

## Crime in India

### Report from the Office of the Home Secretary, Empire of India regarding crime, 1902

We all know that trades go by castes in India; a family of carpenters will be a family of carpenters a century or five centuries hence, if they last so long; so with grain dealers, blacksmiths, leather-makers and every known trade. If we keep this in mind when we speak of 'professional criminals' we shall realize what the term really means. It means that the members of a tribe whose ancestors were criminals from time immemorial are themselves destined by the use of the caste to commit crime, and their descendants will be offenders against the law till the whole tribe is exterminated or accounted for in the manner of the Thugs. Therefore, when a man tells you he is a badhak, or a kanjar, or a sonoria, he tells you, what few Europeans ever thoroughly realize, that he is an habitual and avowed offender against the law, and has been so from the beginning and will be so to the end; that reform is impossible, for it is his trade, his caste--I may almost say, his religion--to commit crime. The Thugs were broken up by Captain Sleeman, a brave and able British detective who succeeded in entering that assassination society and was initiated into its terrible mysteries. A large number of the leaders were executed from time to time, but the government, whose policy is always to respect religious customs of the Hindus, administered as little punishment as possible, and "rounding up" all of the members of this cult, as ranchmen would say, "corralled" them at the Town of Jabal-pur, near the City of Allahabad, in northeastern India, where they have since been under surveillance. Originally there were 2,500, but now only about half of that number remain, who up to this date are not allowed to leave without a permit the enclosure in which they are kept. One of the criminal tribes, called Barwars, numbers about a thousand families and inhabits forty-eight villages in the district of Gonda, in the Province of Oudh, not far from Delhi. They live quietly and honestly upon their farms during the months of planting and harvesting, but between crops they wander in small gangs over distant parts of the country, robbing and plundering with great courage and skill. They even despoil the temples of the gods. The only places that are sacred to them are the temple of Jaganath (Juggernaut), in the district of Orissa, and the shrine of a certain Mohammedan martyr. They have a regular organization under hereditary chiefs, and if a member of the clan gives up thieving he is disgraced and excommunicated. The plunder is divided pro rata, and a certain portion is set aside for their priests and as offerings to their gods."

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