

Vedic India Sources (if you are struggling to read these sources, you can find a differentiated copy [here](#))

The Laws of Manu

The Laws of Manu was compiled by ancient Indian sages to develop a commentary on how society should run. It deals with topics such as the sacraments and study of the Vedas, the behavior of wives and women, and the laws of kings, among other subjects.

"That person is called a Brahmin who is engaged in studying the Vedas; who is devoted to the six well-known acts [rituals]; who is properly observant of all pious acts; who never takes food without having offered it duly to gods and guests; who is filled with reverence for his preceptor [teacher]; and who is always devoted to vows and truth. He is called a Brahmin in whom are truth, gifts, abstention from injury to others, compassion, shame, benevolence and penance. Of created beings, those which are animate [alive] are the best; of the animate, those which subsist by means of their intellect; of the intelligent, men are the best; and of men, the [brahmins] are traditionally declared to be the best.

He who is engaged in the profession of battle, who studies the Vedas, who makes gifts (to Brahmins) and takes wealth (from those he protects) is called a Kshatriya. Protection of the people, giving away [donating] of wealth, performance of sacrificial rites, study, and nonattachment to sensual pleasures—these are, in short, the duties of a kshatriya. Kshatriya never flees from the war, he shows bravery, skill, chivalry and patience in the face of war.

He who earns from keeping cattle, who is employed in agriculture and the means of acquiring wealth, who is pure in behavior and attends to the study of the Vedas, is called a Vaisya.

He who takes pleasure in eating every kind of food, who is engaged in doing every kind of work, who is impure in behavior, who does not study the Vedas, and whose conduct is unclean, is said to be a Sudra...

The code of conduct—prescribed by scriptures and ordained by sacred tradition—constitutes the highest dharma; hence a twice-born person, conscious of his own Self [seeking spiritual salvation], should be always scrupulous [diligent] in respect of it . . . But if you will not wage this lawful battle, then will you fail your own [caste] law and your honor, and incur sin. . . . The people will name you with dishonor; and to a man of fame dishonor is worse than death."

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verses 4-30

In this section near the beginning of the Bhagavad Gita (part of the Mahabharata), we see a conversation between Arjuna and Krishna. Arjuna, a soldier, feels hesitation before a battle in the civil war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. He seeks advice from Krishna (the incarnation of the god Vishnu).

Arjuna said: How shall I strike my grandfather, my guru, and all other relatives, who are worthy of my respect, with arrows in battle, O Krishna?

...We do not know which alternative, to fight or to quit, is better for us. Further, we do not know whether we shall conquer them or they will conquer us. We should not even wish to live after killing our cousin brothers, who are standing in front of us. My senses are overcome by the weakness of pity, and my mind is confused about duty [Dharma]. Please tell me what is better for me...I do not perceive that gaining an unrivaled and prosperous kingdom on this earth, or even lordship over all the celestial controllers will remove the sorrow that is drying up my senses.

After speaking like this to Lord Krishna, the mighty Arjuna said to Krishna: I shall not fight, and became silent. O King, Lord Krishna, as if smiling, spoke these words to the distressed Arjuna in the midst of the two armies.

Lord Krishna said: You grieve for those who are not worthy of grief, and yet speak words of wisdom. The wise grieves neither for the living nor for the dead. There was never a time when these monarchs, you, or I did not exist; nor shall we ever cease to exist in the future.

...The feelings of heat and cold, and pain and pleasure...they are transitory [temporary] and impermanent. Therefore, one should learn to endure them. Because a calm person who is not afflicted by these sense objects, and is steady in pain and pleasure, becomes fit for salvation.

The invisible Spirit [Atman] is eternal, and the visible, physical body is transitory [temporary]...Therefore fight, O Arjuna. The one who thinks that the Spirit is a killer, and the one who thinks the Spirit is killed, both are ignorant. Because the Spirit neither kills nor is killed. The Spirit is neither born nor does it die at any time. It does not come into being, or cease to exist. It is unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval. The Spirit is not destroyed when the body is destroyed.

O Arjuna, how can a person who knows that the Spirit is indestructible, eternal, unborn, and immutable, kill anyone or causes anyone to be killed?...Even if you think that the physical body takes birth and dies perpetually, even then, O Arjuna, you should not grieve like this. Because death is certain for the one who is born, and birth is certain for the one who dies. Therefore, you should not lament over the inevitable.

All beings are unmanifest, or invisible to our physical eyes before birth and after death. They manifest between the birth and the death only. What is there to grieve about? O Arjuna, the Spirit that dwells in the body of all beings is eternally indestructible. Therefore, you should not mourn for anybody.

The Mahabharata on the Origins of Kingship

Yudhistira said: "This word raja [king] is so very current in this world, O Bharata [master]; how has it originated? ...Bhishma said: "Neither kingship nor king was there in the beginning, neither danda [scepter] nor the bearer of a danda. All people protected one another by means of righteous conduct...Then delusion overcame them. Men were thus overpowered by infatuation [foolish interest]...their sense of righteous conduct was lost. When understanding was lost, all men, O best of the Bharatas, over-powered by infatuation, became victims of greed. Then they sought to acquire what should not be acquired. Thereby, indeed, O lord, another vice, namely, desire overcame them.

Attachment then attacked them, who had become victims of desire. Attached to objects of sense, they did not discriminate between what should be said and what should not be said, between the edible and the inedible and between right and wrong. When this world of men had been submerged in dissipation, all brahman [spiritual knowledge] perished; and when brahman perished, O king, righteous conduct also perished."

When brahman and righteous conduct perished, the gods were overcome with fear, and fearfully sought refuge with Brahma, the creator...Then, the self-born lord [Brahma] said to all those gods: 'I will consider what is most beneficial; let your fear depart, O leaders of the gods.' Thereupon he composed a work consisting of a hundred thousand chapters out of his own mind, wherein dharma [righteous conduct], as well as artha [material gain] and enjoyment of kama [sensual pleasures] were described. This group, known as the threefold classification of human objectives, was expounded by the self-born lord; so, too, a fourth objective, moksha [spiritual emancipation], which aims at a different goal, and which constitutes a separate group by itself. Then the gods approached Vishnu, the lord of creatures, and said: 'Indicate to us that one person among the mortals who alone is worthy of the highest eminence.' Then the blessed lord god Narayana reflected, and brought forth an illustrious mind-born son, called Virajas" who became the first king of India.

The Ramayana

The Ramayana tells the story of Rama, the prince of Ayodhya in northern India.

When Rama was about 16, a wise man came to the court, asking for help against demons; he chose Rama to help him, and Rama's half-brother Lakshmana came along to help. The boys received weapons and advice from the sage and they managed to destroy the demons. The sage then brought the boys to Mithila, where the king had a contest— whoever could handle his very heavy bow would win the right to marry Sita, a beautiful and virtuous girl. Rama won the contest and he and Sita were married in a great ceremony.

[In order to fulfill a promise to allow Rama's brother, Bharata, take the throne, Rama's father exiles him to the forest for 14 years]...In spite of the hardships they would face, the devoted Sita and loyal Lakshmana joined Rama in his exile. In the 13th year of the exile, an evil demon, Ravana, had one of his henchmen assume the form of a golden deer; it captivated Sita and she begged Rama to capture it for her. He went off...Ravana, posing as an ascetic, then tricked Sita into leaving the safety of her cottage and carried her away to his island kingdom of Lanka.

In seeking to rescue Sita, Rama and Lakshmana met Hanuman, a great monkey hero. Hanuman made a huge leap across the ocean to Lanka, where he spied on Ravana and found the weeping Sita. He offered to rescue her, but she refused to go with him, saying that it is important to Rama's honor that he rescue her himself...Hanuman was captured, but he lectured Ravana on the need to release Sita; in return, Ravana punished Hanuman by setting his tail on fire. Hanuman escaped, in turn setting Ravana's citadel on fire with his burning tail. He returned to Rama and told him what he had learned.

Rama and Lakshmana then enlisted the aid of the monkeys to help them rescue Sita...A great battle ensued, Rama killed Ravana...When Rama returned to his kingdom after the allotted time of exile, he found that his brother Bharata had refused the crown. Instead, although he ruled the kingdom in his brother's absence, Bharata kept a pair of Rama's sandals on the throne to remind the people that Rama was the rightful king. Rama was crowned king and reigned over his people for many years of peace and prosperity.