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CLASS XII · HISTORY (027) · THEMES IN INDIAN HISTORY PART I · CBSE BOARD EXAMINATION 2027

HISTORY · THEME 3

Kinship, Caste and Class

c. 600 BCE to 600 CE

Chapter Practice Booklet · Questions only

14 note blocks + varna table | 20 keyword cards + link chain | 73 practice questions | Model Answer Booklet

INSIDE THIS BOOKLET

1	**Chapter Notes** 14 note blocks, varna table, kinship terms, two timelines, who's who + exam snapshot	2
2	**Key Words & Links** 20 keyword cards, link chain, cross-chapter links, 16 drills	9
A	**Textbook Check** 14 questions	13
B	**Objective Practice** 22 MCQ and assertion–reason	14
C	**Board Pattern Practice** 12 questions, with frequency stars	16
D	**Source-Based Questions** 3 sources	17
E	**Board PYQ Index** Real board questions by topic	18
F	**My Mistakes** Your error log	19

STUDENT DETAILS

NAME _____

CLASS & SECTION _____

ROLL NO. _____

BOOKLET STARTED ON _____

PRACTICE SCORE _____ / ____

1

READ THIS FIRST

Chapter Notes

The whole theme in short-note form: how the critical edition of the Mahabharata was made, rules of family and marriage, the varna order and who could become king, jatis and those outside the varnas, property and gender, and how historians read the Mahabharata. Revise from here – you should not need the textbook again.

1 The critical edition of the Mahabharata

- In **1919** a project began under the Sanskritist **V. S. Sukthankar** to prepare a **critical edition** of the Mahabharata, with dozens of scholars.
- They collected **Sanskrit manuscripts** written in different scripts from **all parts of the country**.
- They **compared verses** from each manuscript and selected those that appeared **common to most versions**, and published them in several volumes of over **13,000 pages**. The project took **47 years** (completed 1966).
- **Two findings:** (1) there were **common elements** in the Sanskrit versions from Kashmir and Nepal in the north to Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south; (2) there were huge **regional variations**, recorded in footnotes and appendices – more than half the 13,000 pages.
- So the story was shaped by **dialogues** between dominant **Sanskrit (brahmanical) traditions** and resilient **local ideas and practices** – moments of conflict and of consensus.

2 Kinship and families

- Families are part of larger networks of **kinfolk**. Sanskrit words: **kula** for family, **jnati** for the larger network of kinfolk, and **vamsha** for lineage.
- Kin ties were regarded as 'natural' and based on blood, but they were also defined differently in different societies.
- For ordinary people we know little; historians can study the families of the **elite** more easily, from texts and inscriptions.

> **Patriliny:** tracing descent from father to son, grandson and so on. **Matriliny:** tracing descent through the mother.

3 The Mahabharata and patriliny

- The Mahabharata is a story of two groups of feuding **cousins** – the **Kauravas** and the **Pandavas** – who belonged to the ruling family of the **Kurus**. The conflict was over **land and power**; the Pandavas won.
- After the war, **patrilineal succession** was proclaimed. Patriliny existed before the epic, but the story **reinforced** the idea that it was valuable.
- Under patriliny, **sons** could claim the father's resources, including the **throne**.
- Most ruling dynasties from about the 6th century BCE claimed to follow it, with variations: when there was no son, a **brother** or another kinsman succeeded; in exceptional cases **women** exercised power, like **Prabhavati Gupta**.
- Concern for patriliny was stronger among ruling families, but it was also found among others.

4 Rules of marriage

- Daughters had **no claim** to the resources of the household. They were married into families outside the kin – **exogamy**.
- **Kanyadana** (the gift of a daughter in marriage) was an important religious duty of the father.
- Brahmanas laid down codes of social behaviour in Sanskrit texts called **Dharmasutras** and **Dharmashastras** (c. 500 BCE onwards); the most important, the **Manusmriti**, was compiled between c. 200 BCE and 200 CE.
- These texts recognised **eight forms of marriage**: the first four were 'good', the last four were condemned. The condemned forms may have been practised by people who did not accept brahmanical norms.

> **Endogamy:** marriage within a unit (kin group, caste, or people living in one place). **Exogamy:** marriage outside a unit. **Polygyny:** a man having several wives. **Polyandry:** a woman having several husbands.

5 Gotra of women – and the Satavahana evidence

- From about **1000 BCE** brahmanas classified people (especially brahmanas) into **gotras**, each named after a **Vedic seer**; all members were thought to be his descendants.
- **Two rules:** (1) on marriage, a woman was to give up her **father's gotra** and take her **husband's**; (2) members of the **same gotra** could not marry.

- **Satavahana** inscriptions show something different. Several kings were identified by **metronymics** (names from the mother), e.g. **Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani** – son of Gotami.
- Some Satavahana queens kept their **father's gotra** names (Gotama, Vasistha) instead of taking the husband's, and some belonged to the **same gotra** as their husbands – **endogamy**, as among many communities of south India, where marriage among kin (e.g. cousins) was common.
- Yet **succession** to the Satavahana throne was generally **patrilineal**. So the brahmanical rules were not followed everywhere.

6 Mothers and Gandhari's advice

- Mothers were important, but **sons** inherited. The Mahabharata shows this tension.
- Before the war, **Gandhari** made a last appeal to her eldest son **Duryodhana**: make peace with the Pandavas. A king who controls his **senses** guards his kingdom; **greed and anger** drag a man away from his gains; by conquering these two enemies a king wins the earth. War brings no good.
- Duryodhana **did not listen**; he fought and was defeated. The episode shows a mother's moral authority – and the limits of her power over a son.

7 Social differences – the varna order

The Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras laid down an **ideal order** of four **varnas**, each with 'proper' occupations:

- **Brahmanas:** study and teach the Vedas, perform sacrifices and get sacrifices performed, give and receive gifts.
- **Kshatriyas:** engage in warfare, protect people, administer justice, study the Vedas, get sacrifices performed, make gifts.
- **Vaishyas:** study the Vedas, get sacrifices performed, make gifts, and take up **agriculture, pastoralism and trade**.
- **Shudras:** only one occupation – **serving** the three higher varnas.

How brahmanas tried to enforce it:

- Claiming the order had a **divine origin** – the **Purusha sukta** of the Rigveda says the four varnas came from the body of the primeval man.
- Advising **kings** to ensure the norms were followed.
- Persuading people that **status was decided by birth** – through stories in the Mahabharata and other texts.

8 Kings of different origins

- The Shastras said only **Kshatriyas** could be kings. In practice **many ruling lineages had other origins**.
- **Mauryas:** Buddhist texts call them Kshatriyas; brahmanical texts describe them as of 'low' origin.
- **Shungas and Kanvas**, who followed the Mauryas, were **brahmanas**.
- **Shakas**, from Central Asia, were called **mlechchhas** (outsiders) by brahmanas. Yet **Rudradaman**, a Shaka ruler, had the **Sudarshana lake** rebuilt and left a **Sanskrit** inscription – powerful 'outsiders' adopted Sanskritic traditions.
- **Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani** (Satavahana) called himself a **unique brahmana** and a destroyer of the pride of Kshatriyas. He claimed he stopped **intermarriage among the four varnas** – yet he made a **marriage alliance with Rudradaman's family**.
- So **kingship was open** to anyone who could gather support and resources; it often depended on the **support of brahmanas**.

9 Jatis and social mobility

- In brahmanical theory, **jati**, like varna, was based on **birth**. But varnas were fixed at **four**, while the number of jatis had **no limit**.
- When brahmanas met **new groups** – e.g. forest people like the **nishadas** – or **occupations** that did not fit the four varnas, such as goldsmiths (**suvarnakara**), they classified them as **jatis**.
- Jatis that shared an occupation were sometimes organised into **shrenis (guilds)**.
- **Mandasor inscription** (Madhya Pradesh, c. 5th century CE): a guild of **silk weavers** from **Lata** (Gujarat) moved with their families to **Dashapura** (Mandasor), drawn by the fame of its king. Some members took up other work – archery, astrology, learning, religion – and the guild used its wealth to build a **temple of the sun god**.
- So guild members shared a **craft**, but some **changed occupation** – a sign of social mobility.

10 Beyond and below the four varnas

- **Outside the varna order:** peoples whose customs were not shaped by brahmanical ideas were described as odd or uncivilised – e.g. forest-dwellers (**nishadas**; **Ekalavya** was one), **nomadic pastoralists**, and speakers of non-Sanskritic languages, labelled **mlechchhas**. Yet ideas and beliefs were shared.

- **Below the varnas:** brahmanas called certain activities **'polluting'** – handling corpses and dead animals. People who did this, the **chandalas**, were placed at the very bottom; even their touch, sometimes their sight, was thought polluting – **'untouchability'**.
- **Manusmriti on chandalas:** live **outside the village**, use discarded bowls, wear clothes of the dead and iron ornaments, not walk in villages and cities at night, dispose of the bodies of those with no relatives, and serve as **executioners**.
- **Fa Xian** (c. 5th century CE) wrote that 'untouchables' had to **sound a clapper** in the streets so people could avoid seeing them. **Xuan Zang** (c. 7th century) saw executioners and scavengers forced to live outside the city.
- **Resistance in stories:** a Pali Jataka tells of **Matanga**, the Bodhisatta born as a chandala, who taught a proud brahmana-born son that **virtue, not birth**, gives worth.

11 Ekalavya and Hidimba – meeting other peoples

- **Ekalavya**, a forest-dwelling **nishada**, asked **Drona**, the brahmana teacher of archery to the Kuru princes, to teach him. Drona refused because he was a nishada. Ekalavya made a **clay image of Drona**, practised before it and became a great archer.
- Drona had promised **Arjuna** that he would be unrivalled, so he asked Ekalavya for his **right thumb** as the teacher's fee (**guru dakshina**). Ekalavya cut it off at once; afterwards he was never as quick. Drona kept his word to Arjuna.
- **Hidimba**, a **rakshasa** woman of the forest, married the Pandava **Bhima**; their son **Ghatotkacha** fought for the Pandavas. Such stories show **contact and marriage** between Kshatriyas and forest peoples – the **multicultural** world of the epic.

12 Beyond birth – property, gender and wealth

- **The game of dice:** Duryodhana invited Yudhishthira to play; Yudhishthira lost his gold, elephants, chariots, slaves, army, kingdom, his brothers, himself – and finally **Draupadi**, the common wife of the Pandavas. Draupadi asked whether a man who had lost himself could stake her. The episode raises the question of whether **women were the property** of husbands.
- **Manusmriti:** 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.
- Women could keep the gifts they received at marriage as **stridhana** (a woman's wealth), inherited by her children; the husband had no claim. But the Manusmriti warned women against keeping family property, or even their own valuables, without the **husband's permission**.
- Rich women like **Prabhavati Gupta** controlled resources, but **land, cattle and money** were generally controlled by men – gender differences sharpened.
- **Varna and wealth:** Shudras were to serve; brahmanas and Kshatriyas were expected to be wealthiest. **Buddhism** recognised social differences but **rejected claims to status based on birth**.
- **Sharing wealth:** early **Tamil** poems praise chiefs who were **generous** to poets and the poor – generosity, not birth, brought respect.

13 Explaining social differences – a social contract

- Buddhists gave another explanation, in a story in the **Sutta Pitaka**: at first, humans and plants were not fully formed, and all beings lived in **peace**, taking from nature only what they needed for each meal.
- Gradually people became **greedy, vindictive and deceitful**. So they decided to **choose** one person to punish wrongdoers and keep order, and to give him a share of their **rice** in return.
- He was called the **mahasammata** – the **great elect**, chosen by the whole people.
- **Meaning:** kingship was a **human institution**, based on people's **choice**, and **taxes** were payment for the king's services. People could also change rules – the opposite of the brahmanical idea of a **divine, birth-based** order.

14 Handling texts – historians and the Mahabharata

- **Language:** the Mahabharata exists in many versions in many languages; the critical edition is in **Sanskrit**, simpler than the Vedas or prashastis, so it was widely understood.
- **Content:** historians divide it into **narrative** (stories) and **didactic** (teachings on social norms) sections. Most think it was first a dramatic story, and the didactic parts were added later. It was called **itihasa** ('thus it was').
- **Authors and dates:** the original story was probably composed by **charioteer-bards (sutas)** who went with Kshatriya warriors and celebrated their victories; it was passed on **orally**. From about the **5th century BCE brahmanas** took it over and began to write it down – when chiefdoms such as the Kurus and Panchalas were becoming kingdoms.

- Between **c. 200 BCE and 200 CE** worship of **Vishnu** grew and **Krishna** was identified with Vishnu; between **c. 200 and 400 CE** large didactic sections like the Manusmriti were added. It grew from under **10,000** to about **100,000 verses**. Tradition names the sage **Vyasa** as author.
- **Hastinapura: B. B. Lal** excavated a village of this name near **Meerut** (UP) in **1951–52**. Mud-brick and burnt-brick houses, **soakage jars**, brick drains and **terracotta ring-wells** (wells or drainage pits) were found. It may or may not be the epic's Hastinapura – the name could be a coincidence, though it lies in the upper Ganga doab, the Kuru region.

- **Draupadi's marriage:** historians suggest polyandry may once have existed among ruling elites, or in Himalayan regions, or in times of war when women were few; the text explains it as divine will.
- **A dynamic text:** it kept growing after the Sanskrit version – regional versions, local episodes, sculpture, painting, plays, dance and storytelling. It is still retold today.

The four varnas – ideal occupations

Statement MCQs and 3-mark answers

Varna	Ideal occupations in the Dharmashastras
Brahmana	study and teach the Vedas; perform sacrifices and get them performed; give and receive gifts
Kshatriya	warfare; protect people; administer justice; study the Vedas; get sacrifices performed; make gifts
Vaishya	study the Vedas; get sacrifices performed; make gifts; agriculture, pastoralism, trade
Shudra	serve the three higher varnas

Kinship and marriage terms

Matching MCQs: endogamy, exogamy, polygyny, polyandry

Term	Meaning	Example
Kula / jnati / vamsha	family / kinfolk / lineage	the Kuru vamsha
Patriliny	descent through the father	Pandavas' succession after the war
Matriliny	descent through the mother	Satavahana metronymics (not true matriliny)
Exogamy	marriage outside the kin group	brahmanical rule; kanyadana
Endogamy	marriage within the group	south Indian kin marriage; Satavahana queens
Polygyny	a man with several wives	kings and chiefs
Polyandry	a woman with several husbands	Draupadi
Gotra	group descended from a Vedic seer	a woman takes her husband's gotra
Stridhana	gifts a woman receives at marriage	inherited by her children

Key terms

1- and 2-mark answers

Critical edition – version of a text built by comparing many manuscripts

Kula / jnati – family / larger network of kinfolk

Vamsha – lineage

Kanyadana – gift of a daughter in marriage

Metronymic – name derived from the mother's name

Dharmasutras / Dharmashastras – brahmanical texts of social norms

Manusmriti – best-known Dharmashastra, c. 200 BCE – 200 CE

Varna – one of four ideal social orders

Jati – birth-based group, often tied to an occupation; unlimited in number

Mlechchha – 'outsider' – non-Sanskrit speaker

Nishada – forest-dwelling people (Ekalavya)

Chandala – group placed below the varnas as ‘untouchable’

Stridhana – a woman’s own wealth from marriage gifts

Mahasammata – ‘great elect’ – first king chosen by the people

Itihasa – ‘thus it was’ – term for the epic

Sutas – charioteer-bards who first composed the epic

Timeline to memorise

Chronology MCQs come from here

Year	Event
c. 500 BCE	Panini's Ashtadhyayi, a Sanskrit grammar
c. 500–200 BCE	Dharmasutras composed
c. 500–100 BCE	Early Buddhist texts, incl. the Tripitaka
c. 500 BCE – 400 CE	Ramayana and Mahabharata
c. 200 BCE – 200 CE	Manusmriti
c. 200 CE	Tamil Sangam literature

Year	Event
c. 300–600 CE	Other Dharmashastras
c. 400–500 CE	Sanskrit plays including Kalidasa's; Aryabhata
1919	V. S. Sukthankar begins the critical edition
1951–52	B. B. Lal excavates Hastinapura
1966	Critical edition completed

People to remember

Matching MCQs and source questions

Person	Remember for
V. S. Sukthankar	led the critical edition (1919–66)
B. B. Lal	excavated Hastinapura (1951–52)
Vyasa	sage named by tradition as author of the epic
Gandhari	urged Duryodhana to make peace
Draupadi	polyandry; questioned the game of dice

Person	Remember for
Ekalavya	nishada archer; gave his right thumb to Drona
Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani	Satavahana king; 'unique brahmana'
Rudradaman	Shaka ruler; Sanskrit inscription
Fa Xian / Xuan Zang	Chinese pilgrims who described 'untouchables'

Exam snapshot

What the board asks, and how to prepare

SYLLABUS 2026–27

- Broad overview: social histories through the Mahabharata – kinship, caste and class
- Story of discovery: transmission and publication of the Mahabharata
- Excerpt: from the Mahabharata, illustrating how it has been used by historians
- Discussion: other sources for reconstructing social history

BOARD WEIGHTAGE

4–8 / 80

History is one 80-mark theory paper. This theme was asked in **all six papers checked** (board 2024–2026 and three sample papers), giving **4 to 8 marks**: 1–2 MCQs plus a 3-mark answer, a 4-mark source (Gandhari, SQP 2026–27) or an 8-mark long answer (Board 2025). There is no map item for this theme.

MOST ASKED, 2024–2026 BOARD PAPERS AND SAMPLE PAPERS (6 PAPERS CHECKED)

How often	Topic / question type	Marks	Papers
★★★	Kinship and marriage – family relations, gotra, endogamy/exogamy, polyandry, Gandhari	1 / 4 / 8	4 of 6
★★★	The Mahabharata as a text – critical edition, dynamic, multicultural, Hastinapura	1 / 3	4 of 6
★★★	Kings of different origins – Satavahanas, Shakas, kingship not by birth	1 / 3 / 8	3 of 6
★☆☆	Varna, jati, those outside the varnas – Ekalavya	1	1 of 6
★☆☆	Property and gender – Manusmriti, stridhana	1	1 of 6

ANSWER-WRITING RULES FOR HISTORY (CBSE SAMPLE PAPER 2026–27)

1 mark
MCQ · write the letter and the answer text

3 marks
Short answer · 60–80 words · 3 clear points with evidence

4 marks
Source-based · 1 + 1 + 2 · answer from the source, then add chapter facts

8 marks
Long answer · 300–350 words · 8 points, opening and closing line

Write in points, underline key words, and name a site, an object, a scholar or a date in every point. Read every "OR" choice before you start, and attempt only one.

MISTAKES THAT COST MARKS

- Writing that **Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani** was a Shaka – he was a **Satavahana**; **Rudradaman** was the Shaka.
- Calling the Satavahanas **matrilineal** – they used **metronymics**, but succession was **patrilineal**.
- Mixing **endogamy** (within the group) and **exogamy** (outside); **polygyny** (many wives) and **polyandry** (many husbands).
- Saying a woman kept her father's gotra under the brahmanical rule – she was to take her **husband's**; Satavahana queens are the exception.
- Writing that Drona taught Ekalavya – he **refused**; Ekalavya practised before a **clay image** and gave his **right thumb**.
- Giving **Vyasa** as the editor of the critical edition – it was **V. S. Sukthankar** (1919–1966).
- Saying women inherited the paternal estate – under the Manusmriti **sons** did; women had only **stridhana**.
- 8-mark answers without evidence – name a **text, episode, king or inscription** in every point.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

1. **Day 1:** Read the Chapter Notes twice; learn the key terms and the timeline.
2. **Day 2:** Part 2 Key Words & Links – learn the cards, read the link chain aloud, do the drills.
3. **Next day:** Parts A and B. **Then:** Parts C and D – MUST DO questions first.
4. Check every answer against the **Model Answer Booklet**: same points, same keywords, within the word limit.
5. Write every mistake on the My Mistakes page and redo it after 3 days.

2

READ THIS SECOND · THE THREAD THAT JOINS THE CHAPTER

Key Words & Links

Good students lose History marks because they know the words but not how one topic leads to the next. Learn each word's meaning, its example and its link – then use the link words in every answer.

20 keyword cards

Means · Example · Link →

Critical edition — SUKTHANKAR, 1919–66
MEANS a version built by comparing many manuscripts
EXAMPLE 13,000+ pages; common verses chosen
LINK → showed both UNITY and REGIONAL VARIETY of the epic

Kula / jnati / vamsha — KINSHIP
MEANS family / kinfolk / lineage
EXAMPLE Kuru vamsha of the Mahabharata
LINK → the frame for INHERITANCE and succession

Patriliny — KURU SUCCESSION
MEANS descent through the father
EXAMPLE Pandavas' succession after the war
LINK → sons inherit → women have LESS PROPERTY

Exogamy — MARRIAGE RULE
MEANS marriage outside the kin group
EXAMPLE kanyadana by the father
LINK → daughters leave the natal family; GOTRA changes

Gotra — C. 1000 BCE
MEANS a group descended from a Vedic seer
EXAMPLE woman takes husband's gotra; no same-gotra marriage
LINK → Satavahana queens show EXCEPTIONS

Metronymic — SATAVAHANAS
MEANS name drawn from the mother
EXAMPLE Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani
LINK → mothers mattered, but succession stayed PATRILINEAL

Endogamy — SOUTH INDIA
MEANS marriage within the group or kin
EXAMPLE Satavahana queens of the husband's gotra
LINK → local practice differed from SANSKRIT NORMS

Polyandry — DRAUPADI
MEANS a woman with several husbands
EXAMPLE Draupadi and the five Pandavas
LINK → historians debate its MEANING

Dharmashastras — MANUSMRITI
MEANS brahmanical codes of social behaviour
EXAMPLE eight forms of marriage; varna duties
LINK → the IDEAL – not always the practice

Varna — FOUR ORDERS
MEANS ideal social order with fixed duties
EXAMPLE Purusha sukta; birth decides status
LINK → brahmanas' claim to the TOP

Jati — UNLIMITED
MEANS birth-based group, often by occupation
EXAMPLE nishadas, suvarnakara, guilds
LINK → absorbed NEW GROUPS into society

Shreni (Mandasor) — C. 5TH CENTURY CE
MEANS guild of silk weavers who migrated and diversified
EXAMPLE built a sun temple
LINK → shows SOCIAL MOBILITY

Mlechchha — OUTSIDERS
MEANS non-Sanskrit speakers seen as outsiders
EXAMPLE Shakas; Rudradaman's Sanskrit inscription
LINK → outsiders could still become KINGS

Unique brahmana — SIRI-SATAKANI
MEANS Satavahana king's claim about himself
EXAMPLE stopped varna intermarriage – yet allied with Shakas
LINK → kingship was NOT ONLY FOR KSHATRIYAS

Nishada / Ekalavya — FOREST PEOPLE
MEANS forest-dwellers outside the varnas
EXAMPLE Drona refused; right thumb as fee
LINK → EXCLUSION from learning by birth

Chandala — UNTOUCHABILITY
MEANS group placed below the varnas
EXAMPLE Manusmriti rules; Fa Xian's clapper
LINK → the sharpest SOCIAL DIVIDE

Stridhana — WOMEN'S WEALTH
MEANS gifts a woman received at marriage
EXAMPLE inherited by her children
LINK → the only property women CONTROLLED

Mahasammata — SUTTA PITAKA
MEANS the 'great elect' – first king chosen by people
EXAMPLE paid in a share of rice
LINK → kingship as a SOCIAL CONTRACT

Sutas — AUTHORS

MEANS charioteer-bards who first composed the epic

EXAMPLE oral poems of victories

LINK → brahmanas later WROTE IT DOWN

Dynamic text — MAHABHARATA

MEANS a text that keeps changing

EXAMPLE regional versions, sculpture, plays

LINK → a LIVING TRADITION to this day

The link chain – the whole chapter as one story

Read top to bottom; the orange line is the link

From family to society

Family **Kula, jnati, vamsha** – families in kin networks

▼ *property passes through men*

Patriliny **Sons inherit** the throne and estate (Kuru story)

▼ *daughters must marry out*

Marriage **Exogamy, kanyadana, gotra rules** – but Satavahana endogamy

▼ *the rules are part of a larger order*

Varna **Four varnas** with fixed duties; divine origin claimed

▼ *new groups do not fit*

Jati **Unlimited jatis**; guilds like Mandasor's silk weavers

▼ *some are pushed outside*

Outside **Nishadas, mlechchhas, chandalas** – exclusion and untouchability

▼ *yet power is open*

Kings **Mauryas, Shakas, Satavahanas** – kings of many origins

How we know – the Mahabharata

Sutas **Charioteer-bards** compose the story orally

▼ *brahmanas take it over*

c. 5th c. BCE **Brahmanas write it down** as kingdoms form

▼ *new ideas are added*

200 BCE–400 CE **Krishna = Vishnu**; didactic sections; ~100,000 verses

▼ *it spreads across India*

Regions **Regional versions**, art, plays, dance

▼ *scholars seek the core*

1919–66 **Critical edition** under Sukthankar

▼ *archaeology tests the story*

1951–52 **B. B. Lal at Hastinapura** – a link not proven

Cross-chapter links

Words that come back in other chapters

Board answers score higher when you connect chapters. Learn these 8 bridges.

Key word	In this chapter	Comes back in	A link sentence for your answer
Inscriptions	Satavahana and Shaka inscriptions	**Theme 2 Kings, Farmers and Towns**: Asokan inscriptions and prashastis	*"Kings spoke through stone in both themes."*
Rudradaman	a Shaka 'outsider' king	**Theme 2**: repaired the Sudarshana lake	*"The same king appears in both themes."*
Guilds	Mandasor silk weavers	**Theme 2**: shrenis organised crafts and trade	*"Guilds shaped towns and social groups."*
Prabhavati Gupta	a woman who held power	**Theme 2**: her land grant	*"A rare woman with land and authority."*
Buddhist view of society	mahasammata; birth rejected	**Theme 4 Thinkers, Beliefs and Buildings**: the Buddha's teachings and the sangha	*"Buddhism challenged birth-based status."*
Archaeology and texts	Hastinapura and the epic	**Theme 1 Bricks, Beads and Bones**: Mesopotamian texts on Meluhha	*"Texts and digs must check each other."*
Travellers' accounts	Fa Xian and Xuan Zang on 'untouchables'	**Theme 5 Through the Eyes of Travellers**: Al-Biruni on caste	*"Outsiders noticed caste in every age."*
Caste and protest	Matanga Jataka	**Theme 6 Bhakti–Sufi Traditions**: Basavanna and the saints challenged caste	*"Questions about birth never stopped."*

Drill 1 · Explain how X led to Y

2 marks each · 40 words

Use a chain: **cause → what changed → result**. Join the steps with link words:

as a result · this led to · because · therefore · in turn · this made it possible to · on the other hand · however

L1. Explain how **patriliny** led to **women's weak claim to property**. [2]

L2. Explain how the **rule of exogamy** led to the **gotra** rules for women. [2]

L3. Explain how **Satavahana inscriptions** lead historians to doubt that **brahmanical rules** were followed everywhere. [2]

L4. Explain how the **support of brahmanas** helped **non-Kshatriyas become kings**. [2]

L5. Explain how **new groups** led to the growth of **jatis**. [2]

L6. Explain how the idea of **'polluting' work** led to **untouchability**. [2]

L7. Explain how **oral composition by sutas** led to a text that kept **changing**. [2]

L8. Explain how the **critical edition** revealed **regional variety**. [2]

Drill 2 · Use all three words in one answer

3 marks each · 60 words

Underline the three words in your answer. Each must be used with its correct meaning.

L9. Write a 60-word answer using: **Gotami · metronymic · patriliny**. [3]

L10. Write a 60-word answer using: **Drona · Ekalavya · nishada**. [3]

L11. Write a 60-word answer using: **Manusmriti · stridhana · eldest son**. [3]

L12. Write a 60-word answer using: **Sukthankar · manuscripts · 13,000 pages**. [3]

Drill 3 · Fill the missing link

1 mark each

L13. Write the missing step: [1]

Duryodhana and Yudhishthira play dice → ? → Draupadi asks whether a wife is her husband's property

L14. Write the missing step: [1]

People become greedy and deceitful → ? → Taxes are paid as a share of rice

L15. Write the missing step: [1]

Silk weavers migrate from Lata to Dashapura → ? → A temple of the sun god is built

Drill 4 · Odd one out

1 mark each

L16. Find the odd one out and give the link that joins the other three: **Mauryas · Shungas · Shakas · Pandavas** [1]

A

PART A · NCERT PRACTICE

Textbook Check

Every section of the chapter and every NCERT exercise idea, asked in new words. Model answers for all of these are in the Model Answer Booklet.

The critical edition and kinship

A1. Describe how the critical edition of the Mahabharata was prepared. What did the scholars find? MUST DO [3]

A2. Explain the terms kula, jnati, vamsha, patriliny and matriliny. [3]

A3. How did the Mahabharata reinforce the idea of patriliny? MUST DO [3]

A4. Explain the brahmanical rules of marriage and of gotra. MUST DO [3]

A5. "The Satavahanas did not always follow the brahmanical rules of marriage." Give evidence. MUST DO [3]

Varna, jati and kingship

A6. What were the ideal occupations of the four varnas? How did brahmanas try to enforce this order? MUST DO [8]

A7. "Kingship was not confined to Kshatriyas." Give three examples. MUST DO [3]

A8. How was jati different from varna? How were new groups fitted into the system? [3]

A9. How were the chandalas treated according to the Manusmriti and Chinese pilgrims? MUST DO [3]

Property, gender and the epic

A10. Explain the differences in access to property between men and women. MUST DO [3]

A11. Explain the Buddhist idea of the origin of kingship. [3]

A12. Discuss how historians classify the contents of the Mahabharata and date its composition. MUST DO [8]

A13. What did B. B. Lal find at Hastinapura? Why are historians careful in linking it with the epic? [3]

A14. "The Mahabharata is a dynamic text." Explain. MUST DO [3]

PART B · PAPER 027 STYLE

B Objective Practice

The MCQ types of Section A: statements, matching, chronology and assertion–reason.

ASSERTION–REASON: HOW TO ANSWER

(a) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.

(b) Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A.

(c) A is true, but R is false.

(d) A is false, but R is true.

Multiple choice, matching and chronology

1 mark each

B1. The critical edition of the Mahabharata was prepared under the leadership of: [1]

(a) B. B. Lal **(b)** James Prinsep **(c)** D. C. Sircar **(d)** V. S. Sukthankar

B2. Match the term with its meaning: [1]

(a) Endogamy (b) Exogamy (c) Polygyny (d) Polyandry

(i) a woman having several husbands (ii) marriage within a unit (iii) a man having several wives (iv) marriage outside a unit

(a) a-ii, b-iv, c-iii, d-i

(b) a-iv, b-ii, c-iii, d-i

(c) a-ii, b-iv, c-i, d-iii

(d) a-iii, b-i, c-ii, d-iv

B3. Which statement about Ekalavya is correct? [1]

(a) He was Drona’s favourite pupil

(b) He belonged to the Kuru lineage

(c) He gave his right thumb as guru dakshina

(d) He studied archery with Arjuna

B4. Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani belonged to the: [1]

(a) Vakataka dynasty

(b) Satavahana dynasty

(c) Kushana dynasty

(d) Gupta dynasty

B5. Which claim did Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani make? [1]

(a) He was the best of the Shaka kings

(b) He stopped intermarriage among the four varnas

(c) He made a marriage alliance with the Guptas

(d) He rebuilt the Sudarshana lake

B6. According to the Manusmriti, the paternal estate was to be: [1]

(a) given entirely to the eldest son

(b) shared equally by sons and daughters

(c) divided equally among sons, with a special share for the eldest

(d) given to the wife as stridhana

B7. The excavator of Hastinapura in 1951–52 was: [1]

(a) Rakhal Das Banerji

(b) Daya Ram Sahni

(c) S. N. Roy

(d) B. B. Lal

B8. Draupadi’s marriage with the five Pandavas is an example of: [1]

(a) polygyny **(b)** endogamy **(c)** polyandry **(d)** kanyadana

B9. Read the statements about gotra: [1]
I. Each gotra was named after a Vedic seer. II. Women took their husband's gotra on marriage.
III. Members of the same gotra were encouraged to marry. IV. The practice developed from about 1000 BCE.
Which statements are correct?
(a) I, II and III **(b)** II, III and IV **(c)** I, II and IV **(d)** I, III and IV

B10. 'Mahasammata' in the Buddhist story of kingship means: [1]
(a) the great elect **(b)** the son of god
(c) the beloved of the gods **(d)** the unique brahmana

B11. Which Chinese pilgrim wrote that 'untouchables' had to sound a clapper in the streets? [1]
(a) Fa Xian **(b)** Xuan Zang **(c)** I-Qing **(d)** Megasthenes

B12. The Mandasor inscription records a guild of: [1]
(a) goldsmiths **(b)** silk weavers
(c) potters **(d)** merchants of Lata

B13. Arrange in chronological order: [1]
I. Critical edition completed II. Manusmriti compiled III. Lal excavates Hastinapura IV. Dharmasutras composed
(a) II, IV, III, I **(b)** IV, II, III, I **(c)** IV, II, I, III **(d)** II, IV, I, III

B14. The Mahabharata was originally composed by: [1]
(a) brahmana priests **(b)** Buddhist monks
(c) charioteer-bards (sutas) **(d)** court poets of the Guptas

B15. Which of these was NOT an ideal occupation of the Vaishyas? [1]
(a) trade **(b)** pastoralism
(c) agriculture **(d)** administering justice

B16. The Shaka ruler who left a Sanskrit inscription about rebuilding the Sudarshana lake was: [1]
(a) Kanishka **(b)** Satakani **(c)** Samudragupta **(d)** Rudradaman

B17. Hidimba, who married Bhima, was: [1]
(a) a rakshasa woman of the forest **(b)** a Kuru princess
(c) a Satavahana queen **(d)** Gandhari's daughter

Assertion–Reason

1 mark each

B18. ASSERTION–REASON [1]
Assertion (A): Satavahana rulers were identified by metronymics.
Reason (R): Succession to the Satavahana throne was matrilineal.

B19. ASSERTION–REASON [1]
Assertion (A): The guild of silk weavers of Mandasor built a temple of the sun god.
Reason (R): Guild members could change occupations and invest their wealth.

B20. ASSERTION–REASON [1]
Assertion (A): Rudradaman, a Shaka ruler, had a Sanskrit inscription composed.
Reason (R): Brahmanas regarded the Shakas as mlechchhas.

B21. ASSERTION–REASON [1]

Assertion (A): The Mahabharata is described as a dynamic text.

Reason (R): It continued to grow through regional versions and new episodes.

B22. ASSERTION–REASON [1]

Assertion (A): Women could claim an equal share of the paternal estate under the Manusmriti.

Reason (R): Women could keep stridhana, the gifts received at marriage.

C

PART C · BOARD PATTERN

Board Pattern Practice

Written-answer questions grouped by topic. ★★★ = asked in 3 or more of the 6 papers checked · ★★ = 2 papers · ★ = 1 paper.

Kinship, family and marriage

★★★ 4 of 6 papers · 1, 4 and 8 marks

C1. Explain the features of familial relations in the Mahabharata period with suitable examples. MUST DO [8]

C2. What do Gandhari's advice to Duryodhana and his response tell us about family relations? MUST DO [3]

C3. Analyse why the Satavahana evidence challenges the brahmanical rules of gotra. [3]

The Mahabharata as a text

★★★ 4 of 6 papers · 1 and 3 marks

C4. Explain the stages by which the critical edition of the Mahabharata was compiled in the 20th century. [3]
MUST DO

C5. "The Mahabharata is a dynamic text." Justify the statement. MUST DO [3]

C6. How does the Mahabharata reflect the multicultural nature of early Indian society? Give examples. [3]
MUST DO

C7. What did the excavations at Hastinapura reveal? Can they be linked with the Mahabharata? [3]

Kings of different origins

★★★ 3 of 6 papers · 1, 3 and 8 marks

C8. "From the 6th century BCE, kingship was not confined to those born as Kshatriyas." Explain with examples. [8]
MUST DO

C9. Substantiate that several important ruling lineages had different origins in early India. MUST DO [3]

Varna, jati and outsiders

★☆☆ 1 of 6 papers · 1 mark

C10. Examine how brahmanical texts treated people outside the four varnas. [3]

C11. "The guild of silk weavers of Mandasor shows that society was more complex than the varna order suggests." Explain. [3]

Property and gender

★☆☆ 1 of 6 papers · 1 mark

C12. "Social differences between men and women sharpened because of differences in access to resources." Explain. [3]

D

PART D · SOURCE-BASED (Q31–Q33 STYLE)

Source-Based Questions

Each source carries 4 marks (1 + 1 + 2), as in Q31–Q33 of the board paper. The sources are written for this booklet in the style of the excerpts in the textbook. Answer from the source and your notes.

D1. Source-Based · A Mother's Last Appeal [4]

As the armies gathered, an old queen sent for her eldest son. "Make peace with your cousins," she said. "Give them their share and you will honour your father and me. The king who rules his own senses keeps his kingdom; the one who lets greed and anger rule him loses everything. These two enemies drag a man away from what he has won. Conquer them and you conquer the earth. A war brings good to no one." The prince heard her out, said nothing, and went back to his generals.

(i) Identify the queen and her son. [1]

(ii) Which two vices does she ask a king to overcome? [1]

(iii) What does the son's response tell us about his character and about family relations? Give two points. [2]

D2. Source-Based · Digging at Hastinapura [4]

An archaeologist digging at a village near Meerut in the early 1950s reported that in one period no clear house plans could be traced, but walls of mud and mud-brick were found, and lumps of mud plaster bore the marks of reeds – some houses had reed walls plastered with mud. In a later period, houses were built of mud bricks as well as burnt bricks. Waste water was led away by brick drains and soakage jars, and ring-wells of terracotta may have served both as wells and as pits for drainage.

(i) Name the archaeologist and the site. [1]

(ii) What was the use of the terracotta ring-wells? [1]

(iii) Why are historians careful in linking this site with the Hastinapura of the Mahabharata? Give two reasons. [2]

D3. Source-Based · The First King [4]

A Buddhist text tells that long ago, beings lived in peace and took from nature only what each meal needed. Slowly they became greedy and began to store, to steal and to lie. Then the people met and said: let us choose one among us who will be angry when anger is right, blame what should be blamed and send away those who should be sent away. In return we will each give him a share of our rice. The one they chose was called the great elect.

(i) In which Buddhist text is this story found? [1]

(ii) What was the chosen person called? [1]

(iii) How does this idea of kingship differ from the brahmanical view? Give two points. [2]

PART E · REAL BOARD QUESTIONS

E Board PYQ Index

Real questions from recent board papers and CBSE sample papers, by topic. Open the paper and attempt the listed questions.

Frequency	Topic	Marks	Where asked (year: paper code, question number)	Practise here
★★★	**Kinship, family and marriage**	1–8	**2025:** 61/1/1 Q28(A) (familial relations)* · **2024:** 61/1/1 Q7 (polyandry) · **SQP 2025–26:** Q4 (match marriage terms) · **SQP 2026–27:** Q31 (source: Gandhari)	A2–A5, B2, B8–B9, B18, C1–C3, D1, L1–L3, L9
★★★	**The Mahabharata as a text**	1–3	**2024:** 61/1/1 Q22(a) (dynamic text) / Q22(b) (critical edition) · **SQP 2025–26:** Q23 (stages of the critical edition) · **SQP 2024–25:** Q23 (multicultural society) · **SQP 2026–27:** Q5 (Hastinapura)	A1, A12–A14, B1, B7, B13–B14, B17, B21, C4–C7, D2, L7–L8, L12
★★★	**Kings of different origins**	1–8	**2026:** 61/2/3 Q5 (Satakani), Q23 (ruling lineages) · **2025:** 61/1/1 Q28(B) (kingship not by birth)* · **SQP 2024–25:** Q2 (Satavahana)	A7, B4–B5, B16, B20, C8–C9, D3, L4, L16
★☆☆	**Varna, jati and outsiders**	1	**2026:** 61/2/3 Q1 (Ekalavya) · **SQP 2026–27:** Q4 (A–R, Mandasor guild – also Theme 2)	A6, A8–A9, B3, B11–B12, B15, B19, C10–C11, L5–L6, L10, L15
★☆☆	**Property and gender**	1	**SQP 2025–26:** Q5 (Manusmriti on paternal estate)	A10–A11, B6, B10, B22, C12, L11, L13–L14

Papers checked (6): Board 2026 – 61/2/3 · Board 2025 – 61/1/1 · Board 2024 – 61/1/1 (from the marking scheme) · CBSE Sample Papers 2026–27, 2025–26, 2024–25. * Read from a secondary copy of the paper – check against the official paper. Sets of one code family share most questions. Download official papers from cbse.gov.in → Previous Year Question Papers, and sample papers from cbseacademic.nic.in.

F

PART F · YOUR RECORD

My Mistakes

Write down each mistake from this chapter, including your school tests and pre-board papers.

Every wrong answer is a free lesson. Write it here, find the point you missed, and redo the question after three days.

Date	Part & Q No.	What went wrong	Correct point or fact	Redone ✓