



**International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)**

*A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal*

ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)

ISJN: A4372-3142 (Online) ISJN: A4372-3143 (Print)

Volume-VII, Issue-VI, November 2021, Page No. 60-67

Published by Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>

DOI: 10.29032/ijhsss.v7.i6.2021.60-67

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## **The Transition of the Shudra nation with the Evolution and Expansion of the Caste System**

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### **Abstract**

*Caste is one of the most well-known and famous of the innate qualities, action, environment and circumstances that govern man. With birth, the caste of the human being is also fixed. In general, the overall life of a person depends on the extent to which he/she is born.*

*Before discussing caste, we need to know what is Caste? The word 'Caste' literally means 'color'. That is to say, since the word caste is used in the sense of our body color, according to the caste division, according to Hindu scriptures, there are also references to four types of our body color. Such as, white, red, yellow and black. The Brahmins are white, the Kshatriyas are red, the Vaishyas are yellow and the Shudras are black. But on the same subject, Lord Krishna says in the Srimadbhagavadgita, the division of human beings into these four castes takes place according to their natural and basic Sattva, Rajah and Tamah- these three kinds of qualities and their respective actions. But without giving importance to this issue, caste has taken an inhuman form by some restrictions or rules.*

*Casteism has caused and is still causing as much misery as it is congenital and hereditary. Therefore, those who are the best in religion, deeds, education, initiation, conduct, virtue and character, regardless of their caste or nationality, should be given the best offerings or dignity.*

**Keywords: Caste, Shrimadbhagavadgita, Quality, Society, Transition.**

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In all spheres of modern society, technological advances in all fields are observed. Man is now moving beyond his limitations in many respects toward perfection. Among the innate qualities, actions, environment and circumstances that control man in every way, caste is a very familiar subject. The caste of human being is fixed with birth. Man's overall life depends on the caste he was born with. The caste of a person depends on the caste of his lineage, although the word 'Caste' is used in a broad sense.

The word 'Caste' basically means color, which is the English synonym for 'Color'. It is very important to know the literal meaning of the word caste first in the discussion on caste

division. The word 'Caste' literally means skin color. Therefore, according to this literal meaning, i.e. skin color, people are divided into four classes, which was also prevalent in ancient India. These four types of skin color are white, purple, yellow and black. According to these four types of castes, in ancient times there were four divisions among the Aryans in the Rk Vedic age. They are-

1. The white Aryans were Brahmins
2. The purple Aryans were Kshatriyas
3. The yellow Aryans were Vaishyas and
4. The black Aryans were Shudras.

I think this section was created by some of the most powerful and influential people of that era to establish their own prestige.

We can understand what is meant by proper caste division through proper study of Srimadbhagavadgita. Lord Krishna says-

*चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः।  
तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्तारमव्ययम् ॥*

That is, here Lord Krishna says to Arjuna in the context of the advice of Jnana Yoga, according to the category of merit and action, I have created the four castes of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Even though I am the creator of these four castes, you will know me as the preposition and the infinitive<sup>2</sup>. From the literal meaning of this verse we may think that, where Lord Krishna himself has created inequality through caste division, some opportunist people in the society will abuse the issue to establish their prestige. But if we explain the significance of the verse in question, we will see that the God-given caste system was really justified.

The three qualities of nature are Sattva, Rajah and Tamah. The world is created as a result of the inequality of these three qualities. This is clearly discussed in Samkhya philosophy. According to Samkhya philosophy, nature is in the equilibrium of these three qualities of Sattva, Rajah and Tamah. This nature is unconscious but inactive. That is, both nature and man cannot create the process of creation individually. The world resides in nature in an unspoken way before creation. The process of creation is completed by the connection between nature and man by the variation of the three qualities of nature<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore nowhere in the process of creation are these three qualities seen equally. As a result of the inequality of these three qualities, the effect of which quality is more visible and which effect is less among all human being. Due to inequality, four castes are observed in the human race in the society and according to their respective natures, many mental qualities are developed in their character. Such as,

1. Sattva is main in Brahmin.
2. Sattva mixed with main Rajah is Kshatriya.
3. Tamah mixed with main Rajah is Vaishya.
4. Rajah mixed with main Tamah is Shudra.

One thing must be said about this, due to the predominance of Sattva, the qualities of Shama, Dama etc. are seen in Brahmana. Due to the predominance of Rajaguna, the qualities of valour, semen etc. are seen in Kshatriya. Due to the predominance of Tamah-mixed Rajaguna in Vaishya, there is an instinct of labour, tolerance and earning money among them. The inertia, dependency and tendency to serve are also seen in the Shudra, which is the result of the predominance of the Raja-mixed Tamah quality. That is, Lord Krishna wanted to say that, even if one is born into a Brahmin dynasty and does not possess Sattva, he/she cannot be considered as a true Brahmin. On the other hand, if a person is entitled to Sattva even after being born in a Shudra dynasty, then it would be prudent to consider him a Brahmin.

Yet most of us human beings cannot come up with this kind of liberal mentality in our age of modern technology and science. In this regard, it is said that parents and spouses themselves do not always show generosity in the search for spouses when it comes to online communication. They mostly look for their own kind. But the racial untouchability that was prevalent in the Middle Ages and still exists in the far-flung countryside can be eradicated through racial segregation and colourless marriages. Also, when it comes to grooming, most of the parents show that they should be fair-skinned and have a narrow-minded attitude. The word 'Society' means halls or mass<sup>4</sup>. Who is talking about these 'halls' or 'mass' for the proper living of the society? We need to know that. If we observe very closely, we will see that the lower castes, that is, those whom we call Shudras, are these or the masses. Some of these Shudras are again considered as the lower form of the social form of the body. We don't even think about it once, if we weaken these Shudras as the lower part of the social body through contempt, neglect, humiliation etc. Then in the end the whole body will become crippled. But many of the lower castes or Shudras, according to their qualities, deeds, character and religion, are the upper part of the social body. Although it is too late in this regard, we have been able to introduce a much improved mentality in the modern age. In the field of education, like in ancient times, there are no barriers. In the case of untouchability, many of us have been able to improve ourselves in many cases without a few exceptions. Moreover, if a person like Vashishtha, Byasa, Shuka, Kanada, Navaji, Ruidasa, Haridasa etc. had to be engaged in Shudra work, the huge amount of mental waste and spiritual waste would have caused much more social damage<sup>5</sup>.

This article discusses who is our real Brahmin or real Shudra is and where he came from?- if we try to understand the answer to this question from a philosophical point of view, then we will see in the Brihadaranyakopanishad what sage Yajnavalkya said to his wise wife Gargi- *यो वा एतदक्षरं गार्गी विदित्वास्माल्लोकात् प्रैति स ब्राह्मणः*<sup>6</sup> / That is, O Gargi, all those who go to the afterlife without knowing that characteristics of Soul, are Stingy, Slave or Shudras. The one who goes to the afterlife knowing Supreme Brahma is the real Brahmana. Besides, this types of selfless Brahmin also become a Shudra.

Attempts to determine the etymological meaning of the word 'Shudra' are first seen in the book Vedantasutra by Vadarayana. The word 'Sudra' in the Vedantasutras is divided into two parts. Such as, the word 'शुक्' means 'Mourning' and 'द्रु' means 'running'<sup>7</sup>.

In the commentary of Shankaracharya on the interpretation of the word 'Shudra', the word 'Shudra' cannot be understood in any other way than by merely explaining the meaning of its form<sup>8</sup>. 'शुच्' or 'शुक्'+ 'र्'. Thus the grammarian Panini has determined the etymology of the word 'Shudra'<sup>9</sup>. Also in the Brahmanical tradition of the Puranas, the word 'Shudra' is associated with the metal 'शुच्', which means to be satisfied. Thus it is stated in the Vamana Purana, *द्रवन्तश्च परिपर्यासु ये रताः; निस्तेजसो अल्पवीर्याश्च शूद्रास्तानब्रवीत् तु सः*<sup>10</sup> / That is, those who were grieving and running away, engaged in ministry, those who were dull and weak were called Shudras.

The position of Shudras in East Bengal in present day Bangladesh was much higher in numerical terms. According to the census of 1931 AD, the number of Shudras in Faridpur, Bangladesh was four millions twenty seven thousand six hundred ninety eight. At that time the number of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya in Faridpur was 55443, 94591 and 5516 respectively. That is, if we calculate, we can see that the number of these three upper castes is about one-third of the Shudras<sup>11</sup>.

The census of 1931 shows how large the number of untouchable nations was in Bangladesh. I gave the number of almost all the castes from high to low except for those nations which have very few numbers. From this, the importance of eliminating untouchability in Bangladesh will be understood and the weight centre of caste will be available in some places<sup>12</sup>.

There was no tendency or manifestation of caste in the time of the Buddha. At that time there were only two castes in the Yavanese country, the Cambodian country, now known as Nepal, and in other western districts, namely Aryan and Dasa. Although the practice of apartheid was not widespread in ancient times, it began to increase after the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. which later turned into folklore or custom. The social organization of the whole of South India was made up of two groups, peasants and landowners. The dynasty originated from the owners of this land. In South India, Brahmins were highly respected in the society due to the influence of Aryan culture. So the prestige of Brahmin priests was more in the society. Below them were the peasants. The agricultural workers of the south were called Naga. They were again divided into classes like prisoner, hunter etc. This profession-based caste system still survives in India today as a remnant of the caste system practiced in the Vedic period<sup>13</sup>.

In the context of this discussion on caste system, the article would be incomplete without mentioning some of the existing untouchable classes known as Dalits in India. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra are these four castes but unannounced one more caste exists

in our society. Although this fifth caste is caused by the upper caste and influential people of the society, yet this caste is called Dalit. The way in which these Dalit people are being exploited, oppressed and humiliated even in modern times is really a matter of shame for our educated society. It is still seen somewhere that the water of a well, which is being drunk by the upper caste people of the society, is forbidden for the lower caste or Dalit class people of that society, because those lower caste people are untouchable. At the end of the day, after a lot of hard work, some of the wages that are not enough for their days work and the rest of the food of the upper caste people are taken away.

The issue of educating lower caste people is also bound by various restrictions. The upper castes also raised various objections to the literacy of these Shudras. Even the upper caste people have objections to the Sanskrit teaching of the Shudras. According to the majority of the upper caste community, Sanskrit is the language of the Gods. So lower caste people if want to gain knowledge of this Gods language, it will be his/her sin. The reason for all this, I think is that, if the lower caste of the society are educated, the chances of the upper castes to humiliate them will be less and the influence will be less. Yet in spite of all these restrictions, most of the lower castes have gradually but surely been able to educate and taste themselves. They have even shown considerable interest in learning Sanskrit. In this context, a notable Dalit Marathi woman is Kumud Paore. She obtained her M.A. in English and Sanskrit through various hurdles and later joined a college as a professor of Sanskrit<sup>14</sup>. This shows that the caste system is expanding in the modern age.

In south India, as in the Pallava society, there were a large number of Brahmins as well as merchants, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, tanners, weavers, textile merchants, dancers, barbers, etc. Although the Shudras did not have the right to Vedic knowledge at that time, they did have the right to perform mythological rituals like the Vaishyas. In addition, some Shudras were promoted to the rank of commander. Some of them had the status of regional kings. The people of Shudra community like this merchant, goldsmith of the society lived on the outskirts of the city. However, there were untouchables or undeclared fifth caste or Shudra of hari, dom, sweeper, chandal etc. living outside the village. However, this class of people was not only known as Shudra. Reviewing history, we see that these lower class people were called slaves. The people of this slave class were trafficked along with their oppression and neglect. Sometimes they would fight with wild animals and get down, which is extremely inhuman. The western nation is being emulated all over the world for the advancement of their science and civilization, but in ancient times they were equally involved in slavery and the oppression of lower castes. The brutality of this cruelty can be seen more or less in Ramayana. Ramayana author Valmiki Muni, being a great man, has replaced Shamvukavadha by Rama in the epic. Because Shamvuka was a Shudra, so he is a sinner.

This Shamvukavadha story is repeated in the Raghuvamsha epic written by Kalidasa-

*तपस्यानधिकारित्वात् प्रजानां तमघावहम्।  
शीर्षच्छेदं परिच्छिद्य नियन्ता शस्त्रमाददे॥*

स तद्वक्त्रं हिमक्लिष्टकिञ्जल्कमिव पङ्कजम्।  
ज्योतिष्कणाहतश्मश्रु कण्ठनालादपातयत्<sup>15</sup> ॥

In other works, Rama, the controller of all, then decided in his mind, this person is a Shudra. So lack of right to austerities has led to premature death of the people. So it has to be beheaded. With this kind of decision he took up arms and all the ashes of Shudra were burnt by the spark of fire. So when pollen of lotus was caught in the snow, his face was like lotus. Rama smashed that body as if it had fallen from the throat<sup>16</sup>.

On the other hand, in the eight century, Bhavabhuti gave a high status to Shamvuka in the second act of the Uttararamacharita drama-

यत्रानन्दाश्च मोदाश्च यत्र पुण्याश्च संपदः।  
वैराजा नाम ते लोकास्तैजसाः सन्तु ते शिवाः<sup>17</sup> ॥

That is to say, Rama says to Shamvuka, enjoy the benefits of intense austerities. Through this statement of Bhavabhuti, we can clearly understand his protest against the inferiority of Valmiki and society from Dharmashastra. Vanabhata also introduces a much more liberal mentality in his poem Kadamvari, while king Shudraka describes the chandals daughter who came to his meeting. King Shudraka says that, she is like the enchantment of Vishnu, the disguise of taking nectar from the demons; she is like a moving puppet made of indigo, wearing her blue conch, crimson veil, as if the blood of the afternoon has come to the forest of blue lotus. .... her body colour is bright in the effulgence of the gems of anklets as if the fire itself is embracing her to correct her caste. Like Lakshmi, she also has a lotus in her hand. She is as beautiful as painting, as beautiful as sleep<sup>18</sup>. Here Vanabhata compares chandal's daughter with Gods like Vishnu, Lakshmi, Katyayani, Bhavani, Yamuna, Agni etc. So despite the fact that the chandal's daughter was of lower caste, the poet Vanabhata was able to give a proper answer against the caste system of the time by awarding her a high degree of honor.

Therefore, the social arrangement of knowledge in society is very important for the full development of human innate qualities. If people of Shudra caste are always treated unequally, then they will not develop any qualities except inferiority complex. If a clean man turns his face away from a dirty unclean man and refuses to do anything with him or her, the unclean man will never have the desire to be clean. In other words, if the society has to be strengthened, disciplined, then this four-caste system and untouchability must be eradicated. Society must be established on the basis of one of these two principles-caste system was strict, but now the strict rules have been relaxed due to the generosity of the peoples point of view and the convenience of the system. As a result, people of four castes will be able to move forward in the world development almost equally.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the real Brahmanism and Shudraism have not been guided by divine and high ideals, but only by being born and hereditary. Although this disaster has decreased a lot compared to the past. So I think those who excel in virtue,

character and religion are worthy of the true Brahmanical term and those who excel in religious rites, education- initiation, conduct-judgment, virtue-character, regardless of their caste, they are best in offerings, blessings and humanity. Full rights should be provided to them.

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