

CHAPTER-3

KINSHIP, CASTE AND CLASS EARL SOCIETIES

2Marks Questions:

1.What is kinship?

Answer: Kinship refers to familial relationships and connections based on blood ties, marriage, or adoption.

2. What role does kinship play in early societies?

Answer: Kinship serves as the foundation of social organization, influencing roles, responsibilities, and relationships within communities.

3.Explain the significance of social class in early societies.

Answer: Social class delineates individuals based on economic factors, influencing access to resources, power, and privileges.

4. How do kinship, caste, and class interact in early societies?

Answer: They intersect to shape social structure, influencing individuals' status, roles, and opportunities within the community.

5. What is a characteristic of early societies with a strong caste system?

Answer: Social mobility is limited, and individuals are born into specific roles and occupations.

6. Describe the connection between caste and occupation.

Answer: In many early societies, caste is closely linked to occupation, with individuals expected to follow the profession of their birth-based caste.

7. What challenges arise from rigid caste systems in early societies?

Answer: Rigid caste systems can lead to social inequality, discrimination, and hinder overall societal progress.

4Marks Questions:

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

Answer:

The Brahmanical view of society derived from the Purusha sukta describes the four social categories to have emanated from the body of Purusha : The Brahmana was his mouth. The Kshatriya was made of his arms. His thigh became the Vaishya and of his feet the Shudra was born. Thus, the four social categories or vamas – Brahmana, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras were result of a divine order. The Brahmanas often cited this verse to justify their claims for ideal occupations of four vamas. They also attempted to persuade people that their status was determined by birth.

2. Explain the role of kinship in shaping social structures in early societies.

Answer:

In early societies, kinship played a pivotal role in shaping social structures. Kinship refers to the network of relationships based on blood ties, marriage, and familial connections. It served as the foundational unit of social organization, influencing not only individual identity but also determining one's status, rights, and obligations within the community. Through kinship, early societies established systems of inheritance, succession, and mutual support. It defined familial roles, responsibilities, and hierarchies, contributing significantly to the overall cohesion and stability of these communities.

3. Differentiate between caste and class systems in early societies.

Answer:

Caste and class systems were distinct social structures in early societies. A caste system was characterized by a rigid, hereditary hierarchy, where individuals were born into specific social groups with predetermined roles and occupations. Mobility between castes was typically limited, and social interactions were often governed by strict rules.

On the other hand, a class system was more fluid, with social stratification based on economic factors rather than birth. Individuals could move between classes based on factors such as wealth, occupation, or achievements.

4. Explain the relationship between kinship, caste, and class in early societies.

Answer: In early societies, kinship, caste, and class were interconnected social structures that played crucial roles in shaping individuals' lives and determining their status and opportunities. Kinship refers to the bonds of family and lineage, with social roles often determined by familial ties. Caste, on the other hand, is a hereditary social group with defined roles and privileges, often associated with religious beliefs. Class represents economic and social distinctions based on wealth, occupation, and power. These three elements were often intertwined, as individuals' positions in society were influenced by their family background (kinship), inherited social status (caste), and economic standing (class).

5. Discuss the impact of kinship, caste, and class on social mobility in early societies.

Answer:

In early societies, social mobility was often limited due to the rigid structures of kinship, caste, and class. Kinship determined an individual's place within the family and community, setting the foundation for social roles and expectations. Caste, being hereditary, restricted mobility by assigning people to specific social groups based on birth, making it challenging to break free from predetermined roles. Class, tied to economic factors, further compounded social mobility challenges, as economic disparities often persisted across generations.

6. This is what a famous historian of Indian literature, Maurice Wintemitz, wrote about the Mahabharata: “Just because the Mahabharata represents more of an entire literature.... and contains so many kinds of things....(it) give(s) us an insight into the most profound depths of the soul of the Indian folk.” Discuss.

Answer: Plenty of literary sources are available to reconstruct the ancient Indian history. Mahabharata is one of them. It is an important literary and historical source. Its importance has been recognised even by the foreign writers. Its importance has also been recognised by Maurice Wintemitz because in his opinion the Mahabharata represents an entire literature. This great epic is full of various examples of different aspects of the Indians life. The reading of the Mahabharata gives a profound depth of the soul of the Indian folk. It has been written in simple Sanskrit and therefore widely understood.

Generally, historians classify the contents of the Mahabharata under two sections. They are narrative and didactic. Narrative section contains stories and didactic sections contains prescriptions about social norms. But at some instances, there were intermingling also.

.7Marks Questions:

1. Explain why patriliney may have been particularly important among elite families.

Answer:

Patriliney is the system through which descent from father to son and grandson is traced. The principle of patriliney would have been essential for the elite families for the following reasons:

Continuity of Dynasty: As per the Dharmashastras, it was an established belief that the son carried forward the dynasty. That was the main reason that the families wished for sons not for daughters. A couplet of Rigveda also substantiates this view. In this couplet, a father at the time of the marriage of his daughter wishes that she should have best sons with the grace of Lord Shiva.

Inheritance: In royal families, the acquisition of throne was included in the inheritance. After the death of a king, his eldest son was supposed to inherit the throne. After the death of the parents, the property was to be equally divided among all the sons. In fact, parents avoided disputes in the family after their death. Most of the royal families followed the patriliney since 600 B.C. But sometimes this system had exceptions also.

2. Discuss whether kings in early states were invariably Kshatriyas.

Answer:

According to the Shastras, only Kshatriyas could be kings. Their functions were to 'engage in warfare, protect people and administer justice. But the kings in early states were not invariably Kshatriyas. Several important ruling lineages probably had different origins as mentioned below :Regarding the Mauryas, the Buddhist texts suggested they were Kshatriyas but Brahmanical texts described them as being of "low" origin.

The Shungas and Kanvas were Brahmanas. The Shakas who came from Central Asia, were regarded as mlechchhas, barbarians or outsiders by the Brahmanas.

The best known ruler of the Satavahana dynasty, Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani, claimed to be both a unique Brahmana and a destroyer of the pride of Kshatriyas.

Thus, it appears that political power was effectively open to anyone who could muster : support and resources, and rarely depended on birth as a Kshatriya.

3. Compare and contrast the dharma or norms mentioned in the stories of Drona, Hidimba and Matanga.

Answer:

Drona: Drona was a Brahmanas. As per the Dharmashastras, it was the duty of the Brahmana to impart education. It was considered a pious deed of the Brahmanas. Drona was also following that system. He was imparting education. He taught archery to the princes of the Kuru Dynasty. In those days, people of low caste were not entitled to get education. Keeping this view in mind, Drona refused imparting education to Ekalavya. But in the course of time, Ekalavya learnt archery and acquired great skill. But Drona demanded right thumb of Ekalavya as his teaching fee. This was against religious norms. In fact, Drona did this just to ensure that no one could be better archer than Arjuna in the field of archery.

Hidimba: Hidimba was a lady demon, that is rakshasini. In fact, all the rakshasas were man-eaters. One day her brother asked her to catch Pandavas so that he may eat them. But Hidimba did not follow this. She fell in love with Bhima and married him. A rakshasa boy was born to him, named Ghatotkacha. In this way, Hidimba did not keep ; the norms of rakshasas.

Matanga: Matanga was Bodhisatta who was born in the family of a chandala. But he married Dittha Mangalika who was the daughter of a merchant. A son was born to him named Mandavya Kumara. In the course of time he learnt three Vedas. He used to offer food to sixteen hundred Brahmanas every day. But when his father appeared before him dressed in rags with a clay alms bowl in his hand, he refused to offer food to him. The reason was that, he considered his father as outcaste and his food was meant for Brahmanas only. Matanga advised his son not to be proud of his birth. After saying this, he disappeared into the air. When Dittha Mahgalika knew this incident, she went after Matanga and begged his forgiveness. This way acted like a true wife. She performed her duty religiously. A donor is considered generous. But Mandavya failed to follow the norms of religion and generosity.

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

Answer

Gender differences in early societies were very important because it had effects on social life of men and women in the following ways :

No share for women in the paternal estate : According to Manusmriti, the paternal estate was to be divided equally amongst sons after the death of the parents. Women could not claim a share of these resources. Women were allowed to retain the gifts they received on the occasion of their marriage as stridhana.

No hoarding by women : Manusmriti warned women against hoarding family property, or even their own valuables, without the husband's permission.

There was the ideal of patriliney under which sons could claim the resources, including the throne in the case of kings, of their fathers when the latter died.

Gotra of women : Women were expected to give up their father's gotra and adopt that of their husband on marriage.

Polygyny : Under polygyny, a man could have several wives. Satavahana rulers were polygynous.

Wives to be treated as property of their husbands : Wives were treated as property of the husband because Yudhisthira after losing everything including himself had staked their common wife Draupadi in a game of dice and lost her too. However, Draupadi asked whether Yudhisthira after losing himself could stake her. The matter remained unresolved and ultimately Dhritarashtra restored to the Pandavas and Draupadi their personal freedom.

status families were married to the right persons at right time. Kanayadana or the gift of a daughter in marriage was considered as an important religious duty of the father. With the emergence of new means of communication people came into contact with each other and they began to share their view. So the Brahman said down codes of their social behaviour. These codes regarding social behaviour were later on enshrined in Dharmashashtra. These text recognised eight types of marriage. Among these types of marriage the four were considered as good while the rest four as condemnable. Satvahana ruler did not follow exogamy of Brahmins.

Multiple choice questions:

1: What is kinship in the context of early societies?

- A. Religious beliefs
- B. Social relationships based on blood ties
- C. Economic systems
- D. Political structures

2: In early societies, what is the function of the caste system?

- A. Economic production
- B. Social hierarchy and division of labor
- C. Political organization
- D. Religious rituals

3: What distinguishes class in early societies?

- A. Blood relationships
- B. Hereditary occupations
- C. Ritualistic practices
- D. Religious beliefs

4: Which of the following best describes the social mobility in a caste system?

- A. High mobility
- B. Moderate mobility
- C. Low or no mobility
- D. Constant mobility

5. What is a common feature of class-based societies in terms of wealth and power?

- A. Equal distribution of resources
- B. Wealth and power concentrated in the hands of a few
- C. Regular redistribution of wealth
- D. Absence of economic disparities

6. How is social status determined in a caste system?

- A. By individual achievements
- B. By birth
- C. By economic contributions
- D. By religious knowledge

7. Which term refers to a group of people who share a similar economic position in society and often have similar levels of wealth and income?

- A. Caste
- B. Class
- C. Kinship
- D. Tribe

8. What is the primary basis of social organization in kinship-based societies?

- A. Economic factors
- B. Political factors
- C. Blood relationships
- D. Religious factors

9. What is a characteristic of a class system that distinguishes it from a caste system?

- A. Fixed social hierarchy
- B. Fluid social mobility
- C. Strict endogamy
- D. Religious homogeneity

10. In early societies, which system is often associated with rigid occupational roles and duties?

- A. Kinship system
- B. Caste system
- C. Class system
- D. Tribal system

Answer:

- 1) B
- 2) B
- 3) B
- 4) C
- 5) B
- 6) B
- 7) B
- 8) C
- 9) B
- 10) B

Fill in the Blanks:

1. In early societies, _____ played a crucial role in shaping social structures and relationships.
2. The concept of _____ determined familial connections and inheritance patterns.
3. Kinship was often organized into _____ groups, fostering a sense of shared identity and responsibility.
4. _____ is a social stratification system where individuals are born into distinct hereditary groups.
5. The caste system often dictated one's _____, occupation, and social status from birth.
6. The concept of _____ reinforced social hierarchy and limited mobility between different groups.
7. Unlike caste, class is often associated with _____ mobility based on economic factors.
8. In early societies, class distinctions were often tied to ownership of _____ and access to resources.
9. _____ societies witnessed the emergence of distinct classes, such as aristocracy and peasantry.

Answer:

1. Kinship ties
2. Lineage
3. Clan or tribal
4. Caste
5. Varna (class)
6. Endogamy
7. Social
8. Land
9. Feudal

Summary:

Kinship:

Kinship refers to the social bonds and relationships based on blood ties, marriage, or adoption within a community or society. In early societies, kinship played a crucial role in organizing social structures and determining one's place in the community. It often influenced inheritance, roles, and responsibilities within families and larger social groups.

Caste:

Caste systems are hierarchical social structures found in some societies, particularly in South Asia. These systems categorize individuals into distinct groups based on birth, occupation, and social status. In early societies, caste determined a person's social standing, occupation, and interactions with others. Movement between castes was often restricted, and social roles were predetermined by one's caste.

Class:

Social class refers to the stratification of society based on economic factors, wealth, and access to resources. In early societies, class divisions were often tied to factors such as land ownership, labor, and economic power. Class distinctions influenced people's opportunities, lifestyles, and social mobility. The wealthy or ruling class typically held more power and privilege, while those in lower classes faced economic challenges and limited social mobility.