

caste: he regards the term as covering the numerous inferior races and tribes defeated by the Āryan invaders, but originally as denoting only one special tribe. It is reasonable to suppose that Śūdra was the name given by the Vedic Indians to the nations opposing them, and that these ranked as slaves beside the three castes—nobles, priests, and people—just as in the Anglo-Saxon and early German constitution beside the priests, the *nobiles* or eorls, and the *ingenui*, ordinary freemen or ceorls, there was a distinct class of slaves proper; the use of a generic expression to cover them seems natural, whatever its origin (see Śūdra). In the Āryan view a marriage of Śūdras could hardly be regulated by rules; any Śūdra could wed another, if such a marriage could be called a marriage at all, for a slave cannot in early law be deemed to be capable of marriage proper. But what applied in the early Vedic period became no doubt less and less applicable later when many aboriginal tribes and princes must have come into the Āryan community by peaceful means, or by conquest, without loss of personal liberty, and when the term Śūdra would cover many sorts of people who were not really slaves, but were freemen of a humble character occupied in such functions as supplying the numerous needs of the village, like the Caṇḍālas, or tribes living under Āryan control, or independent, such as the Niṣādas.

But it is also probable that the Śūdras came to include men of Āryan race, and that the Vedic period saw the degradation of Āryans to a lower social status. This seems, at any rate, to have been the case with the Rathakāras. In the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa<sup>146</sup> the Rathakāra is placed as a special class along with the Brāhmaṇas, Rājanyas, and Vaiśyas: this can hardly be interpreted except to mean that the Rathakāras were not included in the Āryan classes, though it is just possible that only a subdivision of the Vaiśyas is meant. There is other evidence<sup>147</sup> that the Rathakāras were regarded as Śūdras. But in the Atharvaveda<sup>148</sup> the Rathakāras and the Karmāras appear in a position of importance in connexion with the

<sup>146</sup> i. 1, 4, 8.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra, i. 1, 9, with the scholiast; iv. 7, 7; 9, 5; Weber, *op. cit.*, 10, 12, 13.

<sup>148</sup> Av. iv. 5, 6. That the words *karmāra* and *rathakāra* are here appellatives, as Weber, *op. cit.*, 17, 198, suggests, is quite impossible.