CHAPTER - 5
CHANGES IN SOCIAL STRUCTURE
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The society during the 6th century B.C. marks a transition phase between the tribal and class-divided society. Towards the end of the later vedic phase, the material back-ground of the middle Gangetic basin saw a considerable change. The crucial role of iron in clearing thick vegetation for cultivation in the Kosala and Magadha mahajanpada brought changes from about 600 B. C. onwards.¹ This period also saw the second phase of urbanisation in India.² The majjhimadesha, which included the territory of Magadha and Kosala³, came to acquire prominence during this period not only politically but also economically and culturally. The story of Videgha Mathav in the Sh.Br., as mentioned earlier, also points

1. D. D. Kosambi was the first scholar to draw attention towards this fact in his book ‘An Introduction to the Study of Indian History’, Bombay, 1956.
towards the colonization of this area. The role of Northern Black Polished Ware in advancing the material life of people during 600-300 B.C. has also been highlighted by historians. Use of iron ploughshare in agriculture and frequent mention of money-lending and urbanism in the pali literature bespeaks of the changed material culture after the later vedic phase.¹ This period also saw the emergence of full-fledged agricultural society stabilised by division into ritualistic social classes by the dharmasutras and consolidated by teaching of the Budhas in circa 500-300 B.C.

The beginning of paddy trans-plantation, as evinced through pali texts and distinction between vedic vrihi and post-vedic shali⁵, marks an important stage in the growth of agriculture. Importance of cattle was also recognized in the field of agriculture and significantly even the Brahmanas debate over the eating of beef.⁶ Buddha on one occasion, is

5. V. S. Agrawal, Paninikalin Bharat (Hindi) Varanasi, 1969, p. 204.
said to have saved hundreds of animals which were to be sacrificed. Jainism made a more radical approach towards animal protection.

Rise of a new material culture is further seen in the cropping up of a large number of settlements in the alluvium belt of the middle Gangatic basin. With the beginning of the NBP phase towns became a market place where the trade was further facilitated by the use of punch marked coins. The terms nagara, nigam etc. mentioned in pali texts, have certain similarly with the mention of fortified towns by Panini.

We, thus, see that new forces of production played a great role in social formation during the post-vedic age. This period saw the surplus produced by the peasants supplemented by cattle rearers and craftsmen which led to the formation of the state system in the form of the mahajanpadas. This surplus

7. Sūttanipata, l. 75-76.
8. Anguttaranikaya, l. 178.
also widened social inequalities. But, its most significant result was the upsetting of old social order. In fact, rise of new forms of production brought certain social groups like 
kshatriyas and vaishyas to limelight who were dissatisfied with the traditional set-up of society. Hence, in order to give vent to their rising aspirations, they moved towards new religious sects like Buddhism and Jainism. Ordinary people were attracted towards these new sects because they showed successful response to the challenge posed by social developments generated by the material conditions created by the age of iron-plough share, agriculture and coins. It is in the light of this material culture that social changes after the vedic phase are to be studied.

As mentioned earlier, changes in the material culture also led to changes in the social structure. However, there were other factors too behind social changes. The importance of sacrifices in the vedic period aroused considerable protest among certain sections of people. Moreover, the brahmanical religion
was unable to cater to the needs of politically powerful group of kshatriyas and economically powerful group of vaishyas - both of whom became opposed to certain works of brahmanism and accepted new creeds. In fact, the kshatriyas appear to be more vocal against the brahmanical importance as, despite having become militarily and political strong, they still ranked second in the social hierarchy. Hence, in the Jataka stories, even Buddha is said to have hinted at the superiority of kshatriyas.\textsuperscript{11} However, this is to be borne in mind that in the Pali texts, as they are concerned with Buddhism, there is certain contempt against the brahmanas\textsuperscript{12} as we will see later. On the other hand, these texts give prominence to the kshatriya role. Hence, the brahmanas, who ranked first in the brahmanical texts, have been given secondary treatment in the Buddhist literature.

There is another differential treatment in the Buddhist and brahmanical

\textsuperscript{11} III. 1.24.
literature. The brahamical texts mostly written in the Kuru-Panchala region, have contemptuous view towards the Magadhan people,\textsuperscript{13} who have been regarded inferior (hina) in the Panchavimsa Brahmana. They are held in contempt because they traded in certain articles. Baudhayana, an early law-giver, ascribed mixed origin to the people of Anga and Magadh. This was all done as these eastern people did not follow the vedic religion strictly. On the other hand, the Buddhist literature does not make such a differentiation.

Significantly, brahmanical caste theory finds mention in the Pali canon. Like the brahmanical literature, the Buddhist literature too divides the society into four groups. Buddha teaches his disciples in the Chullavagga of the Vinaya Pitaka about the relation of the castes to the Buddha order - "Just as the great rivers abandon their names and pour their waters into the great ocean, so the four castes-khattiya, brahman, vessa and

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ait. Br. VII. 27.}
sudda, after attaining perfection, lose their names and origins.\textsuperscript{14} This is an important statement as despite mention of four castes, there is also the suggestion that distinction becomes meaningless after attaining perfection. In the \textit{Kanakathala Sutta},\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Buddha} is further said to have told that among the four castes the khattiyas and the brahmanas stood in the front rank. The Assalayana Sutta, despite mentioning the worthlessness of castes, also gives names of chandala, nishada, vena and rathakara as belonging to the lower castes. At the end of his discourses \textit{Gautam} forces the \textit{brahma Assalayan} to make clear that caste is worthless and that the claim of the brahmanas to be the best caste is untenable. The same subject is also handled in the \textit{Madhura Sutta}\textsuperscript{16} and to some extent, the same words are used. Here, the \textit{brahma Kachchana} says that caste neither assumes material success in life nor makes any influence with regard to the punishment or happiness that awaits after death, that it

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} IX. 1.4.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Majjhima Nikaya: 90.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 84.
\end{itemize}
does not protect wrong-doers from the punishment prescribed by law and that, above all, for homeless ascetics it is a matter of indifference.

Regarding the caste system, a new thought was growing, which emphasized on virtuous life but not birth as a notion of giving special status. Hence, in the Jatakas, we are told that virtue alone constitutes a true brahmana. With regard to the caste system, the Uddalak Jataka deals in a most penetrating way. This story of Uddalak and his father Puorhita has certain characteristics. It criticizes some vedic sacrifices and also ostentatious rituals and in the end establishes the superiority of a virtuous life. Denouncing birth as an important criteria, Puorhita argues that kshatriya, brahmana, vessa, sudda, chandala and even pakkusa - can be virtuous and self-restrained and attain nirvana. When they attain peace of soul, none of them is better and no one is worse.

We find numerous instances in the
Buddhist literature where emphasis is given on the virtuous life and equality sought rather than sticking to the caste theory based on birth. In a Jataka story\textsuperscript{17}, it is said that birth and caste cause conceit; virtue is the highest and those who don’t possess it, for them learning also has no value. It is further said that a khattiya who has aimed at vice and a vessa who acts viciously, both come to grief after departing from the world. Elaborating this aspect, it is further said that khattiya, brahmana, vessa and sudda, chandala and pakkusa would be all equal in the world of the gods, if they have acted virtuously in this world. In this regard, the Vedas have no value; nor is there the value of birth or kinsmen for the further world, only one’s own pure virtue brings him happiness in the next world.” The same account of castes and the same conception of their equality as viewed from the ethical Standpoint, is found in the Amba Jataka\textsuperscript{18} where it is said that as a man who seeks juice in the forest considers that tree the best in which he finds

\textsuperscript{17} III.194Sq.
\textsuperscript{18} IV.205.
it, whether it is the eranda tree,\textsuperscript{19} the puchimanda tree\textsuperscript{20} or the palibhadda tree\textsuperscript{21}, so also among the khattiyas, brahmanas, suddas, chandalas and pakkusas, he is the best from whom one can learn what is right. These evidences bespeak of the birth being not an important criteria of one’s social status. Thus, in a Jataka story\textsuperscript{22}, a lovelorn kshatriya, works successively, without any dishonour or penalty as a potter, basket-maker, reed-worker, garland maker and cook. In another Jataka a setthi works as a tailor and as a potter and retains the respect of his high-born relations. Brahmanas are also frequently mentioned as engaged in agriculture and as hiring themselves out as cowherds and even goatherds. All such references point out that people could and did change their vocation by adopting one or other vocatin.\textsuperscript{23}

It is very significant to note that

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the Buddhists never cared in the least to
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\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{19. Ricinus Shrub.}
\item In Sanskrit it is \textit{Pichumanda; Azadirachta Indica.}
\item \textbf{21. In Sanskrit it is Palibhadra, Butea Frondosa.}
\item \textbf{22. V. 290.}
\item \textbf{23. T. W. Rhys Davids, Buddhist India, London, 1903, p. 28.}
\end{itemize}
contradict the caste theory as such and thereby introduce a better organisation of society; what they tried to do was simply to show that caste was of no value for the striving for emancipation. The worthlessness of the castes was emphasised. But at the same time, the brahmanical caste theory and the division of society into the khattiya, brahmana, vessa and sudda group was accepted and mentioned very frequently. This clearly shows that the division of society into four orders was so imbedded in social consciousness that it was difficult to ignore. However, it was the need of the hour to make certain changes taking into consideration the changed socio-economic milieu. Laxity of caste-rules in the brahmanical order and its criticism by the Buddha certainly created a healthy environment for flourishing of trade and commerce and coping up with the aspirations of emerging social groups. The conception of the non-existing of caste distinctions which we notice everywhere in Buddhist writing, seems

to suggest the thought that we are to see in this peculiarity of the Buddistic doctrine a reformatory act of Buddha and have to look upon Buddha as the destroyer of rigid limits fixed by orthodox practice.

In the Mahabharata, we find indications of two-types of society—one tribal and the other a territorial and varna-divided society with a system of taxation, a professional army and an administrative apparatus. \(^{25}\) The later type of society appears mainly in the Shanti Parva and the Anushashan Parva. The dominance of the tribal element in the society appears in the Ramayana too. The description of the Ashvamedha sacrifice\(^{26}\) in which kings belonging to eastern U. P. and Bihar and western and southern India participated, shows resemblance, in many respects, with the description of the same sacrifice in the later vedic texts. Further, the receiving of ratna as tributes and presents from the princes\(^{27}\), can be compared to the

\(^{25}\) R. S. Sharma, MCSF, p. 140.
\(^{26}\) Bala Kanda, sargas 13 and 18.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., 13.35.
circulation of prestige goods among the tribal chiefs on ceremonial occasions. Again, redistribution of wealth and lavish feeding of the people on the occasion\textsuperscript{28} can be likened to the tribal custom of potlatch which was practised by the tribal chiefs not only to share their wealth with their kinsmen but also to compete with similar chiefs in gaining prestige, influence and following. It is said of Dasharath that he distributed so much to the poor and dvijas that at the end nothing was left with him except his hand ornament which also was given by him to a poor brahmana.\textsuperscript{29} Dasharath's feast was not confined to his kinsmen and friends but was attended by members of all the varnas, artisans and citizens of Ayodhya, and by men and women from various countries.\textsuperscript{30} Besides mentioning the prevalence of tribal elements into society, the Ramayana also describes the varna-divided society in which all the varnas and lower social groups are mentioned.

While the brahmanical literature

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 14.11-18.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 14.54, 55.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 13.11, 13.15; 14.12-13, 16.
of the period tries to show the supremacy of the *brahmanas*, the Buddhist literature, on the other hand, conveys the uppermost position of the *kshatriyas* as cited earlier. It appears that in the area west of the Ganga, the *brahmanas* still enjoyed considerable hold in socio-cultural milieu. In the *brahmanical* books supremacy of the *brahmanas* is established. Thus, a *brahmana*, although he was allowed wives of other castes, should have for his first wife one belonging to his own caste; for only such a one could attend to his bodily needs and could stand by his side in the performance of religious rites,\(^3\) she alone assured for the son his belonging to the caste of the father. The *brahmana* was forbidden\(^3\) to take food from a man belonging to a lower caste and as especially impure the leaving of a *shudra’s* table\(^3\) are regarded. Even the sight of a despised human being, especially of a *chandala* whose touch itself causes impurity,\(^3\) was sufficient.

33. *Manu Samhita*, XI.153; *Vashishtha Dharmasutra* XIV.33; *Vishnu Samhita* I.50, 54, 56.
34. *Manu Samhita*, V. 85.
to spoil a brahmana’s meal. These prescriptions may lead us to think of a very rigid caste structure with strict rules and regulations which, if violated, needed expiatory ceremonies. However, in reality, the condition was not so as we have several references of caste cohesion and mutual interaction and adjustments in certain cases to be discussed later.

In the *brahmanical* set-up of society, the *brahmanas* enjoyed supreme position in comparison to the other groups. The birth was an important criteria of his social recognitions and this fact is acknowledged by the Buddhist literature, which says that everyone is a brahmana by his birth nor by his profession, he might change his profession, he might follow the most humble callings, still he remained a brahmana, a member of his caste. An exclusive feature of this order was the consciousness of being premier caste, the only one which enjoyed the privilege of offering

35. *Manu Samhita*, III. 239.
sacrifice as the only medium of communication with the gods. However, this exclusiveness of brahmana exists only in idea.\textsuperscript{37} In fact, the great mass of brahmanas, spread over the whole of northern India in Buddha’s time does not constitute a well-organised body. In the brahmanical works, the brahmana appears to be placed in an ideal world, at the center of which he was regarded, standing above the gods or at least on the same level, with them.\textsuperscript{38} This shows certain differences with the Jatakas which present to us the brahmanas, as they were in their daily lives. We find the brahmana as a teacher asking the new scholar about the honorarium he had brought. He is also seen in the court of the king interpreting signs and dreams or predicting from the constellation of the stars the future of the newly born prince and also as a rich merchant in the midst of his accumulated treasures. He is shown as the head of a big caravan and also ploughing fields.

\textsuperscript{37} R. Fick, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Manu Samhita}, IX. 316.
Jatakas give non-prejudiced and non-contemptuous view of the brahmanas. Many narratives seem to justify this view, for in many cases, the brahmanas are pictured as greedy, shameless, immoral and serving as a foil to the khattiyas, who occasionally played the part of the virtuous and noble humanity in stories. Such an intentional contrast is fully evident in the Junha Jataka. In the Sigala Jataka, while taking brahmana as full of greed of gold the jackal tries to tempt the brahmana. The jackal ventured into the town at night and while sleeping he was taken unawares by the breaking of the day and frightened by the inability to make good his escape without being noticed. He offered a brahmana two hundred Kashapanas if he could take him under his shoulders. Concealed by his overcoat, he was taken out of the town. Lastly, the brahmana was punished severely for his greed. Especially the brahmanas in king's service are regarded as highly greedy. The brahmanas are also shown making good fortunes.

39. IV.96Sq.
40. I.425.
by reading signs about the future of a man or the success of an enterprise. In expectation of a good reward a brahmana, on one occasion, praised goodness of a sword but on another occasion, regarded the same sword as possessing bad characteristics.\textsuperscript{41}

In the Jatakas, the brahmanas are shown lacking morality. They are shown indulged in unwanted activities. In the Sambhava Jataka\textsuperscript{42} the priest Suchirata, unable to answer the queries of his king, was sent to another priest named Vidhura to get answer of the question. But, Vidhura presented his inability in answering as he was occupied in seducing wife of another person. Moreover, his younger brother too is shown occupied with the same work.

Despite making adverse remarks against the brahmanas, the Buddhist literature is not always critical of them. It is better to say that the spirit of the Buddhist writing and even of the Jatakas is only against the

\textsuperscript{41} I.455.
\textsuperscript{42} V.57Sq.
external concept of *brahmanical* duties. On account of the importance which is attached in Buddha's teachings to the virtuous life there can be no question here of a hostile attitude of Buddhism towards the world renouncing *brahmanical* ascetics. In the *Uddalaka story*\(^{43}\), this is clear that as there persisted different opinions regarding duties of a *brahmana*, the Buddhists were critical of a 'worldly' life of the *brahmana*. In the said Jataka, while *Uddalaka* understands by *brahmanadharma* going round the fire, sprinkling water and setting up of sacrificial fire, the *Purohita*, who saw the ideal of the *brahmanas* in the propertyless, world-renouncing holy man, gives expression to the *Buddhist* conception saying that without possessing land, having relations and being unconcerned about the sensuous world free from desires, immune from bad lusts, indifference to existences a *brahmana* could attain peace of mind. And for this reason, one called that *brahmana* virtuous. A *brahmana* without property

and without desires was a thoroughly honourable person as reflected in the *Sachchamkira Jataka*.\(^4^4\) We also find a hard-hearted and cruel prince contrasted with a sympathetic brahmana. In the Buddhist literature, it is said that the brahmana who has removed all sins from himself, who is free from haughtiness, free from impurity and full of self-control, who has mastered science fully and who has fulfilled the duties of a saint can truly be called brahmana.\(^4^5\)

The life of a brahmana and that of an ascetic was regarded identical as the features of homelessness, desirelessness and propertylessness were inherent in the notion of both. Hence, both are asked to sit in the stable of elements and talk of virtuous life.\(^4^6\) Even in the edicts of Ashoka, we find the juxtaposition of samana and brahmana. In the Fourth Edict, among duties laid down by Ashoka, proper conduct towards brahmanas and ascetics is mentioned. In fact, in the brahmanical works,

\(^4^4\) I. 323 sq.
\(^4^5\) *Mahavagga*, I. 2-3.
\(^4^6\) I. 187.
we find the idealized picture of the brahmanas. As emphasised by law books, their life is usually divided into three or four stages, the observance of which appears to be looked upon as essential. 47 According to such stages of life, the brahmana went, when grown up, to a teacher, studied there the Vedas, set up then a household, renounced later worldly life and went to the forest where he lived either as a hermit or surrounded by a host of pupils and ascetics and which he quit in course of time to take up the life of an ascetic and prepare himself for the path of salvations. Manu makes it clear that going to the forest must follow the life of the scholar and that of the householder. 48

Apart from working as priest, the brahmanas were also engaged in other occupations. They carried on agriculture and bred goats and sheep. Hence, Vidhura in the Dashabrahman Jataka protests against the

47. Apastamba Dharmsutra II.2.1sq.
48. Manu Samhita, VI.37.
brahmanas, who were engaged in agriculture. Land cultivating and cattle-rearing brahmanas also occur in the western India as law-books recognise exceptional cases when this occupation was permissible for a brahmana. In a Jataka story we find a brahmana who went along with his son to the field and ploughed it while another brahmana repented over the death of one of his oxen as he could no more plough. We also have references of the brahmanas as big landowners having their fields cultivated by their slaves or by day-labourers. Sometimes, number of these day-labourers (krishakas) is given one thousand. In fact, more frequently than the ordinary brahmana landowner (kassaka brahman) we find in the Jatakas the figure of a rich brahmana. In the Phananda Jataka we find a brahmana even as a carpenter (brahmana vaddhaki) who, living in a carpenter's village outside the city, used to bring wood from the forest and earned his livelihood by making

49. Ibid., X. 116.
50. III.163.
51. IV.15; IV.22; IV.28.
52. IV.207.
wagons. Some of the *brahmanas* definitely lived in wretched condition as they are mentioned as beggars.\(^53\)

Despite the consolidation of society after the *vedic* age, tribal character remained in the organisation of kingship and the *kshatriya* (*Pali-Khattiya*) class as a whole. In many verses, the king is called *vishampati* or the head/protector of the tribe.\(^54\) This title as well as *janeshwar*\(^55\) applied to the king clearly brings out the tribal character of the kingly authority which amounted to chieftdom. Fighting and administration came to be regarded as exclusive function of the *kshatriyas*. But, several rituals in the epics suggested that even agriculture was practised by princes. Janaka ploughed the sacrificial field and *Duryodhana* was advised to do so.\(^56\) *Vidura*, who was considered to be a very wise person, advises the king to take to agriculture, whole his

54. *Jaya Samhita*, I. 127.15; 145.4. 152.11; 176.33; 187.20, 22 etc.
55. *Jaya Samhita*, I. 124.1; 187.15.
father, mother, friends, sons and servants are asked to adopt other professions.57 The kshatriyas were the representatives of the political power and symbolized the idea of a community which stood above the idea of a common man. He was given due respect as we donot find a kshatriya addressed by his name or in the second person by any person belonging to the lower classes. Even with regard to a brahmana, the kshatriya feels his superiority so much so that king Arindama calls Sonaka, the son of a purohita, a man of low birth. The kshatriyas attached great importance to purity of blood and did not consider any person, who through his mother or father, belonged to another social group, of pure blood, even they looked upon him as not of the same status as themselves. Hence, frequently occurring expression like maharaja, matapritsu, khattiya etc. is applied to them in the Jataka.58 Significantly, in the enumeration of the social groups the kshatriyas are mentioned first in some Jatakas.59

57. Mbh, Udyog Parva, 38.12.
58. I.177; IV.42; V.133.
59. III.19, IV.205, 303.
As from the brahmanical sources which place the brahmanas always at the head, not only the claim of the brahmanas to be the best social group but also their real position as such within the specially brahmanical culture-sphere, can be inferred; so, we have in this assigning of premier position to the kshatriyas, a reaction brought about by the view which prevailed in the Magadha and the Koshalan region. The superior position of the kshatriyas in the eastern region and the corresponding decline of the brahmanical influence present themselves to us with irresistible necessity when we study the Pali literature. We are told that the Buddhas were not born in the vaishya or the shudra social order, but they have been born in one or other of the two highest classes—the Kshatriya order or the brahmana order; and because the Kshatriya order is the highest⁷⁶ and he would take birth in that order. We find similar views in the Lalitvistara (Chapter III) when it says that

60. I.49.
the bodhisattva was not born in lower families, chandala or in the families of flutamakers or rathakaras, or in the Pukkasa families; he appeared only in two castes—brahmana and kshatriya. It further elaborates that as monks held the kshatriyas in the highest esteem, the bodhisattvas appeared in the kshatriya order. However, these statements need to be taken cautiously as most of them are of later origin.

Apart from highlighting superior position of the kshatriyas, the Jatakas also exhibit their haughtiness. The Digha Nikaya, while giving the interview between the brahmana Pakkharasadi and the Koshalan King Prasenjit 5, describes how the latter never allowed the brahmana who was a dependent of his to see his face. The Jatakas also narrate such haughtiness of the Shakyas. 62 Mutual relation between the kshatriya and the brahmana further appear in a more theoretical discussion between the Buddha and Ambattha. 63 The discussion was conceived

61. III.26.
62. I. 88; IV. 145.
63. III.1.24.
with the question whether a son born of the union of a kshatriya’s son with a brahmana girl was legitimate or not. The Buddha said that young brahmana must accept the answer that a son born of such a mixed marriage would get his seat and water among the brahmanas, that he would participate in the sacrifices and in the meals, that he would be instructed and that he could marry their women. But, the kshatriyas would never take him up into their group for, on his mother’s side, he was not of equal rank with them. He further elaborates that in the case of a son and a kshatriya’s daughter, the brahmanas should look upon him as of equal rank, while the kshatriyas could not regard him as their equal rank on account of his not being of the same rank on his father’s side. Moreover, if a brahmana was driven out of his community he could not be taken back into his community. But, on the other hand, if a kshatriya got excommunicated from his group he could be allowed to participate in meals, in sacrifice and in introduction and even marry
amongst them. At the end Buddha says, “consequently, Ambattha, even when a Kshatriya has fallen into the lowest depths, he is still the best and the brahmanas are low.”64 He further adds the oft-quoted verse of the Buddhistic suttas that the kshatriya was considered the highest by men who attached valued to family.”65 If we rely on this passage, it certainly possesses influence of a subjective bias on the part of the Buddhistic order. But, even when we ascribe a great portion of the pre-eminence of the kshatriya appearing in Pali texts to the monks who were ill-despised towards brahmanism, there remains enough ground for supposing an actual superiority of the ruling class. And this superiority of the kshatriyas did not dispel them from venturing into another field.

In the Upanishads kings appear very often as teachers of the brahmanas. As the brahmanical law-books mentioned the study of the Vedas for the king66, the kshatriyas also

64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Gautama Dharmasutra, XI.3; Manu Samhita, VII.43.
ventured into the spiritual realm. Although princes were required to study the dhanurveda, they had to devote, like the brahmana youths, a certain time of their life to religious studies. In the Gamanichanda Jataka, the king himself gives the prince instruction for seven years in the three Vedas and in all worldly duties. Generally, the prince was sent to a brahmana and was taught Vedas by him. The Vedas are not always mentioned distinctly as the subject of the studies to which the brahmana introduced the young princes; the princes also learnt the sciences and the crafts. Even the kings were teachers as mentioned in the Jatakas and the son of the king of Banaras, went to the great teacher bodhisattva at the age of sixteen and learnt the three Vedas and all the sciences. The young kshatriyas did not simply outwardly pursue the study of the Vedas, which according to the law-books, is a duty binding upon all the twice-born. In all such passages

67. II. 297.
68. II. 2, II.278; III. 158.
69. III. 122.
70. Ibid.
in the Jatakas where the question is of the education of the kshatriyas, the age at which the youth left his paternal home and went to his teacher, is universally given as the sixteenth year of his life.\textsuperscript{71} In the Gamanichanda Jataka, we are said that a prince, who had been instructed by his father for seven years in the three Vedas, was only seven years old at the time of his father's death\textsuperscript{72} and this story is certainly amazing.

The kshatriyas are mentioned adopting different professions. In the Jatakas we find a Kshatriya, a king's son, who apprentices himself successively in pursuance of a love affair, to a potter, a basket-maker, florist, and a cook, without a word being added as to loss of social status when his action became known.\textsuperscript{73} Some kshatriyas are also mentioned in the Jatakas as traders\textsuperscript{74} and serving others for a salary as an archer.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{71} I. 259, 272, 273; II. 2, 87, 277; III. 122.
\textsuperscript{72} II. 297.
\textsuperscript{73} XI. 5. 290.
\textsuperscript{74} IV. 84.
\textsuperscript{75} II. 87.
Being the main producing class, the vaishyas (Pali-Vessa) came to acquire very prominence during this period. They appear as principal taxpayers, to the exclusion of all the remaining three varnas, in a context in which various tribute-paying princes are compared to taxpaying vaishyas. 76 We further get the information that the vaishyas served meals to or provided resources for the maintenance of dvijati i.e. brahmana and Kshatriya. 77 In the Ramayana, vaishyas are mentioned as principal producers 78 and engaged in various occupations. Duties and occupations of the vaishyas, as mentioned by Manu, are "cattle breeding, distribution of alms, sacrifice, study, trade, lending money at interest and agriculture. 79 The rising status of the vaishyas, during our study period, can be gauged from the fact that there emerged a class of people called the gahapatis (sanstrit grihpati) in the vaishya order. According to

76. Mbh. Sabha Parva. 43.25.
77. Jayasamhita, II. 30.30
78. Ayodhya Kanda, 100.47-48.
79. I. 90.
its etymology, the word means - "householder, head of a household" and denotes generally a landlord or merchant-prince of high wealth. Originally, the term gahapati stood for the class of cattle-breeding and land-cultivating Aryan settlers but it later came to represent social groups.\(^{80}\) Like the kshatriyas, the gahapatis also seem to have distinguished themselves from the great mass of the population by a certain consciousness of position. The son of the setthi gahapati, Yasa, is called in the Mahavagga Kulaputta, a youth of high birth, good family.\(^{81}\) In the court of the king the gahapatis, on account of their importance and wealth, played a significant part as they are shown as retinues of the king.\(^{82}\) They were present, as mentioned in the Jatakas, even on the occasion of king's coronation.\(^{83}\) The status of a gahapati was hereditary and despite the loss of his fortune and doing lower professions, he still remained a

\(^{80}\) R. Fick, op.cit., p. 253.
\(^{81}\) I. 7.7.
\(^{82}\) Mahavagga, I.22.3.
\(^{83}\) II.241.
gahapati. We hear of in a Jataka, one such gahapati who dealt in vegetables.\textsuperscript{84} We also find another poor gahapati who maintained himself and his mother with difficulty by working as a hired labourer.\textsuperscript{85} However, despite the hereditary position, it would be wrong to take gahapati as a caste. In fact, it was a special rank and not a caste.

In the sense of gahapati, we find another word 'kutumbika' which also denotes members of the citizen class, wealthy citizens at the head of a household (kutumba). Connection with such a kutumbika family appears to have been considered suitable by the rich and aristocratic families: a leading citizen, in the Jataka stories,\textsuperscript{86} seeks the daughter of a kutumbika living in a village for his son. The Jatakas also present the kutumbika as engaged in trade and lending a villager even upto one thousand karshapana.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84} III.21. 
\textsuperscript{85} III.325. 
\textsuperscript{86} I.196. 
\textsuperscript{87} II.388.
Perhaps the most important and aristocratic representative of the gahapati class was the setthi. In the Vinayapitaka, the setthi played an important role and appears throughout as a respectable tradesman enjoying a special position of honour among the members of his profession. Anathapindika, a generous Buddhist worshipper, was such type of respectable trademark. In the Chulavagga and Mahavagga, we find references of pious setthis. It has been suggested by some that the setthi also managed finances of the state. He was consulted by the king for paying the army and the officials, for military operations, public buildings etc. Perhaps the king required him in order to exercise supervision over trade in accordance with the prescription of the lawbooks and for the purpose of controlling through him the administration of the laws relating to trade-societies and guilds.

88. VI.4.1
89. VIII.1.16.
90. R. Fick, op.cit., p. 258.
91. Manu Samhita, VIII.401 sq.
92. Manu Samhita, VIII.41.
However, *setthi* appears more as a private gentleman, as a rich and influential merchant. A *setthi* living in Benaras is shown in the *Jatakas*, engaged in trade and driving a caravan of five hundred wagons.\(^3\) In the *Jataka*, the wealth of a *setthi* is given like that of the rich *brahmanas*, uniformly, as eight hundred millions.\(^4\) Occasionally, the rice-fields of a *setthi* are also mentioned and this shows *setthi* not as tradesmen but also as cattle-rearing and land-cultivating owners of the soil.

At the last eg of the varna order were *shudras*, who have been given due importance during this period. They are also called givers of food.\(^5\) As the Aryans penetrated deep into the country, various aboriginal tribes came under subjugation and thus various tribes mixed with the *Aryan* population. Such tribes have been mentioned as the *chandalas*, *pukkusas*, *nishadas*, *mlechchhas* etc. The *chandalas* were the highly despised class so much so that they

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93. I.270.
94. III.128, 300, 444; V.382.
were not permitted to live in villages where the upper varnas lived. Thus, the low-book says that they should be outside the village and their dress should consist of garments of the dead.\(^{96}\) It is further said that they must eat their food out of broken pots; black iron should be their ornaments and they must always wander from place to place. It is further said that a man who fulfils a religious duty should not seek intercourse with them; they should conduct their business among themselves and their marriages must be conducted with their equals.\(^{97}\) The chandalas were prohibited to enter the villages or towns at night. Their work was to carry the corpse of anybody who had no relations and also to kill criminals whenever the royal order with such effects appeared.\(^{98}\) All these prescribed rules made the life of a chandala very miserable. The Buddhist stories do not make a different picture. The Jatakas mention that the chandalas lived outside the town\(^{99}\) in

\(^{96}\) Manu Samhita, X. 51Sq.
\(^{97}\) Ibid.
\(^{98}\) Ibid.
\(^{99}\) IV.376.
a village\textsuperscript{100} by themselves. Two chandala brothers who knew how to blow a chandala flute, had to show their art outside the city gate—the one playing at the northern while the other at the eastern gate. On one occasion, a chandala is compared with a jackal. In a Jataka story, even Buddha is said to have told his monks that for the followers of his doctrine, the eating of food obtained in an unlawful manner is like eating the table leavings of a chandala.\textsuperscript{101} Chandalas were distinguished by their dress and language also.

Along with the chandalas, there are mentioned in the Jatakas, the pukkusas who may be identified with the pukkasas or pulkasas of the brahmanical system where they are called descendants of a nishada by a shudra wife. These pukkasas were also more probably a non-Aryan group occupying a very low position in society. According to the commentary on the \textit{Silavimansha Jataka}, by this are meant men who

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{100} IV.200, 390. \\
\textsuperscript{101} II.82.
\end{flushleft}
had for their profession the plucking of flowers.\textsuperscript{102} However, in the Manusamhita, the catching and killing of cave-dwelling animals is given as their work.

The neshadas or the 'nishadas' of the brahmanical books, were another non-Aryan group. They were regarded as descendants of a brahmana by a shudra. According to lawbooks, their work was to kill fish.\textsuperscript{103} As, according to the Jatakas, the nishadas lived by hunting, we can suppose that fighting and hunting formed their exclusive sources of earning. Perhaps, it was owing to their professional work that they fell into contempt. The despised position of the nishadas is mentioned in different ways. In the Jatakas, it is narrated that a brahmana youth adopted the occupation of a hunter when he could not maintain himself by any other art.\textsuperscript{104} In another Jataka story\textsuperscript{105}, the king asked the hunter to give up his occupation and

\textsuperscript{102} III.195.
\textsuperscript{103} Manu Samhita, X.48.
\textsuperscript{104} II.200.
\textsuperscript{105} IV.422.
recommended other means of earning money such as agriculture and trade. In the Assalayana Sutta also the nishadas are mentioned as low people living outside the town. They are shown in the Jatakas as selling birds.\textsuperscript{106} The nishada of the Mora Jataka who, was ordered by the king to catch a golden peacock, practiced the profession of a hunter in a nishada village.\textsuperscript{107} Likewise, in a village inhabited by members of his community and lying not far from Banaras, lived another nishada who captured deer.

In the Buddhist literature, we find the names of other despised people—the venas and the rathakaras, who are identified with the bamboo-workers and carriage-builder respectively.\textsuperscript{108} The venas are placed in the Jatakas on the same level with the chandala on account of their lower character.\textsuperscript{109} Akin to the venas, so far as their work is concerned and treated as contemptuously as these, are

\textsuperscript{106} V.337. \\
\textsuperscript{107} II.36. \\
\textsuperscript{108} R. Fick, op. cit., p. 326. \\
\textsuperscript{109} II.306.
the two artisans appearing in the Takkariya Jataka\textsuperscript{110} namely the basket-maker (nalakara) and the flute-maker (velukara). The occupation of a barber too was regarded despised. In a Jataka story\textsuperscript{111} an ascetic named Gangamala, a former barber, was called by the queen as "the son of a filth-cleaning barber born of a low caste." However, the story also points out that through asceticism even barber or potter could get higher position.

Above discussions on the social aspect after the Vedic age may lead use to believe that our study period saw the hardening of the social order in the backdrop of Aryan expansion into new areas. In fact, the amalgamation of existing local cultures, which was inevitable in the evolution of Aryan culture, created problems for the theorists of caste society. The process of anuloma (hypergamy) and pratilama (where the mother is of a higher caste than the father) had to be conceded and a number of new

\textsuperscript{110} IV.251.  
\textsuperscript{111} II.452.
and mixed castes (*sankirna jati*)\(^{112}\) were admitted to the theory of social order. They were given the rank of *shudra*. Among these tribes many came to be described as *mlechchha* such as the *ambastha*, *ugra* and *nishada* among the *anuloma*\(^{113}\) and the *suta*, *magadha*, *chandala*, *ayogava* and *pulkasa* among the *pratiloma*.\(^{114}\) Even within the *sankirna jatis* there is a hierarchy of ranking as recorded in the *dharmashastras*.\(^{115}\) Professionally, they followed occupations which were regarded by the lawgivers as activities associated with unclean tasks such as washerman, fisherman, potter etc. Thus, the term *mlechcha*, which was in the initial phase, a notion of non-Aryan language, later came to acquire territorial connotation and frequently used for the 'barbarian' non-Aryans.\(^{116}\) After the Vedic age, ambit of this word was enlarged enough to include

\begin{itemize}
\item[112.] *Manu Samhita*, X.10-12; 16-17.
\item[113.] *Gautama Dharmasutra*, IV.4; *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, I.9.3; *Vashishtha Dharmasutra*. XVIII.9.
\item[114.] *Gautam Dharmasutra*. IV.15; *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, I. 8.8; *Vashishtha Dharmasutra*. XVIII.1-6.
\item[115.] *Manu Samhita*, X.39.
\item[116.] R. Thapar, “The Image of the Barbarian in Early India” in Ancient Indian Social History, Delhi, 1978, pp. 152-161.
\end{itemize}
renunciation, the retirement into the homeless condition, was only the outward expression of that striving for knowledge and for emancipation.

Another intriguing aspect of the social change of the period under consideration is the issue of slavery. In the RV, the story of Sunahasepa, in which a boy was to be bartered for a sacrifice, is regarded as related with slavery\(^{120}\) and sale of an individual. In the Mahabharata too several mythological stories refer to manumission or enslavement and on this basis slaves i.e. *dasas* have been categorised in different groups i.e. slaves born in the family, purchased or captured or acquired through gambling bets and even as a gift.\(^{121}\) Even in the oligarchies and monarchies of the Buddhist epoch, we find presence of slaves in great prosperity. But, slaves were in a better position in monarchy in comparison with oligarchy. We find presence of slaves in every institution—army, agriculture, household-

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120. D. R. Chanan, op. cit., p. 31.
121. Ibid., pp. 34-35.
and even in the service of merchants. However, the master-slave relation does not appear to be harsh or antagonistic. For the master, slaves and servants were an additional burden, whom he was bound to support. We find a master, a rich brahmana, complaining about his lot: "How can we be care free when we have to (exert ourselves to) support our parents...... our slaves, servants and other dependents."\textsuperscript{122} We also find a good worker named Punna being manumitted.\textsuperscript{123} However, we also encounter slaves working on festival-day.\textsuperscript{124} There appears difference between the status of a slave and a wage-earner and the latter was in a poorer condition as in one story\textsuperscript{125} the wage-earner (karmakara) refuses to enjoy a festival because he had to go for work. Moreover, a slave could afford to refuse work by pretending to be unwell but a servant could not as he would lose his wages.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{122} Majjhima Nikaya, II.104-05.  
\textsuperscript{123} Thera Gatha, IX. 65.  
\textsuperscript{124} Majjhima Nikaya, XXIX.  
\textsuperscript{125} Dhammapada, III.99.  
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., II.3.
The Pali literature, having a dislike for manual labour, suggests that condition of slaves and servants was not better as compared to the earlier period. Hence, Buddha intervened personally to mediate between the slaves and masters. However, he does not appear to have adopted a radical approach. He insisted on reciprocity saying that dasa-karmakaras should have work assigned to them according to their capacity and should be well looked after when ill.\textsuperscript{127} He also advised slaves not to have any feeling of revenge against their master, even if the other should try to kill him\textsuperscript{128} In such cases, a change of destiny is promised to the slave in the next birth.

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{127} Atthakatha, V.IV.33.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Jat. VI. 300.
\end{itemize}