

# Mahajanapadas

## Key Historical Overview

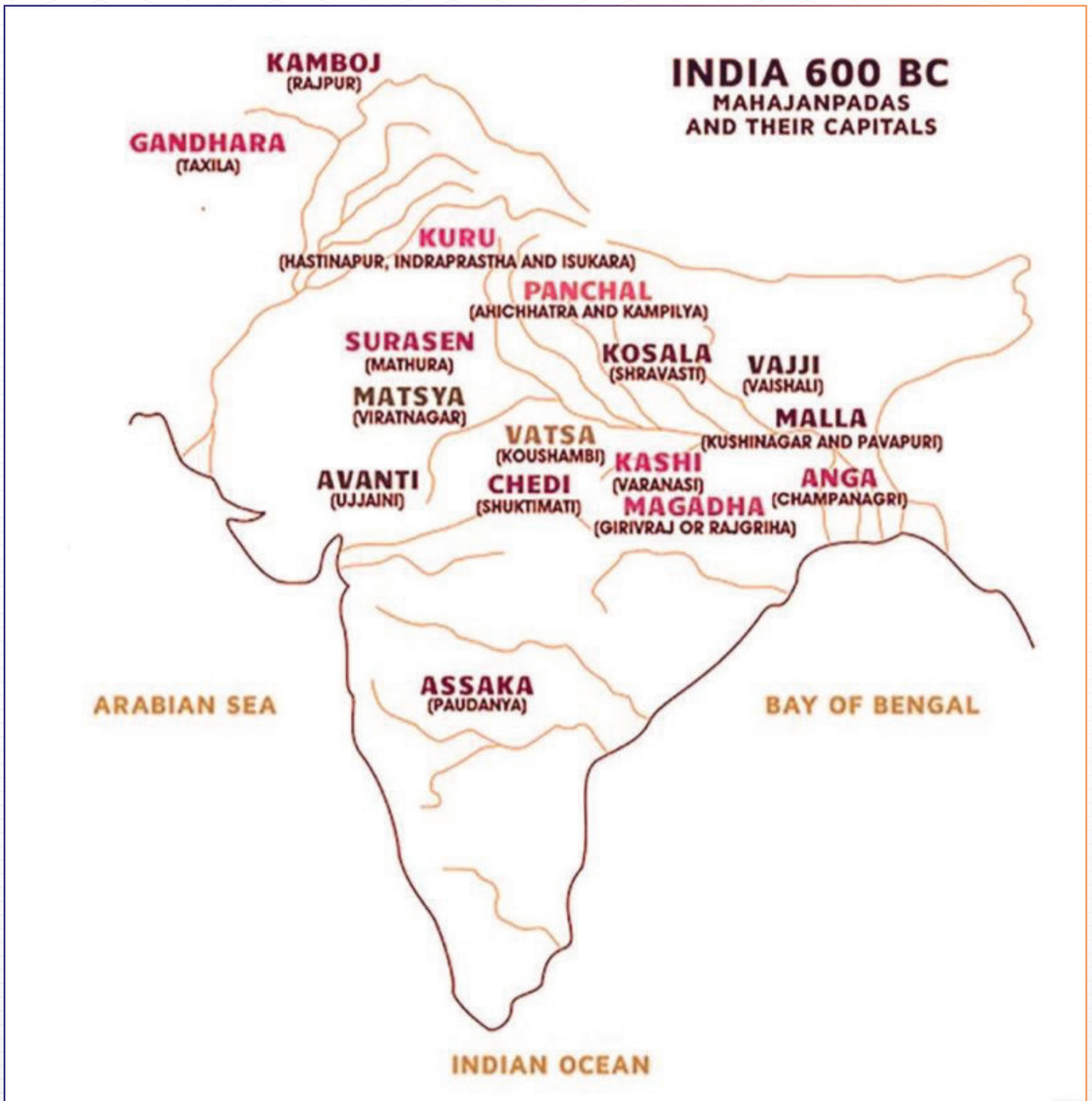
Mahajanapadas were ancient Indian kingdoms or republics emerging around the 6th century BCE after the consolidation of janapadas from the Later Vedic period. These states marked the rise of urbanisation, centralised administration, and iron technology, which laid the foundation for future empires like Magadha under the Mauryas.

### Structure of Mahajanapadas: Republics and Monarchies

The Mahajanapadas, meaning "great kingdoms," were categorized into monarchies (Rajyas) and republics (Ganas or Sanghas).

- ◆ **Republics:** Kuru, Vriji, Malla, Panchala, and Kamboja. These states were governed by assemblies of senior members.
- ◆ **Monarchies:** The remaining Mahajanapadas were ruled by hereditary kings.

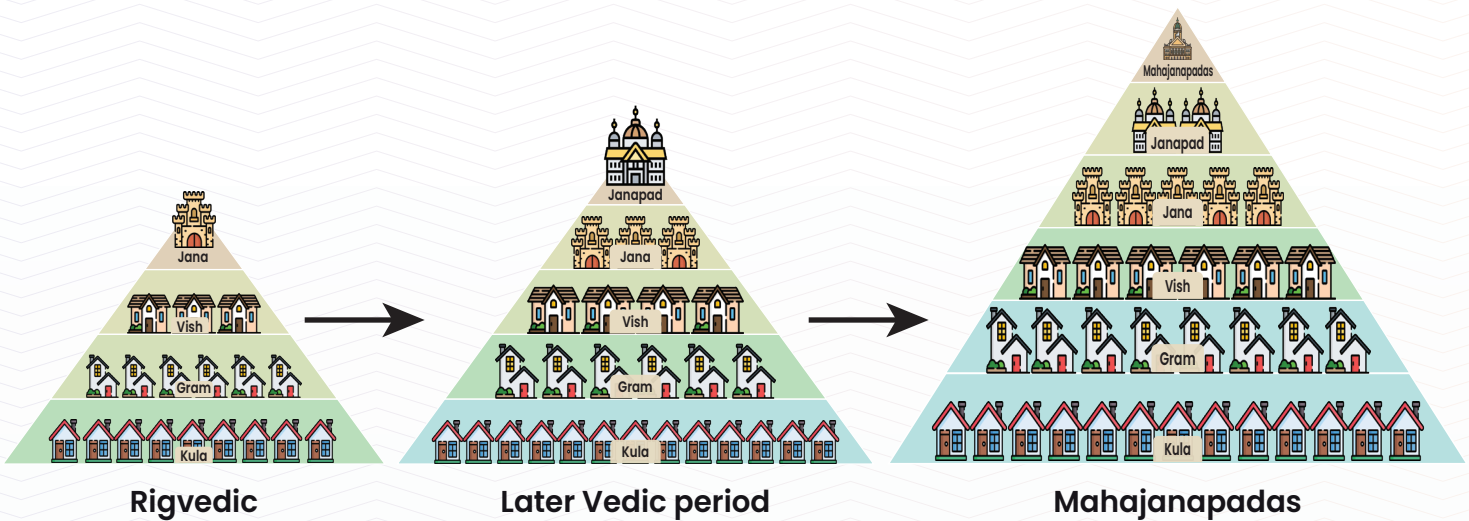
**Geographical extent:** From modern-day Afghanistan to Bihar, and the Himalayan foothills to the Godavari River.



### Sources of information

- ◆ **Buddhist texts:** Anguttara Nikaya, Jataka tales, Mahavastu.
- ◆ **Jain texts:** Bhagavati Sutra.
- ◆ **Mahabharata, and Puranas.**
- ◆ **Archaeological evidence.**

## Emergence of Mahajanapadas



## Transition from Janapadas to Mahajanapadas

◆ **Agriculture and Economy:**

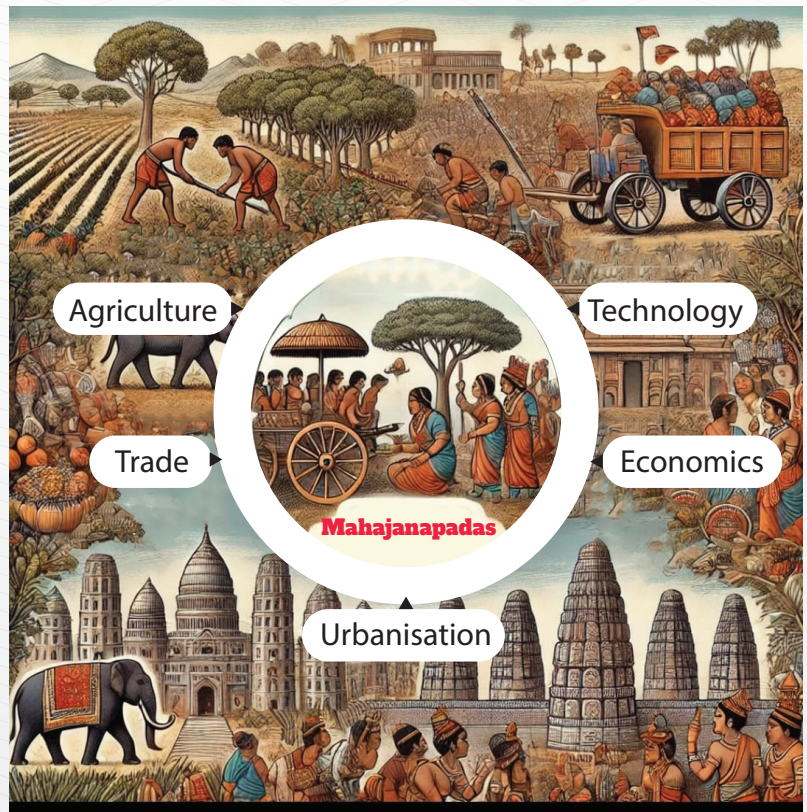
- Widespread use of iron tools enabled deforestation, agricultural expansion, and surplus production.
- Surplus agricultural produce supported trade, commerce, and urbanisation.

◆ **Political Transition:**

- Janapadas, territorial entities based on tribal loyalties, expanded into Mahajanapadas.
- The shift marked the rise of centralised governance and standing armies replacing the earlier temporary forces of the Vedic age.



◆ **Urbanisation:**

- The second phase of urbanisation followed, with fortified capitals and structured cities like Rajgriha and Kausambi.




## 16 Mahajanapadas: Capitals, Modern Locations, and Key Facts

Mahajanapada	Capital	Modern Location	Key Facts
Anga	Champa	Munger & Bhagalpur (Bihar)	Known for its wealth and commerce.
Magadha	Rajagriha/ Pataliputra	Nalanda, Gaya, Patna (Bihar)	Important for Buddhism; site of Buddha's enlightenment (Gaya); fertile land; rich iron resources.
Kasi	Kasi	Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)	Renowned textile manufacturing hub; produced kashaya (orange- brown) robes for Buddhist monks.
Vatsa	Kaushambi	Allahabad/Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh)	Trade center on the Yamuna; capital located 64 km from Allahabad; Central Malwa region.
Kosala	Shravasti	Awadh (Uttar Pradesh)	Included Ayodhya, Saketa, and Shravasti; associated with Gautama Buddha.
Surasena	Mathura	Mathura (Uttar Pradesh)	Linked to the Yadava clan and Lord Krishna; uneven roads and Yaksha cults prevalent.
Panchala	Ahichhatra /Kampilya	Bareilly & Farrukhabad (Uttar Pradesh)	Tribal polity; Western Panchala had Ahichhatra as its capital, Southern Panchala was centered at Kampilya.
Kuru	Hastinapur/ Indraprastha	Meerut, Delhi region	Known for its tribal polity; associated with the Mahabharata.
Matsya	Viratnagar	Jaipur, Bharatpur, Alwar (Rajasthan)	Tribal polity; played a significant role in ancient Rajasthan.
Chedi	Suktimati	Bundelkhand (Madhya Pradesh)	Eastern Bundelkhand region; associated with Shishupala, a Mahabharata figure.
Avanti	Ujjaini / Mahishmati	Malwa Plateau, Madhya Pradesh	Northern capital at Ujjaini, Southern capital at Mahishmati; linked with King Pradyota and Buddhism.
Gandhara	Taxila	Kabul Valley, Taxila (Pakistan, Afghanistan)	Notable for international trade; part of the Persian Achaemenid Empire (Herodotus); King Pukkusati ruled.
Kamboja	Rajapur	Kabul Valley, Kashmir	Known for producing fine-quality horses; laid in Afghanistan and Jammu & Kashmir.
Asmaka	Paithan/Potali	Bank of Godavari (Maharashtra)	Only southern Mahajanapada; situated on the banks of the Godavari River.
Vajji (Vrijji)	Vaishali	Vaishali (Bihar)	A confederation of eight clans (e.g., Lichchhavis, Videhans, Jnatikas); Gautama Buddha frequently visited.
Malla	Kushinara/Pava	Deoria & Kushinagar (Uttar Pradesh)	Non-monarchical polity; Gautama Buddha attained Mahaparinirvana at Kushinara.





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