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4. Name of the Topic: The Construction of Criminality in British Northern India: A Study of the Meo Community of Mewat
5. Keywords: Meos, Mewat, Criminal Tribe Act 1871, 1857, Rebellion, Topography, Minas, Criminal Tribe, Colonial, Ethnography, Caste, Tribe.

## **FINDING**

The main objective of this work was to study and examine the construction of Mewatis criminality in colonial North India. This study found that the notion of the Criminal Tribe and the enactment of the Criminal Tribe Acts were colonial construction and modern phenomenon. The concept of 'inborn criminality' or 'criminal by birth' is based on colonial stereotypes, and methods of Criminal Tribe Acts to control criminality were modern and colonial constructs. This study also found that the main idea and practice of the Criminal Tribe and Acts were the direct outcomes of the British classification of dangerous class and the enactment of the Habitual Criminal Act of 1869, in Britain.

This study also noted that the making of colonial knowledge and history was one of the strategies by which colonial rule rationalised their rule and classified and controlled the native population which contributed to the colony's creation. This method was evident in making colonial knowledge about Meos of Mewat. Colonial ethnographers-cum-officials created colonial knowledge and history about Meos of Mewat in the sense that they can create lawless, predatory, turbulent, and stereotypical criminal images of Meos of Mewat. Thus, the colonial understanding and reasoning of Meos criminality were based on the colonial construct, selective interpretations, and de-contextualised history of Meos of Mewat. The colonial ethnographers generally rationalise Meos criminality on the common origin and character of the Meo-Mina community. Colonial ethnographers formulated their views about Meos based on a story of a legend, the marriage of a Meo boy named Dariya Khan, and a Mina girl Sasibadni Mina. Colonial ethnographers further cited early Indo-Persian accounts to trace the historical continuity of Meos criminal and turbulent character. This work also stated that an immediate reason for Meos criminalisation was their strong resistance and mass participation in the rebellion of 1857. This is evident from the perspective of colonial officials who depicted Meos as a violent, bloodthirsty, robber, and lawless community. This work also suggests that

colonial ethnographers even used selective proverbs to justify Meos violent and criminal character and the subsequent suppression by the British.

This work also questioned the making of Meos criminality and claims that the colonial construction of Meos criminality is also based on colonial stereotypes. This work strongly argues that the construction of Meos criminality was not based on empirical and case histories but rather based on colonial stereotypes and de-contextualised Meos history. This work also found that the colonial stigmatised criminal image of Meos continues in post-independence India as well. Mewat as a region and Meos as a community have been stereotyped as 'dangerous,' 'miscreant,' 'highway robbers,' 'criminals,' 'notorious Mewati gangs,' and 'thugs of Mewat.' It is surprising that colonial notions like 'thugs of Mewat' are still used for Meos and Mewat in contemporary India. In the end, this work also found that in post-Independent India, due to backwardness, poverty, low literacy rate, lack of job opportunities, the large size of individual families, lack of modern industries, population boom, lack of irrigation facilities, and the inconsistent landscape continue to lead many Mewati youth towards crime in Delhi NCR (National Capital Region). In the end, this work strongly believes that Meos criminality is based on conventional examples of colonial stereotypes and the making of colonial knowledge. Meos sense that the way their forefathers fought against colonial rule is the primary reason for such stereotyping and classification as a criminal tribe. This work is based on primary sources, secondary sources, and oral narratives on various aspects of Meo's history