



The Shûdras (I)

Mircea A. Tamas

Today, the Great Disarray spreads like a plague. It is no surprise, considering – as everybody knows – that we live the end of *Kali-yuga*, and this “Iron Age” is under the government of the Shûdras. When we say “the Shûdras” we have in mind firstly the symbolic partition in castes, since we cannot just copy the Hindu traditional system of castes and apply it everywhere. There was a similar partition in the Middle Ages, in Occident, and René Guénon compared the Bolsheviks with the Shûdras.¹

The modern and occidentalized world considers the system of castes as something unfair and obsolete, promoting a terrible confusion of castes. Yet, in fact, the modern mentality, even if – apparently – seems to be a “Vaishya mentality,” is a product of the Shûdras.

From a traditional point of view, there is nothing wrong to be a Shûdra. Like in the case of the races, each individual or group of individuals has to take the place that is in concert with its nature, and participate at the evolvment of the present cycle (the Hindu *Manvantara*). The Shûdras, in compliance with their duties, are important for the well being of the society and they could also be a good example of how people should behave as “Muslims,” that is, obeying God and being His servants. With this respect, the fact that the Shûdras correspond to God’s feet should be related to the symbol of God’s footprint into the world and to the respect paid to His feet.²

Nevertheless, when the Shûdras revolt against the normal order they lose this special characteristic of being “Muslim” and for this reason we should stress that the modern

¹ “... et comme l’usurpation appelle l’usurpation, après les Vaishyas, ce sont maintenant les Shûdras qui, à leur tour, aspirent à la domination : c’est là, très exactement, la signification du bolchevisme. (...) si les éléments sociaux les plus inférieurs accèdent au pouvoir d’une façon ou d’une autre, leur règne sera vraisemblablement le plus bref de tous, et il marquera la dernière phase d’un certain cycle historique...” (René Guénon, **Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel**, Véga, 1976, pp. 91-92).

² The footprint of God is, as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy explained, the presence of the Principle into the manifestation. In Sri Lanka, for example, there is such an imprint of Buddha’s foot, considered by Muslims as being the footprint of Adam, by Christians that of St. Thomas and by Hindus the footprint of Shiva.

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society is a world of “revolted Shûdras,” and in any domain, including priesthood, this “Shûdra mentality” is active.¹

There is a bigger picture though, which is connected to the doctrine of the cosmic cycles, since with respect to this doctrine our present *Manvantara* contains numerous sub-cycles, longer and shorter, more or less important, and each of these cycles presents a similar development like the *Manvantara* itself, and therefore, even though at one moment from a main cycle perspective the human society is marked by a “Shûdra mentality,” from a secondary cycle perspective there still are “castes” corresponding to Brâhmana and Kshatriya; and that is why we can say that Jesus Christ or Buddha is of Kshatriya descendency.

To understand the symbolic hierarchy and development of the castes we may compare them with the principal elements (*bhûtas*) from the Hindu tradition. René Guénon described the five elements using two different representations: a ladder-like and a cross-like one. The ladder-like representation presents the elements from a cosmogonic perspective, as given in the Upanishads, in the progression: ether – air – fire – water – earth.

The cross-like representation places the air as a neutral element along the horizontal diameter of a circle, the fire as the upwards element along the vertical diameter, and the water as the downwards element along the vertical diameter. The ether is on the top and the earth at the bottom.²

A similar picture could be drawn for the castes. In fact, René Guénon presents such a diagram for the castes, similar to the one for the elements, in which Brâhmana is the upwards half-diameter, Kshatriya the horizontal diameter and Vaishya the downwards half-diameter; Hamsa (the primordial people beyond the castes) is on the top and Shûdra is at the bottom.³

From a cosmogonic perspective, the castes are in the following progression: Brâhmana – Kshatriya – Vaishya – Shûdra, and in the Hindu tradition the four castes are in correspondence to the cardinal points North – East – South – West.⁴ In a letter to Gaston Georgel, Guénon suggested these associations: North – white race – water; East – yellow race – air; South – black race – fire; West – red race – earth.⁵

René Guénon built the cross-like diagrams for the elements and for the castes based on the traditional theory of the three gunas. We find in **Vishnu Purana**: “When Brahmâ, with respect to his goal, wanted to produce the world, the beings in whom sattwa prevailed were generated from his mouth; others in whom rajas prevailed were produced

¹ Dante was not against the papacy, but against popes with a “Shûdra mentality.” We underline again, when we refer to “Shûdra mentality” that is not the vassalage, considered from a religious perspective, that we have in mind, but all the specific characteristics defining the fourth caste, in comparison to the “twice-born” (*dwija*) castes.

² See the figure in René Guénon, **Études sur l’Hindouisme**, Éditions Traditionnelles, 1979, p. 59.

³ See the figure in René Guénon, **Études sur l’Hindouisme**, Éditions Traditionnelles, 1979, p. 79.

⁴ See A. M. Hocart, **Caste**, Methuen & Co., 1950, p. 27, and René Guénon, **Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée**, Gallimard, 1980, pp. 120-121.

⁵ Gaston Georgel, **Les Quatre Âges de l’Humanité**, Archè, 1976, p. 17.

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from his bosom; others in whom rajas and tamas were strong were produced from his thighs; eventually, others were born from his feet, having tamas as main characteristic. From these beings the four castes (varnas) were composed: Brâhmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shûdra, which were born from his mouth, bosom, thighs and feet.”¹

Guénon said: “... the hierarchisation of the four varnas, imposed by the gunas that predominate in each caste, is identical with that of the elements (bhûtas).” If we consider the production of the castes and races following a cosmogonic succession, like in the case of the elements, we should assume the associations: Ether – Hamsa – primordial race; Air – Brâhmana – yellow race; Fire – Kshatriya – black race; Water – Vaishya – red race; Earth – Shûdra – white race. On the other hand, with respect to the cardinal points, the associations should be: North – Brâhmana – white race – water; East – Kshatriya – yellow race – air; South – Vaishya – black race – fire; West – Shûdra – red race – earth.

From the point of view of the doctrine of the three gunas, as we have already mentioned, sattwa (and the white colour) predominates in Brâhmana, rajas (the red colour) predominates in Kshatriya, rajas mixed with tamas (the yellow colour) predominate in Vaishya, and tamas (the black colour) predominates in Shûdra, revealing an obvious correspondence with the “degrees of subtlety” of the elements.

However, in a traditional society, the organization of the city required the four castes to be placed in the four cardinal points, in connection with the four yugas. Following a solar circumambulation (*pradakshinâ*), starting with the Northern point, the successive four castes are obtained, in a natural descendent order. Guénon remarked that Brâhmana is placed at North, being linked to the polar tradition, and Kshatriya is placed at East, belonging to the solar tradition.

There is an interesting similarity between the text of **Vishnu Purana** and the dream of Nebuchadnezzar from the **Old Testament**, a dream translated by Daniel as follows:

Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart. Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.² Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled

¹ **The Laws of Manu** says the same thing: “But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds he caused the Brâhmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs, and his feet.”

² We note that the four ages are in direct correspondence with the four castes.

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the whole earth. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that reaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

In Hesiod's **Works and Days** the four yugas are described as follows:

First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus made a golden race of mortal men who lived in the time of Cronos when he was reigning in heaven. And they lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils. When they died, it was as though they were overcome with sleep, and they had all good things; for the fruitful earth unforced bare them fruit abundantly and without stint. They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods.

But after earth had covered this generation – they are called pure spirits dwelling on the earth, and are kindly, delivering from harm, and guardians of mortal men; for they roam everywhere over the earth, clothed in mist and keep watch on judgments and cruel deeds, givers of wealth; for this royal right also they received; – then they who dwell on Olympus made a second generation which was of silver and less noble by far. It was like the golden race neither in body nor in spirit. A child was brought up at his good mother's side an hundred years, an utter simpleton, playing childishly in his own home. But when they were full grown and were come to the full measure of their prime, they lived only a little time in sorrow because of their foolishness, for they could not keep from sinning and from wronging one another, nor would they serve the immortals, nor sacrifice on the holy altars of the blessed ones as it is right for men to do wherever they dwell. Then Zeus the son of Cronos was angry and put them away, because they would not give honour to the blessed gods who live on Olympus.

But when earth had covered this generation also – they are called blessed spirits of the underworld by men, and, though they are of second order, yet honour attends them also – Zeus the Father made a third generation of mortal men, a brazen race, sprung from ash-trees; and it was in no way equal to the silver age, but was terrible and strong. They loved the lamentable works of Ares and deeds of violence; they ate no bread, but were hard of heart like adamant, fearful men. Great was their strength and unconquerable the arms which grew from their shoulders on their strong limbs. Their armour was of bronze, and their houses of bronze, and of bronze were their implements: there was no black iron. These were destroyed by their own hands and passed to the

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dank house of chill Hades, and left no name: terrible though they were, black Death seized them, and they left the bright light of the sun.

But when earth had covered this generation also, Zeus the son of Cronos made yet another, the fourth, upon the fruitful earth, which was nobler and more righteous, a god-like race of hero-men who are called demi-gods,¹ the race before our own, throughout the boundless earth. Grim war and dread battle destroyed a part of them, some in the land of Cadmus at seven-gated Thebe when they fought for the flocks of Oedipus, and some, when it had brought them in ships over the great sea gulf to Troy for rich-haired Helen's sake: there death's end enshrouded a part of them. But to the others father Zeus the son of Cronos gave a living and an abode apart from men, and made them dwell at the ends of earth. And they live untouched by sorrow in the islands of the blessed along the shore of deep swirling Ocean, happy heroes for whom the grain-giving earth bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing thrice a year, far from the deathless gods, and Cronos rules over them; for the father of men and gods released him from his bonds. And these last equally have honour and glory.

And again far-seeing Zeus made yet another generation, the fifth, of men who are upon the bounteous earth.

Thereafter, would that I were not among the men of the fifth generation, but either had died before or been born afterwards. For now truly is a race of iron, and men never rest from labour and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them. But, notwithstanding, even these shall have some good mingled with their evils. And Zeus will destroy this race of mortal men also when they come to have gray hair on the temples at their birth. The father will not agree with his children, nor the children with their father, nor guest with his host, nor comrade with comrade; nor will brother be dear to brother as aforetime. Men will dishonour their parents as they grow quickly old, and will carp at them, chiding them with bitter words, hard-hearted they, not knowing the fear of the gods. They will not repay their aged parents the cost their nurture, for might shall be their right: and one man will sack another's city. There will be no favour for the man who keeps his oath or for the just or for the good; but rather men will praise the evil-doer and his violent dealing. Strength will be right and reverence will cease to be; and the wicked will hurt the worthy man, speaking false words against him, and will swear an oath upon them. Envy, foul-mouthed, delighting in evil, with scowling face, will go along with wretched men one and all. And then Aidos and Nemesis, with their sweet forms wrapped in white robes, will go from the wide-pathed earth and forsake mankind to join the company of the deathless gods: and bitter sorrows will be left for mortal men, and there will be no help against evil.

In **Metamorphoses**, Ovid told also the story of the four ages:

The golden age was first; when Man yet new, No rule but uncorrupted reason knew: And, with a native bent, did good pursue. Unforc'd by punishment, un-aw'd by fear, His words were simple, and his soul sincere; Needless was written law, where none oppress: The law of Man was written in his breast: No suppliant crowds before the judge appear'd, No court erected yet, nor cause was heard: But all was safe, for conscience was their guard. The mountain-trees in distant prospect please, E're yet the pine descended to the seas: E're sails were spread, new oceans to explore: And happy mortals, unconcern'd for more, Confin'd their wishes to their native shore. No walls were yet; nor fence, nor mote, nor mound, Nor drum was heard, nor trumpet's angry sound: Nor swords were forg'd; but void of care and crime, The soft creation slept away their time. The teeming

¹ René Guénon said: "The Age of Heroes is none of the four ages that divide the Manvantara, nor is a different and special age, which should be added to these, but rather a simple subdivision."

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Earth, yet guiltless of the plough, And unprovok'd, did fruitful stores allow: Content with food, which Nature freely bred, On wildings and on strawberries they fed; Cornels and bramble-berries gave the rest, And falling acorns furnish'd out a feast. The flow'rs unsown, in fields and meadows reign'd: And Western winds immortal spring maintain'd. In following years, the bearded corn ensu'd From Earth unask'd, nor was that Earth renew'd. From veins of vallies, milk and nectar broke; And honey sweating through the pores of oak.

But when good Saturn, banish'd from above, Was driv'n to Hell, the world was under Jove. Succeeding times a silver age behold, Excelling brass, but more excell'd by gold. Then summer, autumn, winter did appear: And spring was but a season of the year. The sun his annual course obliquely made, Good days contracted, and enlarg'd the bad. Then air with sultry heats began to glow; The wings of winds were clogg'd with ice and snow; And shivering mortals, into houses driv'n, Sought shelter from th' inclemency of Heav'n. Those houses, then, were caves, or homely sheds; With twining oziers fenc'd; and moss their beds. Then ploughs, for seed, the fruitful furrows broke, And oxen labour'd first beneath the yoke.

To this came next in course, the brazen age: A warlike offspring, prompt to bloody rage, Not impious yet...

Hard steel succeeded then: And stubborn as the metal, were the men. Truth, modesty, and shame, the world forsook: Fraud, avarice, and force, their places took. Then sails were spread, to every wind that blew. Raw were the sailors, and the depths were new: Trees, rudely hollow'd, did the waves sustain; E're ships in triumph plough'd the watery plain. Then land-marks limited to each his right: For all before was common as the light. Nor was the ground alone requir'd to bear Her annual income to the crooked share, But greedy mortals, rummaging her store, Digg'd from her entrails first the precious oar; Which next to Hell, the prudent Gods had laid; And that alluring ill, to sight display'd. Thus cursed steel, and more accursed gold, Gave mischief birth, and made that mischief bold: And double death did wretched Man invade, By steel assaulted, and by gold betray'd, Now (brandish'd weapons glittering in their hands) Mankind is broken loose from moral bands; No rights of hospitality remain: The guest, by him who harbour'd him, is slain, The son-in-law pursues the father's life; The wife her husband murders, he the wife. The step-dame poyson for the son prepares; The son inquires into his father's years. Faith flies, and piety in exile mourns; And justice, here opprest, to Heav'n returns.

And Plato, in his **Republic**, underlined: “the god who formed you mixed gold in the composition of those who are capable to command; also, these are the most precious; he mixed silver in the composition of the guardians; brass and iron in that of the workers and other artisans.”

An Arabic text, quoted by Guénon, illustrates also this decay of the cycle: “In the ancient times, the people were differentiated by knowledge; after that, the birth and the family ties were taken into consideration; then, the wealth was considered a sign of superiority; eventually, in the present times, the people are judged only by the exterior appearance.” It is easy to note the correlation between the four castes and the four ages (yugas).

In a fairy-tale, called **The Grain of Wheat**, the descent of the cycle is vividly described: an emperor tries to find out the place where the wheat has grains as big as the hen's egg. In front of him will come, one after another, an old man, supported by two crutches, then his father, supported by one crutch, and eventually the latter's father, who, without crutches, explained to the emperor that in his time the grain of wheat was as big as an egg, men were men, but today, the men are undeveloped beings, their life is shorter and

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shorter, their only concern being the food, the drink and the clothes, that is, the exterior things. We remark the invert analogy: the old man with the two crutches suggests the four feet of the last age (complete solidification); then, in an ascendant sense, the old man's father with a crutch represents the three feet (more mobility), the man without crutches indicates the two feet and, eventually, even if the fairy-tale does not say, there should be a man with one foot symbolizing the Golden Age.

Lao Zi described the four ages as follows: "In the highest antiquity, (the people) did not know that there were (their rulers). In the next age they loved them and praised them. In the next they feared them; in the next they despised them. Thus it was that when faith (in the Dao) was deficient (in the rulers) a want of faith in them ensued (in the people)."

The vestiges of the Toltec tradition saved the "Legend of the Suns" in which the cycle (*Manvantara*) is parted in five Great Years, these "Years" corresponding to the different races that dominated the world, in conformity with the evolvment of the cycle.¹ We should say that, if the passing from one yuga to the other was marked by a revolt of an inferior caste,² the passing from one Year to another was accompanied by a cataclysm linked to one of the five elements (bhûtas), which was predominant in that age.

Consequently, the Iron Age or Kali-yuga appears to be under the sign of the revolted Shûdras. If the first three castes were *dwija*, twice-born, fully participating to the Tradition, the Shûdras represent the last possibilities, the inferior ones of the manifestation, a fact that was clearly illustrated by how the different traditions described this final age, but also by the present events of our modern world. In Kali-yuga, the Hindu tradition affirms, reign the deceit, falseness, inertia, greed and depravity; the Brâhmanas become addicted to luxury, the servants quit their masters, *the Shûdras take the power*; the whole world is filled with perverted people, and the strongest among the Brâhmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or Shûdras will become kings; the kings will behave like villains; *the castes will be all like Shûdra*.

And the people with the mentality of the revolted Shûdras will spread all these absurd modern theories about progress and evolution, when in fact they are the end of the string, not the beginning. They will promote the stupid idea of taming and mastering the Nature and its "fearful" forces, because they will try with any price to get rid of their real status, that of servants. They will invent automatons and machines, robots and remote controls, to appear as masters having the whole world as their servant. They will dream to dominate the outer space and the other planets. Yet, a mild storm is enough to disrupt these Shûdras, to see their machines impotent and their democracy crashing.

¹ Guénon said: "... finally, there is no consequence to be drawn with respect to the superiority of one race or another, they are only different and they have, each one, their own possibilities, and each race has or had its period of supremacy or domination, in conformity with the laws of cosmic cycles."

² These revolts appear, in conformity with the laws of cosmic cycles, also in the secondary cycles.

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The modern democracy is the result of the same “Shûdra mentality,” but we have to understand that countries where dictators or kings reign do not have a very different mentality today.¹

The present humanity will last, even if today the Shûdra mentality, corresponding to the Iron Age, is in power, as long as a Brâhmana mentality, corresponding to our secondary cycle, somehow subsists. When the Shûdras of the Shûdras will prevail, the end of times will have to come.²

¹ “Un gouvernement dans lequel des hommes de caste inférieure s’attribuent le titre et les fonctions de la royauté est ce que les anciens Grecs appelaient «tyrannie»” (René Guénon, **Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel**, Véga, 1976, p. 78).

² As an example, if somebody sees today an angry, vulgar and hectic priest, instructor or spiritual master, there is no doubt that this one has a Shûdra mentality not a Brâhmana one.