

Lesson 29A

Towards the formation of the state

Summary

In India the formation of the state can be traced back to the early Vedic period when the kingdoms were formed. The kingdoms replaced the chiefdoms. The early kingdom was known as Janpadas which were later replaced by Mahajanpadas. Mahajanpadas were characterized by well-fortified capital city, large number of servants and huge armies. There emerged a distinction between the Raja or Chief and the Jana- the common people. Gradually the position of king became hereditary and an administrative apparatus developed to sustain the position of the king.

Chiefdoms in Early Vedic Literature

□ The Rigveda is a collection of hymns addressed to various gods, in particular to Agni, Indra and Soma.

• Hymns include lists of things for which people prayed.

□ Occasionally give us the names of chiefs or important men of those times.

Rajas with a difference

the term raja is used as an adjective for a number of gods.

occasionally used to describe powerful men.

Battles

- Battles were fought to acquire pasture land.
- No regular army, but there were assemblies where people met and discussed matters of war and peace.
- The Rigveda contains the names of a number of tribes.
- These include the Purus, Yadus, Bharatas, Anus, and Druhus.
- Two terms being used for the common people-Jana and Vis
- The raja is referred to as the raja of a jana or a vis.

Difference between Chiefs and Kings

Chiefs

- not hereditary
- do not have any permanent administrative mechanism
- do not collect regular taxes
- do not maintain standing armies
- interact with people in assemblies

Kings

- kings are hereditary.
- supported with the administrative system.
- receive revenue from taxation.
- maintain standing armies.
- assemblies in formal occasions.

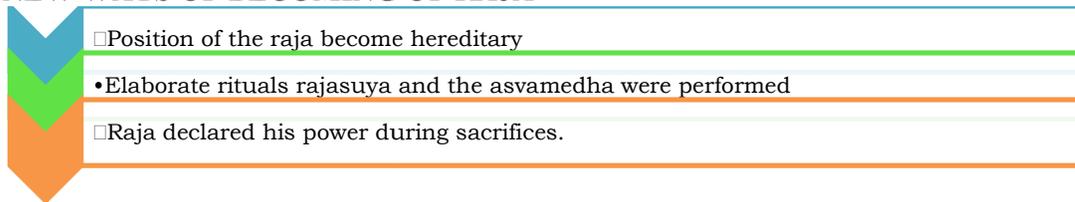
THE EARLIEST KINGDOMS: JANAPADAS

- Between about 1000 BC and 500 BC, certain important developments took place in north India.
- Later Vedic literature gave information about a new form of political organization that called janapada.

- Another distinctive feature of the janapadas was that the population living in these

territories was often classified according to varna.

NEW WAYS OF BECOMING OF RAJA



THE BEGINNINGS OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

- One of the rituals frequently described in later Vedic text in the rajasuya.
- Rajasuya mention a ritual known as the ratni namhavimsi.
- This is a ritual in which the raja was expected to make offerings in the homes of ratnins.
- They were officials of the raja.
- There is no mention of regular salaries being paid to these “officials.”
- They might be the nucleus of the later administrative system.

RESOURCES FOR THE RAJA

- The main ways in which the raja could acquire resources was through battle, and through gifts
- These gifts, often referred to as bali, could be demanded on rituals occasions

MAHAJANAPADAS

- By about 500 BC, some janapadas became more powerful than the others and were now known as mahajanpadas
- Buddhist and Jaina text provide us with lists of 16 mahajanapadas

FORTIFIED CITIES

- Almost all Mahajanapadas had a capital city.
- These settlements were fortified with huge walls of wood, brick or stone.
- These cities sustained their livelihood by the agriculture and iron industry

NEW ARMIES

- Army of mahajanpadas were organized differently.
- Soldiers in the new army were paid regular salaries and maintained by the king throughout the year

- Elephants being used on a large scale.
- Iron industry provided good weapons

REGULAR TAXES

- Taxes on crops: taxes on crops were fixed at 1/ 6th of the produce.
- These taxes were called a bhaga.
- Taxes on crafts: This was usually in the form of labour demands.
- Taxes on goods that were bought and sold through trade was another form of taxation.

MAGADHA AND ITS RULERS

- Magadha became the most important mahajanapada in about two hundred years.
- Geography of Magadha provided protection from external attacks.
- Magadha had two very powerful rulers, Bimbisara and his son Ajatashatrum
- Mahapadma Nada was another important ruler of Magadha.
- He extended his control up to the northwest part of the subcontinent

GANASANGHAS

- While many mahajanapada were ruled by individuals rajas, some were under a different form of government, and were known as ganasanghas.
- These rajas performed rituals together.
- These rituals were not like the Vedic sacrifices.
- They also met in assemblies, and decided what had to be done and how, through discussion and debate.
- All the land of the gana sanghas was owned by all the rajas together (jointly).

- They usually got slaves and labourers known as ***dasakarmakaras*** to cultivate the land.
- Some of the most well-known ganasanghas were those of the Mallas and the Vajjis.

Evaluate yourself

- Q. Differentiate between chiefs and kings.
- Q. List the name of Mahajanpadas.
- Q. Explain Gana Sanga.