

CHAPTER - II

The Roots of Division : The Hindu Socio-Religious Hierarchy

The Hindu social system is structuralised by the code of religion . It is based on ‘*varna-ashrama dharma*’. *Ashrama* relates to the four stages of life - *Brahmacharya*, *Garhastha*, *Vanprastha*, and *Sannyas*. *Varna* is the four divisions of society on the basis of labour and inheritance . The two schemes based on *varna* and *ashrama* are known as *varna ashrama - vyabastha* that is the organisation of *varna* and *ashrama*. Whereas *varna* deals with the division of society i.e. *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* ; *ashrama* deals with the nature of training and living in four stages of life . Thus there emerged four Castes and four *ashramas* . The origin of *varna* is still obscure. Literally it is said that *varna* was not hereditary, it was based on the inborn quality, training and profession of an individual; owing to degradation of the concept of *varna* and its practice in later times it became hereditary . For the origin and growth of *varna* more emphasis, of course, is given on the conflict, inter-relations and blood-mixture between the Aryans and the non-Aryans in India.¹

The Hindu Hierarchy consists of two parts as already outlined above .The one relates to the *ashrama*, while the other to the *varna*. The word “ hierarchy” means “ any system of persons or thing in graded order”.²

The Social Psychology of the four *Ashramas*

The Hindu *Sastrakars* or the *Sastra-writers* have taken man into account as a social being with regard to four broad factors that influenced his life and conduct . He is considered in relation to (i) *Desh* (place) which is said to be the regional approach to the study of society; (ii) *Kala* (time), which constitutes the historical approach to the study of society; (iii) *Srama* (effort) which takes into account his nurture and development in his environment; and (iv) *Guna*

(natural traits), which refers to the natural and inherent psychological environment of a man.³

It is advisable for the proper understanding of the *ashramas* that we should look into the theory of the 'Purusarthas' — '*dharma, artha, kama and moksha*'. These are psychomoral bases of the *ashrama* theory . This is so for two reasons . On the one hand, the individual receives a psychological theory through the *ashramas* in terms of lessons in the use and management of the '*purusartha*'; on the other hand, in actual practice, he has to deal with society in accordance with these lessons . It is usual to translate the terms *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha* in English by such words as morality, wealth, desires or passion and salvation respectively . However, english words are in many cases devoid of the overtones of Sanskrit.⁴

Let us now return to the theory and practice of the *ashrama* proper . The word *ashrama* is derived from the Sanskrit root *shrama* to exert oneself'. Thus it may mean (i) a place where exertions are performed and (ii) the action of performing such exertions.⁵ Literally an *ashrama* is a 'halting or resting place'. The word thus signifies a halt, a stoppage or stage in the journey of life just for the sake of rest ; in a sense in order to prepare oneself for further journey . Thus the '*ashrama*' are regarded as resting places or work-places during one's journey on the way to final liberation which is the final aim of life . The four stages of life, according to Vyas in the *Mahabharata*, formed a ladder or flight of four steps and this flight attaches to *Brahma*. By ascending that flight one reaches the region of *Brahma*.⁶

The *ashramas* are four in number: (1) the *Brahmacharya*— that of student, (2) the *Garhastha* — that of married man, the house - holder, (3) the *Vanaprastha*- that of a retired life in the forest after abandoning the home, preparatory to complete renouncement of worldly relations, and (4) the *Sannyas*- the life of complete renunciation of worldly relations and attachments. The *Brahmacharya ashrama* concerns itself with the management of education as a social institution and the institution is a social and psychological phenomenon . Education is the principal instrument in the hands of a social group by means of which it passes on and hands over to other individuals and posterity's the tradition, discipline and culture it has gathered towards making the best and most important gift of human life . It is evident that amongst all

social institutions the system and outlook of education is of primary importance . In the words of R. H. Lowie —” Conceivably a people could dispense with religion, as the U.S.S.R. has tried to do; conceivably a state might refuse to distinguish fixed forms of sexual union as marriage. But education is indispensable to any society, for without it there would be lost all the accumulated knowledge of the ages and all standards of conduct .Education is the social economy that forestalls such wastage.”⁷

The Brahmacharya ashrama

In the ancient ages the pupil had to live with his teacher and through dialogue got to the tenets of teachings and this stage of learning was known Brahmacharyasrama. After the *Brahmacharya* period was over, the pupil had to take a dip in water and then with the permission of the teacher returned home to start the second stage in his life namely *garhastha* . Because of the dip in water, pupil was called *snatak* symbolizing one who has taken a bath in the water of learning . Nowadays a student after graduation is admitted in a convocation to particular degree and he is charged ‘ to prove worthy of the same’. This means that the student after graduation or after degrees or diplomas has to prove worthy of the same in later life .In ancient time the education that a *snatak* had with his teacher has been finely expressed thus : “Both the teacher and the pupil referring to Brahma prayed thus : Please protect us both and give both of us fruits of education equally . Let us equally acquire the ability to have learning . Let the efforts of both of us in learning be successful . Let us not envy each other”.⁸ But education was not open to all. A *Shudra*, inspite of inherent tendril and ability could not study with a *Brahman* either student or teacher.

The Garhasthasrama

On return to the house the *garhastha* system would come into being .The *Brahmachari* now is to set up his family . To this end marriage became a necessity . It is to be noted that marriage is a social institution with the family or family is a social institution of which marriage is a part. Now *garhastha ashrama* that is the house holder’s life starts . As a social institution marriage has been defined by Wester Marck “ as a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognised by customs or law , and involves certain rights and duties both in the

case of the parties entering the union and in the case of the children born of it.”⁹ Such a definition of marriage indicates that some aspects of the family itself are also included in its connotation. Thus when Wester Marck points out that “marriage is something more than a regulated sexual behaviour,” and that “it is an economical institution, which may in various ways affect the proprietary rights of the party”,¹⁰ refers more to the issues connected with the structure and function of the family than to marriage itself. All these considerations are equally true to these Hindu social institution of marriage (*vivaha*).

It has been held by Manu (ix .96): “to be mothers were women created, and to be fathers men; therefore the *Vedas* ordained that *dharma* must be practised by man together with his wife”. ‘*Vivaha*’ is one of the *sarirasamaskaras* or sacraments sanctifying the body through which every man and woman must pass at proper age and time. Manu (ix .25) considers it a social institution for regulation of proper relations between the sexes.

It is difficult to define precisely and briefly the institution of the family. As a social institution the family has emerged to satisfy certain basic biological, psychological and social needs of man. The primary functions are (i) the stable satisfaction of the sexes, and the psychosomatic needs of man and woman; (ii) procreation, care and nurture of the young ; and (iii) the sharing of a home for living.¹¹ The three functions are so united that each of them reinforces and enriches the satisfactions of others.

Psycho-analysts have traced the psycho-social influence of the family on the individual . In this connection one may note Alder’s studies of the child in relation to the family and Freud’s psycho-analytical studies. Comte recognised the deep influence of the family life upon the individual when he said : “ In the family life alone can the social instincts find any basis for growth”.¹² All the altruistic attitude of man could be traced to their roots in the family life; cooperation, self sacrifice, service to humanity, universal brotherhood, love for living being have been traced back to their origin in co- operation in the family life.¹³

The Vanaprasthashrama

Although four grades of training include the recluse and the *sannyasi*, the *Chhandogya*

Upanishad excludes the fourth, on the ground that it is outside the *ashramas*. The house holder's life is very important . In the third *ashrama* the beginnings are made for the yielding of the same for the final *yajna* which is expected to be performed in the last *ashrama*. The individual now gives up his fields of *artha* and *kama* by leaving his near and dear ones, his family (*kula*), his village (*grama*) and by abandoning his belongings and possession. He now goes out into the forest (*bana*), for meditation and service to others and, he trains himself up for the execution of the final *yajna* of the *sannyas ashrama*, the last *ashrama*.¹⁴

Sannyas

The last *ashrama* provides the fullest opportunity for the self expression and self expansion of the individual in terms of the final *yajna* . *Sannyas* means a complete offering of the self (*atmahuti*) for the achievement of the true spirit of life and its perfection . Then the self surrenders all that was nearest and dearest to its lower ego , in order that thereby and thereafter it may enable itself to be one with the real self (the *Paramatma*) . Through *Sannyas* the individual becomes, a *yajnibhakta* . He has undergone the schooling and discipline from stage to stage, *ashrama* to *ashrama*, realising more and more that neither he belongs to this *samsar* (the world in appearance where the self cherishes all desires and longs to enjoy) nor this *samsar* belongs to him . He now realises fully the place and meaning of the self in the midst of *samsar* and he brings himself face to face with the final aim of all existence, namely *moksha* in the last stage.¹⁵

It may be seen from the above that the *ashramas* are regarded as schools of life at several stages of human existence, devised and organised towards the best likelihood for the individual to attain the aim of *moksha*, in accordance with the theory of the ultimate nature of thing . During these different stages of life, the functions of the group and the individual are both different and definite with regard to each other. In the first *ashrama*, the function of the group is to look after the individual . On the other hand as far as the individual is concerned, it is a phase of interaction. In the second *ashrama* the individual has to look after the group— he is the trusty and manager of the social estate, of the social mores. The group here is interested in giving him and taking from him the fullest opportunities, social, economic, physical and spiritual , so that the indi-

vidual should best satisfy these obligations. The third *ashrama* is largely a neutral phase from the point of view of the individual as well as of the group. Here on the part of the individual, efforts have to be made to yield to his spiritual responsibilities towards the manifestation of the power of the self. By and by he is to take to life according to the best lessons acquired in the *Brahmacharya ashrama*, namely, going into oneself and finding the truth out for oneself. The feeling of separation from God begins to make itself felt at this stage. In the third *ashrama* and in the fourth, the function of the individual is to deal with the hidden, the dormant, the spiritual, the supernatural and with life within; and the function of the group becomes gradually thinned out and in the fourth, it comes almost nil. In the last stage, the individual free from all obligation, has to help himself in the search of the true knowledge and being of the self.¹⁶

The four stages of life were not equitably meaningful to all men and women right from the early *Vedic* period of Indian history. The low-castes were deprived of enjoying and practising the distinguished grades of works as demarcated by different *ashramas*. The *ashramas* exclusively meant for Brahmins of course, the *Kshatriyas* having fulfilled the task of defence and administration could enter the last two stages too, though training during the first stage was rather mandatory for the son of a king. The Shudras, who constituted the major chunk of the population had no right to educate themselves in any *ashramas* run by the Brahmins. The *ashramas*, therefore, were not universal-social institutions; these were virtually preserved for the socio-religious aristocracy of the high caste Hindus.

The Four Varnas

In literal sense, in the *varna* organisation the society is considered from the view point of the larger group and the individual's position is defined in this group with reference to his innate nature, tendencies, disposition and profession. There are several passages in the *Rig Veda* dealing with the origin of the *varnas*, generally meaning socio-religious classes and effectively signifying economic and political status also. The *Purusasukta* in the *Rig Veda* (x, 90, 12) says that the *Brahman varna* represented the mouth of *Purusa* (Universal man), the *Rajana* (*Kshatriya*) his arms, the *Vaishya* his thighs and the *Shudra* his feet. Zimmer and others have held the view

that the hymn of the *Purusasukta* was a later interpolation and that the institution of caste was not *Rig Vedic* but of later origin.¹⁷ However, it has been shown that there are other passages, apart from the *Purusasukta* in which the division of society into *varnas*, though not in the rigid form of later times, is mentioned. Thus, in the *Rig Veda* (viii.35.16-18) the three *varnas* - *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, and *vaishya* are mentioned. In the *Rig Veda* (I.113.16) the four *varnas* are referred to thus: "one to high sway (i.e., the *Brahmana*) and one to exalted glory (i.e., the *Kshatriya*), one to pursue his gain (i.e., *Vaishya*) and one to his labour (i.e., *Shudra*) - all to regard their different vocations, all moving creatures hath the Dawn awaking".¹⁸ Haugh's opinion on the origin of the institution of caste seems to be correct. According to him, "It has been of late asserted that the original parts of the *Vedas* do not know the system of castes. But this conclusion was prematurely arrived at without sufficiently weighing the evidence. It is true that caste system is not to be found in such a developed stage; the duty assigned to several castes are not so clearly defined as in the law book and *Puranas* but nevertheless the system is already known in the certain parts of the *Vedas* or other pre-supports."¹⁹

In the *Vedic* times there were no restrictions as regards particular occupations for persons belonging to a particular *varna*. Thus a person born as a *Brahmana* could take the occupation of a physician without thereby anyway degrading his social status. With *Som* as their sovereign lord the plants hold colloquy and say, "Oh, King, we save from death the man whose cure a *Brahmana* undertakes."²⁰ A *Brahmana* Rishi says: "I am a poet, my father is a physician, my mother a grinder of corn. With our different views, seeking after gain, we ran after cattle."²¹ It is also seen that there were no restrictions in the *Rig Vedic* society in the matter of diet and drink and in this respect there was no obvious exclusiveness between the different *varnas* such as we find in the later society.²² Whatever food or drink was usual was common to all the *varnas*. So too there was no 'higher' or 'lower' *varna* for matrimonial alliances.²³ But things changed in the later times for the worse and inter-dining and inter-marriages between different castes were precluded.

The *Rig Veda* narrates the '*Deva-Asura*' war. The '*Devas*' were superior in rituals, whereas the '*Asuras*' in military prowess. The difference between the two was related to the *yajna*

(Vedic ritual of sacrifice by burning *ghee* in fire along with the recitation of hymns invoking the Gods for some purpose). The *Devas* performed the *yajnas* while the *Asuras* did not . The *Devas* believed in the power of morality and spiritualism whereas the *Asuras* depended on their own intelligence and this signified their religious differences . Since the *Devas* relied on intuition, they are called intuitionist. On the other hand the *Asuras* or *Dasas* and *Dasyaus* as they were so called relied on their reasoning power and physical strength . In Sanskrit term the intuitionists were called the *Brahmanyavadis*, while the *Dasas* and *Dasyus*, the *Boudhas*.²⁴

The above account of the *Vedic* period shows that the *varnas* had been “ open classes “ as termed by Cooley.²⁵ They were not water tight compartments, the membership of which was determined by virtue of heredity and that was “ more based on individual traits and less upon decent.”²⁶ Generally, however, the *varnas* became more and more marked off and separated from each other. They came to be addressed in four different ways, differing in degrees of politeness as indicated by the terms *ehi*, *agachchha*, *adrava* and *adhava* respectively to be used for welcoming persons of the four different *varnas*.²⁷ Different sizes of funeral cakes (*pinda*) were prescribed for different *varnas*.²⁸

While reciting the *Gayatri mantra* the three *Varnas* were to start each with the different word : the *Brahmana* with *Bhuh*, the *Kshatriya* with *Bhuvah* and the *Vaishya* with *svah*.²⁹ And the *Satapatha Brahmana* says that the *varnas* were created from these words.³⁰ Gradually the distinction between different *varnas* grew in terms of different rights and privileges as mentioned in different passages of the *Vedic* literature including the *Samhitas*, the *Brahmanas*, and the *Upanishads* . In the later period, the *Shudra* still held the position of a menial labourer or slave. Even then there was less restriction upon him. He was at times allowed the liberty of even taking part in sacrificial ceremonies.³¹ Instead of three *varnas* mention is now usually made of the four *varnas* together ,the *Shudra* also finds a place along with the three other *varnas*. Though the *Shudra* was now accepted as the fourth *varna* along with the three other *varnas*, he was not yet free from many of the old disabilities. His duty continued to be as in older times, to serve the other *varnas*. He was not allowed to recite ‘*mantras*’ and perform sacrifices.³²

There is a good deal of theorising in the *Epic* and the *Dharmasastra* literature on the problem of the origin and development of the *varnas*. There were no distinct caste or classes of men in the *Treta Yuga* according to the *Mahabharata*.³³ The theory of the origin of the *varnas* from the various parts of the creator's body also finds a place in the *Mahabharata*.³⁴ The theory that the four *varnas* proceeded from the limbs of the creator is also held by *Manusmriti*.³⁵ Manu goes on eulogizing the *Brahmana varna* as the supreme creation of God.³⁶ He positively asserts further that the *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* are the only *varnas* in existence. And there is no fifth *varna* to which *Yajnavalkya*, *Baudhayana* and *Vasistha* also agree.³⁷

Jatis

Manu's theory of the origin of the mixed castes deserves mention. Intermarriages between these new castes give rise to newer and newer castes so that the process goes on multiplying.³⁸ In a *sloka* (x.11) Manu has used the word *jati* as distinct from *varna*. This *sloka* opens the topic concerning offspring begotten on a woman of higher *varna* by a man of lower *varna*. Thus form of inter-caste marriages, the *Suta*, the *Magadha* and the *Vaideha* are so named as *jati* (*jatitah*). Manu also uses the term *varna-sankara* mixture of *varnas*, in this connection.³⁹ Though Manu refers to four *varnas* only, he mentions about 57 *jatis* as a result of *varna-sankara*.

In the *Rig Veda*, society is said to have been classified according to four *varnas*. Originally *varna* indicated colour or appearance. It is derived from the \sqrt{bri} meaning "to select or occupation". On other hand *jati* is derived from the \sqrt{jan} , meaning "to be born". Hence *jati* relates to caste whereas *varna* relates to occupational class. But the two do not correspond with each other. Subsequently, of course, the two were mixed up, and Senart has admitted it.⁴⁰ However, Senart's classification of *Arya varna* and *Das varna* is not tenable. Actually Manu's *jati-system* has been based on "Mathematical device of permutation and combination."⁴¹ Manu has tried to give an explanation of the mixed castes on the basis of his device. He has accepted the "four-rank system" of the *varna* and explained the mixed castes by a combination of different categories of *varnas*.

Manu's derivation of the mixed castes is as follows. Let us assume that Bb represents the marriage of Brahmin male and female; Kk that of *Kshatriya* male and female; Vv that of *Vaishya*

male and female and Ss that of *Shudra* male and female. If a Brahmin marries a female from each of the three lower castes, the *jatis* would be Bk, Bv, Bs. Similarly in the case of Kshatriyas two *Jantis* Kv, Ks, in the case of *Vaishyas* there would be one *jati* Vs. These marriages are known as *Anuloma* . Six *Jatis* are produced by this. Now if a male of lower castes marries a female of upper caste, the marriage is known as *Pratiloma*. Hence, the number of such mixed castes (*Jatis*) would be twelve. In fact the four *varnas* by two kinds of mixture yield 204 *Jatis* as follows :-

(I) <i>Anuloma</i> and <i>Pratiloma</i> first mixture	- 12
(ii) 6 <i>Anuloma</i> mixtures	- 15
(iii) The same male and female in the reverse order	- 15
(iv) Mixture of four <i>varnas</i> with 6 <i>Anuloma</i> and 6 <i>Pratiloma</i>	- 48
(v) 6 <i>Pratilomas</i> amongst themselves and with mixtures of 4 <i>varnas</i>	- 78
(i.e., ii and iv)	
(vi) 6 <i>Anulomas</i> and 6 <i>Pratilomas</i> in their internal mixtures	- 36
	Total - <u>204</u>

Manu has named some *Jatis* but the list is not exhaustive.⁴²

Recent researches into *Manusmriti* have revealed that the picture of society as depicted by Manu has very little correspondence with the realities of life. O' Malley has observed that the Brahmins in their writings of the *Manusmriti* have given an ideal picture of their own accord.⁴³ *Manusmriti* is the evil deed of Brahmana Pushyamitra who as the chief of the army killed his Maurya emperor Brihadratha and ascended the throne of Magadha and established the Sunga dynasty (187 - 75 B.C.). The motive behind was to give supremacy to the Brahmins . Most probably, there was no author of the name Manu. It was, in fact, a compilation by many.

The West Bengal Government published Ashok Mitra's *The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal* in 1951 . Mitra has collected many illusory tales with regard to castes. He has not been able to see through the game of the *Manusmriti*. He overlooked the recent researches of Ramaprasad Chanda and Nihar Ranjan Roy. As a result scientific, social and historical aspects

have been neglected. In identifying the castes, he should have been more meticulous and inquisitive in the study of their origin and multiplications.

The Mixed Castes

According to Manu (x.4) the original development of humanity was confined to *Four Castes*, "The three castes, the *Brahman*, the *Kshatriya* and the *Vaishya* are twice born; the fourth, the *Shudra* is once born, and there is not a fifth." These divisions of human society are, however, quite inadequate in view of diversities in human society. Considering the variation and evolution of human ideas, creativity and occupation, society can not be confined to the divisions of four castes only. Hinduism recognises such classes, and views them as certain and despises the degraded classes of people as the issues of connivable intercourse and adultery. It calls them mixed castes (*varna sankara*) or hybrid. But according to John Wilson,⁴⁴ "the Mixed Castes must have originated principally from the increase of occupations in the Hindu community brought about by the growing demand and division of labour, and by the circumstances of the dominant people coming in contact with aboriginal tribes, which keeping in the main beyond the pale of Hinduism, have either been ultimately degraded (i.e., untouchables), or have maintained for themselves in their own retreats in precarious independence."

The primeval rule for the sons of women one degree lower than their husbands was that they were treated as degraded by the lowness of their mothers. For the sons of women two or three degrees lower the law was as follows. From a Brahmin on a *Vaishya* wife is born a son called *Ambashtha*, subsequently represented a *Vaidya* or physician; on a *Shudra* wife called *Nishad*. Similarly from a *Kshatriya* on a *Shudra* wife springs a creature called *Ugra*. The sons fathered by a Brahmin and born of women of three lower classes, are considered sequentially degraded. In this way Manu by means permutation and combination concocted the mixed castes. The mixed classes of Hindus more numerous than those belonging to the original four castes.

Four Orders :

The Brahmana

The *Sastras* dwell much on the pre-eminence of the *Brahmana*, both by birth and the

original endowment. The very birth of a Brahmin is a constant incarnation of *Dharma* for he is born to promote religion and to procure ultimate happiness. When a Brahmin springs to light, he is born above the world as the chief of all creatures he is assigned to guard the treasures of duties — religious and civil . Whatever exists in the universe is all in effect the wealth of the Brahmin. He is entitled to everything by the eminence of birth. The Brahmin eats his own foods, wears his own apparel and bestows his own in alms; through the benevolence of the Brahmins other mortals enjoy life.⁴⁵

His inherent qualities are “quiescence, self control, devotion , purity, patience, rectitude, secular and sacred understanding , the recognition of spiritual existence , and the inborn disposition of serving *Brahma*.”⁴⁶ In every limb of his body power and glory is resident . The purifying *Ganga* is in his right ear; his mouth is that of God himself, the devouring fire is in his hand; the Holy *tirthas* or places of pilgrimage are in his right foot.⁴⁷ The *Brahmana* is the “first born” by nature (*Agrajanma*); the “twice born “(*Dwija*), by the sacrament of the *Manu* , the “*Diti-on-earth*” (*Bhudeva*), by his divine status ; and the intelligent one (*Vipra*) by his innate comprehension.⁴⁸

The Brahmin thus is as, according to the *sastras* superior to all laws . Even once the code of morality was made subservient to the interest of the Brahmin. Even the truth and honesty must be dispensed with for his peculiar advantage . The *Manu* says, in case of sensual gratification and marriage, food and drink and in owning jewels and wealth all advantage must be made due to the Brahmin.⁴⁹ A Brahmin may without hesitation take the property of a *Shudra*, who has nothing of his own; his master may doubtlessly, take his property.⁵⁰ To this injustice, too, the most horrid cruelty may in his case be added. The point to note is that the Hindu sacred writings are in no degree ashamed of the barbarous treatments of the lower order of people in society. A once-born man, who insults the twice - born one with gross invectives, ought to have his tongue slit.

The Brahmins, as the great authors of the perceptive parts of the Hindu *sastras*, have no feeling of shame in stating their pretension and urging their prerogatives. Their wrath is dreadful

as that of Gods in heaven. They and their wives and daughters are to be worshipped as God on earth.⁵¹ Many opportunities and privileges are conferred on the Brahmins, and these are to be enforced by the state and the ruler . One thing , however, is certain, that as the Brahmin is acknowledged superior, he has little apprehension to account for deviations from his maxims, because no one is at liberty to judge him.⁵²

The Kshatriya

In Hindu caste system, the *Kshatriyas* constitute the class of the warrior, the ruler, the administrator and the prince. According to the orthodox view of castes, the *Kshatriya* sprang from the arms of the God *Brahma*, as the Brahmin from his head. This explanation of the *Kshatriya*, however, is not consistently adhered to in practice as well as in all the codes of the Hindus . In the seventh chapter of the Code of Manu, the creation and glory of a prince is thus set forth :

“ Since the world destitute of a king quaked on all sides, the Lord created a king for the maintenance of this system , both religious and civil forming him of eternal particles drawn from (the Gods); since a king was composed of particles drawn from this chief guardian deities, he consequently surpasses all beings in glory. A king, even though a child must not be treated lightly, from an idea that he is a mere mortal; no, he is powerful divinity who appears in human form.”⁵³

According to the *Bhagavat Geeta*,⁵⁴ the natural duties of the *Kshatriyas* are heroism, splendor, pertinacity, polity, not fleeing from the battle field, liberality and fitness to govern.” The *Kshatriya* is set forth in the Law book as the essence of majesty and power; and as the great dispenser of justice, particularly in the matter of punishment, of which he is the personal manifestation, and which though needed both by God and by men is to be leniently applied to Brahmins.⁵⁵ He is to be the protector of the various castes attending to their various duties.⁵⁶ In discharging his functions, he has to abide by the decision of the learned Brahmin.⁵⁷ He must cultivate humility and be warned by the example of kings, who in the lack of it, have involved themselves in ruin. He is enjoined to seek sacred and secular knowledge from the Brahmin and to avoid various kinds of immoralities and sensualities. He is recommended to choose 8 ministers - some are to be versed in the sacred books and others in the art of war. The ambassador (*dut*)

selected by him should be skilled in the *sastras*. He should live in a capital surrounded by a desert, and other ways difficult to approach and well defended fortifications, his own palace being in its centre. He must appoint a domestic priest (*purohit*), and be liberal in sacrifices and give to Brahmins.

He must be brave, resolute and generous . He must raise taxes from his subjects according to their means . He must not receive any tax from a Brahmin learned in the *Vedas*, while at the same time, he must not allow Brahmins to suffer or die of hunger.⁵⁸ He must choose for warlike campaigns , the season of the year must go favourable for weather and crops . His troops have to march in varied lines. He has to dispose of them in battle according to their capacities . To his neighbours who support his cause, he has to practise kindness. For self preservation, he has to be ready to part with his dominions and even with his family when required. “Against misfortune let him preserve his wealth ; at expense of his wealth, let him preserve his wife; but at all events let preserve himself, even at the hazard of wife and riches”.⁵⁹

From the Brahmin, but never from the *Shudra*, he has to seek the interpretation of law . The king is the guardian of all property, including that of minors and the owner of the half of treasure trove (the other half belonging to Brahmins), except that found by a learned Brahmin , who may take it without any deduction as he is the lord of all . He also receives the wealth of all other classes on the failure of heirs, except that of Brahmin, which must go to their own community without being escheated.⁶⁰ He is the upholder of the last laws and customs of the various classes of the community.⁶¹ In the dispensation of justice the king himself is not to be made a witness. It is his duty to keep the caste bellow himself closed to the works respectively prescribed for them. He should order the *Vaishya* to practice trade or money-lending or agriculture and attendance on cattle; and the *Shudra* to act in the service of the twice-born . The doctrines of Adam Smith were not in vogue when the laws of Manu were reduced to a Code.⁶²

The Vaishya

The *Vaishya* is the cattle keeper, the agriculturist and the merchant. Manu in his code has referred to his function to keep herds of cattle, to sacrifice , to read the scripture, to carry on

trade, to lend at interest, and to cultivate land. The *Bhagavat Geeta*⁶³ assigns to him the duties such as agriculture, keeping of cattle, and the practice of merchandise. In the law Books the general ordinances affecting the *Vaishyas* are the following. After forming the initiatory sacraments, ending with that of sacrificial threads, and marrying a wife of his own class, he should attend to his proper business, specially that of cattle keeping, since the lord of men has committed cattle to his trust in the same way as has committed man to that of the Brahmin and the *Kshatriya*. He has to be acquainted with the prices of mercantile commodities like gems, pearls, coral, iron, cloth, perfumes and liquids. He has to be skilled in sowing seeds, in the qualities of land in weights and measures, in the excellence and defects of articles of traffics, in the advantages and disadvantages of different districts in the probable gain and loss of goods, in the breeding of cattle, in the wages of servants, in the various languages of men, in the best places for keeping goods and in all measures for effecting purchase and sale. He should be vigilant when his wealth increases. Also he should be attentive to the giving off nourishment to all sentient creatures.⁶⁴ In this context the *Vaishya* requires considerable intelligence and ingenuity for the proper discharge of his duties.

The Shudra

The principal duty assigned to the *Shudras* is that of serving the Brahmin, the *Kshatriya* and the *Vaishya*, specially the Brahmin for whose advantage, principally he has been created. In the law book he is viewed as a domestic slave, to whom servitude is natural and of which he can not be divested, and whose property even is at the disposal of his master.⁶⁵ It is obvious from his daily engagement that ceremonial ablution was not required to the consequence of simple contact with him. His religious degradation is complete according to Hindu legislation.

Manu has laid down the following injunction on the Brahmin. He is not to give advice to a *Shudra*, nor clarified butter of which part has been offered to the Gods, nor spiritual counsel to such a man, nor inform him of the legal expression for his sin. Any one violating this injunction is condemned to a hell named *Asamvrita*.⁶⁶ A Brahmin is never to be the preceptor of a *Shudra*.⁶⁷ While the first part of a Brahmin's compound name should indicate holiness; of a *Kshatriya*'s

power ; and of a *Vaishya*'s wealth, that of a *Shudra* should indicate contempt.⁶⁸ The *Veda* is never to be read in the presence of a *Shudra*.⁶⁹ No sacrifice is to be performed for him.⁷⁰ They who received property from a *Shudra* for the performance of rites to consecrated fire be condemned as ministers of the base.⁷¹

It is laid down that *Shudras* engaged in religious duties must perform each month the ceremony of shaving their heads ; their foods must be the orts of the Brahmins and their modes of purification the same with that of a *Vaishya*.⁷² A Brahmin is purified by water that reaches his bosom; a *Kshatriya* by water descending to his throat ; a *Vaishya* by water taken into his mouth; a *Shudra* by water touched by an extremity.⁷³ A *Shudra* must not marry in any caste superior to his own.⁷⁴ He must help in carrying the body of a Brahmin to the burning or burial ground so that the funeral rites may not be hindered and obstructions to entire may not occur.⁷⁵ He may drink the spirits of rites, while it interdicted to *Brahmans*, *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*.⁷⁶

It has been held in subsequent times that the two castes namely the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* no longer exist. In explanation of this doctrine the legend of Parsurama is referred to. In the *Puranas*, specially the *Vishnu Purana* (P.610), it is stated that Parsurama, an incarnation of God Vishnu, killed all the *Kshatriyas* in 21 engagements. Thereafter, king Nanda , son of Mahananda, a *Shudra* became the king.

The above study brings to light the fact that the scriptural, doctrinal and practical background and aspects of the Hindu caste system have dominated all socio-economic and political relations and activities of the Hindus all along the course of the Indian history. In the very structure of Hindu social relations the upper castes in sequence made the lower castes subservient. The Brahmins remained at the top with the political, and military support of the *Kshatriyas*, and the *Shudras* had to render service in subservience to all. Of the *Shudras* , the Untouchable's life was pitiable by all considerations. For embarking on human rights with the coming of the dawn from slumber things had to change, and therefore, there woke up a new beginning with a protest movement which right from its infantile stage was led by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. No wonder, this protest movement ultimately took a consequential turning with the Neo-Buddhist Movement.

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