

IAS Prelims Exam: Ancient History

NCERT Questions: Kinship, Caste and Class

Questions asked from Ancient Indian History section in IAS Prelims Exam are quite easy but the candidates need to memorise well before appearing in the exam. The candidates should have balanced preparation of overall three sections of the History and its chronology is one of the most important parts of the subject history which enable candidates to memorise well every important aspects of history.

Following Multiple Choice Questions of Ancient Indian History would help students in understanding the nature of questions asked in IAS Prelims Exam.

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the critical edition of Mahabharata:

- I. A team comprising dozens of scholars initiated the task of preparing a critical edition of the Mahabharata.
- II. Initially, it meant collecting Sanskrit manuscripts of the text, written in a variety of scripts, from different parts of the country.
- III. The team worked out a method of comparing verses from each manuscript.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?

- A. Only I
- B. I and II
- C. I and III
- D. All of the above

Answer: D

Explanation: One of the most ambitious projects of scholarship began in 1919, under the leadership of a noted Indian Sanskritist, V.S. Sukthankar. A team comprising dozens of scholars initiated the task of preparing a critical edition of the Mahabharata. What exactly did this involve? Initially, it meant collecting Sanskrit manuscripts of the text, written in a variety of scripts, from different parts of the country. Ultimately, they selected the verses that appeared common to most versions and published these in several volumes, running into over 13,000 pages.

Q2. Which of the following statements is incorrect about the critical edition of Mahabharata?

- A. The project of preparing a critical edition of the Mahabharata took only 5 years to complete.
- B. There were several common elements in the Sanskrit versions of the story, evident in manuscripts found all over the subcontinent, from Kashmir and Nepal in the north to Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south.
- C. The evidences were enormous regional variations in the ways in which the text had been transmitted over the centuries.
- D. Our understanding of these processes is derived primarily from texts written in Sanskrit by and for Brahmanas.

Answer: A

Explanation: The team worked out a method of comparing verses from each manuscript. Ultimately, they selected the verses that appeared common to most versions and published these in several volumes, running into over 13,000 pages. The project took 47 years to complete. Two things became apparent: there were several common elements in the Sanskrit versions of the story, evident in manuscripts found all over the subcontinent, from Kashmir and Nepal in the north to Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south.

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the familial ties and practices:

- I. Often people belonging to the same family share food and other resources, and live, work and perform rituals together.
- II. Families are usually parts of larger networks of people defined as relatives, or to use a more technical term, kinfolk.
- III. While familial ties are often regarded as “natural” and based on blood, they are defined in many different ways.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?

- A. Only I
- B. I and II
- C. I and III
- D. All of the above

Answer: D

Explanation: We often take family life for granted. However, you may have noticed that not all families are identical: they vary in terms of numbers of members, their relationship with one another as well as the kinds of activities they share. Often people belonging to the same family share food and other resources, and live, work and perform rituals together. Families are usually parts of larger networks of people defined as relatives, or to use a more technical term, kinfolk. While familial ties are often regarded as “natural” and based on blood, they are defined in many different ways. For instance, some societies regard cousins as being blood relations, whereas others do not.

Q4. Which of the following statements is incorrect regarding the ideal of patriliney?

- A. Patriliney had existed prior to the composition of the epic; the central story of the Mahabharata reinforced the idea that it was valuable.
- B. The concern with patriliney was not unique to ruling families which is evident in mantras in ritual texts such as the Mahabharata.
- C. Under patriliney, sons could claim the resources (including the throne in the case of kings) of their fathers when the latter died.
- D. Most ruling dynasties (c. sixth century BCE onwards) claimed to follow the patriliney system, although there were variations in practice: sometimes there were no sons, in some situations brothers succeeded one another, sometimes other kinsmen claimed the throne, and, in very exceptional circumstances, women such as Prabhavati Gupta exercised power.

Answer: B

Explanation: The concern with patriliney was not unique to ruling families. It is evident in mantras in ritual texts such as the Rigveda. It is possible that these attitudes were shared by wealthy men and those who claimed high status, including Brahmanas.

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the rules of the marriage during the Early Societies:

- I. At that time sons were important for the continuity of the patrilineage, daughters were viewed rather differently within this framework.
- II. At the same time, marrying them into families outside the kin was considered desirable.
- III. The system of exogamy gave rise to the belief that kanyadana or the gift of a daughter in

marriage was an important religious duty of the father.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?

- A. Only I
- B. I and II
- C. I and III
- D. All of the above

Answer: D

Explanation: While sons were important for the continuity of the patrilineage, daughters were viewed rather differently within this framework. They had no claims to the resources of the household. At the same time, marrying them into families outside the kin was considered desirable. This system, called exogamy (literally, marrying outside), meant that the lives of young girls and women belonging to families that claimed high status were often carefully regulated to ensure that they were married at the “right” time and to the “right” person.

Q6. Which one of the following language was used by the earliest ordinary people?

- A. Hindi
- B. Prakrit
- C. Sanskrit
- D. Urdu

Answer: B

Explanation: Basically, the early manuscripts were written in either Sanskrit or Prakrit language and till that time no other language had been explored. The common or ordinary of the time could understand the Prakrit language and use of this language was at large, this is language is also known as the language of the common people.

Q7. The earliest inscriptions were written on which of the following materials?

- A. Paper
- B. Stones
- C. Soft surfaces

D. Non-metallic surfaces

Answer: B

Explanation: Generally, the earliest inscriptions were written on relatively hard surfaces like stone and metallic surfaces.

Q8. What type of the animals eaten by the earliest people can be traced through the study of:

- A. bones of animals found
- B. the regions where the evidence of settlements have been found
- C. tools used by them
- D. pots used by them

Answer: A

Explanation: The archaeologists studied the bones found in the various sites and constructed the eating pattern of the people of the past.

Q9. The process of understanding the inscription of the past known as the:

- A. Archaeology
- B. Topography
- C. Paleontology
- D. Decipherment

Answer: D

Explanation: The archaeologist studies the inscription found in the process of excavation and understanding these inscriptions known as the decipherment.

Q10. Which of the following is the first big Kingdom of India?

- A. Magadha
- B. Vijayanagara
- C. Kushana
- D. Mughal

Answer: A

Explanation: Magadha is the earliest big kingdom of India and rest of the above empires came after the Magadha Empire.