

One-Liner Shots: (16 Mahajanpadas)



- The 6th century BC was remarked by the emergence of the territories of 16 states in the Indian subcontinent.
- Mahajanapadas were the 16 big kingdoms that existed in ancient India.
- The 'Janapadas' denotes the places with various types of human settlements.
- These settlements assumed geographical titles for the first time in Indian History, as mentioned in Vedic texts and various Jain as well as Buddhist sources.
- These groups were called Janapadas, and these turned into the hubs for the spread of standardized beliefs and traditions towards the end of the Vedic ages.
- The literal meaning of "*janapada*" is the '**place or land where the Jana set foot to settle down**'.
- According to **Panini's Astadhyayi**, the people were loyal to the Janapada (a territorial unit) to which they belonged rather than to the *Jana* or the tribe.
- As per the Buddhist Canonical scripture, **Angutara Nikaya**, there were **16** great kingdoms or **Mahajanapadas** at the beginning of the 6th century BCE in India.

The Mahajanapadas

- Mahajanapadas were established during the 6th century BC onward.
- The most prominent feature of Mahajanapadas is the emergence of large states.

- With the rise of Mahajanapadas, the political history of North India became much more prominent. 16 Mahajanapadas consisted of both republics or '*Gana rajyas*' and monarchies.
- The Mahajanapadas signify the tribes that came together to form different groups and later gave rise to a large permanent area of settlements called 'states' or 'Janapadas.'

The Mahajanapadas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monarchs: Gandhar, Koshal, Magadh, Kashi, Vatsa, Kamboj, Chedi, Panchal, Kuru, Avanti, Anga, Matsya, Surasena ● Republics: Asmaka, Malla, Vriji (Vijjis)

Factors behind the rise of Mahajanapadas

- It was initiated when the tribes of the later Vedic era decided to own territorial communities.
- It eventually gave birth to larger and permanent settlements.
- With the use of new equipment as well as weapons, the peasants were able to clear the forests to expand their agricultural production.
- The rise of agriculture also resulted in the growth of population and social prosperity.
- The emergence of various urban centres ensured regular trade
- The rise of several categories of people, such as merchants, settlers, weapon makers, chariot makers, etc., who were involved in a series of occupations.

Political Structure of the Mahajanapadas

- ★ Most of the states were monarchies, but some were republics known as Ganas or Sanghas. Asmaka, Malla, and Vriji were such republic states.
- ★ These Ganasanghas were oligarchies, which means the king was elected, and he ruled with the help of a council. Vajji was an important Mahajanapada with a Sangha form of this government.
- ★ The founders of Jainism and Buddhism also emerged from republican states.

16 Mahajanapadas At A Glance

NAME	CAPITAL	LOCATION	FACTS & ASPECTS
Anga	Champa	Confluence of Ganga and Champa River	Major commercial center and port to Suvarnabhumi (South East Asia)

Magadh	Rajgriha or Girivraja	Modern Patna and Gaya	It was ruled by the Haryanka dynasty first. Later, it emerged as the greatest of all Mahajanapadas.
Kashi	Varanasi	Modern Benaras	Later, infused with Kosala
Kosala	Shravasti (northern capital) Kushavati (southern capital)	Eastern Uttar Pradesh	Kosala's king, 'Prasenjit' was Buddha's contemporary. Lumbini of Kapilavastu was Buddha's birthplace
Vatsa	Kaushambi	Confluence of Ganga and Yamuna at Prayagraj (Allahabad)	King was Udayana (Hero of 3 Sanskrit dramas- Swapnavasavadatta, Ratnabali and Priyadarshika)
Kuru	Indraprastha	Western UP	The epic, Mahabharata, depicts the conflicts between the branches of Kurus.
Panchal	Ahichhatra (northern capital) Kampilya (southern capital)	Modern Bareilly and Farukhabad in UP	The popular city of Kannauj was located in Panchal
Matsya	Viratanagar	Modern Bairat	The founder king was Virata
Vriji (Vijji)	Vaishali	Modern Basarh in northern Bihar	King Chetaka was the brother of Trishala (mahavira's mother) and the father of Chellana (Bimbisara's wife). Ajatasatru later defeated Vriji.
Malla	Kushinara and Pava	Western India	Buddha took his last meal in Pava, and Mahaparinirvana happened in Kushinara.
Chedi	Shuktimati	Eastern part of Central India	The king was Shishupala. According to Purana, he was

			killed by Vasudeva Krishna.
Saurasena	Mathura	On the banks of Yamuna	King Avantipura was Lord Buddha's disciple
Avanti	Ujjain (north capital) Mahishmati (southern capital)	Central Malwa	The capitals were divided by Vindhya.
Gandhar	Taxila	Modern Peshawar and Rawalpindi,	Major trade and learning centre
Kamboj	Pooncha	North-West Pakistan	Famous for excellent horse breeds and horsemen
Asmaka	Potali	A few parts of Modern Telangana	Only Mahajanapada located in Dakshinapatha or the south of the Vindhya range

The Most Prominent Mahajanapada - Magadha

Avanti, Kosala, Magadha, and Vatsa faced fierce competition for supremacy over the entire Aryavarta. Over the years (around 600-400 BC), Magadha gained sovereignty and emerged as the most powerful Mahajanapada. The success of Magadha depended on the following factors:

- ❖ Adventurous and strategic geographical location.
- ❖ Adequate rainfall and fertile land.
- ❖ Agricultural surplus and standing army.
- ❖ Use of elephants on a huge scale in the army.
- ❖ Trade and tolls, metal money, and growth of towns.
- ❖ Ambitious rulers such as Bimbisara, Ajatshatru, Mahapadmananda, and many others.
- ❖ The unorthodox character of Maghan society