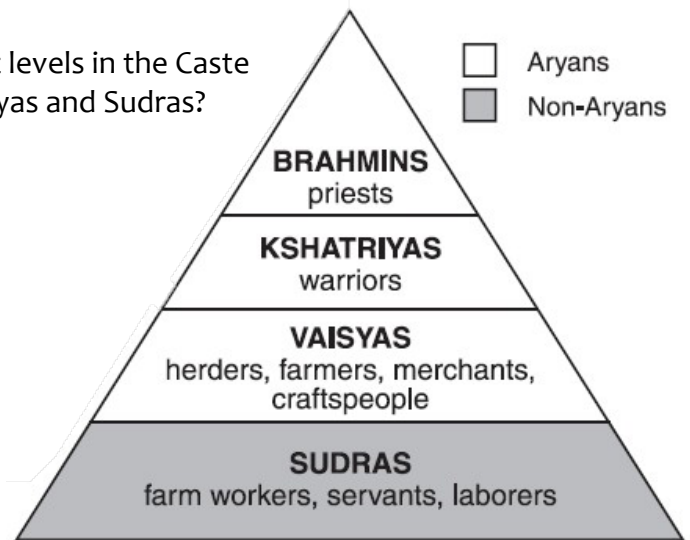


# the caste इण्डल

**The Caste System** “From the Vedas, we learn that the Aryans divided their society into ranked groups based on occupation. The highest group was made up of the Brahmins, or priests. Next came the Kshatriyas (kuh SHAT ree yuhz), or warriors. The third group, the Vaisyas (VYS yuz), included herders, farmers, artisans, and merchants. The Aryans separated people who had little or no Aryan heritage into a fourth group, the Sudras (SOO druz). This group included farmworkers, servants, and other laborers. The lowest social group, the dalits (DAH lits), was considered outside of the caste system. These people did work that others wouldn’t, such as making leather from animal skins.”

*Source: World History, Ellis and Esler, Prentice Hall*

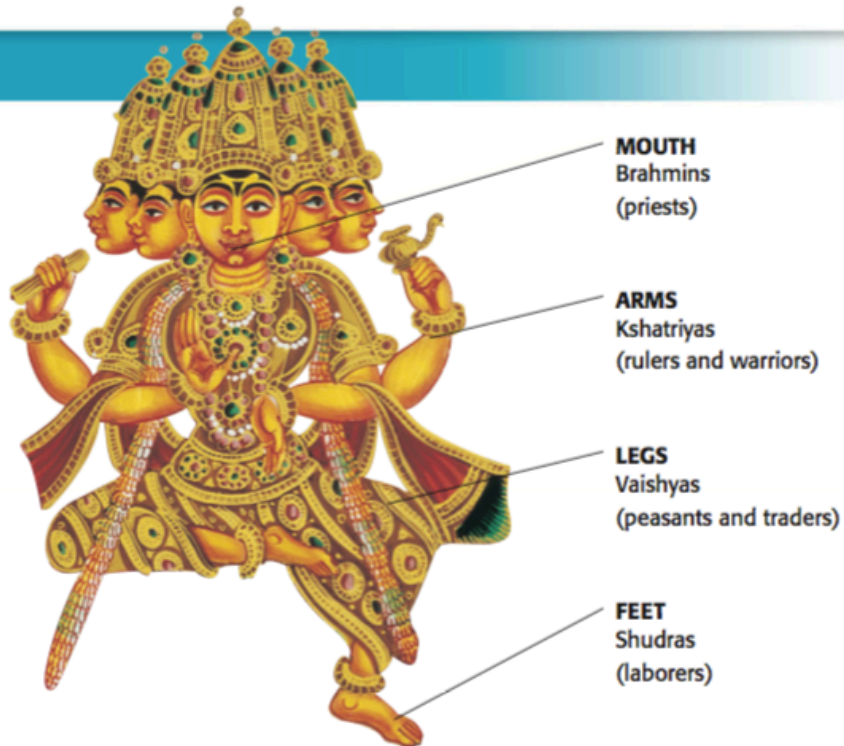
1. What differences existed between the different levels in the Caste System? What was the difference between Vaisyas and Sudras?



## > Analyzing Art

### The Aryan Caste System

According to Indian tradition, the four major castes emerged from the mouth, arms, legs, and feet of Purusha (the first human being). Purusha (at right) is identified with the creator god Brahma. The body part indicated the dignity and role of the caste that emerged from it.



#### SKILLBUILDER:

#### Interpreting Visual Sources

**Making Inferences** Why might the caste of Brahmins (priests) have been associated with the mouth?

2. A religious explanation was given for the castes. What did the body part associated with the caste say about that caste?

*“When they divided Purusha (the Cosmic Man) how many portions did they make? What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet? The Brahmin was his mouth, of both his arms was the [Ksatriya] made. His thighs became the Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was produced.”*

— The Rig Veda

3. How do you think a religious explanation could help to deter (discourage) people from trying to improve their social status?
4. Considering all of the documents, do you think the Caste System was originally developed for religious or social reasons? Explain.
5. **ANSWER THE QUAESTIO:** How was life in the Indian Subcontinent different before and after the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization?