

Traditional Taxonomy of Varna -Jati and Kula

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(Note: The author does not claim that this paper is dealing exhaustively on the problem touched upon here and as it merits. There are many issues that need to be addressed. Eventually the author plans to develop these ideas and pointers to deliver a fuller research monograph.)

Introduction: Varna-Jati-Kula are three technical concept- words used in 'Identity debates' related to individuals and communities in vedic traditions. The connotations from these words, used in the context of social identity debate have to be kept clear from the connotations of the same words in spiritual identity context. The social identity of individuals and communities per Vedic value-paradigm is deliberated in the series of works called Dharma-Shastra and Artha-Shastra. The spiritual identity of individuals and communities per Vedic value-paradigm is deliberated in the series of works called Darshana-Shastra and Yoga-Shastra.

This clarity on the right discipline to be referred for specific identity based guidance, was dismantled by the colonial rulers during 17th century and meddled purposively in governing India. Four critical shifts can be noticed in this operation. (1) Making the sacred texts to be read as profane historic literature (*- invasion and sacrilege of the sacred*). Vedas are regarded and treated as historic tribal literature. (2) Treating 'Dharma-Value' based social practices as 'Religious practices' in the eye of the judicial and social governance. (*Paradigm shift in understanding Dharma as Religion*) (3) Reconstructing traditional literature expounding social identities built around Dharma-practice as socio-economic /human rights injustice perpetrated by priestly class for power and pecuniary gains. (*Social discontentment building for destroying native traditions, breaking the communities and introduce new found religions as panacea for all social evils*). (4) Distortions of the tools and technicalities of language used for proper understanding of the primary resources. (*Dismantling the Methodology of traditional education and validation*). These are recognized in the modeling of Samskrutham – the spiritual language as historical classical alien language of India, sourced to Biblical resources; the modified name is Sanskrit; *Indology, linguistics takes over the domains and authority of traditional disciplines - Vyakarana, Kosha, Nirukta, Tarka, paribahsha. (Monier Williams dictionary becomes the anchor book for understanding the traditional texts).*

Varna, Jati, Kula are three, traditional- technical-concepts from Vedic textual resources. These words carry a three thousand plus years of deliberation, across three hundred and more Dharma shastra works in the history of *Bharath* that is now known as India. The pluralistic understanding of these words continues to shape and steer the social, geo-political, cultural, historic and spiritual identities of sanatana-dharma practicing communities accepting *Vedas* (and allied resources like *Bhagavad-Gita*) as scriptures. The colonial administration in India, (post 1700 CE), was instrumental in giving a new coloration and preferred meanings for these technical words, discarding the guidance in traditional resources. The colonial flavor of meanings so introduced was used for judicial and administrative governance in the beginning. Eventually the distortions were introduced in to education and academia. The consequence of this change has resulted in a devastating situation with multi-dimensional impacts: (i) A total distorted presentation of *Identity* from all perspectives - *social, spiritual, individual, religious, historical, cultural-* in relation to vedic sanatana dharma practices (ii) inaccurate and inappropriate portrayal of history, language, practices of religion and spirituality (iii) Indecent substitution of original concepts in traditions by alien prejudicial models and thought processes, resulting in

damaging the harmony-pride of inheritance of a tradition amongst dharma-practice identity 'Hindu' communities (iv) conjectural construction of languages of primary resources of native tradition with total disregard to the available evidence and rules of language interpretation.

The net result of India continuing to live with this historic distortion, is an explosive confusion and crisis of current period in anchoring the traditional social identity of individuals, families and communities affiliated with practices of sanatana-Dharma per vedic traditions.

The traditional Indian society up to 17th century, had no more than 200 social identity groupings evolved over several centuries,(even if marked as 'Caste'). Today, the same communities carry an official list of around 6000 social identity groupings, a three hundred percent explosion! This is officially recognized and enumerated in the documents of post Independence India. This list is still expanding according to government of India. It is in this background, the following questions become relevant:

- What is the model of identity deliberation per vedic traditions? How were these lived in Bharath that is India?
- What are the specificity of factors used for social identity of individuals, families and communities in governance following veda-Dharma guidance? –especially in the overlapping matters of practices having religious, cultural, economic impact?
- How justified is it to systematically efface out the native socio-cultural identity and substitute it with alien models ?
- Can Spiritual identity be a total satisfying replacement or a stand alone- universal substitute for social community identity? Where is the demarcation boundary of identities by religion, culture, nation, faith, biological parentage, rites of passage, faith and institutional affiliation? Clarity on purpose and limitation of each identity model, per veda-dharma tradition?
- How to derive a dynamic model of social identity from Dharma-Shastra traditions, which seem to have their deliberations focused on a narrow segment of India (Aryavarta) and a specific model of 'Varna-Ashrama' compliant communities governed by a benevolent King ? What is *Raja-Dharma* and *Praja-Dharma* in the global scenario according to Dharma-Shastra and Artha Sahstra ? How to address the identity issues for members in faith modeled communities out of Dharma-shastra paradigm using Varna-Ashrama tags? What is the guidance on rites of passage and life style? Dharma-practice and Social justice seem to be at logger heads?
- How relevant is Dharma shastra deliberation in India as a nation which has a shifted its base of governance from 'Dharma to Religion'? What is the guidance on balancing the law of the land and laws of spiritual welfare? Reconciling Dharma –Gods- Prayers, leaders and institutions of religion. These have very large impact on economies and human relations centered around the teachings of scriptures and maintained by religious institutions /leadership.
- How to address the global social identity issue / generally identified as challenge of 'Hindu Identity' per traditional guidelines?
- How to present the cultural history and traditionsⁱ through education to the next generations?

There could be many related issues and action points for deliberation here.

Genesis and anchoring of the Problem: For the purpose of this paper, the primary resource taken is Chapter 2 of the work 'History of DharmaShastra' (1941), an exclusive write up of 85 pages, quoting source

references. This follows the colonial line of thought used by Monier Williams in the publication of Sanskrit – English Dictionary by Monier Williams during 1851. The erroneous conceptual equation of varna = jati =caste /race is provided by the dictionary. This equation has two serious errors - (a) error by inaccurate vocabulary from target language (*anuvada –dosha*) (b) use of incorrect paradigm in context construction and technicality of the concept (*paribhasha dosha*). This error takes almost a hundred years to percolate to the psyche of the scholars of native tradition. The challenge of defining the social identity of veda-dharma following communities is pitched to the well known scholars of tradition in Maharashtra. It may be noted here that Maharashtra was the place from where the work ‘Dharma-Sindhu’(- by Kashinatha Upadhyaya) – emerged. This is the last update of Dharmashastra, currently followed widely in South Indian traditional circles.

The ‘almost legitimizing’ⁱⁱ of the error in colonial thought process is done by a scholar of native tradition, before the end of a century. The writings of PV Kane, in the pre-independence period of India, and from Maharashtra traditional base, shapes the future trends in the formation of Indian legislation and constitution. The seeds of error in wrongfully accommodating colonial thought on the core tradition leads to a series of ‘Religion-Caste’ based deliberations in administration of Indian communities. The social dynamics and political activism generate legislative outcomes addressing the ‘Caste-Identity’ issue as a national challenge in India, ‘Hindu Identity’ and ‘Human Rights issues’ on global platforms.

PV Kane’s work ‘almost legitimizes’ the stand of colonial approach by organizing and aligning data from dharmashastra works and other primary resources. Mahamahopadhyaya P. V. Kane, the author of this work was well acquainted with almost all available works of Dharma-Shastra (in original text) across India, and a practitioner of ‘brahminical tradition’ and a legal professional. His writings on the topic of ‘varna’- ‘jati / kula’ identity is a documentation of the period specific understanding of the traditional resources, in the circles of tradition, society, communities, judicial and administrative governance of colonial rulers. Select statements from this work are placed below, and serve as a reference for further deliberation. The literal dictionary meaning of these words from the Sanskrit-English dictionary of Monier Williams is to be noted along with this, before further analysis.

Reviewing Varna –Jati –Kula –word meaning by Monier Williams and traditional concepts :

Monier Williams Sanskrit –English Dictionary (-Compiled-Published: 1851/ 1899) provides a set of known traditional usage, usage context and meaningsⁱⁱⁱ for these words. The dictionary entry shows that each word has a plurality of meanings and a long history of usage in multiple contexts. When a plurality of meanings are provided, and lee way for context construction is given, it is easy for tweaking a given text to fit a preferred view. This seems to be precisely the strategy used to subvert the Samskrutham Traditional base of understanding vedic resources like Dharma Sahstras, vedangas and upa-vedas. The ‘integrity of language, texts, traditions, purpose and practice were dismantled part by part. The space so created was filled with colonial model thinking on religion, caste and history, meeting the vantage position of colonial rulers and administrators. It may be of interest to explore the laws passed by British authorities and judicial deliberations on Indian community related disputes^{iv}. [- The Sharada Act of 1929 deals with issue of Hindu marriage. Kayastha (= shudra) related reports in Indian Antiquary for 1939 –vol 1 ; ILR reports 51- Cal. 488]

Traditional understanding of the literal meaning of the words: In the traditional schools, the meaning, relevant for ‘identity’ need would be as follows. Varna is the description tag - a unique entity

identifier, forming basis for a jati. Jati is the genus which gives unique identity to an entity. Kula is the group having entities with an inherent jati.

These are not concoctions or current period constructions for a justification! These deliberations have concurrently existed in the illustrations in the resource works of tradition. Serious deliberations with technically precise language is used in debates amongst the schools of *nyaya*, *vaisheshika*, *dharma-shastra*, *vedanga* schools, *darshana* shastras. The language –grammar works (*Vyakarana*) and language-technicalities works (*paribhasha*) have full clarity on these concepts well documented. These works date back to 1000 BC or earlier! and have a continuing living tradition, even to this date.

Varna = Unique descriptor tags, unique features which can be used for identification of individual entity for a specific identity. Attribute, Trait, Feature. Example: An apple may have several unique descriptor tags- color, shape, taste, size, weight, ripeness. The ‘appleness / genus of apple’ can be a consolidated descriptor which may include a plurality of other ‘varna-tags’ like taste, size.

Jati = When individual entities with a ‘varna’ become a group, the observing mind /seer cognizes a common clause inhering in all the elements of the group. The ‘mind’ consolidates the data and ‘varna’ from what is seen. There can be one or more ‘varna’s for forming one ‘jati’. This ‘commonality which includes an integration of unique descriptors /tags’ – which permeates a group of similar items, which is transmitted as a genus from one to another, is called jati. An example can make this clear: When a cow gives birth to a calf, the calf carries not only a biological matter, but also an ‘intangible, permeating inheritance called ‘Cow –varna /cow jati’ (Samskrutham: *gotva jati*). And because of this, the calf is a member of the cow-*kula* = cow community. If one sees ten apples, a common clause quality is perceived by the seer as inhering all elements of the group. This may be named as ‘apple genus /apple jati’. If a totally new, eleventh apple is seen elsewhere, the perceiver still recognizes it as ‘apple’, even though it is new and was never seen so far. Why? How? Because, in the eleventh apple presented to the seer, the seer recognizes ‘apple genus /inherent. If an orange were added to the previous group of ten apples, the seer would perceive that new entrant entity is ‘Not an apple’; Or would perceive a ‘Fruit’ genus’ which is more foundational to apples and oranges. In this way, Jati is a ‘common inheritance – common clause’ perception’ by the user in a given group. Knowledge of ‘Varna’ tag plays an important role in this experience.

Kula = Kula is an organization of entities with ‘common jati’. Example: If a mixed bag of fruits is given, and goal is to sort out fruits of each kind and group them, then the final grouped oranges, apples, grapes represent a ‘kula’ of oranges, apples, grapes. When all of them are in one mixed bag, they belong to the ‘Fruit kula’ distinct from ‘bag of vegetables vegetable *kula*. When oranges are further graded by some specific factor like size, then the smaller group is ‘orange of smaller size –kula’.

This understanding of the technical meaning of these words in tradition is present continuously for more than three thousand years ! This clarity is used to build the ‘Identity Tags’ in specific contexts. The tag is created for a purpose. A tag, once created can be used in several contexts and domains with a clarity of understanding and purpose.

Coming specifically to the usages like ‘Brahmana Varna’, Brahmana Jati, Brahmana Kula’, what is target denoted by such usages depends upon the meaning associated with the word ‘Brahmana’ in this case. The meaning and explanation of the word ‘Brahmana’ may not be the same across different contexts; much

less with a social relevance and focus on social identity issue! Even in a historic context. If the researcher/ interpreter overlooks these criticalities, the outcome would be disastrous and damaging the for the understanding of the traditions-texts-practices.

This specificity of context-construction is the overlooked area and mother source of confusion in current period understanding of the traditions. Unless the primary usage context of the resource texts and technical terms are firmed, the total import of the text and relevance of practices cannot be anchored. Errors made at this point leads to the series of serious faults. An error of a bigger magnitude here would be to make a change / different backdrop for the source work itself! This undercuts the value of the text-tradition-practice link. This is the way by which meaning of the primary resource text can be manipulated for motive! An example follows.

Which branch of Vedic traditional study addresses social identity of dharma practicing communities? How ? by what factors? :

The right paradigm of constructing the identity issues of multiple layers, in a given context needs to be properly constructed: Each aspect of varna-jati-kula guidance in different works find their right place in this overall schema and give a social identity ' Sanatana-Veda-Dharma-Practitioner /Varna-Ashrami'. When there is a mix of Dharma-Practitioners with theistic and non-theistic belief system, the larger group is called 'Prajaa /Manava/ Brahma-Putra', currently identified as 'Hindu'. The theistic dharma practitioners get their guidance from dharma shastras. The non-theistic teams follow the Darshana Shastras (Avaidika darsanas) /Samanya dharma guidance.

For Vedic documents, the guidance model is for pursuit of individual spiritual identities with the goal of Dharma-Practice / Balance of wealth and welfare / Salvation/Moksha/ Paramartha. Vedanta schools /Darshana schools provide guidance here.

Gita model of Varna-jati-kula guidance is for individuals within the context of family traditions, where it is possible to fix the guna-karma-svabhava issues with a reasonable clarity; and provide guidance on 'Triguna' model, appropriate yoga suitable for life style.

The Puranas and epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata provide guidance of families -communities / kula , with a focus on human relations, ethics.

Dharma-Shastra guidance is for rites of passage and religiosity practice within a context and life style, currently called as 'religious communities', accommodative of a number of Gods and goddesses.

Artha-Shastra is the guidance for state administration to ensure that institutions of communities of dharma-practice are properly accommodated and maintained in state.

This clarity helps us to understand how and where to ask for questions on dynamics of 'social identity' according to vedic traditions. There is no conflict if one carries multiple varna-Jati-kula- identities ! When traditional schools accommodate a ' Vashistha' as a 'Brahmana –Rishi', despite his wife 'Arundhati' coming from a 'low social caste, and children of Vashistha as brahmanas, where is the difficulty in drawing a current period rule in the context of inter-community marriages? When traditional schools provide unique terms like '*jati brahmana –karma brahmana – brahmajnanena brahmana*' :: Brahman by birth, by practice and profession – by realization of the Supreme Divinity', why are some die-hards desiring to fit only one

understanding of 'Brahman varna' – as by birth only'? These issues are seriously deliberated in Dharma-Shastra technicalities under the headings like : *Prayaschitta* –expiation, *Jatytkarsha Jatyapakarasha* – elevation in Varna and Jati over generations , *Samskaras* – rites of passage, *Tapas* – Penance.

How traditional understanding is vitiated ? Schema or Strategy or Motive or Lesser Scholarship?

The key issue is about < Construction of Context, backdrop and Purpose of a resource Text –Divergent view points of traditional schools and colonial /modern schools.> The meaning of what a given textual resource means changes by (a) change in the construction of context (b) change in the backdrop and visualized purpose of the text. There are key texts, text-passages and paradigms of interpretation over which this divergence of views needs to be carefully considered. They are as follows, in relation to 'Vedas':

	Traditional Schools Understanding		Colonial /Modern Schools
Vedas (- This covers all Vedas).	Nature of Document	Mystic	Historic
	Language	Samskrutham /Chandas	PIE /Vedic language / historic
	Rule book for interpretation	Vedanga Vyakarana + Other traditional resources	PIE languages of past
	Geo-Temporal anchor /Historicity	Not Applicable. Vedas are not bound by any specific community, person, historic land	Land history is constructed as Migration of Aryans to Bharath .
	Sacredness	Transcendental and Sacred	Only a matter of belief
	Traditional Application	For welfare, with a Trust in the efficacy / science of Vedas (?)	Appreciation of past, useful for arts and culture, entertainment.
	Traditional - Living	A continuity of timeless ageless practice / <i>sampradaya parampara</i>	Caught in the past, shackles of past
	Purpose	Dharma-Practice	Knowledge of Historic past culture, religion, language, values inheritance
	Document Structure	Integral	Amorphous, multi layered, multiple authors.
	Goal	Guidance on Dharma, Ultimate Salvation – <i>Moksha, Self-Realization</i>	
	Access	Graded , through rites of passage.	
	Social relevance	For use of spiritual guidance Institutions to advise the seekers of mystic ; Guidance on Dharma – Practice ; Connecting to past traditions.Community integration, Grroming Community Spirituality through religiosity	Historic. Tribal, Religious, Used as a tool in the hands of privileged sacerdotal priests to keep control on society and retain power in the name of scriptural sanctions
	Spiritual Relevance	Guidance for Moksha – qualified with tags: Self realization, Realization of God /Supreme Divinity, Control over nature, Freedom from several causes of suffering, Ultimate Freedom from cycles of birth and death.	Philosophical deliberations, at best.

The social identity of communities in Bharath has been built around traditional and specific understanding of Vedas over centuries. This was challenged in the colonial frame of interpretation of Vedas as shown above. Nay, colonial rulers enforced, with all the might at their command, this view point over the traditional understanding through the channels of administration, judiciary and education channels. This understanding has shaped a new dimension of struggle in Bharath, over the last three hundred years. In post independence India, the colonial view point has found new channels for its fast expansion.

Context and meaning misconstructions of the words under the lens:

Let us take the most often quoted vedic resource Purusha Sukta (Rigveda X-90) and see how preferential context and meaning constructions are made for the word 'Varna'! The reference for discussion is about the origination of the four varna's from the cosmic being; often used to justify / critique the superiority – inferiority relation between 'dharma practicing communities'.

The vedic text : ' brAhmaNosya mukhamAsIt, bAhU rAjanyaH krutaH, UrU tadaysa vaishyaH, padbhyAM shUdro ajayata

The position of tradition on what veda is important to know at the outset: Veda is eternal; Veda is a revelation which is time-space transcendent. Veda is non-human vision-document. There is no question of a 'deliberation' such as 'during vedic times' constructing a geo-temporal earth anchored historic time-community of some rulers and kings performing a 'human-sacrifice' ! The language of veda is to be interpreted sacrosanct per rules of *vedanga vyakarana*. The *shrouta* and *gruhy* sutras provide how to use veda for a target benefit and in a context. Veda is unalterable by accent, sequence, words and integrity of its given structure. Dharma-Shastras provide the guidance on who can learn Vedas and how. Dharma Shastra also provides rules for every one with a specific way to access vedic learning and get the benefits of veda. In this backdrop, Vedas are sacrosanct, and words in veda need to be interpreted properly.

The goal of Veda is NOT deliberation on giving a 'social community identity'! The descriptive tags like brahmana, shudra, dasyu, dasa are technical concept descriptors. The words are NOT any pointers to specific individuals or communities or positions or status.

Within the documents pool of veda, the word 'Varna' is not of any fixated social community identity as it is explained these days! Purusha sukta does not use^v the word 'Varna' ! There is no pointer for calling a person as brahmana with criterion like gender, rites of passage, parentage, education, penance, achievement, profession and the like. What is given in Purusha sukta is a *Spiritual –Vision*. IF later documents use this resource for a social identity tag, it is contextualizing the scripture. The tradition of 'Dharma-Shastra' provides a guidance for 'Dharma-Practice' for each individual of community using specific factors, in a context.

The position of colonial scholars/ and teams following their argument on what veda is important to know as a contrast to the traditional view. According to this school, Veda is a historic panegyric, composed , corrected, compiled in different periods of time by different communities. There is a geo-temporal historic community anchor, a historic language for vedic compositions. Veda is 'Religion-Revelation / resource scripture' for a community to build their own social and religious power hierarchies and identities. Later scholars, distanced in time and language environment, have difficulties in grasping the original intent of the inherited texts! The later writers have used their creative ingenuity and play with language to make all the

tradition look as if it is a seamless continuity and well preserved without any mutations! The vocabulary and illustrations in Vedas are descriptors of members of social religious communities and tribes who believed in Vedas. The read through from extracts below highlight this line of presentation.

Select quotes from writings in History of Dharma Shastra – Vol.2 on ‘Varna’ :

Placed below are select quotes from the work of MM P V Kane. The reading shows very clearly how colonial view has been mounted on the core of traditional thinking. This masks the true intention and paradigms of Vedic traditions in addressing the social and spiritual guidance of individuals, families and communities. For an ordinary member of the community, the practice guidance needs to come from an authority – for Dharma or religion-socio- legal issue. Specifically in the topics related to marriage, rites of passage, and places of worship. The directives here depend on element of ‘innate trust’ and are emotionally sensitive’ in nature. The precedents set by the past generations (without getting in to details of why!) and contextual issues – sensitivities related to people involved play a major role. The actions here mold the culture and history of the community. The spokes persons and administrators connected with Dharma shastra need to be extremely careful and sensitive to these issues as they are steering the future of traditions.

The intelligent readers can draw their inference as to the deviations suffered in proper understanding of the source traditions and its historic anchors, from the extracts placed below.

(Page 11)One important question that is very much canvassed in works on dharmashastra is about the country or territory which should be called aryavarta or which was fit habitation for those who called themselves the followers of the vedic religion....

My Notes: The land identity in Rigveda, Manusmriti , the rivers , the mountains does not seem to be vast enough to cover the land identified as Bharath; and certainly not stretchable to the entire community of global nations. Does it mean that ‘Dharma-Shastra’ deliberations are limited by historicity, geographic boundaries and localized communities ?

(Page 25) The word ‘Varna’ means ‘color’ or ‘light’ in most passages of the Rigveda (eg. I.73.7, II.3.5, IX.97.15, IX.104.4, IX.105.4, X.124.7). But in some verses of the Rigveda, the word varna is associated with groups of people having a skin of a dark or fair color.

(Page 25) In Rigveda I.104.2 varna seems to be placed in opposition to dasa. These passages make it clear that the Aryas and Dasas were two opposing camps and both were designated varnas on account of the color of their skins. The tai.Brahmana I.2.6 (with reference to the Mahavrata in which there was a mock fight between a brahmana and a shudra) says ‘that the brahmana is divine varna and sudra is the asurya varna. If we can interpret the rigveda verse by the help of the Tai.Br. then in Rigveda IX.71.2, the words ‘asuryam varnam’ mean ‘sudra tribe’. There is no doubt that the word asura when applied to gods like varuna has another meaning also in the Rig. Veda. In numerous places in the Rigveda, the antagonism between the aryas and dasa or dasyus is emphasized and prayers are offered to Indra and other gods for having subdued or for subduing the dasa in favor of the Arya. ... (page 27) The foregoing shows that in the times of rigveda, there were two antagonistic camps, of the Aryas and dasa or dasyus, they differed in their color of their skins and also in worship, speech and bodily appearance. **Therefore, in the earliest period we find the word varna associated only with dasa and with arya. Though the words brahmana and kshatriya occur frequently in the Rigveda ,**

the word Varna is not used in connection with them. Even in Purusha sukta (Rigveda X.90), where the words brahmana , rajanya, vaishya, and sudra occur, the word varna is not used. **Hence one may reasonably say that the only water tight groups that are positively or expressively or expressly vouchsafed by the Rigveda are arya and dasa or dasyu.**

It is often argued that as the word brahmana denotes a caste in later literature, in the rigveda also it must be presumed to have the same meaning. But this begs the whole question. No one denies that brahmana denotes a caste in later literature. But whether it has the same sense in the rigveda must be determined on the materials furnished by the rigveda itself. It is generally conceded that the Purusha sukta is a much later hymn of the Rigveda. **In the whole of the Rigveda the words vaishya and sudra do not occur except in the Purusha sukta, though both of them occur in the Atharvaveda and very frequently in the Tai.Samhita.** Besides, we can not forget that the final redaction of the rigveda must be held to have been separated from the composition of the individual hymns by several hundred years, (If not more) and that even if it be conceded that at the time when Purusha Sukta was composed , the four varnas had been constituted and had become castes, yet the same can not be affirmed for the time of the original composition of the other hymns.

My Notes: Why then are we debating the 'Caste' issue ? Why not live by just three categories from Rigveda , which deos not even bring in the word 'Brahmana' ? ! Varna – debate has social implications in terms of :Biological heredity (Marriage / Parentage /Mother/ Birth factor),social customs of food and profession, Rites of passage, Prayer and membership-affiliation of religious institutions/communities. Inappropriate lay extension of thoughts and idea-promotions are not good models of promoting the right understanding of the traditional view.

(Page 32-33) Foot note quoting Nirukta on Rigveda : X.53.4 : This is explaining ' Panchajanah' – There are four varnas : gandharva, pitru, deva, asura. The fifth varna is called nishada by the school of Aupamanyu.

My Notes: We don't see this model flowing from Nirukta to Dharma shastra traditions. Why ? For a traditional school, it is clear that Nirukta is dealing with a 'spiritual identity' and not the 'land –locked historic identity in India'. Dharma Shastra deals with a land locked social identity debate. It is not obliged to draw on every element of identity tag in Vedas.

(Page 48) The preceding discussion renders the following propositions most probable.

(1) that in earliest times about which we have literary records, there were only two varnas. The aryas and their opponents the dasyus or dasa; that the difference between the two was based on difference of color and culture and was thus more or less racial and cultural.

(2) that the centuries before the samhita period closed that dasyus had been conquered and were given a position subservient to the aryas

(3) that **the sudars were the dasyus so subjugated and made subservient;**

(4) that the spirit of exclusiveness and pride of superiority existing among the aryas with reference to dasyus soon extended to groups among the aryas themselves.

(5) **that by the time of brahmana literature**, brahmanas (men supposed to be devoted to learning and priesthood), kshatriyas (kings, noblemen and some warriors) and vaishya's (the artisans and common people) had become **separated in to groups more or less dependent on birth** and that the brahamana had come to be regarded as superior to the kshatriyas by the fact of birth

(6) that even such low castes as chandalas and pulkasas had been evolved long before the end of the vedic period

(7) **that owing to cultural advance, division of labour arose and numerous arts and crafts had been developed and they were in process of contributing to the complexity of the system by creating numerous sub-castes based upon occupations**

(8) **that besides four varnas intermediate castes like the rathakaras had been evolved.**

(9) that there were certain non-aryan tribes which were supposed to have been originally kshatriyas but fallen later on.

The close of the vedic period is here taken as being not later than about 1000 BC. How much earlier it may be placed it is not possible to say.

My Notes: The final inference makes a traditionalist feel that three thousand years of Dharmashastra writers and Arthashastra writers were novices in understanding the challenges of social identity of veda-dharma practicing communities; ignorant or insensitive to the dynamics of society beyond ritual paradigm of vedic practice ! And it needed a colonial construction to understand what Vedas really are! **By one stroke of ' varna = jati = caste', the veda-dharma practitioners are transformed to a 'inheritors of tribal religions of obscure origin and blind followers of dictums' of a priestly class whose sole purpose was serving the interests of the ruler class and maintain the social divisiveness in the name of 'scriptural sanctions' ! So much for the glorious tradition of Spiritual, cultural past of India prior to the British rule!**

(Page 50) – Several centuries before the Christian era there were several castes. This follows not only from the Dharma-sutras but also from the ancient Buddhist works and from the meager existing fragments of the work of Megasthenes on India.

The ancient writers on dharmashastras strive very hard to account for the bewildering ramification of the caste system from the four varnas that were spoken of in the sruti (revelation). There is unanimity on the theory that the numerous castes actually found in the country arose from the unions of males of different varnas with women belonging to varnas differing from their own. .. The smriti writers had before them the hoary theory of four varnas vouched for by infallible vedic authority, but they were at the same time quite cognizant of the realities in society viz. the separate existence of numerous castes and sub-castes that had varying claims as regard to social status and that were based in popular estimation on birth alone. Therefore when one criticizes the smriti view of the derivation of numerous castes from the mixtures or confusion (samskara) of the four varnas as purely hypothetical and imaginary, the criticism is true only partially. The smriti's were composed in different parts of India at different parts of India at different times and they were meant to supply a popular want, to guide the people and to reflect the prevailing state of society and popular feeling.

My Notes: The schools of Buddhism and Jainism did not invent new models of social governance and identities. The new schools were primarily philosophical and provided social corrections for Dharma-Practice in a different model; an alternative to the *yajnika* model. Both Buddhist and Jains coming from the Kshatriya stream, live with Dharma-Shastra and Artha Shastra for social governance. The flavors of spiritual philosophical modalities is not considered as 'new Varna or Jati' in the classical works. Contra, these are considered as 'new religions' by modern schools. **The error of reading 'Dharma' as 'Religion' is the reason for such view. Varna-Jati-Kula are social classifications in Dharma model. Religion model of 'Personal God – faith anchor/ leaning to a specific philosophy does not change varna !** A Brahmana continues to be a brahmana whether the personal god of worship of Vishnu or Shiva, the philosophical leaning is advaita or dvaita. There is no dharmashastra which treats a 'smarta brahmana' as a separate varna' from 'dvaita tradition following brahmana'. Contra, the modern writers treat saivite bramins as separate religion ; the followers of Shankara school are considered as separate religion distinct from Madhva following!

(Page 57) – The ancient dharmasutras mention only a few mixed castes... All the smritis taken together hardly mention more than about one hundred castes. All the smriti's taken together hardly mention more than about one hundred castes.

My Notes: The concepts of *prayaschitta - jatyutkarsha –jatyapakarsha* - The dynamics of varna-mobility across generations and families, deliberated in great detail by Dharmashastra writers like Gautama, Manu and Yajnavalkya are not fully explored and explained. A right understanding of these concepts can put a check on the uncontrolled proliferation of casts in the name of 'varna'. More importantly, the key concepts of 'Gotra-Pravara' identity has been totally misinterpreted and as 'archaic rishi-lineages' , bad linking to DNA – genetic inheritance models and the like. Such studies need a better understading of the paradigms of vedic science deliberations. All these need proper understanding of Samskrutham –language tools and technicalities as Vedanga . Use of Sanskrit as a historical classical language tool based on a period specific grammar does not help in decoding the source texts. The easy way of dismissing this pointer is to say that these are conjectures and lame defenses for ignorance of tradition or a wily way of defending the traditional stand seeking 'divine sanction' and authority for scriptures, empowering specific priestly communities. Only unbiased research can bring out the truth here.

(Page 69)- We shall now append a list of several castes enumerated or mentioned in smriti and other dharmasastras works from about 500 BC to 1000 AD ...(page 104) – Even among comparatively late works the total number of sub-castes enumerated does not go beyond even two hundred. For example, Wilson in 'Indian castes', vol.I – pp.65-70 mentions only 134 castes with their Sanskrit and modern Marathi names as gathered from the *jativiveka*, *madhava-kalpalata*, *parashurama-pratapa* and other works.It is only in the census reports prepared at great expense by the British government after elaborate efforts and organizations that the great complexity of the caste system in modern india is laid bare to the eye.

My Notes: This note provides an anchor to frame the question: How did the Varna = jati=caste, which presumably started with a minimum of three to ten tag names and did not exceed a limit of 200 social identity groups during the 1500 years at the minimum, suddenly explode to 6000 units around 1980's and get official recognition by the government of India, yet passing on the blame over Dharma Shastras ? What is the yard stick used by Governments and Academia to explain this challenge of splintered exploding social identity of veda-dharma practicing communities?

Dharma, is a composite context. Dharma-Practice guidance is deliberated in two paradigms: Primacy of Spiritual welfare (*Paramartha*). Primacy of Worldly welfare (*Purushartha*). The idea is balancing aspirations of wealth and welfare in life style.

Use of Dharma-Practice as a factor for global Social identity based on Vedic traditions is available from Ramayana and Mahabharata resources. The opening question in Ramayana by sage Valmiki to Sage Narada sets the context and the key factors: *Konvasmin sampratam loke, gunavaan, kascha veeryavan, dharmajnascha ...* : In the current (continuing) period, who is the individual who is having the qualities of nobility, Prowess, *Dharma-Compliant Knowledge*,... The entirety of Mahabharata is a deliberation on 'Dharma-Compliant Practice'. Hinduism and communities within it are 'Dharma –Practicing' individuals and families. Bhagavad-Gita, which is the respected resource of Vedic traditions and anchor of Hinduism presents the four tags of 'Varna' as follows. In this context, the social identity of sanatana dharma compliant global citizen is called 'Dharma-Praja'. The practice guidance is called 'Praja-Dharma'; and this is provided by Dharma-Shastras. The spiritual flavor of 'Dharma-Praja' also gets a name 'Brahma-Putra', Manu's lineage. The leadership title term is 'Dharma-Raja'. The rule guidance is called 'Raja-Dharma', which is the artha-shastra tradition for Kshatriyas.

Spiritual goals are integrally blended in Dharmashastra guidance and are incorporated in to '*Samskaras*'. *Yoga, Tantra, Yajna, Devataa, Devalaya*, are different technicalities of Dharma-Samskara for specific goals. The tradition of Masters *Guru-parampara* takes care of this knowledge domain. Each technicality provides custom ways for realigning the balance of wealth and welfare (*Paramartha* and *Purushartha*) in to life style practices, with personalized guidance. There is a social and economic dimension built in to these practices, for local relevance. Marriage is an important rite of passage in Dharma-practice. The marriage format (*Ashta vidha vivaha*) does not impact the 'varna' factor by birth /parentage. The 'four fold ashrama' deliberation guidance is anchored on either side of 'Marriage and aspirations for life' (*Gruhastha/ prajaa-kaama / Vanaprastha*). Gita gives 'Chaaturvarnyam' – the grid of 'Varna' categorization by technicalities of Guna and Karma- *svabhava*'. Do we find 'birth alone as a factor for varna determination ? OR Personal God faith as a factor for 'Caste' ? This deliberation in Gita, comes in the last (18th) chapter – Moksa Sanyasa yoga, setting the context for understanding.

Varna – Grid : Bhagavdgita : The following varna-grid is based on the factors provided in Bhagavadgita. Intelligent readers need to show where is the criterion for 'birth based varna' in this document ? Those who charge traditional schools, making 'Brahmana as punching bag' for having played fraud on 'socially under privileged' should show what aspect of 'Brahmana qualities' they want to be free from, so that they can retain an 'unadulterated shudra' status' ? Conservative traditional Brahmanas need to reaffirm that they have not trespassed in to the realm of other three 'varnas' per Gita standards in their life – life style ?!

The most often quoted verse from Gita, 4-13^{vi} invoking Scriptural sanction for 'Varna' system is the following: Please note the word used in the original is 'VARNYAM'; it is not 'VARNA'. Linguistically, Varna means a descriptor. The word *chaturvarnya* means – descriptors related to four fold arrangement. There is no gradation, no hierarchy or even idea of a 'caste /race'. From the context of the Gita, the fourth chapter, titled *Jnana-Yoga*, the deliberation is about analytical model and not social regrouping of communities.

The detailing in 18th chapter (titled *Moksha Sanyasa yoga*) provides specific detailing on what this ‘Guna-Karma-Vibhaga’ means. The word ‘Guna’ refers to the technicality of the three gunas called Satva, Rajas, Tamas , which are detailed for their technicalities through 14th to seventeenth chapters of Gita text. The ‘Guna-karma / Satvika , Rajasa, Tamasa ‘ are explained clearly and with all technicality in 18th chapter itself . The ‘karma = activity /profession’ part is given in the slokas^{vii} 18-41 to 44.

Brahmana	Kshatriya	Vaishya	Shudra
<i>Shama = Control over senses, compassion</i>	<i>Shauryam=Valor</i>	<i>Krishi = Making productivity from earth to get food and wealth</i>	<i>Paricharyatmakam = Service activity related to the domains listed earlier</i>
<i>Dama = Regulation over senses, Restraint in behavior</i>	<i>Tejah = Inner potency manifestation in action</i>	<i>Go-rakhsa = Protection of wealth in the form of knowledge, Agriculture</i>	
<i>Tapah = Penance</i>	<i>Dhruatih = Determination, Firmness and clarity</i>	<i>Vanijyam = Trade, Commerce, wealth enhancement activity</i>	
<i>Shuchah = Cleanliness and Purity</i>	<i>Daakshyam = Efficiency in executive action</i>		
<i>Kshanti = Tolerance</i>	<i>Yuddhe apalaayanam = When in war, willingness to take it to the logical end and never turn back half way by discarding the endeavor</i>		
<i>Aarjavam= Honesty, Strive forwardness</i>	<i>Daanam =Charity</i>		
<i>Jnanam = Knowledge</i>	<i>Ishwarabhavah = Leadership quality</i>		
<i>Vignanam = Scientific temperament and approach</i>			
<i>Asikyam = Faith in a Supreme Divine</i>			

This shows very clearly that the traditional resources do provide multiple factors for ‘Varna’ concept construction in specific context. Dharma-Shastra is focused on a specific aspect of ‘Identity’ that is best suited for ‘rites of passage’ (Samskara) and spirituality. Artha-shastra is focused on specific aspect of ‘identity’ that is best suited for social governance. Vedas are focused on spiritual global identity. These texts and concepts do not map to the concept of ‘caste –tribe –race –profession based categorization’ models which are mounted artificially by modern writers.

Analysis - Action points : The notes above, leads us to think of the next-action points. The key challenge is to bring out the social identity of veda-dharma practicing communities in a global scenario. This also needs to address specific issues in a context specific way. There are challenges in aligning the source works, refuting the inaccurate writings, deconstructing the motivated interpretations, retaining the native community by proper re-grouping of understanding of identity factors. This work does need a concerted team with a plan and resources. The starting point could be a revisit of the 'History and understanding of DharmaShastras', starting with the writings of MM P V Kane, in the reference work of (1941) whose work has enormous information and pointers for deliberation. The related issues being : understanding the vedic documents, history of sanatana-veda-dharma practicing communities at Bharath. The greater challenge is re-writing the damaged history of dharma-practicing traditions, broadly identified as 'Hindus' at India and all over the globe. The work is cut out for a team consisting of representation of Dharmacharyas, Shaastra- Scholars, language scholars, Community representatives, legal experts on religion, national and social law, cultural historians and academicians to arrive at any meaningful further deliberate and position statement, especially for the global level. The critical need is (a) to get back to 'Upa-veda and Dharma-Shastra's' as the right paradigm and discipline-streams for deliberating social identity according to Vedic traditions, historically and as relevant for present period (b) to recognize the errors in colonial translations due to misunderstanding, motive and abuse of these technical terms (c) provide right pointers for corrective action, using source works (d) point to the right model of technical language and technicalities of language (*Samskrutham-paribhasha*) of the source works.

Conclusion: There is a critical need for Dharma-Shastra teams to come up to date and provide guidance on social identity and dharma-practices in a global scenario, beyond the previous limitations of '*Aryavarta, Varna-Ashrama Dharma, Raja rakshito desha*'. Models. Dharma –practice guidance needs to keep pace with the social dynamics and provide a continuity for traditions –Identities for the goal of wealth-welfare balance.

ⁱ There are many Laws enacted by government of India, and deliberated by the judiciary under constitutional provisions, which touch seriously upon 'Dharma -practice' and 'identities'. One such is the act called : **THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES ACT, 1993** [2nd April, 1993] - An Act to constitute a National Commission for Backward Classes other than the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental there to. This provides a guide line for caste identification in relation to 'social backwardness, education backwardness, economic backwardness'. These are not the criterion for 'Varna -jati-kula classification' in dharma-shastra. So how can one equate Varna coming from Dharma Shastra with caste criterion followed by current government?

ⁱⁱ Why is the word 'almost' used here ? Mahamahopadhyaya P V Kane was a very learned person, concerned and practitioner of tradition. Yet, he does not call himself or get recognized as a 'Dharma-Shastra kaara' – the authority on 'Dharma-Shastra'. He ends up as a historian, compiler, and critique of traditions of Dharma shastra. At best, MM PV

Kane's writings are to be taken as 'opinion of high value' and not as 'mandatory update / review of the last of the Dharmashastra books, even from Pune, which is called 'Dharma Sindhu'.

iii *Varna* : (*MW Entry* -) - <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

(H2) v/arNa [p= 924,2] [L=187290] - m. (or n.g. ardharcA*di , prob. fr. v1. vR ; ifc.f(A).) a covering , cloak , mantle L. [L=187291]a cover , lid Ya1jn5. iii , 99 [L=187292] outward appearance , exterior , form , figure, shape , colour RV. &c [L=187293] colour of the face , (esp.) good colour or complexion , lustre , beauty Mn. MBh. &c [L=187294] colour , tint , dye , pigment (for painting or writing) MBh. Ka1v. &c [L=187295] **colour = race** , species , kind , sort , character , nature , quality , property (**applied to persons** and things) RV. &c [L=187296] **class of men , tribe , order , caste (prob. from contrast of colour between the dark aboriginal tribes and their fair conquerors ; in RV. esp. applied to the Aryas and the dAsas ; but more properly applicable to the four principal classes described in manu's code , viz. Brahmans , kSatriyas , vaizyas , and zUdras ; the more modern word for " caste " being jAti** ; cf. IW. 210 n. 1) ib. [L=187297] a letter , sound , vowel , syllable , word Br. Pra1t. &c [L=187298] a musical sound or note (also applied to the voice of animals) MBh. R. Pan5cat. [L=187299] the order or arrangement of a song or poem W. [L=187300]praise , commendation , renown , glory Mr2icch. Kum. Ra1jat. [L=187301](in alg.) an unknown magnitude or quantity [L=187302](in arithm.) the figure , " one " [L=187303](accord. to some) a co-efficient [L=187304]a kind of measure L. (cf. -tAla) [L=187305] gold L. [L=187306]a religious observance L. [L=187307] one who wards off , expeller Sa1y. on RV. i , 104 , 2 (H2) v/arNA [L=187308]f. Cajanus Indicus L. (H2B) v/arNa [L=187308.1]n. saffron L. [cf. accord. to some , Slav. vranu8 , " black " , " a crow " ; Lith. vA7rnas , " a crow. "] (H2) varNa [p= 1332,1] [L=339160] (in comp.)

Jati : (*MW Entry* -) - <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

(H2) jAti [p= 418,1] [L=78658]-f. **birth** , production AitBr. ii , 39 Mn. MBh. (also °tl , xiii f.) &c [L=78659] re-birth R. i , 62 , 17 Ka1ran2d2. xxiii , 193 [L=78660]the form of existence (as man , animal , &c) fixed by birth Mn. iv , 148 f. Yogas. ii , 13 [L=78661] (ifc.) Katha1s. xviii , 98 [L=78662] position assigned by birth , rank , caste , family , race , lineage Ka1tyS3r. xv Mn. Ya1jn5. &c (°tl MBh. xiv , 2549) [L=78663] kind , genus (opposed to species) , species (opposed to individual) , class La1t2y. Ka1tyS3r. Pa1n2. &c , (once °tlifc. MBh. vi , 456) [L=78664] the generic properties (opposed to the specific ones) Sarvad. [L=78665] natural disposition to Car. ii , 1[L=78666] the character of a species , genuine or true state of anything Ya1jn5. ii , 246 MBh. xii , 5334 [L=78667] reduction of fractions to a common denominator [L=78668] a self-confuting reply (founded merely on similarity or dissimilarity) Nya1yad. v , 1 ff. Sarvad. xi , 10 and 34 Prab. Sch. [L=78669] (in rhet.) a particular figure of speech Sarasv. ii , 1 [L=78670] a class of metres R. i , 4 , 6 Ka1vya7d. i , 11 [L=78671] a manner of singing Hariv. [L=78672] a fire-place L. [L=78673] (= °tl) mace , nutmeg Sus3r. [L=78674] Jasminum grandiflorum L. [L=78675] = °tl-phalA L. [L=78676]= kampilla L. cf. antya- , eka- , dvi- - ([cf. Lat. gens ; Lith. pri-gentis]) (H2) jAti [p= 1327,3] [L=331870] (in comp.)

Kula : (*MW Entry* -) - <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

(H1) k/ula [p= 294,2] [L=52810] n. (ifc.f(A).) **a herd , troop , flock** , assemblage , multitude , number , &c (of quadrupeds , birds , insects , &c , or of inanimate objects e.g. go-kula , a herd of cows R. &c ; mahiSik° , a herd of female buffaloes R2itus. ; ali-k° , a swarm of bees S3is3. Gi1t. &c ; alaka-k° , a multitude of curls BhP.) L=52811] **a race , family , community , tribe , caste , set , company** (e.g. brAhmaNa-k° , **the caste of the Brahmans** BhP. ; padAtInAM kula , infantry Ra1jat. v , 247) [L=52812] (ifc. with a gen. sg.) a lot , gang (e.g. caurasya-k° , a gang of thieves) Pa1n2. 6-3 , 21 Ka1s3. [p=

294,3] [L=52813] the residence of a family , seat of a community , inhabited country (as much ground as can be ploughed by two ploughs each drawn by six bulls Comm. on Mn. vii , 119)[L=52814] a house , abode MBh. [L=52815] a noble or eminent family or race Mn. MBh. &c [L=52816] high station (in comp. " chief , principal " cf. kula-giri , &c) [L=52817] the body L. [L=52818] the front , forepart W. [L=52819] a bluestone L. [L=52820] (with zAktas) N. of zakti and of the rites observed in her worship (cf. kaula)[L=52821] = kula-nakSatra q.v. Tantras. (H1B) k/ula [L=52822]m. the chief of a corporation or guild L. (H1B) k/ula [L=52823] m. = kula-vAra q.v. Tantras. (H1B) k/ula [L=52824] m. N. of a man R. vii , 43 , 2 (H1B) k/uIA [L=52825] f. " a principal day " , N. of the 4th and 8th and 12th and 14th day in a pakSa , or half-month Tantras. (H1B) k/ull [L=52826] f. a wife's elder sister L. (H1B) k/ull [L=52827] f. the plant Solanum Jacquini or Solanum longum L. (H2) kula [p= 1325,1] [L=328360](in comp.)

^{iv} Social and cultural history of India since 1556 - By N. Jayapalan- ISBN 81-7156-826-2 , Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi. www.atlanticbooks.com

^v The ingenuity of colonial writers uses the argument points of 'time linearity and stratified documentation of Vedas, tinkering of vedic text for a right communication that suits the needs of the sacerdotal priestly class' to over come this objection. What is missed here ? The meaning of Varna in vedic documents is not the same as desired and preferred by the colonial writers! And Veda based 'Varna' identity is about the Spiritual Identity, Ritual qualification for chants. A Brahmin by birth, not learned in the sacred lore is not the right person for a yajna. In this sense, multiple identity factors under the same class are for proper qualified identification of the right person for a need. This difference is seen in society and practice. It is not a reason to discard the vedic definition of brahmana or indiscriminately extend the meaning and ask for inappropriate permissions and rights ! In other words, Varna is a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, defined for a context.

^{vi} chAthurvarNyaM mayA sR^iShTa.n guNakarmavibhAgashaH .
tasya kartAramapi mA.n vid.hdhyakartAramavyayam.h .. 4\13

^{vii} shamo damastapaH shauchaM kShAntirArjavameva cha .
GYAnaM viGYAnaM AstikyaM brahmakarma svabhAvajam.h .. 18\42..
shaurya.n tejo dhR^itirdAkShya.n yuddhe chApyapalAyanam.h .
dAnamIshvarabhAvashcha kShAtraM karma svabhAvajam.h .. 18\43..
kR^iShigaurakShyavANijya.n vaishyakarma svabhAvajam.h .
paricharyAtmakaM karma shUdrasyApi svabhAvajam.h .. 18\44..
sve sve karmaNyabhirataH sa.nsidhi.n labhate naraH .
svakarmanirataH siddhi.n yathA vindati tachchhR^iNu .. 18\45