

**THEME 3**  
**KINSHIP, CASTE AND CLASS IN EARLY SOCIETIES**  
**(600 BC-600CE)**

**Key concepts in nutshell**

- Many rules and different practices were followed by the people.
- Very often families were part of larger networks of people we define as relatives.
- Blood relations can be defined in many different ways.
- 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 varna of societies.
- Social differences prevailed and integration took place within the framework of caste system.
- According to the sutras only Kshatriyas could be a king.
- The original version of Mahabharata is in Sanskrit.
- It contains vivid descriptions of battles, forests, palaces and settlements.

- Q1. What do you mean by the term epic? 2  
Ans. Epic means a larger poetic text which narrates the life and achievements of the heroes or the past of a nation.
- Q2. Give Two Importance of Manusmriti? 2  
Ans. (i) It gives vital information about law and social practices.  
(ii) It influences the Hindu way of life even today.
- Q3. Why the war Mahabharata was fought? What was its result? 2  
Ans. The war of Mahabharata was fought to acquire land and authority. The war was won by the Pandavas.
- Q4. What do you mean by term kula and Jati? 2  
Ans. Sanskrit texts use the term kula to designate families and jati for the larger network of kinfolk.
- Q.5 What is endogamy? 2  
Ans. Endogamy refers to marriage within a unit. This could be a kin, group, caste or a group living in the same locality.

Q6. What did B.B.Lal note about the houses in the second phase of Mahabharata period Explain? 5

Ans. B.B.lal has given a description about the houses in the second phase. He noted that within the limited area excavated, no definite plans of houses were obtained, but walls of mud and mud bricks were duly encountered. The discovery of mud plaster with prominent reed marks suggested that some of the houses had reed walls plastered over with mud.

Q7. In what ways was the Buddhist theory of a social contract different from the Brahmanical view of society derived from the Purusha sukta? 5

Ans. (I) The Purusha sukta says that four varnas emerged from the Purusha sukta .  
(II) These varnas were Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudras.  
(III) The Brahmans enjoyed the supreme position in the society.  
(IV) The Kshatriyas were warriors, they ran the administration.  
(IV) The Vaishya were engaged in trade. The Shudras were destined to serve the three Varnas.  
(V) Only the birth was the basis of status and respect in the society.  
The Buddhism did not accept this concept. They believe that the inequality in the society was artificial and temporary. They rejected birth as the basis of social prestige.

Q8. Explain the relationship between the Varna system and the occupation according to Brahmanical texts. How did the Brahmanas reinforce these? 5

Ans. Relationship between the varna system and occupation according to Brahmanical texts:  
(I) Brahmanas- study and teach the vedas, perform sacrifices.  
(II) Kshatriyas –study the vedas , get sacrifice performed and engage in warfare ,protect people and administer justice.  
(III) Vaishyas-study the vedas,get sacrifices performed and engaged in agriculture and trade.  
(IV) Shudras-assigned only one occupation-that of serving the three higher varnas.  
The Brahmanas enforced these by:  
(a) Divine origin.  
(b) Advising kings to enforce the order.  
(c) Caste based on birth.

Q9. The rules of the Brahmanical texts were not universally followed in ancient time. Justify giving five evidence. 5

Ans. Brahmanical texts were not universally followed in ancient times:

- (i) Women were expected to give up the gotra of the father after marriage. However the women married satvahana rulers continued to have names derived from others gotra. They did not adopt husband's gotra.
- (ii) According to the shastras only Kshatriyas could become rulers. But there were many ruling families that claims to be Brahmanas or Vaishyas.
- (iii) There were population whose practices were not influenced by Brahmanical ideas such as Nishadas, nomadic pastoralists.
- (iv) There were instance of multiple occupations of the same caste such as silk weavers of Mandasor.
- (v) Instances of chandalas not accepting the life of degradation prescribed in the Shastras.
- (vi) Generally marriage took place within the caste. Sometimes marriage took place outside the caste such as Bhim and Hidimba.
- (vii) Women were not allowed to share the property of their father. Exceptions are there such as Prabhavati Gupta.

Q10. The Mahabharata is a good source to study the social value of ancient times Prove it.?

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Ans. Yes, Mahabharata is a good source to study the social value of ancient times.

- (I) The Mahabharata gives a vivid description of the social values of the period as essential it is story between two set of warnings cousins and thus centre around conflict in the society.
- (II) Patriliney succession it emphasized
- (III) The Mahabharata reinforces the relations between the caste and the occupation prescription between the caste and the occupation prescribed in the Dharmashastras through stories. For example, the story of Eklavya.
- (IV) The Mahabharata gives a vivid description of the caste system and interrelation of the different caste group. This is evident from the story of Hidimba's marriage with Bhima.
- (V) The Mahabharata also provides evidence to patriarchal society, for example Yudhishtira staking Draupadi, his wife in the game of dice.
- (VI) Kanyadan or gift of daughter in marriage was considered an important religious duty of the father.
- (VII) Different types of marriages were practiced in the society.
- (VIII) The Mahabharata also gives two contrasting social norms in the relationship between the mother and son for example(i)relationship between the Pandavas and their mother example (ii) the Kauravas and their mother.
- (IX) It provides information about varna and different professions.

(X) Elders were dominating in the family.

Q11. Read the following passage given carefully and answer the question that follows: 8

### **Draupadi's Marriage**

Drupada the king of Panchal organised a competition where the challenge was to string a bow and hit a 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 saw them asked them to share whatever they had got .she realized her mistake when she saw Drupadi, but her command could not be violated. After much deliberation, Yudhisthira decided that Drupadi would be their common wife.

When Drupada 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 woman was know reborned as Draupadi and Shiva had fulfilled her desire Convinced by these stories, Drupada consented to the marriage.

- (i) What was the competition organized by the Panchala king Drupada for the marriage of his daughter? 2
- (ii) What two explanations were given by Vyasa to convince king Drupada for Draupadi being the common wife of the Pandvas? 3
- (iii) What form of the marriage was Draupadi's marriage to the pandvas? Give two views of historians about the form of marriage. 3

Ans.(i) Drupada organized a competition where the challenge was to string a bow and hit a target.

Ans.(ii) Vyasa told that Pandvas were in reality incarnations of Indra. He also told that a women was blessed by Lord Shiva to have five husband was now reborn as Draupadi.

Ans.(iii) It was an example of polyandry. Some historians believes that such kind of marriage were perhaps prevalent in some section of societies. Some historians believe that such tradition was present in the Himalayan region