CHAPTER VII
Qualifications and Characteristics

To be successful in his trade, a thief or robber had to acquire a number of qualifications. Sarvilaka, a master-thief spoke of himself thus: 'I ... am a cat in leaping, a deer in bounding off, a hawk in seizing prey and tearing it to pieces, a dog in judging the strength of a man according as he is asleep or awake, a snake in crawling, magic (personified) in assuming different characters, postures and dresses, the goddess of speech in (talking in) the various dialects of different countries, a lamp during nights, a dudubha in (slipping away from) intricate places, a horse on land, and a boat on water! Moreover —

In movement I am quick like a snake; in steadiness, like a mountain; in flying, I resemble the lord of birds (i.e. the eagle). In surveying the whole country, I am like a hare; in effecting a capture, like a wolf; and in strength, a lion. (1) A few words of this verse need explanation. (2) Sarvilaka said here that like a dog he could ascertain the strength of any man awake or asleep. Dogs are known to possess the quality of gauging the strength at least of other dogs by looking at them just for once. 'Magic (personified)', etc., may also mean 'the vaglic or will power by which one can create things.' Sarvilaka probably referred to the spell of changing the features and distorting the body. He was also an expert in changing dress, etc. All these were done to baffle recognition by others. Du'dubha or Duduma or dundubha 'is a very tenacious reptile and remains fast-stuck to something when an attempt is made to drive it away.' Did Sarvilaka
meant that while ascending a wall or descending from it, he, though in a very precarious position, could save himself by clinging to something dexterously. This reptile is also well known for speed. Sarvileka might also mean that in an emergency, he could escape as quickly as a snake. By 'in flying,' etc., he probably referred to rapid speed or to the power of flying through the skies. 'In surveying,' etc., means that like a hare, he was expert in 'inspecting the ground to find a place for hiding in.' 'A lamp during nights' probably hints at his power of seeing at night with the help of some spell, or it may simply mean that no obstacle, not even darkness could deter him and somehow he finished his work with success. Thus a first class thief should be an expert in leaping, running, crushing his resister, in finding out a rich man's house and robbing it by making a hole or tunnel into it (or breaking a portion of the house to effect entrance into it), in seizing other's wealth with unerring dexterity (grahulmane), gauging the strength of the inmates of the houses to be entered into, crawling through holes, assuming various forms magically, wearing disguises, speaking many dialects (so that he can understand the words of the householders and befool others by posing as a foreigner, speaking foreign languages), working in darkness, making acrobatic feats (samakatesu dudubah) and also in moving quickly either on land or in water. He should be steady, sharp-eyed, zealous like the wolf in grabbing others' property and strong as lion.
An almost similar list of qualifications is mentioned by Sajjasaka in the Carudatta: 'A cat to leap, a wolf to sneak away, a hawk to descry a house, sleep to gauge the strength of the slumbering, a snake to glide; illusion itself in changing either form or hue, goddess of speech to understand the dialects of the land, a light by night, darkness in dangers, the wind on land and a boat on water.' (3)

A thief should also know how to make breaches of various shapes and sizes with perfection in proper places, dig tunnels, find out whether people are really asleep or just feigning sleep, collect necessary information before entering into a house, use all the appliances necessary for theft, apply charms and spells and even medicines in cases of snake-bite and the bite of poisonous insects. He should conquer sleep, work noiselessly, restrain cough (as pointed out earlier) and avoid the sight of women. The sight of a sleeping woman may divert the attention of the burglar by exciting his passion and if under the influence of libido, he approaches the woman, she may raise a hue and cry and rouse the other inmates of the house. (4) Kale, however, says that 'The Sāstra advises thieves to avoid the sight of women; for, women being light in their sleep might at once raise an alarm on beholding a thief; and no violent hands can be laid on them.' (5)

A thief must also be very hard-working because cutting a breach or tunnelling is a very laborious task. Sometimes a thief had to spend a whole night in committing a burglary. (6) Going in a house and returning from considerable it with the booty at night
required considerable time as the thief had to move very cautiously, avoiding policemen, passers-by, early-risers talking to servants, and houses under women (gramnarinathem, etc.).

According to Kale, a thief avoided a house under the women-folk probably out of pity for the defenceless women or out of fear that "a women might raise an alarm on seeing a robber, and was not to be killed." It may also be contended that, as such houses were likely to be frequented by bad characters who would enter into them at midnight and come out at early dawn, they were unsafe for burgling. Above all, a thief should be strong, clever, resourceful, agile, painstaking and brave. All kinds of thieves, especially the knot-cutters possessed 'sharp intelligence, quick judgment and a well-developed faculty to win, the sympathies of most people.' In order to collect information, thieves and burglars had to associate with all classes of people; especially with those belonging to the lower strata of the society, and also with drunkards, gamblers and the like. As referred to already, a burglar should get rid of all goodness and virtue and be quite cruel and violent, pitiless, a man of cruelty and violence. A thief must be an inveterate liar and should stick to a lie, as mentioned before, even at the cost of his life.

Among the numerous characteristics of a successful thief, his cleverness and tricky nature attract our attention most. Indeed, a thief without shrewdness was an impossibility. Rauhineye kept himself prepared for future troubles. He forced the inhabitants of the village Sali to make an agreement with him. When asked by the king's men about him in his absence,
they were to say that he was a resident of their village, that his name was Durgacanda and that he had gone to another village. On finding that he had forgotten to bring the measuring tape Sarvilaka at once decided to use his sacred thread as its substitute. He boasted of his clever tricks thus: 'I had to stand like a wooden pillar of a house when a posse of the king's watchmen came near me. By hundreds of acts, mostly like these, I turned the night into day. Apaharavarmen who often indulged in theft thought out trick after trick at a moment's notice to meet exigencies and put them into execution with consummate skill. Being surprised by a police squad, he stonce pretended to be beaten by a snake and showed the cramps due to deadly poison.' On another occasion, he passed himself off as a madman to befoul some policemen, who came in his way. In order to make the union of the poor lover, Dhanamitra and his beloved, the daughter of the greedy merchant, Kuberedatta possible and to teach the latter and Dhanapatja rival, Arthapatja to whom Kuberedatta decided to give his daughter in marriage, Apaharavarmen, a typical amateur thief, hit upon a marvellous plan that befouled many including a courtezan and a king. On another occasion, having been arrested in a drunken state, on the street at night with a sword in his hand, Apaharavarmen posed as a cuckold and declared that out of spite he had stolen the magic wallet of his wife's paramour, Dhanamitra. As this Dhanamitra was his bosom friend, Srgalike, the maid of Apaharavarmen's wife, who was following him, stonce
saw through his plan, confessed the guilt of her mistress and fervently requested him to pardon his wife and give out to her the location of the place where he had secreted the jewels. Apaharavarman relented and when the maid came near him, he whispered to her his plan of action. He advised her to tell Dhansmitra to go to the King and say that Apaharavarman really introduced him to his wife but soon became jealous of him and stole his wallet. He should then request the king to persuade Apaharavarman to return it to him. The King would certainly believe it to be possible and postpone his execution. Then the maid was to free him from jail by some clever means. A thief, Sukumara by name, having decided to throw into the Ganges the lopped off head of his father which was kept in the king's treasury under strict vigil, poisoned the captain of the police and chopped off his hand. Then fastening it to a pole, he made a show of thrusting it into the treasury. The king who was there, lopped it off and slackened his vigil. In an unguarded moment, the thief got into the treasury put on the crown and royal dress, summoned the door-keepers and ordered them to cast the head of the thief into the Ganges, because his son, being unable to do that, had done much harm to the citizens. The thief Karpara was executed by a king for having illicit connection with his daughter who was, however, secretly carried off by his friend, Ghat. The indignant king ordered his servants to keep a strict watch over the corpse of Karpara which, his friend or relatives might try to take away for cremation. Ghat went near the corpse in the guise of a Pasupata ascetic with a pot of rice and milk in
his hand, deliberately broke it and began to lament, saying, 'O Karpers (pot) full of sweetness!' Next day he came there as a drunken villager accompanied by a bride and a servant. Being challenged by the guards, he said that he was going to his father-in-law's house taking some sweetmeats for him. He gave each of them a sweetmeat previously mixed a narcotic on the plea that by speaking to him, they had become his friends. Having thus stupefied the guards, Ghata brought fuel and burnt the corpse. The king then engaged new guards to watch the bones of Karpers. Ghata knew a hypnotic charm but to disarm the suspicion of the watchmen went near them with a mendicant. When the latter began to show off the muttering of spells, Ghata stupefied the guards and threw the bones into the Ganges. \(^{(18)}\)

A thief succeeded in seducing a princess by landing unobserved in a closely-guarded island in the Ganges. \(^{(19)}\) He sent down towards that island some floating water-vessels and having covered his head with one of them, swam to that place. \(^{(17)}\)

When the corpse of a thief was being dragged through the town, his son, in order to create an opportunity for his mother to mourn her husband's death without creating suspicion in the minds of the king's men who were dragging it, climbed upon a tree and when the corpse was brought near their home, fell down on the ground. \(^{(20)}\) His mother, realizing his intention hostilely embraced him and gave full vent to her grief. \(^{(20)}\) A thief, in order to humiliate a king who used to punish thieves mercilessly, placed his sleeping queen on the bed of a labourer and the latter's wife
on the royal bed. To chastise the superintendent of the Police, he entered into his house in his absence introducing himself as his son-in-law who had been long away. He succeeded in carrying off the women of the house to another place on the plea of the minister's sudden arrest by the king's men. On another occasion, being chased by a man who was engaged by the king to arrest him, he went to a washerman and persuaded him to allow him to do his job. Eventually, the real washerman who stood looking on, was arrested. He then went one night to the house of the man appointed by the king to capture him and offered him some presents from the king. As that man stretched out his hand to take them, he cut it off and went to the palace with it. Boring a hole into the royal chamber, he pushed the severed hand through it. When the king chopped it off, he fled and soon the king's men were arrested and ordered to be executed. A thief named Vasana placing a dead child on his bundle of loot began to cry while passing along the street, saying that his only child had died. This however, created suspicion in the mind of a veteran thief, named Catura who followed the former, went ahead of him and waited for him in a cemetery lying as a corpse among the dead. Vasana came there to bury his loot but before doing that, looked about him cautiously and then pierced the limbs of the corpses therein as a precautionary measure to verify whether anybody was alive to watch his action. Catura bore the pain calmly and when Vasana went away, dug out his loot and gave it to a courtesan, Rupasana. Finding that his buried treasure had been stolen, Vasana made a clever plan to catch the thief. With the help of the king whom he promised to restore the
golden peacock stolen by him from the top of a temple, he raised the price of the pan-leaf (betel-leaf) to an exorbitant amount and in the guise of an ascetic stood in the market place to watch the persons who would buy it at that prohibitive price. He knew that the thief must have sustained knife-injuries for the cure of which pan-leaves were essential and no price was too much for the thief who was now in possession of the golden peacock. When a slave-girl of Rupesena bought some leaves, he told the king that the thief who stole the peacock from him was staying at that courtezan's house and got him arrested. Another thief, Musala stole in a clever way a bowl from the house of his friend (also a thief) where he went on a friendly visit and hid it in a pond. On not finding his bowl next morning, the host cautiously touched the feet of his sleeping friend and finding them cold, tracked his footsteps to the pond and found out the bowl. Two thieves, one young and the other, old once started digging for a treasure around a campaka tree. The young thief's spade struck a jar of gold coins but he told his friend that it was merely a stone. The elder thief, however, became suspicious and when the young thief fell asleep, he dug out two jars from that hole and buried them in the mud of a nearby pond and lay asleep. The young thief soon got up from his bed only to find the hole empty. He then closely inspected his friend's body and finding mud in his feet went to the pond. As he walked round it, frogs jumped into the water on three sides only. So he went to the fourth side and dug out the jars, loaded
them upon a cow and started for his village. Past master of human psychology, a thief, when ordered to be executed by the king, confided to him that he knew a wonderful art which would work only in the hands of a man who had never stolen anything. He then requested the king to take it from him.

As neither the king nor his ministers ventured to take it, the thief said, 'Where king and minister and Purohita do steal, how can I act otherwise?' The king had to set him free. The method followed by some robbers to exact ransom from their captives (e.g. freeing the father when captured along with the son to bring the ransom) shows their deep insight into human psychology.

Thieves and robbers could bear infinite pains. As pointed out earlier, a thief calmly bore knife-thrusts on his limbs. Another thief, while feigning death to deceive a fellow-thief, did not show any sign of pain when the latter dragged him through the street like a corpse and not a muscle of a cheat twitched when very hot water was poured upon his body.

Thieves were no discriminators of food. They lustily ate the leavings of food in houses they burgled and also the flesh of wild animals and roots. The thief, Kharapsa soaked his cake, which was baked on the coals of a funeral pyre, in the oil of a lamp placed in a temple. Members of the criminal tribes, who were mostly robbers generally lived on meat, fruits, etc. Both thieves and robbers were addicted to drinking and frequented wine-shops.

The boldness of thieves and robbers knew no bounds and
they did not hesitate to embrace death in an emergency. When the legs of a thief pushed through a hole in a house-well were caught by the inmates of that house, he asked his associates to cut off his head to make his identification impossible. (30) Forest-robbers pounced upon a caravan or a king's retinue over and over again though hundreds of them were being done to death by the former. (31)

As referred to earlier, Servilaka rushed off to free his friend from the prison of king Palaka, released him by breaking the jail, and ultimately murdered the king and placed his friend on the throne. Purnabhadra fearlessly fought against an elephant that was engaged to trample him to death and succeeded in wounding and driving it away. (32) When the thief, Kharpatė desecrated the lamp in the temple of the goddess Harasiddhi, the idol therein stuck out her tongue to frighten him but that fearless man hissed, 'Draw your tongue back into your mouth, harlot, or I shall smash you to pieces with this stone.' (33) To avoid arrest by the king's men who were hotly pursuing him, a bold thief decided to execute a magic charm which required great courage. (34)

Rupyakhura (35) publicly announced his plans before committing thefts. Sukumāra used to send letters to his prospective victims prior to the commitment of theft in their houses. (36)

Rauhiṇeye's mother urged him to scorn death thus: 'I should not grieve at your death... If you should fly at the sight of a fight, my son, you would expose to shame both your father's family and mine. If in a lion's family, a jackal should be born in the womb of a lioness, shame, shame upon such a miserable
Thieves, especially robbers were generally very cruel. Though burglars usually avoided bloodshed, some of them did not scruple to commit murder to gain their ends or to ensure their safety. Sarvileka and Apehrāravarmen were no abhorrers of bloodshed. A thief said that his ways were cruel. As the widow of king Uccala of Kashmir was ascending the pyre, the pilferers hurt her limbs in their eagerness to rob her ornaments. In a story of Hemaśīvaye, some bandits are called 'terrible as Yama's servants, vastly cruel like the Rākṣasas.' The forest-robbers would sacrifice their captives to their goddess or sell them as slaves. Robbers used to raid villages giving no quarter to bipeds, quadrupeds, resisters or non-resisters and often setting hamlets to fire. Some robbers cut off the hand of a Brāhmaṇa's plump wife as the jewellery did not come off her hands easily. They were so heartless as to take away the pudding prepared by a poor Brāhmaṇa for his hungry children while they looked on helplessly. When the Brāhmaṇa came to resist them, the robber-chief ran forward to meet him, butchered a cow which got into his way and chopped off the Brāhmaṇa's head. He also cut open the belly of the Brāhmaṇa's pregnant wife and also cut off his wailing children.

Some envious heretics once engaged some wandering thieves to murder the great Moggallāna whom they captured, tore him limb by limb and reduced his bones to powder. Some brigands suspecting a hermit of robbing their buried gold, beat him with
sticks, cut off his hands, feet and finally gouged out his eyes.\(^{(45)}\)

Robbers often had to be cruel for their own safety. 'It is highly impolitic for us', said some robbers, 'to take wealth without killing its possessor for if he is deprived of his wealth without being killed, he will certainly do us an injury.'\(^{(46)}\)

Thieves and robbers were generally treacherous and ungrateful. Thieves like Mândîya used to kill treacherously their helpers and coolies who carried their loot to their dens.\(^{(47)}\) A good doctor once cured a dog and a thief. The thief broke into his house, killed the dog and escaped with the doctor's wealth.\(^{(48)}\)

Robbers did not scruple to rob even their devoted wives of their ornaments. Thus a robber requested his rich wife to accompany him with all her ornaments to a mountain cliff where he would fulfil his vow of giving an offering to a deity. On going there, he told her that he wanted to take her jewels by killing her.\(^{(49)}\) Robbers often robbed travellers of their life and property by posing as their benefactor.\(^{(50)}\) Even the women and children of robbers were rude, cruel and repulsive. Some robber-children once captured an adventurer, bound him hand and foot, smeared him with blood and left him in the forest.\(^{(51)}\) Even their pet birds relished plunder and murder.\(^{(52)}\)

Generally uneducated and belonging to the low classes, thieves and robbers were very superstitious. They believed in ghosts, spirits and omens. The thief, Vasmā, while burying his loot in a cemetery, was thoroughly alarmed by the cry of a she-jackal which, according to him, was an indication that somebody was watching him secretly.\(^{(53)}\) Some
thieves were scared off by a sneezing woman whom they took for a yaksini (a female spirit). A thief took fright on seeing a woman in a hole. Robbers regarded the sight of a corpse on their way to robbery as a good prognostic. Ignoring of a bad omen would, according to them, lead to disasters. The terrible shouts of Devadanti terrified the Philies who fled in every direction.

Generally very lustful, thieves and robbers frequented brothels. According to J.J. Meyer, thieves and other criminals are inseparable from public women. A thief even overcame his greed for ornaments in order to enjoy a beautiful woman. The thief, Lohakhura used to enjoy other men's wives. The robbers and members of the criminal tribes abducted women whenever they found an opportunity and made them their concubines. As even the nuns were raped by the robbers, the former were advised to cover their private parts with grass, earth, etc. On seeing the beautiful wife of Agaladatta, a robber-chief stood still fixing his gaze upon her. Agaladatta, taking advantage of his diversion, killed him with a mortal blow. Besides wine-drinking, meat-eating and association with prostitutes, gambling was also very common among these outlaws. Rauhineya's father rated his son severely for not gambling, hunting wild animals, eating meat and drinking wine. He was, in the opinion of his father, breaking the rules of their house. As mentioned before, master-thieves and robber-chief's used to live gorgeously in their caves and strongholds which were full of harlots and dancing girls. As phraotes, king of Taxila, said to the Greek Apollonius, thieves
on whom fear of justice presses, 'hurry to enjoy the present hour, and give themselves up to gluttony, debauchery and effeminacy'. Among the robbers, sexual morality was at a very low ebb. Licentiousness was very common. A hunter-king killed one of his followers and forced his wife to cohabit with him. Their wives too were profligate, living with paramours and killing their husbands if they opposed their debauchery.

Being idle by nature, thieves disliked to live by manual labour. Though showing flashes of energy now and then, they were incapable of doing laborious work for a long time. Once two thieves had to abandon their noble resolve to earn bread by the sweat of their brow as their jobs demanded very hard labour. According to the Mehabitkovikas, the eldest of the Pandu brothers joined a band of bandits finding their mode of life excellent. These robbers looked down upon the toils of tillage and gave themselves up to the more profitable pursuit of pillaging towns and villages and laying up stores of riches and grain and providing themselves with fish and flesh, toddy and other beverage, passing their life thus jovially in feasting and drinking.

Thieves, though generally very bold, often took fright for trivial reasons. Their courage faded at the approach of the dawn. Servimska said, 'Whoever stares closely at me as I walk rapidly, or approaches me quickly as I stand in a state of distraction, — my suspicious mind internally treats all such persons equally; for it is one's own faults that fill a man with apprehension.' A teacher taught his dullard pupil a charm, 'you are rubbing, you are rubbing! Why are you rubbing? I know too.'
Being awakened by some noise made by burglars while breaking into his house, the pupil began to recite the charm upon which the burglars fled in fear dropping even their clothes thinking that the householder had been observing them. The wild cry of a blind prince, himself frightened, scared some thieves away. (74)

Thieves and bandits were wont to use filthy language, and ridicule honesty. (76) They regarded a pious fellow as a weakling and a coward. (77)

They were also vindictive by nature. (78) Seeing a suspicious-looking man whose feet were spattered with mud and robe was drawn over his head, the treasurer, Sumangala said to himself that the man must be a night-prowler. On hearing this, that thief bore him a grudge and burnt the treasurer's field seven times, mutilated his cattle and burnt his house and the Perfumed Chamber built by him at a huge cost and lastly even tried to kill him.

In the Kadambari, there is a fairly detailed picture of the repulsive character of the Sabara people, a tribe of habitual criminals. Their life was full of folly and their actions were condemned by the good. Their religion was the offering of human flesh to Durga. Their food consisted of meat, wine and so forth. This was loathed by the good. Hunting was their exercise and their sestra was the cry of the jackals. Owls were their teachers of what was good or bad. Knowledge of birds was regarded as wisdom. Their companions were the dogs. Desolate woods formed their kingdom. A drinking bout was their
feast. Bows were their friends. The heads of their arrows were smeared with poison and caused the destruction of deer. Other men's wives taken captive became their concubines. They lived with tigers. They worshipped gods with blood of beasts, offered flesh as sacrificial offering and earned their livelihood by theft. Gems found on the hoods of snakes were used by them as ornaments. Their cosmetics consisted of the ichor of wild elephants. They utterly destroyed the very forest wherein they lived.

The word 'Pulinda' meaning a criminal tribe signified vice and misery. According to the Pulindas, vice brought success in life. They were also described as 'cruel, confused of mind, ever rogues.' The Kūrātas (another criminal tribe) were unfair in trade, cheating the customers whenever they found an opportunity. In Pali, the words Kūratika, Kūrativa, etc. (Sanskrit Kairataka) mean, cunning or hypocritical. According to the Mēhābherata, the Kūrātas 'live on fruit' and roots, dress in skins and perform cruel deeds with their cruel swords.' A repentant thief confessed that his life was full of shame. (81)

So long only the seamy side of the criminals' character has been shown. Though they were 'as rough and mean as they can be, regardless of noble men and even gods', sometimes they are said to possess some sterling qualities which even the noblest man could be envious of. (82)

Though generally cruel, they often showed unexpected mercy towards their victims. They had a soft corner, especially
for the poor. Sarvilska almost decided not to take a jewel casket from the hands of the sleeping Maitreya because 'it is hardly proper to rob a man of good birth who is as poor as I am.' (83)

A thief was once engaged by a man to rob his cousin, a pandita (a learned man or a teacher). As the thief stood concealed near the house of the pandita, he heard the latter describing his troubles to his wife who began to weep. This melted his stony heart and instead of burgling into the house, he dropped a bag of money there with a letter in cipher which meant that he was not a mere burglar. He had a heart. (84) A hunter robbed a Brahman of his belongings including his sandals and as the latter was feeling difficulty in walking barefoot, he gave him his own worn-out shoes, out of pity. (85) A generous robber let off a poor Brahman who had a thousand pieces of money with him. (86) A master thief's shrewd policy led a king to believe that his superintendent of Police was himself a thief. When the latter was ordered to be executed, the thief, however, became very sorry for him and came to the king and saved the superintendent's life by proving his innocence. On seeing that a poor couple had nothing except some straw as use as bed for their child, a thief threw a piece of cloth over it and went off in tears. (88)

Some forest-robbers about to sacrifice a boy to Ganesha, gave him to an old Brahman when he claimed him to be his missing son. (89) A Brahman robber fought against his own fellows to save the life of a Brahman. A robber-chief released Vasudatta from bondage as his heart melted with pity at the sight of the
Two feminine-stricken Candélas having been arrested by the warders of a bandit village for trespassing into it were pardoned by the robber-chiefs who were moved to pity on hearing their tale of woe. They fed the Candélas, and took them in their band. Five robbers supported for long twelve years the family of an ascetic who had left it to its fate during a famine.

Though generally treacherous, the sense of gratitude was not entirely foreign to thieves and robbers. A thief left a house empty-handed because as his hand slipped into a vessel of curds therein, he tasted the liquid. The idea is that one should not steal in a house where he had once eaten some food. Sarvileka having unconsciously done some harm to Vassantasaña, his benefactress, expressed his sorrow thus:

'Alas! That branch of a tree, to which I had resorted for shade when suffering from summer's heat, — that very branch has been despoiled of its foliage by me, in my ignorance.'

Rauhineya said that he would not destroy a city because his ancestors ate food sent by its people as tribute. The Pulinda chief, Vindhyaketu released from captivity Sundarasena whom he earlier decided to sacrifice before Candika because he suddenly recognised him to be the son of Mahásena whose court he had frequented and received many a favour from him. He fell to the ground lamenting pitifully for this misdeed, bandaged his wounds and administered medicines to him. He also released all
the other captives at Sundarasena's request. Soon Sundarasena got back his abducted wife who was at that time captured by the chief's men along with her captor, a merchant. Vindhyaketu celebrated the reunion of the couple by arranging a great feast at which all the women of his tribe danced. He also honoured the couple with clothes and unguents. He made Sundarasena sit on a magnificent throne and honoured him with gifts, pearls, musk, etc. Another robber-chief, Candasesa learnt from a captive women that she was the daughter of his benefactor who once saved his life. He began to regard her as his sister and at her request ordered his men to search her husband separated from her during the chief's attack upon them. The chief vowed to enter into fire if he was not found out within six months. When she gave birth to a son, the chief vowed to offer ten men to goddess Candasesa if the mother and the child should remain in good health. Soon her husband was found out and, at his request, the chief agreed to abolish the custom of offering living beings to the goddess.

A young merchant, Dharana once earned the gratitude of a Kirata-chief named Kalesena by curing his wound. One day this chief unknowingly plundered the Caravan of this very merchant and came to know about this from one of his captives whom he recognised to be a retainer of Dharana. He at once sent his men to look for the merchant. On their failure to find him out, Kalesena fainted from grief and after recovering consciousness bewailed his ingratitude. He vowed that he would enter into fire.
in case he did not find him out within five days. He also promised to sacrifice ten men to Candika if he was found out soon.

After a few days, his men captured Dherana and took him along with others to the temple to offer them to the goddess. There Kalasena recognised him by his boldness and unselfish attitude and asked for his pardon. Dherana successfully persuaded him to worship the goddess in future with hymns of praise and flowers.

Another merchant, Dhansadatta cured with a charm the beloved wife of the Bhilla chieftain, Sihaecanda, and was rewarded by him for his service. The prince, Sena and his wife joined a caravan which was attacked by the Bhillas in a forest. Sena rushed into the fight and downed the Bhilla chief but spared his life. The grateful chief restored the looted property to the caravan and presented a belt to Sena. He also promised to send his men in search of Sena’s missing wife and ultimately made the reunion of the couple possible. Mrgankadatta sought the help of Mayavatu, king of the Pulindas whom he once saved from three water spirits, in his fight against the father of his beloved whom he wanted to carry off from his custody. The chief gladly agreed to help him. To show his gratitude to the prince, he alighted from his horse, ran forward, fell at his feet and embraced his benefactor. He then fought against the army of the lady’s father and helped the prince to carry her off to his (Mayavatu’s) palace where their wedding took place.

A merchant called Vasudatta once saved a Sabara chief from capital punishment by paying a lakh of gold pieces to the king.
The chief, on his return to the forest at first thought of making for him a beautiful necklace of pearls gathered from the heads of slain elephants. But as he saw a beautiful lady coming that way on a lion's back, he decided to marry her to his saviour. After that he generally lived in his friend's house. (98)

Thieves and robbers sincerely loved and honoured their friends and allies. Leaving his beloved lady on the road, Sarvīlaśa wanted to rush to the succour of his friend, Āryaka. He said, 'In this world, these two things are exceedingly dear to men, viz. a friend and a wife; but now the circumstances are such that the friend has become more important than even a hundred fair wives.' (99) Ghatā's deep love for his friend, Sarvīlaśa has already been referred to. He performed Āryaka's funeral rites at a great personal risk. Udayana and his beloved Vēṣasaṃdāta while going to seek the protection of their ally, Pulindaka, the king of the Pulindas, was attacked in the Vindhyā forest by the chief's men. Udayana fought back heroically and was at last recognised by Pulindaka who prostrated himself before him and then took the couple to his village and arranged their wedding with great pomp. (100) Mrgeṇkaśāta was helped by the Kirāta and Matanga chiefs because they were the friends of Mrgeṇkaśāta's ally, Mēyēvētu. (101)

In their family life, thieves and robbers behaved like ordinary men. They loved their wives, sons and sisters and respected their parents. They had great respect for their gods and time-honoured customs and performed the funeral rites with
with meticulous care. The Bhilla-chief Simhasanda deeply loved his wife Simhavati. Thieves generally tried to give proper coaching to their sons so that they could even surpass their fathers in the skill in thieving. Rauhineya was the delight of his father. But though loving, thieves never hesitated to send their sons on dangerous missions to gather experience. When Rauhineya refused to kill or drink wine like others of his family, his father sternly said, 'Conduct yourself according to my wishes or prepare for death at my hands.' Sons of thieves greatly respected their parents. At the behest of his parents, Rauhineya took to thieving though he did not like it at all. Ignoring his personal safety, Sukumara, as pointed out earlier, performed the funeral rites of his father. Sarvilaka lamented that though a son of a 'very learned Brahmana, he had unfortunately turned a thief. Sisters of thieves often acted as their helpmates. Their wives generally loved them, mourned their death and were proud of the prowess of their husbands. Rauhineya's mother proudly described the qualities of her husband and urged her son to follow his example. As pointed out before, Cheta performed the funeral rites of his friend as perfectly as possible.

Generally speaking, thieves and robbers made the rich their targets and sympathised with the poor. Sajjasaka said, 'I feel no compunction in my mind if I come across the house of a merchant who is rich and greedy, who disregards honest men, and is ruthless in business.' Apeheravarman left nothing in
richman's house excepting some mud-pots. He robbed all the wealthy misers of a city and gave that wealth to the poor and made them rich. 'Those misers with earthen bowls in their hands are moving begging at the gate-ways of these (newly) rich people.'\(^{(114)}\) Rauhineya declared, 'Truly the \(\text{common}\) people do not need to be afraid to me in the least; \(\text{but}\) I shall come night after night and constantly play tricks with ease on the king, the prince, the minister and the policemen.' He earned popularity by distributing his wealth among the poor.\(^{(115)}\)

Though greedy, thieves did not like excessive greed. Mahēblesa refrained from stealing in the houses of a merchant, a courtesan and a Brāhmaṇa simply out of disgust on seeing their inordinate love for riches.\(^{(116)}\) He saw through a lattice window that a merchant was bitterly quarrelling with his son over some small disagreement of accounts. He went away contemplating that such a miser who quarrelled with his diligent son over a trifle must die of heartbreak if he was robbed of his property. He was also surprised to see that a courtesan was entertaining a leper for money and in disgust, left her house. Lastly he saw a sleeping Brāhmaṇa who said, 'Thank you', mechanically when a dog urinated into his outstretched hands. As the greed of that Brāhmaṇa for gift persisted even in sleep, the thief deemed it beneath his dignity to rob such a despicable person.

There are some examples of thieves' regard for their word, and for truth and faithfulness. A robber-chief impressed by the valour of his victim promised to make him his chief minister
if he ever became a king. He fulfilled his promise when he really obtained the throne. A thief who once let go a lady unmolested on her promise of coming back to him after her wedding, did not enjoy her when she actually came, out of his regard for her honesty.

Somethieves and robbers are said to have followed some sort of moral code. Servilakr said, 'I do not rob a woman with ornaments on, looking like a creeper in blossom; I do not steal a Prahman's wealth, nor gold collected for the purpose of a sacrifice; so, too, I never, during my search after money, rob a child lying on a nurse's lap. Thus my mind has always been given to the discrimination of what is right and wrong, even in the act of committing a theft.' The robber-chief, Kayavya and his followers refrained from slaying women, children, cowards, ascetics and those who did not resist. His men did not kidnap women and always tried to do good to the Prahmanes. Kayavya used to give the flesh of deer to the Prahmanes regularly.

There is a rare example of a robber who lamented for murdering at the direction of his petbird, a man who did not have any money with him.

High-born thieves were well-grounded in the various Kala (Arts). On entering a palace, Aparavavarman saw a sleeping princess for whom he felt a strong passion. He painted in a board the sleeping princess and also himself as kneeling at her feet with folded hands. Then he wrote a verse: 'This your slave here, with folded hands, implores of you this object that is so well
known, viz. — sleep with me, exhausted in sport alone, and not in this manner. Then he chewed some betel-leaves, a bit of camphor and scented catechu and spat on the white wall with its reddish juice. The shape of a pair of Cakravakas was thus created on the wall. (122)

Another thief who entered into king Bhoja's treasure-house through a tunnel heard him repeating a half stanza several times as he was apparently unable to compose the rest. Unable to restrain his flow of poetical inspiration, the thief exclaimed the remaining half stanza. The king composed this couplet:

'This, which within the moon has
the appearance of a strip of cloud,
People call a hare, but to me it,
does not wear that form.'

The thief's composition ran thus:

'But I think that the moon has its body marked
with the brands of a hundred scars,
Entrenched by the meteor-strokes of the side-long glances of the fair girls afflicted by separation from your foes.' (123)

This thief was richly rewarded by the king. The oratorical skill of Rauhineyes was also very impressive. (124)

A thief, eager to vindicate justice, saved a man from execution. A profligate woman left her house at night to see her paramour who was hanged by the city-guards on the supposition that he was a thief. As she was kissing his mouth, the corpse which was then animated by a vetâla bit off her nose. She then
returned to her house, went to the king and accused her innocent husband of mutilating her. The king ordered her husband to be executed. But a thief who entered into their house that night and followed her to rob her ornaments, disclosed everything to the king. He did it knowing fully well that his confession might lead to his own execution. \(125\)  

**Justification and Condemnation of Theft by Thieves:**

Nobody looks down upon his profession. The thieves and robbers generally regarded their calling as respectable and adventurous, affording easy means of livelihood. Robbers, especially forest-robbers like the Thuggees considered their avocation, as already pointed out, to be sacred having some sort of divine sanction. Sarvilaka is vociferous in his praise of thieving: 'Let people call as they will, this a vile trade, which thrives well when people are asleep; and that getting the better of people by cheating them when they are unsuspicous, is mere thieving, and by no means a brave deed. Still, even a condemnable position of independence is preferable to serving others with folded hands. And this is the path that was followed of Yore by Drona's son \(\text{Asvatthamay}\) when he assassinated the Kshatriya princes in sleep. \(126\) Rauhinaya proudly declared: 'Let all the people hear, I am a thief, born in a thieves' family, of pure thief lineage on both father's and mother's side'. \(127\) Indeed 'the despised occupation which is born with one is surely not to be discarded. The practiser of the Vedic rites, though tender with pity, has to be heartless in the act
of killing animals. A pet bird rebuked his master, a robber, for shrinking from attacking a king. This, in its opinion, amounted to contempt for the calling he lived by. Sarviléke, who was not a hereditary thief, however, condemned stealing. According to him, theft was a 'deed of sin', 'crime, 'that shuns the light of day.' He lamented that by committing theft in Carudetta's house, he tarnished the good name of his family.
REFERENCE

1. Mrcchakatika, III. 20-21:
Marjērah Kramene argahe prasarane syeno grahālunçene
Suptāsuptamanusyavirystulene śe sarpene pannagah /
Meyu rūpeśarīravesārēcē Vēgdesăbhesentare
Dīpo ratriśu samketeu dūdbhō veji sthale nrurjele // 20 //

Apīca /
Bhujega iva gateu girih sthirāta petegepeteh
periserpene ca tulyeh /
Sasa iva bhuvanāvalokene'hem Vrke iva ca grahene
bele ca simbha  // 21 //

See Mrcchakatika, ed. Kale, pp. 120-21.

2. Ibid. Notes, p. 69; ibid., ed. Haridās Siddhāntavegīṣṇu,
p. 231.

3. Carudatta, III. 11. See Phāsaṃetakaścēra, ed. C.R. Devedha,
p. 229:
Merjērah plavene vrko'pasarene syeno grahāloke
Nidra suptāstaṃsuvirystulene smasarpene pannagah /
Meyu vāraṣeṣarīrabhedakarane vāg desabhēsentare
Dīpo ratriśu samkete ca timirām vasyaḥ sthale nrurjele //

5. Mrcchakatika, op.cit.; Notes, pp. 64-65.
6. Ibid., III. 23; IV. 1-3.

7. Desēkumaṛacerīta, op.cit., Notes, p. 75; Penoj Bṣeṣu, op.cit.,
Vol. II, pp. 38 and 120: Thieves do not enter into a house
where there is a patient or a baby, or an old man or a man
or women of loose character.


13. Mrochekatike, op. cit., pp. 114, 136. Also see p. 120.


15. Ibid., pp. 57ff.

16. Ibid., pp. 63ff. Vol. XLV,


18. Ibid., p. 207; see p. 208 for a somewhat similar tale.

19. Ibid., p. 208.

20. Ibid., p. 209.


24. Ibid., p. 214.

25. Sadhu, op. cit., p. 60. Vol. XLIV,


27. J.C. Jain, op. cit., p. 67. Vol. XLV,


31. Ibid., p. 219.

32. Desakumāracarita, (Chap. IV), op. cit., p. 124.
34. Ibid., pp. 121ff.
35. Rauhineyacaritra (8ff.), *op.cit.*, pp. 159ff.
37. Rauhineyacaritra (120ff.), *op.cit.*, pp. 159ff.
38. Mṛchakatika, Act III; Dēsakumārcerite, Chp. II.
40. Rṣistaranjini, VIII. 368. 16.
42. Ibid., p. 220.
43. Ibid., pp. 216ff.
46. Ibid., p. 116.
48. Ibid., p. 218.
51. Ibid., pp. 213-14.
54. Ibid., p. 227.
Russel, Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces, Vol. IV, p. 493: 'If we see a cat when we are near the place where we intend to commit a dacoity, or we hear the relations of a dead person lamenting, or hear a person sneeze while cooking his meal, or see a dog run away with a portion of any person's food, or a kite screams while sitting on a tree, or a woman breaks the earthen vessel in which she may have been drawing water, we consider the omen unfavourable. If a person drops his turban, or we meet a corpse, or the Jemadar has forgotten to put some bread into his waist belt, or any dacoit forgets his axe or spear, or sees a snake whether dead or alive; these omens are also considered unfavourable and we do not commit the dacoity.' These unfavourable omens were described by a member of the Senses caste of wandering criminals. See The Kethas., op. cit., Vol. III, p. 86, Note 1.

Bloomfield, op. cit., p. 212; Desekumacerarita (Chap. II), op. cit., pp. 89ff.


Bloomfield, op. cit., p. 218.


Reuhinevaceritra (3ff.), op. cit., pp. 159ff.

69. Ibid., p. 213.
71. R.K. Nookerji, "Chandragupta Maurya and His Times," Appendix I.
72. Vrachakatike (Act III), op.cit., p. 137.
75. Dasakumāracarita (Introduction, Chap. II), op.cit., 24ff.
77. Raunihneyacaritā (82ff.), op.cit., pp. 159ff.
78. Buddhist Legends, op.cit., p. 301.
84. Sādhu, op.cit., pp. 81ff.
89. Dasakumāracarita, op.cit., p. 15.
90. Ibid., pp. 24ff.
96. Reuhineyaceritra (192ff.), op.cit., pp. 159ff.
100. Bloomfield, op.cit., p. 231.
104. Reuhineyaceritra (31ff.), op.cit., pp. 159ff.
110. Ibid., p. 209.
111. Reuhineyaceritra (75ff.), op.cit., pp. 159ff.
113. Desakumercerita (Chap. II), ed. N.Bhaktavatsalam (trans.),
p. 25.
114. Ibid., p. 33.
115. Reuhineyaceritra (80ff. and 140ff.), op.cit., p. 159ff.
129. The *Jateks*, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, No. 503 (Sattigumba-Jateks).