

Name _____

Date _____

Hinduism and the Caste System: A Role-Playing Activity

Historical Context: Hinduism is a religion from India that is different in many parts of the country. But one thing that is similar is the caste system. The Ancient Aryans who created Hindu beliefs divided up Indian society into 4 castes: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. The Untouchables are outcasts (not even part of the caste system). Each caste had to practice good dharma (the rules for their caste) and also understand the idea of karma (your actions will have consequences) or else they might be reincarnated in a lower caste. But if they practiced good dharma, they might move up the caste system in their next life.

Your Task: You will be told which caste you are in. Each person will be part of a group that has one student from each caste. As a group, you must make a poster that cuts out images and words from a magazine and glues them onto a diagram. The diagram shows the levels of the caste system, so you must choose images or words that relate to each specific caste and then, next to the level, explain how they relate. The roles for each caste member are below:

- **Brahmin:** Supervise and direct the others. You are in charge of deciding which images go into the diagram, proofreading and editing what the Kshatriyas write, and keeping everyone on task
- **Kshatriya:** You will write explanations of how each image relates to the caste level. The Brahmin must proofread a rough draft of what you write before it gets written onto the poster. While you are waiting for something to do, you must remain quiet and respect those in your own caste and those above your caste.
- **Vaishya:** You must glue the images onto the diagram in the right ways according to what the Brahmin decide. While you are waiting for something to do, you must remain quiet and respect those in your own caste and those above your caste.
- **Shudra:** You must cut out the words and images, that the Brahmin decide on, from the magazine. While you are waiting for something to do, you must remain quiet and respect those in your own caste and those above your caste.
- **Untouchables:** You are the clean up crew. You are not allowed to speak to or interact with anyone outside your caste and you must clean up as people make a mess (if there are scraps of paper, pick them up), while also getting people water if they desire. They can speak to you, but you cannot speak to them.

Karma and Dharma Points: While doing this activity, there will be karma and dharma monitors walking around the class. They will have lists of every student and be adding a “plus sign” or a “minus sign” next to everyone’s name if they are practicing good or bad karma and dharma. At the end of the class, we will add up how many dharma and karma points each student has, and that will determine your grade for the assignment. **Remember, your grade is based on how well you act according to your dharma.**