

Revision Notes
Chapter – 6
Kingdoms Kings and Early Republic

- In the later Vedic period, the tribal organization changed their identity and gradually started shifting into a territorial identity called Janapada or states.
- These states consisted of a single tribe like Shakyas and Molas or people from the Ganga Valley called Aryans.
- They did not incorporate people outside the Aryan pole.
- There was, therefore, a strong consciousness of the pure land of the Aryans called Aryavrata.

• **What is Janapada:**

- (i) The term Janapada literally means land where jana set its foot and settled down.
- (ii) Early Vedic texts reveal about several Janas or tribes of the Aryans living in semi-nomadic tribal state.
- (iii) In due course of time, these early Indian Iron Age Rigveda Janas coalesced into geographically fixed Janapada.
- (iv) Some Janapadas became more important than others, and were known as Mahajanapadas. There were sixteen Mahajanapadas which had evolved and flourished in a belt stretching from Ghandhar in the North -west to Anga in the eastern part of the Indian sub-continent and included parts of trans Vindhyan region.

• **Features of Mahajanapadas:**

- (i) Each Mahajanapadas was ruled by a king each having their own army and a capital city.
- (ii) The kings maintained large armies, by paying regular salaries throughout the year.
- (iii) Many of these Mahajanapadas were fortified, which means huge walls of wood, brick or stone were built around them.

• **Political Organisation**

- (i) The political organization of the mahajanapadas was organized into two forms-monarchy

and republican system.

(ii) Monarchies came to embody the concept of hereditary accession to the throne and association of the king with a divine status. Magadh was an example.

(iii) Republics were either single tribes or a confederacy of tribes, governed by a general assembly and a council of elders representing powerful Kshatriya families.

• **Taxation:**

(i) As Mahajanapadas needed huge amount of money for building huge forts and maintaining big armies so they imposed taxes.

(ii) One-sixth tax was fixed on crops; tax on crafts persons, herders, goods bought and sold through trade.

(iii) Further hunters and gathers had to give forest produce to the raja.

• **Agricultural System of Mahajanapadas:**

(i) Two major changes were introduced in agriculture.

(ii) One, was the rapid use of iron ploughshares instead of wooden ploughshares.

(iii) Second, people started transplanting paddy which lead to increase in production.

• **Varna System of Mahajanapadas:**

(i) Varna means group in Sanskrit.

(ii) Varna decided one's group. It was not based on birth.

(iii) Gradually in later Vedic age, Varna system changed to caste system.

(iv) The Brahmins imparted knowledge, Kshatriyas were rulers, Vaishyas contributed to trade while Shudras were slaves who were denied entry into the mainstream.

• **Magadha and Vajji**

(i) Magadha in South Bihar, on the banks of river Ganga was a fertile and industrial area which contributed to one of the most powerful kingdoms and some great kings like Bimbisara and Ajatshatru in India.

(ii) Vajji, with its capital at Vaishali was under a different form of government known as Gana or sangha, where there were not one ruler but many rulers. These Ganas were conquered by the Gupta rulers. Both Buddha and Mahavira belonged to Gana or sanghas.