

CHAPTER – III

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE *VASIṢṬHA*

DHARMA-SŪTRA

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The cultivation of land is called agriculture and the cultivation of mind is called culture. The civilization of nation may be destroyed due to the nature of calamities and other reasons. But culture never destroyed if human resists. Culture is transmitted and transformed. Civilization is outer development, but cult is inward development. Inward development helps in outward development. So here lays the importance of culture. Culture consists of customs, religion, rituals, super station, food habit, dress code etc.

Vasiṣṭha has defined that those people are called cultured whose family member study *Veda* together with its supplements and who are able to adduce as proofs express Vedic texts¹. The law is set forth in the Vedic and traditional texts. When these do not address an issue, the practice of cultured people becomes authoritative. And a cultured man is free from desires².

Dharmasūtras were one of the most noteworthy developments of the Indian Culture. In the special reference of the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* regarding the Indian Culture, we can mention the following areas.

RELIGION :

The Dharmasūtras are the part of the Vedic supplements and are written primarily in the *Sūtra* style. Though it includes the term *sūtra*, but it does not bear the grammatical sense of *sūtra* as Pāṇini has done. Except the *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, other Dharmasūtras are written in prose intermixed with verses. Such works are mainly concerned with *Dharma*. In such works, *Dharma* came

to include the areas of individual and social behaviour and norms as well as personal, civil and criminal law.

Dharmasūtra is a part of the Vedic supplement called *Kalpa*. Hence, it directly concerns with the Vedic Religion. Dharmasūtras mainly deal with the Law through which society can resist in a systematic form. So, in the Dharmasūtras, religion or *Dharma* means self duties. Thus, *Dharmasūtras* declare the duties of the people of four Varṇas, and the people of the four stages of life. All the duties of such people are framed under the acceptance of the Vedic consigns.

Duties and code of conduct of people as inhabitants of a particular society, all are discussed and analyzed in this research work. All the points of the second and the third chapter of this work concern with the rules and regulations and code of conduct of all the people of that particular period. Through the analysis of such points we will enable to notice the Indian religion so far as focused in the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*.

REGARDING CUSTOM :

The general rule about the binding character of customs is set out by Vasiṣṭha in his work as, the (peculiar) custom of countries, castes and families may be followed in the absence of rules propounded by the *Veda*, and XIX.7 prescribes that the king should enforce these among the four Varṇas³. It means in the time of *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* people obey the *Veda* as well as they also can generate new customs according to their needs.

RITUALS :

Actually, ritual activities are the most part of the stage of householders. Regarding rituals Vasiṣṭha has laid down some general rules. Likewise, a man who is generous and without greed, should neither live without establish the sacred fire nor fail to offer Soma sacrifice if he has the means to offer it⁴. But a Brāhmiṇ has the obligation to establish the sacred fires. And he should offer the full-moon and new- moon sacrifices, the sacrifices of the first fruits, the seasonal sacrifices, the animal sacrifices, and the Soma sacrifices, for this is specifically enjoined and is also acclaimed as a debt. It is stated: A Brāhmiṇ is born carrying three debts- of sacrifice to the Gods, of offspring to the ancestors and of studentship to the seers. That man is free from debts who has offered a sacrifice, fathered a son and lived as a student⁵. Here, offerings meant for gods or ancestors should always be given only to a learned Brāhmiṇ. If it is not given to a learned Brāhmiṇ reaches neither the gods nor the ancestors. Even if a learned man lives far away, while a fool lives in one's own house, one should give a gift to the learned man not to the fool⁶.

Bali Offerings :

Vasiṣṭha has also dealt with the *bali* offerings. He told that a householder should offer in the fire a portion of the food he has cooked as an oblation to the all gods and make a *bali* offering to the house deities. Cf. *VDS*, II.3-4 *vaiścadevasya siddhasya sāyamprātagrhyāgnau juhuyāt | gṛhadevatābhyo balim haret |* Āpastamba has also told that *bali* should be

made with the food of a couple of householder and as a result of such *bali* offerings it leads people to heaven and prosperity⁷.

Twilight Worship (*Sandhyā*) :

The procedure as well as the results of the twilight worship has been clearly stated in the *Vasiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra*. By controlling his breath while seated during the evening twilight a man wipes away the sins he committed during that day by thought, word or deed. By controlling his breath while standing during the morning twilight a man wipes away the sins committed during that night by thought, word or deed. When someone remains seated restraining himself continuously by controlling his breath or constrains himself with two more or with double- that is the highest authority⁸.

Gifts (*Dāna*) :

At the time of *Vasiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra*, *dāna* has taken a very important place in the culture of that of that particular age. He has told about who is worthy to receive gifts as well results and significance of gifts. Some are worthy to receive gifts as their Vedic learning and others because of their austerities. Among all the worthy people that person is the most worthy of receiving gifts whose stomach is freed from taking the food of a *Śūdra* Cf. *pātrāṇāmapi tatpātraṁ śūdrānnaṁ yasya nodare* (VI.26.). A man who is rich in Vedic recitation and comes from a good family, who is perfectly tranquil, devoted to performing sacrifices and afraid of sin, who has vast knowledge and in patient with women, who is righteous, protects cows and wears himself out with penances- such a man, they say, is worthy to receive gifts⁹. Besides this,

as milk, curd, ghee or honey poured into an unbaked pot perishes because the pot was weak, likewise when an ignorant man accepts a cow, gold, a garment, a horse, a piece of land, or sesame seeds, he is reduced to ashes like a piece of wood¹⁰. Vasiṣṭha has also symbolized the things. Gold is the firstborn of fire, land is the daughter of Viṣṇu and cows are the children of sun. A man who gives gifts of gold, land and cows obtains an eternal reward¹¹. On the full moon day of April- May if someone gives to seven or five Brahmins black or white sesame seeds mixed with honey, saying, “ May king of Law rejoice!”, or expressing any other wish he may have in mind, that very moment all the sins he has committed during his whole life will be wiped away. He has also stated that a man who places sesame seeds, gold, honey and ghee upon a skin of a black antelope and gives it to a Brahmin overcomes all sins¹². Therefore he has told that by giving gifts a man obtains all his wishes “dānena sarvānkāmānavāpnoti” (VDS.,XXIX.1). Rather a man who refrains from causing injury to living beings goes to heaven. By entering fire one attains the world of Brahman, by keeping a vow of silence one achieves prosperity and by living in water one becomes the lord of elephant. A man who gives water fulfils all his wishes. A man who gives food gets good eyesight and a keen memory. A man who gives the gift of safety from all dangers becomes intelligent. By allowing the use of cows, one gets the same reward as by bathing in all the sacred fords, by giving beds and seats , one becomes the lord of harem and by giving umbrellas one gets a house¹³. Vasiṣṭha has also quoted: “whatever sin a man may have committed under the pressure of his occupation,

he is cleansed from all that by giving a piece of land even as small as a cow's hide"¹⁴. There are three super gifts- cows, land and knowledge. Among these, the gift of knowledge is superior to all gifts and surpasses even those super-gifts. Cf. *VDS.XXIX.19, trīṇyāhuratidānāni gāvah pṛthvī sarasvatī | atidānam hi dānānām vidyādānam tato'dhikam* | This is the rule of conduct that grants endless rewards and awards liberation with the release from the cycle of rebirth- a wise man who free from envy, follows it, or a man, pure and self-controlled, who simply remembers or hears it with a trusting heart, sheds all his sins and rejoices in the very summit of heaven. But a Brāhmiṇ must not accept weapons, poison or liquor as gifts¹⁵.

Ancestral Offering (*Śrāddha*):

In ancient time gods and men used to live together in this world. Then the gods went to heaven by performing rites, while men were left behind. Those among them who perform rites in the same manner get to dwell in that world together with the gods and *Brāhmaṇ*. For this purpose Manu proclaimed this rite bearing the name "Ancestral Offering"¹⁶. In this ritual one should offer honey, meat. Vegetables, milk, milk- rice etc. The ancestors rejoice at a son who extends the family line, is diligent in presenting ancestral offering, and is devoted to gods and Brāhmiṇs. When someone offers food to Gayā, they rejoice, just as farmers rejoice at field that have received abundant rain; in him his ancestors are blessed with a true son. Cf. *VDS.,XI.42, nandanti pitaratasya suvrṣṭairiva karṣakāḥ | yadgayāsthō dadānnaṁ pitarastena putriṇa iti* |

Vasiṣṭha has also stated the appropriate times for the ancestral offerings. The son should make ancestral offerings on the full-moon days of July-August and November-December and on the ninth day of the fortnight of the waning moon in the four lunar months between November and March. When extraordinary materials or Brāhmiṇs or an extraordinary place is at hand, however, rules regarding the proper time do not apply¹⁷.

GUESTS :

By paying homage to a guest, the householder obtains peace and heaven. It is great belief of Indian culture. At the time of the *Vasiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra*, we can see that this culture was strongly adopted by the people. It is stated that a Brāhmiṇ guest enters a house as the fire common to all men. Cf. *VDS.XI.13, vaiśvānaraḥ praviśatyatithibrāhmaṇo gṛhān* | Therefore, they bring water except during the rainy season – and people call that a rite of appeasement. If a guest arrives after he has made the offerings to all the gods, he should have food prepared specially for him. After giving food to the guest, he should pay him homage. Then, when he departs, he should follow him up to the village boundary or until he gives him leave to return. It is also said that only on the occasion of paying homage to ancestors, gods or guests, an animal may be killed. Killing an animal at a sacrifice, therefore, is not a killing. Cf. *VDS.,IV.7, na ca prāṇivadhaḥ svargyastasmādyāge vadho 'vadhaḥ* Moreover, it is said that the householder can cook meat of a big ox or a big male goat for a *Brāhmaṇ*, for a *kṣatriya*, or for a visitor. In this way they show him hospitality¹⁸.

SUPERSTITION AS DEPICTED IN THE *VASIṢṬHA DHARMASŪTRA* :

Since the dawn of civilization people have believed in that some objects are lucky and some objects are unlucky. They also believe that some things happen unnatural due to the influence of the unlucky objects. This belief is known as superstition. In ancient time many people are victimized by superstitious fears. Even in this modern and scientific period, superstitions are marked in the people of the developed countries of the world. In some hospitals in London the bed number 13 cannot be found. Some streets of that country are numbered without the no. 13. Moreover, scientific explanations cannot support some customs and rites found among many people. Some streets of that country are numbered without the no. 13. Moreover, scientific explanations cannot support some customs and rites found among many people. Some called them superstitions. Our critical mind scrutinizes some acts of our society and termed them as superstitions. It is also noticed that strong beliefs in superstition are sometimes partially connected with religion. In the present context, some superstitions are marked in the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*. These are categorized as follows –

(1) Women and

(2) Touchable and Untouchable.

1. Women : Women specially widow was not giving proper honor, which may be termed as superstition. *Vasiṣṭha* says that the wife of a deceased man should sleep on the floor for six months, observing her vow and eating food without salt or seasoning¹⁹. Again *Vasiṣṭha* prohibits a

menstruating woman from applying collyrium on her eyes or oil on her body, bath in water, she should sleep on the floor and not sleep during the day, she should not touch the fire, make a rope, brush her teeth, eat meat or look at the planet²⁰.

2. Touchable and Untouchable : Vasiṣṭha speaks of impurity that makes a thing untouchable. He says that if someone touches a sacrificial post, a pyre, a cemetery, a menstruating woman, a woman who has just given birth, and sordid men, he should enter water submerging his body and head under water²¹.

He further says that if some touches a human bone with soft tissue attached to it, he remains impure for three days, while if it has no soft tissue attached to it, he is impure for a day and night, as also when he follows a corpse in a funeral procession²². Regarding Śūdras, Vasiṣṭha's remark is nothing but an example of superstition. cf. *VDS.XVIII.13*,

śmaśānametatpratyakṣam ye śūdrāḥ pāpacāriṇaḥ |
tasmācchūdrasamīpe tu nādhyetavyam kadācana ||

According to Vasiṣṭha, Śūdras are like a cremation ground. Therefore, one should not recite the *Veda* in the vicinity of a *Śūdra*.

FOOD HABITS IN THE VASIṢṬHA DHARMASŪTRA :

Food in Hinduism is traditionally governed by the rules laid out in the Dharmasūtras, a genre of Sanskrit texts pertaining to Hindu religious and legal duty. Vasiṣṭha, the great dharmasūtrakāra has dealt with the information about the articles of food permitted or prohibited in the time represented by him.

According to the Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra, we can discuss the rules relating to food under the following heads :

- (a) Fish and other aquatic animals,
- (b) Flesh
- (c) Beef eating and
- (d) Miscellaneous.

(a) **Fish and other aquatic animals** : The general rule is that those kinds of fish, which are misshaped or grotesque fish (vikṛtarūpaḥ) and whose heads resemble those of serpents (sarpa-śīrṣa) cannot be eaten²³. Among fish, there are also some forbidden to be eaten, likewise the ceṭa, the Gavaya, the porpoise, the alligator and the crab. cf. VDS.XIV.41, matsyānām vā ceṭagavayaśiśumāranakrakulīrāḥ | Among these the meaning of the *śiśumāra* has been given by Monier Williams in his Sanskrit English Dictionary as the Gangetic porpoise or dolphin. Its flesh not allowed to be eaten. In the Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra, we have found the name of those fish or aquatic animals which can be eatable. Thus, from his opinion, we may be come to the conclusion that except these mentioned fish and aquatic animals remaining other fishes are allowed to be eaten. In the other dharmasūtra works, we have found lots of name of eatable fish and aquatic animals. The following kinds of fishes are unanimously allowed to be eaten: Bṛhacchiroromaśakarī, cilicima, Rājīva, Rohita, Śapharī, Sahasra-damṣṭra and Varmī²⁴. Āpastamba has considered the fish called Śatavali as to be

very pleasing to the Manes and such prescribed for offering to Brāhmaṇa on the occasion of Śrāddha²⁵. The kacchapa allowed by all.

(b) Flesh : In the age of the Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra, meat-eating appears to have been widely in vogue. The eating of the meat of animals, sacrifices in religious festivals are considered as a part of the usual life. Even to show hospitality towards the guests, the householder can kill the living creatures²⁶.

Vasiṣṭha, the great Dharmasūtrakāra has clarified that the flesh of the animals with five claws, the porcupine, hedgehog hare, tortoise and Godhā monitor lizard and also among domestic animals, those that have teeth in only one jaw except the camel may be eaten²⁷. In this regard Āpastamba is also agreed with the opinion of Vasiṣṭha²⁸. But with regard to rhinoceros, there is a conflict between Baudhāyana and the opinion of Āpastamba and Gautama together. It is this difference of opinion among the authorities which is may be referenced to by Vasistha in his work in XIV.47. On the other hand, there is a question, whether Sūkara's flesh can be eaten or not. Baudhāyana and Āpastamba condemn a *grāmyasūkara*²⁹. Gautama in XVII.27 is also of the same opinion. Vasiṣṭha also agrees with the opinion of them. He opines that if someone eats the meat of a dog, a cock, a village pig, a kaṅka heron, a vulture, a Bhāsa vulture, a Pārāvata done, a man, a crow or an owl, he should fast for seven days until all the excrement is gone, then consume some ghee and undergo re-initiation³⁰. Therefore, the implication is that a wild sūkara's flesh can be eaten. Infact, under

ĀDS.I.21.15, Haradatta remarks-*grāmyāṅāmīti vacanād āraṇyānāmapraṭiṣedhaḥ*. The flesh of the beast, known as gavaya, is forbidden³¹.

In the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, we can find a list of birds. Which flesh are forbidden. According to him, among birds the following are forbidden-birds that agitate, scratch with their feet or are web footed, Kalaviṅka sparrow, Plava heron, Haṃsa goose, Cakravāka goose, Bhāsa vulture, crow, Pārāvata dove, Kurara osprey, Sāraṅga cuckoo, white dove, Krauñca crane, Krakara Partridge, Kaṅka heron, vulture, falcon, Baka egret Balāka ibis, Madgu cormorant, Tiṭṭibha sandpiper, Māndhāla flying fox, nocturnal birds, wood pecker, sparrow, Railātakā bird, Hārīta pigeon, Khañjarita wagtail, village cock, parrot, Śārika starling, kokila cuckoo and carnivorous birds and those living in village³². The prohibition with regard to kukkuṭa, found in *ĀDS*.I.21.15 and *GDS*.II.8.29 holds good in the case of grāmya-kukkuṭas. Therefore the implication is that wild kukkuṭas are not banned. Baudhāyana, in I.12.3 does not expressly mention the word grāmya in his prohibition of kukkuṭa. The carnivorous birds, the kravayādas as they are designated are also condemned by Āpastamba (I.17.34). But in case of birds of the Jāla-pāda class, Gautama differs from Vasiṣṭha. The flesh of the birds of the Jāla-pāda class can be eaten according to Gautama (XVII.33).

Coming to individual birds, we can notice the following :

Name of prohibited birds' flesh :

<u>Name of birds</u>	<u>Authorities</u>
Bhāsa	VDS.23.30 ĀDS.I.17.35
Gṛdhra	VDS.23.30 GDS.17.27
Kaṅka	VDS.23.30 GDS.17.27
Kāka	VDS.23.30 GDS.17.27
Khañjarita, Kokila, Krakara	VDS.14.48
Madgu	VDS.14.48 GDS.17.32
Māndhāla	VDS.14.48 GDS.17.32
Nactamcara	VDS.14.48 GDS.17.32
Plava	VDS.14.48 GDS.17.26 ĀDS.I.17.33
Railātaka, Sāraṅga, Śārikā, Śuka	VDS.14.48

Śyena	VDS.14.48
	GDS.17.27
Tiṭṭibha	VDS.14.48
	GDS.17.32
Ulūka	VDS.23.30
Vāyasa	VDS.14.48

Permitted birds flesh :

Name of birds

Authorities

KapotaVDS.14.48

(prohibits only pandu kapola)

BDS 1.12.17.

(c) **Beef Eating** : This topic attaches special interest even today. An average Indian of today rooted in what appears to him as his traditional Hindu religious heritage carries the load of misconception that his ancestors, especially the Aryans, attached great importance to the cow account of its inherent sacredness. The ‘sacred’ cow has come to be considered a symbol of community identity of the Hindus whose cultural tradition is often imagined as treated by the Muslims who are thought of as beefeaters³³.

The oldest Hindu text *Rgveda* (10.87.16-19) speak about prohibiting the flesh of the cattle and the horses.

The fiend who smears himself with flesh of cattle with flesh of horses and of human bodies |

Who steals the milch-cow's milk away, o Agni tear off the heads of such
with fiery fury ||16||

The cow gives milk each year, O Man regards let not the Yatudhāna ever
taste it |

It one would glut him with the biesting Agni pierce with thy flame his
vitals as he meets thee ||17||

Let the fiends drink the poison of the cattle; may Aditi cast off the
evildoers |

May the God Sanitar give them upto ruin, and be their share of plants
and herbs denied them ||18||

Agni, from days of old thou slayest demons never shall Rakṣasas in fight
o'ercome thee |

Burn up the foolish ones, the flesh devourers let none of them escape
thine heavenly arrow ||19|| (cf. Rgveda.- X.87.16-19)

Brāhmins are not supposed to eat non vegetarian food as it taints
their mind away from the focus on the scriptures. Meat is proven to
cause sleepiness and drowsiness and therefore it is a cost not a benefit on
Brahmins. In general it is seen, that all Brahmins in India are vegetarian
with the exception of Kashmir Paṇḍitas and Bengali Brahmins and
Maithil Brāhmins, who eat fish and meat. Beef is the only meat which is
prohibited for all Hindus and thereby all Brahmins. This is because the
cow is seen to give many products (*Pañcagavya*) and to be like the
mother of human kind (*Kamadhenu*).

However, in some Rgvedic verses, we have found references to the slaughter of cattle, horses and other animals as well as the meat eating³⁴.

The Atharva Veda bans only the eating of the raw meat and the human flesh. cf. AV., VIII.6.23

Those who eat flesh uncooked and those who eat the bleeding flesh of men.

Feeders on babes unborn, long haired, far from this place we banish these.

Vasiṣṭha has advised that for the hospitality of a Brāhmin, a *Kṣatriya* or a visitor, a householder can cook a big ox or a big male goat³⁵. He also quoted that in the *Vājasaneyisamhitā*, it is found that the milch-cow and the draft ox are pure and can be eaten³⁶.

Thus, it is seemed that at the time of the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, beef eating is not a usual trend but it can be said that in some special occasion it is allowed in respect of sacrificial mode.

(d) Miscellaneous :

- (i) People whose food may be eaten :** Vasiṣṭha, the great *Dharmasūtrakāra* has opined that a man should not refuse the food of a man who hunts with bow and arrow. In the support of this statement he stated that during a sacrificial session lasting a thousand years, Agastya, the great sage went hunting and he had sacrificial cake made with the choice meat of excellent animals and birds. He

also opines that in particular, the food given by a generous man should be eaten, even if he is a thief, but never that given by a man who performs sacrifices for a lot of people and initiates a lot of people. If a man spurns such food, his forefathers will not eat from him for fifteen years and the sacred fire will not convey his oblations³⁷.

(ii) **People whose food may not be eaten** : Now let us discuss the food which is unfit to be eaten. The following are unfit to be eaten, food given by a physician, a hunter, a harlot, a law enforcement agent, a thief, a heinous sinner, a eunuch or an outcaste, as also given by a miser, a man consecrated for a sacrifice, a prisoner, a sick person, a man who sells Soma, a carpenter, a washer man, a liquor dealer, a spy, an usurer, a leather worker, a *Śūdra*, a man who bears arms, a lover of a married woman and a husband who countenances it, an arsonist or one who does not execute those who deserve the capital punishment, food given after yelling, food given by a corporate body or by a courtesan³⁸. This is the list of those particular people whose given foods are unfit to be eaten.

According to Vasiṣṭha, Gods do not eat the food of a man who peeps dog, who is married to a *Śūdra* woman, who is controlled by his wife or who lets his wife lover remain in his house. But a man can accept the following things from even such people : fire wood, water, fodder, Kuśa grass, propped rice, food given unasked,

vehicles, shelter, Śaphari fish, millet, garlands, perfumes, honey and meat. In case, for the sake of someone's teacher, to save his wife and to honour gods or guests, a man may accept gifts from anyone, but never to satisfy himself. At last Vasiṣṭha says that almsfood given by physicians, hunters, surgeons, fowlers, eunuchs, and an unchaste wife is not to be accepted even if it is given unasked³⁹.

(iii) Unfit Food : Now let us discuss the unfit food which is enlisted by the lawmaker, Vasiṣṭha. According to him, leftover food from anyone other than one's teacher is unfit to be eaten as also one's own leftovers and food that has come into the contact with leftovers or with a garment, hair or insects. When food is touched by crows or dogs during a divine procession, marriage festivities or while sacrifices are in progress, it should not be thrown away. After extracting from it the defiled portion of food, the rest should be purified, liquids by straining them and solids by sprinkling them with water. When something is touched by a cat's mouth, it undoubtedly remains pure. Food that has gone state, looks revolting, makes a person uneasy has been cooked again or is raw or pan cooked is unfit to be eaten. If he wants, however, he may use such food after pouring some curd or ghee over it⁴⁰.

Vasiṣṭha has quoted that a Brāhmin should not eat anything that drips from someone's nails whether it is ghee or oil. Yama has

declared that it is impure and equal to eating cow's meat.

VDS.XIV.30,

ghṛtaṁ vā yadi vā tailaṁ vipro nādyānnakhaścyutaṁ |

yahmastadaśuci prāha tulyaṁ gomāmsabhakṣaṇaiḥ ||

On the other hand Oil, salt or sauces are not served by hand to the giver, while the eater devours guilt. Therefore, they should be given place on a leaf or a blade of grass, let him never serve them with his hand or with an iron utensil⁴¹.

Thus, Vasiṣṭha has advised unfit food for the people of that particular society.

(iv) Forbidden Food : Vasiṣṭha has advised that for eating garlic, onions, mushrooms, Gṛñjana (onion), *Śuśmāntaka* fruits, tree resins, red juices flowing from incisions on tree barks, anything licked by a dog or a crow, or the leftovers of a *Śūdra* he should perform the very arduous penance. For eating other things except preparation of honey, meat or fruits, he should perform the arduous penance. The milk of cows in heat or whose calves have died and of cows, buffaloes or goats during the first ten days after giving birth, water collected at the bottom of a boat, wheat cakes, fried grains, porridge, barley- meal, oil cake, oil, milk, rice and vegetable that have turned sour- a man should avoid these as also preparations made with milk and barley meal. Among fish, the Ceta, the Gavaya, the porpoise, the alligator and the crab as also grotesque fish and snakehead fish, Gaura bison, Gayal oxen and Śarabha, as also

animals milch-cows, draft oxen and animals whose milk- teeth have not fallen- these are not to be eaten.

Through the above mentioned points we have tried to give a pen-picture about the culture of the society at the time of the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*.

FOUR STAGES OF LIFE :

Aryan people were concerned to divisions of life into four stages called Āśrmas. This very word is derived from the root *śram*, to labour. These four order of life are viz.,- student, householder, forest hermit and wandering ascetic respectively⁴². Baudhāyana has given the significance of these four āśramas as these four paths leading to the gods traverse between heaven and earth. It helps to attain the unfailing prosperity through the grace of Gods⁴³. In this regard, we can mention the Law which is approved for all orders of life by Vasiṣṭha. A man belonging to a particular stage of life he should have to refrain from slander, envy, pride, egotism, disbelief, dishonesty, praising oneself, running down others, hypocrisy, greed, perplexity, anger and jealousy⁴⁴. He also opines that a Brahmacārin studying one, two or all the Vedas and he has not violated his now of chastity may live in whichever orders of life he prefers⁴⁵.

The concept of the four stages of existence is fully established by the era of the dharmasūtras, but it appears after Vedic times. However, the first two stages are known from the Vedas onwards. On the other hand, the Āraṇyakas presuppose that the life of the hermit was already organized. Actually what

they have in mind is clearly an autonomous mode of life. The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (II. 23.1) distinguishes three orders of life to follow the rule of dharma as practiced, which could correspond to the first three āśramas (the wandering ascetic is not included there) and each of these orders enables one to attain heaven after death. Therefore, it is only in the dharmasūtras that the four āśramas appears as successive stage of life.

BRAHMACĀRIṆ (VEDIC STUDENT) :

The first stage i.e. Brahmācārin commences with the ceremony of initiation (*upanayana*). It is a very important ceremony, in fact, it confers a second birth to a novice as well as it makes him a *dvija* (*dvi jāyate iti dvija*). The preceptor, who places the sacred triple thread upon the youth, hands him the antelope skin to cover himself and the brahmācārin's staff and teaches him the formula of the Gāyatrī, is considered as his spiritual father. Āpastamba opines that such spiritual parentage is held to be superior to natural parentage⁴⁶. Without the second birth the young man cannot participate in religious life; he is on the level of the *Śūdra*⁴⁷. Generally, according to Dharmasūtras, initiation takes place at the age of eight for a Brāhmaṇa and three and four years later for a *Kṣatriya* and *Vaiśya*⁴⁸. After the initiation a *dvija* goes to live with his preceptor in order to study the Vedas and the auxiliary sciences under his direction. According to Āpastamba and Gautama, the requisite duration for each of *Veda* is considered as twelve years, so that the period denoted to study for the four Vedas can be prolonged up to 48 years, though it can be reduced to a minimum of twelve years⁴⁹. Vasiṣṭha has defined the commencement of the

annual course of Vedic study. It takes place on the full moon day of July-August or August-September. Before going to start the course, the student should kindle the fire and offer rice grains in it by saying- “To the gods! to the seers ! to the Vedas !” He should get Brāhmins to say, “May there be well being!”, feed them with curd and then begin the study of the Vedic lessons⁵⁰. He should continue the study for four and a half or five and a half months⁵¹. Moreover, of that period, he should study the Veda during the fortnights of the waxing moon. If he wants to, he may study the Vedic supplements also⁵². Thus, Vasiṣṭha does not mention any definite duration for acquiring Vedic knowledge at the stage of the Brahmācārin.

A student, during his course, he should refrain from sleeping on a bed, brushing his teeth, applying collyrium on his eyes or oil on his body, wearing shoes or carrying an umbrella⁵³ and wear all his hair matted or just the topknot⁵⁴. The students, those are permanent should serve his teacher until death and after his teacher he should serve the sacred fire as his teacher. cf. *VDS.VII.6, vijñāyate hyagnirācāryastaveti* | He should obey his teacher and should be restrained in his speech. When the teacher is walking he should walk behind his teacher. If the teacher is seated or lying down, he should wait upon him by standing or sitting orderly. The student should always be ready to announce everything that he has received to the teacher and he should recite his lesson only when he is called upon to do so. The student should eat with the permission of his preceptor and can take alms food every fourth, sixth or eighth mealtime⁵⁵. The student should go around begging for alms food using

the seven syllabic formula with “Madam” (*bhavati*) at the beginning, ‘almsfood’ (*bhikṣām*) in the middle and ‘give’ (*dehi*) at the end without pronouncing the syllables *kṣā* (of *bhikṣām*) and *hi* (of *dehi*) too loudly⁵⁶. A Brāhmin should request alms food placing “Madam” at the beginning, a *Kṣatriya* placing “Madam” in the middle and a *Vaiśya* placing “Madam” at the end⁵⁷. Thus, in the student life, he should maintain a code of conduct in every aspect of his duties. Though the word ‘Brahmacārin’ is rendered by our word ‘student’, it seems to be not appropriated as it implies a life devoted not only to study but also to the practices of austerity which are intended to purify the pupil’s soul. He must learn to master his senses, to keep himself from all impure contact to practice the virtues in an appropriate way with humility, obedience and moral instruction.

In this context there is a question raised whether a married man can return to studentship or not. In the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, we have found the quotation of Śvetaketu that if a man, after he has married and settled down, wishes to study the Veda further, he should live at house of his teacher with a collected mind for two months every year⁵⁸. Through this way he will manage to study more of the Veda than during the time of his studentship. But it is forbidden by the authoritative texts. It is because after marriage one should be enjoined by Vedic texts to perform daily rites, the daily fire sacrifice, hospitality towards guests and others⁵⁹. It means he can utilize his Vedic knowledge through performing his duties.

The end of the first phase of life is marked by ceremonies including a purificatory bath (*snāna*), whence the name *snātaka* which is given to the *dvija* who has finished his studies⁶⁰ and has returned to his paternal home. The *snātaka* is subjected to special obligations, to a kind of life which is not yet that of the householder but which prepares him for it.

Duties of *Snātaka* :

Vasiṣṭha provides some rules and duties for *Snātakas*. According to him, a bath- graduate cannot beg for anything to others people except the king or pupil of him. If he is raked by hunger, however, he may beg a little something- a plowed or unplowed piece of land, a cow, a goat or a sheep, gold, grain or food. But he should not be fainted because of hunger. He should not have sex with a menstruating woman or with a pre-pubescent girl or not with an inappropriate woman. He should engage in sexual intercourse with his wife only during her season and avoiding the days of the moon's change. He should not carry tales from one family to another. He should not step over a rope to which a calf is tied or look at the sun at sunrise or sunset. He should not urinate or defecate in water or spit into it. He should void urine and excrement by covered his head and has to face the north during the day and the south during the night⁶¹.

A bath- graduate should always wear a lower and upper garment and two sacrificial cords and carry a staff and a pot filled with water⁶². He should carry a bamboo staff and wear a pair of gold earrings. Outdoors, he should not wear a garland except one made of gold⁶³.

During the twilights, the bath- graduates should sit facing the north and he should eat his food facing the east. He should silently swallow the whole lump, pushing it into the mouth with his thumb and not make any sound with his mouth. Rather, he should not climb trees⁶⁴, go down into wells and not to blow on a fire with his mouth. A bath- graduate should not pass between a Brāhmin and a fire or between two fires or between two Brāhmins. But after receiving permission, he may do so.

Vasiṣṭha has also proclaimed that the bath- graduate should not eat in the company of his wife. Because according to Vājasaneyins, it is stated “His children will lack manly vigor.” cf.VDS.XII.31. “bhāryayā saha nāśnīyādavīryavadapatyaṁ bhavatīti vājasaneyake vijñāyate”. A bath- graduate should not point out a rainbow using the name “Indr’w bow”, instead, he should call it “jeweled bow⁶⁵. He should avoid stools, footwear and tooth cleaners made with palāśa wood and not to eat food placed on his lap or on a chair⁶⁶. He should avoid casino and fairs. He should obey the authority of Vedas, otherwise, one will be destroyed. He should not go to a sacrifice unless he has been chosen to officiate, but if he does so, he should return keeping his right side towards it. A bath- graduate should not start a journey when the sun is seen over the trees or should not get into an unsafe boat or not to cross a river by swimming. If he gets up in the last watch of the night, he should recite the *Veda* and not go back to sleep⁶⁸ and at the time of the sacred to Prajāpati a Brāhmin should perform some religious observances cf.VDS.XII.47, *prājāpatye muhūrte brāhmaṇaḥ kāmścinniyamānanuṣṭhēditi* |

HOUSEHOLDER (GRHASTHA) :

After finishing his Brahmachārin stage he must contract marriage and enter the second stage of life i.e., householder (*grhastha*). Marriage is a social and religious duty for every *Ārya*, bound as he is to continue the family and to secure the perpetuation of the domestic cult. Thus, the dharmasūtras consider the householder phase as the most important for it is one upon which the three other depend⁶⁸.

Duties of Householder :

Vasiṣṭha opines that the stage of *Grhastha* is the best among all the stages of life. cf. *VDS.VIII.14, caturṇāmāśramānām tu grhasthastu viśiṣyate* |

A householder without greed, should establish sacred fires and should offer the soma sacrifice if he has the means to offer it⁶⁹.

Another most important duty of a householder is the hospitality. He should always have to give a good service to his guests. A guest should not remain in his house without being given to eat. Because it is said that when he is given nothing to eat, he leaves taking with him all the good works of that *grhastha*. Cf. *VDS.VIII.6*.

yasya nāśnāti vāsārthī brāhmaṇo grhamāgataḥ |
sukṛtaṁ tasya yatkiñcitsarvamādāya gacchati ||

Vasiṣṭha also defines that term *atithi* in VIII.7 as - *anityam hi sthito yasmāttsmādatithirucyate* | He also says that a *Brāhmaṇa* who spends one night, according to tradition, is called a guest. But if a *Brāhmaṇa* lives in the

same village or come for a social visit is not a guest⁷⁰. But the *gr̥hasthī* should honour anyone who comes to his house⁷¹.

For the duties of a *gr̥hasthī*, Vasiṣṭha advises that the householder should be intent on reciting his *Veda*, offering sacrifices and begetting offspring. cf. *VDS.VIII.11, yuktaḥ svādhyāye yajñe prajanane ca* | And lastly the householder should give food to all the creatures according to his ability⁷². This stage of life is highly appreciated by all the Dharmasūtrakāras. The great Vasiṣṭha says that this stage of life leads to achieve the world of Brahman⁷³. According to him, as all rivers and rivulets ultimately end up in the ocean, so people of all the orders ultimately end up in the householder⁷⁴.

He also says that as all living beings live dependent on their mothers, like all mendicants live dependent on the stage of the householder⁷⁵.

FOREST HERMIT (*VĀNAPRASTHI*) :

It is the third stage of life of human beings, according to the Dharmasūtrakāras. They advised that a forest hermit should wear matted hair and a garment of bark or skin. He should not enter a village or step on plowed land. He should gather uncultivated roots and fruits and should observe chastity with full of patience⁷⁶.

Duties of Forest Hermit :

A forest hermit cannot receive anything from people, but he can give. When guests come to his hermitage, he should honour them with almsfood of roots and fruits. A forest hermit should bath three times - at dawn, noon and dusk. After establishing the sacred fire according to the hermit procedure, he

should become a person who maintains the sacred fire. He lives at the foot of tree. After six months he lives homeless and without a fire. He should make offerings to gods, ancestors and men. Thus, he will attain in an endless heavenly abode⁷⁷.

WANDERING MENDICANTS (*PARIVRĀJAKA*) :

It is the fourth stage of life of mankind. After this stage man can achieve the liberation. At this stage who is not attached to the following things, viz. hut, water, cloths, tripod, house seat and food, he has surely won liberation⁷⁸.

The significance of this stage is that if a sage wanders about after giving the gift of safety to all creatures, no creature poses a threat to his own safety. After giving the gift safety to all creatures, however, when someone backslides, he brings to ruin the past and future generations of his family, as also anyone who accepts anything from him⁷⁹.

A wandering ascetic should be shaven headed, free from selfish yearning and without possessions. He should wrap himself with a single piece of cloth or an antelope skin covering his body with hay cut for the cows, he should sleep on the ground. He cannot stay at a fixed place. He should stay in the outskirts of the village, in a temple or an abandoned house or at a foot of a tree. He should always apply his mind to the cultivation of knowledge⁸⁰.

Duties of Wandering Ascetics :

For the livelihood a wandering ascetic has to go randomly to seven houses to beg for almsfood at a time when smoke is not rising from the kitchen

and the pestles have been laid aside. cf.VDS.X.7-8, *saptāgārāṇyasaṅkatpitāni caredbhaikṣaṁ | vidhūme sannamūsale |*

He should never try to get almsfood by interpreting portents or omens, by displaying his knowledge of astrology or somatomacy, by giving advice, or by participating in debates. He should neither be disheartened when he does not receive nor elated when he does. He should take only as much as would sustain his life⁸¹.

Alternatively, a wandering ascetic can eat what he obtains from a Brāhmin household morning and evening avoiding honey and meat and he may live in a village without being crooked, dishonest or irresolute. He should not sensually attach to anything and has to look upon all creatures dispassionately⁸².

After the stage of *Parivrājaka*, one can attain the freedom from rebirth. At this stage he has to bring his senses under control and put an end to all sensual pleasures, he focuses his mind on contemplating the highest self and looks upon everything dispassionately. But after this stage, liberation is not achieved by a man who takes delight in verbal sciences and in captivating the folks, has his heart on food and cloth and loves beautiful residences⁸³.

A parivrājaka should abandon all ritual activities. But cannot abandon the *Veda*, because by abandoning *Veda*, he becomes a *Śūdra*. For him the Monosyllable OM is the highest *Veda* and the control of breathing is the highest austerity. cf.VDS.X.4-5, *saṁnyasetsarvakarmāṇi vedamekaṁ na*

samnyaset | vedasaṁnya sanācchūdraṁ tasmādvedaṁ na samnyaset ekākṣaram
paraṁ brahma prāṇāyāmāḥ paraṁ tapaḥ |

Thus, the Great Vasiṣṭha has prescribed the four stages of life of human beings which systematized the life of a human being in a disciplined way.

DRESS CODE :

In a society dress code takes a very significant place among the human race. It differentiates people to the animals. Particular dresses help us to know the people of different cults.

At the time of the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, it is seemed that the dress code mainly elaborates the different stages of life and the people of the different castes.

According to Vasiṣṭha, at the stage of *Brahmacārī*, a person should wear a sacred triple thread an antelope skin to cover himself and Brahmacārī's staff. A Brāhmin's griddle should be made of muñja grass, a Kṣatriya's of a bowstring and a Vaiśya's of hemp thread. A Brāhmin's upper garment should be the skin of a black antelope, a Kṣatriya's the skin of the spotted Runu antelope and a Vaiśya's the skin of a cow or a male goat. A Brāhmin's garment should be white and unblemished, a Kṣatriya's dyed madder and a Vaiśya's yellow silk. Or else, the people of all classes may wear undyed cotton garments. A Brāhmin should take a staff of Palāśa wood, a Kṣatriya of banyan wood and a Vaiśya of Udumbara wood. A Brāhmin's staff should reach the hair of the head, a Kṣatriya's the forehead and a Vaiśya's the nose⁸⁴.

One should wear all his hair or just the topknot matted⁸⁵.

A bath- graduate should always wear a lower and upper garment and two sacrificial cords and carry a staff and a pot filled with water⁸⁶. He should carry a bamboo staff and wear a pair of gold earrings. Outdoors, he should not wear a garland except one made of gold⁸⁷. A bath graduate should avoid the footwear⁸⁸.

A forest hermit should wear matted hair and a garment of bark or skin.
cf.IX.1, *vānaprastho jaṭiloscīrājinavāsā* |

A wandering ascetic should be shaven headed and he should wrap himself with a single piece of cloth or an antelope skin. Covering his body with hay cut for the cows, he should sleep on the ground. (*VDS.X.6, 9-11*).

In this way Vasiṣṭha has prescribed the culture through the dress code for the people belonging to the four classes and the four stages of life.

NOTES AND REFERENCES :

1. VDS., VI. 43.
2. Ibid., I. 4-6.
3. Cf., Ibid., XIX.7, *deśadharmajātikuladharmān sarvānevaitānanupraviśya rājā caturo varṇānsvadharme sthāpayet |*
Also see, Kane, P.V., *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. 3, p.857.
4. VDS., VIII.9-10.
5. Ibid., XI.45-48
6. Ibid., III.8-9
7. *ĀDS.*, II.3.12, *gṛhamedhinoryadarśanīyasya homā balayaśca svargapuṣṭisamyuktāḥ |*
8. VDS., XXVI. 2-3.
9. Ibid., VI.30.
10. Ibid., VI.32, Cf. *avidvānpratigrhṇāno bhasmībhavati dāruvat |*
11. Ibid., XXVIII.16, *agnerapatyaṁ prathamam suvarṇam bhūrvaiṣṇavī sūryasutāśca gāvah| tāsāmanantaṁ falamaśnuvīta yaḥ kāñcanaṁ gām ca mahīm ca dadyāt|*
12. Ibid., XXIX.2-13.
13. Ibid., XXIX.15., Cf. *yatkimciturute pāpam puruṣo vṛttikarṣitaḥ | api gocarmamātreṇa bhūmidānena śudhyati |*
14. Ibid., XII.55., *śastraṁ viṣam surā cāpratigrhyāni brāhmaṇasya /*
15. *ĀDS*, II.16.1.
16. *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, XI.40.

17. Ibid., XI.43-44 Cf. *śrāvanyāgrahāyīṅyoścānvaṣṭakyām ca pitṛdhyo dadyāt | dravyadeśabrāhmaṇasamnidhāne vakālaniyamaḥ*
18. Ibid., IV.8., cf., *athāpi brāhmaṇāya vā rājanyāya vābhyāgatāya vā mahokṣam vā mahājam vā pacedevamasmā ātithyam kurvanti||*
19. VDS.XVII.55, *pretapatnī ṣaṅmāsānvratācāriṇyakṣāralavaṇam bhuñjānādhaḥ śayīta |*
20. Cf. Ibid., V.7, *sā nāñjyāt | nābhyañjyāt | nāpsu snāyāt | adhaḥ śayīt | na divā svapyāt | nāgnim spr̥ṣet | na rajjum̐ sṛjet | na dantāndhāvayet | na māmsamasnīyāt | na grahānnirīkṣeta ||*
21. Ibid., IV.38, *yūpacitiśmaśānarajasvalāsūtikāśucīm̐sca spr̥ṣṭvā saśirasko 'bhyupeyādapa iti |*
22. Ibid., XXIII.24-26, *mānuṣāsthi snigdham spr̥ṣṭvā trirātramāśaucam | asnigdhe tvahorātram̐ | śavānugame caivam̐ |*
23. *ĀDS.I.17.39; VDS.XIV.42.*
24. *BDS.I.5.12.8.*
25. Benarjee, S.C., *Dharmasūtras : A study in their origin & Development*, p. 150.
26. *VDS.IV.8*
27. Ibid., XIV.39-40
28. *ĀDS.I.17.37; GDS.XVII.27; BDS.I.12.5*
29. *BDS.I.12.3; ĀDS.I.17.29; I.21.15.*
30. *VDS., 23.30.*
31. *ĀDS.I.17.29; VDS.XIV.43.*

32. VDS., XIV.48.
33. Jha, D.N., Paradox of the Indian cow: Attitudes to Beef Eating in Early Indian.
34. *RV.*,X.85.13; X.162.10; X.162.12-13.
35. VDS.IV.8
36. Cf.VDS.XIV.46, *bhakṣyou tu dhenvanaḍuhou medhou vājasaneyake vijñāyate |*
37. VDS.XIV.14-18.
38. Ibid., XIV.1-10.
39. Ibid., XIV.11-13, 19.
40. Ibid., XIV.20-29.
41. Ibid., XIV.31-32.
42. Ibid., VII.3.brahmacāriḡrasthavānaprasthaparivrājākāḡ |
43. Cf. *BDS.II.11.11*,
ye catvārah pathayo devayānā antarā dyāvāpṛthivī viyanti |
teṣām yo aḡyānimajītimāvahāt tasmai no devāḡ pari datteha sarva iti //
44. Cf.VDS.X.30,
paiśunyamatsarābhimānāhamkārāśraddhānārjavātmastavaparagarh
ādambhalobhamohakrodhāsūyāvivarjanaḡsarvāśramāḡnām dharma
iṣṭaḡ |
45. VDS.VII.3, *teṣām vedamadhītya vedau vedāntāviśīrṇabrahmacaryo*
yamicchettamāvaset |
46. *ĀDS.I.1.16-18.*
47. *BDS.I.3.6; VDS.II.6; GDS.II.1.*
48. *VDS.XI.49-50; BDS.I.7-9; GDS. I.6-11; ĀDS. I.1.19.*

49. *ĀDS.I.1.2,12-16; GDS.II.45-47.*
50. *VDS.XIII.1-4.*
51. cf. *VDS.XII.5*, *ardhapancamāsānmāsānardhaṣaṣṭān vā* | also in *ĀDS.I.9.1-3.*
52. *VDS.XIII.6-7; ĀDS.II.8.10-11.*
53. *VDS.VII.15.*
54. *Ibid.,VII.11.*
55. *VDS.VII.9; ĀDS.I.25.10*
56. *BDS.I.3.16.*
57. *VDS.XI.68-70; BDS.I.3.17; ĀDS.I.3.28-30; GDS.II.36.*
58. *ĀDS.I.13.19, niveśe vṛtte samvatsare dvau dvau māsau ācāryakule vasedbhūyaḥ śrutamicchanniti śvetaketuḥ* |
59. *ĀDS.I.13.20-22; I.14.1-2.*
60. Cf. *ĀDS.I.30.1, 4, vidyayā snātītyeke* | *teṣu sarveṣu snātakavadvṛtīḥ* ||
61. *VDS.XII.1-13.*
62. *Ibid., XII.14.*
63. *Ibid., XII.37-39.*
64. *Ibid., XII.18-20.*
65. *Ibid., XII.32-33, nendradhanurnāmnā nirdiśet* | *maṇidhanuriti brūyāt* |
66. *Ibid., XII.35-36.*
67. *Ibid., XII.40-46.*
68. *GDS.III.3; BDS.II.11.27; Vi.DS.VIII.14-15; VDS.VIII.14.*

69. VDS.VIII.9-10, *śraddhāśīlo ' spṛhayāhuralamagnyādheyāya nānāhitāgniḥ syāt | alam ca somāya nāsomayājī |*
70. Ibid., VIII.8, *naikagrāmīṇa atithirvipraḥ sāṅgatikastathā |*
71. Ibid., VIII.12, *gṛheṣu abhyāgatam pratyutthānāsanavāksūnṛtānasūyābhitmahayet|*
72. Cf., Ibid., VIII.13, *yathāśakti cānnena sarvabhūtāni |*
73. Cf., Ibid., VIII.17,
nityodakī nityayajñopavītī nityasvādhyāyī patitānnavarjī |
ṛtou ca gacchanvidhivacca juhvan na brāhmaṇaścyavate brahmalokāt ||
brahmalokāditi ||
74. Cf., Ibid., VIII.15,
yathā nadīnadāḥ sarve samudre yānti samsthitim |
evamāśramiṇaḥ sarve gṛhasthe yānti samsthitim ||
75. cf., Ibid., VIII.16,
yathā mātaramāśritya sarve jīvanti jantavaḥ |
evam gṛhasthamāśritva sarve jīvanti bhikṣukāḥ ||
76. Ibid., IX.1-6.
77. Ibid., IX.7-12.
78. Ibid., X.23,
na kutyām nodake saṅgo na caile na tripuṣkare |
nāgāre nāsane nātre yasya vai mokṣavittu sa iti ||
79. Ibid., X.2-3.
80. Ibid., X.6,9-13.

81. Ibid., X.18-22.
82. Ibid., X.24-29.
83. Ibid., X.17,20.
84. Ibid., XI.52-67.
85. Ibid., VII.11.
86. Ibid., XII.14.
87. Ibid., XII.37-39.
88. Ibid., XII.35.