

# INSTITUTION OF THE CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA

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**The Institute of Indian Society, like Honey Bee is very difficult to point out the system of Caste**

The purpose of this article is put up short account of the formation and institution of the caste system in India. It is manifestly a subject of considerable difficulty, and I am not aware that it has received that fullness of treatment which it deserves. I must, therefore, be pardoned for taking the liberty of speaking indulgence during the discussion of this most important topic. In my attempt to write what I must consider at best a conjectural essay on the history and institution of the caste system in India, I shall be obliged to dwell incidentally on many other topics that are more or less connected with the growth of a system that has to a considerable extent repelled all aggressive measures for so many centuries. Neither the Mohammedan conquest nor the civilizing influence of British legislation has been able to create an effective breach in its ranks, or to penetrate the solidarity of its composition. The history of Brahmanism being necessarily connected with the growth and maintenance of the caste system in India, I must, in a rapid way, sketch out before you the origin and development of Brahmanism, as an introduction to the subject I have undertaken to discuss.

The Hindu religion, before it had settled itself into Brahmanism, was preceded by two stages or periods of development; viz., the Vedic and the Aryan period, which, for want of better expressions, I shall denominate respectively Vedism and Aryaism, as distinct from and precedent to the more modern form of Brahmanism.

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The state of religion during the Vedic period was pure elemental worship, accompanied by its retinue of sacrifices and invocations of a more primitive form and character. They had sacrificial fires over which oblations of clarified butter were poured, and the fermented juice of the Soma plant was offered to the deities that were invoked on the occasion. In spirit and in substance it was thoroughly Homeric. The worship used to take place in the dwelling of the worshipper, in a chamber consecrated to that purpose. There is no mention of temples nor of idols; the worshipper does not seem to have taken any part in this ceremony of worship; there was a goodly array of priests, and animal victims were offered on particular occasions. The blessings prayed for were mostly of a temporal character; though there are indications of an indistinct hope of a future life in the Vedas. The immortality of the gods was recognized, and its attainment by human beings by the exercise of piety and virtue. Protection against evil spirits was a constant object of prayer with the Hindus. The sacrificial fire formed the principal ceremony, and the vivid imagination of the worshippers lent to it the embodiment and the attributes of a personality. Fire was personified into a divinity, and was exalted to the position of a mediator between the gods and the human supplicant. The idea of a universal soul seems to be traceable here and there, the "Maha-Atma," as it is called.

The primitive Hindus were not a nomadic race as has been frequently supposed; arts and civilization were cultivated by them to a considerable extent, towns and villages growing up here and there; and the occupations of the people were divided between maritime and warlike pursuits, in which they were led by their prophets, priests, and kings or tribal chiefs. The rishis, or the prophets and rhapsodists, amongst the Hindus, were considered saintly guides, and their prayers were courted by the offering of wine, and cattle, and chariots, and other costly gifts; and their favour and alliance by marriage. And it frequently happened that the rishis were forced to become polygamists on particular occasions—unable to resist the solicitations of powerful kings, or the attractions and the prodigality of multiplied beauties. There existed in those primitive times a division into classes, but not strictly into castes; intermarriages constantly took place between the different classes. The Brahman was then the designation of one out of seven kinds of officiating priests: the word Kshetriya occurs once and that only to denote the military dependant of a king; and Vaishya in its rudimentary form, is applied to the community at large without distinction of rank or condition. Shudras are not alluded to till a later period, and the slaves are called Dasyas.

There existed then a marked division into two classes:—on the one side are the Aryas, or the fair complexioned, the honourable of the earth; and on the other, the Dasyas or the dark-skinned demon worshippers, the barbarians and the outcasts of the earthy the great division of a dominant and a *servient* race is alone traceable. There is no allusion in the Vedic literature to the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, or to frequent renovations of the world; on the contrary, it is affirmed that heaven and earth were generated once, and the notion of the sins of individuals being visited on their descendants is strongly inculcated.

The heaven of the Vedas was peopled with gods and goddesses; the exact parallel of the Homeric period. The invocation of the sun formed also a principal part of the worship; and the Gayatri, or the sacred thread of the Hindus, was their formula of invocation. There is no other trace of a philosophical cosmogony, except that Manu was the progenitor of mankind. Side by side with the Aryan tribe, we find in the Vedas allusion to another tribe called the Bharatas tribe. With the destiny and migration of this tribe we shall have to do hereafter.

Let us now turn our attention to the account that Herodotus gives of the different Indian tribes when the Persian Empire was in its glory.

India formed, according to Herodotus, in the reign of Darius, the son of Hydaspes, a large and flourishing tributary to the Persian government. The Indians paid large revenue in gold dust to the imperial treasury. They were divided at that remote period into various tribes, differing in language and habit, some of which were nomads and others not; some of them inhabited the fens of rivers and lived on raw fish, and principally spent their time in their rude canoes; they had mats for garments. Others again, that was nomadic tribes, fed generally on raw flesh, and was called Padae. One of the most remarkable usages noticed by Herodotus amongst them was, that whenever one of the community fell ill, the nearest male kin put him to death and feasted on his body. Again, such as had the misfortune to reach to an old age were equally sacrificed, and were made to pass through the same sanguinary execution. Among some other Indians quite a different practice prevailed; they would neither kill anything that had life, nor sow, nor build houses to themselves; they lived in the open air,

and principally subsisted on herbage and rice. And if any one of them fell ill, he retired from all intercourse with his fellow men, and laid himself down quietly in the desert; none ministered to him during his illness, nor after his death committed his body to the ground. In complexion they were more like the Ethiopians. Those, again, amongst the Indians that inhabited the northern parts were chiefly engaged in warlike pursuits, and were more or less assimilated in manners and customs with the Bactrians.

Making, then, some allowance for the traditional medium through which Herodotus collected his information about the Indians, I cannot help thinking of its high interest and value to an Indian antiquary. What the fragment of Strabo about the education and life of Moses is to the Jewish analyst, or the incidental mention of the early Christians and their usages in one of Pliny's letters is to the Christian historian, this fragment about the Indians in Herodotus is to the Indian antiquary. But for this fragment we should be utterly at a loss to throw any light over the dark period which intervened between the Vedic age and that which witnessed the rise and growth of the hierarchical polity of the Brahmins. It furthermore explains the extraordinary circumstance that, although the Brahmanical religion bears on its face the impress of elevated sentiment and of exalted philosophy, the most staunch apologist must still allow, that in certain cases it sanctions rites of the most sanguinary character and usages of the most barbarous nature; rites and usages which are totally opposed to that humane tendency which it otherwise discloses to even the most careless student of its antiquities.

**Herodotus's Account of the Indians Corroborated.**— 1. The many detached aboriginal tribes occupying the more rugged and inaccessible portions of India, who have in some cases only partially submitted to the Brahmanical polity, and in others have remained wholly aloof, resisting all the attempts of the Brahmins to incorporate them into their commonwealth, go considerably towards verifying Herodotus' account of the primitive Indians. The Bhils, the Santhals, the Dhangars, the Newars, the Todars of the Nilguries are remnants of an aboriginal population.

The nomadic tribes alluded to by Herodotus under the name of *Padce*, are all traceable in the genealogy of Indian castes, to an inferior tribe called the *Pods*, who have yielded more readily to the efforts of the missionary than any other class of the Hindus. Most of the Christian converts in the South Eastern districts of Bengal are from this class.

The sanguinary customs which according to Herodotus' account appear to have prevailed to a considerable extent in India, and to have been practiced with unrelenting fury by the primitive Indian savages, are traceable in a more modified form in the refined polity and usages of the Brahmins. For instance, self-immolation or suicide under particular circumstances was allowed by the Hindu legislators—emulating in this respect the virtues and the equanimity which passed current in the stoical school.

4. Cannibalism in some form or other is still traceable among the Tantras—the latest edition of Hinduism, and also in the sanguinary custom of human sacrifices that were offered in the temple of the Hindu goddess Kali.

5. The free intercourse of the sexes, alluded to by Herodotus, receives its corroboration in the marriage of one of the kings of the heroic period of Indian history, and in the custom of polyandry that still exists among some of the aboriginal tribes of India.

*b.* Monasticism, or rather asceticism, appears to have existed in India before the advent of the Aryan conquerors. We should hardly have been able to corroborate this portion of Herodotus' account, if the customs and religious usages of the Todars of the Nilguries had not contributed their quota of truth towards its verification.

The Todars are a hill tribe, who have occupied for many centuries the heights of the Nilguries hills, and have remained in perfect isolation from Brahmanical influence. Their religion is of a primitive character, as well as their habits. Evidently their traditions point to some remoter period of their history, when they inhabited the rich plains of the valley of India, and migrated to the hills under the guidance of their prophet, who is called Eavel. He is worshipped as a tutelary god, and priests are dedicated to his service. From time immemorial it has been customary for two of the community to dedicate themselves to the priestly office; they are exempt from all manual labour, and live in a state of celibacy and solitude, holding little or no intercourse with the laity. Their food consists of herbage and milk; and their dietary system is on the whole of a rigid and ascetic character. Their offices are few; they preside at the annual ceremonies performed in honour of the dead, and officiate at the

prayers and religious services rendered to the god Ravel. Like the Buddhist priests of some countries, they may relinquish their sacred office, and resume secular occupations, provided they take care first to select a successor to continue the order of priesthood and the maintenance of the priestly functions. It must appear evident, from this short account of the Todars of the Nilgirie hills, that asceticism must have existed in India long anterior to the advent of Brahmanism and the conquest of the Aryans; that, after the introduction of Brahmanism, it took shelter for some time under its tolerant policy, and gave birth to the several Hindu forms of monastic orders; and then after a time it partially separated and detached itself from Brahmanism, and entered into a permanent alliance with Buddhism during her dubious and protracted warfare with Brahmanism; followed her through evil and through good report, to witness her conquests amongst the savage races of Tartary; and there it settled in the camp of the Tartars as a fixed and firm ally, the herald of peace between contending tribes, the conservator of learning, the depositary of religion.

Another feature that strikes us in the history of the Todars, is that the aboriginal tribes of every country whose histories have come down to us, seem to have migrated, when pressed by foreign conquest, under the guiding genius of some particular prophet amongst them; that prophecy is coeval with the history of the human race; and that the rise and birth of prophecy is a part and parcel of the spiritual economy of the religious education of mankind. And men of superior genius, raised far above the mass, appeared at distant intervals of time to carry on the mission of humanity and the progressive development of the human race.

Leaving now the aboriginal tribes of India in their primeval forests and fastnesses, luxuriating in their wild independence and freedom, unmolested by any conquering tribe, without laws and polity, and with hardly any religion—leaving them, let us trace the destiny and the fortunes of the Aryan race. First in its location in Media; and then in its subsequent migration to the pleasant valley of the five rivers in Punjab, India

**Location of the Aryans in Media, from Herodotus.**— The colonists who came into Media, according to Herodotus, called themselves Aarii, which is manifestly the same word as the Sanskrit Arya, which signifies pure and honourable men. The north-western parts of India were called by the Brahmins Arya-varta, or the country of honourable men. The Brahmins designated themselves the Aryas in the Vedic period, in opposition to the Mletchas or the barbarians. The Aarii of Herodotus were a mixed priestly and warrior class, and owed their early military success to their skill in horsemanship. From all these facts, together with those which I shall adduce hereafter, we cannot help concluding that the Aryan race were located in Media after they had left their original habitation, and exercised their supremacy there as a ruling caste. The Aarii in later times formed a principal contingent the army which was collected from all languages, peoples, and tongues, to contest the independence of Greece, and necessarily the civilization of Europe. At what particular period they left Media we cannot say, for their history throws no light on this point. What was the exact nature of the pressure that led to their dispersion, we can only conjecture. Perhaps the insurrection of the agricultural and shepherd tribes, headed by Cyrus, that took place at that remote period in the history of Persia, may have contributed as a principal cause towards the dispersion of the Aryan tribe. As we know nothing to a certainty on this point, we may well leave it in its mystery, and hasten to the ascertained facts of the Aryan settlement in the north-western portion of India.

Whatever may have been the immediate political pressure which led towards the dispersion of the Aryan tribe, the real cause, perhaps, lies deeper than any we have hitherto imagined. Strabo somewhere says, " that about the time of the Trojan war, both Greeks and barbarians, as if seized with some wandering spirit, or acted upon by a sort of restless impulse, deserted their native seats, and marched in multitudes to invade the possessions of their neighbours." Perhaps some such irresistible impulse may have impelled the Aryan tribe in their march onwards. History is equally silent upon this interesting portion of their migration: what prodigies surrounded them in their exodus we know not, for none are recorded; what supernatural interventions sustained their courage and faith we know not, for none are recorded; perhaps the good angel that shields us from harm and evil may have shielded them too. What unknown dangers and difficulties they had to encounter we know not, for none are recorded; perhaps they may have ascended acclivities of unknown grandeur and height—one of those snow-capped peaks which in that mountain range still oppose a barrier to the barbarian hordes over the plains of India. They may have seen there the glorious luminary of their adoration reflected in a

thousand images on the eternal snow that covers the tops of those mountain heights; they may have made their obeisance on their approach, and received the seal and apostleship of their divine mission. Perhaps, after that, they may have bent their steps downwards through declivities of equal danger, led by their chiefs and warrior-kings, sustained by the prayers and uplifted arms of their prophets, cheered by the songs of their rhapsodists. They descended by slow and sure steps till they reached the valley of the five rivers; they witnessed again the same sun that followed them through all their migrations, shining with undiminished vigour and unalloyed purity, ready to reward their services with a plentiful supply of the necessaries and enjoyments of life. Let us then next behold them in their valley, where they developed that polity which I shall presently delineate under the name of Aryaism.

According to the Hindu geographers, the earth consists of numerous concentric circles separated by seas, forming rings between. They are called islands, in the same sense that the Jews called the western continent the isles of the Gentiles. The first circle constituted India, and is called by the Hindus Jambu Dwipa; and right beyond the Jambu Dwipa is placed the Saca Dwipa, or the country of the Scythians. The Sacas of the Hindus are the Sacse of Herodotus. The northern segment is called Aira-varta, or Arya-varta, or the land of the Aryans. The southern segment is called Bharata-varsha or Bharata. The land that separates the two segments in the middle is called Videyia-varsha. The geographical divisions here given from modern writers, agree substantially with those given by Manu. What is called Bharata-varsha by the modern geographers, is called Brahma-varta by Manu, and is placed between two rivers, of which one is Saraswati, and consequently it includes the northern portion of Bengal. That, then, was the habitation of Brahmanism, as contradistinguished from that of Aryaism. The middle land, the Videyia-varsha, is called by Manu the Madhya-desa, or the central region: this was left as a sort of highway between Arya-varta and Bharata-varsha, for different foreign nations to pass to and fro, and settle themselves if they liked, by forming inter-communicative alliances, or rather international alliances, with the Brahmins. That at remote intervals in the history of Brahmanism we find mention of such alliances as a marked peculiarity in its history, I shall show hereafter. The northern segment of the modern geographers tallies with the location given by Manu to the Aryans. The name given to it by Manu is Arya-varta. This was then the seat of Aryaism, or of the Aryan polity.

The sources of our information on the subject of the Aryan polity lie concealed in the fragmentary notices of it in the tenth chapter of the *Institutes* of Manu. That chapter, in my opinion, embodies a distinct and an older polity. Under the Aryan polity the Hindus were divided into four great classes; the priestly, the military, the commercial, and the servile. The Brahmins formed the priestly class; the Kshatriyas the military; the Vaisyas the commercial; and the Shudras the servile. There were other sub-divisions and sub-classes, with a view to connect the history of Aryaism with that of Brahmanism.

The Brahmins were the descendants of the Aryan race, and had the exclusive privilege of officiating at religious sacrifices, and of expounding the sacred books of the Hindus; I mean the Vedas. The military and commercial classes were also considered sacerdotal castes, though of an inferior grade. All the three classes were termed the "twice-born" or regenerate. They had all the privilege of wearing the sacrificial thread, as well as the girdle of their class. In certain instances the two inferior grades of the twice-born classes assumed to themselves the privileges of the Brahmins. The study of the Vedas was extensively cultivated under the Aryan polity by the three superior classes; and thus the traditional knowledge of the ancient books of the Hindus, that would have perished, for want of the art of printing, was preserved through the successive changes of dynasties, mutations of time, and the invasion of foreign rulers.

The position of the Shudras, under the Aryan polity, was better in many respects than that of other inferior tribes. The chief work of a Sudra was attendance on the Brahmins; and in lieu of this, on the two superior classes next to the Brahmins. In fact they formed a class of hereditary domestic slaves to the Brahmins. Under particular circumstances, a tribe sprung from a Brahman by a Shudra woman, was incorporated with the Brahmins, after a succession of intermarriages of its women with Brahmins. It is difficult to say how the Shudra tribe was first formed; from the incidental hints in Manu, we should rather be disposed to say that their ranks were originally filled from the Daysas, or the aboriginal demon-worshippers; their submission to the Aryan polity became the means of their exaltation. The composition of the Kshatriya, or military tribe, deserves particular attention. They were formed from several original military races, or tribes; from the Yavanas, or the Ionians; the

Chinas, or the Chinese; from the Critas, a tribe of mountaineers, inhabiting the north of India; the Cambojas, or the people of the north-eastern provinces of Persia; the Pallavas, or the Phelivis of the ancient Persians ; and the Sacas, or the Sacse of Herodotus.

Traces do not want in Manu, that at the time when the Aryan polity was inaugurated, a great theological dispute arose about the assumption of the sacrificial thread by the three superior classes. Perhaps it was an innovation, and was imposed for the first time on the Aryan race; a considerable section of the Aryan community remaining separate and unsubjected to the innovating spirit of a more developed form of Aryaism. Theological disputes often arise from trifles, and afterwards become the source of separation and disturbance to communities and races. The outcast Brahman (the Vratyas), or the separatists from Aryaism, together with sections of the other two superior classes, dispersed in different directions, and settled in different countries—perhaps not far from either the original seat of Aryaism, or its new location in India. Some of them appear to have retreated to the Indo-Scythian territories, from whence, as you will see afterwards, they will emerge, to fill up the ranks of Brahmanism, as a counter polity to Aryaism.

In connection with the Aryan dispute of explaining a few historical difficulties that would otherwise be apparent in the present discourse. A great many writers who have ventured to treat on the Aryans have attempted to trace the Hindus to a branch of the Indo-Germanic stock, which dwelt originally with other cognate races, in central Asia, and consider that they subsequently migrated into Northern Hindustan, where the Brahmanical, or rather the Aryan religion and institutions were developed and matured. In the absence of historical data, Armenia has been regarded by them as the most probable centre from which the Indo-Germanic stock spread themselves—and the Aryan race is supposed by them to have divided themselves originally into two branches—the eastern and the western Aryans. The eastern Aryans wandered eastward, they say; and at a period anterior to the fifteenth century before our era, they are supposed to have settled in the tract watered by the Upper Indus. The western Aryans took a westward course, and possessed themselves of the more favourable climates of Persia, Asia Minor, and some parts of Europe. These writers attempt to support their theory by arguments drawn chiefly from comparative philology, and from the contents of the Rig-Veda. The Rig-Veda may lend an illustration here and there, but it can render no adequate support to their theory. Now, it is true that through comparative philology we can trace the affinity of languages, and consequently we can prove the contact of races; and perhaps can also discover traces of conquest on the one part and of servitude on the other; but we cannot, by its aid, prove either common origination or community of descent. Consequently I have confined myself solely to historical inductions, to attempt to trace the tribe of the Aarii further than those inductions would warrant.

As a matter of conjecture, the dispersion of the Aarii tribe from Media took place, perhaps, at the time when the Medes, having long held dominion, as the ruling caste, were overthrown in an insurrection of the agricultural and shepherd tribes, under the presidency of Cyrus. Considerable support is given to my views by the researches of Dr. Haug, of Bombay. He says that the great antagonist of the Hindu religion, Zoroaster, is mentioned once by his very name, under the corrupt form "*Jaradashti*" in the Rig-Veda. The Hindu Rishis, or seers, are mentioned in the books of Zoroaster, under the name of "*Kavis*" The spiritual guides of the Magian religion, are mentioned in the songs of the Rig-Veda, under the name of "*Maghava*," which is evidently a corruption of the word "Magi." From the above inductions we may gather these two or three important points. First, that the time of Zoroaster is closely connected with the time of the Vedas ; secondly, that Zoroaster must have lived previously to the later Vedic period, when the name and occupations of the Brahmins came prominently into notice, supplanting the functions and office of the *Kavis*, of the earlier periods; thirdly, the ordinary opinion is, that Zoroaster lived five hundred years before Christ; and, consequently, according to the popular chronology, the great Aryan migration could not have taken place at a period anterior to this ; because the apparent cause of their dispersion was a religious dispute between the followers of the Vedas, and of the Zendavesta. Having regard then to the historical succession and order, to the opposition and to the contact of religious developments, as disclosed in the Vedas and the Zendavesta, it would be an offence against chronology, as well as an inversion of the whole order of things, to assert that the Aryan race had migrated to India, without first acquiring a local habitation and a name in Media. The truth is, that they migrated to India on account of the religious pressure imparted by the followers of Zoroaster; and that they carried from Media the frame-work of that society which they afterwards consolidated and developed in India.

We have here touched some solid, tangible, common ground, where two entirely distinct lines of tradition and polity converge to a single historical point. We feel relieved from the bewilderment of mythical literature. We cannot help conceiving that the ground discovered to be the common point of convergence is none other than the common centre of pressure of the intersecting curves of national traditions; and that upon this principle the projection and course of the Aryan tribe, as regards its migration to Upper India, must be laid in Media, as the grand starting-point.

To return—marriages took place, under the Aryan polity, between the different classes or castes; and thus the old Hindus had a larger and more unrestricted area of selection accorded to them. The legal marriages could only take place in the direct order of classes; namely, of a Brahman with a Kshatriya; and of a Kshatriya with a Vaishya, etc; or of a Brahman with a Brahman, etc.

In all classes, those that were born in a direct order, of wives equal in class, and virgins at the time of marriage, were considered to belong to the same class as their fathers. Sons begotten by Brahmins, from women of the class next below them in order, had an intermediary rank between the two classes that their parents respectively belonged to ; though evidently they were not degraded below an intermediary rank, still they were debarred from being girt with the sacred thread, as they had disturbed the order and the precedence of castes.

Marriages, in an inverse order of the classes or castes, were reprehended, and denounced as illegal; consequently their progeny were excluded from the performance of obsequies to their ancestors. The latitude that was given to the law of marriage, under this older polity, was not attended with any serious evil, owing to the law of tribal adoption which existed at that period. According to the Institutes of Manu, tribes preceded the institution of castes, certain tribes giving themselves up to certain occupations or trades, became stereotyped in time, according to the nature of those occupations, into castes. The law of tribal adoption was a distinct institution altogether from the law of adoption, in families which afterwards grew under the Brahmanical polity into a more defined system.

When the Aryan race settled themselves in the north-west of India, they formed a theocracy in some respects similar to that of the Jews. The three superior classes had alone the privileges of wearing the sacred thread, and of the enunciation of the incommunicable Shibboleth of the Hindus. They had, as the Hindu legists say, "the communion of the Gayatri." The Shudras, as well as some of the intermediary tribes that were in rank above them, were allowed to perform the funeral rites in commemoration of their ancestors, as well as to discharge certain household sacraments that were necessary for them as members of a theocratic polity. The inferior castes were excluded from all participation in the civic rites of the Hindu theocracy, and were considered in the light of the " proselytes of the gate" under the Jewish economy. The Shudra, though placed under the Aryan polity in a state of perpetual and hereditary servitude, had still a certain imperfect right of property communicated to him ; and what was originally, perhaps, a *peculium* in the Roman sense of the term, was developed in time into a more perfect right, with the growing intelligence and wealth of the community.

The Brahmins—the original tribe of Aarii of Herodotus : the Vaidyas, or the medical caste, were a Median tribe mentioned in Herodotus under the name of Buddii; the Vaisyas, or the agricultural class, were also a Median tribe mentioned by Herodotus under the name of Basse. The Nishadas were a tribe of mountaineers, who had settled themselves in Arya-varta, as a tribe of boatmen. The Ayogava, a class of outcasts, were a race of plundering Afghans, the old name of the Afghans being Aoghan or Aoga, and not Afghans. The Jhallas, Mallas, Nata, were a tribe of gypsies who were by profession cudgel-players, boxers, dancers, and wrestlers. The gypsies of India are still called "Budea-nuts." The Cshattri, another class of outcasts, were an aboriginal tribe, the remains of which are represented by the present race of Dhangars, or Santhals. These Dhangars or Santhals have a tradition that they came from a country where they were once very numerous, which they call by the name of Cshattra country. The Chandalas, a low caste, the remains of which are still represented in several parts of India, and in Ceylon. The Vaidehas, another low caste, of which Ptolemy takes notice as a wandering race inhabiting the northern parts of India. They were afterwards traced in Mysore by Tippu Sahib, and were known by the name of Bedas, and are now found in their wild and savage state in Ceylon. I mean the Veddahs of Ceylon.

The Aryan polity was from the beginning one of a centralizing character. It is not improbable, nor is it altogether an untoward conjecture to advance, that the Aryan tribe in its migration to India,

resided for a considerable time in Media, and that they formed a confederacy of tribes in that country; and that subsequently in their new settlement in India, certain aboriginal tribes were added to the list, forming a secondary and inferior grade to the original Median tribes of the confederacy.

The composition of the Kshatriya or the military caste has a very marked peculiarity which throws considerable light upon the construction of military races in ancient times. The tribes that composed the great army as given in Herodotus, were made up of many distinct and original races. The army of Tamerlane as given in the Institutes of Timour corroborates also the same fact. Down to a later period, the composition of the armies of the Hindus as given in their dramas, indicate also nearly the same tribes from which the military caste was originally formed.

The Kayastha tribes who are represented by the "Kayats," or the hereditary caste of the scribes of the present day, formed originally a sub-military class which throws some light on Herodotus' description of the military classes in Egypt. He divides them under the two heads, the Calasaries, and the Hermotybes. Perhaps the second formed the contingent class, which was always a component part in the constitution of armies in ancient times.

The Aryan race that conquered and settled in India imitated a theocratic polity that must for some time have been contending for growth in the Medo-Persian Empire. If we turn to a later composition amongst the Persians, we learn from the poem of Ferdousi, the Shah-nameh, or the Chronicler of the Persian Kings, that a king of the name of Jemshid remodelled the polity of the ancient Persians, by combining certain speculative tenets with a system of castes. In the above poem, the names of the castes with their occupations are given. They are as follows:—the sages' class was called Anmuzban; the military class was called Nisarie; the sub-military class, Mendipai; the fourth, or the class of craftsmen, Amenshubi. In the caste system given by Manu, we can trace, in some respects, the identity, or rather, the analogy of some of these classes. Society, under the Aryan polity, as far as we can gather from the incidental hints scattered in Manu, was considerably advanced. The sciences of music and astronomy were cultivated; the towns were mapped out in a certain primitive order; the lower classes being obliged to live in the suburbs; the higher in the city. There existed (as one of the most remarkable features of the primitive society of the Hindus), a class of hereditary female singers, whose duty it was to usher the advent of the morning, by ringing the town bell, and also to recite praises in honour of great men. The Aryan Hindus evidently had horses and cars, the management of which formed the particular business of a tribe. The arts of joinery, masonry, carpentering, and engraving, were pursued by different castes and classes. Agriculture had high pre-eminence as an occupation, and the Brahman unable to subsist by the performance of his priestly functions, was allowed to descend to the quiet pastoral occupations of an agriculturist. This fact lends considerable support to the theory that in the formation of ancient societies, the traces of agriculture are recent, and do not constitute a primary stratification in point of occupation and development. Barter in human beings—or slave trade, existed to a considerable extent.

The arts of dyeing, and the manufacture of cloth from wool, as well as from bark, were known to the Aryan Hindus; the culture of nila, or something approaching to indigo, was also known to them from a very ancient period. One of the most remarkable customs as regards food amongst the lowest tribe, the Ohandalas, was that of eating dogs; as the Chinese of the present day do. The king had the exclusive monopoly of gold and silver mines, and the largest portion of ordinary exchange took place in specie.

Acquisition of property by occupancy, was one of the recognized modes of title—a right which has continued to the present time, and has been the means of working out extensive clearances of waste lands in India; and which also forms the basis of the ryot's charter, independent of, and distinct from, the proprietary right of the Zamindar, or the landholder.

The members of the military class were allowed to acquire and create a title by conquest, and thus fresh territories were added to the Aryan race. The conquest of Nepal by the Kshatriyas of the plains, at a modern period of Indian history, exemplifies the original territorial law of the Aryans. With respect to the law of interest, the Brahmins were forbidden to receive it, though it was allowed to the other classes under a regulated system. In a case of urgent necessity, such as war, or foreign invasion, the king was allowed to impose an income-tax either on the agricultural produce or the annual profits of his subjects. Otherwise, there existed a system of regulated taxation, which the king was bound to observe as supported by usage and by the maxims of religion. In short, we might well

say that under an apparently arbitrary system of government, a constitutional one existed, though perhaps in a rudimentary form, under the influence of theocratic maxims.

Perhaps it is not altogether an improbable supposition in connection with the Aryan settlement in India, that several distinct tribes must have arrived at their new settlement or location at distinct intervals of time, and have laid the basis of distinct principalities and chieftainships; and that all these several kingdoms should have formed one Aryan confederacy, in connection with the idea of a theocracy which pervaded them all as a common element.

Here, then, ends my account of the Aryan polity: in the succeeding discourses that I may hereafter deliver as a continuation of the present subject, I intend to follow out the history of Brahmanism—first, in its location in the northern frontiers of Bengal; and secondly, its character as a counter polity to Aryaism. While, in some respects, it imitated some of the general features of Aryaism, still it went a step further in point of liberality and the perfection of a federative organization. Under the influence of Brahmanism, that portion of the Aryan race which under the Aryan polity had kept itself separate from the other tribes of the Aryan confederacy, mingled with cognate Aryan races that were making their way slowly but gradually through a contest of a theological and political character with the Magians of Persia. Then again, on the plains of Brahmanism, they intermarried and intermingled with the original races that then existed in India. I shall indicate these points by distinct and appropriate proofs, throwing perhaps a considerable amount of weight upon circumstantial evidence. I shall resuscitate some of the cognate Aryan races from the Zend traditions; and some of the aboriginal races of India through the marvelous light that is thrown upon the subject by the demonology of the Hindus. You are perhaps not aware, that the demonology of the Hindus has always formed a component part of the Hindu medical science, and through the key it supplies, we can retrace the primitive habits and instincts of most of the aboriginal races. In their demonified existence, they preserve the traces of their earthly existence: being of the earth, they were earthy. They will appear to you one after another in succession like ethnic mummies which have been laid bare, and unclothed of their winding-sheet, and will give intelligent responses to all your ethnic inquiries. Then I shall show how the same fact is corroborated by the eight different forms of marriage amongst the Hindus, which by retaining their legal significations have also preserved for the future antiquary, the originals of their history. Afterwards, I will connect the subject of the great Aryan dispute, with the rise and growth of Brahmanism; and how the ranks of Brahmanism were subsequently filled up by the outcast Brahmins of the Scythian countries, who emerged from their solitudes at a subsequent period of the Brahmanic history, and asserted their position as the reformers of Aryaism; and how the law of tribal adoption was gradually lost sight of, and the formation of castes was abandoned in the first instance, and then subjected to certain stereotyped laws—steady in their operation—certain in their success. I shall descend to the modern history of the caste system, following out the several causes which have modified or affected the growth of Brahmanism:—Buddhism in Ceylon and Nepal; Jainism in Central India; Mohammedanism throughout India; the religion of Guru Nanak in the Punjab; the religion of Chaitanya in Lower Bengal; slavery in Madras; and lastly, the introduction of Christianity, and the growth of new occupations and new trades. I shall, perhaps, cast a side glance at, and project a little the future of the caste system as it will be affected by the present laws of emigration. I shall pursue, then, as an ultimatum—not without the reverential spirit which becomes the consideration of such a subject, the light that the discussion of the caste system throws upon the great ethnic problem of man's origination. Whatever the future inquiries of philosophers may decide upon this problem, the discussion of the caste system in India evidently establishes some important propositions. That the civilization of the world has been developed, or rather has grown up as it were, under a hierarchy of castes.

That the birth of civilization is recent as regards the antiquity of man. That there exist in the geographical conformation of the world, certain hierarchical habitats where alone hierarchies can grow to any great magnitude; and, as political convulsions have swept these caste-systems from one quarter to another, they have gradually retreated, and have now centered their energies in India. Those tribes are being consolidated under the influence of civilization and Christianity: that the Buddhist castes are less in number than the Hindu castes; and, that finally, Christianity will modify and unite them into one family. And that, although the caste system presents to an ordinary observer a rigid and stereotyped form, resisting like a rock the ravages of time; still, when you come narrowly to inspect it, you will find it has been ever changing its ground, and that while it has preserved to a

considerable extent its original nomenclature, its forms have been changeable and various. Of the number of castes under the Aryan polity, some disappeared and became extinct under the Brahmanical system ; some were raised to a higher rank than they held under the Aryan system; new castes were formed; and then, in the course of time and through the force of circumstances, they were swept from one area to another, until you will see that they were cast as it were into a whirlpool in Central India, where rival Brahmanic nations have grown up, and new castes are still in their elemental and formative state, obeying organic laws peculiar to them.

The extraordinary circumstance that tribal instincts change in course of time, either under the influence of circumstances, or through the operation of certain mysterious organic laws. Certain tribes that have submitted to a domestic polity can be traced to their wild congeners, leading a wild life, unchanged in their habits, and retaining their particular habitats.

Brahmanism can be resolved modern to one of older date and form, and that older form into Aryaism, and that Aryaism again into Vedism, we can also trace in the same way the Brahmins to the Aryas of Manu, and the Aryas of Manu to the Arian of Herodotus, located in Media; we can, however, ascend no further in our inquiry; it stops there. If we interrogate the Aryan traditions we cannot by any possibility get a historical response. There is a perfect obliteration of what (if I am allowed the expression) I should call the "historical consciousness" of the race—the same is the case with the other ancient nations. There is only one singular race that has preserved its historical consciousness—though perhaps marred here and there by the disturbing causes to which it has been subjected. I will attempt, then, to the best of my ability, to trace the cause or causes by which this singular phenomenon is to be accounted for. How far the wave of the Aryan dispersion with other cognate dispersions can be traced backwards through the traces that are left behind, to some older and larger impulse—to perhaps some one single excitation, under a mysterious law, that has thrown nations and races into concentric circles of migration and movement; how far the history of the dispersion of the dominant portion of the human race is connected with, and has proceeded in concert with another general and concurrent law, by which the "historical consciousness" has been obliterated in all the other races of the world, except one. Thus bringing some of the important and interesting inductions of philosophy to bear on some of the mysterious truths of scripture.

7. That side by side with the physical fusion of castes, we detect the existence of a great spiritual law—the law of spiritual incorporation. Wherever, therefore, the centre of man's physical origination may be placed, we detect but one common, universal centre for his spiritual incorporation. Let us not forget, amidst all these waves of conflicting inquiries, surging one upon the other, intersecting at an infinite variety of points, the Divine accents of Him who said " It is I; be not afraid "

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