CHAPTER III

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN GUILD ORGANISATION

The antiquity of ancient Indian guilds is difficult to determine. The term Cāpa or Ganeśh appearing in an Upanishadic passage has been taken by some scholars to indicate the existence of a fairly developed corporate organisation of the Vaiśyas in the later Vedic times. Such an interpretation seems to be somewhat far-fetched. The expression may at best refer to the Vaiśyas as a class of people engaged in wealth-producing activities, distinct from the two higher classes, the Dālāmanas and the Kṣatriyas. It does not however reflect on their corporate organisational character, nor afford any positive ground for assertion to that effect in the Vedic age. Of course the presumption of the growth of the nucleus of a loose organisational league of the working craftsmen or traders of the vaiśya order can not be brushed aside altogether.

Corporations of different professional workers as alluded to in the Dharmasūtra of Gautama is the earliest reference. It is further indicated that they formulated definite rules and regulations for their own guidance which received recognition as valid law even before the Court. But the picture of the structural organisation is totally absent in the Sūtras.
In the age of Buddha there are some factors viz.
(1) localisation of industries
(ii) emergence of the leadership of Jetthakas
(iii) the heredity of occupations and the formation of autonomous laws, which contributed not only to the development of industrial set-up but also highlighted the picture of industrial relation.

It appears from the early Buddhist literature that the industrial craftsmen during this period were in a position to stand on their own legs and set-up organised units in particular areas. Facilities for marketing their wares and for procurement of raw materials essential for production must have weighed with them in choosing sites for localisation of particular industries.

As for example we can mention Dantakāra Vīthī, Rajaka Vīthī, Odanikagha Vīthī, Narabodchakī gāmo, Kāmmā gāmo, Veisasnamāyā Vīthi, Tantavatatthānam. The detailed discussion regarding localisation will reflect industrial advancement.

There is a reference to a weavers' village almost adjacent to the city of Benaras in a Jātaka. The fine texture and superfine quality of Banaras textile are clearly indicated by the expression Kasikāni Vatthāni. Ivory carving was localised within the town in order to attract the more affluent consumers who were local residents as well as those who visited the holy city on a pilgrimage.

An area within the city appears to have been marked out for
ivory-carvers (Dantakāra-vīthī), where they had their work-
shop and show-rooms for sale. Similarly there were smiths' 
village (Kamāragāma). The Sukhī Jātaka mentions the loca-
tion of two such villages lying side by side. There were 
almost a thousand huts (satassa kutika kamārgāmo). The 
number of families engaged in Smithy reflect the volume of 
production as well as the scope of its distribution amongst 
consumers in Banaras and also in other areas accessible by 
land and river routes. The settlement of pillars in the 
c outskirts (Pārānasā nagarassa dvārāgāma kumbhakārakule) 
of Banaras is mentioned in the Kumbhayāra Jātaka. The loca-
 lisation of carpenters and their brisk business a re described 
in the Alīna-citta Jātaka which does not mention the exact 
location of the Vaddhakigāmo but it appears from the said 
Jātaka that it was not far from Banaras. Rather it is 
tempting to identify it with the carpenters' village of a 
thousand villages outside the city limits of Banaras (Kāsi-
ratthe paccantagāmo babu vaddhakī vasanti) mentioned in the 
Samudde venīja Jātaka. The figure one thousand (kulasabasa 
Nīvāsa mahāvaddhakigāmo) may be a conventional expression 
but it no doubt reflects on the concentration of the crafts-
men working in wood.

The Arthaśāstra of Kautilya refers to a number of 
manufactured commodities bearing the hall-mark of their
localisation. The *Arthasastra* mentions that workers in wool, yarn, bamboo, leather, armours, weapons and shields and Sudras should live in the Western quarter. Smiths and workers in precious stones (lohamani karavah) and Brāhmanas should live in the northern quarter. In the several corners guilds and corporations of workmen shall reside (vastuchidamulācānaśreniaprabahenikāyā).

This localisation of industry helped the buyers to locate easily the articles they intended to buy. Secondly this helped the workers to be acquainted with the techniques of their craft and subsequently led to the specialisation. Thirdly it developed in them the spirit of co-operation, and lastly it brings the employers/employees closer. Obviously a relation grew up between the employer and the employee.

Next we come to second factor, viz., role of the head of the guild or *jetthaka*. Leadership was the vital factor in the structural set-up of the organisation. Each industrial organisation had its own *jetthaka* and therefore the nature of the work of every *jetthaka* differed from that of the other. As for example we can cite Kamnakāra, *Jetthakas*, Nālakāra, *Jetthakas*, Vaddhaki. *Jetthakas* and various others. From this it is clear that the nature of work and responsibility of
Jetthakes differed from craft to craft, according to circumstances. Each Jetthaka was well conversant with the technique and technicalities of the craft. Otherwise it would not have been possible for him to determine the policy and organisation of production of respective commodities.

It will not be unreasonable to say that the Jetthaka as the head of the guild was independent for all practical purposes. It is not possible to determine whether his post was elective or hereditary. But Fick opined that his office was hereditary and honorary and he further expressed his opinion that his appointment was based on skilled rather than age. It may be possible otherwise he would not exercise his control on his subordinates.

Regarding the qualifications to the Jetthakes we have no clear-cut outline in the Jatakas. We can only surmise that the Jetthaka must have profound knowledge and wide experience as well as efficiency and skill in his profession.

Administrative control of the Jetthaka is also highlighted in some of the Jatakas. The Suci-Jataka mentions the principal smith of a group of one thousand families of smiths. In the Samuddavaniya Jataka, it is mentioned that there was a village of carpenters near Benares consisting of one thousand families and governed by two Jetthakes, each
having five hundred families under him. Even adjudication of disputes among the members and award of punishments were within the power of the leaders of which we find reference in the Jātakas. It is laid down in Vinaya Pitaka that Jīttabhaka settled disputes among their members.

Herodity of occupation is mentioned several times in the Jātakas. The son was apprenticed to the craft of his father from his early youth and thus acquired the technical know-how as well as the trade secrets of his father and forefathers. This process of inheritance of technical knowledge thus continued from generation to generation.

Regarding guild-laws we find the earliest reference in the Gautama Dharma Sūtra. It is stated that "cultivators, traders, herdsmen, money-lenders and artisans have the right to follow their own laws" (kārākā vanika paśupālakusidikārabākā svā svā varga).

The Pāli literature clearly shows that the traditional laws and customs of the guilds alluded to by Gautama were in vogue in the age of (Buddha). In the Kulavaka Jātaka it is mentioned that the headman of the guild is authorised to impose fines. A similar allusion regarding the judicial power of a headman is furnished in the Ubbatobhāja Jātaka.
These instances clearly illustrate that the Jetthaka followed some laws for settling disputes and imposing fine for negligence of work. Thus it is observed that "own rules" alluded to in the Sutras, might have continued in the age of Buddha. But it is sure that there was some codification of laws; otherwise on what basis the Jetthakas inflicted punishment and settled disputes? They definitely did not give any arbitrary decisions on the basis of whim. But unfortunately, the actual nature of codification of laws is not highlighted in the early Buddhist canonical literature.

It is clear that in the age of Buddha there was a remarkable growth of arts, crafts and industries. The Jataka frequently mention eighteen corporate bodies ²⁹ (attharañi). Eighteen might have been conventional number to imply multiplicity of such units. R.C. Majumdar ³⁰ listed as many as 31 and that too has not been considered as exhaustive.

Some light of course can be thrown on the evolution of their institution in subsequent periods. Though the Arthasastra favours, to a great extent, royal control on private enterprise, the guilds continued to exist side by side with the state concerns. A study of the Arthasastra shows that economic interests of the ruler were of supreme importance and concern. The importance of guilds was
naturally relegated in the Arthasastra which maintains suspicious stance against guilds. To control the activities of guild Kautilya recommends the following measures:

(i) registration of corporations
(ii) laying down of checks and balances on the activities of artisans and craftsmen
(iii) the appointments of special tribunals to administer them.

(i) Registration — It was the duty of the Superintendents of accounts to maintain the registers of the "amount of increase or decrease in the use of the (various) materials, expenses, excess, surcharge, mixing, place, wages and labourers in connection with factories" \(^{31}\) (karmāntañān evaśpravaya vṛddhi keśaya vyayaśprāvanavyājī yogāśna vētana viṣṭā pramaṇaḥ). \(^{32}\) The main purpose of this registration is to keep a check on the earnings and profits of the corporations.

(ii) To control the activities of guild Kautilya recommends the creation of a Board presided over by three Ādityas of Prādestāraka. Artisans "shall carry out the work with the place, time and (nature of the work) stipulated, without stipulation as to place or time if the nature of the work can be pointed out". \(^{33}\) (nirdistadēśakālakāryyam ca karmā
For exceeding the time limit, (there shall be) a reduction in the wage by one-quarter and double that as fine. For carrying out a work otherwise than as ordered (there shall be) loss of wage and double that as fine. In case of dispute with regard to work and wage, experts mediated and the government most probably enforced their decision on the parties. This may be compared with the present conciliatory body which settles all the industrial disputes. The position of artisans was safeguarded by a series of regulations. By this passage it is understood that the artisans had to abide by the certain rules and regulations and in case of violation of these rules the artisans were fined. Thus it is clear that the guild played an important role for the industrial developments but checks were imposed on them by the state. There is not much scope of activities for such autonomous corporations in the Arthashastra. That is why the state regulated, supervised and directed all major crafts and industries. The offices of the Purṇādhyakṣa or the controller of weights and measures, the superintendent of mining and metallurgy, the controller
of mints, precious metals and liquors encroached upon the autonomy of the guilds.

The picture of guild in subsequent periods is altogether different. From 2nd century B.C. onwards widespread state control on economy in general and industries in particular, became almost a rarity. The guilds consequently regained considerable prominence. The peculiarity regarding the function of guild is that the guilds started to act almost as a banker. It proves that the guilds by virtue of their activities became able to create confidence among the public. Secondly the public gained by depositing money in guilds because they used to get interest out of their deposits. The evidence of such activities has been reflected in the contemporary inscriptions. An inscription in a cave at Nasik records donation (dated the year 42 - 120 A.D.) of 3000 kārśāpanas by Usavadatta, son-in-law of the Saka chief Mahapana. The gift was intended for the benefits of the Buddhist monk and the entire sum was invested in the weaver's guilds dwelling at Govardhan (i.e. Nasik). The rates of interest were 12% per annum and 9% per annum. It is clearly stated that the principal will be kept intact and their interest only will be enjoyed. Another inscription at Nasik records the similar type of investment.
of 1000 Kārṣāpanas to the guilds of Kulārikas (Vyaau āgatānā gataśa srenīṣu vataḥ kulārika śrenyā haste kārṣāpana sahasra 1000). The record belongs to A.D. 333. The same inscription records the investment to Odayattīkas (workers fabricating hydraulic engines (odayattīka śrenyā sahasrāṇi dve) and to tilapisaka (nyāḥ śatāni paṁca tilapisaka śrenī ete ca kārṣāpana chaṭāleṣa). The inscription at Junnar records the investment of the income of two fields with the guild at Konāchikā for planting karṇa and banyan trees (konāchikā yām uvakāttādhuḥkha sahaṇa yadād-dikā Kavānja Kula Nivataḥsāni). Führer and Burgess translated it as follows — "By Adhutan, the Saka, an upāsaka of the guild of the Konāchikās (a gift of) 20 Nivartanas in Vadalika, near the Karṇa tree. Another inscription at Junnar records the investment of money with the guild of bamboo-workers (vasakāra seni) and the guild of braziers (kāsakareseni).

Indore Copper plate inscription of Skandagupta dated the year 146 (i.e. 465 A.D.) throws interesting light on the similar type of function of guild. The Mandasar stone inscription of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvarman reveal that the industrial guilds were highly organised.

Thus it is clear from these inscriptions that the
guilds received deposits from the people and paid regular interest. Without confidence of guilds the people would not have deposited such amount with the guilds. In this connection it will not be unreasonable to infer that the guilds utilised this deposited money for the development of industries.

To materialise these activities of guild, the administrative machinery is outlined by Brhaspati, Nārada and Vājañavalhya in the following manner:

(i) The first was Kosā which refers to the ordeal by sacred libation described in detail by Vājañavalhya and Nārada. According to it the person to be examined was made to drink three mouthfuls of water in which the image of deity whom he holds sacred, has been bathed and worshipped. If he should meet any calamity within a week or fortnight of the ordeal, it should be regarded as proof of his guilt. Otherwise he was considered as being worthy of becoming a member of the guild:

Devaśpras�ដेनmabhyarcya tatpunokodakaharet
samsāraya pūhayetasmajalantu pramāntrayam
Avāk caturdādāntāhovasya no rājadevīkām
vyasanam jāyate shoram sa śuddha avitāsāmsaye.

(ii) The second was Lekhakriya which refers to the written
agreements. The new member of the guilds should observe this written agreement. The word ‘Lekhakriya’ is mentioned in Brhaspati:

kosene lekhakriyayac madhyasthairvaparasparan
visvasām prathamam kṛṭvā kuryah karyasyanataram.

(iii) The third was the Madhyastha, which probably refers to an arbitrator who could attest to his faithfulness and good behaviour. This type of recommendation is now a day insisted on all the application. Besides these members, there were some executive officers (kāryacintakāh). These officers should possess the following qualities — (I) They should be versed in the lore of the Vedas, pure in monetary affairs and should be advisers of the associations in regard to their transactions —

Dbarmynah sucayo'ldvha bhavovuh kāryacintakah
kartavyam vacanām teśām samhahitavādīnām. 50

(II) Honest persons acquainted with the Vedas, and with duty, able, self-controlled, sprung from noble families and skilled in every business shall be appointed as head of an association:

sucayo devadharmajño dakṣadantah kulodbhavāh
sarvatārasyapravīnaḥca kartavyāstvā mahattamaḥ. 51

At the same the persons who are not eligible for holding these posts, are also mentioned in Brhaspati: "Enemies,

"
dissolute, bashful indolent, timid, avaricious, over-aged or very young persons must not be chosen as officers of affair;.

\[ \text{videsino vyasaninah salinalamamirava} \]

\[ \text{Luvdhâtiyuddhabaläsca na kāryah kāryacintakāh.} \]

The number of these advisory officers of the corporations was sometimes two at times three or five. The members of guilds had to follow advice of these officers:

\[ \text{Dvo trayah pānca vā kārjāh samūhabitavādīnaḥ} \]
\[ \text{kartavyam vacanāḥ t'eśān śramaśrerogānadiḥ.} \]

It is not unlikely that the kāryacintākas looked after, among other things, proper observance of rules and regulations of guilds. These executive officers seems to have exercised considerable power over their individual members. In case of violation of rules and regulations of guilds or negligence of his work, punishment was ordained. The guild officers could deal with wrong-doers with punishment ranging from mild censure, and rebuke to expulsion. In administering just punishment to wrong-doers these officers were free from the interference of the state. Nārada specifically states that the King should maintain the usages of the guilds. Whatever be their laws, their duties, the rules regarding their attendance and the particular mode of livelihood prescribed for them, that the king should approve of.
But the interference of the king into the affairs of the guild was not unknown. The king interfered in the affairs of the guild only on certain occasions. Narada states that the independence of the association was fully recognised by the State and the security of the individual from the injustice of the guild officials was duly safeguarded.

All these injunctions of Narada and Bhāspati show that a great importance was given to guild life not only by the common people but also by the state. It appears that the economic life of the period formed its best expression through the organisation of the guilds.
NOTES

1. Pradārāṇyak-Upanisad: "vānyatāni devajātani" ganasa ākhyāyante
4. Ibid., Vol. IV, 81.
6. Ibid., Vol. II, 18; IV. 159 and 207.
8. Ibid., Vol. VI, 485.
10. Ibid., Vol. I, 356;...
11. Ibid., Vol. IV, 352; Vol. V, 377; Vol. VI, 47.
12. Ibid., Vol. III, 376.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
21. E.B. Cowell, op. cit., p. 170; Śūci Jātaka
23. Uppa Jātaka (II, 9).
24. Vinaya Pīṭaka, IV, 236.
27. Kuśāya Jātaka.
30. R.C. Mazumdar, Corporate Life in Ancient India, pp. 15-17.
32. Kautilya Arthāṣāstra, 2, 7, 2.
34. Kautilya Arthāṣāstra, 4, 1, 4.
36. Kautilya Arthāṣāstra, 4, 1, 5.
38. Kautilya Arthāṣāstra, 4, 1, 7.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, p. 36.
44. R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
    Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, p. 18.
46. Buddha Prakash, *op. cit.*, p. 19; R.K. Mukherjee,
    *Local Government in Ancient India*, p. 84.
47. Yājñavalkya Smṛti, II, 112-113; Narada, I, 520-31;
    SBE, XXXIII, pp. 116-117.
49. Ibid.
52. Ibid., XVII, 9; SBE, XXXIII, p. 547.
54. Brhaspati, XVII, 10; SBE, Vol. XXXIII, p. 547.
55. Ibid., XVII, 14, 15.
56. Ibid., XVII, 17.
57. Ibid., XVII, 18; Narada, X. 2. 3. 6.