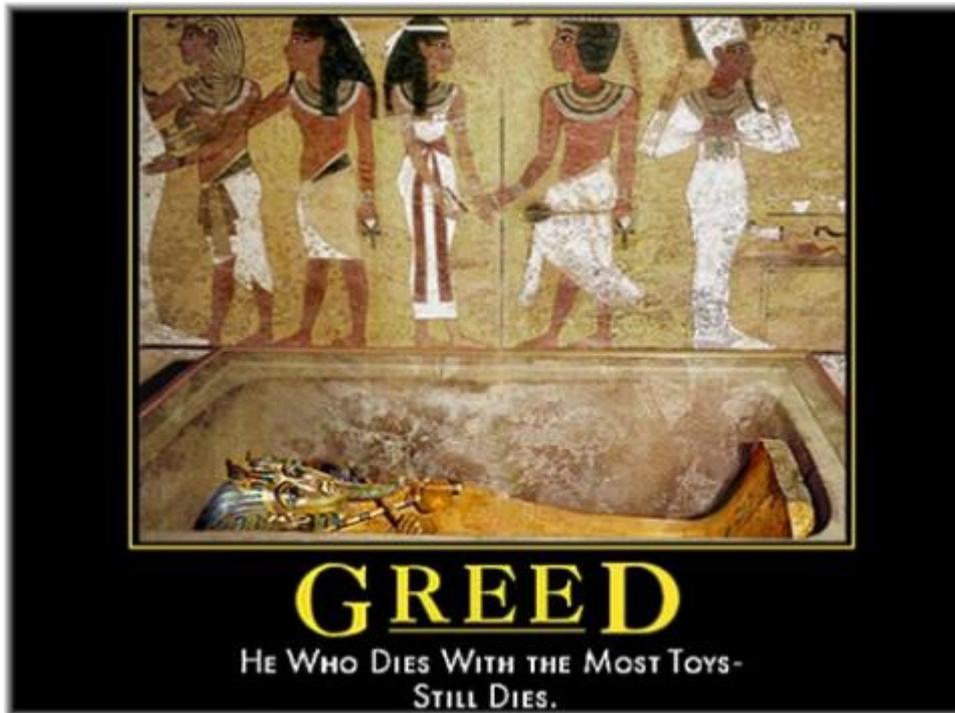


The Vaeshya Age - The Age of the Capitalists



Both the kśatriyas and the vipras like to enjoy material wealth, though their methods of accumulating material objects are different. The vaeshyas, however, are more interested in possessing material objects than enjoying them. Looking at their possessions, or thinking about them, gives them a certain peace of mind. So in the Vaeshya Age the practical value of material goods is less than at any other time. They gradually become inert both literally and in financial terms. This is the greatest curse of the Vaeshya Age, because the less the mobility of material goods, that is, the greater their stagnation in different spheres, the more harmful it is for the common people. In the Kśatriya and Vipra Ages it is very rare for people to die of starvation while grains rot in the warehouses. Although there is disparity of wealth in the Kśatriya and Vipra Ages, kśatriyas and vipras do not kick others into a pit of privation, poverty and starvation while they themselves enjoy their wealth. This is because they see other people as tools to be used for the purpose of exploitation, but do not see them as the wellspring of exploitation as the vaeshyas do. To a vaeshya, the shúdras, kśatriyas and vipras are not only tools to be used for exploitative purposes, they are the wellspring of exploitation as well.

The vaeshyas gain material objects of enjoyment through the physical efforts of

others; or directly through mental efforts; or sometimes through such physical efforts, sometimes through mental efforts, and sometimes through both simultaneously, according to the situation. So in this respect the vaeshyas are similar to the vipras. However, the difference is that when the vipras acquire objects of enjoyment, they do not let others know that that is their intention; they resort to various types of logic, quote from the scriptures, fake indifference, and employ many other techniques. The vaeshyas do not do such things. In this regard at least, they are more straightforward than the vipras. They do not hide their intentions, which are to accumulate an increasing number of objects of enjoyment.

As vipras are to some extent guided by conscience, they do not utilize their intellects solely to accumulate objects of enjoyment. If they develop a greater degree of conscience or if their intellects increase, they will often neglect to do this altogether. But this never happens with vaeshyas, first of all because they are somewhat lacking in conscience. And secondly, if any of them do have a bit more conscience, they will satisfy it by making donations according to their convenience, priorities or inclination, but they will never stop accumulating objects of enjoyment. A vaeshya with a conscience may donate a hundred thousand rupees at a moment's notice, but while buying and selling he will not easily let go of even a paisa.

The consequences of accumulating material objects of enjoyment are not the same for vaeshyas as they are for vipras, either. Because they generally spend some time thinking about higher pursuits, vipras do not ideate on objects of enjoyment. But vaeshyas do. As a result they one day take the form of matter.

Vaeshya Mentality

Whatever glory the vaeshyas gain, they gain at the risk of their lives. In this regard they are definitely greater than the vipras and may also be greater than the kśatriyas. The vaeshyas always keep in mind the possible ups and downs in life and their personal profit and loss; thus they develop the capacity to adapt to a wide variety of situations. They are neither especially attracted to luxuries nor repelled by hardships. This is the key to their success.

Vaeshyas are fighters, but their methods of fighting are different from those of the kśatriyas or even the vipras. Actually they lack the powerful personalities of

the kśatriyas and are in fact the opposite - weak personalities. They do not hesitate to sell their personal force, their society, their nation, the prestige of women, or national welfare, which the kśatriyas would never do. Vipras limit their fighting to the intellectual sphere, but this is not exactly the case with vaeshyas. Although they also fight intellectually, they do so only to make money. If a vipra and a vaeshya ever engage in a purely intellectual fight, the vipra will win. But if the fight is between their urges for financial gain, the vaeshya will win; the vaeshyas will lock the vipras' minds up in their iron safes.

Vaeshyas perceive the world through greedy eyes. They do not have the capacity to correctly or fully understand worldly issues. They do not understand anything except the economic value of things. Their commercial outlook is not confined to the material world only; it also includes the psychic and spiritual worlds.

Even though vaeshyas, as a kind of intellectual, have the capacity to acquire psychic wealth, they do not utilize this capacity properly. However, some vaeshyas do find quite subtle ways to make money - it all depends on the degree of their intellect.(1) Though they may have a developed intellect or a desire to do good, they never forget that their primary aim is to make money. They worship whichever god makes them rich. After earning tens of millions of rupees by cheating people with their business acumen, they use a small part of their profit to construct temples or dharmashálas [pilgrims' inns], because they believe that this will absolve them of their sins.

Vaeshyas do not like to tread the path of desireless action in order to make their minds one-pointed and realize God. They avoid or usually try to avoid the real purpose of dharma, for they do not have any sense of or feeling for religion other than some degree of fear of God. If this fear decreases, they begin to behave like mean-minded demons. In such a state of mind they can commit any type of sin to satisfy their hunger for money.

A mind which runs after money moves in very crooked ways. Although this movement involves intense effort, due to the crudeness of its objective the movement cannot be straightforward: it is crooked, extremely crooked.

Due to their intense effort vaeshyas are mutative by nature, and due to the crudeness of their objectives they are static by nature; thus they are a combination of the mutative [red] and static [black] forces and are symbolized by

the colour yellow.

Though vaeshyas make greater efforts than do kśatriyas, their efforts are more psychic than physical.

Deadly Social Parasites

Vaeshyas believe that only a few people can accumulate material wealth, depriving the rest. Thus there will always be only a few vaeshyas, while those who are the objects and tools of their exploitation form the majority. Like exploited beasts of burden which carry bags of sugar, in their crippled state of mind the majority feel that they do not have the right to taste the sweetness. This feeling is the greatest ally of the vaeshyas, so directly or indirectly they always try to nurture this type of feeling in the minds of the majority. Consequently they propagate various types of isms and ethereal theories with the help of the vipras in their pay whom they have reduced to the level of shúdras. When the majority, unable to tolerate this exploitation any longer or find any other way out, desperately leap into action, the Vaeshya Age comes to an end. But it takes a long time for downtrodden people to understand that the vaeshyas are the parasites of society. Hence thorough preparation is required to end the Vaeshya Age.

By vaeshyas I mean here the low type of vaeshyas. However, I am not prepared to call those who are not low vaeshyas, “high” vaeshyas; because while it is true that they give donations as well as exploit, and that society may be benefited by their donations, that will not bring the people who have died from their exploitation back to life!

The vaeshyas increase their wealth by buying the back-breaking labour of the shúdras, the powerful personalities of the kśatriyas, and the intellect of the vipras, according to their needs. The shúdras, just like beasts, sell their physical labour in exchange for mere subsistence. Because they sell their labour, society survives and moves ahead. The powerful personalities of the kśatriyas build and maintain the social structure with the labour extracted from the shúdras. Through their intellect the vipras utilize the personal force of the kśatriyas, and through their money and capitalistic mentality the vaeshyas utilize the vipras’ intellect to increase their wealth.

The vaeshyas do not confront any social problem directly. Just as they buy the labour of the shúdras, the personal force of the kśatriyas and the intellect of the

vipras with money, so they endeavour to solve all social problems with money. They do not win victory on the battlefield; they buy it with money. In poverty-stricken democratic countries they buy votes. As they accomplish everything with money, their vital force comes from money. They therefore take all sorts of risks in life to accumulate money. For money they can sacrifice their conscience, their sense of good and bad, right and wrong, at any moment. So in order to save the exploited shúdras, kśatriyas and vipras from the vaeshyas, money, which is the source of all their power, has to be taken out of their hands.

Of course it is not wise to think that all social problems will be solved just by taking money away from the vaeshyas. Although they will have lost their money, they will still have their greedy, money-making mentality.

Thus the structure of society will have to be built in such a way, and society will have to progress in such a way (maintaining balance among time, place and person), that the greedy, money-making mentality of the vaeshyas is rendered ineffectual. This cannot be accomplished by persuasion or by delivering philosophical talks. Their money-making intellect will have to be rendered ineffectual through physical force, and they will have to be shown the divine truth and made to sit and perform spiritual practices to awaken their pinnacled intellect.

To the vaeshyas the social body is merely a machine for making money. The vipras are the head, the kśatriyas are the arms, and the shúdras are the legs of the machine. The authors of scripture may say that the vaeshyas are the thighs of the machine, but I would say that this is incorrect. Of course the vaeshyas are part of the social body, but they are not part of the money-making machine within that social body. They are separate. They supply the oil, water and fuel to the machine, but they take far more from the machine than they spend on it. They think, "As I supply oil, water and fuel to the machine to keep it running, all of the output is mine. My money built the machine, and with my money I can destroy it. If necessary I will get more work out of it by supplying it with more oil, water and fuel, and if I no longer need it I will send it to the junkyard."

If, in the history of human struggle, the role of the vipras is one of parasitic dependence on others, I cannot find words to describe the role of the vaeshyas. Both the vipras and the vaeshyas exploit society, but the vipra exploiters are not as terrible as the vaeshya exploiters. The vaeshyas are like a deadly parasite on

the tree of society which tries to kill the tree by sucking dry all its vital sap. But if the tree dies, the parasite will also die. The vaeshya parasites understand this and therefore try to ensure the survival of society by making some donations; they build temples, mosques, churches and pilgrims' inns, give little bonuses, feed the poor; etc. Calamity only comes when they lose their common sense out of excessive greed and try to suck society completely dry.

Once the social body falls unconscious, the vaeshyas will die along with the rest of the body. Otherwise, before allowing themselves to die, the exploited shúdras, kśatriyas and vipras can unite to destroy the vaeshyas. This is the rule.

Crooked Intellect

The path of the vipras is crooked and so is the path of the vaeshyas. The difference between them is that since the vaeshyas' crooked intellect has no trace of spiritual consciousness, it often proves to be suicidal.

A dreadful calamity will befall society if those who have intellectual capacity squander it by running after mundane pleasures instead of utilizing it to realize spiritual bliss - if they utilize all their intellect to fatten themselves by sucking the vital juice of others. So there can be no social welfare until this type of mentality is eradicated or rendered ineffectual through circumstantial pressure. No political leader or governmental or social system can build a welfare state, a socialistic state or an ideal society if they neglect this fundamental disease. If those who go around looking for opportunities to enlarge their stomachs by sucking the vital force of others continue to control society or the nation through their own group of sinners, what can one expect to see in such a society except a horrid picture of hell!

Most of the evils that occur in society are created due to the exploitation carried out by the vaeshyas. In order to increase the size of their bank balances, the vaeshyas create an artificial scarcity of such items as food, clothing and other essential commodities, and then earn a profit by black marketeering. Those who do not have the capacity to purchase commodities at exorbitant prices steal, commit armed robberies and engage in other criminal activities in order to obtain the minimum requirements of their lives. Poor people deprived of food and clothing work as the agents of the greedy vaeshyas engaged in black marketeering and smuggling. When these poor people are caught, they are the

ones who get punished, while the vaeshyas escape thanks to the power of their money. Such ill-fated poor people lose their consciences and descend deeper into sin. Society condemns these sinners, while the rich vaeshyas, the instigators of the sinners, play the role of public leaders. They wear garlands, set off verbal fireworks, and shrilly exhort the masses to make greater sacrifices.

Prostitution

The repugnant social disease of prostitution is also a creation of the vaeshyas. As a result of excessive wealth the vaeshyas lose their self-control and their character on the one hand; and many unfortunate women are forced by poverty to descend to this sinful occupation on the other hand.

In India prostitution has been outlawed, but every rational person knows that it cannot be stopped by legal means. Poor women who once lived in red-light districts have only fled out of fear of the law to respectable localities. As a result the sin which was previously confined to certain areas is now spreading to other parts of town. In order to eradicate this sinful occupation in India, it will be necessary to eliminate the vaeshya social system, because in eighty per cent of cases the cause of prostitution is economic injustice. Of course if due to wrong education or base propensities people (both men and women) give indulgence to this sinful occupation, it will continue even after the eradication of economic injustices. So instead of enacting laws, the exploitation of the vaeshyas will have to be eliminated, as will other social injustices. And instead of legally banning something, a healthy outlook should be encouraged.

Of course it is in the nature of a vaeshya-dominated social system that many good laws are framed just to win cheap applause from the public. However, none of these laws are strictly implemented; because if they were, it would become difficult to exploit people.

The Acquisition of Wealth

Neither the vipras nor the vaeshyas directly produce the wealth of society; instead they accumulate the wealth produced by others. To say that there is a heaven-and-hell difference between their methods of acquiring wealth is to say little. The vipras use their intellect and acquire the hard-earned wealth of others in order to meet their material needs, maintain their reputation in society and protect their prestige. But the vaeshya outlook is different. They are content to

simply accumulate wealth, and derive pleasure from thinking about their accumulated riches. Hence even millionaire vaeshyas sometimes neglect the bare necessities of life. They forget their hunger when they are counting their money; they forget their personal needs - their minds get absorbed - when they see the wealth they have accumulated. And as for prestige, they sell it for money without any hesitation.

If a certain commodity is easily obtainable in the open market, a vaeshya will welcome a customer with folded hands, saying, "Please come in, sir, have some betel." But when the same commodity is only available in the black market, the same vaeshya will not even recognize that customer.(2) In other words, to vaeshyas money is the only thing that matters. Where money is concerned, their own prestige or the prestige of others is of no consequence.

When people use their intellects over a long period of time solely to accumulate material wealth, their intellects, because they have inculcated this sort of thought in their mental bodies, gradually develop in that direction. In other words, "How can I accumulate more?" ultimately becomes their only thought. Their social spirit and sense of humanity gradually disappear until eventually they become total blood-sucking leeches. They do not retain even the tiniest scrap of humanity.

At the beginning of the Vaeshya Age some social spirit still exists in them alongside the desire to make money. Whatever their motive may be, the vaeshyas do sometimes spend generously on social service and charitable activities, but by the end of the Vaeshya Age they lose even the last vestiges of social consciousness, and as a result of their foolhardiness shúdra revolution occurs.

At the beginning of the Vaeshya Age the vaeshyas use their money-making intellect both for social service and for accumulating money, and in these matters they take advice from other members of society. But by the end of the Vaeshya Age they become so irresponsible due to the intoxication of accumulation that they are not prepared to take advice from anyone. They use their money-making intellect solely to exploit society.

How the Vaeshyas Evolve

In the Vipra Age those who were defeated due to their lack of physical strength, courage or intellectual ability tried to discover an alternative way to live and gain social recognition. The particular type of psychic clash which arose in their minds

due to their constant efforts to establish themselves developed in them their money-making intellect. This skill helped them to utilize the strength of the strong, the courage of the brave and the intellect of the intellectuals, and the more they were able to do this the more they became known as shreśthiis.

Here the funny thing is that the vaeshyas, who had money but no social status, were able to obtain from the vipras whom they exploited titles of respect such as shreśthii(3) and sádhu [honest]. (Sádhu became sáhu and today it is Sáú [a common surname].) The vipras took on the worry-free job of priests to these shreśthiis and sádhus. They underwent austerities, performed worship and recited scripture on behalf of the shreśthiis in return for money. The courageous kśatriyas took upon themselves the responsibility of being armed gatekeepers, and began to salute the shreśthiis twice a day. Other vipras became clerks, accountants, etc.; and the shúdras became porters and labourers. Through their work they all gradually began to elevate the status of the shreśthiis. This is an objective picture of the Vaeshya Age in every country of the world.

Pseudo-Vaeshyas

Some vipras' economic intellect is awakened while under the patronage of the economic intellect of the vaeshyas. Such people become pseudo-vaeshyas, and towards the end of the Vaeshya Age their dominance of society becomes evident. The vipras' crooked thinking blends with the vaeshya-like economic intellect of these pseudo-vaeshyas, but the pseudo-vaeshyas do not possess any of the good qualities of either the vaeshyas or the vipras. So although they carry on the vaeshya legacy up to the very end of the Vaeshya Age, they finally fall into utter disgrace and disrepute.(4)

In their efforts to perpetuate their exploitation without hindrance, the pseudo-vaeshyas make use not only of their economic intellect but also of whatever other intellectual capacities they possess. By hook or by crook they even seize governmental power. They then use that power as an instrument of exploitation, a cruel machine to ruthlessly pulverize the whole of society. Out of fear that their descendants may face financial difficulties in the future due to their lack of competence, they not only continue to exploit the whole of society, but also set aside for those descendants huge sums of money which remain wholly or partially unutilized.

The non-utilization of capital is the worst consequence of economic exploitation. Exploited and downtrodden people who do not want to be exploited to death, revolt. Thus shúdra revolution occurs during the period of the Vaeshya Age which is dominated by dishonest vaeshyas.

The vitality of the Kśatriya Age gives way to the intellectuality of the Vipra Age, and the intellectuality of the vipras is bought for money in the Vaeshya Age. The vaeshyas buy the vipras' intellect with money, and with the help of that intellect they build up their state, society and economic structure, putting them to work as they choose.

Generating Collective Wealth

Nothing in the world is exclusively good or exclusively bad. Is the Vaeshya Age only an age of economic exploitation? Is there nothing good in this present Vaeshya Age, and has there never been anything good in it? Although it is a fact that the vaeshyas' economic exploitation has always surpassed their service, they have nevertheless done service, however small or insignificant it may have been. When the vipras collect something (directly or indirectly), they decide how and to what extent it can be put to use, how it can be enjoyed by the people and how it can be utilized for their welfare. But the vaeshyas collect things without thinking about how they can be utilized for social welfare. Instead they think about how to compel people through circumstantial pressure to buy those things so that they can earn money in exchange.

Material goods have no practical value for the vaeshyas, except as a source of income. This type of mentality leads them to illegally hoard foodstuffs out of a greedy desire for greater profits, depriving millions of people of food and pushing them down the road towards death.

We do not expect vipras to do such things. The vipras do promote their personal interests and their domination, but they do not try to deprive the shúdras and kśatriyas of a chance to live. But if the vaeshyas think of the kśatriyas or shúdras as thorns on the path of making money, they will deprive them of a chance, and often out of greed for greater profit indirectly kill them.

Having said all this, I still contend that nothing in this world is exclusively good or bad. For any individual or collective endeavour, capital, either in the form of money or resources, is initially required. The opportunity to create such capital,

to create capital in a massive way or in a widely-diversified way, comes in the Vaeshya Age. With the help of such capital, wealth can be generated for both individual and collective needs, and this is what happens.

In order to raise the general standard of living in a society, state or economy, capital is required, whether the capital comes from within a particular country or from outside. No matter where it comes from, it must be controlled partly or completely by an individual. The individual controller is, of course, the vaeshya. But if, without examining how it should or should not be used, the use or control of the capital is entrusted to a government, a cooperative or a representative of the public, non-utilization or misutilization of the capital will be inevitable in all circumstances. This is one of the main reasons why capitalistic countries develop extremely rapidly in the material sphere.

Furthermore, if large amounts of capital are placed under collective management, a small error on the part of the managers will lead to gross misutilization. This is the main reason why the system of collective farming, or the commune system, has failed in socialistic countries. If the ownership of wealth is taken away from individuals and placed in the hands of the state - in other words, if the vaeshya system is abolished by force - managers will not have the same control over that wealth as individual owners would.

State Capitalism

One thing more needs to be said about collective capital: collective capital does not always mean the establishment of socialism. Where collective capital means the capital of the state, if the state tries to increase its national wealth without stopping exploitation in society and without trying to increase individual wealth, increasing the national wealth will mean increasing the individual wealth of only a few people in power. Thus, although there is an increase in the per capita income, the per capita income of the poor does not increase, and the per capita income of the well-to-do does not decrease.

Although one cannot support this sort of state capitalism, one cannot deny that the state has to utilize capital in order to increase the wealth of the state. If state capitalism actually increases the per capita income of every person without constantly seeking to exploit, we cannot but praise it - it can be considered exemplary socialism. After all, a state must invest capital if it wants to increase

the national income. Such capital investment is clearly a vaeshya system.

Perpetuating Exploitation

The vaeshyas became established through their materialistic intellect. First they defeated the vipras through their materialistic intellect and financial machinations, then they turned them into sycophants so that they could harness their intellects in order to increase their wealth.

Although the production, accumulation and distribution of things indispensable for the preservation of human life are carried out under the ownership or partial supervision of the vaeshyas, those whose labour, personal force and intellect are actually used to produce and distribute essential commodities are not vaeshyas. In order to meet their own needs those people mortgage their labour, personal force and intellect to the vaeshyas. The vaeshyas clearly understand that their system of exploitation will fail without the help of the shúdras, kśatriyas and vipras.

Thus behind their grandiloquence the vaeshyas continue their psychological manipulations in order to perpetuate their capitalistic rule. Through this process the shúdras and kśatriyas readily become their slaves. Although the vipras understand what is happening, after a short struggle they are also compelled to surrender to the vaeshyas like a fly caught in a spider's web.

These psychological manipulations, a part of vaeshya philosophy, begin to fail only when the shúdras, kśatriyas and vipras lose their minds due to excessive exploitation. They then become desperate, blind, mindless people who completely lack conscience, intellect or rationality. One day they mercilessly smash the vaeshya structure to pieces. How or why they did it, or how the new structure will be built - these considerations, this type of thinking - never enter their minds. They only jump into the struggle in order to survive. They think, "Since there is no point in living, let us die sooner." While this directionless revolution is going on, the condition of the shúdras, kśatriyas and vipras becomes almost the same. It is useless to expect from them anything worthy of human beings.

Intellect controls strength; therefore the vipras control the shúdras and the kśatriyas. But, Annacintá camatkára ["Wonderful are the ways of hunger"] - when even intelligent people find themselves struggling to survive, they readily sell their intelligence for money; for this reason the vipras sell themselves to the

vaeshyas. They not only sell themselves, but also surrender the shúdras and the kśatriyas, whom they had previously controlled, at the holy feet of their vaeshya overlords. Without the help of the vipras, it would be virtually impossible for the vaeshyas to force the shúdras and the kśatriyas to work.

It is therefore evident that in a capitalistic structure, when the vaeshyas struggle to perpetuate their system of exploitation, they do not physically struggle, they merely spend money. Upon taking the money, the vipras then fight with their nerves, the kśatriyas with their muscles, and the shúdras with their sweat and labour.

Thus it is clear that in any type of communal or other reactionary-instigated conflict, there are wealthy bosses on both sides behind the riots and fracas. The bosses themselves never take up spears, lances or axes and fight.

The victory of wealth over intellect, the vipras' surrender at the feet of the vaeshyas, does not come about in a single day. As mentioned earlier, the vipras get caught like a fly in a spider's web; they do make some efforts to understand their situation, but finally they become so entangled in the web that their vitality gets exhausted in the struggle and they have no alternative but to surrender. They are then compelled to sing the victory songs of the vaeshyas as they beat their heads in despair.

Through the power of money the vaeshyas take over all the constructive work accomplished by, or useful things built by, the intelligence and ideological commitment of the vipras, the sacrifice and personal force of innumerable kśatriyas, and the labour of countless shúdras. Sometimes the vipras, kśatriyas and shúdras seek the help of the unworthy vaeshyas in order to preserve some worthy institution. But for the sake of money, they are compelled to name the institution after those vaeshyas.

However, the vaeshyas' cunning methods of economic exploitation do encounter set-backs according to time, place and person. Whenever they see the vipras, kśatriyas and shúdras moving towards counter-evolution or counter-revolution, they adopt new forms of deception in order to save their position. Until an actual shúdra revolution occurs, they engage themselves untiringly in trying to discover newer and more artful methods of deception.

It should be remembered that in countries where the dominant vaeshya structure

is at present extremely firm and stable, the strength of that structure was not created in a day. The vaeshyas laboured a long time to build it and they will try to maintain it by any means. To expect, under such circumstances, that they will be won over by humble requests, or will voluntarily put on a loincloth and renounce the world, is sheer lunacy. Actually such things are possible if they become inspired by a great spiritual ideology; however, this would require the long-term, continuous propagation of morality-based spirituality among the vaeshyas. Intelligent people should certainly consider whether it is really rational to allow the exploitation of the masses to go on until such a day comes.

The occasional charity works that the vaeshyas undertake are only a trick to maintain their exploitation. Most of their charitable activities are not inspired by humanism; their sole purpose is to keep the machinery of exploitation, that is, the vipras and the shúdras, functioning. If the vipras and the shúdras die, who will there be to exploit? The cunning vaeshyas consider such charitable activities as investments.

The help that vaeshyas extend to poor people in difficult times, during floods and famines, they afterwards recover with interest. They are benefited in various ways. First, their businesses continue to run and they make good money. Secondly, people who are disgruntled with the vaeshyas' exploitation are to some extent pacified and their wounded minds are temporarily soothed.

Of course these comments do not apply to those vaeshyas who do social service out of humanitarian or spiritual inspiration. No doubt there are some honest vaeshyas who are worthy of veneration by everyone.

Whatever dignity a person possesses as a human being in either the Kśatriya Age or the Vipra Age is dealt its heaviest blow in the Vaeshya Age. In the Vaeshya Age a person's dignity is measured in terms of money. The repercussions of this defective evaluation of human beings are not confined only to the realm of dignity; they have far-reaching effects in all spheres of society.

No matter how many other qualities they may possess, vipras and kśatriyas who think independently, possess a sense of dignity or are self-reliant, cannot establish themselves unless they learn to flatter the vaeshyas in a psychological way. Even the unworthy son or relative of a wealthy person has the opportunity to sit at the head of society, and through the power of money an unattractive

daughter is properly married to a good bridegroom. A good marriage cannot be arranged even for the sons of the poor, intelligent and educated though they may be, let alone the daughters of the poor. In fact in the Vaeshya Age people cannot hope to be respected unless they are rich. Those who hope for respect or have gained it, depend or have depended on the mercy of the vaeshyas.

Yasyásti vittaṁ sah narah kuliinah;
Sa paṅditah sah shrutavána guṅajiṇah.
Sa eva vaktá sa ca darshaniiyah;
Sarve guṅáh káiṅcaṅamáshrayanti.

[Those who have wealth are high-caste, are well-educated, possess many abilities, are good orators and are good-looking. They have all these qualities because they have money.]

The methods of social exploitation used in the Vipra and Vaeshya Ages are somewhat similar. Certain aspects of society in the Vipra Age therefore remain unchanged in the Vaeshya Age, such as the social system, the law, the status of men and women and the right of inheritance.

Breaking the Vaeshya Structure

The difficulties faced by those who have tried and are trying to break apart the structure of the Vaeshya Age in order to rebuild society on a humanistic foundation, are not less, but are in fact a little more, than the indescribable social tortures that great people suffered in the past when they tried to reform the social structure of the Vipra Age. This is because those who wanted to break apart the vipras' structure had to fight the vipras and also the kśatriyas and shúdras under their protection, but those who want to strike at the vaeshyas' structure have to fight against all the vipras, kśatriyas and shúdras who are obedient to the vaeshyas.

But there are similarities between the two. The common people misunderstand great people who act on their behalf and for their welfare, or even if they understand them, they do not give them their support. Their nerves, courage and labour are bought with the vaeshyas' money.

The vipras exploit the masses in the Vipra Age under the pretence of religion, which cannot be challenged. The same thing occurs in the Vaeshya Age, but

vaeshya exploitation is more dangerous. In the Vipra Age the vipras exploit others through religion in order to promote their personal interests, but in the Vaeshya Age the vipras exploit others through religion in order to promote both their own and the vaeshyas' interests.

In the Vaeshya Age this religious exploitation is more psychic than physical, because the vaeshyas use the vipras to try to spread intellectual propaganda among the masses to prevent them from finding any philosophical justification for their suppressed grievances against the vaeshya structure. This intellectual propaganda aims to convince people that they are the victims of circumstance. It argues, "Everything is destiny. Everything is preordained." Such doctrines help the vaeshyas to perpetuate their structure. They destroy the personal force of people and make them the playthings of fate. People accept the idea that everything is preordained, and support the status quo.

Those who try to break the structure of the Vaeshya Age and show the downtrodden the path of liberation, will have to advise the people to free themselves from the intoxicating effect of the opium of religion; otherwise how will they be able to serve the downtrodden people?

A group of exploiters loudly object to a remark that was made by the great Karl Marx concerning religion. It should be remembered that Karl Marx never opposed spirituality, morality and proper conduct. What he said was directed against the religion of his time, because he perceived, understood and realized that religion had psychologically paralysed the people and reduced them to impotence by persuading them to surrender to a group of sinners.

Footnotes

(1) In the winter of the Bengali year 1368 [end of 1961 or beginning of 1962 BCE], some opportunistic astrologers (vipras) declared that the world would soon come to an end following the conjunction of several planets in a particular house of the zodiac. Perhaps they thought that the public would be frightened by such a declaration, and just prior to the cataclysm might renounce everything and donate a large part of their wealth to the vipras in an effort to ensure that they would go to heaven. This plan of the Indian vipras met with some success; out of fear many sinners undertook charitable activities.

The frightened vaeshyas arranged sacrificial fires presided over by the astrologer-priests. They thought that perhaps the smoke from the sacrificial fires would change the course of the planets concerned, moving them out of the zodiacal house they were in and thereby preventing the destruction. The commercial mentality of the vaeshyas (capitalists) was glaringly evident in their temporary religious fervour.

Along with this there was another amusing thing I noticed. For use in the sacrificial fires the vaeshyas sold unsaleable ghee, which was unfit for human consumption, at exorbitant prices.

(2) [[Because the vaeshya will try to sell the item to the customer at an exorbitant price.]] -Trans.

(3) Shreśthii, “man of wealth” was coined from shreśtha, “superior man”. -Trans.

(4) For descriptions of shúdras cast in similar roles in the Kśatriya Age, and kśatriyas cast in similar roles in the Vipra Age, see pp. 14 and 39. -Trans.

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