

THE KINGS OF THE MAHAJANAPADAS



You must have heard about many kings. What do you think about them - who is a king? what does he do for the people, and what do the people do for him? What does he give the people, and what do the people give him? Look at the pictures in this chapter and find out more about the kings and their subjects. Are the things you mentioned about kings reflected in these pictures?

You read in the previous chapter about the emergence of many small *janapadas*. Here we will read about the situation three to four hundred years after that. This is called the age of the *Mahajanapadas*.

• *You would be knowing the meaning of janapada by now. Select the right meaning:*

1. *Where the cattle of the jana grazed.*
2. *The village where the people of the jana lived.*
3. *The area where the people of the jana practised agriculture and settled down.*

• *What could mahajanapada mean?*

• *In those days, there were 16 big janapadas or mahajanapadas. They have been shown in the map. Which of these are new and which are old? Fill in the following table :*

Old janapadas	New janapadas

• *Are the old janapadas more in number or the new janapadas?*

• *In which direction of the old janapadas did the new janapadas emerge?*

We have shown only 16 *mahajanapadas* on the map. In addition to these there were many smaller *janapadas*. There were several new developments taking place in the

mahajanapadas. We get information about these from books and stories of those times written in Pali language. With the help of these we can also imagine how the kings of the *mahajanapadas* must have been.

KING OF A MAHAJANAPADA - A STORY

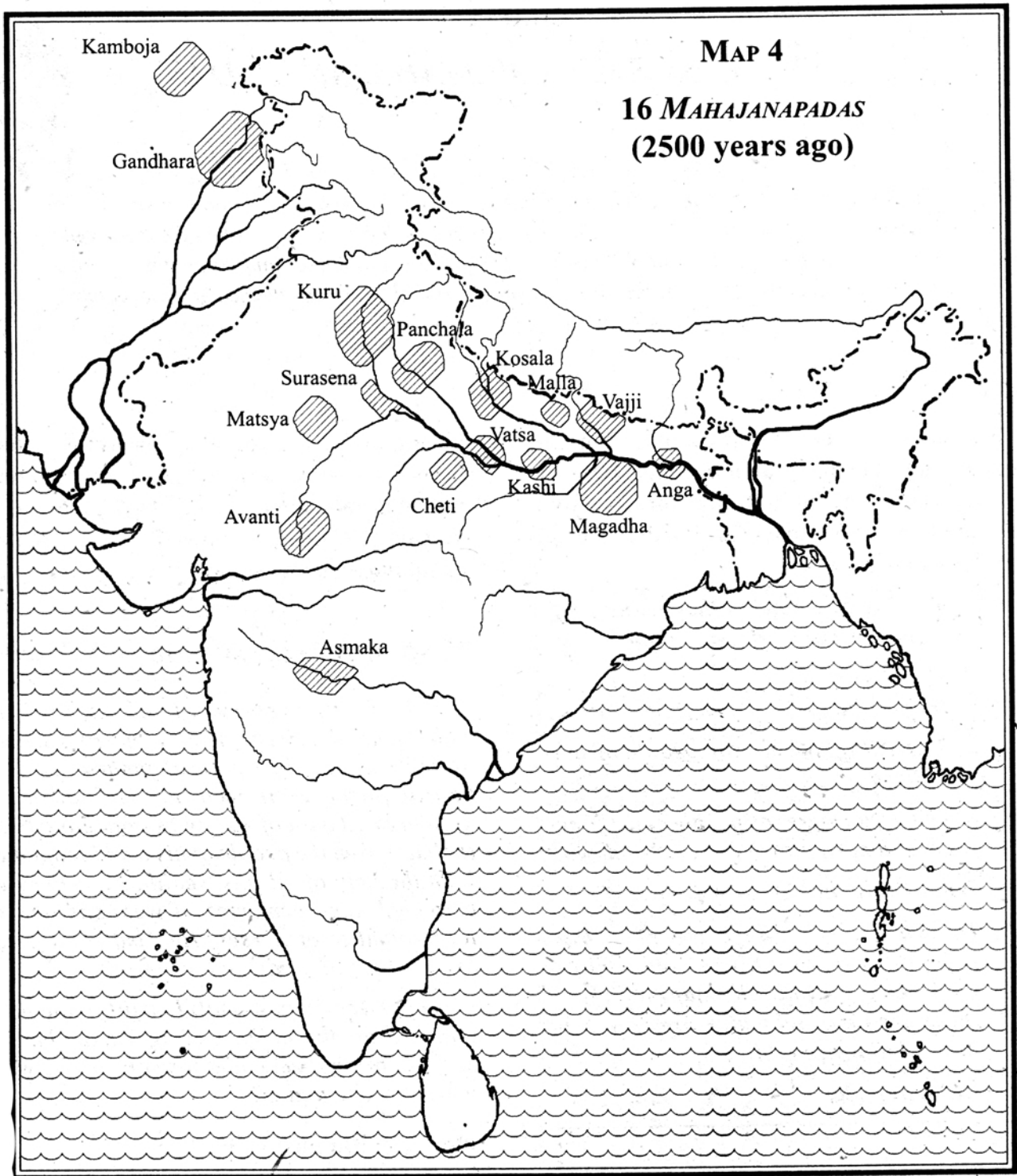
This is the story of a king of a mahajanapada. His name was Purujit. He had waged wars against several janapadas and had acquired their wealth. He had also accumulated a lot of wealth by collecting bali (tribute) from the people of his own janapada. With the help of all this wealth, Raja Purujit collected huge armories of weapons and a large number of horses. He also wanted to build a beautiful palace for himself.

As he became powerful, Purujit frequently attacked all the neighbouring janapadas in order to bring them under his control. He was feared by one and all.

Plan to Build an Army

As was the practice, Purujit had to distribute a part of the conquered wealth to the Rajanyas, perform huge sacrifices in which he had to feed all the people, and give large gifts (dakshinas) to the brahmins. In those days, the fame of a king depended on how much he spent on sacrifices.

However, Raja Purujit began to resent spending his wealth in this way. He wanted to wage war on many more janapadas. He was also being threatened by kings of some other janapadas. Therefore Purujit wanted to make

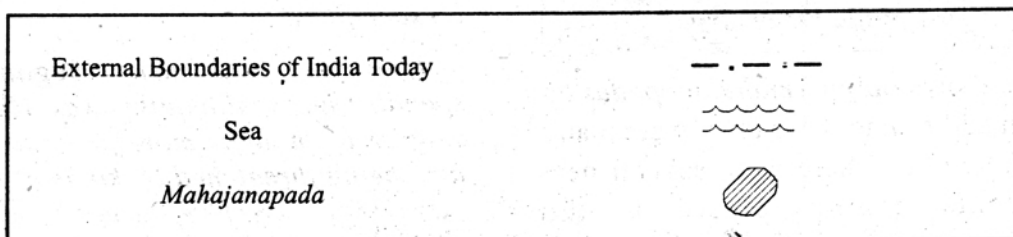


Based upon Survey of India map printed in 1987.

The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.

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proper preparations for future wars. He began to think, "If all the wealth of the kingdom remained with me, I could acquire the best horses, elephants and weapons."

In addition, raja Purujit also felt the need to build a proper army. You probably remember that till the time of the janapadas, the rajas did not have armies. All the people of the janapada marched with their raja and rajanyas to fight in the war. But the people of the janapadas also had to attend to their fields, crafts and trade. They could not abandon their work as and when the raja called them. Purujit began to be troubled by this.

He thought, "I need thousands of such men who would be ready to fight on my orders, and do not do anything apart from this. If I have enough wealth, I can keep such persons. I could pay them some money according to their needs. They need not engage in agriculture or any other profession, and would remain exclusively in my service. I will train them in the art of war and weaponry. Then they will have to fight for me as and when I order them."

The king lost no time in setting up his army. In the course of some years he enrolled thousands of people in his service. With the help of his army Purujit conquered many neighbouring janapadas and made them part of his own janapada. He began to take tribute from them all. In this way, his janapada became a 'mahajanapada' or large janapada.

Not only neighbouring janapadas, but even kings of far off places began to fear an attack from Purujit's army. Following Purujit's example, and also in order to defend themselves, other kings also began to build up armies.

- Why was raja Purujit anxious to collect more wealth?
- How did the small janapadas fight without an army?
- Why did the king of the mahajanapada wish to have an army? How would it have benefited him?

Laws About Payment of Bali

Raja Purujit had become powerful and famous. But his worries were not over. What was he worried about now?

The raja was still worried about wealth. He had to pay the salaries of thousands of soldiers throughout the year. He also had to make arrangements for weapons, horses and elephants. The raja used to think, "Whatever happens, I must always have enough wealth with me. Otherwise, I cannot have thousands of soldiers in my service. What would enable me to collect money on a regular basis?"



One Portion of the Harvest for Tribute to the King



- What could be the solution to his problem?
- Could the problem of wealth be solved by repeatedly going to war?

The raja made a law which was announced with the beating of drums, to the people of all the villages of the janapada. "All peasants listen carefully! This is Raja Purujit's order. After the harvest, one out of every six parts has to be given to the king. Those who do not pay this bali will be severely punished."

In this way, a law was made, and the king began to regularly collect grain from the people after every harvest. Regular and compulsory collection of tribute is called tax.

- What is this part of the lesson about?
 1. The need for war.
 2. The need of an army.
 3. The need to collect resources for the upkeep of the army.
- What law did the king of the mahajanapada make for the payment of bali? Choose the correct alternative -
 - i. People should give according to their own wishes.

ii. People should give a part of every harvest.

iii. People should give as and when the king demands.

- In the days of the mahajanapada, why did the king need to collect bali after every harvest?

The King's Officers

Soon, raja Purujit felt the need to make some more arrangements. Records and accounts needed to be maintained about how much each village had given in tax, or which village had not given any. Complaints and punishments had to be dealt with. The work of managing the army had also increased. The king needed help to manage all this work.

In the earlier days, the important people of the jana, that is the rajanyas, used to manage all this work. In return the king gave them a part of the tribute (bali) and booty won in war.

But the king thought, "I cannot carry out all this work only through the rajanyas of my own jana and my relatives. There may be some courageous, capable and loyal people even in the janapadas that I have conquered. How does it matter if they are from a different jana? I am concerned only with the work. Whoever works well, I will reward well. I will remove from serv-

ice those who do not work according to my wishes. In this way, I can rule my land the way I wish to."

Accordingly, Purujit appointed many officers and employees to assist him and carry out his orders. He also appointed many competent persons as his ministers, whose job it was to advise him and also look after various works on his behalf. The king used to pay a regular salary to his officers, employees and ministers.

Thus the importance of rajanyas began to decline in the mahajanapadas, as the king began to administer the janapadas with the help of other people.

- **What are the important points of this section? Write them in three sentences.**

Questions in the Raja's Mind

The expenses of running the administration of the janapada was exhausting the treasury. This was also one of the reasons for Purujit's desire to conquer neighbouring janapadas and assimilate them into his kingdom.

In a few years time, one more idea occurred to Purujit. He wanted to reduce certain expenses that he thought were not essential. For example, according to the old customs, he was expected to periodically perform huge yagnas. If not, his relatives and the brahmins felt upset. The king now began to think, "Why is it necessary to perform such big yagnas? What does one gain from them?"

Raja Purujit had managed to solve huge problems relating to his kingdom. But he died without finding a solution for changing rituals like yagnas.

* * *

In the times that followed, customs with regard to yagnas did change. We shall read about it in the coming chapters. The problems described in this story were being faced by many janapadas of the time. The kings appointed officers and ministers, built armies, and made laws relating to tax collection. Gradually, the king became the most powerful person in the mahajanapadas. The rajanyas and the other ordinary people of the janas were no longer significant, and the assemblies of all the jana people stopped taking place altogether.

GANASANGHA

There were also some *janapadas* in those days where there was no single king who was all-powerful. In such *janapadas*, all the male members of the *jana* together ran the affairs of the *janapada*. They used to manage the work by meeting and discussing the issues among themselves. All the male members of the *jana* called themselves 'raja'. Isn't it interesting? One *janapada* with so many rajas! Such *janapadas* were called 'Ganasanghas'.

- **In those days there were two important ganasanghas - Malla and Vajji. Spot them on the map.**

The Magadhan Empire

Among the 16 mahajanapadas, Magadha emerged as the most powerful. A king of this *janapada*, called Bimbisara built a powerful army. He and his son Ajatashatru defeated many *janapadas* and annexed them to their kingdom.

- **Look up the boundaries of Ajatashatru's kingdom in Map 5. Compare it with Map 4 and see which janapadas had been made part of the Magadhan kingdom.**

After some years, there was a king in Magadha called Mahapadmananda. He had built such a large army and amassed such a huge treasury that his fame had spread far and wide.

- **Look up Map 5 for the boundaries of Mahapadmananda's kingdom. Notice how many janapadas he added to the kingdom after Ajatashatru. Which janapadas were still outside the kingdom of Magadha?**

Mahapadmananda had defeated so many *janapadas* and annexed them to his kingdom, that Magadha is called an empire.

Alexander's Invasion

In those days there was a kingdom called Macedonia in Greece in Europe. Alexander, who was the king of Macedonia, set out with



Which of these two pictures shows a *ganasangha*? Which one shows a king? Give reasons for your choice

a huge army with the intention of conquering the whole world. After defeating scores of kings, he reached the river Indus. There, he defeated a large number of small kingdoms and *ganasanghas*. One among them had a king named Puru or Porus. You might have heard about him. The armies of these kingdoms fought so bravely that Alexander's army was completely worn out. When they heard of the

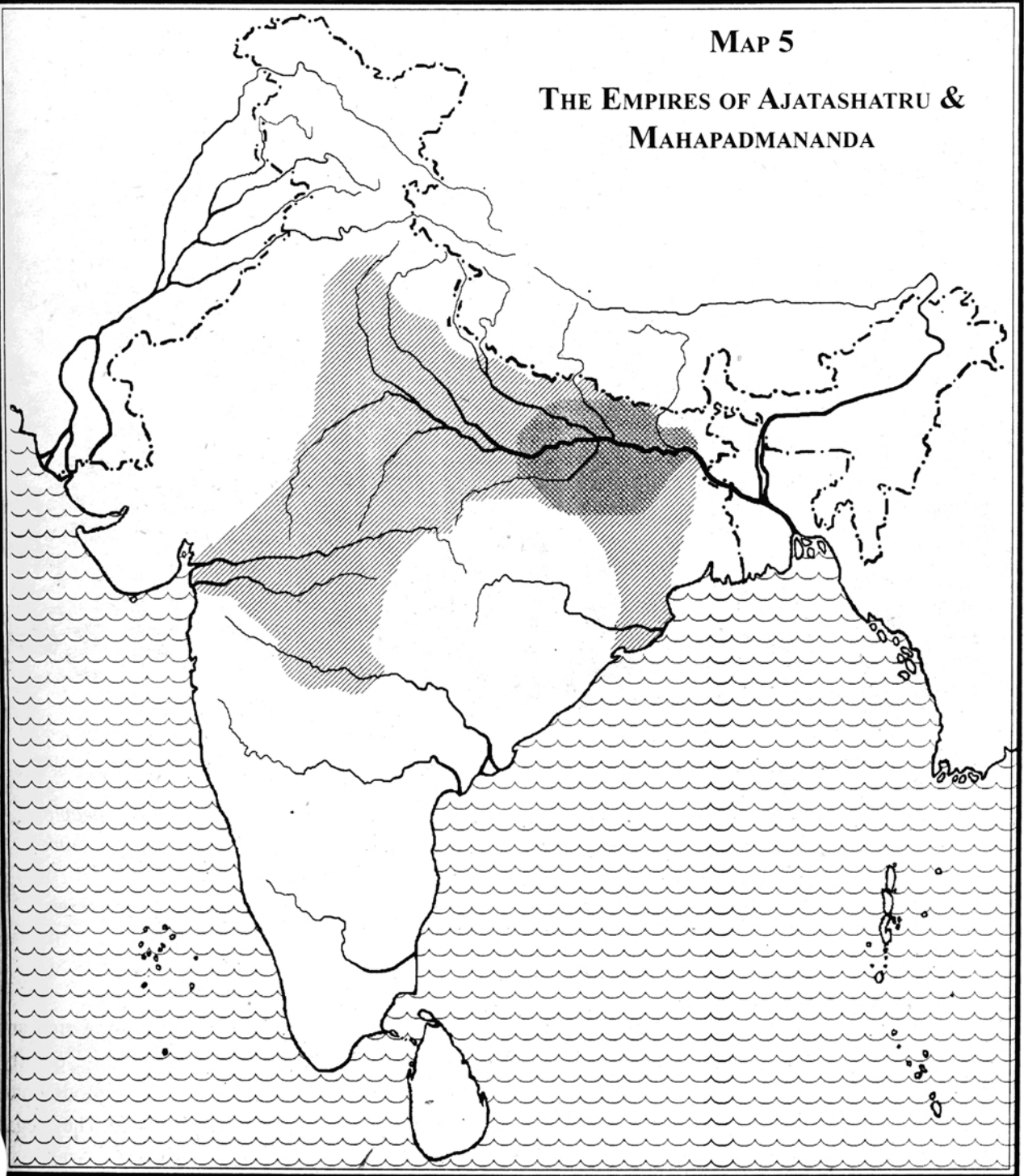
massive armies of Magadha, the Macedonian soldiers refused to proceed further and insisted on returning home. Alexander died on the way back. However, his commanders continued to rule over the territories conquered by him. Thus, west of the Indus, the rule of Alexander's commanders was established. However, to its east, Magadha remained the most powerful kingdom.

EXERCISES

1. What did the kings of the *mahajanapadas* have which the chiefs of the small *janapadas* did not? Explain in detail 3 - 4 such things.
2. a. Whom did raja Purujit make his officers -
Only people of his *janapada* / only *rajanyas* / only people of other *janapadas* / whoever was competent and loyal.
b. What did the king give his officers? A share in the tribute / a share in the spoils of war / salaries
3. While the chiefs of the small *janapadas* wanted to perform many *yagnas*, the kings of the *mahajanapada* were reluctant to perform *yagnas*. What was the reason for this difference ?
4. Write two sentences on each of the following :
a. Ajatashatru
b. Mahapadmananda
c. Alexander
d. *Ganasanghas*
5. Right in the beginning, you had outlined the attributes of a king . Did you find Purujit conforming to your ideas ? Discuss.
6. a. Was there any *mahajanapada* in the region where you live ? Check on the map.
b. In which states of modern India do the various *mahajanapadas* fall ?
7. Raja Purujit began to collect regular tributes from the peasants. Under which sub-title of the chapter will you find information on this ?
8. What does empire mean ? Select the correct alternative -
Nearby kingdom / small kingdom / where there was no king / very big kingdom.
9. Use the following words in your own sentences -
law; relative; advice; regular.

MAP 5

THE EMPIRES OF AJATASHATRU & MAHAPADMANANDA



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External Boundaries of India Today	- · - · -	Ajatashatru's empire	●
Sea	~~~~~	Mahapadmananda's empire	▨