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SOME CRIMINAL TRIBES OF INDIA.

INTRODUCTION.

These lectures were never meant for publication and have only now been published "by order." There is no pretence that they are the outcome of original research; all that has been done in the majority of cases was to collate the accounts written by others and from these to bring our knowledge up to date. They were written for the Probationers of the Training School, all of whom had their "Gunthorpes," and were intended to understand that the last word on criminal tribes had not by any means been written, and that "Gunthorpe"—though selected as their text-book—was written more than a generation ago.

In writing the lectures reference was made among others to the following sources of information, other official papers containing notes on criminals were not within reach :—

- Crooke's 'Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces;'
- Sherring's 'Hindu Tribes and Castes;'
- Gunthorpe's 'Notes on Criminal Tribes;'
- Paupa Rao Naidu's 'History of Railway Thieves;'
- Mullaly's 'Notes on Criminal Classes;'
- Sir H. Elliot's 'Races of the North-Western Provinces of India;'
- Notes on Criminal tribes published from time to time in the *Police Gazette*;
- Articles which have appeared in the "*Indian Police News*."

Where possible the information already obtainable in Major Gunthorpe's book was omitted. Invaluable assistance was also given by Inspectors Mahfuzal Rahim, Mahadeo Prasad and Durjan Singh, who have had considerable experience of criminals, and many opportunities of studying their ways. Inspector Mahfuzal Rahim had himself been gathering information concerning the various tribes with the object of publishing a book: the help given by him was therefore particularly valuable, and it was given in the most public-spirited manner, without a thought of self-interest; the only cause of regret I have is that he was not at hand while each lecture was being prepared.

One might easily be deluded into the idea that every tribe has such marked characteristics that any one ought to be able to recognize members of it at sight. Nothing could be further from the truth: the man who could unerringly pick a Bhampta out of a train-load of travellers, or a Sanoria out of a well-packed sarai or crowded bazar, would deserve the grateful acknowledgments of his fellow-beings. Criminals when on the warpath naturally do all they can to hide their identity and to evade observation. In the lawless days of the past, when criminal tribes were openly kept by petty Chiefs to provide them with the wherewithal to fill their coffers, many tribes gloried in their skill and daring, and did not hide their light under a bushel, but they have had to alter their tactics with changing times. Some have found first one form of crime, then another, too risky; all have become more cautious and been obliged to use the utmost cunning to throw their enemies off the scent; each prosecution has given them some clue to the points which have helped the police to establish their identity; intercourse with an advancing civilization has taught them fresh and improved ways of enriching themselves, and experience has taught them where and when to refrain from exercising their calling. It is therefore now out of the question to give cut and dried descriptions of any tribe which will cover all conditions. Each band has

its own ways and keeps them as secret as possible. One can therefore only generalize. Customs, however, die hard in this land of caste, where the help of tribal gods is invoked by their votaries in their criminal expeditions; so we still have in many instances marked circumstances to help us to distinguish tribes both from one another and from their non-criminal brethren.

Every one who takes the trouble to read this pamphlet will note that detailed and authentic information about the tribes is now and then asked for. Every particular that can be sent will be most gratefully received, whether written by a man of long experience, or a keen young officer who has taken careful and accurate notes of his first contact with these public pests, whether it refers to particulars picked up in the past or to fresh cases, or whether it is meant to correct a mistaken assertion made in these lectures or to add a fresh item to our present stock of knowledge. The only thing asked is that each officer who sends a contribution will bear in mind that the information should give careful and accurate details taken as far as possible from the criminal records at the termination of a trial (if there has been one). It should aim at giving when practicable—

- (a) the real home of the gang and its mother tongue ;
- (b) its composition ;
- (c) the places visited by it and the dates and duration of visits, and the places chosen for camping, and mode of conveying equipage ;
- (d) a full description of the offences actually committed, showing in detail the methods adopted, and disposal of stolen property ;
- (e) a description of the members of the gang and disguises used ;
- (f) its religious beliefs and observances, its tribal gods and the shrines it considers most sacred and to which it makes pilgrimages ;
- (g) miscellaneous interesting facts, such as omens observed, slang expressions used, &c.

Criminals may frequently alter their methods of crime when the crime is not a religious function; but they will only change their religious beliefs and customs by imperceptible degrees. They may lie freely about everything else, but will hesitate to lie about their religious observances and sacred places; and in the near future we may have little we can rely on, but religious characteristics to guide us in fixing the tribe to which a gang belongs unless the finger impressions of some of the members betray them. In writing of a single gang of a tribe it must be remembered that every gang of that tribe will not necessarily behave similarly.

A few words on the force of habit when applied to criminal propensities may interest some of the younger members of the force. In countries where criminology has been scientifically studied it has been established that the bulk of what may be called "organized" and serious crime against property is committed by what the French call the *récidiviste* or criminal who reverts to his habits of crime after conviction: with us this individual comes under the title of "habitual." You will find—and this will perhaps become truer as time goes on—wherever there is a run of serious offences against property, that "habituals" are at work, and there are no habituals so bold or successful as those belonging to a tribe

which has made that particular form of crime its chief study for generations: they are people whose blood tingles with pleasure at each fresh *coup* and urges them on to fresh triumphs, whose daily companions are accomplices ever ready to propose or co-operate in new exploits, and whose chief deity is best pleased when they are employed in enriching themselves under his or her auspices. Récidivism will not quickly die out among such people, and it behoves the police to pay very marked attention to them; for only so long as they are under proper control will they be innocuous.

Once more forgiveness is craved for imperfections in these lectures; it is hoped that later—when readers have rendered it possible by the supply of authentic information—a better thought out and more reliable account of these and other tribes may be compiled and published with the photos and illustrations which the Inspector-General hopes to obtain.

G. W. GAYER,

Principal, Police Officers' Training School, Saugor.

ERRATA.

- Note to preface.*—The page should be 109 and not 108.
- Page 3, 2nd paragraph, 8th line.*—Gunthorpe not Gunthrope.
- Page 10, 5th paragraph, 7th line.*—Insert “the” before “tribes”.
- Page 17, 6th line from bottom.*—Insert “an” before “oval”.
- Page 29, paragraph 3, line 11.*—“is” should be “in”.
- Page 30, paragraph 6, line 6.*—“Purpose” should be as now given.
- Page 39, last line of first paragraph.*—“women” should be “woman”.
- Page 50 (2), last word in line.*—“Marwari” should be as now given.
- Page 60, 6th line, from bottom.*—“returned” should be “return”.
- Page 62, 4th paragraph, line 3.*—“Which it set fire” should read “which is set fire”.
- Page 66, last line.*—“leave” should read “leaves”.
- Page 67, paragraph 5, line 6.*—The “s” of “Doms” should be omitted.
- „ paragraph 6.*—The “k” in “necktar” should be omitted.
- Page 77, 7th line.*—“person” should be “persons”.
- Page 87, paragraph 3, line 11.*—Insert “a” before “large”.
- Page 93, paragraph 2, line 8.*—Omit “k” from “workship”.

- “n” from “sepparate”.
- hororoughly”.
- r —The last “r” in “Pitirir” should read “s”.
- ‘make”.
- in” should read “Vishnu”.
- line 7 and line 12.—“Tulsidass” should be spelt with
- arama Hansa” should be spelt as shown here.
- ’ not “spastha”.
- The “u” in “Quadiria” to be omitted.
- ama Hansa” whenever found here and hereafter should
- ine—“()” before and after “Bhattacharjee”.
- m—Add “n” in “medicant”.
- ine—Insert “l” in “wordly”.

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N. B.—Before taking the book for reading,
 please fill in this slip and hand it over to
 the assistant at the circulation desk.

- Page 120, paragraph 1, line 1.*—Insert “l” in “wordly”.
- Page 128, line 3.*—“delineate” not “delienate”.
- Page 129.*—Last word of note (2) should read Sesha.
- Page 131, paragraph 98, line 4.*—Mallik should read Malak.
- Page 133, line 3.*—Bhattacharjee should be in brackets.
- Page 137, last line.*—alms not alm.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The number of copies of these lectures originally printed proved insufficient, instructions were therefore issued for the preparation of a revised edition. Since the publication of the first edition much useful information about criminal tribes has come to hand, with the result that many of the lectures have had to be rewritten, others developed, and some fresh ones added; the occasion has also been seized to add three new sections, the last of these contains three lectures on religious mendicants. With the kind permission of Mr. C. R. Cleveland, C. I. E., I reproduce at the foot of this preface the memorandum which led to the writing of the lectures on Sadhus. Every endeavour has been made to exclude anything which is likely to arouse the susceptibilities of orthodox Hindus; with this object the rough drafts were submitted to Rai Saheb Ganga Singh, retired Extra-Assistant Commissioner, and Pandit Hari Shastri, Professor, Training Institute, Jabalpur, and I take this opportunity of thanking them for the trouble they have so kindly taken, and sincerely hope that no exception can be taken to the lectures as they now stand.

My warmest acknowledgments are also due to my brother, Mr. W. A. Gayer, for his generosity in placing at my disposal the whole of his extensive notes, to Mr. C. M. Seagrím for permitting me to make use of his pamphlet on Chandrawedis, and to Messrs. Merrick and White, for kindly letting me reprint their memoranda on Patharries.

G. W. GAYER,
Principal, Police Officers' Training School, Saugor.

MR. CLEVELAND'S MEMORANDUM.

MR. GAYER, *Police Training School*.—The case below will probably interest you as throwing light on the life of an absconded murderer* in India. It could form a peg on which to hang an interesting essay on Sadhus. Recently a native member of the Viceroy's Council, Mr. Chitnavis I think, said the Sadhus were one of the curses of India (Budget Debate, 1907). I think, if you feel inclined to write an essay, the Census of India figures for Sadhus, *et hoc genus omne*, would be worth quotation. I think in mediæval days Europe was overrun by lazy able-bodied-monks who have mostly disappeared with civilization, enlightenment, industrial development and conscription. I think if Hindus are to take a place with modern nations they will have to purge their system of several relics of barbarism and the Sadhus are one such relic. Possibly the Hindu system would be stimulated by advice from Government. That the question is not one we need fear to touch is, I think, clear from the fact that such an orthodox Hindu as Mr. Chitnavis, took it up in a public speech. I should like to establish that the system of Sadhus is bad for public morality: that it encourages crime and criminals; that it prejudices industry and agriculture by shortening the supply of labour: that it is a wasteful and unjustifiable diversion of charity and that with all these defects it is unworthy of support by the Hindu community, by the religious leaders thereof and by native princes and landlords.

Will you see if you can make something of the subject? If you could write a lecture on the question and make it square with the enlightened opinion of orthodox Hindus I would publish it. You might perhaps introduce it as supplementary to your Criminal Tribe lectures as so many of these gentry masquerade as Sadhus.

C. R. CLEVELAND,
Inspector-General of Police.

The 28th July 1907.

* *Vide page 108 about Chand Prasad.*