ECONOMIC DISCOURSE
Chapter - 4

Economic Discourse

The mainstay of the Punjab rural economy during the period under discussion was agriculture supplemented by animal husbandry and a limited amount of handicraft production. Manufacturing was largely confined to the urban centres which were also the main centres of trade. Land was therefore, the chief economic asset and the main source of economic and social power in the countryside. It also remained, as Grewal (1993:293) points out, the most important source of income to the State from the beginning of the British rule in 1849 to its end in 1947. For our purpose, therefore, the issues related to land control and land use and associated social relations constitute the core of the economic discourse in the novel.

4.1 Land Control and Land Relations

4.1.1 Pre British Proprietary Rights

Grewal (1981:13-14) attempts to dispel the impression that proprietary rights in land were introduced by the British. He cites documentary evidence to show that transfer of land through inheritance, purchase and gift occurred even in Mughal times and continued during Sikh rule. Similarly about the Sikh rule Banga writes:

Land was a disposable property and fields as well as plots of ground were mortgaged and sold among the ordinary Zamindars either with or without the concurrence of the local authorities. Even if such transactions were not very frequent or numerous, the known cases and references to mortgage and sale in contemporary records leave no doubt about the proprietary rights of the individual (Banga 1978:175)
For Grewal (1981:5-11), a progressive reduction of the territory under the control of vassal chiefs and the promotion of peasant proprietorship and cultivation of land by peasants were important features of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's policy of consolidation of power and augmenting of land revenue. Banga too stresses that the state favoured all those, 'who were prepared to keep the land under cultivation and pay the revenues, irrespective of their right or caste or tribe' (Banga 1980:126).

4.1.2 State Policy and Agrarian Strata Under Sikh Rule

In this backdrop of state policy the agrarian society was composed of three distinct layers: (a) the peasant proprietors, who were the largest in terms of numbers and area cultivated; (b) tenant cultivators, they were distinguishable into two broad categories corresponding to those categorised by the British as occupancy tenants and tenants at will; (c) non-cultivating primary Zamindars (Malik-i-ala) and intermediaries, who were neither cultivators nor rulers but occupied an in between position. They were allotted a certain share of the produce, or state revenue, or a specific grant, in recognition of their rights as proprietors, jagirdars, talluqtdars, dharmarth, grantees or functionaries of the State. Included among these were not only such downwardly mobile persons as descendants of dispossessed rulers, jagirdars, revenue farmers etc but also dharmarth grantees and revenue functionaries of the State like Choudhris, Muqaddams, Qanungos, Patwaris who had maintained or improved their status (Banga 1980:129).

In line with its policy the 'state slowly circumscribed the large non-cultivating primary zamindars and created proprietary or quasi-proprietary tenures in favour of those who were prepared to invest capital or labour in land'. This class of proprietors came to be known as 'adna malik' (Banga 1980:128); investments on which their tenures were based included, 'purchase of land or digging of wells, irrigation channels, tilling the lands of non-cultivating proprietors, sharing in the payment of land revenue'. The investors acquired 'hereditary and transferable rights both in the well or irrigation channel and in the cultivation of land irrigated from it' (Banga 1978:112). Another most important form that came into being was the result of colonization of
wastelands in central, north western and south western Punjab. A number of Artisans, Menials, Tarkhans, Lohars, Kumhars, Telis, Juhahas, Kalals, Bhists, Mochis, colonised wastelands as tenants or part-time cultivators and gradually acquired proprietary rights and possibly better social status. The distinction between peasant proprietors and tenants who were liable to pay 'malikana' and open to 'ejection' (Banga 1980:126) steadily declined in practical significance. Among the methods of assessment the most prevalent were batai (a fixed share of crop) and kankut (an assessment based on standing crop) followed by zabt with fixed cash rates per unit area. Fixed cash rates were also charged on wells and ploughs in some areas. The rates varied in different places and depended on a number of factors. On an average the government's share being 2/5th of the produce (Banga 1978:189). Thus certain major changes to promote agricultural production through peasant proprietors and quasi-proprietary tenants had already taken place before the British occupied Punjab. These included (a) a decline in the status of the non-cultivating primary zamindars, (b) a strengthening of the position of the tenant in relation to the proprietor, (c) the entry of certain non-agricultural elements like the trading Khatris and Aroras, the pastoral Labanas and Gujjars, low caste artisans and menials into the agrarian hierarchy (Banga 1980:129). However, the period, 'could not engender large scale mobility without a diversification of the regional economy and technological change' (Banga 1980:135, Grewal 1981:13-20).

4.1.3 British Economic Policy and Agrarian Relations

For the British administration in Punjab too land remained the main focus of economic policy. As land revenue was the most important source of income its systematic collection and augmentation linked to assured growth in agricultural productivity became key policy concerns. Much care was devoted to examine rights in land 'to identify long term cultivators as well as proprietors with whom settlement could be made' (Grewal 1993:293). The settlement comprised of two elements, an 'assessment of land revenue and framing of a record of rights', the latter being based on the determination of existing rights rather than creation of new ones. Nevertheless, the formal recording of an individual's proprietary right and its legal recognition introduced an
element of great significance. New laws rather than "new rights" gave economic significance to proprietorship in land' (Grewal 1993:293).

These conditions together with the rise in prices of produce as well as land from early 1860's onwards, were reflected in the increase of area under cultivation, digging of additional wells and greatly extending of area under well irrigation. 'In 1868 about 6 million acres of land were irrigated, mostly by wells. By 1900, the canals were irrigating over 5,00,000 acres' (Grewal 1993:293). However, the most important factor which gave a final push to Punjab agriculture was the development of means of communication, railways, steamships, improved roads, telegraphs etc. By the turn of the century rail links were established between different cities and towns of Punjab and between Punjab and major cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Karachi, leading to a faster movement of commodities and 'greater equalisation of prices in the different markets of the province'. The linkage with agricultural and trade centres widened the internal and external markets of the agricultural produce of Punjab and stimulated commercialisation of agriculture, which was largely related to three main crops wheat, sugarcane and cotton (Banerjee 1982:50-51). Thus, 'the price of wheat in Punjab came to depend on its price in Liverpool. The cultivator began to produce beyond his wants, and he was now a part of world trade. Punjab thus became an integral part of colonial economy, exporting food and raw materials and importing finished goods and precious metals' (Grewal 1993:294). Indeed 'the imperial embrace' (Fox 1990:14) was complete.

Legally alienable rights in land and commercialisation of agriculture, linked to internal and external trade, made agricultural land a 'valuable commodity' and in the absence of industrial development an attractive asset for the investment of surplus capital:

In 1870 average price of land was ten rupees an acre but in 1891 it was more than Rs.60. Similarly from 79,000 acres sold in 1874-75 the number rose to 2,09,000 acres in 1884-85, and to 3,21,000 acres in 1894-95. The mortgages for these years were 2,04,000, 3,23,000 and 6,03,000 acres respectively. (Grewal 1993:294).
Those who benefited from these transactions were though largely moneylenders, traders, bankers, civilian officials, professionals and others mainly belonging to Punjab's mercantile classes; they also included some major and middling landholders and others enjoying patronage of the state (Grewal 1993:295) or having non-farm income from army or police service or some other source. The worst affected however, were the small landholders who though less highly indebted than the large landholders had hardly any resources to repay the debt other than the small amount of land which they were forced to mortgage or sell.

4.1.4 Indebtedness and Land Alienation - Varying Patterns

The growing indebtedness had a number of causal dimensions: the system of cash payment of revenue and fixity and inelasticity in collection, fragmentation of holdings, scarcity, famines, droughts, cattle mortality, high water rates, bad canal administration, credits taken to join army, buy a new variety of seeds, or to finance some other ventures etc. Finally a point specifically emphasized by Darling, with his characteristic administrative bias, that a large part of the debt was incurred on unproductive social obligations which thwarted the possibility of repayment (c.f. Kessinger 1979:154). These however, were not easily dispensable frills, for often the family honour and standing in the community were at stake.

Yet as Grewal (1993:295) points out, 'there was enormous diversity in patterns of mortgages and sales of land', which varied according to difference of geography, systems of agriculture, character of landholding groups and outlook of trading communities in Punjab. The patterns indicated:

in the south eastern districts, alienation of land was the least extensive. In the South Western districts on the other hand, alienation was largely in favour of non-agriculturists while in the upper districts of Western Punjab it was largely in favour of agriculturists. The semi-pastoral and high caste owners lost more than the settled agriculturists and Jats.
In Gujrat district and neighboring Gujranwala, Shahpur, Sialkot and Jehlum districts, which are more relevant for this study, the situation regarding indebtedness and alienation of land to moneylenders was no less serious, though the available figures vary, pertain to different years and are only roughly comparable (Banerjee 1982:108-110, 120). In Gujranwala district, for instance, it was estimated that by 1879, 80% of owners, 20% of the occupancy tenants and 10% of the tenants-at-will were indebted. Thorburn's account of Shahpur villages indicated that by 1890 nearly 46.5% of the cultivated area had been transferred and little over 72.5% of old proprietors were indebted. Similarly his study of three villages in Sialkot revealed that by 1894-95 from nearly 42% to 51% of the total area was transferred mostly to moneylenders. Furthermore, his figures for the entire Rawalpindi division of which Gujrat district was a part, found that moneylenders held 15% of the agricultural land in full proprietorship and another 13% in mortgage (Banerjee 1982:90). However, districtwise figures (R.R. 1900-01:13) show that cultivated area under mortgage in Gujrat was 16.1% and in adjoining Shahpur and Sialkot 15.9% and 25.1% respectively. (c.f. Banerjee 1982:137).

4.1.5 Official Debate on Land Policy - Changing Trends

Despite district wise variations in the extent of land sold/mortgaged and caste/community and hereditary occupations of the buyers/sellers, creditors/debtors/mortgagors/mortgagees, the figures for land alienation continued to rise creating an increasing alarm in official opinion, particular in relation to the rapidity with which land was being transferred from agriculturists to traders, moneylenders and other non-agriculturists. The alarm related to the prevailing political conviction that the stability of the British rule depended on the continued support of the rural masses, especially the peasant proprietors and more substantial landlords. Van den Dungen (1972) in his detailed analysis of the emerging official debate in this regard discerns three distinct phases in the crystallization of official opinion, though in each phase there are a minority of dissenting voices and also some who anticipate later developments.

In the first phase, covering the initial two decades of British rule, there is a broad general
consensus about promoting individual proprietary rights in land and unimpeded flow of credit for land development. Alienation of land through sale/mortgage was not to be worried about so long as land prices were rising which were seen as an index of increasing prosperity and growing consciousness of the value of land. There was a general confidence in the market oriented policies of the British Government to bring about progress and prosperity and that any transitional cases of hardship will be taken care of by judicious enforcement of such protective provisions as rights of preemption of community members to buy land at a reasonable price as against higher prices offered by the outsiders and restrictive regulation of forced sales of 'hereditary' and 'joint-acquired' and in execution of a decree (pp.43-53, 66-67).

The second phase started when Arthur Brandreth the Commissioner of Multan pointed out the serious political consequences of the growing displacement of hereditary landholders by the trading castes and blamed for it not only the folly of agriculturists but also at times 'rigid exaction of revenue and pressure of civil courts' (Dungen 1972:76). This initiated a serious debate about the land policy and need to place some restrictions on voluntary transfer of land. However, even those who felt the situation was serious enough to call for some legislative regulation thought some 'restrictions on interest,... extension of the period of limitation for debt... and better agricultural education' may serve the purpose (Dungen 1972:97). Governor Davies, while noting the difference of opinions among his officers took the view that the transfers that were taking place were neither excessive nor all due to pressure of debt as land prices were rising and there was growing prosperity. He therefore, felt no immediate need for new legislation. However, by 1890 the trend of opinion began to drastically change. The situation was now felt to be alarming and some legislation was deemed necessary to restrict voluntary transfer of land. The differences of opinions in this phase largely centered on what should be done so that the agricultural credit is not needlessly restricted and the voluntary alienation of land from agriculturist to non-agriculturist is controlled. There were also difficult problems which needed to be sorted out about the definition of agriculturists as against non-agriculturists and what should be done about the growing number of agriculturist moneylenders.
4.1.6 Land Alienation Act of 1901

The culmination of discussions and debates relating to these and other matters was the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1901 under which:

Permanent alienation of land between members of agricultural tribes was permitted while sales by agriculturalists to persons not belonging to agricultural tribes was virtually prohibited. Restrictions as the form and period of mortgages by members of non-agricultural tribes or by members of agricultural tribes to members of same tribe were removed. The maximum period of usufructuary mortgage as also of lease was fixed at 20 years and another form of mortgage was added under which the mortgagor could remain in possession of land as an occupancy tenant for any period on rent to be fixed in case only of dispute by revenue officer. A mortgagor could be evicted for arrears for rent only (Banerjee 1982:91).

The categorization of agriculturists and non-agriculturists varied considerably. Jats, Rajputs, Arains, Gujjars, Dogras, Mughals, Pathans etc were categorised as agriculturists. While Labanas, Sheikhs, Kambhos etc were sometimes included and at others excluded. Those kept out felt aggrieved, particularly the ones who were actually practicing agriculture but belonged to a trading or artisan caste. 'The social configuration of Punjab in the late nineteenth century gave to the Alienation of Land Act a Communal as well as class complexion' (Grewal 1993:295), for religious and caste divisions at places reinforced agriculturist/non-agriculturist and rural landed/urban middle class divisions.

The act had an immediate impact and strict implementation despite voicefrous protests from non-agriculturists, particularly Hindu trading castes and urban middle class. There was a steep fall in the sale and value of land; it slumped to Rs. 78 an acre five years after the act was implemented. However by 1906 land prices began to rise, reaching Rs. 275 an acre in 1919-20 (Grewal 1993:298). The act was amended in 1907 to exclude statutory agriculturists (members of the non-agriculturist castes practising agriculture for a long time) also from the category of agriculturists, thus emphasising caste basis of the recognition as against actual occupation.
As moneylenders continued to be the principal source of credit for the cultivators, the latter too had to collude with the moneylenders in avoiding the stringency of the new legal provisions so that a continued flow of much needed credit was maintained. Thus, both sides found new modes of co-existence after the framing of the act. The various loopholes found in the law included nineteen year mortgages, benami transactions, marrying into agricultural families etc. Some of the capital not invested in money lending found its way into trade and industry. The agriculturist, moneylender however, became a specially privileged person who as agriculturist had little difficulty in buying land mortgaged to him by peasant proprietors.

4.1.7 Caste, Moneylenders and Local Power Structure

A number of attempts have been made to classify moneylenders based on their caste, spatial distribution, the nature of their money lending and other activities and their categorisation as agriculturists and non-agriculturists (Banerjee 1982:111). These are rather impressionistic and not very revealing. The rural moneylenders regardless of their caste origin and status as agriculturists or non-agriculturists lived as part of the village society and tried to extract as much as they could from their debtors within the constraints of the village social and cultural ethos and the law. However, their status in the community and the nature of their money lending and other social relations with their clients varied with the nature of their occupational interests other than money lending.

The area with which we are concerned with was dominated by Hindu Khatri moneylenders and their clients were mainly Muslim peasant proprietors. Apart from money lending and trade a number of Khatris are known to have held high positions in revenue administration and army, some reaching the highest level of the ruling class - the Jagirdars, and a variety of junior positions such as Diwans, village accountants Kanungo’s, Patwaris, Tehsildars, Kardars or Amils etc. (Grewal 1981:27,36). Ganesh Das in his ‘Charbagh-i-Punjab’ (c.f. Grewal and Banga 1975:50,53,54) refers to the various Khatris of Gujrat who held zamindari rights or substantial landed property. These included the Handa Khatris of Daulatnagar, Duggals
of Alamgirpur, Sobtis of Jalalpur, Bhallas of Karianwala, Kondhi and Wadhera Khatris of Bahrolpur. All this suggests that at least a minority of trading caste families were not just moneylenders and traders but had also substantial interests in land which they either cultivated themselves or through tenants. (Dungen 1972:37, Gilmartin 1988:29, Banerjee 1982:112)

A recent study by Bayly (1988) underlines the structural imbeddedness of the moneylender in the pre-British Indian society and his rather limited capacity to take over land and productive resources of his debtors. The moneylender was very much dependent on the protection and support of the local power structure of which in some ways he was a part and also an instrument. Land was closely tied to the lineage structure and though the possibility of alienation was there both the opportunity and the incentive was rather limited. For one thing, land was plentiful and it was better to have a share of the produce as payment of debt than to takeover the land and the liability for paying land revenue and the bother of getting it cultivated.

Furthermore, the bonds between the moneylender and the borrower was not just an instrumental one but one with multiplex social and moral components. These are best summarised in the Punjabi saying, 'Guru bina gatt na, Shah bina patt na' (No salvation without the Guru, no honour without the Shah). Thus, both the giving and returning of loan was part of the code of honour of the community shared by the moneylender and the debtor. By lending money at the time of need or distress without procedural hassles and often in confidence the moneylender helped the cultivator to meet his production related needs and social obligations and uphold the prestige of the family. The conflict or breakdown in this relationship, like any other kind of socially disruptive situation was a matter to be primarily handled at the community level.

After the coming of the British there were important changes in economy, polity and society at the village as well as wider levels. The linking of Indian agriculture to the world capitalist market, exposure to trade, growing weakness of biraderi and its capacity to control the alienation of land were significant changes which transformed the role of the moneylender. Now land became an alienable commodity. The moneylender began to seek enforcement of his claims
from courts and civil administration. His dependence on the village community of which he was a part was getting marginalised. The resulting system of court cases, manipulation of accounts, false witnesses etc opened the course of exploitation (Kessinger 1979:92, Tandon 1961:86). It was this situation which the land alienation act of 1901 was meant to take care off. However, the extent and pervasiveness of these developments varied in different regions and communities. The novel depicts this situation of continuity and change through its portrayal of the complex web of social relations of the Shah family. A most important aspect of the economic discourse of the text relates to the relationship of patronage between Shahji and his Jat tenants. Shahji interacts with them at various levels, as a moneylender, trader, major landlord, patron, village elder etc. However, this relationship has deep crevices and resentments specially centered on high rates of interest and mortgage of land. It is only Shahji's young Jat tenant Mehr Ali who brings the simmering tension to the surface, which threatens the carefully projected surface harmony and mutuality of the relationship. Shahji, however, exploits the multiplicity of his roles to diffuse the situation by taking a paternal attitude. He tells his father to ask the boy to return home and the issue of land will be settled to his satisfaction.

4.1.7.1 Baisakhi, ld, Diwali - Harmony and Discontent

The prelude to Baisakhi is a mixed feeling of joy, satisfaction, dissatisfaction and sorrow. These contradictory and conflicting emotions are boldly articulated by Shahji's gusty young tenant Mehr Ali. He speaks out his mind and is determined to change what has come to him as his destiny (P.80-84).

'The drums of Baisakhi resounded in the air creating a fresh urge to live. The trees - peepul, bor, kikkar, Falah and Neem, brightly reflected sunlight, and the ripe harvests gave a golden hue. The hard working Jats harvesting the fields, seemed to assume the form of trees moving about.

In the afternoon. Maa bibi, Kartaro and Bagga came out from the haveli, carrying the 'chattis' (earthen pots) balanced on their heads, the men began to wipe the sweat across their brows. Allah Rakha called out from a distance, 'Karamawallis, just hurry up a bit. Bagga, your pot has ghee, that I shall taste later. First
let me drink some lassi'. Saffu wiped sweat with the corner of his tahmad and held out his earthen bowl before Maa bibi, 'come on phuphi, I suppose you are lucky for me'. Maa bibi raised her eyebrows, 'why my dear nephew, I am called a phuphi just to get lassi?' Saffu emptied the contents of the bowl and placed it again before Maa bibi, 'there is something else a phuphi is supposed to do. Should I tell you?' 'Sure, nephew, there should be no unfulfilled desires left'. 'Come on lend me your ear phuphi, a bowl full of chajj' for the nephew, with a blob of butter'. 'To get this, you spun such a long story'. Vazeera teased Kartaro, 'sister Kartaro, I am sure its ghee shakkar'. 'You are right to the tune of sixteen annas. Today I have got for you two thick rotis, seasoned with ghee shakkar'. 'Bibi rani, Jats do not need zardapulao's. All that we need are thick rotis to give us strength, and ghee shakkar to wolf them down'. Kartaro began to spread ghee shakkar on the rotis. Seeing Mehr Ali, Maa bibi spoke up flippantly, 'Mehr Ali, I am like your maternal aunt, you can at least wish me sometime', 'Salaam masi'. Maa bibi spread ghee shakkar on the roti and handed it to Mehr, 'who all would you feed masi! you seemed to have assumed charge of being the masi and bua of the entire village'. 'Listen stupid nephew, I don't feed you for love, but for the hard labour you are putting in, May God bless your capacity to work. Hope you harvest lots of grains so that huge maunds can be seen everywhere'. 'Come on masi, you are talking as if we are the owners of our lands. We clear the soil, sow the seeds, plough the land, irrigate them and finally create maunds of grain. After all the lands belong to the Shah's what comes our way is only hard labour and a few morsels of grain'.

Maa bibi was suddenly alert, 'you are not someone special. Those who own lands would reap the benefits from it. As for the Kamins their due is only hard labour'. Mehr Ali slapped his hand vigorously on his chest and then pressed his armpits. 'We are knee deep under the Shah's debts. If only I could free the Kasankia land. Then I will work really hard, earn a bit and save up something'. 'Listen Mehria, be in your senses, the Shah's help you out with money when you need it, in difficulty they cover you up. Here you are cursing them'. Mehr Ali adamantly shook his head, 'masi, you too are deeply indebted to the Shah's and will never be able to understand me'. Farman Ali felt proud of his son, but scolded him, 'Isn't it said, for a yam/ate khuda nai gaye chor' "Jat Yama ke khuda nu lat gaye chor"

'Hard labour for the tenants and benefits to the Shahs. The one who owns the land wields the power; Son, what we eat is a result of our toil'. Mehr Ali, longingly glanced at the maunds of harvested grain, 'sure why not, the tilling of the soil is the responsibility of the Jat, and perched on their horses, supervision is the responsibility of the Shah's. Riding their horses, glancing around, an instruction here or there and filling their houses with grains. Whatever is left over is for the Kamins'. 'Stop it Mehria don't behave like Aflatoon, you would be even deprived of this food which you are getting with respect'. Mehr Ali was
'four annas interest on a rupee and a maund \(^8\) of grain for every bigha\(^9\). Whatever remains is enough for the Kamins to last a life time'. Farman Ali quickly gulped his lassi down, 'son don't forget yourself, are you planning to grow a thorny bush? Innocent, fool! the ownership of the Shah's rests in their red account books. While ours rest in our bodies. Wherever, the Shah spreads his hand, it is his and the amount a Jat sweats that is his'. Maa bibi also scolded him, 'Mehr Ali, being a Jat you speak as a man of power. Did you ever bother to go to the maulvi to pick up a few alphabets. The ownership of the Shah's is not due to stealing or loot, that you are so bitter about'.

Mehr Ali quickly tore his roti into four parts and threw one in his mouth. 'The milk and cream goes to the Shahs and the water and lassi comes our way. Shame on our hard labour. 'Stop it you show off, don't eye the milk of the birds, otherwise you would be left with nothing'. Mehr Ali, folded his hands and spoke innocently, 'Chacha, one cannot see eye to eye with the Sun during the day, yet in the evening it sets by itself'. Hearing this scared the wits out of Farman Ali, 'so much of arrogance in one's youth. So Barkhurdar you will free us from all debts of the Shah's. Stupid fool! pointing a finger at the sun that it will set one day and also warning his own father of the same fate'. Farman Ali felt perplexed and spoke, 'son, if a Jat is not burdened by debts he is no less than a King. Even God, hands over the flowering harvest to someone else. Remember one thing, which I am telling you, think of yourself as a Jat, a khidmatgar, but not a Shah. not God either, you are only the owner of your hard labour'. Something pierced Saffu's heart, 'yaar, to me even God appears to be in league with these white turbaned fellows'. Allah Rakha scolded him too, 'now you have spoken like a typical ungrateful Kamin. Eating the ghee and the grains of the Shah's and cursing them. Isn't it said that the "Kamins get flour while the flatterers are offered rice". But our Shah's do not practise discrimination. Every year the rice-ghee consumed by us on Baisakhi keeps our spirits alive till the next harvest. You are doing a bad thing. Eating the salt of the Shahs and complaining behind their back. The truth is that a Shah is a Shah because of his luck, but a Jat is a Jat because he was destined to be so'. As if Mehr Ali was taking out the last dice from his pocket, 'that is fine, but what about making ones own destiny'.

Similarly Shahji himself is aware of his role as a Shahukar and the economic and political influence the position carried with it. In a realistic discussion with Kashi Shah, he articulates

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\(^8\) A unit of weight consisting of 40 sers (approximately 88 pounds).

\(^9\) A measure of land generally considered equal to 20 biswas or 4 canals, also 1/2 of a Ghumaon; the actual size varying from region to region.

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clearly, his method to acquire land, subtly circumventing the law and enhancing his assets (P.87-89).

After winning the Mai chak case, the Shah's once again opened their account books and began to draw lines on peoples destinies. Dipping his pen in the brass inkpot, Kashi Shah looked at his elder brother, 'there is a 'rukka' from Maulvi asking for help for the masjid, at least one will be able to see minars (minarets) in the village'. 'Sufiji give your advise. In these affairs you are the know all'. 'Bharaji why delay in this noble deed. Both mandir and masjid are abodes of God'. 'A decision is yet to be made on the Munnawar Tawiwali land'. 'The court has advanced the date by a week, I suppose the matter will be clinched after a couple of dates'. 'We have only got about fifty man of grains from the Chichiwali land. Ruldru is in a bit of a tight spot'. The elder Shah nodded his head, 'whatever is deficient add it to the interest. Four ser per rupee is anyway due from him'. 'About the Haduwali Missi land...'. 'Kashi Ram, our Qadir Baksh and Falta are keeping an eye on the ownership. Take out the old bahis (account books), they are under debt from our Chacha Sahib's time'. 'The Kilcharpur issue is a little complicated. Sultan has moved the court'. 'How much is the land?' Kashi Shah began rearranging the Sialkoti papers, 'about fifty to fifty five ghumaon'. 'What is the amount he owes us?' Chote Shah, gave a grave look to his brother, 'the principal amount is one Sainkra (Hundred), which now adds up to a thousand'.

Shahji wiped his head with the edge of his turban, 'someone has rightly said, that a Shah's money really multiplies when it reaches a borrower's hands'. 'It is not fair to fleece the poor Jat farmers'. Shahji stared at his younger brother, then said kindly 'take out this misconception from your mind Kashi Ram. Being a Sahukar is a profession. It has not been made to assuage, people's feelings and aspirations'. Chote Shah quietly settled down with his books. 'Mantu has cut two bundles of grain without permission'. 'Inform the Lambardar, he would directly deal with him'. 'Jamniwala Kharu wants to borrow another ten-twenty. He wants to buy oxen he says. He always hangs around in the morning'. 'What about the payment on

10 A measure of weight varying different parts of the Punjab. Generally 1/40th of a mound or about 2.2 pounds (less than a kilo).

11 Red account books to maintain records of financial dealings.

12 A measure of land varying in different parts of Punjab an consisting of 8 Kanals, also equal to a 2 Bighas or an acre (here marla is equal to about 1/20th of a Kanal and a Kanal is equal to 1/4th of a Bigha or 1/8th of a Ghumaon..
his original sum? 'He keeps on giving something or the other'. 'Kashi Ram, one cannot remain a Sahukar with such a soft heart. If he is not able to payback by the next harvest, then one will have to mortgage his land'. 'If a man is in difficulty even the law shows leniency'. Shahji nodded his broad forehead, 'according to the law, Hindus cannot purchase agricultural land. Leaving aside Sikhs, Labanas and Muhalas, non-Muslims are debarred from establishing new ownerships in land. The agricultural castes now are Arain, Awan, Balauch, Gujjar, Jat, Querishis, Labanas, Mughal, Pathans, and Rajput Sayyids'. 'So where do we stand? Sarkar wants the land to belong to the tillers. But tell me one thing how will the Jat farmer produce his grains without the support of money?' 'Shahji once the mortgaged lands are returned you will loose the right to farm on them'. 'In these circumstances do we have any other choice?'

'Thallivand's Bhaktwar had borrowed about a hundred last season. This time he gave about ten maunds of grain. If you permit, then we can draw a line on half his debts. It will ease the burden of the poor fellow'. Shahji nodded his head and laughed, 'Bhagatji, if you are changing the destiny of someone with your hands, then why should I stop you? You have a large heart like a river, but then who will handle the accounts, and help the Jat tenants during their hard times?' 'We are ordinary mortals, it is all in the hands of God'. 'Kashi Ram it is not one but two who rule over man. One is God and the other Sarkar'. 'Well God is the higher one, if he looks at us benignly it brings prosperity, and if he turns angry it is immediate destruction'. 'Kashi Ram you are just like a Fakir. While I am a man of the world. So why should I try to change your line of thinking. Even if you draw a line on the accounts of a fifty or hundred people will it change anything? It is even written in the Shastras. "Charity results in more wealth and not loss of it"'

Kashi Ram was very serious, 'Bharaji, you must recite the Sukhmani Sahib atleast once a day. In this world what matters is the name and reputation one builds up and not the dimes one earns'. But Shahji was lost elsewhere, 'sometimes I think of what our elder Chachaji use to say. Our ancestors had settled in this village with only a sum of hundred and one rupees. Whatever, they touched turned into gold. Now it is a saying "For lamps, it is not oil which is used but the Shah's urine". 'All blessings of this meheranwala'. Kashi Shah, tied the strings of the hahi. 'you have to go to Mehran Khan Paracha's place next Friday. He is celebrating his son's birth'. The elder Shah quietly concentrated and perhaps remembered the accounts of many of his tenants and mujahiras. Then closed his eyes tightly and began to hum:

'The bird filled up its beak and flew
the waters of the river will never dry,
charity never lessens one's wealth,
said so Bhagat Kabir'.

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Chote Shah smiled to himself 'Look at the power of wealth which overshadows humility'. He reminded his elder brother. 'About five rupees per Tambol are due on Parachas account'. The elder Shah was suddenly generous. 'Kashi Ram today is the auspicious day of Shagun. Send a maund of Banaspati and khand (sugar) to his place. He has got this son after a long wait'.

An example of Shahji's acumen is very well illustrated in the manner in which he handles the case of his Jat tenants. This concerns Najeeba, Habiba and Kukka Khan's, request for financial help to dig up a well. Najeeba, comes to Shahji with a spirit of tolerance towards his two brothers and is willing to establish a partnership with both of them. Shahji deftly handles the issues, inciting him to deal with Habiba and to leave Kukka Khan aside, for such a deal was not without problems and dangers. (P.122-123).

Najeeba got up, 'I forgot the real purpose for which I came. Shahji, with the touch of your pen, I could solve the problem of the well'. Chote Shah reassured him, 'Bring Habiba with you in the evening'. The elder Shah spoke up, 'listen to me Najeeba, somehow I am not convinced about the idea of three partnerships on one well. Even if you try, it will not succeed'. 'Shahji how will I resolve this dispute, without a dime in my pocket. Whatever, I had, has already been spent'. 'Najeeba, if you have taken a hundred, then a quarter more will hardly make any difference. Come in the morning and take the amount'. Najeeba was unable to contain his excitement. 'Bharaji, it was in our interest if the three brothers had collaborated. At least they would have been able to return the amount'. Shahji smiled slyly, and said with the maturity of an elder brother, 'Kashi Ram will this amount ever be returned?' Counting on his fingers, Shahji made some mental calculations, 'such families may get back their lands, but not return their debts'. 'Bharaji why would the Jat farmer leave his lands, even the law is with them'. 'Of course they will not leave the lands. But Bhagatji to acquire the lands one has to workout a strategy'. Kashi Shah said feeling a little worried, 'the problem of Najeeba and Habiba has been solved but what about Kukka Khan? Would he be appeasing both these brothers?' 'No, when he frets and fumes we will see'.

However, the strain of conflicting attitudes on both sides does not hamper the celebration of Baisakhi when all assemble at Shahji's haveli for the feast. It is as if all the simmering dissatisfaction and mistrust has been silenced by anthropological roles. It is only Chachi Mehri who notices the inconspicuous but significant absence of Mehr Ali at the Baisakhi
festival - a small indicator of change in the traditional relationship between Shahji and his Jat tenants (p. 84-86).

As the hardworking Jats descended on the Shah's haveli, the freshly washed angan began to gleam. The bodies of the strong young men stood out like the, even creations of the potter. Their muscular arms, the face chiselled by sweat and the sun, moustaches adorning like jewellery radiated excitement. The 'deghs' of basmati seemed to envelop the air, the pots of khand-shakkar and bowls of ghee. As Jawinda halwai covered the 'degh' of rice, Shahji said, 'Jawinda Chacha, use ghee generously, it should be totally absorbed in the rice'. 'If you say, I can make kheer of ghee and rice. I have made it with a lot of love and affection'. 'Precisely that is the spirit in which you have to make it. These jawans have sweated profusely in the fields. Their minds and bodies should be satiated'. Crowds of women and children had gathered upstairs. Jawinda Halwai quickly took out bowlfuls of rice, while Shahji laced them with ghee and Chote Shah added in handfuls of khand-bura. 'Eat to your hearts content youngmen. Today no one will go back hungry. 'In fact you should be so well stuffed that there is no place left to breathe. Hey Vazeera, your hand is like a huge bowl and it has picked up a morsel like a bird. That's not fair'. Saflu sitting near by began laughing as his strong white teeth began to crush the rice. While Rahmat ate by the fistfuls. Mian Khan saw all this and joined the laughter, 'Shahji Rahmat Pehalwan has vanquished Malang Pehalwan at the 'Nashaian-mela'.

Shahji added more rice, ghee and bura. 'Barkhurdar, Khan, the victorious one savours his win, as the loyal lover receives the reward of his loved one. Don't lose out on eating as well'. 'Forgive me, Shahji, has anyone ever lost to 'Khand-Chawal'. Jalal added in, 'Shahji, Sikandara's stomach is like a field, whatever he eats is completely absorbed'. Shahji patted him happily. 'Balle Balle, handsome young man, your fame will do the village proud'. Chaudhry Fatchaliji laughed slowly, 'Shahji I will only accept this, if Jalal does something about himself and becomes Jalaluddin'. Putting away the dish of 'bura' Kashi Shah turned towards them. 'The one who is Jalal is also Jalaluddin, it is just a question of address'. 'No Kashi Ram, the difference is not in the name but in the deeds. Listen if one indulges in looting then its Jalalu, if he is concerned and feels strongly about others then its Jalaluddin'. If he is holding a rosary in the hand and remembering Almighty then he is Sayyid Jalallal Shah'. Kashi Ram remembered God in his humble Sufi style, 'bless the God who has created this world'. Shahji looked at his brother appreciatively and said with pride, 'Kashi Ram, the honour of the family, religion and home rests securely in your hands. Looking at you makes me a couple of inches taller'. Seeing the two brothers talking fondly made the women sitting upstairs emotional. Shalmi wiped away her tears with the corner of her duppatta, and placed her hand on Bindradai's shoulders, 'have you heard the sweet murmurings of my devar. May this
pair of Ram Lakhan prosper'. Both devarani and jethani proudly watched everything, the sons of the soil sitting in rows, and the two brothers looking striking in their white turbans. It was all the blessings of mother earth and her prosperous womb. Letting them savour their luck and the auspicious celebration of the fresh harvests.

It is only Chachi Mehri, watching the crowd from the terrace who notices the absence of Mehr Ali and comments (P.86).

'Putar, I am used to larger crowds on Baisakhi, how come I see less faces?' 'Chachi all the harvesting has not been completed till now. The harvested grains are still in the fields. Half the young men are guarding the harvest'. Chachi Mehri again looked around. 'I don’t see our Mehr anywhere'. Mehr’s Chacha heard her call out. He exclaimed 'I have sent the boy to Salamatgarh, he will be back tomorrow'. 'It was not an urgent date in the court which prevents him from participating in today’s festivities'. Farman Ali spoke even louder, ‘Chachi, Mehr’s mamu’s son had to come from Khavi. Every year he brings rose petals from Katasraj. He will bring a pound home which will help in making gulkand’. Shahji asked Taya Maaya Singh, ‘our Kabul is absent?’ ‘No putarji, he is not absent, has just gone to the well. The boy was standing here a little while ago’.

Kabul's friend Marham laughed, ‘who can miss out on the intoxicating smell of rice and ghee’. Taya Tufail Singh sharply looked at the boy, ‘Oui, tighten up your ‘tamha’, learn to sit among men’.

As Nabi Mirasi joined in, playing his ‘dholak’ everyone got up to dance. Koaura placed his head on his ear and began to sing

'It is the season of chet it has brought along a rich harvest, Yaara, the Sarkar is great It shook Kabul and Kandhar, Set up its tents beyond Attock... One has to die one day so why be scared?

However, the discordant note struck by Mehr Ali continues even after Baisakhi. It
culminated in the news of Mehr's migration to Lahore to work as a Coolie on the railway station. This decision of Mehr creates ripples in the village and generates a lively discussion in the baithak. Here, the menfolk probe deeper into Mehr's actual reason in leaving his lands (P.265-271).

'Badshaho, people have reached America, Africa, Canada, and these fools have reached Lahore station, leaving all uniforms they decided to wear the red uniform'. Shahji was alert, 'whom are you talking about Mahammaddin'. 'Our Mehr Ali and Malla's Khusia both the fools cooked up a strategy and reached Lahore. Nai Ramzan has sent a message through Charanwali that both are busy carting luggage at Lahore station'. Fatehaliji laughed for a long time, 'both of them are such strong young men. If they had to leave their homes and fields then why not seek recruitment in the army or leave for Hongkong - Shanghai. Even the world has reached Africa. The fools stepped outside the village only to reach Lahore station. A railway line is being laid in Canada, that would have brought them good money'. Kirpa Ram was annoyed with the fools, 'obviously there is some motivation for going to Lahore. It is Nai Ramzan who has brainwashed them. One evening while returning from the fields I saw the three hatching a conspiracy near the Khatewala well. He was laughing and telling them tales of wine and women. Now you can understand from where the whole thing originated'. 'Farman Ali, after all he is your son, you must be knowing something about it?' Farman Ali was in deep thought, 'Shahji, I am just not in my senses. The man whose son could effortlessly ride a horse has become a mule at the station. How would the father feel?'

Karamillahiji spoke up, 'Farman Ali your son has always been very sharp. Every harvest he'll declare that he would plough the land only if he owned it. It was Farman Ali who had tied him here. At the first opportunity he escaped'. 'Shah Sahib, he is my son, but at times I feel doubtful about it?' 'Be patient, going to Lahore is no desertion. Every son is bound to move paces ahead of his father'. 'Shah Sahib now what can I say. Somehow he is convinced that he has the rightful ownership of the lands mortgaged. I try to make him understand, "son we are the debtors of the Shahs". But he would always insist, "I shall eat from what belongs to me, otherwise I prefer to go hungry". Mauladadiji thought for a while, 'Shah Sahib, you should have educated this boy, after all he is a bright sort'. 'Chaudhriji, I will tell you what happened. Looking wistfully at the haveli; he said one day, "Abbu one's house should be pukka, lots of animals in the tabela and atleast one horse to ride. One should only earn from one's own land, what else does a man need in life?"
'I was very troubled by this flight of fancy and immediately tried to harness the dream. "Sure son, what you want is sure to materialise, but it will take time. If not me, my grand children would be a witness to your success. Mehr Ali, if God fulfills this desire, it will open a chain of new aspirations. You would seek chrysanthemum, then roses and even dream of being a Nawab-Mehr Ali the Nawab of a riyasat. My son there is no end to one's desires. Today you want this and tomorrow hanker for something entirely different. It tests the endurance of man". "Shahji it appeared as if a ghost was speaking for him. He retorted sharply, 'you carry on harvesting on the mortgaged lands. From today I will not do that work and be burdened with debts'. I tried to soften his sharp responses, "after all, we borrowed from the Shah's. They have never misbehaved with us. My son, it is as simple, we went to ask for help and they complied that's all". 'Shahji, the boy kept on grumbling even after this hard talk. Then his mother tried to make him see reason, 'with this kind of pride a Jat can neither become a nawab or a Shah". Kashi Shah stole a glance at his brother. His raised eyebrows made him look deeply grave. Jahandadji remarked 'then I suppose he took your permission and left?' 'You can presume that. The boy kept on grumbling the whole night and disappeared in the morning. Farman Ali addressed Shahji, 'Shahji, what the boy says appears wrong to me, but he is a young lad. Youth is like an untamed horse, which can turn in any direction. To score a point with his father; the poor fool has adorned the red uniform'. Something struck munshi Illamdeen, 'the only thing which is bothering the boy is that he is not the owner of his lands. Why should he pay for the deeds of his grandfather?' Fatehaliji indicated with his hand, 'if he has gone let him enjoy the season at Lahore'. 'If you ask me these two farmers have been lured by bibi Anarkali. It's all a game plan of Ramzan. He must have lucidly described the colourful life at Lahore. A thirsty man is pulled towards water. They are after all young men, even an ocean is less to quench their desires' Mauladadji avoided looking at Shahji.

Despite attempts to lighten the issue, the unsaid reason for Mehr Ali's departure brings to the surface the oppression of the Shahs, the exploitation of Jat tenants and high interest rate and the intricate trap of usury. For Shahji, Mehr's rebellion is like opening a crevice in the harmonious edifice of patronage and dependence built by him. The prospect of a gloomy future for Mehr, his decision to undertake a meaningful profession, leaving his lands and home, all point to the responsibility of the Shah and his role in it. With his practical acumen Shahji is not prepared to accept such an open rejection of his protective image. He is the elder of the village, and he has to salvage his reputation at any cost, which would enable him to seal the simmering tensions and continue his rule like a grand patriarch. Such a patron combines in his person
kindness, concern and tact (P.270).

As Shahji saw Farman Ali and Allah Rakha getting up to leave he reflected 'if I wipe out the previous debts, will Mehr return to the fields?' For Farman Ali it was difficult to comprehend what was being discussed? 'Farman Ali, call your son back from Lahore. If he wants the ownership of his lands be it so. This time if he is so persistent on this issue, let's concede it'. Mauladadji and Fatehaliji felt happy. 'Wah, wah, may God give you a long life Shahji, what a judgment!' Farman Ali felt short of words, He offered his salaam to Shahji, looked at both the Shahs with moist eyes and made his way out of the haveli. Karamillahiji got up holding his hookha. 'Shah Sahib, I respect your judgement, the boy Mehr has just lost his bearings. Farman Ali is left with no control over the boy. What a generous heart you have to absolve him. This is really an achievement'.

Though the issue of Mehr Ali's protest is successfully resolved, yet the oppression of the Jat tenants at the hands of the Shahs and their inability to change this situation, remains a live wire even for the women who are no less aware of its discordant and conflicting overtones (P.189).

Shahni and Bindradai are discussing Alia, the father of Rabyan and Fateh. 'I have heard, he is heavily under debt'. 'One should never be as straight as you jethani. Is Alia the only one under debt? So many houses have their names written in the account books of the Shahs. After all this is shahukara. If the grandfather borrows it is the grandson who continues paying it'. 'This problem of interest really burdens the Jat farmers'. 'Jethani, the one who helps out during hard days is entitled to interest and usury'. 'He may be rightly so, but why is it that nearly three generations get entangled in this trap?'. Bindradai began to speak like the Shah's ancestors. 'don't be so innocent. If the Khatri Shah do not exercise control will these Jat farmers return even a dime?'. 'Jethani they don't posses the measured balance of the Hindus to spend a bit and save a bit. They earn and spend. Such is their thinking if there are no goodies on Eid, then one is a pauper'.

Or at a scene at the village well, a lively discussion takes place among the Khatri, Jat and
Arora women (P.271-277).

Mohra's bebe tried to get back at Laa bibi, 'what is this Laa bibi even you have started passing snide remarks about the Aroras. They are not endowed with the capacity to enjoy the fruits of their labour like the Jats or relax with the easy resources like the Shah's'. Laa bibi looked at Choti Shahni and laughed, 'Hai! why tell us all this, here is the Shah's wife'. Choti Shahni continued to massage her face, 'the real potential to earn is with the Jats, who work hard on the fields and fill the houses with grains'. Laa bibi laughed, 'true child, God has bestowed this capacity on the Jats but this has been crippled by interests and debts. You tell me what's the use of hard work? Everyone's fate is not like Farman Ali's where Shah has drawn a line on his account'. Choti Shahni was sprinkling water on her face, then wiped it arranging her wet hair, 'maa you are like my mother-in-law. This matter should be sorted out with your sons - the Shahs'. Laa bibi felt happy, 'I must appreciate your intelligence, you have spoken with such tact. It is not that the Jats don't have confidence. They have everything, but what can one do without a weapon (resources). They don't earn through trade or have family wealth. After every harvest the Jat spends all that he earns'. Choti Shahni could not resist herself, 'don't mind it maa, but the 'diningas' never miss out on fun. Whatever, comes is squandered away and this is no lie' 'Child you are absolutely right by sixteen annas. God has given a weakness to both Hindus and Muslims. The 'diningas' are after women while the idol worshipers are obsessed with wealth. But child, these vices cannot quench hunger. One can fill one's stomach only with grains'.

Similarly the Jat women react positively to the recruitment in the army (P.294).

'Come on don't worry about it. Let the barkhurdars go ahead. They have to either work on the fields or wield a gun. They don't have to handle account books like the Hindus. Buy the grace of Allah let them reach the cantonment with pride'.

Baisakhi the festival of joy, Diwali the festival of lights and Id the day to renew friendships and enjoy, evoke natural preparation and participation by the village folk. Much time is spent in anticipation and after the great day, it is again time to wait for the next year. However, underneath the surface of merriment, the sense of injustice, discrimination and dissatisfaction is also obvious. At the time of Id, Suleman's tandoor is a hub of activity (P.69).
Suleman shouted at young Sharifu, 'don't look around, do work, come Bebe Akbari, give me the flour. I'll just take out the seviyan'. 'May you live long son, but I don't have seviyan but corns of barley, which can only be roasted in the 'bhatti' (oven).

Similarly on the occasion of Diwali, the young boys of the village gathered together and arranged games of Saunch and Thikri near Mian Khan's Tabela (P.139-142).

As Boodhu scored his points, Fattu patted him on the back, 'Oh yaar whom did you remember in your heart?' Boodhu laughed and said, 'Laxmi Devi ofcourse'. Roodu's mouth watered, 'what can one do, Laxmi Devi only helps the Hindus'. The boys started to laugh, 'yaar you do have a point' Boodhu took out a coin from his pocket and gave it to Roodu. 'Roodu hold this in your fist, and concentrate on Laxmi Devi as if the four armed Devi is sitting on a lotus'.

As Roodu played his game, he won, when Pindi Das saw all this he proudly and possessively hailed 'Jai Laxmi Devi!' Fateh could not resists himself, 'the Devi is firmly entrenched with the Hindus, no wonder they have amassed as much of wealth'. 'Come on hasn't she blessed Roodu'. 'Yes that is true but is could have been a mistake'. 'No way, now Fateh, even you try out, but first hail the goddess 'Jai Laxmi Devi', Fateh could not believe his eyes, he had won as well. Fateh quickly got up, 'Friends I am off with great luck. I can't take a chance again. He pulled Boodhu's arm, 'give my salaam to the miraculous Laxmi Devi...'

The group started to grumble, 'if everyone is going to ditch after winning, who would be left behind to play?' Maddi said slowly, 'let him go, his mother is very sick, there is hardly any money and food at home'. 'Why not get help from somewhere, why feel shy when one is in need? Tell Fateh to borrow from the Shahs'. Maddi could not restrain himself, 'come on stop it don't give us ideas about taking it on interest. Even the animals give birth once in a while. But this interest on credit multiplies everyday'. Pindi Das was excited, 'look Jat, if I give you some beneficial advise, I get only taunts in return. On one hand we help you in your hard times and you give it back by condemning us. This is the limit'. 'You don't distribute things for free, when it passes from the grandfather to the grandson the interest accumulates and is higher than the principal'. Pindi Das saw the resentment in Maddi's eyes and said quietly, 'this is the height of ungratefulness as if they are not Shahs but butchers'.

The sessions in the Baithak too do not miss the undert currents between Shahji and his Jat
tenants which at times express a tendency to blow out of proportion the real issue (P.152-153).

Mohammaddin is just back from Jalalpur after purchasing seeds, 'Mohommadin sucked in his hookah then coughed', 'the last harvest was scattered in just returning debts, this time I have opted for the 'tillar' seeds, let's see'. As if Shahji had understood, 'Mohommaddin, four annas on a rupee are better than a pand on a bigha'. 'What can I say Shah Sahib, neither do I prefer the barbed wire nor the thorns in the barbed wire. For a Jat farmer both ways it is a loss'. Gurdit Singh snubbed him, 'come on Mohommaddin spare us these hard hitting words'. Kashi Ram, interrupted, 'let him come out with all that's in his mind'. Mohommaddin started again, 'Badshaho, as far as four annas on a rupee are concerned, the moment you take them the interest remains dormant, but before you realise anything it tightens its grip and multiplies. Even to own a few ornaments and good clothes is a distant dream'. Karamillahi, Najeeba, Kuka Khan had their names firmly etched in Shahji's account books. Listening to Mohommaddin talk, they began to snort the hookah or to billow smoke. As Kashi Shah noticed Shahji's raised eyebrows he said kindly, 'Bharaji, even the sarkar is lenient at times, why not do Mohommaddin's work today'. Shahji looked at his brother, then at his tenants, and told Fatehali, 'you are a witness Chaudhryji, this sufi brother of mine always gnaws at my account. If I say 'no', then I compromise with my norms and If I say 'yes' my accounts suffer'.

'Shahji this mother fucker credit beginning from an ant assumes the gigantic proportions of an elephant. What does one catch hold-the tail or the trunk?' Mauladadj stopped him with his hands, 'be careful Mohommaddin, the Jat language is anyway a little thick skinned, combined with pride, it sure is a dangerous combination'. 'Shahji don't bother about him'. Shahji laughed 'Mauladadj why worry we are all products of this hard hitting language. We can understand each other well'. Najeeba spoke up, 'we village folk are better off. What's the use of the syrup laced talk of the city people, one never knows whether they mean yes or no'. Gurdit Singh added 'you must have heard the quissa of the Lahorias. A man of the village went to stay as a guest in one Lahoria's house. He was asking about the morning meal. And lo and behold! what reply he hears 'gaddi vi tayaar hai te roti vi tayaar hai' (The train is ready to leave and so is the food) The choice is yours' (P.153).

The visit of the Zila lat to the village once again brings out Najeeba's wrath and resentment at his own living condition (P.173).

... Gurdit Singh chipped in. 'Patwari-Lambardars are all a matter of destiny. The results of your deeds. Some work hard and harvest grains while others sit on a bed of pearls'. Nejeeba got up excited, 'Badshaho,
fun, frolic and the benefits of wealth seem to be a prerogative of the Hindus’. Chaudhary Fatehaliji stole a glance at Shahji, then coughed slowly and changed the subject, ‘Shahji the power of the law is such that even if the Sarkar puts a mute statue on a horse, it would begin to command’. ‘True’ Shahji complimented him, ‘Chaudharyji you have got the essence of the matter’ Chotc Shah agreed with Gurdit Singh, ‘even you were right but Dhokalmalji, why throw brickbats at others’, Jahandadj nodded. ‘It is true, if one gets a sarkari job, which son of God would like to work’.

‘During the Khalsaraj so much money was amassed and hoarded. Diwan Sawanmal of Multan collected about seventy eighty lakhs, in addition to the hidden resources, which included unaccounted gold, pearls, lands and property’. ‘Lehma Singh Majithia is a man of crores. It is interesting to hear that when Lehna Singh went on a pilgrimage, his two thousand five hundred followers accompanying him cost him a crore. When Zamadar Khusal Singh of Meerut reached Benares, he donated about six lakh rupees in charity’. Najeeba who was squatting nearby felt as if his hands were about to burn, ‘Shahji when did this happen?’ ‘A little before the coming of Firangees’. Najeeba again got up excitedly, ‘This is really unfair, why is it that Allah is so generous in bestowing luck on these corrupt rich men, while we who work so hard get little as our due’. Mauladadi restrained him, ‘Sit down Najeeba, these are all tales of old times. Moreover, the destiny of being rich and poor is not in our hands’. Kirpa Ram tried to balance the situation, ‘true, this is not in the hands of man. There is something called luck. One gets what one is destined for. For some it is just a pinch, while for others it is a handful and even more’. Najeeba pulled a long face, ‘Badshaho if you are talking of nature, then it gives an equal share to everybody’. Fatehaliji snubbed him, ‘just listen’. ‘What should I listen? The rain falls equally on everyone, the sun rises and shines with the same intensity on everyone so does the light reflected from the moon and the stars. Then why natures discrimination in distributing resources to man?’ Hajjiji raised his eyebrows and glared at Najeeba, ‘Oh Jat! since when have you started accepting nature as your God. Remember the Sun is not God for it sets. The moon is not God as it sets too. There is no one except Allah. It is only Allah who looks after the needs of man’. Munshi Illamdin explained with clarity, ‘Remember, this land belongs to Allah, and the right for choosing a successor rests with Allah’. Najeeba was charged like a bull. He was unable to find an answer to Munshi’s statement. Finally he spokess angrily, ‘Allah he/i jaane Allah he/i’ (Only Allah knows about himself). But the real and false ownership of the land rests with the Shahs. Some mortgaged pawned, tied and sold’. Karamillahi raised his voice to silence him, ‘stop it you animal. If you don’t know how to talk, then don’t open your mouth’. Shahji handled the blow with maturity. Trying to cool down Najeeba he said ‘don’t mind it Najeeba. You had to give a retort so you did it. If you get a tahsildari or a sharistadar would you take it?’ Najeeba again squatted and started drawing lines on the ground, ‘No Shahji, I am the son of a Jat. I can plough the lands, irrigate the fields, sow the seeds, do the
weeding and look after the cattle'. Shahji continued cautiously, 'Najeeba now your query has been answered. The crux of the matter is that, the one who works with his mind gets more while the one who uses his physical labour is rewarded with less'. 'Shah Sahib! this is real wisdom! You have separated the milk and the water'.

4.1.7.2

The text specifically highlights the plight of the tenants and peasant proprietors burdened by exorbitant interest rates, long standing debts, mortgages etc. This problem is articulated in three ways: first, by voicing the resentment of the Jat tenants towards the Khatri Shah, the moneylender, giving it a caste and class complexion; and secondly, by pointing to its religious dimension, for the Khatri Shah is a Hindu and the tenants largely Muslims. Thirdly the discourse highlights the strains generated by the accelerated process of change under the colonial impact and the refusal of the younger generation of Jat tenants to accept their plight as destiny. The obvious cracks in the feudal order find an urban spatial articulation with the departure of Mehr Ali from the village to begin life as a Coolie at Lahore station. The text thus emphasises the contradictions embedded in the anthropological position of the Khatri Shah, especially in his role as a calculating moneylender, and as a benevolent village patron; the latter conforming least to the stereotyped projections. The consummate skill with which he is able to balance these role related contradictions constitutes the charm of his personality.

Finally the description of the Baisakhi festival in the text presents a vibrant and colourful portrayal of the ritual integration of a variety of roles of Shah, his tenants and other members of the community in the production process and faregrounds how:

Processes of production are part of the way people think about themselves and represent the work they do in terms of cultural categories and normative codes (Chopra 1994:79).

This aspect is particularly emphasised in the synchronization of the new year in the ritual as well as agricultural calender centred on the harvest of wheat, the principal food crop of Punjab:
The importance given to wheat in ritual and everyday contexts permeated agriculture so that it was the cultivation of wheat that was thought to be among the most crucial moments and among the most significant activities of the agricultural year (Chopra 1994:81).

It is the transformation of the wheat from *'fasal to ann'* (food of consumption) with the women taking over its charge that wheat assumes special ritual significance.

### 4.2 Village, Army and Participation in the First World War

The armyman or fauj i is a very important part of the cultural scenario of the village. He represents gallantry and his deeds of bravery bring laurels to the village. Moreover, the fauj i is a window to the outside world, he regales the village baithaks with interesting information about people, distant lands, tribes, the life in the forces etc. Economically, he is a source of badly needed supplementary cash income for the peasant family to which he belongs.

For about a decade after the annexation, when the entire Khalsa army barring a selected few, was disbanded, the British emphasis remained on the pacification of Punjab and establishing an effective system of civil administration. While there was a positive reassessment of the role of the Sikhs and certain other sections of the Punjabi society following the mutiny in 1857, the main centres for recruitment in the British army continued to be Bengal, Madras and Bombay and Punjab's share of the total army strength remained limited to about a third. The tempo of recruitment however, changed significantly after 1875 and at the outbreak of the first world war in 1914, the Indian army had 'a quarter of a million Punjabis' constituting 'three-fifth' of its total strength (Talbot 1988:41). The related figures given by De Witt. C. Ellinwood (1976:340-341) are '1,00,000 Punjabis out of 1,52,000 Indian combat soldiers at the outbreak of the first world war and 4,00,000 of the 5,63,091 at the end (November, 1918)'. Their variations notwithstanding, both sets of figures clearly indicate that Punjabis had achieved an overwhelming numerical dominance in the Indian army by 1914.
4.2.1 Punjabi Predominance in the Army - The main considerations

This transformation, according to Talbot (1988:43) was based on sound pragmatic grounds as well as a mythological rationale. The critical considerations for Punjab becoming an important Centre for recruitment were: its proximity to Afghanistan, the achilles heel of the British empire; and Punjab's strong military tradition rooted in its turbulent history of continual warfare. The other factors weighing heavily in favour of Punjab were the advantages of combining military efficiency with economy. Punjabi recruits, especially from Hilly areas of Salt Range and Kangra where the climate was similar to that of the Frontier, had fewer problems of acclimitisation and being locally recruited were cheaper, as they were not entitled to the additional foreign allowance for serving in a far off area. Moreover, the skirmishing skills of the Muslims of Salt Range and Hindu Dogras of Kangra Hills and the reputed ability of the Sikh Jats to fight in the plains constituted an excellent foil for each other (Talbot 1988:42-43).

The mythological rationale took the form of 'The martial castes theory which maintained that the ethnic origins and racial characteristics of the main groups of Punjabi recruits particularly fitted them for military service... as martial castes whose racial superiority made them natural warriors' (Talbot 1988:43). This theory was largely propagated by Lord Roberts Commander of the Indian army (1885-1893), who emphasized, 'that "civilising" effects of British rule had undermined the martial instincts of the population's of the Indian army's oldest recruiting areas of Madras and Bengal. True martial castes only existed in the recently conquered territory of Punjab' (Talbot 1988:43).

The theory and its implementation drew a lot of flak. the Nationalists saw it as an attempt to take advantage of the uneducated backward population of Punjab. It was also seen as an important instrument of the divide and rule policy of the British to prevent a unified India. Indeed it was, 'the most superficial rationalization of what was in their colonial best interests' (Fox 1990:145). The theory also provided a rationalization for 'class companies and regiments', for the British were apprehensive that 'mixed military units would allow the materially inferior
classes to attenuate the military skills of the superior races'. Moreover, such units were also deemed to be more cohesive and efficient 'because the men shared caste or religious identity and because the British Officers got to know their customs well and became 'honorary' Sikhs, Jats or whatever, to the good of morale' (Fox 1990:148).

4.2.2 Recruitment Patterns: Before and during First World War

Prior to the First world war when the number of soldiers to be recruited was limited to 'the typical 15,000 per annum', (Ellinwood 1976:341) the recruitment was highly selective and even class basis of selection was interpreted 'on a much narrower basis, with men being chosen from rather limited regions, often from specific villages...'(Ellinwood 1976:340). The outbreak of the First world war and active involvement of the Indian army in Europe, Arabia, East Africa and other theatres of war increased the demand for recruitment considerably. Not only the class basis of recruitment was interpreted liberally to include a wide range of recruits but also appeals were made to the leaders of martial tribes/castes, pirs, mahants and other influential men to extend their loyalty to the government to help secure more recruits. Those who responded actively represented a wide spectrum from different regions of Punjab and especially the martial tribes/castes of all the three major religions (Talbot 1988:44-45; Puri 1985:131-132; Ellinwood 1976:344). However, despite this all round support, the demand for recruitment was so high that inducements had to be offered and even pressure applied to obtain the number desired (Puri 1985:132; Ellinwood 1976:344). While the leaders were tempted by the hope of receiving official patronage, title, sanads etc., the recruits were offered special war allowance, free rations, substantial additions to pay and allowance and loans of Rs.50 to all combatants, (Puri 1985:31; Mittal 1977:104). Thus Punjab, as the biggest contributor of combat soldiers to the Indian army, became deeply involved with the First world war and, for a large number of Punjabi villagers, the war became a matter of intimate personal and family concern.

The incidence of recruitment, however, varied considerably both religion wise and areawise. In terms of absolute numbers, Muslim combatants recruits numbered 1,90,078; Sikhs
97,016 and Hindus 83,515. However, proportionately, the Sikh representation was the highest as they constituted only 12% of the population of the province as compared to the corresponding figures for Muslims and Hindus, 48% and 25% respectively. Similarly, areawise, it was the Rawalpindi Division, with 1,14,202 combat soldiers which emerged the highest contributor, both proportionately and in absolute numbers (Ellinwood 1976:343). Apart from its strong military tradition and dependence of its economy on remittances from men serving in the army, this area, which constitutes the setting of the novel, had a number of martial caste leaders who themselves enlisted in the army as officers and got their followers recruited as sepoys and sawars. They were further helped by the Pirs of their followers who also took active interest in the promotion of recruitment. The more prominent among these leaders and pirs included Sardar Mohammad Hayat Khan, Sikandar Hayat Khan, Umar Hayat Khan, Pir Ghulam Abbas of Mukhand, Pir Fazal Shah of Jalalpur, Pir Budh Shah of Bhera etc (Talbot 1988:44).

As war continued the excitement and enthusiasm began to wear off and fatigue set in. The prolonged absence of soldiers began to tell on their families both emotionally and in terms of extra burden of agricultural work and other male responsibilities. The coercive pressures from army recruitment boards for more recruits were also to be warded off somehow. Moreover, the recurring news of deaths and casualties in the war began to generate fears about safety of near and dear ones on the front. The casualty figures for the war in respect of Punjab amounted to 34,000 of whom 12,794 were fatal casualties (Ellinwood 1976:348). More than anything else, it was these casualties which exposed to the Punjabi villager the murky and ugly dimension of war and served to dilute the romantic image of army life fostered by the army propaganda and the decades of Punjab peace-time recruitment experience.

4.2.3 Cultural Impact of Army and War

Culturally, the involvement of Punjabi villagers in the army and war effort constituted an important but modest 'exposure to or awareness of change' (Ellinwood 1976:349). Action in such main theatres of war as France, Arabia, East Africa and a variety of other locations, including
Persia and Persian Gulf, Hongkong, Singapore, Ceylon, Burma etc., while providing opportunities for interaction with peoples of other cultures. 'broadened the Punjabi soldiers and opened their eyes to new things, new ways of life and to some of their own potentialities' (Ellinwood 1976:337-338). The narrative highlights the army experience of lower ranks and their impact on village life. The prolonged stay of Indian troops in France, during the war and the friendly equalitarian attitude of the French, particularly women, is also reflected in the narrative.

4.2.3.1 Jahandad Khan - Return to the Village

The return of the war veteran Jahandad Khan from the front after an absence of three years, opens the horizons of the village to the outside world. As Jahandad Khan narrates his experiences laced with incidents of history, myths, tales, anecdotes, acts of bravery, he exposes the village to an entirely new world view. Thus breaking its isolation and providing it with news gathered from around the world. Jahandad Khan is welcomed as a brave soldier of the village by Kokila Mirasi. As he returns back to the cozy comfort of his roots, he thanks the Gods and the pirs for maintaining his well being. It is this divine link which has helped the son of the soil achieve laurels on the front. (P.123-130)

'Congratulations! faujis, congratulations on coming back home'. 'Badshaho you are showing up after almost three years'. 'Jahandadji our eyes are now tired waiting for you to come back. Seems to have become so thick with the 'goras' that you did not feel like coming home?' 'Now what explanation can we give you Chacha Mohammaddin. Just understand the moment our leave was accepted we romped home'. Jahandadji introduced his friend to the baithak. 'Badshaho, this is my dear friend Sahib Khan. He is also from the 40 Punjab. We have been together for years. We were recruited on the same day and at the same place. It is only the Shahpuri's who know what it means to be a good friend'. Karamillahji felt happy seeing the strong young man. 'Badshaho nothing like a good friendship. Your Shahpuri turban is a bit of an eyesore though'. Sahib Khan bent and offered his salaam, 'Janab, if you command I'll take it off and put it at your feet'. Shahji started laughing, 'now we have taken off any evil eye cast on you. That is the intelligence of Karamillahji. What a pair of good friends'. Mauladadji felt happy on listening to the praise of his younger brother and his friend. 'Jee Sadke, Jee Sadke'. Ganda Singh teased them. 'So bandookwalla's (gun holders), you have come back after ages, were you able to recognise the village?'
Jahandadji laughed warmly, 'you are 33 Punjab while we are 40 Punjab. Not much difference though.

You know very well, if a fauji moves out into the wide world his heart is safe in a little potli (bundle) on a branch of an ancient tree of the village'. 'Subhan Allah, what an interesting thing you have said'. Shahji felt proud of Jahadad Khan. 'If a villager leaves his heart on the branch of an ancient tree of the village, the villagers remember their absentee friends in every season. Fatehaliji, this is not a fabrication isn't it'.

'You are right just as we renew memories of our best clothes by airing them in the sun, similarly treasured are the cherished memories of old friends'. Kirpa Ram came along with Kokila mirasi. 'Shahji first there should be a song to welcome the brave faujis'. Ganda Singh jumped from the manja and caught Kirpa Ram from the neck, 'Hey, my enemy, when I returned to the village, you never welcomed me with the mirasi's song'. Everyone burst out laughing sitting on the manjis. Shahji, looked at Sahib Khan, 'Badshaho', permit Kokila to begin singing'. Sahib Khan slowly nodded his head. Kirpa Ram called out to Kokila, 'come on, something special for the vardiwallahs' (uniformed ones).

'Whatever, you command Badshaho'

'Pind Jhuke
Chowkidar aage
Chowkidar Jhuke
Lambardar aage
Lambardar Jhuke
Aahalkar aage
Aahalkar Jhuke
Sarkar aage
Sarkar Jhuke
Talwar aage
Talwar Jhuke
Sipahsalar aage
Sipshsalar jhuke
Fateh Tegh aage
Fateh Tegh Jhuke
Badshah aage
Badshah Jhuke
Sacche Padshah aage'.
The village bows before the Chowkidar
The Chowkidar bows before the Lambardar
The Lambardar bows before the Officer
The Officer bows before the Sarkar
The Sarkar bows before the Sword
The Sword bows before the Soldier
The Soldier bows before the Fateh Tegh
The Fateh Tegh bows before the Badshah
The Badshah bows before the Saccha Padshah.

The baithak swayed at Kokila's singing. 'Putar Kokila, what wonderful rhyming'. 'Shahansheho, only today, the soldiers of the goru fauj have returned home, so, I must receive them with proper preparation'. Kokila offered his salaam. On Shahji's signal Bagga gave him jaggery, Jahandadji and Sahib Khan responded with a coin each. 'Shahji may God protect you. Congratulations to the Vilayati faujis. By the grace of Rab Rasool they have come back to such a thunderous welcome'. Jahandadji praised him, 'What a powerful composition. The Mirasis of our village have become really smart'. Gurdit Singh laughed, 'Chavni (Cantonment) Sahib, Kokila deserves his reward, but I heard the same lines a year before last at the Nankana Sahib Gurudwara'. Gurdit Singh and Mauladadji too had reached the recruitment office but developed cold feet at the time of medical examination. He said with a longing, 'Jahandadji, why don't you tell us something interesting? If we had also joined the police or army, we would have also come back to such a warm reception'. Kirpa Ram tried to explain, 'Khalsaji so much of desire and ambition at this age is not becoming. By the grace of God, Kaka Prithvi Singh has received the Peti-pagri (belt and turban). 'Our boy is in which regiment?' 'The Labana of 33 Punjab which is stationed at Jhelum cantonement'. 'Jahandadji even yours is the Dera Jat Rasala?' 'No, our regiment is 40 Punjab, which is famous in the country. Almost everyone seems to be represented in it. Jat, Rajput, Bunerwal, Swati, Gilzai, Durrani, Bajauri, Bhatani and even Gorkhas'.

Kashi Shah asked, 'according to the newspapers, the government is making all out efforts to conquer Kabul'. 'Yes, many roads have been built and cantonments set up. But the Balouch-Kabuli are hard to tame. They have too much of spirit and are fearless. Sahib Khan do you remember when the Masoodia's attacked the Zob guard?' 'This incident happened in the year when Mian Parvida's Caravan was moving from Gomal to Khurasan. It was the month of baisakh. The caravan stopped to rest. The camels were unsaddled. A fire was lit to prepared the meal when the Vaziris suddenly attacked them. The attackers escaped with almost seventy camels and killed the men who challenged them'. Kashi Shah remembered
the story from *Paisa Akbar*, 'this happened when the sarkar imposed a fine of about one lakh on the Masoods'. 'Yes'. Gurdit Singh remembered something, 'Badshaho' there must be a lot of inner rivalries among the armymen'. 'Sure, this is an addiction which remains with man all his life. Last year a Bhatti naik from Gujranwala was killed by a Virk Lancenaik'. 'Yes, Virks and Bhattis nurse an old rivalry. Their family trees originate from Bikaner and Batner'. Munshi Illamdin was full of curiosity. 'Are there any incidents of thefts in your regiments?' 'Of course, lots of pistols are stolen in the Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Quetta Chaman areas'. 'When they feel like they just pick up the guns. The last time 40 Punjab was stationed at Quetta Chaman, no day passed without such an incident'. Sahib Khan spoke up, 'in these matters it is the Balouch who has a sharp and agile mind. He is like a smouldering coal till he does not take revenge'. Jahandad Khan remembered something, 'why not narrate the Tabootwala quissa?' 'Badshaho, those days, 40 Punjab was stationed at Chaman. One Balouch Jawan gave an application for leave, due to a death in the family. He wanted to go for the relative's burial. The request was accepted. After all the Gora Officers treat their Jawans well. By some chance as the Balouch was loading the coffin on the camel, a Captain passed that way. He felt suspicious, he commanded, "Kholna mangta Taboot. Dekhna mangta" (open the coffin want to see). The Balouch came near, spoke with a polite and firm voice, "please take back your order. I am willing to lay down my life for the honour of this coffin". Captain allowed a gate pass for the Balouch. In the evening the guns were counted. One was missing'. 'The Balouch came back from leave - the gun resting on his shoulder'. He had to present himself before the Captain, he did not deny anything. - "Sahib, it was an old enmity. It was necessary to kill my father's murderer. I will accept any punishment from Sahib Bahadur". Hearing all this Gurdit Singh was near boiling point, 'when Kaka Prithvi Singh comes back on leave, Tandewala Labana Katha Singh's days are numbered. He has cast aspersions on our family before the whole biradari'. Ganda Singh gravely looked at Gurdit Singh's swollen nostrils, 'For the Balouch, revenge is like a ritual and he has a passionate frenzy about it'.

'Once Nabi Shah of Bannu was seriously injured by Attar Singh of Bannu. The Balouch's heart bled along with his wound at this insult. The first thing he did on recovering was to eliminate Attar Singh and his entire family. He announced in the bazaar "khoon ka badla khoon" (blood for blood). Jahandadji, turned towards Shahji, 'Shah Sahib, such are the dangers and blessings of the army'. Shah enquired about their journey, 'Jahandadji did you come here directly or stopped somewhere for relaxation?' 'By the grace of God, we paid respects at the dargah of Sakhi Sarvar'. 'If one reaches the darbar of Sakhi Sarvar it is a sublime blessing...'
Ganda Singh interrupted Jahandadji, 'Fauji's do you have some good news to give us? Then give it today.
It should not happen like me who took more than a week. When I came back with my pension I did not have the heart to tell anyone. Every night, I would go on the roof and fire the gun. Everyone thought I was missing my regiment. This continued for about five-six days. One morning Sharik Jhanda Singh called out, "Oui! Ganda Singh, have a heart. Every fauji has to receive his pension one day, you are not special. One cannot arrest time by firing in the air everyday". Then he addressed everyone, "listen Naik Ganda Singh, 33 Punjab has returned as a pensioner. Go to his place and congratulate him", 'so Jahandadji, don't worry, even the Sun reaches its peak one day'. 'Sure Badshaho, by the grace of Allah, and with honour we have returned from the army as pensioners'. The baithak became suddenly quiet. Mauladadji tried to help out his younger brother, 'if he had wanted, there was no problem in continuing there for another five or six years. But it is good you are back home, things will become lively'. Shahji handled everything in his characteristic style, 'The essence of the matter Badshaho is that one needs time for oneself and the children. They have to care for the wives left back home and the lands which are neglected. Both of them cry out for their owners. And, one day they win. I am not wrong Jahandadji? 'You are right Shah Sahib, this is the whole truth'. As if Cahudhry Fatehaliji added the last straw to the baithak, 'Putarji, you have had lots of fun and bravado. Now spread your weapons on the lands. Adorn our majlis and our village'.

4.2.3.2 Jahandad Khan - Reminiscences

Yet for Jahandadji the days in the army remain alive for him. He regales many a sessions in the baithak by recounting his experiences and giving information about life in the army, regiments, deeds of bravery etc., thereby recreating a different world for the villagers and instilling in many young men the desire to join the army (P.150-151).

Fatehaliji spoke up, 'Badshaho, in Tanda there is a fauji in every house. No one is less than the other Jahandadji your regiment must be full of Labanas from Tanda'. 'Of course, Tanda, Phalian, Kharian, Shahpur, Gujrat, our area is well represented in all the regiments'. 'Sujan Singh the grandson of Man Singh from Phalian and Fariyad Ali the nephew of Imdad Ali from Naushera have already reached Rasoalpur Landikotal'. 'Jahandadji, may God bless you, where are Miandad and Bakshish stationed and in which regiments?' 'Shah Sahib, Miandad is in 26 Punjab while Bakshish Khan in Punjabi Musalian'. Ganda Singh felt very happy, 'that means 33 Punjab isn't it?' 'There are four to six regiments with it, four companies of Punjabi Musalmans, two Pathan and two Labanas'. Ganda Singh felt happy for a while and then was lost in deep thought. 'Those youthful days in the army. Yaar Jahandad, is it not possible to
Jahandadji said slowly, 'Badshaho, why ask me, your wish is my command'. 'Come on you 40 Punjab. If it were in the hands of man, then army regiments would not have trapped their enemies, but arrested time for ever'. Fatehaliji coughed, 'Ganda Singh change the stream of your mind. Concentrate on your land'.

Jahandadji picked up an old thread, 'Shahji the year Miandad joined the army, it was the golden anniversary of the regiment, that was also the year when two subedar majors were pensioned off. They were Subedar Major Magar Singh Bahadur and Subedar Major Makhdood'. 'General Bahadur felt happy and commanded that portraits of the two should be presented to them as gifts. Not only that at the time of farewell, they were given a ceremonial salute. This is really an honour'. 'Even our Kaka Baksh Khan has been awarded the army belt'. Din Mohammad added proudly, 'it is a family of armymen. His grandparents from both sides have only been adorning the gun'. Kukka Khan spoke up, 'one works hard on the lands as well, but it is the uniform which makes a man feel complete'. 'What does a Jat need fine dresses for. Isn't it a saying "Chitta Kapra our Kukkar Khana, us Jat ka nahi thikana" (white clean clothes, staying idle and living it up ruins a Jat)'. Mauladad summed it up, 'every task has its own adornment, the harvest is the apparel of a hard working jat. Indeed one cannot plough fields with fine clothes and murgpulae'. Shahji continued the conversation, 'Mauladadji, you have said something very wise. If the child in man does not seek sustenance from mother earth, why would the mother feed him? Our scriptures explain this mutual relationship of love and respect. As the life giving milk dries up without care and nourishment, similarly land's potential squeezes up with neglect...'

4.2.4 The War Effort-Reactions and Reflections from the Countryside

The beginning of the World war gradually enmeshes the entire countryside in its Web. Along with the war comes the orchestrated campaign for recruitments. The recruiting officers travel through the length and breadth of the countryside offering incentives - both moral and material for joining the war effort. The passionate recruitment drive stirs the imagination of young men in the countryside. The war is a real challenge, with possibility and thrill of brush with fighting, death and glory. The possibility of assured employment, rewards for bravery and decorations are other attractive incentives of the war effort which sustains the enthusiasm of the
young men to have their chest measured and adorn the army uniform. It is the women of the village who feel a piercing stab in their heart, as the absence of their sons from their homes, family and lands becomes a reality. The women are apprehensive about the diet of their young boys and the future which the war holds in store for them. The mothers secretly feel for their strapping young sons, the sisters for their handsome brothers and the young girls for their sweethearts. The possibility of a deserted village spells gloom. Yet the recruiting officers enthusiasm seems to sway everyone in the war effort. (P.294-304).

The drums resounded loudly
The war has begun
The recruitments have started.

The declaration created a wave of enthusiasm among the young and the old. Chachas, Tayas, Bapus, Bhaif quietly stole glances at the broad chests of their brothers and nephews, wishing them all the best. The women congregating at the Bhattis, wells and tandoors had only one thing on their lips, 'how did this occur to the angrez suddenly to start a war?' Their vaddi-vadderi (old matriarch) was so much better. She ruled with wisdom and maintained peace. 'After all she was a woman with children, it is being said that, "she herself was the real sovereign. Her husband was under her thumb. He was no king". 'Sister, whether it is a queen or an ordinary woman, a man's protection is essential'. 'Listen, Nikki's father came back from the city yesterday. He was saying that all the families are being registered in the village'.

'May God bless our sons. If a government proclamation is made, all would be trapped in this'. 'Sadke Gohar, yours is too young but looks older'. 'What about my Jalal?' 'They are almost of the same age'. 'Come on why worry, let the Barkhurdars go ahead, either they have to plough the fields or wield the gun. They don't have to handle account books like the Hindus. By the grace of Allah Beli let them reach the cantonement with pride'.

Laa Bibi joined the women carrying a huge bundle, 'what is the latest girls?' 'Maa, we have heard that the war is on. The boys will not rest without joining in. They will all rush to be recruited'. Laa bibi laughed with pride, 'my Fathu has been excited since morning. He has a great weakness for the uniform'. 'I am feeling very worried about Bodha'. Laa bibi's two sons were already in the army. She said patiently, 'Bodha's mother, it is all the grace of God. Don't worry the young man who is destined to adorn a uniform will do so. By Allah's blessing, let them proudly display the army patti (batch)'. As Laa bibi left Kocchar's
bahu snapped, 'listen to Laa bibi talk, as if it were not war but a game of Saunch-kabbadi'. 'After all she is a Jatti. Either her sons work on the lands or get recruited in the army and both possibilities appeal to her'. Arora's Banto scored a fast one on the Khatrasis, 'we are after all shopkeepers but why is the soul of the Khatrasis too diffident?' The duty of the Khatri is to go ahead and fight. Then why don't they send forward their sons? Khullar's Pasho could not take this, 'why have you started this old Khatri-Brahmin story. Any mother would hesitate before a part of hers is separated. The participation in war is writ large on the chests of our sons and you have started tracing the attributes of kul-gotras, Fillhe-muh'.

The drums began to beat in every village and the sarkari proclamation was made:

'Suno, shahi farman jawano.
Lam roz roz nahi lagti,
Takdeeren roz roz nahi Khulti.

(Listen to the sarkari farman young men).
(Recruitment does not happen everyday).
(One's luck does not change every day).

Jats, Singhs, Labanas, Rajputs, Aawans, Pathans, - the young men congregated together. 'Bahadurs reach the battle field. The sarkar will look after your families'. 'Young men, prove yourself on the front'. 'Barkhurdar once prosperity comes to your family, then there is no stopping, murabbas (squares of land in canal colonies) cows-buffaloes, cattle, horses, wealth'.

'Aao jawana ban rangroot
Nai poshaken wadhia boot'.

(Come on jawan be a recruit
New clothes and excellent shoes)

'Mothers, sisters, wives, give permission to the young men to be recruited in the Punjab army'. 'Young men who will prove themselves in the Front and come back victorious'. 'Remember one thing - the King

14 Allusion to Khatris. Kshatriya status and of Khatri pride as true Kshatriyas. Khatris treat Aroras as inferiors who are petty traders.
of England wears the Tiwana Lancers uniform and adds to its glory'.

The sarkari drums gave out the beat for a number of Zindabads

Sarkar Bahadur Zindabad
Bahaduri Punjab Zindabad
Tiwana Lancers Zindabad
Zindabad bhai Zindabad
Faujen apni Zindabad.

Children too gathered around. The recruiting officers called out to the children, 'come on shoot up fast, we shall measure your chests as well'. The Choudhry hatta which gathered together around the recruiting officer included, Choudhry Jahandad Khan, Fatehaliji, Karamillahiji, Mia Khan, Mia Bakhish and the rest.

Fatehaliji cleared his throat, 'Sahibji, most of the young men have reached the recruiting office leaving aside the only sons of old women. The ones standing before you are all with running noses'. 'The war is not over as yet'. The recruiting officer included Jahandadji, 'being an old pensioner, it is your duty to make the recruitment drive a success'. Sure janab, I am an old servant of the Jungi Lat. Two of our barkhurdars joined the army before the war'. The women congregated together. Mothers, sisters, Bebe's, Dadis and the rest. Wearing a black dupatta, carrying a little brat, Ayesha bibi moved forward, 'Bharti Sahiba (recruiting officer), this village has turned out in full strength before the sarkar. This is not a small thing'. 'Yes our four villages have got together and sent hundred jawans. The full lashkar, it is enough to move even a mountain'. Bholu's younger brother Dholu had gone to see his uncle in uniform at Jalalapur. He came forward and repeated the famous tappa.

'Har ghar seek banda.
Putar nahi to chanda'.

(One man from every house,
if not a son then donation).

Uttari Vand's Jena rebuked him, 'stop it donations may appeal to the Sheharis (city-dwellers) not to us. These are the escape routes of the rich, who hide their sons in the closet and donate bundles of money'. Shahji was around the corner. Tall, fair, starched turban - walking the steps of a man of prosperity. Shahji had deposited his donations in the Subalat's office so the recruiting officer greeted him
respectfully. The elders of the village were comfortably perched on the manjis around the recruiting officers. Some smoked their hookahs while others sat on their haunches. Naib began his discourse - 'Hazrin, Sarkar Aala (government) and Shahenshah Englishtan (King of England) are obliged to the elders of the village who have sent their sons to the front. They share the same love and affection for the Indian people and the army as they do for the 'Englishani army'.

'Listen carefully, the heads of the 'gori' regiments are adorned by caps while our regiments are adorned by safas. The safa (turban) is the pride of a man'. Tahsildar interrupted the naib, 'first describe the Dogri pagri'. 'Janab, Dogra pag seven and a quarter gaz'. Sikhi safas seven gaz, Punjabi Musalman safas five and a half gaz, Pathani safas, five and a half gaz. The short length of the Musalmani safas compared to the others did not appeal to the mothers and sisters. 'Hey, 'Bharti Afsar', why this injustice? Sikhi safas seven, Dogri seven and a quarter, so why did the Sarkar have to act stingy on the safas of the Punjabi Musalman and Pathan?' Naibji replied respectfully. 'Bebe you are right, but the Sarkari treasury will not become empty by spending on an extra length of cloth. We approved the type of safas according to the custom of the quam kahila'. Karamillahi ji signalled with his hands, 'don't worry too much about it, it's a matter of customs. The Jatti's can manage with a meagre piece of cloth while the Hinduanis need almost two and a half gaz long ones'. Maa Karbari told Husaina, 'Hindus have a lot of money, that is why they can afford this expanded length'. 'Listen, mothers and sisters. Every safa has a distinctive style. Pathani safa - eight folds on the longer side, three on the left and the lar (corner) loose from inside. Sikhi safa - one turn on the right, eight folds, on the left, one can see the triangle of the turban from the centre'.

'Son, tell us about the De rajat safa'. 'Listen, Punjabi Musalman's kulla is one of its kind. Neither small nor too big, four folds the size of one's hand, one turn on the right, then on the left towards the kulla'. The mothers imaginatively visualised their sons adorned by beautiful turbans. Maa Haaka took out a coin from the corner of her duppata and did 'sirvarna' sadke naiba, even my sons and grandson's must be adorned in these type of turbans'. Naib bent and touched bebe's feet. 'May you live long son and enjoy the bliss of youth'.

Gohar's grandmother came nearer, 'will my grandson get roti spread with ghee at the cantonment'. 'Of course Bebe, you can confirm it from anyone. Karammarain from Pindi Bahaddin sends shiploads to the front. Don't worry about the food and diet of the children'. Bebe's eyes visualised Nikka near her, 'Putar, I wish he could visit us for a while, in his full uniform. Try and get him leave for a few days before he boards the ship'. 'Don't worry Bebe, the Sarkar looks after the diet and well being of the Jawans'.

15 A system of measurement approximating two feet.
'What all do they get to eat?' 'Flour about a quarter ser'. 'What did you say, twelve chatank^{16}? It constitutes how many maunds?' 'Two or three'. 'Hai! hai! only twelve chatank flour. With such meagre diet how will they fire guns and canons?' 'As if it is no atta but ghee'. 'Listen, I shall tell you about ghee as well - dal about two chatank, ghee - one chatank, tarkari ghost (meat) one ser'. 'Come on don’t tell lies, that sarkar which cannot increase the quantity of atta from 12 to 16 chatanks, would give the boys a ser of ghost tarkari every day? 'Naiba don’t fool us any more'. 'Listen, as for liquor, one peepa (box) per week'. Seeing the frown on the elders, Naib added in, 'milk, kehwa, and every ten days sweet vangi. What I mean to say is that our jawans are eating well'. Najeeba asked, 'we have heard that the sarkar feeds the goras fauj pista and badaam paste'. 'They are all rumours, 'Badshaho! The Angrez paltan is not a congregation of Kashi Brahmins Gosains, who would leave everything to get their thandais. Now listen to the diet of the goras. So that you don’t have any doubt in your mind, a quarter ser ghost tarkari, a quarter ser double roti, a quarter ser vegetables, rice about eight chatank, liquor one peepa, tea, sugar, kehwa - just like the desis'.

Tehsildar got up from the manji, 'Lat sahib is very pleased by the recruitment from tehsil Gujrat, Kharian and Phalian. I am sure there will be about twenty thirty boys still left in the village who are capable of joining the army, so 'hazreen' don’t try to hide them'. Tota Khoji came up with some news, 'Shahji, yesterday the sons of Nauhsherawalla Sayyids had come to the village'. The Chaudhris glanced at each other, when the recruitment officer declared, 'you must all know that the sarkar has relaxed recruitments for the Sayyids'. Meerbaksh spoke, 'I agree that the Sayyids are pure, but the sarkar is going to lose a lot if they are not recruited. After all there is not one but many of them - Hussaini, Zaidi, Jilani, Baghdadi, Jafari'. 'Forget about the Sayyids, we have no dearth of warrior classes in our area. Jats, Gujjars, Gakkhars, Tiwanas, Labanas, Khokhars, Rajputs'. Eight to ten boys of the village who were standing on the terrace watching the fun, rushed towards the recruiting officer, 'Janab-e-ali', please measure our chests we want to join the army'. 'Choudhry sahib, do they have the permission of their parents?' 'Ji'. 'They should present themselves on Wednesday at Jalalpur'. After the work was done, the elders requested the recruitment officer, 'Sahib Bahadur, it is going to be evening, please wet your throat with milk or lassi'.

The sarkari delegation moved towards Shahji’s haveli. On their way they were stopped by mothers, grandmothers, sisters, 'Sahiba my son was recruited last month, he would be on the ship by now?' 'Son you must have heard about Sikandar Waraich. He went for his medical and measurement to Gujrat. He

^{16} measure of weight 1/16th of a ser or consisting of 5 tolas.
is a boy, one in ten thousand. Brave to the hilt, request the sarkar to give something to the boy'. Naib assured them, 'Bebe, the government is very happy with our region'. Laa bibi marched in, conducting herself as if she was the mother of all faujis. She said in a high cracking voice, 'Hakams, don't distribute all the benefit to the 'nehrias' (colonists). They have already got enough. Our sons and grandsons are on the front, while I and my daughter-in-laws manage the land. Sahiba, if mothers and wives don't keep their hearts strong, who will adorn the angrez fauj? You must tell the 'Zila Lat' that two of my sons are already in the army while I have sent two more to the cantonment'.

The manjis were arranged in a row at the haveli. There were plenty of bowls of hot milk, khasta nan-khatai and gol mithai. Kripa Ram asked inquisitively, 'Badshaho, just tell us why has this war started?' Ganda Singh was quick to explain, 'Kirpa Ram what kind of question is this? The sarkar must have grabbed some territory. After all wars are not fought to improve friendships'. Gurdit Singh added his bit, 'just eyed the Jamrud fort, ordered the forces to move out of their cantonment, all it required for conquest was a Ranjit Singh style thrust'. Munshi I llamdin was irritated, 'Khalsaji I don't understand the connection?' 'What is their to understand?' 'He laid seize and conquered the fort'. 'The question simply is that what motivated the angrez to declare war?' 'The forces are otherwise too entrusted with so many tasks'. 'The thing is Badshaho! every government has to indulge in all this once in a while to rule. After all the garrison is not meant to kill flies out of boredom. It is an opportunity to prove one's might, isn't it?' Shahji endorsed Fatehalijis contention, 'The function of the government is to maintain law and order, dispense justice and assert it's authority'. 'Naibji which Zila Tehsil is leading in numbers regarding recruitment?' 'Badshaho, in terms of numbers, out of the entire Hindustan, it is Punjab which is racing far ahead. In Punjab, it is our four districts - Shahpur, Gujrat, Jhelum, Rawalpindi'. Tehsildarji added proudly, 'before the war started about one lakh Punjabis were already in the army. Shah Sahib, in terms of ratio it is twenty eight persons to one from Punjab and one hundred fifty persons to one from the rest of India'. 'Shahash'. 'Listen to more, Gujrat four thousand, Shahpur five thousand, Rawalpindi fifteen thousand, Jhelum twelve thousand'. Karam Ilalahji's enthusiasm was dampened. 'This way our district is far behind'. 'The recruiting officer said tactfully, 'No Choudhryji, in terms of averages, the tehsil kharian of district Gujrat is at the top'.

Kundan changed the tract, 'I have heard that the value of pound has fallen?' 'It is not harmful. This is something which goes on in Sarafas and mandis'. 'Don't say this, the sarkari banks were about to be declared bankrupt on the day the war was declared'. Tehsildar said firmly, 'It was just a rumour. People were made to understand that their money will not be used without their wishes'. Ganda Singh could not swallow this, 'this is a white lie. Sarkar directed the Hindu bankers of Lahore and, Gujranwala to put
in money in the banks at night so that the money could be distributed in the morning. My brother-in-law's relative is working in the accounts section at the Punjab National Bank. He has passed tenth standard'. Tahsildar frowned, 'just tell me the name of the boy?' Ganda Singh said alertly, 'what will you do by knowing the name. He has joined the army long ago'. The sarkari 'mandali' did not appreciate these postures, 'Khalsaji, I hope you are not interacting with the Ghadris - Inqualabis'. "No way, but tell me one thing why did the sarkar stop people from going to Canada?' The hardships they had to undergo were terrible. The sarkar should know that this kind of cruelty will not be taken lying down'. The Tehsildar got very irritated, 'Shah Sahib, what is all this? Hope he is not interacting with the wrong people?' 'No Janab, don't worry. This is an old family of armymen. The elder son was in the army, he became a martyr in Africa. The younger one too enlisted before the war. Even Ganda Singhji himself is a fauj i pensioner'. 'My old regiment was thirty three Punjab'. 'Wah! Tahsildar extended his hand, yes, I go through the list of all fauj i pensions'. 'Badshaho, my name is sure to be there. Naik Ganda Singh number 6685'.

Beebo Mirason came down from the haveli. Seeing the crowd around the recruiting officers she covered her head with a ghoonghat like a newly wed bride, then she clapped vigorously:

Hukam hua sarkaro
ki putarwali kam no kare
hukam hua sarkaro
ki dhi chole dale.

(Order of the government, women with sons do not work.
Order of the government, women with girls grind grain.)

The Tehsildar liked Beebo's composition. He gestured to the naik who gave a reward. Beebo felt happy and called out 'Fateh' (Victory).

Oui Mucchar badshah teri Fateh,
Oui Rode badshah teri Fateh,
Oui Malka motri teri Fateh,
Oui Jangi Latere teri Fateh

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4.2.4.1  Response of the Village Women

The response of the village women to the war and recruitment drive reflects an interesting mixture of excitement, happiness, hope, pride, worry, fear, apprehension and expectations. (P.304-307).

Rabyan began a 'Lam Ghori'

Order of the government.
A bugle was sounded for the war,
Banka reached Basra
to win in the battle field.
May you reach the zenith,
May you become a hero,
May your chest be adorned,
May your shoulders be adorned,
May your forehead resound with victories at the front,
May your mothers lap be full,
May the family prosper,
May we all have squares of canal irrigated land,
That's what the commotion is all about.

Mothers, sisters, wives, felt sad remembered God, slowly wiping their tears away. Sajda bibi patted Rabyan, 'May the pir-fakirs bless you. May we listen to your ghazal-ghoris and bear the agonising wait for our loved ones'. Shahni who was sitting on the peerhi asked. Hussaina, 'Maa has Nikka's rukka (communication) come?' 'Yes Shahni, let's see when he writes'. Chachi Mehri who was sieving out the rice said slowly, 'May the boys across the seas be safe'. Rasooli's mother said proudly, 'The Lat has
ordered that son's of zamindars can fight court cases relating to land from their regiments'.

'Something is wrong with the Angrez mind. Shurli's mother your Kaka is in the police?' 'You may consider him to be in the army. Sarkar has sent about two to four regiments of the police to the front. Shurli is also with them'. Fakira's mother laughed, 'there is enough ammunition to fight the war but who will shower abuses on the enemies? Our Punjab Police has achieved fame for its abuses'. 'You are right, it is a barrage of abuses which inspires in a soldier the determination of steel'. 'Fatima, has Nadar sent a money order?' 'May Allah protect him, I have received two money orders till now'. 'Though he was in a hurry, but he lit a lamp at Sheikh Sadda's and left. Before boarding the train he stopped at the darbar of Wali Shahdaula pir of Gujrat. 'May Sain bless him'.

Laa bibi came in carrying an earthen pot of lassi - the arrogance of a mother with sons in the army. 'Fauji rangroots (recruits) have been given a promotion of fifteen (rupees) per year and fifteen as allowance for fighting on the front. Child how much was Gohar's rukka?' 'Bebe, ten less than hundred. Children must be keeping at least five or ten for their own needs'. 'The sarkar feeds them well. Every jawan has his own quota of milk, eggs, fruit. Even roti and meat is good'. Sajada Bibi could not believe it, 'why would the sarkar spend so much on the jawans?' 'Sarkar is not doing them a favour. They feed and pamper the boys for the war. Not only that puffs of tobacco and quota of liquor as well'. 'Oh sister, if they get it for free, our boys would be also lying drunk like the Singh labanas. 'War is such a strain. So what if they take a sip or two?' 'Shardulu's bhabi, our boy is now at Meerut Cantonment'. Sajada bibi spoke, 'I have heard that the camels of the regiment are suffering from a throat choking infection'. 'But the sarkar is not deficient of anything. If not horses, then camels, if not camels, then dachis and if not dachis then mules'.

'Yesterday Buta's father had gone to the Cantonment to see off his son. He has brought news that Lat Punjab has declared that the sarkar would reward the brave jawans with ten thousand 'murabbas' (ten thousand squares yard of land)'. 'The army men are really in demand. The prospect of land made the women remember God feverishly. 'May God bless them. If the boys come back safely, their coming itself is like a jagir for us.

The thought of Junman's mother upset everyone. The lion hearted boy Junman passed away in no time. It is all destiny. 'The moment he got off the ship he was hit by a bullet'. The women's breasts ached for their sons. Buta's mother got up, 'today I got so engrossed in cleaning up that I forgot to reach the Dharamshala. The new ragi performs kirtan very well. After listening, the troubled mind is at rest for a while'. Chachi said, 'with the boys at the front, which mother would feel at peace with herself?' Chachi almost fell asleep, when Bindradai whispered to Shalni. 'Thank god Jethi, that the kids are young,
otherwise how would you have prevented them from going to the war? I always count my rosary beads, hoping that the war would end before they grow up. 'It's true, Bindradai, if our little ones had gone to the front, how would I have survived?' Yesterday Kashi Ram was telling us that Roopchak's Hakkoo first got her two sons recruited in the army. When the news of one being injured reached her, the third was also sent to the front. It is said that the Lat Punjab has sent her a rukka (communication) in appreciation.

'There are so many like Hakkoo. Sajada bibi told us about the famous Chakwali Sharifan. The Jatti got all her five sons recruited in the army. Foolish one! even the sarkar gives concession for one son. Anyway if one rushes to the cantonment with enthusiasm why should the sarkar be mournful.'

4.2.4.2 Growing Disenchantment and Disillusionment

As the War prolongs, the grim reality seems to hit everyone. Helpless mothers who receive the news about the deaths of their sons in far away lands, the elders trying to believe in the positive outcome of the war, the reality and politics and coercive methods of the Suba Lat, some benefits to the rich for helping in recruitments, announcement of rewards and finally the sheer futility of the war effort were some aspects of the situation. The logic behind it appearing more and more confused with the passage of time. Thus, as the war continued it gradually gives rise to growing disillusionment. The women trapped in an emotional vacuum while trying to believe in the promises offered to them realise that they have become pawns in a situation with which they are remotely connected. (P.323-32~)

When her grandson’s Laddu's first ‘rukka' reached from the front, Dadi Hassa kissed it and held it close to her heart. 'It's your grace Allah, may the cool breeze keep on blowing from the front'. The month was not over when bad news reached the village. It created a commotion. - 'hai our enemies, why did you do this to us? May you all die a dog's death. The army is full of young jawans and out of all of them you had to pick out our ‘sher baccha' (lions cub), Hai Rabba'. Hearing this all the mother's hearts missed a beat. The Chulahs in the neighbourhood became cold. Jumman's mother who used to always avoid women with sons, came forward and held Fatima tightly. May the childhood playmates meet again in heaven. 'Children, how will your old mothers be able to cross this mountain like empty existence?' Rabba! Why did not old women like us die before this day'. The other mothers gathered around to quietly remember God. The men gathered together, puffing at their
hookahs, not being able to settle down on an issue to discuss. Finally Mohommaddin spoke, ‘Jahandadji, our young boys have reached the front. May God protect them. Why don’t you relate something about the cantonment and the armaments?’ Karamillahiji endorsed, ‘Choudhryji talk about something that would lighten the atmosphere’. Jahandadji left his hookah and started off with his old quissa, ‘this story is about those times when 14 Punjab was transferred from Peshawar to Jhansi. At Jhansi was also stationed 60 Madras. Badshaho, by some chance as the train moved out of Punjab it began raining heavily and when it reached Jhansi station, it was again raining cats and dogs. As you know 14 Punjab is composed of Punjabi Musalman and Pathans...’ As Jahandadji finished with his story it appeared as the young Laddu had joined them. The tall, lanky Jat body, with twirling moustaches adorning his face. Gurdit Singh spoke, ‘one cannot stop thinking about Laddu. He grew up before us and now we are here to receive the news, of his death. Such is fate of Fatima Bharjai and Bebe Hassa’. ‘Before joining, he wished ’salaam’ to everyone and left’. Karamillahiji nodded his head, ‘it’s all God’s will. Son, many bullets are fired in war, yet for the one who is destined to die, the bullet pieces his heart’. Miabakash spoke, ‘so many of our village kinsmen are in the army and have fought wars. Yet they have survived’. ‘Again this is all in the hands of Rab-rasool (God and his Prophet)’. ‘Our Ganda Singhji reached Africa, isn’t it Khalsaji’. Ganda Singh had closed his eyes, he did not bother to open them.

Shahji steered the conversation towards Jahandadji, ‘when you reached Tibet, those were also hard times’. ‘Badshaho, Tibet is a land of rivers and waters, it was so difficult to even look for a piece of bread. We route marched and reached Lhasa’. Munshi Illamdin was unimpressed, ‘Jhanadadji, what is the distance between Tibet and Lhasa?’ ‘About four hundred kos. Shahji, the water of the place is so unappetising, one cannot drink or boil it. The air so terrible that even strong Dogras died of pneumonia. The hospital was full of at least eight gora afsars and two fifty desi jawans’.

Ganda Singh spoke with a start, ‘in winter the angrez ’wada din’ (big day) is Christmas. Once after eating ‘aande ki phirni’ the jawans developed a running stomach. The commander gave the order that phirni will never be cooked or served in the mess’. ‘True, the sarkar’s first responsibility is the well being of its army’. ‘Shahji, the leeches of that area are notorious. Once they stick to you, they suck out all the blood. The area is mountainous but the water is terrible. It’s only man’s endurance which makes him accept all this. Even we have managed in those hard times’. Ganda Singh spoke, ‘The Tibetans are short statured but carry long swords. Their face is bare without beards and moustaches’. ‘Ganda Singhji, it is a cold country’. ‘What more, if a Tibetan wants to say thanks he sticks out his tongue and shows his thumb’. ‘Tauba tauba, this is no ritual’. Badshaho, one incident happened, a Pathan helped a Tibetan jawan get off the yak. The man got down, took out his tongue then showed his thumb. This was enough to make
the Pathan red with anger. He was ready to kill and took out his pistol. As luck would have it, their Subedar major came out in time and explained to our Pathan their traditional custom.

Shahji continued the conversation, 'Kashiram our Tandewala Kabul Singh used to tell us that our forces fought very bravely in Tibet. They were even praised in the London newspapers'. Hearing the praise of his regiment, Jahandadji's moustaches seemed to have added a couple of inches to them. 'Subedar, Shabibullah, Hawaldar Sharif, Sipahi Akbarshah, Subedar major Jamalali, Lancenaik Piao were all awarded Medals for bravery'. Ganda Singh added, 'Even Iswar Singh Kotliwala earned a good name for himself. A strong and good looking man. He was later sent to Somaliland'. Munshi Illamdin felt a bit put off, 'Badshaho, it would have been great, if you had been able to win a medal for our village. After all even you adorned the army'. Everyone burst out laughing. Jahandadji spoke, 'you have hit the nail on the head Illamdinji. But there are couple of conditions to win fame on the battle field. First you do something which immediately catches the eye of the Captain, second, Allah is willing to help your quest for fame, and lastly, you are willing to risk your life without any fear'. This did not appeal to Ganda Singh, 'Jahandadji on the battle field, no one locks up one's life in a purse. One is always willing to risk it. But the one who is willing to take the risk, and gets away with it is a soorma (hero)'. Kashi Shah remembered something, 'Badshaho listen to what Shah Latif has to say...'

As the war continues it gradually brings in resentment, cynicism, defiance of the people as well as disaffection in the army and occasional desertions. (P.332-336).

'So, Shahji has the Suba lat (governor) changed his stance in the durbar?' 'Chaudhryji how can he? Always harping on the same issue recruitment, war funds, rewards'. 'This time the Lat has really praised our area. He said that the government is very proud of this district. He wholeheartedly praised us. He said that the people of Gujrat had earlier joined Hongkong police. It was the Gujratis who first reached Neelnehar (Suez canal), Aawadan and London'. 'It is now famous that the most friendly and warm person you meet in foreign countries is bound to be from Jehlum, Gujrat or Sialkot'. Mauladadji was happy, 'Wah! what a splendid thing to say about us. Choudhryji the Lat specially mentioned the contribution of important villagers in the durbar. First he mentioned the Jandialawalah lambdar Bakshkhan, who had sent three sons and three nephews into the army. Then he praised Muridkiwale's Muslim sharifan who sent all her three sons in the army and ploughs the fields herself'. Fatehcliji spoke, 'Kashi Shah, send a rukka about Laa bibi to the Zila Lat. The families would gain something out of it. She has looked after the fields like a brave soul'. 'Sure, I will do it tomorrow', 'Shahji, I got the news from Jalalpur that the Lat really threatened our people in Gujranwala. He rebuked them saying, 'you rich fellows who want to keep
your sons in a closet and buy the government with charity. This does not please the government at all".
Choudhry Fatehlaiji who was at the darbar said, 'I suppose this is the Lat's style of getting things done.
First, lavish praise, then demand for donations and finally threats'. Najeeba laughed, 'I suspect the angrez have some kind of links with the Khatri-Aroras. After all a Khatri Shah will not rest till he makes one rupee into hundred'.

Shahji spoke, 'Lat Bahadur said something else to the Wazirabadis. He admonished them for being still indifferent when a thousand Bengalis and nine hundred Punjabis had already joined the army'. Tufail Singh shares his reservations, 'who will explain to the Lat that it is wrong to recruit Bengalis'. Kashi Shah reacted, 'Taya Tufail Singh this is derogatory. The spirit of Inquilab was initiated by the Bengalis. They are willing to risk their lives'. 'Listen to me carefully Kashirama, a Bengali thinks and speaks too much. Why this or that, why should one move forward or backward or how much to proceed, demands to know the law etc. If such a character participates in war then one has had it'. Jahadadji nodded, 'Yes, in the army it is impossible to ask the question why? It is not like fighting a court case, where it is an endless spiral of arguments. Here it is straight do or die'. Shahji picked up the thread, 'as the darbar resounded with clapping, the Suba Lat got up and with his hand, gave a secret signal to his officers, who began collecting donations. Beginning from five lakhs and finishing at five thousand'. Fakira added his bit, 'yes, some will be spent on the war the rest will be digested by them, bringing prosperity in their homes'.
The Zila Hakam has mentioned a number of families and tribes. Subedar Tikka Khan of Karor, Hawaldar Fazl Hussain of Sayyid, Naik Gulab Khan of Mayra Shamsk, Sipahi Abdul Karim of Dhok, Burhan Ali, of Kiriyan. Gebba Khan of Maira Mor. The Lambardar of Chak Amru Khudadad Khan sent three out of his four sons to the front'. 'Major Hashim Khan of Sailkot recruited a thousand Rajputs in the army. His jagir is ensured. Shahji the sarkar has announced the recruitment of ten thousand drivers'. 'When the Lat mentioned the name of the first Victoria cross winner - Naik Khudadad Khan, the hall resounded with a spontaneous cry of Zindabad. It created such a thunderous a commotion as if the mai ka Ia! is still alive'. Gurdit Singh spoke, 'yes, he got the Victoria cross, but anyway the one who dies for the country, always remains alive'. Only the destined ones, get decorations'. Karamillahi ji mind was distracted by his grandson Akhiya, 'Shahji my Akhiya is a brave lad but lacks intelligence'. 'It's all his mehr, Choudhryji, bravery is the only thing one needs on the battle front. The officers are present to chalk out strategies'. 'Our armies are working according to a well laid out plan'. 'Jahandadji you would know better'.

As Karamillahi ji noticed Ganda Singh falling asleep he put in, 'Yesterday barkhurdar Zoravar Singh reached the village. he must have got the parchi (slip) to board the ship'. Kukka Khan shared his information, 'No, I have heard that he has returned from the Cantonement without taking leave. It is said
that he has got a furlough'. Munshi Illamdin spoke, 'Zorovar Singh does not seem to be in high spirits, perhaps some illness'. Ganda Singh got up with a start, 'no our Kaka is neither suffering from any illness nor is he on leave. He has returned the army badge. He took it off and put it before the gora Captain, "upni vardi sambholo, aapan chale" (keep your uniform I am leaving). Jahandad was worried, 'tell us in detail, Badshaho it is a dangerous offence'. Ganda Singh touched his safa, 'Zoravar has been deprived of his uniform. There were about thirty forty soldiers in their regiment. An old recruitment. When the promotions to subedar's rank took place not a single desi name appeared in the list. A feeling of grave injustice was created. Some of them got together and complained to the commanding officer. They just wanted to know as to what the desi jawans lacked that they were denied promotions'. 'In the morning parade, it was ordered that the group of soldiers who had earlier expressed their resentment should deposit their rifles. The stripes were taken off their shoulders'. It is clear that they have been suspended from the regiment' Jahandadji enlightened Ganda Singh, 'this is not a small matter. Obviously it is much more serious'. 'No, the one and only reason being that the regiment is Indian and our boys deserve a fair chance of promotion.' The Captain explained to the boys, "it is the punishment for your offence. If you connive with the inqualabis, this is the price you shall pay". 'Jahandadji, Zoravar tells us, that there was a boy from Sahiwal Roshan Ali a brilliant marksman. He gave a very blunt reply, "Captain Sahib, remember my last words too. If we are not meted equal treatment in the army, then the heart of every desi jawan will come out of its cage and become inqualabi". Shahji thought for a while, then lowered his voice, 'send Zoravar to his nanihal for a few days. There is a lot of police activity in our village. A few days away will do him good'.

Gurdit Singh began reading Sardool Singh's rukka. 'Shahji Sardool Singh writes that the French people feel really thrilled with our boys and specially the women. As the Hindustani regiments walk across the road, they come forward, to shake hands with such warmth that one feels like locking them in a tight embrace'. Mirbaksh spoke, 'these are the benefits of army men. The coveted lollipop after a tough time at the border. Why should not they enjoy this bliss?' 'Badshaho any letter from Gohar', 'Yes, he feels shy of me. But he has written a letter to his brother describing an interesting incident. One evening a group of five or six jawans were returning to their cantonement, on the way a beautiful Gulabo made a pass at him, she first shook hands and then kissed him. The gora walking next to him laughed. Gohar protested, "she is herself coming forward and hugging me, what should I do?" The gora said, "you are a lucky jawan, go take this beautiful bud for a walk". 'Then what happened Mir Bakshji?' Gurdit Singh interrupted, 'what was there to happen? Must have taken a few sips of something and... After all the boy was not to set up a jhuggi, with the bibi so that she would make his babies and cook food'. Maaya Singh laughed rolling away, then winked at Gurdit Singh, 'why son, are you in a mood to savour the French
flavour. Chalo, lets go to France. So what if we are past our prime. But old war horses are hard to beat'.
Fakira laughed, 'you really are the limit Taya Maaya Singh. Does an old lion ever lose his vigour?' As if Maaya Singh was back in his youth. 'He laughed, Oh, mother fucker you are teasing me. Your Taya is on his way to God. Now he will miss this high swing of life. This is not destined for him'.

Everyone burst out into peals of laughter, wiping their eyes with the corner of their turbans. As he laughed, Taya Maaya Singh's safa adorned head suddenly hit the side of the Manji. Kashi Shah held his hand. His eyes were closed. The pulse had disappeared, the old lion had suddenly crossed the battlefield of life.

4.2.5 Military Service: Romance and Reality

The romance and reality of military service is alluring to all in the village. Primarily the visual of a young man in a uniform is a dream. And if it comes true, it opens a dream world of prospects and perks. These include uniform, attractive salary during active service, home leave for serving soldiers and other facilities, pensions etc after discharge and death. The army takes good care of the living and dead armymen. Besides thrill of brush with real fighting, active service in any theatre of war, challenge of bravery and heroism, rewards and decorations are some of the other incentives. In the village, veterans, pensioners and serving soldiers on home leave constitute this enviable group. This core group is in close contact with serving soldiers on home leave and ex-servicemen belonging to the neighbouring villages. There is much looking back and comparison between life then and now. Exservicemen and the serving lot on home leave never exhaust to share experiences of their sojourn in the army. But alas! the years of active service pass too soon. Could time move backwards and the span of serving years be stretched to one's heart content. Ganda Singh, an old pensioner shares his dream wish with Jahandadji, who has just returned to the village after completing his years in the army. How we, the pensioners, wish to report back on duty after long leave. So many memories and nostalgia of an eventful service with friends and comrades crowd the reminiscences.

Retirement from the army is hardly a vacant withdrawal or a blank beginning. There is
so much to relate with the younger soldiers who continue to represent the village and the general area. Here under the banner of their regiments the past and present, age and youth co-exist and enrich the tradition of military service.

The exclusive club of armymen in the village comprises of: Pensioner, Ganda Singh of 33 Punjab, who saw active service in Africa and Tibet. His two sons were also enlisted in the army. Unfortunately, the older died young fighting in Africa. The other, Zoravar has now been declared a deserter from the army. Miandad serving in 26 Punjab, Bakshish Khan serving in Punjabi Musalman and Jahandad, ex-fauji of 40 Punjab are the other leading lights. This is Jahandad's first visit to the village after joining the ranks of a Pensioner. This time, his friend, Sahib Khan of Shahpur, also of 40 Punjab is accompanying him to keep up his morale. This group of faujis is well informed about faujis in nearby Tanda and other villages. Sujan Singh, the grandson of Man Singh of Phalianwala and Fariyad Ali, the nephew of Imdad Ali of Naushera are at the moment in Landikotal.

The emergency of the First World War created a situation for a fresh wave of recruitment in the village and the general area. Gohar, Naddar, Jumman, Laddu and some other young men are lucky to be selected for military service. However, not all lived to see the conclusion of the war. Jumman and Laddu died during the course of the war. Death of a young soldier shatters many a dreams. The long list of dead and wounded includes a dear name. The Sarkari letter confirms the news and finalises pension etc. What a substitute for a handsome young boy returning home to his family and village. Suddenly for the women of the village, the whole effort seemed futile. The promises of quick promotions, rewards of land, Murabbas perished in an untimely unknown death. The mother would have wished for a long span in the army - her fauji son to win rewards and return to the village as a pensioner.

For Jahandad the transition from active service to quiet life of a pensioner is painful. All those glorious years recede into the past. The scenario changes. The realization of one's longing to be back home with the family, parents, friends, lands is not enough to overcome the nagging

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feeling of having left a treasure behind. Jahandad postpones the news of his retirement and pension. He pretends to be on home leave with his friend, Sahib Khan from Shahpur. But Ganda Singh has lived the moment. How long can one avoid reality? And finally Jahandad officially joins the ranks of veterans. The roots open-up to welcome the fresh branch.

Here, tucked together in their village, these soldiers along with Shahji, Chote Shah and others have general discussions on wide-ranging issues in the Baithak sessions. Men from the army have much to contribute. Their wide-ranging experiences, geographical information about peoples, places and theatres of war is almost like first hand reports. They are equally involved in happenings at home - such as the strains of the total war situation, the Ghadrites sparks and the impact of the Komagata Maru Ship. But at times their descriptions about various incidents related to army life are pompous and strain the sense of credibility. Faujis don't mind highlighting their own heroism or gallantry in any challenging situation. The listeners are responsive. They see through their exaggeration and good-humoredly bring down to earth such flights of fancy.

For the faujis, the best of their life is past, but it has not permanently faded into their consciousness. It continues to live with them. It is revived time and again in stories of real or imaginary experiences. Here under the mellowed shadow of these fulfilled or unfilled longings, the boys of the village grow up and get ready to plunge into military service.

4.2.5.1

The passages in the text show the economic repercussions of colonial rule. This is graphically represented by the growing lucratives and necessity for joining the army felt specially by small marginal farmers and those gradually swelling the ranks of tenancy. A move from the cocoons of their village to a world outside to make a living was inherent in the situation. This decision to move out also exposes them to new situations- social, cultural, historical, and political reality. Such a move alters and disturbs the fixed mind-set in which they
have been born and brought up. These rich experiences become a part of the reservoir of their existence as they return back home to narrate and share it with the village folk. In a small and modest manner they play the role of communicating agents for harbingering social change. Lastly participation in the war effort gradually exposes the people to an entirely new dimension of the rulers. The aspect which is exploitative, superior, racist, wanting to suck from the natives as much as possible to rejuvenate themselves. The grim reality of the war shatters a lot many illusions about the colonial state and its paternal image. The experiences of the soldiers, the agony and sense of loss suffered by the people left behind in the village, all contribute to the creation of a feeling of deep resentment against the rulers. A feeling finding expression in dreams and efforts to belong to a truly free and sovereign nation.

4.3 The Nexus Between Police, Criminals and Law

For understanding the village based crime, such as theft, adultery, rape, interpersonal and intergroup fights etc. it is important to see the village as part of a network of communities within which the reverberations of crime are felt and a variety of interpersonal and intergroup relations are activated. Such a network in respect of the village under discussion consisted of the neighbouring villages of Begowal, Kulluwal, Alamgarh, Jalalpur and the city of Gujrat with its law courts and various level of civil and police administration. The presence of Thanedar Salamat Ali and Sipahi Lal Khan was an important indicator that the issue was too serious or too complicated to be settled at the village level. They sought to establish a strong and intimidating hold on the people, and their presence was vital for handling murders for revenge, for land, for upholding family honour, and dacoities, burglaries etc. The police maintained a complex relationship of containment and co-existence with the 'badmashes' of the area whom they used as informers and even scapegoats. It was their fate to be rounded up and beaten up periodically and even kept in custody for a few days just to show that the police was on the job. Thus for characters like Heera Sansi, Sikandar, Vazeera, Gaffu, Saffu, Goglu, Bhagu etc., the occasional detention or imprisonment was more like a seasonal occupational visit to 'barra ghar' than a
punishment.

However, the intricate web of crime in the area had different shades of manifestation. Legally, cattle theft, stealing, dacoity, abduction of women, looting were the major criminal acts, no matter what the circumstances and who indulged in them. For the government, a majority of those involved in them were not ordinary villagers but members of what it deemed as 'wandering and criminal tribes'. According to 1881 census figures of these tribes, Gujrat district was inhabited by Beldar 279, Changar 64, Sansi 1,090, Pakhiwara 213 constituting about 0.2% of the total population as compared to 0.4% of the Province as a whole (c.f. Ibbetson 1993:272-273).

Culturally however, the cattle thieves and dacoits who looted other communities had a protective role in their own communities, and so they often enjoyed an assured support base there. Thus, they acquired a dare-devil reputation in their own community, as part of the community fighting group. Moreover, where pastoralism is present participation in raiding for cattle is a sign of personal bravery and dramatization of the symbolic passage of a boy to adulthood. This practice, which is particularly prevalent in communities where law and order machinery is not that extensive and communities have to depend on self-help for self-preservation, also marks a boy's readiness to take part in community defence.

A further dimension of crime, and the one which has the widest community approval, relates to men's readiness to resort to murder and violence to defend their women, their land and personal honour. A good many of the village crimes form part of this competitive struggle for honour in terms of community values. As this struggle spills over from the village to the law courts, instead of physical power and bravery, one's contacts, influence, wealth, ability to hire good lawyers, bribe officials, procure convincing witnesses true or false and employ them to obtain favourable court verdicts add new complexity to the game of honour and the manner crime figures in it.
The arrival of Thanedar Salamat Ali and the Sipahis creates a commotion in the village. Beginning with Shahji, to the petty criminal, the Thanedar's visit generates a great deal of interest and its outcome is looked forward to with anticipation. (P.44-47).

Shahji and Thanedar Sahib had still not returned from the fields when rumours of a burglary resulting in the Thana being set up in the village gathered everyone near the haveli. Nawab who was thrashing corn heard the commotion and said loudly, 'Badshaho, at the moment the Thanedar is still at the fields, when he comes, he will see the petitions'. Mukhtiar retied his turban, 'listen to what Nawab is saying, our guests have gone to answer the call of nature, not to capture the cannon of the Bhangi's'. Nawab, threw aside his Toka and laughed, 'come on Badshaho, comparing the murmurings of a small earthquake to the mighty cannon of the Sikhs'. 'Sure, which stomach does not have murmurings in the morning?' 'Be patient, the Thanedar will soon be free and come'. Fazal felt a little jealous of the clout exercised by Salamat Ali, 'what is so special about Salamat Ali that he can create earthquakes? Why don't you be frank and say that he has gone to ease himself after yesterday's lavish hospitality'. 'These are the privileges of being a Thanedar'. 'It's the all his Mehr, one has to offer salaam to a Thanedar or a Sipahi once in a while'. Sultan nudged Khajoora 'Hey! look over there'. Thanedar's firm footsteps along with Shahji alerted the crowd.

Shahji enquired, 'why this commotion?' Miahkhanji rearranged his khes, 'we have come to know, that yesterday night there has been a burglary in Jammi?' 'Are you in your senses?' 'We are halting in this village and someone getting away with such an incident in our very presence'. Thanedar Salamat Ali's voice sounded like a well oiled whiplash. Mia Khan rearranged his headgear and looked towards the Jammiwallahs, 'break-in, theft, dacoity- whatever, the incident describe it'. 'It was the dead of the night, Janab I was about to draw out water from the well and had just tied the rope on my shoulders'. Thanedar yelled, 'Taj Khan, I am sure the thieves must have tied the rope to your ledge. I'll beat you so hard that every part of your body shall groan in pain with the crack of my whips'. 'Yes, whose wall adjoins the broken-in-wall?' Ismail Darzi started to tremble. He went ahead and bowed, 'Janab' 'Janab can go to hell. I will expose, precisely what you have cooked among yourself. The break-in happened on the side of your wall, the thieves escaped from the side of your stairs, all the clothes were spread on your terrace. Come on out with it, I am still giving you a chance'. Ismail trembled all over, 'Janab, this man is innocent'. He
ordered Sipahi, Maddi Khan, 'slash his head into three'. 'Hey! Tundo, do you recognise me?' 'Who doesn't know you \textit{Motianwala}?' 'Vomit it out fast', 'Janab, I am at your disposal', 'what was this \textit{Chandl-Chokdi} (group of conspirators) cooking up at Choranwali?' 'No Janab, Choranwali and Jammi are poles apart, 'oui, you are still not a man, Maddikhan just show him the houries (fairies)'. With a swift gesture, Maddikhan twisted his arm and pinned him on the floor. When Thanedar saw Tunda flat on the floor, he signalled him to stop. Then oblivious of the crowd he began chatting with Shah Sahib. As Tunda stole a glance at the two immersed in talking, he called out to Khajura, 'Oui, sister fucker, I seem to have lost my left shoe, just look for it'. Maddikhan snubbed him, 'It's not your shoe, but this Kanjari leg which is soon to be widowed'.

Similarly the visit to tackle the conspiracy to kill a sarkari official is no less thunderous. (P.55-58).

They had just come out of the masjid when Sipahi Lal Khan suddenly made his appearance. 'Lal Khanji, may God bless you! How come you lost your way to our village?' Lal Khan had the style of carrying the thana's structure on his shoulders. He twirled his moustaches and said clearly, 'the police's task is not to lose its way but to find it'. Seeing Lal Khan's temper, Sikandar and Waraich's heart seemed to miss a beat. They said teasingly, 'for the police even a small cracker is like a cannon ball, which bursts with great intensity. Isn't it so Lal Khanji?' Wazira nudged him to shut up, 'Lal Khanji has something new cropped up?' As if Lal Khan's hennaed moustaches were on fire, 'Hey you motherfuckers, you can fly pigeons in your father's baraat. Now I will expose the conspiracy to kill the sarkari officer Panda Khan'. Vazeera and Sikandar held their ears, '\textit{Tauha, tauha} may you continue looking after our interests \textit{Motianwala}. This incident seems to be the doing of the badmashes of Hathar area'. 'The sight of money is enough to tempt the people from Hathar and Jattar'. Chaudhri Mauladadji nodded his turbaned head, 'Lalkhanji, the village is here to help you, just put sense in the heads of these boys. What is this new incident?' 'May God bless you! Lal Khan, the Naib Tehsildar has already undertaken a tour of Barani and Sailab, what is this happening?' As if Lal Khan's moustaches were fluttering like the Indian Penal Code. 'Hey! you donkey leave aside those Badmashes. I am soon to book you under section three hundred seven'. '\textit{Lahaul bila kuwat}, our village is innocent'. 'We don't have to travel to Kabul and Kandhar to hunt for badmashes. There are plenty prospering here as well'. Nabia added a smart one, '\textit{Motianwala} that is no problem for you, just cross the river and you will be beyond Attock...'
Dressed in his turban, khes and jewelled Juttis, Thanedar Salamat Ali appeared a man of style. The pleated white salwar, Pathan turban and kulla adorned the Peshawari coat. Sitting on the manji he seemed to symbolise the Sarkar itself.

'Salaam Badshaho! Salaam Motiamwala, salaam Sahibji'. After sitting for a while, Thanedarji quickly grabbed Saffu and challenged him, 'You sister fucker, standup, just give a straight reply'. 'Sarkar's request is my command'. 'Yes tell me about the celebrations being held at Jalalpurwala Jahangira's place?'. 'Yes, Motiamwala, I was coming back from my Shadiwali aunt's place, so it got late at Jalalpur. I stopped at Jahangira's place'. 'Yes, repeat the deeds and the plans of the Chandal Chaukri'. 'Faggu, Langa, Bhura and Sialkotia were playing cowries'. 'And you three badmashes?' 'Janab, there was no one there besides me. If someone was around, I did not notice. It was pitch dark, the sky was overcast'. Salamat, Ali's voice thundered. 'Do I have to force you, how many false witnesses have you given?' He replied innocently, 'Janab, you are right, this is our daily exercise'. 'Lal Khan, these fools seem to be having it good. Come on, bring out their raw flesh'. Lal Khan began to hit him hard with his whip. All that could be heard was, 'wah! wah! may Allah, brighten the stars of these policewallah's'. Chaudhri Mauladad and Shahji tried to catch Thanedar's eye. 'There seems no doubt about this fool's guilt. I appeal to you to tell us his offense, so that all the others are also given a lesson'. Salamat Ali's red eyes glittered and Lal Khan stopped his hand, 'Remember Shah Sahib, the police adorns the turban of British justice. In any circumstances we will punish the guilty'.

Thanedar's temper sent a wave of tension across the elders of the village. Mia Khan asked softly, 'Salamat Aliji, you are mature, if you elucidate clearly, then the matter can be explained better'. Salamat Ali looked at Karamdin, then gave a couple of blows on Akhiya's temples. 'Chacha Karamdin, if you can't see your grandson being lashed then tell him not to lie before the police. If our Barkhurdar was present here in the village that night, then how come, under police pressure, he has reached Jalalpur?'. Thanedar again turned and looked at the Badmashes, 'Listen carefully Badmasho, this is the price for deception'. As Akhiya removed the hair from his forehead and touched his back with the other, his hand was soaked in blood. Catching his eye with Thanedar Sahib Akhiya began to laugh, 'Balle Balle! what a great sarkar, great officers, and great beatings'. Chaudhry Fatehali ji called out to Nabia, 'Go get some hot milk for Aakhiya laced with ghee'. As Akhiya saw Dulla coming behind Daara he yelled out loudly, 'come yaara, you also give a chance to the Motiamwallas'. Dulla glanced at the gathering. Then, walked briskly, looked at Aakhiya's back, spat and challengingly declared. 'Oui uniformed ones, we are no toys of clay. Listen carefully. Mere cattle thieves don't reside in this village. This is a village of the strong and the brave, whom the police fearfully address as badmash'. Salamat Ali promptly ignored this challenge, then
looked at Shahji and said, 'Lal Khan let them bask in the sun for a while, they should appear at Shahji's haveli in the evening'.

4.3.2 Sipahi Lal Khan and the Badmashes

Similarly Lal Khan's presence has an electrifying effect on the gathering of Mirasis and Sansis. (P.58-61).

Faggu looked up and alerted Lakkhi. 'Here comes the pappi police', Lakkhi began to sing:

'Gunion ke saagar hain'  
Jaat ke ujagar hain,  
Bhikari badmashon ke;  
Prabho kei Mirasi hain, Singhon ke rahabi hain.  
Wawal pirzadon ke  
Ham Duom Malzodon ke'  
(We are an ocean of talents.  
Our race reflects brightness,  
We are the beggar of the badmashes,  
Mirasis of gods,  
Rabbabis of the Singhs,  
Wawalls of the Pirzadas  
Welcoming goods coming our way)

'Stop it', Lal Khan thundered, 'stop this mehil, hazur has remembered you'. 'Why police bahadur, do we have to appear before the police with all our accessories? 'Oui, be careful Mirasia. Following have to reach Shahji's baithak: Bhaggu, Lakkhi, Goglu, Kartara, Sultan'. Khairu of Kanjron Ki Goth came towards Lal Khan, 'Sipahiji will Akhiya have to present himself again?' 'Let him nurse his wounds a bit, that mother fucker'. Dulla mirasi got up and started singing and clapping:

'I have just remembered something,  
I have just remembered Bharvi  
Hai!Hai! I have just remembered her'.

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Seeing Lal Khan's smouldering eyes, he acted innocent. 'We had set out for a mehfil, but we got the police whips instead'. Gullu requested with folded hands, 'Bahadurji, Lal Khan just soothe your throat for a bit'. 'Hey, bring a bowlful for him'. Lal Khan remained stiff but waited for the bowl to come. Swallowed it in a gulp, then waved his whip in the air, 'sister fuckers, you don't put a stop to illegal activities. You keep illicit liquor in the bhatti, if the sarkar... 'It's God's grace! when we are blessed by the kindness of Sitare-hind Sahib ji Lal Khan then who cares about the Indian Penal Code'. Lakkhi Mirasi touched his 'sharna' and consoled them. 'Why be scared of the police Yaaro? with them you have an umbilical bond. Happily go and present yourself. God will be helpful'. The gathering got up to present themselves before the Thanedar. Akhiya folded his hands and remembered Allah. 'Allah sachi nahi bar hak, didar Allah ka shaft hazrat ki'.

Wrapping their khes around them, the young men walked with such a gay abandon in their stride that even Lal Khan's heart missed a beat. He felt the weight of his policed boots. 'I wish I had the careless confidence of the ununiformed ones'. Then tightening his belt he spat out this desire, 'Maa Ke Yaar, they will pay for their deeds'.

4.3.3 Women of the Village and the Police

The women of the village do not miss out on the importance of the Thana. (P.61-63).

When it was confirmed that the Thana would camp at the village on the third day too, it created a commotion in the village. All the women of the village quickly kneaded the dough and lighted the tandoors. If the men leave after eating their food, it maintains their stamina till the evening.

On Shahni's Chulah, the Maa Dal put to cook since the day before, was deliciously simmering. Makki di rotis were cooked and laced with ghee. Lassi and butter were put in earthen pots and sent to the policemen. Chachi Mehri had just returned after paying obeisance at the Kutia. Smelling the delicious aroma of the roasted semolina she exclaimed, 'child! Thanedar Salamat Ali is very fond of Phirni. I can grind some rice for it'. Choti Shahni burst out laughing, 'Chachi, Thanedar is never at a loss for anything. Everyday he is offered things to eat. So, what if he does not get Phirni today, that would not make him any weaker'. 'Leave it child, I was only saying this out of love. On one hand he is the Thanedar on the other Shah's friend. Whatever, looking after we do for him always falls short... 'In that case why not cook some chickens, patridges or yakhni...'. Chachi ignored Maa bibis' comment and continued to grind
rice. Once again when Maa bibi saw Shahni fill up the pot of lassi, she commented, 'Shahni two pots have already been sent down. The stomachs of those drinking so much of lassi would surely smell and burst'. 'No child, Maa bibi are you talking about these policemen? At night they warm their liver with spirits and in the morning cool it with lassi. Child, he is no policeman who at the peak of his power does not continue the tradition of eating, drinking and merry-making'.

Thanedar Salamat Ali too recognises the place of the women of the haveli and the importance of his direct personal equation with them (P.62).

He laughed and said, 'excuse me for a while Shah Sahib, if I consider Shahni my sister and sister-in-law, then in terms of both the relationship I cannot ignore the invitation. That would be against the self interest of Salamat Ali, I have to record my attendance', 'Malik! Badshaho do as you wish'. Salamat Ali stroked his face and adjusted his safa, 'Shahji in terms of relationship we are both kinsmen. Our wives are daughters of the same village. These Alamgarhias are a tough nut to grind'. As Salamat Ali climbed the stairs with his swinging stride, he felt a couple of inches taller. He called out, 'everything is well Shahni'. The Thanedar created a commotion among the women of the household. Maa bibi spread the manji and an embroidered khes on it. Salamat Ali touched Chachi's feet, 'May you live very long, celebrate your youth. Maa bibi bring the lamp'. Pulling the dupatta across her face, Shahni came and sat on the Peerhi, 'Salamataliji, how is my sister Pheroza?' 'She is hale and hearty. Now there is hardly any difference in our girths, the Thanedarni has really expanded'. Chachi snubbed him, 'stop it puttar don't cast an evil eye on my girl'. Thanedar stole a mischievous glance at Maa bibi standing nearby, 'Maa bibi is your husband still hanging around the Kanjari?' Chachi Mehri quickly picked up the threads of the conversation, 'Puttar with your deep insight and power at your command, try and help poor Maa bibi. At least some fun should come back to her life. A pity, her husband falling in the lap of a Kanjari'. 'Chachi now that you have given me the command, I have no choice Maa bibi I'll try to solve this mess'. Shahni took out a few bundles from her lap and handed them to Salamat Ali, 'this is a message for my sister'. 'These must be Seelampat parandas and lazabunds'. 'Yes, sister Feroza had asked for banas and gokharus'.

4.3.4 The Police Service as Badshahi

In the village, unlike the army, the role of the police - Thanedar, Sipahi and their aides is much more real and intimidating. Collectively the functionaries institutionalised the authority
of the Raj in the village. The Thanedar and his Sipahi camp here on their beat and are specially
sent for in case of a fresh crime or emergency.

Familiar with the villagers, they are perfectly at home in accepting hospitality and
rounding up criminals. Their method of investigation and extorting confessions is crude. They
articulate with boots, kicks and whips. And of course there is no dearth of choicest abuses. The
conduct record of any criminal is an 'open-file'. The police is aware of the links of Badmashes
of one village with others of their kind in the neighbourhood. Operating within predictable
networks, it is not at all difficult to nab the right man. It may be a different matter, if the
Thanedar Sahib decides to be lenient and ignores the real culprit. In such instances, Sahib clearly
feigns lack of enough evidence. The game of hide and seek is oft repeated and the village folk
understand this language. Vigilant exercise of nabbing culprits and investigating crimes is stage
managed. But inspite of all these safeguards, the seasoned criminals escape the dragnet - with
the connivance of the people.

Similarly the Thana in the village is an occasion for the women to advance the meal times.
Men folk who have to present themselves for questioning are well fed. They are served lavish
helpings of Tandooris to be able to sustain the police onslaught. Shahni the first lady of the
village and Thanedar Salamat Ali's wife belong to the same village and are 'muhboli' sisters.
Salamat Ali has access to the inner world of the haveli. He visits the haveli for his Salaam
whenever he happens to be in the village. He is treated to his favourite dishes and Shahni sends
him back with gifts for his wife Phiroza. Salamat Ali on his part promises to locate Maa Bibi's
wayward husband. His interaction with the women brings out his gallant, charming and flippant
self.

Thanedar Salamat Ali's junior Sipahi Lal Khan is tough with the village rogues. He keeps
his distance and is seemingly unapproachable. But at times he envies the Badmashes - their
care-free laughter and freedom. After Salamat Ali's transfer the parrot nosed Mehboob Ali has
to build up his stature and credibility in the village. He handles the burglary at Khullar's haveli
with fair amount of expertise and exposes the naive planning of Mustafa, Sikandara, Naubatia, Taaza and Khusia.

By the time, his successor Sansar Chand takes over, the world beyond the village is in turmoil. Villagers with suspected Ghadrite and Extremist links and Deserters from the army were being tracked by the government. In addition to routine police duties, the police was directed to keep vigilance on the movements of suspected characters. Sansar Chand specifically demanded information about Zoravar, pensioner Ganda Singh's son who is supposedly involved in the Moga conspiracy case. The police is also on the look out for the two Arora brothers - Gajjan Singh and Darshan Singh. They are expected to be returning to the village from Canada and are suspected of links with the Komagata Maru Ship.

Shahji is polite to his childhood mate, Sansar Chand with whom he studied in the Sialkot Madarsa. He compliments him on his job in the police, 'a police job is no less than a badshahi'. But Shahji is affectionately protective and silent about his boys. The Sarkar and the police expects him to 'keep an eye' on the boys, Shahji is discreet and tactful. Thanedar Sansar Chand leaves, promising to return later for more information. Shahji has time to think about obliging his friend in the police, loyalty to the Sarkar and feeling for the boys of the village.

4.3.5 Killing for Revenge: Murder of Shahdad Khan

Killing for revenge, land and ownership of property too remains an important aspect of the pulse of the people. They respond to death, not with lamentation and emptiness, but as a spool in a wheel of revenge and upmanship. While the men are willing to stake their lives for different reasons, the women are prepared to pay the price. Be it death or a long absence of their husbands or sons in jail, they are a sport. Finally the process of producing a son and gradually initiating in him the determination for revenge was long. However, the famous Punjab police watches all these happenings and makes a quick buck by instigating both sides (P.92-97).
A sudden commotion was created in the village. Even the impact of the Kangra earthquake was not as intense as Shahdad's murder. Shahdad was reciting his prayers in the masjid when he was murdered. Shahdad was standing with his nephew Zafar in the first row. There were about ten more people in the next row. The lamp was lit in the crevice. Imam Sahib was ahead of them all. They had just bent their knees when Shahdad's neck was hit by a 'taka' from the back. 'Hai Oui, my enemies have killed me', 'Catch them...run'. There was massive activity in the village. Imam Sahib held the lamp and bent towards Shahdad. He was drenched in blood. His eyes still retained a flicker of life. 'Take me home'. 'Sure Chacha'. Zafar took off his khes and wrapped it around Shahdad, 'Please give the name of your enemies. The person whom you name will surely be punished'. Shahdad's eyes were transfixed on Maulviji's lamp. Some one gave him a sip of water and his eyes nickered with life for a while. 'My heir is neither Zafar nor Bostan'. With these words Shahdad was lost to the world.

Shahdad Khan's body was placed on a manja and four men carrying the manja on their shoulders began the journey home. Imam Sahib did not want to lose this opportunity. He consoled Zafar, 'The report of this incident must be sent to the police station. My presence is required on the spot. Police will look at the evidence and make investigations'. Zaffar stopped for a while. His voice seemed to crack. 'Imam Sahib you are a witness, I was with Chacha in the front row while Bostan was behind'. 'Don't waste time. In such incidents, whatever is seen is not what actually transpires. Take the name of God. Send one man to the Thana and the other to the hakim. You never know Shahdad may still recover'. 'I swear by sixteen annas Imam Sahib, I was in the front row while Bostan was behind me - you are a witness'. As Imam Sahib moved towards the masjid without answering, Zafar quickly took the dhussa from Afzal and collected the shoes lying outside the masjid in a bundle and joined the crowd. As the news reached the Thana, Shahdad's death was confirmed. After the shoes of the back row were lifted, Imam Sahib made plans for his evidence. He secretly explained to Bostan's father Shadi Khan. 'The damn fool, has escaped leaving behind his shoes, he will not be able to miss the trap'.

Shadi Khan handed over the money to Maulviji and sought his reassurance. 'Just add your own interpretation to Shahdad Khan's last statement. Don't name Zafar or Bostan, rest we will see'. The police reached the village. Shahdad's body was sent for post-mortem. It was an incident of murder. The police reached the spot. Questioned various witnesses and investigated. Imam Sahib remained conspicuous throughout the investigations. Shahdad's two wives were sitting in the baithak and lamenting loudly, 'You will not be spared from death as well, you killed our Badshah Sultan in his prime, catching him unawares'. 'Oui, our enemies, you will reach the gallows. Your necks will be in bits and pieces'. Shahdad's younger wife Halima was wailing, 'Oh my Badshah, my groom, these enemies have ended my reign.
If he had left a child, at least I would not have felt defeated'. The elder, Mariam snubbed her, 'stop it, be brave. You are hopefully pregnant. The Shahzada will squeeze the necks of the enemies. He will take revenge for his father'. Halima began to gasp, 'come on my child, may Nabi Rasool protect you. If he remains true to Shahdad's blood, he will destroy the enemies seed'. At night Mariam discussed with her souten, 'when did you last menstruate? It's almost four months or so, Yes Khala, more than three'. 'Now listen carefully Halima, the dead man's child is with us. Whoever, tries to grab our livelihood, I will pull out his eyes'. Then she said slowly, 'let the two shariks fight-as neither Zafar nor Bostan can be the owner of our lands'.

The whole village was discussing the incident. The police tried very hard to investigate but somehow a solution seemed to elude them. On the other hand Zafar tutored the witnesses that Shahdad had named him his heir in his last statement. Meanwhile Shadi Khan ran helter skelter in research of Bostan. 'Why did he have to commit murder?' 'A year before last, Shahdad had accepted Bostan as his son'. People wondered, 'you must be having some legal proof of it'. Shadi Khan would draw in his hookah, muttering non-committedly. In the meantime Mariam got an amulet for Halima from Sayyid Sarmast. Zafar's mother tried to be generous and consoled Mariam, 'don't lose heart. Even the product of my womb is caged in jail'. 'Sharik Shadi Khan has surely bribed the police, that's why even Zafar has been included in the conspiracy. It is all darkness. I hope Hakam would investigate and justice will not be denied. My son, who brought back his Chacha on the manja is a murderer while the one who ran away barefooted has been allowed to go scot free and declared innocent'. Mariam brought milk laced with egg for Halima 'come on drink it up, along with you our young man is also breathing'.

The police registered the names of the fellows whose shoes had been picked up by Zafar - Shahwali, Sayid Ali, Sher Zaman and Khalil. Another interesting fact was that, one shoe of Bostan was in the custody of Imam Sahib while the other disappeared. It was Afzal standing on the left side of the front row who spilled the beans by naming Boston's friend Mohammad Sadiq. Thereby giving a new twist to the case. When Imam Sahib heard this, he rushed to the thana and explained, 'Janab I was present at the time of the incident. The last words of Shahdad Khan were, "My heir is Zafar and not Bostan". Thanedar laughed like a rogue, 'Imam Sahib, do you know the value of a victim's last statement in a murder case?' 'Not totally, but all I can say is that this murder is part of a big conspiracy'. Thanedar Yaar Khan seized the victim like an alert serpent, 'there is very little difference between Zafar and Bostan. You don't have the trump card to save Bostan'. 'Now go and rest and give the call for the prayers at the right time. Stay in the village, I shall send for you'. A perplexed Imam Sahib reached the baithak of Shadi Khan and narrated the whole story. Shadi Khan began to take in puffs of his hookah. He did not discuss with Maulviji but only said,
As soon as Maulviji left, Shadi Khan took out his horse from the *tabela* and along with Goraliwala Damodar Shah rushed to seek Shahji's advise. After going through the pros and cons of the case, Shahji agreed to help. He held out a thousand in cash, *'len den saaf, mohobbat pak'* (clear dealings). Chote Shah made him put his thumb impression, *'Shadi Khan's Nikkiwal land is now mortgaged with the Shah's and two annas interest on a rupee is agreed upon'*.

With his pocket full, Shadi Khan was at the Thana and in no time the case once again swung in favour of Zafar. As the Thanedar's horse stopped at Mariam bi's doorstep, she did not bat an eyelid. She looked at the Thanedar straight in his eye and spoke with dignity sitting on the *manja*. *'Thanedara, you can look at the different angles in the case, but there is only one murderer. As for us his name is immaterial. Our Shehanshah had to leave us and he did so. By the grace of God his child will play in this courtyard. So for us he shall always remain alive'*.

Thanedar acted saucy. *'Mariam bi who knows what will happen?* One may not be present to watch the outcome of this game*. *'Thanedar, with the strength of your turban why are you feeling so jealous? Have a heart. It was because of the lands that our sardar was killed. His *Warris* (heir) is sure going to rise and take revenge'.* Thanedar, began to enjoy himself. He looked at Mariam and then at Halima, *'have you some collaboration with God, that you are sure, its going to be a boy?* *'Of course, this will be so, Thanedara. If his father has been killed brutally, Allah is sure going to shower his blessings on this *Khandaan*. Thanedar tried to extend a hand of friendship towards the widow. *'Mariam bi the whole case is a bit dicey. Just try and remember whether Shahdad Khan ever named an heir in the past few years.?* *'Never, why did my man need to do so Thanedara? He had the capacity to sire a fauj. It was I the unfortunate, who clung to him. When our *Shariks* began to eye the lands, I got my niece married to him. By the grace of God, she is expecting*. Lots of people had gathered nearby. Mariam bi brought a bowl of lassi, *'our Shariks have done this for the lands. Thanedara, I have heard that the police has not recorded the last statement of my Sardar. Thanedara as for me, you can dip your hands many times in this pot of crime and take out blobs of butter. But Hakama, it is your duty to make the murderer reach the gallows..'*

**4.3.6 The Return of Barkhurdar Khan**

Similarly for Bebe Karambibi whose son Sarfraz is serving a life sentence, the return of her grandson Barkhurdar Khan from jail is an occasion for celebration. This is an occasion to thank God for his grace. Barkhurdar's return is a matter of pride for Karambibi, yet it also takes her down memory lane to remember her son Sarfraz, whose absence she has stoically
By the grace of Allah, when Barkhurdar Khan returned after a long sentence in jail, Bebe Karambibi distributed dates in the village. Everyone began to congratulate bibi, 'God is looking at your benignly Bibi, now see what your grandson would do'. 'Yes, by the grace of God, the boy has returned home'. 'When he eats rotis cooked by you he will prosper'. The village mutiars (young girls) had not yet forgotten Barkhurdar's teasing and banter. Shiri could not resist asking bebe, 'I have heard that the jail wallahs really make the prisoners work'. 'No my child, Barkhurdar was working as a hawaldar in jail'. Channi nudged Shiri, 'come on Bebe! this is not punishment but shabashi'. Bebe was lost in her thoughts, 'girls, the jail wallahs were very happy with my Barkhurdar. When he was to be released, seviyan - halwa was sent from the Daroga's house'. Channi stuffed in her dupatta to control her laughter. Bebe saw her, 'come on girl, what did you whisper to Shiri?' 'You must be thinking that he has come back a branded man. Fithe muh, my child was not convicted for theft or dacoity. He served a sentence in order to protect his lands. The one who cannot save his lands is not a product of halaal but a bastard'. Shiri's eyes began to glisten, 'Bebe after all he is a man with a lions heart. Don't mind what Channi says'.

Shahni was coming back from the dharamshala, and stopped on seeing Bebe, 'Congratulations Bebe, the light of the house has returned'. 'Congratulations to you too Shahni, Barkhurdar will come to offer his salaam'. 'May Barkhurdar have a long life. Bebe now get him married, so that your household is full of life'. 'You are right Shahni. My Sarfraz is undergoing life imprisonment. It is only this boy whom I have to look upto'. As Bebe Karambibi turned towards her house she told Shiri, 'child get me a handful of seviyan from your mother. Barkhurdar loves them'.

Barkhurdar stopped Shiri on the way, 'why, I have come back from jail and you don't recognise me?' Shiri stuffed the corner of her dupatta in her mouth, then laughed and gently frowned, 'get away, putting on the styles of the city bred. As if I don't know it is not foxes but lions who reside in jails'. Bebe nodded her head and felt pleased, 'the, lions are the bravest. Can anyone tame them'. Shiri laughed, 'jails, Bebe, jahils'. Barkhurdar felt he was beginning life afresh. He stretched his hand and caught Shiri's paranda, then affectionately patted her head, 'Shiri my piri, if you don't come tomorrow to meet Bebe at the same time. I will kidnap your whole family...'

Barkhurdar took off the khes and began to warm his hands. When Bebe saw him she was angry, 'what's wrong? Sometimes you take off your coverings or start warming your hands. Barkhurdar, you swear by me, if you have come back, try and get involved with something which will keep your mind and heart
occupied here. Why not go and meet your old yaar beli’s'. Barkhurdar got up, 'Bebe, if I get a Sainkra or two from the Shals, I’ll plough my lands, grow tobacco, if not Kandhari seeds, desi would do'. On hearing this Bebe Karambibi felt at peace with herself. If a Jat boy thinks of going back to his lands, it is the beginning of prosperity. 'Son if you have resolved to do this, then by the grace of Allah, everything will be alright'. Barkhurdar stepped out of his house, and as she saw his receding form, Bebe was reminded of her son Sarfaraz. 'Hai, his face is different, but the height and the body is just like his father'. Karambibi was suddenly impatient and called out to Sarfaraz as if he was in the barn, cutting fodder for the animal. 'Sarfaraz putar, those bastards gave you life imprisonment. But your mother kept her heart strong. Come on, come back home. How long will this old Bebe of yours live! a couple of months, or a year, come on, get released from jail and come'.

4.3.7 Attempted Murder of Gulzari Sunar

Killing for revenge suddenly strikes a Sunar household in the village. Here it involves the sons of two brothers in the family. When Gulzari Sunar is attacked, his mother Veeranwali raises an alarm. The first to respond to Veeranwali's cry for help is Tara Shah. A kinsman of Shahji, Khatri Tara Shah has the rare distinction of operating in the two worlds of respectability and crime. Tall, handsome and charming, he lives in both the worlds with perfect ease and finesse. He has a network of friends and bluntly articulates with them in his own idiom. His personal life is incredibly adventurous. He forces his lady love, the widow Barkati to leave her parents home. He is seriously wounded in the fight with her brothers but this does not dampen his spirit. He steers Barkati to the security of the Shah household and himself gallops to settle scores with Barkati's brothers. There is never a dull moment in his life. On the night of Gulzari's attempted murder, he takes the initiative in hounding the culprit (who happens to be Gulzari's first cousin)and arranges for the treatment of Gulzari's wounds. (P.182-186)

'Come on, wake up everyone, my son has been hit by a Taka'. Chachi Mehri shook Shahni, 'child, someone has called out for help'. Perhaps a death somewhere' 'Diwan Sunar's wife yelled her guts out. 'May the kanjar di aulad who has committed this deed die a dog's death. I will ensure that the murderer reaches the gallows, otherwise my name is not Veeranwali. Hai! my darling son'. Veeranwali's scream seemed to have gathered the whole village. As Diwan Sunnar, rushed towards Kartar's kothri he stopped him at
the entrance, 'No one dare enter my kotri'. Diwan Sunnar stopped dead in his tracks, 'you cruel ones, he is a part of me, let me atleast ensure that he is alive...'. Veeranwali again yelled loudly, 'what's happened to the elders of the village who have gone to sleep after taking off their turbans. Atleast some one should come to help us out'. Looking towards the Shah's haveli, she spread out her hands, 'those under whom we seek shelter, not a leaf seems to turn for them'. Tara Shah who was sleeping in the new baithak smoothened his moustaches and his arms begin to itch. Quickly tightened his tahmad and raced towards the Sunar's house. In the dim light, Veeranwali was like 'agni' personified. 'I will not live any more. Look what they have done to my son'. Tara Shah consoled, Yeeranwali and whispered to her sternly, 'shut up'. Taking the lamp from Fakira he moved towards Kartar's kotri. The crowd waited, counting every breath.

Kartar put his hand on the latch and shouted, 'don't you dare look at my kotri'. Tara Shah's command resounded, 'oui run along and get some liquor from my baithak'. Tara Shah stealthily moved towards the kotri, one-two-three, he stretched his hand, grabbed Kartara and banged his head on the floor. 'Oui Chamara, who has instigated you?' Tara Shah entered the kotri. Gulzari was lying flat on the ground drenched in blood. Tara Shah put a hand on his chest and poured the bottle of liquor on Gulzari's neck. Gulzari trembled and cried in pain. Tara Shah called out for a manji. He smelt the kotri, a quilt lay in the corner. One double cotton shawl. One blood soiled 'pustak'. He picked it, It was 'Kissa Julekha'. Gulzari was stretched on the manji. Someone put a few sips of milk in his mouth. He could not swallow. The milk came out of his mouth and mingled with blood. Dewan Sunar yelled, 'Oui Malik, take me instead'. Chacha Karamdin's terrace was adjacent to Radhu Sunar's side wall. He came out pretending a tooth ache. Vazeera who was standing downstairs said sharply, 'come down, Toka chal gaya hai'. As they came out Chacha Karamdin said with false concern, 'Tara Shah don't waste time, pick up the manji and try to arrange some medical help for him'. Tara Shah quietly stole a glance at Chacha Karamdin and Radhu Sunnar. He called out to Najeeba, 'come with me, Najeeba'. Tara Shah entered Karamdin's deodhi from the backside of the lane (galli). Then yelled loudly, 'Kaula bharjai, send out the Sunnar boy hiding in the bhuxawali (fodder) kotri. Otherwise, I'll reduce your house to ashes'. Bali who was hiding in a mound of hay began to tremble. Without thinking, he jumped out of the kotri and ran towards the stairs.

Tara Shah missed no chance and grabbed the boy. Bali began to cry loudly. Tara Shah beat him hard which sent the boy for a spin, 'come on out with it, where did you hide the toka?'. Kaula brought the lamp towards the mound of hay and said affectionately, 'find it quickly son and give it to Tara Shah'. Tara Shah held on to Bali with one hand and the toka with the other. He addressed everyone. 'Remember your
names, ancestors, caste and kinsmen. If some one backs out from giving evidence, I will deal with him. According to the law, it would be like conspiracy in the murder'. Radhu Sunnar understood the veiled threat in the voice. 'At this moment you are the Shah, save two khandaans from being ruined'. Tara Shah stepped ahead, 'where both the murderer and the victim are present, no relationship matters'. Kashi Shah quickly felt Gulzari's pulse and placed his hand on his chest. Then took out a small box, placed a pinch of moist powder near Gulzari's mouth and blew it away. Maha Singh's family came and helped out Veeranwal and Dewan. 'Pray to God, Kashi Shah has made him smell a lion's liver. It will give the boy strength'. The dog Jhabba began to snarl at Radhu's family. Kashi Shah consoled Veeranwal 'Bharjai, God is very kind. Keep on repeating *jaap*. Veeranwal 'began to beat her chest, 'you have wasted the milk I fed him. The *Paharonwali Devi* will not spare the killers. They will be hacked to pieces'. 'Stop it bharjai, if you want the good of your son, then pray. Don't leave a single bead. *Jaap* has all the power in itself'. Radhu Sunnar began to tremble. When he could not bear it any more he yelled out. 'Hai, everyone, why could not death come to me this night. I don't want to see what awaits me next morning. *Sim*! children have soiled the name of our khandaan with blood'.

Shahji came on the scene riding his horse. He whispered something to Tara Shah and moved ahead. Gulzari's manji was picked up. Tara Shah took Bali with him and turned away. Then returned to instruct Kartara, 'don't you dare step into the *kothri*'. The women gathered on the terraces and spoke among themselves. *Andher Sain Ka*, what struck this Sunar boy? No fights of lands, and harvests or ownership of houses or family dispute. Just picked up the *taka* and hit his brother. 'Both the brothers were singing quissas in Kartara Lundi's Kothri. As Gulzari turned a page, Bali quickly hit him on the neck'.

Shahni looked from the mounti, 'why have the Jeors stopped near the banks'. Chachi could not see anything. The dark night of *Amavas*. The stars adorning the sky, but complete darkness on earth. 'Child, I can't see anything in the dark'. Choti Shahni noticed the gradual twilight. 'If they go at this speed, when will they reach? 'I suppose the boy is counting his last breath'. As they crossed the Choh sand, the Jeors again became slow and took the manji off their shoulders. Diwan Sunnar could not help himself, 'my boy's life is trapped in a couple of breaths. Don't fail me now. Move your feet fast'. Gangu Jeor called out to Kashi Shah. 'Kashi Shah give the boy some milk, he will feel warm'. The boy could not swallow milk. Diwan Sunnar again broke down, 'the pir-fakir who blessed his birth should protect him now. He was uncontrollable. Shahji's horse joined the group. He got off the horse and felt Gulzari's body, it was warm. 'Hurry! attach wings to your feet, save the boy'. As Kashi Shah put *ark* in the boys mouth he cried in pain. Like a madman Diwan touched Kashi Shah's feet, 'Chote Shah, do something so that he survives the journey'. 'Nothing happens without the wishes of *Sacchepadshah*. Ask for the kindness of
God. Just do your ‘paath’. The elder Shah touched Diwan and Radhu on the shoulder, ‘Thana-Kotwali later, first lets try and reach Salamgarh’s Jarah Khalifa’. Then in a slow tone, gave out his decision before the two shariks, ‘two lives shall cease to be and so would two families be ruined. Both families have only one son’. Shahji patted Radhu on the back who quickly took off his turban and placed it on his brother’s feet, ‘my witness is the Sacche darbarwali. I will drown my son in the river if something happens to Gulzari’. Shahji gave a hand to Diwan and made him sit on his horse. Again beckoned the Jeors, ‘come on move like the air. Gangu Chacha everything is in your feet. Only you can save the boy from death. The Jeors galloped with the horse:

Ram Rahim
Hai Shabash
Rahim Karim
Hai Shabash
Jaldi-jaldi
Hai Shabash

4.3.8 The Mysterious Affair of Shera

Another important constituent of killings for revenge were crimes related to women. Abduction, rape, illicit sexual relations, jealousies all formed a vicious circle in the interaction between men and women. Women were the motivating force in such crimes. To win a woman, to defend her honour, to take revenge if her modesty is outraged by another man and last of all to eliminate a rival competing for his woman’s attention. It is these attitudes which give a frenzied passion to man-woman relations in the village. The case of Fazl Noor is an interesting example of the juxtaposition of passion, honour, jealousy, intrigue etc. (P.278-280)

... Jahandadji asked, ‘the case of Fazl Noor is hot news these days.’ Karamillahiji took a pause while puffing his hookah, ‘it is a very murky incident. Noor’s father will surely be punished’. Kirpa Ram sat up straight, ‘what is this entire episode all about?’

A Gujjar, Shera from Kang village about forty to fifty years old was engaged to Fazl Noor, the daughter of Khairna from village Sahib Khan a distance of about ten to twelve kos. On the fateful night of the
murder Shera had gone to Sahib Khan. It was a bitterly cold night. Shera must have left after his meal at Khairna's place. On Saturday night, the village Lambardar Mohammad Noor reported the discovery of Shera's naked dead body. It was Hashim who first saw the body. He informed the Chowkidar and Lambardar. The Thana reached the site of the incident. The body had been stripped stark naked, his shoes and chaddar were found nearby. The post-mortem of the body took place. The doctor reported, 'probably he has incurred a serious injury on his head, as his mouth might have been gagged by a safai. Yes, there was no mark on the neck. The most likely thing was that murderer had gagged the victim who suffocated to death'. The police's suspicion rested on Khairna, his wife Jeoni, and Jeoni's brother Mehrdin and Hashim. Hashim was a relative of Khairna and he had lost his wife a couple of months ago. The Lambardar suspected Hashim and Mehrdin who first discovered the body. Fazl Noor said that she heard some noises in the next house. Fazl noor handed over two silver rings to the police, 'this is Shera's ring'. She also talked about another ring which Hashim had placed on the palm of her hand when he informed her about murdering Shera. She declared that the ring was now lost. But the police managed to confiscate it from Jeoni. Hashim took the police to the fields where a bundle of Shera's clothes was hidden. A blanket also lay next to it, which was a present from Khairna. In his evidence Hashim confirmed that Khairna had confessed before him of having seen Shera with his wife Jeoni. Full of rage, he took his brother Rashid with him, followed Shera and murdered him.

Khairna kept on denying everything but his wife, Mussmat (form of official address for a woman) Jeoni, became an approver. She said, 'Hashim and my husband Khairna strangulated Shera'. Mussmat Fazl Noor said that she heard voices at night. She woke up her mother. Mother and daughter described what they had seen from the window. Hashim was carrying the dead body and Khairna was with him. The situation became clear now. Khairna suspected his wife of having illicit relations with Shera. According to the Lambardar, the entire village was aware of this liaison. Mussmat Fazl Noor admitted knowing about it all along. Jeoni saw the entire episode as a figment of her husband's imagination. Jeoni's brother said that he advised his sister many times to exercise restraint. Hashim's complicity in the murder was clear - he wanted to marry Fazl Noor.

The suspected accused number one brought a witness to substantiate that he was sleeping in his house on the night of the murder. While the second accused brought a witness to the effect that he was not present in the village at all on that night. Khairna confessed that he was solely responsible for Shera's murder. He had left home after the evening prayers. He returned to find his wife with another man. That confirmed his suspicion. He hit the stranger on the head with his lathi and then he recognised the man as Shera. Shera fell on the ground with a groan. The neighbours gathered in his house. It was decided to hush up
4.3.9 Amiru - The Brave Hero of Kalapani

Memories of Amiru are articulated in the baithak session when Shahji, Kashi Shah and Nejeeba discuss the life of Amiru. Amiru is convicted of killing his kinsmen and is serving a life sentence in the Kalapani (P.121-122).

... Kashi Shah congratulated him. 'You have done the right thing Najeeba, by receiving the vibrations communicated by God. Our Amiru has already reached Kalapani'. 'Any news of him? Its almost five or six years that he has been away'. 'Oh yes! he rules there too like a Lambardar'.

'May God give him strength. Kalapani has a terrible climate'. 'It is famous for poisonous mosquitoes which suck man’s blood. Even if a man finishes his jail term he is reduced to a pale shadow of his former self'. 'Shahji, I have heard that in Andamans people of Chambwal and Derajat have become very close'. My phuphi’s son-in-law, Vazeera from kotla Lahoran had sent a rukka through someone. He had written that it is the rule of money in Kalapani as well. Despite the ban, most of them are collecting guineas. Let’s see what colours is Amiru in? ’Najeeba, he is the bravest and the strongest among you brothers’. ‘True Shahji, his chest is as strong as a mountain peak which makes him invincible. He is just guided by his impulses and gets away with it. Never mind the consequences’. Shahji thought it imperative to praise such a brave warrior, ‘true our Amiru epitomizes the essence of a brave and reckless lad. Let’s hope he returns home safely’.

'May your words be true Shahji I have heard that the sarkar has brought out a new law for the Kalapani wallahs. If they are able to earn about twelve hundred points a year for good conduct, then life prisoners specially young men are given concessions’. Kashi Shah began to calculate, ‘if he adds up about two-three points everyday, then he will be back soon’. Despite his strong muscled body, Najeeba spoke like a little kitten, ‘Shahji this is just a matter of choice, one doesn’t join a madarsa but reaches Kalapani instead. The
grandson of Kharian's Kalapanihuallas came back with great pride. He did not go straight to the village. Stopped on the way at Amritsar. Built up his stamina and muscles, making him the 'cynosure of all eyes'. Shahji nodded his head and said to himself, 'does this simple Jat know what it means to be branded a life prisoner?' 'Kashi Shah asked his elder brother,' Since when have the Kharians become known as Kalapanihuallas?' 'It is a famous quissa. The great grandfather of the boys, Nazar Mohammad from Kot Kamalia had settled down here during Maharaja's time. He was a strong and powerful man. Ranjit Singh Maharaj was so impressed by his deeds that he became a sardar of one of his contingents. He excelled himself in the army. When the firangees established themselves in Punjab, they grabbed all our brave young men. Even Nazar Mohammad was convicted of dacoity and murder and later deported to Kalapani. His family is known as Kalapanihuallas'. Najeeba seemed to be swelling with pride, 'This is really commendable'. 'Nazar Mohammad and Sarvar Shah from Nurpur conspired with the other Punjabi prisoners to kill the angrez daroga there and that is what brought them real fame'. Najeeba began to laugh, 'Shahji this is a game like our very own gulli-danda either you attack or get beaten. The best route is to become the son-in-law of the government and break their rotis in jail. If one has the stamina one can establish oneself anywhere'.

4.3.10 Suffering in Silence

In any crime triangle, there are two coordinates - the criminal and the target, the killer and the victim to be killed or wounded in an attempt to kill. The third point, the hidden victim is usually a kinswoman - beloved, mother, sister, wife, a second wife, a grandmother. She is at the receiving end, exposed to the fall out of aggression and post-crime complications. The motivation or justification of striking for revenge, or for that matter any other motive becomes secondary to the challenge and related adjustments for the women directly or indirectly involved in crime. Crime as fait accompli is thrust on her. She may be an accomplice on the winning or the losing end but she cannot escape the redefinition of her own role in the new situation.

A criminal and a crime usually disturbs an even, orderly pattern with well defined roles. It is worse than death. There is a finality about natural death. After the initial impact, followed by a time-frame of mourning, last rites etc., nature rehabilitates the living. However, after a premeditated sudden death, the emotional resistance of total acceptance is slow. A part of the self
refuses to reconcile and accept the outrage. Barkhurdar's grandmother has spent a life time waiting for her son Sarfraz who was sentenced for life - imprisonment for murder. Her Barkhurdar was awarded a shorter sentence. His return cheers up Bebe but of course he is not Sarfaraz and his presence at home is no substitute for Sarfaraz. Of course Barkhurdar attracts the playful attention of Shiri. The desolate house comes to life with her laughter. She hangs around Bebe, helps her prepare ‘seviyan’ laced with sugar and nuts. The aroma from the cooking pot, revives for Bebe, all the fragrances of life which disappeared with Sarfaraz Khan's departure. Bebe sighs for her son's return. Would she make it or not? That is the question. Her apprehension that life may fail her before Sarfaraz's release constantly disturbs her. But live she must. She must not give up hope. This is the big secret of her survival, her strength and vitality.

Hope inspires and intoxicates the murdered Shahdad's senior wife Mariam. Shahdad had been murdered in the Masjid bowing down with others in the Namaz. His two kinsmen, the suspected killers made a bid to inherit the lands and other assets as Shahdad had no child. Mariam wails, 'what if the Badshah is dead - our Shahzada shall rise to avenge his father's killing'.

Then suddenly she is like a rock. This composure reflects a quick transformation of grief stricken Mariam. The transition from a childless, neglected senior wife of Shahdad, to a wounded matriarch who pledges to avenge the murder of Shahdad is a realisation of her new role. After the initial shock when she roars like a lioness she changes her posture. She calms down and is protective towards Hamida. From seemingly competitive two wives, Mariam and Hamida, become understanding partners in a joint venture. They must prove to the world that Shahdad did not die without an heir. Where was the need for him to name his kinsman Zafar or Bostan as his 'Mutbanna' (heir). 'Why should he do so? He could sire a fauj?' Hamida is carrying Shahdad's child. And like a winner, Mariam shares the news of Hamida's pregnancy with the world. The unborn son is Mariam's strength and hope for the future. Mariam, and many others like her, cool down and learn to live with the loss. The fire of revenge smoulders within. The gaze fixed on that glorious moment in the distant future - the moment of retribution and revenge.
Words are a natural relief in the otherwise placid and dreary existence. Hence, the occasional outbursts.

Unlike the torrents of words which sustain Mariam, Fazl Noor is mute about the murder of her fiancé Shera. Obviously she was totally ignorant about the intrigue and killing around her. Shera her fiancé was involved with her own mother and her father masterminded the murder in a state of desperation and revenge. Fazl noor drifts with the situation. Apart from giving evidence, her only response is to hand over the silver rings to the police which according to her is Shera's gift. This is a farewell gesture for Shera and break with the awareness of his existence.

The silent Noor shall live with the experience for the rest of her life. But who really cares for her silence or her feelings? Murders are manipulated, situations are contrived. For Noor, on the threshold of love and romance the world comes crashing without any forewarning. The fragile security of any situation can be shattered with a quick stroke. First, the middle aged Ditti poisoned her first husband to settle down with the man of her choice. Ditti's son Laude Khan returns home from Karachi. He is fed on details about the incident by relations and friends. Outraged by his mother's liaison with Kamaal, he is determined to annihilate his mother's accomplice. In one stroke, he wipes out the existence of Kamaal. He fulfils his debt to his Abbu, his dear father. For his mother, the road is lonely - soaked in memories of two men in her life. The third, her son, wishes for a few moments of rest before the police arrives to whisk him away.

4.3.11 Significance of Gujrat Courts

Gujrat court is a place of special significance for the people of the area. It is the courts which decide matters of murder, dacoity, theft, land deals, interest, usury, mortgages, killing for land etc. Thus, courts became a vital institution in the lives of the people, influencing the course of their lives. This was particularly so after the coming of the British rule which weakened village communities. Thus settlement of issues within the communities by consensus were
minimized and issues became complicated with court procedure. The whole politics of court cases - bribery, false witnesses, lawyers, munsifs entered in the cultural awareness of the people. In this kind of set up, people like the Shah, who have an important intermediary role, file court cases and help some people whom they patronise. The courts operated on legal evidence rather than justice. Such a system created a disjunction between legal procedure and substantive justice. As aptly put by Prakash Tandon (1961:86):

Our lawyer uncle used to explain that the weakening of the biraderi system began when the British brought codified laws, impersonal courts, professional advocates and judges, high stamp duties, rules of evidence and procedure. Though the new justice was impartial, it was cumbersome and costly. The judges at first were unfamiliar with the ways of the people, but as they began to understand them, people also learned that this new impersonal justice could be deceived by casuistry and false evidence. It was difficult to sustain a lie before a biraderi - if you were not found out then, you were bound to be caught later - but before a judge to whom you were merely a plaintiff or a defendant, perjury was only actionable if it was found at the trial (Tandon 1961:86).

Fighting court cases and winning them and proving oneself a man of power and influence, as well as a skillful manipulator had become another feature of heroic achievements in the village. A positive evaluation was not based on moral grounds but on measure of pragmatic success firmly ensuring the penetration of law and courts in the politics of honour, prestige, power, land and wealth in the village. (P.73-77)

The Jat-sahukars congregated in the courtyards of the Gujrat courts as if their lives were at stake. Like a game of Pir-cowrie it was an attempt at one upmanship. The Jat-sahukars of the area would get together and fight court cases against each other. The lawyers and aahalmads made quick money, thriving on the evidence given by hired false witnesses. Murder, dacoity, debts, cases of interest and usury, land mortagages and land grabbing one just had to name any. No order, no pen. If it was a deal on paper then what the Shah said was sure to be proved right and what the Jat claimed invariably flimsy. It was the numerical strength of the turbans which seems to clinch big court cases. Sitting in the courtyard of the Gujrat court, Dhulawal's Chaudhry Fatch Ali called out to Madinawalah Khusi Mohammad ji, 'Khushi Mohammad ji, hope all is well, you had a date for which case today? One or two of your cases are always put up in the court now and then'. 'Yes today the date was for the Chukamwali land. It has been
postponed'. I have heard that the adalat is out of station. 'You are talking about whose court?' That Daryyan Kalanwale Sheikh Ahmad's younger son Ghulam Mustafa. Ghartiwal Pehalwal Khan an old hand at court cases chipped in. 'There must be some other reason why your date has been postponed. The adalat is very much in town.' 'How do you know?' Badshaho, the adalat was purchasing ladies finger in the market. Everyone laughed loudly.

'Yes, if judges and munsifs are seen roaming about outside the courts, their stature is reduced by half. If they are seen purchasing ladies finger, they loose all that they have built up over the years'.

One tall handsome lad came and touched Chacha's feet, 'Salaam, Chacha sahib. 'May you live long Barkhurdar. You appeared in which court? 'With Sheikh Aaymatullah Sahib. 'What happened?' 'Oh! it has been postponed to another date'. Fatchdin nodded his head, 'These are the priveleges of the courts. Is everything fine at home?' 'Yes! by the grace of Allah'. 'Putarji what is the progress in the Diwani case against the Shariks?' 'No ji, it became clear during the investigation of the case that the Pattiwali Rataria land has been mortgaged by Chacha Nabi Mohammad ji. 'This is it, the Sharik's fight while the witnesses become kings'. As the pair of Namowalwale-Jalle and Sahmmu entered, everyone was left staring at their handsome bodies. The strong heavily muscled body eyes hard and bloodshot - one could only admire these two who had so successfully escaped after committing three dacoities. They came nearer and offered salaam to Choudhry Fatehaliji. 'Choudhry Sahib, how are the Sansi folks of your village? I had just heard that they have created a lot of commotion in the Jhelum area?' 'The Sansis have no permanent abode. Today here, tomorrow somewhere else'. Jalla nodded his head, 'Badshaho these Sansis have jirkis (revolving wheels) under their feet. Today Sandalbar, tomorrow Nilobar, and day after Chajkhusab'. Khusi Mohammadji looked at the young men with great curiosity and said innocently. why do our dachis move at a faster speed than the railway engines? It has been heard that if the horse is of a pure Arabian breed it can leave the train far behind'. Expert at expeditions for stealing and looting, Jalla and Shammu acted mulish, 'Badshaho, we have only travelled where our feet have taken us. Why tell a lie? We have not been able to cross even Wazirabad bridge'. Chaudluyj was very familiar with the likes of such young men. He laughed and said. 'Putarji, I suppose you sleep walked your way through Sheikhupura, Patiala and Karnal'. Jalla and Shamma flashed their teeth, 'you are right Chaudluyji it happened only in our dreams'.

After finishing with his court appearance, even Shah Sahib joined the group. The tall man, his pink face adorned by a white turban, was trailed by two false witnesses hanging on to his coat tails. 'Join us Shah Sahib, without you our Majlis was incomplete'. Bhogowalwallah's, Saudagar Singh and Ujjagar Singh
glanced at Jallu and Shammu in such a way as if they were peas of the same pod. ‘I hope the witness we gave was all right Shahji. Hopefully, the case will be clinched after one or two appearances’. Saudagar Singh began to crackle his fingers. Shahji immediately understood and took out some change, ‘go Barkhurdar’s, enjoy some Lassi-pani at Moola Halwai’s. The boys moved away happy’, ‘Shahji, these Bhagowallwallahs appear to be like slippery eels’. ‘Don’t ask me about them Chaudhryji. They are the ‘Ashmantra’ and ‘Tushmantra’ types. I know these kinds well. But these kind of bards are required to add colour to a case’. ‘Wah Shahji, Wah! What have you said, make them stand in the witness box and they begin to sing bhajans’. Shah Sahib laughed, ‘Chaudhry Sahib, last winter the Naushera land case was put up in the court of Khan Sahib Allahyaar. When I came for the appearance, the two witnesses were nowhere to be seen. I looked around, trying to find out what happened. I found both the hired mules standing with glasses of milk and jalebi. Seeing me they laughed, “forgive us Shah Sahib, we have no face before you. Your adversaries have bought us over. It’s all the fault of these maa-ka-yaar glasses of milk and jalebi”. ‘I patted them on the back and said, “Barkhurdar, I have not lost anything. It is you who have lost all dignity and also been cut off from my list of permanent witnesses”. The crowd burst out into hilarious laughter. ’Then what happened Shah Sahib?’ ‘I gave them money for milk and jalebi and did not let them appear in the court for almost a year. After a lot of pleading they got a chance today’. Chaudhry Basabkhan, from Jatalpur Jattan joined the group. ‘I hope all’s well Shahji’, ‘It’s all the grace of God!’ ‘The news at the adda was that the sarkar is enforcing strict punishment against thefts and dacoity. If the government officers suffer any loss of life then the sarkar will fine the villagers’.

As Kunjawala Jhugga Khan came near with his characteristic walk, his expression conveyed that the faujdari case had been won. He was profusely congratulated. ‘It’s all the grace of Rab Rasool Badshaho ‘sanch ko aanch nahi’ Shahji too hugged him tightly, ‘Jhugga Khanji, by the grace of God, its not everyday that one wins a faujdari case. The thrill and feeling of victory adds a couple of inches to the turban’. Taking out money Shahji handed it to Rakha. ‘On this occasion, Chaudhryji should be offered something sweet. Bring some badana from Gujranwala’s shop’. Jhugga Khanji felt thrilled. ‘Shahji, why not find out from the deputy mukhtar, about the authenticity of the rumour about the fines?’ ‘Chaudhryji, because of the ‘khufia gardwala’ incident about four to six villages will have to pay up fines’. Choraniwali’s Hajji Shah added in with enthusiasm, ‘Shah Sahib, regarding this murder, what I feel is that perhaps it is the conspiracy of a whole village or some scheming woman who had a liaison with Dilawar Khan’. Vasava Khan added sharply, ‘this is not an issue for reflection. That’s just like the police admitting its guilt’. Shahji laughed, ‘Badshaho, kadar andaz hone ke liye kazfehmi chodni padi hai’ (for developing an appreciation for finer nuances you have to give up the narrowness of thinking). You all know regarding lighting lamps before snakes. Our police is no less’. Jhuggaji agreed, ‘true Shah Sahib,
poor Dilawar Khan he is in another world. Now what remains is sarkari dusting and cleaning. Let's see which village is declared guilty.

4.3.12 The Adventurous World of Heera Sansi

Heera Sansi is born with a natural instinct for crime. Occasionally he slips out of the confines of his existence to make contact with the wide world, gold, money and material goods. He has his own network of informers both about the local police Khojis and possible soft targets. He has also a network of intermediaries spread across different villages and towns to dispose of the stolen goods. He is professionally at ease with the elements. Dark night, rain, thunder, slush and river are all his aids. He is ruthless with humans. He is quick to recognise Sajawal Khan and squeezes the life out of him. He buys the silence of boatman Alia. He invokes the protection of Khwaja Khizr for safe passage across the river. His life is full of adventures, romance and a fair amount of success.

With Jeeva his woman, he enacts a fight for the benefit of his neighbours and finally Heera does not miss the chance to escape in the last act. The fight between him and Jeeva confuses the policeman whose attention is focused on someone who looks like Heera. Heera spits on his face and slips (P.115-120).

*Lahore zanizir ka maliya shaitan ko mar de.*
*Aashak pari shah cher pari ko bandh de.*
*Ek syah mor syah sheetal pari ko bandh de.*
*Rewa ko bandh de, Jamuna ko bandh de.*
*Saraswati ko bandh de, Krishna, Narmada, Gomti ko bandh de.*
*Jan Khan Sadhu Darya Singh ko bandh de.*

The ruler of Lahore will kill the Shaitan.
With his love the beloved, tames fairy.
The dark one tames the fair fairy.
Tames the Rewa, the Yamuna, the Saraswati.
Tames the Rewa, the Yamuna, the Saraswati.
Tames the Krishna, the Narmada, the Gomti, Tame Narsinna.
Jat Khan Sadhu tames Darya Singh.

Standing under the thundering clouds and flashes of lightning Heera Sansi remembered the spirit of his ancestor Shansmal. Then with quick vibrant steps, he straight went and perched himself in the kitchen. Covered in a red dupatta Jeeva brought the thali for him. Rotis laced with ghee, mango pickle and a bowl of curd. Heera finished the last morsel, looked at Jeeva and her red odhni glittering in the dark - as if her eyes were two pearls. Heera Sansi with his fluttering moustaches first took the offering of her nose, forehead, then kissing her silver necklace said softly. 'Jai Lachh Maa, Jai Hajji hayat'. Bare bodied, clad only in a langot. Jeeva could not look away from his tempting nakedness. Heera Sansi felt happy and laughed, tugging at Jeeva’s salwar, ‘come on my sweetheart, why the urgency? I shall be back here before day break’. Heera Sansi crossed the deorhi with his deft feet and latched the door from outside. Jeeva remained inside muttering charms to drive away the spirits:

\[ \text{Nadi ko bandh de Aule ko,} \\
\text{dariya ke lehre bandh de,} \\
\text{une se bandh de tootka,} \\
\text{jah use sher bandh de, bicchu ko dang pakar ke bandh de,} \\
\text{dandan zehar bandh de} \]

(The rivulet - tamed by the embankment, 
the river tamed by the waves, 
bad omens tamed by spells, 
brave tamed by the lion, 
sting of the scorpion tamed by the antidote)

In the lightning and heavy rain Heera Sansi made his way lightly out of the village, as if a bird was flying from one tree to another. Crossing the fields he reached the river bank. Over him was the heavy downpour and underneath, the powerful current of the Chenab. Among the waves his limbs moved with the swiftness of a fish. After he crossed the river, he looked around and before him was Bhagowal. It was pitch dark. It seemed the darkness of the sky had enveloped the earth. From the light created by lightning, Heera Sansi spotted a dachi (camel) coming his way from a distance. The dachi coming from Kalluwal was sure to be loaded. The insides of his palms began to tickle. But why did the Khalifa send
out this solitary dachi on the road? Will someone not grab it? Heera Sansi moved with familiar ease towards the beri bushes. Seeing the mound of hay near the Churelwala well, Heera Sansi stopped in his tracks. He drew in a deep breath. The smell of a human. He locked his ears. Near the wet fodder there was a slight movement. With a deft gesture Heera Sansi grabbed a mass of flesh and bones as if it were a chameleon. 'Who is it? Maa ka yaar, trying to keep an eye on me'. 'Have mercy, I am Rala Khoji'. Heera Sansi pulled out the whole body with a jerk, 'Oui, the river is before us, if you try to escape, I'll cut you into pieces and throw you in the whirlpool'. 'I want to live Heera ustad. I am your humble slave'. 'Okay Ralia, tell me where are the, maa ka khusam Policemen camping tonight?' 'According to Dadu Khoji at Kotli Lahoran'. 'Oui, out with the truth... if it is a lie...' 'I swear by Allah that this is true. I'll pass on the news that you have moved operations to Bhagowal'. Heera caught hold of his neck. 'I am leaving you at your word. If a paapi policeman comes my way then your days are numbered'. 'Sure Badshaho!' Heera caught Rala in a tight embrace. In an instant the flash of lightning brought into view Rala's dress. 'Oh! he was none other but the notorious policeman Sajawal Khan, in the garb of Rala Khoji, whose mission was to nab the thieves'. With the quickness of a snake, Heera Sansi pressed Sajawal Khan's neck deftly. Soon the struggling body gave up hope, quietened and slumped on the ground. 'So, Sajawal Khanji, I have done my work, now you enjoy yourself in the solitude of the river'.

As Heera Sansi reached the Shariwala well, his eyes once again became glow worms and ears strained to hear any sound. Far away a dog barked loudly. Heera quickly crouched behind the well. When a suddenly a dachi whizzed past him. It was without a rider. Perhaps this belonged to Sajawal Khan's clone. Swiftly Heera caught the dachi. It was loaded. He took command and turned its direction towards Pattan. Going inside the kallar area, Heera rung the bell hung on the camel's neck, waited for the door to open. Some one peeped out, 'who is it, in this horrible weather?' 'Alia Ustad, this is the humble slave of Shansmal'. Wrapped in a khes, Alia came nearer. He recognised Sansi and moved towards the boat. Measured and weighed the situation and stopped for a while. Sansi jumped from the dachi and yelled. 'What are you debating Alia Ustad? Both the rider and the dachi would cross the river'. 'You will not face any loss. By the grace of God I am loaded with goodies'. Sensing danger, Alia swallowed hard, 'you are the sardar of darkness, your wish is my command'. As the dachi was loaded, the boat tilted on one side. Alia took out the goodies and placed them on the floor, balancing the weight. Sansi invoked the blessings of Khwaja Khizr 'come on, this river is ruled by the pir of life Khwaja Khizr. Remember the name of Khwaja Khizr and this boat will cross any whirlpool. All will be well by the grace of Khwaja Khizr'. Reaching the middle of the river, Alia opened his mouth, 'even these tasks require the blessings of God. Sansi Ustad, it rained so heavily today and now only few drops. These will stop too once we reach across'. Heera Sansi did not scan the river but the boatman. Then asked, 'Alia you want goods or money?'
'Ustad, what will I do with the goods?' 'Okay, what you want will reach you'. 'Sure, settling the accounts is an old tradition'. 'The boat reached the bank. The dachi was lowered, the goodies loaded again and Heera Sansi mounted the dachi, smiled to himself. 'Let the Khujis be busy investigating'. Alia understood the intimidating secret signal of Heera Sansi. 'Sansi, I have not seen the dachi or its rider'.

In the dark, stormy night, there was perhaps a burglary or dacoity at Kullewalwallah Sawan Shah's Haveli. That was the task of the police or the khojis to investigate. But Heera Sansi was safely tucked in his house. He opened the latch from outside, then came into the angan and scaled the wall. In the darkness he smelt the quite house, then went into the kothri and grabbed Jeeva. 'Let the Khojis be busy investigating'. Heera Sansi laughed inwardly, 'the clothes will be across Tawi, the jewellery beyond Gujrat Sarafa, and the utensils at Sandalbar. The dachi had been taken care off, while Sajawal Khan would snore in peace'. It was now early morning. The fields near by were clearly visible to Sansi. He whispered something to Jeeva. She picked up the shabby bed, threw out one of the wooden supports and moved outside creating a commotion. 'You worthless fool, I sleep in this dirty dump, you couldn't even buy me a manji'. Heera's look alike came out, 'you bitch, started barking early in the morning. Just smoothen the Charpoy, that's enough for the night'. Jeeva howled, 'this jungli animal would rather devour me than listen to me'. Heera threatened, 'go and clean your mind with manure'. 'Don't touch me you jungli'. Jatri and Mundro Sansi came out from the neighbourhood, 'Jeeva, just mind your tongue. If the young man beats you then don't come to us'. Jeeva shouted, 'stop it you jungli ke yaar. My good for nothing never gets anything home. Why should I not rebuke him'. Heera came nearer and pulled Jeeva's plait. 'I will set you right, trying to lower my moustache'. I will give you such a punishment... 'Come on, bastard that will only be after your face is washed in your mothers urine'. Heera began to beat her, gathering the entire Sansion ki goth outside. Gradually Heera dragged her inside pulling her by the hair. As Heera jumped the terrace, he was surrounded by the pappi police. Jeeva did not give up, 'I will not cry for you. Who has not even left a child behind'. Jatri put a hand on her mouth 'shut up', Heera Sansi spat on the Sipahi's head. 'I swear by my Kammowali maa, when I return you will be in pieces'
4.3.13 Fiasco of Burglary at Khullar’s Haveli

In contrast to lleera Sansi who is a slick operator, Sikandra, Mustafa, Naubatia, Taaza, and Khusia of the village mastermind a burglary at Alamgarh. The target is Khullar Shah’s haveli. Their planning is neither meticulous, nor their information correct and thorough. The presence of Katha Singh Labana, his friend from Tanda, who is staying for the night at the Khullar’s saves the situation. Single handed Katha Singh neutralizes the game plan. One after the other, the burglars fall into their own trap. Thandedar Mehboob Ali has no difficulty in identifying the culprits. Shah Khullar gets back part of the stolen jewellery. And the rest he is supposed to collect from the Thana after verification. As for the culprits, their fate is obvious. A burglary of this sort by amateurs is a serious risk. hence the fiasco. (P.209-214).

In pitch darkness, Sikandara covered his face and climbed up from the Pironwala well side. Moving behind the refuge dump he reaches the Khullar ki gali. He silenced the dog barking by throwing a roti. Then, jumped through Kehr Singh’s open courtyard and reached the tabela roof. Smelt around, went down the staircase to find himself in the haveli’s backyard. In addition to cows, buffaloes, the horses of Jawinda Shah and Lohinda Shah, a surprise awaited him. The stately horse of Katha Singh stood out.

‘Parvardigar what is happening?’ Tandewala Katha Singh Labana is an ace marksman. If the Labana reaches upstairs, this may be our last night’. Behind the mounds of hay, fodder and manure Mustafa clung to the sardkhana wall. In the darkness he felt the wall and began to scrape it with a stone. The wall gradually caved in. Mustafa was suddenly alert...sush...sush... ‘Is it Naubatia or some movement in the Tabela?’ He caught the intruders neck, ‘who is it?’ Mustafa whispered, ‘I have seen Katha Singh’s horse in the tabela’. Naubatia steadied himself, and said cautiously, ‘we have tied the rope on the mounti so, why develop cold feet now?’ Then he signalled towards the sky, ‘leave it to Him’. Mustafa examined the hole with his hands and squeezed inside. Naubatia who was standing outside split his ears into four parts. One towards the kothri of Kehr Singh Kamin, the other towards the entrance of the tabela. One towards Mustafa’s whispering and one towards Tatta Sansi who waited behind the tabela stairs with the nimble footed Taaza and Khusia.

Mustafa opened the wooden box expertly with a ‘Sanni’ (instrument). Fumbled inside, took out fistfuls of jewellery which he collected in his tahmad. Then he gingerly removed the huge piles of khes and mattresses. As he opened the other trunk a bag of asthrajis fell into his hands. Alert, he could even hear
the movement of his own feet, then handed over the bundle to Naubatia... but on the terrace there was a commotion of someone running away. 'Oui, I have been hit, where are my bangles?...' The silent haveli - tabba had suddenly come to life. Mustafa and Naubatia reached the Sadr Dorwaza adjacent to the mound of fodder, opened the latch and jumped into the gali. Running they began to shout, 'people wake up catch the thieves, some one has entered the Shah's house?' Upstairs one of the Khullar girls was feeding her child when suddenly the door opened, and Taaza and Khusia entered like theives. The Khullar girl Toti was scared out of her wits. As Khusia tried to forcibly remove the gold Chura she cried out in pain. Taaza quickly grabbed the dupatta and stuffed it in her mouth. In the commotion the child began to wail. This woke up Toti's mother 'why are you letting little Kaka cry?' Toti gasped, 'Daku, ma...daku'. Both the miscreants rushed towards the mounti, but just missed holding on the rope to escape. Katha Singh, who was spending the night at the Khullar's was beginning to relax when he heard the commotion downstairs. Just as Taaza and Mustafa were about to catch hold of the rope, Katha Singh caught them by their necks. Taaza tried to move about, but Katha Singh's grip was too strong. 'you Kuttas-Khassias (dog, donkeys). Did you come for a dacoity or to relieve yourself?' As Lohinda Shah reached upstairs, both of them were given heavy thrashing.

'Hai, Rabba, hai Rabba', Katha Singh pulled up the rope and tied them with it, pushing them down the mounti stairs. Picking up his gun lying in the baithak, he pointed towards them. 'Name your yaars...otherwise...' Khusia began to bleed from his mouth, 'just a sip of water...we will tell you everything'. Katha Singh made both of them wet their throats, then throwing them on the manji said affectionately. 'Oui, you must be knowing the names of all the stars which shine at night. I want the names and addresses'. Both of them spoke together as if remembering an old tale. 'Sikandara, father's name Jahangira, Naubatia father's...' Katha Singh interrupted 'oui dhaggas (emasculated beasts of burden) forget the fathers. I just want the names' 'Ji Taatu Sansi Saranki wala and...ji...ji Mustafa'. 'That's all, is that all?' 'Are you making sweet talk with your father or answering the questions of Katha Singh Labana?' 'I would set you right in such a way that the grave and soul become one'. Khusia again spoke softly, 'sorry Badshaho, there is another person- the caretaker of this Tabela Kehr Singh'. Taaza began to tremble, 'the rogue Kehr Singh will not spare us'. They felt an intense pain in every bone. 'Forgive us sardarji, you have not yet lost anything. The dachi will be on its way to Gujrat'. Katha Singh began to laugh at their innocence, 'Jawinda Shah look at them, trying to become Jagga daku'. 'Hey! you kanjars there is a difference between dacoity and ordinary cattle thefts'. Sardar Katha Singh picked up his dhussa lying on the manji and told Lohinda Shah, 'catch them on the way, they must be behind Momidpur masjid. You were to meet the sons of donkeys there, isn't it?'
Both of them held their ears, 'you are right by the tune of sixteen annas'. Katha Singh again glared at them, 'just try and remember you owls, who provided the dachi for this empty baraat?' 'Haidar Shah from Pind Dadan Khan'. 'Jawinda Shah, give them some milk and liquor. It will help them in their ordeal at the thana'. Then he coughed and spat in front of them, 'Donkeys, I don't even feel like wasting a stronger abuse on you. You are on the verge of wetting yourself. While your eyes are already shedding tears. Planned to commit a dacoity hai! hai! Oui mother fucker's:

'Pairon mein firkian,  
kano me lage hon khadak.  
aakhon mein gul, dimag mein hon faulad.  
aur chati per pahar data hua hon,  
to dale jate hain dake'  

(One needs spinning tops on the feet  
ears which can detect a whisper.  
the eyes which can be like a lamp in the darkness,  
a quick mind with determination like iron,  
and a heart as strong as a mountain peak,  
only then one can successfully commit a dacoity)

'What you did today is just like urinating in ones pyjamas.'

As Mustafa and Naubahatia tied their horses, a commotion was created in the village. 'How come a dacoity has been committed at Alamgarh and the police is at our doorstep?' As the horses of the Alamgarh Khullars and the well fed policemen descended on the village, both Uttari Vand and Thalli Vand were in a flux of activity. 'May god be kind, I have heard the name of Shirinwala Mustafa'. Fakira stopped Hussaina, 'keep quiet till the Thana corroborates anything'. 'Hussaina, Fakira is right, one never knows, who it is?' Chachi Mehri called out from the terrace 'what is this noise in the village?' 'Chachi, it is said that a dacoity has been committed at the Khullars of Alamgarh'. 'But why have the police khojis come here?' 'Who has committed the crime?' Shahni suddenly thought of her maternal home, 'Chachi, some one must have come from the Khullars. I can quickly set up the Karahi and make some pooras'. 'Sure do it my child, but they will not eat anything, rather they would do the shagun of their daughters and go. By the grace of God, you, the daughter-in-law of the ragis and the Muslim Kanno are both from Alamgarh'. 'They will give something and go. Alamgarh Shahs are very generous'. Choti Shahni too
joined in. ’Today both the brothers are at the court. Sister send some one to ask about food from your, Peharwalas (maternal home). Something can be sent from Vadda Lala’s house’. Chachi began to grumble, ’Shame on such children. They cannot digest food till a dacoity is not committed after sunset’. ’Bloody fools, if one is sensible the best choice is to join the army or police’. Maa bibi spoke softly to Chachi, ’Mustafa’s elder brother Shaukat is already undergoing imprisonment for murder. What will the unlucky mother do?’ ’What will she do? She will bribe the policemen to try and meet her sons’. Nawab came out of the Tabela and told the women standing upstairs ’Our Barkhurdar Mustafa has also made a beginning, bismilliah. The police has come on a round. Let’s see who all are involved’.

Children, elders, Choudhri’s, panches, sipahis and Thanedar, all gathered as if a darbar was in session. After the transfer of the familiar Salamat Ali, the parrot nosed Mehboob Ali tried to stamp the impact of his ’Thanedari’ on the village. He cracked his whip a couple of times while sitting on the manja, and herded the young men together as if they were sheep and goats. Sipahi ji too cracked his whip and asked in a normal tone, ’How many types of dates can be found?’ ’Ji- ji’. ’Come on out with it’. ’Luna pind, Wanki pind, Shagasti and Cheeko pind’. ’So today you badmashes will taste the dates of Cheekho... The children began to laugh. ’Is it a Thana or a Madarsa...’ Sipahi ji said smugly, ’I will just tell you’. Mustafa’s cousin Usman was called out, ’Oui you sour faced, just walk and show me, why this sudden act of being lame? You were also throwing rotis at the dog on the night of the dacoity?’ Usmaan walked slowly and offered his salaam to Thanedarji. ’His lame jumps are from birth. Sahibji, put him in your service. If not anything he can hand you the whips’. Gurdit Singh nodded his head, ’Sadke Donishmandi, by the time Usmaan langra picks up the whip, the poor victim will also get breathing space’. As Thanedar’s eyes penetrated Gurdit Singh he began to stroke his turban. The Sipahis brought with them Hukma and Khudabaksh. Thanedar thundered, ’the pair of you are now in our custody. Out with the tale of Tatta Sansi’. Mustafa did not even look at Naubatia, and quickly blurted out, ’Sansi had turned in the direction of the Tilla’. Thanedar crossed his legs on the manja. ’I am listening, carry on’. ’The jewels are with Motiramia and the rest of the stuff at Islangarh Tibba’. Barkhurdar Khan placed his hand on his chest and smiled in a mulish way. Thanedarji gave him a dirty look’. Then he called out, ’Oui, you should have been patient. You quickly became the witness. It would have been better if you had gone for rounds with the Aror:irs - Kirans selling hankies, oils and combs. The deeds of the brave are not for you’. Thanedar looked at him with his small eyes as if he was not a young Jat lad but a Chilgoza. Sipahi came nearer and said, ’Hauor it is a family of old numbris. Just throw them aside’. Thanedar reinforced his arrogance, ’Barkhurdar, come to the Thana to register your presence’. Barkhurdar Khan got the opportunity he was looking for. He smiled like a brave handsome lad. ’Thanedarji, your wish is my command. I never act false. I only present myself to defend my offences. I shall certainly come on the day
I have been asked to'. If you want, I am ever ready to visit the Bade 'Sain's Thana'. Thanedar twirled his moustaches and seemed to have reached an important decision. He handed a small bundle to Jawinda Shah, 'Just count, your small pieces of jewellery. The rest will be identified at the Thana' (P.214).

4.3.14

The assortment of crimes and the activities of so called criminals, breaks the otherwise dull, frugal and measured scenario in the village. Any crime, depending on its magnitude and seriousness ceased to be private and envoked general response of the village folk. Important men in the village like Shahji take the post-crime situation in their hands to help solve and settle the problem. Meanwhile the government functionaries in charge of law and order reach the scene for investigations. And finally, sometimes the issue is dragged to the courts in Gujrat for settlement. Any crime surfaced many dimensions - social, economic, legal and cultural.

A fresh crime absorbed both the Men's and Women's world. Men usually have first hand information. Similarly their response is factual, pragmatic and realistic. Information that trickles to the women is often diluted and generates a lot of gossip and juicy comments. However, the women's network is elaborate, information is much more diverse and helps to surface many dimensions of the same incident. Finally, the women's version is fairly thorough by piecing information derived from various sources. For men and women in the village, Shahji and Shahn are like an informal court of justice and a parallel police and investigating agency. All must seek their advice, help and guidance.

A crime is a challenge to the collective consciousness of the village. All respond but gradually the happenings of today recede into the memories of yesterday. The activity, curiosity, investigations etc. become routine affairs. Individuals condition themselves to bear their own burden and cope with the situation as best as they can.

Thus it can be seen that crime - the world of thefts, robbery, murder emerges as
something interlinked with the cultural consciousness of the people. In the matrix of the novel, the criminal exists as a person in his own right, in a world of his own, which is not prone to judgement on a moral basis. Infact success in deeds of crime, winning a litigation etc. are all symbolic expressions of personal power and bravery, qualities appreciated and admired in terms of standards valorised by the community. Finally acts of criminal offence, and the daredevilry associated with them are generally romanticised and talked off proudly and gradually become a part of the village folklore and myths.

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