

over fifty murders in one series of outrages. As they were working against time, cruel, and violent methods were often adopted to compel the victims to reveal the hiding place of their treasure, such as forcing women to sit on burning charcoal, etc. Rape was common. The traditional weapon of attack was a short hard stick, thrown with tremendous force, while the lathi was used for defence. In more recent years, however, guns have been adopted and khaki worn. Having secured their plunder, they buried it immediately in the vicinity to avoid any incriminating evidence and dispersed. In the event of a murder being committed, no serious action is taken, though it is regarded as bad or sin, and if a stranger has been murdered, the murderer distributes gilt among the brotherhood. This costs Rs.1-4-0. Should one of the tribe however be murdered the offender must give a feast costing Rs.101. When the whole affair has blown over, the plunder is dug up and given to the women who dispose of it to the goldsmiths who act as receivers.

It is essential to emphasise the great part played by crime in the general life of the clan. A boy is initiated into crime as soon as he is able to walk and talk. No doubt the motive is practical to a great extent, in so far as it is always better to risk a child in petty theft, who, if he were caught would probably be flogged, while an adult would immediately be arrested. An important part is also played by women, who although they do not participate in the actual raids have many heavy responsibilities. Besides disposing of most of the stolen property, they are also expert shop lifters thus participating in the material support of the tribe. They also arrange for the legal defence of arrested men, as well as supporting and visiting relations in jail.

A raiding party is composed of men who only operate at some distance from the district in which the rest of the gang containing old men and women and children have camped. Thus in the absence of the men on a raiding expedition, the women are responsible for the camp and the main body is in the charge of a woman and may be known by her name. It is no doubt this, which induces Hollins to remark that "A feature of the tribal organization is that many gangs are led by women". Mr. Sheard informs me that he has never heard of an active gang being under the leadership of a woman or women while actually engaged in dacoity or raiding. Quite recently a number of Karwal gangs wished to come to the Andamans, and in every case a woman's name was given as the leader of the gang; he was convinced however that this was merely for ease in reference to any particular gang and had no connection with leadership in crime. It is also apparently legitimate for a Bhanthi to use her womanly wiles in the advancement of the tribe's criminal activities, but such aid cannot be termed prostitution.

Crooke in his "Tribes and Castes of the North-western Provinces and Oudh" (122 pages 136-139) refers to the Bhanthi as "one who lives by stealing and thieving cattle". With the exception of stealing goats for food, cattle thieving is not indulged in. The Bhanthi is essentially a high way robber and dacoit, and the difficulties and risks incumbent in the disposal and transport