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*Some rough Anthropological Notes on Calcutta Juvenile Criminals.—By*  
MAJOR W. J. BUCHANAN, I.M.S., *Inspector-General of*  
*Jails, Bengal.*

[Read 7th May, 1902.]

It is an important fact that in every civilised country at the beginning of the present century the proportion of habitual criminals in the population is steadily on the increase.

It is also generally agreed by all who have studied the subject that the habitual offender is the man who takes to crime as to a trade, and he begins young. Therefore if society is ever to get rid of the habitual criminal it must be by removing or ameliorating the conditions which produce the juvenile offender.

The following notes on youthful Calcutta criminals as seen in the Alipore Central Jail are rough and imperfect, but may be taken as a contribution to a subject so far but little studied in India.

The facts to follow are the results of an examination of some 120 boy criminals in Alipore Jail: A mere glance at some of them is sufficient to see the "degeneration" which is plainly written on their faces.

The juvenile criminals whom these notes refer to are "habituals," not boys who have been sent to prison for some single offence, but

youths from 16 to 22 with four, five or six convictions against them. Many of them owing to the lenient sentences passed by the Presidency Magistrates come two or three times to Jail in one year, some have commenced their career of crime very early and have spent five years in the Reformatory, and of all boys the Reformatory *failure* is the worst, there is no vice which he does not know, but fortunately failures from the Reformatory are the exception rather than the rule.

The criminal can be studied from two points of view, (1) as regards his environment, and (2) his anatomical peculiarities.

As regards environment it is unfortunately by no means easy to get at anything like an accurate history of persons of this class in India. Inquiry, especially by a Government officer, arouses suspicion, and questions as to existence and habits of a father or mother are apt to be met by silence or falsehood, as they cannot believe that the information will not be used against the family. Of course when one knows them well they are more communicative, and one fact which struck me forcibly in my inquiries was that many of these youthful criminals had lost one or other parent. In other cases the parents were alive, but the boy had been turned out of the house for theft. I could very seldom elicit any history of the father's having been in Jail. Nearly all the boys confessed to having been led astray by older boys, and there can be no doubt that life in the slums of Calcutta is far from conducive to strict living. Living in the street all day and half the night a boy is brought up from his earliest youth to sights and scenes which soon spoil him. In many parts of Calcutta there exist regular gangs of youths, with *sardārs* at their head, they have secret signals and passwords, and from what I learn they specialise their thievery to a high degree. One gang goes in for clothes stealing, another for watches, another for umbrellas, and one gang will seldom or never invade the prescribed territory of the other.

I do not find that pauperism is a motive for crime among these youths. We know of course the observation of Becky Sharpe that "it is easy to be honest on £5,000 a year," but these Calcutta youthful criminals are certainly not driven to crime by poverty. Many, and by far the majority have been in the enjoyment of regular pay as messengers, assistants to *gāriwālas*, or, as is often the case, employed in various Printing Presses, and have often obtained the rudiments of education.

In Europe drink plays a large part in the etiology of crime, but this is not the case in Calcutta, or to a small extent only. No doubt these youths have early learnt the use of other intoxicants and narcotics, such as opium, Indian hemp, and cocain, but opium does not incite to

crime, and *gānja* is not, in my experience, a stimulant indulged in by these youths, though common among older criminals. The peculiar vice of the Calcutta youths is indulgence in cocain, an up-to-date form of vice which I have elsewhere written on (*Indian Medical Gazette*, October 1901). This pernicious habit is unfortunately not confined to youths of the criminal class, but is far too common among boys of good family, students at school and at the Calcutta University. It is certainly very common among the Calcutta criminal population and it certainly leads to crime. Many boys have told me that once the habit is commenced they must continue it, and as it is an expensive habit, they find they can easily steal enough to purchase this stimulant. Cocain as sold till recently by the *pāncāllas* in every street cost one anna a grain and as habitués take six, eight or ten grains and more a day it must become a very expensive indulgence for them. I believe it is only in this way it is an excitant to crime, its immediate effect on the constitution being a sense of lightness, pleasure and general well-being, followed soon by a corresponding depression which is met by taking another dose. The recent action of the Bengal Government in making it penal to sell cocain except at a druggist's shop is good, but druggist's shops of sorts are found in every street and bye-way in Calcutta.

But environment, though of the greatest importance in making or marring a human life, is not everything, and I was much struck when I took over charge of the Alipore Jail, a year ago, to find how these boys differed from the youths I had seen in Jails in Bihar where the prisoners are chiefly of the cultivator class, or villagers.

The Calcutta boy criminal is different and one at once notices the physical and anatomical peculiarities which have been described as characteristic of the European habitual or born criminal.

At this stage it may be well to state that I do not for a moment think that we can measure crime in millimetres or decide that a man is a criminal because he has some well marked anatomical peculiarities. None of those who have studied the subject have made this extravagant claim. This is only a sample of cheap criticism made by those who have not understood it. The utmost claim made is that the peculiarities, measured and recorded, are found in far greater number in the individual criminal, and among criminals as a class than among normal individuals.

Few of us are absolutely normal, indeed the normal man, "born to consume the fruits of the earth" is a very poor person after all, but the number of anatomical peculiarities seen in the criminal, the lunatic or the idiot is far in excess of that of the normal man, and nearly all that has been described in the European or American criminal can be found in the convicts of our Indian Jails.

Take a couple of cases like the following :—

- (1) Shaikh Dukhu, aged 18, third conviction for theft, a resident of Calcutta, father dead, has worked in a printing press, can read and write in vernacular. Height 4 ft. 10 in., weight 97lbs. Head markedly "sugarloafed" marked gynaecomastia, thick bulbous nose, marked temporal hollows; ears irregular and prominently outstanding, thick lower lip, prominent orbital ridges, left mastoid process more prominent than right, left shoulder higher than right, left handed. Face much wrinkled. Flat-footed, second and third toes longer than great toe, great gap between first and second toe.
- (2) or another, Shaikh Kalna, aged 22, with six convictions, hairy body, broad bulbous nose, much wrinkled forehead, prominent cheeks, irregular bumpy occiput, marked hollows over the mastoid bones, ears outstanding, with Darwinian tubercles on both, forehead low, hair coming down to within an inch of eyebrows, small receding chin, bulbous second and third toes.

We may now consider these anatomical peculiarities in turn.

*Head.*—I have not ventured to give any figures as to their cranial indices. Till we know more of the racial importance in India of the cranial index it is useless to apply it to criminals.

Probably the most common type of head among Calcutta Juvenile criminals is the oxycephalic or "sugarloafed" head. This is the type of head depicted as Satanic by old sculptors and painters. It is certainly abnormal, but may indicate genius, for Shakespeare's head was of this shape.

Another common type of head among these boys is one with a high vertex sloping downwards and forwards to the chin, giving the owner a "Jackal" like appearance—indeed one of the boys in Alipore Jail with such a head is called "*gidar*" by his companions.

A want of symmetry of the skull is very common. Few person's heads are absolutely symmetrical, but the heads of these boys show very often marked asymmetry. Ottolenghi, who studied this point in Italy states that over three abnormalities should put a head in the degenerative class. The most common abnormalities I have found to be—irregular protuberances at the occiput, and in the mastoid region, the parietal hollows, so much so that the one side of the head is plainly different from the other.

Facial anomalies are also very common, a receding small pointed chin is very common, also the heavy square lower jaw of the violent

criminal. Prominence of jaw or prognathism is less often seen. It is inherited in the Hapsburgs of Austria, and according to Sir William Turner it is found in the higher apes, and among Australian aborigines.

*Teeth.*—I have found few peculiarities among the teeth of these Calcutta boys. The teeth are usually good, but often stained by use of *pān* and cocaine. Abnormalities of the palate are rare, and I think Surgeons in India are agreed that they are rare in Indians generally.

The ear in peoples of all countries is subject to much variety. Large outstanding ears are more common than any other anatomical character among criminals of all nations. Not less than 40 per cent. of Calcutta juvenile convicts have abnormal ears. Every peculiarity which has been noted of the human ear can be seen among these youths.

The nose is a feature which has been less studied by criminologists but I have very frequently noted a short broad bulbous nose, with prominent patent nostrils in these youths, and I think this shape of nose is characteristic of them.

*Wrinkles* are another feature, very soon noticed among these youths. It is not uncommon to find boys of 16 or 18 with faces as wrinkled as is normal to men of 60. This is most marked on the forehead and temples, and I find it often associated with (and doubtless caused by) a persistent habit of contracting and moving the facial muscles. Scanty growth of hair of head and beard I have often noted, but one knows so little of the growth of hair of ordinary natives of India that it is not possible to come to any conclusion on this subject.

As regards height and weight—I have made many observations, but I can find no observations among normal individuals to compare them with. Some years ago I collected the heights and weights of some 28,000 Bihari adult prisoners. Their mean height was only 5 ft. 3 in., and the mean weight of this large number only 110lbs., and I found a practical rule to be as follows—Taking 5 ft. to have a weight of 100lbs, I found that for every inch above 5 ft. about 3lbs. should be added—for example a man of 5 ft. 4 ins. should weigh about 112lbs. This will be found on the whole fairly accurately to apply to the class of man we get in Bengal Jails.

The means given, 5 ft. 3 in. height and 110lbs. in weight are small compared with European averages, but I think it will fairly represent the mean height and weight of men of the Bengal peasant class. At Elmira Reformatory, New York, the average height of 529 men was only 5 ft. 5½ ins., and average weight only 133lbs.—figures far below those of the average American adult.

*Gynaecomastia* is pretty common among Calcutta youths—I show

photographs of some typical cases. These not infrequently come to the Surgeons at the Medical College to have their breasts removed, as their companions tease them about their feminine peculiarity.

*Heart Disease* is relatively common among criminals, and Major Jackson, I.M.S., of the Yerroada Jail, near Poona, has written on this subject. I have also found, in a series of cases examined *post-mortem*, that the heart on the average weighed two ounces more than the normal.

Among other peculiarities of these Calcutta youths are "Knock-knees," but the most common peculiarity of their feet is the large space between the first and second toes. Flat-foot is also very common, and another peculiarity which I have not seen elsewhere described is the length of the *second* toe which is very frequently  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch longer than the great toe. Ottolenghi and Carrara have examined the space between the first and second toes in Italian criminals and find that a space or gap of over 3 mm. is three times more common than in normal men. Idiots also show this anomaly.

The prehensile toe of the barefooted Native of India is well known. It appears to be uncommon among Europeans, and Ottolenghi takes some pride in describing two cases he has met with.

Left-handedness is common among these Calcutta youth. This can often only be tested in throwing a stone. I do not know to what extent it is common among the normal population of India.

Epilepsy is not uncommon among criminals, two per cent. of them I have estimated to be subject to epileptic fits, often of a mild degree only (*petit mal*). Eye defects, squint, etc., are not very common, but a one-eyed or squinting man is proverbially not trusted in India.

There can be little doubt of the physical insensibility of the Calcutta criminal. Tattooing is not very common among them. They are loud in complaint of trivial ailments, generally hoping thus to get off task-labour, but on the other hand they shrink at no amount of self-torture if thereby they gain an easy time in hospital. They will eat anything raw or irritant to produce diarrhoea or dysentery—they will introduce a needle and thread soaked in lime to produce lameness or a swollen hand, they are adepts at producing hæmoptysis, nose-bleeding or bleeding as if from piles. They will inflict the severest injuries on themselves to throw the blame on others.

Their eyesight is generally good, colour blindness is very rare, and ear disease is very common.

This paper is already long, otherwise, much could be said as to many other points in the criminal's character. He of course is incorrigibly lazy, he would not be in Jail if he was not so; the intelligence of the habitual criminal is sometimes great, very often the

*mauvais sujet* is *le bon detenu*, and some of the worst men morally are first class workmen. Their vanity is notorious, and many breaches of Jail discipline are committed from a feeling of bravado or desire to be distinguished from the rank and file. Like that distinguished-degenerate Oscar Wilde they would rather be pelted than not noticed. A peculiarity also is their periodical outbursts. A man may be working well for months and then suddenly do some stupid act which he knows he must be punished for, and on talking to him he will often say he could not help himself, and such a case, when genuine, is best not punished.

We need say nothing here as to his addiction to vices and immoralities. The boy habitual has no vices to learn, he is adept at them all, and strict watch has to be kept over him to prevent the worst forms of immorality. But the habitual is not without a sentimental side to his nature; he is easy moved to tears, he is very fond of pet animals (birds or squirrels), and he is a first-rate attendant on the sick. This I find to be the most satisfactory trait in his otherwise gloomy character.

I say nothing here as to the proper management of this class of unhappy youth; big manufacturing Jails are not the best place for him, but a consideration of his proper treatment would lead me too far afield to-night, and in India there are difficulties greater even than in Europe as to the proper management of this unfortunate class.



*The Sacred Caves of Cachar.*—By FRANK EDE, Esq.

(Communicated by the Anthropological Secretary.)

[Read 1st May, 1901.]

[The Author has sent to the Society an account of a visit paid by him to the temples and caves on the hill bordering Cachar on the east and known as the Bhoban Pahār; the following extracts from it are of interest:]

The ascent of the hill itself takes about two hours, it being not more than 3,000 feet high. There is a fair path the whole way up; it is in bad repair in places, and is very steep. We broke our journey at a convenient stream about half-way up the hill, and pitched our camp immediately on the crest, where the path bifurcates to the caves and temples.

We first visited the sacred temple and groves to the south. There is a fair path winding along the water-shed, and the distance is about two miles and a half. We were much surprised to find Hindu and Mohammedan priests with their temples and pirs in such propinquity, viz., within a hundred yards of one another, and drawing water from the same well. This well is of fair size, situated in a hollow just below the lower temple. It is of modern construction and is said to have been built by a person called Rām, a wealthy contractor to local Boards and Municipalities. It is lined with undressed stones.

The temples and images are prettily situated among clusters of screw-pines, philodendrons, and ferns. There are four images in all; two are apparently very old, the other two are more modern. Of the two older images one represents Gaṇeṣa, and the other Hanumān. The other two are much larger and cruder; one of them represents Pārvati. A year or so ago a mad man in Silchar had a delusion that the gods were displeased with him; he visited the hill and gave Gaṇeṣa a very bad time of it, for Gaṇeṣa's image is at present in three pieces; and both Gaṇeṣa and Hanumān have had their features considerably damaged, but some people say the latter injury was done by some Nāgas.

The Mohammedan Pir is on higher ground than the Hindu temple, and is immediately on the top of the watershed, at a point where the drop is sheer to the west, and from where on a clear day a magnificent view over a considerable portion of Cachar is obtained. This particular spot on the hill is visible from many miles distant, because of the white sheen of the scarp in the sun.

We returned to camp about dusk, and the next morning started with rope-ladders, &c., for the sacred caves. They are situated about three miles to the north-east of the point where the path up from the



