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# **M.E.G.-13**

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*By: Kshiyama Sagar Meher*



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# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

## WRITINGS FROM THE MARGINS

M.E.G.-13

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Attempt five questions in all. Question no. is 1 compulsory. All questions carry equal marks.

**Q. 1. Write notes on the following:**

**(a) Difference between canon and discourse**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-2, Page No. 5, 'Knowing What a Canon Means', 'The Process of Canon Formation' and Chapter-3, Page No. 10, 'Defining Discourse'.

**(b) Inception and connotations of the term "dalit"**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-15, Page No. 84, 'Dalit'.

**(c) Mizo folk tradition**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-27, Page No. 161, 'Mizo Folk Tradition'.

**(d) Title of "Sangati"**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-9, Page No. 47, 'What Does the Title Sangati Mean?' and Page No. 52, Q. No. 1.

**Q. 2. What is the importance of the geographical and historical details in 'Changia Rukh : Against the Night'.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-7, Page No. 34, 'Life of the Community'.

**Q. 3. "Bansode deserves special credit for bringing a feminist slant to Dalit poetry." Elaborate the above statement in the light of the poem "Yashodhara".**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-14, Page No. 79, 'Yashodhara: Contexts and Perspectives'.

**Q. 4. In what ways the play "Routes and Escape Routes" signifies the varied points of entry and exists regarding Dalit ideologies? How do the characters of the play take different routes to address the Dalit issues?**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-16, Page No. 95, Q. No. 8.

**Q. 5. Give a detailed overview of Devy's account of varied aspects of tribal ways of life.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-23, Page No. 137, Q. No. 1 and Page No. 138, Q. No. 1 and Q. No. 2.

**Q. 6. Critically analyse the Lepcha folktale "Children of the Snowy Peak". How does this folktale foreground Lepcha beliefs and myths?**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-26, Page No. 156, 'Summary of the Children of the Snowy Peak – Yishey Doma' and Page No. 157, 'Analysis of the Lepcha Creation Myth'.

**Q. 7. Comment on the importance of forest in the lives of Adivasis in the context of Janu's autobiography *Mother Forest : The Unfinished Story of C.K. Jank*.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-29, Page No. 179, Q. No. 1 and 'Some Important Issues'.

**Q. 8. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem "If You Were in My Place" by Nirmala Putul.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-32, Page No. 194, 'Critical Reflections on the Poem'.

■ ■

# QUESTION PAPER

December – 2023

(Solved)

## WRITINGS FROM THE MARGINS

M.E.G.-13

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any five questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. Write notes on the following:

(a) Three different categories of Dalit Literature.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 9, Q. No. 3.

(b) Difference between the terms ‘Untouchable’, ‘Harijan’, ‘Scheduled caste’ and ‘Dalit’.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 84, ‘Introduction: The Socio-Historical Context of the Dalits in India’.

(c) Ambedkar’s call for conversion.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 86, ‘Ambedkar and the Call for Conversion’ and Page No. 88, Q. No. 4.

(d) Khasi folk tradition.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-27, Page No. 163, ‘Khasi Folk Tradition’.

Q. 2. Attempt a detailed critical analysis of Balbir Modhopuri’s *Changia Rukh : Against the Night*.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 44, Q. No. 1 and Page No. 45, Q. No. 2 and Q. No. 3.

Q. 3. With specific reference to the poems ‘Naked Truths’ and ‘With Love’, discuss Sunny Kavikkad as a Dalit poet.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 64, ‘Sunny Kavikkad as the Poet of Two Poems ‘Naked Truths’ and ‘With Love’ and Page No. 65, Q. No. 1.

Q. 4. Describe the stories ‘The Poisoned Bread’ and ‘The Storeyed House’ as representations of literature of ‘revolt and ‘protest’.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-17, Page No. 103, Q. No. 1.

Q. 5. Elucidate upon the concept of Tribal Discourse. Also discuss in detail the forms of Tribal Discourse.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-21, Page No. 126, ‘Tribal Discourse – The Concept and Forms of Tribal Discourse’.

Q. 6. Write a detailed note on Santal folk tales citing from the stories in your course to support your answer.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-25, Page No. 151, Q. No. 7, Page No. 150, Q. No. 6 and Page No. 152, Q. No. 3.

Q. 7. What does the word “Kochharethi” mean? Comment on the significance of the novel *Kochharethi : The Araya Woman by Narayan*.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-30, Page No. 184, ‘Introduction’, Page No. 185, ‘The Novel: Kochharethi. The Araya Woman’ and Page No. 186, Q. No. 3 and Q. No. 4.

Q. 8. Comment on the predicament of Gumba in Lummer Dai’s short story ‘The Price of Bride’.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-36, Page No. 219, Q. No. 3.



# Sample Preview of The Chapter

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# WRITINGS FROM THE MARGINS

## BLOCK-I : THEORY, CULTURE AND HISTORY OF DALITS

### Historical Background



#### INTRODUCTION

Dalits or the marginalized sections of society have lived as deprived and oppressed since time immemorial. The deprivation and loss of face and self-respect have kept them perpetually in a state of helplessness. Dalits made agricultural tools, spun and wove cotton-thread to make cloth, cleaned up village streets and took part occasionally in harvesting. They were perhaps close to what the modern-day work force signifies. But the social prejudice brought them down to the level of inferior living devoid of respect.

#### CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

##### DEFINING TWO TERMS: “THE OPPRESSED” AND “THE MARGINALIZED”

The word ‘marginalized’ suggests oppression and denial. It draws a line of demarcation between the center of control and a place that is ignored as non-existent. It implies they are out of sight and out of mind. It also implies that the dalits do not exist in the mind or attention of the rulers since stationed on the margins.

##### ORIGIN OF THE ‘SOCIAL DIVISION’: VIEW OF AMBEDKAR

Dalits has an effective presence in Indian history more than 2500 years before. Indian historian Ram Sharan Sharma believes Dalits were present in the Mauryan period and before. B.R. Ambedkar cites the Western historians to say that the Aryan invasion was the mark when dalits as a section of society with racial distinction came into being. Ambedkar makes the following assertion:

- (i) The Vedic literature was created by the people belonging to the Aryan race.
- (ii) The Aryans were outsiders and invaded India.
- (iii) *Dasas* and *Dasyus* who were racially different from the Aryans were the natives of India.
- (iv) The Aryans were white race and the *Dasas* and *Dasyus* were a dark race.
- (v) The Aryans conquered the *Dasas* and *Dasyus*.
- (vi) After they were conquered and enslaved, the *Dasas* were called *Shudras*.

(vii) The Aryans cherished colour prejudice and formed the Chaturvarnya and separated the white race from the black race.

A whole section of Indian population starts being termed dalit 3000 years ago. Dalits had the existence of second class citizens ever since they gained this identity – they were descendents of India’s original population called ‘*Dasas* and *Dasyus*’ in historical accounts.

##### ‘SOCIAL DIVISION’: FACTS FROM ANCIENT INDIA

R.S.Sharma refers to Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* on the fact of life in ancient India. According to Kautilya, actors, players, singers, fishermen, hunters, herdsman, wine distillers and vendors and similar persons usually travel with their women. This was not the case with the women of the higher *varnas*, whose activities were limited to the sphere of home. The outside life of the women of the sudra *varna* was because of the necessity of working in the fields and pastures for the subsistence of their family. Kautilya provides that wives of sharecroppers and herdsman are responsible for the payment of debts incurred by their husbands. The status of women belonging to the lower ranks was stronger and more dynamic than was the case with women of the higher ranks because the women of the lower ranks participate in the work outside home and are a component of social productivity. *Arthashastra* also mentions of rituals of marriage as well as divisions in society along lines of profession and work. Kautilya mentions the castes were endogamous. The husbandman could not take a wife from the artisan class and *vice versa*. But some marriages also happened between the members of the higher *varnas* and the *sudras*. He further declares that members of these mixed castes should marry within their own caste. They follow their respective avocation.

##### POSITION IN SOCIETY: MEDIEVAL INDIA

In the post-Gupta period, two major developments were the decline of urban centres and paucity of money. There were also decline in trade and parcellization of power. A related development was the increase in the number of land grants by the state. The land grants carried with them various obligations to the overlord and led to the creation of a class with superior rights in

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land which extracted the surplus from producers either through rent or labour services. This class of landlords was delegated fiscal, judicial and military authority as well. Brahman priests were recipients of a large number of such grants. The purpose of these grants was both ideological and the extension of the agrarian frontier. By the end of the Gupta age the shudras were losing their servile status and had, along with the *vaishyas*, become part of the huge class of subject peasants in the countryside. Surpluses were extracted by a superior class of landlords, who also had a high ritual status. There is a proliferation of *jatis* in this period, and *varna* loses its functional role. During the period, the servants of the household are turned into peasants who would now work day in and day out to provide resources to a new class of landlords to whom grants have been given by the new regime. The *shudras* and *vaishyas* who worked together in society lose their identity at this time and become scattered along lines of divided work. This is meant by *varna* changing into smaller castes and *shudras* are subjected now to a new kind of oppression where one group will be segregated from another and all groups will be bound by the new norms associated with specialised labour. *Jati* or caste being the result of this phenomenon the new situation consisted of untold miseries, hardships and oppression. The process continues till the occurrence of invasions in the beginning of the new millennium.

**MOVEMENT FORWARD**

A new set of artisans who came along from other countries in the wake of change in the rulers and leaders in society and their interaction with the artisans in India contributed to new mobility that led to increase in production, study and research. Irfan Habib has brought out the implications of coming together of two different sections of artisans and craftsmen in the 13th and 14th centuries. New techniques of paper manufacture, of making lime mortar and vaulted roof and, quite possibly, some weaving techniques (e.g. carpet making) could only have been established here through such immigrant craftsmen. In course of time, there must have been adjustments within the caste system but in the short run, the lack of craft labour in specific spheres had to be overcome.

**BHAKTI POETRY: ASSERTION OF LOWER CASTES**

Most of the Bhakti poets came from the lower rungs of society. They had roots in the shudras, the artisans and the supposedly lower castes. A whole branch of Bhakti poetry in the 15th and 16th centuries belong to the philosophical strain, known as Nirguna poetry – which rejected the visible idol and focused on the essential idea. The bhakti poets were sharply critical of the prevalent hierarchical system. The positive viewpoint the bhakti poets such as Kabir, Guru Nanak, Ravidas, and Dadu Dayal rejected was pitched against the supposed superiority of the Brahmin. They found the upper castes bereft of any worthwhile quality and in fact lower down the scale of value and usefulness. The other starting of Bhakti poetry categorized as Saguna also in fact complemented the Nirguna stream

in one respect. Mystically the idol was turned into a living God resembling superior human being – kind, loving and playful. This also worked against the existing definition of the upper rung. In the Saguna poetry, levelling was discernible between Krishna and Ram on one side and the worshipper on the other. Sometimes the worshipper would be a woman or a man will turn into a woman to woo God. The strength and energy of Bhakti poetry in India had its source in the diverse forms of production and increase in skills witnessed at the time. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, new social relations were developing in the country, especially in areas under *sultanate* rule. Towns and town life were expanding, as exemplified by the example of Delhi, “the biggest city of the Islamic east” according to Ibn Batuta. Other big cities in India included Daulatabad and Patan. The rise of new crafts based on the new technologies and a new rural class which centralized in its hands a larger proportion of the rural surplus than ever before were also important factor in this process.

**‘MARGINALITY’ TODAY: DALITS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA**

After the Bhakti movement and later at the end of the Mughal rule in the eighteenth century, dalits moved inexorably towards the margins. They did not receive education and learning came their way only through professional work. A large section of them became victims of difference at the hands of the rich and privileged. In the nineteenth century, Dalits caught the attention of some great social reformers such as Jotiba Phule. Born in 1828, Jyotirao Phule himself a dalit was able to attend school and did his matriculation in mid eighteenth century. He was a voracious reader and his early education in social thought was through his writing of Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* which he read in 1847. G.P. Deshpande has spoken of Phule as “the first social activist who made agriculture and the production conditions therein, among the main subjects of his concern.” Deshpande has also pointed out that “Phule did not think of women’s problems in terms of Brahmin or Shudratishudra. In his *Satya Dharma Pustak*, he talks of ‘*sarva ekandar stree-purush*’, all women and men together. Gail Omvedt has pointed out that Phule does not use the common word ‘*manush*’ (human being), but insists on using ‘*stree-purush*’, thus emphasizing gender differentiation, while pleading for equal and common human rights for women and men. He is the first to do so in India.”

**UNIT END QUESTIONS**

**Q. 1. Write a note on the emergence of shudras in Ancient India.**

**Ans.** Indian historian Ram Sharan Sharma believes Dalits were present in the Mauryan period and before. B.R. Ambedkar cites the Western historians to say that the Aryan invasion was the mark when dalits as a section of society with racial distinction came into being.

R.S.Sharma refers to Kautilya's *Arthashastra* on the division of society. According to Kautilya, actors, players, singers, fishermen, hunters, herdsmen, wine distillers and vendors and similar persons usually travel with their women. This was not the case with the women of the higher varnas, whose activities were limited to the sphere of home. The outside life of the women of the sudra varna was because of the necessity of working in the fields and pastures for the subsistence of their family. Kautilya provides that wives of sharecroppers and herdsmen are responsible for the payment of debts incurred by their husbands. The status of women belonging to the lower ranks was stronger and more dynamic than was the case with women of the higher ranks because the women of the lower ranks participate in the work outside home and are a component of social productivity.

In the post-Gupta period, two major developments were the decline of urban centres and paucity of money. There were also decline in trade and parcelization of power. A related development was the increase in the number of land grants by the state. The land grants carried with them various obligations to the overlord and led to the creation of a class with superior rights in land which extracted the surplus from producers either through rent or labour services. This class of landlords was delegated fiscal, judicial and military authority as well. Brahman priests were recipients of a large number of such grants. The purpose of these grants was both ideological and the extension of the agrarian frontier. By the end of the Gupta age the shudras were losing their servile status and had, along with the vaishyas, become part of the huge class of subject peasants in the countryside. Surpluses were extracted by a superior class of landlords, who also had a high ritual status. There is a proliferation of jatis in this period, and varna loses its functional role. During the period, the servants of the household are turned into peasants who would now work day in and day out to provide resources to a new class of landlords to whom grants have been given by the new regime. The *shudras* and *vaishyas* who worked together in society lose their identity at this time and become scattered along lines of divided work. This is meant by *varna* changing into smaller castes and *shudras* are subjected now to a new kind of oppression where one group will be segregated from another and all groups will be bound by the new norms associated with specialised labour. A new set of artisans who came along from other countries in the wake of change in the rulers and leaders in society and their interaction with the artisans in India contributed to new mobility that led to increase in production, study and research. Irfan Habib has brought out the implications of coming together of two different sections of artisans and craftsmen in the 13th and 14th centuries. New techniques of paper manufacture, of making lime mortar and vaulted roof and, quite possibly, some weaving techniques (e.g. carpet making) could only have been established here through such immigrant craftsmen. In course of time,

there must have been adjustments within the caste system but in the short run, the lack of craft labour in specific spheres had to be overcome.

**Q. 2. Discuss Bhakti Poetry as an expression of new perceptions in creativity.**

**Ans.** Bhakti poets had roots in the shudras, the artisans and the supposedly lower castes. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a whole branch of Bhakti poetry belong to the philosophical strain, known as Nirguna poetry – which rejected the visible idol and focused on the essential idea. The bhakti poets were against the prevalent hierarchical system. The positive view-point the bhakti poets such as Kabir, Guru Nanak, Ravidas, and Dadu Dayal rejected was pitched against the supposed superiority of the Brahmin. They found the upper castes bereft of any worthwhile quality and in fact lower down the scale of value and usefulness. The other starting of Bhakti poetry categorized as Saguna also in fact complemented the Nirguna stream in one respect. Mystically the idol was turned into a living God resembling superior human being – kind, loving and playful. This also worked against the existing definition of the upper rung. In the Saguna poetry, levelling was discernible between Krishna and Ram on one side and the worshipper on the other. Sometimes, the worshipper would be a woman or a man will turn into a woman to woo God. The strength and energy of Bhakti poetry in India had its source in the diverse forms of production and increase in skills witnessed at the time. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, new social relations were developing in the country, especially in areas under sultanate rule. Towns and town life were expanding, as exemplified by the example of Delhi, “the biggest city of the Islamic east” according to Ibn Batuta. Other big cities in India included Daulatabad and Patan. The rise of new crafts based on the new technologies and a new rural class which centralized in its hands a larger proportion of the rural surplus than ever before were also important factor in this process.

**Q. 3. Consider Phule's contribution to the cause of dalits in the latter half of the 19th century.**

**Ans.** Born in 1828, Jotirao Phule himself a dalit was able to attend school and did his matriculation in mid eighteenth century. He was a voracious reader and his early education in social thought was through his writing of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* which he read in 1847. G.P. Deshpande has spoken of Phule as “the first social activist who made agriculture and the production conditions therein, among the main subjects of his concern.” Deshpande has also pointed out that “Phule did not think of women's problems in terms of Brahmin or Shudratishudra. In his *Satya Dharma Pustak*, he talks of '*sarva ekandar stree-purush*', all women and men together. Gail Omvedt has pointed out that Phule does not use the common word '*manush*' (human being), but insists on using '*stree-purush*', thus emphasizing gender differentiation, while pleading for equal and common human rights for women and men. He is the first to do so in India.”

### **ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT QUESTIONS**

**Q. 1. Differentiate between the oppressed and the marginalized.**

**Ans.** The word 'marginalized' implies that the section of people who remain out of sight and out of mind. It refers to the dalits who do not exist in the mind or attention of the rulers since stationed on the margins. It draws a line of demarcation between the center of control and a place that is ignored as non-existent.

The oppressed refers to the people who have been deprived and oppressed by the upper castes. The deprivation and loss of face and self-respect have kept them perpetually in a state of helplessness. Dalits made agricultural tools, spun and wove cotton-thread to make cloth, cleaned up village streets and took part occasionally in harvesting. They were perhaps close to what the modern-day work force signifies. But the social prejudice brought them down to the level of inferior living devoid of respect.

**Q. 2. Write a note on B. R. Ambedkar's views of the origin of Dalits.**

**Ans.** B.R. Ambedkar cites the Western historians to contend that the Aryan invasion was the mark when Dalits as a section of society with racial distinction came into being. According to Ambedkar:

(i) The people belonging to the Aryan race created the Vedic literature.

(ii) The Aryan came from outside and invaded India.

(iii) Dasas and Dasyus who were racially different from the Aryans were the natives of India.

(iv) The Aryans were white race and the Dasas and Dasyus were a dark race.

(v) The Aryans conquered the Dasas and Dasyus.

(vi) The Dasas were called Shudras after they were conquered and enslaved.

(vii) The Aryans cherished colour prejudice and formed the Chaturvarnya and separated the white race from the black race. A whole section of Indian population starts being termed Dalit 3000 years ago. Dalits had the existence of second class citizens ever since they gained this identity – they were descendents of India's original population called 'Dasas and Dasyus' in historical accounts.

**Q. 3. Discuss the social division in ancient India.**

**Ans.** According to R.S.Sharma, Kautiliya's *Arthashastra* has reference to the social divisions on the basis of caste. Kautiliya says actors, players, singers, fishermen, hunters, herdsman, wine distillers and vendors and similar persons usually travel with their women. This was not the case with the women of the higher *varnas*, whose activities were limited to the sphere of home. The outside life of the women of the *sudra varna* was because of the necessity of working in the fields and pastures for the subsistence of their family. Kautiliya mentions that wives of sharecroppers and herdsman are responsible for the payment of debts incurred by their husbands. The status of women belonging to the

lower ranks was stronger and more dynamic than was the case with women of the higher ranks because the women of the lower ranks participate in the work outside home and are a component of social productivity. *Arthashastra* also has reference to rituals of marriage and the divisions in society along lines of profession and work. Kautiliya mentions the castes were endogamous. The husbandman could not take a wife from the artisan class and *vice versa*. But some marriages also happened between the members of the higher *varnas* and the *sudras*. He further declares that members of these mixed castes should marry within their own caste. They follow their respective avocation.

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

**Q. 1. Who among the following historians believed that Dalits were present in the Mauryan period and before?**

- (a) Irfan Habib
- (b) Ram Sharan Sharma
- (c) B.R. Ambedkar
- (d) Gail Omvedt

**Ans. (b) Ram Sharan Sharma.**

**Q. 2. According to B.R. Ambedkar, who were the original inhabitants of India before the Aryan invasion?**

- (a) Shudras
- (b) Brahmins
- (c) Dasas and Dasyus
- (d) Vaishyas

**Ans. (c) Dasas and Dasyus.**

**Q. 3. Which ancient text mentioned the endogamous nature of castes in India?**

- (a) *Arthashastra*
- (b) *Vedas*
- (c) *Ramayana*
- (d) *Bhagavad Gita*

**Ans. (a) Arthashastra.**

**Q. 4. Which Bhakti poet is known for rejecting the visible idol and focusing on the essential idea?**

- (a) Guru Nanak
- (b) Kabir
- (c) Ravidas
- (d) Dadu Dayal

**Ans. (b) Kabir.**

**Q. 5. Who is recognized as the first social activist to make agriculture a central concern in his work?**

- (a) Jyotiba Phule
- (b) B.R. Ambedkar
- (c) Thomas Paine
- (d) Gail Omvedt

**Ans. (a) Jyotiba Phule.**

**Q. 6. In which centuries did new crafts and technologies arise due to the interaction of Indian and immigrant artisans?**

- (a) 11th and 12th
- (b) 13th and 14th
- (c) 15th and 16th
- (d) 17th and 18th

**Ans. (b) 13th and 14th.**

