

TERRITORIAL STATES AND THE FIRST MAGADHAN EMPIRE

JANAPADAS:

The early Aryans settled into the Ganga plains in the form of small political organizations called as Jana. They formed small states and these states were known as Janapadas.

MAHAJANAPADA:

The Janapadas conquered the neighbouring territories and grew in size. Several Janapadas united to form a Mahajanapada. There were sixteen Mahajanapadas in the early 6th century BC. These were: (1) Kashi (2) Anga (3) Kosala (4) Magadha (5) Vajji (6) Malla (7) Chedi (8) Vatsa (9) Kuru (10) Panchala (11) Matsya (12) Surasena (13) Asaka (14) Avanti (15) Gandhara (16) Kambhoja

IMPORTANCE OF MAHAJANAPADAS:

- (i) The study of Mahajanapadas shows that some Republics were also prevalent and there was a system of election.
- (ii) It also shows that even in Monarchies, the rulers were not dictators.
- (iii) Mahajanapadas gave rise to bigger empires by which Indian was being politically united.

Q. Describe the Political conditions of India in the 6th century B.C.

The period from 600 B.C to 400 B.C was very important in the history of India. Many kingdoms and Republics came up in the Gangetic plains during this age. The Buddhist and Jain literature have given us historical facts about this period. Some information has also been gained from the excavations carried out at certain sites.

Many territorial states were found in India in the 6th century. They were called Mahajanapadas. Most of them were situated in the north of the Vindhyas and extended from north-west frontier to Bihar. India was divided into 16 Mahajanapadas. Most of these states were in conflict with one another. During the life time of Buddha, the Mahajanapadas were reduced to four states only. These were: Vatsa, Avanti, Kosala and Magadha.

These four kingdoms gradually absorbed the neighbouring small and weak kingdoms. After sometime, clashes arose among them also and ultimately in the 4th century B.C, the Magadha State became all powerful and under the Mauryas all these four states were welded together into one giving rise to them Mauryan Empire.

So, the political history of India in the 6th century B.C. was a history of struggles between the Mahajanapadas for supremacy.

RISE OF MAGADHA

The area of Magadha extended upto Patna and Gaya in Bihar. It was strong and powerful in comparison to other kingdoms in this period. This was due to the following reasons.

- (1) Magadha was located in Ganga valley, where the soil was fertile to produce rich harvests.
- (2) The dense forests yielded Timber which was used for great constructions.
- (3) Magadha had vast deposits of iron-ore which made it possible for the rulers to make implements and tools for industries and agriculture.

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- (4) Magadha saw the rise of many great kings, who extended its boundaries by fair and foul means.
- (5) The trade in North-Eastern India was developed. The rulers of Magadha imposed taxes on the users of trade – routes and thus collected large amounts to maintain large armies.

MAGADHA

The area of Magadha was extended upto Patna and Gaya in Bihar. It emerged to be the most powerful empire in 6th century B.C. All the kings ruling over this territory extended the empire in their own ways and made it more powerful.

Magadha under Haryanka dynasty:

Bhimbisara:

He was the first great ruler of Magadha of the Haryanka dynasty. He became the king of Magadha in about 542 B.C. He expanded his kingdom through conquests, matrimonial alliances and diplomatic relations. He conquered Anga lying to the south –east of Magadha. He increased his power and position by entering into matrimonial alliances with Kosala, Vaishali and Madra. He maintained his friendly relations with rulers of Avanti and Gandhara. He made Rajgriha his capital. His Kingdom consisted of 10,000 villages.

Ajatshatru:

He was Bindu Sara's son and ruled over Magadha from 493 to 461 BC. It is said that he killed his father and sat on the throne. He too followed a policy of conquests and expansion and annexed Kattu, Vaishali and many other small states. Under Ajatshatru, Magadha became the most powerful kingdom of the north.

Udayan:

He succeeded Ajatshatru and ruled from 460 B.C. to 444 B.C. He extended his kingdom from the Himalayas in the north to the hills of Chota Nagpur in the South.

Magadha under the Sisunaga Dynasty: Haryanka dynasty was followed by the dynasty of Sisunagas. Their greatest achievement was the destruction of the power of Awanti, which became a part of the Magadhan Empire and continued to be so till the end of the Mauryan rule.

Magadha under the Nandas: The Nandas ruled from 346 to 321 B.C. They proved to be the most powerful and rich rulers of Magadha. They maintained a huge army. Mahapadma Nanda was the greatest ruler of the dynasty. He increased the power of Magadhas by acquiring Kalinga.

