

CBSE Notes Class 6 History Chapter 5 - Kingdoms, Kings and an Early Republic

One question might have struck your mind that how did men become rulers in the past? You will find the answer to this question after going through CBSE Notes Class 6 History Chapter 5 - Kingdoms, Kings and an Early Republic. The chapter also discusses the Magadha and Vajji kingdoms in detail.

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How some men became rulers

Around 3000 years ago, we find some changes taking place in the ways in which rajas were chosen. Some men now became recognised as rajas by performing very big sacrifices. **Ashvamedha or horse sacrifice was** one such ritual in which a horse was let loose to wander freely and it was guarded by the raja's men. If the horse wandered into the kingdoms of other rajas and they stopped it, they had to fight. If they allowed the horse to pass, it meant that they accepted that the raja who wanted to perform the sacrifice was stronger than them. These rajas were then invited to the sacrifice. The raja who organised the sacrifice was recognised as being very powerful and all those who came brought gifts for him.

Janapadas

The rajas who performed big sacrifices were now recognised as being **rajas of janapadas** rather than janas. The word janapada means the land where the jana set its foot and settled down. Archaeologists have excavated a number of settlements in these janapadas such as Purana Qila in Delhi, Hastinapura near Meerut, and Atranjikhhera near Etah.

1. They found that people lived in huts, and kept cattle as well as other animals.
2. They also grew a variety of crops such as rice, wheat, barley, pulses, sugarcane, sesame and mustard.
3. They made earthen pots. One special type of pottery found at these sites is known as Painted Grey Ware.

Mahajanapadas

About 2500 years ago, some janapadas became more important than others, and were known as **mahajanapadas**. Most mahajanapadas had a capital city, many of these were fortified which means that huge walls of wood, brick or stone were built around them. Forts were probably built because:

1. People were afraid of attacks from other kings and needed protection.
2. Some rulers wanted to show how rich and powerful they were by building large, tall and impressive walls around their cities.

3. The land and the people living inside the fortified area could be controlled more easily by the king.
4. Building such huge walls required a great deal of planning.

The new rajas began maintaining armies. Soldiers were paid regular salaries and maintained by the king throughout the year.

Taxes

The rulers of the mahajanapadas were building huge forts and maintaining big armies so they needed more resources. To meet their requirement they started collecting regular taxes.

1. Taxes on crops were collected from peoples because most people were farmers. Usually, the tax was fixed at 1/6th of what was produced. This was known as **bhaga** or a share.
2. There were taxes on crafts persons as well. These could have been in the form of labour.
3. Herders were also expected to pay taxes in the form of animals and animal produce.
4. There were also taxes on goods that were bought and sold through the trade.
5. Hunters and gatherers also had to provide forest produce to the raja as tax.

Changes in agriculture

There were two major changes in agriculture around mahajanapadas time.

Growing use of iron ploughshares: This means heavy, clayey soil could be turned over better than with a wooden ploughshare so that more grain could be produced.

People began **transplanting paddy**. This meant that instead of scattering seed on the ground, saplings were grown and then planted in the fields.

A closer look - Magadha

Magadha became the most important mahajanapada in about 200 years. Many rivers such as the Ganga and Son flowed through Magadha which play an important role for:

- Transport
- Water supplies
- Making the land fertile

Parts of Magadha were forested which was used for building houses, carts and chariots. There were iron ore mines in the region that could be tapped to make strong tools and weapons.

1. Magadha had two very powerful rulers, Bimbisara and Ajatasattu, who used all possible means to conquer other janapadas.

2. Rajagriha (present-day Rajgir) in Bihar was the capital of Magadha for several years. Later the capital was shifted to Pataliputra (present-day Patna).

A closer look - Vajji

Vajji, with its capital at Vaishali (Bihar), was under a different form of government, known as **gana or sangha**. In a gana there were many rulers. Each one was known as a raja. These rajas performed rituals together. They also met in assemblies, and decided what had to be done and how, through discussion and debate.