

HISTORY: CLASS-6: SUMMARY

CHAPTER 4 - Rise of The Kingdom of Magadha

Points of Discussion

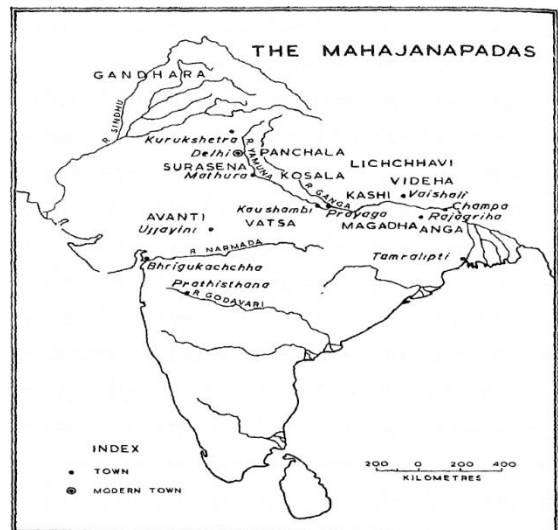
- Magadha Kingdom (Position of King)
- Life of the people (taxes, village, town, trade, society)
- Jainism and Buddhism

A. Kingdoms and republics-

- The Aryan tribes had settled down in different tracts, Panchala (Bareilly district), Surasena (Mathura), Kosala (Awadh), Kashi, Videha, Magadha and so on.
- They no longer lived as simple tribes in a group of villages. They formed themselves into **kingdoms and republics**.
- A **REPUBLIC** is that form of government in which power is held by the people or a group of elected persons or an elected chief. There is **no hereditary king**.
- The **Shakyas and the Lichchhavis**, living in today's North Bihar, formed important **republics**.
- Of the **kingdoms**, the most powerful were **Kosala, Magadha, and Vatsa in the Ganga valley and Avanti with its centre at Ujjayini**.
- These kingdoms were constantly at war to extend their territory or to **control the rivers**.
- In the end, it **was Magadha** which became the most powerful among them.
- **Mahavira and Buddha**, both preached in Magadha and have mentioned the kings of Magadha and the life of the people in their teachings.

1. The Kingdom of Magadha-

- The kingdom of Magadha had large deposits of **iron ore** (in the present Chota Nagpur region).
- This was a valuable metal at the time for both weapons and implements.
- The trade and transport in the **Ganga plain** was carried on by boats on the river. Soon, Magadha controlled the river.
- **Bimbisara-**
- He conquered the kingdom of **Anga** which had river-port of **Champa**. He began the trade of spices and precious stones from all over India.
- His capital was at **Rajagriha** near Patna.
- **Ajatashatru –**
- He attacked Kosala and Vrijjis, in the region of northern Bihar. Ajatashatru was victorious.
- **Magadha was the most powerful kingdom in northern India.**



2. The Position of the King-

- He was the protector of **society and of dharma** (the sacred law).
- In the republics, a chief could be elected from among the people.
- In the kingdom, the brahmins said that the king was not like an ordinary man but that **he was like a god**.
- He was helped by the **purohita, the amatyas or ministers**, and various other officers.
- He received a share of the **produce from the cultivators** for the expenses of the kingdom.
- This was used for the army, for payment of salaries, building roads, wells and canals, and for the support of brahmins.

B. LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

3. Importance of Taxes

- All the producers of goods paid a tax to the king.
- The peasants gave a share **of one-sixth of their produce**.
- King appointed **tax-collectors** who measured the fields, made a record of the amount of grains, One-sixth of this was calculated. After the harvest, they collected the amount.
- The metalworkers made implements, the carpenter made chariots and the cloth weavers gave a certain amount of clothes, **free for the king**.
- In the beginning, taxes were **collected in kind (in the form of goods)** produced by the people and they were distributed as salary to the officers.

4. The Village

- More villages and towns because of the growing population and were connected with one another by **roads and pathways, or by boats along the rivers**.
- Each village had a **headman** who worked for its people and was served as a link between the king and the peasants.
- King owned some villages and lands.
- Labourers were employed to cultivate these lands and **paid wages** for their work.

5. The Town

- Some find mention in the literary sources- These were Ujjayini (in Malwa), Pratisthana (in the northern Deccan), Briguakachchha (Broach in Gujarat), Tamralipti (in the Ganga delta), Shravasti (in Uttar Pradesh), Champa (in Bihar), Rajagriha (in Bihar), Ayodhya (in Uttar Pradesh) and Kaushambi (near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh).
- Some of these towns have been excavated.
- They were built of **wood and bricks** and therefore were more permanent than the villages.
- The king's palace was usually built of **stone and wood** and was finely decorated.
- Towns often grew up around **craft centres, trading centres and the capital of kingdoms**.
- Merchants made huge profits. There was a **large trade** or exchange of goods in the country.

6. Trade –

- Trade was made easier by the new method of exchange and value — **money**.
- Before coins, goods were **bartered or exchanged**.
- The coins of this period were crude pieces of **silver and copper with a design punched on them**.

7. Society-

- The **artisans and merchants** organised themselves into groups known as **shrenis or guilds**.
- Since the artisans lived and worked together, they were regarded as a **caste (jati)**.
- The profession was followed hereditarily, so that, the caste became hereditary.
- Separate laws were made for each of these castes, which were recorded by the brahmans.
- People of one caste could not eat with another caste, nor could marry outside their caste.
- The castes were grouped under four classes — **brahman, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra**.
- Outside the four classes were the **lowly castes**, which were looked down upon.
- The rules of life were divided into **four stages or ashramas**.
- **Brahmacharin**- devoted to education; **grihastha**- being a householder and raising a family; **vanaprastha**- live in the forests for meditation; **sannyasin**- become an ascetic and a preacher.

C. Buddhism and Jainism-

1. Religion-

- The Vedic religion had rites and sacrifices.
- Dissatisfied people felt that instead of making a show of worship, it was better to **lead truthful, moral and dedicated lives**.
- Thus, rose **Jainism and Buddhism**. **Mahavira followed Jainism and Gautama Buddha preached Buddhism**.
- They belonged to the republican tribes of the **Lichchhavis and the Shakyas**.
- They were brought up as the sons of chiefs but were unhappy with people's suffering and they decided to relieve them by finding answers.

2. Jainism-

- Mahavira was born in the sixth century B.C. in the city of Vaishali.
- He supported the teachings of 24 earlier religious teachers called the **Tirthankaras** and added his own thoughts to theirs.
- There were less Vedic ceremonies and calling upon the gods for help.
- **Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Action, the Three Jewels**, were followed, this would lead them to a **virtuous life**.
- They were forbidden from killing any living beings - whether a man, animal or an insect. This was **ahimsa**.
- If a man led a good life, his **soul would be made free and he would not be born again in the world**.
- The religion was preached in a **language spoken by the common people** and not in Sanskrit, because only the educated upper castes used Sanskrit.



Mahavira

Buddhism-

- He was born in **the Lumbini grove** near the city of **Kapilavastu (on the borders of Nepal and eastern Uttar Pradesh)**.
- He too left his home and wandered as an ascetic for many years.
- Got **enlightenment** and taught that the **world is full of suffering** and this is due to the **desire for worldly things**.
- A man should free himself from the desire by following the **Eightfold Path**— eight kinds of action and thought which would lead to virtuous living
- Buddhism also **forbade the killing of animals**.
- The purpose of leading a good life was to purify the mind and **attain nirvana**; then, there would be **no more rebirth**.
- The Buddha too **did not favour the Vedic sacrifices and rituals**
- He **objected to the division of society into castes** because those who belonged to the lower castes (shudras) were **ill-treated by the upper castes**.
- **Monasteries** were built, which were places where monks lived and spent their lives **praying and preaching Buddhism**.
- The monasteries (viharas) were also used **as schools**.
- **Craftsmen, traders, peasants and untouchables** followed these religions because these were easy to practice.
- In the **towns**, Buddhism and Jainism were very popular.
- The monks travelled from place to place preaching the new ideas and soon Buddhism had spread to many parts of India.
- The Buddhist monasteries became **important centres of education**.
- Wealthy merchants donated money, and beautiful chaityas, viharas and stupas were built.
- Buddhist monks went to other parts of Asia — Central Asia, China, Tibet and south-east Asia
- The idea of **non-violence or ahimsa** was made popular by the Buddhists and the Jains.
- Later, the **Emperor Ashoka** became a Buddhist.



Gautama Buddha

Conclusion

In this topic, you learned about the Kingdom of Magadha, position of the king, tax structure, important towns, trade activities, society, Buddhism and Jainism.