

Mahajanapada Period

These notes are your ultimate revision weapon to revise Mahajanapadas history. We've distilled years of previous exam questions (PYQs) into one powerful, concise resource. Everything you need to know, nothing you don't.

- **PYQs, Decoded:** All key concepts from past exams, organized and simplified.
- **Revise in Record Time:** Short, precise, and designed for last-minute review.
- **Focus on What Matters:** Master high-probability topics and boost your confidence.
- **Free PDF** to download.

Ancient Indian Kingdoms and Dynasties

1. The Mahajanapadas (The 16 Great Kingdoms)

- **General Facts:**
 - Existed in the 6th century BCE.
 - There were 16 major kingdoms (Mahajanapadas).
 - 8 were located in the region of present-day Uttar Pradesh: Kuru, Panchala, Kosala, Kashi, Vatsa, Malla, Chedi, and Shurasena.
- **Sources:**
 - Listed in the Buddhist text **Anguttara Nikaya** and the Jain text **Bhagwati Sutra**.
 - The grammarian **Panini** also listed 22 Janapadas in his work **Ashtadhyayi**.
- **Specific Kingdoms and Capitals:**
 - **Anga:** Capital was **Champa** (modern Munger & Bhagalpur, Bihar). Later annexed by Magadha.

- **Magadha:** Initial capital was **Rajgriha (Girivraja)**. Later moved to Pataliputra.
- **Kosala:** Capital was **Shravasti** (which had a crescentic town configuration). Also associated with Saket.
- **Vatsa:** Capital was **Kaushambi**.
- **Avanti:** Capital was **Ujjain** (ancient name: **Avantika**).
- **Chedi:** Capital was **Suktimati (Sotthivati)**. Located in the Bundelkhand region.
- **Surasena:** Capital was **Mathura**.
- **Matsya:** Located in present-day **Rajasthan** (around Jaipur). Capital was **Viratnagar**.
- **Panchala:** Divided into two parts.
 - **North Panchala:** Capital was **Ahichhatra**.
 - **South Panchala:** Capital was **Kampilya**.
- **Kuru:** Capitals were **Indraprastha** and **Hastinapur**.
- **Assaka (Ashmaka):** Capital was **Potana/Potali** (modern Paithan). Located between the Godavari and Narmada rivers.

Republics (Gana-Sanghas):

- **Lichchhavis** established a republic at **Vaishali** (perhaps the first republic in the world).
- **Chetak** was the leader of the Lichchhavi clan (part of the Vajji confederacy).
- Other ancient republics included the **Shakyas** (of Kapilavastu) and the **Yaudheyas**.

2. The Magadha Empire

- **Dynasties and Chronological Order:**
 - **Haryanka Dynasty** (544 – 412 BCE)
 - **Shishunaga Dynasty** (413 BCE to 343 BCE)
 - **Nanda Dynasty** (344 – 321 BCE)
 - **Mauurya Dynasty** (321 – 184 BCE)
 - **Shunga Dynasty** (184 – 75 BCE)
- **Key Rulers and Events:**
 - **Haryanka Dynasty:**

- **Bimbisara:** Key founder who started Magadha's rise. Patronized the physician **Jivaka**.
- Married **Chelana**, daughter of Lichchhavi leader Chetak.
- **Ajatashatru:** Son of Bimbisara, killed his father to take the throne.
- **Udayin (Udayan/Udayabhadra):** Son of Ajatashatru, who killed him. Founded the city of **Pataliputra** and moved the capital from Rajgriha to there.
- **Shishunaga Dynasty:**
 - **Sishunaga:** Extended Magadha's power by defeating Avanti and conquering the **Malwa** region.
- **Nanda Dynasty:**
 - **Founder: Mahapadma Nanda** (also known as Ugrasena).
 - **Titles:** Called **Sarakshatrantaka** (destroyer of all Kshatriyas) and **Aparo Parashurama** (the second Parashurama) in the Puranas.
 - Conquered Kalinga and dug a **canal** there, as recorded in the Hathigumpha Inscription, with King Kharavela later extending it to his capital, Kalinganagari.
 - **Last Ruler: Dhanananda.**
 - **Downfall:** Ended due to public unhappiness over high taxes. Chandragupta Maurya and Chanakya overthrew Dhanananda.

3. Other Notable Rulers and Historical Figures

- **Pradyota Dynasty (Avanti):**
 - **Pradyot (Chand-pradyota):** Ruler of Avanti. A contemporary of Gautama Buddha and Bimbisara. Was treated by physician Jivaka.
- **Kosala:**
 - **Prasenjit** was a ruler of Kosala.
- **Vatsa:**
 - **Udayana** was a ruler of the Vatsa Mahajanapada.

- **Chedi Dynasty (Kalinga):**
 - **Kharavela:** A major ruler. His Hathigumpha inscription records:
 - The first evidence of **canal construction** in Kalinga.
 - Donations of villages to Jain monks.
 - Victories over southern states like the Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas.
- **Later Period:**
 - **Mahendra** was the ruler of Kosala during Samudragupta's time (as per the Prayag Prashasti).
- **Scholars:**
 - **Panini:** A famous Sanskrit grammarian born in **Pushkalavati, Gandhara**. His most important work is the **Ashtadhyayi**, in which he mentions the Janapadas of **Magadha, Ashmak, and Kamboj**.
- **Archaeologists:**
 - **Alexander Cunningham:** A British archaeologist who identified the ancient city of **Shravasti** (near modern Gonda, UP) in **1861**.

4. Important Cities and Geography

- **Pataliputra:**
 - Founded by **Udayin** of the Haryanka dynasty.
 - Established as a fort at the confluence of the Son and Ganga rivers.
 - Became the capital of major empires like the Mauryan, Nanda, and Shishunaga dynasties.
 - **Chandragupta Maurya** was the first emperor to make it the capital of a large empire.
- **Ujjain:**
 - The ancient name was **Avantika**.
 - Associated with the legend of **Udayan and Vasavadatta**.
- **Other Ancient Cities:**
 - **Viratnagar (Bairat)** and **Madhyamika (Nagari)** are ancient cities mentioned in both the Mahabharata and Patanjali's Mahabhashya.

- **Historical Geography of Uttar Pradesh:**
 - **Kalpi:** An ancient town on the bank of the **Yamuna River** (Jalaun district). Known as Kalpriya in ancient times, founded by King Vasudeva in the 4th century BC.
 - **Kaushambi:** The capital of the Vatsa Mahajanapada.
 - **Ahichhatra:** The capital of the Panchala Mahajanapada.
 - **Medieval Name Changes:**
 - **Koil** is the old name for **Aligarh**.
 - **Mahotsav Nagar** is the old name for **Mahoba** (meaning 'city of great festivals').
 - **Mahodaya Shree** is the old name for **Kannauj** (once the capital of Harsha's empire).
 - **Jejakabhukti** is the old name for the **Bundelkhand** region.

5. Religion, Philosophy, and Society

- **6th Century BCE Context:**
 - A period of significant **religious upheaval** and intellectual questioning across the world (e.g., Confucius in China, Zarathustra in Iran, Pythagoras in Greece).
 - In India, this was due to the **complexity of Vedic religion**, which had become overly focused on rituals and sacrifices, increasing the power and cost of priestly classes.
 - This environment led to the emergence of new heterodox faiths like **Buddhism and Jainism**.
- **Other Dynasties (Post-Mauryan):**
 - The **Karnata Dynasty's** last king was **Harisimha Dev (Mithila)**, who was a patron of art and literature and created the Panji system (a method for recording and preserving the genealogy of certain castes).

6. Ancient Indian Coins

- **Earliest Indian Coins:**
 - The oldest extant coins of India were made of **silver**.

- They are known as **Punch-marked** or **Aahat coins**.

Know More about the Mahajanapadas :

- [Mahajanpada Period \(600-325 BC\) One Liner Questions & Answers](#)
- [Mahajanpada Period \(600-325 BC\)– Old Year Questions and Answers](#)

