CHAPTER XI.

Economic Life
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"ECONOMIC LIFE"

Man's attempt to meet the primary necessities of life or his attempts to feed and clothe himself and his family have led to the development of his Economic Life. Wants tend to increase rapidly with the advance of civilization and this has led to the development of the complex science of Economics in the present day world. Based also on the social and economic pressure of meeting all the needs of man simultaneously, was the primary division of labour by the Aryans resulting into four Castes and ultimately leading to the growth and development of the complex structure of Caste System. Farming and fighting were the two occupations left open to all castes and creeds. In India, which is primarily an agricultural country, farming was a highly developed industry by the medieval period.

AGRICULTURE.

The Abhidhānaratnamālā mentions a large variety of cereals - Varieties of Rice - dāli and

Kodrava; mustard-Sarshapa, pepper or saffron-Priyangu, Sesamum-Jartila, wild rice-Mīvāra, as well as pulses of different kinds - Masūra, Kalēya, Rallā and Āqihaka etc. The Śrīvītis mention seventeen articles as Corn= Dhānya and Medhātithi mentions Sugarcane (Iṣhūdanda) and Sugar (Śarkara).

For a scientific utilisation of the fertility of the soil, land was divided into five varieties - (1) Fertile=Urvarā, (2) Barren=Irīpa, (3) Fallow=Khila, (4) Desert=Maru, and (5) Excellent Soil=Mrtṣa or Mrtṣanā.

Ḍūḍvala was land abounding with grass and that abounding in reeds was Nadvala.

Gardening and Fruit cultivation or maintaining large orchards was also practised on large scale and fruits like mangoes, coconuts, mustard-apple, Pomegranate etc. were grown. Flowers like Kamal (Lotus), Nīlotpala (Blue Lotus), Pārijāta (White fragrant flower), Adoka and Kadamba were very popular among the rich and poor alike. Ladies decorated their hair and persons with such flowers.

Though scenes directly showing farmers ploughing land are not found yet the mention of cereals, fruits and flowers as well as the scientific division of land based on fertility of the soil bear witness to the prosperous growth of Agricultural industry.
METAL WORKERS.

Metals like copper, tin, brass, lead, iron, gold and silver were used for making articles of every day use. Saurashtra was famous for its brass industry, Vanga for industries of tin while Debal in Sindh was famous for making swords of iron.¹

Metal workers can be divided into three categories on the basis of metals used - (1) Blacksmiths (Lohakāra) making swords, arrow heads, shields, buckles, stirrups, sickles and spade from iron. (2) Coppersmiths (Tām rakāra) were there for making articles from brass or lead such as utensils like Kalasa (Plate 10. Figs. 1 to 6), ladle, cooking utensils, metal plates or Thāli, Dāpāna, Bells, gongs and the highest achievement of the coppersmith (i.e. the Metallic mirror) as Dāpāna. (3) Goldsmiths (Hirānyakāra) proficiency of whose art is testified by the beautifully and artistically designed various pieces of jewellery worn by men and women alike. Ornaments inlaid with gems, gold or silver ornaments variously designed and shaped like flowers, buds, leaves or bells are innumerable in any single temple site of the early or late medieval period. The Hāra, Kundala, ²

¹ "The Age of Imperial Kannuj" - K. N. Narasimha. Vol. IV, Chapter XIII P.
² U. N. Ghoshal.
Katisūtra, Keyāra, Nāpura all bespeak of the proficiency of the Hiranyakāras.

**BEADS MAN.**

Closely connected with the jewellers is the beedsman. It is the beedsman who strings together gold pendants artistically with red, gold, green and blue threads which may be matching the inlaid work of the gold pieces, to make a necklace. He puts together the beads, pearls, coral and other stones to make a Hāra.

Some other important but considered to be low, were the occupations of -

- **POTTERS** - making pitchers of various shapes and sizes. Even today the Potter at wheel is one of the most interesting persons to watch. How his deft hands turn the wheel and shape the clay into beautiful vases, pitchers, Surāhi (long necked pot) etc is a matter of wonder for many outsiders.

- **ROPE AND BASKET MAKERS (Buruda)** - were making baskets for carrying fruits and vegetables and Ropes for tying the wild animals or huge carved pieces of stone in a Bahangi pole and for many other uses.

- **LEATHER WORKERS (Charmakāra)** - used to make shoes, sandals, slippers, saddles for horses and
leather bags of quite modern designs with a strap to hang them on the shoulder and a lid with a button (Plate X. Fig.8).

Hunters\(^1\) (Bheda), Fishermen (Kaivarta), Washermen (Rajaka), Chāndālas and Vadhaka were some other professionals considered to be untouchables or Antyaja (Weavers also come under this category).

**CARPENTERS** (Takshaka) :- During the early medieval centuries a variety of furniture was used by rich and poor people of India - Cots (Plate X. Fig.13), tables (Plate X. Fig.10), cushioned seats (Plate X Fig.9&11), the paint-wood (Plate X. Fig.12), wooden slippers (Plate X. Fig.7) and such other things. These were all made by the Carpenters. The beautifully decorated Bullock Carts and the best of all - the Indian Chariots, decorated with carved pieces of wood all over are evidences of the dexterity of a carpenter in his profession. They must have also helped in putting wooden doors and beams in the buildings of the time.

**SCULPTORS** (Dilākāra) :- What better proof of the proficiency of an Indian Sculptor of the medieval period, could there be than the massive, magnificent, solid but at the same time delicately carved, hundreds of stone temples that lie scattered all over the North

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1. Hunting scenes have been described in the Chapter Hobbies and Recreations, P. 449.
and the South of India. The bold, patient and
devoted sculptor did not hesitate to choose granite-
the hardest stone, as his material for a temple
(Chausath Jogini at Khajuraho is entirely of this
material). Huge uncouth boulders were brought
from far and distance and the sculptor set at work with
only a hammer and a chisel breathing life into stone.

The work of the architect had been divided into
four categories - (1) The architect or the Sthāpati,
(2) The Designer or the Draughtsman - Sātragrāhī whose
only instrument was a measuring scale and a long piece
of thread (Sūtra), (3) The measurer or Vardhakī who was
well versed in the law of proportions and (4) the Mason
or the Takshaka who engraved the designs with the
hammer and the chisel. Geometrical designs, leafy
patterns, blooming buds, full blown lotuses, flaming
dragons and dancing Apsaras all seem to be perfect to
the finish. Anger, love, bewitching smiles, flaming
eyes and soft affectionate face of the mother, all
are perfect to a degree which evince wonder even from
a most perfect architect of today. The huge Varāha,
large Nandi, tall Horse, massive Elephant as well as
the small birds, the Sūka and the Sārīkā, all are
meticulously carved giving out the minutest details
from top to toe. Some of the images are so realistic
that they could be easily mistaken for real ones, but
for their surroundings.
Fig. 212 - Cutting stone with chisel.

Fig. 213 - Man in Pālaki.

Fig. 214 - Carrying something on Bahangi pole.
A mason at work with the hammer in right and chisel in the left hand\textsuperscript{1} temptation of depicting which, perhaps, the sculptor could not forebear, is the most enlightening portrayal of an artist immersed in work oblivious to his surroundings. What does it matter to him if a crowd passes by – he had his hammer and the chisel and to go a great way before he can stop (Fig. 239).

LABOURERS AND SERVANT CLASS.

Huge stone boulders hewn and unhewn were carried from one place to the other by labourers. Equally heavy weight was tied to both the ends of a pole with ropes and then carried by one\textsuperscript{2}, two or more men according to its weight.

Similarly rich people often went from one place to the other on a Pālakī\textsuperscript{3} carried by two or more men on their shoulders (Fig. 240). Other attendants of these rich men followed them on foot.

Fruit or vegetable sellers also carried their articles on a Bahangi\textsuperscript{4} pole in two baskets tied to it at both ends (Fig. 241).

\begin{itemize}
    \item 1. Lt cut Vishnu T Kiradu; Sm T near Vishnu T Kiradu.
    \item 2. Lt cut Vishnu T Kiradu; Somnath Museum.
    \item 3. Rt and back cut Naulakha T Ghurali; Sm frieze outside the T facing Sun T Modhera; Lt cut Sun T Konark; Sm T near Vishnu T Kiradu.
    \item 4. Lt cut Sun T Konark; Rt cut Muktesvara T Bhuvanesvara.
\end{itemize}
To the servant class belong the Chauri or Fly whisk bearers, garland bearers and staff (Plate II Fig. 11) Chhatra bearers who accompanied their rich masters.

ARMED ATTENDANTS.

Here it would not be out of place to mention the armed attendants of Kings, Queens or other rich men.

Attendants are shown with shields and other hand on Kati; Bow and arrow; and sword and shield (Fig. 242). With small knife (Fig. 242).

Some horsemen are also shown in attendance to their lord. One carries sword and the other a spear.

BARBERS.

Amongst the poor class may be placed the barbers who cut the hair of men in various styles

1. Dhar Museum; Ajmer Museum; Lucknow Museum.
2. Pillar top Dhana Shah T Mt Abu; Ambika T Jagat; Mandap inner Chaumukha Vastupal T Girnar.
3. Lt cut Sm T facing Sun T Konark; Amer Museum.
4. Konark Museum. 2/5 Teli T Gwalior Fort.
5. Rt cut Rajvirat T Sohagpur; Sm T near Mahabir T Chian (arrows only); Bhuri Singh Museum Chamba.
6. Rt out Parasvanath T Mt Abu; (The attendant has only sword and is saluting his master) Badagaon Mehsana Gaur.
7. Chaturbhuja T Gwalior Fort.
8. Back out Puri T.
according to their tastes and the fashions of the day. The various styles of hair, beard, whiskers and moustaches show that barbers must have earned a decent living in those days.

**CHARIOTEERS.**

Chariots were the means of communication which few beside Kings, could afford. But well trained charioteers must have been not lacking and this profession is often referred to in literature.

**GRASS CUTTERS.**

To provide fodder to large number of tame animals, the grass cutter must have been very busy with his sickle or small spade.

**FALCONER.**

Taming birds was popular among ladies and professional falconers must have sold wild birds to them to satisfy their desire for a pet.

**ENGINEERS.**

Massive stone structures and the well planned towns and capitals of medieval India bespeak of the trained and efficient Engineers that there must
have been. Even the Sthāpati mentioned above (under the heading sculptor) was none but the chief architect standing at par with the Chief Engineer of modern days.

**PHYSICIANS.**

Āyurveda is an old Indian science of medicines. The land of famous surgeons and physicians like Charaka and Dhanvantari had not allowed to make their race extinct.

Scenes of women taking out thorn or undergoing an operation in the feet, bear testimony to the existence of this class of professionals in society.

**GOVERNMENT SERVANTS.**

The large number of King’s courtiers, his clerk, bodyguards, army men and civil officials can come under the head of Government servants. They were paid from the royal treasury and belonged to the rich class of society. These were highly qualified and well trained persons in their respective callings and were consequently paid according to their grades and services.

* See Chapter IX. Women P. 409
Fig. 243 - Camel and Horse.

Fig. 244 - Carved stone in Bullock Cart.
ANIMALS AND MEANS OF TRANSPORT.

While some animals and birds were tamed to make them pets (e.g., Monkey, Mayura, Duka and Sarika), others were kept to provide eggs. Under these we may count the hen, the swans and ducks. But animals like Bullocks, Horse, Camel and Elephant provided means of transport and beasts of burden too (Fig. 245).

Bullock Carts were the popular means of transport (Figs. 244 & 245) while Chariots were used by the rich. But in the deserts of Rajasthan Camel Carts (Closed from all the sides as a protection against dust storms of the desert) were used. On the sea coasts and in towns on river banks, boats were the chief means of transport (Fig. 246).

CELESTIAL VEHICLES.

Gods also used vehicles for going from one place to the other and their modes of conveyance were flying horses, Garuda and the Vidyaadhara. Kubera had a Vimana (aeroplane) and Siva had his Bull Nandi.

142. Sm T near Vishnu T Kiradu; 3rd T near Vishnu T Kiradu; (Cart is beautiful and shows a lady sitting under a Chhatra held by a servant) Sammidesvara T Chitter.
3. Room 3 Bhuvaranesvara Museum.
4. (Cart is drawn by three camels) Jodhpur Museum.
FOOD AND DRINK.

Agriculture being the chief occupation of people in India men here primarily depended on cereals like wheat, corn, gram, rice and pulses. Vegetables and fruits were used in plenty. But though a large part of the population was vegetarian all men were not. Hunting and fishing were not merely pastimes, but they also provided food for many. Madhāṭīthī allows cow, goat and deer flesh to be eaten while that of peacock, horse, ass, sparrow, cock and pig was considered lawful food. When savoury vegetarian preparations like sweetmeats and laddoos (James’s is shown eating them) were made, rich non-vegetarian dishes too must have been popular. The royal kitchen had a Cook-Pāchaka (who was also employed in rich men’s houses) and the culinary art had greatly progressed.

Milk was a popular beverage. Honey and grape juice - Madhuka, was also liked. But wine was most popular. The Pānagoshthi or Drinking parties are referred to and even Brahmins used to drink some kinds of wine (Gomāpūna). Wine was also prepared from rice flour*

* Refer to drinking scenes described in Chapt IX.
BUILDINGS.

The poor in villages lived in small mud huts, but brick houses even for the poor could be found in towns and cities. The rich people lived in spacious houses having attached gardens and orchards (Fig. 219, third row from bottom). The kings, of course, lived in palaces with roomy balconies and airy halls (Fig. 249—palace gates and garden are shown). The Manasingh palace at Gwalior (inside the fort) shows how special rooms for summer with light arrangements and skylights were built for the delicate queens of the rulers. Temples themselves show how beautifully carved palaces must have been built for kings.

Some of the scenes sculptured in the temples suggest palace walls and balconies.

The Pratinthari is opening the palace gates. Horses are being looked after in the stables; the elephant is coming out from the gate and herd of cattle is being driven to the pasture (Fig. 249, fourth row).

A palace is shown enveloped in the flames of fire. The flames of fire throw light on its walls.

182. Bhama Shah T Mt Abu.
Fig. 249 - Palace Scene

Fig. 250 - Palace on Fire
and windows. Some persons are shown drawing down its windows (Fig. 256). Ganaša - the god himself is shown driving a chariot towards the palace and in the chariot is seated god Vishnu.

The rich persons living in such palaces often gave large amount of money in charity.

A man seated is being offered a purse apparently full of coins by another man.

CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

The sculptures make no direct reference to the villages, towns and cities of the period. But the royal scenes depicting kings and queens moving with their cortège prove the presence of big towns and cities.

There were nice neat villages in the countryside. The scene (Fig. 257) depicts a typical Indian village with women working under the shades of tree.

A small baby is swinging in the hammock hung on the branches. The cow-herd is tending cows; two women are churning butter; a mother sits with two children on both her knees; nearby is the cradle for the small...

1. Lt out Vishnu T Kiradu.
2. Sm T ahead of Sati Stones Osian.
3. Roof Bhama Shah T Mt Abu.
baby. A woman with the small pitcher seems to be going to fetch water.

Towns having a population of a few thousand men, harbours with navigators and sailors on the sea-coasts and prosperous cities, where kings and courtiers lived were also there. These have been mentioned in the literature of the period but not shown in sculptures.

TRADE AND MONEY.

Not only land trade within the country but also sea trade with far off lands was carried on. Indian goods were sold in Europe, China, Persia and East Indies. Trade was a source of great wealth to the country which was rich and prosperous, so that she was coveted by her neighbours - the Sakas, Kushans and the Muslims.

The common mode of exchange or transaction in the countryside was barter but in towns and cities things were purchased with money. The gold, silver and copper coins found show that coinage was well developed and standard coins were made in the country.