

Indian Political Thought-1 PYQ 2021

Q1. Discuss various meanings of "dharma" in ancient tradition of Indian Political Thought.

Ans. In the ancient tradition of Indian Political Thought, the term "dharma" holds multifaceted meanings that encompass ethical, moral, social, and cosmic dimensions. It is a concept deeply rooted in Indian philosophy and spirituality, and it has been interpreted in various ways by different schools of thought. **Here are the various meanings of "dharma" in the ancient Indian context:**

1. Ethical Duty and Moral Righteousness:

"Dharma" is often associated with ethical duty and moral righteousness. It refers to the right conduct that individuals are expected to follow in their personal and social lives. This aspect of dharma emphasizes the importance of adhering to virtues and values, such as truth, non-violence, compassion, and honesty.

2. Cosmic Order and Harmony:

In the context of cosmic order, "dharma" refers to the underlying harmony and balance that govern the universe. It signifies the natural order that maintains equilibrium and sustains the world. This concept is often related to the idea of cosmic justice and the proper functioning of the universe.

3. Duty and Responsibilities in Social Roles:

"Dharma" also encompasses the duties and responsibilities associated with different social roles and positions. It emphasizes the importance of fulfilling one's obligations as a parent, child, teacher, ruler, and so on. Dharma guides individuals in performing their roles in a just and responsible manner.

4. Law and Legal Norms:

In the context of governance and law, "dharma" is often associated with just and righteous laws that govern society. It underscores the importance of upholding laws that promote fairness, equity, and social welfare. Ancient legal texts, such as the Manusmriti, emphasize the role of dharma in shaping legal norms.

5. Spiritual Path and Liberation:

"Dharma" is also linked to the spiritual path and the quest for self-realization and liberation (moksha). Following one's dharma is considered essential for attaining spiritual growth and inner harmony. It involves transcending material desires and aligning one's actions with higher spiritual truths.

6. Universal Order and Cosmic Ethics:

"Dharma" can be seen as a guiding principle that upholds the moral and ethical order of the universe. It encompasses the cosmic ethical code that guides both human behavior and the functioning of the natural world.

7. Individual's Innate Nature:

According to some interpretations, "dharma" is connected to an individual's innate nature and unique qualities. It implies fulfilling one's potential and purpose in life by aligning actions with one's true nature.

In summary, "dharma" in ancient Indian Political Thought represents a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses ethical duty, moral righteousness, cosmic order, social roles, law, spirituality, and more. It reflects the intricate interplay between individual responsibilities, societal norms, and the larger cosmic framework. Different philosophical schools and texts offer diverse interpretations of "dharma," contributing to its rich and nuanced understanding in Indian thought.

Q2. Is Kautilya a theorist of Realism? Give reasons in support of your answer.

Ans. Yes, Kautilya, also known as Chanakya, is often considered a theorist of Realism in the context of Indian Political Thought. His work, "Arthashastra," is a comprehensive treatise on statecraft, governance, and diplomacy, and it reflects many characteristics of Realist thought. **Here are the reasons supporting the classification of Kautilya as a Realist:**

1. Pragmatic Approach to Politics:

Kautilya's "Arthashastra" is grounded in a pragmatic approach to politics, emphasizing the practical and strategic aspects of statecraft. He focuses on the pursuit of power, security, and national interests as the primary objectives of a ruler. This aligns with Realism's emphasis on the practical considerations of power politics.

2. Centrality of State and Sovereignty:

Kautilya places the state at the center of his political theory. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining and expanding state power and sovereignty. His writings reflect a belief that states are rational actors driven by self-interest, which is a core tenet of Realist thought.

3. Pursuit of Power and Security:

Kautilya's theories advocate for the acquisition and maintenance of power and security through various means, including diplomacy, warfare, espionage, and alliances. This emphasis on power dynamics and strategic calculations resonates with Realist principles.

4. View of International Relations:

Kautilya's conception of international relations is characterized by a realpolitik approach. He acknowledges the existence of anarchy in the international arena and the need for states to navigate this anarchic environment to secure their interests. This aligns with Realism's view of international politics as a realm characterized by power struggles.

5. Moral Relativism:

Kautilya's writings demonstrate a degree of moral relativism in international affairs. He suggests that the ethical considerations that apply to individuals might not always apply to the state. This reflects the Realist view that states often prioritize their own interests over moral principles.

6. Balance of Power:

Kautilya discusses the importance of maintaining a balance of power to prevent any single state from becoming too dominant. This concept of balancing power aligns with Realism's emphasis on stability through power distribution.

7. National Interest and Survival:

Kautilya emphasizes the primacy of national interest and the survival of the state. He advocates for policies that enhance the state's security and prosperity, even if it requires Machiavellian tactics.

In conclusion, Kautilya's "Arthashastra" reflects many characteristics of Realism, including a focus on power, security, and strategic calculations in the realm of statecraft and international relations. While his theories might also incorporate elements of other perspectives, such as ethical considerations, his pragmatic and strategic approach to politics aligns him with the Realist tradition in political thought.

Q3. Compare Ziauddin Barani's and Abul Fazl's views on Kingship.

Ans. Ziauddin Barani and Abul Fazl were two prominent historians and thinkers in medieval India who lived during different periods and had distinct views on kingship. Their perspectives on kingship were shaped by the socio-political contexts of their times and their own intellectual inclinations.

Let's compare their views on kingship:

Ziauddin Barani:

1. Historical Context: Ziauddin Barani lived during the 14th century, a period marked by political turmoil and the decline of the Delhi Sultanate. He was critical of the Turko-Afghan rulers and their inability to maintain the stability of the state.

2. View on Kingship: Barani's views on kingship were pragmatic and grounded in his observations of the political reality of his time. He believed that the ruler should be a strong and capable leader who can effectively maintain law and order, protect the realm, and ensure justice. He criticized the rulers who were more interested in self-indulgence and extravagant lifestyles than in the welfare of the state and its subjects.

3. Role of Religion: Barani emphasized the importance of religion in kingship. He believed that the ruler should adhere to Islamic principles and seek guidance from religious scholars. However, he also criticized the interference of religious leaders in political matters.

Abul Fazl:

1. Historical Context: Abul Fazl lived during the reign of Emperor Akbar in the late 16th century. He was a part of Akbar's court and played a significant role in his administration.

2. View on Kingship: Abul Fazl's views on kingship were influenced by Akbar's policy of religious tolerance and inclusivity. He believed in the concept of the "divine right of kings," where the ruler's authority was derived from a higher power. He saw the king as the protector of his subjects and responsible for their welfare.

3. Syncretic Approach: Abul Fazl advocated for a syncretic approach to religion and governance. He believed that the king should be above sectarian differences and should rule based on the principles of justice and equity. He supported Akbar's policy of Sulh-i-Kul (peace with all), which aimed to promote religious harmony.

4. Promotion of Art and Culture: Abul Fazl believed in the promotion of art, culture, and learning under the patronage of the king. He played a significant role in compiling the "Ain-i-Akbari," a detailed account of Akbar's administration, which highlighted the king's efforts in various areas of governance.

In summary, Ziauddin Barani and Abul Fazl had different views on kingship due to the distinct historical contexts in which they lived. Barani's perspective was more focused on the pragmatic realities of his time, while Abul Fazl's views were shaped by the syncretic and inclusive policies of Emperor Akbar. Both perspectives provide valuable insights into the complexities of medieval Indian political thought and the role of kingship in governance.

Q4. Examine the relationship between caste and gender in Manusmriti.

Ans. The Manusmriti, also known as the Laws of Manu, is an ancient Hindu legal text that addresses various aspects of social, religious, and moral conduct. It is a complex and controversial text that has been interpreted and debated by scholars over the years. When examining the relationship between caste and gender in the Manusmriti, it's important to recognize that the text reflects the social norms and hierarchies of its time, which were deeply rooted in the caste system and patriarchal values.

Here's an analysis of the relationship between caste and gender as portrayed in the Manusmriti:

Caste Hierarchy:

The Manusmriti explicitly outlines the caste hierarchy, placing Brahmins at the top and Shudras at the bottom. The text justifies this hierarchy based on the concept of varna, which was associated with the fourfold division of society. Caste played a significant role in determining one's social status, occupation, and even rights within society.

Gender Roles and Responsibilities:

The Manusmriti also lays down gender roles and responsibilities. It prescribes specific duties for individuals based on their gender and caste. For instance, the text assigns the duty of studying and performing religious rituals to Brahmin men, while Shudras are restricted from studying the Vedas and are meant to serve the higher castes. The text reflects a patriarchal society where men are considered superior and are granted more privileges.

Intersection of Caste and Gender:

The Manusmriti further intersects caste and gender by assigning varying levels of respect and dignity based on both caste and gender. For example, while Brahmin men are placed at the highest position, women from all castes are expected to be subordinate to men. The treatment of women from different castes is also differentiated. Brahmin women are expected to be virtuous and submissive, while the text is more lenient towards the behavior of women from lower castes.

Discriminatory Practices:

The Manusmriti perpetuates discriminatory practices and inequalities in both caste and gender relations. It justifies unequal treatment of individuals based on their caste and gender, often limiting opportunities and freedoms for those belonging to lower castes and women.

Challenges and Criticisms:

It's important to note that the Manusmriti has been a subject of criticism for its reinforcement of inequalities and oppressive social norms. Many contemporary scholars and activists criticize the text for its role in perpetuating caste-based discrimination and gender-based oppression.

In conclusion, the Manusmriti reflects a complex interplay between caste and gender, with both factors shaping the social hierarchy and norms of ancient Indian society. The text reinforces the subordinate position of women and reinforces caste-based inequalities, portraying a society that was deeply structured by both caste and gender divisions.

Q5. Reflect on the origin and nature of political community in Digha Nikaya.

Ans. The Digha Nikaya is a collection of teachings and discourses attributed to the Buddha in the Pali Canon, which is a foundational scripture in Buddhism. The Digha Nikaya contains various discourses covering a wide range of topics, including philosophy, ethics, meditation, and social and political issues. While the primary focus of the Digha Nikaya is on spiritual teachings, it does provide insights into the origin and nature of the political community from a Buddhist perspective.

In the Digha Nikaya, the Buddha does not explicitly delve into detailed discussions about political communities as seen in traditional political treatises. However, some teachings and discourses indirectly touch upon the nature of political authority, governance, and the responsibilities of rulers.

Here are some reflections on the origin and nature of political community that can be inferred from the Digha Nikaya:

- 1. Social Order and Harmony:** The Buddha emphasized the importance of ethical conduct, compassion, and non-violence in human interactions. These teachings are conducive to the establishment of a just and harmonious political community. The principles of the Noble Eightfold Path, which include right speech, right action, and right livelihood, are relevant to maintaining a balanced and peaceful society.
- 2. Righteous Rulership:** The Digha Nikaya includes discourses in which the Buddha provides guidance to rulers on righteous governance. He emphasizes the importance of ruling with wisdom, compassion, and fairness. Rulers are advised to act in the best interests of their subjects, uphold justice, and protect the welfare of the people.
- 3. Mutual Respect:** The Buddha's teachings promote mutual respect and understanding among individuals, which are essential for the functioning of a political community. The concept of metta (loving-kindness) encourages individuals to cultivate benevolence and goodwill towards others, fostering a sense of unity and social cohesion.
- 4. Inner Transformation:** The Digha Nikaya emphasizes inner transformation through mindfulness and meditation. While not directly related to politics, this emphasis on inner development can lead individuals to be more conscious and responsible citizens, contributing positively to the overall well-being of the community.

5. Non-Attachment to Power: The Buddha's teachings on impermanence and detachment can indirectly influence rulers to avoid becoming overly attached to power and material possessions. This could potentially prevent abuses of authority and corruption in a political community.

It's important to note that the Digha Nikaya is primarily concerned with spiritual teachings and ethical conduct, rather than offering a comprehensive political theory. While it provides some insights into the principles of just governance and the ethical responsibilities of rulers, it does not outline a detailed political framework. The Digha Nikaya's approach to political community is rooted in promoting virtues and ethical behavior that contribute to the overall well-being and harmony of society.

Q6. Analyze the nature of individual and society envisioned by Sant Kabir.

Ans. Sant Kabir, a prominent Indian mystic poet and philosopher of the 15th century, envisioned a unique perspective on the nature of individual and society. His teachings are deeply rooted in spirituality, social reform, and a critique of conventional religious practices. Kabir's philosophy emphasizes the interconnectedness of the individual with the larger societal context, and he envisions a harmonious relationship between the two. **Here is an analysis of the nature of individual and society as envisioned by Sant Kabir:**

1. Emphasis on Inner Spiritual Journey: Kabir emphasized the importance of self-realization and inner spiritual growth. He believed that true knowledge and understanding come from introspection and direct experience of the divine. For Kabir, the individual's inner transformation was key to attaining spiritual enlightenment and connecting with the universal consciousness.

2. Transcending Boundaries: Kabir challenged the distinctions of caste, religion, and social hierarchies. He advocated for a universal brotherhood that transcends these divisions, emphasizing the equality of all individuals in the eyes of the divine. He rejected external rituals and rituals as barriers to true spiritual realization.

3. Simplicity and Detachment: Kabir promoted a simple and detached lifestyle, urging individuals to detach themselves from material possessions and desires. He believed that the pursuit of material wealth and attachments hinders spiritual progress and creates unnecessary divisions in society.

4. Critique of Hypocrisy: Kabir vehemently criticized hypocrisy and superficial religious practices. He believed that true devotion is an authentic, heartfelt connection with the divine, rather than mere rituals performed for show. He rejected external displays of piety that lacked genuine inner faith.

5. Social Equality and Compassion: Kabir emphasized compassion, kindness, and empathy as essential virtues for individuals and society. He believed that treating all beings with love and respect was a path to spiritual growth and societal harmony.

6. Unity of Individual and Divine: Kabir's philosophy envisions the individual as a microcosm of the divine universe. He believed that the divine resides within each individual, and through self-realization, one could attain union with the divine. This perspective reinforces the idea of interconnectedness and unity between the individual and the larger cosmic reality.

In summary, Sant Kabir's vision of the individual and society is deeply spiritual and humanistic. He advocated for a harmonious balance between inner spiritual growth and engagement with the

external world. His teachings emphasize transcending divisions, practicing compassion, and seeking genuine connection with the divine. Kabir's philosophy resonates with themes of social equality, authenticity, and the pursuit of a meaningful life that contributes to both personal well-being and the betterment of society.

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