

ANSWER KEY & MARKING SCHEME · CBSE CLASS 12**Kinship, Caste and Class — Early Societies (c. 600 BCE–600 CE)**

History · Chapter 3 · Use this with the Board Paper · Companion to Quick Drill

HOW TO USE

Attempt the Board Paper first (closed-book, full time). Then come here. For 2-mark+ questions, compare your answer to the model. For 3-4 mark questions, also consult the **Topper Templates** below — these show the exact step-by-step structure that scores full marks per CBSE marking-scheme conventions.

MODEL ANSWERS · BOARD PAPER**Section A — VSA (1 mark × 4)****Q1. Who led the preparation of the Critical Edition of the Mahabharata? [1 mark]****Ans:** V.S. Sukthankar (at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune).**Q2. What is meant by patriliney? [1 mark]****Ans:** Tracing descent and inheritance through the father's line (father to son to grandson).**Q3. Define gotra exogamy. [1 mark]****Ans:** The rule that members of the same gotra (clan) could not marry — i.e. one must marry outside one's gotra.**Q4. Name the form of marriage represented by Draupadi's union with the five Pandavas. [1 mark]****Ans:** Polyandry (one woman married to several husbands).**Section B — SA-I (3 marks × 2)****Q5. Why is the Mahabharata considered a dynamic (evolving) text? (any 3 points) [3 marks]****Ans:** (1) COMPOSED OVER ~1000 YEARS — from c. 500 BCE to c. 400 CE, growing from about 10,000 verses to nearly 100,000 verses, so it absorbed material across centuries. (2) LAYERED, COLLECTIVE AUTHORSHIP — though attributed to Vyasa, it was actually built up by many hands: bards (sutras) first recited it, then Brahmanas wrote it down and inserted long didactic (dharma) sections later. (3) MANY REGIONAL VERSIONS — the Critical Edition by V.S. Sukthankar found enormous variation between manuscripts collected across the subcontinent, proving the text was never fixed and was constantly retold and rewritten.**Q6. How did Brahmanical texts treat people placed outside the four varnas? (any 3 points) [3 marks]****Ans:** (1) UNTOUCHABILITY — certain groups, above all the CHANDALAS, were ranked outside the varna order and held to 'pollute' by contact; the Manusmriti laid down degrading rules (live outside the village, use discarded utensils, wear the clothes of the dead). (2) RESTRICTED MOVEMENT — they could not move about freely; the pilgrim Fa Xian recorded that untouchables had to sound a CLAPPER so others could avoid them. (3) FOREST PEOPLES SUBORDINATED — groups like the NISHADAS (e.g. Ekalavya) were treated as outsiders and denied the privileges and learning open to the higher varnas. These were prescriptive norms; actual practice may have varied.

Section C — SA-II (5 marks × 2)

Q7. Explain the rules of kinship and marriage in early Indian society. Why were they not always followed? [5 marks]

Ans: Kinship and marriage in early society were governed by several rules: (1) PATRILINY — descent and inheritance ran through the father's line; sons inherited the father's power and resources, and the Mahabharata's central succession story (Pandavas vs Kauravas) reinforced this ideal. (2) GOTRA RULES — a gotra was a clan named after a Vedic seer; a wife adopted her husband's gotra, and members of the SAME gotra could NOT marry (gotra exogamy). (3) ENDOGAMY and EXOGAMY — one was expected to marry within one's varna/jati (endogamy) but outside one's gotra (exogamy). (4) MARRIAGE FORMS — polygyny (a man with several wives, common among elites) and, rarely, polyandry, as in DRAUPADI's marriage to the five Pandavas. WHY NOT ALWAYS FOLLOWED: these were largely Brahmanical IDEALS. Inscriptions of the SATAVAHANA dynasty show queens who kept their fathers' gotras and even same-gotra marriages, and used metonymics; the epic itself records polyandry it has to justify. So actual practice was more varied than the prescriptive rules.

Q8. Describe the fourfold varna order laid down in the Dharmashastras and explain how Brahmanas sought to enforce it. [5 marks]

Ans: The Dharmashastras, especially the MANUSMRITI, laid down a fourfold VARNA order with duties fixed by birth: (1) BRAHMANAS — study/teach the Vedas, perform sacrifices, give and receive gifts; (2) KSHATRIYAS — rule, fight, protect the people, administer justice; (3) VAISHYAS — agriculture, herding and trade; (4) SHUDRAS — to serve the three higher varnas. The top three were 'twice-born' (dvija) and alone could perform Vedic ritual; Shudras and women were barred from Vedic study. ENFORCEMENT: Brahmanas (a) claimed the order was DIVINELY ORDAINED (the Purusha-sukta origin myth), making hierarchy seem natural; (b) advised KINGS that it was their duty to ensure the rules were obeyed, using Kshatriya power to back Brahmanical norm; (c) insisted STATUS was fixed by BIRTH and unchangeable, with the Manusmriti prescribing graded punishments by varna. LIMIT: in reality the scheme could not contain society — many groups were fitted in as JATIS, foreigners (Yavanas/mlecchas) held power despite no varna place, and non-Brahmanical traditions challenged birth-based rank. Varna was thus an IDEAL, not a description of lived society.

Section D — Source-based (10 marks)

Q9. Read the passage and answer the 3 sub-questions. PASSAGE: 'A young Nishada named Ekalavya came to Drona, the renowned teacher of archery, and asked to be taught. But Drona, mindful of Ekalavya's low birth, refused. Undeterred, Ekalavya made a clay image of Drona, worshipped it as his teacher, and practised on his own until he became an archer greater even than Arjuna. When Drona learnt of this, he came to Ekalavya and demanded as his teacher's fee (dakshina) the boy's right thumb. Ekalavya, without hesitation, cut off his thumb and gave it — and so could never again shoot as before.' SUB-QUESTIONS: (a) Why did Drona refuse to teach Ekalavya, and what does this tell us about access to learning? (b) Why did Drona later demand Ekalavya's thumb? (c) What does this episode reveal about social differences in early society? [10 marks]

Ans: (a) REFUSAL + ACCESS TO LEARNING [3 marks]: Drona refused because Ekalavya was a NISHADA — a forest people group of LOW BIRTH outside the high varnas. This shows that access to skills and education was RESTRICTED BY BIRTH: formal training under recognised teachers was a privilege of the higher (especially Kshatriya) varnas, and those born outside were excluded regardless of talent or merit. (b) DEMAND FOR THE THUMB [3 marks]: Although Ekalavya had not been formally taught, Drona claimed him as a pupil through the clay image and demanded his right thumb as gurudakshina. The real motive was to PROTECT THE SUPREMACY of his Kshatriya pupil ARJUNA, who was meant to be the greatest archer. By crippling Ekalavya, Drona preserved the social and martial dominance of the elite. It reveals how authority was used to keep the low-born in their place. (c) SOCIAL DIFFERENCES [4 marks]: The episode powerfully illustrates social differentiation BEYOND the four varnas. (i) BIRTH determined opportunity — a person of low birth could not claim the learning and status open to the high-born, however gifted. (ii) The story shows the ANXIETY of the elite to maintain hierarchy — Ekalavya's excellence threatened the order and had to be checked. (iii) It reflects the treatment of FOREST PEOPLES (nishadas) as outsiders to settled varna society. (iv) As a NORMATIVE narrative it tells the historian what ideals the text upheld — that the existing hierarchy of birth should be preserved. Conclusion: the Ekalavya story is a classic example of how early society denied opportunity to those outside the privileged varnas and used social power to defend elite supremacy.

★ TOPPER TEMPLATE — 8-mark: 'Explain the rules of kinship and marriage in early society (patriliney, gotra, marriage types).'

Annual

Step 1 [1 mark]	Define patriliney	PATRILINY = tracing descent through the FATHER'S line (father → son → grandson). It existed before the Mahabharata, but the epic's succession story (the Kuru lineage, the Pandava-Kaurava claim to the throne) reinforced it as the ideal. Sons inherited the father's power and resources on his death.
Step 2 [2 marks]	The ideal and its exceptions	The patrilineal ideal was not always neat. The Mahabharata itself shows variations: where there was no son, brothers succeeded (as Pandu after Bhishma's renunciation); some lineages claimed descent from a common ancestor. Inscriptions of dynasties like the Satavahanas show metonymics (names from the mother), so practice differed from the textual norm.
Step 3 [2 marks]	Gotra and its two rules	A GOTRA was a clan named after a Vedic seer. Two rules (especially for Brahmanas): (a) a woman gave up her father's gotra and adopted her husband's on marriage; (b) members of the SAME gotra could NOT marry — GOTRA EXOGAMY. Yet Satavahana queens who retained their father's gotras show the rule was not universally followed.
Step 4 [2 marks]	Types of marriage + Draupadi	Marriage forms included ENDOGAMY (within a group), EXOGAMY (outside the clan/gotra), POLYGYNY (a man with several wives, common among elites), and POLYANDRY (a woman with several husbands). The DRAUPADI episode — her marriage to the five Pandava brothers — is a striking instance of polyandry that the text both records and tries to justify, showing such practices existed even if not approved by Brahmanical norm.
Step 5 [1 mark]	Conclusion	Kinship rules (patriliney, gotra exogamy) were IDEALS laid down largely in Brahmanical texts, but the epic and the inscriptions reveal a far more varied social reality — exceptions, polyandry, and metonymics all coexisted with the norm.

COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:

- Defining patriliney wrongly (it is descent through the father, not 'rule by men').
- Confusing gotra with caste/jati.
- Missing the Draupadi polyandry example.
- Stating rules as universal fact, ignoring the exceptions (Satavahana metonymics/gotras).

★ TOPPER TEMPLATE — 8-mark: 'Describe the varna order in the Dharmashastras and how it was enforced.'

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Step 1 [2 marks]	The four varnas	The Dharmashastras (esp. the MANUSMRITI, c. 200 BCE-200 CE) laid down a fourfold VARNA order: BRAHMANAS (priests, teachers — study and teach the Vedas, perform sacrifices), KSHATRIYAS (rulers, warriors — protect people, fight, administer justice), VAISHYAS (farmers, herders, traders), and SHUDRAS (the lowest — to serve the other three). The order was claimed to be divinely ordained (the Purusha-sukta origin myth).
Step 2 [2 marks]	Occupations fixed by birth	Each varna was assigned specific OCCUPATIONS and STATUS, fixed by BIRTH, not ability. Brahmanas claimed the top rank; only the top three were 'twice-born' (dvija) and could perform Vedic rituals. Shudras and women were barred from Vedic study. This was an IDEAL hierarchy — the texts are prescriptive (what should be), not descriptive.
Step 3 [2 marks]	How Brahmanas tried to enforce it	Brahmanas enforced varna in three ways: (a) they claimed the order was DIVINELY ORDAINED and unchangeable; (b) they advised KINGS to ensure the rules were obeyed (Kshatriya power backed Brahmanical norm); (c) they tried to persuade people that STATUS was determined by BIRTH. Punishments in the Manusmriti for varna violation were graded by rank.
Step 4 [1 mark]	Limits — jati and reality	The neat fourfold scheme could not contain reality. Many groups (forest peoples, foreigners/Yavanas, craft groups) did not fit, so Brahmanas slotted them as JATIS — birth-and-occupation groups, far more numerous than four. Non-Brahmanical texts and inscriptions show people did not always follow the prescribed occupations.
Step 5 [1 mark]	Conclusion	The varna order was an IDEAL social model created and defended by Brahmanas; the lived society of jatis, exceptions, and occupational mobility was far more complex than the four-varna theory allowed.

COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:

- Listing the four varnas without their assigned functions.
- Treating the varna order as describing actual society (it is prescriptive).
- Not mentioning jati as the lived reality.
- Forgetting the role of kings/Kshatriyas in enforcement.

★ **TOPPER TEMPLATE — 5-mark source-based: Read a Mahabharata/Manusmriti excerpt (Draupadi, Ekalavya, gotra, varna), answer 3 sub-questions.**

Annual

Step 1 [2 marks]	Identify + contextualise	Name the text and episode the passage is from. State the social rule or theme it illustrates. E.g., 'This is from the Adi Parva of the Mahabharata; it describes Draupadi's marriage to the five Pandavas — an instance of polyandry that the text records and seeks to justify.'
Step 2 [2 marks]	Explain the social norm + tension	Explain the rule/norm at stake AND the tension the passage reveals. E.g., 'Polyandry was unusual against the Brahmanical ideal; the text justifies it through a divine command and a past-life boon, showing how a normative text accommodates a practice it cannot ignore.'
Step 3 [1 mark]	Historian's use	State what a HISTORIAN learns. E.g., 'For the historian, the passage shows that kinship/marriage rules were contested and varied — the Mahabharata is evidence of social norms AND of the debate around them, not a simple description of fact.'

COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:

- Not naming the text/episode the passage comes from.
- Retelling the story instead of explaining the social rule.
- Missing the third sub-question's 'what does the historian learn' angle.
- Treating the normative text as literal description of how everyone lived.

MARKING SCHEME — GENERAL NOTES

- Specific facts (names, terms, dates) carry marks. Vague answers lose half-mark per instance.
- Source-based questions: must quote/reference evidence from the passage.
- Patriliney, gotra exogamy, varna, jati, stridhana must be DEFINED correctly to earn the term-mark.
- Answers that present textual rules as actual practice cap at 60%; full marks require noting the ideal-vs-practice gap (e.g. Satavahana exceptions).
- For the Mahabharata as a source, credit the dynamic-text + Critical Edition (Sukthankar/BORI/47 years) points.