

Chapter-3

Kinship Caste and Class

(4 MARKS)

1. Critically examine the duties as laid down in Manusmriti for the chandalas.

Ans. They had to live outside the village.

They had to use discarded utensils.

To dispose off the bodies.

They could not walk in villages and cities.

2. In what ways was the Buddhist theory of a social contract different from the Brahmanical view of society derived from the Purusha sukta.

Ans. (i) Four varnas emerged from purushaSukta.

(ii) Brahmanas ,kshatriya,vaishya and shudra.

(iii) Brahmanas supreme

(iv) The Buddhist did not accept this concept.

3. Why Mahabharata is considered a colossal epic?

Ans. The Mahabharata is a colossal epic running over 100,000 verses with depictions of social categories and situations.

It was composed over a period of about 1,000 years (c. 500 BCE onwards)

Some of the stories it contains may have been in circulation even earlier.

The central story is about two sets of warring cousins.

The text also contains sections laying down norms of behaviour for various social groups. Occasionally (though not always), the principal characters seem to follow these norms.

4. What were three strategies adopted by the Brahmins for enforcing Social norms?

Ans. The Brahmanas evolved two or three strategies for enforcing these norms.

One was to assert that the Varna order was of divine origin.

Second, they advised kings to ensure that these norms were followed within their kingdoms.

And third, they attempted to persuade people that their status was determined by birth. However, this was not always easy. So prescriptions were often reinforced by stories told in the Mahabharata and other texts.

5. How new jatis were grouped?

Ans. Whenever Brahmanical authorities encountered new groups – for instance, people living in forests such as the nishadas – or wanted to assign a name to occupational categories such as the goldsmith or suvarnakara, which did not easily fit into the fourfold varna system, they classified them as a jati. Jatis which shared a common occupation or profession were sometimes organised into shrenisor guilds.

6. Explain different social dimensions propounded by historians from the central episode of Draupadi's marriage in the Mahabharata

Ans. One of the most challenging episodes in the Mahabharata is Draupadi's marriage with the Pandavas, an instance of polyandry that is central to the narrative.

If we examine the section of the epic, it is evident that the author(s) attempted to explain it in a variety of ways.

1. Present-day historians suggest that polyandry may have been prevalent amongst ruling elites at some point of time.
2. Polyandry gradually fell into disfavour amongst the Brahmanas, who reworked and developed the text through the centuries.

3. Some historians note that the practice of polyandry may have seemed unusual or even undesirable from the Brahmanical point of view.

4. Others suggest that there may have been a shortage of women during times of warfare, and this led to polyandry. In other words, it was attributed to a situation of crisis.

5. Some early sources suggest that polyandry was not the only or even the most prevalent form of marriage. The reason for the authors to choose to associate this practice with the central characters of the Mahabharata is that creative literature often has its own narrative requirements and does not always literally reflect Social realities.

(8 MARKS)

1. The Mahabharata is a good source to study the social value of ancient times. Prove it.

Ans. (i) The Mahabharata gives a vivid description.

(ii) Emphasized patrilineal succession.

(iii) It reinforces the relation between the caste and the occupation.

(iv) Vivid description of the caste system and interrelation.

(v) Provides evidence to patriarchal society.

(vi) Kanyadaan was considered an important religious duty of the father.

(vii) Different types of marriage were practised.

(viii) Elders were dominating.

2. How important were gender differences in early societies? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans. (i) Patriliney: The family system was patriliney which means tracing descent from father to son.

(ii) Rule of Marriage: Daughter had no claims to the resources of the father.

(iii) Gotra of Women: Women were expected to give up their father's gotra.

(iv) Desire of sons: Desires for sons was quite common.

3. How rules of marriage were followed in early societies?

Ans. Sons were important for the continuity of the patrilineage, daughters were viewed rather differently within this framework and marrying them into families outside the kin was considered desirable. Kanyadana or the gift of a daughter in marriage was an important religious duty of the father. The Brahmanas laid down certain codes of social behaviour in great detail. From c. 500 BCE, these norms were compiled in Sanskrit texts known as the Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras.

The most important of such works was the Manusmriti.

The Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras recognised as many as eight forms of marriage. Of these, the first four were considered as “good” while the remaining were condemned. It is possible that these were practised by those who did not accept Brahmanical norms.

Women were expected to give up their father’s gotra and adopt that of their husband.

But the members of the same gotra could not marry.

The Satavahana women’s names derived from father’s gotras. Some of the Satavahana rulers were Polygynous (that is, had more than one wife). Such marriages amongst kinfolk (such as cousins) ensured a close-knit community.
