

CHAPTER VI

SHUDRAS AND DASAS

IT has been shown how untenable the Western theory is. The only part of the theory that remains to be considered is : who are the Shudras? Mr. A. C. Das¹ says :

“The Dasas and the Dasyus were either savages or non-Vedic Aryan tribes. Those of them that were captured in war were probably made slaves and formed the Shudra caste.”

Mr. Kane,² another Vedic scholar and upholder of the Western theory, holds the view that :

“The word ‘Dasa’ in later literature means a ‘serf or a slave’. It follows that the Dasa tribes that we see opposed to the Aryas in the Rig Veda were gradually vanquished and were then made to serve the Aryas. In the Manusmriti (VIII, 413) the Shudra is said to have been created by God for service (*dasya*) of the Brahmana. We find in the Tai. Samhita, the Tai. Brahmana and other Brahmana works that the Shudra occupied the same position that he does in the Smritis. Therefore it is reasonable to infer that the *Dasas* or *Dasyus* conquered by the Aryans were gradually transformed into the Shudras.”

According to this view the Shudras are the same as Dasas and Dasyus and further the Shudras were the non-Aryan original inhabitants of India and were in a primitive and a savage state of civilization. It is these propositions which we must now proceed to examine.

To begin with the first proposition. It is not one proposition but is really two propositions rolled in one. One is that the Dasas and Dasyus are one and the same people. The other is that they and the Shudras are one and the same people.

That the *Dasas* and *Dasyus* are one and the same people is a proposition of doubtful validity. Such references to them as are to be found in the Rig Veda are not decisive. In some places the terms *Dasa* and *Dasyu* are used in a way as though there was no

1 *Rig Vidic Culture*, p. 133.

2 *Dharma Shastra*, II (I). P. 33.

difference between the two. Shambara, Shushna, Vritra and Pipru are described both as Dasas and Dasyus. Both Dasas and Dasyus are described as the enemies of Indra and Devas and specially the Ashvins. The cities of both Dasas as well as of the Dasyus are described to have been levelled down by Indra and Devas. The defeat of both Dasas as well as Dasyus is described as producing the same effect, namely, release of water and the emergence of light. In describing the release of Dabhiti both are referred to, at one place he is said to have been released from the Dasas and at another place he, is said to have been released from the Dasyus.

While these references suggest that the Dasas and Dasyus were the same, there are other references which suggest that they were different. This is clear from the fact that the Dasas are referred to separately in 54 places and Dasyus are referred to separately in 78 places. Why should there be so many separate references if they did not form two distinct entities? The probability is that they refer to two different communities.

About the second proposition that the Shudras are the same as the Dasas and Dasyus, one can definitely say that it is without any foundation whatsoever.

To make out a case that the Shudras are the same as the Dasas and Dasyus an attempt is made to treat the word Shudra as a derivative word. The word is said to be derived from *Shuc* (sorrow) and *dru* (overcome) and means one overcome by sorrow. In this connection reliance is placed on the story told in the Vedanta Sutra (i.3.34) of *Janasruti* who is said to have been overcome by sorrow on hearing the contemptuous talk of the flamingoes about himself.¹ The same derivation is given by the Vishnu Purana.²

How far are these statements well-founded? To say that Shudra is not a proper name but is a derivative word is too silly for words. The Brahmanic writers excel everybody in the art of inventing false etymologies. There is no word for which they will not design some sort of etymology. Speaking of the different etymologies of the word Upanishad given by Brahmanic writers, Prof. Max Muller³ said :

“These explanations seem so wilfully perverse that it is difficult to understand the unanimity of native scholars. We ought to take into account, however, that very general tendency among half-educated people, to acquiesce in any

1 Referred to in Kane's *Dharma Shastra*, II (I), p. 155.

2 Muir, Vol. 1. p. 97.

3 *Upanishads*, Introduction, pp. lxxix-lxxxi.

etymology which accounts for the most prevalent meaning of a word. The Aranyakas abound in such etymologies, which probably were never intended as real etymologies, in our sense of the word, but simply as plays on words, helping to account somehow for their meaning.”

This warning equally well applies to the attempt of the Vedanta Sutra and of the Vayu Purana to make the word Shudra a derivative word suggesting that it meant a ‘sorrowful people’ and we must therefore reject it as being absurd and senseless.

We have, however, direct evidence in support of the proposition that Shudra is a proper name of a tribe or a clan and is not a derivative word as is sought to be made out.

Various pieces of evidence can be adduced in favour of this proposition. The historians of Alexander’s invasion of India have described a number of republics as free, independent and autonomous whom Alexander encountered. These are, no doubt, formed of different tribes and were known by the name borne by those tribes. Among these is mentioned a people called *Sodari*. They were a fairly important tribe, being one of those which fought Alexander though it suffered a defeat at his hands. Lassen identified them with the ancient *Shudras*. Patanjali at 1.2.3 of his *Mahabhasya* mentions Shudras and associates them with the Abhiras. The *Mahabharata* in Chapter XXXII of the Sabha parvan speaks of the republic of the Shudras-. The Vishnu Purana as well as the Markandeya Purana and the Brahma Purana refer to the Shudras as a separate tribe among many other tribes and fix their location in the Western part of the country above the Vindhyas.¹

II

Let us now turn to the second proposition and examine the various elements of which it is composed. There are two elements in the proposition. First is : Are the words Dasyus and Dasas used in the racial sense indicative of their being non-Aryan tribes? The second element is that assuming they were, is there anything to indicate that they were the native tribes of India? Unless and until these two questions are answered in the affirmative, there is no possibility of identifying the Dasyus and Dasas with the Shudras.

About the Dasyus, there is no evidence to show that the term is used in a racial sense indicative of a non-Aryan people. On the other

¹ See References in Tribes in Ancient India by B. C. Law, p. 350

hand, there is positive evidence in support of the conclusion that it was used to denote persons who did not observe the Aryan form of religion. In this connection, reference may be made to Verse 23 of Adhyaya 65 of the Shantiparvan of the Mahabharata. It reads as follows :

दृश्यन्ते मानुषे लीके सर्ववर्णेषु दस्यवः।
लिंगान्तरे वर्तमाना आश्रमेषुचतुर्ष्वपि ॥

The verse says : “In all the Varnas and in all the Ashramas, one finds the existence of Dasyus.”

What is the origin of the word Dasyu it is difficult to say. But a suggestion¹ has been put forth that it was the word of abuse used by the Indo-Aryans to the Indo-Iranians. There is nothing unnatural or far-fetched in this suggestion. That the two had come into conflict is borne out by history. It is therefore quite possible for the Indo-Aryans to have coined such a contemptuous name for their enemies. If this is true, then Dasyus cannot be regarded as the natives of India.

Regarding the Dasas, the question is whether there is any connection between them and the Azhi-Dahaka of the Zend Avesta. The name Azhi-Dahaka is a compound name which consists of two parts. *Azhi* means serpent, dragon and *Dahaka* comes from root *Dah* meaning ‘to sting, to do harm’. Thus *Azhi-Dahaka* meaning a stinging dragon. It is a proper name of a person commonly known in Indo-Iranian traditions as *Zohak*. He is mentioned in Yasht literature many a time. He is credited to have lived in Babylon where he had built a palace. He is also credited to have built a great observatory in Babylon. This mighty devil Azhi-Dahaka was created by the Arch-demon Angra Mainyu in order to destroy the kingdom of holiness of the corporeal world. This Azhi-Dahaka went to war against Yima the renowned king of the Indo-Iranians and not only vanquished him, but killed him in battle.

Yima is always spoken of in Avesta as *Kshaeta* meaning shining or ruling. Root *Kshi* has two meanings, to shine or to rule. There is another epithet commonly used for Yima and that is *Hvanthwa* meaning ‘possessing good flock’. This Avesta Yima Khshaita became in later Persian language *Jamshid*. According to traditions, king Jamshid son of Vivanghvant was the great hero of the Iranian history, the founder of a great Persian civilization. He was a king of the Peshdiadyan dynasty. In Yasna 9 and 5 (Koema Yashi) it is stated

1 I am sorry, I have lost the reference.

that 'Vivanshas' was the first man who unceremoniously pounded Hasma (Sk. Sasma) in this corporeal world and the boon he received was: to him was born a son nobly who was Yima the shining and of good flock, who was most glorious amongst the living ones, who was like a glowing sun amongst mankind, during whose kingship he made noblemen and cattle (animals) immortal, made waters and trees undrying. He possessed undiminishing (ever fresh) divine glory. During the kingship of famous Yima there was neither extreme cold nor extreme heat, there was no old age, death and envy.

Is Dahaka of the Zenda Aveshta the same as Dasa of the Rig Veda? If similarity in name can be relied upon as evidence, then obviously it points to their being the names of one and the same person. Dasa in Sanskrit can easily be Daha in Aveshta since *sa* in the former is natural conversion to *ha* in the latter. If this were the only evidence the suggestion that Dasa of the Rig Veda and Dahaka of the Zenda Avesta are the same could have been no better than a conjecture. But there is other and more cogent evidence which leaves no doubt about their identity. In Yasna Ha 9 (which is the same as Horn Yashe) Azhi-Dahaka is spoken of as 'three mouthed, three-headed and six-eyed'. What is striking is that this physical description of Dahaka in Aveshta is exactly similar to the description of Dasa in Rig Veda (x.99.6) where he is also described as having three heads and six eyes¹ If the suggestion that the Dasa in the Rig Veda is the same as Dahaka in the Aveshta, is accepted, then obviously the Dasas were not native tribes aboriginal to India.

III

Were they savages? The Dasas and Dasyus were not a primitive people. They were as civilized as the Aryans and in fact more powerful than the Aryans. Such is the testimony of the Rig Veda. It is well epitomized by Mr. Iyengar when he says that :

"The Dasyus lived in cities (R.V., i.53.8; i.103.3) and under kings the names of many of whom are mentioned. They possessed 'accumulated wealth' (R.V., viii.40.6) in the form of cows, horses and chariots (R.V., ii.15.4) which though kept in 'hundred-gated cities' (R.V., x.99.3), Indra seized and gave away to his worshippers, the Aryas (R.V., i.176.4). The Dasyus were wealthy (R.V., i.33.4) and owned property 'in the plains and on the hills' (R.V., x.69.6). They were 'adorned with their array of gold and jewels' (R.V., i.33.8). They owned many

1 For the identification of Dasa with Dahaka I am indebted to the *Maharashtra Dnyana Kosha*, Vol. III. p. 53.

castles (R.V., i.33.13; viii.17.14). The Dasyu demons and the Arya gods alike lived in gold, silver and iron castles (SS.S., vi.23; A.V., v.28.9; R.V., ii.20.8). Indra overthrew for his worshipper, Divodasa, frequently mentioned in the hymns, a 'hundred stone castles' (R.V., iv.30.20) of the Dasyus. Agni, worshipped by the Arya, gleaming in behalf of him, tore and burnt the cities of the fireless Dasyus. (R.V., vii.5.3). Brihaspati broke the stone prisons in which they kept the cattle raided from the Aryas (R.V., iv.67.3). The Dasyus owned chariots and used them in war like the Aryas and had the same weapons as the Aryas (R.V., viii.24.27; iii.30.5; ii.15.4)"

That the Dasas and Dasyus were the same as the Shudras is a pure figment of imagination. It is only a wild guess. It is tolerated because persons who make it are respectable scholars. So far as evidence is concerned, there is no particle of it, which can be cited in support of it. As has been said before, the word Dasa occurs in the Rig Veda 54 times and Dasyu 78 times. The Dasas and the Dasyus are sometimes spoken together. The word Shudra occurs only once and that too in a context in which the Dasas and Dasyus have no place. In the light of these considerations, it is difficult to say how anyone in his senses can say that Shudras are the same as the Dasas and Dasyus. Another fact which is to be noted is that the names Dasas and Dasyus completely disappear from the later Vedic literature. It means they were completely absorbed by the Vedic Aryans. But it is quite different with the Shudras. The early Vedic literature is very silent about them. But the later Vedic literature is full of them. This shows that the Shudras were different from the Dasas and Dasyus.

IV

Were the Shudras non-Aryans? Mr. Kane says:¹

"A clear line of demarcation was kept between the Arya and the Shudra in the times of the Brahmana works and even in the Dharmasutras. The Tandya Brahmana speaks of a mock fight: 'the Shudra and Arya fight on a hide; out of the two they so arrange that the Arya colour becomes the victor.' The Ap. Dh. S. (I, i.3.40-41) says that a *brahmachari* if he cannot himself eat all the food he has brought by begging, may keep it near an Arya (for his use) or he may give it to a Shudra who is a Dasa (of his teacher). Similarly, Gautama x.69 used the word 'anarya' for Shudra."

On the question of the line of demarcation; between the Shudras and Aryans, the matter needs to be carefully examined.

¹ Kane, *Dharma Shastra*, II (I), p. 35.

The strength of the argument that the Shudras were non-Aryans is to be found in the following statements :

A.V., iv.20.4. — “The thousand-eyed god shall put this plant into my right hand; with that do I see everyone, the Shudra as well as the Arya.”

Kathaka Samhita, xxxiv.5— “The Shudra and the Arya quarrel about the skin. The gods and the demons quarrelled about the sun; the gods won it (the sun). (By this act of quarrelling with Shudras) the Arya makes the Arya Varna win, makes himself successful. The Arya shall be inside the altar, the Shudra outside the altar. The skin shall be white, circular—the form of the sun.”

Vajasaneyi Samhita, xxiii.30-31—“When a deer eats the barley in the field, the (owner of the field) is not pleased with the nourished animal; when a Shudra woman has an Arya as a lover, (the husband) does not long for (the consequent) prosperity.”

When a deer eats barley, the (owner of the field) does not approve of the nourished animal. When a Shudra is the lover of an Arya woman, the (husband) does not consent to the prosperity.

These stanzas, which speak of the Shudra and the Arya as separate and opposed form the foundation of the theory that the Shudras are non-Aryans. To say the least, such a conclusion would be a very hasty one. Two considerations must be borne in mind before any conclusion is drawn from the aforementioned statements. In the first place, it must be borne in mind that according to what has been said before and according to the evidence of the Rig Veda, there are two categories of Aryans, the Vedic and the non-Vedic. Given this fact, it would be quite easy for an Arya of one class to speak of an Arya of another class, as though the two were separate and opposed. Interpreted in this way, the above statements, in which Shudras are set against the Aryans, do not mean that they were not Aryas. They were Aryas of a different sect or class.

That this is possible can be seen from the following statements in the sacred literature of the Hindus:

(1) A.V., xix.32.8.— “Make me, Oh, Darbha (grass), dear to the Brahmin, and the Rajanya (i.e., Kshatriya), to the Shudra and to the Arya and to him whom we love and to everyone who is able to see.”

(2) A.V., xix.62.1.— “Make me beloved among the gods, make me beloved among the princes; make me dear to everyone who sees, to the Shudra and to the Arya”

(3) *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, xviii.48.— “(Oh, Agni), give to us lustre among Brahmins, give us lustre among kings; lustre among Vaishyas and among Shudras; give to me lustre added to lustre.”

(4) *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, xx.17.— “Whatever sin we have committed in the village, in the forest, in the assembly, with our senses, against the Shudra or against the Arya, whatever sin one of us (two, the sacrificer and his wife) has

committed in the matter of his duty (towards the other),— of that sin, you are the destroyer.”

(5) *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, xviii.48.—“As I speak these auspicious words to the people, to the Brahmin and the Rajanya, to the Shudra and to the Arya and to my own enemy, may I be dear to the gods and to the giver of *dakshinas* here in this world. May this desire of mine be granted. May that (enemy of mine) be subjected to me.”

What do these statements show? The first one makes a distinction between the Brahmins and the Aryas. Can it be said that the Brahmins were non-Aryans? The other statements pray for the love and goodwill of the Shudras. If the Shudra was a primitive aboriginal non-Aryan, is such a prayer conceivable? The statements on which reliance is placed do not prove that the Shudras were non-Aryans.

That the Dharma Sutras call the Shudra Anarya and the statements in the *Vajasaneyi Samhita* pouring scorn on the Shudra woman, do not mean anything. There are two arguments against accepting the testimony of the Dharma Sutra. In the first place, as will be shown later, the Dharma Sutras and other treatises are books written by the enemies of the Shudra. As such, they have no evidentiary value. It is also doubtful whether such anti-Shudra statements are mere imprecations or statements of facts as they existed. They seem to contradict facts reported in other works.

The Dharma Sutras say that a Shudra is not entitled to the Upanayana ceremony and the wearing of the sacred thread. But in *Samskara Ganapati* there is an express provision declaring the Shudra to be eligible for Upanayana.¹

The Dharma Sutras say that a Shudra has no right to study the Vedas. But the *Chhandogya Upanishad* (iv:1-2) relates the story of one Janasruti to whom Veda Vidya was taught by the preceptor Raikva. This Janasruti was a Shudra. What is more is that Kavasha Ailusha,² was a Shudra. He was a Rishi and the author of several hymns of the Tenth Book of the Rig Veda.

The Dharma Sutras say that a Shudra has no right to perform Vedic ceremonies and sacrifices. But Jaimini, the author of the *Purva Mimamsa*³ mentions an ancient teacher by name Badari— whose work is lost— as an exponent of the contrary view that even *Shudras* could perform Vedic sacrifices. The *Bharadvaja Srauta Sutra* (v.28) admits that there exists another school of thought which holds that

1 Referred to by Max Muller, in *Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (1860). p. 207.

2 *Ibid*, p. 58.

3 *Adhyaya* 6, *Pada* I, *Sutra* 27.

a Shudra can consecrate the three sacred fires necessary for the performance of a Vedic sacrifice. Similarly, the commentator of the Katyayana Srauta Sutra (1.4.16) admits that there are certain Vedic texts which lead to the inference that the Shudra was eligible to perform Vedic rites.

The Dharma Sutras say that a Shudra is not entitled to the sacred drink of Soma. But in the story of the Ashvins, there is definite evidence that the Shudra had a right to the divine drink of Soma. The Ashvins, as the story goes, once happened to behold Sukanya when she had just bathed and when her person was bare. She was a young girl married to a Rishi by name Chyavana who at the time of marriage was so old as to be dying almost any day. The Ashvins were captivated by the beauty of Sukanya and said "Accept one of us for your husband. It behoveth thee not to spend thy youth fruitlessly." She refused, saying "I am devoted to my husband." They again spoke to her and this time proposed a bargain: "We two are the celestial physicians of note. We will make thy husband young and graceful. Do thou then select one of us as thy husband." She went to her husband and communicated to him the terms of the bargain. Chyavana said to Sukanya "Do thou so"; and the bargain was carried out and Chyavana was made a young man by the Ashvins. Subsequently, a question arose whether the Ashvins were entitled to Soma, which was the drink of the Gods. Indra objected saying that the Ashvins were Shudras and therefore not entitled to Soma. Chyavana, who had received perpetual youth from the Ashvins, set aside the contention and compelled Indra to give them Soma.¹

There is another reason why the evidence of the Dharma Sutras that the Shudras are non-Aryans should not be accepted. In the first place, it is contrary to the view taken by Manu. In the decision of the issue whether the Shudra was an Aryan or a non-Aryan, the following verses from Manu require to be carefully considered :

"If a female of the caste sprung from a Brahmana and a Shudra female, bear (children) to one of the highest castes, the inferior (tribe) attains the highest caste within the seventh generation."

"(Thus) a Shudra attains the rank of a Brahmana and (in a similar manner) a Brahmana sinks to the level of a Shudra; but know that it is the same with the offspring of a Kshatriya or of a Vaishya."

"If (a doubt) should arise, with whom the pre-eminence (is, whether) with him whom an Aryan by chance begot on a non-Aryan female, or (with the son) of

1 V. Fausboll, *Indian Mythology*, pp. 128-134.

a Brahmana woman by a non-Aryan;"

The decision is as follows : 'He who was begotten by an Aryan on a non-Aryan female, may become (like to) an Aryan by his virtues; he whom an Aryan (mother) bore to a non Aryan father (is and remains) unlike to an Aryan.'"¹

Verse 64 from Manu is also to be found in Gautama Dharma Sutra (uv.22). There seems to be some controversy as to the correct interpretation of this verse. In summing up the different interpretations, Buhler says :

"According to Medh., Gov., Kull., and Ragh., the meaning is that, if the daughter of a Brahmana and of a Shudra female and her descendants all marry Brahmanas, the offspring of the sixth female descendant of the original couple will be a Brahmana. While this explanation agrees with Haradatta's comment on the parallel passage of Gautama, Nar. and Nan. take the verse very differently. They say that if a Parasava, the son of a Brahmana and of a Shudra female, marries a most excellent Parasava female, who possesses a good moral character and other virtues, and if his descendants do the same, the child born in the sixth generation will be a Brahmana. Nandana quotes in support of his view, Baudhayana i.16.13-14 (left out in my translation of the Sacred Books of the East, ii, p.197)... '(offspring) begotten by a Nishada on a Nishadi, removes within five generations the Shudrahood; one may initiate him (the fifth descendant); one may sacrifice for the sixth.' This passage of Baudhayana the reading of which is supported by a new MS from Madras clearly shows that Baudhayana allowed the male offspring of Brahmanas and Shudra females to be raised to the level of Aryans. It is also not impossible that the meaning of Manu's verse may be the same, and that the translation should be, 'if the offspring of a Brahmana and of a Shudra female begets children with a most excellent (male of the Brahmana caste or female of the Parasava tribe), the inferior (tribe) attains the highest caste in the seventh generation.'"

Whatever be the interpretation, the fact remains that in the seventh generation² a Shudra under certain circumstances could become a Brahmin. Such a conception would have been impossible if the Shudra was not an Aryan.

That the Shudra is a non-Aryan is contrary to the view taken by the school of Arthashastra. As a representative of that school, the opinion of Kautilya on that question is of great value. In laying down the law of slavery, Kautilya says:³

The selling or mortgaging by kinsmen of the life of a Shudra who is not a born slave, and has not attained majority, but is Arya in birth shall be punished

1 Chapter X, verses 64-67.

2 The rule which requires that for establishing his nobility a man must be able to trace his six uninterrupted degrees of unsullied lineage of not merely free-born, but full-born, appears to be a universal rule in ancient times.—See W. E. Hearn, *The Aryan Household*, Chapter VIII.

3 Book HI, Chapter 13.

with a fine of 12 panas.

Deceiving a slave of his money or depriving him of the privileges he can exercise as an Arya (*Aryabhava*) shall be punished with half the fine (levied for enslaving the life of an Arya).

Failure to set a slave at liberty on the receipt of a required amount of ransom shall be punished with a fine of 12 panas; putting a slave under confinement for no reason (*samrodhaschakaranat*) shall likewise be punished.

The offspring of a man who has sold himself off as a slave shall be an Arya. A slave shall be entitled not only to what he has earned himself without prejudice to his master's work but also to the inheritance he has received from his father.

Here is Kautilya, who calls the Shudra an Aryan in the most emphatic and express terms possible.

V

Coming to the question of Shudras having been made slaves, it is nonsense, if not mendacious. It is founded on two assumptions. First is that the Dasas are described as slaves in the Rig Veda. The second is that the Dasas are the same as Shudras.

It is true that the word Dasa is used in the Rig Veda in the sense of slave or servant. But the word in this sense occurs in only 5 places and no more. But even if it did occur more than five times, would it prove that the Shudras were made slaves? Unless and until it is proved that the two were the same people, the suggestion is absurd. It is contrary to known facts.

Shudras participated in the coronation of kings. In the post-vedic or the period of the Brahmanas, the coronation of a king was in reality an offer of sovereignty by the people to the king. This was done by the representatives of the people called Ratnis who played a very important part in the investiture of the king. The Ratnis were so-called because they held the Ratna (jewel), which was a symbol of sovereignty. The king received his sovereignty only when the Ratnis handed over to him the jewel of sovereignty, and on receiving his sovereignty the king went to the house of each of the Ratnis and made an offering to him. It is a significant fact that one of the Ratnis was always a Shudra.¹

Nilakantha, the author of *Nitimayukha*, describes the coronation ceremony of a later time. According to him, the four chief ministers, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, consecrated the new king.

1 On this point see Jayasswal, *Hindu Polity* (1943), pp. 200-201.

Then the leaders of each Varna and of the castes lower still, consecrated him with holy water. Then followed acclamation by the twice-born.¹

That the Shudras were invited to be present at the coronation of the king along with Brahmins is evidenced by the description of the coronation of Yudhishtira, the eldest brother of the Pandavas, which is given in the Mahabharata.²

Shudras were members of the two political assemblies of ancient times, namely, the Janapada and Paura and as a member of these the Shudra was entitled to special respect even from a Brahmin.³

This was so even according to the Manusmriti (vi.61) as well as to the Vishnu Smriti (xxi.64). Otherwise there is no meaning in Manu saying that a Brahmin should not live in a country where the king is a Shudra. That means Shudras were kings.

In the Shanti Parvan of the Mahabharata,⁴ Bhishma in his lessons on Politics to Yudhishtira says :

“I shall, however, tell thee what kinds of ministers should be appointed by thee. Four Brahmins learned in the Vedas, possessed of a sense of dignity, belonging to the *Snataka* order, and of pure behaviour, and eight Kshatriyas, all of whom should be possessed of physical strength and capable of wielding weapons, and one and twenty Vaishyas, all of whom should be possessed of wealth, and three Shudras, everyone of whom should be humble and of pure conduct and devoted to his daily duties, and one man of the Suta caste, possessed of a knowledge of the Puranas and the eight cardinal virtues should be thy ministers.”

This proves that the Shudras were ministers and that they were almost equal to the Brahmins in number.⁵

The Shudras were not poor and lowly. They were rich. This fact is testified by the Maitrayani Samhita (iv.2.7.10) and the Panchavimsa Brahmana (vi.1.11).⁶

There are two other aspects to this question. What significance can there be to the enslavement of the Shudras, assuming it was a fact? There would be some significance if the Aryans did not know slavery or were not prepared to turn the Aryans into slaves. But the fact is that the Aryans knew slavery and permitted the Aryans to be made slaves. This is clear from Rig Veda, (vii.86.7; viii. 19.36 and viii.56.3).

1 See Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity* (1943), p. 223.

2 *Mahabharata*, Sabha Parvan, Chapter XXXIII, Verses 41-42.

3 See Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, p. 248.

4 Roy's Translation, Vol. II, p. 197

5 Bhishma believed in communal representation.

6 Referred to in the Vedic Index, Vol. II, p. 390.

That being so, why should they particularly want to make slaves of the Shudras? What is more important is why should they make different laws for the Shudra slaves?

In short, the Western theory does not help us to answer our questions, who were the Shudras and how did they become the fourth Varna?

••