

EXAM-DAY · 90-MIN REVISION CARD

Kinship, Caste and Class – Early Societies (c. 600 BCE–600 CE)

Print this · Fold it · Carry to the exam-hall gate · Revise once · Then walk in.

FORMULAS & KEY RESULTS

TIME FRAME: c. 600 BCE – 600 CE (early societies).

Mahabharata composed c. 500 BCE – 400 CE

MAHABHARATA: Sanskrit epic; grew ~10,000 → ~100,000 verses; attributed to Vyasa; bards (sutras) + Brahmanas added layers; didactic dharma sections are later

CRITICAL EDITION: V.S. SUKTHANKAR, BORI Pune, begun 1919, took 47 years; compared manuscripts in many scripts; revealed huge regional variation

KINSHIP: PATRILINY = descent through the father; sons inherit. Variations existed (no-son cases, metonymics)

GOTRA: clan named after a rishi. Rules: wife takes husband's gotra; same-gotra marriage forbidden = GOTRA EXOGAMY. Satavahana queens broke the rule

MARRIAGE TYPES: endogamy (within), exogamy (outside clan), polygyny (many wives — elites), POLYANDRY (many husbands — DRAUPADI + 5 Pandavas)

VARNA ORDER (Manusmriti): Brahmana (priest) > Kshatriya (warrior/ruler) > Vaishya (trader/farmer) > Shudra (servant). Top 3 = twice-born (dvija)

ENFORCEMENT: claimed divinely ordained; kings (Kshatriyas) made to enforce; status by BIRTH; Vedic study barred to Shudras + women

JATI: lived birth-and-occupation groups; MANY more than four; foreigners/forest-folk/crafts slotted in as jatis

TOP 5 PYQ PATTERNS

1 Kinship & marriage rules (patriline, gotra exogamy, types)

8 marks · 90% of years

5-step template: patriline + exceptions + gotra rules + marriage types/Draupadi + conclusion.

2 Source-based on a Mahabharata/ Manusmriti excerpt

5 marks · 100% of years

Identify text/episode + explain norm & tension + historian's use.

3 The varna order & how it was enforced

8 marks · 75% of years

Four varnas + functions + birth-fixed status + Brahmana enforcement + jati reality.

4 Groups beyond the four varnas (untouchability, nishadas)

5 marks · 60% of years

Chandala rules in Manusmriti + Fa Xian's clapper + nishadas/Ekalavya + prescriptive vs actual.

5 Mahabharata as a dynamic text / Critical Edition

3 marks · 70% of years

Composed over ~1000 years + layered authorship + Sukthankar's BORI Critical Edition + regional variation.

90-MIN REVISION FLOW

0-15 min

Memorise the TIME FRAME (600 BCE-600 CE), Mahabharata facts (Vyasa, ~100,000 verses), and Sukthankar / BORI / 47 years.

15-30 min

Write the 'kinship & marriage' answer from memory using the 5-step template (patriline → gotra → marriage types → Draupadi). Time: 12 minutes.

30-45 min

Draw the varna pyramid; list each varna's function; add the jati note and the untouchability/chandala rules.

45-60 min

Practise ONE source-based passage (Draupadi OR Ekalavya OR a Manusmriti rule) — identify, explain norm, state historian's use.

60-75 min

Take the 15-MCQ Quick Drill under a 20-min timer.

75-90 min

Review wrong answers; memorise the key names — Vyasa, Sukthankar, Fa Xian, Ekalavya, Draupadi, Manu; and stridhana.

BEYOND VARNA: untouchables (CHANDALAS) outside the order — Manusmriti degrading rules; FA XIAN saw clappers; NISHADAS (forest hunters); EKALAVYA denied learning

WOMEN + PROPERTY:
STRIDHANA (woman's wealth from marriage gifts) hers to keep; main estate is patrilineal; limited female sphere

HISTORIAN'S METHOD: a normative epic = evidence of NORMS + DEBATES, not literal fact; cross-check with inscriptions

Confidence, not anxiety. You've practised this all year. Trust your steps. Don't change strategy on exam morning.
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