
1. Background: From Mahajanapadas to Magadha's Rise (6th Century BCE)

After the Later Vedic Age, India was divided into **16 Mahajanapadas**. Among them, **Magadha** (in South Bihar) emerged as the most powerful due to **geographical, economic, and political advantages**.

Causes for the Rise of Magadha:

1. Geographical Advantage –

- Located in the fertile **Gangetic plain**.
- Surrounded by rivers (Ganga, Son, Champa) → easy irrigation & defense.
- Rich **iron ore deposits** in hills of Rajgir → helped in making weapons.

2. Economic Strength –

- Agriculture flourished, trade routes (north–south, east–west) passed through Magadha.
- Use of **punch-marked coins** → monetary economy.

3. Political Organization –

- Strong kingship, efficient army with **elephants**.
- Absorbed neighboring weaker states one by one.

4. Ambitious Rulers & Diplomacy –

- Early kings like **Bimbisara** and **Ajatashatru** used both conquest and marriage alliances.

5. Capital Location –

- Early capitals: **Rajagriha (Girivraja)** → later **Pataliputra (modern Patna)** — centrally located and fortified.

2. Major Dynasties of Magadha

Dynasty	Important Rulers	Contributions / Notes
Haryanka Dynasty (544–412 BCE)	<i>Bimbisara, Ajatashatru</i>	Founded Magadhan power; patronized Buddha and Mahavira; built Rajagriha; Ajatashatru fought wars with Kosala & Vajji.
Shishunaga Dynasty (412–344 BCE)	<i>Shishunaga, Kalasoka</i>	Shifted capital from Rajagriha → Vaishali for a time; held 2nd Buddhist Council at Vaishali.
Nanda Dynasty (344–322 BCE)	<i>Mahapadma Nanda, Dhana Nanda</i>	Enormous wealth, large army; highly centralized administration; overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya (with help of Chanakya).



3. Simultaneous Kingdoms & Background Context

During Magadha's expansion, other Mahajanapadas existed:

- **Kosala, Avanti, Vatsa, Kashi, Vajji (Republic).**
- These either allied or were conquered gradually.
- Republics like **Lichchhavis** (Vaishali) practiced **Ganarajya (Republican governance)** — early democratic form.
- But the trend moved toward **monarchies** — Magadha unified them.



4. Rise of the Mauryan Empire (322 BCE)



Founder: Chandragupta Maurya

- With guidance from **Chanakya (Kautilya)**, he defeated **Dhana Nanda** (Nanda dynasty) and established the **Mauryan Empire**.
- Extended empire across North India; capital: **Pataliputra**.
- Defeated **Seleucus Nikator** (Greek general of Alexander) — got territories of Afghanistan and Baluchistan.

5. Mauryan Administration (As described in *Arthashastra & Megasthenes' Indica*)

Feature	Description
King	Supreme authority; autocratic but guided by ministers.
Council of Ministers (Mantriparishad)	Advised the king; Chanakya was key figure.
Provinces	Empire divided into provinces (each under a <i>Kumara</i> or <i>Aryaputra</i>).
Districts & Villages	Headed by <i>Rajukas</i> (district officers) and <i>Gramika</i> (village head).
Army	Huge standing army — infantry, cavalry, chariots, elephants.
Espionage System	Wide network of spies — <i>Gudhapurusha</i> .
Revenue System	Land tax = main income (1/6 of produce).
Judiciary	Well organized — both civil and criminal laws.

6. Mauryan Rulers

(1) Chandragupta Maurya (322–298 BCE)

- Founder; unified most of India.
- Established strong centralized rule.
- Retired to Shravanabelagola (Karnataka) as a **Jain monk** (under Bhadrabahu).

(2) Bindusara (298–273 BCE)

- Son of Chandragupta.
- Expanded empire further south (Deccan).
- Maintained diplomatic relations with Greek kings.
- Known as **Amitraghata** ("slayer of foes").

● (3) Ashoka the Great (273–232 BCE)

- Initially warlike; fought **Kalinga War (261 BCE)** → massive loss of life.
 - Turned towards **Buddhism** and **Dhamma (moral code)**.
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7. Ashoka's Dhamma (Ethical Governance)

◆ Core Ideas:

- Respect for elders and parents.
 - Compassion for animals.
 - Religious tolerance.
 - Truth, non-violence, and charity.
 - Welfare of subjects — like hospitals, rest houses, trees on roadsides.
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8. Ashokan Edicts (Inscriptions)



Types:

1. **Major Rock Edicts (14)** – deal with moral principles and Dhamma.
2. **Minor Rock Edicts** – personal faith in Buddhism.
3. **Pillar Edicts** – administrative orders and Dhamma principles.

Famous Edict	Location / Content
Rock Edict XIII	Describes Kalinga War and Ashoka's remorse.
Rock Edict XII	Religious tolerance.
Pillar Edict VII	Summary of Dhamma policy.
Minor Rock Edict I	Mentions Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism.

Lumbini Pillar Marks Buddha's birthplace.

Sarnath Lion Capital National Emblem of India.

9. Decline of the Mauryan Empire

Causes:

1. Weak successors after Ashoka (Dasharatha, Samprati).
 2. Over-centralization & huge military cost.
 3. Decline in trade after Ashoka's non-expansionist policy.
 4. Invasions (Greeks, Shungas later).
 5. Administrative inefficiency in distant provinces.
- Last ruler: **Brihadratha Maurya**, killed by **Pushyamitra Shunga** (founder of Shunga dynasty).
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10. Post-Mauryan Dynasties (200 BCE–300 CE)

Dynasty	Region / Rulers	Features
Shunga Dynasty	Pushyamitra Shunga	Revived Brahmanism; patronized Sanskrit learning.
Kanya Dynasty	Vasudeva	Short rule; succeeded Shungas.
Indo-Greeks	Menander (Milinda)	Spread Greek influence in art (Gandhara).
Shakas (Scythians)	Rudradaman I	Ruled western India; Junagadh inscription.
Kushanas	Kanishka	Patron of Mahayana Buddhism; 4th Buddhist Council (Kashmir).
Satavahanas	Gautamiputra Satakarni	Ruled Deccan; promoted trade and Prakrit literature.



11. Art and Architecture (Mauryan & Post-Mauryan)

Period	Features	Examples
Mauryan	Use of polished stone, imperial art.	Ashokan Pillars, Sanchi & Sarnath stupas, Barabar caves.
Post-Mauryan	Religious art flourished (Buddhist, Jain, Hindu).	Gandhara & Mathura schools of art, Amaravati stupa.



12. Sangam Age (South India – 300 BCE to 300 CE)



Features:

- Tamil region ruled by **Chera, Chola, Pandya** dynasties.
- Period named after **Sangams** (literary assemblies in Madurai).
- **Sangam Literature** – deals with love, war, ethics, and life.
- Society: advanced urban life, women participation, maritime trade with Rome.
- **Economy**: pearl fishing, trade, agriculture.
- **Religion**: early Hinduism + hero worship.



13. Chronological Flow (Visual)

Later Vedic Age → 16 Mahajanapadas → Rise of Magadha



Haryanka → Shishunaga → Nanda → Maurya



Chandragupta Maurya → Bindusara → Ashoka



Decline of Mauryas → Shungas → Kanvas → Indo-Greeks → Kushanas → Satavahanas



Sangam Age in South India (Chera, Chola, Pandya)

