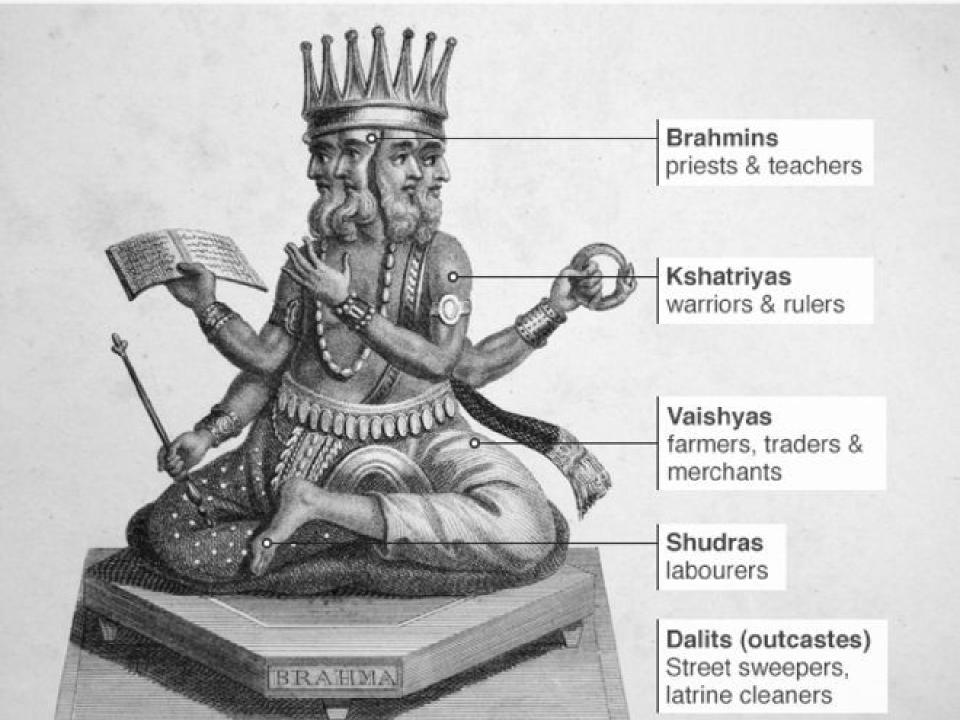
#### Caste System in Ancient India



## Origins of caste system

- Castes were first described in the book called "Rig Veda", one of the main manuscripts of the Vedic Period (1500-1000 BCE). So the caste system is about 3000 y.o.
- Caste system is based on *religious understanding* of the world. Castes are given from above, they are sacred because they are the way this world was created by gods (the primary God Brahma).
- **Caste system** division of people into segregated social groups different one from another by *professional occupation* as well as *rights and obligations*.
- Caste limits the mobility of an individual, his/her freedom of choosing profession and marriage partner, getting education and knowledge, having special kinds of food and etc.



#### Castes System

- Brahmins: most educated, advising the rulers, rituals of serving to the Gods, praying, white color
- Kshatrias: educated, powerful, war and governance, protection of brahmins, women and the weak, red color
- Vaishyas: farming or commerce, wealthy, ancient "middle class", had their own houses, yellow (golden) color

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- Shudras: not educated, labour workers, servants, didn't have own houses, lower caste, black color
  - <u>Untouchables (outcaste)</u>: "dirty" work, living outside of the settlements, no access to water sources, no access to temples

### Castes in Modern India

- Modern India context:
  - 1.3 billion people
  - 80% of population is rural
  - Over 50% is poor
- There is more than 3000 castes and subcastes, depending on ethnical diversity of the population of the certain region
- 90% of marriages are still made inside of the caste (land of origin, family network, social-economic conditions)

#### Castes in Modern India

- Is caste system legal?
  - In 1930s the British changed the legislation of India by establishing quotas for the representatives of lower castes in the governmental institutions
  - 1950, Article 17 of the Constitution of India:
    "Untouchability is a punishable offense".

# Caste System – In Practice

- Because of the law of Karma, people do not resist the caste system.
- They believe they are there because of their actions in previous

lives.

- This encourages the individual to fulfill his role or duty of his or her
- caste, because their position in the next life is sure to improve.
- If you did something outside your caste, you could be excommunicated from your caste. That would cut you off from doing
- any work to support yourself because you could only do the jobs

allowed by your caste.

#### Conclusion

- Caste system is a historically inherited reality of modern India's society which is still visible
- Caste system helps to sustain the hierarchy and power, as well as social and economic inequality
- Caste system is a challenge for modern India to improve human and civil rights protection of each citizen

Thank you!