



Class 9 Social Science – Chapter 5

NCERT Textbook Solutions – State and Society up to 1000 CE

Book: *Understanding Society: India and Beyond*

Class: 9 | **Session:** 2026–27

These solutions are based specifically on the **official 2026–27 textbook PDF you provided**. Chapter 5 is “**State and Society up to 1000 CE**” and covers the Vedic period, early kingdoms and republics, Mauryas and Guptas, administration, social structures, women, education, religion, economy, trade and guilds.



Questions and Activities

Q1. How did political organisation change from the Vedic period to the age of large empires such as the Mauryas and the Guptas? Explain the administrative system of the early Indian states.



Answer:

Political organisation gradually changed from **small kinship-based groups to larger territorial states and empires**.



Vedic Period

Early Vedic society was organised into **janas**, or clans, which were based mainly on kinship. The **rājā** acted primarily as a clan chief who protected the people and led them in warfare. Assemblies such as the **sabhā**, **samiti** and **vidhata** also participated in political affairs.



Janapadas

Between approximately **1000 BCE and 600 BCE**, political organisation gradually changed from kinship-based identity to territorial identity. These territorial units were called **janapadas**.

Mahājanapadas

From about **600 BCE to 300 CE**, larger political units called **mahājanapadas** developed. There were traditionally **sixteen mahājanapadas**, among which **Magadha** became especially powerful.

Mauryan and Gupta Empires

Large empires required more complex administration. Territories were divided into provinces, divisions, districts and villages. Officers were appointed at different levels to collect revenue, administer justice and maintain law and order.

The Guptas retained much of this administrative structure, with officials such as the **mantri**, **commander-in-chief**, **general**, **palace guards** and **sāndhivigrahika**.

Political evolution:

Janas → Janapadas → Mahājanapadas → Kingdoms/Republics → Mauryan Empire → Gupta Empire

Q2. Describe the role of the king, important officers, and the methods used to govern large territories.

Role of the King

The king was expected to:

-  Protect the people.
-  Ensure justice.
-  Maintain law and order.
-  Support agriculture and economic activity.
-  Collect revenue.
-  Protect the kingdom from external threats.
-  Work for the welfare of the people.

Texts such as the *Arthaśhāstra*, *Yajurveda* and *Mahābhārata* emphasised the king's responsibilities towards his subjects.

Important Officers

Kauṭilya described the **Saptāṁga**, or seven constituents of the state:

1.  King — *swāmi*
2.  Ministers and officials — *amātya*
3.  Territory and population — *janapada*
4.  Forts — *durga*
5.  Treasury — *koṣha*
6.  Forces — *daṇḍa*
7.  Allies — *mitra*

The **council of ministers (mantri-pariṣhad)** advised and supported the king. It could include the treasurer, chief tax collector, chief legal advisor and commander-in-chief.

Methods of Governing Large Territories

Large territories were divided into:

Provinces → Divisions → Districts → Villages

This allowed rulers to manage taxation, administration, justice, infrastructure and law and order more effectively.

Q3. After studying this chapter, what do you think were the most important features of the state and society in India before 1000 CE?

Answer:

The important features included:

-  Development from clan-based polities to kingdoms and empires.
-  Growth of administrative institutions.

-  Importance of justice and **dharma**.
-  Agriculture as the foundation of the economy.
-  Development of irrigation systems.
-  Expansion of internal and overseas trade.
-  Importance of villages and local assemblies.
-  Development of social categories such as **varṇa and jāti**.
-  Important contributions by women in intellectual, economic, social and religious life.
-  Development of gurukulas, universities and centres of learning.
-  Development of religious and devotional traditions.
-  Growth of guilds and specialised crafts.
-  Expansion of trade routes connecting different parts of India.

The textbook describes early Indian society as dynamic, with considerable political, social, economic and cultural development while also showing continuity across different periods.

Q4. What do early texts such as the *Ṛigveda*, *Arthaśhāstra*, and *Mahābhārata* reveal about political and social life?

Ṛigveda

The *Ṛigveda* provides information about:

- Janas and kinship-based society.
- Political institutions.
- The *rājā*.
- Assemblies such as *sabhā* and *samiti*.
- Religious practices.
- Social and economic activities.

It is one of the earliest literary sources used to understand early Indian society.

Arthaśhāstra

The *Arthaśhāstra* provides detailed information about:

-  Kingship.
-  Administration.
-  Revenue.

-  Defence.
-  Justice.
-  Agriculture.
-  Trade.
-  Officials.
- The **Saptāṃga** theory of the state.

Mahābhārata

The *Mahābhārata* provides ideas about:

-  Duties of rulers.
-  Justice.
-  Ethical conduct.
-  Responsibilities towards subjects.
- **Dharma.**
- Social life and values.

The textbook notes that these texts help historians understand political, social, cultural and moral dimensions of early Indian society.

Q5. What can we learn from early Indian society about varṇa and the role of women?

Varṇa

The four varṇas were:

1.  **Brāhmaṇas** – associated mainly with learning, teaching and rituals.
2.  **Kṣatriyas/Rājanyas** – associated with warfare, protection and administration.
3.  **Vaiśhyas** – associated with agriculture, pastoralism and trade.
4.  **Śhūdras** – expected to assist other varṇas, while also participating in agriculture, animal husbandry, trade and crafts.

The textbook emphasises that early social identity was influenced by several factors and that occupations were not initially completely fixed by birth. Over time, flexibility reduced and **jāti** developed as a more complex social structure.

Role of Women

The textbook gives several examples of women's participation:

-  Women participated in scholarly learning.
-  Some performed rituals.
-  Some attended social gatherings such as the **sabhā**.
-  Hymns are traditionally attributed to women sages such as **Apālā, Viśhvavārā, Ghoṣhā and Lopāmudrā**.
-  Women participated in agriculture.
-  They worked in crafts, spinning and production.
-  They participated in cattle rearing.
-  Some participated in fishing and salt production.
-  Royal women sometimes participated in governance and religious patronage.

The position of women changed over time and was not identical in every period or region.

Q6. Explain how assemblies like sabhā and samiti limited the power of the rājā. Which modern institutions perform similar functions today?

Answer:

In the Vedic period, the **rājā** was not necessarily an absolute ruler.

Sabhā

- A smaller body.
- Mainly associated with judicial functions.
- Composed of selected elites.

Samiti

- A larger assembly.
- Concerned with political affairs and policy decisions.
- Represented a broader section of the population.

Vidhata

- A popular gathering of members of the community.
- Discussed warfare and other political matters.

These assemblies provided opportunities for discussion and participation and therefore placed some limits on the authority of the rājā.

Modern parallels

Some comparable modern institutions include:

-  **Parliament** – debates and makes laws.
-  **Courts** – interpret laws and provide justice.
-  **Local self-government institutions** – enable community participation.

The comparison is not exact, but both ancient assemblies and modern institutions demonstrate the idea that rulers' powers can be subject to institutional checks.

Q7. What do the terms varṇa and jāti refer to in early Indian society? How were they different, and what factors may have contributed to the formation of various jātis?

Answer:

♦ Varṇa

Varṇa refers to the broad fourfold social classification:

Brāhmaṇa → Kṣatriya → Vaiśya → Śūdra

The textbook explains that the early system had a functional dimension and that occupations were initially more flexible.

♦ Jāti

Jāti refers to the many social groups that developed over time.

Unlike the fixed fourfold classification of varṇa, there was **no fixed limit to the number of jātis**. Their number increased as new social groups and occupations developed.

Factors contributing to the formation of jātis:

-  Intermarriage among varṇas.
 -  Migration of communities.
 -  Territorial differences.
 -  Development of endogamous communities.
 -  Growth of new occupations.
 -  Formation of new social groups.
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Q8. Why do you think education in early India emphasised both knowledge and moral values? How might this have benefited society?

✓ Answer:

Early Indian education aimed at the **holistic development of a person**, rather than only preparing someone for a career.

Students were taught values such as:

-  Self-control
-  Humility
-  Knowledge
-  Reverence for living beings
-  Dharma
-  Patience
-  Respect for nature

They also studied subjects including:

-  Vedas
-  Mathematics

-  Astronomy
-  Medicine
-  Philosophy
-  Grammar
-  Ethics
-  Arts
-  Martial arts

Students also practised yoga, meditation and service to the guru.

☀ **Benefit to society:**

Education combining knowledge with moral values could produce people who were expected to use their knowledge responsibly, fulfil their duties and contribute positively to family and society.

Q9. Look at the major trade routes of early India. How do you think these routes helped people in the exchange of goods, skills, beliefs, and cultural practices?

✅ **Answer:**

Major trade routes connected different regions of India and helped facilitate:

-  Exchange of goods.
-  Movement of textiles and crafts.
-  Exchange of valuable materials.
-  Transfer of skills and technologies.
-  Spread of religious ideas.
-  Exchange of knowledge.
-  Cultural interaction.
-  Movement of merchants and travellers.

Two important land routes were the **Dakṣiṇāpatha** and **Uttarāpatha**. They connected different parts of the subcontinent and linked inland regions with coastal ports.

Important ports included:

Q10. What might have been the advantages and challenges of ruling a large empire in the absence of modern communication systems?

 Answer:

Advantages

-  A large empire could bring many regions under one political authority.
-  It could provide greater military protection.
-  Large territories could facilitate wider trade networks.
-  Revenue could be collected from different regions.
-  Infrastructure and irrigation could be developed on a large scale.

Challenges

-  No modern communication meant information travelled slowly.
-  Distant provinces were difficult to control.
-  Local officials had to make many administrative decisions.
-  Rebellions or invasions could take time to reach the central government.
-  Different regions had different languages, customs and political traditions.

This is one reason large states developed **provincial, district and village-level administrative systems**.

Q11. Many ideas about governance come from texts composed by scholars and

advisors of the king. What might be some limitations of relying only on such sources?

✓ Answer:

Texts written by scholars and royal advisors are valuable, but they have limitations.

⚠ Limitations:

1. They may mainly describe the **ideal behaviour of rulers**, rather than everyday reality.
2. They may reflect the viewpoint of the **ruling or educated classes**.
3. They may give less information about ordinary people.
4. They may not fully represent women, workers, artisans or marginalised groups.
5. Authors may have had particular political, social or religious perspectives.
6. Some descriptions may be prescriptive rather than factual.

Therefore, historians should compare literary sources with **archaeological evidence, inscriptions, coins and other sources**.

Q12. Read the source and answer the questions.

The source is the **Nāśhik cave inscription of Uṣhavadāta**, dated to the **2nd century CE**. It records an endowment of **3,000 kāhāpaṇas**, deposited with guilds and used to generate interest for the Buddhist Saṃgha.

(a) What does this source tell us about the economic role of guilds?

✓ Answer:

The inscription shows that guilds were not merely associations of traders and craftspeople. They also performed **financial functions**.

They:

-  Accepted deposits.
-  Invested money.
-  Paid interest on deposits.
-  Managed endowments.
-  Helped provide financial support to religious institutions.

The textbook specifically describes guilds as functioning as **banks, financiers and trustees**.

(b) Why were guilds trusted with money deposits?

✓ Answer:

Guilds were trusted because they were organised professional associations with established rules and financial responsibilities.

They regulated professional activities, supervised their members and could manage financial resources. The Nāśhik inscription provides evidence that money deposited with guilds generated regular interest.

(c) Identify the donor and the donees from the given source.

✓ Answer:

Donor:

➡ **Uṣhavadāta**, son of Dinika and son-in-law of King Nahapāna.

Donees:

➡ The **Samgha**, specifically members of the Samgha residing in the cave.

The inscription records the donation of the cave and the financial endowment.

Q13. Mark and locate on the map of India the following important centres:

Places to mark:

1. **Pāṭaliputra** – Bihar
2. **Nāśhik** – Maharashtra
3. **Ujjayinī** – Madhya Pradesh
4. **Vikramśhilā** – Bihar
5. **Kānchipuram** – Tamil Nadu
6. **Mathurā** – Uttar Pradesh
7. **Rājgriha** – Bihar

These places are specifically listed in the textbook activity.

Q14. Prepare a short presentation or poster on one of the following.

The textbook provides four choices:

(a) Life in the Vedic Society

Include:

- Janas and kinship.
- Role of the rājā.
- Sabhā and samiti.
- Family and kula.
- Varṇa.
- Agriculture and pastoralism.
- Religious practices.

(b) Early Education System – Gurukula

Include:

- Guru–śhiṣhya relationship.
- Disciplined lifestyle.
- Vedas and other subjects.
- Mathematics, medicine and astronomy.
- Yoga and meditation.
- Service to the guru.
- Moral education.

(c) Trade and Guilds in Early India

Include:

- Dakṣiṇāpatha.
- Uttarāpatha.
- Important ports.
- Traders and merchants.
- Guilds or **śhreṇīs**.
- Punch-marked coins.
- Guilds as financial institutions.

(d) Role of Women in Early Indian Society

Include:

- Women sages.
- Education and learning.
- Ritual participation.
- Agriculture.
- Crafts and economic activities.
- Women poets.
- Queens and royal women.
- Women's changing roles over time.

These are the four presentation/poster topics given in the official exercise.

Chapter 5 Quick Revision

Vedic Period

Janas → Rājā → Sabhā, Samiti, Vidhata

Territorial States

Janapadas → Mahājanapadas

Major Political Powers

Magadha → Mauryas → Guptas → Regional Kingdoms and Empires

Administration

King → Ministers → Provinces → Districts → Villages

Society

Varṇa + Jāti + Kula + Gotra + Āśhrama

Ethics

Dharma → Duty + Righteousness + Moral Conduct

Education

Gurukula → Knowledge + Character + Practical Skills

Economy

Agriculture + Irrigation + Crafts + Trade

Trade

Dakṣiṇāpatha + Uttarāpatha + Ports + Guilds

Guilds

Trade organisations + Quality control + Price regulation + Banking + Finance

Religion

Vedic traditions → Renunciant traditions → Bhakti

Bhakti

The organised and widespread Bhakti tradition gained prominence in the **6th-century Tamil region** through the **Ālvārs** and **Nāyanmārs**.

Important Terms

Term

Meaning



Jana

Kinship-based clan/community

 Janapada	Territorial political unit
 Rājā	King/chief
 Sabhā	Smaller assembly, mainly judicial
 Samiti	Larger political assembly
 Vidhata	Popular community gathering
 Varṇa	Four broad social categories
 Jāti	Social groups that developed over time
 Gotra	Patrilineal lineage/clan
 Dharma	Duty, righteousness and moral conduct
 Gurukula	Traditional teacher–student educational system
 Śhreṇī	Guild of traders/artisans/professionals
 Dakṣiṇāpatha	Major southern trade route
 Uttarāpatha	Major northern trade route
 Saptāṃga	Seven constituents of the state
 Guild	Organised professional association that could also perform financial functions

Chapter 5 in One Line

Kin-based Vedic society → Janapadas → Mahājanapadas → Kingdoms and republics → Mauryan and Gupta administration → regional kingdoms → evolving social structures → education, trade, guilds and cultural traditions.