

9th Social Science Lesson 4 Notes in English

4. Intellectual Awakening and Socio-Political Changes

Introduction

- The discovery of iron marked the beginning of the second phase in the history of civilisations.
- The invention of smelting of iron transformed both production and warfare. Before **iron, copper and its alloy, bronze, which were expensive**, were employed in production.
- The copper or bronze edges became blunt quickly and so implements, whether weapons or ploughs, made of bronze could not be used effectively.
- Iron ore, in contrast, was available in abundance compared to copper or bronze. The effect of iron axe on agriculture was immense.
- The iron axe enabled cultivators to clear the jungles and the iron plough was used to break the hardest soil.
- The Assyrian Empire, which made use of iron technology, was ascendant by the beginning of the seventh century BCE.
- Small kingdoms or city states emerged in **China, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Greece, Italy, Palestine, Lebanon and North Africa**.
- A new civilisation began to develop in northern India, with the revival of trade and urbanization during the sixth century BCE.
- In this period of major political and social changes in north India, Buddha and Mahavira were born.
- In the century following their death, **Buddhism and Jainism took root as major religions in India**.
- This meant that new religious orders were coming up with many followers, propagating new beliefs and philosophies.
- Similarly **Zoroastrianism in Persia and Confucianism and Taoism in China** became popular during this period.

Religion in the Sixth Century BCE



- The new civilisations that emerged in the **new Iron Age** had certain common features.
- They were characterised by the **proliferation of new crafts, growth of long-distance trade, building of cities and towns, rise of universalistic religions and evolution of a code of conduct.**
- Sixth century BCE was, therefore, a period of exceptional development in all spheres of life such as **material, cultural and intellectual.**
- About this time, we find that a number of prominent men, great thinkers and founders of new religions lived, making it a period of great historical importance.
- Philosophical and religious thinkers such as **Confucius in China, Zoroaster in Iran and Mahavira and Buddha in India** gained popularity in sixth century BCE.

Confucianism and Taoism

- In the sixth century BCE, two great thinkers were born in **China: Confucius and Lao-Tse.**
- They laid down the systems of morals and social behaviour for individuals and communities.

- But after their death, temples were built in their memory and the philosophy they taught was developed into a religion. Known as **Confucianism** and **Taoism** respectively, their books were held in great reverence in China.
- Confucianism exerted a big influence on not only the political class of China but also on the common people.

Confucius (551–478 BCE)

- Confucius was born in the Shantung province of China in 551 BCE.
- He studied **history, poetry, philosophy and music**. He is the author of five important works:

(1) The Book of Records, which is chiefly ethical, providing guidelines for the regulation of human society

(2) The Book of Odes, illustrating the sound principles of morality in songs

(3) The Book of Changes dealing with metaphysics

(4) The Spring and Autumn Annals, a code of political morality

(5) The Book of History narrating the events and legends of the early religions of China.

Five Cardinal Principles of Confucius' Ethics

1. Humaneness

2. Righteousness

3. Propriety

4. Wisdom

5. Trustworthiness

- Confucius said that wisdom grows from the family, and that the foundation of society is the disciplined individual in an orderly family.
- The superior man, according to him, is not merely intelligent or scholarly, but his character should be exemplary.
- The superior man of Confucius possesses three virtues: intelligence, courage and goodwill.
- Though Confucius insisted on children obeying parents and wife her husband, he also clearly proposed that **"when the command is wrong a son should resist his father and a minister should resist the prince."**
- When asked about government, he said that there are three requisites for it: **"That there should be sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment and confidence of the people in their ruler."**

- The philosophy of Confucius gave the Chinese people an awareness about their political rights.
- It also clearly listed the government's duty towards the people. Confucius felt that the government should work with an ideal.
- In matters of national life, Confucius felt that the people in the nation are the actual and proper source of political sovereignty.
- He advised that the ruler must appoint persons of character in the government to govern the people impartially.
- Confucianism is often characterised as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than as a religion.
- The correct way of writing Confucius, according to the new Pinyin system of transliteration, is **Kong Fu-Tse**.
- The European scholars who visited China found it difficult to pronounce the name and so they turned it into **Latin** and called him **Confucius**.
- **[Linguists developed a system called Pinyin, meaning spelled sounds, for pronouncing and spelling Chinese names and words in languages written in the Latin alphabet.**

Taoism

- Lao-Tse, the greatest of the preConfucian philosophers, was **53 years older than Confucius**. **Lao-Tse was born in 604 BCE**.
- Disgusted with the intrigues of politicians and the prevailing corruption of his time, he left China to live in a peaceful abode.
- Lao-Tse wrote a book in two parts, running into 5,000 words. He then disappeared from the place and no one knew where he died.
- His book Tao Teh Ching is a guide to the conduct of life.

Teachings of Lao-Tse (Taoism)

- The cause of human unhappiness in the world is human selfishness. Selfishness creates unlimited human desires, which can never be satisfied. In nature, all the things act in a natural way.
- The law of human conduct must correspond with nature. Humans live a life under the regulation of someone.
- This is because they have acquired knowledge and have not remained innocent. On the basis of their acquired knowledge, they have built up an **urban civilisation and have made themselves unhappy**.

Zoroastrianism

- Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest of the revealed world religions. It remained as the state religion of **three great Iranian empires**, which flourished from the **6th century BCE and dominated much of the Near and Middle East**.
- Zoroaster of Persia is the founder of Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster was pained to find his people worshipping primitive deities.
- He revolted against it and proclaimed to the world that there is one god, **Ahura Mazda (the Lord of Light)**.
- The holy book of Zoroastrians is **Zend Avesta**. It is a collection of sacred literature of different **epochs, containing religious hymns, invocations, prayers, confessions, laws, myths and sacred reminiscences**.
- The doctrines and rituals of the Zoroastrians have much similarity to those of the Vedas. The language of Avesta bears similarity to that of the Indo-Aryan.
- Linguists have established a close relationship between Indo-Aryan and the languages of West Asia, in particular Iran.
- The old Iranian language dates back to the second millennium BCE.
- Later, it incorporated languages of Dravidians and those of aboriginals of the Indian sub-continent.
- According to the historian Romila Thapar, the old Iranian and IndoAryan speakers originally belonged to a single group and later split up because of dissensions.

Teachings

- Zoroaster taught that the great object of religion, state or society is the cultivation of morality.
- The highest religious conception is purity of thought, word and deed. He asserted that Ahura Mazda has seven qualities:
 - (1) light
 - (2) good mind
 - (3) right
 - (4) dominion
 - (5) piety
 - (6) well-being
 - (7) immortality.
- Ahura Mazda is omniscient (**knows everything**), omnipotent (**all powerful**) and omnipresent (**is everywhere**).

- In Zoroastrianism, sacrifice and image worship were discarded. Fire was worshipped as a symbol of the deity and considered the highest form of worship.
- Charity was made an essential part of religion, and service to the poor was particularly emphasised.
- Human virtues did not mean only prayer, meditation, sacrifices and rituals. It meant much more, such as fighting evil, making efforts for good and assisting the activity of Ahura Mazda.
- This religion ceased to exist in its place of origin, as in the wake of Muslim conquest of Persia (Iran), many of the Zoroastrian families fled to different countries, including India between the eighth century and tenth century CE.
- With their dwindling numbers and in the face of coercive measures adopted by the Arabs to push through their new faith, as well as the incidents of destruction of fire temples and killing of priests, Zoroastrianism went into a decline.
- The Parsis, who came to India from Persia first as merchants and later in the wake of persecution, brought Zoroastrianism with them and they have been practicing it ever since.

Impact of Iron Technology in India

- In the Gangetic valley, people learnt to produce crops more than that was required for subsistence.
- So, another section of people took up some professional crafts as their livelihood. Like the farmers, these craftsmen also had to rely on a group of people who collected raw materials and distributed the craft products.
- Early urbanisation happened in two ways. One was as a result of some villages specialising in **black smithy, pottery, carpentry, cloth weaving and the like**.
- The other was on account of the congregation of specialised craftsmen in villages close to where the raw materials were available and where markets were present.
- Such a concentration enabled villages to evolve into towns and exchange centres. **Vaisali, Shravasti, Rajagriha, Kausambi and Kashi were some significant commercial centres of the Gangetic plain.**

Religion: Post-Rig Vedic

- Three more Vedas – **Yajur, Sama and Atharva – were composed after the Rig Veda.**
- Manuals of rituals called Brahmanas, specifying rhyming words to be sung, and two commentaries on certain Rig Vedic hymns called Aranyakas, containing knowledge to be learnt secretly in the forest, and the Upanishads, were compiled in the **upper Gangetic plain during 1000–600 BCE.**

Post-Vedic

- During the post-Vedic period, the Rig Vedic gods such as **Varuna, Indra, Agni, Surya and Usha** lost their importance.
- New gods like **Siva, Vishnu and Brahma** appeared on the religious firmament. Aryans developed the ideas of tapas (virtuous living) and brahmacharya (celibacy).
- Rites and rituals insisted on by Brahman priests overshadowed the true spirit of the religion.
- The sacrificial cult, supported by the wealthy and the elite, urbanized in accordance with the formulae prescribed in Brahmanas, were opposed by Buddha and Mahavira, who revolted against the existing practices and proposed their ethical teachings.

Jainism and Buddhism

- In the Gangetic plain, iron plough agriculture required the use of bullocks. But the indiscriminate killing of cattle for Vedic rituals and sacrifices caused resentment.
- The founders of Jainism and Buddhism did not prescribe killing as a religious rite. They secured their livelihood mostly by alms.
- Celibacy and abstinence from holding property made the new teachers much more acceptable than the Brahman priests.
- The people's resentment about the expensive and elaborate Vedic rituals, animal sacrifice and the desire for wealth eventually took them towards Jainism and Buddhism.
- Mahavira and Buddha lived a life of purity and exemplified simplicity and self-denial. They lived in the times of **Bimbisara and Ajatashatru, the famous kings of Magadha**.
- The commercial development of the northern cities like **Kaushambi, Kushinagara, Benaras, Vaishali and Rajgir** added importance to the Vaishyas who turned to Buddhism and Jainism in their eagerness to improve their social status.

Jainism Mahavira: Birth and Life

- **Vardhamana Mahavira was born in 599 BCE at Kundagrama near Vaishali.** His mother was Trishala, a Lichchavi princess.
- He spent his early life as a prince and was married to a princess named **Yashoda**. The couple had a daughter. At the **age of thirty**, he left his home and became an ascetic.
- For over twelve years, Mahavira wandered from place to place, subjecting himself to severe penance and self-mortification.
- In the **thirteenth year of his asceticism**, he acquired the highest knowledge and came to be known as **Jaina (the conqueror) and Mahavira (great hero)**.
- Jains believe that Mahavira came in a long line of Tirthankaras and he was the **twenty fourth and the last of them**.
- **Rishabha was the first Tirthankara and Parshvanath the penultimate or the twenty third.**
- Mahavira travelled extensively as a preacher in the kingdoms of Magadha, Videha and Anga.
- Magadha rulers **Bimbisara and Ajatashatru were influenced by his teachings**

- Thousands of people became his followers. After **30 years of preaching**, Mahavira died at **Pawapuri in 527 BCE at the age of seventy two.**

Teachings of Mahavira

The three principles of Jainism, also known as Tri-ratnas, are the following:

1. Right faith: Belief in the teachings and wisdom of Mahavira.
2. Right knowledge: Acceptance of the theory that there is no God and that the world existed without a creator.
3. Right action: It refers to the Mahavira's observance of the five great vows: **(a) ahimsa, (b) honesty, (c) kindness, (d) truthfulness and (e) not coveting or desiring things belonging to others.**

Spread of Jainism

- In order to spread his new faith, Mahavira founded monasteries and engaged munis (Jaina monks) who led a very austere life.
- In North India, this new faith was 8rbanizati by rulers such as **Dhana Nanda, Chadragupta Maurya and Kharavela.**
- There was a notable following for Jainism in Karnataka and western India during the 4th century BCE.
- Jainism encouraged the public spirit among all who embraced it. Varna system practiced by Brahmans was challenged.
- People were spared from the costly and elaborate rituals and sacrifices.
- Mahavira believed that all objects, both animate and inanimate, have souls and various degrees of consciousness. **They possess life and feel pain when they are injured.**

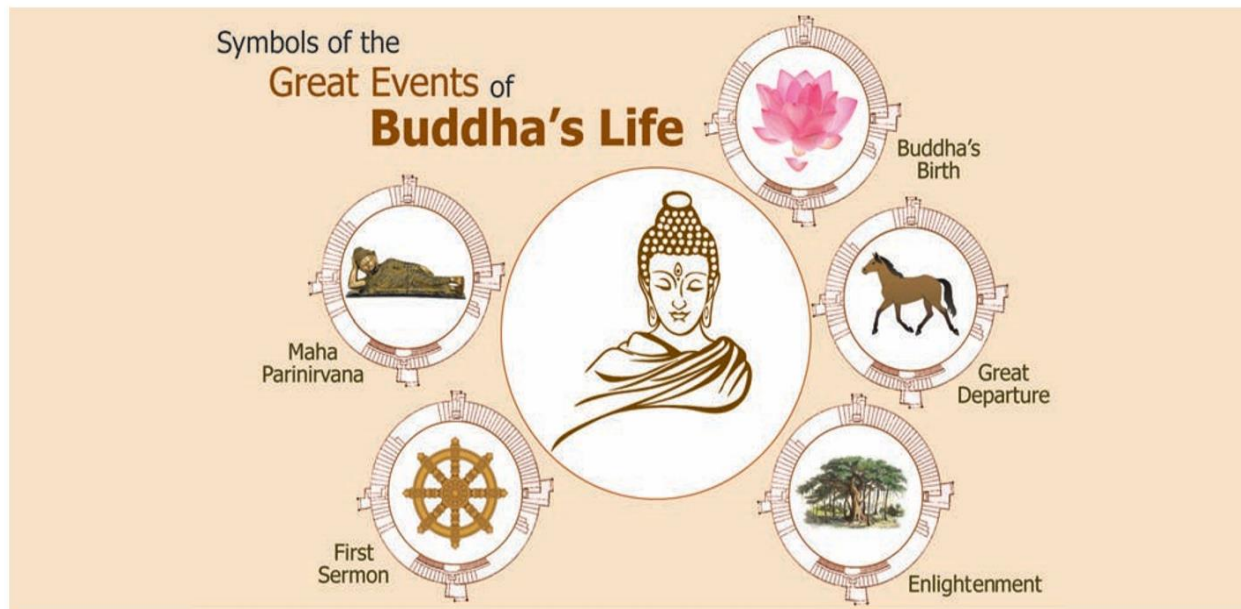
Split in Jainism

In course of time, Jainism split into two branches, namely the **Digambaras (sky-clad)** and the **Svetambaras (white clad)**. The Digambaras were the orthodox followers of Mahavira. The Digambaras rejected clothes altogether. Svetambaras wore a white dress from head to toe.

Decline of Jainism

The **lack of royal patronage, its severity, factionalism and spread of Buddhism** led to the decline of Jainism in India.

Buddhism



Gautama Buddha: Birth and Life

- Gautama Buddha was the **son of Siddhodana, the chief of a Kshatriya clan of the Sakyas of Kapilavastu in present-day Nepal.**
- His given name was **Siddhartha**. As he belonged to the Sakya clan, he was also known as '**Sakya Muni**'.
- He was born in **567 BCE in Lumbini Garden, near Kapilavastu**. His mother, **Mayadevi (Mahamaya)**, died after a few days of his birth and he was brought up by his stepmother.
- In order to divert his attention towards worldly affairs, his father got him married at the age of sixteen to a princess called Yashodhara.
- He led a happy married life for some time and had a **son by name Rahula**.
- One evening, while Siddhartha was passing through the city, he came across an old man who had been abandoned by his relatives, a sick man crying with pain and a dead body surrounded by weeping relatives.
- Siddhartha was deeply moved by these sights. He also saw an ascetic who had renounced the world and found no sign of sorrows.
- These '**Four Great Sights**' prompted him to renounce the world and search for the cause of suffering. In **537 BCE**, he left his palace and went into the forest in search of truth.
- In the course of his wanderings, he sat under a peepal tree for several days until he attained enlightenment.
- The place where he attained enlightenment, the **Mahabodhi temple**, still exists in **Bodh Gaya (Bihar)**.
- After his enlightenment, Buddha decided to impart his knowledge to the people. He went to Varanasi and gave his first sermon at **Saranath**. He preached in the kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala.

- A large number of people became his followers including his own family. After **forty five years of preaching**, he breathed his last in **487 BCE at Kushinagar (near Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh) at the age of eighty.**

Teachings of Buddhism

(i) Four Great Truths:

- (1) There is suffering and sorrow in this world.
- (2) The cause of human suffering is desire and craving.
- (3) This pain or sorrow can be removed by suppressing desire and craving.
- (4) This is to be achieved by leading a disciplined life or by following what Buddha called the 'Noble Eight-fold Path'.

(ii) Attainment of Nirvana:

According to Buddha, a person should aim at attainment of nirvana or the highest bliss, and it could be achieved by any person by leading a virtuous life and by following the Noble Eight-fold Path.

(iii) The Noble Eight-fold Path:

Buddha preached a new path to attain the purest state of mind:

- (1) right views,
- (2) right aspirations,
- (3) right speech,
- (4) right action,
- (5) right livelihood,
- (6) right effort,
- (7) right mindfulness and
- (8) right contemplations or meditation.

Buddha preached that he who practices the eight-fold path can attain the highest and purest state of mind.

(iv) Middle Path and Salvation:

Buddha advised his followers neither to indulge in material pleasures and luxuries nor to practice austere penances. He said that by following the '**Middle Path**', people could attain moksha or salvation, that is freedom from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

(v) Ahimsa or Non-violence was another fundamental belief of Buddha.

He condemned **bloody sacrifices in the yajnas**. According to him, love for all living beings was an essential disposition for a good practitioner of Buddhism.

(vi) Emphasis on Morality:

Buddha advised his followers to do good deeds and lead a moral and disciplined life. He appealed to them to refrain from lying, from killing living beings, from taking intoxicants, from **stealing and from leading a sensual life**.

Spread of Buddhism

- Buddha, in order to carry his message to different parts of India, established the Buddhist **sangha or the Holy Order of Monks**.
- The **bikshus (monks) and the bikshunis (nuns)** were enlisted for spreading the faith and they were required to lead a life of purity and poverty.
- Buddhism spread to **Central Asia, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Asia, as well as the eastern countries of China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan and Vietnam**.

The Split in Buddhism

- During the reign of Kanishka, the Buddhist monk Nagarjuna initiated reforms in the way Buddhism was being followed.
- As a result, Buddhism was split into two as Hinayana and Mahayana.

(i) The **Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle)** was the original creed preached by Buddha. The followers of this form regarded Buddha as their guru and did not worship him as God. They denied idol worship and continued with the **people's language, Pali**.

(ii) In **Mahayana (Greater Vehicle)**, Buddha was worshipped as **God and Bodhisattva** as his previous avatar. The followers made images and statues of Buddha and Bodhisattva and offered prayers, and recited hymns (mantras) in their praise. Later, they wrote their religious books in Sanskrit. This form of Buddhism was **urbanized by Kanishka**.

Decline of Buddhism

Buddhism declined in India due to the following reasons:

1. Buddhism was popular in the beginning because it was preached in people's **language (Pali)**. The later texts were written in Sanskrit, which was difficult for the common people to understand.

2. The split in Buddhism into **Hinayana and Mahayana** was another vital reason. Image worship in Mahayana made no difference between Hinduism and Buddhism.
3. Buddhism lost its royal patronage during the reign of Guptas.
4. Further, the invasions of **Huns and Turks** almost wiped out Buddhism.

Other Heterodox Sect

Ajivika

- The period that produced Buddhism and Jainism also witnessed the birth of a sect known as Ajivika.
- Its founder was **Gosala (Maskariputra Gosala)**, a friend of Mahavira. For some time, they were together.
- Later, Gosala moved away and founded the Ajivika sect. As an atheistic sect, Ajivikas rejected the karma theory, which postulated that the condition of men is determined by their past actions.
- Gosala argued that acts of charity and piety can, in no way, influence this finality. Ajivikas had a small presence in southern India.
- Under the Cholas, a special tax was levied on them. Three Tamil texts, **the Manimekalai of Buddhists, the Nilakesi of Jains and the Sivajnanasiddhiyar of Saivites**, contain the outlines of Ajivika doctrine.

Political Organisation:

- Pre-Mauryan The spread of Aryans in the east led to the establishment of new settlements in the Gangetic region.
- One important result of introduction of iron tools was the easy removal of dense forest cover from the banks of the Ganges.
- Sedentary agriculture had resulted in a permanent settlement of a clan in a particular area, thereby giving it a geographical identity. Retaining their acquired land required **political urbanization**.
- The emergence of **gana-sangha, chiefdom**, has to be seen in this context. The clusters where particular clansmen were dominant came to be known as janapadas.

Gana-sanghas

- There were two distinct forms of government at the time of Mahavira and Buddha: monarchical kingdom and clan oligarchies or Gana-sanghas.
- The Gana sanghas provided a polity alternative to the kingdoms. Vedic rituals and the rules of varna were not followed.

- The Ganasanghas consisted of either a single clan, such as the **Shakyas, Koliyas and Mallas**, or a **confederacy of clans**, such as the **Vrijjis and the Vrishnis** (a confederacy located at **Vaisali**).
- The Gana-sanghas had only two strata: the **Kshatriya rajakula**, ruling families, and the **dasa-karmakara, the slaves and labourers**. The dasakarmakaras had no representation in the Assembly.
- The presence of various other popular religious cults in Gana-sanghas is in contrast to the socio-cultural system prevailing in kingdoms.
- In Gana-sanghas, the head of the clan presided over the Assembly, comprising the heads of families.
- The clan's head was not chosen following heredity. This Assembly discussed the matters relating to the affairs of the Gana-sanghas and if a unanimous decision was not possible, it was put to vote.
- There were advisers to the head of the clan. In later days, elaborate judicial procedures also evolved.
- The income of the Gana-sanghas was drawn from **agriculture and cattle rearing**, which was confined only to the Punjab and the doab, and to some extent from trade.
- For the chieftains of the north-west, the income primarily came from trade. Land was owned in common by the clan.
- They were cultivated by dasa-karmakara. There was only domestic slavery. The use of slaves in production was absent.

Rise of Kingdoms

- The 6th century BCE witnessed the establishment of kingdoms, oligarchies and chiefdoms as well as the emergence of towns.
- From the largest of the chiefdoms emerged kingdoms.
- Many tribes of Rig Vedic period such as **Bharatas, Pasus, Tritsus and Turvasas** passed into oblivion and new tribes such as the **Kurus and Panchalas** rose into prominence. **Sixteen mahajanapadas are** listed in the Buddhist texts.
- Linguistic and cultural commonality prevailed in the janapadas, whereas in the mahajanapadas, different social and cultural groups lived.
- With the emergence of kingdoms, the struggle for supremacy among different states occurred frequently.
- Sacrifices such as **Rajasuya and Asvamedha** were performed to signify the imperial sway of monarchs over their rivals.
- The **Rig Vedic title of 'Rajan'** was replaced by impressive titles such as **Samrat, Ektrat, Virat or Bhoja**.

Growth of Royal Power

- The king enjoyed absolute power. The sabha of the Rig Vedic period ceased to exist. The king sought the aid and support of the **samiti** on matters like war, peace and fiscal policies.
- However, in spite of the existence of the assemblies, the power of the king kept increasing.
- The **Satapatha Brahmana** describes the king as infallible and immune from all punishments.
- The growth of royal power was reflected in the enlarged administrative structure. The king was now assisted by a group of officers such as **Bhugadugha** (collector of taxes), **Suta** (charioteer), the **Aksharapa** (superintendent of gambling), **Kshattri** (chamberlin), **Gorikartana** (king's companion in the chase), **Palogola** (courtier), **Takshan** (carpenter) and **Rathakara** (chariotmaker).
- In addition, there were the ecclesiastical and military officials like the **Purohita** (chaplain), the **Senani** (army general) and the **Gramani** (leader of the village).
- In the later Vedic period, Gramani, who acted both a civil and military officer, was the link through which the royal authority was enforced in the village.
- The king administered justice and occasionally delegated his judicial power to **Adhyakshas** (royal officials).
- In the villages, **Gramyavadin** (village judge) and **Sabha** (court) decided the cases. Punishments for crimes were severe.

The Rise of Magadha Kingdom

- The polity followed in kingdoms was different from that of **gana-sanghas**. Kingdoms operated with a **14rbanizatio** government.
- Political power was concentrated in the ruling family, which had become a dynasty, with succession becoming hereditary. There were advisory bodies such as **parishad (ministers)** and **sabha (advisory council)**.
- The sabha collected the revenue and remitted it to the treasury in the capital of the kingdom, from where it was redistributed for the public expenses, such as maintenance of army and salaries to state officials.
- Of the kingdoms mentioned in the literature of the period, **Kashi, Kosala and Magadha** are considered to be powerful. The only republic that **14rbaniz these kingdoms was the Vrijjis, whose capital was Vaisali.**
- In the struggle for control for the Gangetic Plain, which had strategic and economic advantages, the Magadha kingdom emerged victorious. **Bimbisara** was the first important king of Magadha.
- Through matrimonial alliances with the high-**status Lichchavi clan of Vaishali** and the ruling family in **Kosala, Bimbisara** went on to conquer Anga (in West Bengal now), thereby gaining access to the Ganges delta.
- **Bimbisara** succeeded in establishing a comprehensive structure of administration. Village was the basic unit of his administrative system.

- Apart from villages (gramas), there were fields and pastures as well as wasteland and the forests (aranya, khetra and vana).
- Each village was brought under a **gramani (headman)**, who was responsible for collecting taxes and remitting them to the state treasury.
- Officers appointed to measure the land under cultivation and assess the value of crop were to assist the gramani in his task.
- Land tax (bali) was the main source of revenue to the kingdom and the share of the produce (bhaga) was determined proportionate to the extent of land cultivated.
- The term **shadbhagin – one who is entitled to a share of one-sixth –referred to the king**. Thus, a peasant economy came into being at Magadha. Ajatashatru, the son of Bimbisara, is said to have murdered his father and ascended the throne in **493 BCE**.
- He continued his father's policy of expansion through military conquests. The capital city of Magadha was Rajagriha, which was surrounded by five hills, providing protection to the kingdom from external threats.
- Ajatashatru strengthened the Rajagriha fort and also built another fort at Pataligrama on the Ganges.
- It served as the exchange centre for the local produce and later became the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra.
- **Ajastashatru died in 461 BCE** and he was succeeded by five kings. All of them followed the example of Ajatashatru by ascending the throne by killing their parent.
- Fed up with such recurring instances, people of Magadha appointed the last ruler's viceroy Shishunaga as the king.
- After ruling nearly for half a century, the Shishunaga dynasty lost the kingdom to **Mahapadma Nanda** who founded the Nanda dynasty.
- The Nandas were the first of non-kshatriya dynasties to rule in northern India. Nandas extended the Magadhan Empire still further.
- Nandas gave importance to irrigation, with the canals they built touching even the **Kalinga (Odisha)** kingdom.
- During their period, officials were regularly appointed to collect the taxes which became a part of the administrative system.
- Nandas' attempt to build an imperial structure was cut short by Chandragupta Maurya who founded the Mauryan kingdom in **321 BCE**.

North-West India and Alexander

- Historically, the north-west part of India remained a region under varying suzerainties such as **north India, Afghanistan and Persia (Iran)**. During **6th century BCE**, it was part of the Achaemenid empire founded by **Cyrus II of Persia**.

- The Indian region had since been providing mercenaries for the Persian armies in their fight against the Greeks. **Takshashila or Taxila**, as the Greeks called it, was a prominent city in the northwest.
- It turned out to be a centre for intermixing of Iranian and Indian culture and learning. The ascendancy of Achaemenid empire **in north-west ended with the conquest of that empire by Alexander of Macedonia**.
- While marching on the territories of the Achaemenid Emperor Darius III. Alexander, the Greek Emperor entered the Indian provinces in **326 BCE**.
- His campaign in northern India lasted for two years. The king of Jhelum region, Porus, fought him heroically in the battle of the Hydaspes (Jhelum).
- Though Porus lost the battle, he was restored to the throne only to be killed by one of Alexander's generals after Alexander's death. Alexander had left his governors in India. But his sudden death at the age of thirty three prompted his governors to leave north-west India to seek their fortune in West Asia.
- Alexander was a great general and a world conqueror. After his death, his great empire fell to pieces.
- Ptolemy took Egypt with its capital Alexandria, while Seleucus had **Persia and Mesopotamia and part of Asia Minor** as his share.
- Alexander's death, however, cleared the way for the founding of a great empire, the Mauryan empire in India.

Mauryan Empire: State and Society

- Mauryan Kings Vishnugupta, who was later known as **Chanakya or Kautilya**, fell out with the Nanda king and vowed to dethrone him.
- Chandragupta perhaps inspired by Alexander of Macedonia, was raising an army and looking for opportunities to establish a kingdom of his own.
- On hearing the news of Alexander's death, Chandragupta stirred up the people and with their help drove away the Greek garrison that Alexander had left at **Taxila**.
- Then he and his allies marched to Pataliputra and defeated the **Nanda king in 321 BCE**. Thus began the reign of the Mauryan dynasty.
- During Chandragupta's reign, Seleucus, the general of Alexander, who had control over countries from Asia Minor to India, crossed the Indus only to be defeated by Chandragupta.
- **Seleucus's envoy, Megasthenes**, is said to have remained in India and his account titled Indica is a useful record about Mauryan polity and society.
- After gaining control over the Gangetic plain, Chandragupta turned his attention to north-west to take advantage of the void created by Alexander's demise.
- These areas comprising the present-day **Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Makran** surrendered without any resistance. There upon Chandragupta moved to Central India. According to

Jaina tradition, towards the **end of his life, Chandragupta**, who had by now become an ardent follower of Jainism, abdicated his throne in favour of his son Bindusara.

- Bindusara, during his rule, succeeded in extending the Mauryan empire upto Karnataka. At the time of his death, a large part of the subcontinent had come under Mauryan suzerainty.
- **Ashoka succeeded Bindusara in 268 BCE.** Desirous of bringing the remaining parts of South India into his empire, Ashoka waged a war against Kalinga in the eighth year of his reign.
- The people of Kalinga fought bravely, but they were defeated after a large-scale slaughter. This war and slaughter affected Ashoka so much that he decided to give up war.
- Ashoka became an ardent Buddhist after meeting the **Buddhist monk Upagupta and propounded his Dharma.**
- The only true conquest, he proclaimed, is the conquest of self and the conquest of men's hearts by the **dhamma (Pali) or dharma (Sanskrit)**. He issued edicts, which were carved out in the rock.
- In one of his Kalinga edicts, he tells us his horror and sorrow over the deaths which the war and conquest caused.
- In yet another edict, he makes it known that Ashoka would not tolerate any longer the death or captivity of **even hundredth or thousandth** part of the number killed and made captive in Kalinga.
- Ashoka's passion for protecting life extended to animals as well. **Hospitals were constructed for them and animal sacrifice was forbidden.**
- Ashoka sent his son Mahendra and his daughter Sanghamitra to Ceylon to spread his message of Dharma there. Ashoka died after ruling for **38 years**.

Mauryan Administration

- The Mauryan state in its early years undertook some measures that were positive for the development of society.
- The state raised taxes to finance a huge standing army and a vast bureaucracy. The Mauryans had evolved a very efficient system of governance.
- The king, as the head of the administration, was assisted by a council of ministers. There were **mahamatriyas, who functioned as secretaries to the ministers. The person in charge of revenue and expenditure was samaharta.**
- The empire was divided into four provinces and these provinces were administered by governors, who were usually princes or from the royal family.
- The district was under a **sthanika**, while gopas were in charge of five to ten villages. The urban administration was under a **nagaraka**.
- Six committees with five members each carried on their duties under him. They were to take care of the foreigners, to register the birth and death of the citizens, to look after trade and commerce, to supervise different manufactures and to collect excise duties and custom duties respectively.

- Like the city or town administration, the military department was also managed by a board of **30 members, split into six committees, with five members in each of them.**
- At the village level, there was gramani, whose responsibility was maintaining the boundaries, keeping the records of land and a census of population and livestock. In order to keep a vigil over the entire administration, including the conduct of officers, a well-knit spy system was evolved and put in place.
- Justice was administered through well-established courts in all major towns and cities. Punishment for crimes was severe.
- The state used the surplus appropriated for the development of the rural economy by founding new settlements, granting land and encouraging the people to settle as farmers.
- It also ¹⁸urbanized irrigation projects and controlled the distribution of water. There was state control of **agriculture, mining, industry and trade.**
- The state discouraged the emergence of private property in land and banned its sale. The Mauryan state gave further boost to urban development.
- It secured land trade routes to Iran and Mesopotamia, as well as to the kingdoms of northern China. **Arthashastra refers to Kasi (Benares), Vanga (Bengal), Kamarupa (Assam) and Madurai as textile centres.**
- The distribution of black polished ware of northern India as far as South India is indicative of the extent of trade during the Mauryan rule.
- Trade contributed to ¹⁸urbanization in a big way. New cities such as **Kaushambi, Bhita, Vaishali and Rajagriha had sprung up in the doab region.**

Educational Centres

Monasteries and temples served the purpose of imparting education. Nalanda was a great monastery built by the Magadha Empire. Educational centres offered Buddhist and Vedic literature, logic, grammar, medicine, philosophy and astronomy. Even the science of war was taught. Nalanda became the most renowned seat of learning in course of time. It was supported by the revenues of 100 villages. No fees were charged to the students and they were provided free board and lodging.

More to Know:

1. Chandragupta's minister **Chanakya** is credited with a book titled Arthashastra, which gives a detailed account of the Mauryan administration.
2. Our national emblem with four lions is a replica of the **Ashoka Pillar of Saranath.**
3. There are **33 edicts, including 14 major rock edicts, 7 pillar edicts and 2 Kalinga edicts**, apart from Minor Rock edicts and Minor Pillar inscriptions. They form the reliable sources to know about the Mauryan Empire, in particular the dharmic rule of Ashoka.
4. Iron plough agriculture led to the rise of empires Assyrian in **Iran and Magadha in India.**

5. Northern India extended from the Kabul Valley in the north to the Godavari in the South. It witnessed the rise of sixteen states known as Mahajanapadas or sixteen great states: **Kasi, Kosla, Anga, Magadha, Vajji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kuru, Panchala, Matsya, Surasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara and Kamboja.**

6. Jaina Kanchi :

Jainism was one of the major faiths in the Tamil region during the 7th century CE. The Pallava king, Mahendravarman was a Jain. Under the influence of Appar he got converted to Saivism. Close to the present town of Kanchi there is a place called Jaina Kanchi where you find many Jain temples. One of the important temples is the Thiruparuthikundram temple, where the ceiling is painted with the life story of Mahavira.

7. The statue of **Bahubali (known as Gomateswara, 57 feet) at Shravanabelgola** in Karnataka is the tallest Jaina statue ever carved out in India.

8. Manichaeism, resembling Iranian and Indian religions, was founded in Persia by Mani in the 3rd century CE but could not survive in the face of persecution of the Church on grounds of heresy.