

Dr. phil. Øyvind Jaer, February 2022.

***Karchana village 40 years after.
Change and Continuity in a Globalizing World***

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Project ideas with fieldwork in an Indian village
Information events.**

Background

I have a long and intimate relationship with *Karchana*, a North Indian village on the Ganges plains in the center of what has always been the core area of Indian and Hindu civilization. My monograph, *Karchana - Lifeworld-ethnography of an Indian village*, was published by the Scandinavian University Press 1995 with reference year 1985-86.

I have been fortunate to visit Karchana regularly since I did my fieldwork in 1985-86. Much have changed, also in Karchana. The village center has grown into a small rural town with shops and workshops and much motorized traffic serving a large hinterland of villages. Telecommunications which were based on morse through the local post office when I did my initial fieldwork, has changed dramatically. Today most of the grownup population, even in the poorer families, have their own mobile phone, many of them smart phones with direct access to the global Web. The number of televisions in Karchana, of which I counted 10 in 1986, has exploded. Many villagers can now observe the MTW as teenagers do in Mumbai or Oslo.

However, there are also some solid pillars which seem to sustain or even reactivate the past in the midst of an increasingly fluid and changing world. Hindu fundamentalism has been on the increase since the mid 80', something which is politically challenging, but indeed anthropologically interesting. Such processes also increase the *double binds* (Eriksen 2016) experienced by many villagers, not least the younger generations, when they are 'thrown out' in the ongoing transformation from tradition to modernity - to the process I will term the neoliberal globalization and in several significant ways 'colonization' of Karchana lifeworld.

To identify change and continuity, the present must be compared with the past. *Karchana - Lifeworld-ethnography of an Indian village* and the data underlying this monograph, is one way to help reconstruct a picture of the village in the mid 80'. The surveys done then can be compared with up to date surveys, something which will give valuable quantifiable data. Other monographs and reports on North Indian villages from the same period will broaden the picture. Talks with older people in Karchana will do the same.

Karchana – lifeworld-ethnography of Indian village can in many ways be described as a classical anthropological monograph, holistic in its ambition to describe the day to day life of the people, giving equal attention to economy and material conditions as well as the social and religious life of the people. Although 'classical' in its attempt to provide an holistic account of the village community, the book also offers what I claim to be an innovative approach to the description and analyses of the village within the greater settings of regional, national or even global scales.

Of importance in this regard is the concept of the lifeworld which I define as "*the socio-cultural whole within which the day to day life of the villagers of Karchana takes place and their lived experiences are formed*". I argue that the concept of the lifeworld enables us to

grasp the village - the little community/tradition of the Redfieldian approach – as a part of the great community/tradition and larger scales of processes (Eriksen 2008) in which the lives of the villagers are increasingly embedded.

For a more detailed presentation of the project idea *Karchana 40 years after* where you can find research ideas, concepts and methodologies which can be further developed as well as literature which I believe have sustained the passage of time - please see the document attached.

Fieldwork in an Indian village?

Given my long-lasting relationship with Karchana village as well as my studies of Indian culture in general, I believe I have a window of opportunity to offer to talented candidates who would like to do fieldwork in a developing country, in this case an Indian village. The attached document presenting the general research idea *Karchana 40 years after*, offers a wide range of research opportunities. Many interesting projects, small or big, challenging or more easy, could be designed within this frame of reference.

I would appreciate if, over time, some talented students Master, PHD, Post Doc or others, would like to do fieldwork in Karchana with focus on change and continuity. One could start out with a smaller and more easy project for the Master degree. And if the place, the people, the challenges and the results doing the Master are promising and stimulating, one could proceed with a PHD. This invitation is certainly also open to Post Docs and researchers who would like to do research in an Indian village, need a field, and are stimulated by the broad project ideas outlined here and in the attachment.

I would assist and make my contacts and original data available for candidates selected. I could advice, cooperate, even be a supervisor depending on preferences. A broad specter of research interests could be pursued. Topics could be picked by students and researchers interested in rural India and village studies in general, ritual life and religious studies, development and rural sociology as well as most social anthropological themes.

Where I cannot do much of assistance except some advice certainly, is how candidates will manage village life and relate to the people. There is also a question of research permittance. I assume a smaller Master degree projects can be done without going official with the project while a PHD study most probably will have to apply for permittance. SIA must assist in this matter.

Events spring term 2022:

Students-researchers who could be interested in doing a project based on fieldwork in Karchana are advised to follow all the four events outlined below. The two rounds of lectures on my Indian studies *Capital and Karma. Hinduism and Capitalism compared* (Magister thesis 1983, published 1998) and my monograph on Karchana Dr. Phil. Thesis 1990, published 1995), will be open and hopefully interesting for a more general public.

1. Teaser in SIA's breakfast meeting (30 minutes. 10th March)

- a. Presentation of self,
- b. The broad project idea,
- c. Pictures of the village and people you will meet,
- d. Information on the three following events.
- e. Q and A

2. ***Cultural translation and karmic ideology. Themes from Capital and Karma. (2x45 min. 15th March)***
 - a. For an anthropology of India
 - Indian experience
 - Indian studies.
 - Texts-Indology. Fieldwork-anthropology
 - Critical dialogue with Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970)
 - b. 'Bridgehead' for cultural translation: Dumont or Jaer?
 - c. Man as a Karmic being
 - d. Karmic ideology and the Caste system.
 - e. Karmic phenomenology
 - f. The relevance and rational limits of Karmic ideology
3. ***Lifeworld-Ethnography – a model for 'writing culture' the holistic way. Themes from Karchana monograph (2x45 min. 22nd March)***
 - a. Why Karchana? With basic information on the village 1985-86.
 - b. The theoretical challenge: Crises of representation. Karchana as part of a greater whole.
 - c. The societal structure of Karchana lifeworld in the mid 80':
 - Horizons in time and space,
 - Timebound and Spacebound Arenas of social action,
 - Channels of communication,
 - Networks of interlinkages.
 - d. Intersubjectivity analyses.
4. ***Workshop. Depending on interest and individual needs (2x45 min. end March)***
 - a. Presentation of the General Project Idea, useful concepts and promising themes (see document attached).
 - b. Identification of project ideas of interest to participants,
 - c. Q and A, discussion.
 - d. Inputs to develop selected project ideas.
 - e. Practical issues and challenges.
 - f. Follow up.