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.

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 10th 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 Ābhĩras, 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 Ābhĩras 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 Ābhĩras, 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 Ābhĩras and Śūdras were settled near the Sarasvati.¹

The Śūdras came to India towards the end of the second millennium B.C. when they are defeated by the vedićĀryans and were gradually absorbad into the later vedić society as the fourth Varna. It has been asserted that the kśatriyas were reduced to the position of Śūdras as result of their long struggle with the Brahmans, who ultimately deprived their adversarics of the right to the upanayana.² 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.³ 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 vedić 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.⁴ 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 Brāhmans 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. Badarayanas 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 ŚūdraVarna. 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 those who grieved and ran and where addicted to manual tasks and where 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. Varna 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 ŚūdraVarna 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 scaricice (asvamedha) the nourisher Vaiṣya 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. 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. 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 Bainda 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 Kśatriya 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.

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. The same picture is obtained from a Jataka story, which informs us that clothes gnawed by rats were intended for the use of the Dāsa and the kammakaras. Gautam further adds that the remnants of food are meant for the Śūdra servant. 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.

A passage of the Āpastamba Dharmasūtra 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. 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, allows him to accept the food.
from a herdsman, a labourer in tillage, an acquainintance of the family, and a servant. But Gautam does not permit him to support himself by following the occupations of a Śūdra.17

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 Brāhmaṇa women is branded as a candela. According to Gautama people begotten by the Brāhmaṇa 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 Brāhmaṇa by a Śūdra woman is called a Nisada.18

A passage from Vaistha enumerates the following characteristics of the Śūdras: backbiting, untruth, cruelly, fault-finding condemnation of the Brāhmaṇas 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 Brāhmaṇas, in particular.19 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 ŚūdraVarṇakauṭīlya 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 kauṭīlya may suggest that the Śūdras continued to be completely dependent for their livelihood on their masters of the upper Varṇas.20 On the basis of a passage, in book II of the Arthśāstra of Kauṭīlya it is suggested that Śūdras appeared as peasants and cultivators, but this interpretation of the passage seems to be doubtful. Kauṭīlya 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.21 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 purāṇa 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.22

The epigraphical traditions referred to the tax-paying katumbins and karus, who were from ŚūdraVarṇa adopted agricultural as a subsidiary means of livelihood.23 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,24 a statement which is qualified by
the Narasimha purana, where agriculture was considered as the main duty of the Śūdras. It can be surmised that significant changes took place during 4th & 5th 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 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 Brāhmaṇa. It is also referred in Manusmriti that Śūdras were not allowed to carry a dead body through the routes used by the upper Varna people. Even is money leading Śūdras discriminated against Śūdra was supposed to pay highest rate of interest and Brāhmaṇa paid lower. The later vedic traditions assigned, agriculture to the Vaiśyas, who were independent peasant paying a part of their produce as taxes to the kings. 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.

Manu explicitly declares that the existence of a wealthy Śūdra is painful for the brāhamanas. 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. 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. Manu states that the Śūdra was created to serve but it becomes clear when pain alludes to the bought (krita) and free (akrita) unborn kinds of them of these the former could be freed by his master. 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 metaphysic. 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.\(^3^4\) 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.\(^3^5\)

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 *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 mantaras find their way into the *vedic* mantras. An early medieval law givers 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*.\(^3^6\)

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 *Brāhmaṇa* should not be carried by a *Śūdra*, because, if he defiles the brunt offering by his touch the deceased does not reach heaven. In this way he maintains the distinction between a *Śūdra* and a *Brāhmaṇa* even the latters death.\(^3^7\)

The word *Vṛṣala* 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 *vṛsali*” are terms of abuse suggesting thereby that *Śūdras* and slaves were considered despicable elements in society. The *vṛsala* was placed in the category of the thief and both aroused *Brāhmaṇical* hostility the company of the *Śūdra* was considered contaminating for a *Brāhmaṇa*.Manu states that a *Brāhmaṇa* 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*.\(^3^8\) Manu recalls that the old rule that if the *Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras* come to the house of a *Brāhmaṇa* as guests, out of compassion they should be permitted to take their fund along with the servants.\(^3^9\) 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.\(^40\)

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, \(^41\) 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 meant. 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.\(^42\) 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\(^43\) punishment. Manu lays down very severe punishments for Śūdras offending against the members of the superior Varnas. Thus if a Śūdra insult a twice-born with gross invective, he shall have his tongue\(^44\) 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\(^45\) 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\(^46\) with the work of internal defence. Kautilya provides for different kinds of warnings tendered by the court to the members of the different Varnas. The most severe warning is to be given to a Śūdra who is reminded of terrible spiritual and worldly consequences,\(^47\) 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 Varnas, 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 Brahanamical
society was mainly formed by the non-Aryan population, who were reduced to that position by the Aryan conquerous.

The distribution of the Aryan languages over the greater part of India presupposes mass migration of their speaker. Inspite of the occurrence of many words of proto-munda and ‘Dravidian’ stock in Sanskrit from vedic times onwards the pre-Aryans 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-Aryan language. On the other hand, in the later vedic period the Śūdras understood the Aryan 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 Varnas. 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.48

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 its 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 brāmanical 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 Brāhmanical told, 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 Brāhmanical 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 Puruṣasūkta passage already referred to, which recurs in the nineteenth book of the AtharVeda.49

Atharvaveda refers to the existence of four Varṇas. In it prayer is made to the darbha (grass) to make the worshipper dear to Brāhmana, Kśatriya, 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.50 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,51 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 lave 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 Alexanda against a tribe called Sodrai,52 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 10th-8th century B.C. from the Śūdra tribe of the 4th 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 Varna. 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 Varṇa that no Dāsa or Ārya can damage the course he maintains.53

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.54
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, Ksatriya in the south, Vaiśya in the west and Árya in the north are asked to protect him. Jayaswal says that phala is evidently a substitute for Śūdra.55

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.56 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 Árya and the Śūdra.57

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.58 There is an indication of the lack of civic status of the Śūdra in the minor ceremony described in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa. 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.59

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 woman60 and vice versa. It is ironically stated that the Árya 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 Árya 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 Árya and the Śūdra.61

The position of the Śūdras in post-vedic times the Brāhmanical sources, which mainly comprisate the Dharmasūtras, the Gāhyasūtras and the grammer of Pāṇini 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 Panni, whose grammer has been assigned to the middle of the 5th century B.C. 62

The laboring or sessile population of every village was called Śūdras, over when the three upper Varnas exercised general social central. Thus we have the clear beginnings of a society based on the Śūda 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 Varnas, and thus to maintained 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 mechanical arts.

The artisan members of the ŚūdraVarna 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 with plough shares, spades and similar implements, when enabled the farmers to provide surplus food for people living 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. 66

That the slave received a fixed type of food is clear from the repeated use of the abusive phrase Dāsa-paribhoga. Sour grud was the food of a poor man working for wages. A Jataka story refers to a potters hireling, who offer a full days work with the clay and the wheel “sat all clay-besmeared on a bundle of straw eating balls of barley great dipped in a little soup.” 67 The phrase that a person lived a hard life on a workmans wages commonly occurs in the Jatakas. At one place, the workman who is the Buddhistta, bewails his lot in these words: I get a masaka or a half-masaka for my wages and can hardly support my mother. 68

A Jataka story shows that while the salves lived in the house of their masters, the Karmakar was went to their lodings in the evening. 69 The life of the hireling sometimes harder than that of the slaves. 70 He could not enjoy that security of livelihood which was assured to the slave or the permanent domestic servants Gautam lays down that the drya, under whose
protection the Śūdra places himself, should support him if he becomes unable to work. 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.

Members of the Vaiśya, the Kṣatriya and perhaps of the Brāhmana Varnas, who did not obsene 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 Varnas, is not to be found in any other Dharmasūtras, although it has its parallel in the Manu smriti. It may be a later insertion which reflects the tendency of a Brāhmanical 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 Varnas, & our shares would go to the Brāhmana, three to the Kshatriya, tho to the Vaiśya and to the Śūdra son. In such case Vasishtha provides for the shares of the sons of only the three higher Varnas, leaving out the Śūdra son.

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 Brahmankinduck, a pracalaka, a crow, an owl, a frog, a muskrat, a dog etc. 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 acceptance for the same law givers prescribe a wergled of ten cows and a bull for killing a Śūdra. No doubt, that the early Brāhmanical law attached very little importance to the life of a Śūdra. The general substitution of society based on Varna for tribal society during post vedic times, the members of the ŚūdraVarna 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 Varnas.

The food touched by the Śūdra is defiled and cannot be taken by a Brāhmana is first expressed in the Dharmasūtras. According to Āpastamba the food touched by an impure, but is not unfit for eating. But it is brought by an impure Śūdra, it cannot be taken. 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 of a Śūdra touches a Brāhmana while the latter is eating he should leave off eating, because the Śūdras, touch defiles him. Moreover, he is alone in laying down the rule that a snataka should not sip the water of
In some cases the rules regarding the Brāhmana 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. 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 Kṣatriya 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 Varnas. 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. 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 or hired labourers. In some cases, however, the Kṣatriya father avoids eating with his daughter by a slave wife. But this passage occurs in the present story of a later Jataka.

The marriage rules of the Dharmasūtras were dictated by considerations of Varna. 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.

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 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.

The Śūdra could not lay the sacred five for the vedic sacrifice. He could not perform 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 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\(^3\) is the particular duty of the twice-born.

The *Vaiśya* traders 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.\(^4\) In the *Arthśāstra* the Śūdras probably come under the eatgory of the non-taxpayers, who number also is to be recorded by the *gopa*.\(^5\) 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.\(^6\)

*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.\(^7\) 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.\(^8\)

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.\(^9\)

*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*.\(^10\)*Manu* lays down that a Śūdra should not be permitted to accumulate wealth, for the gives pain to the Brahmans. It is suggested that this injunctions is an exaggerated statement addressed to Śūdra himself,\(^11\) but the tax does not provide any basis for such an interpretation.\(^12\)*Manu* lays down that the *Brāhmaṇa* 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 Buddhist Samagha which had become enormously rich.  

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, to the Śūdras. He also repeats the old law prescribing different forms of greetings in relation to the members of the four Varnas. 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.  

Thus an elevated tone was not to be used in addressing Śūdras.

The Śhāntiparva emphasizes that the Śūdra servant must be maintained by masters of the three higher Varnas. 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 Śhāntiparva repeats the myth that the Śūdra was created by prajāpati as the Dāśa of the three vainas and hence he is required a practice the Dāsa-dharma.

The earlier law givers permit arts and crafts to the Śūdras only when they fail to earn their livelihood through the service of the three higher vernas, but this condition is now waived and handcrafts 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 Śūdravarga. Thus the list would suggest that all varieties of arts and crafts were practiced by Śūdras.

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 Grhyaśūtra called the Vaijāvapa Grhyaśūtra 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.
For occurring in a post-Gupta Vaisnative upapurna ordins that in making temples and images white wood is auspicious for the Brähmanas, red for the Ksatriya, yellow for the Vaiśya and black for the Śūdra. It is also laid down that a Brähmana 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.109

Brhaspati lays down that in the case of still birth a Brähmana 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 outcasts, 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 prajapatyas is the heaven assigned to the Brähmanas 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 Varna. The Śūdra was allowed also to adopt varta which is explained as agriculture, cattle rearing and trade.110 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 kautalya111 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.112 The AitĀryaBrähmanas 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 Varnas, 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.113 It indicates that the Śūdradid not belong to the Āryan fold. The social disabilities of the Śūdras such as their enterance into the place where sacrifices were performed and they were debarred, from sitting in the same line with the twice-born.114

TheŚūdras 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.\textsuperscript{115}

**Conclusion**

In the life of a man social and economic status play an active role. In the anicient 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 comprasion 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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