

Mahajanapadas

Mahajanapadas are kingdoms that grew to fame from the 6th century BC onwards. Mahajanapadas represent the tribes that jointly formed various groups and subsequently gave rise to permanent settlements called states or Janapadas'.

- In Vedic India, Janapadas were the primary kingdoms.
- During that period, Aryans were the most powerful tribes, referred to as Janas'.
- By the 6th century BCE, there were 22 distinct Janapads.
- The increasing Socioeconomic achievements, political & religious advances, and increased use of iron instruments led to the establishment of Mahajanapadas from small kingdoms known as Janapadas.
- After Harappan Civilisation, it is considered the 2nd urbanization era.

List of the 16 Mahajanapadas with Capital

The 16 Mahajanapadas had monarchies and republics. Following is a list of these kingdoms, including the 16 Mahajanapadas with Capitals and their modern-day location. You can find these locations on the 16 Mahajanapadas Map.

16 Mahajanapadas Name	16 Mahajanapadas Capital	Current day location	Important facts
Anga	Champa	Munger and Bhagalpur	Situated in present-day Bihar and West Bengal, its capital Champa was situated at the confluence of the Ganga and the Champa rivers.

Magadha	Girivraja/ Rajagriha	Gaya and Patna	Finding mention in the Atharva Veda, Magadha became a centre of Jainism. The first Buddhist council was held in its capital, Rajagriha.
Kasi/Kashi	Kasi	Banaras	Located in Varanasi, this city got its name from the rivers Varuna and Asi. The Mahajanapadas was captured by Kosala.

Vatsa	Kausambi	Allahabad	Also known as Vamsa, these Mahajanapadas followed the monarchical form of governance. It was the center for economic activities where trade and business prospered in the 6th century.
Kosala	Shravasti (northern) Kushavati (southern)	Eastern Uttar Pradesh	Located in modern-day Awadh, the area includes an important city of Ramayana-Ayodhya. It was also the birthplace of Gautam Buddha.

Shurasena	Mathura	Western Uttar Pradesh	A major center of Krishna worship at the time of Megasthenes. There was a dominance of Buddha followers here too.
Panchala	Ahichchatra and Kampilya	Western Uttar Pradesh	These Mahajanapadas incorporate the famous city of Kannauj. The kingdom of Panchala followed the monarchical form of governance, which later shifted to the republic form.

Kuru	Indraprastha	Meerut and Southeastern Haryana	Situated in the area around Kurukshetra, the holy epic of Mahabharata tells the story of a conflict between two branches of the reigning Kuru clan.
Matsya	Viratanagara	Jaipur	Situated to the west of Panchalas and south of the Kurus, the capital of Matsya was named Viratanagara after its founder Virata.

Chedi	Sothivati	Bundelkhand region	In Rigveda, Shishupala was the king of Chedi. Lord Krishna killed Shishupala during the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhishtira.
Avanti	Ujjaini or Mahismati	Malwa and Madhya Pradesh	Located around present-day Malwa and Madhya Pradesh, Avanti was significant in the rise of Buddhism.

Gandhara	Taxila	Rawalpindi	Cited in the Atharva Veda, the people of Gandhara were highly trained in the art of war. It was an important place for international commercial activities.
Kamboja	Poonch	Rajouri and Hajra (Kashmir), NWFP (Pakistan)	As per seven literary sources, Kamboja was a republic. Situated in present-day Kashmir and Hindukush, Kamboja had an extraordinary horses breed.

Asmaka/Asaka	Potali/Podana	Banks of Godavari	Situated on the banks of River Godavari, Asmaka was the only Mahajanapadas located to the south of the Vindhya range in Dakshinapatha.
Vajji	Vaishali	Bihar	These Mahajanapadas included eight clans, the most powerful being the Lichchhavis, Jnatrikas, and Videhans. The great Mahavira belonged to the Jnatrikas clan.

Malla	Kusinara	Deoria and Uttar Pradesh	<p>A republic Mahajanapadas, Malla finds a reference in Jain and Buddhist texts and the Mahabharata.</p> <p>Its capitals of Kusinara and Pava are significant in the history of Buddhism, as the Buddha took his last meal at Pava and went to Mahaparinirvana at Kusinara.</p>
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The abovementioned list of 16 Mahajanapadas arose before the rise of Buddhism in India. Smaller, weak kingdoms and republics were eliminated and replaced by stronger rulers over time. The only 4 powerful kingdoms to remain in the 6th century were Magadha, Avanti, Kosala, and Vatsa.

Types of Government in Mahajanapadas

In Mahajanapadas, there were two types of Government- Monarchy and Republic. The major differences between the Monarchy and Republic are given below.

Features	Monarchy	Gana-Sangha (Republic)
Government	Centralized and Inheritable	Decentralized and was not hereditary
Location	Most are founded in the Himalayas foothills.	Most of them are situated in the Great alluvial grasslands of the Ganga river and its tributaries.
Decision-making	Via conversation, discussion, and voting in the community called Santhagara.	Via King, who the ministers instructed, called as Mantri-Parishad.
Views	Passive toward unorthodox ideas.	The Brahmanical system did not accept other theories.

Political System of the 16 Mahajanapadas

Most states were monarchies, but few were republics known as Ganas or Sanghas. These Ganasanghas were oligarchies, which means the king was elected and ruled with the aid of a council.

- Most states had forts constructed around them for security from other kings.
- The new rulers or Rajas kept regular troops and collected taxes from the people.
- The originators of Jainism and Buddhism arrived from republican states.
- Each of the 16 Mahajanapada had a capital city.
- An important Mahajanapada with a Sangha form of government was Vajji.
- Usually, the crop tax was 1/6th of the produce, known as Bhaga or share.
- Taxes were even imposed on artisans, herders, and hunters.