**Origin of Caste System**

The origin of the Indian caste system has many theories behind it. Some of them are religious, while others are biological. The religious theories explain that according to the Rig Veda, which is the ancient Hindu book, the primal man, Purush, destroyed himself to create a human society and the different parts of his body created the four different varnas. The Brahmins were from his head, the Kshatriyas from his hands, the Vaishyas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet. The Varna hierarchy is determined by the descending order of the different organs from which the Varnas were created (Daniel). For example, Brahmans, who were derived from the head of Purush, are considered the intelligent and most powerful varna because of their wisdom and education and are a representation of the brain. In the same way, Kshatriyas, considered the warrior caste, were created by arms, which represent strength. Another religious theory claims that the Varnas were created from the body organs of Brahma, who is the creator of the world in Hinduism.

**Karma in the Caste System**

As mentioned earlier, the Brahmins came out of his mouth, the Kshatriyas from his arms, the Vaiyshas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet. Another justification derives from the theory of **Karma**. This concept rationalizes the caste system based on birth. It supports the argument that people of the lower castes have to blame themselves for their troubles and low status because of their bad Karma in their past life (Jayarama V). The law of Karma states that the present condition of your soul, for example, confusion or serenity, is based on your decisions in the past and that you, as an individual, have made yourself what you are based on your actions. Also, your present thoughts, decisions, and actions determine your future life events, and these events can alter one’s Karma through natural, moral decision and action (Oriental Philosophy). Therefore, it is the notion that “one’s particular duty is calibrated to the class into which one was born and the stage of life one is presently passing through” (Smith, 10), and that one of the main entailments of the caste system is “the belief in karma and the cycle of rebirth whereby ones social position in this life is ethically determined by moral actions in past lives” (Smith, 10). Since one of the main beliefs in Hinduism is that the consequences of your past decisions have determined your present state, reincarnation plays a huge role in the prevention of people revolting against the caste system. Reincarnation was created by the Aryans in order to justify the oppressive behavior they were imposing on the natives and to keep the people from rising up against the system. Reincarnation bolsters caste oppression in two ways: it justifies injustice, and deflects hopes for progress from this life to a “next life” (JoT). For the people on top of the caste system (the Brahmins), reincarnation justifies why they get the privilege of high-class birth. Those privileges were earned through virtuous behaviors in their past lives, and a privileged birth proves that one deserves privilege. For the people on the bottom, the Shudras and the untouchables, reincarnation justifies why they suffer for their low birth. They must have earned their suffering through sinful acts in past lives. In order to avoid a low-caste birth in their next life, Hindus who are born as Shudras or untouchables learned to support rather than oppose their own oppression. Hinduism teaches low-caste people that the way to improve their position in their next life is by leading a virtuous life this time around with no acts of deviance towards the caste system (JoT).