

Lesson 5

From Janpadas to Empire

Summary

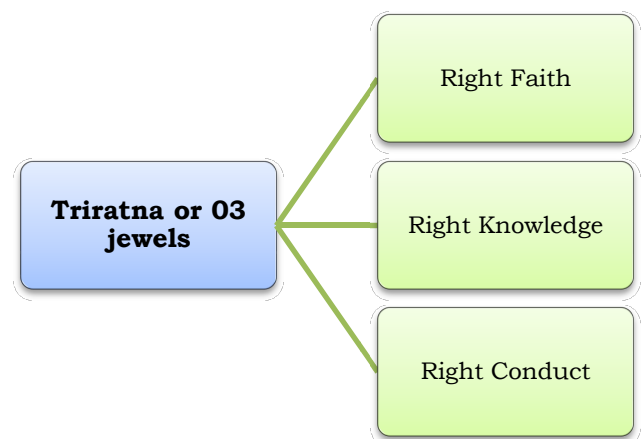
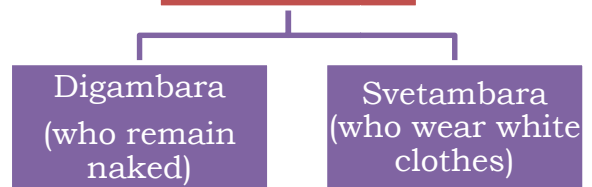
Increased agricultural activity and settled life led to the rise of sixteen Mahajanapadas which were in north India in sixth century BC. One of these states called Magadha defeated all others to rise to the status of an empire later under the Mauryas. The Mauryan period was one of great economic and cultural progress. However, the Mauryan Empire collapsed within fifty years of the death of Ashoka. You will read about the Janapadas and the economic, social and political cultural developments of this period in this lesson.

Doctrines of Jainism and Buddhism

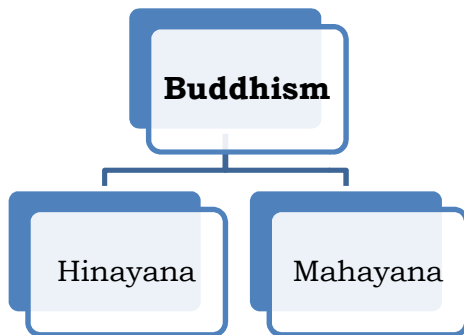
Jainism-

- Vardhaman Mahavira, is regarded as the founder of Jainism.
- He was twenty-fourth and the last *tirthankara* of Jainism.
- Nirvana can be achieved not through rituals and sacrifices but by pursuance of *triratna* and *panchamahavrata*.
- The most distinguishing feature of Jainism was the concept of *anekantavada* or *syadavada*.

Two sects of Jainism



Five Great Vows



Noble truths or Arya Satya -

- Dukkha
- Dukkha Samudya
- Dukkha Nirodha
- Dukkha Nirodhagaminipratipada

Eight fold path or Astangika Marga -

- Right faith
- Right resolve
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right living
- Right effort
- Right thought
- Right self concentration

The Sixteen Mahajanpadas -

- In the later Vedic period, people had started agriculture, which made them settle down at a particular place.
- These permanent settlements led to foundation of **Janapadas** or territorial states under the control of the king.
- In the sixth century BC the main area of political activity gradually shifted from Western UP to Eastern UP and Bihar.
- The use of better iron tools and weapons enabled some territorial states to become very large and they came to be called **Mahajanapadas**.
- Most of these states were monarchical in nature but some of them, called Ganasangha, had an oligarchical system of governance.

Rise of Magadh-

- The political fight among these *mahajanapadas* ultimately led to one of them namely Magadh to emerge as the most powerful state and the centre of a vast empire.
- The earliest important ruler of Magadh was the king Bimbisara, who ruled from 544 to 492 BC.
- He married the sister of the king of Kosala. She brought in dowry the territory of Kashi.
- His other wives were daughters of the chiefs of Lichchavi and Madra.
- Ajatasatru first came into conflict with his maternal uncle.
- He asked Ajatasatru to return the territory of Kasi.
- Ajatasatru not only retained Kasi, but also added Vaishali to Magadh.
- Ajatasatru was succeeded by Udayin and his main contribution was building a fort on the confluence of river Ganga and river Son at Pataliputra or Patna.
- Udayin was succeeded by the dynasty of Shishunaga.
- The most important achievement of Shishunaga was to defeat Avanti (Malwa) and make it a part of Magadh.
- The Shishunaga dynasty was succeeded by the kings of the Nanda dynasty.
- Mahapadma Nanda was its most important ruler.

Mauryan Empire - Mauryan Sources

Edicts

Indica of
Megasthenes

Archaeological
Sources

Dipavamsa and
Mahavamsa

Arthashastra of
Kautilya

Mudrarakshasby
Visakhadatta

Mauryan Dynasty-

- Chandragupta Maurya (321–297 BC)- Founder of the dynasty.
- Bindusara (297–269BC)-He promoted trade and cultural interaction with Greeks.
- Ashoka (269–232BC)-Fought a major war with Kalinga around 261 BC in which large number of people were killed or imprisoned.

Ashoka and his Dhamma-

- It was a code of conduct or ideal social behaviour common to all religions of the world.
- Dhamma included compassion (*daya*), charity (*dana*), truthfulness, purity and gentleness.

Decline of the Mauryas-

- After the death of Ashoka, the empire got divided into two parts.
- One of the main reasons for decline could be the succession of weak rulers.
- The reason of decline was inherent in the structure of the vast centralized empire itself.

India under the Mauryans-

- The Mauryas established an elaborate system of administration in which king played the chief role.
- The king appointed a council of ministers called *mantra parishad*.
- Among all the executive officials *samaharta* was the most important. His responsibility was to supervise collection of taxes from all types of sources.
- Apart from Magadh with its capital at Patliputra, the Mauryan Empire was divided into four other provinces.
- These were put under the control of royal princes called *kumara*.

Economy, Society and Art

- The mainstay of economy in this period was agriculture.
- The *balior* land tax was the main item of revenue, levied at the rate of one sixth of the produce.
- Peasants had to pay many other taxes like *pindakara*, *hiranya*, *bhaga*, *bhoga* etc.
- Mining and metallurgy were another important economic activity.
- Craft activities were also a major source of revenue to the state.

Society-

- *Varna* system continued to exist and brahmanas and kshatriyas dominated the social hierarchy.
- Shudras could be involved in the agricultural and artisanal activities.

Art-

- The Mauryan period provides the earliest examples of ancient Indian art and architecture.
- Ashokan pillars at Rampurva, Lauriya Nandangarh and Sarnath present excellent examples of stone sculptures
- Our national emblem comes from the Asokan pillar at Sarnath near Benaras.
- Rock cut architecture like Lomasa Rishi cave in the Barabar hills near Gaya belonging to the Mauryan period.
- Polished stone sculpture of a *chauri*-bearing female known as Didarganj Yakshini is most famous.

Evaluate Yourself-

Q. On the map of India mark the following.

i) Major rock Edicts of Ashoka.

ii) Pillar Edicts of Ashoka.

Q. What is 'dhamma' according to Ashoka?

Q. List the teachings of Buddhism.