

# The Making Of Sudra: As Reflected In Early Indian Literary Traditions

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**Abstract:** We are preached to believe that the long history of upper Varnas people in India is soaked in the blood of generations of poor Shudras. This was done because; a few sages sitting in their remote hermitages discuss dharma in the company of their peers and disciples. Such totalitarianism has been possible because the literary traditions of early India speak of Varna system and the western scholar's confused the term Shudra with untouchability.

Thus, scriptural legitimating had nothing to do with the creation and perpetuation of Varna system, much less with the oppressive and discriminatory nature of the system. Generally Varna was confused with Jati and Jati with the caste. And all these notions were not the product of Dharmasastras nor were they tied up into relationship of exploiter and exploited big and small.

A couple of questions, which bother the inquisitive scholars of Indian history on this issue, are:

- ✓ Were Sudras aborigines?
- ✓ Whether Sudras were Kshatriyas or a independent tribe?
- ✓ Whether the Origin to Sudras is colour centric?
- ✓ Whether the Sudras were an Aryan on pre-Aryan tribe, and if Aryan, when did they come to India?

These questions call for reinvestigations and revisit:

**Keywords:** Shudra, Varna, dharmasastras and jati

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Early Indian literary traditions depict man as a social being with reference to four broad factors that influence his life and conduct: He is considered in relation to: (a) place which may be said to be the regional approach to the study of society; (b) time which, we may say, constitutes the historical approach to the study of society, (c) efforts which takes into account man with reference to his nurture and development in the contemporary environment; and (d) natural traits, which refers to the natural inherent psycho-biological equipment of man. P. N. Prabhu, (rep) 1979. These traditions value the place and time in the activities and behaviour of human being and a co-ordinate system, formulated by the ancient scholars, called the *Varnadharmas* which was created primarily with reference to the society in which the individual lives. This kind of *dharma* concerned itself with the organization and management of the individual as well as the society.

Though, the *Purusha-Sukta* (Rgveda, X.12), has been interpreted as having a figurative significance behind. Thus, the mouth of the *Purusha* from which the *Brahmanas* were created was the seat of speech; the *Brahmanas* therefore were created to be teachers and mentor of mankind. The arms were

symbol of gallantry and muscle; the *Kshatriya's* assignment in this world was to carry weapons and defend people. It is difficult to interpret that the creation of the *Vaishya* from the thighs of the *Purusha*. But the thigh might symbolize the lower portion of the body, the portion which eats food, and therefore the *Vaishya* might be deemed as the giver of food to the people. The making of *Shudra* from the foot symbolizes the fact that the *Shudra* was to be the servant of other *Varnas*. It has been argued that during the Vedic times, the *Varnas* were open classes. They were not watertight compartments, the membership of which was resolute by virtue of heredity only; they were more based on individual qualities and less upon descent.

Nonetheless, the miserable *Brahmans*, in association with power hungry *Kshatriya* were created, continued and embedded on exploitative system of sociopolitical management. The *Varna* and caste system needed the academic justification of the *Brahman* and the rapacious sword of the *Kshatriya* for its protection and perpetuation. The whole supper structure of *Varna* and caste discrimination was based on this unholy alliance between the power of the regnum and the religious fraud of the sacerdotium. (S. S Sharma, 2005)

However, scriptural legitimating had nothing to do with the creation and perpetuation of *Varna* system, much less with the oppressive and discriminatory nature of the system. Generally *Varna* was confused with *Jati* and *Jati* with the caste. And all these notions were not the product of *Dharmasastras* nor were they tied up into relationship of exploiter and exploited big and small.

In fact, the concept of *Varna* system as caste superstructure germinated in the mind of western scholars and colonial administrators. It was picked up very ably by many eminent Indian scholars and transmitted to a couple of generation of their carefully nurtured students their appropriation of the colonial interpretation of Indian history suggests the conjunction of their hermeneutical agenda with that of the colonial regime. Once the theory of the Aryan invasion of India was accepted as a historical fact it became possible for some scholars to explain every difference in social organization as a product of subjugation. (Rgvada, VI.5) But the story of the subjugation of the original inhabitants of the India and their *Sudrazation* and worse, degradation does not find mention in the Vedic traditions pertaining to the whole of the Vedic period.

Interestingly, the historian and sociologists' invariably seek to drive the caste from *Varna* "Colour". In fact, in ancient Indian literary traditions referred caste by the single term *Varna*. This term does indicate colour in several hymns of *Rgveda*, the Western scholars are of the view that the *Shudras* were original inhabitants of India, and these dark-skinned people were defeated and subjugated by the white skinned *Aryana*. They based their argument by identifying the *Shudras* with the dark – coloured *Dasas* and *Dasyas* who were mentioned time and again in hymns of the *Rgveda*. But *Shudras* cannot be identified with either the *Dasa* or *Dasyas* except perhaps where an opprobrious epithet was meant. The various epithets Characterizing the look, language, and beliefs of the *Dasa* and *Dasyus*, i.e. not meeting the requirements of the Aryan ceremonies, and phallic worshippers. (Chitra Tiwari.1963) It is nowhere indicated that the Vedic deities used their deadly weapons against the *Shudras* as they used against the *Dasa* and *Dasyus*. Indeed it will be dangerous to interpret the notion of *Varna* on the basis of colour theory.

However, the fundamental factor of the Aryan having been a white-skinned race itself is not entirely invulnerable is not lacking. It is not unfair to accept the popular belief that the Indo-Aryans were white complexioned, but *Rgvedic* traditions also refer to the Sages with dark complexion. The *Rgveda* refers *Kanva* as black-skinned sage. The dark-skinned sages were accepted as leaders among the Aryan such as *Kavasa Ailusa*, *Vatsa*, *Kaksivan Ausija* (A. B. Keith, rep.1981) and *Satyakama Jabala*. (Chandoyga Upanisad, 1975) The social classification based on difference of complexion of the skin is not only untenable but can be rejected as a pan-European myth.

The occupation of the Aryan was not completely and strictly a matter of the violation of Aryan law. The Aryan was free to choose profession that suited his temper that suited his temper. The *Rgvedic* hymn runs as:

"I am a bard; my father is a physician, my mother a stone grinder. Thus planning in various wages, desirous of wealth, we live following (other) like cattle, flow soma, flow of

Indra's Sake". (Rgvada, 1977) In this case if acquisition of wealth could be planned so as to include even the so-called derogatory avocations, where did the stigma attach. Thus, during *Rgvedic* times the members of the same family adopted different vocations, but this did not indicate any social classification. During later Vedic times, however, classification of functions tended to develop into differentiations of rank, and tribes and clans gradually disintegrated into, social classes. R.S. Sharma states that if appears that *Shudra* tribe or section of the Vedic society in servile work were given position of the fourth *Varna*, and in this sense the tradition of the common origin of the four *Varna* may have an element of truth. But it does not represent the whole truth. It is possible that in subsequent times the descendants of the Aryan *Shudras* went on multiplying in the new fertile Gangetic settlement, but from the Vedic times onwards large numbers of aborigines of varying stocks were successively incorporated in the *Shudra varna*". (R. S. Sharma, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.1980)

However, some evidence of *Shudras* are seen in the *Atharva Veda*, which leads R. S. Sharma to surmise that *the Shudras* appear as a social class only towards the end of the period of the *Atharva Veda*", but here too the occurrence of the terms "should be understood not in the sense of *Varna*, but in that of a tribe which suits the context better". There is no evidence of any racial, linguistic or territorial differentiation between the Aryans and the *Shudas*. However R. S. Sharma, negates the theory of differentiation between the Aryan and the *Shudras* by reaffirming that "in the light of the available data one may be incline to think that the *Shudras* tribe had some affinity with the Aryan". During the times of early Aryan, the *Shudras* should be seen more as a tribal entity than as a social class, and if we go by the testimony of the literary traditions pertaining to this period we find no evidence of a *Shudra* class on of any hostility between the Aryan and the *Shudras* for nearly six to seven hundred years, (S. S. Sharma, 2005) linguistically the *Shudras* cannot be considered a different race, because they understood and spoke the very same Aryan language and "there is nothing to show that they spoke non-Aryan languages". The *Shudras* are not mentioned in the list of non-Aryan people, which however, included such categories as the *Pulindas* and the *Sabars*; they are always located in the north-west, and are shown to have settled around the *Saraswati*, an area which was the most important locale of Aryan activity.

However, there are plethora of evidences of *Shudras*, as a social unit or a tribe, sharing the same Aryan geographical space, but subscribing to a different cultural regime, often in conflict with the Vedic Aryan, R. S. Sharma also believes that it is more plausible that the *Arya* and the *Shudras* may have represented two tribal groups between whom existed a state of cultural and ideological tension. The *Atharva Veda* refers to *Shudra* women along with the tribes of the *Mujavanta*, *Bahlikas* and *Mahavrsas*, all of whom are shown located in the north-western part of India. In the *Mahabharata* the *Shudra* tribe is depicted as living along with the *Abhinas*". Bracketed with the *Abhinas* the *Shurdras* are repeatedly defined as an independent tribe in the *Mahabharata* which contains tradition that may look back to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century B. C. The *Mahabharata* made a clear distinction between the

*Shudra Kula, Kshatriya and Vaishya Kula.* The *Shudras* tribe is mentioned along with the *Abhras Daradas, Tukharas, Pahlavas* etc. The *Shudras* as a tribe find place in the list of peoples conquered by Nakula in the course of his all round victorious march, and is that of those sending presents to Yudhishthira on the occasion of his great coronation ceremony. P. Banerjee argues that *Shudra* existed as a tribe at the time of the Mahabharata war, (P. Banerjee, 1930) and Buddha Prakash holds that "in the period of Chaos, which followed the aftermath of the war, *Shudras* spread themselves over the Punjab." The plethora of references to the term *Shudras* along with the *Abhiras* show that the *Shudras* was an old tribe flourishing at the time of the Great War in the *Spatva Sindhava* regions.

However, the *Mahabharata* refers that "the *Shudra* tribe performed military services as was the case with the Aryan tribe and their tribal institutions, and the great epic refers the army of the *Shudra* people along with that of the *Ambasthas, Sibis, Surasenans* etc." (Mahabharata, 1971-74)

It is thus certain that a recognized community of people the *Shudras* and the *Abhiras* had existed in ancient India much earlier than the *Sakas, Pahlavas, Romakas, Chinas, and Hunas*. The reason for the clubbing of the *Shudras* with these tribes can be found in the cultural patterns of these people, and which the Aryan found rather contrary to their own notion of refinement and virtuosity. The fact is that such invading and ruling groups as the Greeks, the *Hunas* and the *Sakas* were labeled as *Shudras*, tells a very significant story. It reminds that the term *Shudra* was not a signifier of oppressed, subjugated and servile social class, but a denotation of a way of life that was not in ideological consonance with that of cultural differences between the *Aryan-Shudra* tribes of the North West region of India. The Vedic Aryan got transferred to the people coming into India in much later times and the common name of a group became the derogatory epithet for all the non-Aryan communities. David Frawley suggests "The division between Aryan and non-Aryan people therefore is a division between cultures following spiritual and those following materialistic." (David Frawley, 1999) The *Shudras* must have remained a class of people outside the Vedic spiritual culture' having little regard for Vedic value and ritual practices. They may have become hostile to the belief system of the Aryans which is suggested by the fact that the most important disability, imposed in later times on the *Shudras* was their restricted convenience to the Vedas. The *Shudras* known to the *Atharva Veda* were not a servile social class, but a tribe having its own political, military and cultural identity. The presence of the *Shudras* as an organized tribal entity is also suggested by the account of Diodorus in which Alexander is said to have fought against a tribe which was culturally and spiritually varied from the Aryan. This variation over the period of time became stylized and all such communities who did not measure up to the Aryan standards of nobility came to be treated as *Shudras* and in later times in *Shudra* was a term of opprobrium applied to people disliked by upper *Varnas* people.

The *Shudras* has been defined to mean one who grieves; he is called the child of misery. He is called the child of tapas (sorrow), the etymological explanations of the term *Shudra*; too, indicate only a cultural and behavioral aspect of the

notion without signifying any servile or low social position. In the *Vedanta-Sutra* of Badarayana divided this term into two parts *Suk- grief* and *dra* from root *dra* 'to rush' meaning thereby 'to rush to grief'. (J. W. McCrindle, 1893) Sankaracharya states that king Janasruti was called a *Shudra* and was refused the initiation into *brahmavidya* by the *Brahmana*.

Then he grieved and from his grief the word *Shudra* took its form. While commenting on this verse Sankaracharya gives three alternative explanations why being Janasruti was called a *Shudra*, viz: (a) he rushed into grief (b) grief rushed on him, and (c) he in his grief rushed to Raikva, Sankaracharya concludes that the word *Shudra* can be understood by explaining the meaning of its components and not otherwise. (Vedanta Sutra of Badarayana, 1890) But, why did Badarayan, Sankaracharya and the *Puranic* tradition locate the meaning of the word *Shudra* in the root *SUC*, to be grieved? Why is the *Shudra* said to have rushed into grief? Or fallen into grief on to have grief rushed to him? The *Puranas* give us a possible reason. It seems that some people, initially belonging to the Aryan cultural and civilization world decided, at some point of time, to pursue a separate course of their own by adopting different mode of life which may have included disregard for the Vedic world view and the Aryan notion of good and bad. Those who broke ranks and ran away or were forced to move away were believed to have embraced less righteous lives leading them to grief and degradation. The *Vayu Purana* says (Yayu Purana, 1890) "those who grieved and ran, and were addicted to manual tasks, and were inglorious and feeble were made *Shudra*." And the *Bhavisya Purana* holds (Bhavisya Purana,) "The *Shudras* were so called because they received droppings of the Vedic knowledge". It seems that during the first many centuries of the Vedic times, the *Shudras* were not treated as a class of people, much less as a degraded and subjugated class of people. Their presence begins to be felt only around later Vedic times when they were registered as independent and political strong tribal formations, inhabiting the western and north western region of ancient India. S.S. Sharma rightly argues that, "their inferiority was explained not in terms of social or racial degradation but as a result of their cultural and social practices which puts them on the margins of the Aryan idea of a good life."

B.R. Ambedkar argued that the *Kshatriyas* were reduced to the status and of *Shudras* as a result of their long struggle with the *Brahmanas*, who ultimately deprived their adversaries of the right to the *Upanayana*. (B. R. Ambedkar, 1946) He based his argument on *Shanti Parva* of *Mahabharata* where *Paijavana* was a *Shudra* king. It is depicted that *Shudras* were *Kshatriya* in the beginning. R.S. Sharma negated B. R. Ambedkar statement that "such a view seems to be without any foundation in facts. First, *Kshatriyas* as a well defined *Varna* with the rights and duties did not exist in the *Rgvedic* times". Fighting and management of the common affairs were the concern of the whole tribe and at best of the clan chiefs but not confined to a class of chosen warriors. Perhaps the struggle between *Brahmanas* and the *Kshatriyas* centered round the question of sharing the surplus in the form of gifts and tributes collected occasionally from the tribal peasantry called the *Vis* and emerging social supremely which determined the nature of the privileges to be



enjoyed by them. We must bear in mind that in the beginning the loss of the *Upanayana* was the decisive test of being a *Shudra*, and the loss of the *Upanayana* was not the cause of the conversion of Aryans into *Shudras* but the consequence of their having sunk to the lower orders as a result of the rise of economic and social inequalities. It is also very difficult to vouch for the authenticity of the tradition in the *Shanty Parva* that *Paijavana* was a *Shudra*. Ambedkar identified *Paijavana* with *Shudas*, the head of the *Bharata* tribe, and it is argued that this famous hero of the Battle of Ten Kings was a *Shudra*. We do not notice any evidence in the Vedic traditions to support this view, and moreover, the *Shanti Parva* tradition is not corroborated by any other sources, epic or *Puranic*. It can be deduced that in later times the word *Shudra* was used indiscriminately by the *Brahmana* to any body that went against them.

Even later Vedic tradition allowed *Brahmana* to eat the food prepared in the house of *Shudras*, and during distress a *Brahmana* may take food from a *Shudra*. The Later Vedic texts also tell us that *Shudra* could take part in the Soma-sacrifice, and even they were shown as the ministers of certain kings, or *Shudra* could be merchants, or they could exercise any trade. (Satapatha Brahman, 1972)

However, during later times, the notion of victims and victimizers came into being and the *Shudras* were reduced to the level of non-being. The law givers presumed that all the *Varnas-Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vshaishya and Shudra* – are arranged in a descending order and that the last is the down most. In the revivalist era the priestly elites scrupulously forbade even the listening to recitation of Vedas for *Shudra* if a *Shudra* intentionally listens to the recitation of Vedas his ears shall be filled with the molten lead. If he recites Vedic hymn his tongue shall be split into two, (V.G.Apte, 1931) it is further stated that if a *Shudra* tries to converse with an Aryan on an equal footing, walks on the road side by side with him or sit on the same couch, he should be given corporal punishment. The tongue of a *Shudra*, who speaks evil of a virtuous person belonging to one of the first three *Varnas* shall be cut out. (G. Buher, 1975) It indicates that *Brahmanas* were quite aware that the *Shudra* were as capable of learning and propagating knowledge as any member of the three upper-*varnas*, they did not want to share the privileged position which they enjoyed on the ground of possessing sacred knowledge even with the *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya*, and not at all with *Shudras*.

We notice plethora of reference to determination of unrelieved and unmitigated miserable life of *Shudra* in *Dharmasutras*. These early Indian literary traditions enumerate them in positive scores and implied hundreds but numbers multiplied and multiplying fail to arrange the tension of his inequities and during the continues that follow it is apparently the one endeavor of the law givers to run down the *Shudras* to shear them of all physical and spiritual possessions and thus reduced them to the label of animals and non-beings. The literary traditions of early India throw some light on the miserable living condition of the *Shudra Varna*. Gautama provides that the *Shudra* should use the shoes, umbrellas, garments and mats, thrown among by the people of the higher *Varna*. He further adds that the remnants of food are meant for the *Shudras*. The *Apastama* instructs the pupil to put down the

remains of good left in his dish a *Shudra*, which clearly implies that the remains of food were to be eaten up by the *Shudra* servant.

The *Smrtis* era was considered as the era of the *Brahminical* revival, all the law givers of the *Smrtis* times adopted the names of Vedic sages to get authority for what they said. *The Manu Smrtis* was the first attempt of the priestly elites in this direction. Therefore, it was perhaps natural to attribute this *Smrtis* to the primogenitor, *Manu*, armed with the ancient myth of creation and various *Samaskaras* (Sacraments), together with the doctrine of *Karma*; he tried to revive the bygone golden age by reestablishing the ancient system of *Varna* hierarchy. In this process *Shudras* were the greatest scum. *Manu* tried to assign each and every ethnic group whether Indian or foreign, a specific place in the *Varna* system according to his own criteria. He generally followed the guidelines laid down by the *Dharmasutras* later law givers followed *Manu*. Certain ethnic groups and lineages which were to be given a higher place in the social hierarchy were described to be offspring's of hypogenous unions between two *Varnas*, and those that were to be assigned a low status were declared to be the progeny of hypogenous unions. The social entities of various kinds were assigned a high or low position in the social feudal hierarchy in this way. (Indra Deva Shrirama, 1999)

The large segment of *Shudra Varna* worked as the artisans, such as weavers, wood-workers, smiths, leather-dressers, potters, painters, and tailors etc. Artisans in metal not only made axes, hammers, sours, chisels etc., meant for the carpenters and smiths, but also supplied agricultural tools like ploughshares, spades and similar implements, (E. B Cowell, 1976) which enabled the farmers to provide surplus food for people living in the town. The urban life and the thriving trade which could not have been possible without considerable amount of products by the artisans. Thus, it is clear from the analysis of certain literary traditions confirms the significant *Shudras* mode of production in ancient India.

The profession of the *Shudras* was the markers of their social status. We notice that lower as the profession of a group, correspondingly lower was its social rank. Among all upper *Varnas* perhaps there were those who took to toiling vocations, some vocations originally commendable came in course of time to be regarded low. It is evident that certain early tribe, that enjoyed a better status, became degraded as the tribe was advancing towards the feudal stage of development. In feudal society anywhere in the world labour was branded as undignified; hence all professions connected with manual labour became degraded in feudal society. It was in this manner that some of the vocational classes that had enjoyed respectable social status during earlier periods came to be regarded as *Shudra* in later times.

It is very clear that the *Shudras* could not perform a sacrifice, listening and writing of Vedic texts were forbidden to them, nor could be practice austerities. He was categorically denied the right of initiation and consequently the first stage of individual life of the studentship. However, the works utility often took the form of *dana* and *deyadhamma*, which was the most thereof the numerous donatives records. *Ranabir Chakravarti* rightly argues that it is logical infer that the donors/patron had with or without his group sufficient resources

to spend for digging of tanks and wells. Seen in this light, instances of donations by the craftsmen and professional groups, generally clubbed under Shudra Varna, may indicate the economic well being of at least some of them. (Ranabir Chakravarti, 2009) This economic status of Shudras might have brought some prestige to the donors whose actual status therefore could have enhanced his ritual status laid down in the literary traditions of early India. Out of other sacraments marriage was the only one, which was explicitly applicable to the Shudras. G.S. Ghurge negated Max Muller, when states that the *Grihya Sutras* never expressly exclude the *Shudra* from the rite of initiation. He further argues that the “ages at which this rite was to be performed were laid down only for the three *Varnas* and not for the *Shudra*, and it appears that this is sufficient evidence that the *Grihya Sutras* did not contemplate the initiation of the *Shudra*. (G. S. Ghurye, rep.2008) The initiation ceremony opened the door to the study of the Vedas.” The *Shudra* was forbidden from the study. He was never been allowed to hear and recite Vedic holy hymns. How possibly could the *Grihya Sutra*, under these circumstances, even dream of the *Shudra* being initiated? Initiation was like a second birth because through initiation the boy becomes a full member of the Aryan society. Since the *Shudras* were not entitled to have initiation, they have only one birth. Thus the question of *Shudra* as part of Aryan society does not arise. Manu has emphasized that their sole occupation was to serve the twice born. Brahman was the highest? Varna, serving them would be most meritorious. To justify the low social and religious status of the *Shudras*, Manu refers to the ancient divine myth of the self-existent. *Brahmanas* sprang from the mouth of the self-existent, since the mouth is the present part of the body the *Brahmanas* are the lords of this whole creation. (Manusmrti, 1963) The *Shudra* were produced from the feet of the self-existent; the service of *Brahmanas* alone was declared to be the excellent occupation for the *Shudras*. In return, the *Shudras* were entitled to receive leftover of food, old clothes, and the refuge of grain of the upper – three *Varnas*. Since the *Shudra* has only one Birth no sin would cause loss of Varna. In any case, a *Shudra* must not be allowed to possess’ wealth. Obviously, if a *Shudra* became rich he would no more serve *Brahmanas* or any other twice-born. Manu explicitly declares that the existence of a wealthy *Shudra* is painful for the *Brahmana*. The fact that Manu assigns a low status to the *Shudra* does not mean that he was not aware of their functional utility. In fact he enjoins the king to ensure that the people from the lower *Varnas* continue to perform the work prescribed for them. Because if these lower *Varnas* swerved from their duties, he would be thrown into confusion, thus, we can surmise that the *Shudras* had no civil and religious rights. Nevertheless, there are sentiments of compassion about him depicted in literary traditions. A master was exhorted to support his *Shudra* servant when he was unable to work and to offer funeral abolition for him in case he dies childless. *Shudra* is once allowed to cook food, even though meant for religious function under the supervision of members of the three higher Varna.

Manu is fanatically hard on *Shudras*. His hatred for them was unbounded. His depiction is purposeful and selective, based on his own perception of whatever he observed and

experienced during his life time. It seems that Manusmrti was never enforced by any King over people. He used the term *Shudra* in both general and specific.<sup>66</sup> Manu made at one place a Sharpe division between the free and slave *Shudras*. In the beginning the reference is general where Manu states that the *Shudra* 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 *Shudra* served his master as his chattel 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 *Shudras* could be opted out in accordance with his wish and choice and could not be compelled to continue to serve the same master.

It can be surmised that religious considerations and the dictate of law givers responsible for the creation of *Shudras* in early Indian society, professions and racial difference between upper *Varnas* people and lower classes of original inhabitants of ancient India played a very vital role in creating *Shudras* in ancient Indian society.

However, the *Aitarya Brahmana* (A. B. Keith, 1981) depicted that those who did not surrender to the Aryan were called as *dasyus* (robbers) and *Shudra* were treated a servant by occupation and that he could be ejected from a place or even slain at will. Thus it can be deduced that the *Shudra* was completely at the mercy of the upper *Varnas*, and had no security in respect of property or life. Even they were denied the right to milk cows the milk to be used for sacrificial purposes.

We find plethora of inferences to *Shudras* and various disabilities and derogatory treatment they were subjected. We notice that a *Shudra* was not allowed to a mass wealth on the ground that by so doing he might be proved and openness the *Brahmana*. It is also referred in *Manu Smritis* that *Shudras* were not allowed to carry a dead body through the routes used by the upper Varna people,<sup>79</sup> even is money lending *Shudras* discriminated against the *Shudra* was supposed to pay highest rate of interest and *Brahmana* paid lowest. (Yajnavalkasmrti, 1930)

The Aryan acquired the vast fertile lands of north-western India. They badly needed manpower to bring more and more born land under cultivation. For them, the original inhabitants were most suitable source of agricultural labour. (S. Das, 1994) They were captured, subjugated and forced to work for them, during later Vedic period the mass population might have been employed in agricultural activities. The later Vedic traditions assigned agriculture to the Vaishyas. The independent peasants were paying a part of their produce as taxes to the kings. But during Buddhist times Vaishyas were transformed into mercantile class. Now *Shudras* started adopting agriculture as their profession and source of livelihood. Ultimately *Shudras* also transformed as agriculturists. (G. C. Chauhan, pp.50-52)

*Kautilya Arthasastra* refers that a *Shudra* duty was not merely the service of the three upper Varna. The *Shudra* was allowed also to adopt *Varta* which is explained as agriculture, cattle rearing and trade. (Arthasastra, 1986) During the Mauryan and the past Mauryan times *Shudras* were being transformed as peasants. The new villages were formed, and

the services of the *Shudras* were required to bring uncultivated land under cultivation. Even Kautilya<sup>86</sup> suggested that a new village inhabited by *Shudras* enjoys the advantage of numerical strength. He further adds that for the cultivation of uncultivated land on rehabilitates old sites the *Shudras* were to be transferred from the regions which were over populated and settled in new areas, thus it is clear that the biggest segment of the *Shudra* population continued to be employed as agricultural labourers. We find plethora of references in *Arthashastra*, where *Shudra* status was employed in agricultural production on a large scale. R. S. Sharma rightly states that “In old settlements a large number of *Shudras*, agricultural labourers, slaves were employed by proprietors of the higher *Varnas*. The *Gopa*, who was in charge of the collection of taxes from the peasants, was required to register the total number of inhabitants in each village and also of half a dozen producing section of society – namely the *karakas* (cultivators), the *goraksakas* (herdsman or owner of the cattle), trades, the *Karas* (artisans), the *karmakaras* and the *dasasas*. It is further argued that the list includes the member of the two lower *Varnas*, the first three groups belonging to the *Vaishya* and the removing there to the *Shudras*. (Vishnu Smrti, 1977)

Thus, the socio-economic aspect of feudalism in ancient India was intimately connected with the transformation of the *Shudras* as peasants, who were common helots of the three higher *Varnas* probably they were provided the waste and uncultivated land, because old peasants would not like to shift from settled areas, cultivators were enrolled as *Shudras* in the *Braminical* social organization. They are called peasants. Hence in Gupta and post Gupta texts it became necessary to call them cultivators. This statement is further qualified by Yuan Chwang describing the *Shudras* as farmers.

Normally it is understood from a bare analysis of the above referred early Indian literary traditions that this feudal exploitation of *Shudras* Varna among the upper *Varnas* people was widespread and glaring, More so for the reason that they who considered themselves as most refined and noble classes of warriors and intellectual and expected absolute servility and loyalty from the *Shudra*, servants and other low class people, not out of the social and religious conventions, but rather forced these acts of barbarism, debauchery and ulterior motives.

However the later Vedic notion of *Vaishya* peasants does not carry any meaning during the *Smritis* period where Manu, Vishnu and Yajnavalkya suggested that land was rented out to *Shudra* of cultivation and food production, which indicates that more and more *Shudras* were adopting agriculture as their profession. Even Narada included the *Kirasa* (peasant) among those who was a *Shudra* and forbidden to be examined as witnesses. (Narada Smrti, 1977) It can be safely deduced that *Sudras* transferred themselves as peasants during the *Smritis* period.

The epigraphical traditions referred to the tax-paying *Katumbins* and *Karus*, who were from *Shudra Varuna* adopted agricultural as a subsidiary means of livelihood. Even *Arthashastra* of Kautilya refers *Katumbins* as share cropper *Shudras*. R. S. Sharma holds “the *Kurmis*, who constitute a numerous cultivating caste in West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar-Pradesh, Jets, Jaats and Rajputs of North India are placed in

the category of *Shudras*, seems to correspond to the *Katumbin* the same is true of the *Kunbi* caste found in Maharashtra and parts of Madhya Pradesh”.<sup>95</sup> Yuan Chwang’s refers *Shudra* as a Class of agriculturists, (T. Watters, 1904-5) a statement which is qualified by the *Narasimha Purana* where agriculture was considered as the main duty of the *Shudras*. (Narasimha Purana, 1911)

**CONCLUSION:** It can be surmised that significant changes took place during 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E., when large population of *Shudras* adopted agriculture as their profession for livelihood, it might be because of large scale land-grants made by kings who ultimately created a class of landed aristocrats between the kings and the peasant. All sorts’ religious and administrative services were being paid through land grants. In the process of land donation the landed aristocrats brought more and more land under cultivation with the help of iron-plough share where *Shudras* were used as actual cultivator of land or they can be called as agriculturists.

The study of the early Indian literary traditions with reference to the creation of *Shudras* and its transforming as peasant only highlights the nefarious designs of upper *Varnas* elites, as it is a universally acknowledge fact that all human being are social and equal and indispensable for the development and continuation of civilized society. But this factum did not find favour with the upper class elites and the consequential required realization could never be realized by the early Indian upper class elites, so much so that lower *Varnas*, *Shudras* in particular, ultimately came to be treated as animals and non-being rather than a precious and important human being for obvious reasons of notion upper class domination was the product of the feudal mindsets of past and present generation of man which ultimately created a society a feudal in early India. (G. C. Chauhan, SAEIS, pp62-63)

Thus, it can be surmised that the negation and the difference of opinions depicted in the *Dharmasastras* are due to the fact that these works were amassed, edited and redacted over many centuries under the supervision of various Scholars. These literary traditions integrate the testimony of the common practices of various societies noticed during a time span of many centuries. It is impossible to attach a particular view to a particular age or an author.

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