

Key Notes

Chapter-3

Kinship, Caste and Class in Early Societies

- 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.

Finding out about families:

- Family varies in terms of numbers of members, their relationship with one another as well as the kinds of activities they share.
- People belonging to the same family share food and other resources, and live, work and perform rituals together.
- Families are usually parts of larger networks of people defined as relatives, or to use a more technical term, kinfolk.
- While familial ties are often regarded as “natural” and based on blood, they are defined in many ways.
- Historians also investigate and analyse attitudes towards family and kinship.

The ideal of patriliney:

- Patriliney means tracing descent from father to son, grandson and so on.
- Matriliney is the term used when descent is traced through the mother.
- The concern with patriliney was not unique to ruling families. It is evident in mantras in ritual texts such as the Rigveda.
- It is possible that these attitudes were shared by wealthy men and those who claimed high status, including Brahmanas.