

CLASS 9 SOCIAL SCIENCE – PART 1

CHAPTER 5: STATE AND SOCIETY UP TO 1000 CE

Exam Preparation Notes

These notes follow the uploaded chapter and retain its key terminology, examples and broad sequence. Use the textbook maps, timelines and inscriptions alongside these revision notes.

Chapter at a Glance

Chapter: State and Society up to 1000 CE

Main themes: How early Indian society and states were organised; the growth of janapadas, mahājanapadas and empires; ideas of kingship and dharma; social groups; education, religion, agriculture, irrigation and trade.

1. Understanding Society and the State

Society: A system of social relationships among people who share a territory, culture and sense of belonging. It includes families, households, institutions such as marriage, customs and practices. Society is mainly regulated by customs and practices rather than formal laws.

State: An organised political system based on rules and laws. It has defined rights and duties of rulers and subjects, mechanisms of governance and institutions that maintain law and order.

Historical change: As communities grew larger and more complex, political organisation developed from kinship-based groups towards territorial states and empires.

Sources: Archaeological evidence is supplemented by literary sources such as the Ṛigveda, Arthaśāstra and Mahābhārata, as well as inscriptions. Each source provides particular kinds of evidence and must be interpreted carefully.

2. The Vedic Period and the Four Vedas

Vedic literature: The Vedas are the earliest known corpus of Indian literature. They were transmitted orally for centuries before being written down. The date of composition of the Ṛigveda remains debated; estimates mentioned in the textbook range from the fifth millennium BCE to the second millennium BCE.

Ṛigveda: The earliest Veda; contains 1,028 hymns (sūktas), including hymns praising deities and reflections on creation, life and death.

Yajurveda: Explains the performative aspects of yajñas and refers to hymns used in them.

Sāmaveda: Contains hymns drawn from the Ṛigveda arranged for musical recitation; its chanting tradition is associated with the seven svaras (notes) of Indian music.

Atharvaveda: Contains a range of hymns, including some intended to ward off evil and others related to physical and mental ailments.

Four parts of each Veda: Samhitās (hymns and invocations); Brāhmaṇas (prose explanations of rituals); Āraṇyakas (philosophical reflections associated with forest sages); Upaniṣhads (questions such as the Self/Ātman and the ultimate universal Being/Brāhmaṇ).

Important distinction: Brāhman refers to a philosophical concept; Brāhmaṇas are Vedic texts; Brahmins/Brāhmaṇas can also refer to a varṇa category.

3. Political Institutions in the Vedic Period

Jana: A clan or community bound by kinship ties. The Ṛigveda mentions about thirty janas.

Pañchajana: The five peoples collectively identified as Yadu, Turvaśha, Puru, Anu and Druhyu.

Rājā: Primarily a clan chief who led the group in warfare and protected its members.

Sabhā: A smaller assembly, mainly associated with judicial functions and composed of selected elites.

Samiti: A larger assembly concerned with policy decisions and political affairs, representing a broader population.

Vidhata: A popular community gathering that provided a forum for discussions about warfare and other political matters.

Bharata jana: The name Bharata appears in the Ṛigveda in reference to a jana ruled by the family of the Bharatas. It illustrates how early communities could identify themselves through a people and its ruling family.

4. From Janas to Janapadas and Mahājanapadas

Janapada: A territorial political unit. The term indicates where a people first set its feet and reflects a shift from identity based mainly on kinship to identity connected with a particular land.

Approximate transition: The development of janapadas took place approximately between 1000 BCE and 600 BCE.

Mahājanapadas: Larger political units that rose approximately between 600 BCE and 300 CE. Historical sources commonly refer to sixteen mahājanapadas.

Magadha: Located in present-day Bihar, Magadha became especially powerful because of its strategic location, fertile plains and strong rulers. Its expansion contributed to the rise of the Mauryan Empire.

Forms of government: Northern India included monarchical states (rājyas) and republican states (gaṇas or saṃghas).

Iron and settlement growth: Archaeological evidence from the Ganga region in the first millennium BCE includes iron implements, a wider variety of grains and Painted Grey Ware (PGW). Later, Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW), with a smooth glossy black surface, marks a refined material culture. Literary sources also refer to expanding agriculture and increased crop variety, especially paddy.

5. Early Kingdoms of Southern India

Early Tamilakam: The Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were important early kingdoms of southern India. Sangam literature, dated in the textbook to 300 BCE–300 CE, is a major source for this period.

Royal emblems: The tiger represented the Cholas, the bow the Cheras and the fish the Pandyas.

Other southern polities: The textbook also mentions the Keralaputras, identified with the Cheras in Kerala, and the Satiyaputras in northern Tamil Nadu. These polities appear in Aśhoka's inscriptions.

Sangam society: Sangam poems describe kings, agriculture, trade, warriors, craftspeople and other occupational groups. The early Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms should not be confused with the later imperial kingdoms that emerged centuries afterwards.

6. Kingship, Duties and the Ideal of a Chakravarti

Duties of a king: Texts such as the Arthaśhāstra, Yajurveda and Mahābhārata describe a ruler as responsible for protecting people, maintaining order, administering justice, judging impartially and working for public welfare.

Royal authority: Although kingship was generally hereditary, historical texts also refer to kings being elected or expelled. This suggests that royal authority was not always absolute and succession was not entirely hereditary in practice.

Pan-Indian political ideas: Terms such as Jambudvīpa, Bhāratavarṣha, Prithivi, Aśhvamedha yajña, Rājasūya yajña and chakravarti kṣhetra expressed ideas of sovereignty or political authority extending beyond an individual kingdom across much of the subcontinent.

Chakravarti: The ideal of a chakravarti samrāt was that of a universal paramount ruler. The idea expressed an aspiration to exercise authority over a broad subcontinental realm; it did not mean that one ruler continuously controlled every region.

Examples: Aśhoka referred to Jambudvīpa in an edict. The textbook also describes a Chera ruler, Nedunjeral Adan, as attaining the rank of adhirāja, and notes that the later Chola ruler Rajendra I adopted the title Gangaikonda after campaigns reaching the Ganga region.

7. Administration and the Saptāṅga Theory

Saptāṅga: Kauṭilya described the state as an organic whole with seven constituents: (1) the king (svāmi), (2) ministers and officials (amātya), (3) territory and its population (janapada), (4) forts (durga), (5) treasury or wealth (koṣha), (6) forces of defence and law and order (daṇḍa), and (7) allies (mitra).

Council of ministers: The mantri-pariṣhad advised and supported the king. It could include the treasurer, chief tax collector, chief legal adviser and commander-in-chief. An Aśhoka inscription indicates that ministers could take decisions during the emperor's absence in exceptional circumstances.

Administrative hierarchy: Large states were organised into provinces, divisions, districts and villages. Officers handled administration, justice and revenue, while local leaders and assemblies managed village affairs.

Terms used in different regions: Northern provinces could be called bhuktis and southern ones maṇḍalas or maṇḍalams. Other subdivisions included viṣhaya or bhoga in the north, and koṭṭams or valanāḍu in the south. Villages formed the lowest administrative units.

Satavāhana administration: The Satavāhana empire had āhāras (administrative divisions) overseen by officials called amātyas; villages were led by a grāmika.

Gupta administration: The Guptas retained much of the earlier administrative structure. Officers included the mantri, commander-in-chief, general, palace-guard chief and sāndhivigrahika (minister of peace and war).

Pallavas and Chālukyas: The Pallavas combined monarchy with decentralised local governance and made tax-free grants to villages known as Brahmadeya villages. The Chālukyas gave land grants to Brahmin settlements known as agrahārams; some became centres of learning.

Chola village government: Village assemblies handled local matters such as revenue, land, irrigation, roads and records. The Uttaramerur inscription of Parantaka I describes the Kudavolai or 'ballot pot' system: names of eligible candidates were placed on palm leaves in a pot and drawn publicly. Committees called varyams managed specialised tasks.

Kannauj and the tripartite struggle: The Gurjara–Pratīhāras, Pālas and Rāṣhṭrakūṭas competed for control of Kannauj. Their administrative systems combined monarchy with decentralised units.

8. Ethics, Dharma and Social Values

Samatva: A principle of sameness: all bodies are made of the same matter, and forms of consciousness are understood as manifestations of one supreme consciousness. The epics often emphasise the welfare of all beings and critique discrimination.

Ṛita: A concept in the Ṛigveda referring to cosmic order, harmony and balance in nature and human society. It is associated with natural order and moral values.

Dharma: In this chapter, dharma does not simply mean religion. It refers to duty, obligation, righteousness and moral conduct, guiding people to fulfil responsibilities according to their roles.

Dhamma: The Pāli equivalent of the Sanskrit word dharma, used in Buddhism for related ethical principles.

Dharma and governance: Aśhoka's edicts promoted dhamma through moral conduct, respect within families, ethical behaviour, non-violence and compassion. The Uttaramerur inscription also set ethical expectations for candidates to village assemblies.

Four puruṣhārthas: Dharma (righteousness), artha (material well-being), kāma (fulfilment of desires) and mokṣha (liberation from worldly ties). The pursuit of wealth and desires was ideally guided by dharma.

Four āśhramas: Brahmacharya (studentship), grīhastha (householder), vānaprastha (life in the forest) and saṁnyāsa (renunciation). Each stage had duties associated with it.

9. Varṇa, Jāti and Social Mobility

Varṇa: The four categories described in the textbook are brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas (also referred to as rajanya in early contexts), vaiśhyas and śhūdras. Their expected roles included learning and ritual work; protection and governance; agriculture, pastoralism and trade; and assisting other varṇas, respectively.

Early flexibility: The textbook explains that early Vedic social identity was shaped by overlapping factors such as region, language, gotra, village, subgroups and occupation. Occupations were not always fixed by birth. The R̥gveda includes a verse describing a poet, a physician father and a mother who ground grain.

Changing roles: Over time, the four varṇas became associated with particular roles, and flexibility in social roles gradually reduced. The chapter also notes that texts such as the Buddhist Sutta Nipāta emphasise deeds rather than birth as the basis for being considered a brāhmaṇa.

Jāti: Jātis developed over time through factors including intermarriage, endogamy, migration and territorial differences. There was no fixed limit to the number of jātis, and their number increased as new groups and occupations emerged.

Social mobility: The chapter gives examples of rulers from varied social backgrounds and occupational movement. A guild of silk weavers mentioned in the Mandsaur Stone Inscription (473 CE) was skilled in weaving as well as other pursuits. Some inscriptions record brāhmaṇas as land managers.

Southern India: Sangam literature mentions groups such as Arasar (kings), Vanigar (traders/merchants), Velar (farmers) and Antanar (brāhmaṇas). It also describes active interaction among merchants, salt-makers, fishermen, artisans, farmers and warriors.

10. Family, Gotra and Women

Kula and grāma: The kula (family) was the smallest social unit. Several families formed a grāma (village); groups of villages formed a viśha, and the jana was a larger kinship-based community.

Gotra: A patrilineal lineage or clan traced to a common ancestor, traditionally linked to a Vedic sage. Gotra affiliation could influence marriage practices.

Women in Vedic society: Textual references describe women participating in learning, some rituals, social gatherings and other activities. Hymns are traditionally attributed to women sages such as Apālā, Viśhvavārā, Ghoṣhā and Lopāmudrā.

Changing roles: The position and roles of women varied over time. Women contributed to household management, agriculture, crafts and religious practices. Prabhāvatī Gupta ruled as a regent in the Vākāṭaka kingdom and issued land grants in her own name. Sangam literature mentions women in agriculture, cattle rearing, spinning, fishing, salt production, poetry and performance. Sembiyan Mahādevī supported temple building and religious institutions during the Chola period.

11. Religion, Renunciation and Bhakti

Vedic worship: Vedic deities were invoked through prayers and yajñas, often involving offerings to sacred fire. Many deities were associated with natural elements such as the sun, rain, fire, earth and dawn.

Renunciants: Around the middle of the first millennium BCE, renunciants such as parivrājakas (wanderers), bhikṣhus (alms-seekers) and śramaṇas (those who strive) advocated non-attachment to material comforts and social relationships. Gautama Buddha and Mahāvīra became influential thinkers in this wider context.

Bhakti: A path of devotion offering a direct connection with a personal deity without requiring elaborate Vedic rituals; it was described as accessible to people regardless of class or gender.

Ālvārs and Nāyanmārs: The organised and widespread Bhakti tradition gained prominence in the Tamil region in the 6th century. The twelve Ālvārs composed hymns in praise of Viṣṇu; the sixty-three Nāyanmārs composed hymns in praise of Śhiva.

12. Education and Centres of Learning

Purpose of education: Education aimed at developing knowledge, practical ability, self-control, humility, patience, truthfulness, ethical conduct and reverence for living beings. Students were expected to act according to dharma.

Subjects and skills: Students could study the Vedas, grammar, logic, philosophy, ethics, mathematics, science, medicine and astronomy, along with music, dance, painting, physical education and martial arts such as archery. Yoga, meditation and service to the guru were also part of learning.

Gurukula: The teacher's home served as the centre of learning. The guru-śiṣhya relationship was considered sacred, and students lived a disciplined life marked by self-control, obedience and devotion.

Centres of learning: The textbook map names centres such as Takṣhaśhilā, Vārāṇasī, Nālandā, Odantapurī, Vikramśhilā, Vallabhī, Kāñchīpuram, Puṣhpagiri, Sompura, Jagaddalā, Śhāradā Pīṭha and others.

Literary traditions: Examples include Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī and Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya (grammar); Charaka-saṁhitā and Suśruta-saṁhitā (medicine); Kālidāsa's Sanskrit poetry; Tiruvalluvar's Tirukkural; Tamil epics Silappadikāram and Maṇimēkalai; and Smṛiti literature on law and ethics.

13. Economy: Agriculture, Irrigation and Trade

Agriculture: Agriculture was the backbone of the economy and a major source of state revenue. The Mauryan state supervised economic activities and encouraged agricultural expansion. Land included individual holdings, common pastures and groves; some forests were protected.

Land revenue: The basic Mauryan land tax was generally one-sixth of the produce. Crops mentioned in the chapter include rice, pulses, wheat, linseed, mustard, saffron, sugarcane, vegetables and fruits.

Irrigation: Reservoirs, canals and dams supported farming and settlements. Puṣhyagupta, a governor under Chandragupta Maurya, constructed a dam on Sudarshana Lake near Girnar. The Cholas built and maintained canals, lakes and tanks; the Grand Anicut (Kallanai), associated with Karikala Chola, remains in use.

Trade routes: Dakṣiṇāpatha and Uttarāpatha were two major land routes by around the 6th century BCE. They connected regions, cities and ports, facilitating movement of goods, people and ideas.

Ports and overseas trade: Important ports included Muziris, Kāveripaṭṭinam, Arikameḍu and Masulipaṭnam. Maritime trade used coastal and long-distance Indian Ocean routes. Trade with Rome had expanded significantly by the early centuries of the Common Era.

Goods and state regulation: Magadha traded textiles, gems, coral, pearls, metals and minerals. Salt was important and its production was regulated. The state aimed to protect routes, prevent adulteration and protect consumers.

Guilds (śhreṇīs): Associations of traders, merchants and craftspeople in the same profession. Guilds regulated quality, sometimes fixed prices, supervised members through guild courts, and could function as banks, financiers and trustees.

Evidence of guilds: Jātaka literature refers to eighteen types of guilds. A Nāśhik cave inscription records money deposited with weavers' guilds, whose interest supported Buddhist monastic needs. The Sanchi gateway inscription refers to the guild of ivory workers from Vidiśhā and its artistic and religious patronage.

14. Important Inscriptions and What They Tell Us

Junagadh Rock Inscription: Contains records from different periods: Aśhoka's 3rd-century BCE edicts on Dhamma; Rudradaman I's c. 150 CE Sanskrit inscription describing military achievements and repair of Sudarshana Lake; and Skandagupta's 5th-century CE record of its restoration.

Uttaramerur inscription: A 10th-century Chola inscription describing village assemblies, eligibility rules and the Kudavolai method for selecting representatives and committees.

Mandsaur Stone Inscription (473 CE): Mentions a guild of silk weavers who migrated from Lata in Gujarat to Dashapura in Madhya Pradesh and had varied skills.

Nāśhik cave inscription: Provides evidence that guilds received deposits and paid interest, helping finance religious establishments.

Why inscriptions matter: They provide evidence about rulers, administration, public works, donations, guilds, religious patronage and local governance. They should be interpreted alongside other sources.

Key Terms to Remember

Jana: Kinship-based clan or community.

Janapada: Territorial political unit.

Mahājanapada: Larger political unit; sources refer to sixteen.

Gaṇa / saṁgha: Republican form of political organisation mentioned in the chapter.

Sabhā / samiti / vidhata: Assemblies or gatherings in the Vedic period with different roles.

Saptāṅga: Kauṭilya's seven constituents of the state.

Dharma / dhamma: Duty, righteousness and ethical conduct; dhamma is the Pāli form used in Buddhism.

Ṛita: Cosmic order, harmony and balance.

Varṇa: Four broad social categories described in the chapter.

Jāti: Social groupings that developed over time; not limited to four.

Gotra: Patrilineal lineage or clan.

Āśhrama: One of the four stages of life.

Puruṣhārtha: One of the four goals of life.

Bhakti: Devotional path centred on a personal deity.

Śhreṇī: Guild or occupational association.

Brahmadeya / agrahāram: Land grants or settlements associated respectively with Pallava and Chālukya examples in the chapter.

Quick Revision Flow Charts

Political evolution — Janas (kinship-based groups) → Janapadas (territorial units) → Mahājanapadas (larger political units) → Mauryan and later empires.

State administration — King → Council of ministers and officials → Provinces → Divisions/districts → Villages and local assemblies.

Saptāṅga — King + Ministers + Territory/population + Forts + Treasury + Army/force + Allies.

Four Vedas — Ṛigveda: hymns | Yajurveda: ritual performance | Sāmaveda: musical recitation | Atharvaveda: varied hymns and practical concerns.

Four āśhramas — Brahmacharya → Gṛihastha → Vānaprastha → Saṁnyāsa.

Four puruṣhārthas — Dharma → Artha → Kāma → Mokṣha.

Economic life — Agriculture + irrigation → Surplus and revenue → Trade routes and ports → Guilds, crafts and commerce.

Exam Practice: Important Questions with Answer Points

1. Differentiate between society and state.

Society is based largely on social relationships, shared culture, customs and practices. A state is an organised political system based on rules and laws, with institutions for governance and law and order.

2. How did political organisation change from the Vedic period to the age of empires?

Early Vedic society was organised into kinship-based janas. These gradually developed into territorial janapadas and larger mahājanapadas. Magadha grew powerful, contributing to the rise of the Mauryan Empire; later, the Guptas and regional empires developed complex administration.

3. Explain the roles of sabhā, samiti and vidhata.

Sabhā was a smaller body associated mainly with judicial functions; samiti was a larger assembly concerned with policy and political affairs; vidhata was a community gathering for discussion of warfare and other political matters.

4. What were the seven constituents of the state according to Kauṭilya?

The king, ministers/officials, territory and population, forts, treasury, forces of defence and law and order, and allies.

5. What is the significance of dharma in governance?

Dharma meant duty, righteousness and moral conduct. It linked ethical behaviour with public responsibilities. Texts and inscriptions expected rulers to protect people, administer justice and work for welfare.

6. What is the difference between varṇa and jāti?

Varṇa refers to four broad social categories. Jātis were numerous social groups that developed over time through factors such as occupation, intermarriage, endogamy, migration and territorial differences.

7. What does the Ṛigvedic verse about different occupations in one family suggest?

It suggests that occupations in early Vedic society were not always fixed by birth and that different members of one family could follow different occupations.

8. Describe the role of women in early Indian society using examples.

Women are described as participating in learning, some rituals and social life; hymns are attributed to women sages. Women also worked in agriculture, crafts and trade, and some women such as Prabhāvatī Gupta and Sembiyan Mahādevī played roles in governance or religious patronage.

9. What was the importance of gurukula education?

It combined academic learning with practical skills, discipline, service to the teacher and moral development. Subjects included literature, grammar, logic, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, arts and physical education.

10. Explain the importance of agriculture and irrigation.

Agriculture supported livelihoods and state revenue. Dams, reservoirs, canals and tanks stored and distributed water, expanded cultivation and supported settlements. Examples include Sudarshana Lake and the Grand Anicut.

11. How did trade routes and ports help early India?

Routes such as Dakṣiṇāpatha and Uttarāpatha connected inland areas with cities and ports. Ports supported coastal and overseas trade, moving goods, people and ideas and linking India with regions including Rome.

12. What were guilds and what functions did they perform?

Guilds were associations of people in the same craft or occupation. They regulated quality and prices, supervised members, and could act as banks, financiers and trustees.

13. What does the Uttaramerur inscription reveal?

It describes Chola village assemblies and the Kudavolai ballot-pot method for selecting eligible representatives, along with committees responsible for local matters such as irrigation, justice and taxes.

14. Why is the Junagadh Rock Inscription historically valuable?

It preserves records of Aśhoka, Rudradaman I and Skandagupta, providing evidence about Dhamma, military achievements, irrigation works and restoration of Sudarshana Lake.

15. Explain the idea of chakravarti samrāt.

It was an ideal of a universal paramount ruler whose authority extended over a broad subcontinental realm. Terms such as Jambudvīpa, Bhāratavarṣha and chakravarti kṣhetra expressed a wider political vision.

16. Name the four āśhramas and four puruṣhārthas.

Āśhramas: Brahmacharya, Gṛihastha, Vānaprastha and Saṁnyāsa. Puruṣhārthas: Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣha.

17. How did Bhakti develop in the Tamil region?

Bhakti offered a direct devotional connection with a personal deity. In the 6th-century Tamil region, the twelve Ālvārs composed hymns to Viṣṇu and the sixty-three Nāyanmārs composed hymns to Śhiva.

18. Why should historians use multiple types of sources?

Literary texts, inscriptions and archaeological evidence each provide different information and have limitations. Comparing them helps historians form a fuller and more careful understanding of the past.

Exam Preparation Tips

Use precise terms: Learn key terms such as jana, janapada, mahājanapada, dharma, varṇa, jāti, saptāṅga and śhreṇī.

Structure long answers: Begin with a clear definition or context, explain the main points in separate paragraphs or numbered points, and add a relevant example from the chapter.

Use examples: For administration, refer to the Saptāṅga theory or Chola village assemblies; for trade, mention routes, ports and guilds; for inscriptions, use Junagadh, Uttaramerur or Nāśhik.

Avoid overgeneralisation: Describe historical practices as the chapter presents them; social roles, women's positions and political systems changed over time and differed across regions.