Chapter 5

SOCIO LINGUISTIC OBSERVATIONS IN YĀSKA’S NIRUKTA

5.1 Introduction

Socio linguistics is a branch of linguistic studies which stresses on the social and cultural factors of the society through the linguistic equipments. So the linguistic element connects with the social phenomena and interprets the changes and nature of the society in accordance with the tools of linguistics. Yāska’s Nirukta is rich in references to the sociological ideas to a great extent. His attempts to trace out the meaning of many words reveal this factor on many occasions.
In the *Nirukta* there are a number of references of socio-linguistic elements scattered throughout the text, which may be interpreted with the tools of socio linguistics. A number of sociological references are available from the interpretations of Yāśka. The categorization of the available data is more or less helpful to evaluate the society through its varied linguistic indications.

Etymologies of Yāśka discuss the divergent areas of the society life at that time. More over, the Vedic passages quoted by Yāśka also depict the social standard and cultural standpoints of Vedic people. Thus they can be connected with some linguistic categorizations which require sociological diversity. The sociological factors which are seen in the etymologies of Yāśka may be categorized into various types. Etymologies regarding of social functions like status of women, wealth, importance of virtue, natural sources and animals, society life, inheritance of patriarchy and so on.
5.2 Status of Women

While explaining the similes, Yāska quotes a Vedic passage to compare the inferior nature of upameyas with the supremacy of the of upamānas (Nirukta III.15). The Vedic passage is -

\[ \text{kuha sviddośā kuha vastōraśvinā} \]
\[ \text{kuhābhipitvam karataḥ kuhośatuḥ.} \]
\[ \text{ko vām śayutrā vidhaveva devaram} \]
\[ \text{maryam na yośā kṛṣṇute sadhastha ā.} \]
\[ \text{(Rgveda X.40.2).} \]

‘Where are you during the night? Where during the day? Aśvins! where do you get your necessary things? Where do you dwell? Who puts you to bed in a dwelling place as a widow a husband’s brother; and a lady a man?’

The above mentioned Vedic passage and its explanations are of great emphasis in social and semantical approaches. Yāska explains the Vedic passage in the following method -

\[ \text{kvasvidrātrau bhavathāḥ. kva divā,} \]
\[ \text{kvābhiprāptim kuruthaḥ kva vasathāḥ.} \]
The last sentence in the commentary of Yāska refers to the word meaning of ‘devara’ i.e. ‘he is the second husband’. Further, Yāska etymologizes the words ‘vidhavā, devarah, maryah and yosā. In this occasion, Yāska’s etymology is - ‘devaro dīvyati karmā’ (Nirukta III.15).

According to Siddheshwar Varma, ‘devaro dīvyatikarmā means one who is sporting sexual place’. Root div means to sport. According to Lakshman Sarup the word devara means a player ‘div to play’. Durga also comments on this word as - devate kriḍatiti devarah. ‘Husband’s brother will be always a player with wife and she looks him as a little boy or her own son’.

Lakshman Sarup strictly criticizes the word meaning devara as second husband. According to him, the passage (devarah dvitiyo varah) is evidently an interpolation. And he quotes three reasons for the conclusion -

‘(1) the four words vidhavā, devara, marya and yosā
are explained by Yāska in the same order in which they occur in the second hemistich of X 40.2, but this passage disturbs the regular order.

(2) the first derivation of devāra is separated from the second by the intervening explanation of vidhavā, This is against the method of Yāska, who places all the etymologies of one word at the same places, connecting them with or...or;

(3) the passage is omitted by the MSS. of the shorter recension and Durga’. (Lakshman Sarup, 1998, p.48).

Siddheshwar Varma accepted the word meaning of ‘devāra’ as a second husband and criticizes the etymology of Yāska, as the actual meaning of the word according to Indo European family is ‘husband’s brother’. He quotes various words of similar meaning from German and I.E group of language.

The above mentioned Vedic passage and its commentary of Yāska and Durga may be considered as a socio linguistic unit, which exposes a semantic change of words with the
social conditions. The Vedic passage, represented by a Rsikā namely Ghosā, addresses the Aśvin deities. She asks several questions to them like ‘where are you at night, and during the day...and who puts you to bed in a dwelling place as a widow, a husband’s brother and a lady, a man’. This occasion states the word meaning of devāra as a second husband and Durga also comments on the passage in a similar way. Moreover, the whole meaning of the Vedic passage stresses the sexual relation of widow with husband’s brother. Here Durga illustrates that widow should treat husband’s brother in a very appreciable manner. In the next occasion, a lady calls an unknown man to her bedroom will be also in an attentive style of behaviour. So the whole meaning, according to the contextual analysis, stresses on some sexual behaviour. Moreover, the other words in the simile (vidhavā, marya, yosā) are also illustrating the same way of meaning.

So, Yāska’s explanation and Durga’s commentary exhibit various social sequences. These are explaining the semantic
change of the word ‘devara’ with the change of social conditions. According to Vedic age or the above mentioned Vedic passage, the sexual relation of widow and husband’s brother should be usual in the social life. Yāśka’s etymology for the word ‘devara’ is not enough to explain the meaning of devara. (devaro dīvyati karmā). Root ‘div’ is applicable in the senses of -

\[ krīḍā vijīgīśā vyavahāra dyuti stuti moda mada svapna kānti gatiṣu \]

Durga accepted the meaning ‘to play’. Lakshman Sarup also translated in a similar way. Varma also accepted the meaning ‘to sport’. So during the time of Durga, it may be considered that the husband’s brother as own brother by wives. The sexual relation of them is not accepted by the social conditions. So the transference of meaning of the word from the Vedic period to Yāśka’s period is not so clear; but Durga obviously states the meaning of the word devara as ‘a player’.

The interesting thing in this occasion is that the word ‘devara’ only governs the semantic changes as above mentioned.
All other three words in the simile are not interacting with similar situations. The etymologies of *vidhavā*, *marya* and *yosā* are in accordance with the Vedic passage. The etymology of *yosā* is - ‘*yosā yauteḥ*’ that means ‘a woman is derived from the root ‘to join’. Durga comments on the word as -

*sā hi miśrayatyātmānāṃ puruṣēṇa sākam*

‘she mixes herself with man’ (*Nirukta* III.15).

So the word in this occasion indicates a sexual relation of woman with man. But the social changes influenced the family concepts and relations to a great extent; this may be reasoned for the meaning of the word ‘*devara*’.

The word *vidhavā* has been explained by Yāska with the observation of Carmaśiras. According to him the word *vidhavā* is explained as -

*vidhavā vidhāṭkā bhavati, vidhavanādvā*

*vidhāvanādveti carmaśirāḥ, api vā dhava iti*

*manuṣyanāma, tadviyogādvidhavā* (*Nirukta* III.15).

‘A widow becoming sans sustainer, devoid of the sustainer or traumatized by the death of the sustainer
Carmāśiras gives a remarkable explanation for the word vidhavā. Durga comments on this derivation as -

\[\text{śā hi bharturabhāvādanurudhyamānā pumbiryatatato dhāvati (Nirukta III.15).}\]

‘A female running helter-skelter, intercepted and impeded by other males due to her being devoid of a husband’.

This explanation for the word vidhavā explicitly states the status of woman at the age of Yāska. As well as, she was respected by the world in her family life; she was totally remorse by people at the death of her husband especially by men. This picture of a lady-a widow- switched off to a helpless condition at the death of her husband has been depicted by Yāska through this explanation. The derivations quoted by Yāska on the word vidhavā imply the prominence and need of a husband in woman’s life in such a social situation.
5.3 Patriarchy

In the third chapter of the \textit{Nirukta}, discussions on the words \textit{apatyā} and \textit{duhitā} are exploring the status of legitimated child and daughter's succession. These words are discussed by Yāśka of great emphasis. All these derivations are illustrating the different opinions about the patriarchy in the society at the time of Yāśka.

Yāśka discusses on the word \textit{apatyā} (\textit{Nirukta} III.1) with ample quotations from Vedic hymns. This discussion governs a remarkable social enquiry of Vedic passages.

Yāśka here deals with the importance of offspring who is legitimate. The discussion on this part of the text, engaged with the child's inheritance; and the inheritance should achieve only by the legitimate offspring. If the offspring is adopted, he is regarded as a stranger. Here Yāśka quotes a Vedic hymn from \textit{Ṛgveda} VII.4.7, which is a dialogue between Agni and Vasiṣṭha. Durga here remarks that -

"The latter (Vasiṣṭha) implored the former to grant him
a child as all his sons were killed. The former (Agni) asked him to get a child by adoption or purchase, where upon he denounced all but the legitimate child’

(Nirukta III.1).

The above mentioned dialogue from Vedic passages and the interpretations of Yāska explains the importance of a legally begotten child (aurasa). The Vedic passage denotes that the aurasāpatyam may be considered as an eternal wealth. Here Vāsiṣṭha prays to Agni that, ‘May we be masters of eternal wealth, as of the parental property’ (Nirukta III.2). and the adopted or any other type of child should be a stranger and he is not to be considered as a śeṣa. Here Durga offers two interpretations - 1. i.e. a child begotten to one’s own wife by another man. 2. A child begotten by a woman other than one’s own wife. Lakshman Sarup remarks that -

‘therefore, that the adopted child is the object of denunciation in this stanza, hence Durga’s second interpretation is more appropriate’.

The word *reknah* (wealth) denotes the meaning of wealth; i.e. offspring. And ‘*nityasya rāyah*’ means eternal wealth. All these remarks on offspring explain the importance of legitimate child. Vasiṣṭha prays that ‘O Agni, do not corrupt our paths’. Agni offers Vasiṣṭha that the adopted son may be accepted.

Further the discussions in *Nirukta*, deal with the importance of son and daughter. The word *apatyam* has been explained as son and daughter by different commentators.

‘Offspring has been explained as that which spreads father or the progenitor. Both the son and the daughter continue the line, so both are offsprings, and should have equal rights to inheritance’- says Durga.

Yāska quotes Vedic passage for admitting daughter as the holder of inheritance (*Rgveda* III.31.1) and then, the son as the holder. In the former, the word *duhitā* has been derivated in many ways.

The word *duhitā* come from the root *duh* (to milk). Further it is so called because, ‘it is difficult to arrange for her welfare
or she fares well at a distance'; here the word *duhitā* has been analyzed in consideration with the status of a daughter in society. The discussion on *Nirukta* explicitly states that, during the time of Yāśka, there were different opinions about the inheritance of patriarchy. Some considered both daughter and son are equally considered for inheritance. But some believed that, only male offspring has the right of inheritance. If the female has no brothers, they may be considered as the legitimate offspring and then they will be inheritance of father. Yāśka gives quotations for brotherless maiden.

\[abhrātara \text{iva } yoṣāstiṣṭhanti \text{hatavartmanah}\]

(*Atharvaveda* I.17.1)

\[abhrāteva \text{ pumsa eti praticīgarta}rūgiva \text{ sanaye dhanānām.}\]
\[jāyeva \text{ patya } uṣātī \text{ suvāsā } uṣā \text{ hasreva niriṇīte apsaḥ}\]

(*Ṛgveda* II.1.8).

According to these passages brotherless maiden is not auspicious for marriage selection. Because she goes towards men, that is parental ancestors to render the duties of offspring and to offer
the funeral cake, but not to her husband. Further, Yāṣka clearly
states this idea in the illustration of the word abhrāṭrkā -

‘nābhrāṭṛīmupayaccheta tokam hyasya tadbhavati-
tyabhrāṭrkāyā upayamanīṣedhaḥ (Nirukta III.5).

This statement denotes that, the brotherless girl is not preferred
to marriage, which is doing for progeny. If the marriage is
connected with the want of progeny or offspring, which is an
eternal wealth, the brotherless lady is not appropriate and she
never fulfills the requirements of her husband. So the brotherless
maiden has the power to render the duties of offspring. The law­
givers, who believe that the son have the rights of inheritance,
say that women are given away, sold and abandoned, but not
the man. Yāṣka here mentions the opinion of Śunaśśepa, who
believes that the man also is given away or sold; because the
story of Śunaśśepa reveals the ‘selling of man’ for money.

Further, the equal status of men and women for inheritance
has been stated by Manu in the beginning of creation and Yāṣka
quotes Manu as follows -

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The above mentioned sloka is not found in the Manusmṛti. But a similar view is expressed by Manu (IX.130.133.139).

Yāska while explaining the position of brotherless girl quotes a Vedic passage from Rgveda which is consisted of four similes. These four similes are indicating four conditions of women in society. The Vedic passage which starts abhrāteva pumsa eti reveals the different stages of women’s life. Further, it imparts the knowledge about the Vedic society and the status of women during the Vedic age. The passage says the beauty of dawn; ‘like a brotherless maiden who goes back to men, like one who ascends the pillar of assembly, room for the acquisition of wealth, like a well dressed wife longing for her husband, like a smiling damsel, dawn displays her beauty’. This poetic depiction of dawn is further illustrating the status of women in society.

Yāska concludes the discussion on apatyam by explaining
the opinions of scholars who believe in the power of legitimate son. According to them, vahni i.e. a son, and avahni i.e. a daughter, one of them i.e. the son and the heir, becomes the protector of the children, and other, that is the daughter, is brought up and given away (in marriage) to another. The striking factor on this concluding passage is that the lady, who has a brother, never associates with the rights of inheritance; her brother will never give her the wealth of her father and she should be the well wisher of her husband's family.

5.4 Variety of Castes

The word manuṣya is also worth noticing. Yāska derives the word in three ways -

matvā karmāṇi sīvyanti, manasyamānena srṣṭāḥ,
manorapatyam manuṣo vā. (Nirukta III.7).

'They are so called because they connect their works after having thought about them or because they were created by the felicitous creator. Or they are the offspring of Manu, or manuṣaḥ.
All these explanations are of various roots. Among these, the third one is acceptable to *Pāṇinīyas* - says Durga. The third one is well appreciated by later scholars. Yāska’s derivation ‘*matvā karmāṇi sīvyanti*’ is substantiating the characteristic features of man. Moreover, it denotes the thought which is the peculiar feature in man among the all creatures of this universe. Hence the etymology occupies an anthropological insight in word derivation. The other derivations on the word *manuṣya* are denoting a divine nature connecting with the origin of man. But the first one illustrates an ontological transition of man.

The word *manuṣya* has a synonym, *pañcajanāḥ* and the discussions on this synonym are of great emphasis. Yāska explains the word with the Vedic quotation. Here, Yāska discusses about the five tribes of man and the fifth category is named as *niśāda*. The word *pañcajana* means five-tribes. Here Yāska quotes two opinions on the five types of people. According to some, the word *pañcajana* indicates the meaning-*gandharva, pitara, deva, asura* and *rakṣāmsi*. Aupamanyava
believes that the word pañcajana means ‘the four castes and the fifth one as niṣāda’.

Yāska explains the word asurā and niṣāda with a great emphasis. It holds a sociological importance of evaluation.

The word asurā has three etymologies -

asuratāḥ sthāneṣu, astā sthānebhya iti vā, api vā
asurīti prāṇānāmāstāḥ śarīre bhavati, tena tadvantāḥ.

(Nirukta.III.8).

‘Demons are so called because they delight in evil places or they are expelled from places (from the root ‘to throw’). Or else the word asuḥ is a synonym of breath; inhaled it rests in the body, i.e. endowed with it (asurāḥ).’

Siddheshwar Varma gives a remarkable comment on the word asurāḥ. He says that ‘in its later pejorative sense has been derived as a+su+rataḥ, ‘not very happy’ as the asuras, when driven out of their original place, became unhappy or the word has been traced to root as, lit. ‘Thrown out of their
positions’ *astāḥ sthānebhya iti vā*. This is a typical case of popular etymology. Though the correct derivation has also been given, viz. from *asu*, with a possessive suffix *ra*, lit. ‘full of life or energy’, but in ignorance of the fact that the meaning of a word some times degenerate, even the former, popular etymologies were also incorporated by Yāska in his work.

Here Siddheshwar Varma explicits the phenomenon of degeneration of meaning. The original or former meaning of the word *asura* was ‘full of life or energy’. This meaning of the word *asura* has been excluded in the popular usage of it. Vedic texts, especially *Samhitā* portions indicate the meaning of the positive nature (full of life), for the word *asura*. But later on, this meaning has been influenced by the popular usage of it, which indicates the evil sense. For the evil sense, Yāska here quotes a *Brāhmaṇa* passage, which is to be noted-

*sordevānasṛjata tatsuṛāṇāṃ suratvam.*

āsorāsṛānasṛjata tadasurāṇāmasuratvam iti vijñāyate.

(*Nirukta* VIII.8).
‘It is known: he created gods (ṣurān) from good (su), that is the characteristic of gods; he created demons (asurān) from evil (a-su), that is the characteristic of demons’.

From this Brāhmaṇa passage, it is obvious that the meaning of sura is of good sense and asura is of evil sense. The noticeable feature in this occasion is that, for the above mentioned meaning of asura, which indicates the evil sense, or bad sense occurs in the Brāhmaṇa texts and not in the Samhitā portions. Sometimes, the degeneration was explored in the period of the development of Brāhmaṇa texts. Yāska was also influenced by the popular usages; or he stresses on them.

The word nisāda is derived as follows -

nisāṇṇamasmin pāpakamiti nairuktāḥ. (Nirukta III.8)

‘Sin is embodied in him, say etymologists’.

Durga comments on this word as ‘he lives by killing animals’. This explanation for the word nisāda expresses the idea of caste division referred to Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdra and
the fifth one *Niṣāda*. Further it explains the social status of the fifth category; i.e. ‘they (*niṣāda*) considered as the sin embodied men, because of killing of animals for livelihood’. This occupation, exegesis as a sin at the age of Yāska; and according to whom killing of animals for the purpose of sacrificial usage is not considered as a sin -

\[
yatho etadanupapannārthā bhavantīti;
\]

āmnāyavacananādahimsā pratīyeta (*Nirukta* I.16).

‘As to (the objection) that their meaning is impossible (we reply) that no injury is to be inflected, so it must be understood by the authority of the Vedic passage’.

5.5 Society life

5.5.1 Wealth

The word *dhanam* is also explained in an interesting way of social awareness. It is so called because it gives delight *dhinotīti sataḥ* (*Nirukta* III.9). Durga comments on this as -

\[
prīṇayatyetatsvāminamiti dhanam(Nirukta III.9)
\]
‘Impressing its owner or giving pleasure to its holder means \textit{dhanam}. From the very ancient age, wealth was considered as a distinguished one for achieving a momentous place in society. This idea has been explained through this etymology. The word \textit{draviṇodāḥ} means the god of wealth has been derived in a similar sense. The word \textit{draviṇodāḥ} is derived as follows -
\textit{dhanam draviṇamucyate, tasya dātā} (\textit{Nirukta.VIII.1}).
The word \textit{draviṇam} means wealth because -
\textit{yadenamabhidravanti} (‘people run towards it’).
This attracting or fascinating state of wealth is noticed by Yāska in this derivation. Since, the root or stem may be anticipatory or false according to grammatical rules and regulations, the social factor of the word explored through the etymology. ‘Wealth’ which is a social factor, embodied in the whole positional, cultural, or the like. The explanation of Yāska, in these two words emphasizes the undefeated power of wealth in society; according to that all categories of people are determined.
5.5.2 *samgrāma*

The word *samgrāma* has been explained by Yāska as follows:

\[ \text{sāṅgamanādvā, sāṅgaraṇādvā, sanīgatau grāmāviti vā (Nirukta III.9).} \]

The word has been derived from two origins- *gam* and *grn.* Durga comments on the first derivation as - *samgacchanti hi parasparam atra yoddhā iti.* That means the warriors are mutually associated in this. Or it may be explained as *saṅgaranād.* The word meaning according to Durga is as follows- *samgrṇanti śūrā āhopuruṣikāmatra paraspareṇa.*

This explanation of the word *samgrāma* illustrates the nature of war from the very earliest stage. The concepts of war and the participants of war are explained here. That means the warriors should be brave and coming to the war land with the fullest spirit of it. More over, this denotes the intuition of two villages for gaining victory.

All these explanations about the word *samgrāma* depict the characteristic features of war. Yāska quotes Vedic passages for
the synonym of samgrāma, namely khala. The word khala has been derived from two roots—khalatervā skhalatervā.

5.5.3 daṇḍa

While explaining the word daṇḍa Aupamanyava derives the form daṇḍa from the root dam. It means ‘alleviation’. In English, the word ‘dome’ may be equivalent to the word dama. Some type of socio linguistic elements may be observed from the word dama or dome. From the ancient age, domesticity is an inherent nature or instinct of man. He is the only one among the creatures of the world, who interested in taking under control the natural sources or the nature. All other creatures are living with the flow of nature. The word daṇḍa explicits these ideas through explaining it from the root dam. This insight has been explored by Aupamanyava through his etymology for daṇḍa.

5.5.4 grha

While explaining the word mahān Yāska derives the word grha. grha is derived from grhāntīti sataḥ (Nirukta III.13).
That means ‘they seize everything’. The interesting thing in this explanation is that according to Durga the word grha is derived after the word mahān. Because ‘it is the great alone who have homes of their own, so synonyms of home follow those of great’. Durga also comments on this word etymology that a house can never be made full. These two observations on the words grha and mahān are explaining the characteristic features of the concept of house during the time of Yāska or at least at the age of Durga. In another occasion Yāska explains the word dama as the synonym of house.

5.5.5 sukham

The word sukham has been derived as follows - suhitam khebhyah kham punah khanateh (Nirukta III.13).

‘It is so called because it is useful for the sense organs’. The etymology of the word sukham is illustrating a materialistic observation which explains the happiness of the sense organs. There are various types of happiness in the world such as mental,
physical and so on. Yāṣka explained the word *sukham* with a materialistic approach which stresses on the physical happiness of man. The word *kham* used in the meaning of sense organs is also pointing the view of Yāṣka according to the attachments on this world.

5.5.6 *kitava*

While explaining the word *śvaghni*, Yāṣka mentions the word *kitava*, which is a synonym of *śvaghni*. The word *śvaghni* has been derived as -svam hanti (*Nirukta* V.22). ‘He destroys himself’. Similarly the word *kitava* also explained as -

*kim tavāstīti śabdānukrtiḥ. kṛtavānvāśīrnāmakah.*

(*Nirukta* V.22)

‘What have you got? It is an onomatopoeic word. Or else, it is a benedictory exclamation, ‘good luck’. These two etymologies of gambler are depicting a remarkable social enquiry. The consideration and status of a gambler in the society has been explained through the etymologies. Social welfare and ethical value of the game gambling are questioned even from the Vedic
age. The etymologies of Yāska of the word *kitava*, exposes the concepts of gambling which are depicted in the *kitava sūkta* of *Ṛgveda*. ‘There is nothing for the gambler in this world, or he destroys himself’ are depicting the extravagant nature of the player. Vedic passages from *Ṛgveda* narrates the nature, culture and ethical value of the play of gambling in a poetic language. The etymology of the word *kitava* according to Yāska exhibits the evanescent nature of him. The social status of a gambler is depicted with the etymological observations.

5.6 Etymologies connected with natural sources and animals

Vedic age was extremely influenced with the power of natural sources and calamities. Accordingly, Vedic hymns are exhaustively depicting the various phenomena in the nature and its allocations. Yāska’s etymologies are illustrating the implied meaning of Vedic words and passages.

There are a number of etymologies which depict the idea
of nature and other creatures in the nature. The etymologies on animals and birds are depicting some observations on their interesting characteristic features. Nature has been considered with an ecological insight through the etymological observations. Some etymologies connected with the natural sources such as sun, earth, fire are explaining some of their own specific functions. For instance the etymologies of sun are far-stretching to the different rays of sun such as suṣumna. The word giri has been explained with its or hight. Words like kāka, śvā, simha, tittiri and vyāghra are etymologized through interpreting their movements, behavior, sounds and so on.

While explaining the metaphors and similes, Yāska quotes a number of words which indicate the modern philological approaches like onomatopoeic theory and so on. The word kāka is etymologized as- kāka iti śabdānukartih. According to Yāska these types of names are common in birds. For instance, the names like ‘tittiriḥ, kapiṇjalaḥ ’ are explained in this way.

The word kāka is explained with two etymologies which are
observed in the illustration of Aupamanyava. The word *tittiri* is so called because it has variegated spots of the size of a sesame seed -

\[\text{tittiristaranāt tilamātracitra iti vā (Nirukta III.18).}\]

The word *taraṇāt* has been explained by Durga as *-utplutya gamanāt* that means which goes with jumping. This observation on the bird is explaining the nature of the body and its specific movements. The root origin of the word *tittiri* is *ṭṛ plavanataraṇayoh*. Hence the naming of the bird is connected with its movements.

There is another word which explains the peculiar nature of the bird *kapinjala* and Yāska etymologizes it as follows -

\[\text{kapiṇjalaḥ kapiriva jīrṇaḥ }\]

\[\text{kapiriva javata īsatpiṅgalo vā,}\]

\[\text{kamanīyam śabdam piṅjayatīti vā (Nirukta III.18).}\]

‘A francolin partridge is so called because it is withered like a monkey, or it is swift like a monkey, or it is slightly brown, or it warbles a melodious note’.
These two observations depict the movements and some specific characteristics of the birds. Here Yāska's keen observations on the creatures on this world has been exposed.

The word śvā has been explained as-

śvā śuyāyī, śavatervā syātgatikarmaṇāḥ śvasitervā

(Nirukta III.18).

Dog, swift runner, or the śvā is derived from the root śav, meaning to go or śvas to breathe. Breathing nature of dog is observed here. Another characteristic feature of the dog is its nature of fast running. These two expressions on the dog expose the keen observing mind of Yāska.

The etymology of simha also exhibits an interesting derivation and here also Yāska mentions the method of metathesis. ‘The word simha (lion) is so called from its power of resistance, or it is derived from the root ‘hims’ (to injure) by metathesis’. (simhaḥ sahanāddhimservā syādviparītasya (Nirukta III.18). The attentive quality of particular animals which is always mentioned even in the colloquial usages. The
wildly nature of the lion is also expressed here. The word *vyāghra* is also explained in the same way. It is also illustrated with the smelling nature of it - *vyāghro vyāghranāt*. ‘Or it kills having separated’.

All these explanations of various birds and animals are referred to their natural functions or characteristic features. Here, Yāska’s etymologies provided with a basic nature which may be illustrating the actions of different creatures and particles. Hence the etymological observations of Yāska are substantiating the minute notes of movement of the nature.

5.7 Society life of Vedic people

While discussing the importance of particles and prepositions, (*upasargas* and *nipātas*) Yāska quotes various hymns as examples. Among these, some hymns are enough to give some observations on the social set up of Vedic age. These observations are elucidating the idea of some social conditions like wealth,
poverty, status of women and conditions of caste category as already noted.

While explaining the divergent meanings of particles, Yāska mentions a number of particles which are used to fill up a sentence in prose and expletives in poetic compositions, such as kam, īm, id, and u. The particle kam is used as expletive in the Vedic hymn -

\[ \text{nīṣṭvakraśaścidinnaro bhūritoka vṛkādiva.} \]

\[ \text{bibhyasyanto vavāśire śiśiranjīvanāya kam} \]

\,(Nirukta I.10). 'Men without garments and having many children, being afraid of a wolf making meaning less sounds as, they longed for the spring (śiśiram) to live.

This particular hymn has been quoted by Yāska for the expletive usage of kam. But the hymn depicts a picture of Vedic people who were suffering from poverty. According to the commentary of Durga on this case, the quoted hymn explains the sufferings of poor people and the word bhūritokāh means having many children and the word nīṣṭvakrāsah means men without
garments. The Vedic hymns are explaining the philosophical, poetical and material richness in society. Above mentioned hymn denotes the poverty of some people who were murmuring with the frightened nature of it. According to them the winter (hemanta) seems to be like a wolf. Here the cultural state of the indigenous people is also observed, that those with having many children are helpless and poor. This implies that Vedic age was enriched with numerous types of wealth like cattle gold and farms, as well as there existed sufferings from poverty, which may be announced as a phenomenon going with the cyclic movement of the universe.

The remarkable thing according to this quotation is that it is not available in the present Samhitā texts of Vedas. There are a number of quotations in Yāska’s Nirukta from the Vedas which are not available in the present Samhitā texts. Some quotations are from the Vedic passages and some are from the Brāhmaṇa passages. In the first chapter of the Nirukta, while explaining the particles, Yāska quotes a hymn which illustrates the lamentations of the wives of Asuras. The hymn is -
‘With oblations some seek heaven from this world; others press soma juices in sacrifices. The pure rejoice indeed with their rewards; pursuing crooked ways, lest we should fall into hell’.

Durga also not explained the hymn fully. He says that *mṛgyah śeṣah* which means ‘it is not seen in the text’. There is a story connected with this hymn. The sage Nārada compelled the wives of Asuras to cheat their husbands. At that time their lamentations to the sage are illustrated in this hymn. But the quotation is untraced according to Durga. Lakshman Sarup comments that it is traced from *Rgvidhāna khila*.

All these quotations which are untraced and quoted in the *Nirukta* are depicting a picture about the Vedic society. Later on, some of the Vedic hymns which are considered as preserved without any change or interpolation are lost and not found in the
later *Samhitā* texts. Some passages which may be interpreted with a remarkable social development are also not seen in the present form of Vedas.

While explaining the particle *nūnam*, Yāska illustrates a Vedic passage which illustrates the grievances of Indra. The passage is as follows -

\[ na \textit{nūnamastī nośvāḥ kastadvēda yadadbhutam.} \]
\[ \text{annyasya cittamabhisancareṇyamutādhītam vinasāyati.} \]

(Nirukta 1.6)

Here the passage explains with a story of Indra and Agastya. Agastya had assigned an oblation to Indra and later on desired to offer it to the Maruts. Thus Indra, having presented himself, lamented before Agastya as quoted in the passage. This shows the deviating status of Vedic gods. Further, Yāska depicts the picture of Indra with all human characteristic features. The lamentations of Indra are stressing on the altering nature of the world and worldly life. More over, Indra who was a prominent deity at the Vedic age was not so appreciated by the later traditional works like *Purāṇas* and so on.
While explaining the word *kīkaṭeṣu* (*Nirukta* VI.32), Yāska mentions the non-Aryan tribes and their country. The word *kīkaṭa* means the country of non-Aryans. The etymology of the word is-

\[
kīkaṭāḥ kim kṛtāḥ. kim kriyābhiriti prepsā vā
\]

(*Nirukta* VI. 32).

That means, ‘what have they done? or their assumption is that religious rites are useless’.

According to the etymology of Yāska, the word *kīkaṭa* refers to a group of people who are not believing in sacrificial performances. Durga also explains the meaning of the word *kīkaṭa* as - ‘they are not believing in sacrifices or god. And according to them ‘drinking and eating’ are considered as the happiest matter in this world; ‘there is no world other than this’ is their faith. They are called *nāstikās*.

In this context, Yāska quotes a Vedic passage which mentions different categories of people among the non-Aryan tribes. The Vedic passage is as follows -
kim te kr̥̄vanti kīkāṭeṣu gāvo
nāśiram druhe na tapanti gharman.
ā no bhara pramagandasya vedo
naicāśākham maghavannrandhayānaḥ

(Rgveda III.53.14).

which means, ‘the wealth of non-Aryan people is useless; and
bring us the wealth of them’.

Here the word maganda means ‘a usurer’; he advances with
the thought that it (kusida- interest) will come back to him’. 
Yāska explains the word as follows -

magandaḥ kusīḍī, māṅgado māmāgamisyatīti ca dādāti

(Nirukta VI. 32).

These two observations are depicting the social life of the non-
Vedic people. There are references to the non-Aryan people
in Vedic hymns. The word ‘pramanda’ is referred to as ‘an
epicurean’, who assumes that this is the only world and there
is no other. It also means ‘an impotent’ or ‘one who paralyses
himself by his testicles’.

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There are references about various types of people like, usurer, epicurean, impotent and so on. Their wealth is useless; they neither get the milk to mix with soma, nor they kindle fire. So let those wealth ours. This is the interpretation of Yāska for the above mentioned Vedic passage.

All these references are explaining the status of non-Aryan people among the Vedic people. Vedic people are praying their god to bestow them the wealth of the non-Aryan people. The wealth of them are not used in the penance. Hence it is useless for them.

In the sixth chapter, while explaining the word ‘upalaprakṣinī’ there is a clear reference to famine. Here Indra, asked the seers - ‘How does one live in famine?’ one of them answered, ‘Nine are the means of livelihood in famine. That is -

śakataḥ śākini gāvo jālamasyandanam vanam.
udadhiḥ parvato rājā durbhikṣe nava vṛttayah

(Nirukta VI.5)

‘cart, pot herbs, kine, net, restraining the flow of water, forest,
ocean, mountain and the king are the means of livelihood in famine’.

This nine occupations in famine are illustrated by Cchāgaleya Smṛṭi. According to Yājñavalkya, they are-

\[ \textit{kṛṣiḥ śilpam bhṛtirvidyā kusīdam śakaṭam giriḥ.} \]
\[ \textit{sevānūpam nṛpo bhaikṣyamāpattau jīvanāni tu.} \]

(\textit{Yājñavalkyasmrī} III.42)

The verse mentioned in \textit{Nirukta} explains the means of livelihood in famine. But according to Durga, the verse and the question of Indra are interpolations.

The word \textit{upalapraksīni} also depicts a social activity. Durga explained it as - \textit{saktukārikābhidheyā}. i.e. ‘one who grinds grain’. The word meaning exhibits the idea of her actions; i.e. \textit{upaleśu prakśināti} (\textit{Nirukta} VI.5). This etymology of Yāska depicts the picture of that specific group of women who grind grain. And it explains the duties of them in the Vedic social life.

There are a number of references which illustrate the society life and various social, cultural and natural elements at the age
of Yāśka. The word *libujā* (*Nirukta* VI.28) is explained as - ‘līyate vibhajantītī’. It means the creeper which means ‘it clings, or distributing’. The observation of Yāśka always stresses on the behavioural analysis or functional analysis of words. This methodology exhibits the semantical variations of words and they expose the meaning changes also.

Yāśka considers the words from Vedic literature which is the main concern of the text. Yet he mentions some dialectical variations of classical Sanskrit language. Here the historical approach of Yāśka is revealed. For e.g.

‘*āthāpi prakṛtaya evaikesu bhāṣyante. vikṛtaya evaikesu. śavatigatikarmā kāmbojēśveva bhaṣyate’*  
(Nirukta II.2).

Here the division of people according to the linguistic usages made by Yāśka is a remarkable feature. Sarup states that-

‘Yāśka divides people into those who employ primary forms and those who employ secondary forms Yāśka differentiates the Aryans from the Easterners and the
Northerners. Although they must have been brought under the influence of the Aryans to such an extent as even to adopt their language'. (Lakshman Sarup, 1998, p.223).

This critical observation on Nirukta suggests the varied nature of society. Such flashes of information available in Nirukta are really valuable. Through this statement Yāśka’s awareness about the significance of dialectical variations in a language has been verified.

According to a socio linguistic observation on Yāśka’s Nirukta there are a number of Vedic passages and etymologies which are exploring the social set up of Vedic age and Yāśka’s age. In the present study some of them are explained with their social background. With the materials of exegesis, Yāśka substantiates all the possibilities of Vedic hymns which were not explained by various scholars of ancient age. Further, linguistic tools are sufficient for the readers to evaluate the Vedic literature with a new insight.