

did not know who his father was, and the latter could quite well have been a Brahmin.

It may therefore be held that the priests and the nobles practised hereditary occupations, and that either class was a closed body into which a man must be born. These two Varnas may thus be fairly regarded as castes. The Vaiśyas offer more difficulty, for they practised a great variety of occupations (see Vaiśya). Fick<sup>143</sup> concludes that there is no exact sense in which they can be called a caste, since, in the Buddhist literature, they were divided into various groups, which themselves practised endogamy such as the *gahapatis*, or smaller landowners, the *setthiis*, or large merchants and members of the various guilds, while there are clear traces<sup>144</sup> in the legal textbooks of a view that Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya stand opposed to all the other members of the community. But we need hardly accept this view for Vedic times, when the Vaiśya, the ordinary freeman of the tribe, formed a class or caste in all probability, which was severed by its free status from the Śūdras, and which was severed by its lack of priestly or noble blood from the two higher classes in the state. It is probably legitimate to hold that any Vaiśya could marry any member of the caste, and that the later divisions within the category of Vaiśyas are growths of divisions parallel with the original process by which priest and noble had grown into separate entities. The process can be seen to-day when new tribes fall under the caste system: each class tries to elevate itself in the social scale by refusing to intermarry with inferior classes on equal terms—hypergamy is often allowed—and so those Vaiśyas who acquired wealth in trade (*Śreṣṭhin*) or agriculture (the Pāli *Gahapatis*) would become distinct, as sub-castes, from the ordinary Vaiśyas. But it is not legitimate to regard Vaiśya as a theoretic caste; rather it is an old caste which is in process of dividing into innumerable sub-castes under influences of occupation, religion, or geographical situation.

Fick<sup>145</sup> denies also that the Śūdras ever formed a single

<sup>143</sup> *Op. cit.*, 19 et seq.; 162 et seq.

<sup>144</sup> Hopkins, *The Mutual Relations of* | *the Four Castes according to the Mānava-*  
*dharmaśāstram*, 78, 82 et seq.

<sup>145</sup> *Op. cit.*, 202 et seq.