CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION

The physical entity of Central Provinces can be best focussed after gylmpsing through the geographical distribution of the province. It stretched from Bundelkhand in the north to the Madras Presidency in the south; from the Frontier of Bengal in the east, to Malwa Plateau and Deccan in the west, the Central Provinces enjoyed the focal centre of the Indian Peninsula.¹ Taking the 18th to the 24th degree of North Latitude and from the 77th to the 83rd degree of East Longitude².

Their extreme length from north to south may be computed at 510, and their extreme breadth from east to west at 550 miles.³ The province was bound on the north by the Bundelkhand States of Tahri and Panna, on the west and north-west by the British Districts of Lalitpur and Chanderi, belonging to the North Western Provinces, the State of Bhopal and Scindia's Dominions; on the south

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
and south-west by Berar and Nizam's dominion; on the south-east by Rajamundri district of the Madras Presidency; on the east by the Jaipur state, and by the Bengal portion known as tributary mehals. 4

In general terms, the Central Provinces may be described as an extensive British Territory, situated in the very heart and centre of the Indian peninsula, dissociated, geographically and politically, from other British Provinces; and though occasionally touching upon neighbouring British Districts, yet for the most part surrounded on all sides by Foreign Territory.

The first striking feature of the central provinces was its division into nearly two halves by the Satpura Hills. The range runs south of the river Narmada from east to west with in itself it embraces considerable tracts of table land, which have been formed into several districts. There were three kinds of districts in central provinces, first, those north of or above the Satpura Hills; second, those belonging to the Hills; and third, those south of or below the Hills. The districts in and above the Satpura Hills have the better

climate. To begin with, in the north-west the districts of Sagar and Damoh are included in the Vindhya or Malwa Plateau, which rises in height from the North of the Nermada river. Then to the south there comes the Vindhya Hills, a comparatively low and irregular range overlooking the valley of the Nermada River. This valley commence from the western limit of Hushangabad District (not far from Mhow and Indore) passing through the Narsingpur District on to Jabalpur. It is bound on the north, by the Vindhyas and reaches to the Satpura which form its southern boundary. At Jabalpur it is gradually cut off by the off shoots of the Satpura Hills. Then from Jabalpur running northwords towards Mirzapur, upto the frontier of the Rewa Agency, there is a tract which is really a brach of the Nermada valley, though it is not permeated by any stream of note. The districts in the Satpura range from the hill region of the central provinces, commence from the elevated Plateau of Amarkantak, where the river Nermada has its source. Due west there comes the Seoni District, generally wild and hilly, but with some rich valley and plateau. Westward again is the Chhindwara District, once the seat of the principal Gond Dynasty in these provinces. To the west

5. Ibid. p.2.
is the Betul District, possessing one extensive Table Land, where the River Taptee has its source.

The Districts south of or below the Satpura range constitutes, in the first place, the Province of Nagpur proper. These are separated from Berar and the Nizam’s Dominions by the river Wurdha, running from north to south. The next great Division is the valley of the Wynganga, which flows nearly parallel to the Wurdha from north to south. Towards the north, where the river debouches from the Satpura Hills, the valley is broad, on the right bank opposite the capital Nagpur, the valley reaches out to a great breath till it is separated by some hilly country from the valley of the Wurdha. Here, then, is the great plain of Nagpur stretching from Nagpur to the River Wynganga for forty miles of flat unbroken cultivation of wheat and maize. On the opposite side of the river the country is more broken or undulating, but partially cultivated, chiefly by means of irrigation from Tanks, this tract might almost be called the Lake Region of Nagpur. Proceeding southward the valley of the Wyngunga becomes narrower, until at last it joins the Wurdha below Chanda. Its feeders have also valleys of a similar character. Proceeding eastward the attention is arrested by the
plateau of Chattisgarh. The northern or upper portion has its surface broken up by a variety of small hills and ranges of irregular formation. Its principal place is the old city of Ratanpur. From the forest-clothed hills far down to the south there rise the Mahanadi and the Sew Rivers. These run northwards almost parallel to each other, and both intersect the plains of Chattisgarh in the neighbourhood of Raipur.

Eastward beyond the valley of the Mahanadi, there intervened the petty states, dependencies of Sambhalpur. A stream named the Jank, formed the boundary between the Raipur District, Nagpur province and these states. These tracts were poor and barbarous, yet possessed the great capability of improvement; held by feudal chiefs, tributaries of the British Government.

The Sambhalpur territory, then consisted in reality of the valley of the Mahanadi and its feeder the Eebe, which traverse the whole district from one extremity to the other. The remainder of the district, though extensive in area, consisted chiefly of hill and forest, with occasional valleys partially reclaimed.

The south-eastern portion of the Nagpur province stretched from the valley of the Wynganga and the plains
of the Chattishgarh, down to the Godawari on the south and almost to the range of the Eastern Ghat Mountains that over hang the littoral districts of Bengal and Madras. It is divided into two portions by the Indrawati River, which rising in the Eastern Ghats, runs in a south-west course to join the Godawari with a few small and rare exceptions, the upper portion north of the Indrawati, was composed of out lying portions of the Chanda, Bhandara and Raipur Districts, and of the Bostar State. It was entirely uncultivated and uninhabited, and was almost untrodden by men, except in one line traversed once or twice a year by the hardy Bunjara Traders with their long strings of laden bullocks. This track was the solitary mark of human occupation. On the whole it was one of the British dominions in the east. In area it was as large as two or three districts in the settled provinces. Yet its total revenues was under a few thousand of rupees and its population under a few thousand of people.

On the south bank of Indrawati is situated Jagdalphur which was the capital of Bostar, a Native state, under political control of British authority, with a large area and a small half civilized population. Beyond
Buster, stretching far to the north-east, close up to Sambhalpur there was the outlying state of Kharonde or Kalahandi, also a petty principality. Under the political control of British authority. The eastern limits of Buster touched upon the Jaipur states, which were under the political jurisdiction of the Madras Presidency. The various districts now been described, in their external aspect, are the Central Provinces; vast in geographical area, infinitely varied in local and topographic details, sometimes flat and fertile, but generally wild and rugged, abounding in hills, forests and brushwood, sparsely populated and scantily cultivated for the most part, but occasionally opening out into long and broad tracts covered with harvests and thickly inhabited on the whole, poor and unproductive, but rich in various resources and capable of indefinite development in the future.

Apart from the geographical distribution of central provinces, its past history also deserve a special mention. The earliest Dynasties in this part of India, of which anything is now either recorded or remembered, are those of the Gond Rajputs. But prior to these, and superior to them in civilization, there must have been several Hindu dynasties which are only now known by
architectural remains—some at Jabalpur on the banks of the Narmada, some in the hilly part of Chattishgarh and some at Bustar in the heart of the wilderness.

An authentic historical utterances of the central provinces can be traced from the ancient past. Its mention in different epigraphic numismatic sources also presents the glorious history of this region. As regards to the glorious periods of Maurya and other Empires, central provinces also bears testimony in the form of coins and inscriptions. The existence of one of Asoka's rock edicts at Rupnath, Jabalpur, proves that his empire had once embraced this portion of the province. From the inscriptions found in Seoni and the Ajanta Caves, it has been concluded that the Vakataka dynasty was ruling over the Satpura Plateau and Nagpur from the 3rd century A.D. Similarly the portions of the Nagpur and Wardha districts belonged to the old kingdom of Vidarbha, which was in existence, during the 2nd Century B.C. These districts then passed successively to the Andhra Dynasty and the Rashtrakutas of the south (750-1087 A.D.)⁶. From the 9th to 12th centuries A.D.

Sagar and Damoh were the parts of the Chandel Kingdom of Mahoba.

After the 13th century there is a dark period which extends right up to the rise of Gond power in the central provinces in the 15th century A.D.. The earliest Gond kingdom was that of Kherla near Betul, which first emerged in 1398, whose Raja Narsingh Rai, is stated to have taken part in the wars between Bahamani kings and those of Malwa and Khandesh. Further in the 16th century A.D. Sangram Shah, the Gond Raja of Garha-Mandla, extended his dominion over Sagar, Damoh, Nermada valley, Mandla and Seoni.

During the late medieval period, Mughal conquests penetrated the north western portion of the provinces during the reign of Sangram Shah's successor, whose widow Durgawati was defeated by a Mughal general in 1564. A subah was formed out of the western part of Hoshungabad, Sagar and Damoh districts during the 16th century and a fort and garrison were maintained at Dhamoni near Sagar. Nimar, however, did not form part of Gondwana and was for the two earlier centuries under the Faruki kings of Khandesh. In 1600, Akbar's forces captured the fort of Asirgarh and annexed entire
Khandesh to the Mughal empire. Later on Berar also became the Mughal Province including Wardha and Betul districts. Thus the Mughal empire included, a strip along with the western border of the province, while the centre was still occupied by the gond kingdoms. And in Chattisgarh the old Hailhaivashi Dynasty remained in power.

The Mahamedan princes and generals who were settled in Malwa did sooner or later occupied the finest parts of the Nermada valley. And the city of Hoshungabad was named after the well known Hoshung Khan. The Maratha province of Nagpur, too, having been brought under Mahamedan rule, was made a dependency of the vice Royalty of the Deccan. As the Mahamedan Empire become broken up, and a general scramble for empire commenced, and as the tide of Maratha invasion ebbed and flowed, revolutions swept like so many waves one after the other. The Nermada districts suffered in common with Malwa, a long series of misfortunes. Thus the landholding portion of the Hindu population were trodden out or banished, and the Gonds were driven to

8. Ibid.
the hills and woods. And at the last, these much vexed provinces suffered partially from pindari incursions; the robber tribe of Pindaries having fixed their headquarters in the wild and strong country on the banks of the Nermada below Hoshungabad. The depopulation and devastation which occurred in those successive periods of evil greatly modified the circumstances and character of the people.

Ultimately, however, the districts of Sagar and Damoh, and part of the Hoshungabad district, were incorporated in the dominion of the Maratha house of Scindia, while the rest of the country was included in the kingdom established by the Maratha House of Bhonsla. Bhonslas accumulated a great extent of territory. The Bhonslas also reduced the Gond Rajput Chiefs who were driven out from the Deccan by the Mahamedans, had established themselves in the wilds of Bustra near the Godawari and also over the Gond and Gond Rajput Chieftains, who governed the districts of Mahanadi, now known as Sambhalpur and its dependencies. Hence they extended their possessions over the Cuttack region right down to the sea. It is also to be remembered that the Bhonslas

owned as one of their first possessions the province of Berar, and borne the title of Rajas of Berar. After the first Maratha war in 1803, Berar was shorn off from the Nagpur kingdom and transferred to the Nizam of the Deccan. At the same time the Province of Cuttak was ceded to the British. The power of the Bhonslas culminated under the first and greatest of the Rughojees. He ruled from the Bay of Bengal in the east to the Ajanta Hills overlooking Kandesh in the west, from the Nermada in the north to the Godawari in the south, over one of the greatest kingdoms ever founded by a Maratha prince. His revenues amounted to about a million sterling per annum. He died in 1755. It was in the reign of the second Rughojee (1803) that Cuttack and Berar were lost by Bhonslas and the kingdom reduced by more than one-third. From that time a British Resident was established at Nagpur. Rughojee the second died in 1816 and Appa Sahib was placed on the throne. It was his treachery and defection in 1817 that brought the province under the British control.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.
One result of this was the cession to British of the districts of the Nermada and of the tributary states on the Mahanadi. Two small hills of Seetabuldee and a few square miles of ground for a cantonment were also ceded to the British. These several cessions were ratified by the treaties of 1817 and 1826. At the same period after the conclusion of the second Maratha war, the Sagar and Damoh Districts were ceded to the British government by Dowlut Rao Scindia in 1817 and 1818. Thus were acquired by the British government the districts so long known as The Sagar and Nermada Territories.

The remnant of the Bhonsla dominions consisted of the province of Nagpur only. After the final desposition of Appa Sahib in 1818, Rughojee the third then a minor, was placed on the throne by British authority. During the long minority and regency which ensued, the government was virtually conducted by the Resident Sir R. Jenkins, some European officers were appointed to Superintend the several districts; and a regular staff of Native Officials was appointed. This administration, if not quite equal to that of regular British provinces, was

13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
consonant to the usages and circumstances of the country and superior to any thing known previously. It lasted till 1830, when the government was assumed by the Raja himself. Rughojee died in 1853, and the kingdom was finally annexed to the British Empire.

Almost the whole of these provinces have been under Maratha rule. In Nagpur proper, the Marathas have thoroughly left their impression upon the face and features of the country. There the manners and customs, the language, the ideas and associations, were all Maratha, both among high and low.

Apart from the historical background of the province, the people of the area too deserve special mention, the people here, present every variety of tribe and caste mixed up together. Writing in 1862, Richard Temple records his observation "quite, peaceable and patient", and further that "those classes which are barbarous are neither fierce nor aggressive." Fanaticism was very rare in any shape. To the north of Nermada the people were spirited and sensitive, but were not turbulent. He goes on to say: "The upper class of the population is fairly interspersed everywhere, but its standard of education and civilization is not high. The middle
class is numerous, and all things considered tolerably educated and attended. The lower class and the mass of the population must rank low even in an Indian scale, in respect of skill, industry and intelligence and education among them is even more rare than elsewhere in India."15.

R. Jenkins and Major Agnew, who served the region as British administrators and came in very close contact with people. R. Jenkins recorded in 1827 that the 'Brahmins' of the Nagpur state were mild and courteous in their manners. But they were proud and overbearing in their behaviour towards the lower class. Yet he observes that "they are great flatterers and dissemblers, and have a complete command over their tempers, which they never lose when their interests are at stake". About the conduct of lower classes, Jenkins describe them as "rougher than that of the Brahmins, but more pleasing to European"16.

According to Major Agnew: "considering the uniform state of the people their moral character seems to be


superior to the most other parts of India".  

Various factors contributed to the formation of the Central Provinces. Geographically the Sagar and Narmada territories, conjoined with the province of Nagpur, formed a compact area of about 90,000 square miles, with a population of more than six millions. Though these territories had diversities in matters of race, language and customs, yet the characteristic features of many of tribes and classes were their homogeneity, strong resemblance and affinity. From the communication point of view also the districts of these territories possessed comparative facilities with each other.

Politically, the earlier administration in these two separate units did not exhibit that unity completeness and efficiency which are requisite in order that justice may be done to the condition and prospects of territories so largely capable of improvement.

19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
The administrative efficiency was always retarded because of the potent fact that the head quarters of the Supreme Government and Nagpur Province were too far away to exercise an effective control, moreover the Sagar and Nermada Territories were frequently tossed and buffeted between the two masters i.e. the Government of the North Western Provinces and the Government of India, resulting into an utter administrative negligence\(^{21}\).

Under such circumstances, it was both administrative and political necessity to consolidate these units into one compact province. However, this idea was not new in 1861. Forty years earlier John Malcolm had already pleaded for the formation of these provinces under a Lieutenant Governor. George Canning, then at the Board of Control, said it would have at once conceded had Lord Hastings informed him of it. Now the matter had passed on from the father to son for the creation of the proconsulate.\(^ {22}\) Even Colonel Elliot also in memorandum of the 18 February 1861 had advocated the merger of the

\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) The 'Friend of India' dated 9\(^{th}\) Jan. 1862, Vide, Khan, M.A: History of British Administrative system in India. p. 16.
Sagar and Nermada territories with the Nagpur province. He was of the view that the head quarters of the new government should be at Nagpur. To quote him: "It is in the very heart of India. It form the confines as it were of the four presidencies (Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Agra), from each of which it is almost equidistant."^{23}

By the Resolution of the 2nd November 1861 the province of Nagpur and its Dependencies, and the Sagar and Nermada Territories, were formed into the Central Provinces. By the government resolution of 30th April 1862 Sambhalpur and its Dependencies were added to it.\textsuperscript{24}

British India was divided into provinces such being controlled by its own local Government, which obeyed the orders of the governor General-in-council. The provinces were distinguished by their Regulation and Non Regulation system of Administration. During the Governor-Generalship of Lord Dalhousie new provinces like the Punjab and Oudh were formed on the Non-

\textsuperscript{23} Rev. Deptt. C.P. 1861, No-28, Vide Khan, M.A, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{24} AAR. 1861-62, p.1.
Regulation System. The system proved so successful that at later stages it became the practice to constitute all new provinces on the same principle\textsuperscript{25}. The Central Provinces originally comprised of eight districts of the Sagar and Nermada Territories, viz: Sagar, Damoh, Jabalpur, Mandla, Seoni, Betul, Narsinghpur and Hoshangabad, and six districts of the Nagpur province, viz: Nagpur, chanda, Bhandara, Chindwara, Raipur (Chhattisgarh) and Sironcha (Upper Godawari) with dependencies of Bustrar and Karonda\textsuperscript{26}. These districts were reorganised into the following divisions, under the commissioners\textsuperscript{27}.

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\textsuperscript{26} Foreign, Gen, B progs, Jan 1862, No.179-186.

\textsuperscript{27} AAR, 1861-62. p.19.
Chattisgarh Division .... Raipur
Bilaspur
Sumbhalpur and the Gurjat Districts.

Godawari Talooks Sironcha Districts and Bustar Dependency

The districts varied considerably in size and population. The average area was 4,430 square miles. Raipur alone had an area of 12,036 square miles, the largest in the province, while Narsinghpur had an area of only 1,916 square miles, the smallest in the province. 28

The administration of Law and Order was one of the two principal concern of British Government in nineteenth century India; the other was the assessment and collection of revenue. The present work attempts a study of the problems of Law and Order the Police and the Administration of Criminal Justice in Central Provinces after its formation in 1861.

Along with the process of formation and consolidation of the Central Provinces, there also kept on developing the structure of administrative organisation.

Among all the institutions introdueed by the

British in India, perhaps the judicial system evoked the greatest dissatisfaction among them. After the suppression of the Revolt, the Government of India made a determined bid to rid of its most objectionable features. Some of the new experiments were tried in Central Provinces in this branch of administration. An interesting experiment, having far reaching implications was to decentralise the judicial machinery by appointing Honorary Magistrates from among the landed aristocracy. An attempt has been made to analyse this experiment. It is further proposed to study how far was it adequate to meet the needs of the province.

Pindaris and Thags may well be considered to be the first criminal communities active in central provinces. The Pindaris, who were mostly Mohamadans, were firstly heard of as followers of the Marathas armies in the Deccan about the year 1700. They were of different religion different castes and from different localities and their only bond of union was the desire to loot. They were given grants of land by Holkar and Scindia in the country North of the Nermada. They were allowed to pillage everywhere except in the territories of their masters, who after each campaign collected, usually by force, a good share of the loot. Their raids extended
all over Central India down as far as Madras. Periodically they emerged from across the Nermada and swept through the valley of the Tapti over the plains of Berar. The plain of Berar the valley of the Wardha river still show the remains of the mud forts which the inhabitants had to erect in self defence against them. They were all horsemen, the servants and camp followers being mounted on country ponies. They used to loot the country of all cattle or property and destroy what they could not take with them. They killed, ravished and tortured wherever they went and, on return to their standing camps across the nermada lived a life of debauchery, and excess till the money was gone and they had to look out for new scenes of rapine 29.

In 1817 Government started a regular military campaign for their repression, not being able to stand against regular troops, they were soon dispersed into small bands which were hunted down and destroyed piecemeal with the help of the local land owners, who were only too pleased to take vengeance for the horrors they suffered for years at their hands 30.

30. Ibid. p.4.
Thags period of baneful activity began before the Pindari period and lasted for 30 years after. They were a society of hereditary murderers who strangled and robbed their victims all over India. Their origin is unknown, the organisation came to the notice of Government in 1799, but it was 30 years later that, its extent was fully grasped and active measures taken against it. A special department was formed and officers and agents were employed all over India. Captain Sleeman was appointed General Inspector with head quarters at Jabalpur and his field of operation in 1835 extended from Lahore to the Carnatak.\(^{31}\) The thags or Phansigars were not a distinct caste, but were recruited from Mohamadans and Hindus of all castes. All worshipped the goddess Kali and committed their crimes under her patronage.\(^{32}\)

After the final destruction of the Thags in 1848 a labour colony was instituted in Jabalpur for the support of the approvers and their families, and this subsequently developed into a school of Industry.\(^{33}\) It


\(^{32}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{33}\) *Ibid.*
is an interesting fact that in the crime statement attached to the Police Administration Report of the Central Provinces, there was a separate column for murders by thags up to the year 1904. It was invariably blank except for two cases in 1864, which unfortunately were not commented on in the body of the report. Of the period from the suppression of the thagi to 1861, we have little knowledge of the crime and criminals, or the social state of the province.

Crime and violence have been present in some form or other degree, in all societies in all ages. But this aspect of social behaviour in India in the past have generally been ignored by Historians. The treatment of crime in Indian historical studies has been scanty.

Annual General Administration Reports, Police Administration Reports, Judicial Administration Reports and Jail Administration Reports of all the Provinces and Presidencies in India contain sufficiently detailed statistics on crime. They provide good data for an empirical study of criminal behaviour of the people. Yet such investigation have not been taken up so far.

34. Ibid.
Some questions about the accuracy of the official statistics of crime can pertinently be raised. It may be argued that it was in the interest of the police officers to underreport crime in official returns. It may also be asserted that often an increase in the volume of the reported crime might in fact be the result of an increased efficiency in crime reporting and the vigilance of the police at the lowest level. It may, however, be conceded that there are no means available today to judge the accuracy of the official statistics. Some cross-checking can be done, and has been done before processing the data, by comparing the police statistics with the judicial ones.

An explanation about the statistics of population for the period under review is necessary. First Census was conducted in 1866. It was nearly in the beginning of the period under study. Other Censuses were 1872, 1881 and 1891. Demographic statistics is also available in Annual Administration Reports of Central Provinces. Central Provinces was ravaged by the terrible famine of 1869-70. It was visited by two more devastating famines in the closing years of nineteenth century. These natural disasters caused large scale deaths and migration of population. The mean annual growth of population between
1861 and 1891 was 0.48 percent. Demographic statistics available in Census of 1866 and 1872, therefore, have been used and also the statistics available in Annual Administration Report of 1861, 1875 and 1886 have been used for computing proportions in the present study.

The present study presents a detailed empirical study of crime in Central Provinces during the period from 1861 to 1891. A mass of statistical data from Annual Administrative Reports, the Census Reports of 1872 has been culled, shifted and analysed.

Two questions automatically present themselves. First what do the available statistics reveal of any trends and patterns of criminal behaviours in the people of central provinces. Secondly, how far can such trends and patterns be explained on the basis of available sources? The two purposes alone give direction to the study of crime presented in this work.

Every effort has been made to resist the temptation to formulate loose hypothesis on the basis of insufficient data. An attempt has been made to stay close to the available data avoiding over sophisticated data manipulating techniques; the amount of data requisite
for a very sophisticated manipulation is just not available. Therefore, the analysis of trends and patterns, which is presented in this study, is simple and visually verifiable through charts and tables, a profuse use of such illustrative aids has been made.

The problems of law and order in central provinces received scant notice till recently. M.A. Khan in his *History of British Administration Systems in India*, has attempted to survey all the departments of administration. D.B. Trivedi in his *Law and Order in Upper India, A Study of Oudh (1856-1877)* has widely discussed all the problems of law and order in Oudh. P. Jegatheesan’s *Law and Order in Madras Presidency (1850-1880)* is an interesting study of the problems of law and order in south India.

Among historians of Indian police one should note J.C. Curry’s *The Indian Police*, P. Griffith’s *To Guard My People, The History of Indian Police*, N.A. Razvi’s *Our Police Heritage* and A. Gupta’s two books, *Crime and Police in India upto 1861* and *The Police in British India, 1861-1947*. But these authors have not made any specific mention of central province except A. Gupta, who has occasionally touched central provinces.
The present work is based upon the official proceedings, despatches and books preserved in various Archives and Libraries in India. A coherent study of the problems connected with crime in central provinces, as presented in the present work, has been made possible by these sources.