Class 9 Social Science Chapter 5: State and Society up to 1000 CE - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Class 9 Social Science Chapter 5 notes cover “State and Society up to 1000 CE” from the new NCERT textbook Understanding Society: India and Beyond (Part 1, 2026-27): how political organisation grew from janas to kingdoms, republics and empires (Magadha, Mauryas, Guptas, Pallavas, Cholas and others), social organisation, education, the economy, trade and guilds, and the continuity of Indian culture – with tables, Q&A, 10 MCQs and a free PDF.

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Chapter Overview

Indian civilisation shows remarkable continuity in its cultural, social and political traditions. From the Vedic period, political life evolved from clans (janas) led by a rājā, to janapadas and mahājanapadas, republics (gaṇas or saṁghas) and finally large empires like the Mauryas and Guptas, and powerful regional kingdoms such as the Pallavas and Cholas.

These states developed systems of administration, taxation, military organisation and governance. The economy was based on agriculture supported by irrigation, while trade routes, ports and guilds helped commerce and crafts. Knowledge traditions, universities like Nalanda, and devotional movements such as Bhakti flourished across regions despite political changes.

Important Topics and Concepts

From Janas to Empires

- Vedic clans (janas) led by a rājā, with assemblies like Sabha and Samiti.
- Janapadas and mahājanapadas (around 6th century BCE), including monarchies and republics (gaṇas or saṁghas).
- Magadha rose to dominance due to fertile land, iron resources, rivers and able rulers.
- The Mauryan Empire (from about 321 BCE) unified much of the subcontinent.

Major Dynasties and Kingdoms

- Mauryas – centralised administration, officials, taxation, Ashoka's inscriptions.
- Kuṣhāṇas (about 30–375 CE) in the north-west and north.
- Guptas and Vākāṭakas (about 4th–6th centuries CE) – a period of literature, science and art.
- Pallavas (about 275–897 CE), Chalukyas, Rāṣhṭrakūṭas and Cholas in the south; Kāmarūpa in the north-east; Maitrakas of Vallabhī in the west.
- Visitors such as Faxian recorded life in India; an Arab conquest of Sindh took place in 712 CE.

Society and Social Organisation

- Society was organised into varṇas and many jātis, which grew as new occupational groups formed.
- Villages (grāma) of several families were the basic units of rural life.
- Āśhramas – stages of life – and the four goals (puruṣhārthas): dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣha.
- Dharma guided duties of individuals, families and rulers; texts gave advice on kingship and governance.

Education and Knowledge

- Education was a key part of life, emphasising discipline, self-control and devotion.
- Takshashila was a large centre of learning in the north-west.
- Nalanda university (established about 427 CE) and Vallabhī (about 480 CE) attracted students from far.
- Literature, mathematics, astronomy and medicine developed, especially in the Gupta–Vākāṭaka period.

Economy, Trade and Guilds

- Agriculture was the base; land revenue was the main income of the state.
- Irrigation works supported farming – e.g. the Sudarshana lake mentioned in Rudradaman's Junagadh inscription.
- Trade routes such as Uttarāpatha and Dakṣhiṇāpatha linked regions; ports connected India to distant lands.
- Guilds (śhreṇīs) of merchants and artisans regulated crafts, gave loans and made donations, as recorded in inscriptions like those at Sanchi.
- Bhakti and other devotional traditions spread widely.

Timeline Snapshot

Key dates (approximate).

Period	Development
c. 6th century BCE	Mahājanapadas; rise of Magadha
c. 321 BCE	Mauryan Empire founded
c. 30–375 CE	Kuṣhāṇas
c. 4th–6th centuries CE	Guptas and Vākāṭakas
c. 427 CE	Nalanda established
c. 480 CE	Vallabhī university established
712 CE	Arab conquest of Sindh
c. 9th–13th centuries CE	Chola power in the south

Political Organisation over Time

Stage	Features
Jana	Clan led by a rājā, assemblies
Janapada / Mahājanapada	Territorial states; monarchies and republics
Kingdom (Magadha)	Strong army, resources, taxation
Empire (Mauryas, Guptas)	Large territory, officials, administration
Regional kingdoms (Pallavas, Cholas)	Temples, local assemblies, trade

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Jana	Clan or tribe of the Vedic period
Janapada	Territory where a jana settled
Mahājanapada	Large early state
Gaṇa/Saṁgha	Republic governed by an assembly
Varṇa	Broad social category
Jāti	Community often linked to occupation
Āśhrama	Stage of life
Puruṣhārthas	Four goals of life
Śhreṇī	Guild of merchants or artisans
Uttarāpatha	Northern trade route

Short Answer Questions

Q1. How did political organisation change before 1000 CE?

From janas led by rājās to janapadas, republics, kingdoms like Magadha and empires such as the Mauryas and Guptas.

Q2. Why did Magadha become powerful?

Fertile land, iron resources, rivers for transport and able rulers.

Q3. What were gaṇas or saṁghas?

Republics governed by assemblies rather than a single king.

Q4. Name the four puruṣhārthas.

Dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣha.

Q5. Name two ancient Indian universities.

Nalanda and Takshashila (also Vallabhī).

Q6. What was the main source of state income?

Land revenue from agriculture.

Q7. What were guilds?

Associations of merchants and artisans that regulated trade and crafts and sometimes acted as banks.

Q8. Name two ancient trade routes.

Uttarāpatha and Dakṣhiṇāpatha.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Trace the evolution of the state from janas to empires.

Janas: clans led by rājās with Sabha and Samiti.

Janapadas and mahājanapadas: territorial states, monarchies and republics.

Magadha emerged dominant with resources and strong rulers.

Mauryas built a large centralised empire; Guptas followed.

Regional kingdoms like Pallavas and Cholas flourished in the south.

Q2. Describe the economy of India up to 1000 CE.

Agriculture was the base, supported by irrigation works.

Land revenue was the main state income.

Trade routes and ports linked regions and foreign lands.

Guilds organised crafts and commerce.

Donations by guilds and merchants supported religious centres.

Q3. “Indian civilisation shows continuity.” Explain with examples.

Assemblies from Vedic times to republics show traditions of consultation.

Ideas of dharma and puruṣhārthas guided life across centuries.

Trade networks and guilds persisted across dynasties.

Devotional traditions like Bhakti spread widely.

MCQs with Answers

1. Vedic clans were called(a) janas (b) gaṇas (c) śhreṇīs (d) grāmasAnswer: (a) janas

2. Republics were called(a) gaṇas or saṁghas (b) mahājanapadas (c) jātis (d) āśhramasAnswer: (a) gaṇas or saṁghas

3. Which state became the most powerful mahājanapada?(a) Kosala (b) Magadha (c) Avanti (d) VatsaAnswer: (b) Magadha

4. Nalanda was established around(a) 127 CE (b) 427 CE (c) 827 CE (d) 1027 CEAnswer: (b) 427 CE

5. Guilds were known as(a) śhreṇīs (b) sabhas (c) janas (d) varṇasAnswer: (a) śhreṇīs

6. The four goals of life are called(a) āśhramas (b) puruṣhārthas (c) varṇas (d) jātisAnswer: (b) puruṣhārthas

7. Junagadh inscription is linked with(a) Ashoka (b) Rudradaman (c) Harsha (d) RajarajaAnswer: (b) Rudradaman

8. Pallavas ruled in(a) north-west (b) south India (c) north-east (d) BengalAnswer: (b) south India

9. Arab conquest of Sindh took place in(a) 712 CE (b) 1001 CE (c) 326 BCE (d) 1192 CEAnswer: (a) 712 CE

10. Main source of state income was(a) trade tax (b) land revenue (c) tribute only (d) tollsAnswer: (b) land revenue

Quick Revision Points

- Jana → janapada → mahājanapada → empire.
- Magadha, Mauryas, Kuṣhāṇas, Guptas, Pallavas, Cholas.
- Varṇa, jāti, āśhramas, puruṣhārthas.
- Takshashila, Nalanda (427 CE), Vallabhī (480 CE).
- Agriculture, land revenue, irrigation, guilds, trade routes.
- Continuity of culture; Bhakti.

Chapter Summary

Up to 1000 CE, political organisation in India evolved from Vedic clans to janapadas, republics, the powerful kingdom of Magadha and empires such as the Mauryas and Guptas, followed by strong regional kingdoms like the Pallavas and Cholas, each building systems of administration and taxation.

Society was organised through varṇas, jātis, āśhramas and the goals of life, with villages as basic units. Education flourished at Takshashila, Nalanda and Vallabhī. Agriculture, irrigation,

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Learn the political evolution sequence.
- Remember a few key dates for MCQs.
- Use the society terms correctly with meanings.
- Give examples of guilds and trade routes in economy answers.
- Continuity questions need 4–5 examples from different areas.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 CBSE syllabus?

Yes. It is part of the new NCERT Class 9 Social Science textbook “Understanding Society: India and Beyond” (Part 1), prescribed for the 2026-27 session.

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How did the state evolve in ancient India?

From Vedic janas to janapadas and mahājanapadas, then to kingdoms like Magadha and empires such as the Mauryas and Guptas.

What were guilds in ancient India?

Associations (śhreṇīs) of merchants and artisans that regulated trade and crafts.

Conclusion

State and Society up to 1000 CE shows how India’s political, social and economic life took shape over two thousand years. Learn the tables, practise the Q&A here and save the free PDF for revision.

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Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE social science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 9 Social Science textbook, Understanding Society: India and Beyond (Parts 1 and 2, first edition 2026, NCF-SE 2023), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 23 November 2026.