CHAPTER VI

HISTORICAL BASE OF DACOITY
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Dacoity, although, quite common yet is not unique to India alone. In one form or another it has existed in all parts of the world from Russia and Persia, Afghanistan and China to England, France, Italy and Mexico.\(^1\) Thus, right from the time, the people organised themselves, we can trace the evidence of deviants, breaking the norms and acting against the spirit of social system.

The seeds of dacoity and glimpses of outlawry have been existed in every age in Indian context. The word ‘Dasyu’ was used in vedic age for those aboriginals who had been defeated by Aryans. As Crooke states, "It may have been a synonym for Dasyu, those of the black skin who represented the contrast between the aborigines and conquering Aryans."\(^2\)

In Uttar Vedic age, the varna system took its rigid form and the fourth category of the varna was reserved for Dashas and Dasyus. In ‘Sutra and Dharmashastras’ period which begins about 6 or 7 B.C., the persons who were liable for theft, dacoity and for other criminal offences had to prove their innocence either by trading the fire or by taking poison. The punishment for the cattle thieves was to sever the nose and the death sentence was awarded for stealing grains more than ten 'Gharahas' (pots) and for theft gold and silver. Dutt (1978:108) refers in Yajnavalkya Samhita.

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"A person with whom stolen property is found, who has a special mark of a thief in him, who had been previously convicted of theft, and whose whereabouts are not known, may be arrested by thieves by officers who are empowered.\textsuperscript{1} If a person, who is arrested, on a suspicious charge of theft, can not establish his innocence, the king shall compel him to return the stolen articles and punish him like a thief.

The highest form of pecuniary punishment is (for the person), who knowingly gives food, residence, fire (for cooking etc.), water, advice, implements and expenses either to a thief or a murderer. A pilfer of clothes and a pickpocket should have their thumbs and forefingers cut off. If they commit the same offence, a second time, they should have a hand and a leg cut off.\textsuperscript{2}

Dacoity, is as old as society itself in one form or another, its present form is the outgrowth of a long historical ups and downs of Indian society. Mahabharat, Ramayana and Jatak Kathayen present popular legends about the anti-social activities of these brigands. The 'Dasyu', as they then called, were not other than the ancient brand of present day dacoits and out-laws. In 'Drona Parva' and 'Shanti Parva' of Mahabharat the king was reported to have been advised to fight the growing menace of dacoity.\textsuperscript{3} Although these Dasyu indulged in looting the property

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid. p. 110.
\item Margolkar, Vasant, 1974: Crime and Non Violence, p. 44.
\end{enumerate}
of others, they did not molest the women. They had their own moral code and self respect. The example of Valmiki, the great poet of Ramayana and notorious dacoit Angulimala are very popular even now.

Manu Samhita is regarded as next in sanctity to the Vedas. Manu the great law giver, in his Smriti detailing the main aspects of 'Dharma' and imposing duty on the kings to maintain the same in society, he insists the hard measures against heinous crimes. "For heinous crimes, many advocates or prescribes harsher punishment, like death sentence or banishment and the confiscation of moveable or immovable property or both. Crime, such as dacoity, theft, and robbery, were committed and in old literature the word 'Chrodhanaranikas', which means one who chases away thieves, is mentioned."

Patanjali, in his 'Yoga Sutra' speak of 'Bhuta Bhom Vrata' and under the head 'Yama' mentions non-stealing as a virtue to be practised. With the same spirit during the sixth century B.C. Lord Mahavira, the last prophet of Jainism, and Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism have also emphasised on non-stealing (Ascesta) in their teachings.

Kauftiya, the chief councillor of Chandra Gupta (325 B.C.)

mentions in his 'Arth Shastra' some preventive measures of crime in 'Danda Neeti'. He described that persons used to be awarded by the king who disclosed matter of cattle theft. Persons used to inform the arrival of the gangs of dasyus and enemies by beating drums and making noise or by riding on fast horses to state guards.

Though the measures were taken in order to maintain law and order in the whole state yet the persons were feeling unsafe. When there was any possibility of invasion of gangs of robbers then the pet pigeons used to convey the message to the king. Even such descriptions are found that cattle-sheds were made to avoid cattle-thefting.¹

In the same way while talking about trade, he discussed again and again about the measures of security. It seems that the dasyus were the main impediments in the expansion of Indian trade at that time. The terror of robbers and dasyus was so much that Kautilya advised to foreign traders that they must had contact with security officer and foresters.²

Thus, if we throw light on the human history of about one thousand B.C., then we find that the right from the tribal wars up to the extent of ups and downs of empires, there were feeding and nourishing the basic instincts of robbery and ownership.


The tribal wars were fought in order to possess and enjoy the property, women and cattle of others. As much as we grew more civilised and institutionalised in the spontaneous flow of culture, our basic instincts from generation to generation were socialised. The development of systematic community life commence from Agricultural era since then upto the present time society confined itself upto tribal level on some extent and man continued to lead their lives as robbers but they were not condemned because they confined their behaviour with the prevailing norms of their community.

Every social institution has its historical origin, similarly the nature of dacoity can not be analysed in the right perspective until we give the historical basis of the problem. From time to time the social structure of Indian society had to face blows by political instability created such anomique conditions which established the different pattern of deviation. Thus, the deformity in society is the root cause for producing thugs, pindaries, outlaws and abscounders etc.

During the Gupta period and around the seventh century punishments were harsher and yet the situation in regards to law and order was not very satisfactory. There prevailed a sense of insecurity of life and property. Huen-Feang, who visited India during the seventh century and had the misfortune of being robbed more than once, gives details of robberies and murders and of the looting of trading caravans. The duties of policeman as watchman, keeping track of bandits and manning the secret service wing, are also mentioned indirectly. Though he
mentions that, the crime was rampant and gangs of robbers or thugs were reported to exist.\(^1\) It shows that disturbed conditions then existed not only in Chambal or Bundelkhand, but the whole northern India. The history of central India is the history of devastation, the whole region of Doab and Chambal had been marked by political instability and tribal or clan violence since the decay of Harisavarman. Crooke (1974: 113) points out the rising of prominent Rajputs families. "It was on the death Harisavarman, who reigned from 607 to 630 A.D. that most of the Rajput families would seem to have risen to power. Tomars of Delhi, Chandelas of Khajuraho as well as Kesarnahas of Narwar and Gwalior, all begin their genealogies from that time."\(^2\)

The recorded history of organized banditry, however, begins with the Muhammadan rule in India. Actually before Muslim rule in the country, discrete cases of dacoity may be found frequently, but as an institution it established in this era due to many justifiable causes.

Early in the 12th century A.D. clanish war broke out over Delhi. Rajputs like Anangpal, a Tomar king of Delhi were expelled by Pritniviraj Chouhan. These expelled Rajputs spread over the whole of Doab and Chambal basin.\(^3\) The Tomars made ceaseless efforts to reoccupy Delhi but they were thwarted both by Pritnivi Raj and the later Sultans. In course of time, they established their small dynasties in Dholpur, Sawai, Gwalior.

\(^{1}\) Khan, S.A., 1983: op. cit., p. 3.
\(^{2}\) Crooke, William, 1974: op. cit., p. 113.
\(^{3}\) See also, The Early Settlers of the Region, Ch. II.
Social and political disorder created by the attacks of foreigners and inter-clan wars resulted that the Bhadaurias, Meos, Tomars, Chauhans and Sikarwars spread over the Chambal and Doab regions. There was marked concentration of clan groupings in some specific areas—Bhaduria in Bhadawar i.e. Bah, Mahyaon and Bhind; Sikarwar in Sikarwari, Sabiyarn and Jonraj; Tomars in Towargadh i.e. Ambaon and Morana, Chauhans in Mainpuri etc. for their safety they maintained their guerilla warfare.

Beginning with the Muslim rule, their was mass conversion of Hindus to Islam by force. To protest against this conversion Rajputs became very aggressive. They resisted the Muslims and their rule till they were not rooted out from western India and Delhi. In beginning no one accepted Islam. Warrior castes played a starring role as raiders on the city of Agra and Delhi in this connection.

Sharma (1984: 94) reveals a noteworthy fact about Meo community, which was Hindu once, the plundering role in history, “They played a stirring role as raiders on the city of Delhi specially after the advent of Muslim rule in India. One first hears of the Meos when, at the instigation of Prithivi Raj of Delhi they were expelled from upper Doab by some Rajputs (Crooke: 1896: 492). They again raised their heads in the early Muhammadan era and continued to create trouble for Muslim rule. Until Ghy-as-ad-din Balban after his accession in 1265 A.D., took in hand their repression with the result that, the Meos expired by a terrible punishment a long series of crime.”

In fact, from the time of Mahmood's death (1030 A.D.) until the appearance of Kutub-ud-din (1193 A.D.), according to the Imperial Gazetteer of central India (1908), "The history of central India is that of the incessant petty wars, which went on between the various Hindu clans."¹

In 1196 A.D. Kutub-ud-din took Gwalior. But after his death, the Rajputs regained their lost territories through their guerrilla warfare tactics. The Imperial Gazetteer of central India (1908 : 20) mentions, "A period of confusion followed his death (1210 A.D.), during which Rajputs of central India regained the greater parts of their possession."² The law and order was more than once so worse in the reign of Balban that he was compelled to march in person to the neighbourhood of Kampil and Patiali in Doab region and there he remained for five are six months, putting the rebels to the sword.³ He himself made frequent journeys through the Doab to see that his orders were carried out and, "the den of robbers was thus converted into a guard house, and Musalmans and guardians of the way took the place of highway robbers."⁴

So disturbed and critical was the condition of Doab at this period that Sultan Mahmood Shah in 1339 A.D. found it exasperating.

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4. Ibid . . . . p. 129.
dient to make Jalesar his headquarters during his war with rival Sultan Abu Bakar, and after crushing a serious rising of the Doab Rajputs. The accession of Mahmud Shah in 1394 A.D. was followed by a period of anarchy and civil war, 'The moment was an opportune one for the rebellions Rajputs of Doab and they did not fail to take advantage of it.'\(^1\) In 1400 A.D. Ikabul Khan, the general of Mahmud Shah attacked at Patiali but was driven with heavy loss to the Swahar Border. In 1414, 1416 and 1418 A.D. repeated punitive expeditions were made by Taj-ul-Mulk in these districts but the punishment they had received was not sufficient to subdue the refractory Rajputs. Sikandar Lodhi, the successor of Baholol Lodhi marched against the Hindu confederacy and fought near Atrauli. Sikandar’s Son, Ibrahim also visited the district Shah and fought with Chauhans at Sakit, driving many of them to take refuge in Shadawar.

Shersah had become the greatest power in northern India, still he never succeeded in subduing Rajputana, Malwa and Bundelkhand. When Shersah, thus, found the rebellions and disobedience of the Zamindars who lived in this part, he brought 12000 horsemen, and repressed the Zamindars and cultivators of this part. "This repression and its like created reaction and counter reaction helping only to steal the determination of the so called outlaws to carry on their trade."\(^2\)

The Mughal emperors did try to secure law and order in their times. Some of them succeeded also. But the account

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of contemporary travellers and visitors show that the success was partial and restricted to certain regions only. Actually, since the death of Babar in 1530 A.D., anarchy prevailed, throughout the Doab region interrupted only a few years during the iron rule of Sher Shah till the accession of Akbar in 1556 A.D. For the same purpose Akbar had to keep a big garrison in the historic fort of Hatkant. In 1559 A.D., he had to send one of his trusted army generals to Hatkant in Bah of Agra region. As it is mentioned that the Raja of the Bnadian states was ordered to be crushed under the feet of an elephant after his defeat. A remarkable description of the rebellious attitude of the people of Sakit (Etah) is given in an account of the conditions of the people which beset Akbar when he was hunting in that neighbourhood in 1562 A.D.

"The people of inhabiting the villages round Sakit stood unrivalled for their rebellious spirit and ungratefulness; the eyes of the age never saw rebels, thieves and marauders like them; they are not only disorderly themselves, but keep the villages and their inhabitants in state of disorder, and they live a bold short of life which only fools call bravery. The office of the district had frequently complained of the inhabitants."

For the same purpose Akbar's most trusted comrade and court historian, Abul Fazal, was murdered in the ravines of Antri in Datia District. It is also true that Fatehpur Sikri, the capital built by Akbar some 25 miles from Agra, had to be abandoned ultimately because of the rebelmenace from the Chambal ravines.

His successors, too left Agra because it was consistently raided by bandits from the Chambal countryside and nearby regions.\(^1\)

Traveling was unsafe and the roads infested with highway men-robbers. During the Mughal period in 1583-91 A.D. Ralph Fitch who visited India who recorded that there were many thieves at that time. While on his way to Akbar's court, the Portugees Priest, father Monserrate came across a large number of thieves from Surat to Agra. William Hawkins who remained in India during 1608 to 1613 A.D. observed that the large number of outlaws and thieves made travelling impossible unless a large force accompanied those who moved about.\(^2\) William Finch who came to Bhada-wara in January 1610 A.D. found the town filthy and full of thieves. The road from Gwalior to Ahmadabad, he says was all a sandywood country and full of thievish beastly men. From Ahmadabad, Cambay he found the way-sandywood and thievish. The way of Cambay was difficult to cross because of very dangerous thieves who looted the people and threw them into the sea.\(^3\)

The same condition was observed by Thiebolas Withington who went to Cambay in 1613. He says, "One may go as soon as from Agra to Singh as Surat; but there is more thieving outlaws on the highways and on the river murdering as they rob." Sir Robert Shirley found the way from Thatta to Agra much infested with thieves.\(^4\) The country is now so full of thieves and

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2. Ibid. p. 38.
3. Ibid. p. 38.
4. Ibid. p. 39.
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\textsuperscript{2} Ibid. p. 38.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid. p. 38.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid. p. 39.
outlaws he says, "that one can hardly stir out of doors in any part of his dominions without a guard, as almost the whole people are in rebellion. He records that he was plundered on the way of my clothes and every thing else, about me." ¹

John Willoughby at Agra wrote to Surat factory in April 1823 that the roads were full of dangerous dacoits, "for here is nothing but killing in every one of these parts." Another letter from Ahmedabad to Surat says, "The roads are so full of robbers that no one can pass. In the wars of succession that occurred after Shahjahan, conditions become worse. Manucci says of these times, "The villagers and thieves were plundering on high ways and created a good deal of tribulation to travelers, robbing and slaying them." ²

Next, Meos made history for themselves by looting the revenue of Jahangir at Koshi between Agra and Bani in when it was being taken to the capital under the protection of imperial guard. The reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707 A.D.) witnessed the high water mark of the muslim power in India and yet it was in this reign that its decline had begun. His reign was marked by Marathas uprisings, the appearance of Bundelas, the rise of Jats, the expansion of the European trading companies into the interior of the country. All these forces were breaking the backbone of Mughal Empire and were hasten the process of its disintegration. Bernier, was in India from 1656 to 1668 A.D.

². Ibid.
says, there were frequent cases of robbers in country. Dr.
John Francies Careri the Italian traveller who visited India
in 1695 A.D. also expresses the same views, "there was no safey
thieves, non were there caravanserais for travellers."1

During the reign of Aurangzeb the law and order situa-
tions was so bad that the Emperor himself complained about it
to the Prince A'Zam, "I have come to know that royal road between
Bahadurpur and Khajas Tehouniad (Aurangabad) is not free from
danger. Highway men rob the merchants and travellers of their
goods, why farers can not travel in secury. When such robbery
takes place near the quarters of yours and mine armies, woe to
conditions of distant roads. Writing again to A'Zam, Aurangzeb
laments about the lack of law and order, "Every day in the dist-
trict of Hazipur, Miyanpur and other police stations, strife and
quarrel, oppression and tyranny, take place. The Kolis plunder
Nairganj situated close to the army. They bind the inhabitants
of the town and carry them away. He also finds the presence of
robbers and outlaws in the remot southnear Ahmadnagar as he
had written to A'Zam,"very few travellers traverse the road in
safety."2 In fact robbers and outlaws were practising their
profession all over the country.

Aurangzeb's death brought the process of disintegration
to the point of no return. In Deccan he created such conditions

that Pindari could flourish by destroying Muslim Kingdoms. The
nobility in the days of later Mughals was ridden with nepotism
and corruption. Mirza,(1970) observed "after Ahmad Shah acce-
session, in course of time matters came to such a pass that a
discursive list of all articles in the imperial stores, the
arms the carpets, cooking utensiles and dinnerplates, books
and hand instruments and of every other Karkhanas, was prepared,
and these articles were sold to the shopkeepers and peddlars,
and most of the money thus realised was spent in paying the
troops."

He further adds, "The result was what no regular
army was maintained. Those who were in service could not get
their salaries regularly. Downtrodden and frustration they took
recourse to selling of their armaments. How could be an army
be maintained when the horses in the stable were dying for
want of grass and forage? Under the circumstances the profession
of arms no longer remained a source of attraction to the people.
Small wonder, the soldiery whose morale had already deteriorated,
became restless and restored to breaking in mutiny and plundering
villages and towns, for their salaries were not regularly paid."

It would take many pages to tell about anarchy prevailed
during pre British rule. As we have discuss previously that
the condition of unemployment and difficulties in various profe-
sions of subsistance such as soldiery, agriculture, trade and

2. Ibid., p. 23.
as the condition of other profession was no better. There was confusion and disorder all round the country owing to misgovernment. Previously, Nobles and Jagirdars used to employ soldiers but now with the end of Jagirs the source of employment were tightened. Before the rule of British in these regions Marathas began to quarrel among themselves. The young Pashva committed suicide, immediately a war of succession ensued and peace was not restored in Doab and Sandalkhand for many years. There was great discontent among the rulers of small principalities as well as states. After the treaty of Basien and later on the siege of Delhi, Bharatpur and Sandalkhand, Marathas had suffered so severely in the last war that they had to lost the region of Doab.

During the time of British period, the home authorities turned his attention to the anarchy prevailed in central India. There, the Marathas, Pathans, Pindaries, Thuges and many others were making hell on the earth. The Maratha chiefs—Sindhia, Holkar and Bhonsla had territories of their own which they used as bases for plundering expeditions into the surrounding regions. The Pathan worked together in gangs. They had no settled homes of their own. They plundered and fought for anybody who would pay them well enough the looted property.

In fact, the Pindaries were originally hangers-on of the Marathas armies. They had received no pay. They lived entirely on loot. Desperate broken men joined them. They
plundered, tortured and destroyed the property, no one in central India was safe from them. With regards to the responsibilities of Marathas for creating conditions which made the rise of pindaries possible in central India and which perpetuated the same conditions in Bundelkhand also we may cite the argument of Barlow, "Central India was Maratha's territory with which the company had nothing to do. In Bundelkhand the financial condition determined his limits."  

Sir George Barlow (1803 A.D.) has also been criticised for not taking care that anarchy did not spread in the turtity of Rajputana state. In fact, the anarchy prevailed in the areas dominated by Marathas has been attributed to his policy. According to Willson, (Sindhias), "feable mind and ungenerous policy allowed the whole of Hindustan beyond its (company's) boundaries, to become the scene of fearful plunder and frightful desolation, for many succeeding years."  

Following the peace with Sindhia and Holkar, the two chief had a completely free hand in Rajputana, the East India Company having bound itself not to enter into any relations with the prince who had been feudatories to the Maratha's. The result was a general anarchy, in which Sindhia, Holkar and the Pindari like Amirkhan and the various other Rajpute States involved in interminable feuds. The same conditions was in Bundelkhand where the petty Bundelas were creating troubles.  

2. Ibid. p. 233.
PINDARI

In History, the word 'Pindari' was used in 1689 A.D. when the rebellious Zamindars of Deccan assassinated thousands of noble Ruhellas against the Mogul Empire and dugout the whole Bijapur District. Later on these plunderers encountered with Zulphikar Khan, the 'Sipahasalar' of Aurangzeb who had come to suppress these rebellions. Though he went back to Delhi yet the valley of Kaveri was made the battlefield for pindaries from where they continued their plunder till 1817 A.D. to the remote country and Indo-gangetic plain. ¹

Sir John Malcolm finds that Pindaries were known to have flourished as early as 1669 A.D. As regards the etymology of the term 'Pindari', the popular belief is that Pindaries derived their name from their addiction called 'Pinda'. Another explanation about Pindari is that it is a corrupt word of plunder. Sharma, (1962) puts another explanation about the origin of the word (Pindari), "Pinda is an offering made to the dead and who thrives on it is called Pindari. And the class of people who made these things daily diet came to be called Pindari. This item of food, which is prepared in open and baked on fire after boiling of rice, was amply suited to the way of life of the vagabond Pindaries."²

In fact, from the very beginning, Pindari formed auxiliaries of the Maratna's armies and they adopted the method of

guerrilla warfare, so characteristics of Maratha armies, was
ideally suited to the predatory activities of these marauders.
With the growing Maratha power in central India, they also
appeared to constitute a formidable menace. Their predatory
incursions made life and property insecure and even peaceful
folks also often compelled to take a life of violence as there
was no other means to cope with mounting danger. Thus violence
begot violence and people reduced their own losses by the plunder
of others.¹

In course of the time they acquired military status
under Bajirao Peshwa I. Malhar rao Holkar presented their chief
with a golden flag. Lt. Valentine wrote that there was no iden-
tification of these plunderers except loot and murder. Actually,
the outgrowth of Pindaries was related to the political distur-
ances and disorder of Peshwa regime. Jankins, the British Agent
at Brar (1812 A.D.) compared them with Russian Kajjals and called
them uncontrolled and violent outlaws who used to accompany the
Marathas.² Sir John Malcolm states that Pindari has arisen like
masses of putrefaction in animal matter, out of corruption of
weak and expiring states.³

At the juncture of eighteenth and nineteenth century
the sociopolitical conditions were also liable under which a man

   Quoted from Dharmayug, p. 30, 6 Feb. 1983.
3. Ibid.
could become only Pindari. After the downfall of Moghul Empire, the Peshwa Regime extended from south to north and the sametime his generals became rivals for capturing of power. Though on 16th October, 1788 A.D. the flag of Manadji Sindhia was hoisted at Delhi, yet in 1799 due to lack of central authority anarchy and lawlessness prevailed. Not only Sindhia but Holkar of Indore, Himmat Bahadur Gosain of Mathura, Alibahadur of Bundelkhand, Rewari's Ismail Baig and many others were also ambitious of holding power over Delhi. At the end of Eighteenth century India had become powerless. Pathans, Jats, Runelias, Bahariyas, Gurande and Gosain had stood for plundering. Under these circumstances the booty looted by Pindaries was shared to petty Jagirdars and markets were also armed for sale of such plundered materials and goods. All this was not accidental but due to the appointment of auxiliary armies of British the soldiers of small states had to disarm their forces. Besides the bad characters, these soldiers also joined the company of Pindari.

Protection of Pindari Bands:- Mutual ravilies of Indian states provided an eternal source of employment to these ruffians. Their enormous were easily available to any prince who sought to defeat an enemy without any excessive drain upon his own exchequer. In the time of Bajirao I, they were attached to the Maratha's army as irregular horsemen. After the third battle of Panipat in 1761 A.D., the Pindaries settled themselves in Malwa and they attached themselves to Sindhia and Holkar. As the power of Marathas declined, the Pindaries began to plunder independently.
Wherever they went, they carried fire and sword with them. This led to lawlessness in these regions also.

Pindari bands usually serving particular prince owed his names. After the death of Yaswant Rao Holkar, the Holkar Shahi Pindaries came into prominence. Though they pretended to acknowledge Sindia and Holkar as their masters, they never had any sense of loyalty. Whenever it suited their self-interest, they did not hesitate to act treacherously. At times, they also profitted from the weakness, rivalry and cupidity of those employed against them.

Organisation: It was not merely a question of lawless group of people but of an organised system which was the product of the then socio-historical conditions of the country. Besides, the mountains, ravines, strongholds, forests and open or secret support of the people, either willing or out of fear, all conspired to sustain the Pindaries for a long period in central India.

Obviously, encouraged by such recognition, the Pindaries showed greater zest in their ravages, as besides apportioning a good deal of the booty to themselves, they had also to offer their employer his due share. Thus, they claimed a legal sanction for their depredations.

The Pindaries did not form a regular army. The only link between the Pindari's chief and his followers was the prospect of plunder. The ranks of the Pindaries were joined by

all kinds of elements. There was no difference between the Muslim or a Hindu. In most cases, Pindari came from the ranks of the disbanded leaders and fugitives from justice, idlers, and unscrupulous persons from every caste and creed were welcomed.¹

Operation of Pindari Bands:— Pindaries used to come in the form of locusts, riding on the best horses. They looked and prosecuted to the people and burnt to ashes the grain storages. They had their special technique of plundering. Pindaries attached their target with the speed of lightning and managed to fly away with all their booty. The Pindaries have been compared to the swarms of locusts. As the Pindaries followed the Maratha armies, they have been called the scavengers of Marathas.²

Their field of action was for sometime confined to the territories of the Nizam Raja of Barar, and the Pusawa. Gradually, however, they grew bold and crossed the British Frontiers destroying the area with slaughter, flames and pilage.³ There was not a single village, town or city in the valley of Narmada where Pindaries did not reach twice a year. In 1805 A.D. they even snatched the belt with costly stones of William Martindal the British Agent at Baroda Darbar. In 1807 in Shazipur area, some sixty persons were burnt alive in a straw pile.⁴

4. Ibid.
Their incursions were carried on upon the plan of regular campaigns, except that no rule of civilized warfare was allowed to check their ferocity. Horace, (1852: 64) states "Whenever they appeared the most inhuman cruelties were perpetrated. Men were burnt with sealing oil, suffocated with dust, or played by application of fire. Children were drowned in wells brained against the earth or torn from their mother's breast and sabred. Women, if not made to suffer the violence from which their modesty recoiled, were driven to commit suicide through fear of it; and villages and towns, after being depopulated, were given to flames and plunder."  

Pindari invasion was a crusade against life, peace and property, besides the kidnapping of wealthy persons they used to spring the children with the air. They released the kidnapped person after gaining the amount of ransom otherwise they killed them mercilessly. In the word of Hastings, "The horrors perpetrated by these demons at other places made the poor villages, totally unarmed and incapable of resistance, fly to the desperate resolution of burning themselves with their wives and children. All the young girls are carried off by the Pindaries, tied three or four like calves on a horse, to be sold." By the end of 18th century chaotic conditions had reached a climax that the country was distinguished by the title of the "Country of Robbers".


3. Ibid.
Code of Conduct:— There was no code of conduct of them except to loot and pilage and to feed away. They were totally barhounous and savage. All the evils of that age were in their character. They were neither brave nor nationalistic. Their was sole aim to loot, desertion and murder. In the situation of encounter they had run away. If loot was their religion them to fly away was their pleasure. In 1809 A.D. a report presented to East India Company, Sidhehame wrote that Pindaries were the outlaws of lowest category who were not born to face the forces but to fly away after loot and murder. 1

Religious Faith of Pindaries:— Pindaries were religious cowardice murderer. They often used to offer Gold, Silver and cash to the gods and goddess. Their deity was the 'Kamakha Devi of Kamaroope'. They also worshiped so many 'pears'. At Vijayadasami all the Pindaries assembled in a ground and offer prayers to Kamaknya Devi, Ramdeva Pear, Jana Pear and Gogapeer, and they launched their incursion at the same evening. Thus, living the whole year, a normal civil life, after celebrating Vijayadasami they started their campaign of loot and murder.

These marauders ruined the temple of Xankan, Girmar and Ramtek. But there was not a single instance destroying a mosque. There might be two reasons for not to destroying any mosque. First, there was nothing to loot and secondly, most of the prominent Pindari chiefs were muslin by faith. Once a Pindari chief named Khadabaques was interviewed, he told that the God had made us for murdering on the earth.

ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS AND OUTLAWRY

The regions of Doab and Bundelkhand were not only ravished by invaders, Pandaries, Thugs and various outlaws, but here also nature did not lag behind from playing her terrible roles from time to time. These areas have been always subjected the frequent natural calamities like famines, floods, and above all the erosion of soil and ravines.

Upper province witnessed the famine of 1803-4, A.D., on account of failure of rain. Famine visited again to the province in 1812-13. This time only a part of Yamuna Doab was affected. The great famines that visited a north-west province and Bundelkhand were the 1833-34 and 1837-38 A.D. after the great Chalisa in 1783. These enveloped a vast area of the land and prevailed in a severe form almost throughout the south-western parts of the province.

During these years not only did the crop failed entirely but the grass and fodder was also lost. Borrowing scenes of poverty, scarcity and death were witnessed all round the area. The calamity was so enormous that cultivators of these areas were not ready to enter into engagement with the Government for tilling lands at high assessment made by Timins.


During these famine society was disorganised and horrors of every kind pervaded the land. Bands of plunderers were formed by these disparate people, and they began to loot the loads of grains. The Government authorized the police to punish the plunderers and maintained public peace. The result was that Jails were filled with such criminals. For instance, Rohilkhand Jails became full of convicts. Aliganj and Farrukhabad districts also suffered from outburst of starving people who took to plunder and dacoity.¹

The famine of 1933-34 is known to have severe on in western Bundelkhand also. According to an estimate of Col. Biard Smith, 8000 souls were reported dead in Doab area. Crooke, however felt these figures to be much below² while Mr. Muir, writing in 1842, says that out of about 75000 homes in that portion of district (Jalaun) some 39000 were abandoned, during the famine of 1837-38.³ Dacoity out-breaks especially in the time of famine or as the after math of political unrest. Katarce observes,

"The condition of the Rajputs chiefs, Jamindars and feudal lords became deplorable in these famine years. This compelled to them to loot rather than to steal because stealing was against the prestige of Thakurs, and they started to extort money by the use of force, and thus maintained the spirit of Baghi."⁴

Thus repeated seasons of famine increased serious crimes such as murder, dacoity and robbery etc.

¹. Ibid. p. 265.
². Ibid. p. 261.
THUGGEE

There was, however, another menace, namely Thugges. This institution was much older than the pindari. There was Thugges in the reign of Ferozshah Tughlak (1351-98 A.D.). His office had once arrested not less than one thousand highway robbers who were released after a stern reprimand. Again we find a mention during the reign of Akbar (1556-1605) as many as 500 thugs were arrested and executed in a single district of Stawah.¹

In 1666 A.D. the French traveller, Thernverynot mentions about these outlaws, "Though the roads I have been speaking of from Delhi to Agra, be tolerable, yet hath it many inconveniences. One may meet with tigers, panthers and lions upon it, and one had best, also have a care of robbers and above all things not to suffer any body to come near one upon the road. The cunningest robbers in the world are in that country."²

Actually as regards the thugs, they were bands of hereditary robbers and murderers who carried out their crimes in an unfair manner. They spent most of their time in a respectable occupation and practised thugges occasionally. It was difficult to suspect such persons. They bore necklace and showed themselves as merchants. They robbed the rich as well as poor and were ready to commit murder for a few rupees.

The thugs first came to the notice of British after the capture of Srinagpattam in 1799 A.D. They particularly flourished in Mysore territory. Later on it was seen that they operated in many parts of India.\(^1\) It was early 1810 A.D. that General St. Leger, a discription of murderers dominated thugs who infested the district of Doab and other parts of Upper province, cautioned his soldiers against them. The Government took of these bad characters at that time. The result was disastrous for the peace and administration of not only these areas but of the whole of north western provinces and central India. Thus, gang robberies and thuggery became widespread all over the country. At last, William Bantick had to institute a new department for the suppression of thugs in 1849 A.D. under the supervision of Col. Sleeman.

**Gang Organisation of Thugs** - The gangs of Thugs often contained as many as from ten to fifteen to scores of men.\(^2\) Inside each band of thug there were regular ranks and gradation. A thug with a great reputation as a strangler became Janedar and he was given a special share of plunder. An outstanding member of profession become Subedar. They all, however, derived their origin, by descent or initiation from the member of the old gangs. The thug of northern India who from time to time emigrated in to the south India and they confined their trade almost exclusively to their own families, and to the sons of murdered parents adopted and brought up among them.

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There are some temporary thug gangs also which attached
with big permanent gangs. They contended themselves with occa-
sionally joining the large gangs as they passed through Rajpu-
tana, Gujrat, Khandesh, Malwa Delhi and Bundelkhand territory
or depreding idenpendantly in small parties upon the roads that
passed through their own country.\(^1\)

The older gangs emigrated from one province to another
province as stated by Sleeman,(1840: XIII) the older gangs from
Doab, Gwalior and Bundelkhand States who have emigrated to
Rajputana. It should be remarked that the gangs of thugs who
resided into the kingdom of oode, unlike those who resided in
other parts, generally confined their depredations to that country
and their expeditions were, in consequences, generally less
extensive and more frequent.\(^2\)

**Protection of Thugs:** Thugs enjoyed the protection of the chiefs,
Zamindars and officials. They paid a lot of money as tributes
to their harbourers in the form of 'Nasarana'. They always
after their journey were obliged to give the Zamindars of their
village some present. All thugs propitiated their Zaminder.
In the words of Col. Sleeman (1940) "We find it extremly diffi-
cult to obtain from him any of those influential characters who
could recreate their gangs in part of India if left immolestad
for a few season."\(^3\) He further adds, "The greater part of those

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1. Sleemann, W.K., 1840: op. cit., p. XIX.
2. Ibid. p. 10.
3. Ibid. p. 8.
who have eluded our pursuit have found an asylum in the service of native chiefs and become members of their civil and military establishment and returned to their old trade as soon as they find our pursuit relaxed. Some thugs has their contact with police and Chaukidars.¹

![The old gang members gave shelter and food for new gangs on an expedition. Their expeditions were generally short and the parties, small as they were, often repeatedly reorganized in course of one season.](image)

**Mode of Operation:** The modus operandi of the thugs in their trade was that usually they went about as merchants with osten-
sible good demeanour and used to trap the innocents. When thugs started their expedition they proceeded in search of travellers who were stranger to them. During their expedition the member of gang might be 10 - 15 to 250 as stated by Sleeman. "During the year of 1866-17 A.D. in Doab, Gwalior and Bundelkhand there were many gangs of thugs who operated these areas. Feringia with gang of 13 thugs, Chotee Brahmans with gangs of 15 thugs and Gurgadeen, Makun had 260 thugs in their gangs of their expedition.²

First of all, they confined their attention to the travellers while travelling along. They wait with them during the night and tried to win the full confidence of the victim. The value of victims burden was immediately discovered by

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² Ibid. p. 136.
these keen eyed sportsman. Then leaders and stoutest and
fleestest followers were immediately selected for the pursuit.
some times they followed the victim unperceived for the several
miles, till they had been then passed through the village road
or they took them on to a place Chosen a distance of 2 - 3 miles,
in jungle or lone place where they suddenly closed in upon them
and put them all to death before they could prepare for resis-
tance. After murdering they covered the dead body with stones
in the bed of water course.

Sometimes they strangled the victim generally near
drynullah, or at water course in the morning as they crossed
and buried the bodies and flew away. They adopted so many
tactice to compell the victim according their planning. They
persuaded their victim to accompany them to the river oath and
while preparing his ablutions he fell an easy prey to them.
Sometimes they endeavoured to pursue them to sit down or rest
etc. at the place where they found convenient to strangle them.¹
Even they offered seat upon their ponies to travellers, the
traveller did not know who are they, then he was murdered.

In course of an expedition the thug gangs generally
halted at the groves of mangoes tries near villages. On an
expedition the strip of cloth (Gamachha) and pick axes with which
the grave of victim was dug out, they used.² They suddenly threw

¹. Sleeman, W.H., 1840: op. cit., p. 25.
². Dodwell, H.H., 1932: The Cambridge History of India, vol.VI,
a rope of cloth (noose) round the neck of the subject and then
drew very tight by two thugs who held it pressing the head of
the victim forward, a third seizing the victim seized him the
legs and he was, thus thrown the ground. There was little
opportunity of resistance by the victim. The same description
of customary method of strangling was given by a French Traveller.
M.Dc. Thaverno.

They never committed robberies without murdering the
victim. They committed crimes always out of their own native
area. They sometimes took with them some of their children
(boy under teenage), less to attract notice and suspicion. They
had bullocks or tattoo (ponies) to carry the plundered properties.
Thus, they frequently assumed the character of merchants.

Seeing that victim had become suspicious they cautioned
the part, in their secret language. On risk or danger they dis-
persed and rejoined the main body at the place appointed already.
Sometimes they sent back some of their party to see whether the
bodies might be discovered or they found that they had been dug
up by jackals or that a concourse of people had collected round
them. On taken up by police, they told so plausible stories
and snowed themselves very respectable that officers generally
decieved and released them.

Division of Share: Looted or captured things or money was
devided among the member of the gang. First of all some portions

2. Ibid. p. 72.
were set aside for local pujars whose protections and help were considered important. Besides it, some portion was set apart for the performance of religious ceremony. After that, two shares were given to the actual murderer and a share each was given to ordinary member of the gang. The leader was given a special share of the plunder. Thus, he who strangled and he who inveigled always got greater share.

Beliefs of Thugs: The thugs had great faith in religious and superstitious activities. They were the worshiper of Hindu Goddess Kali.¹ It was believed by them that she would not desert them. Garg (1963: 72) mentions "Every thug fully convinced that the Goddess had created the system and that she invariably saved. Thugs from punishment or disaster, so lay as they obeyed the rules she had laid down for their operation." He mentions the statements of Sleeman, "They considered the persons murdered as victims offered up to Goddess, and they remember them as priest of Jupiter remembered."²

Actually they believed that strangling of victims was a part of their sacred duty. Garg (1963: 71) write about their religious ceremony. "Some of these thugs were Bramoins by caste. Brahmin members of the gang, used to conduct the religious ceremonies before start of their All-famed operations. The neophyte, whether the son of a thug or a new recruit was initiated in an impressive religious ceremony and took adreadful oath of absolute fidelity to the brotherhood."³

3. Ibid.
Sleeman also suggests a similar view about sacred Pujah. "Dahan Marni" is a general Pujah performed by them before an expedition. Sometimes they keep the proceeds of several affairs for a general Pujah. They apportioned a special share of plundered booty for Pujah. They apportioned a special share, suppose they had made hundred rupees by a murder, two rupees five annas as would be laid aside for the pujah.

**Code of Conduct:** Every member of the group was bound by strict rules and regulations which were as inviolable as religious vows and oaths taken before the image of Kali. They did not murder the man carrying a cow, Faqeer, Carpenter, Blacksmith, the master. There is not the case of destroying any temple or molesting a woman in general. But rascal thugs did not bind to these ethics.

Garg, 1963; writes, "The thugs on occasions adopted different disguises. Especially donning the dresses and marks of ascetics, they possess a code of vocabulary and a number of secret signals which could be used, without danger, in the presence of outsiders."1

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Like the bane of thugges, dacoity has been practiced by some pre-British influential persons and landlords in these regions. Who have been uprooted and left without a living due to new revenue system and the record of rights prepared by British administrations of India. In fact, the common people as well as landlords were not satisfied with the British policy of revenue settlement. During the land settlement to know the effect of famine 1837-38 it was noticed that people were not interested in agricultural pursuits due to high rate of revenue. It resulted in many kinds of crime. J.H. Kaye wrote in his report: Administration of East India Company, p. 139, about the comment of Hastings, "Warren Hastings complained that the farming system has a tendency to extend and perpetuate this evil." He adds, "And the same fact is instigated upon and demonstrated on the evidence of the dacoits themselves by the present generation of British functionaries."¹

There were many kinds of dissatisfied and uprooted people who joined by the bad characters and professional thieves and robbers of the area in these regions. With the passing of the time combination of these bad character people became very dangerous to the peace of these regions as they spread all over the area and plundered the civil population wherever they happened to go. In order to suppress dacoity no systematic efforts had been made before Sir Charles Metcalfe, the Lieutenant Governor

in April 1837 made the first attempts when Hugh Fraser was appointed special Magistrate, but no improvement could be effected by it. Therefore, when Lord Auckland took over the north western province in 1838 A.D., he decided to unite the office of Thugia and dacoity under Col. Sleeman.

In fact, central India in early Nineteenth century was a dacoits infested area including many varieties of deviants i.e. Pandaris, Pathans, Bhells, Sondees, Grassians, Makranes and Gujar etc. Grassiahs were Rajputs chief who had been disloyed by the invaders and driven to acts of plunder in despair. The Sondees were a mixture of all classes and were successful freebooters. Sondees and Grassiahs inhabited a long tract popularly called Sonawara with 'Manidpur' as its centre and stretching from Barar to Chambal region.

The practice of dacoity had reached its high water mark in the native state of Awadh before its incorporation into the British dominion because the native rulers of the small state were unable to maintain law and order in their states. The Awadh frontier on three sides of North Western Province gave considerable trouble to the police and was a source of constant danger to the peace of Doab region. The weak Government of Awadh had no control over these frontiers areas, while in the interior also the conditions were not enviable. The bad characters of Awadh were almost independant due to the difficulty of roads, and as a result there of the people of the neighboring district of Doab region had to suffer from their depredations.1

Awadh Frontier Dacoits:— A large number of bandits and robbers used to enter into the province usually from outside of British territory specially from Awadh and Sindia’s territory. British Government was however, convinced that though the dacoits had their origin outside the company’s territory and they had generally the local aids in the vicinity of the places of their attack. The British officials too, found it difficult to believe that the frontier dacoit and robbers could prevail without some connivance and assistance from the regular residents. Similarly Mr. Alexander Ross in his minute of Feb. 27, 1837 A.D. expressed the opinion that gangs of such robbers were formed and their head quarters were located away from their places of their activities. But he said that the local police could do little or nothing against these gangs. 1

In order to check the activities of these robbers and dacoits Auckland had to appoint a joint magistrate specially for the Tarai. At the same time, the Faisildar throughout the Doab region were authorised to exercise the powers of police and this help in the suppression of crime in accordance with regulation of XI of 1836 A.D. 2


Mr. Robinson, the commissioner of Agra, rightly reported that the Awadh territory. "Offered complete immunity to our proclaimed offenders through thither. Ultimately, therefore, the North Western Province Government had to raise a special police Battalion for the preservation of public peace on the Oudh Frontiers in 1844."

Budhak Dacoits:— Col. Bisseman put up an end to the dacoity of Budhak tribe and some other criminals. There was class of dacoits in India known as Budhak dacoit. According to Kapoor 'Budhak literally means a Killer but according to early British official terminology, a dacoit was called 'badhak'. Their origin was Gujrat from where they had migrated all over India and settled in Tarai area. They were hereditary bandits spoke Gujarati language, raided the Government treasuries and the merchants. The liberally shared in their spoil with Zamindars, were always desirous to welcome them to stay in their territory. They had no permanent houses, resided mostly in the hills and forest to Tarai area. They had become usually bold and committed the most fearful atrocities against merchants and travellers passing through the area with their merchandise and the belongings and the herdman going with their cattle. These dacoits had made the lives of the residents living the villages and nearby areas of bordering forest most insecure. Life and property had become insecure skeletons of human beings were

were usually found tied to the trees and dead bodies of people butchered in cold blood, were discovered on the highways.

The gangs of these dacoits were so well organised in their raids that no native Government could dare to offend them, and even British Government had to raise fortifications around their native Collector's treasuries near the Chambal ravines to escape their depredations. In 1839 A.D., the British Government decided to destroy them with the help of the native rulers. About 1200 families of badhak dacoits were believed to be residing in the Awadh Tarai at the time and by 1842 A.D., about half of these families had been seized or destroyed. In 1842 A.D., about 300 such dacoits again crossed in to Tarai towards the border of Gorakhpur. The Awadh Government was requested to assist in their pursuit, the state compiled atonce and many of them were seized and handed over to the incharge of the thugs and dacoity.¹

Efforts to Suppress Outlawry:- Actually, at that time local police as well as authority failed to check the evil of outlawry. Mr. Stockvale, Commissioner of Muradabad rightly complained in 1835, 'Police has been comparatively neglected in consequences of the increased attention paid to late years to the revenue affairs and that measure are necessary to replace it on its former footing of importance before efficient and successful management can be secured.²

British Government had to raise a special police

battalion for the preservation of public peace on the Awadh Frontier in 1844. In spite of the best efforts of captain Hearnsay who was in charge of it robbers from this side continued to plunder and pillage the north west province so much that Buller, the Magistrate of Shahjahanpur had to report of November 13, 1847, "As far as the interests of that district are concerned, the Oude frontier police does not exist." Peace and order was established in these regions only after Awadh was annexed by Lord Dalhousie and proper administration was introduce there.

At that time the police was corrupt, as a district Superintendant of police admits in his article on the police, "Extortion of a galling type was almost universal." In the preevolt in the period in these regions, as today in Uttar Pradesa illegal gratification and bribe were usual with police officials as well as rank and file. That corruption of police officials increased later on when the police duties were taken over from the Magistrate. Kaye, had to admit, "Police is the weakest point of out administration".

The main duty of Military police was to hunt-out and punish the local rebels.

2. Ibid. p. 238.

Quoted from Shanu,D. 1934:240, op. cit.
The British administration had disappeared from Bundelkhand and Doab during the period of Mutiny. In 1857 Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi was forced to leave the state, but she managed to reach Kaipi to join her forces with Nawab of Banda, Tatia Tope and others. At the same time the people of Banda, Jauharpur and Pipla in Pailani began openly to plunder the surrounding country, and their example was followed by the villagers of many districts.

The power of British was entirely subverted, the state of these districts can best be described in the words of Mr. Mayne, the Collector of Banda, "In the paragana the news spread like wildfire and the villagers rose in every direction and plundered and murdered each other promiscuously. Old enmities and the long smothered wish for revenge were forth with satisfied. Auction purchasers and decree holders were ousted, travellers and merchandise plundered and servants of Government compelled to fly for their lives; and in all instance Government property and building were plundered and destroyed. Everyman's hand was against his neighbour and the natives rebelled in all the license and madness of unchecked anarchy and rebellion in a manner such as only Asians can relish in these pleasures."

centered into closed correspondence with other rebellion
chiefs. Kalpi became the rebel headquarters. Tantia Tope
at the head of Sindia's troops who mutinied at Gwalior, moved
in the direction of Jalaun.\footnote{Ibid. p. 189.}

The situation was so critical that even native states
were plundering each other. Pathak,\cite{Pathak1977} observes, "The
Orchha troops not only inflicted a great injury on the agricul-
tural population of some paraganas of Jhansi by plundering and
driving off the cattle but also collected ten lacs of rupees
as revenue. The state of Datia did not lag behind in the race
and plundered many villages during those critical days when
the district of Jhansi was being trampled by the British troops.\footnote{Atkinson, E.T., 1974: Statistical Description and Historical

Local chieftains were trying to make good their own
claims to the old state and paraganas. Unruly land holders,
outlaws like Despat (Mauranipur), Daulat Singh and the rebel
rajas of small state like Banpur (Lalitpur) Shangarn (Tikamgarh),
Charkhari (Hemipur) with large members of irregular troops
spread over to plunder. The outlaw Despat and roving bands
of rebel plundered unchecked the central paraganas in Hemipur,
finding a secure asylum in the wild country near the junction
Before and after the mutiny of 1857 A.D., where as several of districts in the province of Bundelkhand have been annexed to the possessions of the East India Company due to rebellious activities, the Ikramamah were made to get security and satisfaction. Aitchison (1876:323) mentions many Ikramamah written by the rebellions, Jagirdars on the given type, "Ikramamah of Allegiance of Rao Prithvi Singh, Jagirdar of Jignes - I engage not to permit thieves or robbers to reside in any of my village and if the property of any of the inhabitants or travellers be plundered or stolen in any of my village I engage to make the Zamindar of such village responsible for the stolen property."^1

**IMPOVERISHMENT OF LANDLORDS**

During the process of land revenue settlement and later on the long standing landlords and malgujars who failed to pay their taxes were harassed and deprived of their lands and property. Higher caste like Rajputs and Brahmans were, in fact, the main occupants of the land and had enjoyed considerable freedom under the former rulers including Marathas and Bundelas, were now hit hard. In Bundelkhand the Bundela Thakurs who had justified themselves as the real successors by keeping up the spirit of rebelliousness against not only British rulers or Marathas but Mughals also, were physically strong and frayed tempered as well as brave and aggressive people. They are still overly sensitive to their self respect and family clan prestige.

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Besides it, inspite of becoming worse economic conditions, they struggled hard to maintain pomp and show of older days.

In fact, there is no other means of income except the earnings of the land revenue which they used to collect from their tenants. It felt too short as the natural increase of their families resulted in a constant subdivision of their ancestral property including land. The feudalistic mode of life cultivated the habit of spending lavishly which combined with the devastation of agricultural misfortunes left no alternative to meet out their huge expenditure. Thus they had to barrow loans from money lenders against their land holdings.

The disposition of lands, therefore, induced these martial castes to overthrow law and resort to rebellion and plunder. In due course of time, organised by these vigorous elements, the whole Bundelkhand became infested by dacoit gangs. The extreme poverty had for reaching consequences. It gave favourable conditions in the amplification of dacoity.

The gangs were chiefly organised by Rajputs because they had all the know how of strategies for a long period. In Bundelkhand jangs were organised by Bundela Thakurs during those critical days, as Katara finds, "In 1822, Bankaji a Bundela Thakur of a Naogaon (Jhansi) started his maurading activities with his associates. His gang along with others committed 93 dacoities, besides those unreported.¹ Gajraj (1833) was first Robinhood of Doab area before Man Singh.

In 1857, Diwan Deshpate, a rebel, fled away from Nagpaur judicial lock up and took shelter in Chhatarpur forests. Col. Thomson encountered him and killed him. His nephew Raghunath Singh rebelled against British Government. ¹ In 1858, Chhatar Singh from Jhansi made a descent on the district of Hamirpur plundered and killed the local government officials. Bands of robbers infested the wild hilly area of Mahoba and Kulpahar and one of the most notorious of these outlaws, named Raghunath was killed in 1869. ²

The three principal bands of dacoits were headed by Debye Singh, Bikran Singh and Jaswant Singh respectively. Thanin, the district superintendent of police, Lalitpur surprised the first August in 1864 when with only 14 fellows he most gallantly attacked a band of 60 men; eight of the gang were killed and Debye Singh himself was wounded.

Thus, in Bundelkhand every village was filled with potential dacoits. In order to check the menace, Pathak (1977:420) finds, "In 1891 A.C. Hanim was appointed as a special officer to give a death blow to this menace in Bundelkhand, but no permanent solution could be achieved. However, the dacoits continued to haunt this region and this problem could not be eradicated for many years". ³

A most notorious dacoit was Dhiraj Singh Bundela who

was captured in 1918, then in 1929 Nanur Singh, Bulla and Balwanta became notorious. In 1940 Donger Singh shot dead, soon Man Singh in Chambal and Debee Singh in Bundelkhand took his place. Beside these, Dhara Vijayee, Ratana, Granthe Singh, Bire-Ajuddhi Yadav were some prominent gang leader in Doab area before Independence. After Independence there is a flood of dacoit gangs. Lachhman Lodha, Maniram and Gokula Lodhi, Bhudeva Nai, Chandana Chamar, Dada Tejguru and Arjun Singh Gosain were the notorious gangs in Doab region which eliminated before sixty.

It will take many pages to write the names of hard boiled and not headed dacoit of these areas. This synoptic overview shows that dacoity in these regions has had a long history.