

## **EMERGENCE OF MAHAJANAPADAS:ASMAKA JANAPADA**

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### **Abstract**

*The “Janapadas” term indicates that the places with various types of human settlements came to receive geographical titles for the first time in Indian History, as stated in subsequent Vedic texts, Jain sources, and Buddhist sources. The literal meaning of the word “janapada” is “the land where the Jana set foot and settled down. A tribe or a confederation of tribes living there acquired a geographical identity when they made permanent settlements there. These groups, known as Janapadas, evolved into the hubs for the spread of standardized beliefs, traditions, and language. The research paper presents the origin of janapadas and in detail history of asmaka janapada.*

### **Introduction**

According to a text from the Astadhyayi of Panini, the people were more loyal to the Janapada (a territorial unit) to which they belonged than to the Jana or the tribe. Some janapadas became more prominent than others around 2500 years ago and were referred to as mahajanapadas. Panini mentions more than forty Janapadas, Some of the Janapadas had evolved into Mahajanapadas by the sixth century BCE, including Magadha, Kosala, etc. Many of the Mahajanapadas were created by combining earlier separate Janapadas.

Angutara Nikaya, a Buddhist scripture mentions 16 great kingdoms or Mahajanapadas at the beginning of the 6th century BCE in India. They emerged during the Vedic Age. The history of the emergence of Mahajanapadas can be linked to the development of eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar during the 6th to 4th century BCE where agriculture flourished due to the availability of fertile lands and iron production increased due to availability of iron ore in large quantities. This resulted in the expansion of the territories of the Janapadas (due to the use of iron weapons) and later addressed as 16 highly developed regions or the Mahajanapadas.

### **Emergence of Mahajanapadas from Janapadas**

The Janapadas were the major kingdoms of Vedic India. During that period, Aryans were the most powerful tribes and were called 'Janas'. This gave rise to the term Janapada where Jana means 'people' and Pada means 'foot'.

By the 6th century BCE, there were approximately 22 different Janapadas. Socio-economic developments chiefly due to the use of iron tools in agriculture and military, along with religious and political developments led to the rise of the Mahajanapadas from small kingdoms or Janapadas. The people gained a strong allegiance to the territory or Janapada they belonged to rather than the tribe or the jana. This period is also known as the era of second urbanisation, first being the Harappan civilisation.

During that period, the political centre shifted from the west of the Indo-Gangetic plains to the eastern side of it. This was due to better fertility of the land because of more rainfall and rivers. Also, this region was closer to iron production centres.

### **Factors for the rise of Mahajanapadas**

- With the use of new agricultural equipment, the peasants were able to clear the forests, expand their agricultural production
- The rise of agriculture also contributed to population growth and social prosperity
- The emergence of urban centers ensures the regular trade
- the rise of several categories of people, such as gahapati, merchants, settlers, etc., who engaged in a variety of activities and occupations.

### **Features of Mahajanapadas**

The majority of Mahajanapadas had a fortified capital city.

- It's also possible that some kings constructed incredibly tall, imposing walls around their towns to demonstrate their wealth and might. There was a lot of planning involved in constructing such massive walls.
- This kind of massive construction needs a significant amount of labor, perhaps from thousands of men, women, and kids.
- The ruler could more readily maintain authority over the territory and inhabitants inside the walled city.
- The rajas started keeping armies. The king maintained and gave regular salaries to the soldiers throughout the year.

- They began collecting regular taxes under the rule of the Janapadas raja.
- The most significant taxes were those on agriculture. This was referred to as bhaga or share.
- Craftspeople were subject to taxes as well.
- Herders were also obliged to pay taxes in the form of animals and animal goods.
- The raja needs forest produce from hunters and gatherers.

### **Political Structure of the Mahajanapadas**

- Most of the states were monarchies but some were republics known as Ganas or Sanghas. These Ganasanghas were oligarchies where the king was elected and he ruled with the help of a council. Vajji was an important Mahajanapada with a Sangha form of government.
- The founders of Jainism and Buddhism came from republican states.
- Each Mahajanapada had a capital city.
- Most of them had forts built around them for protection from other kings.
- Regular armies were maintained by these new kings or Rajas.
- They also collected taxes from the people. Usually, the tax on crops was 1/6th of the produce. This was known as Bhaga or share.
- Even craftsmen, herders, hunters and traders were taxed.

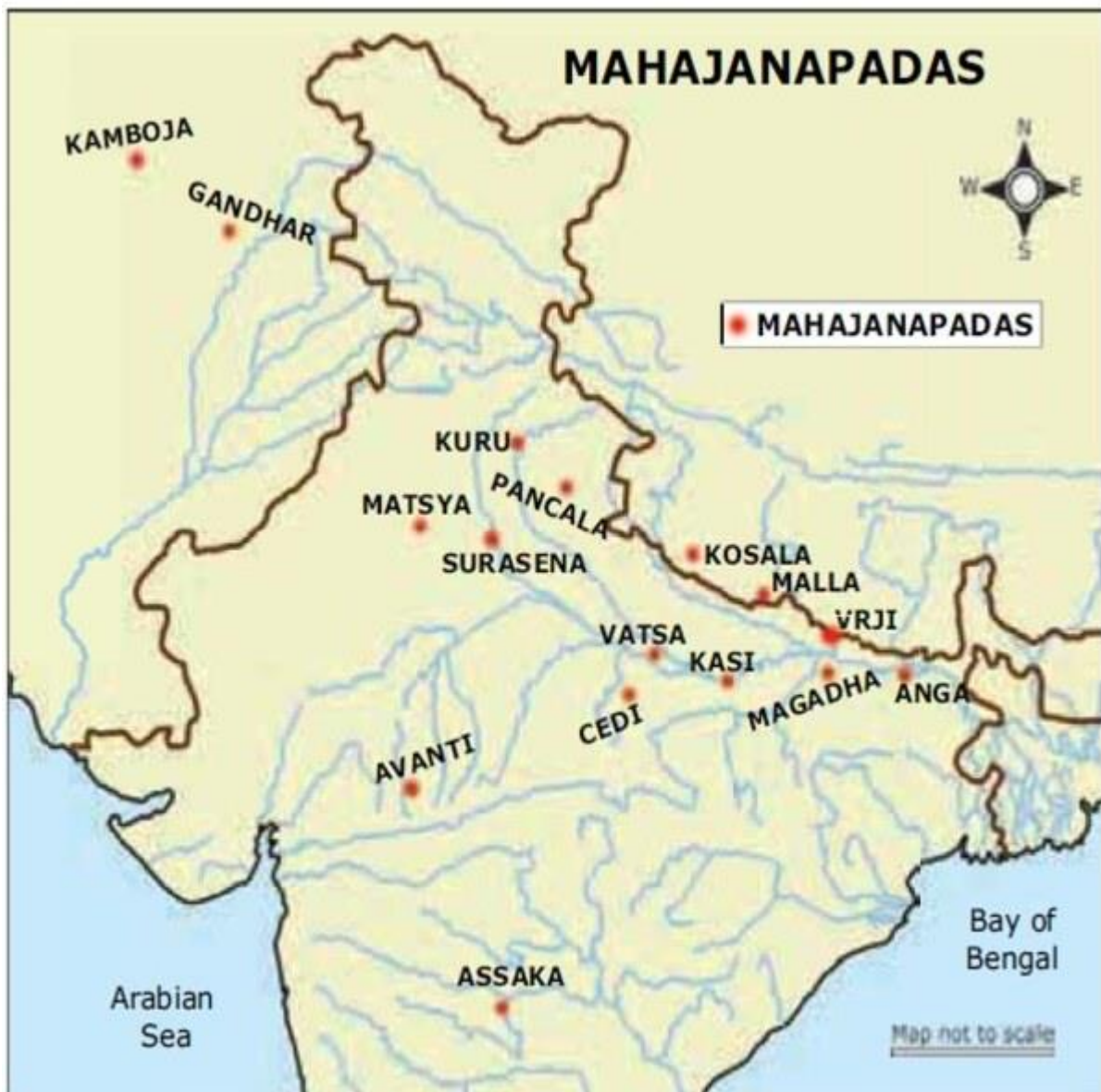
### **Most Prominent Mahajanapadas**

According to the Buddhist canonical literature Ahguttara Nikaya, there were sixteen significant states known as “Solasa Mahajanapada”. There were sixteen Mahajanapadas, and they either followed a monarchical or republican. Political structure. The republics were located in north-western India, in what is now Punjab, and along the foothills of the Himalayas, whereas the monarchies were mostly found in the Gangetic Plains. The Anguttara Nikaya lists the following sixteen Mahajanapadas:

- Anga
- Magadha
- Kasi
- Kosala
- Yajji

- Malla
- Chhedi
- Yamsa
- Kuru
- Panchala
- Maccha
- Surasena
- Assaka
- Avanti
- Gandhara
- Kamboja.

Gandhara, Kamboja, Kashi, Vatsa, Avanti, Chedi, Kuru, Panchala, Matsya, Anga, Kosala, Magadha, and Surasena are some of the monarchies. Republics include Vajji, Malla, and Assaka.



### Assaka or Asmaka Janapada

700 BC - 300 BC : Assaka was a region of ancient India came after Megalithic (Iron or Metal Age). It was one of the shodasa (sixteen) mahajanapadas in the 6th century BCE, mentioned in the Buddhist text Anguttara Nikaya.

Assaka" (Prakrit) or "Asmaka" (Sanskrit) signifies "stony region" and was located in the Deccan region.

In the Vayu Purana (88. 177-178) Asmaka and Mulaka appear as scions of the Ikshvaku family. This probably indicates that the Asmaka and Mulaka (or Alakas) kingdoms were

believed to have been founded by Ikshvaku chiefs, just as Vidarbha and Dandaka were founded by princes of the Yadu (Bhoja) family.

We learn from the Assaka Jataka (No. 207) that at one time the city of Potali was included in the kingdom of Kasi, and its prince Assaka was presumably a vassal of the Kasi monarch.

The country of Assaka or the Asmaka was located in Dakshinapatha or Southern India. In buddha's time, Assaka was located on the bank of the river Godavari (South of Vindhyan range). The Capital of the Assaka was Potana or Potali which corresponds to Paudanya of Mahabharata.

Modern day Bodhan (Nizamabad), Kotilingala (Karimnagar) are believed to be the capitals of Assaka Janapada. Excavations in kotilingala found punch marked coins of rulers Gobada, Narana, Kamvayasa, Sirivayasa and Samagopa.

Paithan (Maharashtra) used to be the capital of Mulaka (Alaka).

Evidently, Assaka and Kalinga regions were once contiguous. The Godavari River separated the country of the Assakas from the mulakas.

The Assaka Janapada evidently covered considerable part of the Telangana. The reference to Asmaka Janapada, part of present Telangana, as one of the 16 Janapadas in ancient India proves that there existed an advanced stage of society.

In the Mahabharata we find that an Asmaka prince was killed by Abhimanyu; and Kama, the great warrior on the side of the Kauravas, is said to have conquered the Kalingas, Rishikas, Asmakas and others.

In early Pali literature Assaka has, on the one hand, been distinguished from Mulaka which lay to its north, and on the other from Kalinga. He suggests that in later times Assaka seems to have included Mulaka, and also perhaps Kalinga. In the Sona-Nanda Jataka we find Assaka associated with Avanti; this association can only be explained if we summarize that Assaka included at that time Mulaka and thus its territory abutted on Avanti.

The Buddhist text Mahagovinda Suttanta mentions Brahmadata king of the Assakas who was a contemporary of Sattabhu king of Kalinga, Vessabhu king of Avanti, Bharata king of Sovlra, Renu king of Videha, Dhatarattha king of Anga and Dhatarattha king of Kasi



The Chulla Kalinga Jataka mentions a king of Assaka named Aruna and his minister Nandisena, and refers to a victory which they won over the king of Kalinga reigning over the city of Dantapura in Kalinga country.

In the sixth Century BC at the time of lord Mahavira, the ruler of Assaka whose son was a prince Sujatha.

The Sutta Nipata, an early Buddhist work relates the episode of sixteen disciples of Bavari, a hermit living in Assaka Janapada, who after meeting the Buddha at Rajagriha took refuge in the Dhamma.

Assaka represents the Sanskrit Asmaka or Asvaka, which is mentioned by Asanga in his Sutra-lankara as a country in the basin of the Indus. Asanga's Asmaka seems therefore to be identical with the kingdom Assakenus of the Greek writers, which lay to the east of the Sarasvati at a distance of about 25 miles from the sea on the Swat Valley.

## Conclusion

During the sixth to the fourth century BCE, sixteen oligarchic republics or kingdoms called the Mahajanapadas ruled ancient India. Early Vedic literature describes conflicts between different Aryan Janas, or tribes, and non-Aryan tribes over cattle, sheep, and lush meadows. These early Vedic Janas later amalgamated to become the Janapadas of the Epic Period.

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