Abstract

The problem of dacoity is not new to our country. There are several references of ‘dasyues’ in ancient Indian literature. Stray instances of dacoity occurred in almost all the period of Indian history and in all parts of the country. However, the way organized banditry has been widely practiced for over centuries is peculiar to central India especially Chambal valley alone.

There are various forms of violent and organized crime. Dacoity, too, is also a kind of the same, which is quite common in India especially in central India, where a large number of organized gangs of dreaded desperadoes have operated for centuries. Discrete cases of robbery can be seen almost everywhere even now, but the continued existence and operation of a large number of gangs disrupting and paralyzing the entire civil life is a phenomenon peculiar to central India alone. In spite of stringent measures taken continuously since the beginning of British rule, dacoity has not yet been eradicated. No doubt many dacoits, some of them notorious, were successfully liquidated. Many organized gangs were destroyed from time to time. And yet dacoity continues. New dacoits have come up. This gives rise to some simple but very pertinent questions. What are the reasons behind the continuance and persistence of the problem of dacoity? In which forms, they have emerged or emerging from time to time.

Dacoity has been defined in Section 391 IPC when five or more persons conjointly commit or attempt to commit a robbery or where the whole number of persons conjointly committing or attempting to commit a robbery, and person present and aiding such commission or attempts, amount to five or more, every person so committing, attempting or aiding is said to commit “dacoity”.

There are various factors responsible for the origin and persistence of dacoity in these areas. Some view it as a historical continuation of group behaviour, which can be
traced back to medieval or even ancient times. They maintain that the desperadoes are the descendents of the Princes who were uprooted by the feudal struggles or foreign invasions. Social tension emanating from caste-cleavage and political strife has also been described, as being another important cause. Moreover frustration, caused by economic difficulties is said to have been responsible for pushing many a person over to banditry.

The pattern of dacoity has changed in the recent period. Previously, the root cause of dacoity was not the lure of money but due to poverty, injustice, and groupism. They were denied justice by those who were financially, politically, and socially better off than themselves. For centuries, Chambal dacoits have captured the public imagination: the royal baaghi (rebel), who took up arms against the rich feudal lord; the poor goatherd who could find no other escape from state atrocities; the women who swore blood- revenge against her rapists.

In the recent period dacoity in Chambal valley is in the process of transition despite concerted efforts of the police. Now the dacoit gangs adopted the technique of kidnapping for ransom in dacoity. The gangs almost specialized in perpetrating highly organized and remunerative kidnappings with considerable professional finesse. Being inexpensive, less bothersome and above all, more paying, the technique gained momentum among dacoits. Besides that looting, arson, murder became the principal forms of activity. The new baaghis are shaped by the modern world- their crimes are made up of extortion, protection rackets, election violence and surviving of the corruption of the state. The dacoit gangs have metamorphosed into something quite different: closer in spirit and technique to the mafia don than to the social bandit or class and caste rebel.
The dacoity menace is of a very complex nature. The gangs operate in the area under disguise and it is highly impossible to distinguish between those who are dacoits and those who are not. Needless to mention, the dacoity problem have created awe and terror in whole of chambal valley.

The dacoits, like the Mafioso form an organization, a plan, a system, rules and regulation, a code of ethics; an executive authority and they commit every sort of brutality and violence in dacoity excursions. Examples are of Nirbhay Gujjar who had committed 239 serious offences: murder, kidnapping, extortion, and armed robbery before he was killed on November 7, 2004. A few gangs that claim to be dacoits in the traditional sense still exist. There are the Gadaraiyas who shot into national headlines when they killed 13 Gujjars in Bhawanpura in October 2004.

Though there are many socio-legal measures that have, from time to time, been adopted to combat the menace of dacoity in these regions, the problem of dacoity continues and entail two kinds of enquiry- one relating to forces operating at the system level and the other centering on the forces operating at the individual level. The existence of the system of dacoity as such is governed by some general laws related to the general structure of society.

The main aim of the study is to prove that dacoity is not a problem in Chambal. It’s a profession- a business that needs no investment. Except a gun, may be. Gangs began to get organized, and kidnapping for ransom, rather than looting, was the new favoured activity. The present is an attempt to investigate the nature and type of people who generally take up the profession of dacoity by going details into the causative factors or into the etiological considerations of the dacoity system. The present study also emphasizes on remedial measures to cope up the menace of dacoity and expedite the rehabilitation programme.