SECTION A

1. Analyse in brief the nature of polity in early historic Tamilkam. How did the transformation from pre-state to state take place?

Ans: Approximately during the period between 350 BCE to 200 CE, Tamilkam was ruled by the three Tamil dynasties: the Chola dynasty, the Pandyan dynasty, Satyaputra dynasty and the Chera dynasty. There were also a few independent chieftains, the Velirs. The earliest datable references to the Tamil kingdoms are in inscriptions from the 3rd century BCE during the time of the Maurya Empire.

The Pandyan dynasty ruled parts of South India until the early 17th century. The heartland of the Pandyas was the fertile valley of the Vaigai River. They initially ruled their country from Korkai, a seaport on the southernmost tip of the Indian Peninsula, and in later times moved to Madurai. The Chola dynasty ruled from before the Sangam period (3rd century BCE) until the 13th century in central Tamil Nadu. The heartland of the Cholas was the fertile valley of the Kaveri. The Chera dynasty ruled from before the Sangam period (3rd century) until the 12th century over an area corresponding to modern-day western Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Although the area covered by the term "Tamilakam" was divided among multiple kingdoms, its occurrence in the ancient literature implies that the region's inhabitants shared a cultural or ethnic identity, or at least regarded themselves as distinct from their neighbours. The ancient Tamil inscriptions, ranging from 3rd or 2nd century BCE to 2nd or 3rd century CE, are also considered as linguistic evidence for distinguishing Tamilakam from the rest of South India. The ancient non-Tamil inscriptions, such as those of the northern kings Ashoka and Kharavela, also allude to the distinct identity of the region. For example, Ashoka's inscriptions refer to the independent states lying beyond the southern boundary of his kingdom, and Kharavdelia's Hathigumpha inscription refers to the destruction of a "confederacy of Tamil powers".

However, the archaeological evidence does not support the existence of "Tamilakam" as a distinct cultural region; the material culture and habitations discovered in present-day Tamil Nadu and Kerala are also found elsewhere in peninsular India and Sri Lanka. The textual tradições of the vedic period do not permit us to arrive at a complete understanding of political processes. Nevertheless, they point to important developments.

They suggest that there was an attempt to consolidate the power of the raja, and while the term may have referred to a chief in the early Vedic tradition, we can consider it as almost king—like in the later Vedic context. The raja depended on support, drawn from priests, with whom the relationship was often tense. He also drew on support from an increasingly differentiated community, the vis, and on ties with certain individuals who performed functions that were more or less valued.

Nevertheless, the political structures that were evolving were not stable. They were subject to pressures and contestations, and seem to have been constantly modified. The pre-state system in Early Vedic period was characterised by the lineage society. According to Romilla Thapar “A lineage has been defined as a corporate group of unilineal kin with a formalised system of authority”. The later Early Vedic period was a transitional stage between pre-state lineage society of Early Vedic period and emergence of incipient state in the form of gana sanghas and full fledged state systems viz. monarchies which emerged in the age of the Buddha.

In the south the pre-state social formation was a blend of four forms of subsistence patterns viz. hunting-gathering, cattle breeding, plough agriculture and craft production. The political structure was characterised by chieftains. The source of information about these chieftoms is the Tamil heroic literature. The socio-economic and political system was undifferentiated and non-stratified. Thus it can be considered as a prestate social formation. The transition to state in South India took place in the 6th century AD with the establishment of the rule of Pallavas, Pandyas, Ceras and Colas.

2. Explain the process of state formation under the Rajputs in the early medieval period.

Ans: Rajput is a member of one of the patrilineal clans of western, central, northern India and some parts of Pakistan. They claim to be descendants of ruling Hindu warrior classes of North India. Rajputs rose to prominence during the 6th to 12th centuries. Until the 20th century, Rajputs ruled in the "overwhelming majority" of the princely of Rajasthan and Surashtra, where the largest number of princely states were found.

The period after the 7th century A.D. was characterized by the growth of ruling clans especially in Rajasthan and these have been categorized as Rajput. The rise of Rajputs has so far been analysed in the context of tracing their ancestry through a study of the genealogies found in the inscriptions and constructing a dynastic and political history. Several theories have been propounded by scholars regarding the origin of the Rajputs. Some consider them to be of foreign stock while others regard them as belonging to the Khshatriya Varna. Bardic traditions refer to them as having originated from agnikunda on Mt. Abu. Later heroic poems or traditions suggest that the category Rajput comprised of 36 clans which initially may have been 12 or 24. However recent writings have tried to study the history of the emergence of ruling lineages in early medieval India. Thus the focus in the study of early medieval polity has moved away from the dynastic history of ‘Rajput’ kingdoms to the analysis of the factors which led to the emergence of state structure comprising of local ruling clans. The formation of ruling lineages is regarded as a ‘process’ which emerged and was strengthened by the alleged ascription of Khshatriya status by these ruling clans. The claims were not merely a manifestation of their desire to trace their pedigree but they represented the means to justify their position as the ruling authority. Thus, the ‘Rajput’ category and the process of Rajputization through adaptation within the regional and socio-political context, gained ascendancy in early medieval times. This should be studied not in terms of dynastic and genealogical details but as a phenomenon which led to the evolution from ‘tribal’ to state polity in this period. The increase in agricultural settlements with the growth of agricultural economy is borne out by the epigraphic and archaeological testimony. The inscriptive evidence from Western and Central India refers to the subjugation of Sabaras, Bhillas and Pulindas by the Rajput clans. The Rajput ruling lineages gained at the expense of the tribal groups. Various