

CUET · HISTORY · CLASS XII · CODE 314

Kinship, Caste and Class (Mahabharata)

CUET unit: Theme III — Social Histories of Early Societies
(Mahabharata)

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Snapshot

- The Sanskrit **Mahabharata** (c. 500 BCE - 400 CE; ~100,000 verses) is a window into early Indian social history between c. 600 BCE and 600 CE.
- It studies **kinship** (patriline, gotra, exogamy/endogamy, polygyny/polyandry, eight forms of marriage), **caste** (varna, jati, "untouchables"/chandalas) and **class** (access to property, gendered and varna-based).
- It introduces the **Critical Edition** of the Mahabharata by V.S. Sukthankar (1919-66) at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- It teaches the craft of how historians **handle texts** — language (Sanskrit vs Pali/Prakrit/Tamil), author(s), audience, narrative vs didactic sections, and convergence with archaeology (B.B. Lal at Hastinapura).
- CUET tests it for definitions (patriline, exogamy, stridhana, metonymics, jati, mlechchha, chandala), source-attribution (Manusmriti, Purusha sukta, Sutta Pitaka, Matanga Jataka, Sangam) and example-based questions (Satavahanas, Ekalavya, Draupadi, Gandhari, Matanga).

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

- **Why the Mahabharata?** It is "a colossal epic running in its present form into over 100,000 verses" with depictions of a wide range of social categories; composed over about 1,000 years (c. 500 BCE onwards), with a central story about two sets of warring cousins (Kauravas and Pandavas) (NCERT Intro, p. 53).
- **Critical Edition project.** Begun in 1919 under V.S. Sukthankar, a noted Indian Sanskritist; dozens of scholars collected Sanskrit manuscripts (in different scripts) from across the subcontinent — from Kashmir/Nepal to Kerala/Tamil Nadu; selected verses common to most versions; project ran 47 years (1919-66), published in volumes running over 13,000 pages, more than half devoted to regional variations (NCERT §1, p. 54).
- **Texts as source — cautions.** Each text/inscription was written from the perspective of specific social categories; we must keep in mind **who composed what, for whom**, the language used, and how it circulated. Used carefully, texts allow us to piece together attitudes and practices (NCERT Intro, p. 53).

Understanding is derived primarily from Sanskrit texts by/for Brahmanas; later scholars also studied Pali, Prakrit and Tamil works (NCERT §1, p. 54).

- **Terms for family and kin.** Sanskrit texts use **kula** for families, **jnati** for the larger network of kinfolk, and **vamsha** for lineage (NCERT §2.1, p. 55, sidebar).
- **Patriliney vs Matriliney.** Patriliney = tracing descent from father to son, grandson, etc.; Matriliney = descent through the mother. Under patriliney sons could claim the resources (including the throne) of their fathers after the latter's death (NCERT §2.2, p. 55).
- **Kuru-Pandava feud.** The Mahabharata is a feud over land and power between two groups of cousins — Kauravas and Pandavas — of the **Kuru** lineage, one of the **janapadas**. After the Pandava victory, patrilineal succession was proclaimed (NCERT §2.2, p. 55).
- **Variations in patrilineal succession.** Most ruling dynasties from c. 6th century BCE claimed patriliney, with variations — sometimes brothers succeeded, sometimes other kinsmen claimed the throne, and in very exceptional circumstances women such as **Prabhavati Gupta** exercised power (NCERT §2.2, pp. 55-56).
- **Concern with patriliney was not unique to rulers** — mantras in the Rigveda (e.g. one inserted c. 1000 BCE for the marriage ritual asking for "fine sons") show wealthy men and high-status Brahmanas shared the concern (NCERT §2.2 Source 1, p. 56).
- **Rules of marriage — endogamy/exogamy.** Endogamy = marriage within a unit (kin group, caste, locality). Exogamy = marriage outside the unit. Marrying daughters into families outside the kin was considered desirable; **kanyadana** (gift of a daughter in marriage) was the father's religious duty (NCERT §2.3, p. 57).
- **Polygyny/Polyandry.** Polygyny = a man having several wives. Polyandry = a woman having several husbands (NCERT §2.3 sidebar, p. 57).
- **Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras.** From c. 500 BCE Brahmanas compiled Sanskrit codes of social behaviour. The **Manusmriti** is the most important, compiled c. 200 BCE - 200 CE (NCERT §2.3, p. 58).
- **Eight forms of marriage.** The Dharmasutras/Dharmashastras recognised eight forms; the first four were considered "good", the remaining four were condemned. The Manusmriti excerpt lists the first (Brahma — father gifts daughter to a Veda-learned man with jewels), fourth (gift after enjoining duties together), fifth (groom gives wealth to kinsmen/bride), and sixth (voluntary union of maiden and lover from desire) (NCERT §2.3 Source 3, p. 58). [The eight Dharmasutra forms are Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa, Paishacha.]
- **Gotra of women.** From c. 1000 BCE Brahmanas classified people (especially Brahmanas) by **gotras**, each named after a Vedic seer; two rules — women had to give up father's gotra and adopt husband's gotra at marriage, and members of the same gotra could not marry (NCERT §2.4, p. 58).
- **Satavahana evidence.** Satavahana queens (e.g. Gotami, Vasithi, Vasathi, Madhari, Hariti) **retained their father's gotras** instead of adopting the husband's; some

belonged to the **same gotra** as their husbands — exemplifying **endogamy** rather than the Brahmanical ideal of exogamy. Several rulers were also polygynous. Endogamy among kinfolk (e.g. cousins) was and is prevalent in south India (NCERT §2.4, pp. 58-60).

- **Were mothers important? Metronymics.** Satavahana rulers are identified by metronymics (names derived from the mother — Gotami-puta, Vasithi-puta, "puta" being Prakrit for "son"); the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad also lists teachers by metronymics. Yet Satavahana succession was generally **patrilineal** — so we must be cautious (NCERT §2.5, p. 60).
- **Caste — varna order.** "Caste" refers to a set of hierarchically ordered social categories. The ideal order laid down in Dharmasutras/Dharmashastras ranked Brahmanas first; Shudras and "untouchables" at the bottom; positions were supposedly determined by birth (NCERT §3, p. 61).
- **Ideal occupations of the four varnas.** Brahmana — study/teach Vedas, perform sacrifices, give/receive gifts. Kshatriya — warfare, protect people, administer justice, study Vedas, get sacrifices performed, make gifts. Vaishya — the last three Kshatriya duties **plus** agriculture, pastoralism and trade. Shudra — serve the three "higher" varnas (NCERT §3.1, p. 61).
- **Brahmana strategies to enforce varna.** (1) Assert divine origin (Purusha sukta of Rigveda — Brahmana from Purusha's mouth, Kshatriya from arms, Vaishya from thighs, Shudra from feet); (2) Advise kings to enforce; (3) Persuade that status is by birth; reinforced by stories in the Mahabharata (NCERT §3.1, p. 61; Source 6).
- **Ekalavya story.** Drona (Brahmana teacher of archery to Kuru princes) refused **Ekalavya** the nishada (a forest-dwelling hunting community) as a pupil. Ekalavya practised before a clay image of Drona, then surpassed all; Drona demanded his right thumb as **guru-dakshina** so that Arjuna would remain unrivalled (NCERT §3.1 Source 7, p. 62).
- **Non-Kshatriya kings.** Despite the Shastric rule that only Kshatriyas could be kings, the **Mauryas'** background was disputed (Buddhist texts — Kshatriya; Brahmanical — "low" origin); the **Shungas and Kanvas**, immediate successors of the Mauryas, were Brahmanas; the **Shakas** from Central Asia were called **mlechchhas** by Brahmanas — yet Rudradaman, the best-known Shaka ruler (c. 2nd century CE), rebuilt Sudarshana lake and his inscription is one of the earliest in Sanskrit (NCERT §3.2, pp. 62-63).
- **Satavahana paradox.** Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani claimed to be a **unique Brahmana (eka bamhana)** AND a destroyer of Kshatriya pride, claimed to prevent intermarriage among the four varnas, **yet** married into the kin of Rudradaman (a Shaka mlechchha). Integration within caste was therefore complicated (NCERT §3.2, p. 63).
- **Jati.** A second term for social categories — like varna, based on birth in Brahmanical theory, but unlike varna (fixed at four) **jatis had no fixed number**. New groups (e.g.

nishadas) and occupational categories (e.g. **suvarnakara** = goldsmith) that did not fit the fourfold varna were classified as jatis. Jatis sharing an occupation were organised into **shrenis (guilds)** (NCERT §3.3, p. 63).

- **Mandasor silk-weavers inscription.** A c. 5th-century CE stone inscription from Mandasor (MP) records a guild of silk weavers who migrated from Lata (Gujarat) to Dashapura (Mandasor); some members adopted other occupations (music, biography, religion, Vedic astronomy, battle); collectively built a sun temple — showing that members shared more than craft (NCERT §3.3, pp. 63-64).
- **The case of the merchants.** Sanskrit texts use **vanik** for merchants. The Shastras say trade is for Vaishyas, but plays like the **Mrichchhakatika** of Shudraka (c. 4th century CE) describe the hero **Charudatta** as both Brahmana and **sarthavaha** (merchant). A 5th-century inscription describes two brothers donating for a temple as **kshatriya-vaniks** (NCERT §3.3 sidebar, p. 64).
- **Beyond the four varnas — integration.** Forest-dwellers (e.g. nishadas), nomadic pastoralists, and speakers of non-Sanskritic languages were labelled **mlechchhas** by Brahmanas, yet ideas and beliefs were shared. The Hidimba story (Adi Parvan) — Hidimba a rakshasi who married Bhima and bore Ghatotkacha — is read as marriage with a non-Brahmanical community (NCERT §3.4 Source 9, pp. 64-65).
- **Subordination — chandalas and untouchability.** Brahmanas classified certain groups as "**untouchable**" based on a purity/pollution divide. **Chandalas** handled corpses and dead animals; the **Manusmriti** ordered them to live outside the village, use discarded utensils, wear clothes of the dead and ornaments of iron, dispose of unclaimed bodies, serve as executioners, and not walk in villages/cities at night. **Fa Xian** (c. 5th c. CE, Chinese Buddhist monk) wrote that "untouchables" had to sound a clapper; **Xuan Zang** (c. 7th c.) observed that executioners/scavengers were forced to live outside the city (NCERT §3.5, pp. 65-66).
- **Resistance — Matanga Jataka.** A Pali story (the Bodhisattva as the chandala Matanga) describes him marrying Dittha Mangalika the merchant's daughter; their son Mandavya, who fed 16,000 Brahmanas, refused alms to his ragged father; Matanga remarks: "Those who are proud of their birth and are ignorant do not deserve gifts." Suggests chandalas sometimes resisted the Shastric prescription (NCERT §3.5 Source 10, p. 67).
- **Gendered access to property.** During the dice-game Yudhisthira staked his property, brothers, himself, and finally **Draupadi**. The Manusmriti said the paternal estate was to be divided equally among sons after the parents' death (with a special share for the eldest); women could **not** claim a share. **Stridhana** (literally "woman's wealth") — gifts received at marriage — could be retained by women and inherited by their children, with the husband having no claim; but the Manusmriti warned women against hoarding family property without the husband's permission (NCERT §4.1, p. 68).
- **Seven means for men, six for women (Manusmriti).** Men's seven means of acquiring wealth — inheritance, finding, purchase, conquest, investment, work, and

acceptance of gifts from good people. Women's six — gifts at marriage (in front of the fire / bridal procession / token of affection), and what she got from her brother, mother or father; subsequent gifts; what her "affectionate" husband gave her (NCERT §4.1 Source 12, p. 69).

- **Varna and access to property.** Only Shudras were prescribed servitude; the wealthiest men should therefore have been Brahmanas and Kshatriyas — and kings/priests are usually depicted as wealthy in textual traditions (NCERT §4.2, p. 69).
- **Buddhist critique.** Buddhists recognised social differences but did not regard them as natural or inflexible and rejected birth-based status. In the **Majjhima Nikaya**, Kachchana (a disciple of the Buddha) argues to king Avantiputta that a wealthy Shudra could have a Brahmana/Kshatriya/Vaishya as obedient servant — proving that the four varnas were "exactly the same" (NCERT §4.2 Source 13, pp. 69-70).
- **Alternative — Sharing wealth (Sangam).** In ancient Tamilakam, generous chiefs were respected, the miserly despised. The **Puranaruru** (a Tamil Sangam anthology, c. 1st c. CE) describes a poor but generous chief at Irantai who would order a spear from the village blacksmith to earn so he could give to bards (NCERT §4.3 Source 14, pp. 70-71).
- **Buddhist social contract.** The **Sutta Pitaka** myth — beings were originally peaceful; greed/vindictiveness/deceit set in; people **chose** a being to censure and banish, paying him a proportion of rice — he was the **mahasammata** (great elect). Kingship was based on human choice; taxes were payment for services; human beings could change the system they had created (NCERT §5, p. 72).
- **Handling texts.** Historians examine language (Prakrit/Pali/Tamil = ordinary people; Sanskrit = priests/elites), kind of text (mantra, story), author(s) and intended audience, date and place of composition (NCERT §6, pp. 72-73).
- **Narrative vs Didactic.** Historians divide Mahabharata content into **narrative** (stories) and **didactic** (prescriptions about social norms — **didactic** means meant for instruction). The didactic was probably added later. The Sanskrit of the Mahabharata is simpler than the Vedas — probably widely understood. The text is called an **itihasa** ("thus it was") (NCERT §6.1, p. 73).
- **Author(s) and dates.** Original story probably composed by **sutas** (charioteer-bards) who accompanied Kshatriya warriors and circulated orally. From c. 5th century BCE Brahmanas committed it to writing — the time when Kuru/Panchala chiefdoms became kingdoms. A second phase c. 200 BCE - 200 CE coincided with Vishnu worship growing and Krishna being identified with Vishnu. Between c. 200 and 400 CE, large didactic sections (resembling the Manusmriti) were added — the text grew from perhaps fewer than 10,000 verses to about 100,000. Traditionally attributed to **Vyasa** (NCERT §6.2, pp. 74-75).
- **Convergence with archaeology — B.B. Lal at Hastinapura (1951-52).** Five occupational levels; 2nd phase (c. 12th-7th c. BCE) — mud and mud-brick walls, reed-marked plaster; 3rd phase (c. 6th-3rd c. BCE) — mud-brick and burnt bricks,

soakage jars, brick drains, terracotta ring-wells. The Adi Parvan describes Hastinapura as "bursting like the ocean, packed with hundreds of mansions" — possibly added after urban centres flourished post-6th c. BCE (NCERT §6.3, pp. 75-76).

- **Draupadi's polyandry — three explanations.** Drupada organised a competition; Arjuna won; Kunti's command that the brothers share what they had got led Yudhishthira to declare Draupadi the common wife. Vyasa offered three explanations to the protesting Drupada — Pandavas were incarnations of Indra (whose wife was reborn as Draupadi); a young woman prayed five times to Shiva for a husband and was reborn as Draupadi. Multiple explanations suggest polyandry **fell into disfavour** with the Brahmanas who reworked the text; some historians point to its prevalence in the Himalayan region or to a shortage of women in warfare (NCERT §6.3 Source 16, pp. 76-77).
- **A dynamic text.** Mahabharata grew in many languages, with regional stories woven in, retold in sculpture, painting, plays, dance. **Mahashweta Devi**, a contemporary Bengali writer, retold the house-of-lac episode in "Kunti O Nishadi" — making the nishada woman's perspective central (NCERT §7, pp. 77-78).
- **Major textual timeline.** Panini's Ashtadhyayi (c. 500 BCE); Dharmasutras (c. 500-200 BCE); Tripitaka in Pali (c. 500-100 BCE); **Ramayana & Mahabharata in Sanskrit (c. 500 BCE - 400 CE)**; Manusmriti and Tamil Sangam literature (c. 200 BCE - 200 CE); Charaka/Sushruta (c. 100 CE); Puranas (c. 200 CE onwards); Natyashastra (c. 300 CE); other Dharmashastras (c. 300-600 CE); Kalidasa, Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Jaina works in Prakrit (c. 400-500 CE) (NCERT Timeline 1, p. 79).
- **Mahabharata study landmarks.** Critical Edition 1919-66; J.A.B. **van Buitenen** began an English translation in 1973, incomplete at his death in 1978 (NCERT Timeline 2, p. 79).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Kula	Family	55
Jnati	Larger network of kinfolk	55
Vamsha	Lineage	55
Patriliney	Tracing descent from father to son, grandson, etc.	55
Matriliney	Tracing descent through the mother	55
Kanyadana	The gift of a daughter in marriage — a religious duty of the father	57
Endogamy	Marriage within a unit (kin group, caste, locality)	57
Exogamy	Marriage outside the unit	57
Polygyny	A man having several wives	57

Term	Definition	Page
Polyandry	A woman having several husbands	57
Gotra	A classificatory category named after a Vedic seer; all members regarded as his descendants	58
Metronymic	A name derived from that of the mother (e.g. Gotami-puta)	60
Mlechchha	Barbarian/outsider; non-Sanskritic-speaking groups	63-65
Jati	Birth-based social category; unrestricted in number, often occupational	63
Shreni	Guild of jatis sharing a common occupation	63
Vanik	Merchant (Sanskrit)	64
Sarthavaha	Merchant (caravan leader)	64
Chandala	Group at the bottom of the social hierarchy, assigned polluting tasks like handling corpses	66
Stridhana	Literally "a woman's wealth"; gifts received at marriage, inheritable by her children	68
Mahasammata	"The great elect" — the chosen king in the Buddhist social-contract myth	72
Itihasa	"Thus it was" — a Sanskrit category meaning "history", applied to the Mahabharata	74
Didactic	Meant for purposes of instruction (used for the prescriptive sections of the Mahabharata)	73
Sutas	Charioteer-bards who accompanied Kshatriya warriors and composed praise poems	74
Suvarnakara	Goldsmith — an occupational jati	63
Eka bamhana	"Unique Brahmana" — title claimed by Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani	63

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **Fig. 3.1 — Terracotta sculpture, West Bengal, c. 17th century**, scene from the Mahabharata (p. 53).
- **Fig. 3.2 — A section of the Critical Edition** showing the main text in large bold and variant readings in smaller print (p. 54).
- **Map 1 — Kuru-Panchala region** with Hastinapura, Indraprastha, neighbouring janapadas (Shurasena, Matsya, Vatsa, Koshala, Malla, Sakya, Avanti) (p. 56).
- **Fig. 3.3 — Satavahana ruler and his wife** sculpted on the wall of a cave donated to Buddhist monks, c. 2nd century BCE (p. 59).
- **Fig. 3.4 — Battle scene from the Mahabharata**, terracotta from Ahichchhatra (UP), c. 5th century CE (p. 60).

- **Fig. 3.5 — Silver coin of a Shaka ruler**, c. 4th century CE (p. 63).
- **Fig. 3.6 — Gandhara mendicant sculpture**, c. 3rd century CE (p. 66).
- **Fig. 3.7 — Chief and follower**, stone sculpture from Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), c. 2nd century CE (p. 71).
- **Fig. 3.8 — Krishna advises Arjuna on the battlefield** (18th-century painting; the **Bhagavad Gita** is the most important didactic section) (p. 73).
- **Fig. 3.9 — Lord Ganesha the scribe** to whom Vyasa is traditionally said to have dictated; from a Persian Mahabharata, c. 1740-50 (p. 74).
- **Fig. 3.10 — A wall excavated at Hastinapura** by B.B. Lal (p. 76).

2.5 Timeline / Key events

Year / Period	Event	Significance
c. 1000 BCE	Painted Grey Ware phase at Hastinapura — earliest occupation (B.B. Lal)	Possible setting of the Kuru-Panchala war (NCERT §3.1, p. 76)
c. 600 BCE	Sixteen mahajanapadas form	Political background to Dharmashastra tradition (NCERT p. 56)
c. 500 BCE	Compilation of the Mahabharata begins	Earliest layer of the epic (NCERT §3.1, p. 53)
c. 500–200 BCE	Dharmasutras composed	Earliest legal/ritual codes (NCERT §3.2, p. 57)
c. 4th c. BCE	Vyasa traditionally said to have dictated the Mahabharata to Ganesha	Mythic-historical layer (NCERT p. 74)
c. 200 BCE – 200 CE	Manusmriti compiled	Authoritative Dharmashastra (NCERT §3.2, p. 57)
c. 1st c. BCE – 2nd c. CE	Satavahana inscriptions show metonymics & endogamy	Exception to Brahmanical exogamy (NCERT §3.3, p. 59)
c. 2nd c. BCE – 2nd c. CE	Sangam-age Tamil texts attest kin and gender norms in the south	Parallel non-Brahmanical norms (NCERT p. 71)
c. 1st c. CE	Compilation of the Bhagavad Gita finalised within the Mahabharata	Didactic core of the epic (NCERT p. 73)
c. 4th c. CE	Final redaction of the Mahabharata	Reaches its present form (NCERT §3.1, p. 53)
5th c. CE	Fa Xian (Faxian), Chinese Buddhist traveller, reaches India	Observes Indian social life (NCERT p. 65)

Year / Period	Event	Significance
7th c. CE	Xuan Zang (Xuanzang), Chinese Buddhist traveller, visits India	Outside witness on caste, gender (NCERT p. 65)
1919 CE	V.S. Sukthankar leads the Critical Edition project of the Mahabharata at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune	Modern philological landmark (NCERT §3.1, p. 53)
1951–52 CE	B.B. Lal excavates Hastinapura — identifies five occupational levels	Archaeology of the Mahabharata setting (NCERT §3.10, p. 76)
1966 CE	Critical Edition completed after 47 years and ~13,000 pages	(NCERT §3.1, p. 54)

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **Patriliney ≠ Matriliney.** Patriliney = father-to-son descent; matriliney = through the mother. **Metronymics** (mother-derived names like Gotami-puta) do **not** prove matriliney — Satavahana succession was still patrilineal.
- **Endogamy ≠ Exogamy.** Brahmanical ideal = **exogamy** (marry outside the gotra). The Satavahanas practised **endogamy** (within the kin group) — an exception, not the rule.
- **Varna ≠ Jati.** Varna is fixed at **four**; Jati is **unlimited** in number and often occupational.
- **Critical Edition dates.** Started **1919** (V.S. Sukthankar), took **47 years**, published over **13,000 pages**. Don't confuse with the date of the Mahabharata's composition (c. 500 BCE - 400 CE).
- **Eight forms of marriage are in the Dharmasutras/Dharmashastras** — the Manusmriti excerpt quotes only the 1st, 4th, 5th and 6th forms. First four = "good"; last four = condemned.
- **Mauryas were disputed**, not definitely Kshatriya. **Shungas and Kanvas** were Brahmanas. **Shakas** were called mlechchhas.
- **Stridhana** could be inherited by her children — **not** by the husband.
- **Manusmriti** was compiled c. **200 BCE - 200 CE**, not by Manu in a single date.
- **Sanskrit = elite/priests; Pali/Prakrit/Tamil = ordinary people.** This is a key methodological point.
- **Fa Xian (5th c.) and Xuan Zang (7th c.)** are both **Chinese** observers — don't swap their centuries.
- **B.B. Lal excavated Hastinapura in 1951-52**, identified **five** occupational levels.

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This chapter is a heavy CUET scorer — definitions (gotra, jati, stridhana, mlechchha, chandala, mahasammata), source-attribution (Manusmriti / Purusha sukta / Sutta Pitaka / Matanga Jataka / Puranaruru / Majjhima Nikaya), example-driven questions (Ekalavya, Satavahanas, Draupadi, Gandhari, Hidimba, Mandasor weavers, Hastinapura excavation by B.B. Lal) and methodological questions on Sanskrit vs Pali/Prakrit/Tamil sources typically appear. Expect ~12-15 MCQs per year drawn from this single chapter under Theme III (Social Histories of Early Societies).

CUET 2023 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.9 (CUET 2023) Consider the statements about the Mahabharata. A. It was composed in Sanskrit. B. It contains social norms. C. It discusses dharma. D. It is a Buddhist text.

- A) A, B, C only B) A and B only C) B, C, D only D) A, B, C, D **Tests:** The Mahabharata as a source for social history **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.60 (CUET 2023) The Vedic texts were composed in which language?

- A) Sanskrit B) Prakrit C) Pali D) Tamil **Tests:** Language and literature of early India — Vedic Sanskrit **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.61 (CUET 2023) The Rigveda mainly contains:

- A) Philosophical discussions B) Hymns and prayers C) Law codes D) Stories **Tests:** Vedic corpus — Rigveda and Brahmanical tradition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.62 (CUET 2023) The varna system in ancient India consisted of:

- A) Two groups B) Three groups C) Four groups D) Five groups **Tests:** Varna order in the Dharmashastras **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2024 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.12 (CUET 2024) Kauravas and Pandavas belonged to which ruling family?

- A) Kuru B) Panchal C) Magadha D) Vatsa **Tests:** Kuru lineage in the Mahabharata **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.45 (CUET 2024) Which of the following statements are correct? (A) Mahabharata has over 1,00,000 verses. (B) Mahabharata was written by Valmiki. (C) V. S. Sukthankar is associated with the critical edition of Mahabharata. (D) The critical edition of

Mahabharata took 47 years to complete. (E) The critical edition of Mahabharata ran into over 13,000 pages. Options:

- A) (A) and (B) only B) (B) and (E) only C) (A), (C), (D) and (E) only D) (B) and (C) only

Tests: Critical edition of the Mahabharata — V. S. Sukthankar **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.46 (CUET 2024) Match List-I with List-II. List-I List-II (A) Kula (I) Larger network of kinfolk (B) Jati (II) Families (C) Vamsha (III) People (D) Jana (IV) Lineage Choose the correct answer:

- A) (A-I), (B-II), (C-III), (D-IV) B) (A-IV), (B-III), (C-II), (D-I) C) (A-II), (B-I), (C-IV), (D-III) D) (A-III), (B-IV), (C-II), (D-I) **Tests:** Kinship terminology — kula, jati, vamsha, jana **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.49 (CUET 2024) Who among the following were the principal deities of the Vedic pantheon?

- A) Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva B) Vishnu, Shiva, Indra C) Agni, Indra, Soma D) Agni, Varuna, Indra **Tests:** Vedic pantheon — Agni, Indra, Soma **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2025 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.5 (CUET 2025) Match List-I with List-II: List-I List-II (A) Descent traced through mother (I) Ad-Parvan (B) Barbarians/outside of Brahmanical order (II) Endogamy (C) First section of Mahabharata (III) Matriliney (D) Marriage within kin/group (IV) Mlechchhas Options:

- A) A-III, B-IV, C-I, D-II B) A-I, B-III, C-II, D-IV C) A-IV, B-III, C-I, D-II D) A-III, B-II, C-IV, D-I **Tests:** Mahabharata structure and kinship — matriliney, endogamy, mlechchhas **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.6 (CUET 2025) In the play Mrichchhakatika, Charudatta was described as both a Brahmana and a _____.

- A) Nishada B) Kshatriya C) Sarthavaha D) Mlechchha **Tests:** Varna order and exceptions — Charudatta in Mrichchhakatika **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.31 (CUET 2025) Match List-I with List-II (Family terms): Meaning Term Family term in Sanskrit texts Kula Descent from father to son Patriliney Man with many wives Polygyny Gift of daughter in marriage Kanyadan a Options:

- A) A-I, B-III, C-II, D-IV B) A-II, B-I, C-III, D-IV C) A-I, B-II, C-III, D-IV D) A-IV, B-III, C-II, D-I **Tests:** Kinship terminology — kula, patriliney, polygyny, kanyadana **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.32 (CUET 2025) In Sanskrit texts and inscriptions, the term Vanika refers to:

- A) Peasants B) Merchants C) Guilds D) Kings **Tests:** Vanika — merchants in Sanskrit texts and inscriptions **Answer:** Not in extracted key