

New Beginnings – Cities and States

First Urbanisation of India

- **Urbanization** is the process where an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities and towns, and the ways that society adapts to this shift.
- India's 'First Urbanisation' refers to the **Indus / Harappan / Sindhu-Sarasvatī civilization**.
- After 2000 BCE $\{(2000+2025)-1\}=4024$ years ago] the decline of the **Indus Valley Civilisation** urban life disappeared for nearly a millennium (a period of 1000 years).

Q// Mention the components of the Harappan urban order.

The **Harappan urban system** included:

- Public and private **buildings**
- **Streets and markets**
- **Specialised professions**: potters, smiths, builders, etc.
- **Writing and sanitation system**
- **Governance and state structure**

Second Urbanisation of India

- Around **1st millennium BCE**, a new wave of urbanisation began in the **Ganga plains** parts of the Indus (or Sindhu) basin, and neighbouring regions, gradually spreading across the Subcontinent.

Q// Identify and explain the major historical sources that provide evidence for the second phase of urbanisation in India.

Mainly from two sources: -

- Archaeology (ruins of cities, coins, tools)
- Ancient **literature** (Vedic, Buddhist, Jain texts)
- Supported by:
 - Growth of agriculture (especially in fertile Ganga plains),
 - Use of **iron tools**,
 - Emergence of **trade networks**,
 - Political organisation into **janapadas** and **mahājanapadas**.

Janapadas

Q// What is the meaning and origin of the word Janapada?

‘Janapada’ is a Sanskrit word which means ‘where the people (jana) have set foot (pada),’ that is, have settled down.

- **Janapadas:** Small territorial units ruled by a rājā, often advised by a sabhā or samiti.
- People formed **clans or groups** associated with a specific territory or *janapada*.
- The janapadas grew as trade networks expanded and connected them.

Mahājanapadas

Mahājanapadas were **larger states** formed by combining smaller janapadas.

- By the 8th or 7th centuries BCE, some janapadas merged to form larger units known as *mahājanapadas*.
 - The most frequent list names **16 mahājanapadas**, stretching from Gandhāra in the northwest to Anga in the east and Aśhmaka in central India (near the Godavari River).
 - Some smaller janapadas also continued independently.
- ❖ Examples of some powerful Mahājanapadas: **Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti etc**

Q// What made the Ganga plains a suitable region for the rise of many Mahājanapadas?

Most mahājanapadas were concentrated in the **Ganga plains** due to:

- Growth of agriculture in the fertile Ganga plains,
- The availability of iron ore in the mountains and hills,
- The formation of new trade networks.

Q// Describe the major archaeological findings associated with the capitals of Mahajanapadas.

- Most were fairly large well-fortified cities, with a moat running outside the fortifications as further defence.
- The gateways through the rampart walls would be deliberately kept narrow, so guards may control the movement of people and goods entering or leaving the city.

Governance Systems

- ♠ **Sabha and Samiti:** Councils where elders discussed policies. A good king followed their advice. In some states, the king was even **elected!**
- ♠ **Monarchies:** In these states, the rājā was the ultimate authority.
 - usually a hereditary position (son succeeding father).
 - Kings collected taxes, maintained law and order, built fortifications, and kept armies.

Examples: - Magadha, Kosala, 1w2xAvanti etc

- ♠ **Republics (Gaṇa/Saṅgha):** the sabhā or samiti had more power and took important decisions through discussion, and, if necessary, through vote.

Examples: - Vajji (or Vṛijji), Malla etc

Technological & Economic Advances

- **Iron metallurgy:** Revolutionised agriculture and warfare.
- **Coins:** First **punch-marked silver coins** used for trade.

- Urban centres flourished due to **trade, fortification, and resource use** (e.g., Kauśāmbī, Śhishupalgarh).

Social Structure – Varṇa–Jāti System

- ♠ **Jāti:** Occupation-based communities.
 - often hereditary.
 - *Jātis* often subdivided
 - *They* developed their own customs
- ♠ **Varṇa:** 4-fold classification
 - Brahmins – Focused on preserving and spreading knowledge, and performing rituals.
 - Kshatriyas – Responsible for defending society and land, and engaging in warfare.
 - Vaishyas – Aimed to increase societal wealth through trade, business, or agriculture
 - Shudras – Included artisans, craftspeople, workers, or servants.
- ♠ Early system was **flexible**, became **rigid over time**, especially under colonial rule.
- ♠ The English word 'caste' comes from the Portuguese word 'casta,' used by 16th-century CE travellers to understand Indian society.
- ♠ Scholars use 'caste' to refer to *varṇas*, *jātis*, or the entire *varṇa–jāti* system

Interconnected India

- ♠ Major trade and cultural routes:
 - **Uttarapatha** (NW to Eastern India)
 - **Dakṣiṇapatha** (North to South).
- ♠ By **300 BCE**, urban centres emerged across India, including **Chola, Chera, Pāṇḍya** kingdoms in the south.
- ♠ Śhishupalgarh (today Sisupalgarh, part of Bhubaneswar), which was the capital of the Kalinga region and followed a strict square ground plan, with imposing fortifications and broad streets.
- ♠ The south was rich in resources like **precious and semi-precious stones, gold, and spices**, which led to profitable trade both within India and overseas.
- ♠ By **300 or 200 BCE**, almost the entire Subcontinent, including regions in the Northeast, was a **vibrant, interconnected land**, with goods and culture travelling widely, even beyond India to Central and Southeast Asia.