Chapter 2

Universe and Methods of Study
Like anthropology, sociology and psychology, to name a few, criminology is a behavioural science; it studies human behaviour patterns in a scientific manner. The subject matter of criminological studies is that aspect of human behaviour which is deviant in nature, pathological in character, anti-social in tone and tenor.

There is a general consensus of opinion among the various disciplines classed under the general field of social sciences that human behaviour is, by and large, leamed behaviour in that man acquires such behaviour as a member of the society he belongs to. It is unlike animal behaviour which is, more or less, instinctive in character because it is rooted in the innate tendencies or faculties with which an animal
organism is endowed. In sum, animal behaviour is a general "built-in" mechanism whereas human behaviour is a largely "built-up" mechanism.

Subscribing to this basic postulate of how man comes to inculcate behaviour patterns through his membership of the society, is the universally accepted view that criminals, too, are human beings, and that their behaviour is a learned behaviour. What primarily sets apart a criminal from a non-criminal is neither his genetic endowment nor the climatic conditions but the socio-cultural milieu in which the individual is born and brought up, the impact of the agencies of socialization and the mechanisms of social control. The process of institutionalization of behaviour, the intensity and extent of internalization of group norms and values or departure therefrom, also contribute to the making of a criminal. It has, thus, been long realized that, in regard to the learned behaviour of man — whether criminal or non-criminal — genetic or biological endowment plays the least role whereas environmental factors and forces play a far-reaching and decisive role.

*Criminology: A Theoretical Resume*

At one time in the informal history of criminology, several pre-scientific explanations were advanced to explain the reasons of delinquency. The 'Theory of Demonology' marks the...
earliest attempt at explaining the phenomenon of delinquency in terms of demonic causative factors — Satan and his allies, evil spirits, ghost and goblin damned, witches and demons, and other ethereal existences — which were held responsible for the anti-social, delinquent and deviant behaviour of men. Such lexical phrases as "bedeviled", "under the spell of spirits", "possession" and so on only substantiate the aforesaid semantic implication.

When Aristotle and Galen talked about the positive correlation between bodily characteristics and criminal behaviour, they had adopted the position of the theory known as the 'Theory of Physiognomy', a slightly improvised version of which was advanced by Franz Joseph Gall who rejected the 'Theory of Phrenology, but stressed instead his position: "Different types of minds are contained in differently shaped skulls". These physiognomical and phrenological theorists held scene for long, fighting the Environmental or Geographic Determinists who laid singular and uncompromising emphasis on what is generally known as the spatial arrangements and the characteristics of the physical ecological environment.

Hedonistic philosophers like Jeremy Bentham discarded all biological and geographic determinism with a single stroke: man is a rational animal who seeks to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, he is not a prisoner of the
external forces; he makes his own choices and behaves in his own way. Brenda S. Griffin and Charles T. Griffin have summarized the 'Hedonistic Theory' by highlighting the 'Hedonistic calculus' and the 'Penal pharmacy' that the adherents and advocates of this school had advanced as diagnostic and therapeutic measures to fight all violation, in a rationalist style.

Basing their formulation on the economic factors and conditions prevailing in a society, the advocates of economic determinism sought to correlate crime with poverty, denial and deprivation, recommending economic rehabilitation as the surest and the only ameliorative measure to fight the demon of delinquency.

When the founder of modern criminology, Cesare Lombroso, appeared on the scene, the Italian physician brought with him a rich body of first-hand information relating to the behavior of the troublesome and the confirming soldier. He put forth his hypothesis that the trouble maker type of soldier had a typical physical character directly correlated with the temperaments of their owners. This was an expression of the fact that certain physical stigmata like extremely long arms, defects in the eye, an unusual size of the ears, facial asymmetry and other peculiar features were suggestive of what he called the homo delinquent
... a living representative or specimen of the primitive stage whose delinquent behaviour is an expression of the degenerate tendencies of the bygone ages... a phenomenon which Lombroso termed atavism. Proceeding with this methodological frame of reference, Lombroso attempted a typology of criminals into born criminals, insane criminals, criminoids, and criminals by passion... as suggestive of the different combinations of physical stigmata and psychological traits. His formulations were looked upon with great admiration when he commented on his classification of criminals as being a "variety of individuals who constitute the gradations between the born criminal and the honest man", assigning different individuals their legitimate pigeonhole, as it were. It is indeed a pioneering work.

Lombroso's typology and its methodology could not stand the test of scientific investigations when his own student, Enrico Ferri, channelled the trend of modern criminological research along social dimensions on the simple plea that "crime is a social problem that disrupts the orderly relationships between people". Treating an individual---criminal or non-criminal---as a member of society, Ferri stressed that human beings have no meaningful existence apart from their society. He made a clear departure from his teacher's position in that he believed that crime was a product of a combination of athropological, psychological,
geographic, economic and sociological factors --- a social organismic model of delinquency.

Raffaele Garofalo regarded crime as a violation of the basic moral attributes like probity (the respect of property rights) and pity (relief over the infliction of harm and suffering on other people) --- a moralist view of crime.

Eames A. Hooton made a comparison between 13,000 criminals and 3,000 non-criminals with a view to studying their physical characteristics in order to arrive at his conclusion of the "organically inferior" type of people who were criminals on whom the environment easily exerted its impact because of their being "low grade human organisms" --- a physical type model of criminality.

The biological research orientation of the German scholar Eames Kretschmer, and the Harvard scholar, William H. Sheldon, gave rise to formulations of body types vis-a-vis mental illness and the three body types or somatotypes into the endomorph, the mesomorph, and the ectomorph among the juveniles. Several others extended the Sheldon typology on the juvenile delinquents through their rigorous empirical researches.

Studies of biological determinants of both crime and delinquency have yielded significant results and offer deeper insights into biodynamics to highlight mental degeneracy, physical abnormality, endocrine gland dysfunction, genetic
abnormality and hyperactivity or hyperkinesis as the possible correlates of crime (Griffin & Griffin, 1976).

The foregoing survey - sketchy and hasty though it is - of the major schools of criminology and their theoretical formulations goes to suggest that modern criminological researches have drifted along the social and cultural dimensions of delinquency and crime largely because an interdisciplinary perspective and orientation is steadily gaining ground. This marked shift in the emphasis of the study of delinquent and criminal behaviour is rooted in the growing recognition that crime is a by-product of what may be called the sub-culture of the under-world. As such the processes of initiation and maturation, life-styles, social organization, isolation, and survival of the criminals cannot be ignored but have to be given due weightage. The following passage from Inciardi more than emphatically stresses it thus:

The development of the criminal career begins with initiation and socialization into the world of crime, followed by a maturation process involving the acquisition of the skills, knowledge, and associations appropriate for maintaining the desired occupation.

The above passage highlights the social dynamics of the world of crimes. The present study of the pickpockets, therefore, aims at spotlighting the process of how criminals are made, nurtured, and protected.
The Universe

The place selected for studying the role-playing of the
pickpockets is Sagar Town, and the dramatic personas of the
play are pickpockets of different grades — neophytes, adepts,
and old-timers. They are wedded to their profession, its
ethics and ritualism, its norms and values, code of conduct and
etiquette, protocol: in sum, they are bound to each other in
professional brotherhood by the bonds of piety, as it were, for
their recruitment and training, operations and survival, safety
and security.

The universe of the present empirical investigation
is the small township of Sagar which only a couple of years
ago was declared as a Corporation. Its population has been
recorded at 1,18,574, according to the census of 1981. If the
population of the Cantonment Area and the Mobile Brigade
Centre are included, the figure may well cross 2,00,000. It
comprises 42 Wards of uneven size — some of them are thickly
populated, others are sparsely populated; some are absolutely
congested, others are not so congested. The city is growing
and expanding speedily. But the expansion is along the
marginal or fringe area of the traditional boundary of the
town. It has a dateable history of emergence and growth over
several centuries, a brief account of which is given below:
Historical Backdrop of Sagar Town

A medium-sized urban township, Sagar town is a part of the district of the same name and lies in the heart of the region known as Bundelkhand. Embracing nearly all the former states of Vindhyas Pradesh on the north of Sagar district and covering the area well beyond Bina in the west, Bundelkhand also covers the parts surrounding Narsinghpur in the south as well as Jabalpur and Katni in the south-east and east respectively. Covering a fairly large territory, Bundelkhand is marked as a district linguistic-cum-cultural region with its literature and folklore, dialect and dress, history and traditions.

Situated in the heart of Bundelkhand, Sagar town has an overall tradition that has been preserved even to the present day, partly due to the forces of conservatism and partly due to the relatively slow pace of change that the town has witnessed over the past few decades.

Its history dates back to before AD 1023 when one Nihal Shah, King of Jalaun, annexed Sagar, including many other villages to his kingdom. By the close of the 13th century Sagar was brought under Muslim rule. A little over three-and-a-half centuries later, in 1660, Udan Shah who hailed from a Dangi family, founded the first settlement. The present site of the Municipal ward known as Pakota was, thus, the
first settlement. During the reign of his grandson, Pirthipat, Maharaja Chhatrasal of Panna annexed it forcibly to his kingdom.

By AD 1734 Sagar came under the Peshwa rule. Under Peshwa's command, one Govind Rao Bunder took over the administrative charge of Sagar, including many other adjoining villages. Sagar flourished during Govind Rao's regime, becoming the capital of the adjoining territory and emerging into a town. When Govind Rao was killed by the Afghans, he was posthumously awarded a territory which was exempted from land revenue. Sagar was included in the rent-free land granted to Govind Rao's successors.

In the year AD 1818 Peshwa Baji Rao ceded to the British Government a greater part of the area adjoining Sagar. By the time of the mutiny of 1857, Sagar came to figure prominently on the military map of British India, and it soon developed into a military centre of immense consequence. Ever since the British had come to India, Sagar had started making its first strides towards urbanization and industrialization. A once-time anonymous village with its typical rural setting, thus, emerged as an urban township to which the blending of folk-urban characteristics had added colour.
With the inauguration of bidi manufacturing Sagar came to have one of the largest industries which involved no machines nor much of skilled labour. During the past four decades, ten bidi magnates, majority of whom are Gujaratis, have expanded their bidi empire, and provide employment to thousands of people. Bidi manufacture on large scale has given rise to the middleman, mediating between these magnates and the manufacturers. They are the sattadars who employ workers on behalf of a firm, and who earn their share as commission agents.

Next in importance to bidi manufacture are the saw-mills. The luxuriant forests in Sagar district not only provide Tendu leaves for bidi-making, they are also rich in teak and timber wood of varying qualities, besides many other varieties of wood which supply firewood. Felling of the trees, transportation and sawing of logs of wood and the like are a source of livelihood to many unskilled and semi-skilled labourers. Sawdust and discarded batten are purchased by the fourwheel thelavales, and they sell them as fuel to every house.

Oil, oil-cakes and dal mills as well as Sinchi soap factories and confectionaries are the other industries in the town. Proliferation of the means of transport in the form of automobiles have given rise to many workshops, lathe workers, painters and denters, upholstery-workers, welders, electricians and so forth.
Education facilities have also multiplied over these years. As a result the town now has a University, two evening Colleges, a degree college for girls, a basic training college, a police training college, an ITI Centre, 14 higher secondary schools, a convent school, a central school, 5 kindergarten schools and one or two primary schools for boys and/or girls in every Municipal Ward.

From the administrative point of view, Sagar is the district headquarters, having the district and sessions court, treasury, collectorate, tehsil and revenue courts as well as block office and its allied wings. An industrial estate is coming up at one of the outskirts of the town. Military concentrations are increasing with the expansion of military encampments ever since Sagar came to have a mobile brigade centre. A regular S.A.F. unit has also been posted in the town, and is combing the dacoit infested areas in and around the district.

Sagar town is a multi-caste and multi-religious urban centre. Many different castes belonging (or claiming to belong) to the five-fold ritual strata in the Hindu hierarchy form a major part of the town’s population. Other religious groups such as Christians, Jains, Muslims and Sikhs add further variety to the demographic contours. Many Hindu castes still continue to practise their age-old traditional occupation. The occupational castes of the town include shik or vadav
(milkmen), dimar or barua (watermen), bharai (carpenters), basar (bamboo workers) brahmín (Hindu priests), shadër (masons), chamar (cobblers), chaursia (betal-growers), dard or namdeo (tailors), chobi or bartha (washermen), chachera (donkey-herders), Kalar (distillers) and kesharwani or laskarsiya (foodgrain sellers), Khatik (vegetable-vendors), kari or julaha (weavers), kumhar (potters), lakhera (lac workers), lohar (blacksmiths), mali (gardners), meht or bhangi (scavengers), nai or khabas (barbers), nemar (sweets-sellers) patel or kachhi (vegetable growers) sana (gold and silver-smiths), tamarker (brassware-workers) and teli or sahu (oil pressers) are some of the other traditional occupational castes of the town.

From the urban-industrial matrix have emerged modern professions and occupations: doctors, engineers, teachers, pleaders and the like constitute the new crop of professionals, autoriksha and tempo drivers, hotel cooks and waiters, watchmen, drivers, conductors, cleaners, etc. fall in the class of old occupational men. Prototypes of vagabonds and rogues of the past fe dal days of Europe make up the population of the generally uneducated, unemployed, anti-social elements who represent the rank and file of criminals in the town.

Crime Contours of Sagar Town

By the nineteenth century, Sagar had emerged as a small town of administrative, strategic and commercial significance. Its
administrative significance had been long established ever since it was preferred as the centre of administration under the Peshwa regime. Its strategic importance got established with its becoming a part of the British rule. And its character of a commercial centre started taking shape thereafter when it emerged as a townships. Several traditional trading communities, wealthy and resourceful as they had been, came forward to boost large scale production and/or sale of such commodities as gold and silver ornaments, metal utensils, grocery, handloom cloth and foodgrains besides animal trade — both milking and draft animals.

In the wake of urbanization, newer occupations came up. Unskilled rural labour started drifting cityward for the Municipal and the P.W.D. operations needed it in large numbers. Parallel to the influx of labour force sprang up several allied problems, including law and order issues: jobless and penniless labour had started posing a serious threat to the social order. Newer forms of crime centring on money began taking place.

Sagar town had earlier witnessed raids and murders by the thugs and pindaris; stories of their indiscriminate looting operations were always recalled by the people. Such criminal tribes as the Kanjars and the Kushbandiyas were nomadic people who indulged in house-breaking, tent-thieving, looting
of encampments and isolated homesteads, cattle and sheep lifting, and thefts of all sorts. The thugs and the pindaris formed the class of highly specialized highway dacoits and murderous robbers; the Kanjars and the Kuchbandiyas were usually the non-violent type of criminals. The Badiyas, the Gujars, the Nats, the Banjaras and several others were the groups of those nomadic criminals who survive in the folklore of Bundelkhand even today.

The Kanjars and the Kuchbandiyas belonged to the tribal hordes sharing a common culture and social institutions. Singing and dancing for entertainment in the countryside formed their source of livelihood in the daytime; prostitution was rampant among their womenfolk as the evening fell; and midnight occupation of the menfolk was thieving and allied property crimes (Jain, 1962).

The historical background of the town in regard to crimes was largely attributed to these criminal tribes. With the inauguration of urbanization, their diffusion took place: such factors as rural labour influx, job insecurity, unprecedented opportunities for easy gain, urban anonymity and the like gave a fillip to the variety of crimes against people and property. The Indian Penal Code bears a testimony to how several crimes have proceeded largely if not only from the urban matrix.
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In the course of the present investigation, statistics were collected from four police stations that cover the Corporation and the Cantonment areas under their jurisdiction. Such crime statistics were gathered with a view to delineating the crime contours of the town over a period of three consecutive years—1981, 1982 and 1983. The Table 2.1 presents crime-wise statistics and the accompanying map depicts them in diagrams:

Every science implies a methodical study. The natural and biological sciences involve tools and techniques of research in laboratory conditions whereas the social or behavioural sciences have human behaviour as the subject of their study and the society at large as their open laboratory, as it were.

But for the behavioural sciences like psychology and linguistics, among others, where experiments are conducted under controlled observation conditions, all empirical investigations in the social and/or behavioural sciences are field oriented. Therefore, they have to follow a conventional procedural mode which is marked by several stages in a logical sequence or progression. Such stages relate to the selection of the problem and the formulation of a working hypothesis as the first step. Then follow such steps as the demarcation of the universe of study, the identification of the subjects, the establishment of initial contact and rapport before the informants are subjected to survey or census operations,
schedules and interviews, genealogical mapping or life-history recording and so on. The nature of the problem often determines the kinds of tools and techniques that should be employed in the course of the investigation. For, it is only the methodological rigour of the tools and techniques that ensures objectivity and credibility of the data thus collected.

An investigation directed towards a systematic exploration into the dynamics of pickpocketing as a career crime has to be a carefully planned research programme. The very first step in such exploration necessarily involves the issue of identification of the pickpockets—the informants. For this a two-step strategy was adopted for arriving at the identification of the pickpockets.

1. The initial spadework was directed towards identification of the known pickpockets. All the four police stations in the town were contacted with a view to collecting the barest minimum bio-criminal data about those pickpockets whose history sheets of crime were available in the police records. Their names and addresses were collected, their photographs were seen and studied and the areas of their maximal operations were noted down.

Having collected such preliminary background information, an effort was made to contact them at their favourite haunts where they met their fellow craftsmen or comrades. After
several visits and frequent interaction (formal though such interaction was in the initial phase of fieldwork), I could get close to them only gradually without ever having them suspect my intentions. The phase of initial contact was arduous and irksome, occasionally disgusting too, for the simple reason that the pickpockets did not hang around their meeting place for long— they kept moving hither and thither, sometimes running from place to place in search of their victims.

My initial contacts with them got smoothly established when I got in touch with an old timer from amongst the local pickpockets. My getting close to him and winning his active confidence paved the way for my getting close to the other neophytes and adepts among the pickpockets who regarded the old-timer as their preceptor, mentor and what not.

2. The known cases of the pickpockets from the police records were all too limited. The police knew only about those who had been apprehended, prosecuted and acquitted or sentenced to imprisonment in the past. There were many others who had not been yet apprehended and on whom, therefore, the police had no watch; they figured nowhere in the police records.

To proceed from the known to the unknown pickpockets was a real uphill task. A proclaimed pickpocket would seldom divulge the names of such anonymous fellow craftsmen
of his. The reason is twofold: their code of professional ethics
expects that they keep their lips pursed about their otherwise
anonymous fellow brethren; the longer their anonymity is
ensured, the greater will be the chances of their safely roping
in bigger game.

The old-timer came to my aid at this juncture. He is
addicted to alcoholism, and I used to tip him now and then
with a five rupees note in order that he may buy his daily
booze. I had started addressing this old-timer pickpocket as
Kakadi (Uncle), and the employment of this fictive kinship
term made him feel elated that I (his nephew) was interested in
knowing more and more about his craft and his craftsmen.

It did not take me long to discover that my "adoptive
uncle" used to get vocal when he was under the potent spell of
alcohol. And I could dig out the names of those other
pickpockets whom he had imparted the secrets of his trade;
several of these apprentices did not figure in the police
records.

The process of identification, thus, led me to face the
pickpockets themselves. My close association with my
'adopted uncle' got to their eyes and, by and by, they too
became friendly with me — perhaps thinking of me as a
prospective entrant into their fraternity in due course of time.
When my initial familiarity with them had thickened into
friendship, I told them in plain language that, as a student of criminology, I had a consuming interest to know all about pickpocketing and assured them that whatever information they divulged to me would be kept buried and confined to myself; they agreed to subject themselves to the administration of the schedule provided it was assured and they were convinced that all anonymity would be kept about their identity. I did not fill in such details as their names, their family members' names and the like that they thought were enough to reveal their identity. I could, thus, manage to win their active confidence — as a lawyer wins his client's or a doctor wins his patient's.

The story of my getting close to the old-timer pickpocket must be narrated here. From the day it was decided that I was to study pickpockets, I began my search for their gang leader who was not difficult to locate; for he was a regular visitor, almost every evening, at the country liquor shop of my ward. My doctor friend's clinic is located at a walking distance from the liquor shop, and while sitting in the clinic I could easily watch from a distance all that was going on in the vicinity of the bar.

One evening the old-timer walked in there. My doctor friend and I received him with great warmth. He was drunk for his legs were staggering, his hands were trembling, his voice was slurred and unsteady. He sank in a chair—half awake...
and half asleep. He looked like lost to himself—calm, quiet, drowsy but with the glow of contentment on his face.

A few minutes later when he came to his normal self, he enquired: "Kya heal hain, daeatar saab."

My friend answered that he was fine, and added entreatingly: "Koi cheej suna" (Recite some poem, please).

The old-timer had a taste for Urdu poetry, shair-e-shairi, and he started pouring out several Urdu couplets and lyrics in a sing-song manner. I was amazed to see how anyone so dead drunk could recite so many verses at a stretch. I enthusiastically appreciated his aesthetic tastes and sensibilities, and my appreciation won him over. He patted my back, caressed my head as if in a gesture to bless me, and started addressing me as beta (my son). I, too, grabbed the opportunity and reciprocated by addressing him as Kakri (my uncle).

Emotionally charged responses soon paved the way for an intimate and informal dialogue. For he started visiting the clinic nearly everyday after his evening booze, and an atmosphere of ease and familiarity got established after his first few visits. As his host, we used to make provisions for pants and cigarettes for him. Encouraged by his affectionate treatment my initial hesitation disappeared, and I started addressing my idle curiosity about his personal and
professional life. He boldly admitted that pickpocketing and
outwitting had been his source of livelihood, for several
decades.

Slowly and gradually I began probing him about his
experiences, status, seniority, personal skills, and so on; I
started gathering the desired information in the initial informal
sittings with him—sometimes when he was drunk, on other
occasions when he was not drunk. It was during this period
when he introduced me to some of the adepts in pickpocketing
as well as some novices. My "adopted uncle" would project
my identity to them as a nave savant (newcomer), and they
started behaving with me as their prospective colleague only
because I had casually expressed the desire to join their
fraternity. This facilitated my entry into their fraternity,
and my conduct with them was that of a friend, a well-wisher, a
vagabond which left no room for their entertaining any doubts
about my bonafides.

My informal evening chats and occasional probing sessions
with my 'adopted uncle' revealed many a fact which I used to
note down in my daily log after the clinic. Emboldened
by our intimacy, I requested him to take me on one of his
pickpocketing expeditions/operations. He declined. But I was
persistent in my entreaties to which he finally yielded.

It was the month of September in 1983. He summoned
me to accompany him on his operation which he called
jeb saafi (pocket cleaning). We boarded the Katni–Bina train without tickets. His searching eyes soon identified a potential victim. He got close to his prey and returned to me a few minutes later, asking me to stand at the entrance of the compartment. A few minutes more and a small station arrived. As soon as the train stopped, he bade me get down. Employing the sleight of his hand he had robbed Rs. 70.00 from his victim. How and when he had robbed his prey, I could not see – the pick was so quick and fast.

When the train was about to start again, he hastened towards another compartment and I followed him. Within minutes he had perhaps identified his next prey. For while I stood at the entrance, he drifted among the standing passengers. I was watching his movements, stealing a glance at him every now and then. Another few minutes passed and the train arrived at Khurai. He hurriedly rushed through the standing passengers only to make a rapid get-away. We got down at Khurai and came out of the railway premises, walking towards the town. When I enquired from him if he had another victim, he waved a four fold pack of notes. Counting them, he found they were Rs. 200.00. He had cut the inner pocket of a young villager!

He entertained me with snacks in a hotel, and paid for my bus fair to Sagar. Although his catch of the day amounted to Rs. 270.00, he did not give even a single paisa to me; nor did I
ask for it. But he played a kind host to me all the while. That marked my first and last trip on a pickpocketing expedition.

My 'uncle' was jubilant about his successful 'hunt' (Shikar); and I was marvelling at his art. Since he had given me some practical hints about how to manipulate the index and the middle fingers for pickpocketing, I thought of trying it out myself—only once to test my informal apprenticeship!

About a month later the Navaratri festival arrived, when earthen images are enshrined in the different wards of the town. In my ward an image was enshrined by the young enthusiasts who formed the Kali Committee, and the duty assigned to me and my friend was to ensure that the visitors who came for darshan of the Mother Goddess did not turn into an unruly, chaotic mob. We were posted there as volunteers. Arrangements were being made by our fellow friends for the cultural programmes in the night. Visitors had started pouring there in large number—men, women and children. It was the fifth night of the Navaratri festival.

Suddenly I saw a middle-aged, simple-looking man standing beside me. He stood there with folded hands and eyes closed, obviously paying. Some currency notes were clearly visible in his pocket. The devil in me prompted me to try my hand and
test my apprenticeship. My hand was trembling. But I had decided about a trial. Very skilfully I got my index and middle fingers into his pocket. And, the paper money was in my hand! I could not dare stand before the shrine any more, and slipped away from there.

I was now trembling badly. The thought flashed in my mind: "What will happen if someone saw me pickpocketing". I was overtaken by a sense of guilt that I had committed theft before the image of the Mother Goddess, that I had robbed a devotee of his money.

When I got back to my normal self again, I reasoned it out that I had committed no offense. What I had done was a part of my field experience in the course of my empirical investigation. I returned to the spot, went straight to the donation box and slipped those notes into it. They were six notes of Rs. 2.00 each.

My conscience pricked me for picking up a petty sum of Rs. 12.00; there were no qualms of conscience on the face of my 'uncle' when he had robbed his two victims to the tune of Rs. 270.00.
My initial contact, my rapport and my participant observation apart, I had administered a schedule on the identified pickpockets of all grades. Their number had gone up by 150. But when the question of choice of the sample arose, I selected only 100 (70 were reported in Police record and 30 were not recorded), a sample that represented all the varieties of pickpockets.

Informal interviews, formal and focused interviews, life histories, collection of indigenous tools and gathering of authentic information from the police records, thus, formed my tools of the trade as a researcher.