

became established. Probably it was about this period that caste became established. Its divisions, privileges, duties, disqualifications, &c., are to be found in the *Laws of Menu*, the embodiment and systematising of Brahmanic Hinduism. In those codes it is pretended that caste had a divine origin, having its foundation in the earliest facts of creation. Brahma produced his own chosen people, the Brahmins, from his mouth. Hence they are to be regarded as Brahma's voice, their words as his words, their decisions as his decisions. Their persons are to be sacred; the killing of a Brahmin, even the most atrocious criminal, is the one unpardonable sin; the despising of a Brahmin, even the most despicable, is punishable with death and punishment in future transmigrations. Kings are to select their councillors from them alone; are to render them all obedience, reverence, and even worship; they alone are to interpret the sacred Books and the Laws, and they alone to administer justice; they are not to work, but to be supported by the donations of inferiors, who were to be privileged to have the glory of making them presents. The prohibition against their working was afterwards relaxed, and they were allowed to engage in any work of any other caste, though each other was kept strictly to its own place.

Next, from Brahma's arm proceeded the Kshatriya, and he, therefore, must be the warrior or strong arm of the nation. His province was to defend the people, but chiefly the Brahmins, to render himself an adept in all martial expedients, and expert in the use of all warlike weapons. His rank was next to the Brahmin. The Kshatriyas have disappeared from all parts of India save Rajpootana, and certainly the brave Rajpoots, who have held their own against all comers since the earliest historical days, until the might of Britain compelled obedience, are worthy to be ranked as descendants of those heroes whose prowess is recorded in the ancient Epics of the *Maha-Bharat* and *Ramayana*.

Next came forth from the thigh of Brahma the Vaishya, and to him was assigned the task of making money. He was to be the merchant, the trader, banker, &c. It was to be his joy to give large presents to the Brahmins, and to pay the Kshatriyas the wages of soldiers. The greater part of the wealth of the country speedily came into the hands of the Vaishyas.

Each of these castes was separated by a sufficiently broad line from each other, but the division was as nothing compared to the gulf which separated the lowest of them from the next caste, the Sudras, who were said to have come from Brahma's toe. Each of the three first mentioned castes was distinguished by the high epithet of the "twice-born,"—each was allowed to wear the "poita," or sacred thread worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm,—and each was allowed to read the Vedas. But the Sudras were to be the cultivators of the soil, and the slaves of the "twice-born"; they were to be the Gibeonites, "the hewers of wood and drawers of water," for all the others. They had no rights; it was to be their highest honour to be permitted to serve the others. This harshness demands explanation, and it is found in the supposition that the "twice-born" were the descendants of the conquering Aryans, whilst the Sudras were their Helots, the enslaved aborigines; a supposition strengthened by various facts, such as the darker colour of the low castes, the prevalence even till this time among them of practices and superstitions repugnant to the Aryan race, but which are found amongst the still independent aborigines, and their fondness for the worship of Shiva and Durga, who are identified with the aboriginal Mahadev and Parvati, the worship of whom was probably first permitted to them, and then gradually adopted by the conquerors.

It is manifest that the ever-increasing complexities of society would soon necessitate a breaking through of some of the regulations laid down in this tight-binding code. Intermarriages and unlawful intercourse between castes was to be attended with the excommunication of the offspring. But such intercourse became common, especially between the soldier Kshatriyas and the