Chapter-2

Narratives of Social Disruption in English and Dogri Heroic Ballads

This chapter undertakes the study of Heroic English ballads narrating the plight of lower sections of the society in comparison to those depicted in the Dogri ballads of almost the same time span in the histories of both the respective regions. The English ballads deal with the people who lived on the Anglo-Scottish border. This period of Scottish history is marked by constant wars between England and Scotland as well as by frequent raids by the border reivers. The condition of common people or peasants in Duggar region was not much better than the Scottish people. They were governed by the feudal social structure. Peasant life was incredibly hard as portrayed through the Dogri ballads.

Songs and poetry including the ballads which have been discussed in the earlier chapter depict borders as sites of romantic period from the 13th century to the beginning of the 17th century. However, it was a cruel time. This was not just about England versus Scotland. Scot robbed Scot and English robbed English. There were feuds between families on the same side of the border and across the border. Robbery and murder were everyday occurrences. Raiding became an important part of the social system-a way of life. No householder could go to sleep secure, no cattle could be left unguarded. The land was dominated by the sword. The
ballads that narrate the stories related to border raids and counter raids to recover robbed goods are ‘The Fray of Suport’, “Jamie Telfer of the fair Dodhead” and ‘Dick o’ the Cow’.

“The Fray of Suport” tells about an English woman living in Suport, near the foot of Kershope. She had been plundered by a band of Scottish moss-troopers in the night. In the morning, she convoked her servants and friends for the ‘Hot Trod’ or pursuit of the reivers to get back her things. At the same time, she complained about their negligence and incompetence in securing her safety. Hot Trod was the hot pursuit of reivers and was allowed under the border laws. It allowed for the ones who had been robbed to mount a pursuit within six days of the raid and to cross the border, if necessary, to follow the raiders and hound and horn for the recovery of their goods. It was the duty of all neighbours between the age of sixteen and sixty to join the Trod. A piece of burning turf was held aloft on a spear point to let others know what was happening. The person in pursuit had the right to recruit help from the first town it came to and the first person encountered was to bear witness that a lawful Hot Trod was being carried out. When told to join the Trod, if a person refused, he would be considered to be a traitor and to be in alliance with the enemy. That person who refused would also be forced to become a fugitive. Even if the Trod was successful, the pursuers could not relax. They knew that there would be reprisals and then reprisals upon reprisals.
According to the ballad, the English woman called out the men of the countryside and the coopers working in the woods to rise in arms against the band of marauding Scots who had stolen her horse and cattle the previous night, in addition to many others valuable articles. They had also lamed her guests who tried to help to defend her home. The lady said that all the fords on the Liddel and a gap which was a possible escape route were guarded. The Scots would be prevented from returning home to Scotland. The narrator finally announced the arrival of authorities such as the Captain of Bewcastle, Jephtha’s John and Captain Musgrave. The town bell of Carlisle also started ringing. With this the lady was assured that the property would not be taken over the border without a fight.

“The Fray of Suport” operates very effectively as a part of the reiving ballad group within the Minstrelsy. It is very precise in its geography, it names specific individuals in history and while the lines and the structures are very different from the other ballads, the drive and emotional impact of the verses are the same. It may be useful to consider “The Fray of Suport” alongside “Jamie Tefler of the Fair Dodhead”, as one presents a Scottish raid on English territory, while the other presents an English raid on a Scot and while one of the heroes of ‘Suport’ is the Captain of Bewcastle, he is the villain in “Jamie Tefler of the Fair Dodhead”.

119
“Jamie Tefler of the Fair Dodhead” is one of the raid and retrieval ballads contained in the *Minstrelsy*. According to the ballad, the Captain of Bewcastle and his men ride into Teviotdale on a plundering expedition and seized the cattle and ransacked the home of Jamie Tefler in Dodhead. Tefler begged the Captain not to take his possessions, saying that he would be revenged if he did so, but the Captain merely laughed, noting that there was only a sheathless old sword in the house. Telfer ran ten miles in the dark to Stobs’s Ha’ to ask for help from Gibby Elliot there but Elliot refused and told him to seek help at Branksome Ha’, where he had paid protection money to him although Telfer implied that he had made payments to the Elliots. Telfer then hurried towards Coultart Cleugh to ask for help from his brother-in-law, Jock Grieve, and Grieve furnished him with a horse. Tefler then rode to Catslockhill to ask for help from William’s Wat, and Wat and his two sons rode with him to the home of old Buccleuch at Branksome Ha’. Buccleuch summoned his son, Willie Scott. He raised other Scotts and soon caught up with the Captain. Willie demanded that the Captain should give up Tefler’s cattle but the Captain refused and a skirmish broke out in which Willie Scott was struck on the head and killed. Wat of Harden then urged the Scots to avenge him and they won the day, leaving two of the Captain’s men dead and thirty wounded. The Captain himself had a broken leg and was
emasculated. When word of his capture went to the lady, she said that she would rather have seen him dead than disgraced.

A wild young man called Watty wi’ the Wudspurs, lead a band over the border to the Captain’s house at Stanegirthside and stole his cattle. Hence, Jamie Tefler was presented with thirty-three cows when he had only ten stolen from him. Tefler paid the rescue fee, and Willie Scott was greatly mourned.

There is no historical record which relates to the events narrated in the ballad. However, many of the characters mentioned in the ballad have historic parallels, with the notable exception of Jamie Tefler himself. There is no specific individual of this name who appears in historical documents. Jamie Tefler, therefore, should be taken as a representative of one of the inhabitants of the border, who found themselves victim to the border reivers. Moreover, the portrayal of the deputy of the Warden, an officer of the peace, making a raid, not in the way of retaliation, but simply to plunder, is too much out of rule even for Bewcastle and does not speak favourably for the antiquity of the ballad.

Another ballad which narrates the story of a border raid into England and then clever retrieval by a foolish Englishman is “Dick o the Cow”. In this ballad, the man regains his stolen cows. According to the ballad, Fair Johnie Armstrong and Willie Armstrong of Liddesdale
decided the ride into England in search of booty after a peaceful time where there has been no raiding.

They came to Hutton Ha’, but the lord had secured everything except six sheep, and the Armstrongs decided that they would be deeply ashamed to go home with no more booty than that. The thought of the three good cows of Lord Scrope’s fool, who was called Dick of the Cow and they raided his place at night taking the cows and three bed covers. In the morning, Dick’s wife cried about their loss but Dick assured her that he would bring her back, three time the value of the cows. He went to Lord Scrope and obtained his permission to steal in Liddesdale, but only from those who had stolen from him. He then bought a bridle and spurs to take with him but went on foot to Pudding-burn house where the thieves were living. He complained about the theft to the Lord’s Jock who presided over the gatherings of Armstrongs there, but the Lord’s Jock merely invited Dick to dine on the meat from one of his own cows. That night, Dick went into the stable and hamstrung all but three of the horses. He galloped away on one horse, leading another. In the morning, Armstrongs discovered that Dick had gone off with the horses of Fair Johnie and Willie. The third horse that he left undamaged was a bay belonging to the Lord’s Jock. Fair Johnie sought permission to pursue Dick. He overtook Dick on Cannobie Lee and threatened to kill him but the spear he threw went through Dick’s jerkin without hitting him. Dick
knocked Fair Johnie unconscious and took his sword and his steel-jacket and cap away with him. He also took his horse. When he came home, Lord Scrope threatened to hang him when he saw with him the horse that he knew belonged to the Lord’s Jock, but Dick explained that he won the horse when he fought with Fair Johnie and he showed Johnie’s sword and steel jacket and cap as tokens. Lord Scrope then gave him a fine cow and offered Dick fifteen pounds for the bay, and Dick forced the price up to twenty pounds. Dick then met Lord Scrope’s brother Ralph, who offered him ten pounds and a good cow for Fair Johnie’s horse and Dick again forced the price up to twenty pounds. He was accordingly able to go back to his wife with forty English pounds, two fine cows, and the third horse that he had obtained, which was as good as the others. However, he told her that the Armstrons would hang him if he remained in Cumberland and hence, he took farewell of Lord Scrope and moved south to Burgh under Stanmuir.

In “The Fray of Suport”, the raid was followed by the ‘Hot Trod’. But Dick stopped his wife from crying loudly and announcing their loss. He says:

“O had thy tongue, my wife,” he says,

“ And o’ thy crying let me be;

And ay where thou hast lost ae cow,

In gude suith I shall bring the three.”(33-36)
He intended to recover his cows by stealing and he sought permission from his lord who allowed him to go across the border into Scotland for the theft. As a law-keeper, he would have sent him in a Hot Trod, then why did he do so? Was he averse towards excess blood-shed that would have resulted from the conflict? Armstrongs were the most powerful of Border reivers. Hence, their fear might have led to such an action. He also forbade Dick to steal more than his own cows. Dick is depicted as a foolish man throughout the ballad. The poet says:

Dickie’s ta’en leave o’ lord and master;
I wat a merry fule was he!
He’s bought a bridle and a pair of new spurs,
And pack’d them up in his breek thie. (57-60)

He was shown buying a bridle and a pair of spurs, although he had no horse to ride on. He went on foot. Has the poet used the term “fule” ironically? Was Dickie a clever person as he had already planned to steal a horse from the Armstrongs?

Feudalism in its simplest form was a pyramid of power. At the very top was the king. Below him were noblemen and knights, and below them were the peasants. The peasantry was the largest chunk of the pyramid, right at the bottom, and it could make up to three quarters to nine-tenths

124
of the entire population. Among the peasantry, the classes were further sub-divided into Freemen, Villeins, Cottagers and Slaves.

Vassals who possessed extensive fiefs divided out portions of them in a process known as subinfeudation. The result of subinfeudation was that every landholder in the feudal system became both a vassal and an overlord, except the king and the lowliest vassal holding single, indivisible fief. This system grew unsystematically and it carried so complicated tenure relationships that it carried with it the seeds of its own disintegration. In reality, lords had little control over their lesser vassals. The descriptive phrase of the time, ‘The vassal of my vassal is not my vassal,’ describes the dissolution of the ability of the overlord to maintain effective authority over fiefs granted to vassals. Even king ‘holding only from God’-who owed homage to no one and was purportedly above such fractionalizing involvements, became mere landlords bound by feudal contracts to vassals who were their equals and sometimes their superiors in military strength and political power. The power of feudal monarchs was so limited by contracts to a position that they were little more than first among equals. The limitation of royal power, a striking feature of feudal society, was a result of such practices as subinfeudation.

Peasant life was incredibly hard. To many peasants, regardless of class, life generally meant backbreaking field-labour. Under Medieval
law, the king owned everything by what they believed was “divine right”, the right to rule granted by God and then passed on through heredity. What the king gave to his lords were the things which the lords had to pay rent on. For that rent, anything within the lord’s land belonged to him. This everything included the crops, the people, the animals, the wood, tools, clothing- hence everything. Away from the Kings notice, landlords were free to wield their not-inconsiderable power. Landlords were allowed to set their laws and taxes, and did so freely. Peasants were, therefore, exploited. D.N Jha states, “the Indian peasantry was subjected to an ever increasing burden of rent in kind and to some extent, in cash” (15). The region of Jammu was no exception. The condition of the peasants during feudal age was pathetic. Dogri ballads present an excellent impression of the suppression of peasants by the feudal lords. Mrinalini Atrey writes:

    Prevalence of feudalistic practices in the region is also evident through the ballads. We come to know about the kind of relationship existing between the feudal lord and the peasant and the picture is not very encouraging. The feudal lords were usually harsh in their treatment of the peasants. They afflicted atrocities on the peasants not only in the process of tax collection, but also, indulged in excessive taxation for one reason or the other. (42)
Thus, the peasant class of Jammu region was suppressed, both physically and financially. Dogri ballads which present a realistic picture of the plight of peasantry in Duggar region are “Bawa Jitto”, “Data Ranpat”, “Bawa Tholu” etc.

The Karak of “Bawa Jitto” depicts the events of the sad self-sacrifice of a Brahmin for the sake of justice. The incident had a mass appeal and hence, it became a great theme for a ballad, which seems to have been composed by an expert poet. As the person involved happened to be a Brahmin, the caste which enjoyed an exclusive position of reverence in Hindu society of sixteenth century, the Karak became something religious in nature. Because of this fact, the shrine and the Karak became popular although there were so many other similar incidents which also became subject of a number of ballads, in which the persons sacrificed themselves for some good cause. The basic events of the Karak, the self-sacrifice of Jitto as a form of passive resistance to feudal injustice, was an historical fact on which the edifice of the Karak was constructed by the composer and more details were added to it by the later reciters. Illiterate ‘Jogis’, ‘Gardis’, and ‘Draeses’ were prone to provide their own words and sentences which were liable to go off the memory.
Hence, it was very common that new descriptions were added and some incidents were constructed in order to add to the sensational effect of the story as desired by the composer and the reciter.

Bawa Jitto was the only son of Rupo Brahmin and Jojala. He got married to Maya. Soon after that his parents died. His wife also died after giving birth to a daughter. Jitto had to depend on her aunt Jojan to bring up her infant daughter. Jojan had seven sons but their ancestral land was divided into two parts, one part belonged to Jitto and the other part belonged to her seven sons. The lady was believed to practice witchcraft and it was believed that the deaths in Jitto’s family were afflicted by her. She also tried to kill Jitto’s daughter, Kauri and Jitto in order to grab his land. Afflicted by the various tortures, Jitto decided to leave his village Ghar along with his eight years old daughter Kauri. He reached Panjore where his friend Rulho Luhaar lived. He stayed at his place for some days. Then he asked Rulho if he could get any land for cultivation. Ghaghi suggested them to meet Mehta Bir Singh, the Zagirdaar and the maternal uncle of the king of Jammu, Raja Ajaib Dev. All three of them went before the Zagirdaar, where he offered Jitto to accept the job of a priest in any temple. Jitto told him that although he was a brahmin, yet he wanted to earn his living by doing hard work. This argument enraged the proud zagirdaar.
In order to teach him a lesson, Mehta Bir Singh gave him an infertile piece of land near Shama Chack with a written agreement that Jitto would have to give one-fourth of the crop’s share to him. Though the share of the *zagirdaar* was supposed to be fifty percent of the crop, Bir Singh pretended this generosity because he knew that Jitto would fail to yield a crop on the barren land. He ordered Iso Megh, the keeper of that land to accompany Jitto and help him to select the land. Jitto and Iso worked hard on the land and prepared it for cultivation. He made Iso his partner. They grew wheat on the land, watered it, manured it and took proper care throughout day and night. Bua Kauri once visited the field and she wanted to taste the sweat soft fruit but Bawa Jitto forbade her to do so, as the crop had many partners. Such were the ideals of Bawa Jitto. After the harvest, Jitto made a heap of the wheat. Mehta Bir Singh was reported about the excellent crop yield. When he himself saw the quality of wheat, he became greedy and asked his men to collect fifty percent of the crop. At this, Jitto got annoyed and he reminded the *Zagirdar* about his agreement, to which the cruel lord totally denied. Bawa Jitto was convinced that the lord was determined to do injustice. He went home, got a dagger and stabbed himself to death on the heap of wheat. His eight years old daughter Bua Kauri immolated herself along with her father.

Historical facts narrated in the ballad have been distorted. Mehta Bir Singh has been shown as a royal official and has been called as *wazir*
of the *Raja* of Jammu, in an effort to prove that Jitto’s struggle was a struggle against the ruling power. Bir Singh was only a petty officer, or probably a farmer of the government deputed to the territory of Ambgarota. Jitto invited him to come, measure the crop yield and take his share. Mehta Bir Singh is shown to proceed from Gumat, the centre of Jammu Kingdom. Bir Singh is shown to be present at the field when Jitto came with his dagger but historical records say that he had gone away, instructing his men to take away half of the wheat as his share. The introduction of Bir Singh is added to heighten the pathos of the event and the firm determination of the offended brahmin. He stabbed himself saying:

रुक्खी कनक निं खायां महतेआ, दिन्नां मास रलाई।
रामो—राम ध्यान्दा बावा, ते पेट कटारा लाई। *(Gandalgal 82)*

Rukhee kanak nin khayan Mehteya dinnan maas ralayee
Ramo- Ram dhyanda Bawa, te pet kataara laalyee.

Don’t eat dry wheat, let me add my flesh to it.

Chanting Ram-Ram, Bawa stabbed his stomach with the dagger.

*(Transliteration mine)*

There is a confusion about the historical period of this ballad. Most of the folklorists consider Bawa Jitto as contemporary of Raja Ajaib Dev Singh who ruled Jammu for 31 years from 1423 onwards. Raja Hamir
Dev, also called Bhim Dev was killed in a battle with Jasrath Khokhar in April 1423. When Hamir Dev was killed his son Ajaib Dev was only six years old. His maternal uncles Mehta Mardhana and Jaipal seated him on the throne and carried on administration. Mehta Bir Singh was appointed Zagirdar of Ambgarota. Since Ajaib Dev’s death is recorded to have happened in 1454, he was not the ruler of Jammu at the time when Bawa Jitto committed suicide. It was his son Bhirm Dev, who ruled from 1454 to about 1490. Bawa Jitto’s martyrdom is said to have happened in 1458.

Another important aspect of Duggar society which gets highlighted in the ballads is land and boundary disputes. The most remarkable ballad exhibiting this theme is the one related to Data Ranpat. He was a pious brahmin who lived in Birpur near Jammu. The Zagirdar of Birpur, Bangi Charak was a deceitful lord. He had forcefully acquired the land of his relatives. This led to a dispute. Data Ranpat, was appointed as judge to settle the dispute. Data Ranpat who was a man of principles and truthfulness, passed his judgement against Bangi Charak. The feudal lord was enraged over his decision. He tried to bribe him but was unable to convince him. Thus, he got Data Ranpat murdered by his own maternal cousins. Ranpat’s head fell at a place called Dral and his body fell at Birpur. Ranpat’s mother Alma immolated herself along with her son and ordered her daughter-in-law Shukra to perform Sati after 12 years.
Some of the historical facts have been wrongly narrated in the ballad. Aengal, Maingal, Mehnga and Chhajju who killed Data Ranpat are said to be his maternal cousins but in reality they were his step-brothers. They had their own reasons to kill Ranpat. Ranpat was appointed the *Purohit* of the Charak family, the lords of the village, by superceding all his brothers. As a result, they were jealous of his position. When they were instigated by Bangi Charak, they captured this occasion to fulfill their plan. The ballad wrongly narrates about the relation of these people to Ranpat as:

एङ्गल, मैंगल, मैंघा ते छज्जू, हैन मसरे भाई।
अर्गें—अर्गें दाता चलें पिच्छें मौती ने छत्रड़ी लाई (82, 83)
Aengal, Maingal, Mengha te Chhajju, hain masere bhaaee
Aggen-aggen Data chalai pichhen mautee ne chhatarhi laayee.
Aengal, Maingal Mengha and Chhajju were his maternal cousins
As Data moved forward, death followed him.

(Transliteration mine)

Data Ranpat also owned a large piece of land. Killing him was beneficial to them as they could also capture his land. Moreover, the panchayat was held on the eleventh day of Bawa Ladha’s death, the
father of Data Ranpat. But Data Ranpat was killed after four years, on the
day of fourth death anniversary of his father. The incident took place
around 1660 A.D when Bahuwal Kings ruled Bahu.

Data Beeram was also killed over a land dispute. He was a Jat
Peasant. He came into conflict with Brahmin peasant in which he was
killed.

Cattle raids were very common during feudal ages. The poor
peasants were mostly affected by this practice. The ballad of “Data
Sukho” is about the sacrifice of a Rajput lord who lost his life while
releasing the cows of a poor untouchable peasant. He came pleading to
Data Sukho about his loss and cried for his help. Data Sukho had a tough
fight with the other party (raiders) and ultimately he was killed in fighting
against injustice.

Another ballad related to the capture of cattle is about Data Hallo.
Meru Gujjar who was the worker of Data Hallo complained that Bajju
Jatt had forcibly captured his cows. There was a tough fight after this
incident which resulted in the martyrdom of many people.

Bawa Alla Sidh committed suicide when Sungliye people refused
to return his stolen cows. He pleaded before them but they made fun of
him and depressed Bawa hung himself from the tree near their house.

Data Sarnu of Marh got killed during a cattle raid. While he was
grazing his cows, some Mughals came and surrounded the cows to

133
capture them. Data Sarnu gave a tough fight to them but was ultimately killed.

Conflicts were also aroused among common people when their cattle strayed into the neighbouring fields and destroyed the crop. The ballad of “Data Rangu” narrates such an incident. He was a shepherd belonging to the Jat class of peasants. One day his cows entered into the field belonging to peasants of Majbe caste and destroyed the crop. This infuriated the Majbe people who killed Rangu over this petty issue.

Data Leekho, a brahmin from Muthi village in Jammu was killed by the Manhas Rajputs, the owners of the field which was a little destroyed when the cows of Leekho entered there. He immediately took them out of the field but one of the them became so annoyed that he stabbed Leekho with his sharp instrument.

Another evil practice prevailing in the Duggar region was of human sacrifice. The ballads of “Bawa Tholu” and “Raj Bahu” Rull” are examples of humans sacrificed by feudal lords.

Bawa Tholu was a brahmin child, born to Paras Brahmin in Kharote village of Kathua which was under the rule of Mehtab Singh of Lakhanpur. Mehtab Singh was constructing a palace but the walls couldn’t stand at all. A priest was called upon to find out the reason behind this. He told the lord that a devil resided below the foundation of the walls. He needed a sacrifice of a fair innocent brahmin. Mehtab Singh
sent his soldiers all over his territory to get such a *brahmin* for the sacrifice. They captured Tholu who was a minor child of 5 years without being noticed by his father Paras. When the poor father became aware of his son’s missing, he went to seek help from the lord, Mehtab Singh who pretended to help him in all the possible manner. Poor little Tholu heard his father and wanted to cry aloud but the soldiers stopped him. On the day of sacrifice, Tholu was laid alive on the foundation and then the wall was built.

Raj Bahu Rull was the daughter-in-law of the king of Kangra and she was sacrificed in the same way as Tholu, for the purpose of building a canal by her in- laws. The cruel practice was although prevalent in the *Duggar* society, yet it was not wide spread.

The sacrifice of all the martyrs of Dogri ballads discussed in this chapter, was elevated to a supreme level by the practice of Deification prevalent in the *Duggar* society. They are all commemorated through shrines called ‘Dehris’ or ‘Dehras’, built in their honour. Annual and bi-annual congregations, fairs and festivals are organized in their memory. ‘Jogis’ and ‘Chelas’ sing ballads of their deeds. It may be pointed out here, that the process of deification of these martyrs was followed by the sufferings, diseases, mis-happenings caused to the people responsible for their unnatural deaths. The families were cursed after they committed the sin. When the cause of the pains afflicted to the murderers was
discovered, if was found to be the Hatya which means ‘murder’. Most of the martyrs belonged to the brahmin caste, the most highly revered class in the Hindu religion. Hindu religion considered the murder of person belonging to this sect as the greatest sin. According to the epic Ramayana, Lord Rama was also cursed by Brahma Hatya as Ravana was a brahmin. His father was a brahmin saint while his mother was a Raakshasi. Hence, Ravana was a brahmin by birth. Lord Rama had to go to Sangam in Allahabad to repent for his sin. If Lord Rama, who was believed to be the incarnation of God himself, could not survive the pressure of superstitious beliefs of Hindu religion, then, how could a common man or a feudal lord/king be denied committing such a sin. But, if considered the other way, Lord Rama who is regarded as the Maryada Purshotam or the Ideal Man in Hindu religion, exhibited this belief to show that violence and murder are the greatest sins on earth. If an ideal king like Rama, who killed Ravana for the good cause can be cursed, the sin of killing an innocent person or forcing a person to take extreme steps as suicide, is the crime for which there is no apology. The people took the legend of Lord Rama otherwise. Firstly, they killed a person or forced one to commit suicide, then they commemorated him/her as their Deity with the fear of being cursed by the dead person’s wrath. In feudal times, this practice of Deification was very common. The Deity acted as power in Dogri ‘Karaks’ and the discourse of the ballads is shaped by him/her.
They conform to Lukacs’ viewpoint because they narrate history with its inherent contradictions.

The English and Dogri ballads discussed in this chapter are related to the sufferings of the lower section of the society. They narrate the tales of their victimization by the feudal lords. Whether it is Anglo-Scottish border, or the Duggar region, lying so much apart geographically, the status of the weaker and poor sections of the society had a close resemblance. The Anglo-Scottish people were tortured by border reivers as well as feudal lords whereas the peasants of Duggar region were victimized by feudal lords and religious agencies. The methods of subjugation and discrimination varied but the motive was same, i.e., to suppress the lower classes through physical and economic harassment.

Both the English as well as Dogri ballads exhibit the themes of victimization by feudal lords, economic discrimination, cattle raids, violence and lawlessness in the Anglo-Scottish border region and Duggar region respectively. The first major theme which is depicted in all three English ballads and many of the Dogri ballads are based on cattle raids. “The Fray of Suport”, “Jamie Tefler of the fair Dodhead” and “Dick O’ the Cow” are about cattle raids as regards Dogri ballads, “Data Sukho”, “Data Hallo”, “Bawa Alla Sidh”, Data Sarnu” narrate the events of cattle raids in Duggar society.
The English ballads narrate the events that followed the cattle raids whereas the Dogri ballads are about the cattle raids. In “Fray of Suport” and “Dick o’ the Cow”, the raids were carried by the Scottish reivers on the English side of the border. Since, the borders had their own distinct laws, the retrieval of the cattle or other goods plundered by the reivers was sought through the practice of ‘Hot Trod’ as already discussed in “The Fray of Suport”. “Dick o’ the Cow” depicts a different procedure. The man who was robbed was allowed by the lord himself to go and retrieve his things by stealing. A law-keeper, Lord Scrope, allowed Dick to go to Liddesdale to take revenge rather than undertaking the expedition lawfully or waiting for the ‘Truce Day’ to settle his complain. Hence, from the study of these two ballads, it concludes that there was no particular law prevailing in the borders to protect the poor people from the frequent raids. In contrast, “Jamie Tefler of the Fair Dodhead” narrates a separate theme. This is a story of a border raid by the English Captain of Bewcastle and his men into the Scottish territory. The man who led the ‘Hot Trod’ in “The Fray of Suport” to get back the plundered cattle and goods was himself involved in a raid on opposite side of the border. Jamie is helped by the lords although many of them rejected his request. The ballad narrates a lot of bloodshed during the conflict to get back his things. Willie Scott lost his life in this battle.
As regards the cattle raids depicted in the Dogri ballads, the theme of retrieval is narrated in the ballads of “Data Sukho” and “Data Hallo”. Both of these folk heroes helped the men who came to ask for their help in getting back their cattle. They sacrificed their life for the men who came in their shelter. In contrast “Bawa Alla Sidh” and “Data Sarnu” exhibit the plight of poor peasants whose cattle was forcibly captured by the feudal lord and powerful Mughals respectively. Bawa Alla Sidh had nobody to go for help because the man who was supposed to be responsible for his protection and well-being was himself plundering him. Data Sarnu was all alone when the Mughals captured his cows. He could not call anybody for help and hence sacrificed his life while fighting for justice.

It follows from the comparative study of both English and Dogri ballads, that although law existed but it was at the disposal of the feudal lord when and how to use it.

To maintain tenure of the strips assigned to them, serfs owed more than labour service to the landlord. Along with the customary dues and rents, the peasants were obliged to give a percentage of all they harvested to the lord, a part of its to the priest, and perhaps a share to the steward. There were also extra obligations, such as gifts made to the landlord on certain holidays and other special occasions, and there was additional labour owed, such as collecting the lord’s firewood or doing other errands.
for him. If they wished, lords could arbitrarily impose additional charges on their serfs.

The theme of economic burden is well visualised through the Dogri ballad “Bawa Jitto” and English ballad “Jamie Tefler of the fair Dodhead”. The self-sacrifice of Bawa Jitto was a tragic outcome against feudal injustice. According to the agreement made by the feudal lord, Mehta Bir Singh, Bawa Jitto was supposed to give one-fourth of his crop yield to the lord. But the greedy feudal lord was lured when he saw the extraordinary quality of wheat produced in Jitto’s field. He, on the spot, raised his share to fifty percent. To this, Jitto revolted and killed himself. In “Jamie Tefler of the Fair Dodhead”, Jamie Tefler went to Gibby Elliot for help, but he refused him saying that he had not paid the protection money to him. Jamie tried to convince him that he had paid the money but Elliot did not believe him. Jamie had to seek help elsewhere. These two ballads throw light on two common practices in both the regions. Firstly, to increase the share payable to the feudal lord without any advance notice or under any law and rule. Secondly, to deny the payment made or agreement signed. In “Bawa Jitto”, Mehta Bir Singh denied having signed any agreement which dictated his share to be one-fourth of the grains.

The theme of land disputes is not depicted in any particular English ballad but these ballads talk about border reivers who plundered the
people living on the Anglo-Scottish border. Central to the reivers’ activities was an area delightfully termed as the “Debatable Land.” Straddling the border between Scotland and England, for over 300 years, its inhabitants effectively answered to neither government. Beyond the “Debatable Land”, a wide stretch of territory on both sides of the national border was divided into Marches and officials called Wardens were appointed by both the governments. These wardens were sometimes represented as law-keepers and sometimes as law-breakers.

Landlords did have certain obligations to the serfs. They were obliged to make land or some other means of livelihood available to them, and once all obligations to the lord were satisfied, peasants were granted what remained of their produce for their own needs. Sometimes landlords also offered peasants aid and support in times of dearth and, on special days, provided them with feasts and celebrations. Landlords were the sources of livelihood. They had the authority of a king, who was a distant and vague ruler beyond the approach of most peasants. Landlords fulfilled the basic functions of local government for their peasants. They offered protection from external harm and maintained internal peace when peasants revolted against abuses and unwarranted corruption.

Subordination was emphasized by the lord’s control over local justice and by his manipulation of laws and justice in his own favour,
often at the expense of tenants. Beyond providing protection, landlords generally tried to get as much from their serfs as possible.

A prominent example of land dispute is exemplified by the ballad of “Data Ranpat”. Data Ranpat was got murdered by a feudal lord who was dissatisfied by the just judgement of the Ranpat in the case of a land dispute between the lord and his relatives. The feudal lord was infuriated by the loss of land, illegally occupied by him. People were also killed over minor incidents of land disputes and cattle straying. The ballads of “Data Beeram”, “Data Rangu” and “Data Leekho” represent brutal murder of these poor people by the powerful and tyrannous rich lords over petty issues.

Human sacrifice is another issue dealt in the Dogri ballads. Sacrificing poor children and women for a religious cause or for building some monument was a practice prevalent in the royal families of Duggar region. Although, many examples of animal sacrifice are found in Hindu and Muslim religions, but sacrificing a human for a sacred cause was not widespread except for practitioners of black magic in India. The ballads of “Bawa Tholu” and “Raj Bahu Rull” highlight this darker side of the Duggar society.

The minor themes of mutual jealousy, witchcraft and Sati are also visualized through the Dogri ballads. Aunt Jojan of Bawa Jitto practiced witchcraft and killed his parents and wife as told in the ballad. She also
forced him to leave Ghar, his native village. At one instance in the ballad, where Mehta Bir Singh was attracted by the good quality wheat, Jojan who was far away in her village is shown to come to Jitto’s field. The lord gave some grains to her. Jitto discovered her and complained that she had followed him there also as his misfortune. She caused pain to Jitto due to her jealousy for larger share of land held by him and by driving him away from the village, she secured the land for her seven sons. But, if her aim was fulfilled, why then, is she shown to follow Jitto to Shama Chak. This is poet’s own imagination, introduced in the ballad to elevate the emotional appeal of the narration. Mutual jealousy is also exhibited by the step-brothers of Data Ranpat, Aengal, Maingal, Mehnga and Chhajju who murdered him. The theme of Sati is also depicted in the ballads of “Bawa Jitto” and “Data Ranpat”. This theme will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Both English and Dogri ballads are pictures of the Medieval societies exhibiting the social, economic and political life of the people in both the regions. The feudal society was constructed for one reason-security. The nobles wanted the security of maintaining control over their far-reaching kingdom; they were forced to delegate power to local control. The peasants wanted security from marauders and barbarians from neighbouring lands. They also wanted security from invading armies. And thus, the development of the feudal system and the fief
structure was almost inevitable. However, all this came at the great expense of the common man. He gave up his freedom for security. The ballads present the discourse of feudalism according to the principle of ‘Realism’.