

Explanation: How reincarnation and the caste system are related

- 1) The Indus River Valley Civilization and the Aryan people probably combined when the Aryans invaded the IRVC around 1500 BCE.
- 2) Each group had their own traditions and religious beliefs.
 - a) Socially, we don't know much about how the IRVC divided their societies. We know that the greatest warrior became chief of the Aryans (rajah), and that they divided the rest of their society by occupation:
 - priests
 - warriors
 - artisans, merchants, traders, skilled craftsmen
 - farmers/peasants, slaves, servants, non-Aryans
 - b) Regarding religion, both groups were polytheistic. The Aryans had many ancient stories passed down verbally by priests. One of the story collections was called the Rig Vedas. (The word Veda means "wisdom.")
- 3) By the year 500 BCE, the IRVC and the Aryans had really turned into one group, socially and religiously. Here is where we can point to the start of Hinduism.
- 4) When the two groups combined, they combined their many different traditions. One of the changes was that the idea of dividing society by job class (a social or political division) was combined with the idea of reincarnation (a religious idea). They tied the two ideas together, saying that "Yes, you are stuck in the caste (class) you are born in, **but the reason you were born there is because of how you reincarnated.**"

-You should understand that this gave extra reason for people to stick with the caste system and not try to "buck the system," because you are born into the caste for a **religious reason**. If you recall, Egyptian pharaohs (political leaders) had extra influence or power over their people because of their ties to the Egyptian people's religion. People would have been hesitant to try to revolt because government and religion were tied together.

Also, you are born into the caste you are because of **your own actions**. Remember, how you reincarnate is dependent on your actions in a previous life, so if you move up the social scale, you must have done good things or learned a lot, or perhaps the other way around if you move down the caste system.

-Some of you are now wondering to yourself: "Yeah, but how do they **know** that they are reincarnated, that they used to be someone else in a previous life, and that where they are today is due to their actions in that previous life???"

The answer is: faith. People who believe in any faith believe it despite science, evidence, proof, etc. To have faith does not require hard facts. Think about any religion you are familiar with. How do you really know? You know in your heart because you believe. It is no different for people of any religion.