

According to the information collected from the books of Bauddhism and Jainism, Puranas and other Sanskrit literature, there was not a single almighty ruler in North India in the end part of the 7th century B.C. The entire North India was fragmented into many small or big kingdoms. These kingdoms were also known as Mahajanpadas or Ganarajyas. Pali book “Angutarnikay” gives the list of the names as follows:

16 Mahajanpadas

No.	Name of Mahajanpada	Capital	Present Name
1	Anga	Champa (malini)	East Bihar
2	Magadha	Girivraja/Rajgruha	South Bihar
3	Kashee	Varanasi	Kashee (Banaras) –Uttarapradesh
4	Koshala	Shravastee Ayoddhya Kushavatee	Avadh (Uttarapradesh)
5	Vajji	Mithila	North Bihar
6	Malla	Kushinara-pava	Gorakhpur District
7	Chedi-Cheti	Shuktimatee (shakti)	Region between rivers Ganga and Yamuna
8	Vatsa	Kaushambee	Alhabad region
9	Kuru	Indraprastha	Thaneshwar, Delhi and Meerut District
10	Panchala	Ahichhatra/Kampilya	Bandau, Bareilly and Farukhabad District
11	Matsya	Viratanagara	Jaypur District (Rajasthan)
12	Soorsena	Mathura	Mathura nagar and district
13	Asmaka	Paithana	Bank of river Godavaree
14	Avanti	Mahishmatee, Ujjayinee	Malava region
15	Gandhara	Takshashila	Peshavar and Ravalpindie districts
16	Kamboja	Lajapur (Hatak)	South-east Kashmeer region

Besides these, in other books of Bauddha dharma, some of the following states are mentioned. They are Kalinga, Sauveera and Videha. Similarly, in Jain book, “Bhagavatee” some more states are mentioned, which are Malava, Kochcha (Kachchha), Padha (Pundra in Bangla), Lagha (Radha in Bangla) and Molee (malla).

Some of the above states were republican federal states and had democratic way of functioning.

Group of Free and Sovereign States

In Bauddhigranthas (Buddhist books) there is a mention of gana states of different tribes. It includes, Lichchhavis of Vaishali, Shakyas of Kapilvastu, Mallas of Pava and Kushinagar, Moriya of Piplivana, Magga of Sumasumara giri and Videhas of Mithila. Panini in his book 'ashtadhyayee' mentions republic (free and sovereign) states as 'gana and sangha', in which the following important free and sovereign states existed:

Vaishalee (Lichchhavees) :

At this time the Lichchhavis gana state was very strong. 9 states of Malla gana states and 18 states of Kashee-Kaushalya under the aegis of Sardar Chetak of Lichchhavees formed a formidable sangha. Vaishali was the capital of Lichchhavis. It was prosperous and rich. There were many halls, rest houses, lakes full of lotuses, viharas, chaityas and palaces. It was from that place a dancer "Amrapali" who had put amravana at the feet of Lord Buddha. In the administration of the state of Vaishalee there were 7707 kings (leaders), and the same number of sub kings (upanetas), generals, and treasurers. It can be inferred that all the citizens participated in the state-administration. There was an administrative committee consisting of 8 to 9 members to look after the daily affairs. The committee of 9 members managed external affairs and committee of 8 members managed judiciary. The unity and discipline of the people of Lichchhavees were applaudable. Their greatness was manifested in their character.

Kapilvastu (Shakyo) :

Shakyas have given to the world great person like Lord Buddha. According to the mention of Dr. Radha Kumud Mukharji, there were 80 thousand families or the population of five lakhs. It was a republic form of government. In their santhagar (Parliament) there were 500 members. Their president was called raja. After three readings only any law was passed. In important questions the voting was done through "shalaka" (Different colours' sticks used for voting). Some questions were delegated to smaller committees for discussion. The shakyas were proud of their culture and nobility. From the stories of Bauddha it seems that the society was based on equality.

Pava and Kusheenara (mallas) :

One of the branches of mallas was in Pava and another in Kushinara. Mahavir Jain had nirvana in Pava and Gautam Buddha had in Kusheenara. Malla state was a republic sangha state. In every state, its members were known as "kings". In Pava, Mallas had made parliament house called 'ubbhita'. Here the administrative officers were called 'pureesha', which are very close to present day police. This state had renowned teachers like Bhikkhu anand and Aniruddh.

Besides these, other free and republican states that could be mentioned are gana states, Ramagrama, Koliyo and Moriyo of Piplivan. The construction, organization and administration of all these gana states to a great extent were similar to that of Lichchhavis, Mallas and Shakyas.

The Rise and Development of Magadha Kingdom

Among the 16 mahajanpadas of North India in 7th century B.C. four (Koshala, Vatsa, Avanti, Magadha) states were main and powerful. They were competing for superiority. The development of Magadha from a small state to a great state is a notable fact of the Indian History in the times of Buddha.

The Reasons of the Rise of Magadha :

There were many reasons for the rise of Magadha to be a great state. In the 7th century B.C., there wasn't a single state which was the most powerful. Kosaladevi, the sister of Prasenjita, the king of Koshala

had been married to the king of Magadha, Bimbisara. After killing his brother Bimbisara, Ajatashatru occupied the throne of Magadha and to take away Kashi, he waged a war with Prasenjit. Prasenjit was defeated. Thereafter, with the help of the minister of Prasenjita, Vidudabha revolted and occupied the throne of Kosala kingdom. Darshaka, the king of Magadha seemed to have suppressed the opposition by establishing marriage relation with the princes of Vatsavansha.

At this time, it was more strategic to establish empire in Magadha than anywhere else among the other states of India. It was located at a natural strategic place near rivers like Ganga, Shona, Gandaki, and Gogra. At the time of war, they were used as water ways. On the south of Magadha, there was a vast area of mineral iron, which was very strategic for trade. From the beginning Magadha and eastern countries had remained separated from Vedic culture. Therefore, Aryans who hated, such non-Brahmins and Vratyas were more powerful. On the one hand non-Brahmins and Vratyas were pushing away political aspect of Vedic culture and on the other hand Buddhists and Jain were destroying the religious hierarchy. Thus it was a beginning of a new age.

In short, out of the main four states of 7th century B.C. two states of Avanti and Vatsa were out of the competition of becoming super powers. Then in the 6th century B.C. only two states Magadha and Kosala remained in the race of becoming super powers. Some scholars give credit to Magadha to become super power because Prasenajita, the king of Kosala was defeated by Ajatashatru, the king of Magadha.

Expansion of Magadha Empire (603 B.C. – 323 B.C.)

The books of Buddhist religion divide the kings of Magadha in Haryaka, Shishunaga and Nandavansha.. Kings Bimbisara and Ajatashatru belonged to Haryaka dynasty, in whose time Magadha developed the most.

Bimbisara :

Bimbisara had become the king of Magadha at the age of 15. From his enthronement, he had started expanding the empire around the surrounding states. He established matrimonial alliances with different states.. He changed his capital to Girivraja. He invaded Anga state and made his son Ajatashatru the administrator. There were 80 thousand villages in his empire, which were administered by 'Mahapatra', 'sabbathako', and 'gramiko'.

Ajatashatru :

In making Magadha, the empire, Ajatashatru, the son of Bimbisara contributed a great deal. Prasenajit, the king of Kosala had to admit defeat. He broke the union of Mallas who were under the leadership of Lichchavis and brought them under him.

Ajatashatru's son Uday, inherited the kingship, changed the capital from Girivraja to Patliputra (Kusumpur). His successors were Uday followed by Nagdashaka.

Shishunaga and His Heirs :

According to the books of Buddhist religion, having done away with their fathers Udayan, Uday and Nagdashaka became kings. Having got tired, the people allowed Amatyashishunaga of Nagdashaka to sit on the throne. That is how the Shishunaga dynasty began. The Buddhist religion books inform that after Shishunaga, Kalashoka and his ten sons ruled over for 21 years. According to one Greek author, the lover of queen Kakavarni pierced the dagger and murdered the king and occupied the throne to begin Nanda dynasty in Magadha.

Nandavansha :

Some scholars propound that Nandavansha was established by Mahapadma Nanda. He was a successful general and powerful king. He invaded Kaushambi, Kosala and Avanti and triumphed over them. He had also

triumphed over Kalinga know from the Hathigufa inscription of Kharvel the king of Kalinga. The Greek authors praised the power and prosperity of Nanda kings. In his time the great state of Magadha had reached the peak of prosperity. The last king Dhanananda was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya to establish Maurya dynasty in Magadha (323 B.C.)

Iranian and Macedonian (Greece) Attacks on India and Their Effects

Iran attacked India in 6th century B.C. and Greece attacked India in 4th century B.C. The reason is that there was no powerful king at that time. Small kingdoms were weakened because of in-fighting. In post-vedic period the centre of culture of India moved towards East India. In the entire North India not a single power was sovereign. The idea had not evolved yet to form a union of all the states to counter the attacks of foreign rulers.

It looks like, at this time, the border areas of Punjab and north-west might not have the political and cultural importance. When the activities of the Aryans were centred around Madhyapradesh and countries of East, the North-West border of India first became the target of Iranian invasion and later that of Masedonian Sikander.

The Iranian Invasion on India

There was a cultural relationship between India and Iran from ancient times. It was in matters like languages, religious rituals and many other matters. But as the Indian Aryans moved more and more towards the East began to attack there was decline in this relation. In the 6th century B.C., because of the expansion motive of Emperor Cyrus, it India. Greek historian Herodotus mentions that ruler of Arkananiyan dynasty, Cyrus, occupied Gandhara (present Afghanistan) region located in the North-West of India. After Cyrus, his son Cambyses did not attack India. But his successor, Darius I sent Iranian soldiers to the border of India. Herodotus mentions that in (517 B.C.). Darius had sent his navy man, Scoplex to study the currents of the river Sindhu with a fleet of ships. Twenty provinces in the empire of Darius included one province of Western border of India. Its wealth was so abundant that every year 360 “talent” (gold foils) was taken as tax. One third of the revenues of the empire’s total revenue was collected from India.

At the time of Zakarsis, son of Darius I must have consolidated his position. Herodotus mentions about the battalion of Indian and Gandhar soldiers, as a part of the army that was sent to fight in Greece. It shows that the Indian army had fought for the first time on behalf of Iran in Europe, near Thermopoli.

It is difficult to decide how long the control of Iran remained over India. Yet, it can be assumed that it must have remained till 330 B.C. The reason is that Iranian emperor Darius III lost against Sikander and the way opened for Sikander to come towards India.

The Effects of the Iranian Attacks on India :

Politically there was no long lasting effect of Iranian attack. In the field of trade and culture the impact was greater. Navigator Skylax during the time of Darayasa I studied the water way through the river Sindhu and its branches must have helped to improve trade relations between them. The Iranian Aryans and the Indian Aryans came in contact with each other by establishing new relationship. As a proof for the trade relation, gold coins “darika” and silver coins “sigloi” of Iran have been found in certain parts of India. Similarly in the North-Western provinces of India there was a beginning of Kharoshtee script (writing from right) that resembles the Iranian Aramaic script. Some scholars assume the effect of Iranian art and sculpture on the Mauryan sculpture and architecture; and the inscription on the stones and columns of Ashoka tradition.

Attacks of Macedonia (Greece) on India and Its Effects

Attacks :

Sikander, the son of king Philip of Macedonia, enthroned at the age of 20. He was very ambitious to be the king from his childhood. His attacks on India are known as Macedonian attack in Indian History. In the war of Arbela, he defeated Darius III of Iran and prepared to attack India. He constructed forts on the way to go to India. In 327 B.C. from one of these fortes named "Nasiya" he gave an invitation to the king of Takshashila and the kings on the West of Sindhu to become part of his empire. The king of Takshashila sent his son Ambhikumar with a promise to help him if attacked India. Similarly another king Shashigupta near the border too helped him. Thus in the Indian History these two can be considered the first traitors.

Sikander divided his army in two groups to attack India. First group was led by Haphaestion and Perdicaas under the guidance of Ambhikumar, who led them through river Kabul way to Peshavar. But on the way the king of Ashtakas challenged them and the Greek army could proceed further only after killing him.

The second group was led by Sikander himself. He entered Kunara, Panjkaura and Swata from the north of river Kabul. The Ashvayana and Yashvakayana tribes of these states to which famous grammar scholar Panina belonged, countered the army with bravery. In breaking their forts even Sikander was hurt, and the people of the entire fort had to pay the price. Sikander butchered all the people of the fort. Even the Greek historians have criticized this cruel act of Sikander.

Sikander, then, overpowered the strongest fort Arsona of Ashvakayas. The Greek historians consider this victory the biggest military achievement.

Then, on the bank of the river Sindhu he joined with the second group of his military and crossing the river Sindhu he reached Takshashila in 324 B.C. There he was welcomed majestically by Ambhikumar. In Takshashila he held the court in which he accepted the tribute from the kings of the adjoining states. But Jhelum king of Raghu dynasty, Parvartak (Puru, Greek called Porus) did not surrender himself. He sent the word to Sikander, "We will meet but in the battlefield."

King Porus and his army bravely encountered them but at the end he fell and was caught, but his self esteem remained intact. Sikander appreciated his bravery and returned his kingdom to him. In addition, he also gave him 15 regions of republic states.

Sikander wanted to defeat Nanda, the king of Magadha. But his soldiers who had been away from their homes for many years were anxious to return home. It is possible that He heard about the military power of the Nandas of Magadh and wanted to return. They also had experienced the braveness and loyalty of the people of India in the war; hence they must have got discouraged. Such a fear in them surfaces in the writings of the Greek authors. Sikander tried to explain his army men but in vain. Ultimately, on the bank of the river Beas he made twelve altars of stone and having offered sacrifices to Greek gods, returned from India with a heavy heart.

Effects :

The attacks of Sikander revealed the internal weakness of the Indians. The smaller states realized that to counter an organized attack on them they had to be united and had to have a strong empire. It exhibited that Sikander and his men during the time of conquest were worse than barbarians. However it also manifested the bravery, high spirit and love for freedom of the Indian people. In thousands, the people sacrificed their lives but did not prefer to become slaves. The advance of the military of Sikander it has not made much mark. This could be the reason why Indian authors have not made any special note of the same.

However, from the cultural point of view, the paths that were trodden by the army of Sikander, later became the paths for contact and interactions between India and the Western World. Means and material were added to the history of India. India received the base for counting years and ages. Through the colonies that were established on the borders of India, the western world came to know Indian religion and philosophy. Indian sculpture, architecture, currency coins, Gandhar pattern and astronomy were impacted by Greek culture. In short, Sikander could be given importance in Indian history, as with him the contact between India and Greece began after him. There were Indians who sacrificed their lives bravely in countering the Iranian and Macedonian attacks on the states of India whereas there were also some (likes of Aambhikumar and Shashigupta) traitors, who exposed their weakness and cowardice.

EXERCISE

1. Answer the following questions in detail :

- (1) Give reasons for the rise of Magadha Empire.
- (2) In the expansion of Magadha Empire, Write the contribution of respective dynasties?
- (3) Mention the effects of attack of Iran on India
- (4) 'Sikander was successful in attacking India' – Give reasons.
- (5) Discuss the effects of the attack of Sikander on India.

2. Answer the following questions briefly :

- (1) What is "Mahajanapada"? How many Mahajanpada were there in India?
- (2) Give names of any five of Mahajanpadas.
- (3) Explain: 'The unity and discipline of the people of Lichchhavees was appreciable'
- (4) Give information in short about Kapilvastu Shakyas.
- (5) Why was Malla state known as Republic Union (sangh) state?

3. Choose the correct option from the given alternatives and give answers :

- (1) In which pali book is the list of gana states given?
 (A) Nikay (B) Tripitak (C) Angutar Nikay (D) Abhidhamma pitak
- (2) Which dancer surrendered her amravan to Buddha?
 (A) Himanee (B) Amrapalee (C) Ganika (D) Sarika
- (3) What is the nirvana place of Mahavir Swami?
 (A) Kapil Vastu (B) Pavapuri (C) Kushinagar (D) Vaishalee
- (4) What is the nirvana place of Gautam Buddha?
 (A) Kushinagar (B) Panchala (C) Gandhara (D) Avanti
- (5) Who was the Indian who helped Sikander to attack India?
 (A) Ambhikumar (B) Aadikumar (C) Anavilakumar (D) Ajatashatru.

