

SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION IN VICTIMISATION BY DACOIT-GANGS IN THE CHAMBAL VALLEY

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For long, the populace in the dacoit-infested Chambal Valley has been living in terror. Have the depredations by the outlaws been random occurrences? Or else, have particular individuals and groups been chosen for victimisation? The present paper brings out the fact that victimisation is a selective process. In this, rural/urban background, sex, age, caste, educational status and income-level are important bases. Generally speaking, middle-aged men in the rural areas, who are *Vaishyas* or *sudras*, and who are relatively educated and prosperous, are highly vulnerable. The evidence is, here, recurrent that some kind of social differentiation governs the process of victimisation by dacoit-gangs in the valley.

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Introduction

For quite some time, the Chambal Valley in central India has been notorious for dacoity and other violent crimes. This is not without justification. The offence of dacoity is by no means peculiar to any part of the country; yet in the valley it has certain features that set it apart from those perpetrated elsewhere. First, the permanent or semi-permanent structure of gangs made up of members firmly committed to dacoity in a professional way, is rather unique. Secondly, the offenders are proclaimed outlaws, but they are not socially regarded as fallen or depraved. Belonging to different caste-groups, they are seldom looked down upon for their grisly deeds. On the contrary, they may be bestowed honorifics like the '*Baghi*', '*Raja*', '*Master*' or '*Thakur*'. Thirdly, although for all practical purposes the bandits, while at large, forsake settled community life, they receive active popular support and supplies but for which they would be extremely hard put to flourish or survive. Fourthly, in respect of crime-specialities, the bandits in these regions have been conspicuous. Besides usual looting, arson and killing, there have been desperadoes who were noted for their horror-inspiring deeds. For example, Harjan Singh

(eliminated in 1939) used to castrate men; Batri (died in 1930), Doongar (eliminated in 1940) and Gabbar (eliminated in 1959) used to chop off the nose; Hujuri (eliminated in 1958) used to openly rape women; and Lal Singh (eliminated in 1959) used to behead his victims. Lastly, the simple, inexpensive and paying technique of kidnapping for ransom has been popular with the outlaws in the valley, particularly since the times of Doongar-Batri. In recent years, two more dacoit-ways of extracting money have sprung up: they are '*chanda*' and '*tika*'.

Cumulatively, the problem of dacoity has been a scourge of the valley. Despite several preventive and ameliorative attempts including the surrender *en masse*, in 1972, the problem has persisted more or less unabated. This has had as much an unsettling effect upon the local administration as it has aroused research concern. Apart from a large amount of journalistic work, quite a few focussed studies have been conducted. Kapoor (1960) has highlighted the problem in relation to the topography of the region (see also' Katare, 1973). Garg (1965) has interpreted the problem mainly in terms of Socio-cultural factors. Gang-dynamics including organisation and *modus operandi* has also attracted attention (see Khan, 1973). Jatar and Khan (1980) have

The article, has been written in the personal capacity of the authors and reflects their own views.

explored different aspects of the problem in the valley as well as in the adjoining region of Bundelkhand. Offender-centred as they are, these studies have seldom been able to delineate sufficiently the nature or the causation of the problem; and few have been able to outline a viable preventive policy.

A victim-centred study of the problem is likely to eliminate many of the analytical difficulties referred to earlier. Stated differently, a more systematic understanding of the problem can be evolved, if it is studied from a victimological perspective. Beginning with the publication, 'The Criminal and His Victim' by von Hentig, in 1948, victimology as an important branch of criminological sciences has covered a large distance. While studying biological, psychological, sociological and criminological details about the victim (Fattah, 1966), it brings into focus the relationship between the victim and the offender and the role played by the victim in the occurrence of the offence (Antilla, 1973). Relating to offences such as assault, burglary, larceny, auto-theft and robbery, victimological studies, particularly in the U.S.A. have introduced several new perspectives in criminology. Its theoretical and operational aspects have been further enlarged at the triennial International Symposia on Victimology held in Jerusalem, in 1973, in Boston, in 1976, and in Munester, in 1979.

Indeed, victimological or victim-centred research of the phenomenon of dacoity offers certain distinctive advantages. First, the gravity of the offence can be better determined by ascertaining as to how the victim feels about it. This is what is largely missed in the process of 'labelling', based on legal codes. Secondly, since the focus is on the victim, his background and the situation culminating in dacoity, valid generalisations as to causes are possible to make. Thirdly, by evaluating the personality and behaviour

of the victim, and by looking into the offender-victim relationship, it makes it possible to identify broadly individuals or groups who are most likely to fall victims to dacoity. Fourthly, victimological studies may provide a more dependable assessment of the crime-situation by analysing the direct or indirect contribution made by the victim to the occurrence of the offence. Fifthly, they are likely to bring about a balance into the research on the problem by dispensing with the stereotypes commonly associated with the dacoits and their victims. Lastly, a victimological study may facilitate the chalking out of a preventive policy as it would provide valid estimates of the gravity of the offence of dacoity and the ensuing damage.

In respect of crimes, in general, and dacoity, in particular, certain categories of persons have been reported to be more susceptible to victimisation than others. Is it that victims directly or indirectly contribute to the offence? Several researchers bring out information which is affirmative and confirms this hypothesis. Reportedly, in many situations, victims wittingly or unwittingly provoke crime (Fattah 1966); Holyst (1964). while studying criminal homicide, has found that most victims had what may be termed as quasi-guilt. Many persons according to Schultz (1969), may engage in behaviour that may trigger their own victimisation. In relation to homicide by immediate relatives in Japan, Higuchi (1960) emphasises the personality traits of the victim in determining the extent of criminal responsibility of the offender. Likewise, Miers (1974) postulates that victims in a sense are active participants in the crime, the extent of which is determined by internal and external aspects — the former signifying the personality, and the latter, behaviour.

It would be readily seen that the victim's personality and behaviour have a bearing

on the offence they fall prey to. In relation to the offence of dacoity in the valley, this line of thinking appears to be more plausible. The valley is inhabited by lakhs but all of them are not victimised by dacoit-gangs. Perhaps, persons with specific personality-traits, social background and behaviour are prone to such victimisation. In this, the social background of the victim of dacoity has been reported to be important (see Katare, 1973, and Khan 1973). From this stems the possibility that there obtains some kind of social differentiation insofar as the process of victimisation by dacoit-gangs in the valley is concerned. A classificatory concept, 'social differentiation', denotes ways through which the main social functions of society become dissociated from one another, attached to specialised roles and organised in relatively specific organisational framework within the confines of the same institutionalised system (Eisenstadt, 1967). A society is composed of groups who differ from each other in terms of sex, age, religion, caste, education, and occupation. It is in reference to this diversity that the term social differentiation becomes meaningful (see also, Bierstedt, 1970). In relation to victimisation, Ziegenhagen (1977) mentions two types of differentiation—horizontal and vertical. The possibility that in the process of victimisation the inhabitants of the valley are differentiated in either way by the dacoit-gangs, has thus far remained unexplored.

Present Paper

The problem of dacoity in the Chambal Valley has been menacing and persistent. In this regard, several population-groups have been reported to be specially vulnerable. Stated differently, the dacoit-gangs in the valley while indulging in kidnapping, arson, loot, murder and the like, may differentiate among persons and groups. They

may pick and choose while selecting their targets. These are some of the issues which have been sought to be studied. Towards this, the paper sets out to examine the hypothesis "Certain population-groups in the Chambal Valley as defined by their social characteristics have fallen victim to dacoit-activities more than other groups".

In the present context, the terms *dacoity* and *victimisation* are more or less interchangeable. However, since the present study is a victim-centred study, the latter term would be used frequently. Who is a victim? The Penal Code of the USSR defines the victim as the person who, owing to an unlawful act, has sustained moral, material or physical damage (Kalos, 1963). Castro (1969) emphasises the contributory role of the victim and considers him a crime-producing factor. For the present purposes, victims are persons who have sustained psychological, physical, material or social damage on account of being the object of depredations by different types of dacoit-gangs in the valley. In order to ascertain social differences, the present paper focuses itself on such variables as rural-urban background, sex, age, religion, (bases for horizontal differentiation), and caste, education, occupation and income of the victims (bases for vertical differentiation).

As part of a larger work, the present study has been conducted in the Chambal Valley known after the river of the same name. Though the geo-cultural entity of the valley covers a large area transcending state-boundaries, attention has been paid only to two administrative districts, Bhind and Morena, which have had in the past a conspicuously high rate of dacoity. The problem has persisted in the region for decades, if not for centuries. However, only a period of one year prior to the large-scale surrender mentioned earlier, that is from July, 1971 to June, 1972, has been focalised in this study. From the crime-

registers at the Police Headquarters of the two districts, a list of the chief victims has been compiled. Numbering 191 and spread all over the two districts, they have been the main informants for the study.

Aimed at bringing out demographic and sociological information, as required by the objectives of the study, an interview-schedule has been developed, pretested and standardised. On the basis of this schedule, the victims have been interviewed (seven victims on the list could not be traced/contacted).

The substantive concern of the present paper is to delineate social differentiation in victimisation by dacoit-gangs. This calls for a comparative assessment of the distribution of the demographic and sociological variables in the sample of victims and in the two districts. Towards this, relevant decennial census-data have been collected. The information thus collected has been analysed to bring it to bear on the hypothesis. Simple cross-tabulation and statistical calculations like proportions, averages, chi-square and contingency coefficient have been carried out (see Siegel, 1956, and Blalock, 1959).

Findings

It is scarcely necessary to state that in the occurrence of an offence like dacoity, two parties are involved — dacoits and their victims. Each one may make a contribution to the offence (see Holyst, 1964; Schultz, 1969). Miers (1974) emphasises the personality and behaviour of the victim, while Fattah (1966) underlines behavioural — situational factors. Doubtless, factors like personality, situation, and behaviour of the victim are highly relevant and may have a linkage with the process of victimisation. However, equally important is the consideration of the social background of the victim for it may have a direct bearing not

only on such factors as personality, situation and behaviour but also on the motivation for and the occurrence of the offence (see also Higuchi, 1960). Keeping these theoretical angles in view, the present paper attempts a comparative analysis of the census-data and survey-data so as to bring demographic characteristics of the victims, their religious and caste affiliation and their socio-economic background into focus.

Demographic characteristics : A consideration of demographic characteristics becomes important wherever a study of population-groups is involved (Hauser and Duncan, 1959). A relatively recent strain, social demography facilitates understanding of the relationship between demographic and social phenomena (Ford and de Jong, 1970). With this in view, the phenomenon of victimisation may be analysed in relation to the demographic characteristics of the victims. Although it is possible to cover, under demography, a large number of variants (Bogue, 1969), attention has been paid only to rurality/urbanity, sex and age of the victim-respondents.

(a) Rurality/urbanity: Dacoity in the valley has been referred to primarily as a rural phenomenon (see Khan, 1973; Jatar and Khan, 1980). At the same time, the fact may be kept in mind that the population in the valley is predominantly rural. To illustrate the point, the two districts of Bhind and Morena cover an area of 16,053 sq. kms. and have a population of 1,779,295, but the rural population in the area accounts for 90.1 per cent — which is well above the national average (80.09%). It is, therefore, not surprising that the bulk of the victims are from rural areas. But it would still be unusual if it is found that a disproportionate number of them are from rural areas.

From Table 1, it would be readily seen that the region, according to the census figures, has a component of urban popula-

TABLE 1
SHOWING THE RURAL-URBAN DISTRIBUTION

	Census data		Survey data	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Rural	16,02,899	90.10	181	98.40
Urban	1,76,394	9.90	3	1.60
Total	17,79,293	100.00	184	100.00

tion of 9.90 per cent but the incidence of victimisation by the dacoit-gangs is nowhere near this proportion (1.6%). Even in this, the possibility cannot be ruled out that these few urbanites have been 'chance victims'. As the external data show, this has been in fact the case. Reportedly, one respondent, who had come out of his dwelling late in the night to urinate, had, to his great sorrow, attracted the attention of a passing gang, and the two others were kidnapped and held for ransom while partaking in a burial ceremony in a graveyard located on the outskirts of the town. The data thus clearly demonstrate that it is over-whelmingly the rural population which is victimised by the bandits. Germane to the issue is, however, the question: do gangs differentiate between rural and urban persons, or else, do the victims get differentiated owing to certain exogenous factors?

(b) Sex of the victims: In a cynical way, sex-differentiation is "one of the brute facts of society" (Beirstedt, 1970), from which two distinct sets of roles, statuses and societal groups are formed. Perhaps due to biological or sociological reasons, one of them, the female group, has come to be regarded as 'soft'; and, contrariwise, the other, as 'tough'. Indeed, the two groups vary in terms of inter-personal relations in ways more than one. As a logical corollary,

the members of the two groups are likely to differ in terms of their vulnerability to victimisation by dacoit-gangs. This is what has been sought to be ascertained through the information presented in Table 2. The census-data bring out that, in the region, males outnumber females in the ratio eleven to nine (that this sex-imbalance may be a source of social discord in the region is beside the point). However, the position is found to be radically different when the sex of the respondents is examined. The proportion of the female respondents is very small (2.7%). This hardly matches with the general expectation that owing to their soft nature, women are likely to be victimised more than men. Even this minuscule proportion is mainly of surrogate victims. They are those women who happen to be some sort of 'head of the household' and relatively affluent widows. Apparently, the outlaws have been differentiating their victims in terms of sex. This may be due to several reasons. A variety of disputes and rivalries (and the dacoits taking sides) have been reported to be the root-cause behind dacoit raids in the region and the women-folk, owing to certain biological, psychological and sociological reasons are not much given to controversial or aggressive behaviour. Secondly, the households are customarily headed by males and as such

TABLE 2
SHOWING SEX-DISTRIBUTION

Sex	Census data		Survey data	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Female	8,10,135	45.53	5	2.70
Male	9,69,158	54.47	179	97.30
Total	17,79,293	100.00	184	100.00

females are less likely to be a target for looting or kidnapping for ransom. Thirdly, the psycho-social makeup of the women-folk also minimises the chance that 'they would provoke their own victimisation' (physical injury, etc) through initiative or resistance. Lastly, the outlaws, even the most ferocious of them reportedly avoid victimising women. This is part of their strategy to build an 'image' and to perpetuate some kind of a Robin Hood posture (Khan, 1973).

(c) Age of the victims: It is hardly necessary to emphasise the significance of the variant of age in determining the statuses and the roles of persons and, thereby, the nature of their behaviour in the community. Along with privileges and responsibilities, and rights and duties, vulnerability to various forms of criminal victimisation also tends to vary with age (see also Beirstedt, 1970). With this in view, the age distribution of the victims may be examined (Table 3). The census figures reveal that the region has more than half of the total population which could be regarded as young, the age being less than twenty years.

TABLE 3

SHOWING THE AGE-DISTRIBUTION

Age (in years)	Census data		Survey data	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
—20	915889	51.5	20	10.9
20—29	275179	15.5	40	21.7
30—39	220634	12.4	53	38.8
40—49	161859	9.1	48	26.1
50—59	111537	6.3	19	10.3
60+	94093	5.2	4	2.2
Total	1779191	100.0	184	100.0

Over the subsequent higher age-groups the population proportions steadily decrease denoting a positive skewness in distribution. On the other hand, the median age of the respondents is much higher (the distribution of the data is more or less normal). Further, the mean age in the region is found to be 23.99 years as against the mean age of the respondents, 35.43 years. The data thus suggest that in victimising the populace the bandits differentiate their victims and avoid or bypass the too young and the too old. In other words, those who are between twenty to fifty years of age face the odds by four to three to be victimised by the dacoits.

Religion and Caste: "Religion", writes Malinowski, "is a mode of action as well as a system of beliefs, and a sociological phenomenon as well as a personal experience" (1958). What is more relevant is the fact that persons, particularly in traditional communities, have been sharply differentiated in accordance with their religious affiliation. In the Indian Socio-cultural context, a consideration of 'caste' is of even greater relevance. "No comparable institution", observes Hutton, "is to be seen anywhere with anything like the complexity, elaboration and rigidity of the caste-system in India" (1951). It would be justifiable to suggest that religion and caste may be important bases in differentiating individuals in the process of victimisation by dacoits.

(a) Religious affiliation of the victims: Many writers have attempted to trace the phenomenon of dacoity in the valley to the foreign Muslim invasions in the medieval period (Kapoor, 1960; Katare, 1973). They argue that most of the outlaws are the descendants of the rulers and potentates deberted by the invaders. In view of this an attempt to look into the religious affiliation of the populace in the region and of the victims becomes all the more relevant. It would not take long to see (Table 4) that

the region is overwhelmingly inhabited by Hindus (95.4%). A small but sizeable proportion of Muslims is also there. There are other religious groups also, including Jains, Sikhs, Budhists and Christians. But their proportion is almost negligible. Moreover, most Budhists and Christians are neo-converts. Muslims are concentrated mostly in urban or semi-urban areas. It may be further pointed out that as most Jains engage in trade and commerce, they are commonly regarded as moneyed people and, hence, a lucrative target of victimisation by the outlaws.

TABLE 4
SHOWING THE RELIGIOUS DISTRIBUTION

Religious distribution	Census data		Survey data	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Budhists	123	0.01	—	—
Christians	125	0.01	1	0.50
Hindus	1697095	95.40	181	98.40
Jains	16428	0.90	2	1.10
Muslims	61403	3.50	—	—
Sikhs	4125	0.20	—	—
Others	4	0.00	—	—
Total	1779303	100.00	184	100.00

When we examine the religious affiliation of the respondents, it is seen that, barring three cases, it is only Hindus who have been victimised by the dacoits. The thrust of the data is that dacoity or, alternatively, victimisation is not perpetrated along religious lines. That it may proceed along caste-lines may be another matter.

(b) Caste of the victims: As is well known, the underlying principles of *varna* or caste-system among Hindus are stratification and differentiation. The ascription of

caste does not only affect one's social status but also his occupation. To some extent, social tensions are inherent in caste-hierarchy and, to a great extent, they have been accentuated by the social, economic and political changes in the recent decades. In relation to the Chambal Valley the variant of caste has been reported as having a bearing on gang-formation, gang-dynamics and victimisation of the inhabitants (Khan, 1973; Jatar and Khan, 1980). For example, gangs are organised often on caste-lines. In disputes relating to agricultural land or grazing land and relating to group-behaviour, the outlaws often take sides. In elections, too, caste and dacoit-gangs often play a critical role.

TABLE 5
SHOWING THE CASTE DISTRIBUTION

Caste	Census data		Survey data	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Brahmin	—	—	30	16.58
Kshatriya	—	—	11	6.08
Vaishya	1282948	75.60	17	9.39
Touchable sudras				
Scheduled castes	366318	21.57	123	67.95
Scheduled tribes	47829	2.82		
Total	1697095	100.00	181	100.00

With this backdrop, the variant of caste may be analysed. It may be noted that Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are only a part of the fourth *varna*, the category of Sudra; but, apart from these, the category also includes other caste-groups which may be termed as touchable sudras. But the decennial census in the country

records and compiles, for constitutional reasons, figures only on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Table 5 shows that these caste-groups account for less than one-fourth of the Hindu population. However, when the caste of the respondents is examined, this proportion is found to be by far larger: more than two-thirds of the respondents are found to be *sudras*. Although due to non-availability of census-data it is not possible to determine whether upper caste-groups (brahmin, kshatriya and vaishya) are over-or under-victimised, the sudra caste-groups appear to have had more than their proportionate share in the process. However, this may not be taken as conclusive because there are several data-limitations which make valid comparisons difficult. Nevertheless, the relevance of caste to the process of victimisation can be looked into in yet another way.

It has already been suggested that there arise in the region a large number of disputes which may be traced to caste, and that dacoit-gangs adopt a partisan attitude.

TABLE 6

SHOWING THE CASTE OF THE GANG-LEADER AND THE CASTE OF THE VICTIM

Caste of gang leader	Caste of victims				Total
	Brahmin	Kshatriya	Vaishya	Sudra	
Same	4	4	—	5	13
Different	26	4	16	100	146
Total	30	8	16	105	159

$$\chi^2 = 18.22; df = 3; p < 0.001.$$

As such, these predatory groups are likely to differentiate their victims on this account. Table 6 presents valid responses relating to the caste of the victims and that of the

gang-leaders who have victimised them. The distribution of the data is highly significant ($p < .001$). From the table, three inferences are possible: (i) More than two-thirds of the victims belong to sudra caste-groups and have been victimised by the gangs whose leaders are of castes different from their own. This in a way suggests that the groups in the region are mostly being led by members of the upper castes. At the same time, the data clearly indicate that no gang is led by a vaishya. (ii) As about 92 per cent of the respondents have been victimised by the gangs whose leaders are of castes different from their own, a kind of basic differentiation made by gangs in victimising the populace is in evidence. Indirectly, this also suggests that the region is ridden with caste-disputes, (iii) Finally, the issue as to which caste-group is more likely to be victimised, may be analysed. It is seen that Vaishyas (100.0%), followed by sudras (95.0%), are most vulnerable. Conversely, brahmins (86.7%), followed by kshatriyas (50.0%), are less vulnerable. Incidentally, kshatriyas also appear to be much involved in intra-caste disputes.

Socio-economic background: Towards a systematic understanding of a social group and the differentiation obtaining therein, attention needs to be paid to the social and economic conditions of its members. As the general preparation for life, education deeply influences individual preferences and behavioural tendencies. Similarly, the nature of the main occupation pursued by a person determines to a great extent his status in the community and the type of friends and adversaries he is likely to have. Closely related with this is the issue of income. On the contemporary scene one's income has much to do with one's social status. Besides, it has a pointed relevance to a property offence like dacoity.

It is often suggested that the criminal justice system as a whole is biased in favour

of the socially strong and the economically well-off (see Schur, 1965; Becker, 1968). It would be relevant to inquire whether such a differentiation also exists in the matter of victimisation by dacoit-gangs. In this connection education, occupation and income of the victim-respondents may be brought under focus.

(a) Education of victims: In all societies, whether primitive or modern, theological or secular, totalitarian or democratic, learning and education are valued. They form an important basis for differentiating individuals. This apart, learning and education are linked with one's social status and earning potential, one's capacity to resolve personal and inter-personal problems, and the ability to avoid risks. What has been the educational status of the victims of dacoity in the region? A perusal of the data presented in Table 7 brings out interesting details. According to the census-data, more than three-fourths of the populace is illiterate, and out of every forty persons only one has a Matric certificate. The survey

data also reveal that the majority of the victims are illiterate (57.6%). Yet the underlying trend is unmistakable that the literate and the educated when compared with the census proportions are over-represented among the victims. The respondents who are matriculates or graduates appear to have been victimised four times more than their proportion in the general population. The data show that the odds of being victimised by dacoit-gang are heavily weighed against those who have a better educational status.

(b) Occupation of the victims: What people do for a living has, indeed, much to do with their status in the community. Again, occupational status has been a major criterion in socially differentiating individuals and groups. Needless to add, occupation is also linked with the economic well-being of individuals and groups. These theoretical considerations aside, the state of Madhya Pradesh, and more so the region, are predominantly agrarian. But agriculture in the region has certain peculiarities which may be highlighted. Arable land in the region is scarce: central and western Morena have table-top hillocks forming a part of the Malwa plateau; a fairly large area is covered with tropical jungles; and the southern border-lands, adjoining the river Chambal, are criss-crossed with deep ravines. Agriculture is mostly dependent on monsoonal rains, as irrigation facilities are yet to be sufficiently developed. Further, agricultural practices are largely outmoded. All these factors appear to have combined to give rise to a large number of land-disputes and litigations.

The data presented in Table 8 amply bring out the predominant agrarian character of the region. If the population-group of the non-workers (approximately 70.0%) is ignored, the census-data show that more than three-fourths of the population is engaged in agriculture. Those who are

TABLE 7
SHOWING THE EDUCATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

Educa- tional status	Census data		Survey data	
	Num- ber	Per- cen- tage	Num- ber	Per- cen- tage
Illiterate	1399629	78.7	106	57.6
Literate and some schooling	335368	18.9	58	31.6
Matric/ High School/ Higher Secondary	39403	2.1	17	9.2
Graduate and above	5495	0.3	2	1.1
Not as- certained	—	—	1	0.5
Total	1779895	100.0	184	100.0

doing business (in trade and commerce) or in white-collar jobs account for only 9.3 per cent. There is also a small proportion of labourers who may be mostly working

TABLE 8

SHOWING THE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

Occupation	Census data		Survey data	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	400784	77.0	159	86.4
Trade and commerce	14956	2.9	13	7.0
White-collar jobs	33337	6.4	6	3.3
Unskilled labour	71349	13.7	6	3.3
Total	520426	100.0	184	100.0

as agricultural or construction workers. The juxtaposition of the census-data with the survey-data is revealing: while agriculturists and businessmen are over-represented, and white-collar workers and labourers are under-represented. It may be noted that businessmen are more or less a priority-target for victimisation by the bandits, for obvious reasons. That agriculturists are also being victimised more than their population—proportion, may be attributed mainly to

two features: their victimisation tends to be seasonal. Following harvesting, generally speaking, they attract much dacoit attention. Secondly, agriculturists, particularly those having large holdings, are much involved in land-disputes.

(c) Income of the victims: A person's income does not merely represent his purchasing power, but to a good deal, his social status and psyche also. At the same time, a higher income particularly in traditional communities also brings in its wake certain unsettling consequences like jealousy, bickering and a variety of disputes. Quite a few of these may eventually assume eruptive dimensions. Besides, a higher income or relative affluence may naturally tempt dacoits. These are some of the considerations which make the assessment of the income of the respondents highly relevant. First of all, it may be noted that the decennial census in the country, for the present, does not compile statistics on the individual or household income. Alternatively, in order to make a comparative assessment, national or state averages or per-capita income may be relied upon. Table 9 brings out the annual household income of the respondents. The distribution is highly skewed. More than 92 per cent of the respondents are having an annual income below 20,000 rupees—mean income being Rs. 8942.00. The high value of the standard deviation (Rs. 7725.00) further shows that the income distribution

TABLE 9

SHOWING THE HOUSEHOLD ANNUAL INCOME OF THE VICTIMS

	(Income in rupees)							Total
	—1000	1000-5000	5001-10000	10001-20000	20001-30000	30001-40000	+40001	
Frequency	1	81	44	44	9	4	1	184
Percentage	0.5	44.0	23.9	23.9	4.9	2.2	0.5	100.0

in the region is highly variable. This average income is found to be many times greater than the state or national average. Apparently the affluent inhabitants of the region have been consciously selected for victimisation by dacoits either simply because of the lure of money or because of their involvement in controversies and disputes.

Conclusions

The victim, observes Quinney (1974), is a social construction in the subject-object relationship in a crime-situation. It follows that without properly studying victims it would be well nigh difficult to evolve a systematic understanding of a crime-situation. It is from this standpoint that a study of victims of a complex and persistent offence like dacoity assumes a pointed relevance. Indeed, in the occurrence of an offence, a large number of internal and external aspects of the victim are involved. Yet the significance of the social characteristics can hardly be overemphasised; for these have much to do with the personality-traits as well as the behavioural tendencies of the victim.

In relation to the Chambal Valley it has been seen that the dacoits pick and choose their victims. In aggregate terms, the bases of this kind of differentiation are both horizontal and vertical (Ziegenhagen, 1977). Focussing on horizontal dimensions, it has been found that the rural populace has been victimised far more than its population-proportion. That the problem is predominantly rural in character in further underscored by the fact that the victimisation of the urban populace is six times lower than its ratio in the general population. Notwithstanding the fact that the women-folk are much vulnerable to violence for obvious reasons, their proportion in this process of victimisation has been so low as to suggest that the dacoits deliberately avoid making them

targets. Of course, this has several normative as well as tactical reasons. Further, the too young and the too old have seldom been the target of bandit-depredations: the mean age of the victims is 35.73 years as against the population mean of 23.99. Likewise, although the non-Hindu population-groups have been victimised, their number has been noticeably much below the population-proportion.

Focussing on the vertical dimensions of differentiation, the analyses have brought out many interesting details. Caste has been a critical factor. To a great extent, Backward and Scheduled Castes as well as Scheduled Tribes have to their sorrow attracted much dacoit-attention. Furthermore, the dacoity-gangs are mostly led by the members of upper castes. More than two-thirds of the respondents have been victimised by gangs whose leaders belong to caste-groups other than their own; and Vaishyas followed by sudras have been the prime targets. Interestingly, a higher educational status in the valley has been of mixed value: the educated have proportionately fallen prey to banditry more than the unlettered. This apart, agriculturists (perhaps well-off farmers) and businessmen have borne the brunt of the affliction more than their due share. As would be expected, the affluent (the average household annual income Rs. 8942) have been the favourite target of pillage. When we focus our attention on variables like caste, education and income, it would not take long to infer that they are interlinked, that they cumulatively make for socio-economic status in the community, and that the overall socio-economic status and the process of victimisation are somewhat directly interlinked.

Considering the foregoing analyses, it is easy to piece together a profile of the victim of dacoity in the valley. Chances are that he would be a middle-aged Hindu male from a rural background. He could be a sudra

facing retribution for some offence, real or imagined, but most probably he would be belonging to agriculturist or trader class. In any case, he would be enjoying relatively a higher socio-economic status: he would be educated, and prosperous in his occupation.

This apart, the thrust of the data is that

certain population groups in the Chambal Valley have fallen victim to dacoit activities more than other groups. In this kind of differentiation, several social characteristics, both horizontal and vertical, have been important. The hypothesis under examination thus stands wholly substantiated.

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