According to Hindu religion, the first man, Manu Svayambhuva, laid down the laws by which people were to live. These laws, the Code of Manu, divided Hindu society into four social classes: the Brahmins were the priests and wise men; the Kshatriyas were the warriors; the Vaisyas were the merchants and farmers; and the Shudras were the menial laborers. The following excerpt from the Code of Manu states that each social class was to have its own set of duties and rules, or dharma.

**THINK THROUGH HISTORY: Clarifying**

Give an example of how the laws differ between the social classes.

> Now, for the sake of preserving all this creation, the most glorious Being ordained separate duties for those who sprang from His mouth, arm, thigh, and feet.
> For Brahmins he ordered teaching, study, sacrifice, and sacrificing as priests for others, also giving and receiving gifts.
> Defense of the people, giving alms, sacrifice, also study, and absence of attachment to objects of sense, in short, for a Kshatriya.
> Tending of cattle, giving alms, sacrifice, study, trade, usury, and also agriculture for a Vaisya.
> One duty the Lord assigned to a Shudra—service to those before-mentioned classes, without grudging.
> Man is declared purer above the navel; therefore the purest part of him is said by the Self-Existent to be his mouth.
> Since he sprang from the most excellent part, since he was the first-born, and since he holds the Vedas,1 the Brahmin is, by right, the lord of all this creation.
> Him the Self-Existent, after having performed penance, created in the beginning from his own mouth, for presentation of oblations2 to the gods and offerings to the manes,3 and for the preservation of all this world.
> What being is then superior to him, by whose mouth the gods eat oblations and the manes offerings?
> Of beings, the most excellent are said to be the animated; of the animated, those which subsist by intelligence; of the intelligent, men; of men, the Brahmins.

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1. *Vedas*: the Hindu sacred writings
2. *oblations*: things offered during prayer or devotion
3. *manes*: the spirits of the dead
But of the Brahmins, the learned are most excellent; of the learned, those who
know their duty; of those who know it, such as do it; and of those who do it,
those who know the Vedas.

The birth of a Brahmin is a perpetual incarnation of dharma; for he exists for
the sake of dharma, and is for the existence of the Vedas.

When a Brahmin is born, he is born above the world, the chief of all creatures,
to guard the treasury of dharma.

Thus, whatever exists in the universe is all the property of the Brahmin; for the
Brahmin is entitled to it all by his superiority and eminence of birth.

The Brahmin eats his own alone, wears his own, and gives away his own;
through the benevolence of the Brahmin, indeed, the other people enjoy all they
have.

For the ascertainment of his duties and those of the other castes in order, the
prudent Manu Sváyambhuva composed this treatise.

This treatise must be strenuously perused by a learned Brahmin and explained
rightly to the pupil, but not by any other person. . .

A Kshatriya who reviles a Brahmin ought to be fined one hundred panas; a
Vaisya one hundred and fifty or two hundred; but a Shudra ought to receive cor-
poral punishment.

A Brahmin should be fined fifty if he has thrown insult on a Kshatriya, but the
fine should be a half of the fifty if on a Vaisya, and twelve if on a Shudra.

If one of the twice-born abuses a man of like caste, he should be fined twelve,
but the fine should be twice this amount for words that ought never to be spoken.

If a man of one birth assaults one of the twice-born castes with virulent words,
he ought to have his tongue cut, for he is of the lowest origin.

If he make mention in an insulting manner of their name and caste, a red-hot
iron rod, ten fingers long, shall be thrust into his mouth.

If this man through insolence gives instruction to the priests in regard to their
duty, the king should cause boiling-hot oil to be poured into his mouth and ear.

If one through insolence denies their learning, country, caste, or bodily cere-
monies, he should be fined a fine of two hundred.

If he insults a one-eyed man, or a lame man, or any other person deformed in
like manner, he should be fined a fine of at least one káśāpana, even if he speaks
the truth.

He who slanders his own mother, father, wife, brother, son, or spiritual teacher,
should be fined one hundred, and also he who does not give the right of way to
his spiritual teacher.

The fine to be imposed by a wise king on a Brahmin and Kshatriya for mutual
insults is the first in the case of the Brahmin, and the medium fine in the case of
the Kshatriya.

Exactly thus and in accordance with the caste of each should be the application
of punishment in the case of a Vaisya and Shudra, except the cutting of the
tongue: thus is the decision.

4. reviles: hates
Thus has the rule of punishment in regard to verbal injuries been declared in accordance with truth. Now, furthermore, I will proclaim the law of corporal injuries.

If a man of the lowest birth should with any member injure one of the highest station, even that member of this man shall be cut off; this is an ordinance of Manu.

If he lift up his hand or his staff against him, he ought to have his hand cut off; and if he smite him with his foot in anger, he ought to have his foot cut off.

If a low-born man endeavours to sit down by the side of a high-born man, he should be banished after being branded on the hip, or the king may cause his backside to be cut off.