

SHITALA PRASAD MISRA

LABOUR PROBLEMS IN ANCIENT & MEDIEVAL INDIA

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FOREWORD BY

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I had an occasion to see the mss. of '*Labour Problems in Ancient & Medieval India*,' written by Sri Shitla Prasad Misra. This book points out new direction in the research-field. Till now, *Ashram* and *Sramana* have been the centres of study in the social field and labour and labourers' condition received relatively lesser attention. It is a pleasure that in this book one gets ancient and medieval backgrounds of the leading labour problems of today and this may no doubt help their proper understanding and appreciation. The learned author has successfully spotlighted various aspects of Labour, viz. Industries and Occupations, Labour Organisations, Wages, Employment and Forced Labour, Slavery, Labour and Duties, Social Security and Industrial relations. Analysis as well as treatment both are enlivening. I, however, believe that the work is simply an introduction to his study concerning labour and posterity expects more detailed and comprehensive works from him. I trust the book would not only prove inspiring in its field but would also be accorded its due place in the world of scholarship.

RAJBALI PANDEYA

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By
SHITALA PRASAD MISRA

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GULZARI LAL NANDA,
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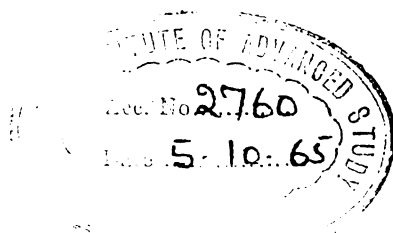


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MINISTER OF LABOUR,
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24th April, 1961

FOREWORD

I HAVE glanced through the short account of 'Labour Problems in Ancient and Medieval India' prepared by Shri S. P. Misra. I find that the account is well supported by Vedic and other historical references. The book certainly throws open a vast field of research in principles and practices of labour problems in the early ages. Such a publication deserves encouragement because of the considerable work involved in unearthing old literature and examining its relevance in the present context.

Shri Misra has undertaken this analysis in addition to his duties as Teacher Administrator in the Central Board for Workers' Education. It is this aspect of his work which is particularly worth commending. I understand that Shri Misra has also prepared a Hindi version of this book. This will help a wider understanding of the problems he has discussed.

G. L. NANDA.

PREFACE

After joining the Workers' Education Scheme, I had occasion to study different aspects of the problems connected with labour. I tried to find out what valuable ideas on the subject prevailed in India in the past. The result of my study in this direction is the present work. I propose to continue this study further. I shall feel amply rewarded if the present work inspires some one else to make an effort in this direction.

All available records for the study and research into the problems of labour in ancient and medieval India could be divided into four classes :—(1) Scriptures, (2) Historical and contemporary literature, (3) Travelogues, and (4) Archaeological discoveries.

Efforts have been made in this book to throw light on the references to the problems of labour in the ancient and medieval India so far as they can be gathered from sources. In this kind of work, with inter-related subjects, some amount of repetition is unavoidable.

Diverse opinions are held about the period of the composition of the ancient works. I have followed the chronology of Shri P. ^V~~B~~. Kane, which, with respect, I have found to be the most reasonable. The chronological table is as follows according to Shri Kane :—

4,000 B.C.—1,000 B.C.	The period of the Vedic Samhitas, Brahmans and Upanishads.
2,000 B.C.—1,400 B.C.	Epic Age.
800 B.C.— 500 B.C.	The Nirukta.
800 B.C.— 400 B.C.	The principal Srauta Sutras (Apastamba, Asvalayana, Baud- hayana, Kātyāyana, Sankhyāyana)

	and some of the Grihya Sutras (Asvalayana, Apastamba).	
600 B.C.— 300 B.C.	The Dharma Sutras of Apastamba, Gautam, Baudhayana, Vashistha, and the Grihya Sutras of Para- sara, and others.	
600 B.C.— 300 B.C.	Panini.	
500 B.C. — 200 B.C.	Jaimini's Purvamimansa Sutra.	
300 B.C.— 100 A.D.	Kautilya's Arthasastra.	
150 B.C.	Mahabhasya of Patanjali.	
-00 B.C.— 200 A.D.	Manusmriti.	
-00 A.D.— 300 A.D.	Yagyavalkya Smriti.	
100 A.D.— 300 A.D.	Vishnudharma Sutra.	
100 A.D.— 400 A.D.	Narad Smriti.	
300 A.D.— 600 A.D.	Some of the Puranas viz. Vayu, Vishnu, Markandeya, Kurma, Matsya.	
600 A.D.— 900 A.D.	Most of the other Smritis and some of the Puranas.	

The authorities given in this work should be looked at in the light of this chronology.

I cannot find adequate words to express my sense of gratitude to Sri W. V. Oak, I.A.S., Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ex-Labour Commissioner, Madhya Pradesh, who very kindly read a draft of the manuscript, and without whose encouragement, advice and valuable guidance, this book could not be completed.

Grateful acknowledgement is also to be expressed to the Hon'ble Union Labour, Employment and Planning Minister, Sri G. L. Nanda for writing a 'Foreword' to the book and to Dr. Raj Bali Pande, M.A. D.Litt., Vidya Ratna, Head of the Department of Ancient History and Culture, Jabalpur University, Ex-Principal, College of Indology, Benares Hindu University for giving his opinion about the book.

(3)

I am grateful to Sri I. N. Puranik, the Regional Administrative Officer, Regional Workers' Education Centre, Indore and Sri L. N. Shandilya, Assistant Labour Commissioner, Madhya Pradesh, with whose encouragement this book could be finished.

INDORE :

SHITALA PRASAD MISRA

15-4-1961.

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INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS

India was greatly advanced in the field of industry and occupations in ancient times. We can get sufficient evidence in ancient literature to support this view. We shall see the conditions of industry, professions and occupations during the Vedic times, and how they deteriorated during the following ages.

During the Vedic times trade was carried on with foreign countries by land and water. A hymn of the *Rigveda* describes a seafaring vessel with a hundred oars :—

“अनारम्भणे तदवीर येयामनास्थाने अग्रमणेशमुद्रे ।
यदश्विना ऊह्युर्भुज्युमस्तं शतारित्रां नावमातस्थिवांसम् ॥”¹

In the *Shatapatha Brahman* also, reference is made to the making of chariots, boats, ships, etc.² The professions of carpenter and weaver were carried on all over the country. Iron, gold and silver were in common use. From references to field weapons and ornaments, we can see the great progress made in metallurgy and arms production.³ The process of boring a hole in a coin, while it is being cast, seems to have been practised as it appears from the allusion to a necklace of ‘Niskas’, worn by Rudra in the *Rigveda* :—

(1) *Rigveda* 1/116/5. (2) *Shatapatha Brahman* 2/3/3/15.
(3) *Epochs of Indian History—Ancient India*, p. 22.

“अहन् निष्कं यजतं विश्वरूपम् ।”⁴

Men and women wore golden ornaments :—

“येअंजिषुयेवाशीषुस्वमानवः सुक्षुक्मेषु खादिषु ।”⁵

Horses were also adorned with golden ornaments :—

“अश्वोनस्वेदमग्राहैम्यावान्तमंहसः पीपरो दाशवांसम् ।”⁶

We find the potter and the leather-worker described in the ancient books. The latter is named in *Rigveda* as ‘Charmamna’. There is also a description of containers to hold liquids such as milk and curds.⁷ Dyeing of leather⁸ and weaving of woollen cloth⁹ were highly valued professions. The carpenters and chariotceers¹⁰ made ploughs and carts for the farmer and chariots for war. The work of a smith¹¹ was considered very important, because he produced the materials used in war and agriculture. A reference to iron is also found in the *Chandogya Upanishad*¹².

The words “Vastra”¹³, “Vasa”¹¹ and “Vasana”¹⁵ are found to represent cloth in the *Rigveda*. It can be inferred from this that people in the Vedic times knew well how to spin and how to weave cloth. A weaver is denoted by the word “Vaya” in the *Rigveda*¹⁶. The weaver of wool is called “Pushan.”¹⁷ A clear reference to weaving is found in the sixth Mandala of the *Rigveda*.¹⁸ In the Vedic times, those who

(4) *Rigveda* 2/33/10. (5) *Ibid.* 5/53/4. (6) *Ibid.* 4/2/8. (7) *Economic Life in Ancient India*, Part I, p. 135—137. (8) *Yajurveda* 30/15. (9) *Ibid.* 19/80; *Atharv.* 14/1/45. (10) *Yajur.* 30/6; *Atharv.* 3/5/6. (11) *Ibid.* (12) *Chhando. Up.* 6/1/6. (13) *Rigveda* 1/26/1; 3/39/2. (14) *Ibid.* 1/34/1. (15) *Ibid.* 1/95/7. (16) *Ibid.* 2/3/6. (17) *Ibid.* 10/26/6. (18) *Ibid.* 6/9/2.

earned their livelihood by agriculture and allied occupations, were called by the following names :—¹⁹
 Kinasa/Krisivala—Ploughmen ; Gopa and Gopala—Herdsman, Avipala and Ajapala—Goatherd, Pasupa—Herdsman, Dhanyakrit—One employed in husking, Upalapraksini—Woman employed in making groats, Vapa—sower of grains.

The following categories of tradesmen are named in industrial pursuits²⁰:—

Karmara—Smith, Dhmatr—Smelter, Kulala and Kaulala—Potter, Mritpaca—Potter, Isukara—One who makes arrows, Dhanuskara—Bow maker, Taksana—Carpenter, Prakaritr—Stone carver, Pesitr—Carver, Vidalkari—Basket maker, Manikar, Hira-nyakara—Worker in gold and jewellery, Rajayitr—dyer, Vaya—Weaver, Vayitri—A female weaver, Pesakari—A female embroiderer, Rathakara—Chariot builder, Rajjukara—Rope maker.

Separate mention of the arrow-makers and the bow-makers leads to the inference that their manufacture was so advanced as to demand specialisation. In addition to the above we find mention of the barbar (Napita), washerman (Malaga), gatherers of wood (Darvahara), fisherman (Das, Dhivara, Dhavara), herdsman (Gopa, gopala), huntsman (Govikartana), drum-beater (Dundubhyaghata), Cook, (Paktr, Pacaka, Srapayitr), charioteer (Sarathi, Rathin), elephant keeper (Hastipa), servant (Anuk-sattr), door-keeper (Dvarapa, grhapa), guard or servant (Payu), menial or messenger (palgala),

(19-20). The Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 149.

boat-man (Navaja), groom (Asvapa), bath attendant (Upasektr), shampooer (Upamanthitr).

Allusions to the following metals in the *Ramayan* shows that working in these metals was common in those days: --²¹

Ayas (2/40/23) or Kalayas (5/41/12), Steel, Karshnayas (1/37/17), Iron or Loha (3/47/46), Kansya (4/50/34), Bronze, Rajata (2/34/14) or Hiranya (1/53/21), Silver, Suvarna (2/32/14), Kanchana (1/37/19), Jatarupa (1/37/22), Jambunada (1/14/54), Maharajata (5/10/7), or Hema (4/50/34), Gold, Shisha (1/37/20), Lead, Tamra (4/23/ 20), Copper, Trapu (1/37/20), Tin.

The weaving industry was in a prosperous state. A skilled weaver was called "Sutra-Karma-Visharad" (proficient in the art of making cloth from the thread). Cloth was made from different kinds of fibres. Woollen cloth was manufactured on a large scale. The cloth called (*aurma*) was made from the wool of a ram (5/75/9). A number of blanket makers accompanied Bharat to Chitrakoot, when he went to receive Rama and bring him home (2/63/14)²².

The caste system had great influence on the development and progress of the various industries and occupations. It will, therefore, be proper to see the ideology of the caste system during the Vedic period.

It has been mentioned in the Purusha-Sukta of *Rigveda* that the Brahmin was born from the

(21) Ramayan Kalcen Samaj, p. 233. (22) Ramayan Kalin Samaj, p. 234.

mouth of the *Great Being*, the warrior from his arms, the Vaishya from his thighs and the Shudra from his feet.²³ Thus we find that the four main castes were considered to be of divine origin. From the order in which they are enumerated it is obvious that the Brahmin enjoyed the highest and the Shudra the lowest position in society. In the *Rigveda* we find caste in an embryonic form. Its evolution went on during the subsequent period. Although war was the special business of Kshatriyas, it seems in those days every one took part in battles. We find allusions in *Rigveda* to the common people taking part in a battle.²⁴ At one place the Brahmin has been described as a drinker of “*Soma*” (an invigorating drink) and reciter of hymns during the sacrifices.²⁵ At another place, he is called a “man of letters” and Manishi (Scholar or thinker).²⁶ “Kshatra” generally means ‘Valour’ or bravery.²⁷ The word Vaishya occurs only in the Purushasukta. In all other places the word ‘Vish’ is found, which generally means a ‘Crowd.’ The word Shudra is found in the Purushasukta alone.

The caste system had developed further in the later Vedic period. *Atharva Veda* divides the community into four classes viz. Rajanya (Warrior class), Vaishya (Trading class), Shudra (Serving class) and Arya.²⁸ *Vajasneyi Samhita* also mentions these four classes of society.²⁹ In this

(23) *Rigveda* 10/90. (24) *Ibid.* 4/24/4; 7/79/2. (25) *Ibid.* 1/164/45. (26) *Rigveda* 7/103/7; 10/71/8. (27) *Ibid.* 1/157/2. (28) *Atharva Veda* 3/5/7. (29) *Baja. Sam.* 26/2.

period, the position of the Brahman was raised very high, and he was regarded as a deity incarnate³⁰ and also the receptacle of all gods.³¹ The Kshatriyas too enjoyed a respectable position in the society. The Vaishyas bred cattle and produced corn.³² The *Aitareya Brahman* recognised their importance and regarded their cooperation necessary in divine or sacrificial work.³³ The word Shudra occurs in many places in the later Vedic literature.³⁴ The Adi and Anushasan Parvas of the *Mahabharat* contain descriptions of various occupations. Cotton yarn is often referred to in the Ashvalayan Shrauta Sutra and the pioneer works and Dharma Sutras (religious treaties) of the Buddhist religion. It shows that the cotton crop was well cultivated during the Buddhist period.³⁵ The Dharma Sutras also often refer to silken cloth.³⁶ In the early Buddhist literature we find that weavers were engaged to weave cloth for the Buddhist monks.³⁷ According to *Tundil Jatak* very fine silken cloth was woven at Banaras.³⁸ The province of Kalinga enjoyed such reputation for the textile industry that the word Kalinga came to mean cloth in the Tamil literature.³⁹ Megasthenese has also praised the fineness of Indian cloth. He says " Their robes are worked in gold and ornamented with precious stones, and they wear also flowered garments made

(30) Taitriyi Sam 1/7/31. (31) Taitriyi Aranayak 2/15. (32) Taitriyi Sam. 7/1/1/7. (33) Aitareya Brahman 1/9. (34) Taitriyi Sam. 4/5/4/2. (35) Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 222. (36) Vashistha Dharm 11/66. (37 & 38) Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 222. (39) Bhartiya Itihas Ki Rooprekha, Vol. 2, p. 743.

of the finest muslin."⁴⁰ In the times of *Kautilya*, a majority of women took part in weaving cloth.⁴¹

In the Buddhist period we find references to jewellers and goldsmiths. In the *Suchi Jatak* the making of five needles by an artist is described.⁴² Weapons of war, ploughshare, axes and daggers were manufactured. Besides this, carts, chariots, boats and ships were also made. The description of wooden vessels is to be found in '*Samudda Vanij Jatak*.'⁴³

The potter's art was highly developed. Allusions are also to be found to sculptors, builders, stonecutters, leather workers, ivory workers, sweetmeat makers, dyers, etc. Historians agree that during Buddha period there were twenty-five categories of occupations.⁴⁴ The practice of digging mines and working of factories, etc., at Government expenses came into being during the Maurya period.⁴⁵ The *Shukraniti* mentions, in addition to carding and weaving, making of essences, mixture of metals, and cleaning of cotton and woollen cloth.⁴⁶

There was no rigid structure of the society, but in a sense a sophisticated civilisation organised on the modern principles of the division of labour. The duties of different castes are given as follows in the post-vedic period during the Buddhist and the epic period and thereafter :—A Brahman should earn his livelihood by (1) teaching, (2) sacrifice,

(40) Ancient India as described by Megasthenese, p. 69. (41) Kautilya 2/23. (42) *Suchi Jatak* 387. (43) *Samudda Jatak* 466. (44) Buddhist India, p. 88. (45) *Bhartiya Itihas Ki Rooprekha*, Part II, p. 741. (46) *Shukraniti* 4/3/1/180.

and (3) receiving gifts.⁴⁷ If a Brahmin cannot earn his livelihood and maintain his family by these means, he can follow the profession of a warrior or an agriculturist.⁴⁸ The Kshatriya or warrior class had the right, like the Brahmin, to study and to perform sacrifices but its duty was to give gifts.⁴⁹ The author has said that a warrior could follow the profession of an agriculturist, if necessary.⁵⁰

The main work of the Vaishyas was always cultivation, commerce and breeding of cattle.⁵¹ Like other castes the Vaishya could also take up any profession other than his own in times of difficulty.⁵² The Shudra held the lowest position in the community⁵³ and his main work was the service of the castes.⁵⁴ In the *Parashar Smriti*, all are allowed to work on the land :—

“षड्कर्म सहितौ विप्रः कृषिकर्म व कारयेत् ।

क्षत्रियोऽपि कृषिं कृत्वा देवान् विप्रांश्च पूजयेत् ॥”⁵⁵

Other authors of *Smrities* allowed all castes to take up the weapons for war :—

“प्राग्वत्राणे वर्ण संकरे वा ब्राह्मण वैश्यो शस्त्रमाददीयाताम् ।”⁵⁶

We find in the *Mahabharat* Brahmins carrying on the professions of a farmer and a cattle breeder.⁵⁷ But a Brahmin leaving his own profession and following those of warriors or agriculturists is compared to a dog or a wolf.⁵⁸ A Brahmin

(47) Gautam 10/ p. 396. (48) *Ibid.* 7/6/7. (49) *Ibid.* 11/3. (50) *Ibid.* 7/62. (51) *Ibid.* 10/13. (52) *Ibid.* 7/26. (53) Apastamb 1/1/1/5. (54) Gautam 10/57-59. (55) Parasar Smriti 2/2/18/19. (56) Bashistha Chap. 3. (57) Mahabharat 13/33/12/14. (58) Valmiki 7/26/33.

following a profession not his own, is considered to be lower than a Shudra.⁵⁹ On the authority of these rulings it may be said that the law givers did not want a change in the division of work among the different castes. For this reason the study of the *Vedas* and practising penance are assigned to the Brahmins alone.⁶⁰ The warrior class was the ruling, protecting and fighting class. Their main business was to protect the fourfold community.⁶¹ According to *Mahabharat* a person who discards study, sacrifice, etc. and practises agriculture and cattle breeding is considered to have become a Vaishya.⁶² Agriculture, breeding of cattle and commerce were the natural professions of a Vaishya.⁶³ The Shudra had no right to study or perform sacrifice,⁶⁴ his main occupation being service.⁶⁵

Buddhist literature has many references to indicate Buddha's view that the division of humanity by caste and colour was unjust and futile. He emphasised only pure conduct.⁶⁶ It has been clearly stated that Jata (coils of matted hair), dynasty or birth does not confer on the individual a right to call himself a Brahmin. He, who is truthful and dutiful, is holy and is a Brahmin—

“न जटाहि न गोलेहि न जच्चा होति ब्राह्मणो ।

यमिह सच्चञ्च धम्मो व सौ सुची सौ च ब्राह्मणो ॥”⁶⁷

Thus, Brahminhood could not be achieved by birth,

(59) Mahabharat 3/313/111. (60) *Ibid.* 12/12/24. (61) Valmiki 2/106 ; 18/21. (62) Mahabharat 12/188/1/18. (63) *Ibid.* 6/42/44. (64 & 65) Ramayan 1/59/13/14. (66) Samyukta Nikay 7/1/9. (67) Dharmmapada 393.

but by means of character and regulated conduct :—

“न जच्चा ब्राह्मणो होति न जच्चा होति अब्राह्मणो ।

कम्पना ब्रह्मणो होति कम्पना होति अब्राह्मणो ॥⁶³

In the literature we find sons of Brahmins working as farmers, hunters, carpenters, weavers, charioteers and even snake charmers.⁶⁹ Thus persons could change their professions.⁷⁰ Stray references indicating exceptions may disclose that the system was not absolutely rigid, but not that there was mobility. Moreover, with the passage of time rigidity decreased.

During the reign of *Prabhakara Vardhana* the textile industry enjoyed an enviable position. *Bana* has described various kinds of cloth on the occasion of *Rajyashri's* marriage :—

“क्षौमैश्च वादरैश्च दुकुलैश्च लालातन्तुजैश्च शुकैश्च नेत्रैश्च

निर्मिकनिमैर्नि श्वासहायैः स्पर्शानुमैयैः वासोभिस्सर्वतः

स्फुरिदन्द्रायुधसहस्रैरिव संच्छादितम् ॥”⁷¹

Kalidas's works mention the following occupations, besides agriculture :— *Swarnakara*—Goldsmith ; *Tantuvaya Karma*—Weaving fine silken and cotton cloths and rough strong cotton cloth used for making tents ; *Vanijya*—Trade and commerce ; *Sainika Karma*—Military service ; *Dhivara Karma*—Fisherman's work ; Education in fine arts *i.e.* Dancing, singing, poetry, etc.⁷²

(68) Su. Ni. Vasatha Suta quoted from *Bharatiya Itihas Ki Rooprekha*, p. 458. (69) *Ibid.*, p. 339. (70) *Buddhist India*, p. 54. (71) *Harsha Charit*, p. 202-203. (72) *Kalidas Ka Bharat*, p. 63.

In the south of India during the days of the Vijayanagar empire the Brahmins held the highest position and besides their own sixfold duties they could undertake agriculture, trade, service, etc. The Kshatriyas were generally engaged in the military profession and the Vaishyas carried on agriculture and trade.⁷³ In the Government factories 500 artists worked upon gold and silver thread.⁷⁴ Madura, Tanjore, North Arcot, Salem and other places were well known for fine work on metals.⁷⁵

While describing the palace of Delhi, *Bernier* has said that it had very big halls which were called 'Karkhanas'. Different kinds of work such as embroidery, goldsmith's work, varnishing, tailoring, leather work, making of pots, polishing metals with gold or silver, weaving of silken cloths and superfine muslins, etc. were carried on in these big apartments.⁷⁶ Under Akbar, Government factories worked at Lahore, Agra, Fatehpur and Ahmedabad, where the employees could develop their respective arts.⁷⁷ All contemporary travellers and historians agree that the industry of manufacture of wool and its cloth was in a very highly developed condition in Kashmir.⁷⁸ According to *Bernier* India had such a large stock of cotton and silken cloth that it not only supplied the needs

(73) *Bijaya Nagar Samrajaya Ka Itihas*, pp. 192—195. (74) *Decay of Indian Industries*, p. 15-16. (75) *Vijayanagar Samrajaya ka Itihas*, p. 179. (76) *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, p. 259. (77) *Mughal Administration*, p. 189. (78) *The Commercial Policy of the Mughals*, pp. 92—94.

of the Mughal Empire but also of the neighbouring states, and even the needs of European countries.⁷⁹ Cotton cloth was made of different kinds, such as simple, bleached, coloured chintz, etc.⁸⁰ During the reign of Akbar, the swords and daggers of Bharoch were very well known. Besides these, blades were also famous all over the world.⁸¹ In this period according to *Moreland*, boat making was well advanced and considerable trade was carried on by means of boats on the waters of the Ganga and the Sindhu.⁸² The Marhattas did not have much time to attend to trade and commerce. Some of their rulers took interest in the matter but there was not much progress in this matter under Marhatta rule.⁸³

(79) Decay of Indian Industries, p. 37-38. (80) The Commercial Policy of the Mughals, p. 94. (81) *Ibid.*, pp. 90—92. (82) India at the Death of Akbar, p. 144. (83) Shivaji and His Times, p. 397.

GUILDS AND TRADE UNIONS

From very early days craftsmen and workers of India felt the necessity of being united. The description of unions of workmen in different occupations is found at many places in the Vedic literature. The *Vedas* advise men to be united in their work, with love and without any antagonism amongst themselves, just as from times immemorial the sun, moon, stars, wind, fire and other divine powers have been performing their duties without any mutual opposition :

“संगच्छ्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।
देवाभागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते ॥”¹

Rigveda enjoins as follows, “You should be united in your hearts, feelings and opinions. You should be mentally united so that your united power may develop” :—

“समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥”²

Atharvaveda also advises this kind of union, “You should all advance with truthful, palatable and beneficial speech. Do not be divided amongst yourselves. Don’t oppose one another and live peacefully and unitedly together.”

“मा विद्यौष्ट अन्यो अन्यस्मै वल्गु वदन्त एत ॥”³

Shukla Yajurveda Samhita has stated that if men

(1) *Rigveda* 10/191/2. (2) *Ibid* 10/191/4. (3) *Atharva Veda* 3/30/5.

are united, nothing can deter them. Thus the utility of union has been illustrated :—

“अनावृष्टाः सीदत सहैजसः ।”⁴

We find used in *Rigveda* the words ‘Gana’ and ‘Vrat’⁵. *Aitareya Brahmana* contains the word ‘Sheshthi’⁶. The *Vajasaneyi Samhita* refers to ‘Gana’ and ‘Ganapati’⁷. The *Arthashastra* considers a ‘Shreni’ to mean a group of employees⁸. Other shastras use the words Shreni, Puga, Gana, Vrat and Sangha to indicate what *Katyayana* calls groups :—

“गणाः पाषण्ड पूगाश्च व्राताश्च श्रेणयस्तथा ।

समूहस्थाश्च ये वान्ये वर्गख्यास्ते बृहस्पतिः ।।”⁹

The word ‘Shreni’ is used in the Vedic literature to mean a group. The *Rigveda* states that the horses grouped themselves together like the Swans :—

“हंसा इव श्रेणिशो यतन्ते यदाक्षिर्बुद्ध्यमज्मश्वाः ।”¹⁰

The *Apastamba Dharmasutra* refers to a body of Brahmacharis going together to beg for alms :

“तस्माद् ह वे ब्रह्मचारिसङ्घं चरन्तं न प्रत्यावर्क्षीतापि हेतेष्वेवंविध
एवं व्रतः स्यादिति हि ब्राह्मणम् ।।”¹¹

From the *Mahabhashya* of *Patanjali*, we know that ‘Vrat’ meant a society of men of different castes who had no definite means of earning a livelihood :—

(4) Shukla Yaju. Sam. 10/4. (5) Rigveda 5/53/11 ; 10/34.
(6) Aitareya Brahman 3/30/3. (7) Bajas. Sam. 23/19/1.
(8) Kautilya 2/4. (9) Katyayan—quoted from History of Dharma-shastras, Vol. II, Part I, p. 68-69. (10) Rigveda 1/163/10.
(11) Apas. Dharm. 1/1/3/26.

“नाना जातीया अनियतवृत्तय उत्सेध् जीवितः सङ्घा ।
ब्राताः तेषां कमब्रातं तेन ब्रात कर्मणा जीवतीति ब्रातीनः ॥”¹²

The following extract from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* illustrates the corporate nature of economic activity in ancient India : —

“स नेव व्यभवत् स विशममृजत, यान्येतानि देवजातानि गणश
आख्यायन्ते ॥”¹³

In the Vedic period we find the development of different crafts and the initial formation of the employees' unions.¹⁴ According to Prof. K. T. Shah, the employees' unions of the ancient times can well bear comparison with the labour unions of the present times.¹⁵ The Vaishyas and Shudras, by forming their unions, could successfully face the ill treatment at the hands of the higher castes and could also improve their economic condition.¹⁶

In the ancient times the unions gradually gained strength so that the employees could improve their condition. The artisans and craftsmen had so much improved their position that they could get fair wages without any external help.¹⁷ The work of these unions was not limited to the betterment of the lot of the members only but they also undertook works of public utility such as the construction of

(12) Mahabhashya, Part II, p. 374. (13) Brih. Up. 1/8/12.

(14) Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 79. (15) Ancient Foundations of Economics in India, p. 49. (16) Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 136. (17) *Ibid.*, p. 276.

rest houses for the travellers, temples, tanks, etc. To serve the poor was also one of their duties :—

“सभाप्रपादेवगृह तडागाराम संस्कृतिः ।
तयानायदरिद्राणां संस्कारो यजन क्रिया ॥
कुलायनं निरोधश्च कार्यमस्माभिरंशतः ।
यत्रैतल्लिखितं सम्यक् धर्मया सा समय क्रिया ॥”¹⁸

These unions of those ancient times were helpful not only in the evolution of arts like sculpture but were powerful centres of arts themselves. On account of their liberal culture and high progress they had become ornaments of the society.¹⁹

Gautama states that the farmers, merchants, cattle breeders and artisans worked under the recognised rules of their unions :—

“देशजाति कुल धर्माश्चास्मान्नायेर विरुद्धाः प्रमाणम् ।
कर्षक वणिक् पशुपाल कुसीदि कारवः स्वे स्वे वग ॥”²⁰

Sometimes, the irresponsible action of a person resulted in trouble for the whole union as when a man disturbs a honeycomb, the evil effects of his action have to be borne by the neighbours :—

एकः पापानि कुस्तेफलं भुङ्क्ते महाजनः ।
भोक्तारो विप्रमुच्यन्ते कर्ता दोषेण लिप्यते ॥”²¹

So, *Brihaspati* wants that the presidents of the unions should be expert, capable and reliable persons :—

“शुक्लो वेद धर्मज्ञा दक्षा दान्ताः कुलोद्भवाः ।
सर्वं कार्यं प्रवीणाश्च कर्तव्यास्तु महत्तमोः ॥”²²

(18) *Brihaspati*—Quoted from *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, p. 17. (19) *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, p. 28. (20) *Gautam Dhar*. 11/20-21 quoted from *Hindu Polity*, p. 242. (21) *Mahabharat*, *Udyog* 33/42. (22) *Brih.* 17/9.

There were hard and fast rules for the membership of the unions, so that responsible persons could become members. It was not, therefore, the practice to allow idle, old or very young men as well as those who have no self confidence, to become members of a union : —

“विद्वेषिणो व्यसनिनः शालीनाल समीरवः ।
लुब्धाति वृद्धवालाश्च न कार्याः कार्यचिन्तकाः ॥”²³

The work of these unions was carried on according to democratic principles. If the chief of a union tried to obstruct or harm a member through malice, it was the king's duty to intervene :

“वाधां कुर्युर्देकस्य सम्भूता द्वेष संयुताः ।
राज्ञाते विनिवार्यास्तु शास्यश्चैवानुबन्धितः ॥”²⁴

If a dispute arose between the President and the members of a union, it was the duty of the King to intervene and bring about a conciliation : —

“मुख्यैः सह समूहानां विसंवादो यदा भवेत् ।
तदो विचारयेद्राजा स्वमार्गे स्थापयेच्चतान् ॥”²⁵

According to *Brihaspati*, the King had to accept the decision of a union about the members of the union, be it kind or harsh.²⁶ *Kautilya* has given a good description of the unions of employees, craftsmen or artisans. According to him the work of the unions should be controlled by a Board of three Directors. He has stated that the entrance and the membership fees should be paid to the President of the union.²⁷ The profit earned

(23) *Ibid.* 10/8. (24) *Ibid.* 17/19. (25) *Ibid.* 17/20.
(26) *Ibid.* 17/18. (27) *Kautilya* 4/1/73/1-2.

by the unions was equally distributed among their members :—

“संघभृताः संभूयसमुत्थातारो वा यया संभाषिते वेतनं
समं वा विभजेरन् ॥”²³

The unions of artisans and labourers to become stronger made an agreement amongst themselves. These agreements were made in the presence of a mediator or they were noted in black and white :—

“कोशेन लेख्य क्रिययामव्यस्यैर्वापरस्परम् ।
विश्वासं प्रथमं कृत्वा कुर्युः कार्याण्यनन्तरम् ॥”²⁴

To keep the members disciplined, much emphasis was laid on proper performance of duty by the members. They could not be forgiven for dereliction of their duties towards the union of which they were members :—

“जाति श्रेण्यधिवासानां कुलधर्माश्च सर्वतः ।
वर्जयन्ति च ये धर्मं तेषां धर्मो न विधत्ते ॥”²⁵

According to *Manu*, a member of the union transgressing its rules and constitution deserves to be punished with fine and even imprisonment :

“यो ग्राम देश संधानां कृत्वा सत्येन संविदम् ।
विसंवदेन्नरे लोभात्तं राष्ट्राद्धिं प्रवासयेत् ॥
निगृह्य दापयैश्वर्यं समयव्यभिचारिणम् ।
चतुः सुवर्णान् षण्णिष्काञ्छतमानंच राजतम् ॥”²⁶

Yajnavalkya is of the opinion that the private property of a person who misappropriates the property of the union should be confiscated and he should be banished from the nation. Similarly,

(28) *Ibid.* 3/14/22. (29) *Brihaspati Smriti* 10/7. (30) *Mahabharat Shanti* 36/19. (31) *Manu* 8/219-220.

if a member acts contrary to the rules of the union or does not perform his duty properly, he should be punished : —

“गण द्रव्यं हरेद्यस्तु संविदं लङ्घयेन्चयः ।
 सर्वस्वहरणं कृत्वा तं राष्ट्राद्विप्रवासयेत् ॥
 कर्तव्यं वचनं सर्वैः समूहं हितवादिनाम् ।
 यस्तत्र विपरीतः स्यात्स दाप्यः प्रथमं दमम् ॥”³²

If a member has a dispute with other members or if he is negligent of his duty, he could be fined 24 Nishkas : —

“तत्रभेदमुपेक्षां वा यः कश्चित्कुरुते नरः ।
 चतुः सुवर्णाः षण्डिष्कास्तस्यदण्डोविधीयते ॥”³³

In the opinion of *Kautilya* if a member commits theft or a crime, he should be forgiven for the first time but if he repeats his crime or if his crime is serious, he should be treated as a criminal.³⁴ It was considered unethical to create differences among the members of the union and the offender was punished.³⁵

During the *Ramayan* period Artisans or labourers working in the same industry had their own unions. These unions were affiliated to the bigger unions of different industries called ‘Naigam’ (corporation). These corporations held an important position in civic and political matters. The representatives of such corporations had come to attend the proposed ceremony of installing Rama as heir apparent : —

(32) Yajnavalkya 15/187-198. (33) Brih. 17/14. (34) Kautilya 3/14/29/31. (35) Narad. 10/6/7.

“पौरजान पदश्रेष्ठा नैगमाश्च गणैः सह ।

अभिषेकाय रामस्य सह तिष्ठन्ति पायिवैः ॥”³⁶

The corporators had accompanied Bharat to Chitratkut to receive Rama and bring him back to Ayodhya : —

“ये च तत्रापरे सर्वे सम्मता ये च नैगमाः ।

रामं प्रति यदुद्दिष्टाः सर्वाः प्रकृतयः शुभाः ॥”³⁷

These included jewellers, ivory-workers, wood-carvers and such other persons of the labouring class.³⁸

These corporators took part in the coronation ceremony of Rama : —

“यो वैश्चैवाभ्यविचंस्ते सम्प्रहृष्टैः सनैगमैः ॥”³⁹

In this connection four words are found in the aphorisms of *Panini*, viz. Gana, Puga, Vrat and Sangha, all meaning a union. Early Buddhist works contain the words Sangha, Puga, Sena and Gana. The word ‘Sangha’ is used in the sense of religious unions in the Buddha and Jain works. From the descriptions of Puga and Shreni it appears that these institutions aimed at making commercial progress. Almost every craft, profession or occupation had its own union which was called ‘Shreni’.

- ✓ Every ‘Shreni’ included about a thousand members. The Shreni elected its chief who was called Pamukha (Pramukha) or Jyesthaka (President) or elder).⁴⁰

The Jyesthakas represented their unions and were treated with respect in the King’s court.

(36) Valmiki 2/14/40/1. (37) *Ibid.* 2/83/11. (38) *Ibid.* 2/83/12/5. (39) *Ibid.* 6/128/62. (40) *Bhartiya Itihas Ki Rooprekha*, Part I, pp. 324-325.

They were given high posts in the court.⁴¹ The trainees in a Shreni were called 'Antewasina' (disciples).⁴² The Jatakas mention the 'jyesthakas' of the unions of boatmen, gardeners, caravans of traders.⁴³

From the 15th inscription of Nasik, we come to know that the employees' unions in the professions of oilmen, potters and watermen had fixed deposits of 500, 1000 and 2000 Karshapanas respectively. From the interest on these deposits medical treatment was given to the people.⁴⁴ The inscriptions No. 9 and 10 at Nasik refer to a donation kept as a fixed deposit with the union of weavers.⁴⁵ We know of a union of the grinders of corn into flour from the Brahmistone inscription at Mathura.⁴⁶ We find that some amount was kept as fixed deposit with the unions of the bamboo workers and bronze workers.⁴⁷ The Indore copper plate of *Skandagupta* mentions money deposited with the union of oilmen.⁴⁸ The creation of a temple dedicated to the Sun God at Dashapura in Malwa by the union of the weavers of silken cloth residing in the province of Lat (South Gujrat) is mentioned.⁴⁹ From what has been stated above the employees' unions of those times seem to have been well managed, economically strong and enjoying the confidence of the community.

(41) Urag Jatak, p. 154. (42) Pracheen Bharat Ka Rajnaitik Aur Sanskriik Itihas, p. 176. (43) Jatak 1/308 ; 3/405. (44 to 49) Quoted from History of Dharma Shastra, Book II, Part I, p. 69.

We know of eighteen unions of Buddhist times.⁵⁰ The line of thought followed in the Cambridge History of India that there were only four organised labour unions, does not appear to be sound.⁵¹ Shri R. C. Majumdar has prepared the following list of unions on the authority of Jataka and other works as well as inscriptions.⁵² :—

(1) Workers in wood (carpenters including cabinet makers, wheelwrights, builders of houses, builders of ships and vehicles of all sorts), (2) Workers in metal, including gold and silver, (3) Leather workers, (4) Ivory workers, (5) Dyers, (6) Jewellers, (7) Fisher folk, (8) Butchers, (9) Barbers and sham-pooers, (10) Garland makers and flower sellers, (11) Sailors, (12) Rush workers and basket makers, (13) Painters, (14) Caravan Traders, (15) Forest Police who guarded the Caravans, (16) Weavers, (17) Potters, (18) Workers fabricating hydraulic engines, (19) Oilmillers, (20) Bamboo workers, (21) Braziers (Kasakara), (22) Corn dealers, (23) Cultivators, (24) Money lenders, (25) Traders, (26) Herdsmen, (27) Workers in stone, (28) Robbers and freebooters.

The Jatakas tell us that the heads of the guilds sometimes held high posts in the state and were favourites of the King.⁵³

(50) Buddhist India, pp. 90 to 96. (51) The Cambridge History of India, Part I, P. 206. (52) Corporate Life in Ancient India, p. 4. (53) *Ibid.*, p. 5.

In describing the marriage ceremony of Princess Rajyashri, *Bana* has mentioned the unions of leather-workers, carpenters and plasterers.⁵⁴ After Harshavardhana, during the rule of the Gurjara Pratiharas traces are found of the unions of the potters, dealers in betel leaf, and merchants dealing in the sale and purchase of horses.⁵⁵ Besides the Shreni and the Sangha, there were unions of labourers as well as of the employers at Kanauj.⁵⁶ The inscriptions in the cave temples of Maharashtra refer to donations by the unions of goldsmiths, carpenters and farmers.⁵⁷ A reference is found to the deposit of money with the union of weavers. With the proceeds of this deposit the preceptors were supplied with clothes during the rainy season.⁵⁸

During the days of Vikramaditya of Ujjain artisans and craftsmen were called Karu or Silpi (worker or one knowing some art). They were well organised in guilds known as Shreni or Kula. They had their own byelaws for the management of the union. The head of a Shreni or Kula was called Kulaka or Kulashresthi.⁵⁹ During the days of *Kalidas* the skilled workers' unions were called Sangha. In the *Raghuvansha*⁶⁰ we find mention of the union of sculptors, and in the *Abhigyan Shakuntal* occurs the name of the chief of a

(54) Sri Harsh of Kanauj, pp. 59-60. (55) The Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. 9, p. 127. (56) History and Culture of Indian People, Part IV, p. 405. (57) A Peep into the early history of India, p. 45. (58) *Ibid.* (59) Vikramaditya of Ujjain, p. 244. (60) Raghuvansh 16/38.

union.⁶¹ We also find the words 'Naigama'⁶² and 'Shreshthin'⁶³.

We find from the Gupta inscriptions that every union had a leader who had some influence on the administration of the country.⁶⁴ In the dramatic literature of the Gupta times, there is a reference to unions. The *Mudrarakshasa* describes the union of Shreshthins in Pataliputra.⁶⁵ From the Mangoli inscription it is known that donations were given by the unions of oilmen, weavers and basket makers.⁶⁶ The system of administering the unions is also found. The union of the weavers of Lakshmeshvara had four presidents and its membership was two thousands. There were 15 persons on the managing committee of the union of Virabalanju described in the Miraj inscription.⁶⁷

The condition of the employees was deplorable in the Muslim rule on account of the autocratic rule of the rulers. The Farman of the Emperor or the Governor could force labourers to leave their home to work on any wages.⁶⁸ According to *Moreland* the wages of employees were very meagre. They could get regular meals only once in a day.⁶⁹ The labourers of the Mughal times were entirely dependent on the higher classes and forced work was taken from them. If the master

(61) Abhigyan Shakuntala, p. 219. (62) Vikr. 413. (63) Abhigyan Shakuntala, p. 219. (64) Life in Gupta Age, p. 366. (65) Mudra Rakshas, p. 98. (66) Rastrakutas and their times, p. 368. (67) *Ibid.*, p. 369. (68) The commercial policy of the Mughals, p. 186. (69) India at the death of Akbar, p. 269.

so desired, he would pay the wages to the labourers ; otherwise he could drive him out of his house. The master was wholly independent and there was no appeal against his decision.⁷⁰

During the Muslim rule labourers and employees gradually lost the feeling of democracy. They were afraid to join any union, as by doing so they would incur the displeasure of the ruler. Thus the unions, continuously going on from the Vedic times, came to an end. As a result it may be said that there was no organisation of workers during the Mughal rule which could tackle and solve the difficulties and problems of the members.⁷¹

(70 & 71) The Commercial Policy of the Mughals, p. 70.

WAGES

In ancient works, the word 'Bhriti'¹ is used to mean wages. According to *Panini* definite remuneration given for definite work is called "Parikrayana". The employer did 'Parikreta' and the employee did 'Parikran'.² The employee sold his labour which the employer purchased in return for a fixed amount of money.

Earning with perseverance, discipline and faithfulness is emphasised in the Vedic literature :—

"अपमित्य धान्यं यज्जवसहमिदम् ।"³

In the Indian culture great importance is given to the purity of the means for earning wealth. Instructions have been given to acquire wealth through hard work and faithfulness. The person who earns money by pure means for personal use is regarded as a pure man :—

"सर्वेषामेव शौचानामर्थं शौचं परं स्मृतम् ।

योऽर्थे शुचिर्हि स शुचिर्न मृदारि शुचिः शुचिः ॥"⁴

Money was useful for maintenance and a person earned remuneration by hard work. In the ancient times wages were determined in three ways :—

(1) It was settled according to the volume of work to be done; (2) it was fixed according to the time required in doing the work; and (3) it was

(1) Yajna. Veermitrodaya Teeka, p. 193. (2) India as known to Panini, p. 112. (3) Atharva Veda 6/117/2. (4) Manu 5/106.

decided in consideration of both the time required and the amount of the work to be done :—

“कार्यं माना कालमाना कार्यकाल मितिस्त्रिधा ।

भूतिरुक्ता तु तद्विज्ञैः सा देया भाषिता यथा ॥”⁵

The employer said to the employee, “ You have to do this much work and so much remuneration will be paid for it.” This system of determining the wages was called “ Karyamana :—

“अयं भारस्त्वया तत्र स्याप्यस्त्वैतावतीभूतिम् ।

दास्यामि कार्यमाना सा कीर्तिततद्विदेशकैः ॥”⁶

A particular amount paid for a year, month or day during which the work was to be done, was called “ Kala-mana ” :—

“वत्सरे वत्सरे वापि मासि मासिदिने दिने ।

एतावतीं भूतिं तेऽहं दास्यामीति च कालिका ॥”⁷

The employer stated, “ You have done so much work during so much time, so you will be paid so much amount as wages”. This system of payment was called “ Karya-kala ” system :—

“एतावता कार्यमिदं कालेनापित्वया कृतम् ।

भूतिमेतावतीं दास्ये कार्यकाल मित्ता च सा ॥”⁸

In the case of those whose wages were not determined beforehand remuneration was paid in consideration of the work done and the time devoted for it :—

“कर्मकालानुरूपमसंभाषित वेतनः ।”⁹

(5) Shukra 2/392. (6) *Ibid.* 2/393. (7) *Ibid.* 2/394. (8) *Ibid* 2/395.

(9) Kautilya 3/13/15/19.

Kautilya has stated that wages should be fixed after considering the cleanliness and fineness, etc. of the thread :—

श्लक्ष्णस्थूलमव्यतां च सूत्रस्य विदित्वा वेतनं
कल्पयेत् ।।¹⁰

Kautilya opines that wages should be reduced in proportion to the amount of thread spun :—

“सूत्रह्रासे वेतनह्रासः द्रव्यसारात् ।।”¹¹

Shukracharya says that remuneration should be determined after noting the merit and the amount of work put up by the artisan or sculptor :—

“दृष्ट्वा कार्याणि च गुणान्छिल्पिनां भृति मावहेत् ।।”¹²

Where a number of labourers are working together, their wages should be given in consideration of the amount of work done by them. If a person performs the work of two, his wages should be doubled but if a man does less work than an average man, his wages should be reduced :—

“यो यावत् कुरुते कर्म तावत्तस्य तु वेतनम् ।

उभयोरप्यसाध्यं चेत् साध्यं कुर्याद्यथाश्रुतम् ।।”¹³

In the case of watchman in a field, cowherds and labourers, arrangements should be made to feed them in consideration of the work done by them. In addition to food, they should get 1½ Pana per month :—

“षण्डवाट गोपालकदासकर्म करेभ्यो यथा पुरुष परिवायं भक्तं
कुर्यात् ।। समादपणिकं मासं दद्यात् ।।”¹⁴

(10) *Ibid.* 2/23/41/3. (11) *Ibid.* 2/23/41/7. (12) *Shukra* 4/838.

(13) *Yajnavalkya* 2/196. (14) *Kautilya* 2/24/42/38-39.

In the case of other artisans also arrangements may be made to feed and pay them in accordance with the work put up by them :—

“कर्मानुरूपं कारुण्यो भक्तवेतनम् ।”¹⁵

If a master takes work from an employee without first determining his wages, he should pay him one-tenth of the income derived from commerce, cattle or crops :—

“दाप्यस्तु दशमं भागं वाणिज्यं पशुसस्यतः ।
अनिश्चित्य भृतिं यस्तु कारयेत् स महीक्षिता ॥”¹⁶

Kautilya also supports this theory :—

“कर्षकः सस्यानां गोपालकः सर्पिषां वैदेहकः पण्यानामात्मना
व्यवहृतानां दशभागम् संभाषितं वेतनो लभेत् ॥”¹⁷

Only the ploughman can get a third part of the profit from the income of land. If he is supplied with food and clothes he should get only the fifth part of the gain :—

“त्रिभागं पंचभागं वा गृहणीयात् सीरवाहकः ।
भक्तच्छादभृतः सीराद् भागं भुंजीत पंचमम् ॥”¹⁸

If a man does not properly perform the work, his wages depend upon the will of the employer. But if a greater gain is obtained through the work of the employee, he is entitled to get a little more than one-tenth of the profit.¹⁹ *Narada* also lays down the same rule. If wages have not been determined before, the employee of a merchant, the cowherd and the farm labourer should get one-tenth of the profit from the business :—

(15) *Ibid.* 2/24/42/40. (16) *Yajnavalkya* 2/194. (17) *Kautilya* 3/13/40. (18) *Brih.* 16/9. (19) *Yajna.* 2/195.

“भृतावनिश्चितायां तु दशभागं समाप्नुयुः ।
लाभं गोवीजसस्यानां वणिग्गोपकृषीवलाः ॥”²⁰

A cowherd who tends ten cows and is not given food and clothes is entitled to get all the milk of one cow as his wages : —

“गोपः क्षीरं भृतो यस्तु स दुह्याद् दशतो वराम् ।
गोस्वाम्यनुमते भृत्यः सा स्यात् पालेऽमृते भृतिः ॥”²¹

In the Epic age one cow's milk was given as wages to the person tending six cows and a couple of cows were given free of cost to the man who tended one hundred cows. An employee in a commercial concern was given a seventh part of the profit as wages. Workers dealing with the hoofs and horns of cattle were given 1/16 part of the profit. Farm labourers got 1/7 part of the profit.²²

According to *Kautilya* the wages of a goldsmith were also fixed. For making an article out of a Dharana (Tola) of silver he was given one masa : —

“माषको वेतनं रुप्यवरणस्य ॥”²³

In preparing golden articles, 1/8 part of the cost of gold was fixed as the wages : —

“सुवर्णस्याष्टभागः ॥”²⁴

If any worker showed special skill in the making of the article, his wages were doubled : —

“शिक्षा विशेषेण द्विगुणवेतनं वृद्धिः ॥”²⁵

Five per cent of the metal was the rate of wages.

(20) Narad 6/3. (21) Manu 8/231. (22) Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 307 and the Cambridge History of India, Part I, pp. 269-270. (23) Kautilya 4/1/73/48. (24) *Ibid.* 4/1/73/49. (25) *Ibid.* 4/1/73/50.

in case of workers in metals such as copper, lead, bronze, zinc, tin or brass : —

“ताम्रवृत्तकंसर्वकृन्तकारकूटकानां पंचकंशतं वेतनम् ।”²⁶

A third part of the cost of jewels, precious stones, etc. was given as wages to employees working in mining, digging, cleaning and separating the precious stones from the ore : —

“अथरकंपासुधावकाः सारत्रिभाग लभेरन् ।”²⁷

Ordinary workmen received Rs. 120/- as annual remuneration : —

“कारुशिल्पिनो विंशतिशतिकाः ।”²⁸

Manu has laid down principles for determining the wages of employees of the Government. The female workers, messengers and other servants of the King should constantly get remuneration in consideration of their position and work.: —

“राजा कर्मसु युक्तानां स्त्रीणां प्रेष्य जनस्य च ।

प्रत्यहं कल्पयेद् वृत्तिं स्थानं कर्मानुरूपतः ॥

पणोदेयो वऽकुण्टस्य षड्कुण्टस्य वेतनम् ।

षाण्मासिकस्तथाच्छादो धान्यद्रोणस्तु मासिकः ।।”²⁹

Manu has laid down that in the case of sculptors, builders, carpenters, etc. the wages should be paid in accordance with the principle that the person who completes a difficult work should be paid more wages than one who performs simple work. ³⁰

In the ancient times the unions of employees grew gradually stronger and the employees had

(26) *Ibid.* 4/1/73/52. (27) *Ibid.* 4/1/73/63. (28) *Ibid.* 5/3/91/18-
(29) *Manu* 7/125-126. (30) *Ibid.* 8/211.

improved their condition. The condition of the artisans and labourers was good and they could get proper wages without the intervention of outsiders.³¹ The wages of artisans, musicians, physicians, readers of scriptures, servants and labourers were determined in accordance with the rate prevailing in the market or as decided by experts :—

“कारुशिल्पिकुशीलवचिकित्सक वाग्जीवन्परिचारकादिराशा कारिक³²

वर्गस्तु यथाऽन्यस्तद्विधः कुर्योधथा वा कुशलाः कल्पयेयुस्तथा वेतनं लभेत्

It is proper for a King to pay his servants in accordance with their merit :—

“यथा यथा तु गुणवान् भृतकस्तद्भृतिस्तथा ।

संयोज्या तु प्रयत्नेन नृपेणात्म हिताय वे ॥”³³

The *Ramayana* considers it a low kind of sin if after taking work from an employee no wages are paid to him :—

“कारयित्वा महत्कर्म भर्ता भृत्यमनर्थकम् ।

अधर्मो योऽस्य सोऽस्यास्तु यस्यायौऽनुमतेगतः ॥”³⁴

Shukracharya has emphasised immediate payment of the wages. He has divided remuneration into four kinds: (1) The wages which will support persons necessary to be maintained are medium; (2) The wages which support all those deserving to be maintained are the best; (3) The wages which supply only food and clothes are ordinary; and (4) The wages which can support only one person are low :—

(31) *Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India*, p. 276.

(32) *Kautilya* 3/13/15/42. (33) *Shukra* 2/398. (34) *Valmiki* 2/75/23.

“न कुर्याद् भृतिलोपं तु तथा भृतिविलम्बनम् ।
 अवश्यपोष्यभरणा भृतिर्मध्याप्रकीर्तिता ॥
 परिपोष्या भृतिः श्रेष्ठा समान्नाच्छादनार्थिका ।
 भवेदेकस्य भरणं ययासा हीन संज्ञिका ॥”³⁵

Shukracharya also lays down that wages should be so well determined that they could maintain the persons who must be nourished such as father, mother, etc. : —

“अवश्य पोष्यवर्गस्य भरणं भृतकाद्भवेत् ।
 तथा भृतिस्तु संयोज्या तथोग्याभृत कायवै ॥”³⁶

A master paying very low wages to his employees turns them hostile because being low paid, the employees engage themselves in some other work and try to find faults with their employer : —

“ये भृत्या हीनभृतिकाः शत्रवस्ते स्वयं कृताः ।
 परस्यसाधकास्ते तु छिद्रकोश प्रजा हराः ॥”³⁷

The law-givers have laid down rules also for the deduction of wages. If a man does not milk the cow at the fixed time he should lose the wages for the day. Similarly, if those who pass strings in the noses of bulls, yoking them to ploughs and ordinary servants do not attend to the day's work, they should not get the wages for the day : —

“दोहकाल मतिक्रामतस्तत्फलहानंदण्डः ॥ एतेननस्यदम्ययुगपिगन
 वर्तन काला व्याख्याताः ॥”³⁸

The same rule applied to those who tended the horses, *i.e.*, they should lose the daily wages if they did not work for the day : —

(35) *Shukra* 2/396-397. (36) *Ibid.* 2/399. (37) *Ibid.* 2/400.
 (38) *Kautilya* 2/29/47/32-33.

“कर्मातिक्रमे वैषां दिवस वेतनच्छेदनं कुर्यात् ।”³⁹

The rule with regard to the regular payment of wages was that at best, wages could be withheld for seven days :—

“तेषामाधिः सप्तरात्रमासीत् ।”⁴⁰

If within these seven days the work was not properly done, another person could be engaged but the wages of the first employee for the work done by him must be paid.⁴¹ The law-givers have also made rules for fining the employer if he does not pay the wages in time. In the opinion of *Kautilya*, the fine should be one-tenth of wages or 6 Panas :—

“वेतनादाने दशवन्धो दण्डः षट्पणो वा ।”⁴²

If wages are not paid due to the extravagance of the employer, the fine should be 12 Panas or fifth part of the wages :—

“अपव्ययमाने द्वादशपणो दण्डः पंचवन्धो वा ।”⁴³

According to the *Apastamba Dharma Sutra* even if financial difficulty affects the wife or the son, the householder has to pay the wages of the employees :—

“काममात्मानं भार्यां पुत्रं वोपरूढ्यान् त्वेव दासकर्मकरम्”⁴⁴

The *Mahabharat* also enjoins the regular payment of wages to the employees. Horrible consequences of nonpayment of wages are possible :—

(39) *Ibid.* 2/30/48/51. (40) *Ibid.* 3/14/66/15. (41) *Ibid.* 3/14/66/17. (42) *Ibid.* 3/13/65/45. (43) *Ibid.* 3/13/65/46. (44) *Apas. Dhar.* 9/2/11.

“कञ्चिद्वलस्य भक्तं व वेतनं च ययोचितम् ।
 संप्राप्त काले दातव्यं ददासि न विकर्षसि ॥
 कालातिक्रमणादेते भक्त वेतनयोर्भृताः ।
 भर्तुः कुर्वन्ति दीर्घल्यात्सोनर्थः सुमहान् स्मृतः ॥”⁴⁵

When an employer was satisfied with the work of the employee, the latter received a reward in addition to his wages. This encouraged the worker and served as an incentive to concentrate his mind on the skilful completion of the work entrusted to him. In the opinion of *Shukracharya* the money given for satisfactory service, bravery, etc. was called a ‘reward.’ Whatever the employees get in return for their work was called ‘wages’ :—

“सेवा शौर्यादिसन्तुष्टैर्दत्तं तत् पारितोषिकम् ।
 भृत्तिरूपेण सन्दत्तं वेतनं तत् प्रकीर्तितम् ॥”⁴⁶

Shukracharya has laid down that 1/8th part of the annual wages should be given as ‘bonus’ to the employees and when they perform more work than was expected, they should be given an eighth part of the profit, in addition to wages and bonus :—

“अष्टमांशं पारितोष्यं दद्यात् भृत्याय वत्सरे ।
 कार्याष्टमांशं वा दद्यात् कार्यं द्रागधिकं कृतम् ॥”⁴⁷

We find reference of giving articles to the employees free of charge in order to encourage them in their work. The employees were given oils, Amla (emblic myrobalan) and ointments or cosmetics in consideration of the length, weight, etc. of the thread spun by them.

(45) Maha. Sabha 5/48-49. (46) Shukra 2/342. (47) *Ibid.* 2/412.

‘सूत्रप्रमाणं ज्ञात्वा तैलामलकोद्वर्तनेरेता अनुगृहणीयात् ।’⁴⁸

The wages of employees were raised or reduced in consideration of the volume and quality of work done by them. A person getting 60 Panas as his wages, was given one ‘Adhaka’ of corn. In this connection the rule observed was that corn should be given to the employee in proportion to the high or low wages paid to him :—

“एतेन भूतानाम भूतानां च विद्या कर्मभ्यां भत्तवेतन विशेषं च कुर्यात् ।
षष्टि वेतनस्याढकं कृत्वा हिरण्यानुरूपं भक्तं कुर्यात् ।”⁴⁹

If a person puts up more work than was expected, he should be paid higher wages :—

“तत्र स्यात्स्वामिनच्छेदोऽधिकं देयंकृतेऽधिक ।”⁵⁰

The Sutradayaksha (Head of the textile industry) should please his employees by offering them scents and garlands for producing rough, fine, superfine silken cloth, as also for weaving into cloth the fine fur on the bodies of deer called ‘Ranku’ :—

“क्षौम दुकूल क्रिमितानरांकवकार्पास सूत्रवान कर्मान्तांश्च प्रयुज्जानो
गन्धमाल्यदानैरन्यैश्चौपग्राहिकैराराधयेत् ।”⁵¹

The system of paying over-time wages for workers on holidays had come into being :—

“तिथिषु प्रतिपादनमानैश्च कर्म कारयितव्याः ।”⁵²

There were rules to grant holidays during the days of illness and on other casual occasions. An employee could get leave if he fell ill, or had fallen in adversity, or was engaged in some other difficult task :—

(48) Kautilya 2/32/41/5. (49) Kautilya 5/3/91/36-37. (50) Yajna. 16/195. (51) Kautilya 2/23/41/9. (52) *Ibid.* 2/23/41/6.

“अशक्तः कुत्सिते कर्माणि व्याधौ व्यसने वानुशयं लभेत् ।”⁵³

During the Maurya times, the civic board managed every thing connected with art. It was also responsible for determining the wages of the employees. In factories high quality materials were used and the employees were paid fair wages by the Municipal Board.⁵⁴ According to *Patanjali* the monthly wages of a labourer were five, six or ten silver Karshapanas during the time of *Panini*. *Patanjali* has also referred at one place to the payment of 6½ Karshapanas to a labourer as his monthly wages. According to *Panini* the system of serving the domestic workers with food was compulsory.⁵⁵

In the Tamilnad contemporary records are available, giving a definite idea about the payment of wages. The Tanjore inscription records the different grades of pay for the several temple officials which are fairly liberal and higher than mere subsistence wages.⁵⁶ The Southern inscription of the Chola Empire illustrates the wages paid to different catagories of skilled and unskilled workers. The employees were paid their wages in kind (*i.e.* in the form of paddy) and annual bonus was also paid in the same way.⁵⁷

According to *Megasthenes*, besides the herdsmen and the hunters, the fourth class included the

(53) *Ibid.* 3-14-66-3. (54) The early History of India, p. 127. (55) India as known to Panini, p. 112. (56) Rastrakutas and their times, pp. 396-397. (57) History and Culture of Indian People, Part IV, p. 407.

traders, merchants or labourers. Some of these offer honorary service to the state but the builders of ships and armourers were given wages and food by the King.⁵⁸

During the Buddhist period persons engaged in working on metals like gold and silver, wood and leather were united and divided the profits proportionately among themselves corresponding to the nature of their work. With regard to the construction of temples, houses and tanks or making of leather articles the head of the union received double the amount of wages of an ordinary worker.⁵⁹

From the records of *Hiuen Tsang* it is known that the Government servants received land in lieu of remuneration and the labourers got wages.⁶⁰

During the days of Akbar the farm labourer was ordinarily a serf who got traditional wages for his work by means of which he maintained himself and his family. Only in cities persons were engaged to work on contract basis. It may, therefore, be said that wages were determined beforehand.⁶¹

Tavernier states that the wages of workers in mines were very low. A skilled worker received three (golden) pagodas as annual wages, which were

(58) Ancient India as described by Megasthenese, p. 84. (59) The Corporate Life in Ancient India, p. 31. (60) Fahien Aur Hiuen Tsang Ki Bharat Yatra Bhumika, p. 1. (61) India at the Death of Akbar, pp. 189-190.

not at all higher than a bare subsistence allowance. The labourers worked in mines in the hope of getting rewards if they came upon a valuable stone or in the hope of stealing precious stones.⁶² During the reign of Akbar the wages of musketeers were divided into four classes :—The first class received 300 dams, the second 280 dams, the third 270 dams and the fourth 260 dams. The wages of others ranged between 110 and 250 dams.⁶³ (1 dam=1/40 rupee). Five adults and a young man were engaged to look after an elephant. The 'Mahaout' received 200 dams as his wages while the feeder of the elephant got 3½ dams per day but when he was on tour he received four dams per day.⁶⁴ The wages of servants working in the royal stables ranged between 100 and 180 dams.⁶⁵ The tenderers of camels were paid from 200 to 400 dams per month.⁶⁶

When a male or female elephant died, three months' wages of the 'Mui' (keeper) were not paid. If any article pertaining to caparisoning of the elephant and its 'Howda' was lost, 10 or 15 dams were deducted from the wages of the Mahaut and the Mui. If an elephant died through carelessness, the Mui had to pay its full cost to the King.⁶⁷ In the same way a fine was levied and recovered from the servant of a stable when a horse died or was stolen.⁶⁸

(62) *Ibid.*, pp. 159. (63) Ayeen Akbari edited by Bevrige, pp. 94-95. (64) *Ibid.*, p. 101. (65) *Ibid.*, pp. 114 to 116. (66) *Ibid.*, p. 124. (67) *Ibid.*, p. 108. (68) Ayeen Akbari edited by Bevrige, p. 77.

During the reign of Akbar the wages of bricklayers were divided into four classes. The first class received 7 dams per day, the second 6 dams, the third 5 dams and the fourth 4 dams.⁶⁹ The wages of joiners had five classes. Labourers of the first class got 7 dams per day, the second 6 dams, the third 5 dams, the fourth 4 dams and the fifth 3 dams. Water carriers and earth removers were paid 2 dams per day.⁷⁰

During this time the daily wages of an unskilled worker were 2 dams. Certainly, the rate of wages of those days appears meagre but in fact money had more purchasing power in those days.⁷¹

During the Muslim rule the labourer got his wages if the master liked to pay him ; otherwise he was driven out from the house. With regard to his servants the master had complete freedom to deal with them and there was no appeal against him.⁷²

According to *Pelsaert* the labourer never got full wages, a major portion of which was cut by the master. A month, according to the employer, consisted mostly of 40 days for which 3 to 4 rupees were paid as wages. The wages could be withheld for a number of months and the balance was paid in the form of old clothes or other articles.⁷³

During the reign of Shahjahan on account of

(69) *Ibid.*, p. 149. (70) *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151. (71) The Commercial Policy of the Mughals, p. 64. (72) *Ibid.*, p.70. (73) The Reminiscences of Fancisco Pelsaert, pp. 61 to 64.

famine, the economic condition of labourers had deteriorated in some parts of the country. Although there was much building activity and there was a great demand for labour, there was no perceptible rise in the rate of wages. The Farman of the Emperor or the Provincial Governors could forcibly drive the labourer out of his house to the field of work.⁷⁴

According to *Moreland* the condition of common people was deplorable. The wages of the employees were meagre and they could afford meal only once in a day.⁷⁵

Thus we note that the well organised system of payment of wages prevailing in the ancient times came to naught in the later ages.

(74) The Commercial Policy of the Mughals, p. 186. (75) India at the Death of Akbar, p. 269.

EMPLOYMENT AND FORCED LABOUR

We find from a careful study of ancient works that the employees were classified into various categories in accordance with the occupations they pursued. Rules and regulations were also made for appointment and termination of service. During the *Ramayan* period the workers were divided into two classes : —¹(1) Vishti and (2) Karmantika. The workers of the Vishti sub-division got their wages in kind *e.g.* in the form of corn and those of the Karmantik class got their wages in cash. The workers who were skilled in the profession and who possessed some special qualities were called artisans or sculptors. We find reference in the *Ramayan* to the following classes of workers : —²

Geologist—Those who knew dryness or dampness of the soil. (2/80/1), manufacturer of scents (2/83/14), shoemaker or dealer in leather (2/8/30), ivory workers (2/83/13), guides—Those who guide travellers (2/80/3), astrologer (2/4/18), digger (2/80/1), farmer (2/112/12), sailor (2/52/81), potter (2/83/12), sawer of wood (2/83/13), blanket maker (2/83/14), fisherman (2/83/15/), hunter (2/12/7), jeweller (2/83/12), worker on peacock feathers (2/83/13), watchman (2/80/2), road builder (2/82/20), road guard (2/82/20), actor (2/6/14), dancer (1/13/7), boatman (2/52/70), domestic servant

(1) Valmiki Ramayan 2/82/20. (2) Ramayan Kalin Samaj, pp. 240. to 242.

(1/45/34), manufacturer of glass (2/83/13), butcher (2/48/18), weaver (2/80/1), builder or architect (2/80/2), artisan (1/13/7), charioteer (2/4/3), cook (3/56/25), barber (6/128/13), goldsmith (2/83/14), tailor (2/83/15), massagist (2/83/14), bard (6/127/3), carpenter (2/80/2), maker of pearl necklaces (2/83/13), merchant or trader (2/6/12), bamboo worker (2/80/3), engineer or overseer (2/80/1).

The *Apastamba Dharma Sutra* mentions only two classes of workers :—(1) Farm labourers and (2) Cattle herdsman.

“अवशिनः कीनाशस्य कर्मन्यासे दण्डताडनम् । तथा पशुपस्य ।”³

Panini has called the workers able to take up difficult tasks ‘Karmakar’⁴ Those who received cash wages are called ‘Vaitnik’ (paid workers).

Shukracharya has sub-divided the employees in three classes :—Slow, average and sharp. Their wages were also low, moderate and high :—

“मन्दोमध्यस्तथा शीघ्रस्त्रिविधो भृत्य उच्यते ।

समा मध्या च श्रेष्ठा च भृतिस्तेषां क्रमात् स्मृता ॥”⁵

Shukracharya has further clarified these classes. That employee is the best who is devoted to the master. The servant who puts up more work in the expectation of getting higher wages is medium. A servant who tries to win over another employer although he gets good treatment from the present employer, is low. He who returns good for evil is the best and who returns evil for good is mean :—

(3) Apas. Dharam 2/28/2/3. (4) Panini 3/2/22. (5) Shukreniti 2/403.

“स्वामिन्ये वानुरक्तायो भृतकस्तूतमः स्मृतः ।
 सेवते पुष्ट भृतिदं प्रकरं सचमव्ययः ॥
 पुष्टोपि स्वामिनाऽव्यक्तं भजतेन्यसचाधमः ।
 उपकरोत्यपकृतोह्युत्तमोप्यन्ययाधमः ॥”⁶

It has been said that a servant should possess four good qualities; he should devote himself to his work physically and mentally, he should be content with what remuneration he gets, his words should be sweet or palatable and he should be diligent in his work : —

“चतुर्गुणेन यत्नेन कायवाङ्मानसेन च ।
 भृत्येव तुष्टो मृदुवाक् कार्यं दक्षःशुचिदृढः ॥”⁷

The King has been advised to test an employee in work, merit and character : —

“परीक्षकैर्द्रावयित्वा ययास्वर्णं परीक्षयते ।
 कर्मणासह वासेन गुणैः शीलकुलादिभिः ॥”⁸

As regards employment, *Shukracharya* has stated that an employee should be engaged in such a work as would suit him : —

“अधिकारे क्षमं दृष्ट्वा ह्यधिकारे नियोजयेते ॥”⁹

With regard to promotion of workers, it has been laid down that when a worker is found competent in a particular job, he should be given another better job and the man immediately below him, if competent, should be promoted to his post : —

“अतः कार्यक्षमं दृष्ट्वा कार्येऽन्ये तं नियोजयेत् ।
 तत्कार्ये कुशलं चान्यं तात्पदानुगतं खलु ॥”¹⁰

A man should be given a chance to rise to higher

(6) *Ibid.* 4/1307-1308. (7) *Ibid.* 2/58. (8) *Ibid.* 2/53. (9) *Ibid.* 2/112. (10) *Ibid.* 2/113.

and higher position in consideration of his ability and capacity and thus may be enabled to rise to the highest position :—

“यथायथा श्रेष्ठपदे ह्यधिकारी यदा भवेत् ।
अनुक्रमेण संयोज्यो ह्यन्ते तं प्रकृतिं नयेत् ॥”¹¹

Shukracharya thinks that there is no person unfit for work. But it is difficult to fit the man and the job to each other :—

“अयोग्यः पुरुषो नास्तियोजकस्तत्र दुर्लभः ॥”¹²

With regard to new appointments *Shukracharya* has warned the King that if he appoints as a servant a person who is not loyal or devoted to him, he would be overpowered by his enemies and he would have to lose his wealth and even life :—

“कुलभक्तांश्चयो द्वेष्टि नवीनं भजतेजनम् ।
संगच्छेच्छत्रुसाद्राजा धनप्राणैर्वियुज्यति ॥”¹³

With regard to the termination of service *Vidurniti* lays down that an employee should be promptly removed from service, if he disobeys the orders of the master, if he is rude in his words and behaviour after being appointed, if he opposes the will of the master or is proud of his own intellectual capacity :—

“वाक्यंतु यो नाद्रियतेऽनुशिष्टः प्रत्याह यश्चापि नियुज्यमानः ॥”

“प्रज्ञाभिमानी प्रतिकूलवादीत्याज्यः सतादृकत्वरयैव भृत्यः ॥”¹⁴

Narad has classified servants into five divisions. The first four classes are called by him ‘Karmakar’

(11) *Ibid.* 2/115. (12) *Ibid.* 2/126. (13) *Ibid.* 4/1269.
(14) *Vidurniti* 26.

and the fifth a slave. The Karmakaras include disciple, apprentice, servant and supervisor. The disciple learns Vedic studies under a preceptor, an apprentice studies sculpture or handicrafts, the servant works only for wages and the supervisor keeps a watch over the work when it is being done : —

“शुश्रूषकः पंचविधः शास्त्रे दृष्टो मनीषिभिः ।

चतुर्विधः कर्मकरस्तेषां दासस्त्रिपंचकाः ॥

शिष्यान्ते वासिभृतकाश्चतुर्थस्त्वधिकर्मकृत् ।”¹⁵

In the days of Vikramaditya, the employees were classified into four sub-divisions *viz.* (1) Bhritak (one who maintains himself by service), (2) Bhritibhujaya (maintained by the wages), (3) Karmakar (worker), (4) Vaitanik (one who receives regular pay). The skilled workers were classified as :—(1) expert, (2) skilful, (3) skilled, (4) alert, (5) warm; and the unskilled workers as :—(1) lazy, (2) glutton, (3) slack, (4) indolent, (5) cold, (6) inert. ¹⁶

During the times of Akbar, movements of the labourers were restricted. The serfs had no permission to leave their place. The masters gave the labourers permission to leave the village only when they had more servants than they needed.¹⁷ A person could get Government work only if he could get an officer interested and when the Government officers were transferred, the services of the servants were generally terminated; so there was no stability of service at all.¹⁸ There were

(15) Narad Smriti 5/2/3. (16) Vikramaditya of Ujjain, pp. 245-246.

(17) India at the Death of Akbar, p. 136. (18) *Ibid.*, p. 85.

no rules, as at present, to test the capacity of the applicant with regard to qualifications and efficiency.¹⁹

During the Mughal rule there were only two ways of obtaining help from the Government. To get service under the King as a military commander (Mansabdar) and to be a student of Kuran Sharif or to become a priest (Mutvalli) at a mosque. Only these could submit applications for assistance from the Government.²⁰ *Tavernier* after seeing the condition of jewel mines of the Deccan, has stated that there was no dearth of labourers in those days.²¹ During the Mughal rule, the workers had no free will of their own. The difference between a slave and an employee was that a slave could be mortgaged or sold, while the employee could not be so treated. In fact, the position of both of them was similar in other respects.²²

FORCED LABOUR

The practice of forced labour persisted in India also in ancient time—as in other countries. It was not considered dishonourable to engage forced labour. We find reference to forced labour in the Epic times. Even the Brahmin had to perform forced labour if he did not study the *Vedas* or did not keep the holy fire burning :—

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 69. (20) The Commercial Policy of the Mughals, p. 65. (21) India at the Death of Akbar, p. 11. (22) The Commercial Policy of the Mughals, p. 64.

“अश्रोत्रियाः सर्व एव सर्वेचानाहिताग्नयः ।
तान् सर्वान् धार्मिको राजा बलिर्विष्टि च कारयेत् ॥”²³

There are allusions in the *Bhagwat Purana* to show that men were forced to work without wages. These persons were called ‘Vishti’ :—

“शोच्यानिभांस्त्वमधिकष्टदीनान्विष्ट्या निगृहणन्निरनुग्रहोऽसि ॥”²⁴

According to *Vashistha* the artisans should perform Government work without wages, for one day in a month :—

“प्रतिमासमुद्वाहकरैस्त्वागमये द्राजनि च प्रेते दद्यात् ॥”²⁵

Gautama also lays down the same rule and it applied to the artisans, labourers, sailors and chario-teers; :—

“अधिकेन वृत्तिः शिल्पिनो मासि मास्येकैकं कर्मकुर्युः ।

नौचक्रिवंतश्च भक्तं तेभ्योपि दद्यात् ॥”²⁶

The *Manusmriti*²⁷, the *Vishnusmriti*²³ and the *Narada Smriti*²⁹ contain references to this subject. *Strabo* also has noted in his work that the fourth class not only paid taxes but also gave definite labour to the Government.³⁰ Although he has not defined the kind of labour, it really means forced labour. *Kautilya* also was aware of this practice. He has regarded this as a branch of ‘Vrata’.³¹

(23) Mahabharat Shanti 76/5. (24) Srimad Bhagavat 5/12/7. (25) Bashistha Smriti, Chap. 19, p. 490. (26) Gautam Smriti Chap. 10, p. 397. (27) Manu 8/1/415. (28) Vishnu 18/1/44. (29) Narad 5/2/25/43. (30) Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature, p. 48. (31) Kautilya 2/4, p. 8.

Shri Samaddar also has stated that the artisans had to do forced labour for a day in every month. The Government did not recover taxes from the Shudras, labourers and artisans, because they worked for the Government.³² But the Government tax was realised from other people.³³ *Hiuen Tsang* has stated like *Fahien* that the Government was liberal and did not take forced labour from the people but the work was got done with restricted payment of wages.³⁴

Forced labour continued during the reign of Akbar. The master paid wages to the labourer if he liked; otherwise the latter was driven away after some beating.³⁵ During the reign of Jahangir, labourers had to work against their will, and they would get some money as wages if the master had a mind to pay them. If the labourer opposed the master and asked for wages he was whipped.³⁶

During the reign of Shahjahan, the Imperial or Provincial order (Farman) was sufficient to drag a person from his home and to force him to work on low wages or even without wages.³⁷

During the days of Mughal Empire, any civil or military dignitary could drive away labourer from the market to the place where he had any work to do.³⁸ Those who opposed received immediately corporal punishment.³⁹

(32) Lectures on the Economic Condition of Ancient India, p. 53. (33) Buddhist India, p. 49. (34) Quoted from 'Life in Gupta Age', p. 363. (35) The Commercial Policy of the Mughals, p. 70. (36) *Ibid.*, p. 131. (37) *Ibid.*, p. 186. (38) *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190. (39) The Reminiscences of Francisco Pelsert, pp. 61 to 64.

Bernier has noted in his work that nobody would till the land or dig a canal unless he is forced to do so.⁴⁰

Thus we see that the system of forced labour which existed in the olden times continued during the Muslim period.

(40) From Akbar to Aurangzeb, p. 202.

THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY

A careful study of the Indian religious and other allied literature brings out the fact that the institution of slavery existed in India since the Vedic times. In the *Rigveda* we find the following description of the presentation of a hundred slaves :—

“शतं दासां अति स्रजः ।”¹

At another place in the *Rigveda*, it is found how ten slaves of fair complexion were presented :—

“योमे हिरण्य सन्दृशोदशराज्ञो अमंहत । अधरस्पदा इच्चैदस्यकृष्ट-
यश्चर्मन्ना अमितो जनाः ।।”²

It appears that the conqueror has presented the enemies taken captive during a battle. According to *Rigveda*, the son of Purukutsa presented fifty women to a Rishi (sage) :—

“अदान्मे पौरुकुत्स्यः पंचाशतं त्रसदस्युर्वधूनाम् ।”³

These women seem to be female attendants.

From these accounts it is clear that male and female attendants were regarded as the personal property of the owner, and the presentation of these slaves from one owner to another was in vogue in those days. At many other places we find references to this kind of gift of male and female slaves.⁴ The *Dana Sutra* or *Rigveda*

(1) *Rigveda* 8/53/3. (2) *Ibid.* 8/5/38. (3) *Ibid.* 8/19/36.
(4) *Ibid.* 3/46/32 ; 8/56/2 ; 1/92/8 ; 10/62/10.

advises good treatment to be given to the needy, the hungry and the slaves.⁵

In the *Taittiriya Samhita* we find the description of slave girls, dancing and singing, with water pots on their heads : —

“उदकुम्भानधिनिधाय दास्यो मार्जालीयं परिनृत्यन्ति पदो निघ्नती-
रिदं मधु गायन्त्यो मधु वै देवानां परममन्नाधम् ।।”⁶

A description of the presentation of a slave is also found.⁷ We find allusions to slaves in the *Rigveda* but there is no clear evidence to show that the number of slaves was very large or that the institution of slavery had become a part of Vedic culture.⁸

Slavery was not restricted to a particular class or caste, and even persons of higher castes such as Brahmins and Kshatriyas could be made slaves.⁹ The stories in the *Upanishads* also confirm the practice of slavery. In the *Kathopanishad*, in the course of the narrative of Nachketa and Yamaraj (the God of Death), a description is found of beautiful women in chariots with musical instruments, where they appear to have been slaves.¹⁰ In the *Brihadaranyak Upanishad*, Janaka is said to have expressed a desire to become a slave of Yagya-
valkya to express his gratefulness for receiving metaphysical knowledge : —

“सोहं भगवते विदेहान् ददामि मां वापि सह दास्याय ।”¹¹

(5) *Ibid.* Dhansukta 10/117. (6) *Taittiriya Samhita* 7/5/10/1.
(7) *Ibid.* 2/26/3. (8) *Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India*, p. 123. (9) *Ibid.*, p. 270. (10) *Kath. Up.* 1/1/25. (11) *Brih. Upa.* 4/4/23.

From the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, it appears that the wealth of a person included cows, horses, elephants, gold, wife, slaves and farms :—

“गो अश्वमिह महिमेत्याचक्षते हस्ति हरिष्यं दास भार्य
क्षेत्राण्ययतनानीति ।।”¹²

There are references to male and female slaves in other *Upanishads* also.¹³ The *Aitareya Brahman* records that a King gave as a donation to his family priest, ten thousand elephants and ten thousand female slaves.¹⁴

In his commentary on *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, Vigyaneshwar enumerates fifteen kinds of slaves : (1) born of a domestic maid servant, (2) purchased, (3) obtained as a donation, (4) obtained as a share of the ancestral property, (5) nourished during the famine, (6) kidnapped, (7) debtor, (8) captured in a battle, (9) demoralised ascetic, (10) won in a war, (11) made, (12) freed from another owner, (13) voluntary, (14) brought by the female slave of the house, and (15) who sells himself.¹⁵

Yagyavalkya has stated how a slave could gain his freedom. In his opinion such slave should be freed who had to suffer enforced slavery, those who had been sold by the thieves, and a slave who saved the life of his master :—

“बलादासीकृतश्चौरैर्विक्रीतश्चापि मुच्यते ।
स्वामि प्राग्व्रदो भक्तस्त्यागात्तन्निष्कयादपि ।।”¹⁶

(12) Chhan. Up. 7/24/2. (13) *Ibid.* 5/13/2 ; Briha. Up. 6/2/7.
(14) Aitareyi Brahman 39/8. (15) Mitakchhara, p. 249.
(16) Yagyavalkya 14/182.

Yagyavalkya also lays down that a demoralised Sanyasi who has fallen from his high position in society, should become the King's slave for the whole of his remaining life. A slave belonging to a lower class of society should serve people of the higher class :—

“प्रब्रज्यावसितो राज्ञो दास आमरणान्तिकः ।

वर्णनामानुलोभ्येन दास्यं न प्रतिलोभतः ॥”¹⁷

In the work of *Megasthenes*, it is stated that the institution of slavery did not exist in India. The Indians did not have slaves, Indian or foreign.¹⁸ There is no doubt that the slavery existed in India when he was here. This sweeping statement for the whole country seems to have been based on the observation of the ways and manners of the community of only a particular area. Probably this observation might be due to the fact that relations between the master and a slave were very cordial and humane.¹⁹ We do not find evidence that the Indian slaves had to suffer tortures like those owned by Roman, Greek or Christian masters. The slaves in India generally worked as domestic servants. The number of slaves was insignificant, and they were not ill-treated.²⁰ The ninth rock edict of Ashoka the Great enjoins people to treat the slaves well. The *Rajatarangini* records that King Vajraditya of Kashmir had sold many persons as slaves in the

(17) *Ibid* 14/183. (18) Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes, pp. 211 to 213 & 70. (19) History and Culture of Indian People, Part II, p. 571. (20) Buddhist India, p. 55.

eighth century A.D.²¹ *Manu* no doubt states that the Shudra should serve the twice born,²² but it does not imply that a Shudra should be regarded as a slave. *Jaimini* has clearly stated that a person could not donate a Shudra serving him, like other articles at the time of sacrifice.²³ *Shabara* in his *Mahabhashya* has further clarified the point. He says that if a Shudra is given in donation with other articles, he must agree, because it depends upon his will. He could not be forced to work with the donee if he did not want to do so :—

“शूद्रश्च न देय इत्यान्वादेशः । कुतः । धर्मशास्त्रात् । धर्मशासनोपनतत्वात्तस्य । एवमसौ तस्मै त्रैवर्गिका योपनत इमं शुश्रूषमाणो धर्मेण संभन्तस्य इति । सोऽन्यस्मै दीयमानो नेच्छेदपि । नचानिच्छतस्तस्य स प्रभवति ।”²⁴

Gautama, in his *Dharmasutra*, has laid down that the lower caste should serve the higher one :—

“सर्वे चोत्तरोत्तरं परिचरेयुः ।”²⁵

This shows that the Shudra was not a slave.

According to *Apastamba Dharmasutra*, the slaves received humane treatment. A guest could be offered a portion from the food of the householder, his wife or son but not from that of the slave :—

“काममात्मानं भार्या पुत्रं वोष रुन्ध्यान्न त्वेत दास कर्म करम् ।”²⁶

Manu classifies slaves into seven kinds : Conquered

(21) History of Dharmashastar, Part III, p. 844.

(22) *Manu* 8/413-414. (23) *Jaimini* 6/7/6. (24) *Shabar* Quoted from History of Dharmashastra, Vol. II, Part I, Chap. V.

(25) *Gautam Dharma* 10/65. (26) *Apas. Dharm.* 2/4/9/11.

in a battle, who has become slave simply to get food, born in the premises, purchased, donated by others, ancestral, and who has to suffer slavery as a punishment :—

“ध्वजाहृतो भक्तदासो गृहजः क्रीतदन्त्रिमौ ।

पैत्रिकोदण्डदासश्च सप्तैते दासयोनयः ॥”²⁷

Manu lays down that the slaves could be given the same corporal punishment as the wife or the son or any other member of the family.²³ *Manu* also says that the wife, son or slave could not own property, movable or immovable. The money earned by these belonged to the master of the house and not to the individuals earning it :—

“भार्यापुत्रश्च दासश्च त्रय एवाधनाः स्मृताः ।

यत्ते समधि गच्छन्ति यस्य ते तस्य तद्धनम् ॥”²⁹

At a number of places in the *Ramayana*, we find allusions to the gifts of beautiful women. Female slaves were offered to Shri Ramchandra, in lieu of tax.³⁰ At the time of the death anniversary of Dasharatha, female slaves were donated to the Brahmans to appease the departed soul.³¹ Before leaving for the forest, Shri Ramchandra had donated a number of female slaves to a Preceptor of the *Taittiriya* branch of learning.³²

In the *Mahabharat* also we find the mention of gifts of female slaves. *Sabhaparva*³³, *Vanparva*³⁴ and *Viratparva*³⁵ contain the men-

27) *Manu* 8/415. (28) *Ibid.* 8-299-300. (29) *Ibid.* 8/416. (30) Valmiki 7/39/11. (31) *Ibid.* 2/77/3. (32) *Ibid.* 2/32/15. (33) *Mahabharat Sabha* 52/45. (34) *Ibid.* 233/43. (35) *Ibid.* Virat 18/21.

tion of giving 30 female slaves to each of the 80,000 Brahmans who had completed their studies. Vanparva³⁶ and Dronaparva³⁷ describe how a thousand beautiful female slaves wearing ornaments were given as a donation. There is a reference to female slaves wearing cotton cloth in the Rajasuya scarifice of Yudhisthira :—

“शतंदासी सहस्राणां कार्पासिक निवासिनाम् ।

वर्लि च कृत्स्नमादाय मरूकच्छ निवासिनः ॥”³⁸

While gambling with dice, Yudhisthira had staked male and female slaves and had lost them.

Narada divides servants into five classes :—

(1) Student of the Vedas, (2) disciple, (3) supervisor or head of the servants, (4) maintained by the house by supplying food and clothes and (5) slave. The servants of the first four classes did clean work, while the slave had to do impure work such as clearing of drains, etc. :—

“गृह द्वारा शुचिस्थानरथ्यावस्कर शोधनम् ॥”³⁹

Narada has divided slaves into fifteen sub-divisions (like Vigyaneshwar) :—Born in the house, purchased, received as a gift in some other manner, protected, received in repayment of debt, conquered in a battle, a demoralised Sanyasi, working for food, or for love of some female slave, etc. :—

“गृह जातस्तथा क्रीतो लब्धो दायदुपागतः ।

अनाकालभृतो लोके अहितः स्वामिनश्चयः ॥

(36) *Ibid.* Van. 185/34. (37) *Ibid.* Drone 57/5/9. (38) *Ibid.* Sabha 51/10. (39) *Narada Abhu.* 6/7. Quoted from History of Dharmashastra, Vol. 2, Part I, Chap. V

मोक्षितो महतश्चर्णात्प्राप्तो युद्धात्पगार्जितः ।
 तवाहमित्युपगतः प्रव्रज्यावसितः कृतः ॥
 भक्तदासश्च विज्ञेयस्तेयैव वड्वाभृतः ।
 विक्रेता वात्मनः शास्त्रे दासाः पंचदशस्मृताः ॥⁴⁰

In the opinion of *Manu*, once a man sells himself he becomes a slave for the rest of his life.⁴¹ If a slave saves the life of his master, he should regain his freedom. *Narada* opines that such a slave should get a portion of the ancestral property like the son. A person, who had been protected during a famine, worked as a slave in the household of his protector, until he was able to free himself by giving a couple of cows in exchange. A slave who was a debtor could regain his freedom if he repaid the loan with interest. The slave captured in a battle could have his freedom again in case he gave a substitute. An indentured slave was free at the expiry of his indenture. The slave for food could be freed when the convenience no longer existed, and a slave fallen in love with another got his freedom after severing connection with the beloved.⁴² *Narada* lays down that in slavery also the positions of high and low castes were considered e.g. the Brahman could have as his slave a Kshatriya, a Vaishya, or a Shudra. The Kshatriyas or Vaishyas could not be owned as slaves by a Shudra : —

“स्वतन्त्रस्यात्मनो दानाद् दासत्वं दासवद्भृगुः ।
 त्रिषु वर्णेषु विज्ञेयं दास्यं विप्रस्य न क्वचित् ॥
 वर्णानामानु लोभ्येन दास्यं न प्रतिलोभतः ॥⁴³

(40) *Narad Smriti* 5/26 to 28. (41) *Ibid.* 5/37. (42) *Ibid.* 5/3, 34/36.

Katyayana states that a Brahman cannot be the slave of another Brahman. If at all he wishes to serve as a slave, he should be given work connected with the Vedic rituals or some such other work : —

“समवर्णोपि विप्रं तु दासत्वं नैव कारयेत् । ब्राह्मणस्य हि दासत्वान्नृपतेजो
विहन्यते ॥ शीलाध्ययनसंपन्नेः तदूनं कर्म कामतः ।
तत्रापि नाशुभं किञ्चित्प्रकुर्वीत द्विजोत्तमः ॥”⁴⁴

The property of the slaves, according to *Katyayana*, consists of the amount of money for which he has sold himself or whatever he receives as a reward from his master : —

दास्यं तु धनं यत्स्वामी तस्य प्रभुः स्मृतः ।
प्रसादं विक्रयाधत्तु न स्वामी धनमर्हति ॥”⁴⁵

Kautilya had noticed the evils latent in the institution of slavery. So, he devised some rules to counteract them. Those who sold or mortgaged a minor Shudra had to pay a fine of 12 Panas; a minor Vaishya, 24 Panas; a minor Kshatriya, 36 Panas, and a minor Brahman, 48 Panas : —

उदर दासवर्जमार्यप्राणमप्राप्त व्यवहारं शूद्रं विक्रयाधानं नयतः
स्वजनस्य द्वादशपणो दण्डः । वैश्यं द्विगुणं, क्षत्रियं त्रिगुणं,
ब्राह्मणं चतुर्गुणः ॥”⁴⁶

The mlechhas were exempted from paying fine in the case of their own children. If a mlechha sold or mortgaged his child, no fine was recovered from him. But he could not enslave a person of Aryan descent : —

(43 to 45) *Katyayans*—Quoted from History of Dharmashastra, Vol. II, Part I, Chap. 5. (46) *Kautilya* 3/13/65/1—4.

“स्लेच्छानाम दोषः प्रजां विक्रेतुमाधातुं वा ।
न त्वेवार्यस्य दास भावः ॥”⁴⁷

There were laws regarding hostages and ransom. An Aryan captured in a battle or entangled in some such difficult situation, could free himself after keeping as a hostage his own son, and promising to pay the ransom. He could obtain his manumission by payment of a sum which was fixed as the price of his liberty :—

“अथवार्यमादाय कुलवन्धन आर्पणाभापदि निष्क्रयं चाधिगम्य
बालं साहाय्य दातारं वा पूर्वं निष्क्रीणीरन् ॥”⁴⁸

A person sentenced to slavery should free himself by working for wages. An enslaved Aryan can free himself after some service and payment of half of his cost by another Aryan :—

“दण्डं प्रणीतः कर्मणा दण्डमुपनयेत् । आर्यप्राणो ध्वजाहूतः
कर्म कालानुरूपेण मृत्यार्थेन वा विमुच्येत् ॥”⁴⁹

Those who enslave or send abroad children under eight, born in the house or owned through purchase, or some other means, should be punished. Those should receive punishment who sell or mortgage a pregnant female slave. The abettors of these crimes should also be adequately punished :—

“गृहे जात दायागतवन्धक्रीतानामन्यतमं दासमूनाष्टवर्षं विवंधुकं
मं नीचे कर्माणि विदेशे दासीं वा सगर्भाय प्रतिविहितं गर्भयर्मयं
विक्रयाधानं नयतः पूर्वं साहसदण्डः क्रेतुं श्रोतृणां च ॥”⁵⁰

If an owner does not free a slave who has paid his price in full he commits an offence for which he

(47) *Ibid.* 3/13/65/6-7. (48) *Ibid.* 3/13/65/8. (49) *Ibid.* 3/13/65/25/26. (50) *Ibid.* 3/13/65/27.

should be fined twelve Panas. One who enslaves another for no valid reason, should be sentenced to a prison-term :—

“दासमनुरुणे निष्कयेण्यमकुर्वतो द्वादशपणो वण्डः ।

संरोधश्चाकारणात् ॥”⁵¹

In case a person sells or mortgages a male or female slave even after receiving a fixed amount as the price he should be fined twelve Panas :—

दासं वा निष्क्रीय पुनर्विक्रयाधानं नयतो द्वादश पणो दण्डः ।⁵²

Kautilya lays down that the successors to the property of a slave would be his kiths and kins. If he has no relatives, the master gets his property :—

दासद्रव्यस्य ज्ञातयो दायदाः, तेषामभावे स्वामी ।”⁵³

During the Buddhist period, the value of a slave was generally 100 Panas.⁵⁴ We know from the *Nanda Jataka* that the value of a slave was 700 Panas. There is a reference in another *Jataka* to the purchase of a wife for 100 Panas.⁵⁵ During the Buddhist period, the prisoners of war were made slaves; men were deprived of their freedom, in spite of the existence of a law to punish the crime. Men also became slaves of their own accord. Debtors also became slaves of their creditors or others if they could not repay the loan. The progeny of a slave automatically became

(51) *Ibid.* 3/13/65/28-29. (52) *Ibid.* 3/13/65/34. (53) *Ibid.* 3/13/65/30-31. (54) Lectures on the Economic Condition of Ancient India, p. 159. (55) Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 271.

slaves. They could be freed after full payment of their price.

Almost every house had male and female servants to perform domestic work. Different treatment was given to different slaves in accordance with the temperament of the owner. A study of the Jatakas shows that though the slaves were treated humanely and were given a chance to learn the three R's or a handicraft, yet they received severe punishment for small offences. But allusions to hard punishment of the slaves are rare. We come across two occasions when female slaves received corporal punishment. In this period efforts were made to put a stop to slavery. Consequently, the Buddhist Sangh admitted into their fold, a freed slave.⁵⁶

The Pali scriptures contain references to different classes of slaves. In one, they are divided into three classes⁵⁷, viz., (1) antojato (born in the master's house), (2) dhana-kitto (purchased), (3) karmaranito (enslaved prisoners of war).

At another place they have been classified into four divisions:⁵⁸ (1) born of a female slave⁵⁹, (2) purchased⁶⁰, (3) those who have become slaves of their own free will, and (4) those who have become slaves through fear⁶¹.

(56) The Cambridge History of India, Part I, p. 205. (57) Vinay, Part IV, p. 224. (58) Nidesh 1/2 and Jataka 6, p. 285. (59) Jataka 1, p. 452. (60) Jataka 3, p. 343. (61) Jataka 6, pp. 135, 138.

The commentary *Sumangala Vilasini* of Buddha Ghosh on the later Buddhist work *Digha Nikaya* contains classification of slaves as follows :—⁶² (1) born in the house, (2) purchased, (3) prisoners of war,⁶³ (4) voluntary. References are found in Pali works to the enslavement by the dacoits⁶⁴ or by way of punishment.⁶⁵

Jain works refer to six kinds of slaves :— (1) born slave, (2) purchased slave, (3) debtor made a slave for non-payment of loan advanced to him,⁶⁶ (4) a person made slave during a famine⁶⁷, (5) a person made slave for non-payment of fine imposed upon him, (6) a person captured in a battle.

During the reign of Harshavardhana, male as well as female slaves were sold and purchased. On the occasion of the birth of a prince, the slaves were permitted a spell of freedom. The slaves were treated well. They were not looked down upon either by the community or by the Government.⁶⁸ We find from Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta, that Kumaramatya and Mahadanda Nayaka were the Emperor's slaves.⁶⁹ On the authority of *Fahien*, it can be said that the slaves were free to live with their master or away from him.⁷⁰

(62) *Sumangala Vilasini*, Part I, p. 168. (63) *Jataka* 6, p. 220. (64) *Jataka* 4, p. 220; *Jataka* 5, p. 297. (65) *Jataka* 1, p. 240-241; *Jataka* 6, p. 389. (66) *Pindanijjutti*, p. 319. (67) *Vyavahara Bhashya*, p. 207 (57—67) Quoted from *Studies in Indian History and Culture*. (68) Bana, p. 112 Quoted from *Life in Gupta Age*, p. 364. (69) *Life in Gupta Age*, p. 362. (70) *Ibid.*, p. 363.

Among the Rajputs also slavery prevailed. People were generally made slaves during a famine. *Todd* records that during a famine thousands of men were sold as slaves. The progeny of a Goli or female slave was classed as a slave. In Mewar the number of these Golis was considerable. They were treated well. The great grand-father of the late Raja Sahib of Deogarh used to attend his court with three hundred Golas.⁷¹

Other historians also support the fact that slavery existed under the Hindu Kings. Slaves were purchased during the days of famine. The slaves received the same treatment as was given to other domestic servants, but they were regarded as a part of the household property. *Elphinstone* does not support the sale of slaves. According to him, there was little distinction between a slave and a free man.⁷²

During the Mughal rule the army contained Chelas (disciples) who were treated as personal attendants and were generally purchased during a famine.⁷³ From the records of *Al Badayuni*, it is clear that slavery existed and slaves were sold and purchased during the reign of Akbar. He states that common workers included ordinary labourers as well as slaves. Although the slaves were called Chelas, there was no change in their condition. In the Farman of Akbar of the year

(71) *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Part I, pp. 207-208. (72) *Elphinstone's History of India*, Part I, pp. 356-357. (73) *The Commercial Policy of the Mughals*, p. 50.

1594, it was stated that parents could sell their children when they were in financial difficulty. But when their economic condition improved, they could get them freed from slavery by paying their price.⁷⁴

Every soldier of the Mughal army generally had two or three attendants. *De la Vale* has recorded that there was a very large number of servants and slaves available in Surat at a nominal cost, and even a man of moderate means could have a large number of attendants.⁷⁵

In comparison with other servants, the wages of a slave were very low. A nobleman or Lord had in his service a number of attendants of both kinds, free men as well as slaves. They could interchange their allotted work among themselves.⁷⁶ *Van Twist* records that a man could sell his wife or children, if necessary. Mothers sold their children.⁷⁷ *Tavernier* records that the slaves had to carry out any and every work their master directed them to do.⁷⁸

Slavery was found in Malwa also but it was generally limited to women. In the houses of the Rajputs and Muslims female slaves were found. Owing to the Purda system they needed such slaves.⁷⁹ In Golconda, we find that a Hindu or Muslim nobleman had a large retinue of servants. Every nobleman had a servant to carry

(74) Muntakhab Tawarikh, Part II, p. 404. (75) India at the Death of Akbar, p. 89. (76) *Ibid.*, p. 87. (77) Akbar to Aurangzeb, p. 212. (78) Travels in India, Part II, p. 186. (79) Malwa Me Yuganter, p. 24.

his umbrella, another to carry cups and two more attendants to whisk away the flies.⁸⁰ These attendants consisted of free men as well as slaves. Different terms were used for civic and rural slaves. The civic ones were called domestic or household servants and the rural ones, farm labourers or serfs.⁸¹

People sold their children to repay loans to pay the taxes, or in times of famine. This system prevailed during the reign of Akbar and for two centuries further.⁸² In addition to slaves, eunuchs were needed to work in the harems. It has been recorded in the *Tuzuk Jahangiri* that at Sylhet men, unable to pay Government taxes, castrated one of their sons and offered him as a servant to the King, in lieu of the tax. This practice was in vogue in other provinces also. Considering the very large number of eunuchs, Jahangir had ordered to stop castrating young children completely.⁸³

Foster has recorded that the Emperor every year sent some of his slaves to Kabul and received horses and dogs in exchange.⁸⁴

During the Maratha rule, there was some improvement in the condition of slaves. They could not only earn money but had a right to own personal property. The female slaves regained their freedom after their marriage. This was a progressive step, under the Marathas.⁸⁵

(80) *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 89. (81) *Ibid.*, p. 90. (82) *Ibid.*, p. 92. (83) *Tuzuki Jahangiri*, Part I, pp. 150-156. (84) *Early Travels in India*, p. 154. (85) *Administrative System of Marathas*, p. 503.

LABOUR AND DUTY

Physical labour is a law of nature. Hard work is necessary to keep up good health. Labour has been the basis of all comforts and conveniences of human life. Great emphasis has been laid in our country on personal perseverance since the times of the Vedas. The scriptures have instructed men to regard perseverance with heart and soul as the very basis of life. Men also have prayed to God from time to time to give them life full of work. The *Yajurveda* says that a man should be industrious to lead a good auspicious life :—

उदायुषा स्वायुर्षोदस्थाम्"¹

At another place a prayer has been offered to God asking for inspiration to follow the good path :—

भद्रं नो अपि वातय मनः "²

The God of Fire has been invoked to grant an industrious life :—

कृषी न ऊर्ध्वाचरथाय जीवसे ।"³

It is certain that a man acts as he resolves, and he attains that position for which he works :—

यथाकृतु रस्मिंल्लोके पुरुषो भवति तथेतः प्रेत्य भवति"⁴

The *Manusmriti* also endorses the view that man acts as he resolves :—

(1) Yajurveda 4/28. (2) Rigveda 10/20/1. (3) Aitareya Brah. 2/2. (4) Chhan. Up. 3/14/1.

“संकल्पमूलः कामो वै यज्ञाः संकल्प सम्भवाः ।
 व्रतानि यमवमश्चि सर्वे संकल्पजाः स्मृताः ॥
 अकामस्य क्रिया काचिद् दृश्यते नेह कर्हिचित् ।
 यद्यद्वि कुस्ते किञ्चित्तत्कामस्य चेष्टितम् ॥”⁶

It is beyond question that a man putting continuous perseverance in work with confidence gets success in it : —

यदेव श्रद्धया चोपनिषदा जुहोति तदेव वीर्यवत्तरं भवति ।”⁶

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* also supports the idea that man acts as he resolves : —

यत्क्रतुर्भवति तत्कर्म कुस्ते यत्कर्म कुस्ते तदभिसंपद्यते ॥”⁷

Of all kinds of labour, farming is considered to be the most prominent. Man has been advised to take to farming to earn his livelihood. He should be contented and pleased with what he earns by honest labour, performed in accordance with ethical standards. When agriculture is adopted as a profession, cows and other animals are maintained and protected, and wife and the family remain happy.⁸ Other Vedic hymns also give the same kind of instruction with regard to farming. The *Yajurveda* advises man to undertake agriculture in which rice, wheat and other good food grains are produced.⁹ A man has been advised to follow the profession of a farmer in order to earn livelihood and wealth, and to maintain his family : —

कृष्यै त्वा क्षेमाय त्वा रय्यै त्वा पोषायत्वा ।”¹⁰

(5) Manusmriti 2/3-4. (6) Chhan. Up. (7) *Ibid* 4/4/5.
 (8) Rigveda 10/34/13. (9) Shukla Yajurveda 4/10. (10) *Ibid*. 9/22.

It has always been desired by all that mother earth, adorned and enriched by agriculture may make lives happy and lead us to progress :—

सानो भूमिर्वर्धयद् वर्धमाना ।¹¹

It has been stated in the *Rigveda* that Gods are not well-disposed towards a person who does not persevere :—

न ऋते श्रान्तस्य सख्याय देवाः ।¹²

The *Yajurveda* states that men should always work hard to obtain a high position; they should feel mutual love, and deal with one another in sweet cultured language. They should also cooperate among themselves. Men of such type obtain every kind of happiness and attain the bliss of absolute; on the contrary idle men can never expect to enjoy happiness :—

अक्रन् कर्म कर्मकृतः सह वाचा मयो भुवां ।

देवेभ्यः कर्म कृत्वास्तं प्रेतं सचाभुवः ॥¹³

The greatness and importance of high achievement has been stressed in *Atharvaveda* which says that success follows hard manly work :—

कृतं मे दक्षिणे हस्ते जयो मे सव्य आहितः ।¹⁴

The *Aitareya Brahman* has further clarified the dignity of labour. The destiny of a man sits silent if he does not exert himself; it moves with the person who is active in his work ; it sleeps with a person who remains asleep; and it follows the

(11) Atharvaveda 12/1/13. (12) Rigveda 4/33/11. (13) Yajurveda 3/47. (14) Atharva. 7/52/8.

person who is actively moving. Hence constant perseverance is advised : —

आस्तेभग आसीनस्योध्वस्तिष्ठति तिष्ठतः ।

शेते निपद्यमानस्य चराति चरतो भगः ॥”¹⁵

The benefits to be derived from hard work have also been suggested. A persevering person can enjoy the sweet pleasures of life. One should take advice from the sun, who constantly goes on his round without stopping even for a moment. Hence the advice to work hard : —

चरन्वै मधुविन्दति चरन्स्वादुमदुम्बरम् ।

सूर्यस्य पश्य श्रेमाणं योन तन्द्रयते चरन् ॥”¹⁶

Bold achievement (purushartha) has four forms viz. the desire and capacity to do something noteworthy, ability to attempt the attainment of the aim, and the mental energy to make the limbs work. Inspiration permeates the mind, which creates a tendency in the limbs to act. This makes the body work, as directed by the mind, leading to the achievement : —

संवित्स्पंदो मनः स्पंद ऐंद्रियस्पंद एवच ।

एतानि पुरुषार्थस्य रुपाण्येभ्यः फलोदयः ॥”

यथा संवेदनं चेतस्तत्तत्स्पंद मृच्छति ।

तथैव कायश्चलति तथैवफलभोक्तृता ॥”¹⁷

By means of personal achievement, the actions of the previous birth can be completely eliminated and replaced by those of the present birth. *Yogavashishtha* has well explained that like two rams the accumulated actions of the previous and of

(15) Aitareya Brah. 3. (16) *Ibid.* 5. (17) *Yogavashishtha* 2/7.

the present birth fight with each other, ultimately the stronger wins. As indigestion caused by the last day's food could be cured with medicine and regulated diet; in the same way, the present actions obliterate those of a previous birth : —

“द्वौ हुडाविव युद्ध्येते पुरुषार्थौ समासमौ ।
प्राकृतश्चैहिकश्चैव शाम्यत्यत्राऽल्पवीर्यवान् ॥
दोषः शाम्यत्य संदेहं प्राकृतोद्यतनैर्गुणैः ।
दृष्टान्तोऽम्रह्यस्तनस्य दोषस्याद्यगुणैः क्षयः ॥”¹⁸

Only idiots think of fate and depending upon it ruin themselves. Wise men attain a high position by their personal efforts : —

मूढैः प्रकल्पितं दैवं तत्परास्ते क्षयं गताः ।
प्राज्ञास्तु पौरुषार्थेन पदमत्तमतां गताः ॥”¹⁹

Hence, it is said, that there is nothing on the earth or in heaven which a man cannot obtain by personal efforts : —

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वाक्वचित् ।
पौरुषेण प्रयत्नेन यन्नाप्नोति गुणान्वितः ॥”²⁰

Even after having great faith in the fate, the *Ramayana* does not deride manly efforts. Success is considered to depend upon both the fate and efforts : —

दैवं व मानुषं चैव कर्म ते साध्वनुष्ठितम् ।”²¹
कच्चित्पुरुषकारं व दैवं च प्रतिपद्यते ।”²²
इमां प्रतिज्ञां शृणु शक्रशत्रोः सुनिश्चितां पौरुष
देव युक्ताम् ।”²³

(18) *Ibid.* 2. (19) *Ibid.* 2/8/16. (20) *Ibid.* 4/62/19.
(21) *Valmiki* 1/18/47. (22) *Ibid.* 5/36/19. (23) *Ibid.* 6/73/6.

Although the *Ramayana* acknowledges the great importance of personal efforts, it also states that all actions of the dispirited, morose and miserable persons are spoiled, and land them in great difficulty :—

“निरुत्साहस्य दीनस्य शोकपर्याकुलात्मनः ।

सर्वार्था व्यवसीदन्ति व्यसनं चाधि गच्छति ॥”²⁴

न विषादे मनः कार्यं विषादो दोषवत्तरः ।”²⁵

This is why it has been advised to work with enthusiasm, because it gives energy. Nothing in this world is unattainable by an enthusiastic person :—

‘उत्साहो बलवानार्य नास्त्युत्साहात्परं बलम् ॥

सोत्साहस्य हि लोकेषु न किञ्चिदपि दुर्लभम् ॥”²⁶

The *Mahabharat* states that wealth does not stay with a person who does nothing :—

“नाकर्मशीले पुरुषे वसामि न नास्तिके सांकरिके कृतध्ने ।”²⁷

Wise and noble persons have great regard for energetic efforts. It is the idle and the impotent who believes in fate :—

“धीमन्तो वन्द्यचरिता मन्यन्ते पौरुषं महत् ।

अशक्ताः पौरुषं कर्तुं क्लीवा दवमुषापसते ॥”²⁸

The Great sage *Vyas*, therefore, loudly proclaimed the importance of working with hands :—

“अहोसिद्धार्थता तेषां येषां सन्तीहि पाणयः ।

अतीव स्पृहये तेषां येषां सन्तीह पाणयः ॥

पाणिमद्म्यः स्पृहास्माकं यया तव धनस्य वै ।”

न पाणिनाभादधिको लाभः कश्चन विद्यते ॥”²⁹

(24) *Ibid.* 6/2/6. (25) *Ibid.* 4/64/9. (26) *Ibid.* 4/1/121.
(27) *Mahabharat Anushashan* 30/31. (28) *Shukraniti* 1/48.
(29) *Mahabharat Shanti* 180/11/12.

He means to say that a man needs nothing more if he has hands with ten fingers, which mainly achieve great deeds. Divine gift of two hands is man's proud possession in the world.

Shukracharya regards life without activity as quite mean. According to him work should be always done thoughtfully; work may be done on the impulse of the moment or it may involve enterprise, but a man should never be idle or dilatory : —

“दीर्घदर्शी सदा च स्यात् प्रत्युत्पन्नमतिः क्वचित् ।
साहसी सालसी चैव चिरकारी भवन्न हि ॥”³⁰

The evil effects of idleness have also been noted by him. An idle person cannot put forth the required effort and so can never achieve success in the undertaking : —

“यतने नैव कालेऽपि क्रियां कर्तुं व सालसः ।
न सिद्धिस्तस्य कुत्रापि स नश्यति च सान्वयः ॥”³¹

Chanakya has also advised perseverance since fortune follows effort : —

“पुरुषकारमनुवर्तते दैवम् ।”³²

He also states that one who desires success in his work, should exert himself : —

‘कार्यं पुरुष कारेण लक्ष्यं संपद्यते ।’³³

With regard to work, he says that one should not put off till tomorrow what one can do to-day. It is desirable to finish in the forenoon the work of the afternoon : —

(30) *Shukraniti* 3/68. (31) *Ibid.* 3/71. (32) *Chanakya Sutra* 98.
(33) *Ibid.* 96.

‘श्वः कार्यमद्यः कुर्वीत ॥ अपराह्णिकं पूर्वाह्ण एव कर्तव्यम् ॥’³⁴

The original theories of effort and labour were lost sight of by the people during the days of foreign rule in the country. *Foster* in his travels, records that on seeing the labourers engaged in building the Tajmahal, he found that one person of his country would work as much as three workers of India.³⁵ *Bernier* also regards Indians to be dull. He also records that the workers work either out of fear of the whip or lure of a reward.³⁶ The French traveller *Modave* regards the dullness to be a natural quality of Indians.³⁷

It appears that the value of labour ceased to be regarded what it was in olden times. The condition of labourers deteriorated as time passed and they became so helpless that they did not undertake any work unless they were compelled to do so.

(34) *Ibid.* 538-539. (35) *Early Travels in India*, p. 120. (36) *Bernier Ki Yatra*, pp. 14-15. (37) *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 27, p. 45.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The joint family system was the old Indian method of social security. If a member became unable to earn money due to his old age or some other natural disability, it was the responsibility of the family to maintain him and give him the same facilities that were enjoyed by any other member of the family. The family consists of a group of mutually related persons *i.e.* mother, father, brothers, sisters, husband and wife. A member of the joint family shared the benefits in respect of food, abode, religious performances, etc.

JOINT FAMILY

We come across the description of a joint family in the *Swapa* :a¹ and *Sammanasya*² hymns of the *Vedas*. The *Sammanasya* hymn emphasises high ideals for the family and inspires the members to be united, and to eat and pray together.³ This sukta (hymn) specifically advises the members of the family never to separate (मवियोष्टं 'Maviyosta'). In the Vedic literature we often meet with instructions enjoining a man to continue to remain a member of the joint family. At the time of marriage, the family priest advises the bride to be a controller of the household consisting of the mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law and brother-in-law : —

(1) Atharva Veda 4/5. (2) *Ibid.* 3/30. (3) *Ibid.* 3/30/1, 5/7.

“सम्राज्ञी श्वसुरे भव सम्राज्ञीश्वश्रवां भव । ननान्दरि
सम्राज्ञी भव, सम्राज्ञी अधिदेवेषु ।”⁴

After the marriage of the son, when grand children are born, the parents are advised to play with their grand children, and pleasantly enjoy their company : —

“इहैव स्तं मा वियौष्टं विश्वमायुर्व्यश्नुतम् । क्रीडन्तौ
पुत्रैर्तप्तृभिर्मोदमानौ स्वे गृहे ।”⁵

Thus, during Vedic times, the members of three generations lived together.

We know from the *Gobhil Grih Sutra* that in those days a very large number of joint families existed.⁶ *Apastamba Dharma Sutra* has advised brothers to live together during the life time of their parents : —

“भ्रातृणां जीवतोः पित्रोः सहवासो विधीयते ।”⁷

Kautilya opines that the family property should be divided only after the death of the father : —

“अनीश्वराः पितृमन्तः स्थितपितृभातृकाः पुत्राः ।
तेषामूर्ध्वं पितृतोदायविभागः पितृद्रव्याणाम् ॥”⁸

The *Manusmriti* also supports this view : —

“ऊर्ध्वं पितुश्च मातुश्च समेत्य भ्रातरः समम् ।
भजेरन् पैतृकं रिक्थमनीशास्तेहि जीवतोः ॥”⁹

*Gautam*¹⁰, *Yagyavalkya*¹¹, *Narad*¹² and others hold the same view. The sons had no claim over the property of their father till his death. During the life time of the father, the sons could

(4) *Ibid.* 14/1/22. (5) *Rigveda* 10/85/42. (6) *Gobhil Grih.* 1/4/23-26. (7) *Apas. Dharma.* 2/6/14/19. (8) *Kautilya* 3/5. (9) *Manu* 9/104. (10) *Gautam* 28/1. (11) *Yagyavalkya* 2/117. (12) *Narad* 16/2.

divide the ancestral property with the full consent of the father :—

“पितुरुभृत्यां दाय विभागः सति पितरि ।”¹³

Shankha advises brothers to live together and thus make progress :—

“कामं सहवसेयुरेकमताः संहताः वृद्धिमापद्येरन् ।”¹⁴

Kautilya recommends that all should live together :—

“पितुरसत्यर्थं ज्येष्ठा कनिष्ठातनुगृह्णीयुरन्यत्र मिथ्यावृत्तेभ्यः ।”¹⁵

If a member of the family earned some money, using the means available in the family, it belonged to the family and not to the particular person. But if he earned money without using the means available in the family, he could own it. *Gautam*,¹⁶ *Manu*¹⁷, *Vishnu*¹⁸, *Yagyavalkya*¹⁹, *Narad*²⁰, and *Mahabharat*²¹ support this principle. It appears that rules regarding the division of a joint family were made later. Consequently, the joint family system began to disintegrate.

DUTY OF THE COMMUNITY

Besides mutual aid in the joint family, the society provides that its members helped one another in times of necessity. It was believed that a man is born with four kinds of debts. He is indebted to the Gods, sages, ancestors and men :—

(13) Baudhya 2/2/8. (14) Shankha 140. (15) Kautilya 3/5.
(16) Gautam 28/31. (17) Manu 9/206-9. (18) Vishnu 18/42.
(19) Yagyavalkya 2/118-59. (20) Narad 16/6. (21) Mahabharat 13/105/1.

“ऋण हवै जायते योऽस्ति । स जयमान एव
देवेभ्य ऋषिभ्यः पितृभ्यो मनुष्येभ्यः ।”²²

Thus assistance to other members of the community was regarded as a debt in the Indian society and every one tried to liquidate it. Men welcomed a chance to help other fellow beings. The *Rigveda* regards it as the first duty of man to protect and help another person : —

“पुमान् पुमांसं परिपातु विश्वतः ॥”²³

During the Vedic period the indigent had to depend upon others for their livelihood, and it was considered the primary duty of the rich to support and maintain the hungry and the naked.²⁴ It is mentioned in the *Mahabharata* that the king had the responsibility of maintaining the helpless, and the physically defective persons ; —

“कश्चिदन्धांश्चमूकांश्चपंगून्व्यंगानवांधवान् ।”

पितेव पासि धर्मज्ञ तथा प्रव्राजितानपि ॥”²⁵

In addition to the supply of food and clothes, social security included finding out employment for the needy, making medical treatment available to the servants during their illness, rendering assistance after retirement from service, and advancing proper help to the surviving members of the family after the death of its head. During the Buddhist period, there was a hospital in every town, where good medical treatment was available.²⁶

(22) *Shat. Brah.* 1/7/2/1. (23) *Rigveda* 6/75/14. (24) *Ibid.* 10/117. (25) *Mahabharat Sabha* 124. (26) *The Indian Empire, Its History, People and Products*, p. 117.

With regard to finding employment, *Kautilya* has laid down that widows, defective girls, female ascetics, old mothers of prostitutes, King's old maids and the dismissed maids of a temple should be given the work of spinning wool, bark thread and cotton, etc. :—

“ऊर्गावल्ककार्पासतूलशण क्षीमाणि च विधवान्यंगा कन्या
प्रव्रजितादण्ड प्रतिकारिणी भी रूपाजीवामातृकाभिर्वृद्ध राजदासी
भिर्व्युपरतोपस्थानदेवदासीभिश्च कर्तयेत् ।”²⁷

The Superintendent of the textile industry has been advised to give employment at their homes to women who cannot leave their homes, a helpless wife due to her husband's going abroad, physically defective girls, and women who are in need of earning their livelihood :—

“याश्चानिष्कासिन्यः प्रोषित विधवान्यंगा कन्यका वात्मानं
विभूयुस्ताः स्वदासीभिरनुसार्य सोपग्रहं कर्मकारयितव्याः ॥”²⁸

PENSION

The King decided upon a fixed allowance to be given to the sons of dead employees, and to persons who are old and infirm or ill. Besides, it was also the duty of a King to render financial help to paupers, sick men, and women at the time of their lying in :—

“कर्मसुमृतानां पुत्रदारा भक्तवेतनं लभेरन् । बालवृद्ध व्याधिताश्चैषामनु
मनुग्राह्याः ॥ प्रेतव्याधित सूतिकाकृत्येषु वैषामर्थमान
कर्म कुर्यात् ॥”²⁹

Shukracharya lays down that the son of an em-

(27) *Kautilya* 2/23/41/2. (28) *Ibid.* 2/23/41/12. (29) *Ibid.* 5/3/91/29-31.

ployee dying on duty in the service of his master should get the father's pay, till he becomes major, and then his emoluments may be settled by his master in consideration of his merits :—

“स्वाभि कार्यं विनष्टो यस्तत् पुत्रे तदभूतिं वहेत् ।
यावद वालोऽन्यथा पुत्रगुणान् दृष्ट्वा भूतिं वहेत् ।”³⁰

There was a law with regard to pension after retirement from service. *Shukracharya* says that an employee, after forty years of continuous service, should get a pension equal to half of his pay :—

“चत्वारिंशत् समानीताः सेव्या येत वै नृपः ।
ततः सेवां विना तस्मै भृत्यर्द्धं कल्पयेत् सदा ।”³¹

There was also a law that after the death of the employee his widow and children should get half of his wages as a pension :—

“यावज्जीवं तु तत् पुत्रेऽक्षमे वाले तद्धकम् ।
भार्यायां वा सुशीलायां कन्यायां वा स्व श्रेयसे ।”³²

An employee should get a sixth or fourth part of his wages during the period of his illness, but if the illness continues for more than two years he is entitled to get half of his wages :—

“षष्ठांशं वा चतुर्थांशं भूतेभृत्यस्य पालयेत् ।
तद्यात् तदर्थं भृत्याय द्वित्रिवर्षेऽखिले तुवा ॥”³³

An employee who has served for more than five years should get 3/4th of his wages during the period of illness.³⁴ The employee could get the sickness allowance for six months. No deductions were made for a week's illness :—

(30) *Shukra* 2/413. (31) *Ibid.* 2/410. (32) *Ibid.* 2/411.
(33) *Ibid.* 2/414. (34) *Ibid.* 2/406.

“षाण्मासिकीं तृदीधति तदूर्ध्वं न च कल्पयेत् ।

नैव पक्षाड्वं मारुतस्य हातव्याल्यापि वै भृतिः ॥”³⁵

A meritorious servant should get half of his wages during the days of illness : —

“सुमहद्गुणिनं त्वार्तं भृत्यद्वं कल्पयेत् सदा ।”³⁶

Manu lays down that an employee who returns to work after a period of illness should be paid his dues : —

“आर्तस्तु कुर्यात्स्वस्थः सन्यथाभाषितमादिनः ।

सदीर्घस्यापि कालस्य तल्लभेतैव वेतनम् ॥”³⁷

If an employee leaves his work partly done and does not return to complete it, he should not be paid any wages.³⁸ Security has been offered by *Kautilya* to pregnant female slaves at the time of their sale, and a person who breaks this rule should be suitably fined : —

“सगर्भमप्रतिविहितं गर्भं भर्षण्यां विक्रयाधानं — नयतः पूर्वः

साहस दण्डः क्रेतुं श्रोतृणां च ।”³⁹

Some light is thrown on social security in the works of foreign travellers, historians and other writers. *Megasthenes* records that priority was given by the government to the security of workers, artisans and farmers. A person damaging the eyes or hands of an artisan was sentenced to death.⁴⁰ During the ancient times, artisans and skilled workers enjoyed many facilities. They were exempted from payment of taxes. They also received

(35) *Ibid.* 2/407. (36) *Ibid.* 2/408. (37) *Manu* 8/216. (38) *Ibid.* 8/217. (39) *Kautilya* 2/13/27. (40) *Ancient India* by Crindle, p. 72.

assistance from the Government in times of need.⁴¹ *Fahien* in his work says that employees were entitled to get pension after a fixed period of service.⁴² He has also recorded that there were rest houses at short distances on roads where people could get medical attention.⁴³

Hiuentsang vividly describes the social security prevailing in India during his sojourn. Men belonging to the Vaishya caste established houses of charity and dispensaries for the benefit of the people. Paupers, helpless persons, widows, childless persons and physically defective persons come to these institutions where they are well looked after. The physician examines the sick and gives them medicine free of charge. All the needs of the sick person are also supplied.⁴⁴ It is clear from the mention of these institutions by *Hiuentsang* that they were undoubtedly conducted⁴⁵ by the upper classes of the society or by the government.

From the records of *Itsing*, it is known that even poor people gave small articles in charity after their meals.⁴⁶ The joint family system was, as before, a part of the social security enjoyed by the people. We find references to the full

(41) Lectures on Economic Condition of Ancient India, p. 134.

(42) *Fahien aur Hiuentsang ki Bharat Yatra*, p. 23. (43) *Fahien Travels*, p. 79 Quoted from *Life in Gupta Age*, pp. 162-163.

(44) *Fahien aur Hiuentsang ki Bharat Yatra*, p. 45. (45) *Yuvan-chang Travels, Part I*, p. 286 Quoted from *Life in Gupta Age*, p. 162. (46) *Itsang ki Bharat Yatra*, Chap. 9, p. 62.

development of the joint family system, during the reign of Harshvardhana.⁴⁷

In his account of the journey through India, *Al Beruni* mentions the giving of charity to helpless people.⁴⁸ In those times there were systematic arrangements for the safety of the employees and their protection from accidents.⁴⁹

During the reign of Ferozshah Tughlaq, there was a standing order to the effect that an unemployed person, desirous of securing job, should be presented before the Sultan who arranged to find work for him, in the Government offices, factories or in some other places.⁵⁰

In the Mughal times, it appears that no efforts were made for social security. There was no stability of service during the rule of Mughal Emperors. One could get service or work through the favour or recommendation of a high Government officer. On the transfer of these officers, the services of the employees were generally terminated. Thus the earning of livelihood had become a difficult problem, as there was no stability of service or work at all.⁵¹

The French traveller *Bernier*, who visited India in the 17th century, after observation of the factories, concludes that the professions descended from father to son. An embroiderer trained his son in his art, a goldsmith and a physician did the

(47) Sri Harsh of Kanauj, p. 55. (48) Alberuni ki Bharat, Part III, p. 193. (49) *Ibid.*, pp. 149-154. (50) Tarikhi Firozshahi, pp. 337-339. (51) India at the Death of Akbar, p. 85.

same.⁵² It may be inferred from this that for want of access to some other professions, men generally had to learn and practise their own hereditary professions.

It appears that the social security prevailing in ancient times gradually began to disintegrate in the later ages.

(52) Mughal Administration, p. 188.

INDUSTRIAL RELATION

Every man craves for happiness. One of the important factors necessary for happiness in a group or community is good mutual relations. The *Vedas* contain many references on this subject. Men have been advised to respect the elders, to be considerate in work, to persevere till the aim is achieved, to eschew opposition and enmity and carry on their work with love : —

“अं ज्यायस्वन्तश्चित्तिनो मावियोष्ट संराधयन्तः सयुराश्चरन्तः
अन्यो अन्यस्मै वल्गु वदन्त एव सघ्नीचीनान्वः सन्मनसस्कृणोमि ।”¹

The *Yajurveda* offers a prayer to God that men should live in mutual love and amity : —

“दूते द्र ह मा मित्रस्य मा चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि
समीक्षन्ताम् । मित्रस्याहं चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि
समीक्षे मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे ॥”²

It says that an employee should calmly work at his post and return home completely contented and pleased : —

“अक्रन् कर्म कर्मकृतः सहवाचा मयोभुवो ।
देवेभ्यः कर्म कृत्वास्तं प्रेत सचाभुवः ॥”³

For righteousness, economic success and the satisfaction of your own people the income of an employer has to be divided into five parts : —

“धर्माय यशसेऽर्थाय कामाय स्वजनाय च ।
पंचधा विभजन् वितं इहामुत्र न मोद ते ॥”⁴

(1) Atharva 3/30. (2) Yajur 36/18. (3) *Ibid.* 3/47. (4) Srimad-bhagavat 8-19-37.

During the Vedic times, to settle an industrial dispute, both the parties voluntarily approached a Madhymasi (mediator), who was a man of position and influence in the society.⁵ People in the rural community were able to solve and settle all such disputes by themselves.⁶ The village officers attended to and solved the local problems. They were invested with judicial as well as executive authority. This system prevailed under the Hindu Government.⁷

The purport of some hymns of the *Atharva Veda* is to put a stop to all kinds of disputes in the society :—

“सहृदयं सामनस्यम् विद्वेषं कृणोमिवः ।”⁸

Ancient law givers teach that intolerance and selfishness spread bitterness and disputes. *Manu* lays down that a man should avoid disputes with a sacrificial priest, a preceptor, a teacher, a maternal uncle, a guest, a dependent, a child, an old man, a sick person, a physician, near and distant relatives, parents, progeny, a wife and the employees :—

“ऋत्विक् पुरोहिताचार्यैर्मतुलातिथि संश्रितैः ।

बालवृद्धातुरैर्वैद्यैर्ज्ञातिसम्बन्धिवान्धवैः ॥

मातापितृभ्यां जामीभिर्भ्रात्रा पुत्रेण भार्यया ।

दुहिता दास वर्गेण विवादं न समाचरेत् ॥”⁹

An elder brother should be regarded as a father, a wife and a son should be considered as a part

(5) Indo-Aryan Polity, p. 71. (6) Epochs of Indian History—Ancient India, p. 129. (7) Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 111. (8) Atharva 3/30/1. (9) Manu 4/179-180.

of oneself and quarrels with them should be avoided. A slave may be thought to be one's shadow and a daughter to be deserving of mercy, and their faults should be tolerated : —

“आता ज्येष्ठः समः पित्रा भार्यापुत्रः स्वकातनुः ।

छाया स्वो दासवर्गश्च दुहिता कृपणं परम् ।

तस्मादेतैरधिक्षिप्तः सहेतासंज्वरः सदा ॥”¹⁰

It is stated in the *Srimadbhagvat* that big animals swallow small ones, the footed ones eat up those having no feet and those having hands feed upon those who have none : —

“अहस्तानी सहस्तानाम पदानि चतुष्पदाम् ।

फल्गूनि तत्र महतां जीवो जीवस्य जीवनम् ॥”¹¹

The *Mahabharat* mentions that a powerful person exploits the weak one, just as big fishes make a meal of small ones : —

“अराजकाः प्रजाः पूर्वं विनेशुरिति नः श्रुतम् ।

परस्परमं भक्षयन्तो मत्स्या इव जले कृशान् ॥”¹²

Kautilya states that the ways of fish are adopted by the society and the weak are exploited by the strong, if the offenders are not severely punished : —

“अप्रणीतो हि मात्स्य न्याय मुद्भावयति, वलीयानवलं

हि ग्रसते दण्ड धाराभावे ॥”¹³

Valmiki Ramayan also refers to the ways of the fish stating that no man can save his property and like the fish, one would destroy another, if the Government is weak and incompetent : —

(10) *Ibid.* 4/185. (11) *Srimadbhagvat* 1/13/47. (12) *Maha. Shanti* 6/17. (13) *Kautilya*, p. 9.

“नाराजके जनपदे स्वकं भवति कस्यचित् ।
भत्स्या इव जना नित्यं भक्षयन्ति परस्परम् ॥”¹⁴

It was, therefore, necessary to regulate disputes. A dispute, which could not be settled by the local Panchayat (an assembly of elected men) was disposed of by a board appointed by the King :—

“विचार्य श्रेणिभिः, कायंकुलैर्यन्त विचारितम् ।
गणेश्च श्रेण्यविज्ञातं गणाज्ञातं नियुक्तैः ॥”¹⁵

When a dispute between a plaintiff and a defendant had points of wide difference it was settled on the authority of the depositions of witnesses and the secret agents :—

“पूर्वोत्तरार्थव्याघाते साक्षिवक्तव्य कारणे ।
चार हस्ताश्च तिष्पाते प्रदेष्टव्यः पराजयः ॥”¹⁶

The disputes between an employer and an employee were disposed of according to written documents or depositions of witnesses :—

“अस्थायरेषु विवादेषूपगश्रेणिगणेषु च ।
दत्तादत्तेषु भृत्यानां स्वामिनां निर्णये सति ॥”¹⁷

If the wages of persons engaged in sea-borne trade had not been already fixed, they were settled by experts, after considering the time, place and the amount of work done :—

“समुद्रयान कुशला देशकालार्थं दर्शितः ।
नियच्छैयुर्भृतिं यां तु सा स्यात् प्रागकृता यदि ॥”¹⁸

(14) Valmiki Ayo. 67/31. (15) Shukra 4/553. (16) Kautilya 3/1/59. (17) Shukra 4/5/517-518. (18) History of Dhârma Shastra, Vol. 3, p. 476.

To avoid disputes, *Kautilya* lays down that wages should be settled by experts : —

“कारुशिल्पिकुशीलव चिकित्सकवाग्जीवन परिचारकादि राशः
कारिकवर्गस्तुयधान्यस्तद्विधः कुर्याद्यथा वा कुशलाः
कल्पयेयुस्तथावेतनं लभेत् ॥”¹⁹

If this opens a chance for dispute, the decision should be made according to the statement of the person present at the time of settling the wages : —

“साक्षिप्रत्ययमेवस्यात् ॥”²⁰

In case the person engaged gets the work done by his substitute, it is taken to be performed by him : —

“यदि कुर्युरपस्थानं वादं तत्र प्रवर्तयेत् ।
यः कश्चित्कार यत्किञ्चिन्नियोगाद्येनकेनचित् ॥”²¹

To prevent misconduct which can lead to disputes the law givers have laid down some rules, which had to be observed both by the employer and the worker. *Kautilya* holds that an employee should be fined twelve Panas, if he does not work well, even after receiving his wages : —

“गृहीत्वा वेतनं कर्माकुर्वतो भृतकस्य द्वादश पणो दण्डः ॥”²²

Manusmriti also supports this line of thought. It states that the wages should not be paid to an employee who leaves his work partially done : —

“भृतोनातो न कुर्याद्यो दर्पात्कर्मयथोदितम् ।
स दण्डयः कृष्णलान्यष्टो न देयं चास्य वेतनम् ॥”²³

(19) *Kautilya* 3/13/42. (20) *Ibid.* 3/13/43. (21) *Shukra* 4/632. (22) *Kautilya* 3/14/66/1. (23) *Manu* 8/215.

Brihaspati lays down that an employee should be fined an amount which is double his wages, if he does not complete the allotted work :—

“गृहीत वेतनः कर्म न करोति यदा भूतः ।

समर्थस्वेद दमं दाप्यो द्वि गुणतच्च वेतनम् ॥”²⁴

Yagyavalkya propounds the same law :—

“गृहीत वेतनः कर्म त्यजन्दिगुणमावहेत् ।”²⁵

If a porter does not complete his work, he should lose a seventh part of his wages. Some times he has to pay as fine a quarter, half or even the whole of his wages, in consideration of the work left unfinished by him :—

“प्रकान्ते सप्तमं भागं चतुर्थं पथि . संत्यजन् ।

भूतिमर्धपदेसर्वा प्रदाप्यस्त्याजकोऽपि च ॥”²⁶

An employee could be compelled to finish the work left partly done by him :—

“कर्मारम्भंतु यः कृत्वा सिद्धं नेवतु कारयेत् ।

बलात्कारयितव्योऽसाव कुर्वन् दण्डमर्हति ॥”²⁷

The King can compel an employee to complete his work. If he was disobedient he could be fined upto 200 Panas :—

“प्रतिश्रुत्य न कुर्याद्यः स कार्यः स्याद् बलादपि ।

स चेन्न कुर्यात्कर्म प्राच्युयाद् द्विशतं दमम् ॥”²⁸

Non-payment of wages at the fixed time leads to a legitimate grievance and grievances piled up can

(24) Brih. Quoted from History of Dharma Shastra, Part III, p. 476. (25) Yagya. 16/193. (26) *Ibid.* 16/198. (27) Katyayan—Quoted from History of Dharm Shastra, Part III, p. 477. (28) Vridh Manu—Quoted from History of Dharm Shastra, Part III, p. 476.

lead to industrial unrest. So a law existed to the effect that the employer could not withhold payment of wages for more than seven days.²⁹ If the allotted work was not properly done within seven days, it could be got done by another : —

“ततोऽन्यमुपस्थापयेत् ।”³⁰

A fine of 24 Panas was imposed on servants who damaged or took away articles from the place of work : —

“न चा निवेद्य मर्तुः संघः किंवित्परिहरेदयनयेद्वा ।
तस्यातिक्रमे चतुर्विंशतिपणो दण्डः ॥”³¹

Yagyavalkya states that compensation should be realised from a labourer if he damages or ruins the goods in his charge, but he should not be responsible if they are damaged by accident or by circumstances beyond his control : —

“अरोजदैविकान्नष्टं भाण्डं दाप्यस्तु वाहकः ।
प्रस्थानं विघ्नकृश्चैव प्रदाप्यो द्विगुणं भृतिम् ॥”³²

Injunctions were laid down for the employers also as they were made for the workers. If an employer engages a man to do some work and wants to discontinue him before the end of the work, he should pay the labourer full wages for the whole day : —

“स चेदल्पमपि कारयित्वा न कारयेत्कृतमेवास्य
विद्यात् ॥”³³

If an employer does not pay wages, he should be

(29) Kautilya 3/14/56/15. (30) *Ibid.* 3/14/66/16. (31) *Ibid.* 3/14/66/18-19. (32) *Yagya.* 16/193. (33) Kautilya 3/14/66/11.

finer six Panas or tenth part of wages. If the wages remain unpaid through the extravagance of the employer he should be fined twelve Panas or fifth part of the wages : —

“वेतना दाने दशवन्धो दण्डः षट्पणो वा ।

अपव्यय माने द्वादशपणो दण्डः पञ्चवन्धो वा ।”³⁴

Apastamba Dharma Sutra lays down that even if an employer, his wife or son is in financial difficulty, he must pay the wages of the labourers : —

“काममात्मानं भार्या पुत्रं वोपहृन्ध्यान्नत्वेव दास कर्मकरम् ।”³⁵

In the *Mahabharat* also it is mentioned that non-payment of wages in time has evil effects.

“कालाति क्रमणादेते भक्तवेतनयोर्भृताः ।

भर्तुः कुर्वन्ति दौर्बल्यात्सोनर्थः सुमहान् स्मृतः ॥”³⁶

An employer who breaks the laws with regard to payment of wages, had not only to pay the wages but also to pay a fine upto 100 Panas : —

“स्वामी वेदभृतकर्मपूर्णे काले जट्याहस्य सर्वमेव मूल्यं दद्यात् ।

पणशतं च राजनि अन्यत्रभृतकदोषात् ॥”³⁷

Brihaspati says that the employer should be made to pay the balance of wages and he was also obliged to pay the same amount by way of fine : —

“कृते कर्मणि यः स्वामी न दद्याद्वेतनं भृतेः ।

रात्रा दापयितव्यः स्याद्विनयं वातुरुपस्तः ॥”³⁸

To improve relations between an employer and an employee emphasis has been laid on good treatment of the employees. It has also been said that

(34) *Ibid.* 3/14/66/45-46. (35) *Apas. Dharm* 9/2/11. (36) *Maha. Sabha* 5/49. (37) *Vishnu* 157 to 159. (38) *Brih.* 16-18.

they should be given suitable wages because low wages create discontent among them and discontentment is the root of all disputes :—

“ये भृत्याहीन भृतिकाश्शत्रवस्ते स्वयंकृताः ।

परस्य साधकास्ते तु छिद्रकोश प्रजाहराः ॥”³⁹

Valmiki Ramayan regards it as a great sin to get work done by an employee and not to pay him proper wages :—

“कारयित्वा महत्कर्म भर्ता भृत्यमनर्थकम् ।

अधर्मो योऽस्य सोऽस्यास्तु यस्यार्योऽनुमतेगतः ॥”⁴⁰

According to *Kautilya*, the employer and the employee should make a contract with regard to the work to be done, according to which the employer agreed not to employ another man for the work and the worker agreed to complete the work and not to undertake any other work. If this contract was broken, the offender should be fined 12 Panas :—

“भर्ता वा कारयितुं नान्यस्त्वया कारयितव्यो मया वा
नान्यस्य कर्तव्यमित्य विरोधे भर्तुर कार यतो भृतकस्याकुर्वतो
वा द्वादशपणो दण्डः ॥”⁴¹

If a worker makes two contracts, one after the other, he must first complete the work of the first employer and then only begin that of the second :—

“कर्म निष्ठापने भतुरन्यत्र गृह्णित्वेतनो नासकामः कुर्यात् ।”⁴²

To maintain good relations between the employer and the employee it was proper that considerate

(39) Shukra 2-807-808. (40) Valmiki 2/75/23. (41) Kautilya 3/14/66/6. (42) *Ibid.* 3/14/66/7.

treatment was accorded to the employees and their small faults were condoned. Indeed, there is not a single person, who does not commit any fault : —

“न कश्चिन्नापराधयति ।”⁴³

The law givers are unanimous in holding that disputes cannot end by continuing them. But they should be settled in a peaceful and friendly manner : —

“नहि वेरेन वेरानि सम्मती ध कुदाचत ।

अवेरेन च सम्मन्ति एस धम्मो सनन्तनो ॥”⁴⁴

The law givers also advise that no employee should remain discontented because a disgruntled employee encourages other employees to create industrial unrest.⁴⁵ There is no doubt that disturbances arise from an insignificant event but as time passes, they develop to a large extent : —

“सुचीमुखाह्यनर्था इति लोक प्रवादः ।”⁴⁶

So the law givers have advised not to do that action for others which one does not like to be done for oneself : —

“न तत्परस्य सन्दध्यात् प्रतिकूलं यदात्मनः ।

सड ग्रहेणैष धर्मः स्यात् कामादन्यः प्रवर्तते ।”⁴⁷

To avoid industrial disputes, it has been laid down that even ordinary work should not be undertaken, if the employees show opposition.⁴⁸ In the

(43) Valmiki 4/36/11. (44) Dham/5. (45) Varhaspatya Arth 2/60. (46) Kautilya 9/3/140/6. (47) Vidur 7/71. (48) Vrihaspati Sutra 1/95.

Vedic times, unions were not only the assemblies of the employees but they were also institutions for maintaining cordial relations between the employees and the employer. ⁴⁹

Every effort was made to improve the mutual relations between capital and labour. The law givers have warned the employers that employees become their enemies, in case they use harsh words, inflict heavy punishment, cut their wages and treat them dishonourably : —

“वाक् पारुष्यान्मृतमृत्यास्वामी प्रबल दण्डतः ।
भृत्यं प्रशिक्षयेन्नित्यं शत्रुत्वं त्वपमानतः ॥”⁵⁰

It has been said in the *Mahabharat* that a wound made by an arrow can be healed ; a tree cut with an axe can grow again but a wound caused by speech can never be healed : —

“रोहते सायकैर्विद्धं वनं परशुना हतम् ।
वाचा दुरुवतं वीभत्सं न संरीहते वाक्शतम् ॥”⁵¹

So one should not use harsh words while speaking with others, but one should always use sweet words. The *Vedas* also enjoin every human being to speak sweetly : —

“जिह्वाया अग्रे मधुये जिह्वामूले मधूलकम् ॥”⁵²

The employees who are treated with respect, are kept content with their wages, and if addressed with sweet words, never leave the employer : —

“भृतिदानेन सन्तुष्टा मानेन परिवर्धिताः ।
सान्त्विता मृदुवाचा ये न त्यजन्त्वधिपंहिते ॥”⁵³

(49) *Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India*, p. 226.

(50) Shukra 2/415. (51) Maha. Udoug 34/378. (52) Atharv. 1/34/2.

(53) Shukra 2/416.

In the *Ramayan* also the employees are treated with respect, given some gifts and sweetly addressed :—

“सोऽहं दानैश्च मानैश्च सततंपूजितस्त्वया ।
सात्त्वैश्च विविधैः कालेकिं न कुर्याहितं तव ॥”⁵⁴

The financial condition of the workers was at a low ebb during the Muslim rule. There was only a nominal difference between an artisan, a servant, an employee, and a slave.⁵⁵ *Faster* has recorded in his account of travels in India that the emperor sent his slaves to Kabul every year and received dogs and horses in exchange.⁵⁶ The social condition of those times can well be imagined from this fact.

Whenever, the emperor or Government officers felt the need of a worker they could snatch him from the street or his house and compel him to work for them. If he showed opposition, he received corporal punishment. After a full day's work he was given only half of the proper wages. A month mostly consisted of 40 days and the wages paid were only three or four rupees per month and yet wages could be deferred for months together and then only were paid in the form of old, used and tattered clothes and such other articles.⁵⁷

During the reign of Akbar, the labourer entirely depended upon the will of the higher classes, em-

(54) Valmiki 6/57/15. (55) The Reminiscences of Francisco Pelsert, pp. 61. to 64. (56) The Early Travels in India, p. 154. (57) The Reminiscences of Francisco Pelsert, pp. 61-64.

ploying them. They were compelled to work and payment of wages wholly depended upon the will of the employer. If he pleased, he paid them; otherwise he beat the employees and turned them out. In those days, the employer was free to do as he pleased and there was no appeal against him.⁵⁸

Fines were imposed upon employees during the reign of Akbar. If a male or female elephant died, its keeper had to forego three months' wages. If any part of the Howda or an article from the caparisoning of the elephant was lost, Rs. 10/- or 15/- were deducted from the pay of the Mahout and the Mui (keeper). If a female elephant died through carelessness on the part of its attendants, full cost of the elephant was realised from them. During monthly inspection, if the work was found to be inadequately done, the wages were proportionately reduced.⁵⁹ Fines were also imposed on the servants of a stable, if a horse died or was stolen.⁶⁰

During the reign of Shahjahan, the economic condition of the employees had become low on account of the famine. Though on account of the building activity of Shahjahan the demand for labour had increased, there was no rise in the standard of wages. An order of the emperor or governor sufficed to drag a labourer from his home and he was compelled to work for any amount of

(58) The Commercial Policy of Mughals, p. 70. (59) Ayeen Akbari, p. 108. (60) *Ibid.*, p. 118.

wages according to the will of the Government officials.⁶¹

During the Mughal times personal difficulties and disputes were solved and decided by the emperor himself. Akbar had entrusted this work to the Kadis, but sufficient information is not available with regard to the extent of their authority.⁶²

The foregoing account illustrates the condition of workers in those days. When the emperor and his officials dealt thus harshly with the workers, cordial relations between labour and capital could not be expected to exist.

(61) The Commercial Policy of the Mughals, p. 186.
(62) India at the Death of Akbar, p. 34.

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