

## Excerpts from the Laws of Manu (translated into English)

The Brâhmana [Brahmin], the Kshatriya, and the Vaisya castes (varna) are the twice-born [religiously initiated] ones, but the fourth, the Sûdra, has one birth only; there is no fifth (caste). . . .

To Brâhmanas he [the god Brâhman] assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms [donations]).

The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures;

The Vaisya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land.

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sûdra, to serve meekly . . . these (other) three castes.

—from *The Laws of Manu*, Chapters 1 and 10, first century B.C.

(A king) who knows the sacred law must inquire into the laws of castes (gâti), of districts, of guilds, and of families, and (thus) settle the peculiar law of each. . . .

Abstention from injuring (creatures), veracity [truth], abstention from unlawfully appropriating (the goods of others), purity, and control of the organs, Manu has declared to be the summary of the law for the four castes. . . .

Among the several occupations the most commendable are, teaching the Veda for a Brâhmana, protecting (the people) for a Kshatriya, and trade for a Vaisya.

But a Brâhmana, unable to subsist by his peculiar occupations just mentioned, may live according to the law applicable to Kshatriyas; for the latter is next to him in rank. . . .

A man of low caste who through covetousness [greed] lives by the occupations of a higher one, the king shall deprive of his property and banish.

It is better (to discharge) one's own (appointed) duty incompletely than to perform completely that of another; for he who lives according to the law of another (caste) is instantly excluded from his own.

A Vaisya who is unable to subsist by his own duties, may even maintain himself by a Sûdra's mode of life, avoiding (however) acts forbidden (to him), and he should give it up, when he is able (to do so).

—from *The Laws of Manu*, Chapters 8 and 10, first century B.C.