Chapter- III

Status of Slaves

In ancient India slaves were a matter of significant consideration and that is why they were provided enough food and clothes by their masters. Their condition was far superior to that of their counterpart in Europe and other countries. The sources, be it literary or legal in nature sufficiently focus on a contradictory picture so far as their status or rights are concerned. On one side if legally a slave had no right even on his own body, quite apart from other rights, he was treated like a chattel, as a property of the house equivalent to master’s oxen, buffalo, gold and silver, garments, sandalwood houses, treasures etc.,\(^1\) while on the other hand Apastamba laid down that the house holder must have to provide food to the slaves even he along with his wife or his children might remain hungry in want of food\(^2\). Kautilya also confirms the similar ruling that the treatment of slaves needed to be good and if a master ill-treated his slaves the state should punish him\(^3\). Similarly the king Ashoka in his Rock Edict IX ordained that all people should treat their slaves with sympathy and consideration. While Manu mentions that a slave, his wife and his son had no right to property of any kind\(^4\). Surprisingly, they did not come across any major change so far as their status in the society during early medieval period was concerned as the literature of this period speaks in the same tone. In this regard, Medhatithi while making a commentary on Manusmrti holds that a slave was merely fed and clothed.\(^5\) Their actual

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\(^2\) *Apastamba Dharmastra*. II, 4.9.11
\(^3\) *Arthastra*, 3/13
\(^4\) *Manusmrti*, 8/416
\(^5\) *Medhatithi on Manusmrti*, IX, 143, p.931
status gets exposed in the documents of *Lekhāpaddhati* and references of *Trisastisalakapurusacharita* which clarify that the slaves were beaten like mules, bear very heavy loads, endure thirst etc.\(^6\) however, Yajnavalkya\(^7\) and Nārada\(^8\) while allowing them property rights seems to indicate that the status of the slaves depended upon the nature of their work, capability, age and most probably on the nature of their masters during their respective period. Hence in the present chapter a humble attempt has been made to throw light on the social, economic, religious, and political status of the slaves during the period under study.

**Social Status:**

In Indian society the slaves used to enjoy a satisfactory attitude as is indicated by the statement of Manu where he asks the master to take food after taking by slaves.\(^9\) It seems that in principle this consideration was expected from the masters, however, in practice it depended upon the behavioural conduct of their masters. As we have pointed out earlier Apastamba laid down that the householder ought to have provided food to the slave even when he, his wife or his children might have to remain hungry for want of food.\(^{10}\) Kautilya also laid down some rules for the just treatment towards slaves. From the *Jātakas* it looks that slaves in India were treated as members of a

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\(^{6}\) Gopal, Lallanji, *op.cit.*, p.76

\(^{7}\) *Yajnavalkya Smrti*, 2/133-34

\(^{8}\) *Naradasmrti*, 5/30

\(^{9}\) *Manusmrti*, 3.116

\(^{10}\) *Ibid.*
family. Some facilities were also provided to them for learning, reading and writing and training in some art and craft. But on the other hand in case the slaves stole the articles of their master their limbs were chopped off. Similarly Manu also holds that the master could beat his slave with a rope or stick. It shows that they were considered as the property of their master like animals, houses, fields and gold. Thus in principle they were deprived of their legal right to oppose the inhuman behavior and torturing by their masters/mistresses. A slave’s witness was also not considered trustworthy.

What is significant to comment is that there were no checks and balances against the ill-treatment of their masters. However, the Mauryan period do witness some changing trend in this context. Kautilya being a rational thinker makes provision of punishment to be made by king if a master shirks to provide some short of social security to the slaves.

In early medieval period also their status in masters family in particular and society in general depended upon the nature of their masters. The sage Kanva in Abhijnanashakuntalam advises Shakuntala when she was going to her husband’s home that ‘You should behave affectionately with dāsa-dasis in royal palace’. Thus it reveals that slaves generally did not face bitter treatment by their masters. However, the social ethics of the period lay stress on the due apathy for slaves. The Sukaraniti, while making a statement regarding

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11 Misra, Jaishankar, op.cit., p.204
12 Manusmrti, VIII, 70
13 Mishra, Jaishankar, op.cit., p. 204
14 Ibid, VIII, 70
15 Abhijnana Shakuntalam, 4/18
fortunes of someone includes slave among nine things, a faithful wife, virtuous progeny, useful science, honestly earned money, a good friend, sincere male and female slaves, a handsome body and a beautiful home. It adds that a noble king was regarded as great source of delight to the lay community and consequently deserved proper attention. The occurrence of the names of five female slaves with the image of their master Prapapadhavala on Tilotha inscription indicates that slaves received kind treatment at the hands of their masters. 

Mānasollāsa also advises that slaves should be properly protected, fed and nourished and also be honoured through the bestowal of gift if masters wish to accumulate merit in this and for the next life. The law of the period also expected to place slaves at an important place in the house. It referred that punishment be given to errant slaves as for a wife, son, sister, pupil, daughter in law and younger brother and thus, they could be beaten with a thin cord or a stick always on the back and never on the head. A transgressed man was liable to be punished like a thief by the king. Agnipurāna also confirms the above view by referring that a man should chastise his wives, sons, slaves, pupils and brother (by blood) with a thin cord or a stick of bamboo on the back and not on the head, a transgressing owner should be punished like a thief. Bilhana also testifies the performance of friendly relations between masters and slaves by showing beautiful damsels playing with their slaves. Nalachampu also talking in the same context tells about the rewards given by the masters to the dasis

16 Sukraniti, III, 293-94, p. 174
17 Epigraphia Indica, XX, 249
18 Mānasollāsa, I, 303-04, p.28
19 Sukraniti, IV, 89-90, p.196
20 Agnipurana, 227,45-46, p.332
(female slaves) showing a high social status of women slaves. Medhatithi commenting on *Manusmrti* asked that the master should not actually beat the slave with a rope or a staff. What was supposed to be ensured by the master that required keeping the slave in strict discipline? Such views of Medhatithi, in fact, intends to clear that the master generally remained sympathetic towards slaves.

The feudal warfares and foreign invasions while playing a decisive role in deteriorating the economic condition of the common man during early medieval period adversely affected the moral standards of the society. As a consequence the social status of the slaves in the family as well as in the society got affected. From the *Lekhāpaddhati* an amazing scene emerges wherein a Rajput girl falling at the feet of a merchant and begging to be kept as a slave testifies the similar type of deterioration in the social values. It is stated that at the *chātusapatha* of the city and with the knowledge of the people of all the four *varnas* he agreed upon to accept her as a slave girl. The same case though recorded the fact that violently opposed as the earlier *Smrti* rule did not allow a man reducing to slavery people belonging to castes higher than his own. Thus it is worth noting that *Lekhāpaddhati* supports the deteriorated social standards of the society in regard to emerging values to slavery during the period under review. The legal injunctions and social ethics were adhered to only by a few masters and therefore, the instances of

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21 *Nalachampu*, Dvitiya evam Saptam Uchchhavas

22 Medhatithi on Manusmrti, VIII. 299

23 Pushpa Prasad, *op.cit.*, p. 270

conviviality between masters and slaves quoted above were found less in comparison to the instances of cruelty and oppression of slaves.

The position of slaves in general life was not in any way better than that of domestic animals. Sometimes they were intentionally marked with some signs in order to ensure their identity as is testified in *Kathasaritasagara* which refers that the foreheads of some of the slaves were branded by iron with a shape like dog’s foot.25 Even derogatory expression for son or daughter of a slave girl was used when someone wanted to abuse the other in a contemptuous sense.26 People in general did not have any sympathetic attitude on the miseries of a slave as the *Dhurtavitasamvada* gleans on the fake weeping of a slave girl, which was born out of nothingness and is difficult to cure. The usual picture of a slave girl was of drooping limbs fatigated with doing all the work.27 The slaves remained in complete observation of their masters. They could be sold, gifted and even deputed by them.28 The *Mrichchhakatikam* seems to testifies their similar position when it quotes a statement of a slave who addressing to his master says, “Undoubtedly my body is completely under you but my character and conduct is out of your jurisdiction”.29 Their psychology is further confirmed on a similar statement, “slavery is a curse and if a slave even tells a truth yet he is considered untrustworthy.”30 While justifying their birth in slavery they used to

25 *Kathasaritasagara*, XIII. 189-190, p.44
26 Gopal, Lallanji, op. cit. , p.75
28 *Katyayanasmrti*, 783, 962
29 *Mrichchhakatikam*, VIII, p.231
associate evil deeds committed in previous birth and say, "I am born
as a slave due to the sins of the previous birth, so in this birth I will
not do any ill works to urge more sins".\textsuperscript{31} The \textit{Harshacharit} also
declares them as a heartrending, unfortunate and degraded.\textsuperscript{32} Both
mental and physical tortures were their usual fate as confirmed by the
statement of Hemachandra who says that they were beaten like mules,
made to carry heavy loads and had to suffer starvation and thirst.\textsuperscript{33} In
the \textit{Lekhāpaddhati} also the owner of a slave girl is empowered, in the
case of her running away, stealing or spreading any rumors about him,
to knock her down, drag her by her hair, bind her, beat her, and set her
again to work as a slave.\textsuperscript{34} It is endorsed in case a slave girl did not
obey her masters orders the owner could kick her and beat her with
sticks even to the extent of killing her without incurring any guilt. By
doing so he would not incur any sin\textsuperscript{35} to and if being fed up with his
cruelty and oppression, she attempts to commit suicide by jumping
into a well, she was expected to reborn as a she-ass or \textit{chandali} in her
next life, according to religious and social injunctions prevailed in the
period. On the contrary the master was absolved of the guilt merely
by bathing in the \textit{Ganga}.\textsuperscript{36} Whenever someone opines enslavement he/
she was required to announce it as a pledge in the public loudly as
gleaned by the \textit{Lekhāpaddhati} wherein a ten year Rajputa girl named
Sampuri declared as follows:

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 25
\item\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Harshcharit}, p.224
\item\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Trisastisalakapurusacharita}, 582, p.21
\item\textsuperscript{34} Gopal, Lallanji, \textit{op. cit.}, p.75
\item\textsuperscript{35} Prasad Pushpa, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 272 (Document No. II)
\item\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
“If I, so long as I live, while employed as a slave in your house or in any other house, commit theft, seeing a vacant room with no body there appropriate some article lying there, or finding that begging has become easier go elsewhere, or in my youth, being tempted or enticed by some one, leave you, or mix with your enemies, and do or cause to cheat, conspire etc. then on the basis of the deed, you will catch me by my hair, bind and beat me, and again put me to the work of a female slave. I shall always throughout the day and night carry out the orders of all the members of your family. I refuse to obey orders, then you may punish me by kicking and beating me with a stick and torture to death for which you, my lord, will remain as free from guilt as if you had been absent from the scene of death. I declare to all that, should I die under the torture in the above-mentioned way it will have been brought about by my own fault. You and your family shall be absolved by bathing in the Ganges. If ever I commit suicide by jumping into a well or pond or by taking poison on account of udarabadha (pregnancy) you my lord will be guiltless, and will only have to perform the penance of bathing in the Ganges”.\(^{37}\) So, the general condition of slaves was so miserable as to give frequent occasions for their attempting suicide.

So far as the provision to safeguard their rights was concerned no such evidence is found in the Lekhapaddhat, a profound and reputed work of the period under review. A person, in fact, once enslaved had to serve not only the master and his family but his descendents as well till his or her death. Moreover, there were no specific duty hours fixed for them as the terms aharnisam and divaratrau in the documents clearly indicate that slaves were bound to work twenty-four hours

\(^{37}\) Prasad Pushpa, op. cit., p. 274 (Document No. II)
without any rest. In inclement weather, i.e. excessive rain, extreme cold or oppressive heat, they required to work without respite or complaint.\textsuperscript{38} The slight negligence in the duty could result in his beating by stick as a punishment. In these circumstances if a slave committed suicide or passed away the master was reproached by none, held to account by none. Everybody took it granted that the slave had died as a consequence of his or her own misdeeds. This was the social ethic of early medieval period for treating with slaves.

In one of the documents of \textit{Lekhāpaddhati} the purchase is called \textit{janmagrahaka} there by referring to the master's right over the life span of the slave.\textsuperscript{39} In the same document no provision was mentioned for the manumission of the slave. On the other hand we have a statement that the father, brother or husband of the slave girl could not interrupt her duty. In this case the creditor (merchant) is entitled to bind, beat or strike her cruelly.\textsuperscript{40} The punishment, which was to be given on the violation of duty, was also proclaimed in public before the agreement of slavery was entered into.\textsuperscript{41}

In spite of hard work done by slaves, they could not ask for wages or salary. The law works of the period make it clear that a slave was entitled to nothing but bare maintenance.\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Medhatithi} also implies that a slave is merely to be fed and clothed.\textsuperscript{43} In this regard

\textsuperscript{38} Jain, P.C., op. cit., p.269
\textsuperscript{39} Pushpa, Prasad, \textit{op, cit.}, p.269
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, p.271
\textsuperscript{41} Mazumdar, B.P., \textit{The Socio-Economic History of Northern India}, p.187
\textsuperscript{42} Gopal, Lallanj, \textit{op. cit.}, p.76
\textsuperscript{43} Medhatithi on \textit{Manusmrti}, IX, 143, Vol. II, p.931
the documents of *Lekhāpaddhāti* refers that a slave girl is to be paid by her owner according to his capacity only with food, clothing and foot-wear and adds that she will demand nothing more.\(^{44}\) From another documents we learn that the highest, which a slave faithful to his duties could expect, was to receive, without having to ask for it, food, clothing, and the like according to the custom, country and times and also as per the capacity of the owner.\(^{45}\)

The sons of the slave girls were looked down upon by the high ranking fathers and masters. Gunabhadra narrates the story of a *brahmana*, Dharanjata who had three sons, two from his wives and another named Kapila from his slave mistress. He doved of Kapila from *Vedic* studies which was available to his other two sons. However, Kapila who was so intelligent that mere by listening to what his father taught his brothers he acquired a perfect knowledge of Vedas. knowing it, the father turned him out of his house outraged at the idea of a casteless boy becoming proficient in Vedas. After his expulsion Kapila went to Ratanpura. At Ratanpura a *brahman* who got much impressed by his knowledge of *Vedas* and decided to marry his daughter with Kapila. His discourses on the scriptures were unparalleled, and Kapila commanded the respect even of the king. However, on knowing about *Kapila’s*, previous history, the king banished him from his kingdom in utter disregard of his vast and undoubted Vedic knowledge.\(^{46}\) Similarly, Haribhadra’s commentary on the *Dāsavaikalikasutra* mentions that a slave girl’s son often had only a thread bare garment was a rogue, he would for the sake of stakes in

\(^{44}\) Pushpa Prasad, *op. cit.*, p.272

\(^{45}\) Ibid.

\(^{46}\) Jain, P.C., *op. cit.*, p.266
gambling burgled a house, killed the residents by kicking them and then visited a prostitute and lived by drinking wine and eating flesh.\textsuperscript{47} Thus some unchecked sons of slave girls would appear to have been a burden on society, wasting their energies in unsocial activities.

The war captured men by Muslim invaders who were generally enslaved by invaders lost their social status as they enjoyed before they were converted to slaves. But those who returned back after their escape were not easily allowed to join the free citizenship. They, in fact, were ostracized by the society and had to undergo a tortuous purifying ordeal in regard to restore their position. Significantly even after the concerned penance was performed they were not accorded, the same social position as they enjoyed before enslavement. Alberuni while referring about such cases intends to make a similar focus that, "I have repeatedly been told that when Hindu slaves (in Muslim countries) escape and return to their country and religion, the Hindus order that they should fast by way of expiation. Then they bury them in the stale dung and milk of cow for certain number of days, till they get into a state of fermentation. Then they drag out of the dirt and gave them similar dirt to eat, and more of the like. I have asked the brahmanas if this is true, but they deny it and maintain that there is no expiation possible for such an individual, and that he is never allowed to return to those conditions of life in which he lived before he was carried off as a prisoner. And how should that be possible, if a brahmana eats in the house of a śudrā in sundry days, he is expelled from his caste and can never regain it."\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} Gopal, Lallanji., \textit{op. cit.}, p.76
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Alberuni's India}, Vol. II, LXXI, p.163
Although the slaves in early medieval period had to lead a wretched life yet, the social thinkers of the preceding time as well as contemporary period made some provision for their protection. To protect slave girls from their lustful masters, Kautilya asked the king to punish such a master who caused abortion of the slave girl. The similar law was enforced during early medieval period as listed by Nāradaa who made hard provision of punishment for abductors of women slave. Agnipurāṇa imposes a punishment of 100 panas on a person who tries to destroy the foetus of a female slave. The same authority, going a step further ordains that even a master who wishes to take a female slave against her wishes is liable to be punished with ten panas. Yājañvalkaya also strictly forbid to anybody who wanted to outrage the modesty of a female slave without her permission. This was the one way of investing the slave with right against rape or arbitrary treatment in disregard of the injections on the subject. The Mānasollāsa observed, on the similar lines, that one who aimed at his good in this life and the next, should protect, food and nourish his salves (bhartya) and also bestow gifts and honors on them. Like wise Medhatithi explains Manu’s precept that an erring slave, wife or son should be beaten with a rope or split bamboo, as enjoining a method of correcting them and not as ordering an actual beating in every case. It is added that verbal chastisement should be applied to correct them, beating being resorted to only when the fault is serious.

49 Arthasashastra, III, 20
50 Naradasmrti, V, 25-36
51 Agnipurana, 258, 21-32
52 Yajnnvalkyasmrti, Vyavaharkand,291-98
53 Mnasollsa, 28, pp. 303-04
54 Medhatithi on Manusmrti, VIII, 299
Thus, a tendency among thinkers, to provide some social safeguards to the slaves may be witnessed, intended to improve social status of slaves from the Gupta period onwards.

The forgoing discussions thus established that they had to lead a wretched life. Rahulasankrtiyayana goes to the extent of suggesting that slaves in the period were treated as sub-human beings.\(^{55}\) But such a view arises from a lop-sided emphasis on the dark aspect of the picture. The slave was after all a part of household and it is easy to imagine that the constant association could not have created in the more humane owner some considerations. As it has been said earlier that the condition of a slave largely depended upon the nature of his master. Some times the master being pleased with the slave because of his some special work could promote him as the head of servants in the family.\(^{56}\) According to AjaymitraShastri\(^{57}\) the word \textit{dāsiparvardhī} used by Varahamihir indicates the rise of slaves in their social status. The \textit{Kayyana} and Nāradaa made provision of the payment of loans taken by the slaves for the maintenance of his family by their masters.\(^{58}\) The record of the names of five female slaves on \textit{Tilotha} image inscription\(^{59}\) who accompanied their master Pratapadhavala while he was going on a pilgrimage indicates towards the kind treatment received by the slaves by their master. The slaves constituted as an important section of the society. Being part of master’s family some of them were even assigned the jobs like

\(^{55}\) Gopal, Lallanji, \textit{op. cit.}, p.77

\(^{56}\) \textit{Marichchkatikam}, VIII , p.270

\(^{57}\) Shashtri, A. M., \textit{India As Seen in Vrihatsamhita}, p.313

\(^{58}\) Kane, P.V., \textit{History of Dharmashastras}, Vol.I, p.175

\(^{59}\) \textit{Epigraphia Indica}, XX , p. 249
“dhartis” (females for nurturing a new born baby in royal/ elite families). *Mahapuran* states, in the similar context, that queens only birthed the child and the rest of the responsibilities were beared by *dhātṛi* the recallation of the word *dhai maa* for them in *Harashcharit* placed such slave women on a better social status. It is also testified with the title conferred upon to Vicaksana a slave girl of the king as ‘*Goddess Saraswati* on earth’ as referred by Rajasekhara also indicates that slaves were not regarded as sub-human beings and thus allow saying that they enjoyed a satisfactory social status in the society. However, it should not be forgotten that only the masters having human and liberal values would have been dealing with such a dignified manner with their slaves. In general thinking they would have been dealt with a unanimous equal footing.

Bongard Levin and Vigasin seem correct when they observe on the basis of *Harshcharit* that all the members of Indian slave community were placed on the same social status, but B.N.S Yadav on the basis of the references of *Varahatjatak* makes a classification of the slaves into three social levels in descending order as *abhuapgam*, *karitdāsa* and *garbdāsa*. Bharuchi, a commentator on *Manusmrti* expressed similar views and declared that *garbdāsa* was complete subjugated man.

Thus what is significant to say that though slaves as a class were accursed, ill-treated and abhorred by the society during early medieval

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60 *Mahapurana*, 43/33
61 *Harshcharit*, IV Uchchhavas, p.65
62 A.P., *Prachin Bharat Mein Samajik Starikarana*, p. 169
63 Yadav, B.N.S., op.cit., 5, p.22
64 *Commentary of Bharuchi on Manusmrti*, 8/66
period, the better among them were not found wanting in the virtues practiced by the people of upper castes. It was most regrettable that although the more fortunate masters admired the virtues of slaves they were blessed with, they could do little to improve slave status, and their living conditions in the society of their times. The remark of Vicksana, a slave girl of high caliber and great intellectual attainment, that the jester by virtue of being a brahmana, though unlettered like an iron beam of gold-smith's balance was used for weighing precious stones, while she, though literate like an ordinary balance, was not employed for weighing even gold, was very apposite indeed. The inferior status assigned even to deserving slaves in relation to foolish people of high castes, is an instance of needless disabilities slaves were made to suffer. Slaves were not completely dependent upon the pity of their masters, they had some legal rights and they also had some social and political assurance, which is reflected by the genuine sympathy of social thinkers of early medieval India.

The aspect of the social status of slaves have always been a matter of consideration in different civilizations. For example, the slavery being an important part of Greek society was also considered necessary for the social superiority as stated by Plato. Aristotle also justified that the relations of slave and master worked as in a family the supremacy of a father over his children theoretically works and thus he puts slave as an equivalent to family member. It was further justified that the relations of master and slave required to be treated like body and soul and further more it is like the relations of a husband

65 Karpuramanaajri, I, p. 10
66 Barker, Sir Umest, The political Thought of Plato and Aristotle, pp. 359-73
67 Ibid.
and wife and a father and his sons. Barker refers some Atic slaves who enjoyed some important rights. They got some food and dress like other members of the family. Socially and legally they were at the same status like other free men and it was the duty of the state to protect their rights. But it seems that this model employed only on some special model of slavery. From the views of above thinkers it appears that the Greekan slaves had a better social status. The only difference between Indian concept and Greek concept was that the Indian thinkers expected a liberal attitude towards slaves but in Greek philosophy slavery was considered as natural process.

The social status of Roman slaves was connected with the historical development of the Roman civilization. Roman slavery in its primary stage did not differentiate between members of family and slaves as shown by W.L. Lanschep. Under Pteria Protesta system masters gave rights to slaves like their sons. Plutarch referring under this system says in reference of Kato that if the wife of Kato gives right to sucking of breast to his child from a slave girl than the child of slave girl can also suck the breast of wife of Kato. But later on this status changed along with historical developments and the slaves were converted in to the personal property of the masters. The static ideology also had expression of sympathy and human attitude towards

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slaves. Ciero also favored the rights of slaves.\footnote{Gratisyaski, P.S., \textit{A History of Political doctrines} (Hindi translation by Budha Parkash Bhatt, p.222)} In the views of Christian thinkers St. Augustien and Thomas Anquitest slavery was a result of sins done by a man and it was decided by the god that a slave could become free after he completed the punishment of his sins. So the Christians ideologist was not much in the favor of rights of slaves and they thought that cruelty gave them way of philosophical development.

Prophet Mohammad, the founder of Islam, had a liberal attitude towards slaves. In Quran he said 'A man who set free his slaves certainly escaped from hell.'\footnote{Yusuf Hussain, \textit{Indo- Muslim Polity (Turk-Afghan Period)}, p.1-47} Islam made a provision of hell for the man who misbehaved his slaves. Islam also asked the master to provide proper diet, dress and liberal treatment to slaves.\footnote{Ibid.} In the context of the manumission of the slaves Islam also come up with a very theory, but there was a difference between a Muslim and Non-Muslim slaves in Islam.\footnote{Wink, Andre, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.1-24} Along with a provision of liberal attitude towards slaves in Islam we find the increase in their number, their trade on international level and their appointment on important political posts as well. Iban-Abir-Rabi says that a master used to give periodical rest to his slaves and the care was also taken of parts of their body.\footnote{Sherwani, Harunkhan, \textit{Muslim Political Thought and Administration}, pp.39-40} Farabi also supports same view. Dhajjalo on the basis of the equality of man in the justice of \textit{Allah} favors the humanly treatment towards slaves.\footnote{Ibid.} He further made a provision for masters to
provide the same quality of food, cloth and drinks as the quality used by him. Moreover, he asked the slaves that they should always remind their masters about their duties towards slaves. It appears in the history of Islamic states that rulers had more confidence in the loyalty of their slaves than their sons and relatives. The Kuran even makes more liberal attitude while suggesting a master to give property to his slave while setting him free. From the above discussion it may be fairly said that slaves had a better social status in Islamic world and they were given human rights. Their social status appears better than those of living in other contemporary civilizations.

In Chinese civilization slaves were not only considered as important part of the family but also treated as property. The Chinese thinker Confucius viewed very early that as slavery was an important part of state in the same way slave was a part of family. Mo-Ti thinks that a master should care of his slave properly. The status of ‘lover slave’ was inferior to that of state slaves in china. Punishment was the base of Chinese concept of slavery and it appears to be natural law of slavery so the whole family was converted in to slavery due to the crime done by any member of the family.

So in most of the civilizations slavery was considered as an important institution of the state and it was supposed to be natural phenomenon, but in India slaves have never been so important for the

80 Ibid., p .62
81 Ibid, pp.118-19
82 Ibid.
83 The New Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol.XVI, p.650
84 Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol. V, p.650
85 Ibid.
state nor the society was completely dependent upon them. Thus the state of slaves in Indian society remained different from its counterpart viz other civilization, moreover, it also appears to be practiced as inferior than Islamic world.

**Economic Status:-**

The economic status of the slaves in early medieval India in some cases appears to be improved to some extent. Earlier, a slave legally had no right even on his own body along with other aspects. He was likely to be chattel as his master's oxen, buffalo, gold and silver garments, sandalwood, houses, treasures, etc.\(^6\) In the Buddhist period, slaves were hardly allowed to own property. But in Kautilayan period, certain concessions were granted to them in the same context. Kautilya while referring to similar viewpoint allowed that a slave, apart from serving his master was eligible to earn money in his spare time and that he was also legally allowed to be the sole heir to his father's property. However, if a slave left no heir, his property went to his master.\(^7\) B.N.S Yadav a noted historian dealing with early medieval period, has rightly made it more clear that in spite of different degree of servitude and the qualified property rights granted to a few type of slave, excessive dependence and property lessness had normally been deemed as the outstanding marks of the status of slavery in the *Mahābhārata* and *Dharamashastra* tradition from about the 2nd century B.C. to the 6th century A.D.\(^8\) It appears, thus, that only a few slaves were allowed property right while other's were deprived of such

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\(^6\) Jain, P.C., *op. cit.*, p.48

\(^7\) *Arthaśāstra*, 3.13

\(^8\) Yadav, B.N.S., *op.cit.*, pp.38-39
rights. It is significant to mention here that the right to property conceded to them by Kautilaya was withdrawn by Manu as he categorically ruled out that a wife, a son and a slave had no right to property of any kind. While going ahead, this smṛti even clearly ordained that whatever money they earned belonged to whom they belonged. The same smṛti further refers that slaves being entirely dependent on their master, should not be allowed to indulge their fancy and squander their wealth according to their will without the master’s sanctions. The above examination in this way concludes that in general the economic status of slaves was more or less same as it used to be except in some cases.

The law givers of the period under study generally opposed the property rights of the slaves as testified by the references of Vishnu, Katayayan, Brhashpati, Nāradaa and Matsayapurana who while apposing the property rights of the slaves gleaned that slave being himself a property of master, therefore, his property also belonged to his master. Matsayapurana while justifying the authority of the king over the state refers that it was due to his last deeds (karmas) and penance(tapa) of previous birth that a king got prosperous state and also enjoyed slaves. However, Katyayan while making some liberal statement allowed a slave to take debts for the welfare of his master’s family without the master’s consent, but the master had to repay the

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89 Manusmruti, VIII, 416
90 Vishnupurana, 28/44
91 Kttyyanasmruti, 724
92 Brhaspatismruti, 25/82-83
93 Naradasmruti, 5/41
94 Matasayapurana, 31/22
95 Ibid, 186/80
loan and not the slave.\textsuperscript{96} It is further clarified that though the slave could not own assets during his stay at his masters house, yet the money which he had obtained by selling himself belonged to him.\textsuperscript{97} Medhatithi while blocking all the possibilities for the slave to own property, intends to make it clear at least that a slave was merely fed and clothed.\textsuperscript{98} But it appears that the rules promulgated by the classical thinkers like Manu and Yajnavalkya were in practice. Commenting for instance on Manusmrti that a wife, a son and a slave had no right of property of any kind, Medhatithi argued else where that slave too, had proprietary rights over his own property.\textsuperscript{99} Yajnavalkya circumscribed the right of the son of a female slave kept by a šudrā to own property. But Mitāksharā seeking to minimize the rigour of earlier law, observed that a son begotten by a female slave should be entitled to a portion of property of the šudrā father if the latter would like it to be so. At the death of the father, the brothers should make the slave a partner to the extent of half of the share; if there were no brother, he might take the whole property provided there were no daughters and grandsons of the master surviving.\textsuperscript{100} Exactly the same view was expressed in the same context in the Agnipurāna.\textsuperscript{101} Nāradaa also agreed upon over the right of property to a slave like the sons of his master, who saved the life of his master.\textsuperscript{102} The

\textsuperscript{96} Katyayansmrti. 724
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Medhatithi on Manusmrti, IX, 143, p. 131
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid, VIII,416,p.878
\textsuperscript{100} Yajnavalkyasmrti, II, 133-34
\textsuperscript{101} Agnipurana, 25, 20-21, p. 374
\textsuperscript{102} Naradasmrti, 5/30
Avasyakacurni referred that after the death of master, his slave became the owner of his property.\textsuperscript{103}

So the discussion in the foregoing paragraphs helps to understand that the tradition of having property right by slaves during Mauryan period continued up to the period of study under review. The same viewpoint is also verified from inscriptions recovered from south India. For example, inscription from Belurtalluka\textsuperscript{104} clearly refers that if a man had no successors then his property and land could be attested to the child of his female slave\textsuperscript{105}. Another inscription of 1165 A.D. also corroborates similar evidence.\textsuperscript{106} Another inscription dated 1343 A.D. while speaking more clearly on the property rights of slaves gleans that women slaves and her sons will be given property like other members of the family.\textsuperscript{107}

Hence, the examination made on the property right of slaves allows saying that during early medieval India the slaves falling in one category do appear in very much pitiable economic condition while on the other hand there were slaves who while enjoying property as well as legal rights were leading a life in a better economic and social status.

**Manumission of Slaves**

Slavery was not considered as a natural phenomenon in ancient India like Greek and other civilizations. Due consideration was given to slaves and the classical thinkers made provision for their

\textsuperscript{103} Jain, J.C., *op.cit.*, p. 107
\textsuperscript{104} *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. V, p.110
\textsuperscript{105} *Ibid.*, p.488
\textsuperscript{106} *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXIX p. 142
\textsuperscript{107} *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI pp.49-50
manumission. In ancient India a slave could hope to become free only if he pleased his master by a complete devotion to him. Kautilaya allowed for the manumission of a purchased slave through payment of the equivalent sum of money for which he was purchased.\textsuperscript{108} Even persons reduced to slavery as war-prisoners could became free by doing some act of extraordinary velour. He also made a provision of punishment of such masters who even after getting his money back did not set a slave free.\textsuperscript{109} In the Buddhist literature also the provisions in regard to manumission of slaves are found. \textit{Dighanikaya} refered three conditions to comply with for manumission of slaves.\textsuperscript{110} In the \textit{Jataks} also the provision were referred to in this regard. Manu also favoured the \textit{manumission} of \textit{sudrā} slaves, even ,he was of the view that slavery was the natural \textit{karam} of a \textit{sudrā}.\textsuperscript{111}

The liberation from slavery was a tough job as in many cases it had became a hereditary phenomenon. However, during period of present study some circumstances and conditions in regard to manumission of slaves are witnessed. This improved their social status. According to Nāradaa, if a slave saved his master from danger he was freed from bondage.\textsuperscript{112} In another condition, if he was reduced to slavery during famine he could buy his freedom by offering a pair of oxen to his master.\textsuperscript{113} Someone enslaved for a specific period was-to be freed after the period was over; those who were captives in war, won through wager or those who opted voluntarily enslavement could

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Arthaśāstra}, 3.13
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Misra, Jai Shankar, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 209
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Manusmṛti}, 8/414
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Naradasmṛti}, V, 30
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Naradasmṛti}, 31
be freed if they gave substitutes having equivalent working capacity; those who were enslaved in exchange of maintenance were free when they ceased to receive help from their master and those who were enslaved because of being tempted by female slaves were freed as soon as they abandoned their female companions.\textsuperscript{114} Like Nārada, Katyayan also refers the similar condition, of manumission for a famine born slave. The effected one could buy freedom by giving one pair of oxen to his master.\textsuperscript{115} The slaves who were born in the house of their master, those who were purchased or received as gifts or in inheritance could only be set free on the mercy of their master.\textsuperscript{116} However, a self-sold slave could never be released from his bondage.\textsuperscript{117} Katyayan stated that a person who was already a slave could not offer himself as a slave to a new master.\textsuperscript{118} It is also stated that a man enslaved because of falling from the monastic order could never be freed.\textsuperscript{119} If a son was born of a master and a female slave, the master had to free the female slave and her progeny from slavery.\textsuperscript{120}

As the slavery had developed in a full fledged institution the thinkers came out with a set of formula not only for someone's enslavement but also with a procedure to free a slave. For example, Nārada prescribed a procedure of freeing a slave. It was ordained that a slave to be freed had to carry a jar filled with water on his

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{114} \textit{Naradasmrti}, V, 29-36
\item \textsuperscript{115} \textit{Katyayanasmrti}, 731
\item \textsuperscript{116} \textit{Naradasmrti}, V, 27-29
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid, V. 37
\item \textsuperscript{118} \textit{Katyayanasmrti}, 730
\item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid, 731
\item \textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 932
\end{itemize}
shoulder which the master had to lift and break. Then the master had to sprinkle water, flower corns on the head of the slave while he repeatedly proclaimed three times that he was “a free man” and thus the slave was declared free. After the completion the procedure the slave was finally dismissed with his face towards the east.121

Yajnavalkya’s provisions for manumission of slaves appears to be in tone with Nāradaa. According to him, 'a slave who was enslaved by force or sold by robbers should be released from bondage; one who saved his master’s life in danger should also be manumitted.’122 The same view was exactly put forward by Agnipuran (10-11 cent A.D.) which stated that a faithful and devoted slave, who had saved the life of his master should have his liberty, if forcibly carried away by robbers and again sold to him, even after his discharge was justified without a formal ransom.123

The provision of manumission of slaves given by the classical thinkers may also be corroborated with the semi-historical literary sources of the period under review. In Marchchhakatikam it is testified with a reference of a female slave who was freed from bondage after paying money. In another reference of the same play it is gleaned that Vasantsena said to Sharvlik that, “You have not at least to give enough money it to the master of Madnika and set her free”.124 The provision of manumission at the will of their masters appeared to be prevalent with some conditions. Vasantsena in

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121 Naradasmrti, V, 42-43
122 Ojha, Gori Shankar, Madhyakalin Bharatiya Sanskriti, p.49
123 Agnipuran, 257, 33, p. 375
124 Marchchhakatikam, 4/8
Marchchhakatikam says, 'I will set free all my slaves after receiving money but it is out of my control.'\textsuperscript{125} Why was she so helpless is not cleared in the play. In another reference of the same play it is said that a virtuous slave should be released from bondage.\textsuperscript{126} It was still a matter of assumption that how many slaves were supposed to be released from bondage, perhaps, only on the basis of their morality?

On the basis of the broadness as well as applicability of the rules of manumission as suggested by Nāradaa, B.N.S Yadav opines that many kind of the bhaktadāsa type of slaves might have gain freedom from slavery either as a matter of course or through formal manumission. It seems that still they did not enjoy the full freedom but continued to be bound to their masters as dependent workers (sharecroppers, agricultural labours etc.) along with retaining the same designation.\textsuperscript{127} However, his view certainly has some weight that slaves transformed into agricultural labourers caused decline in slavery. What is still objectionable so far as the finding of the same scholar, in same regard, is concerned that he places slaves and karamkars on same platform as a matter of socio-economic changes of early medieval period causing decline of slavery while on the other hand the slaves were still restricted to impure domestic works. It is interesting to add here that the statement of Nāradaa helps to understand such complication as his samrti in-listed the inevitable job the maximum fifteen types of slaves. Which was neither taken in to hand his predecessor nor ancestor thinkers.

\textsuperscript{125} Marchchhakatikam, 4/8
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Yadav, B.N.S., \textit{op. cit.}, p.39
The Kautilyan rule on the purchase of freedom by paying an appropriate sum of money was followed by Mahābhārata. It talks about some merchants who after making payment of a large sum of money to Devasmita, a chaste wife to random, four slaves were freed from bondage. Sometimes, the masters were moved by the importunate slaves desire for freedom and set them for liberty.

Besides, a tendency of not liberating the slaves among some masters is also witnessed during the period under review. Owing to such dissuading mentality the slave were deprived of the right of manumission which the law givers of ancient as well as of early medieval period had conceded to them. One of the documents in Lekhapaddhti lays down in the similar context, that the girl once sold as slave was bound to serve her master till her death. The use of the works svajivitantam, adyadinadra-bhyajanm, amaranatham and janmagrahaka to describe the situation then prevalent suggest that the master exercised their absolute rights over the slave and there was the least provision in the law of the age to allow a slave to redeem his freedom. What makes someone handicap in explaining the process of manumission of slaves clearly is the absence of epigraphic record in this regard? However, the provisions told in the literary sources of the period certainly indicated that a liberal social attitude was working for the manumission of the slaves.

To sum up it may be said that the socio-economic status of slaves during the period of present study was generally pitiable.

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128 Kathasaritasagara, XIII, 193 P.44
129 Paumacru, Vol.I, 10,1, p.168
130 Pupshpa Prasad, op. cit., p.268
Although the slaves had some legal rights and assurance of social security along with some property rights yet they did not enjoy the rights and privileges of free citizenship. A slave’s property belonged to his master, he could not take loans in his personal name, yet some thinkers allowed him to do so, his evidence was considered valid in suits but his offspring were addressed with contempt and he was subjected to various types of corporal punishments and insults. Since the slave was taken as equivalent to household objects, it is easy to imagine that his constant association in family could not but have created in a sense of more humane, consideration among owners. Actually their status largely depended upon the nature of their master. The involvement of some of the slaves in military and state affairs and there role in productive works decisively paved a way for their rise in socio-economic status.

The sudden increase in the number of slaves due to foreign invasions, slave trade at international level, their involvement in productive work and provision of socio-economic rights not only justified the continuity of this institution during early medieval period in one hand, it also reveals the second picture of the story which reminds of the concept of Finlay that dependence is associated with the fate of slaves. It can be undoubtedly said that both the factors be it improvement of the slaves or be it downfall in their status in general, go side by side in period under review. However, their status in no

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131 Manusmrti, 8.70
132 Karpurmanjri, 4, 174
133 Vikramankdevacharit, Vol. II, 9.87 p.113
134 Pushpa Parasad, op. cit., pp. 264-270
way was inferior to the status of slaves of their counter part civilizations.