

Kinship, Caste and Class

Multiple Choice Type Questions

- How many verses are there in Mahabharata?
(a) 20 thousand
(b) 50 thousand
(c) One Lakh
(d) More than one lakh
- Who won the battle of Mahabharata?
(a) Pandavas
(b) Kaurvas
(c) Mauryans
(d) Salvahanas
- Which of these is the most important dharmashastra?
(a) Manusmriti
(b) Mahabharata
(c) Rigveda
(d) None of these
- According to Shastras, only _____ could rule the country.
(a) Brahmins
(b) Kshatriyas
(e) Vaishyas
(d) Shudras
- Which of these rulers followed endogamy?
(a) Satvahanas
(b) Pandavas
(e) Mauryas
(d) None of these

Answer

1. (d) 2. (a) 3. (a) 4. (b) 5. (a)

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- Who was Gotami-puta Satakani? Describe his main achievements.

Answer: Gotami-puta Satakani was the bravest king of the Satavahana dynasty. He ruled from 106 C.E. till 130 C.E. and increased the strength and prosperity of his dynasty. He called himself the alone Brahmana and killed many Kshatriyas. He also defeated the Shakas and claimed to destroy the Kshaharat dynasty.

The important leader of this dynasty was Nahapan. Whichever silver coins of Nahapan have been found, they indicate that they might have been minted again. This work could have been done after the defeat of Nahapan at the hands of Satakani. It has been believed that the empire of Satakani was spread from Malwa in the North and till

Karnataka in the South. Probably Andhra Pradesh was also a part of his empire

2. What was the relation between Varna and Property?

Answer: According to the Brahmanical texts, access to wealth was linked with the Varna. All the Varnas performed different jobs. The Brahmanas read the Vedas and taught their pupils. The Kshatriyas fought in the battles. The Vaishyas were engaged in the trade. But the Fourth Varna served all the above mentioned three Varnas.

In other words, the only occupation prescribed for the Fourth Varna was servitude. In fact, the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas performed a variety of occupations. So they were the wealthiest men. The kings and priests were also very rich people. However on some occasions, the Brahmanas are depicted to be poor.

3. What was the basis of criticism of the Varna system?

Answer: When Brahmanical ideas were being compiled in Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras, at that time some other traditions expressed their criticism of the Varna system. The most important criticism, out of these was developed in the early Buddhist religion (around the 6th century). Buddhists admitted that there existed differences in society but according to them these differences were not natural. They even rejected the idea of social prestige based on birth.

4. What did the Buddhists say about the inequalities prevalent in society? What does it indicate?

Answer: The Buddhists were aware of the social inequalities. So they developed institutions to regulate social conflict. There is a myth in the well-known text entitled 'Sutta Pitaka' which tells us that originally human beings did not have fully evolved bodily forms. Similarly, the world of plants was also not fully developed. All the people lived in an idyllic state of peace. They took from nature only what they needed for each meal.

However, this ideal state did not remain for long. There was a gradual deterioration in the peaceful stage. Most human beings became greedy, vindictive, and deceitful. So the people thought of electing a man who could set things in order. He would punish those who deserved to be punished. He would expel those who were fit to be expelled. In lieu of this job, he would be given a proportion of the produce. As he would be chosen by all people, he would be called as Mahasammata, i.e., the great elect.

From this, we come to know that the office of the king depended on the will of the people. In other words, the institution of kingship was based on human choice. People paid taxes for

the services rendered to them by the king. This myth also indicates that human deeds play a great role in strengthening social and economic relations. For example, if human beings could create the system, they could also change it in the future.

5. Explain the factors that should be kept in mind by the historians were: while handling textual traditions.

Or

explain any five elements considered by the historians were: while analyzing the texts.

(C.B.S.E. 2010 (D))

Answer: While analyzing a book or a literary source, the historians were: should keep different aspects in their mind such as follows:

1. They should examine in which language the book has been written. They should see if the book has been written in Pali, Prakrit, or Tamil which were usually spoken by the people. They should also see if the book has been written in Sanskrit which was used by a particular section of the society.
2. The historians were: also paid attention to the kind of text. They tried to analyze if the text contained mantras or the stories which could be read or heard by the people.
3. The historians were: also wanted to know the authors whose views and perceptions gave a concrete shape to the text.
4. The historians were: also examine the audience because every author keeps in mind the audience.
5. They also analyze the possible period of the creation of the book.

Conclusion: Thus, every historian completely analyses the issues involved in the text. By examining the subject- matter, he can recreate history. This task becomes all the more intricate and complicated in texts like Mahabharata.

LONG ANSWER QUESTION

1. What is Mahabharata? How its critical edition was prepared?

Or

describe the various stages through which Mahabharata was compiled in the 20th century.

(C.B.S.E. 2008 (D))

Or

Describe briefly the method worked out by the team of scholars for comparing the verses for each manuscript of Mahabharata. What were their findings? (C.B.S.E. 2011 (D))

Or

describe the elements considered by historians were: to analyze Mahabharata. State the

efforts of V.S. Sukthankar and his team for the preparation of the critical edition of Mahabharata. (C.B.S.E. 2019 (D))

Answer:

- ❖ Mahabharata is one of the most colossal epics of the sub-continent. This epic, in its present form, has over one lakh verses. It also depicts a wide range of social categories and situations. It was composed over a period of about 1000 years (500 BCE onwards). Some of its stories may be in circulation even earlier.
- ❖ The central story of Mahabharata is about two sets of warring cousins. It also contains sections laying down norms of behavior for different social groups. The principal character of this epic occasionally seems to follow these norms.
- ❖ **Critical Edition of Mahabharata:** A very ambitious project was started in 1919 CE under the leadership of noted Sanskrit scholar V.S. Sukthankar. Many scholars collectively decided to prepare a critical edition of Mahabharata. Initially, Sanskrit manuscripts of the epic, written in different scripts and in different parts of the country, were collected.
- ❖ This team, comprising of scholars, worked out a method of comparing verses from each manuscript. They selected all those verses which appeared common in all manuscripts. They published all these in several volumes running into 13,000 pages. Around 47 years were taken to complete this project. Two things became apparent throughout the whole of the process.
 1. The First one was that there were similarities in many elements of the Sanskrit version of the story. This similarity found in all the manuscripts stretched in the whole of the sub-continent from Kashmir and Nepal in the north to Kerala, Tamil Nadu in the south.
 2. The Second one was that a number of regional variations came in front of the ways in which the epic had been transmitted over the centuries. These variations were written as footnotes and appendices to the main texts. More than half of the total pages are devoted to these variations when they were taken together.

Actually, these variations could be reflected in the complete process that shaped early and later social histories through dialogues between dominant traditions and resilient local ideas and practices. These dialogues are featured by moments of conflict as well as consensus.

Our information about all these processes is mainly based on those Sanskrit texts which were written by Brahmins for themselves. Historians, in the 19th and 20th

centuries, for the first time, explored these texts while concentrating on different issues of social history. They believed that whatever is written in the texts could have been actually practiced. Later on, scholars also studied other traditions with the help of Pali, Prakrit, and Tamil texts. These studies indicated that the ideas contained in normative Sanskrit texts were recognized as authoritative, but they were also questioned and sometimes even rejected.

2. What did the Right to Property mean in the context of women and men in the period of Mahabharata?

Answer:

There were fierce competition and rivalry for a long between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Therefore, Duryodhana invited Yudhishthira to a game of dice. In the game, Yudhishthira lost all his gold, elephants, chariots, slaves, army, treasury, kingdom, the property of his subjects, his brothers and finally himself. He was deceived by his rival. At last, he staked their common wife Draupadi. He also lost her in this game of dice. It shows that during those days, the wife was considered as the property of the husband. It also shows that the eldest brother enjoyed special rights over the property.

- ❖ **Divisions of Property among Sons:** The Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras also deal with the issues of ownership. According to Manu Smriti, the paternal estate was to be equally divided among all the sons after the death of their parents. However, the eldest son enjoyed a special share. But the women could not claim any share in this estate.
- ❖ **Sridhara:** Literally, the stridhana means the wealth of the woman. The women were allowed to retain the gifts that they received on the occasion of their marriage. Her husband had no claim on her wealth but her children could inherit it. The Manu Smriti warned the women not to hoard family property. They were also forbidden to hoard their valuables without the permission of their husbands.
- ❖ **Upper-Class Women and Resources (wealth):** However the upper-class women like the Vakataka queen Prabhavati Gupta could have an access to resources. However, the land, the cattle, and the money were controlled by men. In fact, social differences between men and women were sharpened because of the differences in access to resources.

3. The Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras also contained rules about the ideal occupations of the four categories of varnas." Critically examine the statement. (HOTS, All India 2009)

Answer: The Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras contained rules about the ideal occupations of four categories of varnas.

These categories are as follows:

- Brahmanas were supposed to study and teach the Vedas, perform sacrifices and get sacrifices performed and give and receive gifts.

- Kshatriyas were to engage in warfare, protect people and administer justice, study the Vedas, get sacrifices performed and make gifts.
- Vaishyas were also assigned to study the Vedas, get sacrifices performed and make gifts as the Kshatriyas and in addition were expected to engage in agriculture, pastoralism and trade.
- Shudras were assigned only one occupation i.e. of serving the three 'higher' varnas.

Conclusion In addition to assigning these occupations to the four varnas, the Brahmanas evolved two or three strategies for enforcing these norms.

4. Mention any two features of gotra as per the Brahmanical practice. What evidences do we get from the Satavahana inscription regarding the inheritance of gotra? Explain. (All India 2014)

Answer: From 1000 BCE onwards, one Brahmanical practice was to classify people in terms of gotras.

The two important features of gotra were:

- Each gotra was named after a Vedic seer; all those who belonged to the same gotra were regarded as his descendants.
 - Women were expected to give up their father's gotra and adopt their husband's gotra at the time of marriage. Again members of the same gotra could not marry.
- The evidences we get from the Satavahana inscriptions regarding the inheritance of gotra are as follows:
- Inscriptions provide information which permits historians to get the family ties, including marriages.
 - Several women who married Satavahana rulers had retained their father's gotras. They had names derived from gotras such as Gotama and Vasistha which were their father's gotra, instead of adopting the name from their husband's gotra.
 - Some of the women of Satavahana belonged to the same gotra which was against the ideal of exogamy, which refers to marriage outside the unit.
5. What do you know about the authors and the period when Mahabharata was compiled? Explain. (All India 2017)
- or
- Who composed the original story of the text of Mahabharata? Describe the various stages through which Mahabharata was completed between the 5th century BCE and 400 CE? Delhi 2012
- Answer:** The Mahabharata was composed over a period of about 1000 years between 500 BCE and 400 CE. The original story of the Mahabharata was composed by charioteer bards popularly called as Sutas.
- The various stages were:

- Brahmanas began to unite its story from the 500 BCE.
- During this period, the chiefdoms of the Kurus and Panchalas were becoming kingdoms step by step.
- Between 200 BCE and 200 CE, the worship of Vishnu was becoming important.
- Krishna was one of the important figures of the Mahabharata and was coming to be identified with Vishnu between 200 C and 400 CE.

Between 200 and 400 CE, several didactic sections resembling the Manusmriti were added. This epic had about one lakh verses and this enormous composition is attributed to a sage named Vyasa.