

VARNĀSAMKARA IN THE MAHABHĀRATA

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru
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the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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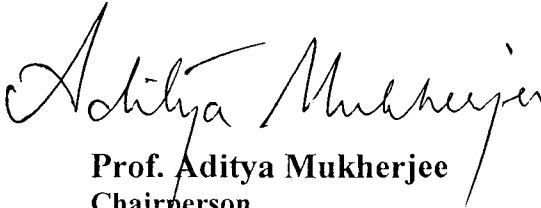


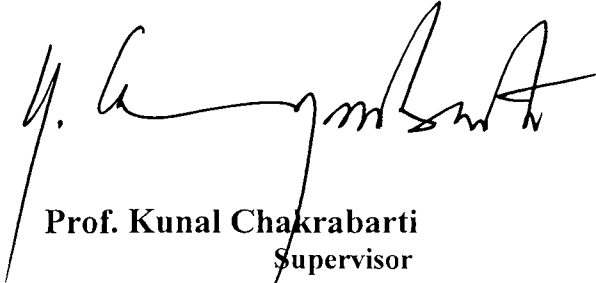
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled, “**Varnasamkara in the Mahābhārata**” submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university and is my original work.


Shubhayan Ganguli

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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All the errors in the work are mine alone.

Shubhayan Ganguli.

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Introduction

jātiratra mahāsarpa manuṣyatve mahāmate

*sarṅkarāt sarvavarṇānām duṣparīkṣyeti me matiḥ*¹ –

[O great snake of great wisdom, due to the inter-mixture of the *varṇas* it is almost impossible to decide the *jāti* to which a man belongs; thus is my view.]

When Nahuṣa, in the form of a snake, asked Yudhiṣṭhira about the means to mark out one's *varṇa*, Yudhiṣṭhira had the above answer for him. The aspects of *varṇa* and *varṇasamkara* are so murky that it is very difficult, even for Yudhiṣṭhira the champion of *dharma*, to figure it out. It is interesting that Yudhiṣṭhira sites *varṇasamkara* or mixture of *varṇas*, as the factor responsible for ascertaining the *varṇa* of an individual. The above statement by Yudhiṣṭhira shows that *varṇasamkara* as a social phenomenon was very much prevalent during the time of composition of the text of the *Mahābhārata*; so much so, that it made the rigid boundary of the four *varṇas* flexible to a great extent.

¹ *Mahābhārata*, (ed.) V.S.Sukthankar et al., B.O.R.I., Poona, 1933-59., 3.177.26. This is the critical edition. I shall henceforth refer to this text as Mbh.

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The present work is an attempt to discuss the reflection of the society in the prescriptive as well as in popular literature by studying the phenomenon of *varṇasaṅkara*, both in its theoretical form and in its representation in a literary text. For the prescriptive literature, it can be said that they do not always give out the real social picture. They only suggest 'what should be done' and not 'what was done'. To find that out I have taken the example of the text of the *Mahābhārata*.

Introduction

Overview of the Historiography:

Not much work has been done on the concept of *varṇasamkara*, unlike the concept of *varṇa*. However, it can be said that both the concepts are interconnected. To discuss the works done so far on the *varṇasamkaras*, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the concept of *varṇa* and its implications for the society. It can be said that this particular concept not only divided the society into different *varṇa* groups, but also gave it a mosaic identity. The concept of *varṇa* brought to the society a theory which gradually became one of the major preconditions of the brahmanical order. With the passage of time, the concept of *varṇasamkara* arose as a more complex outcome of the above theory. This is why the study of the concept of *varṇa* is seen as a prerequisite for any study on the *varṇasamkaras*. In the historiographic field also we see the works on *varṇa* easily outnumber the works on *varṇasamkaras*, with Vivekanand Jha² as one of the exceptions, whom we shall discuss later.

² Vivekanand Jha can be seen as one of the few writers to pay attention to the group of *varṇasamkaras* in society in general. His study of the *smṛti* texts is a great source of information about the *varṇasamkaras*. His major works include: "Varṇasamkara in the Dharmasūtras: theory and practice", *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*,

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One of the early works on the concept of varṇa is by Richard Fick³. In the above essay, Richard Fick tries to look at the position of the oppressed groups in the north-eastern parts of present day India during the time of Buddha (c. 600 B.C.). However, a few doubts remain. In the essay, the north-east region of India is completely ignored. Secondly, the *Jātakas* were composed much after Buddha's death, and thus do not correspond to 'Buddha's time'. Hence the title is quite misleading. The author's effort can be termed as an overview of the oppressed castes in ancient India, though the concept of *varṇa*, as viewed by Richard Fick, is not very clear.

Often the *varṇa* system is blamed for being the backbone of the system of slavery in ancient India. D.R.Chanana's article on the theme⁴ is an important contribution. However, there are certain loopholes in his argument. First of all, his chronology does not

1970, and, "Stages in the history of untouchables", *Indian Historical Review*, 1974, also published in, Aloka Parasher Sen (ed.), *Subordinate and marginal groups in early India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 157.

³ Fick, Richard. "The Despised Castes: North-East India in Buddha's Time". in A.P.Sen (ed.), *Subordinate and marginal groups in early India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 83.

⁴ Chanana, Dev Raj. *Slavery in Ancient India: As Depicted in Pāli and Sanskrit Texts*, in A. P. Sen ed. *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India*; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2004, pp. 96.

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follow the current consensus⁵. There is little discussion on the *varṇa* structure and he entirely relies on the Buddhist sources⁶.

The relationship between *varṇa* and *jāti* is a complex one. One of the earliest works to deal with this relationship in an ethnographic context is, *The Structure of Hindu Society*, by N.K.Bose⁷.

As the title of the book suggests, it studies the present structure of the Hindu society and looks for its roots. Andre Beteille, the translator of the volume, has divided the work into three sections⁸. The first part consists of a kind of anthropological, ethnological study of the tribal communities of eastern India. The second part of his study looks for the roots of the theory and practice of Hindu social life in the

⁵ Chanana places the epics before the Buddha–Kauṭilya period:

“It is interesting to note that in all these definitions or explanations of the word *dāsa*, there is never any mention of the Vedic distinction between the *dāsa* and *ārya* and there is no mention of the *dāsas* being the progeny of a people who had been vanquished at an earlier epoch. The ethnic distinction already absent in the epics does not reappear and one can observe a complete mixing up of the populations, giving rise to the disappearance of all cultural and ethnic differences.” (Underlines mine). Ibid, pp. 109.

⁶ He ignores the epics, the *Purāṇas* and other *smṛti* texts.

⁷ Bose, N.K. *The Structure of Hindu Society* (tr.) Andre Beteille, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1975.

⁸ Bose, N.K. Op. Cit., pp. 2-3.

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classical texts. The third part deals with the social history of the Hindus and the disjunctions and the continuities over time.

Another important work in this genre, though more sociologically oriented, is by Irawati Karve⁹. The above monograph by Irawati Karve studies the Hindu society in its present form and explains the nature of its evolution. She is dissatisfied with the notion of *varṇāśrama* being equivalent to the complex phenomenon of caste and points out that *jāti* is a totally different notion from that of *varṇa*, and it denotes a more identifiable range of social groups.

She has discussed at length the account of caste structure as given in the text of *Manusmṛti*. She argues that, Manu was probably listing the prevalent castes rather than establishing a new system. However, Karve's emphasis is on the largely flexible nature of the Brahmanical system which runs contrary to injunctions of the prescriptive texts, such as the *Manusmṛti*. To quote her,

“the *varṇa* system, which appears so inflexible, itself is surprisingly flexible, because while the words denoting the five orders remained the same, the castes included in them changed”¹⁰.

This flexibility allowed the new entrants to find a place in the system.

⁹ Karve, Irawati. *Hindu society – an interpretation*, Deshmukh Prakashan, Poona, 1961.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. vi.

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The notion of *varṇa* has been explained by different authors in different ways. R.S.Sharma, in his monograph, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*¹¹, has studied the forms of social organisation in early India from a materialistic point of view. Sharma questions the view that *varṇa* relates to the concept of status and not class. According to him, *varṇa* should be looked at from the point of view of management of production and the sharing of surplus¹². For instance he says that the tribal notions of impurity, connected with events of death or menstruation, were not directly responsible for the origin of untouchability¹³. It happened only when manual work was separated from intellectual, religious and administrative work. The upper *varṇas* wanted to keep themselves separated from the primary producers by creating as well as refining the rituals of purity and impurity and devising a mechanism of social barriers.

Sharma, while discussing the *R̥g* *vedic* period, defines the *varṇa* – system as,

“A social mechanism created in response to a mode of production in which the upper classes in the form of priests and noble – warriors act as managers of production and collectors of the surplus produce and the lower classes

¹¹ Sharma, R.S. *Material culture and social formations in ancient India*, Macmillan, Delhi, 1983.

¹² Sharma, R.S. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 4.

¹³ *Ibid*, pp. 7.

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such as peasants, artisans and agricultural labourers, free and unfree, carry on the primary work of production".¹⁴

Based on the above definition, he argues that the caste-system was absent in the *Rg vedic* society. Neither the *brāhmaṇas* nor the *kṣatriyas* enjoyed tribute or a share of production merely on account of their social or *varṇa* identity. The *brāhmaṇa* received tributes in return for their priestly functions. Though large tributes and special privileges went to the *kṣatriya* chief, this was a continuation of the tribal practice¹⁵.

In a later phase, by c.500 B.C., large scale use of iron detached the producing masses from those of the priests and warriors. The producing masses were burdened with social and economic obligations imposed by the militio-administrative body which now followed a well defined *varṇa* system¹⁶. Brahmanical ideology gave this system its legal and religious sanction. The peasants and labourers were excluded from share in surplus and to ensure this the functions of each *varṇa* were defined.¹⁷

To substantiate his argument Sharma has referred to the incident of Śambuka, mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. This *śūdra* was killed by Rāma, for he dared to practice asceticism, which was

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 49.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 50.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 85.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 108.

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set aside as a privilege of the upper *varṇas* only. Sharma shows that the *Rāmāyaṇa* depicts a rigidly hierarchised society¹⁸, based on *varṇa* differentiation. However, Sharma describes the *Mahābhārata* as showing signs of coexistence of two types of society, a tribal and a *varṇa* divided one¹⁹. Sharma concludes that a double burden was placed on the peasant community (*vaiśyas*), who had to support both the princes and the priests²⁰.

In another landmark work²¹, Sharma has focussed fully on a particular *varṇa*, the *śūdra*. Here he studies the changes in the social treatment of his subject over time.

Sharma argues that in the earlier portions of the *R̥g Veda*, there was no trace of sharp class divisions and he connects this to the *Purāṇic* speculation of there being no *varṇa* division until the coming of the *Tretā yuga*²². He also says that no sign of contempt for manual work can be found here, as he mentions that some manual works were pursued even by the *āryas*²³. Sharma further states:

“Although the word *varṇa* is applied to the Āryan and Dāsa in the *R̥g Veda*, it does not indicate any division of labour, which became the basis of the

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 135.

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 140.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 141.

²¹ Sharma, R.S. *Śūdras in Ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass, 2nd edition, Delhi, 1958.

²² Ibid, pp. 26-27.

²³ Ibid, pp. 28.

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broad social classes of later times. *Ārya* and *Dāsa-varṇas* represent two large tribal groups, which were in the process of disintegration into social classes.”²⁴

Another question that remains is whether the *dāsas* formed the fourth *varṇa* or the *śūdras* were formed from within the *āryas*. According to Sharma, some *āryas* performed manual labour along with the *dāsas*. Eventually both these groups were incorporated within the fourth *varṇa*²⁵. This conclusion is derived from the *purūṣasukta* in the *Rg Veda*. This story of the origin of the *varṇas* suggests the *ārya* identity of the *śūdras*.

What follows in the book is a meticulous study of the *śūdras* in ancient India and the social treatment meted out to them in a chronological sequence. Sharma shows that the *śūdras* were gradually excluded from participating in the various Brahmanical rituals. Even the Buddhist period did not do much a difference to their lot. According to Sharma, the condition of the *śūdras* remained the same and the *varṇa* identity of social groups was still very important in the Buddhist period. However, Sharma agrees that the Buddhist texts do not give us as much detail on the position of the *śūdras* as the Brahmanical texts do²⁶.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 28.

²⁶ Sharma; Ibid – pp. 87-88.

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Sharma also discusses in detail the subject of the *varṇasaṁkaras* in society. He argues that even within the *varṇasaṁkaras* there existed a sense of hierarchy. A *varṇasaṁkara* with *śūdra* blood in him/her was considered lower the *varṇasaṁkara* without it²⁷ and it was considered even lower to have a *śūdra* father than a *śūdra* mother²⁸.

Sharma has used his understanding of the *varṇa* structure, to suggest a few hypotheses. This is clearly visible in his work, *Indian Feudalism*²⁹. Following economic reasons, the practice of land grant to the *brāhmaṇas* resulted in a great agrarian expansion in the rural sector. The need for more agricultural labourers was complemented by the gradual transformation of the *śūdras* into peasants. Through brahmanisation and acculturation of the tribal people Sharma shows how feudalism worked as an integrative factor in society of the country³⁰.

Thus, after we have seen the usage and explanation of the aspect of *varṇa* by various scholars, let us now see how the aspect of *varṇasaṁkara* has been dealt with by the historians.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 128.

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 118.

²⁹ Sharma, R.S. *Indian Feudalism*, 2nd ed. Macmillan, Delhi, 1980. (1st ed. 1965).

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 223.

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Suvira Jaiswal's work³¹ is a study of the caste system. In her discussion of the *R̥g* Vedic social organisation, Jaiswal found that the society had only two *varṇas*; *ārya* and *dāsa*³². The *R̥g* Vedic society, according to Jaiswal, was stratified into economic groups, which later took the shape of social groups and became the basis of *varṇnāśrama*³³.

Her treatment of the Buddhist sources is primarily limited to the various applications of the term *gr̥hapati* or *gahapati*³⁴. Jaiswal conceives this category as belonging to the *vaiśya varṇa*³⁵ in view of the fact that the Buddhist texts refer to the group of *gahapatis* as one of the four *varṇas*. However, after a discussion of the socio-economic implications of the term³⁶, Jaiswal rightly concludes that the *gahapatis* might not have been any caste group at all, but an economic class with a social identity.

The most striking point of her work from our point of view is her attempt to present the *varṇasaṃkara* as the

³¹ Jaiswal, Suvira. *Caste*, Manohar Pub., New Delhi, 1998.

³² Ibid, pp. 146.

³³ Ibid, pp. 169.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 205.

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 206.

³⁶ Ibid, pp. 207-211.

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major factor responsible for the integration of the *varṇa* order into the numerous *jāti* orders. She argues that the concept of *varṇasamkara* was always connected with the type of occupation. To quote her,

“In the eyes of the orthodox brāhmaṇa all those who were outside or at the margin of brahmanical society could be none other than śūdras, for the varṇa system was a universal concept defining not only human but also the divine and vegetational worlds. Yet widely divergent social, economic and cultural levels of assimilating groups and material expediencies led to the invention of the concepts of *vrātya* and *varṇasamkara*, that is, formation of separate castes due to non-performance of the sacred duty or because of the mixed marriages of original founder couples; and these theoretical devices were highly successful in extending the varṇa system into the *jāti* system. These explanations also led to a dilution or modification of the varṇa concepts and we have shown how the notions of ‘vaiśya’ and ‘śūdra’ acquired new meanings in the changed material conditions, which favoured a shift from the relative purity of function to relative purity of birth implied in the transition from varṇa to *jāti*.”³⁷

Lastly let us look at the work which is considered as the most important for the study of *varṇasamkara*. This is the article by Vivekanand Jha called, “Varṇasamkara in the dharma sūtras:

³⁷ Ibid, pp. 14.

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theory and practice”³⁸. It is probably the only complete survey of the different *varṇasamkara* groups named in the various *dharma sūtras*. This is a theoretical study of the *varṇasamkaras*, based upon the *sūtra* texts. There exists a considerable amount of mismatch between the different *dharma sūtras* regarding the characteristics, naming, identity, origin and prescribed occupation of the various *varṇasamkara* groups. To deal with this, Jha has produced an excellent comparative analysis of the said groups as found in various *dharma sūtras*.

He has put a great deal of emphasis on the *anuloma* and *pratiloma* types of unions. He found that almost all the *dharma sūtras* unequivocally discourage the *pratiloma* type of union³⁹. Many even sought to make them entirely forbidden. Interestingly, his study shows that even amongst the *pratilomas*, any trace of *śūdra* blood would degrade the social position of the *varṇasamkara* to an even lower category. Jha has discussed several hypotheses regarding the degeneration of the *pratiloma* sons. He ultimately upheld the theory of the ‘impact of the patrilineal invaders

³⁸ Jha, V.N. “Varṇasamkara in the dharma sūtras: theory and practice”, *JESHO*, 1970.

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 274.

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on an indigenous matrilineal population'⁴⁰. His concluding remark in this regard is:

“The exact causes of the difference between the position of sons of a matrilineal father and a patrilineal mother on the one hand and that of sons of a patrilineal father and a matrilineal mother on the other would, however, be forgotten when both societies adopted the patrilineal system.”⁴¹

But why did the group of *varṇasamkaras* at all emerge as a different category in the brahmanical society? Jha answers this question from the realm of ‘speculative theorizing’⁴². Later, he dismisses the theory of the origin of the *varṇasamkaras* from illicit unions only:

“It is difficult to see how a whole people could be the outcome of illicit unions between brāhmaṇa women and śūdra males. Moreover, it would seem unwise to imagine so much brāhmaṇa blood in the veins of these hated and backward aboriginals. On the other hand, the theory of *varṇasamkara*, implying the brāhmaṇa’s deep concern for preserving the purity of Aryan blood, may have been an afterthought and implicitly based on the known reality about sections of the population like the *caṇḍālas*. This hypothesis becomes more plausible when we note that there appear to have been

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 275.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 276.

⁴² Ibid, pp. 277.

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caṇḍālas 'by works as well as by birth', and both permanent and temporary outcastes in the *Dharma Sūtras*.⁴³

However, there is one problem with this understanding which is pointed out by Jha himself. If the *varṇasaṁkaras* were named following occupational groups, how come the otherwise detailed, *dharma sūtras* do not catalogue their occupations? Jha has expressed his surprise at this⁴⁴.

Following the above problem, Jha concludes his essay by tracing the three kinds of people who combined to produce the different *varṇasaṁkara* groups. They are –

- (1) less assimilated backward aboriginals,
- (2) degraded artisans, and
- (3) groups which, through infringement of caste rules or otherwise, had lost their 'Aryan' status⁴⁵.

Now that we have had a brief look at the major works on the topics of *varṇa* and *varṇasaṁkara*, we see that the concept of *varṇasaṁkara* has not received full attention of scholars except Vivekanand Jha. One should also acknowledge the contribution of Suvira

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 282.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 280.

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 287.

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Jaiswal and her discussion of the *varṇa-jāti* structure as the factor responsible for the creation of the *varṇasamkaras*.

Like the works on *varṇa*, the works on the *Mahābhārata* are also numerous, though very few are helpful for the requirements of our study. I have looked at a series of works, both in English and in Bengali, on the *Mahābhārata*.

Buddhadeb Basu's *Mahabharater Katha*⁴⁶ looks at the epic from a completely new angle. It views the character of Yudhiṣṭhira as the protagonist of the text. The role of Yudhiṣṭhira is revisited by the author and he tries to look at the text from Yudhiṣṭhira's point of view. Similarly, Irawati Karve's⁴⁷ work looks at the epic from the point of view of a set of characters. She has analysed the characters of Bhiṣma, Gāndhārī, Kuntī, Vidura, Draupadī, Droṇa, Karṇa and Kṛṣṇa. In the section on Vidura, which is central to our concern, she propounds the theory that Vidura was the real father of Yudhiṣṭhira.

Sullivan's work⁴⁸ on the character of Vyāsa can be termed as an excellent specialised work on a particular character. Sullivan discusses this character at length and portrays him as the

⁴⁶ Basu, Buddhadeb. *Mahabharater Katha*, M.C.Sircar & Sons Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1974. (Bengali).

⁴⁷ Karve, I. *Yuganta*, Disha Books, Mumbai, 1991.

⁴⁸ Sullivan, B.M. *The Seer of the Fifth Veda*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1999.

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very symbol of the brahmanical orthodoxy. Through his discussion of Vyāsa Sullivan shows how the *Mahābhārata* attempted to legitimise Brahmanism and give it divine sanction. Vyāsa, he shows, bears a striking resemblance to the god, Brahmā, and the fact that Vyāsa was the ‘author’ of the text only helped the above cause.

On the other hand, K.C.Mishra’s work⁴⁹ on the various tribes mentioned in the text of the *Mahābhārata*, can be said as an excellent collection of data from the text. Mishra has also looked at the social conditions prevailing at the time of the composition of the epic.

⁴⁹ Mishra, K.C. *Tribes in the Mahabharata*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987.

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A Glance at the Sources:

For the study of the concept of *varṇasamkara* I have selected ten *dharma-sūtras* and *śāstras*. They are – the *Gautama dharma-sūtra*, the *Baudhāyana dharma-sūtra*, the *Vasiṣṭha dharma-sūtra* (period of composition – 600 B.C. to 300 B.C.), the *Mānava dharma-śāstra* (period of composition – 200 B.C. to 200 A.D.), the *Yājñyavalkya smṛti*, the *Viṣṇu dharma-sūtra* (period of composition – 100 A.D. to 300 A.D.), the *Nārada smṛti* (period of composition – 100 A.D. to 400 A.D.), the *Vaikhānasa smārta-sūtra* (period of composition – 200 A.D. to 500 A.D.), the *Uśanas* and the *Sūtasamhitā* (period of composition – 600 A.D. to 900 A.D.)⁵⁰.

There are several editions of the text of the *Mahābhārata*. Manuscripts of the text can be found from all over India and outside. Since there are considerable variations amongst these manuscripts, a critical edition⁵¹ of the text was prepared by a panel of scholars, led by V.S.Sukthankar, who studied a number of manuscripts and prepared a common reader for all containing the verses which are least likely to be of later origin or regional interpolation. The majority of studies done on the

⁵⁰ Periods of these texts as according to P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, vol. II, pt. I, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1974, pp. xi-xii.

⁵¹ *Mahābhārata*, (ed.) V.S.Sukthankar et al., 19 vols., B.O.R.I., Poona, 1933-59.

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Mahābhārata are now based upon the critical edition of it. J.A.B. van Buitenen began a translation of the critical edition and finished doing the first five *parvans* of it. Both the critical edition and its translation are extremely helpful for any study of the text.

Apart from the above, I have also used the Calcutta edition of the text. By the Calcutta edition I mean the edition compiling by comparing the manuscripts found in the eastern part of India. For this I have selected the edition by Haridas Siddhantabagish Bhattacharya⁵². This work contains the Sanskrit verses and their Bengali translation, and the commentary by Nilakaṇṭha called the *Bhāratabhāvadīpa*.

The period of composition of the *Mahābhārata* is uncertain. However, scholars have agreed that the codification of the text primarily belongs to the first four centuries of the Christian era⁵³. This was also the period of composition of some of the major law-codes. The brahmanical society was undergoing changes and reorganisation and it was felt necessary to provide the people with a guideline. Most of this was done through the law-codes. However, with the growing complexity of the social structure, it was also necessary to convey the idea of *dharma* to the common

⁵² *Mahabharatam*, (ed.) Haridas Siddhantabagish Bhattacharya, 43 vols., Bishwabani Prakashani, Kolkata, 1338 (B.S.).

⁵³ Fitzgerald, James L. "Mahābhārata", in *The Hindu World*, (ed.), Mittal, Sushil. And Thursby, Gene., Routledge, New York, 2004, pp. 52.

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people in a simple language through the composition of popular literature like the epics and later the *Purānas*.

However, the society depicted in the *Mahābhārata* is not a monolithic one. The text goes through a series of stratification and, more often than not, shows the presence of various 'survivals' of the past. R.S.Sharma divides these various social remnants into two broad categories⁵⁴. He shows that the text gives clear indications of two types of societies, one a tribal and indigenous one and the other a territorial and *varṇa*-divided state-based society. Examples of both kinds can be found clearly in the text. In the early half of the text it portrays the tribal remnants, and as the narrative moves on to the didactic *parvans*⁵⁵ the focus gradually shifts towards the *varṇa*-divided society.



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⁵⁴ Sharma, R.S. *Material culture and social formations in ancient India*, Macmillan, Delhi, 1983, pp. 140.

⁵⁵ Like the *Śānti* and the *Anuśāṣaṇa parvans*.

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The Plan of the Work:

I have divided my dissertation into three chapters to bring out the concept of mixed-castes and its treatment in the narrative of the *Mahābhārata*. The first chapter deals with the concept of *varṇasaṁkara* and its position in the law-codes. This chapter looks at their evolution, categories and other discussion by the various law-codes to check whether any pattern can be seen to have been followed. This chapter is meant to serve as an introduction to the concept of *varṇasaṁkara*, as it is found in the various law-codes.

The second chapter deals with the text of the *Mahābhārata*, especially the first *parvan*⁵⁶. In this chapter we look at the various birth-stories and catalogue the myths attached to them. The nature of the myths will help us decipher the text's attitude towards such characters. We shall see if the children born of mixed marriages are attributed with any special status and if the law-codes' injunctions are followed while

⁵⁶ The first *parvan* has been selected for the birth-stories in the *Mahābhārata*. As this is the introductory *parvan* of the text, almost all the major characters are introduced here. It also has the maximum number of birth-stories and they are of a varied nature.

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deciding the child's *varṇa*. This will help us in understanding the social reaction to births out of various *varṇa* compositions.

In the third chapter we shall focus on a specific *varṇasaṁkara* character in the text⁵⁷, namely Vidura. The various terms by which he has been addressed will be of specific importance to our study. This chapter will help us figure out the social outlook towards a *varṇasaṁkara* person. The reason behind my selection of Vidura is the fact that he was the only mixed-caste character of importance in the text who was addressed so. Though his character does not correspond to the idea of a *varṇasaṁkara* character of lesser importance in the story, given the paucity of evidence, he can still be considered as a good indicator of the treatment received by such characters in society, as reflected in the *Mahābhārata*.

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⁵⁷ I have looked at only the first five *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata*. The character of Vidura enjoys a prominent position in these sections only, and after the conclusion of the fifth *parvan* and the beginning of the sections on war he does not figure in any important incident of the story.

CHAPTER – 1

Admitting The New; The Theory Of *Varnasaṅkara* In

The *Dharma-Sūtras* & *Śāstras*.

Introduction:

The study of the early Indian society poses a few challenges to the reader. Social history of a country, or more precisely, the history of a specific social pattern, can never be traced in an exact way (unless and until the ‘time – machine’ is invented). One can never know the precise social behaviours of a time bygone, of a society bygone. Still, we do venture into the adventure of studying social history with the help of the textual remnants left by the bygone society.

Interacting with the early Indian social history, the first pattern that comes to notice is the *varṇa* structure. Infused with it, we can see the social picture as coned by this structure. Till this day the *varṇa* structure can be seen in the driver’s seat while driving the truckload of social hierarchy, at many places in India. In the early Indian scenario, it can be seen that, one of the standpoints of the brahmanical

religious, as well as, social order was the *varṇa* division. This division not only classified society into four groups, but also established and legitimised the same by connecting it with the cosmic creation of the world. The four *varṇas* were said to have been evolved out of various body-parts of the cosmic man (*puruṣa*)¹. The *brāhmaṇas* from the head, the *kṣatriyas* from the arms, the *vaiśyas* from the thighs and the *sūdras* from the feet; giving it all the colour it needed in order to, not only legitimise itself, but also to produce a sense of hierarchy. This was a vertical order. With this order was assigned the earthly occupations of each *varṇa*. This, in turn, introduced the idea of ‘purity’ and ‘impurity’ of a *varṇa*, based upon their occupation. However, matters turned complex, once the question of their intermingling came to the forefront. Children of parents of differing *varṇa* were in a probable situation of identity crisis. Also, with the brahmanical expansions to the outskirts of the Gangetic plain or the regions inhabited by numerous indigenous communities, there was a necessity to bring them all under the brahmanical social umbrella. The need arose to give them a name, as well as a well-defined position in the society. Thus to tackle this theoretical, as well as, practical problem of new entrants, the concept of *varṇasamkara* arose, and devices were planned to produce the social guidelines for them to follow. Since there were several of them, theoretically evolving out of different possible *varṇa* combinations and

¹ Rg Veda – (X. 90).

practically out of the numerous tribes and occupational groups, it was necessary to record them first, and then to catalogue them into different hierarchical order in the society, keeping in mind the basic characteristics of the brahmanical social mechanism. This function was carried through the norms propounded in the various 'law-codes' or the *dharma-sūtras* and the *śāstra* texts. Infused with the types of *anuloma* and *pratiloma* kinds, *varṇasaṁkara* became far more complicated as a concept. Due to this, several questions arose about their exact identity, which the law-codes were unable to answer.

Our concern in this study would be on the theoretical aspect of the same structure. This is due to the fact that the law-codes record the *varṇasaṁkaras* in that particular manner, i.e., them coming out of different *varṇa* combinations. However untrue this might be from a practical sense, this certainly helps us to understand the viewpoints of the brahmanical authors, who were trying to legitimise these new entrants and were busy sewing them into the brahmanical socio-cultural fabric.

The overarching brahmanical belief of the *varṇas* being limited to four did not hamper the growth of this new structure of *varṇasaṁkaras*, which existed in parallel terms with the same belief. However cleverly these authors tried to cope with this utterly

contradictory duality, they had to give in to some unavoidable and avoidable contradictions. Many of these contradictions were seen to have emerged out along the chronological line, while many of them were out of the disagreements between different authors. The above point, along with others, form the bulk of our next section where we look at the various difficulties one would face while working with the law-codes.

A Few Problems With The Law-Codes:

Before we indulge ourselves with the topic of *varṇasamkaras* and their positioning in the various *dharma-sūtras* and *śāstras*, let us first face the kind of hindrances likely to be offered by these texts. This is due to the fact that one can get to the point these texts are making, only in a biased way. That is to say, these texts will present us a period they know, a period bygone, and it will be very difficult to get the whole picture out of them. We will only see the portion of that period these texts will show us and not the whole of it. One must keep in mind these problems before using these texts for any researching purpose.

The problem of *varṇa* assignment comes clearly to the forefront, while discussing the *varṇasamkara* pattern in early Indian society. This is a problem, which I believe, can never be solved fully by having the *dharma-śāstra* and the *sūtra* texts as the only source of information. It can be seen that these texts present a dual hindrance regarding the above study. On one hand, they present a typically prescriptive nature where the role of guesswork becomes important while painting the practical arena, and on the other hand they are full of contradictions and conflicts regarding the said aspect of awarding a specific mixed-*varṇa* identity.

With their prescriptive nature, we can never know the real structure and can only make guesses. That is to say, these texts can only tell us ‘what should be done’ and not ‘what was done’. Thus we can never know for sure, if the guidelines in these texts were at all followed or not. Even if we take it that these guidelines were followed by the people of that period, it presents us with another problem. The level of contradictions and disagreements between these texts leave us to wonder, which one of them were being followed by the people. For instance, the same combination of parents (of different *varṇa*) produces a particular *varṇasaṁkara* according to one of the texts, while the other text names a new *varṇasaṁkara* with the above parentage. It gets very confusing indeed, so as to follow or believe ‘which’ text.

Also, more often than not, we find the texts mentioning a few theories, for instance the *jātyutkarṣa* one. Here we collide with the conflict of idea versus reality. We can definitely be sure about the authenticity of the idea, but it being a reality or not, can not be cross-checked. In this battle of idea vs. reality, my suggestion would be to concentrate on the idea alone, and not on its authenticity as being a reality. This is for the fact that even an idea can show the social remnants of a particular period.

The best way out is to look at these differences from the angle of searching for their underlying intention. What we need to look for is the social picture depicted even in these differences, and see if there is a pattern evolving out of these contradictory remarks. This is due to the fact that these texts belong to separate grids, both philosophically and chronologically. They belong to separate periods, and a study of their differences would lead us to the social outlook on the subject being present inside the time frame of the composition of each of these texts.

Moreover, there is also a kind of problem offered by some of these texts, which can never be solved. Some of these texts are written in verses, which are bound by the objective of fulfilling meter requirements. It is possible that many of the words and terms in the verses of these texts were inserted in to keep up with the meter requirements, and were not required otherwise. This is a possibility which, with uncertain degree of effect, can really hamper the study of the data coming out of these texts. Since we have to depend upon the same data for our study, this can become a non-cautioned, as well as, non-cushioned hazard to the same purpose of us. We can never know, whether the term was inserted following the meter requirements or was it really necessary for the text's purpose.

Keeping in mind these problems, and being careful to avoid them, let us venture into our original topic of

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looking at the placing of the *varṇasaṁkaras* by the various *dharma-sūtras* and *śāstras*.

Varṇasaṁkara In The Law-Codes:

As I have already said, the concept of mixed-caste or *varṇasaṁkara* appears in the law-codes with utmost contradiction. It completely opposes the brahmanical belief of limiting the *varṇas* to four and at the same time can be seen as not hampering the above belief at all. This is an interesting paradox, which should be looked at with great care. It is possibly, because of this paradox, we can see the texts as, on one hand, univocally dismissing the idea of mixing the four *varṇas* with extreme despise, and on the other hand, providing provisions for the possible *varṇasaṁkara* and flirting with the possibilities, hereby manufacturing numerous different *varṇasaṁkaras*.

We can also see that the texts even tried to sanction a group of *varṇasaṁkaras* (*anuloma*) to some extent, making them somewhat more acceptable than the other half (*pratiloma*). Almost every text takes the line of approving the *anulomas*, as compared to the *pratilomas*. Still, it can be seen that this did not stop them from spending a lot of ink on the *pratilomas* and carry their disagreements over the naming of certain *pratilomas*, exactly as they do with the *anulomas*. This suggests that the

texts were as much interested with the *pratilomas* as with the *anulomas*. Probably this provided them with the chance to produce a hierarchy even within the *varṇasaṁkaras*, just like it was done with the four *varṇas*.

With all these contradictions and more, it becomes very clear that the idea of *varṇasaṁkara* was indeed a very popular subject for the authors of these texts, and this was here to stay. The chief question that comes out of this is ‘why this idea was at all created’. The answer to this lies in a more extensive study of the subject, which is out of the reach of this meagre attempt of mine, bound by time and space.

In this study I propose to look at the cataloguing of the various *varṇasaṁkaras* by the law-codes. For this I have selected ten different *dharma-sūtras* and *śāstras* of varying periods. They are – the *Gautama dharma-sūtra*, the *Baudhāyana dharma-sūtra*, the *Vasiṣṭha dharma-sūtra* (period of composition – 600 B.C. to 300 B.C.), the *Mānava dharma-śāstra* (period of composition – 200 B.C. to 200 A.D.), the *Yājñyavalkya smṛti*, the *Viṣṇu dharma-sūtra* (period of composition – 100 A.D. to 300 A.D.), the *Nārada smṛti* (period of composition – 100 A.D. to 400 A.D.), the *Vaikhānasa smārta-sūtra* (period of composition – 200 A.D. to 500 A.D.), the *Uśanas* and the *Sūtasamhitā* (period of composition – 600 A.D. to

900 A.D.)². Of these texts, the '*Mānava dharma-śāstra*' or the laws of Manu can be seen to be the most vocal as well as the most centrally located text along the chronological line. Hence, I have selected this text as the core of my study and have divided my study along the chronological divisions of the sections 'Pre Manu', 'Manu' and 'Post Manu' textual periods. This, I believe, would provide the study with a clear approach and vision, and would also help us in making useful comparisons along the time-line.

The concept of *varṇasaṁkara* as found in the various *dharma-sūtras* and *śāstras* can be seen to have originally evolved from the concept of miscegenation among the members of the four primary *varṇas*. Only Āpastamba³ in his *dharma-sūtra*, declares that the *varṇasaṁkaras* are not the result of miscegenation and are derived from the sins committed by them in the past lives⁴. According to Āpastamba, when a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, or *vaiśya* commits sins such as theft of gold or killing of a *brāhmaṇa*, they become in their next birth a *caṇḍāla*, a *paukasa* or a *vaina* respectively. All the other authors approve the miscegenation theory. Nevertheless, terms that emerge as *varṇasaṁkara* names in these texts,

² Periods of these texts as according to P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. II, pt. I, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1974, pp. xi-xii.

³ Period of composition – 600 B.C. to 300 B.C.

⁴ Vivekanand Jha – *opcit*, 1970, pp. 278.

sometimes suggest a completely different theory. That there was a clear motive behind the cropping up of this theory of *varṇasaṁkara*, gets clear support from those terms. However, this we shall discuss later in our study. For now, let us concentrate on the first section of our study, which is on the pre Manu law-codes.

Pre Manu Dharma-Śāstras & Sūtras:

The *varṇasaṁkaras* as a social structure, as found in the various *dharma-sūtras* and *śāstras*, can be viewed from various angles. But broadly they can be viewed in two different ways. Firstly, from the angle of them being *anuloma* categories, and secondly, from the *pratiloma* angle.

The *anuloma* category means the situation where the patrilineal laws are being followed, where the father is of a higher *varṇa* than the mother. On the other hand, the *pratiloma* category is just the opposite of the *anuloma* order. It is indeed interesting, that both these categories are looked down upon by almost every *dharma-sūtras* and *śāstras*, and still one can find a definite sense of hierarchy while placing these categories in an order. The category of the *anulomas*, by most of the texts, is taken to be somehow more acceptable than the *pratilomas*. The *pratilomas*, on the other hand, find no supportive text to their favour.

Amongst the pre Manu texts⁵, the difference of approach regarding the naming of the *anulomas* and *pratilomas*,

⁵ The *Gautama dharma-sūtra*, the *Baudhāyana dharma-sūtra* and the *Vasiṣṭha dharma-sūtra* (period of composition – 600 B.C. to 300 B.C.)

can be very clearly noticed. These three texts, belonging to the period between 600 B.C. and 300 B.C., record the earliest traces of the idea of *vaṇasaṁkara*. Here we can see that they name only 11 categories of *anuloma vaṇasaṁkara* slots to be filled, with due differences, as against the 18 probabilities, with the Vasiṣṭha *dharma-sūtra* filling up only one of these categories (*niṣāda*)⁶. On the other hand, they fill up all the 18 *pratiloma* slots, and we also find all of them agreeing with, at least, two of the slots; i.e. with *kṣatriya* (father) and *brāhmaṇa* (mother) the child is *sūta* in accordance to all three texts, and with *śūdra* (father) and *brāhmaṇa* (mother) the child is always *caṇḍāla*⁷.

This is a very interesting observation as it goes against the theory that the *anulomas* were the favoured one. The authors seem to have taken up more interest in naming the *pratiloma* categories than the *anuloma* ones.

There is also another difference between the *anulomas* and the *pratilomas* as named by the three pre Manu texts. We do find examples of regional names in the *pratiloma* lists, like that of

⁶ See the Table – 3.

⁷ See the Table – 4.

vaidehaka and *māgadha*⁸, while in the *anuloma* one no such terms occur. The *anuloma* list is more filled with *jāti*-like names such as, *niṣāda* and *ambaṣṭha*⁹.

Overall if we look at the three pre Manu texts, a few points emerge. Apart from the categories like, *sūta* and *caṇḍāla*, no other name enjoys the univocal agreement regarding their placing by the texts¹⁰. There is a considerable amount of disagreement with slots like, *brāhmaṇa* father and *vaiśya* mother, *vaiśya* father and *brāhmaṇa*, *ṣatriya* and *śūdra* mother, *śūdra* father and *ṣatriya* and *vaiśya* mother. Slots like *brāhmaṇa* father and *ṣatriya* mother, and *ṣatriya* father and *vaiśya* mother can be seen lying almost vacant (with only Gautama filling the latter slot with the name *ambaṣṭha*)¹¹.

Thus we can note about these texts, while looking at their categorising of the ‘primary’¹² *varṇaśaṅkaras*. When we come to the ‘secondary’ *varṇaśaṅkaras* as being named by these three texts, it is a minor shock that we receive. The texts, which have been so

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ See the Table – 3.

¹⁰ See the Table – 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Another angle of looking at the *varṇaśaṅkaras*, is from the perspective of primary and secondary *varṇaśaṅkaras*. The primary *varṇaśaṅkaras* are the ones who are formed out of the parents falling under the four primary *varṇa*. While the secondary ones are the doubly mixed categories.

vociferous and particular regarding the naming of the primary *varṇasaṁkaras*, leave the secondary slots almost vacant. Only five slots out of the endless ones have been filled with four names, and that too only by the Baudhāyana *dharma-sūtra*¹³. The other two, i.e. the Gautama *dharma-sūtra* and the Vasiṣṭha *dharma-sūtra*, remains totally silent as far as the naming of the secondary *varṇasaṁkaras* is concerned¹⁴. This is indeed very interesting, as it would be naturally expected that the secondary list would show us much more variety and would be much more numerous than the primary one, following the reason that the secondary list shows a situation which could harness endless possibilities for the coming of the new mixed castes (which are mixed – doubly, 3 times, 4 times, 5 times.....).

¹³ See the Tables – 2 and 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Mānava Dharma-Śāstra:

Coming to the next section, that is the placing of the *varṇasaṃkaras* by the Mānava *dharma-śāstra*, one can see a very clear and methodical process being followed by the text.

Regarding the naming of the *anuloma* and *pratiloma varṇasaṃkaras*, Manu names only three of the *anulomas* (*ambaṣṭha*, *niṣāda* and *ugra*) out of the possible six slots¹⁵. Moreover, here he can be seen to be in full agreement with the Baudhāyana *dharma-sūtra*. Regarding the *pratiloma varṇasaṃkaras*, Manu names all of the six possibilities¹⁶. Here he is seen to be in agreement sometimes, with Baudhāyana *dharma-sūtra* and Gautama *dharma-sūtra*. He agrees with Vasiṣṭha *dharma-sūtra*, only while placing the categories of *sūta* and *caṇḍāla*, of which all the three texts are in agreement.

The fact that Manu names all of the *pratilomas* and only three of the *anulomas* is not surprising if we look at the pattern followed by him. He declares that, sons, begotten by the superior three *varṇas* (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya*) on wives belonging to the

¹⁵ See the Table – 3.

¹⁶ See the Table – 4.

immediate next *varṇa*, belong to the same *varṇa* of their fathers¹⁷. It is probably following this theory he keeps the categories like, *brāhmaṇa* father and *kṣatriya* mother, *kṣatriya* father and *vaiśya* mother and *vaiśya* father and *śūdra* mother, vacant¹⁸. It is also noticeable, that Manu, while naming the various *anuloma* and *pratiloma varṇasamkaras*, does not add up new names and can be seen to have been picking and choosing from the names which were already enumerated by his predecessors.

This is, interestingly enough, not the case while Manu is seen naming the secondary *varṇasamkaras*. Unlike the primary ones, here Manu is in his creating best, naming 17 secondary *varṇasamkara* names, which is the maximum by any text of our concern¹⁹ (the next contender is Uśanas, which is a post Manu text, naming 9 of them²⁰). Out of these 17 names Manu enumerates only four names, that have been named before (*kukkuṭa*, *antyāvasāyin*, *pulkasa* and *śvapaca*). Thus, not only is Manu the most vociferous text naming the secondary *varṇasamkaras*, he is also the most original one. This is, however, to be expected, as the predecessors of

¹⁷ Mānava *dharma-śāstra*, chapter-10, verse-6.

¹⁸ See the Table – 3.

¹⁹ See the Tables – 2 and 6.

²⁰ *Ibid*.

Manu named almost none of them and the responsibility, as well as the opportunity, lay with Manu to enumerate them and to, possibly, create them.

Regarding the names (secondary) enumerated by Manu, it can be seen that they follow no particular pattern, apart from the fact that, none of the names are of a regional character²¹. We find names like *kaivarta*, *dāsa* and *sairindhra*, which are somewhat of an occupational character²². Still no major inferences can be drawn on the basis of the above observations. One can only say that naming the new entrants to the society, along the regional parameters, lost its zeal somewhat, while the question of naming the secondary *vaṇasaṁkaras* cropped up.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

Post Manu *Dharma-Śāstras & Sūtras*:

Coming to the section of the post Manu texts, we can see that these texts followed a specific pattern of not following any. Variety and more variety seem to be the key word here. That is why we can find so many names enumerated by the post Manu texts in the list of the primary *varṇasamkaras*.

However, apart from the above, when we look at the various *anulomas* and *pratilomas*, certain points can be seen. In the whole list of the *varṇasamkaras*, which otherwise show a great deal of overlapping and variation, only the category of *rathakāra* occurs in both the *anuloma* and the *pratiloma* lists. According to the Baudhāyana *dharma-sūtra*, which is a pre Manu text, he is the lowest possible *anuloma* (that is formed out of the union between a *vaiśya* father and a *sūdra* mother), and according to the Vaikhānasa *dharma-sūtra* and *Sūtasamhitā* (both post Manu texts), he is the highest possible *pratiloma* (formed out of the union between a *kṣatriya* father and a *brāhmaṇa* mother)²³.

Moreover, if we look at a chronological development, we would see that a lot more new names have

²³ See the Tables – 3 and 4.

been added to the list of the *anuloma varṇaśaṅkaras* by these later authors²⁴, than in that of the *pratilomas*. In the *pratiloma* list, these three texts only repeat names which have been already denoted a place by the previous texts. On the other hand, the *anuloma* list shows a lot of new names²⁵ under these three heads.

Amongst the *pratiloma* categories, a few names can be found which occur under the same parentage according to the majority of the texts. For example the category of *caṇḍāla* occurs as having a *śūdra* father and a *brāhmaṇa* mother, according to each and every text. Same is true for *sūta*, who, having a *kṣatriya* father and a *brāhmaṇa* mother, is viewed as being the same under nine of the ten texts²⁶. No such constant existence can be found amongst the *anuloma* categories. One can find categories like, *niṣāda* and *ambaṣṭha*, which can be seen to be enjoying a dual identity following the disagreement between different texts. Even within this disagreement, a pattern can be noted. The pre Manu text of Gautama *dharma-sūtra* categorises *niṣāda* as the son of a *brāhmaṇa* male from a *vaiśya* female. All the subsequent texts take *niṣāda* as the child of a *brāhmaṇa* male from a

²⁴ That is the *Yājñyavalkya smṛti*, the *Viṣṇu dharma-sūtra*, the *Nārada smṛti*, the *Vaikhānasa dharma-sūtra*, the *Uśanas* and the *Sūtasamhitā*.

²⁵ Like *kumbhakāra*, *nāpita*, *maṇikāra*, *sūcaka*, *bhiṣak*, *avira*, *śūlika*, *kaṭakāra* and *mūrdhāvasikta*. See the Table – 3.

²⁶ See the Table – 4.

śūdra female²⁷. Same is the case with the category of *ambasṭha*. This category has a *kṣatriya* as the father and a *vaiśya* as the mother as according to the Gautama *dharma-sūtra*. In the subsequent texts he is seen as the result of a union between a *brāhmaṇa* male and a *vaiśya* female²⁸. Thus a chronological pattern can be seen regarding the *anulomas* in this regard.

We have already said that in the secondary list of *vaṇṣasamkara*, the most vociferous text is that of Manu's. However, apart from Manu, the post Manu texts²⁹ are the most vocal ones, while naming the secondary mixed castes. On the other hand, texts like Viṣṇu and Nārada do not name any, while Yājñavalkya names only one of them (*rathakāra*)³⁰. The names enumerated by the last three texts in the secondary list seem to be full of occupational names³¹. Thus, if I am allowed to do so, a very clear pattern seems to be evolving from the primary to the secondary *vaṇṣasamkaras*. The thrust seems to be from naming regional names in the primary list, to naming occupational names in the secondary one³².

²⁷ See the Table – 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Especially, the last three; the Vaikhānasa *dharma-sūtra*, Uśanas and the Sūtasamhitā. Their period ranges between c. 200 A.D. to c. 900 A.D., as according to P.V. Kane.

³⁰ See the Tables – 2 and 6.

³¹ Like, *adho-nāpita*, *khanaka*, *tāmropajivin*, *carmakāra*, *nartaka*, *matsyabandhaka*, *sūcika*, *rajaka* and *rathakāra*. See the Tables – 2 and 6.

³² See the Tables – 1, 2, 5 and 6.

Observing Inter-*Varna* Mobility; *Jātyutkarṣa* and *Jātyapakarṣa*:

Here I would also like to mention an interesting observation, placing a theory which, to some extent, approves inter-*varṇa* mobility. This is the theory of *jātyutkarṣa* (rise in status as a *varṇa*) and *jātyapakarṣa* (fall in status as a *varṇa*)³³. This *varṇa* mobility is only allowed to the *anulomas* and not to the *pratilomas*. It can be seen that three authors mention this phenomenon; Gautama *dharma-sūtra* (pre Manu), Mānava *dharma-śāstra* and Yājñyavalkya *smṛti* (post Manu).

According to Gautama, if a *brāhmaṇa* marries a *kṣatriya* woman, the child is a *savarṇa*. however, if this *savarṇa* (female) is married to a *brāhmaṇa* and their female child is again married to a *brāhmaṇa*, and if this continues with the subsequent (female) children, the seventh *savarṇa* female married to a *brāhmaṇa* would give birth to a *brāhmaṇa* child. This is called *jātyutkarṣa*. On the other hand, if a *brāhmaṇa* marries a *kṣatriya* girl and produces a *savarṇa* male, who marries a *kṣatriya* female, and if this goes on, the fifth *savarṇa* son marrying a *kṣatriya* female would give birth to a *kṣatriya* child. This is called *jātyapakarṣa*.

³³ P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. II, pt. I, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1974, pp. 61-65.

Coming to the mention of the same theory in the Mānava *dharma-śāstra*, we can see that there are a few differences. The basic structure of the theory, however, remains the same. Manu prescribes seven generations for both *jātyutkarṣa* and *jātyapakarṣa* to take place, while Gautama prescribed seven and five, respectively. In Manu, the *jātyutkarṣa* mobility takes place in the seventh generation itself, while with Gautama, it is the eighth generation, where it happens. Moreover, Manu is seen to be remaining silent about the mobility of *jātyutkarṣa*, when the original parents are themselves *anulomas* (that is belonging to the secondary list of *varṇasamkaras*).

Yājñyavalkya, on the other hand, adds a new possibility for the *jātyapakarṣa* to happen. *Jātyutkarṣa*, according to him, still happens only with inter-*varṇa* marriage, and takes place in the seventh or fifth generation. *Jātyapakarṣa*, on the other hand, can happen both by marriage and by following a lower *varṇa*'s avocation. By marriage it happens in the seventh or fifth generation, while by the avocation theory, it takes place in the fifth, sixth or the seventh generation.

The whole idea of *varṇa* mobility being taking place following these two rules seems quite improbable as a social reality. This must be seen as a development of an idea only and not in the lights of being a social practice. Still one must say that the mere presence

of theories like these in the law-codes, has in itself some logical implications, even if it was not a social reality. It proves that the mentality of the brahmanical authors was tilted towards the *anulomas*, and the *pratilomas* were awarded a step-motherly treatment. Though the texts constantly refute the idea of mixed-*varṇa* as being a despised one³⁴, they can be seen to be creating a clear-cut hierarchy among the two groups of the mixed-*varṇas*. It seems here, that the *anulomas* were given a chance, however slender it might be, to climb back the social ladder by following the rules of *jātyutkarṣa*.

³⁴ Vivekanand Jha, *op cit*, 1970, pp. 275.

Conclusion:

Thus it can very well be seen that the law-codes worked really hard to sew this new idea of the *varṇasaṁkara* into the brahmanical social fabric. However, it can not be said that they succeeded fully. Most of their good work was hampered by the presence of utter contradictions and differences between them. It is because of this that the chance of knowing the real social practices of the period has been thwarted.

However, it must also be kept in mind that these differences have been very helpful in a way. They have provided us with a specific pattern of naming the *varṇasaṁkaras*, a study of which can get us nearer to the answer of such questions as why this idea of *varṇasaṁkara* was at all created? The emergence of regional names and a gradual shift to the occupational names, the mismatch between the treatment given to the *pratilomas* and the *anulomas*, the gradual erosion of Manu's idea of the *anuloma* child of parents of adjacent *varṇas* not being a *varṇasaṁkara* – all these present us with a pattern which is reminiscent of the brahmanical mentality or intention. Still, a question remains. After the rules were formulated to designate the *varṇasaṁkaras* who were theoretically formed out of different *varṇa* combinations, to what extent were these rules actually

Admitting The New; The Theory Of *Varnaśaṅkara* In The *Dharma-Sūtras & Śāstras*.

followed, if at all. We know that the theory of *varnaśaṅkara* was created to make room for the new entrants to the brahmanical society. Up to what period did this continue is a question that still remains unanswered.

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Tables to Chapter 1.

1. Table 1 of the Primary Mixed-Castes.
2. Table 1 of the Secondary Mixed-Castes.
3. Table of the *Anuloma* Mixed-Castes.
4. Table of the *Pratiloma* Mixed-Castes.
5. Table 2 of the Primary Mixed-Castes.
6. Table 2 of the Secondary Mixed-Castes.

Index to the Tables.

1. Brāhmaṇa + Kṣatriya M = *brāhmaṇa* is the father, *kṣatriya* is the mother and this is clearly mentioned as a marital union (M).
2. Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra CU = *brāhmaṇa* is the father, *śūdra* is the mother and this is clearly mentioned as a clandestine union (CU).
3. Gautama = *Gautama dharma-sūtra*.
4. Baudhāyana = *Baudhāyana dharma-sūtra*.
5. Vasiṣṭha = *Vasiṣṭha dharma-sūtra*.
6. Manu = *Mānava dharma śāstra*.
7. Yājñyavalkya = *Yājñyavalkya smṛti*.
8. Viṣṇu = *Viṣṇu dharma-sūtra*.

9. Nārada = *Nārada smṛti*.
10. Vaikhānasa = *Vaikhānasa smārta sūtra*.

Table – 1.

Table of the Primary Mixed – Castes, As in Various *Dharma-Sūtras* and *Śāstras*.

Period of the Texts			600 B.C. – 300 B.C.			200 B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D. – 300 A.D.		100 A.D.– 400 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.	
	Father	Mother	Child acc. to (Gautama)	Child acc. to (Baudhāyana)	Child acc. to (Vasiṣṭha)	Child acc. to (Manu)	Child acc. to (Yājñavalkya)	Child acc. to (Viṣṇu)	Child acc. to (Nārada)	Child acc. to (Vaikhānasa)	Child acc. to (Uśanas)	Child acc. to (Sūtasamhita)
1.	Brāhmaṇa	Kṣatriya								Mūrdhāvasikta	Bhiṣak/ Suvarṇa (Savarṇa)	
2.	Brāhmaṇa	Vaiśya	Niṣāda	Ambaṣṭha		Ambaṣṭha	Ambaṣṭha		Ambaṣṭha	Kumbhakāra/ Nāpita	Ambaṣṭha/ Kumbhakāra/ Nāpita	Kumbhakāra
3.	Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra	Pāraśava	Niṣāda	Niṣāda	Niṣāda	Niṣāda	Niṣāda	Pāraśava	Pāraśava/ Niṣāda	Ugra/ Niṣāda/ Pāraśava/ Śūlika	
4.	Kṣatriya	Brāhmaṇa	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta/ Rathakāra	Rathakāra	Sūta/ Rathakāra
5.	Kṣatriya	Vaiśya	Ambaṣṭha				Māhiṣya			Āśvika/ Madgu	Maṇikāra	Avira
6.	Kṣatriya	Śūdra	Dauṣmanta	Ugra		Ugra	Ugra		Niṣāda	Śūlika		Dauṣyanta/ Śūlika
7.	Vaiśya	Brāhmaṇa	Kṛta	Vaidehaka	Rāmaka	Vaidehaka	Vaidehaka	Vaidehaka	Vaidehaka	Cakrī/ Māgadha	Māgadha	Mleccha
8.	Vaiśya	Kṣatriya	Dhīvara/ Māgadha	Āyogava	Pulkasa	Māgadha	Māgadha	Pulkasa		Āyogava/ Pulinda	Āyogava/ Pulinda	Pulinda/ Bhoja
9.	Vaiśya	Śūdra	Ugra/ Karaṇa	Rathakāra			Karaṇa			Kaṇakāra/ Cūcuka	Kaṇakāra/ Sūcaka	
10.	Śūdra	Brāhmaṇa	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla
11.	Śūdra	Kṣatriya	Vaidehaka	Kṣatṛ	Vaiṇa	Kṣatṛ	Kṣatṛ	Māgadha	Kṣatṛ	Pulkasa	Carmakāra/ Pulkasa/ Raṅjaka	Pulkasa/ Velava
12.	Śūdra	Vaiśya	Āyogava	Māgadha	Antyāvasāyin	Āyogava	Āyogava	Āyogava		Cākrika/ Vaidehaka	Cakrī	

Table – 2

Table 1 of the Secondary Mixed – Castes, As in Various *Dharma-Sūtras*, and *Śāstras*.

Period of the Texts→			600 B.C.– 300 B.C.	200 B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D.– 300 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.	
	Father	Mother	Child (Baudhāyana)	Child (Manu)	Child (Yājñavalkya)	Child (Vaikhānasa)	Child (Uśanas)	Child (Sūtasamhita)
1.	Brāhmaṇa	Dauṣyanta						Āpita
2.	Brāhmaṇa	Āyogava		Dhigvaṇa				Pingala
3.	Brāhmaṇa	Ambaṣṭha		Ābhīra				
4.	Vaiśya	Niṣāda	Kukkuṭa					
5.	Śūdra	Niṣāda	Kukkuṭa	Kukkuṭa				
6.	Caṇḍāla	Niṣāda		Antyāvasāyin				
7.	Caṇḍāla	Vaidehaka		Pāṇḍusopaka				
8.	Caṇḍāla	Brāhmaṇa				Śvapaca		Śvapaca
9.	Caṇḍāla	Vaiśya					Śvapaca	
10.	Caṇḍāla	Pulkasa		Sopāka				
11.	Niṣāda	Vaidehaka		Āhiṇḍika/ Kārāvāra				
12.	Niṣāda	Āyogava		Kaivarta/ Mārgava/ Dāsa				
13.	Niṣāda	Kṣatriya						Adho-Nāpita
14.	Niṣāda	Śūdra	Pulkasa	Pulkasa				
15.	Sūnika	Kṣatriya					Udbandhaka	
16.	Khanaka	Kṣatriya				Udbandhaka		
17.	Māgadha	Śūdra						Kukunda
18.	Ambaṣṭha	Vaidehaka	Kuśīlava					
19.	Āyogava	Kṣatriya				Khanaka	Sūnika	
20.	Āyogava	Brāhmaṇa				Tāmropajīvin	Tāmropajīvin	Carmakāra
21.	Śvapaca	Brāhmaṇa						Guhaka
22.	Sūcaka	Brāhmaṇa				Takṣaka	Takṣaka	
23.	Rañjaka	Vaiśya					Nartaka	
24.	Takṣaka	Kṣatriya					Matsyabandhaka	
25.	Vaidehaka	Niṣāda		Meda				
26.	Vaidehaka	Āyogava		Maitreyaka				
27.	Vaidehaka	Ambaṣṭha		Vena				
28.	Vaidehaka	Kṣatriya				Sūcika	Sūcika	
29.	Pulkasa	Brāhmaṇa				Rajaka		Rajaka
30.	Pulkasa	Vaiśya					Rajaka	
31.	Māhiṣya	Karaṇa			Rathakāra			

Table – 2 (Contd.)

	Father	Mother	Child (Baudhāyana)	Child (Manu)	Child (Yājñavalkya)	Child (Vaikhānasa)	Child (Uśanas)	Child (Sūtasamhita)
32	Sūta	Brāhmaṇa					Veṇuka	
33	Madgu	Brāhmaṇa				Veṇuka		
34	Nāpita	Brāhmaṇa						Veṇuka
35	Kṣatr	Ugra		Śvapaca				
36	Ugra	Kṣatr	Śvapaca					
37	Dasyu	Āyogava		Sairindhra				

Table – 3

Table of the Anuloma Mixed – Castes, As in Various Dharma-Sūtras and Śāstras.

Period of the Texts→			600 B.C. – 300 B.C.			200B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D. – 300 A.D.		100 A.D.– 400 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.	
	Father	Mother	Child acc. to (Gautama)	Child acc. to (Baudhāyana)	Child acc. to (Vasiṣṭha)	Child acc. to (Manu)	Child acc. to (Yājñyavalkya)	Child acc. to (Viṣṇu)	Child acc. to (Nārada)	Child acc. to (Vaikhānasa)	Child acc. to (Uśanas)	Child acc. to (Sūtasamhitā)
1.	Brāhmaṇa	Kṣatriya								Mūrdhāvasikta	Bhiṣak/ Suvarna (Savarna)	
2.	Brāhmaṇa	Vaiśya	Niṣāda	Ambaṣṭha		Ambaṣṭha	Ambaṣṭha		Ambaṣṭha	Kumbhakāra/ Nāpita	Ambaṣṭha/ Kumbhakāra/ Nāpita	Kumbhakāra
3.	Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra	Pāraśava	Niṣāda	Niṣāda	Niṣāda	Niṣāda	Niṣāda	Pāraśava	Pāraśava/ Niṣāda	Ugra/ Niṣāda/ Pāraśava/ Śūlika	
4.	Kṣatriya	Vaiśya	Ambaṣṭha				Māhiṣya			Āśvika/ Madgu	Maṇikāra	Avira
5.	Kṣatriya	Śūdra	Dauṣmanta	Ugra		Ugra	Ugra		Niṣāda	Śūlika		Dauṣyanta/ Śūlika
6.	Vaiśya	Śūdra	Ugra/ Karaṇa	Rathakāra			Karaṇa			Kaṭkāra/ Cūcuka	Kaṭkāra/ Sūcaka	

Table – 4

Table of the Pratiloma Mixed – Castes, As in Various Dharma-Sūtras and Śāstras.

Period of the Texts→		600 B.C. – 300 B.C.			200B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D. – 300 A.D.		100 A.D.– 400 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.		
	Father	Mother	Child acc. to (Gautama)	Child acc. to (Baudhāyana)	Child acc. to (Vasiṣṭha)	Child acc. to (Manu)	Child acc. to (Yajñyavalkya)	Child acc. to (Viṣṇu)	Child acc. to (Nārada)	Child acc. to (Vaikhānasa)	Child acc. to (Uśanas)	Child acc. to (Sūtasamhitā)
1.	Kṣatriya	Brāhmaṇa	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta	Sūta/ Rathakāra	Rathakāra	Sūta/ Rathakāra
2.	Vaiśya	Brāhmaṇa	Kṛta	Vaidehaka	Rāmaka	Vaidehaka	Vaidehaka	Vaidehaka	Vaidehaka	Cakrī/ Māgadha	Māgadha	Mleccha
3.	Vaiśya	Kṣatriya	Dhīvara/ Māgadha	Āyogava	Pulkasa	Māgadha	Māgadha	Pulkasa		Āyogava/ Pulinda	Āyogava/ Pulinda	Pulinda/ Bhoja
4.	Śūdra	Brāhmaṇa	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla	Caṇḍāla
5.	Śūdra	Kṣatriya	Vaidehaka	Kṣatr	Vaina	Kṣatr	Kṣatr	Māgadha	Kṣatr	Pulkasa	Carmakāra/ Pulkasa/ Rañjaka	Pulkasa/ Velava
6.	Śūdra	Vaiśya	Āyogava	Māgadha	Antyāvasāyin	Āyogava	Āyogava	Āyogava		Cākrika/ Vaidehaka	Cakrī	

Table – 5

Table 2 of the Primary Mixed – Castes, As in Various *Dharma-Sūtras* and *Śāstras*.

Period of the Texts →		600 B.C. – 300 B.C.			200 B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D. – 300 A.D.		100 A.D.– 400 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.	
Texts → Mixed Castes ↓		(Gautama)	(Baudhāyana)	(Vasiṣṭha)	(Manu)	(Yājñīyavalkya)	(Viṣṇu)	(Nārada)	(Vaikhānasa)	(Uśanas)	(Sūtasamhitā)
1.	Mūrdhāvasikta								Brāhmaṇa + Kṣatriya M		
2.	Bhiṣak									Brāhmaṇa + Kṣatriya CU	
3.	Suvarṇa (Savarṇa)									Brāhmaṇa + Kṣatriya M	
4.	Niṣāda	Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra M	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra M	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra M	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra M	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra	Kṣatriya + Śūdra	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra CU	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra CU	
5.	Ambaṣṭha	Kṣatriya + Vaiśya	Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya M		Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya M	Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya M		Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya M		Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya M	
6.	Kumbhakāra								Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya CU	Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya CU	Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya CU
7.	Nāpita								Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya CU	Brāhmaṇa + Vaiśya CU	
8.	Pāraśava	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra						Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra M	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra M	
9.	Ugra	Vaiśya + Śūdra	Kṣatriya + Śūdra		Kṣatriya + Śūdra	Kṣatriya + Śūdra				Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra	
10.	Śūlika								Kṣatriya + Śūdra CU	Brāhmaṇa + Śūdra CU	Kṣatriya + Śūdra CU
11.	Sūta	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa M		Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa M
12.	Rathakāra		Vaiśya + Śūdra M						Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa CU	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa CU	Kṣatriya + Brāhmaṇa CU
13.	Māhiṣya					Kṣatriya + Vaiśya M					
14.	Āśvika								Kṣatriya + Vaiśya CU		
15.	Madgu								Kṣatriya + Vaiśya		

Table – 5 (Contd.)

Period of the Texts →		600 B.C. – 300 B.C.			200 B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D. – 300 A.D.		100 A.D.– 400 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.	
Texts → Mixed Castes ↓		(Gautama)	(Baudhāyana)	(Vasiṣṭha)	(Manu)	(Yājñyavalkya)	(Viṣṇu)	(Nārada)	(Vaikhānasa)	(Uśanas)	(Sūtasamhita)
16.	Manikāra									Kṣatriya + Vaiśya CU	
17.	Avira										Kṣatriya + Vaiśya CU
18.	Daśmanta	Kṣatriya + Śūdra									Kṣatriya + Śūdra
19.	Kṛta	Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa									
20.	Vaidehaka	Śūdra + Kṣatriya	Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa		Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa	Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa	Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa	Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Vaiśya		
21.	Rāmaka			Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa							
22.	Cakrī								Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa CU	Śūdra + Vaiśya CU	
23.	Māgadha	Vaiśya + Kṣatriya	Śūdra + Vaiśya		Vaiśya + Kṣatriya	Vaiśya + Kṣatriya	Śūdra + Kṣatriya		Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa	Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa	
24.	Mleccha										Vaiśya + Brāhmaṇa CU
25.	Dhīvara	Vaiśya + Kṣatriya									
26.	Āyogava	Śūdra + Vaiśya	Vaiśya + Kṣatriya		Śūdra + Vaiśya	Śūdra + Vaiśya	Śūdra + Vaiśya		Vaiśya + Kṣatriya	Vaiśya + Kṣatriya	
27.	Pulkasa			Vaiśya + Kṣatriya			Vaiśya + Kṣatriya		Śūdra + Kṣatriya	Śūdra + Kṣatriya	Śūdra + Kṣatriya
28.	Pulinda								Vaiśya + Kṣatriya CU	Vaiśya + Kṣatriya CU	Vaiśya + Kṣatriya CU
29.	Bhoja										Vaiśya + Kṣatriya
30.	Karaṇa	Vaiśya + Śūdra M				Vaiśya + Śūdra M					
31.	Kaṭkāra								Vaiśya + Śūdra CU	Vaiśya + Śūdra CU	

Table – 5 (Contd.)

Period of the Texts→		600 B.C. – 300 B.C.			200 B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D. – 300 A.D.		100 A.D.– 400 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.	
Texts→ Mixed Castes↓		(Gautama)	(Baudhāyana)	(Vasiṣṭha)	(Manu)	(Yājñyavalkya)	(Viṣṇu)	(Nārada)	(Vaikhānasa)	(Uśanas)	(Sūtasamhitā)
32.	Cūcuka								Vaiśya + Śūdra M		
33.	Sūcaka									Vaiśya + Śūdra M	
34.	Caṇḍāla	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa
35.	Kṣatṛ		Śūdra + Kṣatriya		Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa	Śūdra + Brāhmaṇa		Śūdra + Kṣatriya			
36.	Vaiṇa			Śūdra + Kṣatriya							
37.	Carmakāra									Śūdra + Kṣatriya	
38.	Raṅjaka									Śūdra + Kṣatriya CU	
39.	Velava										Śūdra + Kṣatriya
40.	Antyāvasāyin			Śūdra + Vaiśya							
41.	Cākrīka								Śūdra + Vaiśya CU		

Table – 6

Table 2 of the Secondary Mixed – Castes, As in Various *Dharma-Sūtras* and *Śāstras*.

Period of the Texts→		600 B.C. – 300 B.C.			200 B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D. – 300 A.D.		100 A.D.– 400 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.	
Texts→ Mixed Castes↓		(Gautama)	(Baudhāyana)	(Vasiṣṭha)	(Manu)	(Yājñyavalkya)	(Viṣṇu)	(Nārada)	(Vaikhānasa)	(Uśanas)	(Sūtasamhitā)
1.	Āpita										Brāhmaṇa + Dauṣyanta
2.	Dhigvaṇa				Brāhmaṇa + Āyogava						
3.	Pimgala										Brāhmaṇa + Āyogava
4.	Ābhīra				Brāhmaṇa + Ambaṣṭha						
5.	Kukkuṭa		Vaiśya + Niṣāda / Śūdra + Niṣāda		Śūdra + Niṣāda						
6.	Antyāvasāyin				Caṇḍāla + Niṣāda						
7.	Pāṇḍusopaka				Caṇḍāla + Vaidehaka						
8.	Śvapaca		Ugra + Kṣatr		Kṣatr + Ugra				Caṇḍāla + Brāhmaṇa	Caṇḍāla + Vaiśya	Caṇḍāla + Brāhmaṇa
9.	Sopāka				Caṇḍāla + Pulkasa						
10.	Āhiṇḍika				Niṣāda + Vaidehaka						
11.	Kārāvāra				Niṣāda + Vaidehaka						
12.	Kaivarta				Niṣāda + Āyogava						
13.	Mārgava				Niṣāda + Āyogava						
14.	Dāsa				Niṣāda + Āyogava						
15.	Adho-Nāpita										Niṣāda + Kṣatriya

Table – 6 (Contd.)

Period of the Texts→	600 B.C. – 300 B.C.			200 B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D. – 300 A.D.		100 A.D.– 400 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.		
	Texts→ Mixed Castes↓	(Gautama)	(Baudhāyana)	(Vasiṣṭha)	(Manu)	(Yājñyavalkya)	(Viṣṇu)	(Nārada)	(Vaikhānasa)	(Uśanas)	(Sūtasamhitā)
16.	Pulkasa		Niṣāda + Śūdra		Niṣāda + Śūdra						
17.	Udbandhaka								Khanaka + Kṣatriya	Sūnika + Kṣatriya	
18.	Kukunda										Māgadha + Śūdra
19.	Kuṣīlava		Ambaṣṭha + Vaidehaka								
20.	Khanaka								Āyogava + Kṣatriya		
21.	Sūnika									Āyogava + Kṣatriya	
22.	Tāmropajivin								Āyogava + Brāhmaṇa	Āyogava + Brāhmaṇa	
23.	Carmakāra										Āyogava + Brāhmaṇa
24.	Guhaka										Śvapaca + Brāhmaṇa
25.	Takṣaka								Sūcaka + Brāhmaṇa	Sūcaka + Brāhmaṇa	
26.	Nartaka									Raṅjaka + Vaiśya	
27.	Matsyabandhaka									Takṣaka + Kṣatriya	
28.	Meda				Vaidehaka + Niṣāda						
29.	Maitreyaka				Vaidehaka + Āyogava						
30.	Veṇa				Vaidehaka + Ambaṣṭha						
31.	Sūcika								Vaidehaka + Kṣatriya	Vaidehaka + Kṣatriya	
32.	Rajaka								Pulkasa + Brāhmaṇa	Pulkasa + Vaiśya	Pulkasa + Brāhmaṇa

Table – 6 (Contd.)

Period of the Texts →		600 B.C. – 300 B.C.			200 B.C.– 200 A.D.	100 A.D. – 300 A.D.		100 A.D.– 400 A.D.	200 A.D.– 500 A.D.	600 A.D. – 900 A.D.	
Texts → Mixed Castes ↓		(Gautama)	(Baudhāyana)	(Vasiṣṭha)	(Manu)	(Yājñyavalkya)	(Viṣṇu)	(Nārada)	(Vaikhānasa)	(Uśanas)	(Sūtasamhitā)
33.	Rathakāra					Māhiṣya + Karaṇa					
34.	Veṅka								Madgu + Brāhmaṇa	Sūta + Brāhmaṇa	Nāpita + Brāhmaṇa
35.	Sairindhra				Dasyu + Āyogava						

CHAPTER – 2

Rationalising the Birth-Myths in the *Ādīparvan*

Mahābhārata.

Introduction:

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the problem of allotting a specific *varṇa* comes clearly to the forefront, while discussing the *varṇasaṁkara* pattern in the early Indian society. This is a problem, which I believe, can never be solved fully by having the *śāstra*, *smṛti* and the *sūtra* texts as the only source of information. It can be seen that these texts present a dual hindrance regarding the above study. On one hand, they present a typically prescriptive nature where the role of guesswork becomes important while painting the practical arena, and on the other hand they are full of contradictions and conflicts regarding the said aspect of awarding a specific *varṇa* to a mixed – *varṇa* identity.

Following the above reasons, an incomplete, and somewhat haphazard, picture evolves regarding the concept of *varṇasaṁkara*, which was, without any doubt, a social reality. Owing to the

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fact that the law-codes were not enough a source, the text of Mahābhārata (period of composition – between 400B.C. to 400 A.D. approx.) remains the best ‘indicative’ source one can have to study the *varṇasaṁkaras*. Moreover, while the law-codes are of a prescriptive nature, the text of Mahābhārata can very well paint us a picture indicating the social positions of the *varṇasaṁkaras*.

However, there remain a few problems regarding the usage of the above text for our purpose. One can never be sure about the actual practice following a text, as literature follows a certain narrative and often gives itself in to the demand of the fixed framework. Also, the very authenticity of the text is doubted by asking whether it really happened or not. Still, one can say that, any piece of literature can never be totally detached from the contemporary social picture. It has to use the present society, at the time, as its base for laying down a story. Also, not going into the debate of the said text being a reality or a myth, one can say that the very fact that it was composed in the period almost the same for that of the law-codes, helps us to get to its contemporary society. Regarding the concept of the *varṇasaṁkara*, *Mahābhārata* poses as a mine of information about their practical treatment in the society. The portrayal of the characters, like, Satyawatī, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura shows us the shades of the strategy

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applied by the society for the treatment of the *varṇasaṁkaras*. We can also notice the character of Karṇa as being an unusual case. Here, there is a conflict between his real and borne identity.

Coming to the original topic, it can very clearly be seen that the *Ādīparvan*, or the ‘book of the beginning’¹, is the ground where all the chief characters of the text are being introduced. Being the first book or *parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, it explains the forthcoming conflicts in the early life of its major characters. Also, the ‘super-human’ characters, performing larger than life stunts in the subsequent portions of the text, gets the ‘super-human’ tag being attached to them in this very *parva*. A lot of this was done through mystifying the birth stories of these characters. In most of the cases, the text shows numinous births of them, or them taking birth out of a supernatural situation quite unlike the common men and women. In the light of the above, the reader can very easily differentiate between the good and the bad characters; the good is born with a lot of good and pious signs, while the bad is with blasphemous signs. Also, along with the above, one can see a parallel process going on, which regulates the social position of these characters. It is by looking into these processes that I hope to bring out the social treatment of the *varṇasaṁkaras*.

¹ As put by J.A.B. Van Buitenen in his translation of the critical edition of the text.

The Birth – Myths:

As I have already said, the births in the *Ādīparvan* are presented in a way to introduce the reader to the major characters of the text. The myths associated with them suggest the quality of the character; that is the goodness or the badness of the same. Though it can be said that this projects a sense of favouritism in the mind of the reader, this is what was expected from the text of *Mahābhārata*; the victory of the good, by vanquishing the bad. Let us now look at the birth myths in the chosen section of the text, having a special attention towards the aspect of *varṇa* allotment.

It can be seen that, in the *Ādīparvan Mahābhārata* there are about 46 to 48 births², which are either connected with some myth or are presenting an interesting *varṇa* allotment or are depicting the birth of the major characters in the text. I have tried to divide these birth stories into four categories, with due overlapping. This I did according to the (a) marital identity of the parents, (b) probable *varṇasamīkara* identity of the child, (c) various interventions resulting the birth and (d) factors

² Out of which, only 19 have married parents.

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like *niyoga* and adoption applied in the birth. Let us now have a look at these birth myths/stories having a close eye on the *varṇa* aspect.

The first birth in this regard, which comes to the notice, is that of the seer Somaśravas³. His father is the seer Śrutaśravas, who is a *brāhmaṇa*, and mother is a snake woman (*varṇa* unknown). Here we can presume that the *varṇa* identity of the child should have been a tricky issue. Also we can see two kinds of intervention in this birth. They are, (a) the seer’s (father) powers, and (b) other community (the snakes or the *Nāgas*). Regarding the *varṇa* allotment, surprisingly enough, the child is taken to be a *brāhmaṇa* and was regarded as a member of his father’s community. We shall see later that this was not always the norm, and we do have examples⁴ of same kind of birth where the child was denied his father’s *varṇa* and was taken into his mother’s non-Aryan community. Though the *varṇa* of Somaśravas was never disclosed, we do have enough proof to suggest his *brāhmaṇa* identity. He was seen to have been appointed by the king Janamejaya as his priest, an occupation reserved for the *brāhmaṇa* till this date. Interestingly, this king organised a massive massacre of the snakes through a grand sacrifice, and Somaśravas was not mentioned in the list of the

³ 1.3.14. – Mahābhārata (critical edition by V.S. Sukthankar, translated into English by J.A.B. Van Buitenen). I will further refer to this text as Mbh.

⁴ Ghaṭotkaca, whose father was Bhīma and mother was Hidimbā, a *rākṣasī*.

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priests of that sacrifice⁵. Thus, overall, it remains a hazy picture regarding the *varṇa* allotment of Somaśravas; following what rules was he not called a *varṇasaṁkara*, it remains unclear. However, this birth can be quoted as a great example of inter–community marital/sexual relationship, that too between a *brāhmaṇa* and a *nāga*.

The next birth that I find interesting is that of the seer Cyavana⁶. His father was the great Bhṛgu (*brāhmaṇa*) and mother was Pulomā. The *varṇa* of Pulomā is not discussed, but we do not have any otherwise information of her being anything other than a *brāhmaṇa*, as she is seen as the married wife of the renowned seer Bhṛgu. The interesting portion of this birth lies, not in the *varṇa* allotment, but in the myth associated with it. It is said that when Pulomā was carrying Cyavana, a *rākṣasa* of the name Puloman, seized her from the hermitage of Bhṛgu, in the guise of a boar. The child, she was carrying fell, angrily, from the womb, and the *rākṣasa* died by the mere sight of the child. Since the child fell from the womb, he was called Cyavana (< *cyuta* = fallen). This story is quite interesting as it suggests a few social possibilities, which are, however, outside our concerned area. The fact that Pulomā welcomed Puloman into the hermitage following a normal behaviour, suggests a possible intermingling between

⁵ Mbh. 1.48.5-10.

⁶ Mbh. 1.6.1.

different communities. This, however, can be seen from other examples also from the text.

The birth story of Pramadvarā⁷, which comes next along our study, can be seen under two lights; that of *varṇa* and adoption. This female child’s father (biological) was Viśvāvasu, the king of the *Gandharvas*⁸, and her mother was the *Apsarā* Menakā. The story goes that Menakā abandoned her child at the door steps of the seer Sthulakeśa, a *brāhmaṇa*, and left the scene. Viśvāvasu also is never mentioned again. The seer Sthulakeśa brought her up and married her to the seer Ruru (grandson of Cyavana, *brāhmaṇa*). This suggests that the *varṇa* of the child was the same of her step – father, Sthulakeśa, i.e. *brāhmaṇa*. In many of the cases like this, it can be seen that the child gets the *varṇa* of his/her step – father, and not that of the original parents. We shall come across a situation⁹, where the step – father openly declares his fatherhood over the child. Another interesting observation which comes out, is the fact that, in a lot of the cases of adoption in our text, there is always an *Apsarā* present there as the mother of the child. In this case, we can also see a dual intervention, made by the seer and the *Apsarā*. However, regarding the *varṇa* allotment, it seems that the step – father’s *varṇa*

⁷ Mbh. 1.8.7-10.

⁸ Centaurs.

⁹ In the incident of Śakuntalā.

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is being awarded to the child. Moreover, it seems that the parental identity of the child sums up to her step – father, and nobody else.

We can find another interesting situation in the next birth, which is of Aruṇa and Garuḍa¹⁰. Both of them had the *brāhmaṇa* Kaśyapa as their father and Vinatā as their mother. The *varṇa* of Vinatā is difficult to decipher, as it is not mentioned. She is the daughter of the *Prajāpati* Dakṣa (son of Brahmā, the God). It is as difficult to determine the *varṇa* of her father, as her own. However, since she was married to a *brāhmaṇa*, it seems safe to call her a *brāhmaṇa*. Coming back to her children, it seems interesting that none of them were human, but birds. These children of Vinatā were birds, born out of eggs, after 500 and 1000 years passed respectively since their mother laid them. From the other wife of Kaśyapa, Kadru (also the daughter of Dakṣa), took birth 1000 children¹¹. These children of Kadru were snakes, born out of their eggs, after 500 years passed since their mother laid them. Leave alone the *varṇa* classification of these children, their human identity seems to be missing. There can be many explanations for the above. I feel it was due to the requirement of the ‘snake – sacrifice’ story, that they were assigned the above identity. Also the enmity between the sons of

¹⁰ Mbh. 1.14.5-20.

¹¹ Ibid.

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Kadru and Vinatā may have given the symbolic identity of snakes and birds (snake eating).

The next birth¹², which is that of Āstīka's, can be said to be the culminating one in the line of the 'snake – sacrifice' story. The father of the child here was a *brāhmaṇa*, named Jaratkāru. He married the mother of the child, also named Jaratkāru, who was the sister of the snake king Vāsuki. Āstīka can be seen to have born with a mission; that to save his maternal relatives (especially Takṣaka) from king Janamejaya's snake – sacrifice. Thus we witness a pre – planned birth. The story goes that his father abandoned his mother, just before his birth and he was taken into his maternal community. However he retained his paternal identity, as banking on it he was able to save his relatives. The *varṇa* of this child also, can not be known for sure. Such grave the emergency was that the *varṇa* ambiguity of the bride and the groom is just not cared about. All that matters here is the birth of the child. However, it seems that he was a carrying a *brāhmaṇa* identity, and was addressed so during the sacrifice by the king Janamejaya. Here again we can see a possible *varṇasamkara* identity negated in the text.

The next birth that comes in the list is again an interesting one. This is the birth story of Girikā¹³. Her mother is

¹² Mbh. 1.43.30.

¹³ Mbh. 1.57.35.

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said to be a river, Śuktimatī, and her father a mountain, Kolāhala. One can never know the exact *varṇa* of Girikā or her parents. However, Girikā might be getting the *kṣatriya* status after marrying the king, Vasu, who saved her mother (Śuktimatī) blocked by her father (Kolāhala), by kicking the mountain Kolāhala. This indeed is an interesting situation, where a lot of symbolism seems to have been applied. However, the aspect of the *varṇa* allotment, again, can be seen to have been avoided in the text.

Following the above birth, the text introduces another one of the same kind. This is the birth story of Satyavatī¹⁴, an important character in the text. Her mother is Adrikā, an *Apsarā*, who became a fish after being cursed by a *brāhmaṇa*. Her father is the king Vasu, about whom we have discussed in the above section. The story goes that Vasu’s seed fell down, while he was thinking about his wife (Girikā), in the river and the *Apsarā*/fish Adrikā swallowed it. From her were born Satyavatī and her twin brother. The *varṇa* of her is not stated, but it is possible that she carried her step – father’s (fisherman king, *Dhīvararāja*) *varṇa* (*śūdra*), as she pursued and helped her step – father in his work of ferrying the river Yamunā. Her twin brother, interestingly, in subsequent times became the king Matsya. In the later times she became the wife of king Śāntanu. The *varṇa* situation is quite complex here. Still we see no ink spent on this in the

¹⁴ Mbh. 1.57.40-55.

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text. It seems that they were just not bothered about it. Even during her marriage with the king, other issues were raised, but not the *varṇa* issue.

Next comes the most interesting birth of all, especially regarding the *varṇa* aspect. This is the birth of Vyāsa¹⁵. Here we have the example of a definite *varṇasamkara* child, whose social treatment does not correspond with the *Dharma sūtras*. His father was Parāśara, a *brāhmaṇa*, and his mother was Satyavatī, a *śūdra*. Vyāsa was considered a *brāhmaṇa*, though he should not have been one but a *niṣāda*¹⁶. Even if Satyavatī is taken to be a *kṣatriya* (*varṇa* of her biological father, Vasu) then also Vyāsa do not remain a *brāhmaṇa* but still a *varṇasamkara*. This gets very interesting, when it is seen that a possible *varṇasamkara* was able to, not only shook off his possible social identity, but took up a *varṇa* revered by all, that is *brāhmaṇa*. Nowhere else do we have an example suggesting a likewise process. The incident of Viśvāmitra projected rigorous hardship before becoming *brāhmaṇa*, and it was much clearly mentioned there. Here it seems Vyāsa stole the *brāhmaṇa* identity to nobody's notice.

¹⁵ Mbh. 1.57.69-70.

¹⁶ Vivekanand Jha – “Varṇasamkara in the Dharma Sūtras: Theory and Practice.”, *JESHO*, 1970, pp. 279.

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The next birth in line is that of Dakṣa's¹⁷. His father is the supreme God Brahmā, from whose right thumb he took his birth. Thus he did not have any mother. His *varṇa* can not be deciphered from the above description. But he was considered as a *brāhmaṇa*. However Brahmā is said to be carrying the kingly qualities or *rajogūṇas*. Following the above he should have been a *kṣatriya*. But the celestial happenings do not always follow the social norms. Interestingly, his wife¹⁸ took her birth from the left thumb of the same God Brahmā. Normally, they should have been brother and sister, but were seen as husband and wife. To an extent, this myth can be equated with the story of Adam and Eve in the Bible.

The next birth, of Aurva¹⁹, is quotable following the myth it carries. Aurva is said to be born out of his mother's (Āruṣi, daughter of Manu) thigh, with his father as Cyavana, the *brāhmaṇa*. Following this he was called Aurva (< *Ūru* = thigh).

The birth of Śakuntalā²⁰, which comes next, is another incident where the aspect of adoption comes in. Her biological father was Viśvāmitra (formerly a *kṣatriya*, later became a *brāhmaṇa*), and the mother was the *Apsarā* Menakā. She was left by Menakā

¹⁷ Mbh. 1.60.9-11.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Mbh. 1.60.45.

²⁰ Mbh. 1.66.8-9.

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at the doorsteps of the seer Kanva. Clear-cut suggestions are given by Kanva²¹ to suggest his fatherhood over Śakuntalā. Both her biological parents left her, while Kanva picked, as well as, brought her up. Kanva also performed the duty of a father by marrying her to the king Duḥśanta. It is here that he proclaims her fatherhood. During the marriage Śakuntalā was considered as the daughter of Kanva, although mentions of her biological parents did come up. Thus it can be concluded, that the adopted child used to get the *varṇa* of his/her step – father, and not of the biological parents. To quote Kanva,

śarīrakṛt prāṇadātā yasya cānnāni bhujjate

*krameṇa te trayo 'py uktāḥ pitaro dharmaniścayē*²²

[In the decisions of the Law they quote three kinds of father respectively: the one who begets the child's body, the one who saves its life, and the one who gives it food.]

evaiṁ duhitaraiṁ vidधि mama saumya śakuntalām

*śakuntalā ca pitaraiṁ manyate mām aninditā*²³

[Thus, you should know, did Śakuntalā become my daughter, good friend, and innocently Śakuntalā thinks of me as her father.]

²¹ Mbh. 1.66.13.

²² Ibid.

²³ Mbh. 1.66.15.

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The next birth in line is that of Śakuntalā's son, Sarvadamana (Bharata)²⁴, with king Duṣṣanta as his father. Bharata is considered to be a *kṣatriya*, born out of the *Gāndharva* marriage between his parents, who were of differing *varṇa*, as Śakuntalā was a *brāhmaṇa* (following her step – father, Kanva) and Duṣṣanta was a *kṣatriya*. His mother bore him for 3 years before giving birth. There arises a confusion during Duṣṣanta's public announcement designating Sakuntalā as his married wife. However, it was settled before storming up, and Śakuntalā was acknowledged by everyone as the queen of Duṣṣanta.

Next we come to the birth of Yadu and Turvaśu²⁵, who were the children of Devayānī (daughter of the seer Śukrācārya, and thus a *brāhmaṇa*) and king Yayāti (*kṣatriya*). It is here for the first and only time in the *Ādīparvan Mahābhārata* that a debate over the possible implications of a cross – *varṇa* marriage comes up. This very question comes up before the marriage of their parents. Interestingly, here we have the bride's father, Śukrācārya, a great *ṛṣi*, actually absolving the possible sin arising out of such cross – *varṇa* marriages²⁶. Regarding the incident it is given in the text that Yayāti says to Śukrācārya,

²⁴ Mbh. 1.68.1.

²⁵ Mbh. 1.77.5-6.

²⁶ Mbh. 1.76.31-33.

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adharmo na spṛśed evaṁ mahān mām iha bhārgava

*varṇasaṁkarajo brahmann iti tvāṁ pravṛṇomy aham*²⁷

[Let no great breach of the *dharma* taint me, Bhārgava, because of this mixing of *varṇa*, *brāhmaṇa*; this boon I beseech of you.]

To this, Śukrācārya replied,

adharmāt tvāṁ vimuñcāmi varayasva yatheṣṭitam

*asmin vivāhe mā glāsīr ahaṁ pāpaṁ nudāmi te*²⁸

[I free you from the breach of the *dharma*; choose her freely for your bride. Do not shrink from this marriage; I myself absolve your sin.]

This is the only time that the *varṇa* aspect is discussed in the whole text. The possible implication of this might be the fact that the bride was quite impatient regarding the marriage, and the groom was full of caution. However the *varṇa* allotment of Yadu is not clear. He was supposedly a *kṣatriya*, but the *Yādava* clan (deriving from him) was surely looked down upon.

We can find another interesting development in the next birth story. This is of the brothers Druhyu, Anu and

²⁷ Mbh. 1.76.31.

²⁸ Mbh. 1.76.32.

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Pūru²⁹. Their father was the king Yayāti and mother was Śarmiṣṭhā, the daughter of the *Dānava* king Vṛṣaparvā (possibly *kṣatriya*). Their parents were not married. Śarmiṣṭhā was the slave of Yayāti's wife Devayānī. Here we have an example of extra – marital relationship, where the children get royal attention and patronage. Moreover, following some implications, the youngest son, Pūru, becomes the next king by inheriting his father. This suggests both legal and social identity of the children born from an extra – marital relationship.

We get another example of an *Apsarā* intervention in the next birth³⁰, which is of 10 sons of the king Raudrāśva. The mother was the *Apsarā*, named Anādhṛṣṭi. It is being said that from the eldest of these sons, Ṛcepu, the Kuru genealogy followed.

Example of seer intervention is supplied by the next birth, which is of Bhūmanyu's³¹. King Bharata got him from the seer Bharadvāja, through grand sacrifices. This was done as the other sons of the king Bharata were not capable enough to inherit him, as according to Bharata.

²⁹ Mbh. 1.77.26.

³⁰ Mbh. 1.89.7.

³¹ Mbh. 1.89.18.

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Next in line we have the birth of one of the chief characters of the *Mahābhārata*, Devavrata³² or Bhīṣma. His mother was the river Gangā (*varṇa* is unknown), and the father was the king Śāntanu. Śāntanu did not know his wife was the river Gangā, who came to him in a human form. Nor did Śāntanu, love blind, tried to know anything about this woman. Devavrata was the eighth and the last son out of their union. The rest were killed by their mother right after their birth. The myth goes that they were the celestial *Vasus*, cursed by the seer Vasiṣṭha. The *varṇa* allotment of Devavrata, again gives the reader a slip. However, following his subsequent treatment, it seems that he inherited his father's *varṇa* (*kṣatriya*).

After the above, we enter into the main portion of the text, where the major characters are being introduced. The next birth in line is that of Citrāngada and Vicitravīrya³³. They were the children of the king Śāntanu (*kṣatriya*) and Satyawatī (*śūdra*). There never seems to be any problem rising for their *varṇa* identity. They are invariably taken to be *kṣatriyas*, though they should not have been one, ideally. Their *varṇasaṅkara* identity seems to be eaten up by the huge rooms of the royal palace. Their *kṣatriya* identity came from their father; this we know as they each became king, for a short while.

³² Mbh. 1.92.46.

³³ Mbh. 1.95.1.

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Regarding the birth of Dhṛtarāṣṭra³⁴, a number of complications can be witnessed. His mother was Ambikā (daughter of the king of Kāśī, thus *kṣatriya*), and the biological father was Vyāsa (*brāhmaṇa*), while the social/legal father was Vicitravīrya³⁵ (who was also the husband of his mother). Here the *niyoga* practice is seen to have been applied. Since Vicitravīrya died before being a father, his maternal brother Vyāsa was asked by Satyawatī to propel the family further. Here we see the rules of *niyoga* being followed properly, as according to the *Dharma – Śāstras*; that they should only meet when in emergency and for the sole purpose of child – birth. Here the aspect of *varṇasamkara* gets more complex and confusing. If the child is supposed to inherit the social father’s *varṇa*, then we have definite doubts over the *varṇa* of Vicitravīrya. This is also true, when regarding the biological father, Vyāsa. The exact *varṇa* of this child is, thus very difficult to decipher. However, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is widely considered as a *kṣatriya*, though he was ineligible to rule following his blindness. Even his blindness is said to be rooted in his birth. The myth goes that, Ambikā closed her eyes during her meeting with Vyāsa, thus giving birth to a blind child³⁶.

³⁴ Mbh. 1.100.1-10.

³⁵ Discussed in the previous section.

³⁶ Vyāsa declared upon the pregnancy of Ambikā that,
nāgāyutasamaprāṇo vidvān rājarṣisattamaḥ
mahābhāgo mahāvīryo mahābuddhir bhaviṣyati

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The same story gets repeated when regarding the birth of Pāṇḍu³⁷. The mother here was Ambālikā (sister of Ambikā). Regarding the *varṇa* identity, it is the same as above. It is said, since Dhṛtarāṣṭra was blind, and was not able to be enthroned, Satyavatī asked Vyāsa to produce another child upon the second wife of Vicitravīrya, Ambālikā, this time. However, even Pāṇḍu did not satisfied Satyavatī, as he was of a sickly pallor³⁸.

Following the above reasons, we come to the next birth along the line, which is of Vidura's³⁹, whose biological father was Vyāsa, and mother was a slave woman (*śūdra*). Satyavatī wanted another child and asked Ambikā, who got frightened and sent a slave woman instead of herself to Vyāsa. Vyāsa was so pleased with her servings, that he

tasya cāpi śataṁ putrā bhaviṣyanti mahābalāḥ

kiṁ tu mātuh sa vaigunṇyād andha eva bhaviṣyati

[He shall be a man with the vigour of a myriad elephants, a wise and great royal seer, of great fortune, great prowess and great spirit, and he shall have a hundred powerful sons. But because of his mother's defect of virtue, he shall be blind.] Mbh. 1.100.9-10.

³⁷ Mbh. 1.100.15-19.

³⁸ Vyāsa said to Ambālikā,

yasmāt pāṇḍutvam āpannā virūpaṁ prekṣya mām api

tasmād eṣa sutas tubhyaṁ pāṇḍur eva bhaviṣyati

nāma cāsyā tad eveha bhaviṣyati śubhānane

[Since you paled when you saw my ugliness, you shall have a son of a sickly pallor, and so his name shall be Pāṇḍu the pale, woman of the lovely face.] Mbh. 1.100.17-18a.

³⁹ Mbh. 1.100.26-27.

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pronounced her free of bondage⁴⁰. However, the *varṇa* of Vidura remains a mystery. It is for sure that he was a *varṇasamkara*, but nowhere in the text is his exact *varṇa* being decided. We can also not be sure, if his birth was the outcome of a *niyoga* or not. The marital status of the slave woman is never disclosed. However, Vidura had his position in the palace as a prince and later enjoyed the post of the minister in the royal court (but never did he become a king, following his maternal identity).

The next birth in line is that of Karṇa's⁴¹. His father is said to be the Sun God, Sūrya⁴², and his mother is Kunti (*kṣatriya*). In him we find an interesting case regarding the *varṇa*

⁴⁰ The text says,

*uttiṣṭhann abravīd enām abhujiṣyā bhaviṣyasi
ayaṁ ca te śubhe garbhaḥ śrīmān udaram āgataḥ
dharmātmā bhavitā loka sarvabuddhimatām varaḥ
sa jajñe viduro nāma kṛṣṇadvaipāyanātmajaḥ
dhṛtarāṣṭrasya ca bhrātā pāṇḍoś cāmitabuddhimān*

[When he (Vyāsa) rose, he said to her (the slave woman), “you shall cease to be a slave. There is a child come to your belly, my lovely, an illustrious man-child who shall be mindful of the *dharma* and become the most sagacious man in the world.” Thus was born Vidura, son of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, the immeasurably sage brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu.] Mbh. 1.100.26-27.

⁴¹ Mbh. 1.104.10-15.

⁴² In the present day context, he is considered to be a *kṣatriya*. However, even after repeated attempts, I could not correspond this with our text, i.e. the *Ādīparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. Nowhere in the text of our concern is Sūrya mentioned as a *kṣatriya*, nor we can find his *varṇa* being discussed anywhere in the text.

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identity. Karṇa was probably the only pure *kṣatriya* in the Kuru – Pāṇḍava family of his generation⁴³. However, he was deserted by Kunti after his birth, and a *sūta*, named Adhiratha, picked him and brought him up. All along his life, in the whole text of Mahābhārata, nobody, except a few, knew his real identity, and all along he was treated as a *sūtaputra*. Questions also remain over the identity of Karṇa’s social/legal father; whether it was Pāṇḍu, who married his mother, or was it Adhiratha, who brought him up and gave him life. However, even after knowing his real identity, Karṇa preferred himself to be called as a *sūtaputra*, and not as the son of Kunti.

Regarding the birth of the 100 sons (Duryodhana etc.)⁴⁴ of Gāndhārī (*kṣatriya*), there lies an interesting myth. The father here was Dhṛtarāṣṭra⁴⁵. Gāndhārī originally gave birth to a lump of flesh. She was about to throw it away when Vyāsa intervened and asked her to put it into 100 pots filled with ‘ghee’. From it, after due time, 100 sons and 1 daughter took birth. The daughter’s name was Duḥśālā. This myth probably awards the ‘badness’ to Duryodhana and his brothers; especially when we look at the complications out of which they took birth. However, if there was any

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Mbh. 1.107.7-19.

⁴⁵ Previously discussed.

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problem regarding the *varṇa* allotment to the children, for Dhṛtarāṣṭra being an alleged *varṇasaṃkara*, we have no indications for that.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra produced another son in the womb of a *sūdra* woman⁴⁶. This son's name was Yuyutsu. The exact *varṇa* of Yuyutsu is unknown, though it is clear that he was not treated like a *kṣatriya*, although he lived in the palace along with the other princes. He being definitely a *varṇasaṃkara* was looked down upon. However, his exact *varṇa* is not stated in the text.

Next we come to a series of stories told by Pāṇḍu to Kunti and vice versa. The first birth discussed here is of Durjaya's⁴⁷. his mother was Śāraṇḍāyini (her *varṇa* is not discussed, but she is said to be the wife of a *kṣatriya*) and the biological father was a *brāhmaṇa*. His mother got him through the *niyoga* practice, after his social/legal father died childless. This story is quoted by Pāṇḍu to Kunti, while pursuing her to follow the *niyoga* system. The *varṇa* allotment is not discussed here.

In the reply Kunti told Pāṇḍu this story. King Vyūṣitāśva gave birth⁴⁸ to 3 Śālva and 4 Madra children upon his wife Bhadrā, after his death. This he did through his *yogic* powers.

⁴⁶ Mbh. 1.107.35.

⁴⁷ Mbh. 1.111.33-36.

⁴⁸ Mbh. 1.112.30-34.

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In reply Pāṇḍu quoted the birth story of Aśmaka⁴⁹, whose mother was Madayanti, wife of king Kalmāṣapāda Saudāsa. She got this child through the *niyoga* system. She appointed Vasiṣṭha, after her husband asked her to do so. Even in this story, the *varṇa* allotment of the child is left not clarified.

Following the above conversation, we come to the birth of the first three Pāṇḍavas, Yudhiṣṭhira⁵⁰, Bhīma⁵¹ and Arjuna⁵². Yudhiṣṭhira took his birth out of Kunti, as his mother and the Dharma God as his biological father. This was a birth out of the *niyoga* system. Here Pāṇḍu, who was his social/legal father, ordered Kunti to have a child following the *niyoga* practice, as he himself was unable to produce children. Same was the case with Bhīma and Arjuna. But Kunti got them from the air-God Vāyu and the king of Gods Indra, respectively. Nowhere in the portion of the text, has the *varṇa* aspect of these children been discussed, though there remains a fair amount of doubt regarding the same. Divine links do not always answer everything. The major question that arises is, whether the children born out of a *niyoga* union, inherited their social/legal father's *varṇa*, or was it their biological father's *varṇa* that they inherited. Following

⁴⁹ Mbh. 1.113.21-23.

⁵⁰ Mbh. 1.114.5-7.

⁵¹ Mbh. 1.114.10-12.

⁵² Mbh. 1.114.27.

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the text it is very difficult to get the answer, though it seems that they inherited the *varṇa* of their social/legal father. The case still lies unsolved, as we do not even know the *varṇa* of Pāṇḍu.

The next birth along the line is of the twin Pāṇḍavas, Nakula and Sahadeva⁵³. On Pāṇḍu's request Kunti taught the *Āvāhana mantra* (summoning charm) to Mādrī, her co-wife, and asked her to get a child from any one God. Mādrī, instead called the twin Gods (Aśvins) and had twin sons. Kunti felt cheated and refused to help Mādrī with the mantra any more. The same pattern of the *niyoga* practice can be seen here. Even here the *varṇa* aspect is left untouched.

Next in line, we come to the birth of Kṛpa and Kṛpī⁵⁴. They have no mother and have a myth associated with their birth. Their father, Śaradvat (*brāhmaṇa*) saw the *Apsarā* Jālapadī and spilled his seeds. His seeds fell down on a reed stalk and got split into two. From one was born Kṛpa, the boy and from the other was born Kṛpī, the girl. They were later adopted by the king Śāntanu. However, they seem to have retained their original *varṇa* of being *brāhmaṇa*, as the boy became the

⁵³ Mbh. 1.115.16-17.

⁵⁴ Mbh. 1.120.12-18.

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weaponry teacher and the girl became the wife of the *brāhmaṇa* Droṇa. This is quite interesting, as we have had examples⁵⁵ which suggest otherwise.

The birth myth of Droṇa⁵⁶, is almost of the same kind. When the seer Bharadvāja saw the *Apsarā* Ghṛtācī, nude, he shed his sperms on a trough. From that trough was born Droṇa. Even here the question of the possible *varṇa* identity of the child remains unanswered.

We can also find an interesting myth regarding the birth of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāmā⁵⁷. His mother was Kṛpī⁵⁸. After the birth, the child cried out and the range of his voice went to the horizons like a horse. That is why he was named Aśvatthāmā. He was named as a *brāhmaṇa* in the subsequent portions of the text.

Coming to the next birth, we can find a trace of another inter – community connection. This is the birth story of Ghaṭotkaca⁵⁹. His father was Bhīma⁶⁰ and mother was the *rākṣasī* Hiḍimbā. This is an example of inter – community marriage. Bhīma killed the brother of the bride, Hiḍimba, before marrying her. Their son however, was seen inducted

⁵⁵ The incident of Śakuntalā.

⁵⁶ Mbh. 1.121.4-6.

⁵⁷ Mbh. 1.121.12-14.

⁵⁸ Previously discussed.

⁵⁹ Mbh. 1.143.27-28.

⁶⁰ Previously discussed.

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within his maternal (*rākṣasa*) community. That is why we do not have any other option but to award him his maternal *varṇa*, even which is unknown.

Regarding the next birth, we can again see a birth for a specific purpose. This was the birth of Dhṛṣṭadyumna and his sister Kṛṣṇā (who is better known as Draupadi)⁶¹. They evolved from the sacrificial fire, in which their mother also had her contributions. Their father was the king Drupada and the mother was his wife, Pṛṣatī. Here we can see another birth for a purpose. However, this was not a normal birth. King Drupada wanted a son who would destroy Droṇa for him. In his quest he met the seer Yāja, who promised to organise a grand sacrifice to satisfy the king's needs. At the end of the sacrifice, a youth and a maiden arose from the sacrificial fire. The youth was to be the slayer of Droṇa, while the maiden will lead the kings to the battle, where it would happen; so was said.

We can also find a birth in our list, which is that of Kuru's⁶². He had his mother as Tapatī, daughter of the Sun God, and the father as the king Saṃvaraṇa. This story is chanted, probably to award the solar link to the Kuru family, as Tapatī was the daughter of the Sun God. Sort of divine legitimacy gained for the Kuru genealogy.

⁶¹ Mbh. 1.155.37-50.

⁶² Mbh. 1.163.25.

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Next in line we come to the birth of Babhruvāhana⁶³. His father was Arjuna⁶⁴ and mother was the princess of Manipur, Citrāngadā. They also have a myth associated with this birth. During his exile, Arjuna saw Citrāngadā and wanted to marry her. However, it was only after Arjuna accepted the conditions made by the bride’s father, king Citravāhana, that he could do so. The king wanted the son, who would be born from this union, to belong to his dynasty and not to that of Arjuna’s. Arjuna accepted. However, yet again we do not find the *varṇa* aspect being discussed in the text.

In the next segment, we find the birth of Abhimanyu⁶⁵. He had Arjuna as his father and Subhadrā, sister of Kṛṣṇa, as his mother. The marriage was formally done after Arjuna abducted Subhadrā. This is Rākṣasa form of marriage, which, it seems, had not gone out of practice yet. The child, however, seems to be belonging to his maternal relatives more.

Draupadi, after marrying the Pāṇḍavas, gave birth to five sons⁶⁶, with the father being the five Paṇḍavas. Prativindhya by Yudhiṣṭhira, Sutasoma by Bhīma, Śrutakarman by Arjuna,

⁶³ Mbh. 1.207.20-25. & Mbh. 1.209.24-25.

⁶⁴ Previously discussed.

⁶⁵ Mbh. 1.213.59-63.

⁶⁶ Mbh. 1.213.70-80.

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Śātānīka by Nakula and Śrutasena by Sahadeva. They were all born one after another, a year apart.

There is one more along the line of births in the *Ādīparvan Mahābhārata*. This one is the birth story of five Śārngaka birds⁶⁷. Their mother's name was Jaritā (another Śārngaka bird) and the father was the seer Mandapāla (*brāhmaṇa*). It is said that the seer Mandapāla wanted children, lots of them and quick. Thus he assumed the form of a Śārngaka bird and obtained five children from the eggs laid by another Śārngaka bird, Jaritā. This story again suggests the possible interaction between different communities. Though the children obtained were birds, interestingly they were said to be retaining their paternal *varṇa* identity.

⁶⁷ Mbh. 1.220.15-17.

Conclusion:

After we have had a look at the birth myths in the *Ādīparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, let us now study the patterns that emerge from the above study. Out of the 46 odd birth stories that we have looked into, only a mere 19 were born of married parents. The rest were either the result of an affair or the *niyoga* system. This practice seems to be quite popular among the royal class. Almost all the *niyoga* stories that we came across were connected with the royal class. This is quite natural as the requirement of finding an heir can lead to desperate measures.

One can also observe a great deal of outside interventions in the births. Sometimes it is an *Apsarā* who is involved, sometimes it is the seer and sometimes we find examples of members of another community involved in the process of the birth. These interventions, especially from that of the other community, suggest a definite process of acculturation, even though it may not always be a conscious attempt. The stories of the birth of Somaśravas, the likes of the five Śārṅgaka birds, of Ghaṭotkaca, or of the birth of Āstika or Girikā, all suggest the above process. It seems to be a parallel process, not disturbing the brahmanical social fabric, but helping it by contributing to it.

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Coming to the most important question of our study, viz., the *varṇa* identity of the child, the text is surprisingly quiet. Barring the incident of the birth of Yadu and Turvaśu, nowhere in the text can be seen any attempt to justify and explain the *varṇa* of the child. However, at times it seems that the child carries the *varṇa* of the step – father, which is shown in examples such as, Pramadvārā, Satyavatī and Śakuntalā. On the other hand, we also come across the examples of Kṛpā and Kṛpī who retained the *varṇa* of their biological father. One cannot even say that the superior *varṇa* was chosen following the case of Satyavatī where she was given her step-father’s *varṇa śūdra*, while her biological father’s *varṇa* was *kṣatriya*. The most appropriate concluding statement would be that the text did not care to establish the *varṇa* of these offsprings. What it does suggest is that *varṇa* transgressions in marriage and outside of the marital relationship was common and, while it solved the problem of issues, created different sets of problems. These must be looked into more closely for a more complete picture.

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Tables to Chapter 2.

1. Table 1 of Married Parents.
2. Table 2 of *Varnasatkara* Children.
3. Table 3 of Various Interventions.
4. Table 4 of *Niyoga* and Adoption.
5. Table 5 of Genealogy.

Table – 1

Table of Married Parents, in the *ādīparvan Mahābhārata*.

S.No.	Verse	Child (v)	Mother (v)	Father (v)	Comments
1.	1.6.1	Cyavana (Brāhmaṇa)	Pulomā (not stated; but can be Brāhmaṇa)	Bhṛgu (Brāhmaṇa)	“the Rākṣasa assumed the guise of a boar, brahmin, and seized her with the speed of wind and thought. And the child she bore alive in her womb, o descendent of the Bhṛgu, angrily fell from his mother’s womb and thus became known as Cyavana.” = The Bard (1.6.1)
2.	1.14.5-20	Aruṇa & Garuḍa (?, Birds)	Vinatā (?, daughter of Prajāpati Dakṣa)	Kaśyapa (Brāhmaṇa)	These children of Vinatā were birds, born out of eggs, after 500 and 1000 years passed respectively since their mother laid them.
3.	-do-	1000 Snakes (?, Snakes)	Kadru (-do-)	-do-	These children of Kadru were snakes, born out of their eggs, after 500 years passed since their mother laid them.
4.	1.43.30	Āstīka (?, treated as a Brāhmaṇa)	Jaratkāru (Snake woman, sister of the snake king, Vāsuki)	Jaratkāru (Brāhmaṇa)	Born with a purpose of saving his maternal relatives from king Janamejaya’s Snake sacrifice. A pre-planned birth.
5.	1.60.45	Aurva (said to be a Brāhmaṇa)	Āruṣi (daughter of Manu, son of Brahmā. Considered to be a Brāhmaṇa)	Cyavana (Brāhmaṇa)	“Manu’s daughter Āruṣi became the wise Cyavana’s wife, and from her was born the greatly famous Aurva (<Ūru), by splitting open her thigh, a man of great austerities and heat, even as a child endowed with virtues.” = Vaiśampāyana (1.60.45)
6.	1.68.1	Bharata (Kṣatriya ?, born of the Gāndharva union between his parents of different varṇa)	Śakuntalā (Brāhmaṇa ?)	Duṣmanta (Kṣatriya)	His mother bore him for three years before giving birth. There arises a confusion during Duṣmanta’s public announcement of Śakuntalā as his wife. It is surprising how he points out the negative features of Śakuntalā’s parents before calling her a liar.
7.	1.77.5-6	Yadu & Turvaśu (Kṣatriya, but the Yādava clan was looked down)	Devayānī (Brāhmaṇa)	Yayāti (Kṣatriya)	The very question of cross-varṇa marriage arose before his parents marriage. However, the bride’s father, seer Śukrācārya, actually absolving the possible sin arising out of such marriage. (1.76.32-33)
8.	1.92.46	Devavrata (Kṣatriya ?)	Gangā (River deity)	Śāntanu (Kṣatriya)	Śāntanu did not know his wife’s divine features, who came to him in a human form. Nor did he tried to know anything. Devavrata was the eighth and the last son out of their union. The rest were killed by Gangā right after their birth. The

Table – 1 (contd.)

					myth goes that they were celestial Vasus, cursed by the seer Vasiṣṭha.
9.	1.95.1	Citrāngada & Vicitravīrya (Kṣatriya ?)	Satyavati (Śudra ?)	Śāntanu (Kṣatriya)	There never seems to be a problem rising for the child's <i>varṇa</i> identity. He is invariably taken to be a Kṣatriya, though he should not have been one, ideally. His <i>varṇasamkara</i> identity, it seems, got lost in the huge rooms of the royal palace.
10.	1.107.7-19	Duryodhana & other 101 children (Kṣatriya ?)	Gāndhārī (Kṣatriya)	Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Kṣatriya ?)	Gāndhārī originally gave birth to a lump of flesh. She was about to throw it away when Vyāsa intervened and asked her to put it into 100 pots filled with 'ghee'. From it, after due time, 100 sons and 1 daughter took birth. The daughter's name was Duḥśālā.
11.	1.112.30-34	3 Sālva & 4 Madra children (Kṣatriya)	Bhadrā (Kṣatriya)	Vyuṣitāśva (Kṣatriya)	This story was told to Pāṇḍu by Kunti. In this story king Vyuṣitāśva gave birth to his children upon his wife Bhadrā, after his death. This he did through his yogic powers.
12.	1.121.12-14	Aśvatthāmā (Brāhmaṇa)	Kṛpī (Brāhmaṇa)	Drona (Brāhmaṇa)	After the birth, the child cried out and the range of his voice went to the horizons like a horse. Thus he was named so.
13.	1.163.25	Kuru (Kṣatriya)	Tapati (Kṣatriya)	Samvaraṇa (Kṣatriya)	This story is chanted, probably to award the Solar link to the Kuru family, as Tapati was the daughter of the Sun God. Sort of divine legitimacy.
14.	1.213.59-63	Abhimanyu (Kṣatriya ?)	Subhadrā (Kṣatriya)	Arjuna (Kṣatriya ?)	The marriage was formally done after Arjuna abducted Subhadrā. This is Rākṣasa marriage, which, it seems, has not gone out of practice yet. The child, however, seems to be belonging to his maternal relatives more.
15.	1.213.70-80	Prativindhya (Kṣatriya ?)	Draupadi (Kṣatriya)	Yudhiṣṭhira (Kṣatriya ?)	They were all born one after other, a year apart.
16.	-do-	Sutasoma (-do-)	-do-	Bhima (-do-)	
17.	-do-	Śrutakarman (-do-)	-do-	Arjuna (-do-)	
18.	-do-	Śatānika (-do-)	-do-	Nakula (-do-)	
19.	-do-	Śrutasena (-do-)	-do-	Sahadeva (-do-)	

Table – 2

Table of varṇasamkara children, in ādiparvan Mahābhārata

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Verse</u>	<u>Child (v)</u>	<u>Mother (v)</u>	<u>Father (v)</u> <i>biological</i>	<u>Father (v)</u> <i>social</i>	<u>Comments</u>
1.	1.3.14	Somaśravas (?, considered as a Brāhmaṇa and appointed by king Janamejaya as his priest.)	Snake Woman (Snake)	Śrutaśravas (Brāhmaṇa)	—	“This great ascetic and accomplished student was begotten by the power of my austerities and grew in the womb of this snake-woman who had imbibed my seed.” = Śrutaśravas (1.3.15)
2.	1.8.7-10	Pramadvarā (?)	Menakā (Apsarā)	Viṣvavasu (Gandharva)	Sthulakeśa (Brāhmaṇa)	Brought up by Sthulakeśa, the Brāhmaṇa, and married off to Ruru (grandson of Cyavana). Thus, probably, her <i>varṇa</i> was that of her social or step – father, Sthulakeśa.
3.	1.14.5-20	Aruṇa & Garuḍa (?, Birds)	Vinatā (?, daughter of Prajāpatī Dakṣa)	Kaśyapa (Brāhmaṇa)	—	These children of Vinatā were birds, born out of eggs, after 500 and 1000 years passed respectively since their mother laid them. Though, the <i>varṇa</i> of their mother is not known, we can take the liberty of assigning her the same <i>varṇa</i> of her father, which was, probably, Kṣatriya. In that case, the children were undoubtedly varṇasamkara.
4.	-do-	1000 Snakes (?, Snakes)	Kadru (-do-)	-do-	—	These children of Kadru were snakes, born out of their eggs, after 500 years passed since their mother laid them. Though, the <i>varṇa</i> of their mother is not known, we can take the liberty of assigning her the same <i>varṇa</i> of her father, which was, probably, Kṣatriya. In that case, the children were undoubtedly varṇasamkara.
5.	1.43.30	Āstika (?, considered as a Brāhmaṇa)	Jaratkāru (Snake woman, sister of the snake king, Vāsuki)	Jaratkāru (Brāhmaṇa)	—	Born with a purpose of saving his maternal relatives from king Janamejaya’s Snake sacrifice. A pre-planned birth. However, such grave was the emergency that the <i>varṇa</i> ambiguity of the bride and the groom is just not cared about. All that matters here is the birth of the child.

Table – 2 (contd.)

6.	1.57.35	Girikā (?, married the Kṣatriya, Vasu)	Śuktimatī (a river)	Kolāhala (a mountain)	—	One can not know the <i>varṇa</i> of each of these, apart from the king Vasu. However, Girikā might be getting the Kṣatriya status after marrying the king Vasu, who saved her mother (the river), blocked by her father (the mountain), by kicking her father.
7.	1.57.40-55	Satyavatī (?, daughter of an Apsarā, brought up by fishermen, married a king)	Adrikā (an Apsarā, who is a fish, after being cursed by a Brāhmaṇa)	Vasu (Kṣatriya)	Dhīvararāja (Śudra)	Vasu's seed fell down, while he was thinking about his wife, in the river and the Apsarā/fish Adrikā swallowed it. From her were born Satyavatī and her twin brother. The <i>varṇa</i> of her is not stated, but it is possible that she carried her step – father's <i>varṇa</i> , as she pursued and helped her father in his work of ferrying the river Yamunā. Her twin brother, interestingly, in subsequent times became the king Matsya.
8.	1.57.69-70	Vyāsa (son of a Śudrā and a Brāhmaṇa. should have been a Niṣāda, but considered by all as a Brāhmaṇa)	Satyavatī (Śudra ?)	Parāśara (Brāhmaṇa)	—	Here we have the example of a definite <i>varṇasamkara</i> child, whose social treatment does not correspond with the <i>Dharma-Sūtras</i> . Vyāsa was considered a Brāhmaṇa, though he should not have been one. Even if Satyavatī is taken to be a Kṣatriya (<i>varṇa</i> of her biological father), then also Vyāsa remains a <i>varṇasamkara</i> , and not a Brāhmaṇa.
9.	1.68.8-9	Śakuntalā (?, daughter of an Apsarā, brought up by a Brāhmaṇa and married to a King)	Menaka (Apsarā)	Viśvāmitra (Brāhmaṇa, who previously was a Kṣatriya)	Kanva (Brāhmaṇa)	Clear cut suggestions are given by Kanva to suggest his fatherhood over Śakuntalā (1.66.13). both her biological parents left her, while Kanva picked, as well as, brought her up. During her marriage with king Duṣmanta, she was considered as Kanva's daughter, though mentions of her biological parents did come up.
10.	1.68.1	Bharata (Kṣatriya ?, born of the Gāndharva union between his parents of different <i>varṇa</i>)	Śakuntalā (Brāhmaṇa ?)	Duṣmanta (Kṣatriya)	—	His mother bore him for three years before giving birth. There arises a confusion during Duṣmanta's public announcement of Śakuntalā as his wife. It is surprising how he points out the negative features of Śakuntalā's parents before calling her a liar.
11.	1.77.5-6	Yadu & Turvaśu	Devayānī	Yayāti	—	The very question of cross- <i>varṇa</i> marriage arose before

Table – 2 (contd.)

		(Kṣatriya, but the Yādava clan was looked down)	(Brāhmaṇa)	(Kṣatriya)		his parents' marriage. However, the bride's father, seer Śukrācārya, actually absolving the possible sin arising out of such marriage. (1.76.32-33)
12.	1.89.7	10 sons (Kṣatriya ?)	Apsarā (name – Anādhṛṣṭī ?)	Raudrāśva (son of Puru, Kṣatriya)	—	Here again we can never know the <i>varṇa</i> allotment as the <i>varṇa</i> of an Apsarā is never stated. However, in such cases like this, the child, it seems, carried his father's <i>varṇa</i> .
13.	1.92.46	Devavrata (Kṣatriya ?)	Gangā (River deity)	Śāntanu (Kṣatriya)	—	Śāntanu did not know his wife's divine features, who came to him in a human form. Nor did he tried to know anything. Devavrata was the eighth and the last son out of their union. The rest were killed by Gangā right after their birth. The myth goes that they were celestial Vasus, cursed by the seer Vasiṣṭha.
14.	1.95.1	Citrāngada & Vicitravīrya (Kṣatriya ?)	Satyavatī (Śudra ?)	Śāntanu (Kṣatriya)	—	There never seems to be a problem rising for the child's <i>varṇa</i> identity. He is invariably taken to be a Kṣatriya, though he should not have been one, ideally. His <i>varṇasamkara</i> identity, it seems, got lost in the huge rooms of the royal palace.
15.	1.100.1-10	Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Kṣatriya ?)	Ambikā (Kṣatriya)	Vyāsa (Brāhmaṇa ?)	Vicitravīrya (Kṣatriya ?)	Here the <i>niyoga</i> practice is seen to have been applied. Since Vicitravīrya died before being a father, his maternal brother Vyāsa was asked by Satyavatī to propel the family further. Here we see the rules of <i>niyoga</i> being followed properly, as according to the <i>Dharma-Śāstras</i> ; that they should only meet when in emergency and for the sole purpose of child – birth. Here the aspect of <i>varṇasamkara</i> gets more complex and confusing. If the child is supposed to inherit the social father's <i>varṇa</i> , then we have definite doubts over the <i>varṇa</i> of Vicitravīrya, here. This is also true, when regarding the biological father. However, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is widely considered as a Kṣatriya, though he was ineligible to rule following his blindness. Even his blind

Table – 2 (contd.)

						ness is said to be rooted with his birth. It says that, Ambikā closed her eyes during her meeting with Vyāsa, thus giving birth to a blind child.
16.	1.100.15-19	Pāṇḍu (Kṣatriya?)	Ambālikā (Kṣatriya)	-do-	-do-	The same story gets repeated here, regarding the varṇa identity. It is said, since Dhṛtarāṣṭra was blind, Satyawatī asked Vyāsa to beget another child upon the second wife, Ambālikā. However, even Pāṇḍu did not satisfy Satyawatī, as he was of a sickly pallor.
17.	1.100.26-27	Vidura (?)	Slave woman (Śūdra)	-do-	?	When Satyawatī asked Ambikā for another child, she sent a Śūdra woman instead of her to Vyāsa. Vyāsa was so pleased with her serving that he pronounced her free of bondage. However the varṇa of Vidura remains a mystery. It is for sure that he was a varṇasamkara, but his <i>varṇa</i> is never discussed in the text. However, he enjoyed his position in the palace as a prince and later became a minister (but never a king).
18.	1.104.10-15	Karṇa/Vasusena (Kṣatriya)	Kunti (Kṣatriya)	Sun God (Kṣatriya)	Pāṇḍu/Adhiratha (Kṣatriya?)/(Sūta)	Here we find an interesting case regarding the varṇa identity. Karṇa was possibly the only 'pure' Kṣatriya in the Kuru-Pāṇḍava family of his generation. However, he was deserted by Kunti after his birth and a Sūta, Adhiratha, brought him up. For the major portions of the text, nobody knew his real identity, and all along he was treated as a Sūtaputra. Questions also remain over Karṇa's social father; whether it was Pāṇḍu, who married his mother, or was it Adhiratha, who brought him up and gave him life.
19.	1.107.7-19	Duryodhana & other 101 children (Kṣatriya ?)	Gāndhārī (Kṣatriya)	Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Kṣatriya ?)	—	Gāndhārī originally gave birth to a lump of flesh. She was about to throw it away when Vyāsa intervened and asked her to put it into 100 pots filled with 'ghee'. From it, after due time, 100 sons and 1 daughter took birth. The daughter's name was Duḥśālā. However, if there was any problem regarding the <i>varṇa</i> allotment, for

Table – 2 (contd.)

						Dhṛtarāṣṭra being an alleged varṇasamkara, we have no indications for that.
20.	1.107.35	Yuyutsu (?)	Śūdra woman (Śūdra)	Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Kṣatriya?)	?	The exact <i>varṇa</i> of Yuyutsu is unknown, though it is clear that he was not treated like a Kṣatriya, although he lived in the palace along with the other princes.
21.	1.111.33-36	Durjaya (?)	Śāraṅḍāyini (Kṣatriya)	A Brāhmaṇa	? (name not given)	This story is quoted by Pāṇḍu to Kunti, while pursuing her to follow the <i>niyoga</i> system. The <i>varṇa</i> allotment is not discussed here.
22.	1.113.21-23	Aśmaka (Kṣatriya?)	Madayantī (Kṣatriya)	Vasiṣṭha (Brāhmaṇa)	Kalmāṣapāda Saudāsa (Kṣatriya)	-do-
23.	1.114.5-7	Yudhiṣṭhira (Kṣatriya?)	Kunti (Kṣatriya)	Dharma God (?)	Pāṇḍu (Kṣatriya?)	This child was born through the <i>niyoga</i> practice, after Pāṇḍu enjoined Kunti to have a child from the God Dharma. Here also the <i>varṇa</i> of the child is not discussed.
24.	1.114.10-12	Bhīma (Kṣatriya?)	-do-	Vāyu God (?)	-do-	Same as above, only Kunti got this child from the God Vāyu.
25.	1.114.27	Arjuna (Kṣatriya?)	-do-	Indra (king of Gods, Kṣatriya)	-do-	Same as above. The God here was Indra.
26.	1.115.16-17	Nakula & Sahadeva (Kṣatriyas?)	Mādrī (Kṣatriya)	The Aśvin twins (God; <i>varṇa</i> unknown)	-do-	On Pāṇḍu's request Kunti taught the <i>Āvāhana</i> mantra (summoning charm) to Mādrī, her co-wife, and asked her to get a child from any one God. Mādrī, instead called the twin Gods and had twin sons. Kunti felt cheated and refused to help Mādrī with the mantra any more.
27.	1.143.27-28	Ghaṭotkaca (?)	Hiḍimbā (Rākṣasī)	Bhīma (Kṣatriya?)	—	This is an example of intercommunity marriage. Bhīma killed the brother of the bride, Hiḍimba, before marrying her. Their son however, was seen inducted within his maternal (Rākṣasa) community.
28.	1.207.20-25 & 1.209.24-	Babhruvāhana (Kṣatriya?)	Citrāṅgadā (Kṣatriya)	Arjuna (Kṣatriya?)	—	During his exile, Arjuna saw Citrāṅgadā and wanted to marry her. However, it was only after Arjuna accepted

Table – 3

Table of Various Interventions in the Births Mentioned, in Ādiparva Mahābhārata

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Verse</u>	<u>Child (v)</u>	<u>Mother (v)</u>	<u>Father (v)</u> <i>biological</i>	<u>Father (v)</u> <i>social</i>	<u>Intervention</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1.	1.3.14	Somaśravas (?, considered as a Brāhmaṇa and appointed by king Janamejaya as his priest)	Snake Woman (Snake)	Śrutaśravas (Brāhmaṇa)	—	Seer and Other Community.	“This great ascetic and accomplished student was begotten by the power of my austerities and grew in the womb of this snake-woman who had imbibed my seed.” = Śrutaśravas (1.3.15)
2.	1.8.7-10	Pramadvarā (?)	Menakā (Apsarā)	Viśvavasu (Gandharva)	Sthulakeśa (Brāhmaṇa)	Apsarā and Other Community.	Brought up by Sthulakeśa, the Brāhmaṇa, and married off to Ruru (grandson of Cyavana). Thus, probably, her varṇa was that of her social or step – father, Sthulakeśa.
3.	1.43.30	Āstīka (?, considered as a Brāhmaṇa)	Jaratkāru (Snake woman, sister of the snake king, Vāsuki)	Jaratkāru (Brāhmaṇa)	—	Other Community.	Born with a purpose of saving his maternal relatives from king Janamejaya’s Snake sacrifice. A pre-planned birth. However, such grave the emergency was, that the varṇa ambiguity of the bride and the groom is just not cared about. All that matters here is the birth of the child.
4.	1.57.35	Girikā (?, married the Kṣatriya, Vasu)	Śuktīmatī (a river)	Kolāhala (a mountain)	—	? (Other Community?).	One can not know the varṇa of each of these, apart from the king Vasu. However, Girikā might be getting the Kṣatriya status after marrying the king Vasu, who saved her mother (the river), blocked by her father (the mountain), by kicking her father.
5.	1.57.40- 55	Satyavatī (?, daughter of an Apsarā, brought up by fishermen, married a	Adrikā (Apsarā, who is a fish, after being cursed by	Vasu (Kṣatriya)	Dhīvararāja (Śudra)	Apsarā.	Vasu’s seed fell down, while he was thinking about his wife, in the river and the Apsarā/fish Adrikā swallowed it. From her were born Satyavatī and her twin brother. The varṇa of her

Table – 2 (contd.)

	25					the conditions made by the bride's father, king Citravāhana, that he could do so. The king wanted the son, who would be born from this union, to belong to his dynasty and not Arjuna's. Arjuna accepted.
29.	1.213.59-63	Abhimanyu (Kṣatriya ?)	Subhadrā (Kṣatriya)	Arjuna (Kṣatriya ?)	—	The marriage was formally done after Arjuna abducted Subhadrā. This is Rākṣasa marriage, which, it seems, has not gone out of practice yet. The child, however, seems to be belonging to his maternal relatives more.
30.	1.213.70-80	Prativindhya (Kṣatriya ?)	Draupadi (Kṣatriya)	Yudhiṣṭhira (Kṣatriya ?)	—	They were all born one after other, a year apart. Here also, their <i>varṇa</i> is not discussed, or even bothered about.
31.	-do-	Sutasoma (-do-)	-do-	Bhima (-do-)	—	
32.	-do-	Śrutakarman (-do-)	-do-	Arjuna (-do-)	—	
33.	-do-	Śatānīka (-do-)	-do-	Nakula (-do-)	—	
34.	-do-	Śrutasena (-do-)	-do-	Sahadeva (-do-)	—	
35.	1.220.15-17	5 Śārṅgaka birds (?)	Jarītā (bird)	Mandapāla (Brāhmaṇa)	—	It is said that the seer Mandapāla wanted children, lots of them and quick. Thus he assumed the form of a Śārṅgaka bird and obtained five children from the eggs laid by another Śārṅgaka bird, Jarītā.

Table – 3 (contd.)

		king)	a Brāhmaṇa				is not stated, but it is possible that she carried her step – father’s varṇa, as she pursued and helped her father in his work of ferrying the river Yamunā. Her twin brother, interestingly, in subsequent times became the king Matsya.
6.	1.57.69-70	Vyāsa (son of a Śudrā and a Brāhmaṇa. should have been a Niṣāda, but considered by all as a Brāhmaṇa)	Satyavatī (Śudra ?)	Parāśara (Brāhmaṇa)	—	Seer.	Here we have the example of a definite varṇasaṃkara child, whose social treatment does not correspond with the Dharma – Sūtras. Vyāsa was considered a Brāhmaṇa, though he should not have been one. Even if Satyavatī is taken to be a Kṣatriya (varṇa of her biological father), then also Vyāsa remains a varṇasaṃkara, and not a Brāhmaṇa.
7.	1.60.9-11	Dakṣa (Considered as a Brāhmaṇa)	—	Brahmā (Supreme God, said to be carrying the kingly qualities – <i>Rajogūnas</i>).	—	Divine.	Dakṣa is seen as born from the right thumb of Brahmā, and was considered as a Brāhmaṇa. His wife took her birth out of the left thumb of Brahmā. Normally they should have been brother and sister, but are seen here as husband and wife. To some extent, this myth can be equated with the story of Adam and Eve in the Bible.
8.	1.68.8-9	Śakuntalā (?, daughter of an Apsarā, brought up by a Brāhmaṇa and married to a King)	Menaka (Apsarā)	Viśvāmitra (Brāhmaṇa, who previously was a Kṣatriya)	Kanva (Brāhmaṇa)	Apsarā.	Clear cut suggestions are given by Kanva to suggest his fatherhood over Śakuntalā (1.66.13). both her biological parents left her, while Kanva picked, as well as, brought her up. During her marriage with king Duṣmanta, she was considered as Kanva’s daughter, though mentions of her biological parents did come up.
9.	1.77.5-6	Yadu & Turvaśu (Kṣatriya, but the Yādava clan was looked down)	Devayānī (Brāhmaṇa)	Yayāti (Kṣatriya)	—	Seer.	The very question of cross-varṇa marriage arose before his parents marriage. However, the bride’s father, seer Śukrācārya, actually absolving the possible sin arising out of such marriage. (1.76.32-33)

Table – 3 (contd.)

10.	1.89.7	10 sons (Kṣatriya ?)	Apsarā (name – Anādhṛṣṭī ?)	Raudrāśva (son of Puru, Kṣatriya)	—	Apsarā.	Here again we can never know the varṇa allotment as the varṇa of an Apsarā is never stated. However, in such cases like this, the child, it seems, carried his father's varṇa.
11.	1.89.18	Bhūmanyu (Kṣatriya ?)	—	Bharata (Kṣatriya ?)	—	Seer.	Bhūmanyu was got by king Bharata from Bharadvāja through grand sacrifices. This was done as the other sons of Bharata were not capable enough to inherit his kingdom.
12.	1.92.46	Devavrata (Kṣatriya ?)	Gangā (River deity)	Śāmtanu (Kṣatriya)	—	Divine ?	Śāmtanu did not know his wife's divine features, who came to him in a human form. Nor did he tried to know anything. Devavrata was the eighth and the last son out of their union. The rest were killed by Gangā right after their birth. The myth goes that they were celestial Vasus, cursed by the seer Vasiṣṭha.
13.	1.100.1- 10	Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Kṣatriya ?)	Ambikā (Kṣatriya)	Vyāsa (Brahmaṇa ?)	Vicitravīrya (Kṣatriya ?)	Seer.	Here the <i>Niyoga</i> practice is seen to have been applied. Since Vicitravīrya died before being a father, his maternal brother Vyāsa was asked by Satyavatī to propel the family further. Here we see the rules of <i>niyoga</i> being followed properly, as according to the Dharma – Śāstras ; that they should only meet when in emergency and for the sole purpose of child – birth. Here the aspect of varṇasamkara gets more complex and confusing. If the child is supposed to inherit the social father's varṇa, then we have definite doubts over the varṇa of Vicitravīrya, here. This is also true, when regarding the biological father. However, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is widely considered as a Kṣatriya, though he was ineligible to rule following his blindness. Even his blindness is said to be rooted with his birth. It says that, Ambikā closed her eyes during her meeting with Vyāsa, thus

Table – 3 (contd.)

							giving birth to a blind child.
14.	1.100.15-19	Pāṇḍu (Kṣatriya?)	Ambālikā (Kṣatriya)	-do-	-do-	Seer.	The same story gets repeated here, regarding the varṇa identity. It is said, since Dhṛtarāṣṭra was blind, Satyawatī asked Vyāsa to beget another child upon the second wife, Ambālikā. However, even Pāṇḍu did not satisfy Satyawatī, as he was of a sickly pallor.
15.	1.100.26-27	Vidura (?)	Slave woman (Śūdrā)	-do-	?	Seer.	When Satyawatī asked Ambikā for another child, she sent a Śūdra woman instead of her to Vyāsa. Vyāsa was so pleased with her serving that he pronounced her free of bondage. However the varṇa of Vidura remains a mystery. It is for sure that he was a varṇasamkara, but his varṇa is never discussed in the text. However, he enjoyed his position in the palace as a prince and later became a minister (but never a king).
16.	1.104.10-15	Karṇa/Vasusena (Kṣatriya)	Kunti (Kṣatriya)	Sun God (Kṣatriya)	Pāṇḍu/Adhiratha (Kṣatriya?)/(Sūta)	Seer and Divine.	Here we find an interesting case regarding the varṇa identity. Karṇa was possibly the only 'pure' Kṣatriya in the Kuru-Pāṇḍava family of his generation. However, he was deserted by Kunti after his birth and a Sūta, Adhiratha, brought him up. For the major portions of the text, nobody knew his real identity, and all along he was treated as a Sūtaputra. Questions also remain over Karṇa's social father: whether it was Pāṇḍu, who married his mother, or was it Adhiratha, who brought him up and gave him life.
17.	1.107.7-19	Duryodhana & other 101 children (Kṣatriya ?)	Gāndhārī (Kṣatriya)	Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Kṣatriya ?)	—	Seer.	Gāndhārī originally gave birth to a lump of flesh. She was about to throw it away when Vyāsa intervened and asked her to put it into 100 pots filled with 'ghee'. From it, after due time, 100 sons and 1 daughter took birth. The daughter's

Table – 3 (contd.)

							name was Duṣṣālā. However, if there was any problem regarding the varṇa allotment, for Dhṛtarāṣṭra being an alleged varṇasaṃkara, we have no indications for that.
18.	1.112.30-34	3 Sālva & 4 Madra children (Kṣatriya)	Bhadrā (Kṣatriya)	Vyuṣitāśva (Kṣatriya)	—	Yogic.	This story was told to Pāṇḍu by Kunti. In this story king Vyuṣitāśva gave birth to his children upon his wife Bhadrā, after his death. This he did through his yogic powers.
19.	1.114.5-7	Yudhiṣṭhira (Kṣatriya?)	Kunti (Kṣatriya)	Dharma God (?)	Pāṇḍu (Kṣatriya?)	Divine.	This child was born through the <i>niyoga</i> practice, after Pāṇḍu enjoined Kunti to have a child from the God Dharma. Here also the varṇa of the child is not discussed.
20.	1.114.10-12	Bhīma (Kṣatriya?)	-do-	Vāyu God (?)	-do-	Divine.	Same as above, only Kunti got this child from the God Vāyu.
21.	1.114.27	Arjuna (Kṣatriya?)	-do-	Indra (king of Gods, Kṣatriya)	-do-	Divine.	Same as above. The God here was Indra.
22.	1.115.16-17	Nakula & Sahadeva (Kṣatriyas?)	Mādrī (Kṣatriya)	The Aśvin twins (God; varṇa unknown)	-do-	Divine.	On Pāṇḍu's request Kunti taught the <i>Āvāhana</i> mantra (summoning charm) to Mādrī, her co-wife, and asked her to get a child from any one God. Mādrī, instead called the twin Gods and had twin sons. Kunti felt cheated and refused to help Mādrī with the mantra any more.
23.	1.120.12-18	Kṛpa & Kṛpī (Brāhmaṇas)	—	Śaradvat (Brāhmaṇa)	?	Apsarā ? and Seer.	When Śaradvat saw the Apsarā Jālapadī, his sperm fell down on a reed stalk and got split into two. From one was born Kṛpa, the boy, and from the other was born a girl, Kṛpī. They were both adopted by the king Sāntanu. However, they seem to have retained their original varṇa of being a Brāhmaṇa.
24.	1.121.4-6	Droṇa (Brāhmaṇa)	—	Bharadvāja (Brāhmaṇa)	—	Seer.	When the seer Bharadvāja saw the Apsarā Ghṛtācī, nude, he shred his sperms on a trough. From that trough was born Droṇa.

Table – 3 (contd.)

25.	1.143.27-28	Ghaṭotkaca (?)	Hiḍimbā (Rākṣasī)	Bhīma (Kṣatriya?)	—	Other Community.	This is an example of intercommunity marriage. Bhīma killed the brother of the bride, Hiḍimba, before marrying her. Their son however, was seen inducted within his maternal (Rākṣasa) community.
26.	1.155.37-50	Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna & Draupadi (Kṣatriyas)	Pr̥ṣatī (Kṣatriya)	Drupada (Kṣatriya)	—	Seer.	Here we can see another birth for a purpose. However, this was not a normal birth. King Drupada wanted a son who would destroy Droṇa for him. In his quest he met the seer Yāja, who promised to organise a grand sacrifice to satisfy the king's needs. At the end of the sacrifice, a youth and a maiden arose from the sacrificial fire. The youth was to be the slayer of Droṇa, while the maiden will lead the kings to the battle, where it would happen; so was said.
27.	1.220.15-17	5 Śārngaka birds (?)	Jaritā (bird)	Mandapāla (Brāhmaṇa)	—	Seer.	It is said that the seer Mandapāla wanted children, lots of them and quick. Thus he assumed the form of a Śārngaka bird and obtained five children from the eggs laid by another Śārngaka bird, Jaritā.

Table – 4

Table Of Niyoga And Adoption Practices In Ādiparva Mahābhārata

S.No.	Verse	Child (v)	Mother (v)	Father (v) <i>biological</i>	Father (v) <i>social</i>	Niyoga or Adoption	Comments
1.	1.8.7-10	Pramadvarā (?)	Menakā (Apsarā)	Viṣvvasu (Gandharva)	Sthulakeśa (Brāhmaṇa)	Adoption	Brought up by Sthulakeśa, the Brāhmaṇa, and married off to Ruru (grandson of Cyavana). Thus, probably, her varṇa was that of her social or step – father, Sthulakeśa.
2.	1.57.40-55	Satyavatī (?, daughter of an Apsarā, brought up by fishermen, married a king)	Adrikā (an Apsarā, who is a fish, after being cursed by a Brāhmaṇa)	Vasu (Kṣatriya)	Dhīvararāja (Śudra)	Adoption	Vasu's seed fell down, while he was thinking about his wife, in the river and the Apsarā/fish Adrikā swallowed it. From her were born Satyavatī and her twin brother. The varṇa of her is not stated, but it is possible that she carried her step – father's varṇa, as she pursued and helped her father in his work of ferrying the river Yamunā. Her twin brother, interestingly, in subsequent times became the king Matsya.
3.	1.68.8-9	Śakuntalā (?, daughter of an Apsarā, brought up by a Brāhmaṇa and married to a King)	Menaka (Apsarā)	Viśvāmītra (Brāhmaṇa, who previously was a Kṣatriya)	Kanva (Brāhmaṇa)	Adoption	Clear cut suggestions are given by Kanva to suggest his fatherhood over Śakuntalā (1.66.13). both her biological parents left her, while Kanva picked, as well as, brought her up. During her marriage with king Duṣmanta, she was considered as Kanva's daughter, though mentions of her biological parents did come up.
4.	1.100.1-10	Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Kṣatriya ?)	Ambikā (Kṣatriya)	Vyāsa (Brāhmaṇa ?)	Vicitravīrya (Kṣatriya ?)	Niyoga	Here the Niyoga practice is seen to have been applied. Since Vicitravīrya died before being a father, his maternal brother Vyāsa was asked by Satyavatī to propel the family further. Here we see the rules of niyoga being followed properly, as according to the Dharma – Śāstras ; that they should only meet when in emergency and for the sole purpose of child – birth. Here the aspect of varṇasaṃkara gets more complex and confusing. If the child is supposed to inherit the social father's varṇa, then we have definite doubts over the varṇa of Vicitravīrya, here. This is also true, when regarding the biological father. However, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is widely considered as a Kṣatriya, though he was ineligible to rule following his blindness. Even his blindness is said to be rooted with his birth. It says that, Ambikā closed her eyes during her meeting with Vyāsa, thus giving

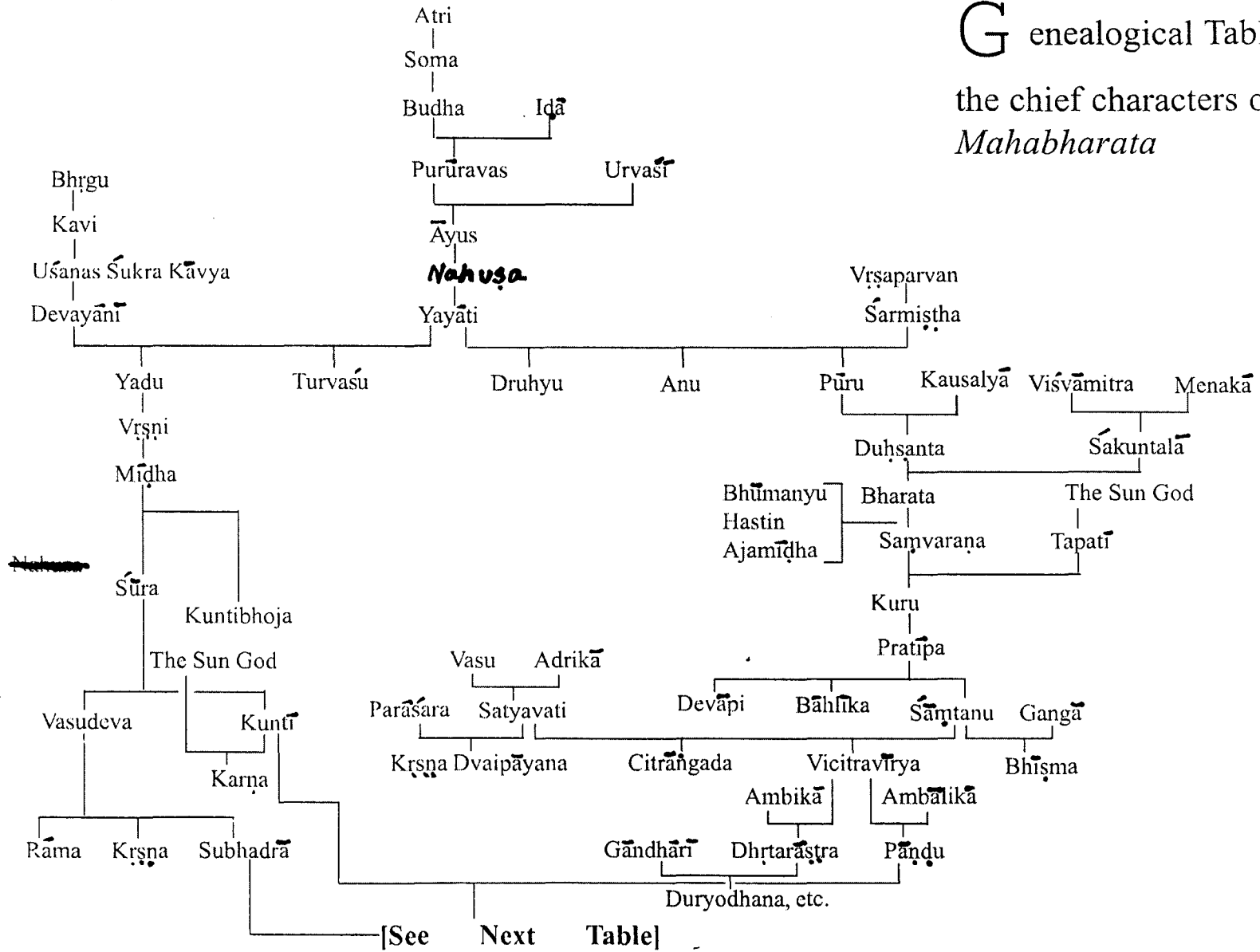
Table – 4 (contd.)

							birth to a blind child.
5.	1.100.15-19	Pāṇḍu (Kṣatriya?)	Ambālikā (Kṣatriya)	-do-	-do-	Niyoga	The same story gets repeated here, regarding the varṇa identity. It is said, since Dhṛtarāṣṭra was blind, Satyawatī asked Vyāsa to beget another child upon the second wife, Ambālikā. However, even Pāṇḍu did not satisfy Satyawatī, as he was of a sickly pallor.
6.	1.100.26-27	Vidura (?)	Slave woman (Śūdra)	-do-	?	Niyoga?	When Satyawatī asked Ambālikā for another child, she sent a Śūdra woman instead of her to Vyāsa. Vyāsa was so pleased with her serving that he pronounced her free of bondage. However the varṇa of Vidura remains a mystery. It is for sure that he was a varṇasamkara, but his varṇa is never discussed in the text. However, he enjoyed his position in the palace as a prince and later became a minister (but never a king).
7.	1.111.33-36	Durjaya (?)	Śaraṇḍāyini (Kṣatriya)	A Brāhmaṇa	? (name not given)	Niyoga	This story is quoted by Pāṇḍu to Kunti, while pursuing her to follow the <i>niyoga</i> system. The varṇa allotment is not discussed here.
8.	1.113.21-23	Aśmaka (Kṣatriya?)	Madayanṭī (Kṣatriya)	Vasiṣṭha (Brāhmaṇa)	Kalmāṣapāda Saudāsa (Kṣatriya)	Niyoga	-do-
9.	1.114.5-7	Yudhiṣṭhira (Kṣatriya?)	Kunti (Kṣatriya)	Dharma God (?)	Pāṇḍu (Kṣatriya?)	Niyoga	This child was born through the <i>niyoga</i> practice, after Pāṇḍu enjoined Kunti to have a child from the God Dharma. Here also the varṇa of the child is not discussed.
10.	1.114.10-12	Bhīma (Kṣatriya?)	-do-	Vāyu God (?)	-do-	Niyoga	Same as above, only Kunti got this child from the God Vāyu.
11.	1.114.27	Arjuna (Kṣatriya?)	-do-	Indra (king of Gods, Kṣatriya)	-do-	Niyoga	Same as above. The God here was Indra.
12.	1.115.16-17	Nakula & Sahadeva (Kṣatriyas?)	Mādrī (Kṣatriya)	The Aśvin twins (God; varṇa unknown)	-do-	Niyoga	On Pāṇḍu's request Kunti taught the <i>Āvāhana</i> mantra (summoning charm) to Mādrī, her co-wife, and asked her to get a child from any one God. Mādrī, instead called the twin Gods and had twin sons. Kunti felt cheated and refused to help Mādrī with the mantra any more.
13.	1.120.12-18	Kṛpa & Kṛpī (Brāhmaṇas)	—	Śaradvat (Brāhmaṇa)	?	Adoption	When Śaradvat saw the Apsarā Jālapadī, his sperm fell down on a reed stalk and got split into two. From one was born Kṛpa, the boy, and from the other was born a girl, Kṛpī. They were both adopted by the king

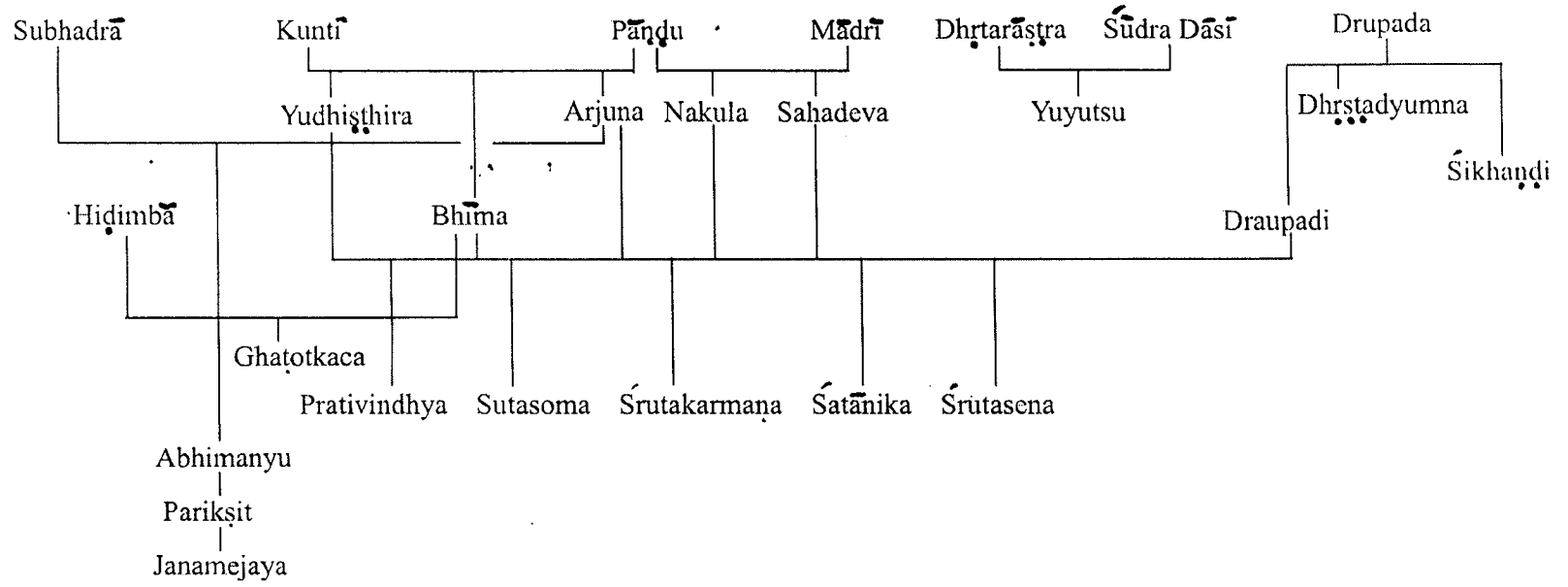
Table – 4 (contd.)

							Sāntanu. However, they seem to have retained their original varṇa of being a Brāhmaṇa.
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Genealogical Table of the chief characters of *Mahabharata*



Genealogical Table (contd.)



CHAPTER – 3

Understanding the *varṇasaṁkara*: A Study of Vidura

Introduction:

In the previous chapters we have seen how *varṇasaṁkara* was looked at in the various law-codes and what the attitude of the brahmanical society was towards the new entrants. We have also looked at the various birth-stories mentioned in the *Ādīparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* and tried to ascertain the *varṇa* status of the characters who were born of unusual marriages or out of wedlock. We have seen how the *varṇa* aspect of the babies was ignored while narrating the birth-stories in the *Ādīparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. However, we also have certain characters in the text who were definitely products of *varṇasaṁkara*, such as Vidura. In the third chapter we will look into the social and political position of Vidura in order to assess the extent to which the injunctions of the law-codes regarding *varṇasaṁkara* were followed in society as reflected in the *Mahābhārata*. This chapter shall guide us to the social attitude towards a mixed-caste whose origin

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can be traced to the royal family. We will see if this fact makes any difference with regard to the social attitude towards a *varṇasaṁkara*.

I have looked at only the first five *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata*. The character of Vidura enjoys a prominent position in these sections only, and after the conclusion of the fifth *parvan* and the beginning of the sections on war he does not figure in any important incident of the story.

The selection of Vidura as the ideal exemplar of *varṇasaṁkara* is not without reason. To understand this, let us have a brief look at the different facets of this character in the text.

Vidura is a central character in the epic, both in the story as well as for the purpose of our study. His presence can be felt throughout the story, though with a moderate impact on the happenings around him. He carries his own view about every event. More often than not, his views match with those of the author, Vyāsa, who is seen as upholding *dharma*. In other words, he keeps to the much debated tenets of *dharma* as he is said to be *dharma* incarnate. Vidura shares a great characteristic similarity with Yudhiṣṭhira, who symbolises proper conduct in the story, and is often seen as playing the role of Yudhiṣṭhira's mentor.

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He is clearly a *vaṇasaṁkara*, and this has a tremendous impact on his social status. He is described as the son of a *śūdrā dāsī* and this is why he was denied the throne which his step-brothers Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇdu enjoyed. It seems that his mother's identity as a slave overshadowed his status of being a simple *vaṇasaṁkara*. It was even more blasphemous to be a slave woman's son than belonging to a mixed *varṇa*. Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇdu were also of mixed caste, but their *vaṇasaṁkara* status did not stand in the way of asserting the royal throne. He became the (chief?) minister of the Kurū state and did enjoy an important political position in the court. He was the only *vaṇasaṁkara* character in the story who was explicitly addressed as one by both Duryodhana the villain and Yudhiṣṭhira the hero on different occasions.

We have ample examples from the story where he is portrayed as a man of not merely virtue, but of exemplary moral courage. The most significant example is the occasion of the dice game when he vociferously protested against the insult met by Draupadi and repeatedly appealed to the conscience of the dignitaries present there. However, Duryodhana was never moved by his suggestions, though it was Dhṛtarāṣṭra, his step-brother and the king, was occasionally perturbed by his words. This, however, had little effect on his decisions. Thus, even though a

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prince, Vidura always remained subordinate to the other members of the royal household. Politically, he was considered nothing more than an employee of the Kurū state, though his social position remains somewhat uncertain. He is acknowledged as a member of the royal family and yet does not receive the respect that such a social status deserves. This makes him an appropriate example for our study.

Knowing Vidura:

The character of Vidura finds a prominent place in the *Ādiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. It is this section of the narrative which talks about the origin of the major characters, and introduces them to the reader. Therefore, this section discusses the birth-stories and tries to connect these with the subsequent events. This point has to be kept in mind when we deal with the narrative and it's relation with Vidura.

First among these birth-myths, we have the story of the birth of one of the protagonist of the *Mahābhārata*, Devavrata¹ or Bhīṣma. His mother was river Gangā of uncertain *varṇa*, and the father was the king of Hastināpura, Śāntanu. Śāntanu, who belonged to the Kurū lineage, was unaware that his wife was the river Gangā who came to him in a human form. Nor did love-blind Śāntanu try to know anything about her. Devavrata was the eighth and the last son of their union. The rest were killed by their mother right after their birth. The myth states that they were the celestial Vasus, cursed by the seer Vasiṣṭha. The *varṇa* status of Devavrata is not revealed. However, following his subsequent treatment, it seems that he inherited his father's *varṇa* and was recognised as a *kṣatriya*.

¹ Mbh. 1.92.46.

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The next birth in line was that of Citrāngada and Vicitravīrya². They were the children of the king Śāntanu and Satyavatī³, possibly a *śūdra*. There never seems to have been any problem with regard to their *varṇa* identity. They are invariably taken to be *kṣatriyas*, though, theoretically, they should not have been considered so. Their *varṇasamkara* identity was overshadowed by their status as princes.

Regarding the birth of Dhṛtarāṣṭra⁴, a number of complications can be observed. His mother was Ambikā, the daughter of the king of Kāśi and thus a *kṣatriya*, and his biological father was Vyāsa⁵ a *brāhmaṇa*, while his legal father was

² Mbh. 1.95.1.

³ The birth-story of Satyavatī is equally incredible. It is said that king Vasu's seed fell down in the river, while he was thinking about his wife, and the *apsarā*fish Adrikā swallowed it. From her were born Satyavatī and her brother. The *varṇa* of her is not stated, but it is possible that she carried the *varṇa* of her legal father who was a boatman in the Yamuna and whom she helped in work. Later she was married to the king Śāntanu on his behest. Her brother, subsequently, became the king of Matsya. Mbh. 1.57.40-55.

⁴ Mbh. 1.100.1-10.

⁵ Vyāsa also has a very interesting birth-story. His father was Parāśara, a *brāhmaṇa*, and his mother was Satyavatī, a *śūdra*. Vyāsa was considered a *brāhmaṇa*, though, according to the *Dharma śāstras*, he should have been a *niṣāda*. Here we have the example of a *varṇasamkara* child, whose social treatment does not correspond with the *Dharma śāstras*. If Satyavatī is taken to be a *kṣatriya* (*varṇa* of her biological father Vasu), even then Vyāsa do not remain a *brāhmaṇa* but is still a *varṇasamkara*. This gets even more interesting, when it is seen that a possible *varṇasamkara* is able, not only to shake off his legitimate social identity, but can take up a *varṇa* revered by all, that of a *brāhmaṇa*. Mbh. 1.57.69-70.

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Vicitravīrya, the husband of his mother. Here the practice of *niyoga* seems to have been applied. Since Vicitravīrya died before being a father, his maternal brother Vyāsa was asked by Satyawatī to carry forward the lineage by begetting sons on his widows. Here the question of *vaṇṣasamkara* gets more complex and confusing. If the child is supposed to inherit the legal father's *varṇa*, then there is scope to doubt the *varṇa* of Vicitravīrya. This is also true of the biological father Vyāsa. The exact *varṇa* of this child is thus very difficult to ascertain. However, Dhṛtarāṣṭra was widely considered as a *kṣatriya*, though he was ineligible to rule following his blindness, which is said to be rooted in his birth. The myth goes that Ambikā closed her eyes during her meeting with Vyāsa, thus giving birth to a blind child⁶.

The same story gets repeated in the case of Pāṇḍu⁷. The mother here was Ambālikā, the sister of Ambikā. It is said that since Dhṛtarāṣṭra was blind and therefore was unable to

⁶ Vyāsa declared upon the pregnancy of Ambikā that,

*nāgāyutasamaprāṇo vidvān rājarṣisattamaḥ
mahābhāgo mahāvīryo mahābuddhir bhaviṣyati
tasya cūpi śataś putrā bhaviṣyanti mahābalāḥ
kim tu mātuh sa vaigunṣyād andha eva bhaviṣyati*

[He shall be a man with the vigour of a myriad elephants, a wise and great royal seer, of great fortune, great prowess and great spirit, and he shall have a hundred powerful sons. But because of his mother's defect of virtue, he shall be blind.] Mbh. 1.100.9-10.

⁷ Mbh. 1.100.15-19.

ascend the throne, Satyavatī asked Vyāsa to produce another child upon Ambālikā the second wife of Vicitravīrya. However, even Pāṇḍu did not satisfy Satyavatī, as he was of a sickly pallor⁸.

Following these we come to the next birth along the line, that of Vidura⁹. His biological father was Vyāsa and mother was a *sūdra* slave woman. Satyavatī wanted another child and once again asked Ambikā, who got frightened and sent a slave woman in place of her to Vyāsa. Vyāsa was so pleased with her service that he declared her free of bondage¹⁰. However, the *varṇa* of Vidura remains a mystery. It is for sure

⁸ Vyāsa said to Ambālikā,

*yasmāt pāṇḍutvam āpannā virūpaṁ prekṣya mām api
tasmād eṣa sutas tubhyaṁ pāṇḍur eva bhaviṣyati
nāma cāsya tad eveha bhaviṣyati śubhānane*

[Since you paled when you saw my ugliness, you shall have a son of a sickly pallor, and so his name shall be Pāṇḍu the pale, woman of the lovely face.] Mbh. 1.100.17-18a.

⁹ Mbh. 1.100.26-27.

¹⁰ The text says,

*uttiṣṭhann abravīd enām abhujīṣyā bhaviṣyasi
ayaṁ ca te śubhe garbhaḥ śrīmān udaram āgataḥ
dharmātmā bhavitā loke sarvabuddhimatām varaḥ
sa jajñe viduro nāma kṛṣṇadvaiṇāyānātmajaḥ
dhṛtarāṣṭrasya ca bhrātā pāṇḍoś cāmitabuddhimān*

[When he (Vyāsa) rose, he said to her (the slave woman), “you shall cease to be a slave. There is a child come to your belly, my lovely, an illustrious man-child who shall be mindful of the *dharma* and become the most sagacious man in the world.” Thus was born Vidura, son of

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that he was a *varnasamkara*, but the text never mentions his *varna*. We also can not decide whether this should be considered a proper case of *niyoga*. The marital status of the slave woman is never disclosed.

The birth of Vidura can well be termed as the result of a mistake. However he was located in the palace and was almost becoming a king. He received his education with his two brothers and proved himself quite an adept in the department of knowledge. Even Bhīṣma respected Vidura's judgement and often asked for his opinion¹¹ on important matters. In due course Pāṇḍu was declared the king, as the other two were unfit to be so¹². Vidura occupied a position in the court. We do not know of his official status in the court, as the text never mentions that. However,

Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, the immeasurably sage brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu.] Mbh. 1.100.26-27.

¹¹ For instance, he asked for Vidura's opinion regarding the marriage of Pāṇḍu with Kunti and Mādri and of Dhṛtarāṣṭra with Gāndhārī. Mbh. 1.103.1-10.

¹² It is said in the *Mahābhārata* that while Dhṛtarāṣṭra did not get the throne for his blindness and Vidura for being a *karaṇa*, it was Pāṇḍu who was declared the king. –

dhṛtarāṣṭras tv acakṣuṣtvād rājyaṁ na pratyapadyata

karaṇatvāc ca viduraḥ pāṇḍur āsīn mahīpatih Mbh. 1.102.23.

However there is a variation of this verse in the vulgate edition of the text, which says, while Dhṛtarāṣṭra did not get the throne for his blindness and Vidura for being a *pāraśava*, it was Pāṇḍu who became the king. –

dhṛtarāṣṭras tv acakṣuṣtvād rājyaṁ na pratyapadyata

pāraśavatvāt viduro rājā pāṇḍur bhūvo ha Mbh.V. 1.103.25.

I will be discussing the same, more vividly in the section, “**Identifying Vidura**”.

time and again, he has been addressed as the *mantrī* of king Dhṛtarāṣṭra¹³. The word *mantrī* literally means ‘one who offers suggestions’, or a ‘minister’. He has also been addressed as the *mantrīmukhyaṃ*, possibly meaning the chief minister¹⁴.

Pāṇḍu died after some years and the kingdom went to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. It is here that the complication in the story began; the sons of both Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra claimed their right over the throne. The Kurū court came to be divided in its loyalty though some remained impartial. Vidura upheld the right of the Pāṇḍavas. Duryodhana, the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, even tried to kill his cousins by hatching a conspiracy aided by Dhṛtarāṣṭra. The Pāṇḍavas were eventually saved by the help of Vidura, who warned Yudhiṣṭhira of the conspiracy in a cryptic language. Finally it was decided to divide the kingdom between the two groups. This, however, did not satisfy Duryodhana, as he wanted the whole kingdom. He challenged the Pāṇḍavas to a game of dice, and won over their kingdom along with their wife Draupadi. She was brought to the court and was insulted by the Kauravas, even though Vidura attempted to save her honour. The Pāṇḍavas were sent in exile of thirteen years in the forest, with the last year to be spent in hiding from the

¹³ Mbh. 2.45.41. and 2.65.13. (by Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself), 3.8.3. (by Duryodhana), 5.31.11. and 5.81.48. (by Yudhiṣṭhira).

¹⁴ Mbh. 2.51.20. (by the narrator Vaiśampāyana).

Understanding The *Vaṇasaṁkara*: A Study Of Vidura.

Kauravas. After thirteen eventful years the Pāṇḍavas came back and demanded their kingdom. Duryodhana refused and this led to the war. Vidura constantly advised Dhṛtarāṣṭra to make peace with the Pāṇḍavas, but to no avail. The long and bloody war resulted in the victory of the Pāṇḍavas, but it claimed the lives of hundreds of *kṣatriya* kings, including the Kauravas. Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas, became the king. Vidura, along with the other elders in the court, decided to go to forest and spend the rest of their lives there. It was in the forest that most of them died of a forest-fire, while Vidura committed self-death by abandoning food and rest.

This is the story of *Mahābhārata* in a nutshell. As we can see, Vidura is a key figure in the narrative and in some cases even influenced the course of events. He remained located in the Kaurava court but helped the Pāṇḍavas in every possible way he could have done. It is not surprising that Yudhiṣṭhira addresses Vidura as his loyal ally, teacher, servant, friend and advisor – *bhakta*, *guru*, *bhṛtya*, *suhṛt* and *mantri*¹⁵.

We know that Vidura was a *vaṇasaṁkara*, as he was denied the throne due to this reason. However, he

¹⁵ In the *Udyogaparvan*, Dhṛtarāṣṭra sent Saṁjaya to Yudhiṣṭhira with the request of stopping the war. It was when Yudhiṣṭhira asked Saṁjaya, the envoy of the Kauravas, to go back with his answer, he also asked him to give Vidura his regards, with these words :

sa eva bhaktaḥ sa guruḥ sa bhṛtyaḥ; sa vai pitā sa ca mātā suhṛc ca

agādhabuddhir viduro dīrghadarśī; sa no mantri kuśalam tāta pṛccheḥ. Mbh. 5.30.29.

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also enjoyed a high position in the court. His precise social location is thus uncertain. On one hand, he is branded as a 'lowly' mixed-caste and, on the other, enjoyed a status in the narrative which many others would envy. To solve this puzzle, we will now look at his social position as depicted in the text, a little more closely. One way of ascertaining his status is to look at the various terms used by the other characters to address him. This way we can make out the social attitude towards the character and also judge his position in the narrative.

Addressing Vidura:

Vidura has been addressed in a variety of ways in the narrative. No other character shares so much variety with regard to the manner in which he has been addressed¹⁶. He has been addressed according to his *varṇa* status, his nature and character, his knowledge of *dharma*, his virtuousness, his location in the court and his relation with the royal family. The most widely used vocative word for Vidura is *kṣattā*¹⁷. He has been addressed by this term for about thirty six times by various characters in the first five *parvans* of the text. This *sambodhana*¹⁸ is of a very special nature and demands particular attention. Before that, let us group together the *sambodhanas* used for Vidura under the following heads.

1. *Sambodhanas* by the positive characters in the text, such as Yudhiṣṭhira,

¹⁶ The term, 'address' or 'adjective' does not fully convey the meaning I have in mind. The Sanskrit word is *sambodhana*. This would refer to any word used in a vocative sense. I shall therefore use the Sanskrit word *sambodhana*, instead of 'address' or 'adjective' from now on.

¹⁷ Buitenen has translated this word as 'steward', which does not seem to be a fitting translation. This term definitely denotes the *varṇa* status of the addressee and not his occupational one. We shall discuss the connotations of this term later in a separate section.

¹⁸ *sambodhana* – a Sanskrit word meaning the terms used for addressing someone. In other words, a vocative term.

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2. *sambodhanas* by the negative characters in the text, such as Duryodhana,
3. *sambodhanas* depicting Vidura's position in the royal court, and
4. *sambodhanas* depicting his position in the royal family.

After we have taken stock of the above, we shall address the question of the *varṇa* of Vidura, as reflected in these usages.

Sambodhanas by the positive characters:

By the ‘positive’ characters I mean those who, by their coherence to *dharma*, have been adjudged so by the text itself, such as Yudhiṣṭhira, Kṛṣṇa, Vyāsa, Bhīṣma, Drupada, Saṁjaya, Vikarṇa, Droṇa, Paraśurāma, Gāndhārī, Pāṇḍu, Kunti and others like them. The text is somewhat ambivalent about the moral status of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, but I have taken him as one of the negative characters.

We must remember that the conduct of Vidura is highly praised in the text. Therefore all the other positive characters in the text also speak highly of Vidura and this is clearly reflected in the *sambodhanas* they use to address him. However, they have also used the *sambodhana kṣattā* for him. Out of the thirty six times that Vidura has been addressed as *kṣattā*, it has been five times by Yudhiṣṭhira¹⁹, four times by Kṛṣṇa²⁰, twice by Gāndhārī²¹, and once each by Pāṇḍu²², Kunti²³ and

¹⁹ See the table headed, “*Sambodhanas to Vidura*”.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

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Saṁjaya²⁴. It shows that it was a common address for him, even though the term referred to his mixed-*varṇa* identity. Since it was used by those who had been respectful to Vidura, it suggests that the term was not used in a derogatory sense. Apart from this, all the other *sambodhanas* by the positive characters reflect their appreciation of Vidura. Yudhiṣṭhira called him *mahābuddhi*²⁵, *suhṛda* (twice)²⁶, *kave*²⁷, *mahāmati*²⁸, *āptama*²⁹, *bahuśrutam*, *vāgminam*³⁰, *kurūnām medhāvinam*³¹, *śīlavantam*³², *dirghadarśī*³³, *agādhābuddhi*³⁴, *bhakta*³⁵, *guru*³⁶, *bhṛtya*³⁷, *mantrī*³⁸, *kurūnām mantradhārinam* (twice)³⁹ and *mahāprajñā*⁴⁰. Kṛṣṇa called him *dhīmataḥ*⁴¹,

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Mbh. 1.134.16.

²⁶ Mbh. 1.135.7. and 5.30.29.

²⁷ Mbh. 2.52.15.

²⁸ Mbh. 4.4.45.

²⁹ Mbh. 5.26.11.

³⁰ Mbh. 5.26.12.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Mbh. 5.30.29.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Mbh. 5.31.11 and 5.81.48.

⁴⁰ Mbh. Mbh. 5.81.48.

⁴¹ Mbh. 5.71.11.

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*mahāmate*⁴², *vyājahāra*⁴³ and *satyasamgraha*⁴⁴. Vyāsa called him *śrīmān*⁴⁵, *dharmātmā*⁴⁶, *sarvabuddhimatām varaḥ*⁴⁷ and *prājña*⁴⁸. Bhīṣma called him *dhīmatām vara*⁴⁹ and *dhīmataḥ*⁵⁰. Gāndhārī called him *mahāmati*⁵¹ and *dīrghadarśī*⁵². Drupada calls him *mahāprajñā*⁵³ and *vibho*⁵⁴, Saṁjaya called him *mānada*⁵⁵. Vikarṇa called him *mahāmatiḥ*⁵⁶. Droṇa called him *mahātmanā*⁵⁷ and Paraśurāma called him as *mahāmatiḥ*⁵⁸.

Thus, most of the positive characters have used a variety of respectful addresses for him. Only Kunti and Pāṇḍu have addressed Vidura as *kṣattā* alone. One would have expected more sympathetic *sambodhanas* from a brother. We shall see that Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the

⁴² Mbh. 5.122.14.

⁴³ Mbh. 5.146.17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Mbh. 1.100.26. (during Vidura's birth).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Mbh. 3.9.6.

⁴⁹ Mbh. 1.103.7.

⁵⁰ Mbh. 5.123.7.

⁵¹ Mbh. 2.66.29.

⁵² Mbh. 5.146.30.

⁵³ Mbh. 1.199.1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Mbh. 3.7.16.

⁵⁶ Mbh. 2.61.13.

⁵⁷ Mbh. 5.146.11.

⁵⁸ Mbh. 5.81.70.

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other brother of Vidura, have used the maximum number of *sambodhanas* for him, which we discuss now.

Sambodhanas by the negative characters:

Among the negative characters addressing Vidura, there is not much of a choice or variety. Most of the negative characters, such as Karṇa, Duḥśāsana and Śakuni, never directly addressed him. They always took his name whenever they had to refer to Vidura. However, Duryodhana does use *sambodhanas* for Vidura, though the terms employed by him are small and formal. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, on the other hand, has used the maximum variety of terms to address Vidura. Out of the thirty six times that Vidura has been addressed as *kṣattā*, it has been fourteen times by Dhṛtarāṣṭra and seven times by Duryodhana. Apart from calling Vidura *kṣattā*, Duryodhana uses only another sambodhana for him, namely *mantrī*⁵⁹. Duḥśāsana, the brother of Duryodhana, referred to Śakuni as their *mātula*⁶⁰, a *sambodhana* that emphasises kinship bond, but Vidura was never described by the Kaurava brothers as their uncle. This demonstrates the immensely strained relation between Vidura and the Kauravas.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra often engaged in long conversation with Vidura, using a variety of *sambodhanas*. Apart from calling

⁵⁹ Mbh. 3.8.3.

⁶⁰ Mbh. 3.8.11.

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him *kṣattā*, Dhṛtarāṣṭra addressed Vidura as *dharmavatsala*⁶¹, *bhārata*⁶², *mahādyute*⁶³, *mantrī mahāprājñah*⁶⁴, *medhāvī*⁶⁵, *kurūṇām pravaro*⁶⁶, *mahātmanaḥ*⁶⁷, *dhīmān*⁶⁸, *kuravo.....mantrī*⁶⁹, *mahāprajñō*⁷⁰, *sākṣād dharmā ivāparaḥ*⁷¹, *suhṛt*⁷², *dharmajñam mama bhrātā*⁷³, *paramabuddhimān*⁷⁴, *prājñā*⁷⁵, *dharmajñā*⁷⁶, *anagha*⁷⁷, *mahāprājñā*⁷⁸, *dīrghadarśī*⁷⁹, *asmin rājarṣivamṣe hi tvam ekaḥ prājñasammataḥ*⁸⁰, *tāta* (twice)⁸¹, *praśādhi*⁸²,

⁶¹ Mbh. 1.124.7.

⁶² Mbh. 1.198.4.

⁶³ Mbh. 1.198.6.

⁶⁴ Mbh. 2.45.41.

⁶⁵ Mbh. 2.46.11.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Mbh. 2.51.5.

⁶⁸ Mbh. 2.65.13.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Mbh. 2.72.27.

⁷¹ Mbh. 3.7.4-10.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Mbh. 3.7.18.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Mbh. 5.33.5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Mbh. 5.33.15.

⁸¹ Mbh. 5.34.1-2 and 5.127.2.

⁸² *Ibid.*

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*manīṣitam*⁸³, *mahābuddhe*⁸⁴, *mahāmate*⁸⁵, *saumya*⁸⁶ and *dharmajña*⁸⁷. Among these there are terms that emphasise the virtuousness of Vidura⁸⁸, that proclaim Vidura as the minister – or maybe the chief minister – of the Kurū court⁸⁹ and, most importantly, that proclaim family ties of Vidura with the royal household, with the king himself calling him as his own brother and proclaiming him as one of the best of their lineage⁹⁰. The virtuousness of Vidura is of course beyond doubt. He was also unquestionably a member of the royal court. The important point is that at least some Kauravas counted Vidura as a member of their own family. Thus, even the negative characters were not wholly disrespectful towards him, and this includes even Duryodhana.

⁸³ Mbh. 5.34.3.

⁸⁴ Mbh. 5.35.1.

⁸⁵ Mbh. 5.36.48.

⁸⁶ Mbh. 5.40.28.

⁸⁷ Mbh. 5.84.5.

⁸⁸ *sākṣād dharma ivāparah*. Mbh. 3.7.4-10.

⁸⁹ *kuravo.....mantrī*. Mbh. 2.65.13.

mantrī mahāprājñah. Mbh. 2.45.41.

⁹⁰ *asmin rājarṣivamśe hi tvam ekaḥ prājñasammatah*. Mbh. 5.33.15.

kurūṇām pravaro. Mbh. 2.46.11.

bhārata. Mbh. 1.198.4.

dharmajñaṃ mama bhrātā. Mbh. 3.7.4-10.

Sambodhanas depicting Vidura's position in the royal court:

Vidura could never be a king due to his *varṇasamkara* status, but he did enjoy a place in the royal court by occupying the position of the (chief?) minister of the Kurū court. This fact is clear by the constant presence of Vidura in the court, his involvement with the courtly affairs and, most importantly, by the various *sambodhanas* depicting him as the minister of the Kurū state.

There are five references to *sambodhanas* which suggest Vidura's membership of the royal court. These have been made twice each by Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Yudhiṣṭhira, and once by Duryodhana. Dhṛtarāṣṭra called him *mantrī mahāprājñaḥ*⁹¹ and *kuravo.....mantrī*⁹². Yudhiṣṭhira twice called him *kurūnām mantradhārinam*⁹³. Duryodhana called him once *mantrī*⁹⁴. It seems that Vidura was indeed a minister in the court. However, the term *mantrī* can also mean 'one who gives suggestions' or 'a friend', and not necessarily 'minister' in the sense in which we understand the term today. Especially, the term *mantradhārinam* indicates

⁹¹ Mbh. 2.45.41.

⁹² Mbh. 2.65.13.

⁹³ Mbh. 5.31.11. and 5.81.48.

⁹⁴ Mbh. 3.8.3.

Rationalising the Birth–Myths in *Ādīparvan Mahābhārata*.

Coming to the most important question of our study, viz., the *varṇa* identity of the child, the text is surprisingly quiet. Barring the incident of the birth of Yadu and Turvaśu, nowhere in the text can be seen any attempt to justify and explain the *varṇa* of the child. However, at times it seems that the child carries the *varṇa* of the step – father, which is shown in examples such as, Pramadvārā, Satyavatī and Śakuntalā. On the other hand, we also come across the examples of Kṛpā and Kṛpī who retained the *varṇa* of their biological father. One cannot even say that the superior *varṇa* was chosen following the case of Satyavatī where she was given her step-father’s *varṇa śūdra*, while her biological father’s *varṇa* was *kṣatriya*. The most appropriate concluding statement would be that the text did not care to establish the *varṇa* of these offsprings. What it does suggest is that *varṇa* transgressions in marriage and outside of the marital relationship was common and, while it solved the problem of issues, created different sets of problems. These must be looked into more closely for a more complete picture.

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Sambodhanas depicting his position in the royal family:

We know for a fact that neither Vidura's mother nor his father belonged to the royal family. His father was the seer Vyāsa, who never claimed any kin relationship with the royal family, and his mother was a *sūdrā dāsī*. Thus, formally, Vidura was not a member of the royal family. In this section we will look at the *sambodhanas* which proclaim Vidura's royal status and his membership of the lineage of the Kurūs.

At least two characters of the text use such *sambodhanas* which proclaim Vidura as a member of the royal family of the Kurūs. They are Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Yudhiṣṭhira. Amongst them Dhṛtarāṣṭra, being the most vociferous, pronounces four of these. Yudhiṣṭhira, on the other hand, utters only one such *sambodhana*. The ones used by Dhṛtarāṣṭra are as follows, – *bhārata*⁹⁷, *kurūnām pravaro*⁹⁸, *dharmajñam mama bhrātā*⁹⁹ and *asmin rājarsivamṣe hi tvam ekaḥ prājñasammatah*¹⁰⁰. Yudhiṣṭhira once called Vidura *kurūnām medhāvīnām*¹⁰¹. Apart from the above *sambodhanas*, we also

⁹⁷ Mbh. 1.198.4.

⁹⁸ Mbh. 2.46.11.

⁹⁹ Mbh. 3.7.4-10.

¹⁰⁰ Mbh. 5.33.15.

¹⁰¹ Mbh. 5.26.12.

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find the narrator Vaiśampāyana referring to Vidura with terms that suggest his ties with the royal family. Vaiśampāyana calls him *kurūnandanah*¹⁰² on one occasion, which means – scion of the Kurūs. There is, however, one more example which invalidates the assumption that Vidura was considered somewhat lowly at the Kurū court. This occurs when Duryodhana, after completing his *vaiṣṇava yajña*, touches the feet of Dhṛtarāṣṭra (his father), Gāndhārī (his mother), Bhiṣma (his grandfather), Droṇa & Kṛpa (his teachers) and Vidura (his uncle)¹⁰³. It is indeed intriguing that Duryodhana, who had such a strained relationship with Vidura, would show respect to him in a manner that will formally put him at par with Duryodhana’s parents and teachers. Moreover, this he did just after the performance of a *yajña*, when only the elders of the family would be offered respect and not a low-born mixed-caste employee of the Kurū state. From the above incident it seems that though Duryodhana was not in best of terms with Vidura, the family ties of Vidura as a member of the Kurū lineage was never questioned by anyone, not even by Duryodhana. This significant fact leads us to our discussion of the *varṇa* of Vidura.

¹⁰² Mbh. 1.106.14.

¹⁰³ *abhivādya tataḥ pādau mātāpitror viśām pate*

bhīṣmadroṇakṛpāṇām ca vidurasya ca dhīmatah

[He (Duryodhana) saluted the feet of his father and mother, lord of your people, and the feet of Bhiṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa and the sagacious Vidura.] Mbh. 3.243.7.

Identifying Vidura (and his exact *varṇa*):

Though Vidura has been mentioned clearly as a *varṇasaṁkara* in the text of the *Mahābhārata*, there is a fair degree of controversy regarding the exact *varṇa* identity of Vidura. While discussing the *varṇa* status of Vidura, the text mentions three distinct possibilities. Vidura has been described as *karāṇa*, *kṣattā* and *pāraśava* in the text, all indicating *varṇa* status. However, it is obvious that the narrative could not have recognised three separate *varṇa* identities for Vidura. This ambiguity can be attributed to the incorporative character of the text which has undergone large-scale redactions over a long period of time. However, the *varṇa* identity of Vidura must be confined within the spectrum of these possibilities. Therefore, let us take a look at the different contexts in which these three terms have been attributed to Vidura.

The term *karāṇa* directly occurs in the context of naming the *varṇa* of Vidura. In the *ādīparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* the narrator Vaiśampāyana discusses the reasons due to which neither Dhṛtarāṣṭra nor Vidura succeeded to the throne. The narrator says:

dhṛtarāṣṭras tv acakṣuṣṭvād rājyaṁ na pratyapadyata

*karaṇatvāc ca viduraḥ pāṇḍur āsīn mahīpatiḥ*¹⁰⁴

[While Dhṛtarāṣṭra did not get the throne for his blindness and Vidura for being a *karaṇa*, it was Pāṇḍu who got the kingdom.]

The term *karaṇa* suggests the *varṇasamkara* identity of a child who has a *vaiśya* father and a *śūdra* mother. This was definitely not the parental *varṇa* combination of Vidura. We know that *varṇasamkara* terms often suggest different parental combinations in different law-codes¹⁰⁵. However, we find no difference of opinion among the law-codes regarding the parental combination of *karaṇa*. At least two law texts¹⁰⁶ refer to this term *karaṇa* and both describe it as the result of a parental combination of a *vaiśya* father and *śūdra* mother. This does not justify the attribution of this term to Vidura. Almost all law-texts describe the *varṇa* status of a child, who has the parental combination of Vidura – i.e. a *brāhmaṇa* father and a *śūdra* mother, as being either a *pāraśava*¹⁰⁷ or a *niṣāda*¹⁰⁸. The *Mānava dharma-śāstra* saw no contradictions in using the two *varṇa* terms for

¹⁰⁴ Mbh. 1.102.23.

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter 1. The Theory of *varṇasamkara* in the *dharma-sūtras* & *śāstras*.

¹⁰⁶ The law-texts of *Gautama dharma-sūtra* and *Yājñyavalkya smṛti*.

¹⁰⁷ The *Gautama dharma-sūtra*, the *Nārada smṛti* and the *Mānava dharma-śāstra* refers to the son of a *brāhmaṇa* father and a *śūdra* mother as being a *pāraśava*.

¹⁰⁸ Law-texts attributing the *niṣāda* identity to a child of a *brāhmaṇa* father and a *śūdra* mother, are the *Baudhāyana dharma-sūtra*, the *Vasiṣṭha dharma-sūtra*, the *Yājñyavalkya smṛti*, the *Viṣṇu dharma-sūtra* and the *Mānava dharma śāstra*.

the same parental combination. At the same time, no legal text attributes the *varṇa* of *karāṇa* to the kind of parental *varṇa* combination of Vidura. The passage quoted above, that describes Vidura's *varṇa* as *karāṇa* is taken from the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*. However, apart from the critical edition, there are several other variants of the text of the *Mahābhārata*, and we do find variations (which seem to be just and appropriate) to the above passage in the other¹⁰⁹ editions of the text. For example,

dhṛtarāṣṭras tv acakṣuṣtvād rājyaṁ na pratyapadyata
*pāraśavtvāt viduro rājā pāṇḍur bhūvo ha*¹¹⁰

[While Dhṛtarāṣṭra did not get the throne for his blindness and Vidura for being a *pāraśava*, it was Pāṇḍu who became the king.] This passage clearly states Vidura's *varṇa* as *pāraśava* and not *karāṇa*, thereby contradicting the comparable passage in the critical edition. The variation has not gone unnoticed. Nilakaṇṭha, the most celebrated commentator of the *Mahābhārata*, noticed this departure (*karāṇa*, instead of *pāraśava*) in some of the manuscripts. In his *Bhāratabhāvadīpa* (commentary on the *Mahābhārata*), he

¹⁰⁹ I have used the Calcutta edition as the non-critical edition of the text. I shall further refer to this text as Mbh. (Calcutta).

¹¹⁰ Mbh. (Calcutta). 1.103.25.

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proclaimed the application of the term *karana* in this case is a misreading¹¹¹ and that the correct reading should be *pāraśava*.

According to the law–codes and other prescriptive texts, marriage can take place only between members of the same *varṇa* status. Following this theory, it can be said that if Vidura was either a *karana* or a *pāraśava*, he must have been married to either a *karana* or a *pāraśava* girl. According to the critical edition, which described Vidura as a *karana*, he was married to a *pāraśavī* daughter of the king Devaka:

atha pāraśavīm kanyām devakasya mahīpateḥ

rūpayauvanasaṁpannām sa śuśrāvāpagasutaḥ

tatas tu varayitvā tām ānāyya puruṣarṣabhaḥ

*vivāhaṁ kārayām āsa vidurasya mahāmateḥ*¹¹²

[King Devaka had a *pāraśavī* daughter of perfect beauty and youth. He (Bhīṣma) sued for her, had her brought, and married her to the wise Vidura].

It is baffling why the editors of the critical edition chose the verse containing the term *karana* instead of the one that mentions *pāraśava*. A few important points emerge from the above verses. These are:

¹¹¹ He says – *karanaṭvācca ety apapāṭhaḥ* - literally meaning “the term *karanaṭvācca* is a misreading”.

¹¹² Mbh. 1.106.12-13

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1. The *varṇa pāraśava*¹¹³ for Vidura fits in with the definition of the law-codes¹¹⁴;
2. the commentator Nilakaṅṭha, whom the editors of the critical edition acknowledge, insists on the application of the term *pāraśava* in place of *karaṇa*; and,
3. that Vidura was married to a *pāraśavī* girl of royal origin, which emphasises ‘equity of *varṇa*’ as an essential prerequisite of marriage.

Thus, it seems that the term *karaṇa* was indeed a misreading, as suggested by Nilakaṅṭha, the commentator.

The next term, *kṣattā*, is the one by which Vidura has most often been addressed. Other similar *varṇasaṁkaras* in the text¹¹⁵ have not been addressed by this term. Thus one is led to believe that the term refers to Vidura’s personal *varṇasaṁkara* identity. However, we seen that Vidura was not a *kṣattā* but a *pāraśava* by *varṇa*. The term *kṣattā*

¹¹³ The child of a *brāhmaṇa* father and a *śūdra* mother.

¹¹⁴ The *Gautama dharma-sūtra*, the *Nārada smṛti* and the *Mānava dharma-śāstra*, all speaks of the child of a *brāhmaṇa* father and a *śūdra* mother as being a *pāraśava* and we can see that this particular parental combination fits in quite well with the parental combination enjoyed by Vidura.

¹¹⁵ For example, the character Yuyutsu was a *varṇasaṁkara* with a *dāsī* as his mother and Dhṛtarāṣṭra as his father. Though he had the same maternal identity as that of Vidura, he was never called *kṣattā*.

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cannot be considered as an interpolation either, as it has been included in both the critical and the non-critical editions of the *Mahābhārata* by the respective editors. Therefore, the term deserves a closer look.

In the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* of Monier Williams, the primary meaning of this term has been given as “one who cuts or carves or distributes anything”. Amongst the other meanings of the term there are, “the son of a female slave”¹¹⁶, “an attendant”, “a door-keeper”, “a charioteer” or “a coachman”. The primary meaning does not apply here, for Vidura was neither a carpenter nor was the term *kṣattā* denotes an occupational status here. The term definitely refers to the *varṇa* status of Vidura.

Buitenen translated this term as ‘steward’ in his translation of the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*. The word ‘steward’ normally refers to a person whose position is just above the slaves and below the family members. Calling Vidura a ‘steward’ would therefore be inappropriate. It seems that Buitenen took the meaning of the term *kṣattā* as ‘an attendant’, as given in the Monier Williams dictionary. It is true

¹¹⁶ This meaning of the term seems to have been given in the dictionary as an afterthought and to accommodate this term’s relation with Vidura. We find no etymological detail in the dictionary regarding this particular meaning – ‘the son of a female slave’. The dictionary mentions the same meaning and then adds “(hence) N. of Vidura (as the son of the celebrated Vyāsa by a female slave) MBh. i, 7381 ; iii, 246 BhP. iii, 1, 1-3”. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, by Monier Williams, Pg. 326.

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that Vidura often serves as ‘an attendant’ to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, but that can never suggest his position as ‘an attendant’ in the royal family. The servings of Vidura to Dhṛtarāṣṭra were not a sign of Vidura’s low position in the family, but were a sign of him showing respect to his elder brother. We can see throughout the whole text that Nakula and Sahadeva were playing the same role to their elder brother Yudhiṣṭhira, among the Pāṇḍavas; and Nakula and Sahadeva were no ‘steward’. Thus we can see that the term *kṣattā* can not be translated as ‘steward’ in Vidura’s context here.

When we look at the usage of this term in the text, we can never be sure if the term was used in a derogatory sense. Both Duryodhana and Yudhiṣṭhira used this term to refer to Vidura. Apart from the above two examples we also see that persons whose socio-political status were definitely lower than that of Vidura, used to address him with the term *kṣattā*, such as by the doorkeeper¹¹⁷ of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

It seems therefore that the term came to be identified with Vidura and referred only to him. The reason for this is unknown. However, it is likely that the term, though it denotes a specific *varnasamkara* identity, was taken to represent the mixed-caste identity of Vidura and was preferred to his *varṇa – pāraśava*.

¹¹⁷ Mbh. 5.33.6.

Conclusion:

Thus we can see that the character of Vidura in the text of the *Mahābhārata* reveals not so much about a *varṇasamkara* character but about a character who was revered by all. The *varṇasamkara* identity of Vidura never comes up along the storyline, except only once, when he was denied the throne. Apart from that one off incident, Vidura was seen as revered by all kind of characters in the narrative; be it a *dharma*-abiding character or otherwise. That he was included in the family of the Kurūs is clear by several statements made to him or about him by different characters, as well as by the narrator. That he was respected by all notwithstanding his *varṇa* status gets clear when Duryodhana touches his feet after completion of a *yajña*¹¹⁸.

The text never suggests any kind of ill-treatment meted out by Vidura following his *varṇasamkara* identity. Nowhere in the text can we find anything done to or by Vidura which connects his *varṇasamkara* identity to the law-codes. In other words, Vidura never faces anything from the society, which should have been faced by him following the

¹¹⁸ See footnote no. 103 of this chapter.

Understanding The *Varnasamkara*: A Study Of Vidura.

law-codes' dictums, being a *varnasamkara* character in the text. He enjoyed a post in the royal court, was considered a member of the royal kin-group and was revered by one and all; none denotes him as a *varnasamkara*.

What it definitely suggests is uncertainty regarding the precise *varna* identity of the mixed-castes, and this was true even of a character who was recognised as a member of the royal household and an office-holder of the royal court. It is difficult to decide whether Vidura was an atypical example, or this fluidity of *varna* status was the norm for all *varnasamkaras*.

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Table to Chapter 3.

1. *Sambodhanas* to Vidura.

Sambodhanas to Vidura:

Ādiparva

<u>No.</u>	<u>Addressed As:</u>	<u>Addressed By:</u>	<u>Verse/s:</u>	<u>Original Text:</u>
1.	Illustrious Man Child, Mindful of Dharma, Most Sagacious Man.	Vyāsa	1.100.26	<i>ayaṃ ca te śubhe garbhaḥ śrīmān udaram āgataḥ dharmātmā bhavitā loke sarvabuddhimatām varaḥ</i>
2.	Immeasurably Sage.	Vaiśampāyana	1.100.28	<i>mahātmanaḥ</i>
3.	Most Sagacious.	Bhīṣma	1.103.7	<i>dhīmatām vara</i>
4.	Scion of the Kurus.	Vaiśampāyana	1.106.14	<i>kurunandanaḥ</i>
5.	Vidura the Steward.	Pāṇdu	1.110.23	<i>kṣattā</i>
6.	– Do –	Vaiśampāyana	1.117.13	<i>kṣattā</i>
7.	Steward, Law-Loving.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	1.124.7	<i>kṣattā, dharmavatsala</i>
8.	Steward.	– Do –	1.125.15	<i>kṣattā</i>
9.	– Do –	Kuntī	1.133.26	<i>kṣattā</i>
10.	Wise.	Yudhiṣṭhira	1.134.16	<i>mahābuddhiḥ</i>
11.	Sage.	– Do –	1.135.7	<i>suhṛdam</i>
12.	Steward.	– Do –	1.135.15	<i>kṣattā</i>
13.	– Do –	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	1.192.23	<i>kṣattā</i>
14.	– Do –	– Do –	1.198.4	<i>kṣattā</i>
15.	Bhārata.	– Do –	– Do –	<i>bhārata</i>
16.	Illustrious.	– Do –	1.198.6	<i>mahādyute</i>
17.	Sagacious, My Lord.	Drupada	1.199.1	<i>mahāprajñā, vibho</i>

Sabhāparva

<u>No.</u>	<u>Addressed As:</u>	<u>Addressed By:</u>	<u>Verse/s:</u>	<u>Original Text:</u>
18.	Wise Councillor, Steward.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	2.45.41	<i>mantrī mahāprājñah, kṣattā</i>
19.	Steward.	Duryodhana	2.45.43	<i>kṣattā</i>
20.	– Do –	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	2.45.53	<i>kṣattā</i>
21.	Great Sage, First Sage of the Kurus.	– Do –	2.46.11	<i>medhāvī, kurūṇām pravaro</i>
22.	Great Spirited.	– Do –	2.51.5	<i>mahātmanah</i>
23.	First Councillor.	Vaiśampāyana	2.51.20	<i>mantrimukhyam</i>
24.	Steward.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	2.51.25	<i>kṣattā</i>
25.	– Do –	Yudhiṣṭhira	2.52.5	<i>kṣattā</i>
26.	– Do –	– Do –	2.52.10	<i>kṣattā</i>
27.	Sage.	– Do –	2.52.15	<i>kave</i>
28.	Steward.	Duryodhana	2.57.3	<i>kṣattā</i>
29.	– Do –	– Do –	2.57.4	<i>kṣattā</i>
30.	– Do –	– Do –	2.57.7	<i>kṣattā</i>
31.	– Do –	– Do –	2.57.12	<i>kṣattā</i>
32.	– Do –	– Do –	2.59.1	<i>kṣattā</i>
33.	– Do –	– Do –	2.60.1	<i>kṣattā</i>
34.	Sagacious	Vikarna	2.61.13	<i>mahāmatih</i>
35.	Sagacious, Councillor of Kurus.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	2.65.13	<i>dhīmān, kuravo...mantrī</i>
36.	Wise Steward.	Gāndhāri	2.66.29	<i>kṣattā mahāmati</i>
37.	Steward.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	2.71.2	<i>kṣattā</i>
38.	– Do –	– Do –	2.71.46	<i>kṣattā</i>
39.	Sagacious.	– Do –	2.72.27	<i>mahāprājño</i>
40.	Steward.	– Do –	2.72.36	<i>kṣattā</i>

Āraṇyakaparva

<u>No.</u>	<u>Addressed As:</u>	<u>Addressed By:</u>	<u>Verse/s:</u>	<u>Original Text:</u>
41.	Steward.	Yudhiṣṭhira	3.6.7	<i>kṣattā</i>
42.	Ājamīdha.	Vaiśampāyana	3.6.10	<i>ājamīdha</i>
43.	God of Law Incarnate, Friend, Law-Wise Brother, Sagacious Man, Sage.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	3.7.4-10	<i>sākṣād dharmā ivāparaḥ, suhṛt, dharmajñam mama bhrātā, paramabuddhimān, prājña</i>
44.	Steward, Who Brings Honour.	Samjaya	3.7.15-16	<i>kṣattā, mānada</i>
45.	Wise in the Law, Sans Blame.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	3.7.18	<i>dharmajña, anagha</i>
46.	Councillor.	Duryodhana ¹	3.8.3	<i>mantrī</i>
47.	Wise.	Vyāsa	3.9.6	<i>prājña</i>
48.	Sagacious.	– Do –	3.10.20	<i>mahāprājñaḥ</i>
49.	Steward.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	3.12.1	<i>kṣattā</i>
50.	– Do –	Yudhiṣṭhira	3.30.45	<i>kṣattā</i>
51.	– Do –	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	3.48.41	<i>kṣattā</i>
52.	– Do –	– Do –	3.242.20	<i>kṣattā</i>
53.	Portion of Me.	Dharma (The God)	3.298.21	<i>mamāṃśabhāk</i>

¹ In the same section, Duḥśāsana (brother of Duryodhana) addresses Śakuni as uncle – *mātula*. (3.8.11)

Virāṭaparva

<u>No.</u>	<u>Addressed As:</u>	<u>Addressed By:</u>	<u>Verse/s:</u>	<u>Original Text:</u>
54.	Sagacious	Yudhiṣṭhira	4.4.45	<i>mahāmati</i>

Udyogaparva

No.	Addressed As:	Addressed By:	Verse/s:	Original Text:
55.	Most Trustworthy.	Yudhiṣṭhira	5.26.11	<i>āptama</i>
56.	Learned and Eloquent, Wise of Kurus, Virtuous.	– Do –	5.26.12	<i>bahuśrutam vāgminam, kurunām medhāvinam, śīlavantam</i>
57.	Steward.	Kṛṣṇa	5.29.34	<i>kṣattā</i>
58.	Farsighted, Plumbless of Spirit.	Yudhiṣṭhira ²	5.30.29	<i>dīrghadarśī, agādhabuddhi</i>
59.	Councillor of Kurus.	– Do –	5.31.11	<i>kurūṇām mantradhāriṇam</i>
60.	Sage.	Messenger of Dhṛtarāṣṭra	5.33.2	<i>mahāprājña</i>
61.	Sagacious, Farsighted.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	5.33.5	<i>mahāprājña, dīrghadarśī</i>
62.	Steward.	Doorkeeper of Dhṛtarāṣṭra	5.33.6	<i>kṣattā</i>
63.	“Only One Deemed Wise in This Lineage of Royal Seers”.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	5.33.15	<i>asmin rājarṣivamṣe hi tvam ekaḥ prājñasammatatḥ</i>
64.	My Friend, Noble of Heart.	– Do –	5.34.1-2	<i>tāta, praśādhi</i>
65.	Sage.	– Do –	5.34.3	<i>manṣitam</i>
66.	– Do –	– Do –	5.35.1	<i>mahābuddhe</i>
67.	– Do –	– Do –	5.36.48	<i>mahāmate</i>
68.	Friend.	– Do –	5.40.28	<i>saumya</i>
69.	Sagacious.	Samjaya	5.47.103	<i>dhītmān</i>
70.	– Do –	Kṛṣṇa	5.71.11	<i>dhīmatatḥ</i>
71.	Sagacious, Chief Councillor of Kurus.	Yudhiṣṭhira	5.81.48	<i>viduram ca mahāprājñam kurūṇām mantradhāriṇam</i>
72.	Sagacious.	Paraśurāma	5.81.70	<i>mahāmatih</i>
73.	Steward, Law-Wise.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	5.84.1/5	<i>kṣattā, dharmajña</i>

² In the same section, Yudhiṣṭhira also addresses Vidura as his loyal ally, teacher, servant, friend and advisor – *bhakta, guru, bhṛtya, suhṛt* and *mantrī*. (5.30.29)

No.	Addressed As:	Addressed By:	Verse/s:	Original Text:
74.	Steward.	Kṛṣṇa	5.89.32	<i>kṣattā</i>
75.	– Do –	– Do –	5.91.4	<i>kṣattā</i>
76.	– Do –	– Do –	5.91.8	<i>kṣattā</i>
77.	Sagacious.	– Do –	5.122.14	<i>mahāmate</i>
78.	– Do –	Bhīṣma	5.123.7	<i>dhtmataḥ</i>
79.	My Friend.	Dhṛtarāṣṭra	5.127.2	<i>tāta</i>
80.	Great Spirited.	Droṇa ³	5.146.11	<i>mahātmanā</i>
81.	True Spoken, Law-Wise.	Kṛṣṇa	5.146.17	<i>vyājahāra, satyasamgarah</i>
82.	Farsighted.	Gāndhārī	5.146.30	<i>dīrghadarśī</i>
83.	Steward.	– Do –	5.146.31	<i>kṣattā</i>

³ In this section Droṇa discusses the happenings during the exile of Pāṇḍu. Here he says that the kingdom was left by Pāṇḍu to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura, and duties were divided between them and Bhīṣma as well. Vidura looked after the generation of revenue, gifts, supervision of the servants and the upkeep of all. Bhīṣma was in charge of war and peace and looked after the king. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, on the other hand, sat on the Lion throne –

05146008a *visṛjya dhṛtarāṣṭrāya rājyaṃ sa vidurāya ca*
05146008c *cacāra pṛthivīm pāṇḍuḥ sarvām parapuramjayah*
05146009a *kośasamjanane dāne bhṛtyānām cānvavekṣaṇe*
05146009c *bharaṇe caiva sarvasya viduraḥ satyasamgarah*
05146010a *saṃdhivigrahasamyukto rājñah saṃvāhanakriyāḥ*
05146010c *avaikṣata mahātejā bhīṣmah parapuramjayah*
05146011a *siṃhāsanaṣṭho nṛpatir dhṛtarāṣṭro mahābalaḥ*
05146011c *anvāsyamānaḥ satataṃ vidureṇa mahātmanā*

Conclusion

In this dissertation we have tried to focus on the theoretical as well as on the practical aspects of the concept of *varṇasamkara*. We have seen that the theoretical side of the topic presents a well-knit picture, through the law-codes which we chose for the study of the prescriptive guidelines of the concept of *varṇasamkara*. However, we have also noticed certain contradictions among the law-codes while dealing with the subject, although they are absolutely unanimous regarding the purity of *varṇa* and marriage norms.

When we looked at the popular literature, such as the *Mahābhārata*, we noticed that the social situation was not as rigid as the law-codes would have us believe. Both the chapters on the birth-myths and on the *varṇasamkara* character of Vidura reveal that the *varṇa* regulations were not very rigorously followed. This mismatch of information in the two categories of sources, points to an ambiguity in the social structure, which demands more intensive study.

In the first chapter we looked at the theoretical aspect of the question of *varṇasamkara*. Here we noticed that though the law-codes occasionally presented contradictory views, they were

Conclusion.

all equally vociferous in condemning it as an undesirable entity. It seems that they were saying, 'we do not want it to happen, but if it has to happen, it should happen this way'. We also observe that with the passage of time, the law-codes became more and more concerned with this question and started to look at it more purposefully. This is clear from the manner in which they name the *varṇasaṁkaras*, which gradually shifts from the regional to occupational names. The later law-codes are full of *varṇasaṁkara* categories in the secondary list, with almost no change in the primary one. They fill up the slots, where the parents are already *varṇasaṁkaras*, by following the primary list. This suggests that in reality the *varṇasaṁkaras* were not coming out of different *varṇa* compositions but were added from outside into the brahmanical arena. Thus their theoretical origin became more and more hazy in the accounts of the law-codes.

Our second chapter also proves the point that the purity of *varṇa* was not such an important a factor while procuring of child, as it was claimed to be in the law-codes. The *ādīparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* remains quiet about the ambiguity of *varṇa* status of the child born of parents belonging to different *varṇas*. The children seemed to automatically inherit the *varṇa* of the father. Only once the issue of *varṇa*

Conclusion.

ambiguity of such a child was raised by the groom¹, which was promptly pushed aside by Śukrācārya, the father of the bride and a great seer. The fact that there is only a single instance of a discussion on the norms of *varṇasaṁkara* in the *ādi-parvan*, leads us to believe that the transgressions of *varṇa* norms was not such an unusual occurrence in the contemporary society.

In the third chapter we looked at a specific *varṇasaṁkara* character to see if he was subjected to any kind of special treatment for his mixed-caste identity. We selected Vidura as a case study and analysed his relation with the other characters in the narrative. For this we specially looked at the different kind of *sambodhanas* used for him. We did not come across any trace of maltreatment for his being a *varṇasaṁkara*. We saw that the nature of relationship that Vidura shared with the rest of the characters in the *Mahābhārata* was determined by circumstances rather than the *varṇa* status of Vidura. He received his due respect from all, including the non-virtuous Duryodhana, with whom he otherwise shared a strained relationship.

Thus it seems that *varṇasaṁkara* was a social reality and members of the mixed-castes were neither rare nor shunned, not so much an integral part of the brahmanical social forum, as it

¹ See the footnotes 25 to 28 in the 2nd Chapter, and the relevant pages.

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has been made out to be in the prescriptive texts. The exact position of *varṇasaṁkara* in brahmanical society is not clear, but it can be said with a fair degree of certainty that the *varṇasaṁkaras* like the *niṣādas* and the *cāṇḍālas* definitely did not owe their origin to the mixture of *varṇas* but to the inclusive character of the brahmanical society.

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