Lesson: 6th grade

Central Question: Did the caste system unite ancient Indian society?

California History-Social Science Standards:

6.5.3 Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved into early Hinduism.

6.5.4 Outline the social structure of the caste system.

Common Core State Standards

R.H.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

R.H.9 Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Overview of Procedures:

Warm-Up: Simulation.

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| 1. **Pre-Activity Set-Up** | Divide Students into 3-4 groups; depending on class size |
| 1. **Group Set-Up (Items Provided to each group)** | 1. Scissors + Glue + Tape; Cardboard 2. Scissors; Cardstock 3. Glue; Newspaper 4. Nothing; Kleenex/Paper towels |
| 1. **Task** | Tell Students they have 15-20 min. to build a Structure; house, building, etc… (Provide NO Instruction/Support) |
| 1. **Judging** | Give the winning team (HINT: Team A) a prize/reward. |
| 1. **Question** | Ask students if the (Insert Teacher Name Here) system united the classroom?  Ex: *Did the Gomez System unite the classroom*? |

The thinking behind the simulation is for students to understand that in ancient Indian society people had different resources/opportunities available to them based on their caste.

Into:

1. Teacher provides background information on the beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how this evolved into early Hinduism. The social structure of the caste system would be part of the background information provided.

There is some helpful reading here: <http://www.historyteacher.net/GlobalStudies/Readings/reading-castesystem.pdf> and <http://www.ushistory.org/civ/8b.asp>

2. Introduce the question: Did the caste system unite ancient Indian society?

3. Teacher models a close reading of The Ancient South Asian World “A Place for Everyone: Caste and Society” (p.3-4)

Possible text dependent questions:

1. Who wrote this source?
2. What is this person’s occupation? Does that mean he/she is qualified to write about ancient India?
3. What changes occurred in India in the 1st century?
4. How was the Code of Manu (or Book of Manu) a response to these changes?
5. How could bad karma affect a person’s life?
6. What could a person improve their karma?

4. Students jigsaw the two readings on the caste system “A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms” (p.5) and “Untouchables” (p.6) using the Annotation and Evidence Collection Guide (it’s one of the attachments) to gather information on one source. They are then paired up with a student(s) who have a different source to share information.

5. Whole group discussion about what they discovered regarding the sources. Some possible questions:

1. What was ancient Indian society like? How do we know?
2. When was Source 2 written? What is the perspective of the source? What can we learn from the source?
3. Does Source 2 support the idea that the caste system united Indian society? If yes, what evidence would you point to in the reading? If no, what evidence would you point to in the reading?
4. When was Source 3 written? What is the perspective of the source? What can we learn from the source?
5. Does the author of Source 3 believe that the caste system united Indian society? If yes, what evidence would you point to in the reading? If no, what evidence would you point to in the reading?

6. Optional: The teacher could introduce one more source—the video clip from the BBC’s Story of India Episode 2: Power of Ideas; from 2:00 to 6:58. It’s available on Youtube--https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63Jw0Ky6ZpQ4

Assessment:

Students respond to the question using evidence from the source. Use the PIE handout.

 Source 1: The Ancient South Asian World “A Place for Everyone: Caste and Society”

Authors: Jonathan Mark Kenoyer and Kimberley Heuston\*

Published 2005

For centuries, the people of South Asia had been able to tell a lot about each other with a single glance. Men in white with a thread over their left shoulders were the “twice-born” Brahmins who did the thinking for everyone. Men in blood red, with our without the sacred thread, were the Kshatriya, the warriors and kings who did the fighting for everyone. Men in yellow were the Vaisya, the merchants who made wealth for everyone. And men in black were the Shudra, the workers who served everyone.

# Vocabulary Words

Code of Manu—Hindu law of men and women that told them how to behave with each other.

dharma—a person’s duty fulfilled by observing custom or law.

varna—one of the four social classes which include the Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Shudra.

karma— the belief that whatever you do comes back to you. For example, if you do [something](http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=something) good, [something](http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=something) good will happen to you.

But by 1 CE, this well-organized society was beginning to fall apart. How were you supposed to treat a Kushana? Or…people from Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Mediterranean, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, or China? And what were you supposed to do when you had a ruler like Kanishka or Ashoka who supported all kinds of religions? It was all turning into one big confusing mess. New languages, new gods, new ways of doing things—no wonder everyone was fighting all the time. How can you avoid misunderstandings and conflict if people don’t understand their place in society?

Some people thought that what South Asia needed was some good, old-fashioned rules…..

In the first century CE, the Brahmins began to refer to a text called the *Code of Manu*. It was supposed to be a record of the laws that the Creator, Brahma, gave to the first man….Manu. These laws were supposed to explain your *dharma* to you—your duty, your purpose…How did you know what you were supposed to be when you grew up? How did you decide the best way to use your time? How should you treat your friend?...

The Code of Manu was very clear that the *varna* you belonged to decided a whole lot about your life. It said that Shudras existed only to serve the other three varnas. That didn’t mean that the Shudras weren’t important. They were. Society needed everyone….

The Code of Manu made it clear that people who were born into a caste should only marry people from the same caste and that they should not try to change their caste or move up in society.

If you were born a Shudra….[y]ou’d made a lot of mistakes in your last life resulting in bad *karma,* and now you had to pay your dues.

The upside was that if doing something bad could get you in trouble, doing something good could fix it. If you changed your behavior, your good karma meant that your next life would be a better one. A big part of making your next life a good one was following the rules of the life you were in.

\*Dr. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer is a professor of anthropology at University of Wisconsin-Madison. His main focus is on the Indus Valley Civilization. Kimberley Heuston writes historical fiction and is a secondary history and English teacher.

Excerpt from “A Place for Everyone: Caste and Society.”  *The Ancient South Asian World*. Ed. Ronald Mellor and Amanda Podany. New York: Oxford UP, 2005. 112-114. Print.

Source 2: A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms(394-414CE)

Authors: Faxian or Fa-hsien

414 CE

*Background information: Fa-hsien was a Buddhist monk. At the age of 25 he traveled to India to learn about Buddhism there and to discover authentic Buddhist writings. His traveled throughout Southeast Asia, recovered a large quantity of Buddhist writings, and returned to China where translated them. A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms (394-414CE) is an account of the journey he took.*

# Vocabulary

magistrates—government officials

cultivate—farm

corporal punishment—physical punishment.

Chandalas—a member of the lower caste, outcast or Untouchable.

All south from this is named the Middle Kingdom. In it the cold and heat are finely balanced, and there is neither frost nor snow. The people are numerous and happy; they have not to register their households, or attend to any *magistrates* and their rules; only those who *cultivate* the royal land have to pay some of their income from it. If they want to go, they go; if they want to stay on, they stay. The king governs without beheading or other *corporal punishments.* Criminals are simply fined, lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances. Even in the cases or repeated attempts at wicked rebellion, they only have their right hands cut off. The king's body-guards and attendants all have salaries. Throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic. The only exception is that of the *Chandalas* or outcasts. That is the name for those regarded as wicked men, and live apart from others. When they enter the gate of a city or a market-place, they strike a piece of wood to make themselves known, so that men know and avoid them, and do not come into contact with them. In that country they do not keep pigs and fowls, and do not sell live cattle; in the markets there are no butchers' shops and no dealers in intoxicating drink....Only the Chandalas a fishermen and hunters, and sell flesh meat.

Excerpted from: http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~phalsall/texts/faxian.html

Source 3: “Untouchable”published in National Geographic Magazine

Authors: Tom O’Neil

June, 2003 CE

*Background information: Tom O’Neil is reporting on the caste system in present day India. India’s constitution forbids discrimination based on a person’s position in the caste system and abolished Untouchability.*

**Untouchables** don't look different from other Indians. Their skin is the same color. They don't wear rags; they are not covered with sores. They walk the same streets and attend the same schools...

# Vocabulary

Untouchables—members of the lower caste, outcast or Untouchable.

Laws of Manu—Hindu law of men and women that told them how to behave with each other.

Brahman—a member of the highest caste.

Varna-- one of the four social classes which include the Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Shudra.

hews—follows.

Untouchables perform society's "unclean work"…as defined by Hindu law. Untouchables cremate the dead, clean latrines, cut umbilical cords, remove dead animals from the roads, tan hides, sweep gutters. These jobs, and the status of Untouchability, are passed down for generations. Even the vast number of Untouchables who work at "clean" jobs, mostly low-paying farmwork for landlords, are considered impure. In an outwardly free society, Untouchables are trapped at the bottom of a system that can't function without discrimination.

The Hindu caste system has its own instruction manual. The **Laws of Manu**, compiled at least 2,000 years ago by **Brahman** priests, prescribes for each **varna** what to eat, whom to marry, how to earn money, when to fight, how to keep clean, whom to avoid. "Manu is engraved inside every Hindu," said Umashankar Tripathy, a Brahman priest…He wore the traditional dhoti, a long loincloth with a tunic buttoned over it. His clothes were spotless, his hands as soft as fine leather gloves.

Tripathy **hews** to the words of Manu. He explained that as a Brahman he must uphold the code of purity, the basis for dividing society from top to bottom. "I do not eat meat or drink alcohol. I will not eat vegetables like ginger or onion that are grown in the ground. My mind should be as clean as my clothes."

A proper Brahman should never come in contact with an Untouchable, Tripathy instructed. "A Brahman wouldn't even touch the feet of Gandhi," he said, referring to the deified leader of India's independence. "Gandhi was a **Vaisya**; Brahmans are superior."

Excerpted from: http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/features/world/asia/india/untouchables-text/1

Annotation and Evidence Collection Chart

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Central Question: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| Source #2: |
| Author: Who wrote this source? *Circle the name of the author.* Why is this person writing this source? |
| When did he/she write the source? *Underline the date.*  Was it written during the time that you are studying? |
| Summarize the source: What is this source about? |
| How would the author respond to the central question? |
| Evidence: How do you know? Quote or paraphrase from the source. |

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| Source #3: |
| Author: Who wrote this source? *Circle the name of the author.* Why is this person writing this source? |
| When did he/she write the source? *Underline the date.*  Was it written during the time that you are studying? |
| Summarize the source: What is the source about? |
| How would the author respond to the central question? |
| Evidence: How do you know? Quote or paraphrase from the source. |

Based on what I heard from my teammates, my tentative answer to the central question is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Questions I have: