

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q3(c)

Dharmashastra presents a duty-centric worldview for individuals and communities. Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · PSIR GS 1 · 15 marks · Political Theory

Political Theory: meaning and approaches.

Core demand of the question

- State what Dharmashastra is as a textual tradition (15 marks)
- Show the duty-centric (dharma) worldview for persons and communities
- **Comment:** contrast with rights-centric liberalism and note hierarchy
- Keep the answer on political theory, not a ritual catalogue

Revision summary

Dharmashastra is a corpus of dharma teaching in which right conduct, law, and kingship are organised as duty.

Persons hold svadharma by status and stage of life; the king holds **rajadharma** to protect and to maintain order.

Community is a structured whole, not a contract of identical individuals as in **Locke** or **Rawls**.

Gandhi drew a moral duty ethic from this climate while attacking untouchability; **Ambedkar** rejected birth-based duty as the core of caste.

The Constitution shifts to justiciable rights, while still naming duties, which is the modern political settlement of this worldview.

Introduction

- **Dharmashastra is the classical Sanskrit corpus of teaching on dharma:** right conduct, law, and social order. Texts such as the **Manusmriti** and later commentaries do not begin from the rights-bearing individual of **Locke**. They begin from duties that vary by status, stage of life, and community. That is a duty-centric worldview, and it has shaped Indian political thought even where the Republic later wrote rights.

Body**Duty before right**

In this worldview a person is a bearer of svadharma. The householder, the king, the student, and the renouncer have distinct obligations. The king's **rajadharma** is protection, punishment of the wicked, and maintenance of varna-ashrama order. Community is not an aggregate of contractors. It is a structured whole in which each station has a function. **Gandhi** later drew a moralised duty ethic - swaraj as self-rule and trusteeship - partly from this climate, while rejecting untouchability.

The contrast with liberalism is sharp. **Rawls** starts from free and equal persons who choose principles. Dharmashastra starts from an already ranked order and asks how each must act. Obligation is not primarily the other side of a right against the state. It is the fulfilment of a cosmic and social role.

Comment

The statement is accurate as a description of the tradition's centre of gravity. The comment must add two political facts. First, duty-centric order can sustain care, restraint of rulers, and a thick community ethic that rights talk sometimes thins. Second, the same order historically encoded caste and gender hierarchy. **Ambedkar** burned the **Manusmriti** because duty attached to birth was, for him, the opposite of equal citizenship. The Constitution's Part III is a deliberate shift toward rights, while Directive Principles and fundamental duties in **Article 51A** show that the Republic did not abolish duty as a public language.

A political-theory comment therefore accepts the duty-centric claim and refuses to romanticise it. Dharmashastra presents a worldview of obligations for individuals and communities. Modern Indian democracy must translate whatever is living in that ethic - restraint, care, public duty - into a frame of equal persons, not restore ranked dharma as law.

Flow diagram

Dharmashastra -> Svadharma
Dharmashastra -> Rajadharma
Dharmashastra -> Ranked community
Liberal rights -> Equal persons
Ambedkar -> Equal persons

Conclusion

Dharmashastra orients persons and communities to station-specific duty rather than to uniform individual rights. That is its worldview. **Gandhi** moralised duty; **Ambedkar** rejected birth-based duty as graded inequality. The comment is that the diagnosis is right, and that a constitutional democracy may keep public duty only on the ground of equal citizenship.

Facts & figures

Manusmriti

A principal Dharmashastra text assigning duties by varna and gender; it became a symbol of the order **Ambedkar** opposed.

Rajadharma

The king's duty of protection and just punishment, a political ethic of obligation rather than of popular sovereignty.

Article 51A

Fundamental duties in the Indian Constitution reintroduce a public duty language after Part III's rights, without restoring varna law.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/psir-gs-1/2024/dharmashastra-presents-a-duty-centric-worldview-for-individuals-and-communities-comment/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com

WRAP Exams