated are direct. One harijan elder, who used to be a jeetha (bonded worker), spoke to me at length about the treatment that he used to receive from his master.

> He was like a father. We had that respect for him. He enquired after us. He scolded us if we did wrong. He made sure we ate well.

Exploitation in such situations is disguised by a "veil of enchanted relationships" (Bourdieu 1976:191) in which economic relationships then become affective and emotive, enveloped in terms of moral rights and religious compunction. To see these transactions as either a purely "moral economy" or "political economy" (Popkin 1980) would be to overlook the complexities in which these transactions are embedded. Such transactions and institutions should also be seen through lens that give recognition to the fact that dispensations of food, grains, and money that result from a moral economy seek goals larger than the ascription of benevolence, status, and goodness to the dispenser. They become instrumental in strengthening the economic position of the dispenser and enhance the bondage and the assigned low social position of the receivers.

It is not for nothing that the decline of <u>aya</u> transactions in Bijapur is a double-sided process. On one level the commercialization of agriculture, market

relations, and the increasing availability of labor weaken and negate the need for land owners to provision the poor during food crises. On the other hand the receivers who are ascribed menial and ritually impure tasks now deliberately seek to break away from these institutionalized mechanisms. Recognizing the stigma associated with the receipt of such payments and the performance of the work and service attached to them, the lower castes such as the <u>thalwars</u> (menial servants) of Madbhavi village choose to opt out of <u>ava</u> payments and their incumbent duties of providing menial service. Many of the men spoke of the freedom associated with doing wage-work in agriculture or in towns rather than being at the bid and call of the landed households.

> "We have left our <u>aya</u> payments. It came to us every twelve years and that is not enough to feed us all. ...Who is to stay in the village for just that? Wage work is not enough either but we are free to go where we want to and work only when we can".

As stated, Village level transactions of provisioning are not directly correlated to seasonal or climatic fluctuations in production. They are thus not insurance mechanisms to contain scarcities that arise from ecological conditions. Instead <u>aya</u>, <u>dasoha</u>, and <u>dana</u> are religiously coded transactions which within the context of their origins embody both economic and moral dimensions. These transactions are gradually eroding under changing conditions of increasing population, agricultural commercialization, reorganization of the village political and economic structure, and changing social relations.

Droughts are recognized as recurrent phenomena and as ecologically specific features in the domain of agricultural practices. Yet, in the domain of resource transactions the specificity of the ecology or the presence and probability of droughts are not taken into consideration. Overlooking the subsistence risks that emanate from climatic fluctuations, the cultural transactions of provisioning attempt to address differences in the social and economic allocation of resources and the articulation of relations of production, power, and exchange. Hence in the context of understanding society-nature relations it is imperative to take into consideration the ways in which economic and political structures mediate such relations. In addition to being predicated on a culturally specific format, societynature relations are also conditioned by structures and relations of power and production.

The next chapter notes how conditions of widespread poverty and recurring food scarcity have led to the intervention of external agencies in the region. The implications of such intervention for society-nature relations and for the cultural complex of the region are addressed.

CHAPTER VII

BECOMING SYSTEM

This chapter details the development and spread of a new agricultural agenda in the district--an agenda which contravenes the local agrarian values and the existing human-land constructs. It notes the ways in which modern agriculture is a hegemonic discourse through which dominant values, preferences, and schemes are introduced, promoted, and made acceptable to a subordinated community. The chapter goes on to highlight the effects of this hegemonic discourse which lead to the displacement of local agricultural knowledge, the resignification of symbols, and the defiance of the ecological specificity of the region.

Recurring droughts, general conditions of mass poverty, lack of regional industrialization, the overall reproduction of marginalization, and mass deprivation spiral together to make Bijapur one of the poorest districts in Karnataka state. In comparison to a state average of thirteen percent of irrigated land under cultivation, Bijapur has only six percent of its land under irrigation. Agricultural yield per acre is 503 kilograms compared to the state average of 939 kilograms per acre (Puttaswamiah 1981). Though tenancy is marginal in the district fifty two percent of the

agricultural workers are landless, a proportion higher than the state average of forty two percent (Nadkarni 1985). In addition, Bijapur is the most drought-prone area in the state and is recorded as having the highest frequency of drought-related famines (Meti 1966; see Appendix A).

Bijapur's agriculture, locally and traditionally premised on cultural precepts and ecologically specific, is subject to re-ordering. Scientists and administrators in general uphold high productivity (assessed by output per acre) or what agronomists call "yield-oriented" strategies to be the best indicator of successful agriculture. Agricultural policies and practices follow this ideology and attempt to change local agricultural practices. The "wet cultivation" bias of the disciplines of agro-economics and agricultural sciences has encouraged policies and programs that promote water-intensive, inorganic, and capital-based agriculture. The Agricultural Extension Service bureaucracy and scientists associate vana besaya, or dry agriculture, with negative connotations; they seen it as unsystematic, essentially low in productivity, and risk aversive (1). Extension Service Agents, who are trained by agricultural scientists and bureucracts, learn and extend these conceptualizations and definitions of local, dry agriculture to the agriculturists with whom they interact. I accompanied an Extension Service Agent on his field trip to a village assigned to him for agricultural supervision.

While he constantly praised the benefits of wet, modern cultivation, he spoke disparagingly of local agricultural practice and of those who continued to practice it. Pointing to a plot in which millet, groundnuts, and lentils were being grown, he commented:

> "See, See. Here's dry agriculture (<u>Vana besaya</u>) for you. Patches of crops...all crying while they grow. What's this dry agriculture? They (agriculturists) plant after the rains, then they sit waiting for the next five months. Where's the profit (<u>payedae</u>)?"

Comments such as these are pervasive and persuasive. They make a schizm between local, dry agricultural practices and modern agriculture: the former as unproductive and unprofitable, and the latter as a means to solve all problems. Hence, in attempting to introduce changes by which agricultural production can be enhanced and the region "drought-proofed", both goverment policies and commercial agro-industries strive to increase the absolute productive capacities of the lands by orienting local agriculturists to new ideologies of production.

AGRICULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

In Bijapur, as in several parts of the nation, the Agricultural Extension Service and agribusinesss agencies promote the modern agricultural package of hybrid seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides. The package is made attractive to agriculturists primarily on the basis of its highyielding capacity that contrasts with the lower-yielding capacity of the organic seeds.

<u>Utpati</u>, as it is used and promoted by the Agricultural Extension Service and the agribusiness, refers to the increase in agricultural production that hybrid seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides enable. Contextualized within the whole "high-yielding", "improved varieties", ideology in which modern agriculture is promoted, <u>utpati</u> seeks to dispel the "traditional", "low productive" orientation associated with local agricultural practices. <u>Utpati</u> focuses on production for market in contrast to local practices that are oriented first to domestic consumption and then production for market.

The ideology of high-yield requires no great coercion on the part of the government or the agri-business agencies. The fast-growing (three months as opposed to the local five months) hybrid seeds, and the increased production that provides a marketable surplus are in and of themselves incentives that make the modern agricultural package attractive. As the people themselves adopt the fastgrowing, bounteous hybrid seeds, and the other accoutrements that go with modern agriculture, they legitimise their acceptance of <u>utpati</u>. As one dynamic and innovative woman agriculturist put it: "when hybrid means growing two for one and four for two, why would we not take to it?"

For the land and capital-rich the new agricultural package and its practice enhance capital and grain resources. Their evaluations of the new agricultural package and its results closely parallel the opinions of the Agricultural Extension Service bureaucracy. Dundappa Hosamane, an owner-cultivator who had put his twelve acres of land under the new agricultural package, highlighted what for him were the contributions of the new agriculture:

> " What did we have before? There was land. But, we planted in the season, waited for five months-didn't put any fertilizers, and got a little grain (thuse kalu). Now, we put rasayina gobara (inorganic fertilizers), when there are insects and diseases (kheda, roga), we put pesticides (aushad-yene). Now we get more. This agriculture is better".

There is a general consensus among the ownercultivators and those who have benefitted from the sale of marketable crops that the modern agricultural package is far better than the local one in terms of increased productivity. For the landless labourers, the modern agricultural package means more employment opportunities as the cultivation of hybrids requires more weeding and other production-related work. The people's consent to modern agriculture and its results (despite the problems associated with it) underscores Gramsci's observation that hegemony is also "the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (1971:12).

The application of the precepts of <u>utpati</u> are sharply evident in the thota units (garden land). With their access to perennial water, thota lands are more compatible with the requirements of modern agricultural techniques, know-how, and practices than the other two land types. Plantains, turmeric, and vegetables are grown specifically to be marketed in urban areas; and grapes, pomegranates, and sunflower are increasingly popular cash crops. Monocultivation of these crops is based on the prescriptions of the Extension Agent and worked with large doses of petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides. There is little regard for matching the soil quality to the quality and requirements of the crops. As the agent tells the agriculturalists, different fertilizers will make the land "hada" (appropriate), but they must work in a "system" way to increase production.

As the following conversation between two agriculturalists and an Agricultural Extension Agent shows, the dissemination of modern agricultural methods implies the inscribing of a whole complex of new meanings to human-land relations and human-human relations. The conversation involves the <u>krshi-sevaka</u>, (an agricultural helper [Agent], employed by the District Agricultural Extension Service) as he watches two brothers transplanting tomato seedlings into

an irrigated plot that is part of a newly made thota land.

AA: Agricultural Agent

AG: Agriculturist

After preliminary greetings, the Agricultural Agent says

- AA: That's not the way to plant seedlings in an irrigated field. Look at the distance between the saplings, some are less and some are more. Be <u>sistam</u> (for system in English). Plant them in measured and fixed distances. Don't plant the way you do in dry agriculture. Be <u>sistam</u>, <u>sistam</u> !
- AG: (Laughs) Whatever! Tell me what <u>yene</u> ('oil' for insecticide) should I use for these tomatoes?
- AA: Yehh! I'm saying something --he's asking for something!
- Onlooker: Listen to him. Be <u>sistam</u>. Look at the amount of water he's let in. Don't you think its too much?
- AA: It may be. You must be accurate--too much water will spoil the crops. They'll rot just as crops without water dry up. Be accurate!
- AG: Look at my crop of onions, don't you think that they are doing well?
- AA: They only look good now, but growing onions and brinjals together won't provide good yields. In wet lands, don't practice mixed agriculture. Keep that for dry lands. The brinjals are undersized--mixed cultivation-Ah!"
- AG: Maybe some urea will help?
- AA: Urea? Use some NPK (English abbreviation and name of a nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous based fertilizer). NPK! remember that? As in <u>anna</u>, <u>saru</u>, <u>roti</u>. Some NPK may help.

(Here the agricultural helper uses a mnemonic devise by alliterating rhythmic Kannada words [meaning rice, curry and bread] to register the English names of the fertilizer)

AG: NPK or 19:19? (then looks at me and says) I'm just learning the "A B C" (in English) of <u>thota</u> making. Just the "A B C".

The Extension Agent dispenses agricultural know-how based on a set of information that he has been schooled in. His tone is deprecating of local agricultural practices, and he dispenses advice in a pedantic manner. As initiates into the new, modern agriculture, the agriculturists are docile and respectful of the Extension Agent's knowledge and advice (2).

The agricultural encounters between the agriculturists and the Extension Service Agents work on a shift from the primacy of "appropriateness" to that of "system". System means uniformity and adherence to strict rules, and it aims at the maximum production of crops. While "appropriateness" hinges on combining ecological specificity to cultural requirements, "system" demands an orientation to a new set of goals and methods. With increased productivity as the new goal, the uniform practices of modern agriculture are promoted by the Extension Service and learned by the agriculturists.

During a week-long Agricultural Training Camp (3) for women, I participated in and observed the training of several women who were active owner-cultivators and decision-makers of their agricultural plots. During the training period, the women enthusiastically learned the methods of new tillage, producing manure, and using pesticides an hybrid seeds. The women trainees' evaluations and comparison of the two types of agriculture resonated with the evaluations of the Agricultural Extension Service agents and those of the Training Center's staff. They spoke of their agriculture as being "without system" (<u>sistam</u> <u>ella</u>), the new agriculture as producing more, and of the better life that modern agriculture promised. Evaluations such as these embody the shifts that are occuring in the precepts of agriculture.

Just as the wider, socially emcompassing notion of hulige (bestowed abundance) is narrowed to its purely instrumental and income-oriented aspect of <u>utpati</u> (increase in production), the "seeing" dimension of agricultural appropriateness is displaced by a set of prescriptions for "being" systematic. The "seeing" of appropriateness required close observation and knowledge of the land, seasons and crops. More emphatically, as "seeing", agricultural knowledge enabled each agriculturist to be his or her own decision maker and guide. In contrast to this, the "being" dimension of the modern agriculture promotes an imitative and externally induced set of actions and decisions on the agriculturist. For new initiates into the modern methods and ideologies, "being system" implies

relying on the knowledge and advice of the Agricultural Agent.

BECOMING SYSTEM

The re-ordering and re-arranging of local agrarian practices are also reflected in the changes that people attempt to make in their personal lives. The analogy between the learning of modern agriculture with that of learning "A B C", indicates how formative and essential the new agrarianism has become. Modern agriculture is associated with the idea of systematicity and the importance attached to English. Like learning English, modern agriculture is associated with advancement and prosperity. As new sets of precepts, <u>utpati</u> and <u>sistam</u> are not confined to the domain of agriculture. "Sistam" is also extended to compare a range of activities and life styles.

Villagers refer to the need to be "sistam" and show appreciation for things that are "sistam". Homes of educated persons are "sistam", urban people are more "sistam" than villagers, and grooms from urban and educated homes will bring "sistam" to their rural lives. These directed shifts in agriculture have initiated changes in the social and cultural fabric which are as significant as they are pervasive.

That the ideas of <u>sistam</u> and <u>utpati</u> and their implications were more integral than I had first noted was

sharply brought home to me during a conversation with a mother. Kabadige Shankarawwa of Madbhavi village discussed the grooms that she and her family were considering for her oldest daughter. She was considering an offer from a family whose son was studying to be an engineer but was demanding a dowry of fifty thousand rupees, and asked me what I thought of the offer. Even before I could think of the practicality of marrying her illiterate but extremely nice daughter to an educated, but unknown urbanite, Shankarawwa went on to point out the importance of this alliance.

> "They are town people (<u>pete mandi</u>). They know how to live. It's with system (<u>sistam</u>). It's better than our lives. The one without any system."

Self definitions and descriptions of themselves and their culture as "without system" are pervasive in the villages. The portrayal of their lives as without system underscores the impact that the new agricultural package and its urban orientation have introduced. Reference to being "sistam" clearly connotes its origin as a set of externallyinduced and urban-oriented precepts. Relegating the local agrarian life, the new ideology of "sistam" privileges the new agricultural package which then generates changes in multiple ways in the society.

"Sistam" and ideas of "being sistam" take hold both in the context of interactions between agriculturists and external agents such as the Agricultural Agent, visiting Agricultural Officers, traders, and commercial agribusiness salesmen, and from agriculturists to other village residents. The term "sistam", or system is used by urban residents of Bijapur in much the same way as "system" is used in Western contexts--to refer to institutional structures and rules that are over and above that of individual actions. Yet the way in which the term has been used in the context of introducing new agricultural patterns, as the antithesis of all that is rural-traditonaloutdated, forms the basis of its impact and appropriation by rural residents. As a referential term "sistam" has made inroads into the culture of Bijapur. It forms the basis of a model which agriculturists see as worthy of following. It is from the importance placed on "sistam" as a model and as a referential term that a culture of being "sistam" has set in.

That the modern agricultural agenda is a hegemonic force is observable in the extent to which it has displaced old order values and precepts and imposed its own. In altering the foundational precepts of rural Bijapur, modern agriculture as hegemonic force bears out Gramsci's observation that hegemony is not only an economic force but can also impact on cultural, religious, philosophical, and moral domains (Bocock 1986). As Bocock paraphrases Gramsci,

> "Hegemony, in its most complete form is defined as occuring when the intellectual, moral, and philosophical leadership provided by the class or alliances of classes and class factions which is

ruling, <u>successfully achieves its objective of</u> providing the fundamental outlook for the whole <u>society</u>" (Bocock 1986: 63, Italics mine).

SHIFTS IN THE LANDSCAPE AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The shifts in the precepts of agriculture have initiated shifts in the landscape: pockets of verdant <u>thota</u> lands dot the otherwise semi-barren land and the new insular "homesteads" on the garden lands stand in stark contrast to the traditional nucleated villages. There is an increasing schism between the <u>thota</u> lands as the "wet and modern" cultivating units, and the "dry and traditional" units of the <u>maddi</u> and the <u>yere</u>.

Thota lands, which utilize modern production techniques, wage labor relations, and have an accumulation of surplus from cash crops and perennial production, exhibit features of capitalist units found generally in the Indian agricultural economy (Rudra 1978). Agricultural work is conducted with more non-domestic labor, work relations are less patrimonial, and payments are often made in cash. Work and agrarian relations on Basavaraj Singi's <u>thota</u> unit follows all these lines. Daily wage-workers are paid in cash and they work for fixed time periods. Unlike this, Keshappa Kumbar requests his neighbours or some young men from his caste group to help him out during harvest. They are paid in cash and allowed to take home some straw for their cattle. Work continues until the immediate task is complete or till dusk.

Contrasts between the different land-types and their variation in cultivation is extended to the spheres of agrarian relations and the cultural evaluation of them. The increasing importance given to <u>thota</u> (garden lands) as prized units of cultivation is fast displacing the cultural value of <u>Yere</u> (Black soil) lands. Traditional pride of being <u>yere</u> owners is giving way to the desire to be <u>thotaghara</u> (garden-owner). Like Gangawwa Badigyar, who presses her son to learn the ropes of garden cultivation, there are others who speak of the possibility of transforming their <u>maddi</u> lands into <u>thota</u> lands.

In place of the cyclical production pattern of local agriculture, where seasonal cultivation of different lands is hinged on an agro-climatic cycle, agricultural production in the modern <u>thota</u> units is based on a linear production pattern. Continous water supply, short-term maturing crops, and horticulture enable the <u>thota</u> lands to be cultivated throughout the year. Different crops are cultivated and marketed in succession without a period of fallow. Agricultural Extension Agents promote hybrid seeds for sunflower, grapes, pomegranates, sorghum, and wheat with little regard for their "appropriateness" to the soil or climatic conditions. As marketable crops that fetch far higher rates than the regular food crops, the agriculturists take to the cultivation of these crops without regarding to

either the ecological degradation that they portend or the risks related to fluctuations in market prices.

In 1989, several of the villages near Bijapur added the cultivation of eggplant (brinjal) to their summer crops. The prices had been good the previous years and the Agricultural Agency was promoting the growing of marketable vegetables. By August the town market was flooded with egg-plants and the prices fell drastically. One farmer told me that the prices did not even make up for the transportation costs, and so he sold the egg plants for grains in the village itself. In the towns, the prices had collapsed to fifty paise per kilogram and when anyone asked to buy less than a kilogram, they were asked to take it for charity (<u>dharma</u>).

Shifts to the modern agricultural methods also pose problems in the conduct of rituals. Rituals which are typically based on the lunar cycle and contextualized within the agro-climatic cycle are faced with a problem of synchronization. Traditional rituals such as the agricultural fertility rites of <u>sege hunime</u> and <u>yell amavase</u> were tied to the lunar cycle and to specific agricultural phases. These fertility rites were meant to be conducted on fields with mature crops, but hybrid seeds mature faster than local varieties and do not coincide with the lunar cycle on which the festivals are celebrated. Fertility rituals for plots in which hybrids were grown is sometimes to a field which is being harvested or to one that has

already been harvested. Conducting the ritual to an empty field defies the meaning of the ritual itself.

The changes in the agricultural patterns have initiated shifts in the social structure. As in other parts of the state and in the country generally, the increasing separation of indigenous dry agriculture from modern wet agriculture distinguishes the adherents of the modern methods who successfully produce for the market from those who practice traditional methods. Adherents of modern methods are identified and labelled as "progressive farmers", making distinctions between agriculturists who are otherwise differentiated on the basis of caste and wealth. Such progressive farmers are those who produce commercial cash crops and are often from the core of the traditional village elite. The Lingayats in the region are well represented in this category of "progressive farmers". Technology, capital, and water availability enable them to be not only owners and owner-cultivators of large and prime units of land but to also rent-in land from others.

As new owner-tenants, the Lingayats compete with the smaller, less resource-endowed tenants for land to rent-in. For example, Basavaraj Sindgi of Madbhavi village is able to compete successfully against smaller tenants and rents-in land from households that are unable to cultivate on their own. Unlike typical tenants whose bargaining powers against landlords were virtually little or non-existent, the

bargaining powers of the new owner-tenants are high. They retain about one-third to half of the shares that they produce. Land owners from the potter, carpenter, and shepherd castes who own smaller plots (between two acres to six acres) of land are unable to compete with the capital and technology (especially the ownership of tractors, and threshing machines) of the larger landowners and are increasingly unable to rent-in additional land.

The landless laborers continue to be drawn from the lower caste groups such as the leather workers, stonecutters, and the harijans. But the production conditions and new relations of production have largely done away with the intra-caste and kin reliance. And wage-labor has largely replaced <u>muye</u> (exchange-labor) relations. As many agriculturists complain, they can no longer rely on kin assistance and caste-based interdependence to perform their agricultural tasks.

DISPLACEMENT OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

The dissemination of modern agriculture has implications for the continuity and identity of local agricultural knowledge and know-how. This trend of rendering local agricultural knowledge and practices as obsolete is observable in Bijapur. Agricultural knowledge and know-how are increasingly seen as having to come from outside the domains of the community. Just as

hybridization necessitates the purchase of new seeds from commercial agencies, so also must agricultural knowledge and expertise come from "trained agents". Local agriculture had been able to contain the absolute loss of crops from droughts by the practices of mixed cropping, rotation cultivation, and the focus on growing dry cereal and pulses. But when a drought sets in now, the District Agricultural Office disseminates information that provides advice to salvage crops.

As modern agriculture gains ground, it displaces the local knowledge and autonomy of the agriculturalists and replaces local knowledge and practices with the uniform and market-oriented prescriptions of the bureaucracy. In the context of Maharashtra, Appadurai (1989, 1990), observes that the adoption and practice of modern agriculture leads to increasing differenciation in the knowledge base of agriculturists, creating a schizm between subsistence and commercial agriculturists. He goes on to note the other implications and results of such agricultural encounters wherby:

> "The emergence of an agronomic episteme, divorced from a wider agrarian discourse, represents just such a separation of knowledge from context, in the process of which the corresponding techne is rendered obsolete. In this process, the very epistemological fabric of the community is also rendered absolescent and survives only in the diminished form (1990:188)".

Agriculturists are increasingly reluctant to use their local, time-tested knowledge for conducting various

agricultural activities, and there is a spreading loss of confidence in the local agricultural methods. The advice and directions of the Agricultural Assistant are eagerly awaited and agricultural tasks postponed when the Assistant is unavailable.

The "secularization of agriculture" (Busch, Lacy, and Burkhardt 1987) associated with agricultural modernization is constituted in an ambiguous and partial manner in Bijapur district. The older reverence and sanctity with which organic grains, (especially food crops), were treated, is not accorded to the crops and grains grown with hybrid seeds. An educated agriculturist, who produces considerable amounts of sunflower and rape-seed for the market, explained to me why the hybrid, market crops were not treated with reverence.

> "These (oil-seeds) are for the market. I make them grow with fertilizers, pesticides and bought seeds. Apart from my labour, it is all bought. When prices are good, I make money. My family and I live in content. But can I rely on these? Who knows the market? But the grains of sorghum, and wheat, these are the ones that fill my stomach always. Market or no market, if I produce grains for myself, I can live. To produce food grains, my hard work counts, I need the help of the earth (<u>bhumisahaya</u>). We treat these organic (<u>javari</u>) grains with respect (<u>mana</u>). It comes from god, the earth and we subsist on them".

Despite the adoption of the new agricultural methods and the attempts to align their lives to the new ideologies that modern agriculture promotes, there is an awareness of the drawbacks of modern agriculture. More than noting the unreliability of the market, the commentary underscores the widespread practice that denies the new hybrid seeds any sacred value. Unlike organic seeds, especially the seeds of food crops that were used in worship and encoded with symbolic value, the hybrid seeds are not incorporated into the ritual corpus. Bhattacharya (1976) notes a similiar trend in Bengal where agriculturists did not use hybrid grains for rituals, relegating them as <u>vidisi dhan</u> (foreign grain). What is emphatic here is the loss of the symbolic value of grains.

Yet, instead of a complete cessation of agricultural propitiation there has been a shift in the object of propitiation. In place of the bi-annual fertility rites directed at the earth, owners of garden-lands propitiate their wells and pump-sets. Not only are samples of the first produce from the garden-lands offered to the well, but every <u>amavase</u> (new moon) day sees the owner offering homecooked specialities and conducting <u>puja</u> (worship) to the pump sets at the garden-lands. This incorporation of pumps and wells into the ritual corpus is not unusual in a culture that accords ritual status to all implements and objects of production. Ploughs, seed-drills, axes, potters wheels, the spinning wheel, and many other sources of production are worshipped during festivals such as <u>divali</u> (4). But, what is of marked significance in the worship of pumps and wells

is the shift from the worship of soil or the earth to machines. This displacement in the object of worship from that of the earth to a machine reflects a new order of production priorities and concerns. It is no longer the earth that is held to be the source of sustenance, which must be propitiated and worshipped; instead the pumps or wells are the objects of propitiation, thereby confirming their status as new sources of production.

THE METAPHOR OF HYBRIDS

The integral shifts in social structure and social relations, in the changing material practices and cultural orientations, have led to the production of a critical discourse among the people. The discourse comments on the changing life conditions and meanings, and the implications of these changes. For most residents, irrespective of their caste, gender and economic position, the new agriculture has meant changes. Even those landed owner-cultivators who positively appraise the modern agricultural package for its increased productivity comment on the loss of quality of grains and also on the shifts in social relations and cultural values. The owner-cultivator of a large and prosperous garden unit (thota) elaborated on what for him were the losses that result from the shift to modern agriculture:
"With this new agriculture we fill sacks. But, the strength (<u>thakat</u>) of the grains has gone. Look at the older generation, they are tall and fine. Look at the new generation from the same household, see, see how small and weak they are. You think they can do the same kind of work as the older generation. No, they are <u>hybrid</u>. They need more care.

Landless laborers, on the other hand, bemoan the patriarchal assurance that the old agricultural system provided and the payment of grains that they had received. An ethos of substantialism, where the links between ecological objects and processes and human activities, and context and actions are strongest, continues to provide a basis for the cultural construction and understanding of such shifts and realignments. Folk categorization that delineates objects and places on the basis of substances and then correlates these to their use and to actors, assesses changes in the same terms. Just as the Vellalas of Kallapur correlated the Kunam (essence) of the soil to that of the puthi (character) of persons (Daniel 1987), in Bijapur the essence of the soil, and in the case of modern agriculture, that of hybrid seeds, is considered to be transferred to that of persons. To the people hybridization means not only the transformation of agrarian practices and substances, but also the transformation of people who produce and consume them. Just as associations were made between strength and dry or organic grains, and between weakness and wet grains, the evaluation of hybrid seeds is extended to both the

physical and moral effects of consuming them. Noting that hybrid seeds are delicate, susceptible to disease, and need expensive inputs, village residents, especially those of the older generation refer, to the current period as that of hybred kala (hybrid period) and to themselves as <u>hybred</u> <u>mandi</u> (hybrid people). Unlike the sturdy <u>jawari</u> (organic) seeds, they are like the hybrid seeds that they now sow--"<u>sukshme</u> (delicate), diseased and needing constant attention", as one woman put it (5).

Local commentary increasingly contrasts the <u>sampurna</u> (wholeness) of the organic produce with that of the hybrid produce. An elderly woman described the changes:

> "What...they used to grow some wheat, red sorghum,...plant a few tubers, chilli plants,...cotton. Now, there's only <u>hibrid</u> (hybrid)...where's the <u>javari</u> (organic/local)? Hybrid seeds, hybrid crops...even the children are hybrid. Hybrid seeds are sown on the earth...the children become hybrid".

Hybrid seeds and the essences attributed and associated with them epitomize the entire gamut of agricultural changes (6). For owner-cultivators, tenants, and landless laborers alike the new agricultural complex forms the matrix through which social and cultural changes are understood. A set of new popular songs and literature bemoan the changes linked to hybridization. As a popular song goes (7):

Hybrid jolla bantuHybrid sorghum is here,roga ragitha hechayethuDisease and destructionniti dharma aledu hoyethuhave increasedpunyada kelasa nintu hoyethuDuties and tradition are...hybrid jolla bantuerased

Charitable works have ended ... hybrid sorghum is here.

In using hybrid seeds as a metaphorical comment on themselves, Bijapur's agriculturalists denote the significant shift that has occured in their lives. The development and spread of the new agricultural agenda can be seen as a hegemonic discourse in which dominant cultural values, preferences, and schemes are introduced, promoted and made acceptable to a subordinate community. As modern agriculture and its methods take priority, they form the basis of a new cultural orientation. The new set of values and ideologies of <u>utpati</u> and <u>system</u> are displacing the old agrarian precepts of hada and hulige. As new metaphors that indicate new realities (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), they also enhance the creation and working of new realities, and the metaphor of contemporary people and life as hybrid summarizes the changes in reality. The imagery reflects the change from one that people consider to have prioritized javari (organic and quality), swantha (autonomy), and thakat (strength), to one that is oriented towards quantity, dependency, and weakness.

The commentary envelopes more than an indicator of the continuity of the ethos of substantialism. It provides a reflexive mode in which people construct and comment on the changes in their lives. Hybrid seeds are then invoked metaphors which as Fernandez noted in context of contested

ideologies "...come to be invested with the tensions of significant differences, with the on going negotiation of human relatedness in that milieu. They (become) ... an expression of that context" (1990: 124).

The articulation of new economic forces with the local cultural forms has led to the generation of a new cultural commentary. Shifts in the re-ordering of the region, and the new ideologies disseminated by modern agricultural practices have implications for the cultural identity of the society and the region. The new cultural constructions mirror the changing life conditions and values, and constitute the people's actions and relations within it. In the case of local agriculture, the ecological specificity of the area is contextualized and prioritized through cultural prescriptions.

In contrast, modern agriculture that is premised on exogenous principles and which dispenses a culture of its own, works to establish a complex whose methods disregard the ecological specificity of the region and which attempts to constitute new meanings and transactions into the cultural complex of the region. In attempting to being "system", the essential being of the land, the integral human-land continuum, is weakened. These changed values, ideas, and meanings are located and understood within a preexisting framework of significance. The ethos of substantialism links the new contexts to new actions and

provides the basis for a commentary on the state of the people and the land.

Though local culture is able to critically comment on the new ideologies introduced into its fabric, it is not a form of resistance to the hegemony of modern agriculture. There is little or no organized or conscious attempt to avoid modern agriculture. Compounded by the way in which it is promoted by the agricultural extension service and the agribusiness agencies, modern agriculture, and the life style that it portends when it is successful, are sufficient reasons for most people to adapt it. Both the entrenchment of the idioms and precepts of modern agriculture and its popularity among the people make it a agency of change rather than a force to be reckoned with. Despite the evocation of counter-pastoral voices against it, modern agriculture is upheld as a model to be emulated. The extent to which modern agriculture is a hegemonic force is to be observed in the manner in which it has reconstructed and reconstituted a culture--giving the dominant worldview scope for expansion. It is the extent of this dominance of modern agriculture and its impact on the other facets of the society, such as the cultural conceptualizations of drought and human-land relations, that will be addressed in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER VIII

A HYBRID DROUGHT TO COME

This chapter, like the previous one, elaborates on the forms by which administrative definitions of the region and policies constitute a hegemonic force and by which local human-land relations are reconstituted. The chapter details the addressing of droughts by the administrative regime and the effects of such administrative intervention on the people's conceptualizations of droughts and their ability to cope with it. Prior to noting such trends and effects I describe the conditions of the district during the onset of a drought in 1990.

Oracular "rain-crop" prophesies for the 1990-91 agricultural season did not augur favourable conditions. During the <u>Muharram</u> or <u>Alaab</u> festival(1) in August at the village of Madbhavi, the oracle prophesied "sweets for some, sorghum balls for others". As the possibility of receiving the important returning South-west monsoon dimmed, the villagers discussed this prophesy. Why would it rain only for some, why would others just subsist? Yes, there may not be a complete drought, most people would be able to harvest some crops. Some discussed the weather; it was humid and there was moisture still in the soils and therefore the crop production would still be successful for some. Perhaps it

would rain, but what use were delayed rains? At the Khaja Ameen Dargah in Bijapur town, the oracle prophesied a similiar scenario; only the <u>uthri</u> and the <u>hasta</u> rains would be succesful. In the Lingayat Mutt at Babladi, the annual <u>kala-jnana</u> (2) reading prophesied five parts of rain but seven parts of crops. The Basaveshwara calendar, noted for its prophecies of rain-crops, prices, and world conditions, spoke of turmoil in the country, impending wars among nations, and a success ratio of two in ten and eight in ten for the forthcoming summer and winter crops(3).

A DROUGHT SETS IN

In the middle of August, agriculturists who had crops of groundnut, wheat, and safflower in the <u>maddi</u> lands waited impatiently for the cover rains. As crops wilted, many people discussed the problems that a failure of crops spelled for them. "What will we eat?" was a repeated question among the small and marginal owner-cultivators, tenants, and wage-workers. Those with previous loans pondered not only sustaining themselves and their families but also losing their land and assets. Some agriculturists pondered the folly of having planted oil seeds in their fields. A popular story of a rich man, who, when approached by his fellow villagers for fodder during a drought had served them the stalks of sorghum instead of food made its rounds. The moral of the story: just as people suffer when they do not get their appropriate food, cattle too suffer when greedy agriculturists plant not staple crops but oil seeds.

An epidemic struck cattle in the district and as news of the disease and the death toll of cattle from neighbouring villages spread, the village of Madbhavi prepared for a collective vara (fast) to ward-off the peda (epidemic). The Lingayat and Pujari elders decided on the need for the whole village to undertake a ritual fast. Beating his drum and standing in the center of each lane, the village crier announced that for the next five weeks no household should make sorghum bread (roti) or grind flour on Tuesdays and Fridays. Only steamed cereal should be eaten on these days. Irrespective of religous and caste differences, the villagers followed this prescription accordingly for the next five weeks. On every Tuesday and Friday, the young boys of the village poured a pot of water on themselves and then poured another pot of water on all the deities of the village. On the final and concluding day of the fast, each household that could afford it made a special dish of either rice or wheat and offered it to the village deities.

By the end of September the important "agriculturists rains" (vokkaligara male) had failed to arrive in most parts of the district and in the few places where they did appear they had been sporadic and out of sequence (adda male).

Those who had sown their <u>yere</u> lands saw some sprouting of sorghum but the oil seeds of sunflower and safflower stubbornly stayed inside the ground. Talk among agriculturists focused on the possible causes for the drought. While some considered the recurring and impending droughts to be due to their sins (<u>paapa</u>) and the lack of moral propriety (<u>dharmada nade</u>) among the people, others spoke of the changing weather conditions and the lack of tree cover as being possible reasons for droughts.

The District Agricultural Office discussed the drought situation at its regular fortnightly meeting. As the Extension Service Agents reported the conditions of the various villages, the information was gathered by the officers to assess the drought condition of the district in formulaic terms. Statistical data related to the percentage area sown, conditions of seed sprouting, and water availability in the district were collected to assess and report the degree of resource stress in the region. The Agricultural Office was to forward this information to the Distict Collector, who in turn was to forward it to the state capital. Declaring the region as "drought-hit" would be contingent on meeting the statistical formula and the political will.

But the official reports and the formulaic assessment of the region's conditions did not take note of the actual social effects, the sub-regional variations, and the

differential effect of even the initial onset of a drought. Instead, the Agricultural Department attempted a salvage approach to the impending loss of crops and food shortage in the district. They distributed flyers (4) to the agriculturists in the district detailing how crops could be saved, suggesting changes in cropping pattern, and recommending drought-resistant crops.

As the fields stood with crops in semi-dead conditions, labor employment gradually decreased and then completely stopped in some agricultural units. Some agriculturists chose to dispense hired labor, and used family labor to weed, spray and fertilize the crops. As unemployment increased in the villages, the stress was evident in the settlements and towns. Carts filled with fodder made their way slowly to market centers and the villages emptied their most impoverished and unemployed families. In the towns, buses and trains going towards Maharashtra and the southern wet belts were packed with people migrating in search of jobs.

In Madbhavi village Gurappa Madha's sons joined a crew of workmen who were freshly recruited for stonecutting and prepared to leave the village. The recruiter paid for their travel expenses and as they, along with several others from their colony prepared to leave, the whole colony gathered together to see them go on "desha". The term "desha means "country" but is often used as "going on <u>desha</u>" It refers

to out-migration from the villages when people go in search of employment. The colonies of the lower castes that housed the agricultural wage laborers were largely empty; a few full families and elderly grandparents and young grandchildren stayed behind. Mabbu Mullah's oldest son and daughter-in-law also joined the steady stream of outmigrants as did the other service caste men and the Holeya workers.

As land owners withdrew labor from the fields, the resource crunch was felt in the households of the wage laborers. Meals consisted largely of sorghum bread eaten with ground onions and chillies and in some families the adults consumed only one meal a day. A flurry of borrowing, lending, and exchanging transactions took place. Though Doddmane Patel did not seem too perturbed by the onsetting drought, he did speculate that his agricultural income would be reduced for the coming year. In the <u>thota</u> lands of Basavaraj Sindgi, the water level in the well was sharply reduced and he made several trips to the town to request a geologist to check the possibility of locating another well on his land.

As I visited several villages, I heard a constant refrain from agriculturists. What is the Government doing? Are people not suffering? So what if there are some standing crops in the fields, are there jobs and therefore food for the working people? Why didn't I tell the

Government? The government will not listen to me, then what use is there in doing this work, this <u>mayethe</u> (understanding) of their lives and the region? Even the usually acquiesing and polite agriculturists seemed beligerent in their demand for government relief. They needed jobs and demanded to know when the government would give them relief work. The more well endowed ones wanted fodder for their cattle. They could eat but what about their speechless and helpless associates (<u>mukha bandhu</u>), the cattle?

In Honutgi village unemployed men sat on the parapet of the bus stop and spoke about their problems:

- Ag 1: There's no rain. No crops. Fodder is a problem.
- Ag 2: There was a little well water. Even that is drying.
 - I : Have people started migrating?
- Ag 2: The coolie (wage workers) people have. That too, those without cattle. Those with cattle, how can they leave them and go? Others are going to Maharashtra. To earn there.
- Ag 3: Every year, by this time my crops would be kneehigh. This year there's nothing. Even if I clear the dry stalks, I'll get only four sacks of hay. So, that's why I'm thinking of migrating.
- Ag 1: We were just discussing this. I was telling this elderly man here that I must go somewhere, work somewhere. The women and children will have to stay here.
- Ag 3: There's no work here. Nothing at all.
- Ag 2: Who's to employ us? There's no rain and the crops are drying.

As signs and hopes of the Government establishing relief centers diminished, people resorted to the last and most desperate measure to subsist; they started migrating in large numbers. A poem (5) about the drought made its circuit, emphasizing this time not how they could live or appeals to divine intervention, but focussing on migration and the despondency of the people.

Viketa Raitharu Vokata Hontare, Vol antha thamma hole Manne Horanadige thamma Hote horevake without hopes the cultivators are leaving together, emptying their homes and their lands, to fill their stomachs in other lands

ADMINISTRATIVE HEGEMONY

As Bijapur continues to be subject to recurring droughts and food scarcity conditions it has become the focus of government-directed interventionist programs. Administrative discourse labels the district "backward" and "drought-prone", and considers it a perennial scarcity area which relies on emergency food relief during periods of droughts. Several government-directed policies and programs are aimed at changing the "backward" conditions of the district, thereby re-ordering the ecology and hence the socio-cultural order of the region.

The evaluation of the region in terms of relative economic criteria makes the ecology and agriculture of the district subject to prescriptions of change. Positivistic approaches to droughts and the bureaucratic apparatus

identify and locate the semi-arid ecology as being the cause for the district's general conditions of poverty and drought proclivity. By naturalizing and objectifying droughts, the administrative apparatus deflects attention away from the the social conditions that produce droughts and droughtrelated stress. The distribution of resources, production relations, forms of production, and the general conditions of poverty and marginalization that produce and exacerbate drought-related stress are overlooked. The administrative definition of drought for India as a whole is defiency of rainfall by twenty five percent or more from a region's average annual rainfall (Singh 1978). As critics have often pointed out (Tiwari 1979; Singh 1978)-a point with which agriculturists in Bijapur also concur-is that it is not the quantity alone of rainfall that affects agricultural production. For instance, the timing of the rain in relation to the agro-climatic cycle of the region is important. Excessively heavy rains just prior to sowing and then a complete lack of rains during the production phase devastate the crops as much as absolute lack of rains.

The naturalistic premise which is the foundation of administrative constructions of droughts then deviates from recognizing the social conditions of production and the larger regional social and economic problems that droughts are embedded in. Baudrillard's observation that, "under the objective stamp of science, technology, and production,

nature becomes the great signified, the great referrent. It is ideally charged with 'reality', it becomes the reality" (1975:54), is particularly relevant here. As an identified causative object of problems, the ecology becomes the object which must be changed. Following this are a range of programs that seek to "drought-proof" the region and hence alleviate the conditions of poverty and recurring starvation and famine in the region.

Like the local delineation of the landscape that constituted and associated the region with particular cultural markers, the administrative re-ordering of Bijapur's landscape carries with it a corpus of values and ideologies which re-define and re-constitute the physical and cultural dimensions of the society. This is exemplified in the program to "drought-proof" the region.

Such programs to "drought-proof" the region seek to re-order the ecology and thereby address problems of chronic poverty and food scarcity in the area. The program's aim of reconstructing the ecology is conducted by works such as the restoration of ecological balance, developing irrigation, soil and moisture conservation, restructuring cropping patterns and pasture development, changing agronomic practices, livestock development, and provisioning of drinking water (Singh 1978). The re-alignment of space, the new orientations based on the hegemony of technology, and human intervention is representative of what Bauman recognizes as the technological defiance of naturalness where "nothing is more artificial than naturalness, nothing less natural than abiding by laws of nature" (1990:165). Government programs and policies focus on reordering what they consider to be a naturally defined and constituted phenomenon. The problems of the region, of recurring food scarcity and widespread poverty and deprivation, are associated with natural factors.

While programs, such as "drought-proofing" the region have been instituted as attempts to provide permanent solutions to recurring droughts, at the onset of droughts it is the agricultural production of the region that gets addressed first. At the onset of a drought, the District Agricultural Office initiates measures and provides advice to first salvage the agricultural production of the district. A flyer distributed in September 1990 summarises the administrative focus on maintaining agricultural production as successful drought alleviation (6):

> .Sowing for the winter season should be completed by the first week of October. Otherwise sow sorghum (M-35-1) by October 15th as this sorghum has greater drought-resisting capacities.

- .From now on decrease the area under sorghum cultivation and sow horgegram and safflower in 4:2 or 2:1 proportion. This way there will be greater economic benefits.
- .Sorghum, sunflower, safflower, wheat, and horsegram seeds should first be soaked in water for atleast eight to ten hours, dried in the shade and then sown.

.Sunflower should not be sown after October 7th.

Where they are sown their yields have decreased due to the rust disease.

Wheat and sorghum seeds can be soaked for about eight to ten hours in either a chloride, calcium chloride or thin calcium mix, dried in the shade and then sown. This way the seeds will sprout faster and the roots will go deeper and will not die due to the moist conditions.

.There must be sufficient gap between rows as the seeds are sown.

a.	sorghum	2 to 2.5	feet
b.	sunflower	2 to 2.5	feet
c.	safflower	2 to 3	feet
d.	horsegram	1.5 to 2.5	feet

. If there are no rains after sowing and the saplings are about thirty days old, then remove about 30 saplings from every row.

Approaches such as this indicate not only the top-down focus that is dominant in rural development schemes but also the relegation of local knowledge and practices. The advice and methods given by the Agricultural Office presumes that agriculturists lack the knowledge and that there are no local methods to salvage crops at the onset of a drought. By stipulating a uniform crop salvage method the administration also overlooks the multiple variations in agricultural units. Moreover, in the eyes of the administration droughts are primarily a problem of productivity.

DROUGHTS AS A PROBLEM OF PRODUCTIVITY

Administrative efforts to contain food scarcity portended by an onsetting drought consist mainly of attempts to salvage the agricultural production of the region. The primacy of agricultural production indicates the administration's priority and its major orientation towards droughts. Droughts are perceived and addressed in the narrow and immediate triology of droughts-scarcity-famine (Ahmed 1978), all of which can be resolved by first salvaging crop production and then providing direct sustenance or relief. What is overlooked is that drought is a synergistic process where skewed distribution of resources (land and water), agricultural practices, cropping patterns linked to the introduction of cash crops, ecological degradation, and marginalization make a region more susceptible to conditions of food scarcity, dependency, migration and dislocation. Much like efforts to "droughtproof" the region, the onset of a drought is met with measures that seek to determine the severity of the drought in a purely administrative manner.

DECLARING DROUGHTS

At the onset of a drought and under conditions of food scarcity, the administration attempts to provision the people. Yet the terms under which the provisioning is made is dependent on the "declaration of drought" which then leads to the establishment of drought-relief centers. Based on a linkage of information from village-district-state headquarters on drought-related stress, the "declaration of droughts" is hinged on satisfying statistical indicators

that purport to measure distress. In Karnataka the administrative rules to declaring droughts are based on the following organization. To "declare" a region as "droughtafflicted" the District Agricultural Office is assigned the task of collecting statistics pertaining to:

- a. Quantity of rainfall
- b. The percentage area sown
- c. Sprouting conditions of the seeds
- d. Fodder availability
- e. Drinking Water availability

Distress in the distict is then assessed on the basis of these statistics. Rainfall is considered to be deficit when it is less than 150 millimeters during the winter (<u>rabi</u>) season and if the rainfall varies twenty percent or more from its annual average during each crop growth period.

The gathering of data and frequent visits of village leaders and representatives to the administrative headquarters form the basis for new rituals. Though administrative procedures make it incumbent on the District Agricultural Office to collect data to report on the conditions of the village, drought-related distress is not brought to the notice of the officials immediately. Much like the appeasing of rain deities, the administrative procedures and processes require agriculturists to plead with government bureaucrats, representatives, and workers for drought relief. Concerned leaders of the village panchayat and leading agriculturists report the conditions of the village to the District Agricultural Agent or to the Administrative Officer himself. The Agricultural Office then relays this information to the District Collector, who then relays it to the State headquarters and awaits directions from them. The final decision to "declare" the district as "drought-hit" is based on political will rather than on the actual conditions of the district.

The region itself is not assessed in terms of percentage people unemployed, the migration trends, or sale of assets. The focus is on the trilogy of drought-scarcityfamine (Ahmed 1978) in which administrative intervention is initiated at the development of extreme stress. Neglected are the larger and more pervasive issues of the regional political economy where the lack of access to land and water exacerbate drought-related stress.

Since the 1960's administrative measures such as that of the Emergency Relief Program and Food for Work schemes have eliminated famines in India (Torry 1986a). Yet the relief program suffers due to bureaucratic amd political delays in recognizing the various forms of drought-induced stress. Often, far before the relief is actually sanctioned, the distress associated with droughts, sale of assets, and starvation has already set in. That the administrative measures miss the essential needs of the region is evident when one notes that the poorest people resort to out-migration well before the relief works are established.

Like the cosmological constructions of droughts which do not recognize or initiate collective strategies to alleviate drought-related stress, the administrative constructions provide a top-down scheme that enhances the fragmentation of drought alleviation strategies. As many agriculturists and landless laborers point out, initiating the relief program after a prolonged period of drought does not aid the indigent and impoverished. A landless laborer in the village of Toravi, who in 1987 had had to get a loan to migrate to Pune for construction work, was vociferous in critiquing the relief-program:

> "When the rains have not come for a period then we immediately loose our agricultural work (<u>dhagada</u>). To stay in the village without work means getting a loan. Now, who'll repay these loans? How can we pay it all back? We, the poorest must go on migration work (<u>desha</u>). Those who stay here are not the ones who worry about an empty stomach".

For the poorest and most indigent, drought remains an immediate problem of sustenance. Some landed agriculturists subsist on stored grains, or loans, or the sale of their assets. For others the drought-relief works provide temporary sustenance. Yet the perennial poverty of the region or the scarcities associated with droughts are not alleviated. Reviewing the current administrative attempts to solve the district's chronic drought and food scarcity conditions, Simpi Linganna, Bijapur's most noted literateur, posed, "can ghee (clarified butter) quench one's thirst?" Relief is then seen as occasional doses that do not solve a more vital and pervasive problem of meeting real needs.

Locating drought as a purely natural phenomenon, administrative discourse and actions are sharply at variance with the local cultural construction of drought as a socially and morally produced condition. Though local social structures in their pre-capitalistic formations were not fully capable of containing long term scarcities or addressing variations in the distribution of resources, droughts were occasions for collectively addressing the social and moral order. Droughts also meant a reduction of resources for all. Agricultural production without deep tube-wells forced all cultivating units to be effected by droughts. Hence a loss or decline in agricultural production, even if of different degrees, was felt by all members of the village community. Changes induced by commercial agriculture induce shifts in the economic and social relations of the community and in cultural priorities. For practitioners of modern agriculture who rely on technology and have access to water, drought is either minimally experienced or is often an opportunity to exploit cheap labor. With no moral, social, or economic impetus to provision the indigent, the village elite are

removed from bearing the responsibilities for alleviating drought-related distress. In the present changed socioeconomic and cultural environment, drought does not mean a reduction in crop production for all and hence a stress on (though of varying degrees) resources that is generally experienced. The Oracle in Madbhavi succinctly indicated this in its 1990 prophesy: "there would be sweets for some, sorghum balls for others". "Sweets for some" refers to the profit that some (the rich and the landed) would reap, while "sorghum balls for others" refers to the bare existence that the others would have to eke out.

This shift in the institutional organization of drought management and the cultural conceptualizations of droughts provides a basis for a disengagement of collective culture from nature. No longer are there collectively held and expressed notions of what causes droughts: some still assert the significance of recalcitrant human actins for the production of droughts; others repeat bureaucratic perspectives, "this is a drought-prone region, that's why we have droughts"; still others point to the degraded ecology. Coterminus with these differenciated perspectives of droughts are the different strategies that each household undertakes to sustain itself in the face of a drought. The implications of these shifts are multiple for conceptualizations of human-nature relations in the region.

I delineate these changes and the implications of these changes in the following three dimensions: (1) the shifts in human-land relationships and hence the changes in societynature relations, (2) the generation of new symbolic forms in the regional culture, and (3) the effect of institutionalized drought-relief on the village community.

THE REGION AS "DROUGHT-AFFLICTED"

The traditional cultural identity of the region as "Karinadu", or the "black land", which invoked idyllic images of agricultural prosperity and a sense of pride, is increasingly displaced by reference to the region as "<u>baraghala peditha desha</u>" (drought-afflicted region). The region as "afflicted" with droughts contrasts with the local cultural construction of the community and village as subject to "affliction". The local cultural construction of droughts as <u>peda</u> or affliction reflected the recognition of social and moral onus for the production of droughts. On the other hand, administrative constructions of the region as drought-afflicted (baraghala-peditha) connotes an asocial, given proclivity to droughts that constructs droughts as inevitable and naturally produced. Though local, collective rituals did not and do not encode effective means and mechanisms of containing droughtrelated scarcities and distress, they were occasions for the collective apprehension of drought-related stress and for

the addressing of the moral and social order. In contrast, the region as "afflicted" connotes a naturalistic, deterministic base in the production of droughts.

The bureaucratic labelling of the region as "droughtprone", and "drought-afflicted" has, since the 1972 drought (when large scale relief works and drought-proofing programs were further entrenched), been appropriated by the residents of the region. People refer to the region as baraghala desha (land of droughts) and as bada desha (land of poverty/ poor region). Constructions such as these form the basis for new images of the region, of people themselves, and of their relationship and identity to the land. The shifting constructions that have resulted from bureaucratic labelling of the region confirms Shields 'observation that labels affixed to specific geo-cultural regions produce "a potent connotative kick which alludes to the emotional importance of entire systems of spatial images which function as frameworks of cultural orders" (Shields 1991:30). In Bijapur, the shift in the cultural image of the land is coterminus with the shift in identity and culture of the people.

Instead of the specific knowledge, skills, and organization that had been developed over the years, there is a nascent submission to the bureaucratic administration of the region and the people's lives. Like the trend towards the replacement of local agricultural knowledge and

methods by modern agricultural practices, drought is increasingly seen as having to be managed by the administration. This is most telling in the loss of naming droughts. Droughts are no longer recalled by the names of crops that helped sustain the people who survived the droughts; nor do droughts have any locally bound significance. The drought of 1972, considered the worst in the century, is remembered not by any specific name of crop or person but as the "1972 drought" (yepath yeradara bara). Further, the widespread distress experienced by the people is embodied in a poem, which unlike older poems on droughts does not appease or castigate gods and goddesses, but which castigates administrators and politicians:

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Similarly, despite the stress of unemployment, food shortage, loss of crops and fodder during the 1990 drought, people did not attach any particular name to the drought. The decline in significance of droughts as cultural markers in the life-world of the people does not imply a decrease in the deprivation, marginalization, and suffering that droughts compound. Rather, the most distressed people are no longer in the region. Migrations, both temporary and permanent, have become regular features in the lives of the poor. The urban areas, large construction sites and the wet agricultural belts provide employment opportunities. However, as a regular migrant commented:

> "What life does a construction site offer? Sometimes we don't know the language. We work, work, work. It's all for the stomach--we buy food, eat and work again. What sort of a life can that be? We'd like to be here--our families are here, our relatives are here.... We fall ill, there's no one to care. There are accidents. Who's to talk for us?"

Migration and temporary urban work, if available, provide basic sustenance. But they are not without hazards to social and physical life. As is evident by the residential sections of the landless and lower caste groups, work migration means that women and children are left to eke out a living for themselves with promises of monetary support from the urban-based men. The section of the village in which Gurappa Madha and his fellow caste members live was largely empty after the onset of the 1990 drought. Only a few households with older women and their grandchildren were left, while the men and younder women had immigrated to the cities for work. For those village residents who manage to pull through on their own during the initial drought-period, government administered relief has become the only viable alternative source of sustenance during prolonged periods of droughts. This is valid for households like that of Gangawwa Badigyar and even for those like Keshappa Kumbar. While their regular incomes and wages sustain them during non-drought periods, they must seek alternative sources of income during droughts.

The contemporary trend of demanding and expecting government relief to help mitigate drought-induced problems is a far cry from the hesitancy and rejection which met administered relief in the nineteenth century. Where droughts had previously been occasions to culturally and ritually address the moral-social order of the community, they are now occasions during which administrative rituals contain the bargaining over village autonomy and village dependency.

So pervasive has the need for relief become in the region that relief centers are now the new symbols of life sustenance. As an elderly man put it to me, "In the old days, we looked for clouds during a drought, now we look for the government jeep." His comment summed up not only the presence of the government apparatus in the region, but also the agriculturists' acceptance of relief and their reliance on the government as provider. That such trends are not restricted to this area or cultural belt alone is well brought out in Subramaniam's (1975) report on the success of government administered drought-relief during the 1970-73 drought in Maharashtra. After appraising the tremendous

success in alleviating famine and distress in the region, Subramaniam quotes a newpaper reporter who had interviewed receipients of relief:

> When Padgaonkar interviewed Namdeo Kokani of Balapudi about the drought relief schemes sponsored by the state government, Laxmibai, his wife, had the following to say: "what is the use of Gods and Goddesses when they have let us down? Why waste money on flowers, on <u>haldi</u> (turmeric), and <u>Kumkum</u> (red ochre powder) on them?" She said her 'Mai-Baap' now was the 'Sarkar'. It had helped them survive. Namdeo said, "Sarkar meant the Overseer, the Tahsildar, the Prant Officer, the Collector and the Gandhi caps." (Subramaniam 1975:502)

The success of the administrative efforts to prevent mass famine in the region is coterminus with the extent to which government relief has become acceptable to the people. The situation is a far cry from the rejection of institutionalized relief or the general hesitancy that most people had previosly had about subsisting on nonagricultural menial work. Typically, the strong cultural orientation of agrarianism would have emphasized the value of agricultural work, cultivating one's land, and being independent in general. Instead, the work centers organized to bring relief from the drought-induced hardships are seen as an alternative and acceptable form of employment.

DEVELOPMENT AND DISARRAY

There are visible signs of "development" in the region: there are more tar-topped roads (built as relief works during droughts); there are more tube-wells within the settlements; and the Agricultural Assistants and other agents of the government are periodic visitors and dispensers of a new cultural orientation. Yet for the poorest residents these very changes do not provide longterm employment security or timely food security. Feeding into the disarray in community relations and the inability to locally contain and address droughts are trends that negatively impact on the already deteriorating agrarian life.

Agriculture, once the cornerstone of Bijapur's rural life and culture, is increasingly disregarded as a viable economic option or as a culturally preferred way of life. With people's exposure to urban life and non-agrarian job opportunities, agriculture is increasingly viewed as a losing game where "crops die and grow" (<u>bele sattu</u> <u>beleyuvudu</u>), where agriculturists must beat their "heads against the rocks" (<u>kallu mele thale vodeyuvudu</u>) to make ends meet, and, where despite their hard work and perserverance they are still in the quagmire of "poverty" (<u>badathana</u>) and "dirt" (<u>kolachu</u>). Many agriculturists encourage their sons to take up non-agricultural

occupations, hoping that urban jobs will save them from the perennial problems of poverty, deprivation, and stress.

Like the shifts in the cultural conceptualizations of droughts, the shift in the cultural evaluation of land indicates a disengagement of land from the divinity-naturesociety continuum. If droughts are becoming purely naturally occuring phenomena then land is being delineated as a purely economic unit, an object and source of livelihood without the attending cultural importance attached to it.

These shifts are expressed in a cultural commentary that links the new symbols in the region to the new landscape and the new social and cultural order in which the people live in.

A HYBRID DROUGHT TO COME

I met Mr. Lingadahalli on a trip to Banhatti, a small weaving town in Bijapur. A local science teacher and literateur, his concern for the deteriorating conditions of the region ranged from the ecological problems of the region to the cultural and social upheaval experienced by its residents. Concluding his observations, he suddenly pointed out to the patches of parthenium weeds in the outlying fields and said, "There will be a drought one of these days and it will be called a hybrid drought (hybrid bara)".

The parthenium weeds he pointed to are new entrants into the agricultural landscape. The fast spreading weeds are considered a nuisance in the agricultural fields, since they not only threaten the crops but also impose more work. Spreading from the fields into the village settlements, the weeds pose health hazards in the form of allergies and chronic eczema. Their origins are linked to the modern agricultural package and in the villages they were called <u>sarkari kasa</u> (government weeds). For their ability to turn milk bitter, when consumed by cows, the weeds were referred to as <u>kahi kasa</u> (bitter weeds).

Mr. Lingadahalli's comment, linking the weeds to a futuristic drought, didn't at first suggest to me anything more than a cultural inclination to prophesy and forecast the future. Later, reading Donald Worster's (1976) study of the Great Drought in the Southern United States I realized the implications of Lingadahalli's observations. The erosion of the indigenous grasses of the southern arid belts had lead to the dust bowl and to the tremendous dislocation, stress, and migration of the 1930's. In that setting, an astute naturalist, Paul Sears, had observed the spread of the dreaded tumbleweeds, and had pointed out that "weeds like red-eyed anarchists, are the symptoms, not the cause of a disturbed order" (in Worster 1976:208). Though Sears' allegory expressed his disdain for socialist arguments, his comment linked weeds to the denouement of a disturbed order.

Perhaps it was Mr. Lingadahalli's perception of a similar scenario for Bijapur that now draws my attention to his words. He had astutely observed the ecological degradation, signified by the presence of unweildy and dangerous weeds, to portend a devastating ecological catastrophe. He had appropriated the symbol of the discontents of modern agriculture and was using the weeds as a new symbol to prophesize the future. He was not alone in his thoughts, for soon I found that several agriculturists also considered the new weeds to portend an imminent disaster.

A hybrid drought would be one caused not by a lack of rain, as were most droughts, but by the introduction of a wholly inappropriate complex of agriculture. The ecological denudation of the region would be concommitant with the destruction of the society and the cultural complex of the region. Modern agriculture is then linked to the social and cultural conditions of the people. Just as local culture constructs and understands droughts as symptoms of cosmological disorder, the parthenium weeds are seen as representative and symptomatic of a persistent and significant social and cultural disorder.

Though the partenium weeds, like the hybrid seeds, are incorporated into the local symbolic order they are linked through the ethos of substantialism to reinforce an older

and continuing framework of significance. This framework of significance is the relationship between the land and the people-where changes in one are considered to constitute changes in the other.

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CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Subject to recurring droughts and famines, the region of Bijapur has provided a window through which to study culture-nature relations. The close alignment of culturenature relations was expressed in: the aligning of social activities to agro-climatic cycles; the appropriation of nature, especially land, in accordance with culturally specific precepts; and in the ways in which conditions of nature are considered to reflect the moral conditions of the society. By focusing on droughts to delineate a specific culture's conceptualizations of society-nature relations, this study has highlighted the importance of frameworks of meaning in understanding a society and its relationship to droughts.

This study has indicated how particular cultural foundations influence the ways in which droughts are understood and come to terms with. Such a perspective can be extended to understanding various other society-nature relationships. More especially, the study may benefit the understanding of societies that are subject to recurring floods, earthquakes, tornadoes and other phenomena often constructed as natural hazards. The culturally specific ways in which these phenomena are understood may throw light

on the modes in which people adapt, adjust, and manage their lives in relation to natural disasters.

CULTURE AND NATURE

In the context of describing the forms and ways in which a particular culture conceptualizes and contextualizes society-nature relations, this study has provided two perspectives. First it largely validates recent anthropological and Indianist perspectives which note that non-Western, non-industrial conceptualizations of societynature relations are based on a non-dichotomized relationship between the two. Society and nature, in such cultures, are understood to be linked in moral, affective, subjective, and integral ways. This is the case in the context of Bijapur wherein the lack of a separate word for nature, the interchangeable use of words for both agricultural and social contexts, and the association of drought conditions to moral conditions indicate the mutually interactive paradigm within which the domains of divinity, nature, and society are conceptualized.

In terms of Bijapur's local culture, droughts are constructed to reflect a coinciding of cosmological, ecological, and community orientations. Locating droughts through a cosmological dimension emphasizes the nonseparateness of society from nature. Natural categories such as climatic processes, and hence droughts also, are
linked to the condition of the society. The three domains of divinity, nature, and society are linked in an integral manner where actions in one are considered to be reflected in the other.

Such an interlinking-of the domains of the natural, divine, and the social-is representative of an ethos of substantialism which has been observed for other practices, such as ayurveda, folk medicine, and rituals in South Asia. An ethos of substantialism is seen as constituting a framework of significance in the domain of local agricultural practices, in the conduct of rain rituals, and in the context of understanding modern agriculture and the social changes that have resulted from it.

While postulating the importance of an ethos of substantialism this study does not propose an ethos of substantialism to be a framework of analysis or a conceptual apparatus through which all actions and interactions in the context of South Asia can be understood. An ethos of substantialism is particularly useful in understanding such local explanatory models such as: the linking of droughts to divine wrath and hence as reflecting the moral conditions of the people; ideas that ascribe specific characteristics to soils, plants and people; and the continuity of associating conditions of the land to conditions of the people.

The second perspective that this study provides, in the context of cultural conceptualizations of society-nature

relations, is to discern the ideological basis of cultural conceptualizations of society-nature relations. As this study has indicated, despite the portrayal and expressions of the close identity and reflexive relationship between society and nature, the results of the articulation of society-nature relations in the context of crises must also be considered. Cultural conceptualizations of societynature relations may themselves form an ideological basis through which exploitation is legitimized and made acceptable. This was observable in the cosmological conceptualizations of drought which, despite expressions of collective human moral onus for the production of droughts, were not linked with specific strategies to alleviate drought-related food scarcities. Instead, the stress on collective human moral onus, observable in local beliefs and rituals, prevented the recognition of the unequal distribution of resources and a development of redistributive mechanisms.

Hence caveats must be added to portrayals of nonwestern, non-capitalistic cultures as being based on a "oneness" with nature, in which perfect adaptation to the external environment has been achieved. Instead of arcadian views of society-nature relations in the context of nonwestern cultures, the ideological basis of these articulations must be recognized. Cosmological conceptualizations of nature must also be related to the

multiple ways in which the social structures of a society, especially the differential resource and power positions, accentuate specific culture-nature relations. While nonwestern conceptualizations of society-nature relations are different from western conceptualizations they do not necessarily inhere a completely non-exploitative structure in them. As in the case of Bijapur, like much of rural India, hierarchical social structures such as caste structures and inequitable distribution of resources define actual resource use and relations.

Such a perspective I believe is especially relevant in the context of recent proliferation of studies that focus on cultural orientations to nature. Juxtaposed to critiques of the capitalist structuring of human-nature relations several studies are finding in non-western, non-capitalist cultures an alternative, non-hierarchical and non- exploitative construction of society-nature relations. Popularization of non-western cultures as representing benign, non-intrusive, non-destructive human-nature relationships belie the complexity of society-nature constructions and deflect attention from the pressing problems that such societies face. This point needs to be reinforced since arguments for reinstituting "traditional", human-nature relations presumed to be non-hierachical and non-explotiative are finding their way into new agendas for the environment. The above caveats about focusing only on cultural conceptualizations of society-nature relations call attention to the forms in which livelihood patterns, and power relations also attend on society-nature relations. Such structures and forces were observable in Bijapur where local provisioning transactions of <u>aya</u> (institutionalized provisioning), <u>dasoha</u> (communal sharing), and <u>dana</u> (charity) were not effectively capable of addressing nature-related resources fluctuations. In the context of research which seek to enhance local, culturally specific provisioning and entitlement strategies, it is vital to bear in mind that provisioning transactions even if conducted in moral, cultural terms do not effectively cover a large proportion of people who are indigent.

The inability of rural social institutions, especially under conditions of significant changes, to address and contain recurring scarcity has led to the intervention of external bureaucratic apparatii to address problems of periodic resource scarcity. Noting such trends this study calls attention to the fact that societies that face sustenance crises are more vulnerable to the reordering of their ecology and their culture. Under the regime of administrative definitions of drought and changing socioeconomic structures, the local cultural conceptualization of drought and hence of society-nature relations takes different forms. Administrative constructions identify

droughts as naturally produced phenomena. Accordingly, the administration engenders programs and strategies which construct the problem of Bijapur--its conditions of general impoverishment, marginalization, and recurring threats of famine--as problems emanating from its particular ecology or natural condition. Programs then address these problems as natural problems only--identified as semi-aridity, low production, and drought proclivity. Drought within such administrative constructions is essentially a problem of productivity. An agricultural regime that incorporates the plausibility of droughts into its practices is seen as falling below an expected productive capacity. Drought alleviation then becomes a program to solve problems of agricultural production and immediate food security. Programs and policies then key in to re-order the ecology of the region. The focus of such attention is the local agricultural complex which becomes subject to changes that aim at increasing its productivity. These administrative policies and programs overlook the social bases of the production of scarcity and enhance those very social relations under which deprivation and poverty are made persistent for a significant number of people.

By noting the social and cultural problems that such administrative intervention creates in the region the study observes the ironic situation in which the agencies that seek to alleviate drought-related distress generate upheaval

and stress in the society. The implications of social disarray, and the compounding of problems, can be extended to other areas of the world in which "disaster management" is conducted through bureaucratic measures.

Administrative definitions of droughts and the reordering of the society and its ecology form a hegemonic discourse which induce significant shifts in society-nature relations. The precepts of hada (appropriateness) and hulige (bestowed abundance) which once privileged the ways in which people related to and utilized the land are giving way to that of <u>sistam</u> (system) and <u>utpati</u> (productivity). Such changes engender shifts from local, autonomous, and heterogenous forms of agriculture and human-nature relations to forms that are externally directed, imitative, homogenous, and dependent. Modern agriculture, the way in which it is promoted and its results, is hegemonic to the extent to which it has reconstituted local cultural forms of utilizing land, the ways in which the people have incorporated its principles into their cultural corpus, and the degree to which it is also accepted by the people.

The result of such hegemonic intervention is the generation of new symbolic forms and changed cultural priorities. Accompanying such changes are the new symbols of pumpsets, hybrid seeds, insular homesteads, and droughtrelief centers which represent and embody the cultural and social changes in the region. The development and

establishment of new symbolic forms in Bijapur validates Comaroff's (1982) and Ohnuki-Tierney's (1990) observations on the results of the articulation of local cultural forms with larger political-economic forces. Comaroff (1982) notes that the results of such articulations lead to the establishment of pluralistic cultural forms rather than to a shift from a variety of indigenous forms to that of a uniform modern culture. As Ohnuki-Tierney (1990) emphasizes, when non-modern cultural forms shift into a modern context they do not loose all symbolic forms and capacities. Instead, new symbolic forms are generated which take into account the new context and meanings.

Such a process is observable in the context of Bijapur wherein pumpsets are incorporated into the ritual corpus and the metaphor of hybrid seeds is used to refer to changes in social identities and relationships. While the incorporation of pump sets into the ritual corpus is indicative of the new sources of production, the metaphor of hybrid seeds draws on an ethos of substantialism to comment on the new human-land and human-human relationships. These new configurations embody and represent changes, amalgamations, and discontinuities of life conditions, social relations, and meanings.

It is this reconstitution of cultures in the face of being directed by external cultures and in the context of the reordering of nature that needs to be further addressed.

In the face of widespread environmental crises in the world it will not be out of place to say that the state of an environment represents the state of a society. Contemporary Somalia, with its double tragedy of famine and mayhem, testifies to this. At the same time there are several areas which, like Bijapur, are being reconstituted in their natural and social conditions. Just as arguments have been made for recognizing the cultural basis of society-nature relations it may be imperative for anthropologists to recognize and read shifting conceptualizations of nature in order to understand the changing contents of culture.

I would like to conclude this study on culture-nature relations and conceptualizations with the words of Dr. M.N Wali, another local scholar and literateur in Bijapur. I had asked him about local conceptualizations of "nature" and what was happening to Bijapur in the context of the significant changes that it was experiencing. His reply summarized what many agriculturists express, but without the same literary expressions.

> Nature, or <u>prakrti</u> is all that is given by God. Culture, as <u>samskruti</u>, is when human actions are aligned to <u>prakrti</u>. But, when human actions are not aligned to <u>prakrti</u>, then one can have only <u>vkrti</u>, the distorted forms of both <u>prakrti</u> and <u>samskruti</u>.

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GLOSSARY

Ауа	- Grains and other shares given to certain service and ritual caste households
Ayadakula	 Landed families that provide grains to specific service and ritual households
Ayagharru	 Specific households from service and ritual castes that are entitled to aya shares
Ayagolu	- Lingayat priest
Bara	- Dryness, cessation of rain
Baraghala	- Drought
Bhumi-guna	- Characteristics of land
Dana	- Charitable donation of grains or food
Dargah	 Muslim religous sites founded around burial sites of sufis
Dasoha	- Commensal meals
Desha	- Employment migration
Dharmakarya	 Construction of public utility resources by the rich
Hada	- Appropriateness
Hibred	_ Hybrid
Holeya	- Untouchables/Harijans
Hosa Besaya	- New Agriculture
Hudi	- Grain storage bins
Hulige	- Ritual incantation meaning bestowed abundance
Javari	 Organic and locally grown crops/ refers to all products that are recognised as local
Jeetha	- Person in agrestic servitude

Jolla	-	Sorghum Vulgare
Kahi Kasa	-	Bitter weed-to refer to the parthenium weed
Kala-Jnana	-	Prophesying conducted at some Lingayat centers
Karinadu	-	Black Land -to refer to the region of Bijapur and its geographic environs
Kuruba	-	Shepherds
Lambani	-	Once nomadic salt sellers and baggage carriers, now settled
Madi	-	Auspicious objects
Maddi	-	Reddish brown agricultural land
Madha	-	Leather workers
Male-bele Helike	-	Rain-crop prophesying
Mullah	-	Muslim priests
Mutta	_	Lingayat religous centers
Muye	-	Reciprocity- to refer to exchange labor
Peda	-	Affliction
Roti	-	Flat leavened bread, usually of sorghum in this region
Samskruti	-	"culture"-more often used in by literate people
Sampurna	-	Wholeness
Satmya	-	Appropriateness in Ayurveda
Sistam	-	System
Sege Hunime	-	Fertility rites for fields (summer)
Sukshme	-	Delicate
Swantha	-	Own/ autonomy
Thalwar	_	Menial servants

Thakat	- Strength
Thota	- Garden lands
Thotaghara	- Garden land owners
Thandya	- Settlement sites of the Lambani
Utpati	- Increased production
Vkruti	-distorted state or condition
Yell Amavase	- Fertility rites for fields (winter)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MAJOR FAMINES IN BIJAPUR

YEAR	CAUSES AND EFFECTS
1396	Twelve years of drought and famine
1422	Two years of drought related famine
1460	Also drought-related famine
1472-73	Drought, large-scale emigration
1629-30	Severe famine
1685	Severe famine
1716	Thousands of deaths
1790-92	Innumerable deaths,"Skull Famine"
1814-18	Many parts of the district affected
1824-25	Droughts widespread
1833	Drought, First relief works started
1863-64	Severe famine
1866-67	Drought prolonged onset of famine
1876-79	Large scale emigration, high mortality of
	humans and cattle,"Padi Drought" 1911-12
	Famine in large parts of the district
1923-24	Famine
1926 - 27	Famine
1937-38	Famine
1942-43	1090 villages out of 1174 villages
	affected,"millet drought"
1951-54	69% of villages affected, relief by Government
1955-56	Droughts reported in 52% of villages
1959-60	605 villages affected
1961-62	94% of villages affected
1972-73	Severe drought, largest post-independence
	relief works set-up.
1976-77	Drought in some areas
1984-85	Drought in some areas
1987	Severe water shortage, loss of crops
1990-91	Loss of winter crops, relief late

[Compiled with data from Bijapur District Gazetteer, Meti 1966, Horakere 1987, Deshpande 1987]

APPENDIX B: HINDU-ENGLISH MONTHS

Local Kannada Names	Sanskrit Names	Corresponding English Months
Magha	Magha	January-February
Phalgun	Phalguna	February-March
Chaitra	Caitra	March-April
Vishakha	Vaishaka	April-May
Jeysta	Jyestha	May-June
Ashada	Asadha	June-July
Shravana	Sravana	July-August
Bhadrapad	Bhadrapada	August-September
Ashvin	Asvina	September-October
Karthik	Karttika	October-November
Mrga	Margasirsa	November-December
Pushya	Pausa	December-January

APPENDIX C: CLASSIFICATION OF RAINS

The following list corresponds to the classical names of the rains derived from the astral (nakshatra) positions. Though the first sixteen of these rains are called <u>Sambava</u> (possible) or <u>kala Malegalu</u> or timely rains), it is the <u>vokkaligara malegalu</u> or "agriculturists rains" that are rains most closely observed. The rest (17-27) are referred to as <u>asambava</u> (improbable) or <u>avakala malegalu</u> or untimely rains and are those that do not occur in the region regularly. Pronounciations in Bijapur sometimes vary from standard Kannada pronunciations, some rains such as the rohini are called roni, or the svathi is called the sathi.

APPROXIMATE ENGLISH DATE

1. Ashvini 2. Bharani 3. Kruthika 4. Rohini 5. Mrgasira 6. Aridra 7. Punarvasu 8. Pushya 9. Ashlesha 10.Magha 11.Hubbi 12.Uthara 13.Hasta 14.Chitta 15.Svathi 16.Vishaka 17.Anuradha 18.Jyesta 19.Mula 20.Purva Ashada 21.Utharashada 22.Shravana 23.Dhanista 24.Shatatara 25.Purva Bhadrapada 26.Uthara Bhadarapad 27.Revati

KANNADA

NAME

April 11-April 25 April 26-May 9 May 10-May 23 May 24-June 6 June 7-June 20 June 21-July 4 July 5-July 18 July 19-August 1 August 2-August 15 August 16-August 29 August 30-September 11 September 12-September 25 September 26-October 8 October 9-October 22 October 23-November 4 November 5-November 17 November 18-November 30 December 1-December 14 December 15-December 27 December 28-January 9 January 10-January 22 January 23-February 4 February 5-February 17 February 18-March 2 March 3-March 15 March 16-March 27 March 28-April 10

APPENDIX D: AGRO-RITUALS IN BIJAPUR

Most festivals both local and pan-Indian, are located during the full (Hunime) and new moon (Amavase) phases of the lunar cycle. Since these festivals mark the agro-climatic cycle, I refer to them and the activities they mark as agro-rituals which are distinct from life-cycle rituals. The fortnightly festivals are as follows:

HINDU MONTH	ENGLISH MONTH	FESTIVALS
1. Chaitra	Mar-Apr	1. Ugadi Amavase 2. Havanada Hunime
2. Vishaka	Apr-May	1. Akhiti Amavase 2. Aggi Hunime
3. Jeysta	May-June	1. Badami Amavase 2. Kar Hunime
4. Ashada	June-July	1. Munyethena Amavase 2. Kadligar Hunime
5. Shravana	July-Aug	1. Nagara Amavase 2. Nula Hunime
6. Bhadrapad	Aug-Sept	1. Ganachauthi Amavase 2. Ananta Hunime
7. Ashvin	Sept-Oct	1. Mahanavami Amavase 2. Sege Hunime
8. Karthik	Oct-Nov	1. Dipavali Amavase 2. Gauri Hunime
9. Mrga	Nov-Dec	1. Chatti Amavase 2. Hasta Hunime
10.Pushya	Dec-Jan	1. Yell Amavase 2. Banada Hunime
11.Magha	Jan-Feb	1. Avatara Amavase 2. Bharat Hunime
12.Phalgun	Feb-Mar	1. Shivarathri Amavase 2. Holi Hunime

NOTES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1. See Raymond Williams (1980) for an excellent overview of the concepts of 'nature' and their various implications.

CHAPTER II: BIJAPUR

- 1. The western <u>ghats</u> (Lit: "steps" for the way in which they rise from the coastal belt) are the western mountain ranges that separate the west coast of India from the inland plains and plateau.
- 2. In 1818 Bijapur was acceded to the British and, along with the areas directly adjacent to the Bijapur sultanate, the district of Bijapur was formed in 1885.
- 3. The fear of being attached to labor pools was reported for many areas of colonial India (cf.Marglin 1990).
- 4. The Krishna River Project was initiated in 1960 and work on the dam and the canals has been intermittent. The incompletion of the dam and the lack of political will to complete the project is often pointed out by the local people as an example of the marginal position that Bijapur occupies.

CHAPTER III: LIFE IN THE BLACK LAND

- 1. The 1981 population was 3066 and the electoral roll for the 1989 general elections listed a total of 1412 eligible persons (above the age of eighteen). With a 2.4 percent average annual population growth (as per estimates for India as a whole) and the increase in the size of households and number of households, I estimate a total of approximately 5000 persons for the village as a whole.
- 2. In 1950 the state of Karnataka passed the Abolition of Vatandar Act (1950) which removed hereditary positions at the village level. Elections for the positions of the newly reorganized Panchayat System were made mandatory.
- 3. One <u>khurige</u> is equal to four acres.

- 4. Agrestic servitude in the district as in many parts of the state is called jeetha and was based on annual payment of fixed sums of money or grains to persons who did domestic and agricultural work for a particular sum. The 1981 Bijapur District Gazetteer refers to such work as "annual servants" missing the element of servitude and bondage associated with these employment relations.
- 5. The Lambani are classified as tribals in the state of Karnataka.

CHAPTER IV: SEEING APPROPRIATENESS

- I deliberately denote these practices and knowledge systems as "precepts" to emphasize the integration of conceptual categorization and actions. An exhaustive definition of precept has recently been made by Brackette Williams (1991): "Precepts are rules and standards often expressed in principles, maxims, or proverbs, that declare the world to be of a certain composition and to work in a certain way" (174).
- 2. Land measurements are made in terms of <u>khurige</u>, one khurige being equal to four acres. Measurements of grains by weight are not popular, and domestic and village level transactions are conducted in terms of volume of grains. One <u>solige</u> of wheat and sorghum is equal to two kilograms. One <u>cheela</u> (sack) of grains usually holds about sixty kilograms of sorghum or wheat.
- 3. "Akki thindavaru hakki. Jola thindavaru thola."
- 4. The differences between substantialism and substantivism must be noted. Barnett and Silverman (1979) note the importance acceded to natural substances in some cultures and consider them to be instances of substantialized symbolism, where substances that are significant to people are thought to be internal to or continous with their being. Perlin (1988) uses the term "substantivism" to refer to those ideologies or orders where the cultural and material are coeval in the same As differing from "substantialism" where the setting. emphasis is on the contextual and non-dualistic significance of actions and actors, substantivism as used by Perlin is the alter side of ideologies and orders that are purely instrumental.
- 5. Literature that refers to non-modern, dry agriculture as "subsistence-oriented" and "risk-aversive" are represented by studies such as those by Ryan (1977).
- 6. "Nam ura raithana bele hulisu" is the saying.

- 7. <u>Maddi</u> lands are not considered as important as the <u>yere</u> and the crops grown on the <u>yere</u>. Hence the fertility rites for the <u>maddi</u> lands are not celebrated very grandly.
- 8. "Yell amavasege yaru karedidavaru ella?"
- 9. Huligya is a local deity whose function is confined to grain yards. Kalburgi (1988) classifies Huligya as one of the local, popular deities of the North Karnataka belt.
- 10. Men who are considered to be lazy or wayward are also refered to as such.
- 11. Literature on agriculture in the arid and semi-arid regions in Africa documents the efficiency of local dry cultivation. Some of these studies have been those by Frank and Chasin (1980), Watts (1983), Richards and Heathcote (1983).

CHAPTER V : CALLING THE RAINS

- 1. Rainlore in the district, as in many of the agricultural regions of India, is rich with details of associating different seasons with different rains, their characteristics pertaining to agricultural use, and to human moods and conditions. See Desai (1963) for details on rainlore in Gujarat.
- 2. The pantheon of pastoral deities in the region closely co-incides with that found in western India in general. Each deity is associated with specific characteristics, focusing on functions such as ability to bring rains, maintain fertility of land and humans etc (Sontheimer 1989).
- 3. Muharram, the Islamic festival that celebrates the martrydom of Ali, is a popular festival in Bijapur with its significant number of Muslims. Based on the Islamic lunar calendar, the festival occurs at different times of the year. Inspite of this variation in its occurence, a "rain-crop" prophesy is held in villages that have a <u>dargah</u> and a good proportion of Muslims. These festivals are excellent examples of religous syncretism.
- 4. According to the rainman Sri. Mahapurusha Maleyappa, the rain center at Murnal is supposed to have been built by the Adil Shahi King in the 14th or early 15th century.

- 5. In appealing for food the Jokumara song contains phrases such as "Begging for coconut, he screams my Jokumara/ Give my Jokumara a coconut/ Begging for butter, he cries my Jokumara,/Give my Jokumara butter/ begging for roti (bread) he beats his stomach/ Give my Jokumar bread".
- 6. The konji-korava are a nomadic group of people who are recognized as hunters, fortune-tellers, and basket makers. They are credited with the ability to divine the future and the word <u>korava</u> is considered to be derived from <u>kuru</u> which means to divine (Nanjundayya and Iyer 1928).
- 7. For details of these "agriculturists rains" and their associated characteristics see Appendix C.
- 8. Thurston (1912) writes of reports from Tamil Nadu in which an effigy of the King was burned during droughts.
- 9. Several songs, including the "drumsongs" (<u>dollina pada</u>) of the shepherds are about men who had provided sustenance during crises such as plagues and droughts.
- 10. The village and the person refered to in this song were supposed to have existed in Bijapur.
- 11.See Choksey (1966) for an analysis and description of the collapse of village public resources in the Bombay Deccan.

CHAPTER VI: AN ENEMY LIKE THE STOMACH

- 1. The saying in Kannada is "Hote antha vairi ella".
- 2. Each caste group has its own deity that corresponds to the functions that the caste performs.
- 3. The <u>baluta</u> system in Maharashtra is siliar to that of the <u>aya</u> system and may have evolved from similiar conditions. Like the <u>aya</u> system, the <u>baluta</u> (grain payments) system consists of grain transactions from all the landed households to certain members of the artisan, service, and ritual specialist castes in the village (Kulkarni 1967).
- 4. Amokshiddha is a pastoral deity and is the main deity in the village of Madbhavi.
- 5. One sack is equal to about 60 kilograms of grains.

- 6. The summer agricultural cycle does not create a demand for labor as the <u>maddi</u> lands are mostly owner cultivated and do not require much labor. Hence the July-August is a particularly stressful period.
- 7. See for example Epstein (1967), Greenough (1982), and Spitz (1980).

CHAPTER VII: BECOMING SYSTEM

- 1. For literature on the risk-aversive attitudes and low productivity of dry agriculture see Binswanger (1978), Ryan (1977).
- 2. The deference that Bijapur's agriculturists accord to Agricultural Assistants cannot be generalised to India. Dr. Charles Morrison (personal communication) points out that in the Punjab, agriculturists often ridiculed the Extension Service Agents. I have observed this in other wet belts of India where agricultural productivity is higher and agriculturists are not under the dictats of the Extension Service. This confirms my observation that productivity is the most significant basis of regional evaluations.
- 3. The Farmers Training Center (FTC) for Bijapur district is located in the town of Jamkhandi. Ten-day agricultural training sessions are held at the center for men and women from different villages in the district. The training is conducted separately for men and women, who also receive free food and boarding in the center during the training. I joined one of these sessions in the month of September in 1990 and was able to interview many of the women trainees and the officers in charge of the training.
- 4. The worship of all implements and in fact of all objects of production is elaborated and heightened during <u>ayuda</u> <u>puja</u>, which is associated with an ancient tradition of worshipping weapons.
- 5. Agriculturists' and village residents' descriptions of hybrid seeds as weak, delicate, and unhealthy correspond to agronomic research that indicates hybrids to be less drought resistant, dependent on inputs like inorganic fertilizers, and of lower nutritional value than organic grains.
- 6. Laboratory-based studies that criticize hybridization policies for having led to the depletion of the protein content of organic grains contributed to

what has been labelled as the "protein gap" theory and continue to be polemical. Lipton and Longhurst (1985) contest such criticisms and advocate the use and promotion of these high yeilding hybrid varieties as they claim them to provide more calories by being cheaper and available in more quantities to people.

7. This song is from Karadi's (1989) collection of songs and poems from and about the region.

CHAPTER VIII : A HYBRID DROUGHT TO COME

- 1. <u>Alaab</u> is the kannada syncopation for <u>Ali ya habba</u>, meaning Ali's festival, and refers to Muharram.
- 2. <u>Kala-jnana</u> literally means "knowledge of the time" and refers to the prophesying conducted by certain <u>Mutta</u> in the districts of Gulbarga and Bijapur.
- 3. This method of assessing crops and rainfall in terms of ratios is the <u>Annavari</u> system. Estimates of crop yields are made by visual assessment in terms of the value of crops in annas, a part of the old currency. The maximum is usually ten annas and the same assessment is used in the prophesying of rains and crops.
- 4. This flyer was produced and distributed by the District Agricultural Office, Bijapur.
- 5. This poem was sent to me by Hanumant Halangalli, who had assisted me in the field during the period of July to December 1990.
- 6. The flyer was distributed in the villages by the Agricultural Assistants.

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