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VARNASAMKARA IN THE DHARMA SŪTRAS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

BY

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(Patna)

The word *varṇasamkara* appears in the *Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra*¹⁾ and *samkara* in the *Gautama Dharma Sūtra*²⁾. The concept, however, figures prominently in the law-books of Gautama, Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha. They are agreed that certain castes originate from miscegenation among the members of the four *varṇas*. They conceive of hypergamous unions, which they term *anuloma*³⁾, “in accordance with the direction of hair” or in the natural order. They also speak of hypogamous unions called *pratiloma*⁴⁾, “against the hair” or in the inverse order⁵⁾. Neither *anuloma* nor *pratiloma* unions find favour with them, but these two are not treated as on an equal footing.

Anuloma is not entirely disapproved of or prohibited except by Āpastamba⁶⁾, who forbids all mixed marriages, condemns sons born of these and other irregular connections and enjoins a man to marry only a virgin of his own *varṇa* with rites prescribed by the *śāstras*. Gautama⁷⁾ and Vasiṣṭha⁸⁾ recommend marriage with a girl of one’s own *varṇa* but countenance marriage with a girl lower than one’s own. Baudhāyana⁹⁾

1) *Varṇasamkarād utpannān vrātyān ābur maṇiṣṇaḥ*, 1.9.15.

2) *Prasūtīrakṣaṇam asamkaro dharmah*. VIII. 3.

3) *Gaut. Dh. S.*, IV. 14.

4) *Ibid.*, IV. 15; IV. 20; *Baudh. Dh. S.*, 1.8.8; *Vas. Dh. S.*, XIII. 7.

5) The explicit use of these terms in the sense of marriage and progeny is found for the first time in the *Dharma Sūtras*, though P. V. Kane infers their use in the sense of marriage in the days of the *Upaniṣads* and refers to Pāṇini’s (IV. 4. 28) formation of words from *anuloma* and *pratiloma* (*Hist. of Dh. S.*, Vol. ii, pt. i. ch. ii. p. 52).

6) *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 6. 13. 1; II. 6. 13. 3-4.

7) *Gaut. Dh. S.*, IV. 14.

8) *Vas. Dh. S.*, I. 24.

9) *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 8. 6.

even puts forward the general principle that if a male of one *varṇa* marries a woman of the *varṇa* just below it, the progeny belongs to the *varṇa* of the father. Accordingly, Baudhāyana¹⁾ and Gautama²⁾, as interpreted by Haradatta, state that the offspring of a brāhmaṇa from a Kṣatriya wife is as much a *savarṇa* and a brāhmaṇa as is a son begotten from a *savarṇa* wife. But certain reservations made by the law-givers considerably restrict the scope of the principle. Thus Gautama³⁾, as interpreted by Haradatta, denies its applicability to issue born of a Kṣatriya male and a vaiśya woman or of a vaiśya male and a śūdra woman; Vasiṣṭha⁴⁾ does not allow Āryas (which term covers vaiśyas also) to marry a girl of the śūdra caste and includes⁵⁾ among those unfit for invitation to a śrāddha dinner a brāhmaṇa who is a *śūdrāpati*, husband of a śūdra woman; and Baudhāyana⁶⁾ himself thinks that begetting a son on a śūdra woman is a great sin (*mahāpātaka*) causing loss of caste. In fact, even in the *anuloma* category marriage with a śūdra woman is particularly disliked.

Grave anxiety and horror are, however, expressed at *pratiloma* marriages and it is sought to make them entirely forbidden. Gautama⁷⁾ even says that all *pratilomas* are *dharmabhīna*, “without virtue”, or, as Bühler⁸⁾ translates it, “outside the pale of the sacred law”⁹⁾. Among the *pratilomas* also, marriage or connection with a śūdra male is viewed with singular concern, Gautama¹⁰⁾ regarding the son of a śūdra from a woman of unequal caste as a *patita*. In any case the progeny of *pratiloma*

1) *Ibid.*, I. 9. 3.

2) *Gaut. Dh. S.*, IV. 14.

3) *Ibid.*

4) *Vas. Dh. S. I.*, 25-27.

5) *Ibid.*, XV. 18.

6) S. C. Banerjee, *Dharma Sūtras, A Study in their Origin and Development*, ch. IV. p. 97.

7) *Pratilomās tu dharmabhīnāḥ. Gaut. Dh. S.*, IV. 20.

8) *SBE*, Vol. II. pt. I. p. 199.

9) The *Mitākṣarā* on *Yājñavalkya*, III, 262 interprets it as meaning that they cannot have *upanayana* and similar *samskāras* of *dvijas* performed for them, though they are entitled to perform *vratas* and *prāyaścittas*. Kane, *op. cit.*, ch. II. p. 53.

10) *asamānāyām tu śūdrāt patitavṛttih, Gaut. Dh. S.*, IV. 22.

unions are considered lower in status than either of the two parents¹).

The *Dharma Sūtras* identify castes in society which, according to them, were produced as a result of interbreeding at different and specific *varṇa* levels. The cross *anulomaja* and *pratilomaja* matings, they suggest, give rise to other known castes. The status of each of these so-called mixed castes is said to depend on birth, which thus becomes the main and decisive factor. The maintenance of the purity and integrity of the *varṇa* system from these ominous trends through endogamy is prized beyond measure, and the preventing of confusion of orders or mixture of castes is enjoined as the prime responsibility of the king, of course in alliance with the indispensable brāhmaṇas²). The lawbooks even allow the brāhmaṇas and the vaiśyas to take up arms—an extraordinary provision—in order to realize this objective. The four *varṇas* have, in their view, already emerged as hereditary castes.

We have to explain the theoretical superiority of the *anuloma* sons vis-à-vis the *pratiloma* ones. Hutton³) attributes this to the impact of patrilineal invaders on an indigenous matrilineal population and contends that the matrilineal system was once much more widely distributed than it is now. Kosambi implies substantially the same in his reference to “aboriginal matriarchy”⁴) and adds that “non-Aryan Brāhmīns are called sons of their mothers by name”⁵). In such a society the issue of a patrilineal father and a matrilineal mother would have status and kinship with both his parents’ families and would inherit from both. Even the issue of patrilocal and matrilocal marriages would receive advantages from at least one side⁶). But the offspring of an im-

1) Kane, *op. cit.*, ch. II. p. 56; A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, ch. V. p. 147.

2) *Gaut. Dh. S.*, XI. 9-10; VIII. 1-2; *Vas. Dh. S.*, XIX. 7-8; Kosambi calls brāhmaṇas “professional priests” without parallel in “Aryan tradition elsewhere”, who in later India acquired “virtual monopoly of all ritual”. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, ch. IV. p. 94.

3) J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, ch. X. pp. 150-151.

4) D. D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, ch. VII. p. 171.

5) *An Introduction to . . .* ch. IV. p. 97.

6) The *Dharma Sūtra* laws of inheritance providing a share, though unequal, to an

migrant patrilineal woman by an indigenous matrilineal male would have no place with either of the parents, and with no claims to kinship or inheritance his status would inevitably tend to be degraded. The position of a *caṇḍāla*, born of a śūdra by a brāhmaṇa woman¹) might, however, differ from a *pratiloma* son born of two patrilineal castes, e.g., of a Kṣatriya and a brāhmaṇa woman, for such sons do not lose status and inheritance completely. This also is supported by the *Dharma Sūtra* testimony that the son of a man by a wife of a higher caste, if he is obedient, is entitled to maintenance provided the father leaves no other male issue²). The exact causes of the difference between the position of sons of a matrilineal father and a patrilineal mother on the one hand and that of sons of a patrilineal father and a matrilineal mother on the other would, however, be forgotten when both societies adopted the patrilineal system.

A word needs to be said, however, about the position of daughters in the *anuloma* and *pratiloma* categories. Theoretically, the social position of the two might be conceived to depend on their origin and be similar, of course within the limitations of a patriarchal framework. However, Āpastamba makes a distinction between sons and daughters of mixed unions because he roundly condemns only the sons born of such unions³). But this cannot be taken to imply any superiority of the daughters and perhaps suggests that it was the male who really counted and marital ties largely and finally determined the social status of women.

It would be odd if theoretical works like the *Dharma Sūtras*, obsessed with the *varṇasamkara* complex, remained satisfied with envisaging *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages and did not also contemplate extra-marital sexual relationships among members of unequal castes. In fact their injunctions regarding crime and punishment amply bear out the distinction between the two. That the punishment for irregular *anuloma* connections (whether the term *anuloma* should aptly apply to this case is

anuloma son born of a śūdra wife prove this point beyond doubt. S. C. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, ch. IV. p. 114.

1) *Gaut. Dh. S.*, IV. 15-16; *Vas. Dh. S.*, XVIII. 1; *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 9. 7.

2) S. C. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, ch. IV. p. 114.

3) *tatrāpi doṣavān putra eva*, *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 6. 13. 4.

doubtful) should be less severe than that for connections of the reverse type is quite understandable and logical. Thus, while banishment is the punishment for a member of one of the three higher castes if he commits adultery with a śūdra woman¹), adultery of a śūdra with a woman of the three higher castes under any circumstances is punishable with death²), even the woman concerned not escaping with a lighter punishment³). *Pratiloma* marriages being forbidden, however, one would like to ask if the *pratiloma* castes enumerated in the *Dhārma Sūtras* of Gautama, Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha were considered to comprise only the original progeny of irregular connections in this category (and not of married ones) and their descendants. The implications for the original parents, if legally binding *pratiloma* marriage were also considered to produce such low castes, would be frightening indeed. But perhaps this would be stretching logic too far, and the *varṇasamkara* concept, with all its obvious limitations, would not be able to stand up under the consequent extra strain and would vanish into the realm of speculative theorizing from which perhaps it largely emanated.

The *Dharma Sūtras* do not agree about the number, names, classification and details of derivation of the so-called mixed castes. While according to Gautama their number is eleven (twelve, according to the view of some teachers mentioned by him), according to Baudhāyana it is fourteen. Vasiṣṭha mentions six mixed castes and Āpastamba only three. Gautama divides his mixed castes into five *anuloma* and six *pratiloma* (six and six according to the view of some teachers)⁴); and Baudhāyana into four *anuloma*, nine *pratiloma*, and two doubly mixed castes: *vaiṇa*⁵) which is placed in both the latter categories; and *pārasava*⁶) which is regarded as only another name for *niṣāda*. Vasiṣṭha mentions only one *anuloma* and five *pratiloma* castes, while the three mixed castes of

1) S. C. Banerjee, *op. cit.* ch. V. pp. 170-171.

2) *Gaut. Dh. S.* XII. 2-3; *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 27. 9; *Vas. Dh. S.*, XXI. 1. 5. *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 26. 24 and *Baudh. Dh. S.* II. 3. 49 ff. provide for penances also in this case.

3) S. C. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, ch. IV. p. 98.

4) Not one and eight as is the view of some, as stated by Kane, *op. cit.*, ch. II. p. 57.

5) *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 8. 8; I. 9. 12.

6) *Ibid.*, II. 2. 30.

Āpastamba are not the product of miscegenation at all and are derived from sins in past lives¹⁾. The *anuloma* castes of Gautama²⁾ are *ambaṣṭha*, *ugra*, *niṣāda*, *dausmanta* and *pāraśava*; of Baudhāyana *ambastha*³⁾, *niṣāda*⁴⁾, *ugra*⁵⁾ and *rathakāra*⁶⁾; and of Vasiṣṭha *niṣāda*⁷⁾. The *anuloma* castes according to the view of some teachers mentioned in Gautama⁸⁾ are *mūrdhāvasikta*, *bhrjyakaṅṭha*, *māhiṣya*, *pāraśava*, *yavana* and *kaṛaṇa*. On the other hand, the *pratiloma* castes of Gautama⁹⁾ are *sūta*, *māgadha*, *āyogava*, *kṛta*, *vaidehaka* and *caṇḍāla*; of Baudhāyana¹⁰⁾ *āyogava*, *māgadha*, *vaiṇa*, *pulkasa*, *kukkuṭa*, *vaidehaka*, *caṇḍāla*¹¹⁾ and *sūta*¹²⁾; of Vasiṣṭha *antyaśvāsāyina*¹³⁾ *vaiṇa*¹⁴⁾, *caṇḍāla*¹⁵⁾, *pulkasa*¹⁶⁾ and *sūta*¹⁷⁾. The two doubly mixed castes of Baudhāyana are *vaiṇa*¹⁸⁾ and *svapāka*.¹⁹⁾ The *pratiloma* castes mentioned by Gautama²⁰⁾ as the view of some teachers are *sūta*, *māgadha*, *caṇḍāla*, *dhīvara*, *Pulkasa* and *vaideha*.

Of the mixed castes only the *caṇḍāla* is common to all the law-books and is listed by Gautama, Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha, as a *pratiloma* born of a śūdra man and a brāhmana woman. *Sūta* is another *pratiloma* caste

1) Āpastamba states that when a brāhmana, kṣatriya or vaiśya is guilty of the theft of gold, (or) of the murder of a brāhmana, he undergoes torments in hell for some time and then is born as a *caṇḍāla*, *paulkasa* or *vaiṇa*, respectively: *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 1. 2. 6.

2) *Gaut. Dh. S.*, IV. 14.

3) *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 9. 3.

4) *Ibid.*, II. 2. 29.

5) *Ibid.*, I. 9. 5.

6) *Ibid.*, I. 9. 6.

7) *Vas. Dh. S.*, XVIII. 8.

8) Bühler, *SBE*, Vol. II. pt. I. p. 198.

9) *Gaut. Dh. S.*, IV. 15.

10) *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 8. 8.

11) *Ibid.*, also I. 9. 7.

12) *Ibid.*, also I. 9. 8.

13) *Vas. Dh. S.*, XVIII. 3.

14) *Ibid.*, XVIII. 2.

15) *Ibid.*, XVIII. 1.

16) *Ibid.*, XVIII. 5.

17) *Ibid.*, XVIII. 6.

18) *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 9. 12.

19) *Ibid.*, I. 9. II.

20) Bühler, *op. cit.*, p. 198. Bühler, however, regards the four *sūtras* (IV. 18-21) mentioning six *anuloma* and six *pratiloma* castes along with their derivation as "perhaps spurious".

originating from a kṣatriya male and a brāhmaṇa woman, according to these three law-givers. A *niṣāda* also is an *anuloma* according to them, though Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha derive him from a brāhmaṇa man and a śūdra woman, while Gautama as interpreted by Haradatta derives him from a brāhmaṇa man and a vaiśya woman. It is to be noted that no *anuloma* or *pratiloma* caste is listed in the reverse category by any of our sources. For the rest, there is a serious divergence concerning the details of the derivation of the particular castes. Thus, among the *anulomas*, while Gautama (as interpreted by Haradatta) derives the *ambaṣṭha* from a kṣatriya and a vaiśya woman, according to Baudhāyana he springs from the union of a brāhmaṇa and a vaiśya woman. An *ugra* is described by Gautama (as explained by Haradatta) as the offspring of a vaiśya by a śūdra woman; and by Baudhāyana as that of a Kṣatriya male and a śūdra woman. Baudhāyana derives the *rathakāra* (not mentioned by others) from a vaiśya male and a śūdra woman. Unlike Baudhāyana, Gautama distinguishes a *pārasava* from a *niṣāda*, though he derives *pārasava* in the way Baudhāyana does *niṣāda*, as the son of a brāhmaṇa and a śūdra woman. The *daṇṣmanta* of Gautama is not mentioned by the others and is ascribed an origin from a kṣatriya male and a vaiśya woman. Among the *pratiloma* castes, the *māgadha* is derived from a vaiśya father and a kṣatriya mother according to Gautama, and from a śūdra father and a vaiśya mother according to Baudhāyana; the *āyogava* from a śūdra father and a vaiśya mother according to Gautama and from a vaiśya father and a kṣatriya mother according to Baudhāyana; and the *vaidehaka* from a śūdra father and a kṣatriya mother according to Gautama and from a vaiśya father and a kṣatriya mother according to Baudhāyana. *Vaiṇa* and *pulkasa* are common to Baudhāyana, Vasiṣṭha and Āpastamba; but while Baudhāyana derives the *pratiloma vaiṇa* from a *vaidehaka* (*pratiloma*) father and an *ambaṣṭha* (*anuloma*) mother (a doubly mixed origin), Vasiṣṭha ascribes his birth to a śūdra father and a vaiśya mother. Baudhāyana derives a *pulkasa* from a *niṣāda* father and a śūdra mother; Vasiṣṭha derives him from a śūdra father and a kṣatriya mother. *Antyāvāsāyin*¹) as a caste arising from a śūdra male and a vaiśya

1) *Gautama Dh. S.*, XX. 1 seems to use the term in a generic sense when it says

woman is mentioned only by Vasiṣṭha; and the *svapāka*, according to Baudhāyana, is a doubly mixed caste springing from an *ugra* (*anuloma*) male and a *kṣatrī* (*pratiloma*) woman. Gautama derives *kṛta* from a vaiśya male and a brāhmaṇa woman, while Baudhāyana derives *kṣatrī* from a śūdra male and a kṣatriya woman. It is very strange that while Baudhāyana regards the *kukkūta* as a *pratiloma* caste, he derives it in two *anuloma* ways, from a śūdra male and a *niṣāda* woman,¹⁾ and from a vaiśya male and a *niṣāda* woman²⁾. Such glaring contradictions make a mockery of most theorizing, prove the “arbitrary genesis”³⁾ of the so-called mixed castes, and suggest a formalist interpretation of the state of society, the origins of which were already obscure when these treatises were composed⁴⁾.

Strangely, the *Dharma Sūtras*, which are so punctilious in naming and ascribing particular origins to the so-called mixed castes, give few facts about them. Indeed, there is not even any mention of their occupations; and this in the face of Vasiṣṭha’s assertion that since sometimes it is difficult to assign any particular derivation to groups of people, men’s subcastes are to be known by their actions and occupations⁵⁾. This much is clear, however, that while the brāhmaṇa stood at the apex of the social hierarchy, a mixture of brāhmaṇa with śūdra blood was regarded as especially polluting, and the mixed castes stood at various levels in the social scale.

That some of the mixed castes were really degraded is incontrovertible. This is only too evident from references to them individually and from the coining and application of such generic terms as *antya antaḥ*, *bāhya*, *antyaaja*, *antyaayoni*, etc. Gautama condemns⁶⁾ the *antya* as the

that a brāhmaṇa father who dwells with the *antyaवासयिन्स* or cohabits with one of their women should be rejected.

1) *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 9. 14.

2) *Ibid.*, I. 8. 11-12.

3) R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, ch. IV. p. 119; Richard Fick, *Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha’s time*, p. 9.

4) J. H. Hutton, *op. cit.*, ch. X. p. 150.

5) *Vas. Dh. S.*, XVIII. 7.

6) *antyaḥ pāpiṣṭhaḥ*, *Gaut. Dh. S.*, IV. 23.

vilest of persons and states¹⁾ that he should be given impure garments. Haradatta²⁾ identifies *antya* with *caṇḍāla*, while Kane³⁾ regards *antya* as a generic appellation for all the lowest castes including the *caṇḍāla*. Āpastamba⁴⁾ uses *antaḥ* in relation to the *caṇḍāla* and this indicates⁵⁾ that he lived at the end of the village. *Bāhya* has the same sense, and Āpastamba⁶⁾ suggests that there is a cessation of Vedic study on the day a *bāhya* enters a village. Haradatta⁷⁾ explains *bāhya* as *ugras* and *niṣādas*. *Antyaja* also, according to Kane⁸⁾, applies to all the lowest castes. Vasiṣṭha⁹⁾ distinguishes between good *śūdras* and *antya-yomis*, who are to appear as witnesses only in their own cases. Obviously, there were sections in society which were kept at a distance, perhaps segregated and considered much lower in status than the *śūdras*. Prof. Sharma¹⁰⁾ rightly points out that their segregation does not seem to have been the result of any deliberate policy of expulsion from old Aryan settlements. It seems that the whole population of tribal villages was condemned to the position of untouchables by the *brāhmaṇas*.

The case of the *caṇḍāla*, about whom relatively more material is available, is an instance in point. Gautama¹¹⁾ speaks of him in the same breath as he does of dogs and crows, and provides¹²⁾ that if a *caṇḍāla* defiles the body it should be purified by bathing dressed in clothes. Āpastamba's view is no different. He¹³⁾ requires every householder to give food after *Vaiśvadeva* to all creatures, including *caṇḍālas*, dogs and crows. Also he¹⁴⁾ holds that to touch and see a *caṇḍāla* is sinful and states

1) *Ibid.*, XIV. 40.

2) *Ibid.*, Haradatta's Comm. on IV. 23.

3) Kane, *op. cit.*, ch. II. p. 69.

4) *antaścaṇḍālam*, *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 3. 9. 15.

5) R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, ch. IV. p. 130.

6) *tadabarāgateṣu ca grāmam bāhyeṣu*, *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 3. 9. 18.

7) Bühler, *op. cit.*, p. 34 fn. 18.

8) Kane, *op. cit.*, ch. II. p. 70.

9) . . . *antyanām antyayonayaḥ*. *Vas. Dh. S.*, XVI. 30.

10) R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, ch. IV. pp. 130-131; B. R. Ambedkar, *The Untouchables*,

pp. 26-27.

11) *śvacāṇḍālapatitāvekeṣaṇe duṣṭam*, *Gaut. Dh. S.*, XV. 25.

12) *Ibid.*, XIV., 28.

13) *sarvān vaiśvadevabhāgināḥ kurvītaḥ śvacāṇḍālebhyaḥ*. *Āp. Dh. S.*, II. 4. 9. 5.

14) *Ibid.*, II. I. 2. 8-9.

that on touching a *caṇḍāla* one should plunge into water, on talking with him one should converse with a brāhmaṇa (for purification), on seeing him one should look at the luminaries (either the sun or the moon). Food looked at by a dog or by an *apapātra*, to whose class belong the *patita* and the *caṇḍāla*, becomes unfit for eating,¹⁾ and the presence of the *caṇḍāla* is considered sufficient to stop the recitation of the Veda²⁾. According to Patañjali³⁾, Pāṇini seems to have included the *caṇḍāla* and the *mṛtapā* (a person who watches dead bodies) in the list of those śūdras who lived outside towns and villages, and contact with whom permanently defiled the bronze vessels of the brāhmaṇas. Prof. Sharma⁴⁾ regards this as the first unimpeachable reference to untouchables in literature.

References to the *caṇḍāla* in earlier brāhmaṇic literature and in contemporary and later Buddhist and Jain literature confirm the statements of the *Dharma Sūtras*, and the *caṇḍāla* appears to be an especially despised caste, quite numerous, widely dispersed and well-recognised. It is difficult to see how a whole people could be the outcome of illicit unions between brāhmaṇa women and śūdra males⁵⁾. Moreover, it would seem unwise to imagine so much brahmaṇa blood in the veins of these hated and backward aboriginals. On the other hand, the theory of *varṇasamkara*, implying the brāhmaṇas' deep concern for preserving the purity of Aryan blood, may have been an afterthought and implicitly based on the known reality about sections of the population like the *caṇḍālas*. This hypothesis becomes more plausible when we note that there appear to have been *caṇḍālas* "by works as well as by birth,"⁶⁾ and both permanent and temporary outcastes in the *Dharma Sūtras*. Also, if the *caṇḍālas* had been only the mixed progeny of the higher castes as the theory of *varṇasamkara* presupposes, and had been large enough in

1) *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 5. 16. 30 with Haradatta's Comm.

2) *Ibid.*, I. 3. 9. 9.

3) *śūdrāṇām aniravasitānām*, Pā., II. 4-10; *Mahābhāṣya*, I. 475. R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.* ch. IV. p. 125.

4) R. S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India*, p. 17.

5) G. S. Ghurye, *Caste, Class and Occupation*, Ch. III. p. 51.

6) J. H. Hutton, *op. cit.*, ch. X. p. 151.

number, they would not have brooked permanent ostracism; and if society at large had been so conscious and organized, instead of being content with theorizing about the phenomenon, it would not have allowed such unions. Kane's observation¹⁾ that such low castes as the *caṇḍālas* and the *paulkasas* had evolved long before the close of the Vedic period cannot be lightly dismissed. Devraj Chanana²⁾ holds the same view. Louis Renou's remark,³⁾ therefore, that there are among the mixed castes some "outcastes", like the *caṇḍāla*, who are, so to speak, promoted by being included among the "mixed", sounds correct. The *paulkasa* and *śvapāka* seem to have been other aboriginal tribes of the level of the *caṇḍālas*, with whom they are frequently associated in literature.

The *niṣādas* are a pre-Aryan tribal people, first noticed in the *Rudrādhyāya* of the *Yajurveda*. The *Mahābhārata*⁴⁾ describes them as short-limbed, with complexions the colour of charred wood, and with blood-red eyes, and gives a fanciful account of their origin from the pierced thigh of king Veṇa, who proved tyrannical towards the priestly class. Prof. Sharma⁵⁾ suggests that this may indicate the resistance which the *niṣādas* offered to the process of brāhmaṇization. The *Nirukta*⁶⁾ explanation of the *pañcajanāḥ* as the four varṇas and the *niṣādas* seems, however, to imply that they proved less intractable than the *caṇḍālas*, *paulkasas* etc. and were slowly assimilated into the brāhmaṇical society, though, according to N. K. Dutt, as a fifth caste⁷⁾. Their habitat and their kingdom are placed in the region of the lower Sarasvatī and the hills and forests of the Vindhya ranges⁸⁾. The *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* requires the sacrificer in a particular rite to reside temporarily with the *niṣādas*⁹⁾,

1) Kane, *op. cit.*, ch. II. p. 48.

2) D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*, pp. 176-177.

3) Louis Renou, *The Civilization of Ancient India*, ch. I. p. 50.

4) *Mbb.*, 59. 99-101.

5) R. S. Sharma, *Sūdras* . . . , ch. IV. pp. 129-130.

6) *Nir.*, III. 8.

7) N. K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Vol. I. ch. III. p. 107.

8) Ram Gopal, *India of Vedic Kalpasūtras*, ch. VI. p. 116; Cf. N. K. Dutt, *op. cit.*, ch. III. p. 107; The *Rāmāyaṇa*, II. 50. 30 ff. refers to the *niṣāda* kingdom with Śṛṅga-verapura as its capital.

9) G. S. Ghurye, *op. cit.*, ch. III. p. 52.

and possibly some of the *niṣādas* found their way into the priestly class. The *niṣāda gotra* reported in the *Gaṇapāṭha* of Pāṇini¹⁾, though not mentioned in any of the standard *gotra* lists, would not be possible unless some brāhmaṇas had been adopted from aboriginal priests or had served the aborigines as priests²⁾. Perhaps we have here an earlier example of the familiar historical phenomenon of the assimilated tribal peoples not always being given the same place in the brāhmaṇical order and the same tribe even breaking up into several varṇas and castes. It may also be that the overwhelming majority of the *niṣādas* remained backward and uninducted, and this led the law-givers to place the caste at the lowest *anuloma* level, though a fall in the status of the whole tribe from what it had enjoyed in the later Vedic society would not be unusual and is in fact a common feature of quite a few other mixed castes. The *pāraśava's* close association, similar derivation and occasional identification with the *niṣāda*³⁾ prove him either to belong to a section of the *niṣādas* or at best to be of a distinct caste at the *niṣāda* level. The *vaiṇa* is another aboriginal tribe at a low material level⁴⁾. One does not know if it too could be connected with King Veṇa, the traditional progenitor of the *niṣādas*.

Most of these primitive aboriginal tribes, identified as mixed castes in the *Dharma Sūtras*, do not appear to have been a well-knit part of the body-politic, but a marginal one. Living in a food-gathering stage, they seem to have been mainly hunters of various kinds. Kane⁵⁾ refers to a number of words in later Vedic literature denoting the extensive pursuit of the profession of hunting: e.g., *mṛgayu* (hunter), *svani* (those who lead pack of hounds), *puñjiṣṭa* (fowler), *iṣukṛt* or *iṣukāra* (maker of arrows), *dhanvakṛt* or *dhanvakāra* (maker of bows), *jyākāra* (maker of bow-strings) etc. It cannot be that those engaged in hunting as a means of livelihood in the half-reclaimed tracts were numerically small. Perhaps

1) Pān., IV. I. 100.

2) R. S. Sharma, *Sūtras* . . . , ch. IV. p. 130.

3) A corrupt passage of *Var. Dh. S.* (XVIII. 10) explains *pāraśava* as meaning that, though living, he is like one dead (*pāraśavo neva jīvanneva śavo bhavāṭītyāhub*).

4) R. S. Sharma, *Sūtras* . . . , Ch. IV. p. 128.

5) Kane, *op. cit.*, ch. II. p. 43.

they were forced by their own material needs and the inevitable aggrandisement of the culturally superior settled community to compromise with and accommodate themselves to the latter, and were slowly pushed to the position of untouchables because of their backwardness and repulsive habits. The extent of their induction into the Aryan society seems to have been very limited and the process of mutual acculturation does not appear to have advanced very considerably.

The *rathakāra* is a clear case of an occupational caste. Forming a part of the Aryan *vis* in Vedic times, it cannot be regarded as an aboriginal tribe as suggested by Rhys Davids¹), though it is likely that in later times some of the aborigines were assimilated into the ranks of the *rathakāras*. Its derivation as an *anuloma* born of a vaiśya male and a śūdra woman is, however, meaningful, and shows how in the material structure of society these two sections were coming together. The process of degradation of the artisan classes to the level of the śūdras had already begun and the relative freedom of the brāhmaṇa caste from manual tasks may have aggravated its pride in itself and coloured its vision towards castes engaged in crafts requiring physical toil and skill. Kane²) speaks of the *rathakāra* as an intermediate caste before the close of the Vedic period, and the position of a member of this caste does not seem to have deteriorated greatly in the *Dharma Sūtras*, as Bauddhāyana even provides for his *upanayana*³).

Of the other mixed castes, we have meagre knowledge of the *daśmanta*, *kr̥ta*, *kukkūṭa*, *mūrdhāvasikta*, *bhrijyakaṇṭha*, *māhiṣya*, *kaṛaṇa* and *dhīvara*. The *ambasṭha*, *ugra*, *sūta*, *māgadha*, *āyogava* and *vaidebaka*, however, do not appear in an unfavourable light in earlier literature. Thus the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*⁴) mentions an *ambasṭha* king and the *ambasṭhas* are identified by H. C. Raychaudhuri⁵) with the *Ambastanoi* of Arrian, called *Sambastai* by Diodorus. The habitat of the *ambasṭhas* would thus be in the north-west region of the country. Theoretically an *anuloma* caste

1) Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I. 100; R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, ch. IV, p. 129.

2) Kane, *op. cit.*, ch. II. p. 48.

3) V. A. Ramaswami Sastri, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. II. ch. XIX. p. 303.

4) *Ait. Br.*, VIII. 21.

5) H. C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 255.

without śūdra blood, the name, according to Louis Renou¹⁾, is that of a clan whose only "fault" was to have lived in a region somewhat remote from the "central country" where the classical dharma prevailed.

Ugra appears in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*²⁾ as the name of a royal officer (*rājaputra*), and although classified as an *anuloma* with some mixture of śūdra blood he appears to be materially quite well-off, for Āpastamba³⁾ allows a pupil to bring wealth from an *ugra* when the teacher is in distress, and states⁴⁾ that a brāhmaṇa may accept gifts of money, corn, such as paddy, the flesh of deer, houses, fields and hay for oxen from an *ugra*.

Sūta connotes both professional bards and charioteers. Kosambi⁵⁾ thinks that the term applied to the original poets and singers when brāhmaṇism had not separated its priestly class from the other Aryans. In the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*⁶⁾ and the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*⁷⁾ the *sūta* appears along with the *kṣatṛ* among the *ratnins* at the royal court. N.K. Dutt⁸⁾ suggests that the *sūtas* earlier accompanied the kings to the battlefield as charioteers and inspired them with songs of heroes and heroic deeds, but later abandoned the military profession and came to be regarded as a caste of lower rank. It is significant that, although regarded as *pratiloma*, the *Dharma Sūtras* agree in assigning brāhmaṇa and kṣatriya parentage to them.

Māgadha, as the name suggests, is connected with the region of Magadha⁹⁾. Appearing first in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*¹⁰⁾, the word earlier meant "bard", and later "trader". Though derived differently, a *māgadha* is ascribed vaiśya blood along with that of the kṣatriya by the

1) Louis Renou, *op. cit.*, ch. I. p. 50.

2) *Tai. Br.*, III. 8. 5.

3) *Viśamagate tvācārya ugrataḥ sūdrato vāharet*, *Āp. Dh. S.*, I. 2. 7. 20.

4) *Ibid.*, I. 6. 18. 1.

5) D. D. Kosambi, *The Culture . . .* ch. IV. p. 92.

6) *Tai. S.*, I. 8. 9. 1-2.

7) *Tai. Br.*, I. 7. 3. 1.

8) N. K. Dutt, *op. cit.*, ch. IV. p. 165.

9) Kosambi thinks that the tribe of the *Māgadhas* gave its name to the region. *The Culture . . .* ch. V. p. 122; Pāṇini derives *māgadha* from the country Magadha. Kane, *op. cit.*, ch. II. p. 91.

10) *Tai. Br.* III. 4. 1.

former and of the śūdra by the latter. The *māgadhas*, according to N. K. Dutt¹), were at first probably those *sūtas* who came from the semi-Aryanised country of Magadha, a breeding-place of mixed and degraded castes.

Vaidehaka (misspelt Vaidehika by Kosambi²)) means 'men of the Videha tribe' and was a class of traders or caravaneers (*sārthavāha*). Since the Videha tribe had vanished, this nomenclature, says Kosambi, shows the origin of the profession as being a particular tribal guild. Vaiśya blood flows in the *vaidehaka* according to priestly theory, though he also inherits kṣatriya or śūdra blood.

The *āyogava*, a *pratiloma* caste in the *Dharma Sūtras*, inheriting vaiśya blood together with kṣatriya or śūdra blood, finds previous mention as *ayogu* (a profession the precise meaning of which is not known) in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*³); and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* speaks of Marutta Āvikṣita as an *āyogava* king.

Perhaps these mixed castes were *vrātyas*, a term used by Baudhāyana as a synonym of *varṇasamkara*,⁴) and interpreted by Basham⁵) as applying to Aryans by origin who had fallen away from the orthodox norms.

Thus, three categories of people combined to produce the phenomenon of the mixed castes—later the untouchables: (1) less assimilated backward aboriginals; (2) degraded artisans; and (3) groups which, through infringement of caste rules or otherwise (association with a region outside the pale of brāhmanism, for example), had lost their Aryan status. Theoretically, the castes were sub-divisions of the four *varṇas* or orders, the result of miscegenation, but in fact they had an entirely different origin and were much more organic and spontaneous in their growth⁶). The *Dharma Sūtras* represent the orthodox and ideal point of view and the *varṇasamkara* theory provides an example of the

1) N. K. Dutt, *op. cit.*, ch. IV. p. 165.

2) D. D. Kosambi, *The Culture . . .* ch. V. p. 124.

3) *SBE*, Vol. 44 p. 397.

4) *Supra*, p. 273.

5) A. L. Basham, *Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture*, p. 7.

6) Basham, *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

brāhmanas' capacity to create categories and carry things to their logical conclusion. The theory flourished on congenial soil. It helped to further the accommodation of the exterior groups into the Aryan order of society, promoted the formation of new castes and was adopted and expanded by future law-givers, Manu himself enumerating 61 mixed castes¹) and the number rising to more than a hundred later on.

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1) R. S. Sharma, *Social Changes . . .*, p. 15.