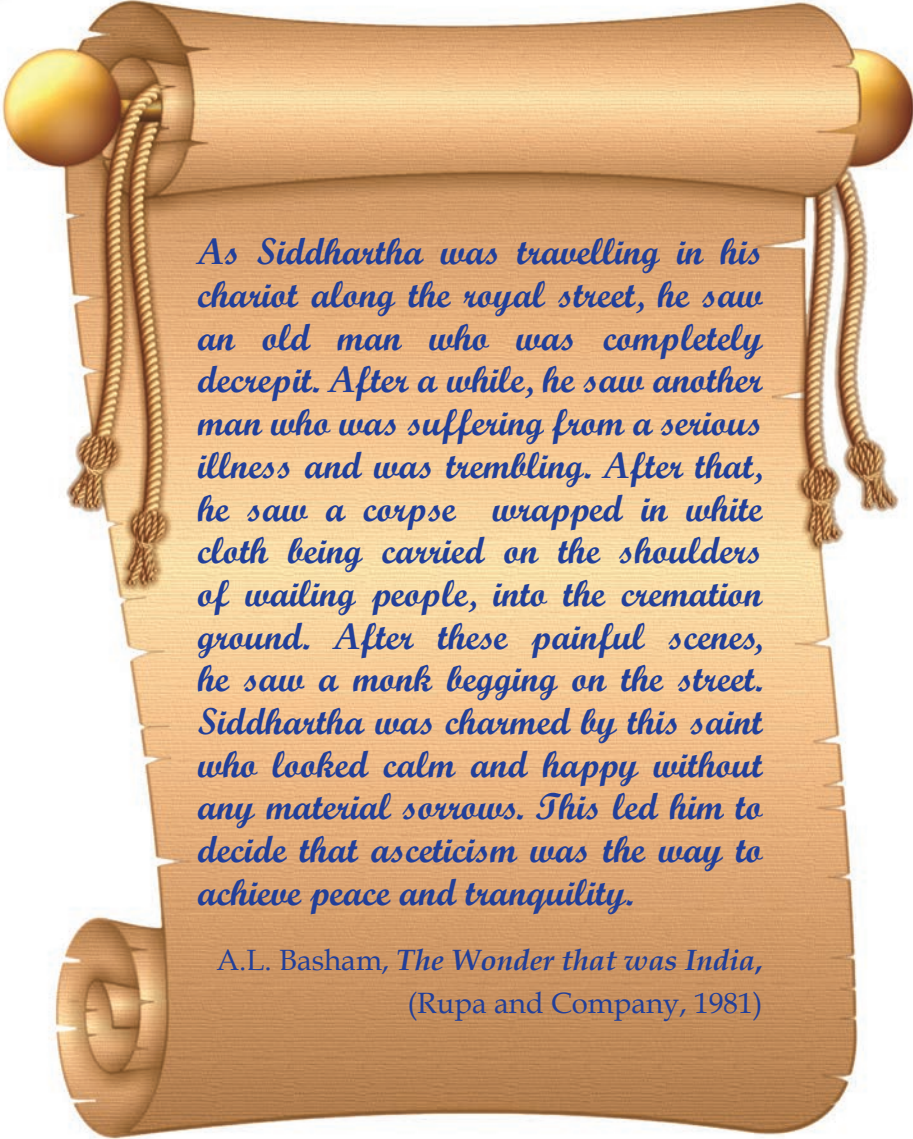


# 2

# IDEAS AND EARLY STATES

A scroll with a wooden frame and gold-colored tassels. The text is written in a blue, cursive font.

*As Siddhartha was travelling in his chariot along the royal street, he saw an old man who was completely decrepit. After a while, he saw another man who was suffering from a serious illness and was trembling. After that, he saw a corpse wrapped in white cloth being carried on the shoulders of wailing people, into the cremation ground. After these painful scenes, he saw a monk begging on the street. Siddhartha was charmed by this saint who looked calm and happy without any material sorrows. This led him to decide that asceticism was the way to achieve peace and tranquility.*

A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*,  
(Rupa and Company, 1981)

This is a story related to the life of Gautama Buddha, the great philosopher who lived in India in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It narrates an event which became the turning point in the life of Siddhartha, who was not happy despite leading a rich and luxurious life as a prince. Seeking the cause of the sufferings of the people around him, Siddhartha took to asceticism and attained enlightenment and later came to be known as Gautama Buddha.

Sixth century BCE was a remarkable period in world history. This was the time when Vardhamana Mahavira and Gautama Buddha in India, Saratushra in Iran, Confucius in China and Heraclitus in Greece spread new ideas. In this period, drastic changes also occurred in economic and political fields across the world. New political systems also came into existence. We will discuss those changes in this chapter.

### Ideological Revolution in the Ganga Basin



Early Iron Tools

During the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, it was mainly in the region of the Ganga basin that new ideas emerged in India. The material conditions of the Ganga basin played an important role in the development of new ideas. The following factors helped in the formation of these material conditions.

- Widespread use of iron tools
- Increased agricultural production
- Growth of trade and cities

By the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, a socio-economic system based on agriculture and cattle had emerged in the Ganga basin. This was not in harmony with the Vedic practice which gave importance to rituals and animal sacrifices. Agriculture depending on cattle was adversely affected by the widely prevailed practice of animal sacrifice as part of rituals. This forced people to think against the Vedic rituals.

The Vaishyas, who had acquired better material progress through advancement in trade, desired a suitable higher status in the society.

During this period, some classes emerged outside the existing Varna system. The important group among these was that of the rich Gahapathis. They were engaged in trade and owned land. In this way, they were in a financially higher position and thus gained better status in the society. It was under this social background that new ideological concepts were formulated. Among these, the Jain and Buddhist philosophies were the

important ones. These new ideas got the support of Vaishyas and Gahapathis.



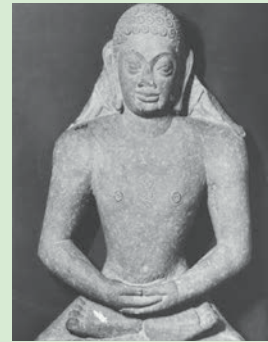
How did the development of an agricultural economy set the stage for the rise of new ideas in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE? Discuss.

## Jainism

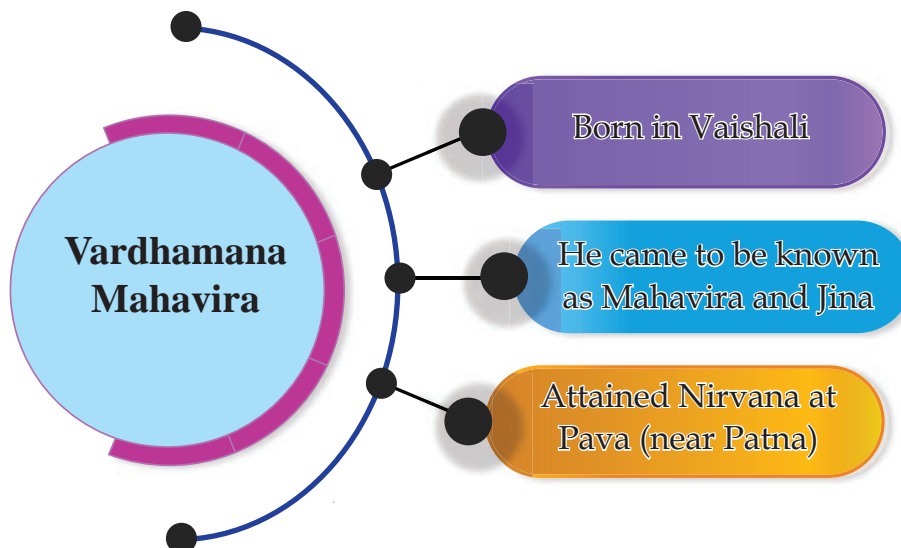
Vardhamana Mahavira was born in Kundagrama near Vaishali in Bihar. According to Jainism, Vardhamana Mahavira is the 24<sup>th</sup> Tirthankara.

### The Tirthankaras

'Tirthankara' means 'one who attained wisdom through asceticism'. There are 24 Tirthankaras in Jainism. Rishabhadeva was the first Tirthankara. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Tirthankara was Parswanatha. Vardhamana Mahavira was the 24<sup>th</sup> (and the last) Tirthankara. Mahavira propagated the ideas of Jainism by adding his principles to those of Parswanatha.



Statue of Tirthankara  
from Mathura



## Doctrines of Jainism

In this world, everything has life

Do not harm any living being

Birth and rebirth are determined on the basis of Karma

Denying the authenticity of the Vedas, Mahavira proposed three principles for attaining 'Moksha' (salvation). They were 'Right Belief', 'Right Knowledge' and 'Right Action'. They are known as the 'Triratnas'. Mahavira shared his ideas with the people in Prakrit languages. According to Jainism, monks and nuns were supposed to observe five vows: don't kill anything, don't steal, don't lie, don't own property and practise celibacy. Later, two sects were formed in Jainism – 'Swetambaras' and 'Digambaras'. The principle of non-violence emphasised by Jainism has influenced Indian philosophy.



### Kerala and Jainism

Jainism which spread to different parts of India came to Kerala also. Wayanad was an important Jain centre in Kerala. The remains of Jain temples are still seen here.



A Jain temple in Wayanad

## Gautama Buddha who Sought the Cause of Sorrows

In the thirty-first sukta, one of the longest discourses of the Buddha in the *Digha Nikaya*, Buddha tells a young man, who has just joined Buddhism, as follows:

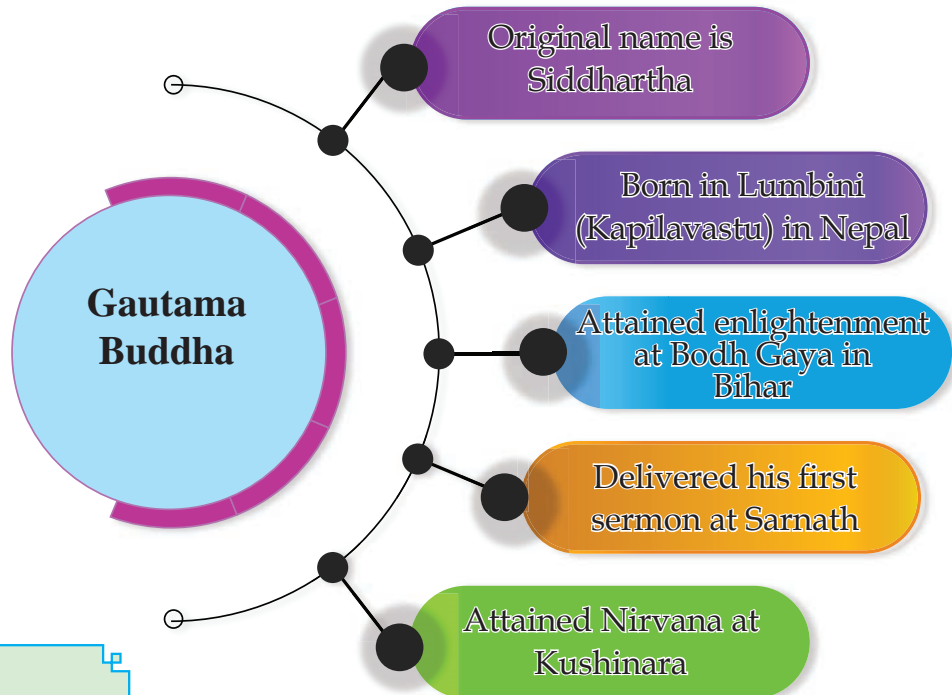
In family life, man and woman should live with mutual respect and both should perform their respective duties properly. In addition to this, employers should treat their servants and workers with courtesy. They should not be given tasks beyond their strength. They should be given adequate food and fair wages. They should be cared for in times of sickness and infirmity. The workers, on their part, should be satisfied with their fair wages and work well and maintain the dignity of their employer.

The Buddha's teachings and principles were simple and practical. He rejected the Vedas, sacrifices (Yagas) and the caste system. His concept of 'Ahimsa' was suitable to the new conditions in the Ganga basin. Cattle were needed in agriculture to prepare land for cultivation and to carry goods. But cattle were killed in large numbers for Yagas (sacrifices). This adversely affected agriculture and transportation of goods. Buddha's stance against sacrifices attracted those who were engaged in agricultural activities. Buddha spread his ideas in Pali, the language of the common people.

Important events in the life of Buddha are given below. Prepare a biography based on this. Collect more information from the school library.



Statue of the Buddha from Mathura  
(1st century CE)



### Ashtangamarga

- Right vision
- Right intention
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood
- Right effort
- Right awareness
- Right meditation

The 'Ashtangamarga' is also known as the 'Middle path.'

### Middle Path

The Buddha forbade a person from taking up severe asceticism. Similarly, Buddha rejected luxurious living. He suggested a middle path between the two.

### Buddha's Principles

- Life is full of sorrows
- Desire is the cause of sorrow
- If desire is destroyed, sorrow will disappear
- To achieve this, the Eight Fold Path (Ashtangamarga) should be followed

### Stupas

Stupas are buildings built on sites where the physical remains of the Buddha or objects used by the Buddha were buried. Stupas are made in a semi-circular shape. They are rich in carvings. Sanchi and Sarnath stupas are famous.

'Sanghas' of monks (monastic orders) were formed to propagate Buddhism. All people were admitted to the Sangha regardless of caste and gender. Women of the Sangha were known as 'Bhikshunis' and the men were called 'Bhikshus.'

Decisions were made in the Sangha through discussions and opinion of the majority. Buddha describes the monastic order thus, "Just as rivers flow

into the ocean and become one, once a person becomes a member of the Buddhist Sangha, that person loses his/her name, forgets the caste, rank, and family.”

Later, Buddhism split into Mahayana and Hinayana. The followers of Mahayana worshipped Buddha as God. Buddhism has made many contributions to the culture of India. The working of the ‘Sangha’ helped to inculcate the sense of democracy and values in the society.



Sanchi Stupa in Madhya Pradesh



### The World Recognises India

Ancient world recognised India through Buddhism. Buddhism spread to Sri Lanka, China, Japan, Burma, Myanmar, Tibet, Afghanistan and Southeast Asia.



Do you think the activities of Buddhist monastic organisations were democratic? Evaluate.



Sarnath Stupa in Uttar Pradesh



### Kerala and Buddhism

Buddhist beliefs were prevalent in Kerala also. Manimekhalai, the heroine of the ancient Tamil work *Manimekhalai*, is said to have embraced Buddhism. Buddha's statues and some other remains have been found from various places in Kerala. Some Malayalam words and names of places indicate Buddhist influence. What does the word ‘Palli’ suggest in relation to place names? Find out.



How did Buddha respond to the socio-economic conditions that prevailed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE? Discuss.

### Indications

- Vedic practices
- Varna system
- Status of women



Find out and list the common ideas propounded by the Buddha and Mahavira.



## Materialism

The main characteristic of Indian culture since ancient times is the emergence and merger of different schools of thought. Several schools of thought were formed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Materialism was one of them. Ajita Kesakambalin was the promulgator of this school of thought. He was a contemporary of the Buddha. The materialists opined that all religious practices are meaningless and that there is neither *Ihaloka* or *Paraloka* (this world or the other world). The materialists said: 'Humans are made up of four elements. When they die, their solid matter dissolves in the earth. Liquidity dissolves in water, heat in fire, breath in air and senses in vacuum.'

➤ Why are they called materialists?



Prepare a virtual tour report including the places connected with the formation of new ideas and religions.



## Mahajanapadas or the Early States

*As long as such decisions are taken together after discussion; as long as they work together; as long as elders are respected, supported and listened to carefully; as long as the women of Vajji live freely; as long as the places of worship in villages and cities exist; as long as people of different faiths can move about freely; as long as they are respected, Vajji will exist.*

Above is what the Buddha said about Vajji (Mahajanapada) in the *Digha Nikaya*, a Buddhist work composed 2300 years ago. What can we learn from this about the administrative system of Vajji at that time?

- Decisions were taken jointly through discussions

- 
- 
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### Janapadas

'Janapada' means a place where people were settled. Forests were burnt down to form farmlands and residential areas. People settled there permanently. This is how Janapadas were formed. Later Vedas refer to various Janapadas.

Vajji was one of the many states in India in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Let us examine how these states were formed.

Tribal social system existed in the Vedic period. The tribes of the period were known as 'Jana'. As agriculture became widespread, these tribal communities began to settle down permanently in different places. These came to be known as 'Janapadas.'

Agricultural surplus production in the Janapadas led to the growth of trade as well as the development of towns. Along with trade, towns became manufacturing centres for different crafts. Some regulations became necessary to coordinate and regulate such diverse economic activities. In this situation, the tribal form of governance disappeared.

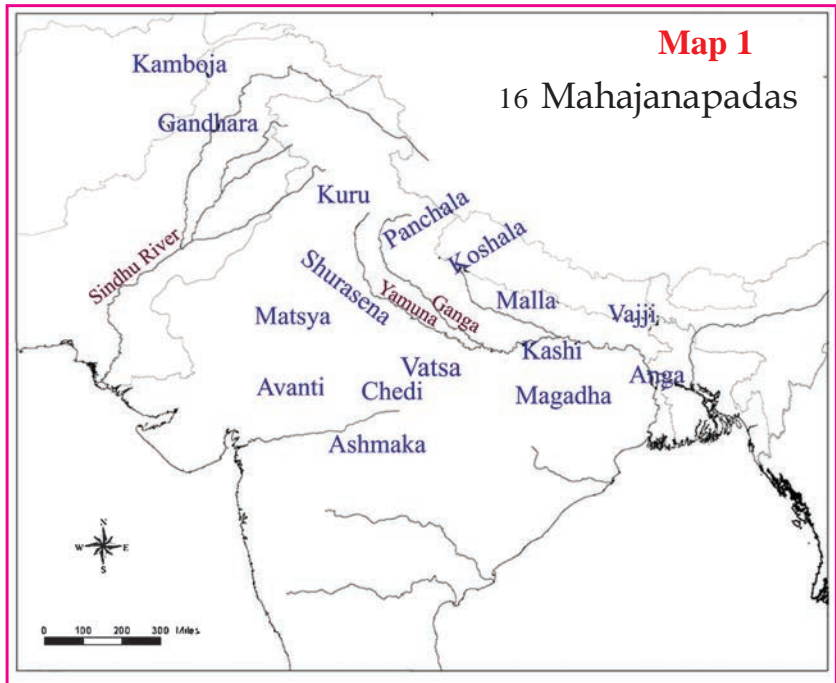


### Cities

After a long journey, Buddha and his disciple Ananda reached the city of Kushinara. The Buddha's nirvana was also discussed among many things. Ananda suggested Buddha that he should not attain nirvana at a place like Kushinara where there were only mud huts in a forest; instead, the Buddha should select bigger cities like Champa, Rajagriha, Shravasti, Saketa, Kausambi or Varanasi for his last breath. What did you learn from this description in the Buddhist work *Digha Nikaya*?

The inextricable relationship with agriculture and the soil started during this time. This gave rise to the view of one's own land. This is how state formation became a reality. The Buddhist work *Anguttaranikaya* speaks of 16 political entities that came into being, in this way. These were known as 'Mahajanapadas'. The changes described above are referred to as 'second urbanisation,' by historians.

Find out and list 16 Mahajanapadas from the map given below

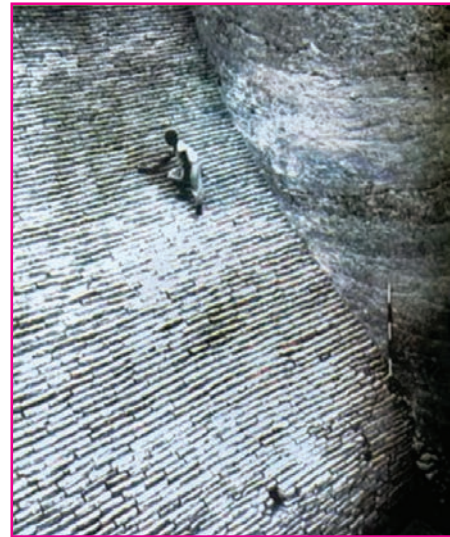


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## Administrative System in the Mahajanapadas

Contemporary works provide some information about the administrative systems of the Mahajanapadas. An efficient system of tax collection and a standing army developed during this time. The word 'Bali' found in Pali texts means tax. 'Bhaga' was another type of tax. Grains and cattle were mainly paid as tax. Those who lived in the forests paid forest produce as taxes, while artisans worked for the king on fixed days.

There were many officials for carrying out administration. The work *Satapathabrahmana* mentions Senani, Purohita and Gramani who assisted the king. Mahajanapadas had forts and capital cities.



Wall at Kausambi (Capital of Vatsa Mahajanapada)



Identify and discuss the various stages of growth from a tribal political system to Mahajanapadas and their characteristics.

## The Rise of Magadha

The sixteen Mahajanapadas were constantly engaged in wars for dominance. Magadha was the ultimate winner. Find the location of Magadha from Map 1. Identify the present Indian state to which Magadha belonged.

Magadha was a fertile region with good rainfall. There were large deposits of iron ore also. Hence, the iron needed for tools and weapons was readily available. Elephants were an important factor in wars in those days. Elephants were available in large numbers in the forests of Magadha. This ensured Magadhan victory in battles. The Ganga and its tributaries provided easy transportation of goods. Magadha also had efficient rulers like Bimbisara and Ajatashatru.

### Dynasties and Prominent Kings of Magadha

- Haryanka Dynasty - Bimbisara, Ajatashatru
- Sishunaga Dynasty - Sishunaga
- Nanda Dynasty - Mahapadmananda



Do you think that the geographical features were the main reason for the growth of Magadha? Why?

## From Magadha to the Maurya Kingdom

Magadha was ruled by various dynasties. Chandragupta Maurya defeated Dhanananda, the last ruler of the Nanda dynasty in 321 BCE and founded the Maurya Kingdom.

*This is a big and beautiful city. There is a big wall surrounding this city. It has 64 entrance gates and many towers. The two- and three-storeyed houses are built of wood and mud blocks. The king's palace is also made of wood.*

Above is the description of the Greek envoy Megasthenes about the city of Pataliputra (present-day Patna), the capital of the Maurya kingdom. *Arthashastra* written by Kautilya, inscriptions of Emperor Asoka and coins in circulation at that time help in the study of the history of the Maurya kingdom.

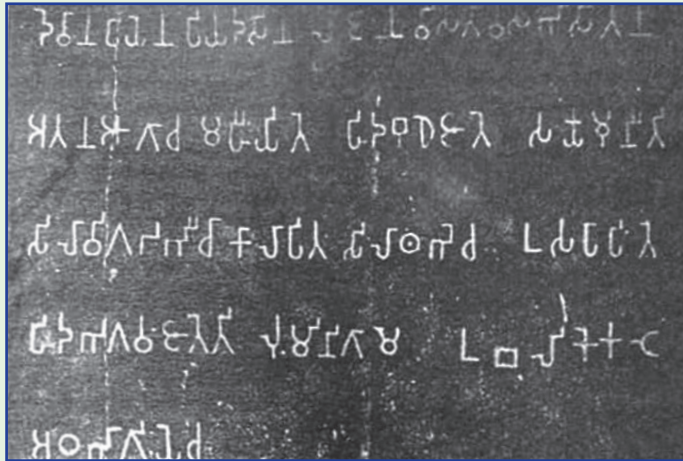
## Arthashastra and Saptanga Theory

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is an important historical document that provides information about the Maurya kingdom. R. Shyama Sastri, head of the Archaeological Library Department of Mysore, got the manuscript of *Arthashastra* from a scholar in Thanjavur. In 1907 Shyama Shastri published this. The work has fifteen chapters. *Arthashastra* refers that a kingdom rests on seven components or Saptangas.



- *Swami* – king
- *Amathya* – ministers
- *Janapada* – land and people
- *Durga* – fortified and protected area
- *Kosha* – treasury
- *Danda* – justice
- *Mitra* – friendly countries

King Asoka was the most important ruler of the Maurya Kingdom. After he invaded and conquered Kalinga (see Map-2, present-day Odisha), the Maurya kingdom expanded. It is recorded in the inscriptions that Asoka gave up war after the Battle of Kalinga.



Rumindei (Lumbini) Inscription

*At this place where Buddha Shakyamuni was born, Devanampiya Piyadasi came and worshipped in person, twenty years after his coronation. A stupa surrounded by a granite wall was erected here to signify that this was the birthplace of that great person. It was decided that the people of Lumbini should be exempted from the 'bali' and that they need to give only one-eighth part of the harvest as 'bhaga'.*

Inscription in Rumindei, Nepal (Lumbini) and its translation are given above.



What do you understand about the Maurya kingdom from this inscription?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....



### Asokan Inscriptions

A large number of stone inscriptions of Asoka have been discovered from various parts of the Indian subcontinent. They are written in Brahmi, Kharoshti and Aramaic scripts. The Asokan inscriptions were first read in 1838 by the British epigraphist James Prinsep. Most of the inscriptions refer to the king as 'Devanampiya' (beloved of God). But the name 'Asoka' can be found in the inscriptions of Maski, Udegulam and Nittoor in Karnataka.

Most of the scripts used in modern India are derived from the Brahmi script.



𑀅 Hindi

𑀓 Bengali

𑀧 Malayalam

𑀓 Tamil

## Mauryan Rule

You have seen that the Maurya kingdom was vast. Now, let us look at their system of administration.

As you know, our country is divided into various states for administrative convenience and all states have capitals. The Maurya kingdom was also divided into various provinces in this way. Such provinces were under the control of governors. Pataliputra, the capital, was under the direct control of the Emperor.



Find the capitals of the provinces from Map 2 and complete the table.

Map 2



▲ Provincial Capitals

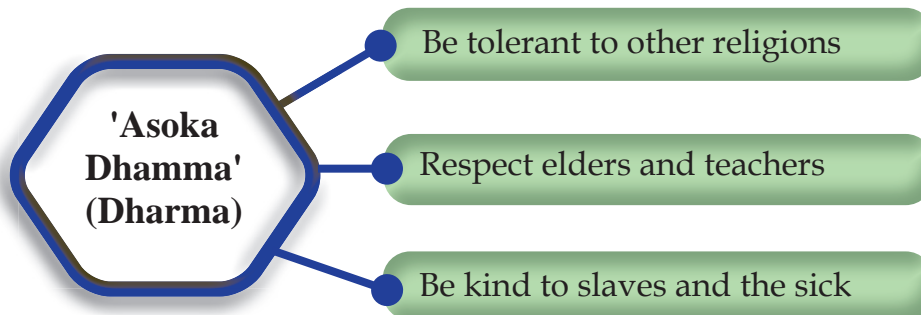
◆ State Capital

Southern province	
Western province	
Northern province	
Eastern province	

The Mauryan army had five divisions. They were infantry, cavalry, chariots, elephants and the navy. Military administration was carried out by a 30 member committee.

The ideas propagated by Emperor Asoka to maintain peace and coexistence among his subjects are known as 'Asoka Dhamma' (Dharma). We learn about this from Asoka's edicts.

The following are the main ideas of 'Asoka Dhamma'.



Eminent historian Romila Thapar opines that 'Asoka Dhamma' was a policy for the efficient administration of a vast country and for keeping various social groups in harmony.



Romila Thapar



What features of the present Indian administrative system can be seen in the Mauryan administrative system? Discuss and compare.



## Growth of Trade

The above image shows the early coins that were in circulation in ancient India. These are known as Punch Marked Coins. They are made of silver and copper. These are evidences to show that coins were used for trade.



Goods were transported through land, sea and rivers. Grains, textiles, metal, etc. were the chief commodities of trade. The words 'Setthis' and 'Sattthavahakar' mentioned in the books of those days refer to traders.



Observe the map and find out the regions through which trade was conducted.

So far, we have been discussing the origin and formation of the Mahajanapadas in the Indian sub-continent and how they later evolved into the Maurya Kingdom. Another region that witnessed similar political changes in this period was Greece in Southeastern Europe.



## State Formation in Greece

Find the location of Greece from the map given below:



In Greece, villages stood together for the purpose of security and governance. They came to be known as city-states. A city-state consisted of a city and the surrounding agricultural villages. Hills and mountains provided natural boundaries for these city-states. Some of the city states were islands. The capitals of these city-states were located on high hills. Athens, Sparta, Corinth, and Thebes were some of the major city-states of Greece.

### Athens on the Democratic Way

The system of government that prevailed in Athens 2500 years ago resembled modern democracy. This was different from the system of governance in other city-states. All males, over the age of 30, except slaves were considered as citizens. These citizens formed a committee and met four times a year to take decisions

on important matters. Women, artisans and the foreigners who worked as traders were not considered as citizens.



As an important centre of trade in the Mediterranean region, Athens was a prosperous city-state. Many in Athens were skilled in ship building and seafaring. They constantly travelled to nearby areas and gathered new ideas and skills. Many thinkers from other regions were attracted to Athens. They were known as Sophists. Herodotus, who is considered as the father of history, is one of those thinkers who reached Athens in this way.

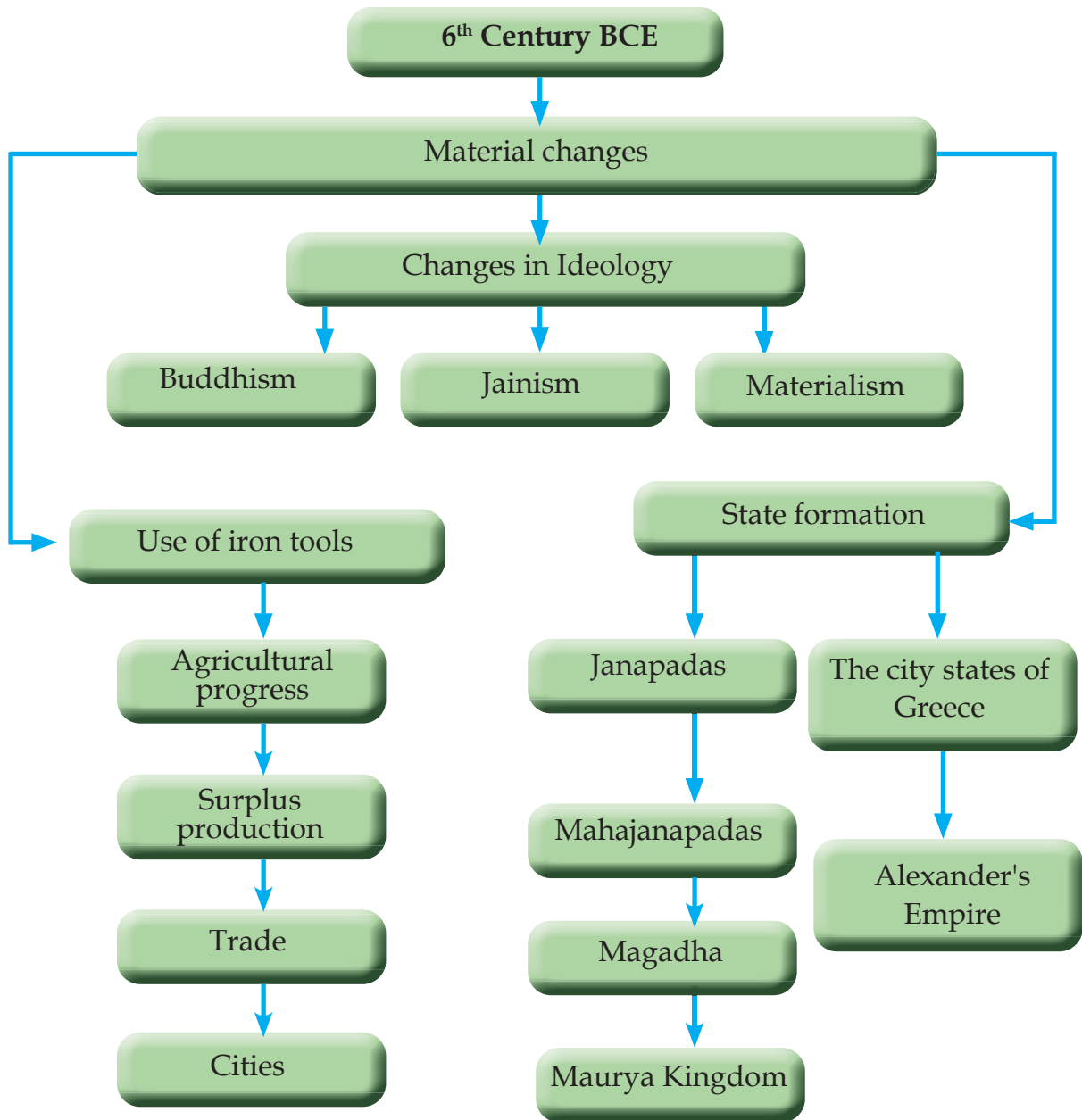


How did the Athenian system of government differ from modern democracy?



Compare the Mahajanapadas of India and the city-states of Greece.

Sixth century BCE was a period that witnessed significant changes in history. Changes occurred in various spheres of the life of the people during that time. The changes in material life were reflected in the spheres of politics and philosophy also. Thus, new ideas emerged during the period. These have had a decisive influence on subsequent human history.





## Extended Activities

- Prepare a short biographical text based on the lives of thinkers who popularised new ideas in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Make them attractive, by adding pictures.
- Prepare a digital presentation including maps on the topic 'From Janapadas to the Maurya Kingdom.'
- Organise a debate on 'Ideas and Early State Formation'.