

Class 12 History Notes,Part-I: CHAPTER 4
Thinkers Belief and Buildings Culture Development
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Key concepts in nutshell

- Buildings of Sanchi Kannakkheda are the most wonderful ancient buildings in the state of Bhopal.
- Buddhist, Jaina and Brahamanical text, monument and inscription are the some of the important historical sources of the age of C 600 BCE-600CE, which help in reconstructing Indian history.
- Many was provided by rulers of Bhopal, Shahjahan Begum and her successor Sultan Jahan Begum to preserved the ancient sites.
- The Rigveda is a collection of hymns, praise of many deities like Agni, Indra, Soma etc.
- The basic philosophy of Jainism already existed in north India even before the birth of vardhamana Mahavira.
- Tha Bhuddha was the most influential teachers of his times.
- Two traditions were including in modern Hinduism – Vaishnavism and Shaivism.
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A detailed study:

1. A Glimpse of Sanchi

- Nineteenth-century Europeans were very interested in the stupa at Sanchi.
- The rulers of Bhopal, Shahjehan Begum and her successor Sultan Jehan Begum, provided money for the preservation of the ancient site.
- One of the most important Buddhist centres, the discovery of Sanchi has vastly transformed our understanding of early Buddhism. Today it stands testimony to the successful restoration and preservation of a key archaeological site by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

2. Buddhist tradition: Sacrifices and Debates

- The mid-first millennium BCE is often regarded as a turning point in world history as it saw the emergence of thinkers. They tried to understand the mysteries of existence and the relationship between human beings and the cosmic order.
- This was also the time when new kingdoms and cities were developing and social and economic life was changing in a variety of ways in the Ganga valley.
- The early Vedic traditions, religious belief and practice were known from the Rigveda, compiled between c.1500 and 1000 BCE.
- Rigveda consisted of hymns, which were chanted when sacrifices were performed, where people prayed for cattle, sons, good health, long life, etc.
- At first, sacrifices were performed collectively. Later (c. 1000 BCE-500 BCE onwards) some were performed by the heads of households for the wellbeing of the domestic unit.
- More elaborate sacrifices, such as the rajasuya and ashvamedha, were performed by chiefs and kings who depended on Brahmana priests to conduct the ritual.
- Many ideas found in the Upanishads (c. sixth century BCE onwards) show that people were curious about the meaning of life, the possibility of life after death and rebirth.
- Thinkers were concerned with understanding and expressing the nature of the ultimate reality.
- On the other hand, people outside the Vedic tradition began speculating on the significance of the sacrificial tradition and questioned the existence of ultimate reality..
- Buddhist texts mention as many as 64 sects or schools of thought.
- Debates took place in the kutagarashala – literally, a hut with a pointed roof – or in groves where travelling mendicants halted.
- Mahavira and Buddha, questioned the authority of the Vedas.
- They also emphasised individual agency – suggesting that men and women could strive to attain liberation from the trials and tribulations of worldly existence.

- **This was a sharp contrast to the Brahmanical position, where an individual's existence was thought to be determined by his or her birth in a specific caste or gender.**