

**SUDRA LIFE IN EARLY INEARLY INDIA****Balbir Singh Jamwal, Ph. D***Principal, B.K.M. College of Education, Balachur, District-S.B.S. Nagar (Pb)***Abstract**

*In this article an attempt has been to find out the Sudra life in early India. Sudra life in early India was very miserable. He was given the remnant food. He was the servant of upper varnas. He lives on the mercy of upper varnas. He was considered impure. He has to work at the home of upper varnas for earning two times bread. He had no civil and religious rights. He had old beds and worn out clothes. He had not allowed to get education. If he committed any mistake by chance, then his punishment was very hard. He was not owner of anything. He was a tiller. He was an artisan but not owner. He was considered the fourth varna. He was created by upper varnas for their benefits. In the concluded form we can say that he led his life on the mercy of two upper varnas. His life in early India was very miserable because he was deprived from everything. There is composition of different thoughts of great Historians, in this article, who have thrown the light on the sudra life in early India. This article would be very helpful for the government policy makers to make the policy for the sudra Varna to uplift.*



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**Introduction**

In the *Atharva vedic* reference under discussion sayana explains *Ārya* as a member of the three varanas. Which is naturally makes *Śūdra* the representative of the forth. The *Śūdras* appear as tribe in the earliest part of the *Atharva veda* can also be inferred from the third reference, in which the fever takman is asked to attack a wanton *Śūdra* women along with *Mujavants Balhikas* and *Mahavras*. All these peoples seems to have been inhabitants of north-western India. Where, in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Śūdra* tribe is described as living alongwith the *Ābhīras*. It suggests that the context in which the *Śūdra* women is mentioned relates to the attitude of hostility of the *Āryans* of the period of the *Atharvaveda* towards the foreign tribes inhabiting north-western India.

Hence the word *Śūdra* here probably means a women of the *Śūdra* tribe. Coupled with the *Ābhīras* the *Śūdras* are repeatedly mentioned as a tribe in the *Mahābhārata*, which contains traditions that may look to the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. this epic makes a clear distinction

between the *Śūdra* kula which mentioned along with the kulas of *Kshatriya* and *Vaiśya*, and the *Śūdra* tribe, which is mentioned with the *Ābhīras*, *Daradas Tukharas*, *Pahlavas* etc. As a tribe the *Śūdras* find place in the list of peoples conquered by *Nakula* in the course of his all round victorious march (dig. *Vigana*) and in that of those sending presents to *Yudhisthira* on the occasion of his great coronation sacrifice (*Rajasuya*). They are bracketted with the *Ābhīras* in many references and both of them seem to have existed in India earlier than the Sakas, Tukharas, Pahlavas, Romakas, Chinas and Huns, where names were later, interpolated into the list of the peoples mentioned in the *Sabha Parvas*. They were a stem of the pre-*Āryan* peoples. In the light of the available data one may be inclined to that the *Śūdra* tribe had some affinity with the *Āryans*. It is interesting to note that they are always bracketed with the *Ābhīras*, who spoke an *Āryan* dialect called *Abhiri*, the fact that the people of the *Śūdra* class could understand the *Āryan* speech in the period of the *Brāhamans* also may suggest, though remotely, that the *Śūdra* tribe was acquainted with the *Āryan* language. The *Śūdra* are never mentioned in the lists of the pre-*Āryan* peoples, such as *bravidas*, *pulindas*, *sabaras* etc. they are always located in the north-west, which in later times, was an area mainly occupied by the *Āryans*. The *Ābhīras* and *Śūdras* were settled near the *Sarasvati*.<sup>1</sup>

The *Śūdras* came to India towards the end of the second millennium B.C. when they are defeated by the *vedicĀryans* and were gradually absorbad into the later *vedic* society as the fourth *Varṇa*. It has been asserted that the *kśatriyas* were reduced to the position of *Śūdras* as result of their long struggle with the *Brahamans*, who ultimately deprived their adversarics of the right to the *upanayana*.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of a solitary tradition occurring in the *Santi Parvana* of the *Mahābhārata*, the *paijavana* was a *Śūdra* king. It is claimed that *Śūdras* were *Kśatriya* in the beginning.<sup>3</sup> In this case modern court decisions cannot serve as a guide for condition at the time when the *Śūdra* class came into being loss of the *upanayana* in the case of the *Śūdra*, as well be shown later, is to be found only from the end of the later *vedic* period, and even so, it was not the only disability imposed on him as a mark of his servility but one of several.

The tradition says that the *ŚūdraPaijavana* performed sacrifices, and occurs in a very late portion of the *Mahabharata* where it is stated that the *Śūdra* can perform five great sacrifices and make gifts.<sup>4</sup> It was clearly meant to serve as a precedent for *Śūdras* making gifts and sacrifices, which as will be shown later, was in keeping with liberal attitude of the *Santi Parvana*. It may be also pointed out that in later times the term *Śūdra* or *vrsala* was applied indiscriminately by the *Brāhmanas* to anybody who went against them.

It is to be found in the *Vedanta-sutra* of *Badarayana*, where the word is divided into two parts *suk* 'grief' and *dra* from root *dru* to rush, while commenting on this passage *sankara* gives three alternative explanations why *Janasruti* was called *Śūdra*: viz. (i) he rushed into grief, (ii) grief rushed on him, (iii) he in his grief rushed to *Raikva*. *Badarayan*'s derivation of *Śūdra* and *sankara* gloss there on have rightly been regarded as an unsatisfactory. The *Janasruti* referred to by *sankara* is said to have ruled among *Mahavarsas*, a people who are mentioned in the *Atharvaveda* as living in North-western India. It is doubtful whether he belonged to the *ŚūdraVarṇa*. Either he belonged to the *Śūdra* tribe, or to some other north-western people who were dubbed as *Śūdras* by *Brāhmanical* writers. A very similar derivation of the term is given by the author of the *unadi-sutras* in the grammar of *Panini*, where the term *Śūdra* is resolved into two components, i.e. root *sue* or *sukt ra*. *Brāhmanical* traditions in the *Puranas* also connect the term *Śūdra* with the root *sue*, to be grieved. It is said that these who grieved and ran and were addicted to *Manual* tasks and were inglorious and feeble, were made *Śūdras*.

In the *Buddhist* lexicon of early medieval times *Śūdra* became a synonym of *Śūdra* and on this basis it is suggested that *Śūdra* is derived from *Śūdra*. Both derivation and philologically unsatisfactory, but are important as illustrating the ideas associated with the concept of the *Śūdra Varṇa* in ancient times. While the *Brāhmanical* derivation betrays the miserable condition of the *Śūdra*, the *buddhist* tradition refers to his mean and inferior status of the society. A recent writer derives the term *Śūdra* from the root *svi* swell the root *dra* 'run' and suggest that this term means are who runs after gross life, therefore according to him the *Śūdra* is an unintelligent fellow meant for *Manual* work. The discussion on the origin of the *ŚūdraVarṇa* may be summed up by stating that large sections of the people, *Āryans* and *Pore-Āryans*, were reduced to that position, partly through external and partly through internal conflicts. Since the conflicts centred mainly round the possession of cattle, and perhaps latterly of land and the produce those who were dispossessed of there and impoverished came to be reckoned as the fourth class in new society.

. It is stated in the *Jaiminiya Brāhmana* that the *Śūdra* is created from the feet of *Prajāpati* without any god, and therefore the lords of the house are his gods and he is to earn his living by washing feet. According to a later source he has to live by serving people of higher varanas. The former source further informs us that as a result of the horse scarifice (*asvamedha*) the nourisher *Vaiśya* becomes wealthy and the rising *Śūdra* becomes an expert worker. It is not known whether the term *karmakarta* is used here in the sense of hired labourer, a meaning always attached to similar term *Karmakara* in post-*vedic* literature. In an

early Upanishad however, the *Śūdra* is called puran or the nourisher, a little applied to the *Vaiśya* in the *Jaiminiya Brāhmana*.

Sudra was the tiller of the soil engaged in sustaining and producing activities for the nourishment of society.<sup>5</sup> The impression that the *Śūdras* constituted the laboring class is gained from several other references. In the purusamedha a *Brāhmana* is to be sacrificed to the priesthood, a *rājanya* to the nobility, a *Vaiśya* to the maruts and *Śūdra* to toil.<sup>6</sup> It was thought that the *Śūdra* symbolized hard work. In the list of sacrificial victims occupations such as chariot maker, carpenter, potter smith jeweler, herdman, shepherd, farmer, brewer, fisherman and hunter in addition to certain people. Such as Misada, Kirata, Parnaka, Paulkasa and Baina<sup>7</sup> who presumably were included in the board term of the *Śūdra*.

This is amply clear from a passage of the *Majjhima, Nikaya*, which present a classification of the earnings of the four *Varṇas*. It informs us that the *Brāhmana* lives on gifts, the *Kṣatriya* on the use of the bow and the arrow, the *Vaiśya* on agriculture and tending of cattle and the *Śūdra* on the use of the sickle and the carriage of crops on the pole hung over his shoulder many references in the early Pali texts speak not of the *Śūdras* as such, but of the *Dāsas* (slaves) and *kammakaras* (hired labourers) as being employed in agricultural operations. There can be little doubt that the landless *Śūdras* were employed as *kammakaras*. There is evidence to show that the *Dāsa* also mostly belonged to the *ŚūdraVarṇa*. This can be deduced from the phrase *suddo va sudda Dāsa va*, which is used by the *Buddha* to define the position of the *Śūdra* after his enumeration of the first three *Varṇas*.<sup>8</sup>

The *Dharmasūtras* throw some light on the living conditions of the member of the *ŚūdraVarṇa*. Gautama provides that *Śūdra* servant should use the shoes, umbrellas, garments and mats, thrown away by the people of the higher *Varṇas*.<sup>9</sup> The same picture is obtained from a *Jataka* story, which informs as that clothes gnawed by rats were intended for the use of the *Dāsa* and the *kanmakaras*.<sup>10</sup> Gautam further adds that the remnants of food are meant for the *Śūdra* servant.<sup>11</sup> The *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* instructs the pupils to put down the remains a food left in his dish either near an uninitiated *Ārya* or near a *Śūdra* slave belonging to his teacher, which clear implies that the remains of the food were to be eaten by the *Śūdra* servants.<sup>12</sup>

A passage of the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*<sup>13</sup> read with the commentary of *Haradatta* allows him to accept the food of a *Śūdra* in times of distress, provided it is purified by contact with gold and fire and abandoned as soon as the *Brāhmana* gets an alternative source of livelihood.<sup>14</sup> No such condition is attached by Gautam, who while permitting a *Brāhmana* to accept a *Śūdras* food in the case of his loss of livelihood,<sup>15</sup> allows him to accept the food

from a herdsman, a labourer in tillage, an acquaintance<sup>16</sup> of the family, and a servant. But Gautam does not permit him to support himself by following the occupations of a *Śūdra*.<sup>17</sup>

the issue begotten by a *Śūdra* on women of the Ksatriya *Varṇa* is known as a ksatriya and the one begotten on a female of the Vaiśya caste as a Magadha. The son of a *Śūdra* by a *Brāhmana* women is branded as a candela. According to Gautama people begotten by the *Brāhmana* the *Ksatriya*, the *Vaiśya* and the *Śūdra* on a women of the *Śūdra* caste are respectively known as parasavas, yavanas, karanas and the *Śūdras*. The son of a *Brāhmana* by a *Śūdra* woman is called a Nisada.<sup>18</sup>

A passage from *Vaistha* enumerates the following characteristics of the *Śūdras*: backbiting, untruth, cruelly, fault-finding condemnation of the *Brāhmanas* and continued hostility. This may be given an indication of the hostile attitude of the *Śūdras* to the existing order in general and to its ideological leaders, the *Brāhmanas*, in particular.<sup>19</sup> as shown earlier, the masters seems to have been more hostile and callous towards their slaves and hired labourers than the latter towards their masters.

In defining the functions of the *ŚūdraVarṇakautilya* used the *Dharmasūtra* terminology. He states that the *Śūdras* means of livelihood is derived from his service of the twice-born. The *Dharmasūtras* terminology used by *kautilya* may suggest that the *Śūdras* continued to be completely dependent for their livelihood on their masters of the upper *Varṇas*.<sup>20</sup> On the basis of a passage, in book II of the *Arthśāstra* of *Kautilya* it is suggested that *Śūdras* appeared as peasants and cultivators, but this interpretation of the passage seems to be doubtful. *Kautilya* lays down that in founding a rural settlement villages, consisting of a hundred to five hundred families each, should be set up at the interval of two or four miles and should be inhabited mainly by *Śūdra* and *Karsaka*.<sup>21</sup> in our opinion the terms *Śūdra* and *Karsaka* from compound and indicate that *Śūdras* were not peasants. Several scholars treat *Śūdra* as an adjective of *Karsaka* and hold that *Śūdra* peasants were requisitioned for founding settlements. The same chapter of purāna speaks of *Vaiśyas* are described as those living on trade, agriculture and cattle rearing and the *Śūdra* as those who are meant for the service of the *Vaiśyas* as artisans and non-artisans.<sup>22</sup>

The epigraphical traditions referred to the tax-paying *katumbins* and *karus*, who were from *ŚūdraVarṇa* adopted agricultural as a subsidiary means of livelihood.<sup>23</sup> R.S. Sharma holds “the Kurmis, the constitute a numerous cultivating caste in West Bengal, Bihar and Utter Pradesh and are placed in the category of *Śūdras*, seems to correspond to the *Katumbin* the same is true of the Kaumbi caste found in Maharashtra and parts of Madhya Pradesh. Hsuan Jsang refers to *Śūdras* as a class of agriculturists,<sup>24</sup> a statement which is qualified by

the Narasimha purana, where agriculture was considered as the main duty of the *Śūdras*.<sup>25</sup> It can be surmised that significant changes took place during 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. when the large population of *Śūdras* adopted agriculture as their profession for livelihood, it might be because of large scale land-grants made by kings and the peasants were all sorts religious and administrative services were being paid through land grants. In the process of land, donation the landed aristocrats brought more land under cultivation with the help of iron-plough share where *Śūdras* were used as actual cultivator of land.

We find plethora of inference to *Śūdras* and various disabilities and derogatory treatment they were subjected. We notice that a *Śūdra* was not allowed to a mass wealth on the ground that by so doing he might be proved and openness the Brāhmana. It is also referred in *Manusmriti* that *Śūdras* were not allowed to carry a dead body through the routes used by the upper *Varṇa* people.<sup>26</sup> Even is money leading *Śūdras* discriminated against *Śūdra* was supposed to pay highest rate of interest and Brāhmana paid lower.<sup>27</sup> The later *vedic* traditions assigned, agriculture to the *Vaiśyas*, who were independent peasant paying a part of their produce as taxes to the kings.<sup>28</sup> We can also have some idea of the economic condition of the *Śūdras* from some rules governing the relation between the employers and the employees. It is depicted that “if the servant in tillage gives up his work, he shall be given physical punishments. The same provision was applied to the herdmen who abandoned tending the cattle. If the loss of the cattle was due to the negligence of the herdmen he was held responsible for it.”<sup>29</sup>

*Manu* explicitly declares that the existence of a wealthy *Śūdra* is painful for the brāhmanas.<sup>30</sup> The fact that *Manu* assigns a low status to the *Śūdra* does not mean that he was not aware of their functional utility. Infact he enjoins the king to ensure that the people from the lower *Varṇas* continue swerved from their duties, he would be thrown into confusions.<sup>31</sup> Thus we can surmise that the *Śūdras* had no civil and religious rights. Nevertheless, there are sentiments of comparison about him depicted in literary traditions.<sup>32</sup> *Manu* states that the *Śūdra* was created to serve but it becomes clear when pain alludes to the bought (*kṛita*) and free (*akṛita*) unborn kinds of them of these the former could be freed by his master.<sup>33</sup> The difference between the two was that the saleable kind of the *Śūdra* served his master as his cattle and could be sold and bought at will and that the act of changing masters on choosing professions was not of his free will while free kind of *Śūdras* could be opted out in accordance with his wish and choice and could not be compelled to continue to serve the same master.

*Manu* explains that the creation of the universe on the basis of the *samkhya* system of metaphysics. It explains that all deeds are performed by gods, men and animals because of three *gunas* (qualities), such as *satoguna* on light, *Rajoguna* or activity, and *Tamoguna* or darkness.<sup>34</sup> *Manu* further adds that the three qualities of nature on the material cause of the universe were responsible for the creation of gods, men and animals. *Manu* also depicted that “in consequence of attachment to sense, and in consequence of the non-performance of their duties, the foe, the lowest *Varṇa*, reach the vilest of births.”<sup>35</sup>

The third century several texts emphasise that the *Śūdras* can perform a number of rituals including the *samskāra* can perform a number of rituals including the *samskāra*, the only condition is that these have to be done without mantras, which obviously belong to the *vedic* texts. The fact that the *Śūdras* are not allowed to utter the *vedic* mantras does continue a religious hiatus between them and the twice-born, but this is more formal than real. For in early medieval times some *smarta* mantras find their way into the *vedic* mantras. An early medieval law giver permits *purta-dharma*, i.e. charity, social service etc. to the *Śūdra* but without *vedic* rites. It is likely that rites meant for warding off the threat and evil effects of the planets were also prescribed for the *Śūdras*.<sup>36</sup>

*Manu* lays down the same moral code for the members of all the four *Varṇas*. They should practice non-injury, truth, non-stealing, purity, sublimation of passions, and freedom from spite and should be get children on their wives only. From the religious point of view he considers women and *Śūdras* as the most impure sanctions of society. *Manu* also provides that a dead *Brāhmana* should not be carried by a *Śūdra*, because, if he defiles the burnt offering by his touch the deceased does not reach heaven. In this way he maintains the distinction between a *Śūdra* and a *Brāhmana* even the latter's death.<sup>37</sup>

The word *Vrsala* used for the *Śūdra* was a term of abuse and opprobrium. While illustrating a rule of *Panini* regarding the formation of the *Samasas Patanjali* states that “like the female slave” or like the *vrsali*” are terms of abuse suggesting thereby that *Śūdras* and slaves were considered despicable elements in society. The *varsala* was placed in the category of the thief and both aroused *Brāhmanical* hostility the company of the *Śūdra* was considered contaminating for a *Brāhmana*. *Manu* states that a *Brāhmana* who lives in the company of the most excellent people and *Shuns* all low people becomes most distinguished by the opposite conduct he is degraded to the opposition of *Śūdra*. He produced the provision that the *snataka* should not travel with the *Śūdra*.<sup>38</sup> *Manu* recalls that the old rule that if the *Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras* come to the house of a *Brāhmana* as guests, out of compassion they should be permitted to take their fund along with the servants.<sup>39</sup> Generally the fund of the

*Śūdras* was accepted in normal times. *Manu* lays down that, among *Śūdras*, one may eat the food of his share cropper a friend of his family, his cow-herd, his slave and his barber.<sup>40</sup>

*Manu* gives some idea of the food and dress of the *Śūdras* who were employed as domestic servants. In this respect he merely repeats and to some extent elaborates the old provision of *Gautam*. A *Śūdra* servant should be allotted by his master suitable maintenance commensurate with his ability,<sup>41</sup> industry and the size of his family. He should be given remnants of food, refuse of grain, worn out clothes and old beds. In the *Milinda-panha* tender wives of *Kśatriyas*, *Brāhmanas* and *gahapatis* are described as eating tasteful cakes and meat. But there is no mention of the wives of *Śūdras* in this connection. *Manu*'s laws imposing new economic disabilities on the *Śūdras* were probably ineffective.<sup>42</sup> The early law givers, man is guided by considerations of *varṇa* in the administration of justice, which affects the position of the *Śūdras* adversely. If a *Kśatriya* defames a Brahman, he shall be fined a hundred *panas*, but a *Śūdra* shall suffer corporal<sup>43</sup> punishment. *Manu* lays down very severe punishments for *Śūdras* offending against the members of the superior *Varṇas*. Thus if a *Śūdra* insult a twice-born with gross invective, he shall have his tongue<sup>44</sup> cut out. The term twice-born indicates only the *Brāhmana* and the *Kśatriya*, for this punishment is expressly forbidden in the case of *Śūdra* reviling a *Vaiśya*. *Manu* further provides that, if a *Śūdra* mentions the names and caste of the twice-born with continuously, an iron nail, ten figure long, shall be thrust red-hot into his mouth. If he arrogantly teaches *Brāhmanas* their duties, the king shall cause hot oil to be put into his mouth<sup>45</sup> and into his ears.

*Arrian* also refers to the servants who attend not only on the soliders but also on their horses, elephants and chariots. Possibly *Śūdras* were recruited as menial servants and *Śūdras* could be enlisted in times of emergency. In the new settlements oboriginal tribes such the *vagurikas*, the *subareas*, the *pulindas* and the *candalas* were entrusted<sup>46</sup> with the work of internal defence. *Kautilya* provides for different kinds of warnings tendered by the court to the members of the different *Varṇas*. The most severe warning is to be given to a *Śūdra* who is reminded of terrible spiritual and wordly consequences,<sup>47</sup> which shall follow as a result of his false deposition.

*Kautilya* differentiates between the diet of an ordinary *Ārya* and that of a *Śūdra*. In the context an *avara* means a person of the low caste and is a *Śūdra*. But an *Ārya* stands for an ordinary member of the higher *Varṇas*, for rations for the *Āryas* of higher grades such as the kings queen and chiefs of army are provided in much qualities. All this would show that the *Śūdras* were fed on inferior food. The *Śūdras* might have been outside the pale of the *Āryan* Society. Since then it has usually been held that the fourth *Varṇa* of *Brahmanical*

society was mainly formed by the *non-Āryan* population, who were reduced to that position by the *Āryan* conquerors.

The distribution of the *Āryan* languages over the greater part of India presupposes mass migration of their speaker. In spite of the occurrence of many words of proto-munda and 'Dravidian' stock in Sanskrit from *vedic* times onwards the pre-*Āryans* living in north India were so swamped by the new comers that they could not retain their language.

As well as shown later, in Northern India the *Śūdras*, along with *Vaiśyas*, accounted for the overwhelming majority of the population, but there is nothing to show that they speak *non-Āryan* language. On the other hand, in the later *vedic* period the *Śūdras* understood the *Āryan* speech, as is clear from the formula of address used for them on the occasions of the sacrifice. In this connection a tradition from the *Mahābhārata* is significant: *Sarasvati* consisting of the *Veda*, was formerly designed by Brahma for all the four *Varṇas*. But the *Śūdras* having through cupidity fallen into 'ignorance', a condition of darkness, lost the right to the *Veda*." Weber understands this passage to mean that in ancient times the *Śūdras* spoke the language of the *Āryans*. The *Āryan* came to India in large numbers with same possible admixture from the enemy tribes, warriors and priests could account only for a small minority of the *Āryan* population.<sup>48</sup>

The Weaver and others, whose occupation were quite dignified in the *RgVeda* and apparently practiced by respected number of the vis, came to be reckoned as *Śūdra* in the Pali texts. It is likely that *non-Āryans* also pursued these crafts independently but there is no doubt that many descendants of *Āryan* artisans, who struck to their old professions, were relegated to the position of the *Śūdras*. It states that the *Brāhmaṇa*, emanated from the mouth of the primeval man, emanated from the mouth of the primeval man, the *Kṣatriya* from his arms, the *Vaiśya* from his things and the *Śūdra* from his feet. Either it shows that the *Śūdras* were supposed to belong to the same stock, and hence were a section of the *Āryan* community, or else it represents an attempt to find a common mythical origin for the heterogenous *brāhmaṇical* society.

It appears that the *Śūdra* tribe or sections of the *Āryans* employed in servile work were given position of the fourth *Varṇa*, and in this sense the tradition of the common origin of the four *Varṇas* may have an element of truth. The old tradition of the common origin of the *Varṇas* could not explain the accession of the *non-Āryan* tribes to the *Brāhmaṇical* fold, but it could serve as useful fiction. It could help to assimilate and keep the heterogenous elements together, and, in so far as the *Śūdras* were supposed to have been born from the feet of the first man it could justify their servile position in *Brāhmaṇical* society. When do the

*Śūdras* first appear as a social class charged with the service of the three higher *Varṇas*? *RgVedic* society had some men and women slaves who acted as domestic servants, but they were not so considerable as to constitute the servile *Varṇa* of the *Śūdras*. The first and the only reference to the *Śūdras* as a social class in the *RgVeda* is to be found in the *Puruṣasūkt* passage already referred to, which recurs in the nineteenth book of the *AtherVeda*.<sup>49</sup>

*Atharvaveda* refers to the existence of four *Varṇas*. In it prayer is made to the darbha (grass) to make the worshipper dear to Brāhmana, *Kṣatriya*, *Śūdra* and *Ārya*. Here *Ārya* probably stands for *Vaiśya*. In the second passage is expressed a desire to gods, to kings and to both *Śūdra* and *Ārya*.<sup>50</sup> It suggests that the ideology of the *Varṇa* system developed under priestly influence. The only other reference relevant to our purpose, which, on the basis of Whitney, can be assigned to the early period of the *AtharvVeda*, mentions *Brāhmana*, *Rājanya* and *Vaiśya*,<sup>51</sup> but leave out the *Śūdra*. It is evident then that the *Śūdras* appear as a social class only towards the end of the period of the *Atharvaveda*, when the *Purusasūkta* version of their origin may have been inserted into the tenth book of the *RgVeda*. It appears that just the common European world's slave and Sanskrit 'Dāsa' were derived from the names of conquered peoples, so also the word *Śūdra* was derived from a conquered tribe of that name. There is no doubt that *Śūdra* existed a tribe in the fourth century B.C. for diodoros records the advance of Alexandria against a tribe called Sodrai,<sup>52</sup> who occupied portions of modern Sind.

The same case may apply to the *Śūdra* tribe, and thus it may be possible to trace the *Śūdra* tribe and thus it may be possible to trace the *ŚūdraVarṇa* of circa 10<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. from the *Śūdra* tribe of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The earlier opposition between *Ārya* and *Dāsa* or *Dasyu* is replaced by one between *Ārya* and *Śūdra*. It is worth stressing that these references do not give any idea of the social distance or disabilities, which are implicit in the conception of *Varṇa*. They may be compared with another passage from the same collection which speaks of *Ārya* and *Dāsa*, and in which it is claimed by the priest or *Varna* that no *Dāsa* or *Ārya* can damage the course he maintains.<sup>53</sup>

In the later *vedic* period artisan sections of the vis were reduced to the position of *Śūdras*, there is nothing to show that crafts or agricultural operations in which they were employed were looked upon with contempt. So far as agriculture is concerned, there was a positive attitude of aiding, encouraging and honouring it by applying charms and performing a number of domestic rites.<sup>54</sup>

The *Śūdra* is possibly connected with another ceremony of the rajasuya sacrifice, in which the newly consecrated king is called on to ascend the four quarters of the sky, when *Brahma* in the east, *Ksatra* in the south, *Vis* in the west *Ana Phala*, *Varcas Ana Pustam* in the north are asked to protect him. *Jayaswal* says that *phala* is evidently a substitute for *Śūdra*.<sup>55</sup>

The *Sabha Parvan*, which is regarded as one of the earliest portions of the *Mahābhārata* tells us that respectable *Śūdras* were invited to the great coronation sacrifice of Yudhisthira.<sup>56</sup> The contradictory statement that no non-sacrificing *Śūdra* was present on the occasion probably reflects a later attempt to exclude *Śūdras* from political power. At any rate it seems clear that at least some section of the *Śūdras* participated in coronations of kings. According to a passage of the *Yajus* collections of both the schools on the occasion of the rajasuga sacrifice the king established among the *vis* prays *surya* for the expiation of the sin committed against the *Ārya* and the *Śūdra*.<sup>57</sup>

The *Śūdra* was not admitted to the *vajapeya* (drink of strength) sacrifices, which was supposed to increase the strength of the king. According to one text it was open to the *Brāhmana*, *Ksatriya* and *Vaiśya*, but in other texts even the *Vaiśya* came to be excluded.<sup>58</sup> There is an indication of the lack of civic status of the *Śūdra* in the minor ceremony described in the *Taittirīya Brāhmana*. In explaining a rite of new and full moon day ceremonies, it is argued that the *Śūdras* who are in front of their masters seek their favour, and those who are not capable of making contradiction are to be treated in the same manner as the *Śūdras*. This would be suggest that the *Śūdras* were not expected to speak against their master and were thought to be completely sessile.<sup>59</sup>

Ritual literature can also made to yield some information on social condition of the *Śūdra*. A passage of the *yajus* collection states that the *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra* were created together. This suns counter to the *purusaukta* version, in which the *Vaiśya* precedes the *Śūdra* in the order of certain with the result that the latter is assigned the lowest place in society. But the tendency to put the *Vaiśya* and the *Śūdra* in the same social category is noticeable in some rites, which shows that a *Vaiśya* can be the husband of a *Śūdra* women<sup>60</sup> and vice versa. It is ironically stated that the *Ārya* husband of a *Śūdra* women does not seek prosperity, the idea being that such a marriage condemns him to a life of prolonged penury. The commentators take the term *Ārya* in the sense of *Vaiśya*, women provides evidence of marriage between the *Vaiśya* and the *Śūdra* women, but the authors of the *vedic* index regard these references as instances of illicit union between the *Ārya* and the *Śūdra*.<sup>61</sup>

The position of the *Śūdras* in post-*vedic* times the *Brāhmanical* sources, which mainly compare the *Dharmasūtras*, the *Gahyasutras* and the grammar of *Pānini* can be

supplemented by the early *Buddhist* and Jain texts. The chronological position of these sources can be fixed only roughly. In the scholarly study of the subject made by Kane the principal *Dharmasūtra* have been assigned to the period (600-300) B.C. The law book of *Gautam*, which contains, most information relating to the *Śūdras*, is believed to be the oldest of the *Dharmasūtras*. The sutra shows a grammatical freedom which is hardly conceivable after the period of the full influence of *Pāṇini*, whose grammar has been assigned to the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>62</sup>

The laboring or sessile population of every village was called *Śūdras*, over whom the three upper *Varṇas* exercised general social control. Thus we have the clear beginnings of a society based on the *Śūdra* labour. The *Śūdras* constituted the serving class was only implied in the texts of the later *vedic* period. But during this period the *Dharmasūtras* made the explicit and emphatic statement that the duty of the *Śūdra* was to serve the three higher *Varṇas*, and thus to maintain<sup>63</sup> his dependents. He was expected to run his independent house, which he supported by agricultural and artisanal occupations. *Gautam* informs that the *Śūdra* could live by practicing<sup>64</sup> mechanical arts.

The artisan members of the *ŚūdraVarṇa* played an important role in the agrarian economy of the pre-*mauryan* period. Workers in metal not only made axes, hammers, saws, chisels etc. meant for the carpenters and smiths, but also supplied agriculture<sup>65</sup> with plough shares, spades and similar implements, which enabled the farmers to provide surplus food for people living in the towns. The urban life and the thriving trade and commerce, which appear for the first time in north-eastern India during this period, could not have been possible without considerable amount of commodity production by the artisans.<sup>66</sup>

That the slave received a fixed type of food is clear from the repeated use of the abusive phrase *Dāsa-paribhoga*. Sour gruel was the food of a poor man working for wages. A *Jataka* story refers to a potter's hireling, who offers a full day's work with the clay and the wheel "sat all day besmeared on a bundle of straw eating balls of barley gruel dipped in a little soup."<sup>67</sup> The phrase that a person lived a hard life on a workman's wages commonly occurs in the *Jatakas*. At one place, the workman who is the *Bodhisatta*, bewails his lot in these words: I get a *masaka* or a half-*masaka* for my wages and can hardly support my mother.<sup>68</sup>

A *Jataka* story shows that while the slaves lived in the house of their masters, the *Karmakaras* went to their lodgings in the evening.<sup>69</sup> The life of the hireling was sometimes harder than that of the slaves.<sup>70</sup> He could not enjoy that security of livelihood which was assured to the slave or the permanent domestic servants. *Gautam* lays down that the *śūdra*, under whose

protection the *Śūdra* places himself, should support him if he becomes unable to work.<sup>71</sup> But the practice did not conform to this precept, for a gatha states that people throw away the out worn servant like a she-elephant.<sup>72</sup>

Members of the *Vaiśya*, the *Kśatriya* and perhaps of the *BrāhmaṇaVarṇas*, who did not observe the rites and duties of their class, could also be subjected to this procedure in the order of their social status but only when the *Śūdras* was not available. This law, which provides a license for the extortions from the *Śūdra* community by the members of the upper *Varṇas*, is not to be found in any other *Dharmasūtras*, although it has its parallel in the *Manu smṛiti*.<sup>73</sup> It may be a later insertion which reflects the tendency of a *Brāhmaṇical* school to exploit the *Śūdra* to the full. The law of inheritance contains discriminatory provisions relating to the share of the son of a *Śūdra* wife. According to *Buudhayana* in the case of issues from the wives of different *Varṇas*, & our shares would go to the *Brāhmaṇa*, three to the *Kshatriya*, two to the *Vaiśya* and to the *Śūdra*<sup>74</sup> son. In such case *Vasistha* provides for the shares of the sons of only the three higher *Varṇas*, leaving out the *Śūdra* son.<sup>75</sup>

In the most shocking to the modern democratic mind is the fact that *Āpastamba* and *baudhayana* provide the same penance for killing a *Śūdra* as for killing a flamingo, a bhasa, a peacock a *Brahmaniduck*, a *pracalaka*, a crow, an owl, a frog, a muskrat, a dog etc.<sup>76</sup> this extreme view, which attaches the same importance to the life of a *Śūdra* as to that of an animal or a bird, may not have found universal acceptances for the same law gives prescribe a wergeld of ten cows and a bull<sup>77</sup> for killing a *Śūdra*. No doubt, that the early *Brāhmaṇical* law attached very little importance to the life of a *Śūdra*.<sup>78</sup> The general substitution of society based on *Varṇa* for tribal society during post *vedic* times, the members of the *ŚūdraVarṇa* ceased to have any place in the work of administration. They were probably excluded from all administrative appointments and subjected to corporal punishments for minor offences. The penalties laid down by the rules of penances and criminal law in respect of the *Śūdras* are indeed proportionately much higher than those prescribed for offences that committed by the higher *Varṇas*.<sup>79</sup>

The food touched by the *Śūdra* is defiled and cannot be taken by a *Brāhmaṇa* is first expressed in the *Dharmasūtras*. According to *Āpastamba* the food touched by an impure, but is not unfit for eating.<sup>80</sup> But it is brought by an impure *Śūdra*, it cannot be taken.<sup>81</sup> The same is the case with the food which is looked at by a dog or *apapātra*, to whose class belong the *patita* (outcaste) and *candela*. Another rule states that if a *Śūdra* touches a *Brāhmaṇa* while the latter is eating he should leave off eating, because the *Śūdras*, touch defiles him.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, he is alone in laying down the rule that a *snataka* should not sip the water of

a *Śūdra*.<sup>83</sup> In some cases the rules regarding the Brāhmanas boycott of the *Śūdra* food were sought to enforced by various threats and penances. According to vasistha, the most deserving *Brāhmana*, was one whose stomach did not contain the food of a *Śūdra*.<sup>84</sup> The *Dharmasūtras* give the impression the generally the ideal *Brāhmana* avoided the food of a *Śūdra*, especially if he was impure. But the penance and threats for enforcing this ban seem to be of later origin and were probably not effective during this period. It is clear that no such ban was imposed on the *Kśatriya* and the *Vaiśya*. Thus at the *vaisvadeva* ceremony the *Śūdra* could be engaged in the preparation of the food under the superintendence of the men of the first three *Varṇas*. While cooking he should remain absolutely neat and clean so that the food might not be contaminated for this purpose he should cause the hair of his head, his beard, the hair on his body and his nails to be cut, preferably on the eighth day of each half of the month or on the days of full and new moon.<sup>85</sup> Beside he should take his bath with his clothes on. Even in a later *Jataka* the occupation of a cook is described as one to be practiced by slaves<sup>86</sup> or hired labourers. In some cases, however, the *Ksatriya* father avoids eating with his daughter by a slave wife. But this passage occurs in the present story<sup>87</sup> of a later *Jataka*.

The marriage rules of the *Dharmasūtras* were dictated by considerations of *Varṇa*. Of the eight forms of marriage, which first appear during this period, the *gandharva* (love marriage) and the *paisaca* (marriage by reduction which implied some sort of consent) were considered lawful for the *Vaiśyas* and the *Śūdras*. According to *Baudhayana* the first was meant for the *Vaiśyas* and the second for the *Śūdras*.<sup>88</sup>

A later *Jataka* informs us that two candela boys went in disguise to receive education at *Taxila*, but when they were detected through the inadvertent use of their own dialect, they were expelled from the institution. Nevertheless, other *Jataka* stories shows that the schools had on their rolls sons of merchants<sup>89</sup> and tailors, and even fishermen. Thus in practice even during this period the *Śūdras* were not completely excluded from the receiving education. The *Dharmasūdra* exclusion of the *Śūdra* from *vedic*-education naturally led to his exclusion from sacrifices and sacrament which could be performed only with the *vedic* mantras. A rule of the *Asvalayana Grhyasūtra* is interpreted as suggesting that the *Śūdra* could hear the *vedic* mantras to be recited on the occasion of the *madhu parka* ceremony.<sup>90</sup>

The *Śūdra* could not lay the sacred five for the *vedic* sacrifice. He could not perform<sup>91</sup> any sacrament. He came to be excluded from the *vedic* sacrifice to such an extent that in the performance of certain rites even his presence and sight were to be avoided. Ordinarily a *Śūdra* could not use even the current exclamation namely he could do this only if he was especially permitted<sup>92</sup> to do so, Gautama, however, quotes certain authorities who allow a

*Śūdra* to perform a select list of small *vedic* sacrifices known as the *paka-yajnas Baudhayana* quotes others as stating that submission in water and bathing are prescribed for all the *Varṇas*, but sprinkling water over the along with the recitation of the mantras<sup>93</sup> is the particular duty of the twice-born.

The *Vaiśyatraders* and *Śūdra* artisans and labourers correspond to the third caste of *Megasthenes* the members of which work at trades, ved wares and are employed in bodily labour.<sup>94</sup> In the *Arthśāstra* the *Śūdras* probably come under the eatgory of the non-taxpayers, who number also is to be recorded by the *gopa*.<sup>95</sup> In the paying villages a list is to be maintained of those who supply free labour to the state. In the taxpaying villages a list to be maintained of these who supply free labour to the state.<sup>96</sup>

*Arthśāstra* evidence regarding the employment central and wages of the artisans in so far as they throw light on the general position of the *Śūdras* – reference has already been made to the artisans who were mobilized by the state to help agriculture. Many others seem to have been employed by the state in weaving, mining, store keeping, Manufacturing of arms, mental work etc. In the earlier period artisans such as weavers appear in the employment of the *gahapati*, but now they are employed in large numbers by the state.<sup>97</sup> People of the *Śūdra* caste and artisans Manufacturing worsted threads, cotton threads, bamboo mats, skins, armour, weapons and scabbards should be allotted their dwellings to the west of the royal place.<sup>98</sup>

Politically and socially the *Śūdras* continued to be subject to the old discriminations, although *Kautilya* seems to have made a number of concessions in the case of the *Śūdra* sons of the people of the higher *Varṇas*. They could not be reduced to slavery, could have share in the paternal property and under special circumstances could enjoy the light to *vedic* sacrifice and education. But the larger body of the *Śūdras* continued to suffer from the old disabilities. The *Arthśāstra* gives us some idea about the general conduct of the lower orders, which shows that they were not altogether happy about the conditions in which they lived.<sup>99</sup>

*Manu* lays down a number of laws which affect the economic position of the *Śūdras* adversely thus he introduces rates of interest according to *Varṇa*. The monthly interest charged should be two, three, four or five percent according to the orders of the *Varṇas*.<sup>100</sup> *Manu* lays down that a *Śūdra* should not be permitted to accumulate wealth, for the gives pain to the Brahmins. It is suggested that this injunctions is an exaggerated statement addressed to *Śūdra* himself,<sup>101</sup> but the tax does not provide any basis for such an interpretation.<sup>102</sup> *Manu* lays down that the *Brāhmana* can confidently seize the goods of his

*Śūdra* slave, for he is not allowed to own any property. *Jayaswal* thinks that this probably legalizes sources of property of the *BuddhistSamagha* which had become enormously rich.<sup>103</sup>

*Manu* provisions regarding the social position of the *Śūdras* are largely the re-mastications of the views of the older authorities. But he introduces certain new discriminations against them. He recounts the mythical story of creation when gives the lowest place,<sup>104</sup> to the *Śūdras*. He also repeats the old law prescribing different forms of greetings in relation to the members of the four *Varṇas*. But he adds that a *Brāhmana* whose does not know the form of returning salutation must not be saluted by a learned man because he is like a *Śūdra*. When learn from Patanjali that in returning greetings *Śūdras* were addressed differently from non-*Śūdras*.<sup>105</sup> Thus an elevated tone was not to be used in addressing *Śūdras*.

The *Shāntiparva* emphasizes that the *Śūdra* servant must be maintained by masters of the three higher *Varṇas*. But it repeats the old rule that he should be given worn out umbrellas, turbans, beds, shoes and fans, and torn clothes by the twice-born. The *Shāntiparva* repeats the myth that the *Śūdra* was created by *prajāpati* as the *Dāsa* of the three *vainas* and hence he is required a practice the *Dāsa-dharma*.<sup>106</sup>

The earlier law gives permit arts and crafts to the *Śūdras* only when they fail to earn their livelihood through the service of the three higher *varnas*, but this condition is now waived and handicrafts are included in the normal occupations of the *Śūdras*. These crafts are defined by *Brahaspati* as working in gold, base metals, wood, thread, stone and leather. The *Amarakośa* list of craftsmen, which occurs in the *Śūdra-varga*, gives two names each for general artisans, heads of their guilds, garland makers, washermen, potters brick layers, weavers, tailors, painters, armourers, leather workers, blacksmiths, shell-cutters and workers in copper. The list gives four names for goldsmiths and five names for carpenters. *Amara* also includes players on drums, water, flute and *vina*, actors, dances and tumblers in the *Śūdraverga*. Thus the list would suggest that all varieties of arts and crafts were practiced by *Śūdras*.<sup>107</sup>

The *Grhyasūtras*, on domestic rites which mostly belong to pre *maurya* times, do not permit any sacrament to a *Śūdra*, nor are those allowed to him in any pre-Gupta text. The problem of accommodating the new *Śūdras* in the *Brāhmanical* system becomes so important that a new *Grhyasūtra* called the *Vaijavapa Grhyasūtra* is prepared for this purpose. Literally it means the text dealing with the sowing of seeds, a function performed by both the *Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras*.<sup>108</sup>

For occurring in a post-Gupta *Vaisnave upapurna* ordins that in making temples and images white wood is auspicious for the Brāhmanas, red for the *Ksatriya*, yellow for the Vaiśya and black for the Śūdra. It is also laid down that a Brāhmana should not accompany the corpse of a Śūdra to the pyre, if he does so he is purified by bathing, touching fire and eating ghee. The old rule providing for the highest period of impurity in the case of death in a Śūdras family is maintained by several texts of the period.<sup>109</sup>

*Brhaspati* lays down that in the case of still birth a *Brāhmana* is purified in 10 days a *ksatriya* in 7 days, a *Vaiśya* in 5 days and a Śūdra in 3 days. In some cases penances are provided for seeing Śūdras and outcastes, who are considered to be as impure as dogs. Penances are also provided for the *ksatriya* student who comes into contact with Vaiśya or a Śūdra and for the Vaiśya student who comes into contact with a Śūdra. After the death *prajapatya* is the heaven assigned to the *Brāhmanas* who perform the ceremonies, *Aindra* to the *ksatriyas* who do not flee in battle, *Maruta* to the *Vaiśya* who carry out their duties, and *Gandharva* to the Śūdras who are engaged in menial service.

*Kautilya arthśāstra* refers that a Śūdra duty was not merely the service of the three upper *Varṇa*. The Śūdra was allowed also to adopt *varta* which is explained as agriculture, cattle rearing and trade.<sup>110</sup> During the *mauryan* and *Post-Mauryan* times, Śūdra were being transformed as peasants. The new village were formed, and the services of the Śūdras were required to brought uncultivated land under cultivation. Even *kautilya*<sup>111</sup> suggested that a new village inhabited by Śūdra enjoys the advantage of numerical strength. He further adds that for the cultivation of uncultivated land on rehabilitate old sites the Śūdras were to be transferred from the regions which were over populated and settled in new arise.<sup>112</sup>

The *AitĀryaBrāhmanas* depicted that those who did not surrender to *Āryan* were called as *Dasyus* (Robbers) and Śūdra were treated a servant of occupation and that he could be ejected from a place or even slain at will. Thus it can be deduced that the Śūdra was completely at the mercy of the upper *Varṇas*, and had no security in the respect of property or life. Even they were denied the right to milch cows the milk to be used for sacrificial purposes. In this connection following remark is significant. “One who is Śūdra has came into being” from non-being.<sup>113</sup> It indicates that the Śūdradid not belong to the *Āryan* fold. The social disabilities of the Śūdras such as their entrance into the place where sacrifices were performed and they were debarred, from sitting in the same line with the twice-born.<sup>114</sup>

The Śūdras could make offerings of water and other things to their pitras, who are referred to by the epithet *sukalin* in the *purānas* and are described as dark in the colour. Śūdras and women were not permitted to offer home which could be done only with the

*vedic* mantras. The newly going practices of puja and vrata were open to them. Persons of all the castes including Śūdras were entitled to perform vratas.<sup>115</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In the life of a man social and economic status play an active role. In the ancient time the social and economic status of the sudra was very lower. Untouchability was in full swing. Punishment was very hard, if he committed any mistake knowingly and unknowingly. Sudra was observed as lower order and as servant. He lived on the mercy of the upper varnas. He was created by upper varnas for their benefits. He had no civil and religious rights. Remnant food was given to him. Early life of sudra was very miserable. In the modern age Governments have and have been launched various schemes to uplift to the status of the sudras. He has given the equal rights to other varna, s people. Centre and state governments have and have been joined the hands to provide the more and more facilities to the sudras. Various laws have and have framed for the welfare of the sudras. Now the position of sudras is very good in comparison of position of sudras in early India. No doubt, the facilities are full and equal to upper varnas to sudras, but attitude of the Higher varnas have not been changed so much as required. Governments should try to change the attitude of upper varnas to sudras varna by organizing various types of Seminars, conferences, workshops, awareness camps, inter-cultures programmes and inter-caste marriage etc. social, religious, political and best educationists should come forward to change the attitude of the upper varnas. Financial help should be given to those families who are really poor. Financial assistance should be provided to the economic weaker sections irrespective caste and colour, thus positive change in attitude of upper varna may be brought to the sudra varna.

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