

MAHAJANAPADAS

From the sixth century BC, the widespread use of iron in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Western Bihar facilitated the formation of large territorial states. The new agricultural tools and implements enabled the peasants to produce far more food grains than they required for consumption. These material advantages naturally enabled the people to stick to their land and also to expand at the cost of the neighbouring areas. People began owing strong allegiance to the Janapada or the territory to which they belonged and not to the Jana or tribe to which they belonged (as was the case in the Later Vedic period).

Buddhist texts list sixteen mahajanapadas or major janapadas, as having been in existence in the sixth century BC. They extended from Gandhara and Kamboja in the north-west of what is now Pakistan, Awanti and Chedi in central India and Anga and Kalinga in Bengal and Orissa. Soon to be known as Rashtra or kingdoms, many still retained their tribal names: Kuru was still the land of the Kuru and Malla belonged to the Malla. However, allegiance was now tied to economic and social dependency. Instead of being focused on tribe and clan, loyalty was increasingly to the territory itself, to the individual or body which had sovereignty over it and to the town or city where the power resided. The 16 mahajanapadas of that era were:

Brahmank Period

By the conclusion of the Later Vedic Period (between 1000 and 500 BC) also known as the Brahmanic Period, the Aryans shifted across the plain region which separates the Yamuna from the River Ganga. It was not an easy project. The Doab region was thickly forested; the Aryans gradually burned and settled the Doab, Finally, they reached the Ganga. The Rig Veda is associated with the most primitive religion of the Aryans, while the Religion of the Later Vedic period is associated with the Brahmanas, or priestly book. The Brahmanas were composed between 1000 and 850 BC. Every aspect of the Aryan life came under the control of priestly rituals and spells in the Later Vedic Period. The Later Vedic Period is known as the Epic Age. Though the great epics of the Indian culture the Mahabharata and the Ramayana were composed between 500 and 200 BC, they were originally formulated and told in the Later Vedic Period. These epics deal with heroes' from this period. These also demonstrate how Aryan cultural values were being transformed by mixing with the Indus cultures.

(i) Magadha Kingdom (South Bihar): The initial capital of the Magadha was Rajagriha and later Patuliputra was made its capital. It is believed that Brihadrata was the founder of the Magadha Kingdom.

(ii) Anga and Vanga Kingdoms (East Bihar): The capital of the kingdom was Champa which was a prosperous and thriving business centre. Later, the kingdoms were annexed by Bindusara and made u part of Magadha.

- (iii) Malta Kingdom (Gorakhpur region): Kushinugar was the capital of the kingdom. It was also a seat of many other smaller kingdoms. Buddhism was the main religion followed there. Later, the kingdom was merged into the mighty kingdom of Magadha.
- (iv) Chedi Kingdom (Yamuna and Narmada belt): The capital of the kingdom was Tisvathirati. One of the families from this kingdom later merged into the Kalinga Kingdom.
- (v) Vatsa Kingdom (Allahabad): The town of Kausumbi was the capital of this kingdom. Udayan was the most famous ruler of this kingdom.
- (vi) Kashi Kingdom (Banaras): The capital of this kingdom was Varanasi. Kashi fought several battles against the Kosala Kingdom. Finally, Kashi was merged with the Kosala Kingdom. Dhruatarashtra was a famous ruler who once ruled over the kingdoms of Kashi and Ang'a.
- (vii) Kosala Kingdom (Ayodhya): Its capital was Sravasti which is identified with Sahet Mahet However. Ayodhya was a significant town of Kosala. Ajatshatru, the ruler of Magadha merged Kosala with Magadha. Kosala was also a part of the tribal republican territory of Sakyas of Kapilvastu.
- (viii) Vajji Kingdom (North Bihar) Its capital was Vajji which was the seat of a united republic of eight smaller kingdoms including Lichhavis, Janatriks and Videhas. The Lichhavis had their capital at Vaishali which was a prosperous kingdom. Later, it was merged with the Magadha Kingdom. Mithula was the kingdom of the Videhas Kingdom. Its most famous ruler was King Janaka. Magadha merged this kingdom as well with their kingdom.
- (ix) Karu (Thaneswar, Meerut and present day Delhi): Indraprastha was the capital of the Kurus. During the Vedic period, it was an important kingdom. It had friendly relations with the kingdoms of the Bhoja and Panchala.
- (x) Panchala Kingdom (Uttar Pradesh): It had its capital at Kampila. Initially it was a monarchy but later it became an autonomous republic. Kanauj was the most important town in this kingdom,
- (xi) Matsya Kingdom (Jaipur): The capital of this kingdom was at Viratanagar. The Matsyas attained independence from the Chedi Kingdom under the leadership of Virat Raja.
- (xii) Suransena Kingdom (Mathura): The kingdom had its capital at Mathura. King Avantiputra was its most famous ruler.
- (xiii) Assaka Kingdom (Godavari): It had its capital at Potali. King Brahamaditta was its most famous ruler.
- (xiv) Gandharva Kingdom (Peshawar and Rawalpindi): The capital of the kingdom was at Taxila, which was an important trade and education centre during the later Vedic age. The Magadha ruler Bindusara defeated its ruler King Pukkusati.
- (xv) Kamboj Kingdom (North-east Kashmir): Rajapure was the capital of his kingdom. The most prominent centre of trade and commerce in the kingdom was Hajara.
- (xvi) Awanti Kingdom (Malwa): Awanti had two parts- north and south. Ujjain was the capital of the northern part, while the southern part had its capital at Mahismati. Awanti was the most vulnerable of all Mahajanapadas. It was ruled by many kingdoms and was merged with the Magadha Kingdom.

University of Taxila

It is said to be the first organised educational epicentre of ancient India. It is also the oldest university and it is not known who actually founded this university. However, it was funded almost by all the great kings and rulers of that time. Many great kings and passed their early years in this university. It was a centre of learning for logic, religion, medicine, mathematics, astrology, the Vedas, warfare and primitive science. Taxila, which was the earlier

capital of the Gandharva Kingdom, allowed students from all parts of India to be enrolled and education was free for all. Only Chandalas were not allowed to study in this university, Scholars like Nagarjuna, Panlmi, Chanokya, Prasanajlt, Jeevka (son of Bimbsara) all came to this place to study before they become important personalities in Indian History Even foreign rulers accepted its importance and many of them took scholars from this university to their nations. Alexander took some scholars from Taxila to Greece, In 500 BC, the Hun ruler, **Toramana**, attacked and demolished the university campus. During that time, most of the records which were burnt or dastioyed could have thrown more light on the management of this university and the ways it shaped the social ami political stature of ancient India

Lokayata

Charvaka's Darshan is a very famous Indian philosophy. It was termed as lokayata because it was based on the Ideas which were derived from the common people. Charvaka did not believe in the existence of any supernatural divine agency. He propagated that the Brahmanasos created rituals for obtaining gifts.



Advance in Knowledge

In the later period, samhitas referred to the list of subjects for study and showed a wide range of knowledge embracing, not only Vedas, Itihaasa, Puranas and grammar, but also astronomy, military science, dilectics and knowledge of portents. There were several competent 'Kshotriya' teachers as also women teachers.

★ Political Unrest

None of the mahajanapadas was great kingdoms and they continuously fought among themselves. The smaller and weaker kingdoms were defeated by the relatively stronger kingdoms. The stronger kingdoms had a general tendency towards civil wars, which disintegrated them into smaller parts that others could easily capture. This state of political disorder continued till the emergence of the Mauryan Empire in the early fourth century BC. Another important point was the continuous emergence of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh regions as trade and commerce centres and the lack of prominence of the Punjab region, which was the hub of activity during the Rig Vedic period.

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