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Introduction

- 1 The archetypal modern urban criminal of South Asia is the goonda, often taken to be a rough equivalent of the hooligan. The term 'goonda', a slang of obscure etymology, came into common parlance in colonial Calcutta around 1900. Till 1918 it connoted a lowly looter who surfaced during heights of tumult and disappeared as soon as order was re-enforced. In 1920 the goonda appeared in a new avatar, that of a fearsome violent robber who lurked in the streets of some north-Calcutta neighbourhoods and preyed upon wealthy Indians or those loyal to them in broad daylight. He struck such terror among his victims and other law-abiding people that the police found it difficult to find witnesses against him. The fear of the goonda assumed such proportions that European police officers of Calcutta, who were obsessed with maintaining order at the time of the then ongoing anti-imperial mass movements, Non-Cooperation and Khilafat, swung into action to draft a new law against goondas and to chalk out a novel strategy of maintaining surveillance on them. At the same time newspapers reported frightening instances of violent crimes from all over the city and attributed these to the goondas. In 1922 the Goondas Bill found its way to Bengal provincial legislative council, in which English educated Hindu Bengali *bhadralok* (i.e. gentlefolk) were in a majority. In 1919 they had staunchly opposed the Rowlatt Act, the anti-sedition law which empowered the police to arrest and detain individuals on suspicion that they were political terrorists. In February 1923 they ratified the Goondas Bill into an Act though its provisions empowered the police to deport virtually anyone from Calcutta and its surrounding industrial rim to outside the province of Bengal on mere suspicion without a trial.

- 2 The Goondas Act [hereafter GA] came into effect in 1923 and became a model for other such acts for Kanpur (1930), Delhi (1937) and cities of Central Provinces and Berar (1946). Each of these acts similarly empowered city police from forces to evict individuals on suspicion. The GA of Calcutta could come into being as disparate, disunited and mutually opposed segments of the city's residents felt the acute need for a law like it. These segments were – wealthy Hindi-speaking Hindu and Jain Marwari traders, upper and middle class Bengali *bhadralok*, elite Bengal Muslim politicians, and Calcutta Europeans, officials and non-officials. In 1922-23 these segments were bitterly divided and mutually opposed to each other. The Europeans constituted a small yet the most powerful minority of Calcutta. They were its high administrators, rich industrialists and businessmen. They looked down on Indians and distrusted them ever more so since the rise of mass nationalism. The *bhadralok* were leaders of Indian nationalist movements at provincial and local levels. They were narrowly elitist in outlook and often used Hindu symbolisms for political purposes which alienated Muslims. They were largely averse to mass movements and joined or even successfully led such movements only reluctantly. Their political predominance was challenged with the introduction of separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims to the provincial legislatures in 1919. In spite of that in 1922-23 they still wielded great influence in provincial and city politics. Muslim politicians of Bengal had drawn away from *bhadralok* led nationalist politics, especially since 1906 with the foundation of the Muslim League. With the beginning of the First World War, Pan-Islamist movement in support of the Ottoman Turkish Sultan and against the dismemberment of his empire gained ground among Bengal Muslims like elsewhere in India, which culminated in the Khilafat movement in 1919. During the same time the Marwaris joined nationalist politics. They had earlier kept away and even opposed *bhadralok* nationalism and their communal animosity towards Muslims had led to riots in Calcutta. When Gandhi led the anti-Rowlatt *satyagraha* (1919) and a year later the Non-Cooperation movement, in which he joined forces with the Khilafatists, unforeseen fraternization united these three segments in the city. Their unity, however, proved short-lived. In February 1922 Gandhi called off Non-Cooperation. Khilafat, though not called off, lost its objective in less than a year with the rise of Mustafa Kemal and the removal of the Sultan. The vacuum left by abrupt withdrawal of anti-imperial and nationalist movements was filled by communalism and factionalism. The *bhadralok* sections tried hard to retain their elite status in politics and were divided into several bickering factions. Muslims, encouraged with the advantage of greater political representation in the provincial legislature given by the Montagu-Chelmsford Act (1919) tried to contest *bhadralok* domination. Their politics turned increasingly communalist. The Marwaris, who were significantly wealthier than before, were left with no common ground to share with either the *bhadralok* or the Muslims. To secure their business interests they had already established linkages with colonial administrators as well as with Gandhi who towered over Bengal politicians. Many of them were drawn to Hindu communalism which culminated in the formation of the Hindu right wing party, the Hindu Mahasabha in 1925.
- 3 What made these segments come together to usher in the GA in spite of their irreconcilable differences, was not, I argue, the fear of a new category of urban criminals. Instead what each segment sought to address was its respective anxiety which arose in response and reaction to the changes that took place since the beginning of the First World War and especially the entry of the mass into the political arena. Following Geoffrey Pearson's research on London hooligans at the turn of the last century, I assert

that there was a respectable fear of the goondas in Calcutta during 1920-23.¹ Respectable fears conceal anxieties that upper and middle classes experience in response to rapid changes in society and politics, which they then map on the lower classes criminalizing segments within them. Thus, in 1890-1900 an anxiety of losing to Germany militarily and economically in the international arena made British conservatives and liberals come together to look for symptoms of a national decline among the poor, and the consequent invention was the hooligan, a degenerate violent poor youth.² Similarly, in St. Petersburg of 1900-14, hasty industrialization and brutal suppression of protests by an absolutist state produced unprecedented social change and tensions. The consequences, as Joan Neuberger says, were overpopulation of the city with desperate poor rural migrants, rapid decline in influence of the traditional elite and rise of a new bourgeoisie seeking to assert high social status.³ In this situation any perceived or deliberate defiance of authority of the elites or the bourgeois by poor migrants came to be labelled as hooliganism or a sign of the most serious social malady. In the light these works it needs to be known what caused anxieties among the elites and middle class of Calcutta, and how and why it culminated in the invention of the goondas and in the legal innovation, the GA.

The Goondas Act (1923)

- 4 The express purpose of the Act was “to provide for the control of the certain goondas residing in, or frequenting Calcutta or the neighbourhood of Calcutta, and for their removal elsewhere”.⁴ It said that the goonda was an “extraordinary badmash”, “other rough” or a “member of a gang of goondas”.⁵ While badmash meant a miscreant and necessarily male, what would turn him extraordinary was left entirely to the discretion of either the Commissioner (i.e. the chief) of Police, the Calcutta Magistrate or the District Magistrate in the industrial belt surrounding the city outside the Calcutta Police jurisdiction, also known as the Presidency Area. Having identified a person fit for being charged by the GA either of the said officers were to send a detailed report on him to the Governor of Bengal seeking permission to issue a warrant of arrest under the Act.⁶
- 5 Immediately after his arrest the Commissioner or a magistrate was to produce the accused to two judges. Any attempt by the accused to evade arrest, or to evade other formalities like being photographed, furnishing sample signature, handwriting and fingerprint was punishable by six months of imprisonment or by imposition of a fine of one thousand rupees or both.⁷ The judges, drawn from the Sessions Courts, were to act in advisory capacity. They were to go through the report on the accused submitted to the Governor, and deliberate on whether the case was fit for expulsion solely on its merit. The GA had no provision for trial by a court of law. However -, the arrested person had the right to represent himself in writing or in person to the judges if he so wanted. He could also seek their permission to call in witnesses to support his statements. The judges -, could call on anyone to seek additional information if necessary. Such persons were to be examined in complete secrecy and the accused was to know nothing of that.⁸ After going through all available information on the individual they were to advise the police on whether he should be deported or not. Though their advice was not binding, it was rarely contradicted, as appears from available evidence.
- 6 The Governor ‘if satisfied’ with the judge’s advice determined the duration for which the accused was to be expelled from the Presidency Area.⁹ In case one of the judges was not in

favour of expulsion, the Governor was free to follow advice of the other. The police then served an order of externment, i.e. a directive on the accused while he was in captivity, specifying the date, destination, route and the mode of his deportation. They were to escort him to a railway station of the city from where he had to go to a location either outside Bengal or somewhere within the province but away from Calcutta. Immediately after reaching the place he had to report to a police station named in the order. For the entire period of his expulsion he was to remain under strict police surveillance over there and had to inform the local police of any change of his residence, and “absence or intended absence” from there. Any non-compliance of the order within the duration of expulsion was to be punished with arrest without warrant followed by rigorous imprisonment up to one year.¹⁰ While these elaborate scheme of punishment existed on paper, when the Act came into operation the Calcutta Police paid no attention to what happened to the deportee after removing him from the city. Within the city surveillance on those charged by the GA was maintained relentlessly till the time of their expulsion.

- 7 When ordered to leave the city the deportee had the right to stake a claim that both he and his father belonged to a family “definitely settled in Bengal” and had to offer evidence of continuous residence in the province for three generations.¹¹ In addition he had to offer proof of his own unbroken residence in Calcutta. If his claim appeared convincing to the Bengal Governor he was to be sent to a place within Bengal. This, though seemingly possible was rendered difficult as the deportee’s claims had to go uncontested at the hands of the Commissioner or Magistrate.¹²
- 8 The deliberate absence of a definition of a goonda in the Act or other markers such as his typical offences, apart from the one that suggested that he was a migrant to the city was justified on the ground that there was little doubt among the law-abiding propertied classes of Calcutta as to who a goonda was. It implied that the social markers of goonda had already been fixed by then, by those who demanded immediate stern action against him. These markers had slowly been singled out and affirmed since 1890s.

Fear of the poor migrant

- 9 A new figure appeared in the horizon of respectable fears in Indian metropolises and industrial towns from around 1880s, namely the poor male migrant. Prashant Kidambi and Jim Masselos have shown that an increase in population in Bombay, the visibility of the poor in city streets and bazaars and their occasional clashes with the police from 1880s led the colonial administrators, capitalists, and Indians of respectable classes to regard them as volatile and dangerous.¹³ The same had happened in Calcutta from the 1890s. Rapid demographic change had taken place in the city and its immediate surrounding areas from the 1880s as male migrants from Bengal’s neighbouring province of Bihar, United Provinces and Orissa. The migrants were pushed out of their native villages either by abject poverty or at times by famines. The steady stream of male migrants from these places altered the composition of population in the city by 1901, of which migrants comprised 35 per cent. In 1911 migrants from Indian provinces other than Bengal comprised two fifths of its population.¹⁴ The trend continued through the 1920s and ’30s when fresh migrants from the other provinces alone comprised around 35 per cent of the city dwellers.¹⁵ Among these migrants nearly fifty-four thousand earned their living as casual labourers in the 1920s, and from around 1911 they remained concentrated in huge numbers in Burra Bazar and its contiguous neighbourhoods and

found work as carters, coolies, servants and guards.¹⁶ Bengalis, averse to menial work, looked down on these migrants as they were illiterate and rustic ; and referred to them as 'Hindustani' i.e. Hindi speaking migrant or by a pejorative slang 'Khotta'.¹⁷

- 10 The prejudice against migrant labourers transformed into fear as there were three short-lived local riots in the city and its surrounding industrial suburbs in 1896, 1897 and in 1898. The first two of these were occasioned by religious disputes among Hindu and Muslim factory workers and the last one broke out from labourers' resistance to forcible inoculation against the plague.¹⁸ During these riots the police, European mill managers and upper and middle class Bengalis bore the brunt of workers' violence. In reaction they created the stereotype of irrational and fearsome violent labourer or coolie from whom the respectable classes and even policemen at times needed protection.¹⁹ From the early 1900s people fitting into such description came to be marked out loosely as goondas or 'gundas', the more prevalent spelling back then. Calcutta experienced three short-lived riots of varying intensity between 1907 and 1918, in each of them low-class aggressors and looters, who suddenly appeared after violence broke out to take advantage of the temporary anarchy, came to be described by the term.
- 11 The first of these riots broke out at a public square in north Calcutta in the evening of 3 October 1907 as a Muslim Police Inspector and two constables tried to disperse a Swadeshi movement meeting of middle class Bengalis.²⁰ The crowd over-powered them only to be dispersed by a larger posse of policemen led by European police sergeants. Soon scuffles between the Bengalis and the policeman spread all over the Chitpore Road, a main arterial street in north Calcutta. After a few hours the police drove out the crowd and patrolled the street. In the following evening fights broke out between the police and the Bengalis of the area again, and a large number of shopkeepers from along the street and others alleged that 'gundas' joined hands with police constables to belabour and rob them in the evening. A Bengali physician, one D.N. Chatterji, said that he saw 'gundas' drag out commuters from tramcars, belabour them and denude them robbing their clothes. Akhil Chandra Chatterji, a Bengali civil engineer said that some up-countrymen attacked him while he was travelling in a tramcar on the Chitpur Road and robbed him of cash. He conjectured that the men were police constables in plainclothes as they looked like 'gundas' but appeared better-fed.²¹ Bengali shopkeepers from the place said that 'up-country' police constables stood watching as 'gundas' raided and looted their shops. However, as order was enforced, the threat of the goondas seemed to wane away and there were no further allegations of goonda crimes or demand for police action against them.²²
- 12 The 1910 riot broke out on the occasion of Eid, the Muslim religious festival.²³ A slum of poor Muslims stood on a plot of land in north Calcutta owned by a Hindu Marwari trader who wanted it cleared for construction of buildings. He along with other Marwaris organized a protest to prevent cow-killing in a mosque in the slum under the pretext that it hurt their religious sentiment especially as they resided in houses close to the slum. The Bengal government found out that the mosque was not, and had not been, a place for cow-killing for years. Yet, as the day of the Eid approached Marwaris went ahead with virulent anti-cow killing protests. They brought a well-known Hindu orator from United Provinces and inducted a number of up-country Hindu *durwans* (Hindi for gatekeeper or guard) for their campaign. They tried to enforce a strike in the neighbourhood a day before Eid, which Muslim shop-keepers resisted keeping their stores open. This led to

clashes which escalated into a riot in Burra Bazar and the Harrison Road, a street running east-west in north and central Calcutta.²⁴

- 13 Fierce combats took place between Hindu up-country *durwans* and the Muslim itinerant traders, popularly called Kabulis, from North West Frontier Provinces and Afghanistan who visited the city during winters. The Commissioner of Calcutta Police observed that the Marwaris had brought the *durwans* to execute planned violent attacks on the Muslims, and they appeared in newspaper reportage as *durwans*, *badmashes* and also as 'gundas'. A case which caused a sensation was the murder of an unsuspecting Muslim pedestrian who had gone to Burra Bazaar during the riot when suddenly an assailant, described in newspapers as a Hindu 'gunda', appeared from a bye-lane stabbed him to death and disappeared in a flash.²⁵ Such attacks were equally matched by the violence of Kabulis, who hurled bricks at Marwari households and fought with policemen who tried to disperse them. In the eyes of the European officials and Bengali observers though, the up-country *durwans* marked out as goondas appeared as the main culprits.²⁶
- 14 After the riot the goondas were heard of in 1918, yet again during a riot.²⁷ An English daily of Calcutta, *The Indian Daily News*, catering to an almost exclusively European readership, published an article in which Prophet Mohammed's tomb had been compared with a gutter of Paris. In protest eminent Muslims, including important leaders of the Muslim League, asked the Bengal Governor to prohibit publication of the paper, which he refused to do. So they called for a protest meeting on 9 September 1918. It was to be addressed by important Muslim clerics from all over India and was expected to draw several thousands of attendees.²⁸ The Governor promptly prohibited the meeting a couple of weeks before its scheduled date. He apprehended the sheer size of projected gathering for the meeting, and the imminent dismemberment of Ottoman Turkey by the Allies meant that it could become a mass Pan-Islamist agitation against the colonial government.²⁹
- 15 The prohibition of the meeting proved counter-productive. Ephemeral leaders from among Muslims of lower class, the overwhelming majority of whom were migrants, resolutely mobilized their poor brethren for it.³⁰ A few institutional politicians like Muslim League Young Turk Fazlul Huq repeatedly requested the Governor to revoke the prohibition. The venue for the meeting, a ground next to Nakhoda mosque in central Calcutta near Burra Bazar, was readied and guarded by the club wielding poor Muslims. On the day of the meeting a crowd of poor Muslims clashed with a posse of policemen and a riot broke out as a *durwan* guarding a mansion of a Marwari businessman fired a shot at the crowd. Enraged the Muslims raided and ransacked shops and warehouses of the Marwaris in the vicinity of the Nakhoda mosque. Soon riots spread all over central Calcutta and Burra Bazaar.³¹ Eyewitness reports said that the goondas made a sudden appearance at this point to advantage of the anarchy. They stopped traffic, climbed into tramcars, roughed up and robbed commuters. Soon they were seen raiding shops and bazaars and ran away with clothes, sacks of wheat flour, foodstuff and in a few cases money.³² The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a nationalist daily, reported an incident in which a 'gunda' single-handedly raided a shop in the vicinity of Burra Bazaar and unhesitatingly stabbed a shop-clerk to death who tried to resist him.³³
- 16 On 10 September crowds looted shops and bazaars at several places in north, central and east Calcutta. At Garden Reach, an industrial area to the south the city a large crowd of Muslim labourers fought pitched battles with the military braving their firepower.³⁴ In this situation fearing the possibility of being held responsible for inciting crowds, Muslim politicians who had actively supported the call for the meeting found it necessary to

dissociate themselves from the riot.³⁵ As a result, within days a number of important Indian edited dailies and vernacular periodicals of the city singled out the goonda for the event. The *Moslem Hitaishi*, a Bengali periodical which claimed to speak for Bengal Muslims, said that as soon a riot broke out on the Zakaria Street Hindu goondas emerged from their lairs to loot the shops of Muslims in the locality.³⁶ They were followed by Muslim goondas, who attacked shops and warehouses of the Hindus. The *Hitavadi*, a periodical which spoke for the Marwaris, similarly said,

... the riots and the looting are the work of the gundas, both Hindu and Muhummdan, and we want to see justice done in the matter.³⁷

- 17 Such words represented the view of the Indians –wealthy, elite and middle class–irrespective of their creed, who held their low class brethren solely accountable for the outbreak. Taking this as an opportunity to claim lofty benevolence from his high office the Bengal Governor made a display of a formal brokering of peace among Hindus and Muslims. A week later a public notice that he had authored, entitled ‘Hindu Moslem Appeal for Toleration’, appeared in *The Statesman*.³⁸ It had a long list of eminent signatories, which included Moti Lal Ghosh, a high ranking Congress leader and Muslim leaders like Fazlul Huq. It said,

The serious riot that broke out in Calcutta and its suburbs is now over. The public is well aware that there has not, nor is there any Hindu Muslim question involved in it. We strongly condemn the acts of lawlessness – though very few – of rowdyism which occurred between the Hindus and the Muslims ... *These incidents were acts of Goondas for whom nobody has any sympathy.*³⁹

- 18 The notice was an official re-confirmation of the prevailing view of who the goondas were. They were criminals from the margins who had no support from the Indian elites or from society at large, and who surfaced only at times of large scale disorders. With order enforced they necessarily disappeared and hence there was no outcry for action against the goondas after the riot was over.

1920-23, The Goondas Anew

- 19 In 1920, the Marwari Traders’ Association of Burra Bazaar sent a petition to W.R. Gourlay, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, written in markedly accusatory language saying that since December 1919 the neighbourhood witnessed an abnormal rise in street robberies.⁴⁰ It blamed the police for it and said that they allowed the worst goondas a free hand to brazenly rob rich Marwaris and their loyal servants in broad daylight in Burra Bazaar. It said that the police were usually reluctant to record complaints of such robberies. If at all they recorded such cases they delayed the framing of charges, allowing crucial evidence to disappear, dissuaded complainants with threats of false charges and also made enquiries with deliberate carelessness.⁴¹ Due to these crimes bill collectors of Marwari firms refrained from stepping out in the streets in fear of the goondas, who did not spare robbing jewellery from helpless Marwari women and children as they ventured out either for their ritual holy dip in the river Ganges nearby or went to temples to offer prayers.⁴² Fear of reprisals at the hands of the goondas and the general reluctance of the police to help victims often prompted them not to report such crimes, which in turn further emboldened the miscreants.
- 20 The descriptions of the crimes contained in the petition in meticulous detail, however, do not appear as unheard of ferocious offences. For example, a Marwari businessman, one

Shiv Bhagwan Goenka was beaten with clubs and then robbed at the point of a dagger by 'goondas' in the bye-lanes when he was returning with a large sum of money. Eight days later one Hanumanbux and Basudeo, proprietors of a firm, were robbed similarly by goondas while on their way home. They had the day's earnings with them and were accompanied by two of their servants. While on way some goondas attacked them, belaboured them as they tried to resist and decamped with a bag full of money. On 31 January, a wealthy Marwari Bhuramull Chandgoria was stabbed by goondas who tried to rob him as he was on his way to the Tarasundari temple of Burra Bazaar. He had a narrow escape as some bystanders came to his rescue and found a knife sticking to his back. What made these cases appear alarming was their growing incidence ; for example, between November 1919 and February 1920 there were more than twenty such cases of serious assault and robbery. Their number seemed to increase towards the end of February when there was days on which as many as three robberies had taken place.

- 21 As Gourlay drew attention of Reginald Clarke, the Commissioner of Calcutta Police, to these cases the latter admitted that there existed a 'goonda problem' in Burra Bazaar. Crime statistics showed that there had been an abnormal increase in ordinary crime in Calcutta that year : there were 99 cases of robbery, more than double of that in 1918, and the value of property robbed was also 'abnormally' high.⁴³ Contemporary observers linked this to the sudden increase in the cost of living and specially so in the prices of food and clothing, the worst sufferers of which were the poor.⁴⁴ Clarke, however, said that the Marwaris were themselves to blame for the goonda problem because

These goondas are up-country-men who have been brought down to Calcutta as *lathials* (i.e. stick or club wielding guards) or *durwans* by Marwaris in Burra Bazar, or have been attracted to Calcutta by the reports of the ease with which money can be made by violence. The Marwaris themselves are very largely responsible for this evil, some employing as many as 200 of these men over whom there can be no efficient control...⁴⁵

- 22 He admitted that the police could not deter these men from taking to crime as the force had neither the necessary manpower to patrol Burra Bazaar effectively nor the weaponry to intimidate criminals into inaction with a small force.⁴⁶ The existing laws which the police used against these criminals were preventive sections of Indian Criminal Procedure Code, which relied heavily on the knowledge of the magistrates about bad characters within his jurisdiction.⁴⁷ These sections were largely ineffective in a metropolis like Calcutta with a continuous inflow of large numbers of migrants. In the absence of effective laws, he lamented, both the numbers and the activities of the goondas proliferated. For example, there were *durwans* entrusted with carrying substantial amounts of cash through the bye-lanes of Burra Bazaar who violated their employer's trust to steal money. Then there were those who waylaid pedestrians carrying large amounts of money or jewellery, and finally there were goondas who worked for other goondas, like guards of cocaine and gambling dens. Taking stock of the problem, he said that more than 95 percent of them were up-countrymen who had migrated to Calcutta in the recent past. Gourlay suggested that an effective mechanism of punishment of these men was to "exclude from the limits of Calcutta".⁴⁸ This became the kernel of the GA, which was drafted as a bill during 1922 and ratified by the Bengal Legislative Council in 1923. Anticipating the Act, Clarke heightened police surveillance in Burra Bazar, drawing personnel from other police stations of the city.
- 23 It needs to be noted that this was not the first time Marwaris sought police action against the goondas. They had done so first in 1914 when the police responded to their plea by

increased patrolling of Burra Bazar for just over a month. When the same group of traders complained about the goondas six years later the unprecedented concern of the police to ensure protection of the complainants with greater care than ever before meant that the Marwaris had by then acquired great significance in the eyes of the Bengal government.⁴⁹

- 24 For the Marwaris, the First World War had proved to be a turning point like a few other groups of Indian traders. Till the War the Europeans and the Bengali *bhadralok* looked down on them as lowly and dishonest traders hailing from Rajputana. Anne Hardgrove says that by 1917-1918 they had gathered immense wealth supporting the war efforts of the colonial government and actively started to assert “their identity as honourable businessmen and political subjects”,⁵⁰ and they could rightly boast that “the entire trade of Calcutta is in their hands”.⁵¹ They had risen spectacularly in wealth and proven to be important allies of the colonial government. In 1905 they had strongly opposed the Swadeshi movement, unlike the Hindu Bengalis of upper and middle classes, and refused to boycott dealing in foreign goods. For this reason the Bengal government was disposed favourably towards them. During the War they supplied the Indian Army with gunny sacks and soldiers’ uniforms, and the Government of India with War Loans. The government recognized their assistance with honours like War Work Badges given to Birla brothers, Ghanshyam Das and Jugal Kishore of Calcutta.⁵² By 1920 they were poised for transition from traders into industrials.⁵³ From around this time Marwari men donned western attire and demeanour in public in order to gain acceptability among European businessmen of the city. Their quest for higher social status found a new opportunity as Gandhi-led mass movements drew support from among groups which till then were outside the fold of politics. Marwari traders had come into close touch with Madan Mohan Malaviya, the nationalist leader, as they took part in the anti-indenture campaign in 1913.⁵⁴ Gandhi had established links with Calcutta Marwaris from 1917 in whom they found the much needed influential leader, who enjoyed a much higher status than Malaviya. In 1919 they took active part in the Gandhi led anti-Rowlatt agitation in Calcutta. A year later they provided the Congress with a large fund to run the Non-Cooperation movement. Alongside from the early 1900s they had started asserting supremacy over Burra Bazaar, their business cum residential quarter since 1870s. From 1910 they had started acquiring land in the Burra Bazaar area, removing its poor shanty-dwelling Muslim residents. When the Calcutta Improvement Trust started functioning in 1911 the Bengal Government paid special attention to facilitate smooth functioning of Marwari businesses in that neighbourhood by slum removal.⁵⁵ When they asked for suppression of the goondas in 1920, it became evident that they were looking for police protection which complemented their newfound wealth and political importance.
- 25 This was not, however, the only reason which impelled the high officials of the Bengal government and the Calcutta Police to adduce high importance to the goondas in 1919-20. Burra Bazaar and its contiguous neighbourhoods had turned into a site of a mass agitation of unforeseen intensity since 1919. The Marwaris took part in these movements but they were outnumbered and overwhelmed by the poor ‘up-countrymen’ i.e. people from neighbouring states of Bihar and United Provinces, both Hindus and Muslims, who constituted the mass of the agitators. The first agitation took place in April 1919 against the Rowlatt Act.⁵⁶ Clarke noted in the police report that up-countrymen unhesitatingly attacked Europeans whoever ventured into that area during the agitation. The first shock came with assaults on two high ranking European police officers, with one injured fatally.

Their number grew larger and even more aggressive as the police brought in additional personnel to aid the officers. They drove them out pelting stones and then set fire to a police car which was on the spot. Finding themselves overpowered, the police called in the troops, who then dispersed the crowds with gunfire.⁵⁷

- 26 The agitation shocked the non-official Europeans far more profoundly. The *Englishman*, a city daily representing their views narrated several incidents in which Europeans, unaware of the violent agitation, had ventured into the area and were thrashed in full public view by the “lowest elements” of Calcutta, which was unheard of in the city till then.⁵⁸ It regretted that “real Calcutta goondas” i.e. low class violent elements, led in places by well-heeled Marwaris, had taken to the streets to bring traffic to a halt. One unnamed European informant said that he was made to doff his hat at agitators, who then flung him against a wall and kicked him. In another report a correspondent of the daily said that he was assaulted by a crowd while he was taking a tour of neighbourhoods centring on Burra Bazaar to witness the agitation, and had managed to escape with his life rescued by a European policeman there on duty. The daily remarked that this kind of violence was the result of Indian politicians bringing in “goondas and the mobs” to take part in what was supposed to be non-violent passive resistance.⁵⁹
- 27 In 1921 Burra Bazaar erupted with a mass movement of even greater intensity. Bengal Governor Ronaldshay described it as an outbreak led by goondas which brought about temporary reign of anarchy. Police reports on the movement noted that like previously the majority of its participants were Marwaris, groups of ‘up-country’ Hindus and Muslims. For example, on 17 November 1921 a strike enforced by Non-Cooperation and Khilafat activists rekindled the fear of the anti-Rowlatt agitation among the Europeans. An official on duty in that part of the city noted that “crowds of hooligans” in the garb of the political activists paralyzed the city completely. They brought transport and all businesses to a halt by sheer intimidation, and “there was talk not of Gandhi Raj but a Goonda Raj”.⁶⁰
- 28 The need felt acutely among European officials of the Bengal Government in the light of these experiences was for an assertion of police authority over the area. Hence the police took to gathering information on those who it perceived to pose a threat in Burra Bazar and its immediate surroundings. A new section within the Detective Department of the Calcutta Police was entrusted with this responsibility in September 1920. It was christened the Goondas Department [hereafter GD] in 1921, and renamed the Goondas Division in February 1923.⁶¹ The department worked with great urgency and gave its first report to Clarke in May 1921, who observed,
93.6 per cent or a very large majority of the goondas in Calcutta are not natives of this province and such Bengalis as join in are merely hangers-on of the Punjabis and up-countrymen who are the real mainspring of this activity.⁶²
- 29 In early 1922 the department re-affirmed his words with a comprehensive report of its findings titled ‘A Concise and Complete Statement of Facts as to the Number, Distribution, Classification etc. of Goondas in Calcutta’ [hereafter Statement] which made these groups of migrants appear as dangerous criminals masquerading as persons with legitimate vocations.⁶³ It was a classified document and the veracity of its information has never been examined. The GD had arrested 181 persons between March and May 1921, described them as “active and dangerous goondas”, it divided them under seven headings following an arbitrary mix of regional, linguistic and religious categories.⁶⁴ Its classificatory scheme echoed the Orientalized notion of martial races, who in their new

avatar displayed a proclivity to violent crime in place of valour.⁶⁵ Most dangerous among those which the GD classified as goondas were Peshawaris from North West Frontier Province, who were cocaine smugglers and leaders with “a large number of local Muhammadan goondas” as followers. As they all had “some connexion with fruit or shoe business” they managed to evade arrest. Five of them were settled in Calcutta for fifteen to twenty years. The rest, whom the Statement called “new arrivals”, were those who had migrated to the city less than six years back. Ranking close second were Punjabis. The report said that the GD had been able to identify only three of them, but suspected that their number was definitely larger. They were said to engage in the same criminal activities as the Peshawaris. Up-country Muhammadans came third. The Statement mentioned seventeen of them and claimed that most of them migrated fifteen years ago from the districts of Shahabad and Gaya in Bihar, and Allahabad in the United Provinces. Next and the most numerous group was of up-country Hindus. The Statement listed seventy of them and described that the majority were :

... recent importation and swell the list of goondas. They are chiefly carters, durwans, hawkers by profession. The older residents among them are some notorious leaders of the goondas own carts and houses which affords them immunity from prosecutions of bad livelihood. They come from Mirzapur, Agra, Jaunpur, Banaras, Patna, Gaya, Arrah, Monghyr, Fyzabad, Lucknow and Gwalior...⁶⁶

- 30 “Local Muhammadans” numbering fifty nine ranked after them. The GD said their number was increasing by the day. They worked as clerks in *pan* (i.e. chewing beetle leaf) and *biri* (i.e. country made cigars) shops, and served as hirelings for their up-country counterparts, but were not as “desperate” as them. Right at the end of the list mentioned nine “Local Hindus” and ten “Local Bengalis”. There were nine persons, “Kahars by caste and coolies by profession”, listed in the first of the groups who had committed robberies along with local Bengali youths. In the last and least significant category of “Local Bengalis” were ten youths from respectable classes “with no inclination for study or work, supported by relations who have no control over them” and another five “homeless men” with “remarkable criminal careers”. According to the GD these three “local” categories did not pose a serious threat.⁶⁷
- 31 Tracing the history of a so-called “goonda menace”, the Statement said that the goondas emerged as a threat to law and order from after 1916. From that year there a slight increase in the annual aggregates of robbery. The aggregates kept increasing till 1919 but from 1920, meaning from the time Marwaris complained of a sudden spate of crimes in Burra Bazaar, there was an abnormal rise in robbery which continued to rise even further through the first six months of 1921.⁶⁸ It attributed this to the presence of the majority of goondas from the city in Burra Bazaar and its contiguous neighbourhoods. Out of the GD’s one hundred and eighty-one goondas, one hundred and seventeen came from that cluster of neighbourhoods, another forty-nine persons, whom the police described as “homeless”, very often frequented these neighbourhoods as carters, hawkers and coolies.⁶⁹ The rest of the city had an insignificant fourteen goondas who posed a minor threat when compared to their former counterparts.⁷⁰
- 32 While the classification and enumeration of known criminals as goondas of the Statement remained confidential the rise in robbery statistics was public knowledge and it echoed in the pages of Calcutta’s important dailies and periodicals, which in the early twenties attributed any violent crime and intimidation to the goondas. Reportage and editorials on

crimes like robbery and extortion liberally mixed speculation with hearsay. One such report published in a Bengali daily, *Dainik Basumati*, said :

We have heard that some well-known goondas and their headquarters are ... known to many, ... when the Lady Dufferein Hospital building was being opened, a goonda made a bet and shied a shoe at the Viceroy ... We have heard that one of the goondas levies *chouth* (i.e. a levy imposed by Maratha raiders in early eighteenth century India) in the China Bazar quarter and he has a centre of enjoyment at No. 7 Swallow Lane, where he goes now and then to collect money from various offices, people pay up in fear of their lives.⁷¹ (Italics mine).

- 33 The account, typical of reportage on goonda-ism then, was evidently based neither on witnessed scenes nor on lived experience or careful investigation required for accurate crime reporting. The disparate set of activities – one of deliberate defiance of high official authority and others of extortion and of running a recreation centre for the working class – had no apparent connection with each other, and there was nothing inherent in them to mark them out as goonda crime. Similarly, in another report the daily said :

Many goondas with money pass as belonging to the respectable class yet they have in their employ men who are capable of any crime possible. Sometimes these men pose as inoffensive vendors of *dal* (lentils) or dried fruits, and sometimes they sell cocaine surreptitiously through women of ill fame. Considering how proudly they move about ... it does not seem that peace is well preserved in Calcutta ...⁷²

- 34 The report, which was a detailed account of the network of drug trafficking in the city, conflated the category of the smugglers and drug peddlers onto that of the goondas, and informed its readers that their city was being secretly invaded by them.
- 35 Similar reports in other Bengali dailies and periodicals exaggerated the threat of goonda-ism to make it appear overpoweringly fearful. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, a Calcutta daily, described the goondas as a body of criminals armed to the teeth with modern weapons, saying :

...(I)instead of the old time daggers, they now use pistols. Some of the recent outrages have filled Calcutta with panic. The goondas are now collecting pistols and cartridges by throwing dust into the eyes of the police.⁷³

- 36 Soon it became a usual for Bengali journalists to speculatively attribute any alarming crime reported from any part of the city to the goondas, which gave goonda-ism the appearance of a city-wide threat. A sensational robbery in front of the Calcutta Medical College took place in May. This was an elite institution where bright Bengali students were trained to be physicians, in which unidentified robbers snatched away five thousand rupees from the *durwan* of Shaw Wallace (an important British firm) in broad daylight. Reporting the incident, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* said :

When he (the *durwan*) came near the Medical College Hospital he was accosted by two men apparently goondas, armed with lathis (i.e. stick or club) and was given a sharp ... blow. He fell down when the robbers got hold of the money and bolted in a taxi ...⁷⁴

- 37 The daily published a number of reports on similar incidents from different parts of north and central Calcutta to create an impression that the city was experiencing a crime wave. For example, reporting a case of pick pocket in front of the Jorabagan police station in north Calcutta, it sarcastically remarked that the Commissioner of Calcutta Police was competing with “journalists and film companies” in making sure that the city did not miss its share “thrilling sensations” provided by goondas.⁷⁵ In August the daily published a detailed report on a street robbery in Burra Bazaar, similar to the ones cited in the Marwari Association petition. The report said unknown assailants, whom it described as

goondas, robbed nearly twenty thousand rupees from one Brindhichand and one Gobind, bill collectors of Marwari firms. Gobind succumbed to his stab wounds and Brindhichand suffered facial paralysis as he was stabbed in the face. Citing this incident an editorial in the daily said that waylaying and robbery were becoming everyday occurrences in the whole of north Calcutta and not just Burra Bazaar.⁷⁶

- 38 The Bengalis were not victims in any of these cases, yet that the fear of goondas was spreading throughout the city became palpable from Bengali periodicals, which published even rumoured events as actual cases of goonda crimes. For example the *Nayak* said :

We hear that gundas stabbed a man under the portico of the Sealdah Station ... we hear that motor car dacoities are committed at Burra Bazaar, Garanahata, Kumartoli, Tollygunj and Ballygunj (localities in north, central, west and south Calcutta respectively), we hear that it is no longer safe to walk the streets of Calcutta in the evening with a gold wrist watch or a gold chain on ...⁷⁷

- 39 In a general commentary on law and order in the city the *Swaraj* painted a similar picture saying :

It has become dangerous for people to walk in the streets of Calcutta. Goondas use revolvers and daggers in public and carry on their nefarious business with impunity. Life and property are no longer safe.⁷⁸

- 40 The *Bande Mataram* accused subordinate policemen in Calcutta, hailing from Bihar and United Provinces, of being in cahoots with their country cousins, the goondas, which allowed the latter to prowl even in areas usually frequented by Calcutta Europeans. In a report on a robbery of gold buttons from the person of a “respectable gentleman” who went to visit an exhibition at the Eden Gardens, then a favourite promenade of the Europeans and the wealthy Anglicized Indian elites, it said that the stolen items were later discovered from one Ram Ajit, an “up-country” police constable.⁷⁹

- 41 The fear the goonda did not remain restricted to the dailies and periodicals published by Bengalis. The most influential daily of Calcutta *The Statesman*, which catered to a predominantly European and Anglicized Indian readership, likened the goonda with warlike tribes of north-west frontier of India preying on an indefensibly docile people following an Orientalist typology. It said :

The great avenues of traffic in northern Calcutta, such as Harrison Road and the Central Avenue are treated by local ruffians like mountain defiles by the Pathan (warlike Muslim tribals of Afghanistan). Lurking in the bye-lanes and alleyways, the goonda upon his victim, in broad daylight as well as in the dark, and revolvers and daggers are used if slightest resistance is offered. When a man is killed or seriously injured, or a large sum of money taken, the case is reported to the police, but for one such report, according to common belief, there are dozen instances in which the victim, after the patient Indian way, suffers and says nothing.⁸⁰

- 42 At the time when these reports were published fear of the goondas became perceptible among Bengalis of educated and professional classes. Pancanan Ghosal, a Hindu Bengali who joined the Calcutta Police in the 1929 in a middle rank, attests that the fear of the goonda had silenced Calcuttans from reporting cases of victimization at their hands to the police.⁸¹ Ghosal read Botany at the Calcutta University and fancied himself to be an amateur criminologist. He remembered the goondas as an irrepressible set of criminals of north and central Calcutta. Citing instances of criminals he had known he said in his autobiography that a typical goonda was not a Bengali, he had no fear of the law, and often poked fun at the police after his arrest. Policemen generally feared him for his superhuman physical prowess. When tried under ordinary laws they often intimidated

Bengali lawyers to defend them free of charges, and silenced witnesses against themselves with threats of violence that too in the presence of policemen. Such men found a spawning ground in the slums of north and central Calcutta, where they raised gangs and fiercely controlled their respective turfs in which the police were virtually powerless.⁸²

- 43 Another such amateur Bengali criminologist, N.L. Bhattacharyya, a senior advocate of the Calcutta High Court in the 1920s, in a short treatise on crimes of the city published in 1926, attributed the rise of the goondas of Calcutta to the rich Marwaris who hired guards from 'up-country' to protect their increasing wealth at the time of the First World War.⁸³ These guards were violent men, and many among them lost their occupations after the War as the profits of their employers diminished considerably. Burdened with a steep rise in the cost of living on top of unemployment these men took to garrotting and became increasingly desperate and violent with each successive crime. So,

What was formerly done under verbal threat of future harm began to be performed with distinct hint as to immediate loss of life.⁸⁴

- 44 He said that soon what was typical of Burra Bazaar spread to other parts of the city, as subordinate policemen in the rank of constables offered immunity to the goondas in exchange of bribes. City Magistrates, indifferent to the well-being of the law-abiding people, often punished the goonda and his victim equally for a breach of the peace. In such circumstances robbery and extortion increased alarmingly and the goondas found an easy way to amass wealth by terrorizing the innocent and the peace-loving. Their modus operandi by this time had become uniform :

Once the pedestrian was attacked, all passers-by would run away, out of fear ; nobody would come to his help and the timid victim would not make any show of resistance but at once hand over the booty ...⁸⁵

- 45 Such occurrences, though regular, could not be proven in a court of law due to the fear of the goonda, because :

Even if arrests were made nobody would venture to come forward and give evidence against them though they were sure of their identity and their part in the crime.⁸⁶

- 46 The petitions of the Marwaris, the confidential report of the GD of the Calcutta Police, the observations of its Commissioner and the crime reportage of the early 1920s, taken together created the image of a typical goonda as a fierce low class male migrant hailing mainly from Bihar, U.P., and also from the Punjab and the North West Frontier Province. This image was already in place when a Select Committee was constituted in 1922 to draft the Goondas Bill. It was headed and dominated by H.L. Stephenson, the Home Member of the Bengal Governor's council, a European and a highly placed bureaucrat, who was then the equivalent of provincial minister for home/internal affairs.⁸⁷ The Bill was initially drafted as a measure applicable to Burra Bazar only, but before being tabled in the Bengal provincial legislative council it was modified to bring the whole of the city under its jurisdiction. It was hotly debated and ratified with the one amendment, which extended its jurisdiction beyond Calcutta to its industrial rim also known as the Presidency Area.
- 47 The Bengal provincial legislative council of 1923 – consisting of 91 councillors, out of which 88 were elected on a restricted franchise – was dominated by the Bengali Hindu *bhadralok*, who were raring to retain their elite status in institutional politics following the rise of mass.⁸⁸ For the *bhadralok* politicians the timing of the Goondas Bill was extremely significant ; with the inception of mass politics from 1919 they had rightly

perceived a threat to their importance in the political arena.⁸⁹ The only successful anti-imperial movement they had led was the Swadeshi movement of 1905-08. The movement was led by wealthy and English educated Bengali Hindu landlords and professionals and drew its following from Bengali middle class Hindus. The use of Hindu pantheon for political mobilization in the movement alienated the Bengal Muslims. After the movement the *bhadralok* did not develop any institutional connection with the lower classes, a shortcoming which became apparent with the rise of Gandhi and especially from the time of the anti-Rowlatt agitation. The highest Bengali Hindu politicians remained aloof from the masses ; they were apprehensive of the Pan-Islamism and the Khilafat movement ; they aspired to rival Gandhi's leadership in all-India nationalist politics and so they initially kept away from the Non-Co-operation movement in 1920. While *bhadralok* politicians joined the movement later on realizing the futility of keeping aloof, their importance in nationalist politics had by then diminished greatly.⁹⁰ In Calcutta the violence of lower-class Muslims in the riot of 1918 and the occasional violence of the masses in the Gandhian movements afterwards had shocked them. When called upon to ratify the Goondas Bill in December 1922, with the memory of the Non-Cooperation movement, withdrawn earlier that year, fresh in their mind, the *bhadralok* were apprehensive that it might become a leveling law which would enable the police to arbitrarily equate them with their social inferiors who comprised the mass in political movements. Their apprehensions were rooted in there being no definition of the word goonda and the consequent near universal applicability of the law. Voicing these concerns, Hasan Suhrawardy, a senior Bengali Muslim politician, and Surendranath Mallik, a *bhadralok* jurist and legislator who was a member of the Select Committee that drafted the Bill, said that during the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movements in Burra Bazaar and the mill districts surrounding Calcutta witnessed the presence of large number of "bad characters" on several occasions.⁹¹ Hence it was necessary to have a clear legal demarcation of the lawful agitators from the goonda who might temporarily don the garb of a political activist. As the Goondas Bill said nothing about distinguishing one from the other, Haridhan Dutta, a Bengali physician and a councillor, demanded an amendment in the bill by which it "shall not apply to any political offence."⁹² In his opinion :

A goonda is a dishonest man and is always committing offences against person and property, while a political offender is an honest man having certain political ideals which he tries to achieve. He is not expected to commit any offence against person and property.⁹³

- 48 These words brought out clearly the way the Bengal political elite imagined the goonda, i.e. as a figure incapacitated from obtaining a dual identity, both criminal and political, even temporarily. It meant, as Dharendra Swaraj and Srivastava say, that the goonda was incapacitated from overcoming his "negative universality" or disincorporating criminality from his body taking part in activities in the public sphere.⁹⁴
- 49 Dutta said he feared that without safeguards to protect political activists the Act would operate as a legal weapon against youths with zealous nationalist ideals who, though not terrorists, might not always remain wedded to non-violence. He said that if such a youth "powerfully urged" a shopkeeper not to deal in foreign made clothes, an overzealous policeman armed with the special powers conferred of him by the GA, might easily mark him out as a goonda. Thus "Hundreds of young men – non-co-operators" arrested by the police during 1920-22, who had been charged with either "breach of the peace" or "criminal intimidation" could be externed as goondas when the act came into force.⁹⁵ He

also apprehended that students, taking part in nationalist agitation, could become easy prey for the GA. So, he demanded the amendment to ensure that the police would necessarily overlook “excesses committed by students” while not conniving at the goondas who would probably join the students led by their criminal instincts.⁹⁶

- 50 Dutta’s proposed amendment for safeguards protecting political offenders in the Goondas Bill failed to win support of the majority in the house who feared that it would, in turn, make way for goondas in political movements. S.R. Das, the Advocate General of Bengal who prided himself as a champion of freedom for the political offender in the council, opposed the amendment on the ground that its incorporation in the bill would mean, “you cannot proceed against a goonda if that goonda is connected with a political movement.”⁹⁷ Stephenson reminded the Council of the looting of shops of warehouses on the Harrison Road during the riot of 1918, when shops and storehouses, containing essential commodities like food-grains and clothes, were looted allegedly by the goondas.⁹⁸ He added that the goondas would “merrily join” all political events in the future to win immunity from the GA and then take to such looting if the amendment was made to the Bill.⁹⁹ He assured the house that the GA would not be applied to Bengalis of the respectable classes because :

... (T)he Bill does not punish a goonda per se ; it merely enables us to deal with a certain class of people, provided they commit certain acts under certain circumstances.¹⁰⁰

- 51 As that class was not that of the Bengali *bhadralok* his assurance won the confidence of the majority in the house, who concurred with him that the Bill was an “extraordinary measure for extraordinary people under extraordinary circumstances” and therefore its “whole object” was “to avoid an open trial.”¹⁰¹ In his opinion ordinary criminals could be tried under the criminal procedure code, but the goonda would intimidate witnesses.¹⁰² In the opinion of the majority of councillors the goonda’s crimes though similar to that of the habitual offender evoked much greater fear. S.R. Das pointed out that the goondas would easily escape harsh punishment they deserved if they were equated with habitual criminals which meant that neither a series of non-bailable offences nor an offence of criminal intimidation leading to breach of the peace were more serious than the crimes of a goonda.¹⁰³ Following this argument Stephenson told the house that “ordinary badmashes” could be tried under the criminal procedure code, but the goonda would certainly intimidate witnesses.¹⁰⁴ Surendranath Mallik supported him citing the fate of a man who deposed against a goonda in a trial :

We cannot afford to have an open trial ... It is dangerous to the witness concerned. The man who comes to give evidence is intimidated. As I know of a case which I was called upon to try, a witness was shot down when the case was at the investigation stage. The man’s son came to give evidence after the father was killed. He was a little young fellow who appeared before the tribunal about 23 days after the murder. This is what we do not want.¹⁰⁵

- 52 Having thus highlighted the apparent necessity of protecting people from falling prey to the goondas the councillors agreed with Stephenson that the surest and swiftest way of achieving this goal was deportation of goondas from the city. Bearing that in mind they extended the jurisdictional area of the Bill to include the whole of Calcutta and its surrounding industrial area, in which the most important place was Howrah, Calcutta’s adjacent industrial town thickly populated with migrant labourers from Bihar and U.P.¹⁰⁶
- 53 Charting an imagined course of the journey of a typical goonda from his up-country home to Calcutta, Hasan Suhrawardy said that Howrah was the place where the future goonda

settled immediately after he “alighted from the train” arriving from his country home. There he enjoyed the support of his slum-dwelling factory-worker country cousins and took to petty crimes enjoying their support. In the next phase of his criminal career he began to perpetrate crimes in Calcutta while living in Howrah. On attaining the status of a fearsome goonda he would settle in Calcutta proper for good.¹⁰⁷ By deporting such an outsider or migrant to his country home, Shib Shekhareswar Ray, a noted Bengali landlord, claimed that he would give up crime and would “live the life of his forefathers.”¹⁰⁸ As the city and its surroundings was “a field of temptations” for him and his native village was a place where the “natural checks” on his “folies and vicious tendencies” exercised by friends and relations would help him to turn a new leaf.¹⁰⁹ Thus, deportation, a rough and ready punitive strategy, appeared to be a just mechanism of decriminalization. The house accepted Ray’s argument and the Bill was ratified by 47 votes for and 24 against, with others absent and a few abstaining. Ratification meant that a typical goonda was inherently unable to have a political function and a re-affirmation of his being an outsider to the city. With it all the prime markers of the goonda acquired its final affirmation and the GA came into effect.

Conclusion

54 While a strong prejudice against the migrant poor existed in the elites and the middle class of Calcutta long before, the goonda was essentially the successful outcome of several quests which originated during the First World War, a time of rapid change. The War years witnessed the rise of the Marwaris as a decisively important wealthy community of the city. With new wealth they sought to augment their social status. They supported British imperialists for profit and later used a part of their wealth to establish themselves as a significant nationalist constituency led by Gandhi himself in Calcutta. To assert their newfound importance in the city they specially demanded action against the goondas, or violent robbers and extortionists, many of whom were their former employees brought in from Bengal’s neighbouring provinces. The Europeans having suffered the shock and humiliation of being attacked and assaulted by the mass, which gathered in Burra Bazaar in 1919 and then in 1920-22, found it necessary to make way for police powers which would instil fear and turn the poor, who constituted it, docile. Shorn of manpower and weaponry European administrators and police officials had to devise a mechanism for deterrent policing over recalcitrant elements from among the mass to achieve this end. Being averse to and apprehensive of the mass the elitist Bengali *bhadralok* and elite Bengal Muslim politicians were anxious to retain their predominance and respectability in times of anti-imperialist movements and agitations. They feared being equated with the migrant poor who they thought of as habitually violent, motivated by criminal intent and incapable of upholding the lofty ideal of nationalism. They anxiously awaited a law to retain their high social status while taking part in agitation alongside the migrant poor. They were aided by journalists who attributed an increasing incidence of ordinary crimes committed during a time of hardship for the poor to the goondas. The result was the GA, a suspicion law which turned the migrant poor into the social matrix of violent street criminals who, while committing ordinary crimes, could silence their victims and paralyze the functioning of the law by instilling extraordinary fear.

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NOTES

1. Pearson (1983, p. 157-167 & 230).
2. Humphries (1981, p. 31-32).
3. Neuberger (1993, p. 39-41).
4. Bengal Act I of 1923 (The Goondas Act, 1923), *The Bengal Code*, Volume IV, Bengal Acts 1920-1930, Calcutta, Bengal Government Press, (1939 fifth edition), p. 97.
5. Ibid. (p. 98-99).
6. Ibid. (p. 99-100).
7. Ibid. (p. 100-101).
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid. (p.101-102).
10. Ibid. (p.103).
11. Ibid. (p. 102).
12. Ibid.
13. Kidambi (2007, p. 154-155) ; Masselos (2007, p. 96-103).
14. *Census of India*, 1911, vol. VI, 'Report of the Census of the City of Calcutta', p. 14.
15. *Census of India*, 1931, vol. VI, 'City of Calcutta', Parts I and II, p. 11-13.
16. *Census of India*, 1921, vol. IV, 'City of Calcutta', Parts I and II, p. 103-104.
17. These terms have been in common parlance till lately. Bengali literature of the twentieth century colonial Calcutta is replete with these references. Bengali aversion to menial work was proverbial during the colonial period. The most famous critic of this tendency was celebrated Bengali chemist Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861-1944), who urged Bengali youths repeatedly to take up menial jobs usually performed by people Bihar, UP and Orissa (now spelt Odisha) in Bengal.
18. Shubho Basu (2004, p. 118-131).
19. Ibid.
20. Papers regarding the Calcutta riots, 1907, Government of Bengal, Home department, Political branch, 149/07 KW, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata, India (hereafter WBSA).
21. Ibid. The constabulary of the Calcutta Police, its lowest rank was manned almost exclusively by men from Bihar and UP through the colonial period. They were looked down upon as corrupt and inefficient by the European high officials of the force. They wanted to hire educated Bengalis in their place, who in turn rarely ever displayed inclination for the job. For a detailed commentary on the matter see W.R. Gourlay, *A Contribution Towards of the Police in Bengal* (Calcutta ; Bengal Secretariat Press, 1916) and the confidential Bengal government report entitled, 'Detailed Examination of the working of the Calcutta Police with statements showing the staff required at once to bring the force into a state of reasonable efficiency and to secure law and order' (Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1942).
22. Ibid.
23. Disturbances in connection with the Bakr Id Festival, 1910, Government of Bengal, Home department, Political branch (Confidential), File Nos. 290/1-3.WBSA.
24. Ibid.
25. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 10 December 1910.
26. 'Disturbances in connection with the Bakr Id Festival, 1910', Government of Bengal, Home department, Political branch (Confidential), File Nos. 290/1-3. WBSA.
27. 'Report on recent Mohammedan disturbances in Calcutta, 1918', Home department, Political branch. A series. File No. 164-201, National Archives of India, New Delhi, India (hereafter NAI)..

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43. Annual Report of Police Administration for the town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for the year 1920 (Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1921), 7, Resolution.
44. Edwardes (1924, p. 50-51). Sarkar (1983, p. 170-171).
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Deb (1969, vi and 1). The laws in question, Sections 109 and 110 of the Criminal Penal Code empowered magistrates to summon a habitual criminal, or any person including a newcomer to the area within his jurisdiction without an "ostensible means of livelihood" and made him execute a bond of good behaviour for a maximum of three years.
48. 'Control of Goondas in Calcutta, 1920', Government in Bengal, Political department, Police branch (Confidential), File no. 241/(1-8), WBSA.
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62. 'The Goondas Bill, 1922', Political department, Police branch, File No.P.2-A-9(3) of 1921, WBSA.
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65. Ibid.
66. Ibid. The place-names mentioned in the quote are of districts of United Provinces and Bihar.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid. The Report said, "The increase was noticeable from June 1920, which shows 8 cases (7 in North Town alone) as compared with 2, 2 and 4 in the preceding three months, and it continues particularly in the North District – right through the year 1920 up to the month of June the current year."
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73. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 5 August 1923. RNNPB, No. 32, Year 1923, p. 811.
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ABSTRACTS

With the Goondas Act of 1923, Calcutta conferred on its police executive powers of deporting virtually any man from the city without a trial under the pretext that he was a violent criminal of migrant origin. The Act deliberately did not define the goonda, as it was 'known' to all in the city who he was. Fear of violence by the migrant poor was felt in Calcutta earlier, but since 1920 the goondas assumed special significance, as a new and commonly accepted social image. From this year, the goonda was invented through : the Marwari traders' search for higher social status ; the demands by the police for powers to subdue the migrant poor who constituted the mass ; and the Bengali Hindu English-educated gentlefolk's perceived necessity to retain an honest and idealist political self-image at the time of tumultuous mass politics.

Par la législation du Goondas Act de 1923, Calcutta a confié à sa police le pouvoir de déporter sans procès pratiquement tout habitant de la ville au prétexte d'être un criminel violent d'origine migrante. De manière délibérée, la loi s'abstenait de définir le "goonda", car tout le monde dans la ville "savait" de qui on parlait. La peur de la violence du migrant pauvre s'était déjà manifestée auparavant, mais les "goondas" avaient pris une importance particulière depuis 1920, en tant que figure sociale nouvelle et communément acceptée. A partir de cette année-là, différents éléments ont contribué à l'invention du "goonda" : l'aspiration des commerçants Marwari à un statut social plus élevé ; la revendication policière de pouvoirs plus étendus pour maîtriser les migrants pauvres qui constituaient la masse de la population ; et la perception des élites bengalaise hindoues éduquées à l'anglaise qu'elles devaient conserver la représentation d'honnêteté et d'idéalisme qu'elles se faisaient d'elles-mêmes, dans une époque tumultueuse de politique des masses.

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