

Theme-3

Kinship, Caste and Class Early Societies (C. 600 BCE - 600 CE)

Key concepts in nutshell

Historians tried to understand the social set up, social practices during these periods. Therefore taken Mahabharata as a case study for better understanding of the concept. It covers wide range of social set up.

- family which is a unit and is part of large networks of people we define as relatives
- System of patrilineality - prevalent in north India
- Blood relations example two groups of cousins - the Kauravas & the Pandavas
Both belonging to a single ruling family, that of the Kurus, a lineage dominating one of the Janapadas.
Under patrilineality, sons could claim the resources (including the throne in case of kings) of their father when the latter died.
- Rules of Marriage : Types of marriages - Eight
e.g. Endogamy - Marriage in own caste or place
Exogamy - Marriage out of his gotra
Polygyny- A system in which husband have more than one wife.
Polyandry- A system in which wife have many husbands.
- The Gotra of women - prevalent system
 - a. After marriage women had to give up fathers gotra and opt that of their husband on marriage.
 - b. Members of same gotra could not marry
- Importance of mothers - In north son was known by his father's name
In South Satvahana rulers were identified through matrilineality (named derived from that of the mother)
Example Satvahana rulers -
Gautamiputra means son of Gautami (mother)
Vasisthiputa means son of Vasisthi (mother)
In North norms were laid down by the Brahmins in Sanskrit texts like Dharmashastra and Dharmasutras
- According to the Sutras only Kshatriyas could be a king
- It also talked about occupation and caste.
- Evolving jatis and social mobility - other than prescribed four varnas - i.e. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Other occupation like hunting, work of goldsmith or goldsmith or swarnakara, carpenter etc were put into jatis
- Varna and access to property

According to the Brahmanical texts kings depicted as wealthiest Priests also generally shown as rich - Mahabharata classified under two heads-

- a. Narrative - contains stories
 - b. Didactic -contains prescription about social norms, messages.
- Manusmriti is considered the most important Dharma Sutra and Dharmashastra. It was compiled between 200 BCE and 200 CE. This Laid down rules governing social life.
 - During Mahabharata age gotras were considered very important by higher verna of societies.
 - Social differences prevailed and integration took place within the framework of caste system.
 - The original version of Mahabharata is in Sanskrit.
 - It contains vivid descriptions of battles forest, palaces and settlements.

V. S. A. (2 Marks)

Q.1 What were the effects of several changes in between 600 BCE and 600 CE on societies?

Ans.

- Extension of Agriculture in to forested areas.
- Craft specialists often emerged as distinct social groups.

Q.2 What sources are used by Historian for understanding of social changes?

Ans.

- Textual Traditions.
- From Inscriptions.

Q.3 What do you understand by " The critical edition of the Mahabharata"?

Ans.

- One of the most ambitious projects of scholarship began in 1919.
- Under the leadership of a noted Indian Sanskritist V.s. Sukthankar.
- A team comprising a dozen of scholars initiated the task of preparing a critical edition of the Mahabharata.

Q.4 What was patriliney and Matriliney?

Ans.

- Patriliney Means tracing descent from father to son, Grandson and so on.
- Matriliney the term is used when descent is traced through the mother.

Q.5 What do you understand of Exogamy Marriage types.

Ans.

- Marriage outside the unit

Q.6 What were the terms of gotras? What were the rules of gotras?

Ans.

- Each gotra was named after a Vedic Seer and all those who belonged to the same gotra.
- Two Rules about gotra were particularly very important. Women were expected to give up their father's gotra and adopt that of their husband's gotra after Marriage.

Q.7 Why were mothers important in Satavahana rule?

Ans:-

- Satavahana rules were Identified through matronymic's (Names Derived from mother)
- Although this may suggest that mothers were important.

Q.8 What were the categories made by Brahmanas?

Ans:-

- Brahmanas Claimed the order in which they were ranked. First was divinely ordained.
- While placing group classified as shudras at the bottom of the social order.

Q.9 Describe the Duties of the Chandalas.

Ans:-

- They had to live outside the village.
- Use discarded utensils.
- Wear Clothes of the dead and ornaments of iron.

Q.10 What do you understand by the Term " Beyond the four varnas"?

Ans:-

- Brahmanas considered some people as being outside the system,they were called untouchable.'
- Some activities were " Polluting" those who performed such tasks designated as chandalas"

Q.11 What do you understand by stridhana (Woman's wealth)?

Ans:-

- According to Manusmriti women were allowed to retain the gift they received on the occasion of their marriage as stridhana.
- This could be inherited by their children.

Q.12 The historians which elements are considered by historians when they analyse text Book.

Ans:-

- They examine whether text were written in which languages. They also consider the kinds of text.
- They try to find out about the authors.

Q.13 What was the ancient Tamilkam?

Ans:-

- In Tamilkam there were several chiefdoms around 2000 Years ago.
- Amongst other things the chiefs were patrons of bards and poets who sang their praises.

Q.14 How Historians classify the contents of the Mahabharata?

Ans:-

- Narrative- Stories, designated.
- Didactic - Social Norms.

Q.15 How is Mahabharata a Dynamic text?

Ans:-

- Versions of the epic were written in a variety of languages.
- Several stories that originated in specific regions.
- At the same time the central story of the epic was often retold in different ways.

S. A. (4 Marks)

Q.1 Mention a rules of marriage as mentioned in the early text.

Ans:-

- The gift of a Daughter after dressing her in costly clothes and honoring her with presents of Jewels.
- The gift of a daughter by the father after he has addressed the couple with the text" May both of you perform your duties together.
- After having given as much wealth as he can afford to the kinsmen and to the Bride herself.
- The voluntary union of a maiden and her lover.

Q.2 What rules did the dharma sutras and Dharma Shastra's contain about the Ideal "occupations" of the four Varna's?

Ans.

- Brahmana's were supposed to study and teach the Vedas, perform sacrifices and give and receive gifts.
- Kshatriyas were to engage in warfare, protect people and justice, study the Vedas and get sacrifices performed.
- The last three occupations were also assigned to the Vaishya's ie crafts, Agriculture and trade.
- Shudras were assigned only serving the three "higher" varnas.

Q.3 What was Jati? How are they related to Varnas?

Ans.

- Jati in Brahmanical theory.
- Varna was based on Birth.
- Number of varnas were four.
- There was no restriction on the number of Jati.
- Jatis which shared a common occupation or profession were sometimes organized into shrenis or guilds.

Q.4 How could men and women acquire wealth in early societies?

Ans.

- For men wealth-Inheritance, Finding, Purchase, Conquest, Investment, work and acceptance of gifts from good people.
- For women - what was given at the time of the marriage, Bridal procession, Token of affection she got from her brother, mother or father and she could also acquire husband.

Q.5 Who was V.S. Sukthankar? What was his contribution in understanding the Mahabharata.

Ans.

- V.S. Sukthankar was a most famous Sanskritist.
- Under the sukthankar a team prepared a critical edition of the Mahabharata.
- Collecting Sanskrit Manuscripts of the text. Written in a variety of scripts.
- Ultimately they selected the verses that were common to most versions.
- And published these in several volumes.

L. A. (8 Marks)

Q.1 Discuss whether the Mahabharata could have been the work of a single author.

Ans.

- Probably composed by charioteer - bards known as sutas.
- From the fifth century BCE Brahmana's took over the story and began to commit it to writing.
- Also possible that the upheavals that often accompanied the establishment of these states.
- Where old social values were often replaced by new norms.
- Another Phase in the composition of the text between C 200 BCE and 200 C.E.
- Between 200 BCE and 400 BCE Large didactic sections was included the manusmriti.

PASSAGE BASED QUESTIONSS:

Draupadi's Marriage

Drupad the king of Panchal groined a competition where the challenges were to string a bow and hit target: the winner would be chosen to marry his daughter Draupadi. Arjuna was victorious and was garlanded by Draupadi. The Pandavas returned with her to their mother Kunti, who, even before she was saw them to share whatever they had got she realized mistake when shesaw Draupadi. But her command could not be violated. After much deliberation, Yudhisthira decided that Draupadi would be their common wife.

When Drupad was told about this, he protested. However, the seer Vyasa arrived and told him that the Pandavas were in reality incarnations of Indra. Whose wife had been reborn as Draupadi and they were thus destined for each other?

Vyasa added that in another instance a young woman had prayed to Shiva for a husband. And in her enthusiasm, had prayed five times instead of once. This women was known reborned as Draupadi and Shiva had fulfilled her desire convinced by these stories, Drupada consented to marriage.

1. What was the competition organized by the Panchala king Drupada for the marriage of his daughter? 1
2. What two explanations were given by Vyasa to convince king Drupada for Draupadi being the common wife of the Pandvas? 3

3. What form of the marriage was Draupadi's marriage to the Pandvas? Give two views of historians about the form of marriage. 3

Answers:

- Drupada organized a competition where the challenge was to string a bow and hit a target.
- Vyasa told that the Pandvas were in reality incarnations of Indra. He also told that a woman was blessed by Lord Shiva to have five husband was reborn as Draupadi.
- It was an example of polyandry. Some historians believe that such kind of marriage were perhaps prevalent in some section of societies. Some historians believe that such tradition was present in the Himalaya region.

(Questions Bank)

2 Marks Questions

1. What do you understand by the term Epic?
2. Give two Importance of Manusmriti
3. Were all kings Kshatriyas?
4. Define social classes.

4 Marks Questions

1. Who were Chandalas? What were the duties of Chandals laid down by Manusmriti?
2. Why were the Dharmashatras and Dharmasutra written?
3. How are all families not identical? Explain the kind of variations that occurred in ancient times.
4. The central story of Mahabharata reinforced the India of kinship and succession explains.

8 Marks Questions

- 1- How did Brahmana's create a Sharper Social Divide?