# **Sec A, Answer to Question 1**

The Vedic culture or the Vedic religion was brought to the Indian region by the Aryans roughly between 2000 BCE and 1500 BCE. After that, there were much amendments and development in that religion. Subsequently, various systems were introduced by the people following that religion. Such two varieties were the Vedic Caste System and the Kautilya’s Arthashastra. In spite of being the integral part of the Vedic culture, the two of them had much similarities and dissimilarities. For example, the Vedic caste system and the Kautilya’s Arthashastra had different views on kingship. This whole idea of different views of kingship, although coming from an indifferent background, is described below.

The Vedic Culture was mainly based on the holy book Veda. There, the whole Vedic people are divided into some castes according to the work they did. There were 4 main castes and thousands of more minor castes which were categories of the 4 main castes.

*The four main social castes were brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudras. These were each given special innate functions: the brahmins’ job was teaching and learning; the kshatriyas’ was defence; to the vaishyas was assigned care of livestock, trading, and agriculture; the shudras—artisans, labourers, and indigenous slaves—were to ‘serv[e] these other classes without resentment’.* (Black 68)

In the Vedic caste system, the most importance was given to the Brahmins and they were set to the top of the social hierarchy. Also, they were the priestly caste, who passed, distributed and developed knowledge. The second caste in the hierarchy was the Kshatriya. They were the one to take care of the defence system, they were the warriors who captured new lands and expanded the area of their empire. Most importantly, the king was also from the Kshatriya caste. This is interesting enough that the king was not from the top class of the society (the Brahmins), which was done intentionally with a very specific purpose. The Vaishyas came next in the social hierarchy. Their main identity was they were merchants, they conducted trades inside and outside of their empire. And the last and apparently the least importance was given to the Shudras. They were the untouchables who did the works like slavery, cleaning and others. In short, they were the servers of the top three castes.

At this stage, we need to look at the special purpose - on which basis the Kshatriyas were made the king, not the Brahmins. According to the book ‘A World History of Ancient Political Thought’ by Antony Black :

*In theory, the brahmins held the monopoly of knowledge about cosmic truth, human fate, individual destinies, and moral duties. It was their function to transmit this knowledge to other members of society. Only brahmins could perform the all-important sacrificial ritual, with its ‘message of dominance and subordination’ (Roy 1994: 75). But they did not control politics or war.* (68)

So, the Brahmins were to share knowledge and wisdom across the nation, not to control politics or war. Controlling politics or war was the task of the king who was from the Kshatriya (the warrior caste). If the Brahmins had to control the politics or war, they would have less time to concentrate on gathering wisdom. However, the king needed the knowledge and wisdom of the Brahmins. There is also a fact that, *Castes were conceived as more fundamental than a king to the structure of society and cosmos. In ancient Indian theory, caste came first, kingship second* (73)*.* So, at the end of the day, the Brahmins had more authority than the king himself. *Even the king can’t compel people to infringe their own dharma. His duty is the protection (rakshana, palana) of the kingdom and of his subjects* (Hoffmann 241)*.* So, the king upheld a little more power than the rest of the Kshatriyas, but not more than the Brahmins. It will be clearer from the fact that, *Brahmins were credited with the ability to bring down an unrighteous king by cursing or magic* (Black 74). Based on the details, now it can be said that, in Vedic Caste System, the Brahmins had higher authority than the king himself, it limited the role of kingship and made them one level below the Brahmins in the socio-religious hierarchy.

Now we have talk about the second part – Kautilya’s Arthashastra. Kautilya (also known as Chanakya and Vishnugupta) born on 350 BCE. It was the time when the great Alexander was spreading his empire worldwide. Alexander’s master was Aristotle. Kautilya was much influenced by these two personalities. He studied in Taxila which is the world’s first university. Then he came to Patliputra and got involved in a conflict with King Dhananand. Because of the conflict, Kautilya wanted to defeat Dhananand’s empire (Magadh Empire) in some way. So, he started to provide his knowledge to Chandragupta, who later succeeded to become the king of his Maurya Empire defeating the Magadh Empire. Kautilya’s all the advices to Chandragupta were compiled in a book named the Arthashastra. Here, ‘Artha’ means material, wealth or property and ‘Shastra’ means the science or the way. So, the way of gaining wealth is discussed in the Kautilya’s Arthashastra. The Arthashastra included 15 books, 150 chapters and 180 topics. The basic thing discussed in the book is State Craft.

According to Kautilya’s Arthashastra, *the constituent elements of the state are: ‘the king, the ministers, the country, the fortified city, the treasury, the army, and the ally’* (Black 71). It states that, the king is the center of a state and power who plays the most important role. It emphasized on the importance of the sovereignty of kings. That was a form of the schema of imperial governance (a government ruled by an emperor or empress). Because of that, the kings had the highest authority in the society. Like Vedic caste system, Kautilya also said that the king should control politics and war. However, it is added that, the main aim of a king should be securing material well-being for the tenant. According to Arthashastra, the main source of material well-being was land. Therefore, the king should focus on acquiring more lands, lands of neighbors. Because, according to Kautilya, neighbors are natural enemies, the king should try to neutralize them. The king had all the authority for a war against an opponent. *Kautilya advises the kings not to leave military matters entirely to others* (Boesche 22). Whereas, the Vedic caste system says that the king could rely on his warlord.

One interesting fact is that, according to Kautilya’s Arthashastra, not only the Kshatriyas can be a king, a king may come from any of the 4 castes as long as the king had all the traits of being a king determined by Kautilya.

By the discussion above, we can come to the fact that, there were two major differences between the Vedic Caste System and Kautilya’s Arthashastra towards the view of kingship. Firstly, in Vedic Caste System, the King must be from the Kshatriya caste, whereas, the Arthashastra says that the king could be from any caste if he had the proper qualities of governing. Secondly, the king was not the superior among all, the Brahmins had higher authority than the king and they might overrule the kings in some situations. However, in Kautilya’s Arthashastra, it is said that the king is the center of a state, he must be sovereign in order to ruling the state and also, he the superior authority, no one can overrule a king. These two were the major difference between the two of them.

From the above discussion, we can conclude on the fact that, Vedic culture had different views towards kingship. This was because of the instability inside the society of then. The Vedic religion had some rigid rules and guidance, which people wanted to get rid of, especially the people from Shudra caste. That’s the reason why other religions like Buddhism, Jainism emerged. Alongside, there created different views for the society within the Vedic people. All these led to the thought of kingship and gave birth to different views of kingship as well.

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# **Sec B, Answer to Question 2**

In the ancient times, there’re domination of Vedic religion in the area of current Indian subcontinent. But there’re some flaws and strict rules in that religion, like distinction of classes with caste system. Then a religion emerged developed by Gautama Buddha named Buddhism. This new religion had some exemption of the strict rules proposed by the Vedic religion.

The Vedic Caste System included 4 major castes and thousands of minor castes included in those dominant castes. The 4 major castes were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Among them, Brahmins were the priestly caste and given the most importance and the least importance was given to the Shudras (the untouchables). The Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas were in between respectively. In this system, the Shudras lived an inhuman life. They had no right of anything, they were only allowed to serve the top classes.

However, Buddha discouraged caste system in Buddhism, rather, he implemented class order to maintain social hierarchy. Here, one would achieve higher order in the society depending on how close he/she was from enlightenment (Nirvana). Although, everyone was given the same importance in the society.

The purpose of dividing people into the castes in Vedic religion was keeping the purity of blood intact within the caste. But Buddha never encouraged this system. However, a social order or hierarchy was needed to maintain the system. So, Buddha introduced the class order, which also avoided radical changes in the system.

There should be people doing all sorts of tasks to maintain a social system. That’s where the hierarchy comes into place. It ensured that all sorts of works were provided to the people of the society according to the class order to maintain the harmony of social order.

# **Sec B, Answer to Question 4**

Assyrian Empire of ancient Mesopotamia and the Qin Dynasty of ancient China both had practiced dictatorship while they ruled. Both dictatorial rules had greatly affected the social and cultural lives of the then people.

The Assyrians were so brutal ruler. They used the term Assimilation (observing one single cultural identity) to rule over the people. The Qin dynasty also used a term called Legalism (enforcing strict laws to control over the impulses of the tenants). Both the terms imposed strict rules on the general mass and upon breaking any rule, one used to suffer a lot (or sentenced to death in some cases). All these things broke the harmony of the social and cultural life of the general mass. From various sources, we get to know that, people were very scared all the times that they would do something wrong and get a very tough punishment. In the case of Assyrians, they used a lot of soldiers for war, so general mass was the sufferers of the intimidating wars. The peasants were the main sufferer for the cruelty of the Qins, because they had to work hard to provide them the tax.

I do think that the Assyrian empire and the Qin dynasty both applied cultural suppression by Assimilation and Legalism. The worst part is they practiced this cruelty in the name of governance and nobody could do anything about it.

After a bad political rule, both the empires were to be collapsed one day. Consequently, the Assyrians had to lose to the Persians and the Qins had to lose to the Hans. So their reign ended very soon after the dictatorial suppression undertaken by them.

# **Sec C, Answer to Question 3**

‘Universal religion’ is the concept of one world religion. It is known that, Buddhism was accepted by a wide range of people from the very early stage of the religion and there are a lot of people who are still conveying the religion all across the world. We can categorize Buddhism as a universal religion on the basis that anyone from any language, race, caste was welcome to accept Buddhism. Additionally, there were no restrictions for any people from doing any certain thing as long as that thing was a good thing to do. Moreover, they did not discriminate over the people on any basis, anyone was able to do whatever thing they wanted to do following the rules of Buddhism and the ideals of Buddha. What they did was basically following a path which was good and led them towards ‘Nirvana’ (a state of getting free from reincarnation). Due to this wide acceptance, we can say that Buddhism a universal religion.

# **Sec C, Answer to Question 4**

After reading the sections of Therigatha (Psalms of Nuns), I think, yes, Buddhism provided women a space of social and spiritual liberation. In the poem, it is clear that, women were given the rights and power to overcome many obstacles themselves, they were set free from the tortures of men and the confinement at home. Although it was a fact that, many women were not set free to pursue a spiritual life thoroughly until they were old. However, something is better than nothing. So, instead of having no freedom at all, women started to get freedom by the policies of Buddhism, which might be a reason of the good days of women nowadays.

I think some women of 5th and 6th BCE India achieved a certain degree of self-government through Buddhism. The first one among them was Mahapajapati Gotami, who was the aunt and foster mother of Buddha. There were also some nuns in the list like Ambapali, Subha and some others.

I think women already have freedom in the 21st century. However, there is always some space for improvement. I think Buddhism can fill up the gaps and provide an emancipatory space for women in the 21st century.