Chapter XII

Gotras of Śūdras

As the Śrauta Sūtras are silent about the gotra affiliation of Śūdras, it is inferable that the Śūdras of the Vedic age are debarred from obtaining membership of the Aryan gotras. This may be due to their state of slavery and the fact that officiating priests would not be available to them. Being not entitled to perform sacrifices, they cannot adopt priestly gotras.

The original meaning of 'Śūdra' seems to be 'slave'. Sometimes, the words 'Śūdra' and 'Dāsa' display an identity of meaning. In the Brāhmaṇas, the son of a female slave is called 'the son of a Dāsi mother' (dāsyāḥ putrah) or 'the son of a Śūdra mother' (śūdra-putrah) or 'the son of an Asurī mother' (asurī-putrah). He is an object of social contempt.

Just as a female slave of Vedic society is designated as 'Dāsi' or 'Śūdra' or 'Asurī', so also a male slave has the probable designation 'Dāsa' or 'Śūdra'. A rich Vīś (Vaisya)

1 - Vide ŚNB 12. 3 and AB II. 3. 1; Kavaṣa is censured as a 'dāsyāḥ putrah'.
2 - Vide PB 14. 6. 6; Vatsa is reviled as a 'śūdra-putrah'.
3 - Vide JB III. 235; Trisóka is reproached as 'asurī-putrah'; he is the same as Vatsa Kāṇva, vide JB III. 198; thus, 'śūdra-putrah' and 'asurī-putrah' seem to convey the same meaning; a female slave is of probable non-Aryan origin and called 'Asurī'; she is also designated as 'Śūdra'; about the non-Aryan origin of Śūdras of the Vedic age, see p. 14, Some aspects of ancient Indian culture.
is regarded as 'one who is attended by a large number of male slaves' (vahu-dāsa-puruṣā); the word 'Dāsa' in this context denotes 'male slave'. The Śūdra is described as 'another man's slave' (anyasya preṣyaḥ) and 'one who may be killed according to the will of the lord' (yathākāma-vadhyah). Thus, the designation 'Dāsa' or 'Śūdra' in the sense of slave seems to denote the same person.

4 Manu speaks of the slavery (dāsya) of the Śūdra.

It is reasonable to suppose that the Śūdras as slaves cannot adopt an Aryan gotra affiliation, as officiating Brāhmanical priests are not available to them in the normal conditions of Vedic or post-Vedic society.

1 - Vide TB III. 8. 5.
2 - Vide AB VII. 5. 3.
3 - Ibid.
4 - Manu VIII. 413 - 415.
5 - See p. 55, The Hindu law of marriage and strīdhana; the Śūdra is not perhaps entitled to yajana like the other three castes, as Baudhāyana specifically mentions it as one of the functions of the three castes, but not of the Śūdra; see Baudh. Dh. S. I. 10. 18. 2-5; Āpastamva prohibits 'fruitful deeds' (sacrifices) for the Śūdras; vide Āp. Dh. S. I. 1. 1. 6 --- asūdrānām adustakarmanāṃ upāyam vedādhyayanam agnyādheyam phalavanti cha karmāṇi.
Kautilya mentions Sudras (slaves) of Aryan origin (aryaprāṇa). This shows that his age has witnessed the emergence of Sudras of Aryan birth whose eligibility for gotra affiliation may be guessed.

The denotation of the term 'Sudra' is gradually extended to all classes of artisans and even to agriculturists and the trading population. These larger sections of the people, brought under the denomination of Sudra, may have adopted gotra designations from their priests.

Another fact to be considered is that Aryanisation is made practicable by the extension of gotra affiliation to all classes of people who get a place in the Brāhmaṇical varṇa scheme. This is clearly discernible in the social development

1 - Vide Arthasastra III. 13.
2 - Vide Viṣṇu S. (UNS), 2. 5; also Yājñ. S. (UNS), I. 120; Parāśara S. (UNS), II. 15.
3 - Viṣṇu condemns the Śudrayājin Brāhmaṇas; vide Viṣṇu S. (UNS), 82. 14; his vituperation bears witness to the fact that Brāhmaṇas of his epoch have begun to officiate at the religious ceremonies of the Sudras who are engaged in all kinds of crafts.
of Bengal, where the various strata of the people have got
affiliation to the Sudra caste as well as to Aryan gotras.

At present, almost all caste-groups of Bengal are found
to be affiliated to gotras and designated as Sudra or placed
below the Sudra caste. The Kasyapa gotra of various sub-castes
is perhaps due to the traditional rule that persons without
gotra names are to be placed into the Kasyapa gotra.

The gotra appellations of many Bengali castes, denomina-
ted as Sudras, are inclusive of Rishi names as well as non-Rishi
names of local origin. Kasyapa and Alamyna are found to be
the most popular gotras among castes other than Vaidya and
Kasyastha. Alamyna seems to be the corrupt form of Alamva or
Alamvayana or Alambhayana of Baudhaya's list.

1 - The Brahmavaivartapurana regards some caste-groups as
sat-Sudra, vide Brahmakhanda, X. 17 - 18; see also pp. 92-94,
Bangali Hindura Varnabheda, Nihar Ranjan Ray.
2 - Raghunandana has excluded the Sudras from the restrictions,
connected with gotra exogamy and thus shows that he is conver-
sant with the gotras of Sudras; see p. 572, Astavimsatitattvani,
op. cit.
3 - Vide p. 95, Samskara-mayukha, vol. I, op. cit.
4 - See pp. 248-253, Kasyastha Purana; also pp. 77-78, 244-248,
Samvandha-nirnaya, op. cit.
5,6 - Vide Br. Up. VI. 5. 2; the Upanisadic metronymics
"Alamvayani-putra" and "Alamvi-putra" are formed of the gotra
names of Alamvayana and Alamva.
7 - Baudh VIII. 45.
The Nava-sāyakas (nine arrows) or Nava-sākhas (nine branches), described as 'nine clean Sudra castes' by Risley, are usually affiliated to the Kāsyapa or Ālāmyāna gotra. Among caste-groups, ranked below Śūdras, viz., Hādis, Doms, Vāgdis etc., the most common gotras are Kāsyapa and Ālāmyāna. The Kāpālikas affiliate themselves to one or the other of these two gotras.

The Parāśāra Dāsas, forming a section of Māhiṣyas, may have obtained their caste designation from the gotra of this name (Parāśāra). Some members of this sub-caste are affiliated to the Kāsyapa gotra.

1 - The Vallāla Caritam mentions the Nava-sāyakas as Gopa (milk-man), Māli (garland-maker), Tāmvūli (dealer in betel-leaves), Kāmsāra (dealer in brass vessels), Tantrī (weaver), Sāṅkhika (dealer in ornaments made of conch-shell), Kulāla (potter), Karmakāra (blacksmith), Nāpita (barber); see Uttarakhandam, p. 123, sl. 11.

2 - See p. 119, The people of India, Sir Herbert Risley.

3 - The Vāgdis form a fishing or cultivating caste; see p. 276, A statistical account of Bengal, vol. VI, W.W. Hunter.

4 - The Kāpālikas are placed among the lowest castes by Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa, see pp. 95-96, Bāngāli Hindura Varnabheda.

5 - See pp. 591-592, ch. XV, The history of Bengal, vol. I; a section of Brāhmaṇas, known as Parāśāras, may have obtained their designation from the gotra name 'Parāśāra'; see p. 256, Yasōhara-Kulnāra Itiḥāsa, pt. I, Satish Chandra Mitra.