Chapter-2

(Physical Feature & Political History of Northern India)
PHYSICAL FEATURE OF NORTHERN INDIA

Before commencing a study of the material life of the people of northern India, some knowledge of the principal physical features of the concerned area is essential. Subbarao\(^1\) rightly said that "for an intelligent understanding of the pattern of development of cultures in India, one should begin with geographical factors". The area of the present study is confined only to the northern part of the Indian territory which has been divided into number of units comprising the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. But it is significant to note that these administrative divisions do not make a geographical and ecological homogeneity and every region has its own specific character to which man, plant, soil and atmosphere contributed a lot.

Out of sixteen great\(^2\) states (sodasmahajanapadas) in c 600 B.C. except Gandhara, Kambhoja (both now in Pakistan) and Asmaka (Maharashtra) all belong to the area under discussion (Map No 1). Besides it, in the above mentioned states the national language, Hindi is quite popular in the comparison to other parts of India and the division of northern India is here based upon these two factors. To understand it clearly we can divide it region wise into seven parts.

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\(^1\) Subbarao, B., 1958, *The Personality of India*, Baroda, p 8
\(^2\) Law, B C, 1976, *Historical Geography of India*, Delhi, pp 42-53
Map No.1 - India in the age of Mahajanapada

Courtesy: Sharma, R.S., 1977, Ancient India, NCERT, New Delhi, p 70
(i) Rajasthan Plain,
(ii) Punjab Plain,
(iii) Upper Ganga Plain,
(iv) Middle Ganga Plain,
(v) Budelkhand Region,
(vi) Malwa Region and
(vii) Udaipur – Gwalior Region

(i) Rajasthan Plain: The Rajasthan plain (24°30′N-30°-12′N and
69°15′E-76°-45′E) covers an area of 1,96,747 sq km of Rajasthan
and includes the marusthali (eastern portion of Thar desert) and the
adjoining begar (steppe land) to the west of Arawali ranges (Map
No 2) 3 Historical and archeological evidences prove that the region
being well wooded and suited for human habitation has been settled
since remote historical period 4 The Saraswati and the Drishdavati
rivers flowed through this part to the Arabian sea during the Vedic
period Even the Indus had one branch flowing through this part into
the Rann of Kutch In the valley of these ancient rivers, archeological
remains of this period extending from the Harappa to the
comparatively recent have been discovered

It is significant to note as pointed out by Singh that during the
permo-carboniferous period, western Rajasthan was covered by

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3 Singh, R L (ed.), 2003, India A Regional Geography Varanasi pp 49 50
4 Abhichandani C T and B B Roy, 1966, "Rajasthan desert – its Origin and
Amelioration", International Geographical Jouranal, XLI, Nos 3 & 4 p 37
Map No.2- Rajasthan Plain

The climate of this plain is characterized by extremely high range of temperatures and aridity although sharing the characteristic monsoonal variations throughout the year. It is the hottest region of India. The entire "sanded over plain" of marusthal and the begar receive less than 50 cm. of annual rainfall. The Rajasthan plain displays great variations in geographical features. The region slopes, generally from east to the west and from north to south. The most important river flowing through this region is the Luni which rises in the Arawali range south-west of Ajmer and flows towards the south-west. The Luni reaches the Rann of Kutch only during the rainy season. It is apparent that excepting the south-east portion, the rest of the Rajasthan plain is an area of inland drainage. Thus the following four physiographical zones may be recognized:

(a) The semi-arid transitional plain (Shekhawati tract) characterized by inland drainage and strewn with salt lakes such as Didwana, Kuchman, Degna and the great Sambhar etc. In the extreme north lies the Ghaggar plain.

(b) The western most belt is covered with sand dunes extending from the great Rann along the Pakistan border to Punjab.

(c) The rocky area characterizes this zone. It is the comparatively dune free tract of Jaisalmer-Barmer-Bikaner. The limestone and

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Singh, R.L., *op cit*, p.51
sand stone rocks exposed here belong to Jurassic and Eocene formation.

(d) The little desert found eastward is having almost similar features as the western most regions covered with dunes.

The Rajasthan plain areas are covered with scrubs, which are thorny and have a stunted growth. In the arid region babul (Acacia milotica), Acacia senegal, Prosopis spicigera, and Prosopis juliflora. The soil of Rajasthan plain are generally characterized as sandy, containing 90 to 95 percent sand and 5 to 7 percent clay. It has been classified as desert soil, red desertic soil, yellowish brown sandy soil, and alluvial soil.

Rajasthan is endowed with a great variety of minerals. The Rajasthan plain is devoid of ferrous and other metallic minerals. A few important minerals, namely, gypsum, lignite, and fuller's earth, however are concentrated in Rajasthan plain. The fuller’s earth is mainly used for refining vegetable oils and for filtering and colouring petroleum products mainly lubricants.

(ii) Punjab plain: The Punjab plain (27°39'N-32°30'N and 73°51'E-77°36'E) is situated in the northwest of the great plains of India (Map No 3). This region occupies an area of 95,714 sq km and comprises the reconstituted states of Punjab, Haryana and the Union territory of
Map No.3- Panjab Plain

Delhi\textsuperscript{6} This plain, a physically distinct unit, is made up largely of extensive alluvial deposits. Culturally, this is the region where varied cultures have mingled with each other. It is a region which has occupied a great strategic importance since time immemorial. Culturally it is old and settled very early in the human history. It was in conformity with the general trend of the pre-historic age when river valley cultures had evolved in the middle east that the Indus Valley also developed a highly advanced culture which in the east extended as far as Rupar along the Sutlaj in sub-montane belt of the plains. Excavations at Rupar have revealed the existence of a Harappan cultures and thereafter\textsuperscript{7}.

Geologically this plain is of very recent age. The climate of this region is semi-arid monsoon type. Over the entire region the highest average temperatures are recorded in June ranging from 32.9°C (Chandigarh and Amritsar) to 34.5°C (New Delhi). The monthly mean temperature during November-February is below 20°C and January is the coldest month throughout the region with mean temperature varying from 11.8°C to 14.2°C in different parts. The rainfall also varies. The sub-mountain tract receives an average, about 75 cm of rainfall annually while in the extreme southwest it decreases to less than 30 cm.

\textsuperscript{6} Wheeler M 1953 The Indus Civilization supplementary volume \textit{The Cambridge History of India}, p 2
This plain suffers otherwise also. From April to June, practically throughout the day hot winds blow steadily from the west. Another unpleasant feature is the dust storm particularly in the southern parts.

The relief and drainage system of this plain is most striking. It is apparent that in the north there is a slope from the Siwalik hills towards the south and southwest, while in the southeast the Arawali outliers provided a slope towards the north. It is only in eastern Gurgaon that the land in general has southerly and southeasterly slope. North of the Delhi, particularly throughout the plain the old high bank of the Yamuna river forms the summit levels of the plain. In the southern part of the plain an east-west band is formed where the alluvial detritus from the Arawali meets that of the Himalayas. The topography of the greater part of plain is marked by slight undulations.

This region is blessed with a good number of rivers which account for its high fertility. The greater part of this region suffers from a lack of perennial rivers. The Ravi, the Beas, the Sutlaj and the Yamuna are the only perennial rivers and have their sources in the snowy regions of the Himalayas. In the upper Bari Doab several smaller streams flow down the northern heights and join the Ravi and the Beas. The Kiransakki, a tributary of the Ravi, joins it on the left bank in south near the international boundary with Pakistan. The Ghaggar another important river, rises from the Siwalik hills but becomes dry after
flowing for a short distance from the hills. The Siwalik feeds this river only in the rainy season. It is not drawing any water from the Himalayan glaciers, like the other major rivers of the Punjab. After traversing the Siwaliks in the neighbourhood of Sirmaur, it leaves the hills near Ambala and meets the Saraswati river at Rasula in Patiala district. The river Drishdavati or Chautang has its course very near to that of the Saraswati and both the streams flow close to each other up to Kurukshetra and then it takes a southwesterly turn. There are evidences that the Saraswati passed through Hissar, Bhadra Nohar in Haryana and ultimately meet the Ghaggar near Suratgarh. Other important streams of the plain are the Dohan, the Kasantti, the Sahibi and the Indori from the Arawalis, which flow towards the north in Gurgaon district.

As regard the natural vegetation of the Punjab plains Singh writes, “in the remote past there were extensive areas covered with natural vegetation, particularly in the southeast (Haryana) and sub-Montane belt right from bank of Yamuna to the Ravi, much of which has been removed.” Now only 3.4% of the area is under forest. The important floras of this region are stunted thorny bushes with occasional kikar or babul (Acacia nilotica) trees. The scrub jungles

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8 Spate O H K 1954 India and Pakistan London p 485
10 Singh, R L, op cit, p 93
consist mostly of jai, jund and coper Shisham (Dalbergia sissoo) and dhak (Butea dactylica) are also available in the northern and the southern part of the plain respectively. As far as mineral resources are concerned, iron-ore is found in the Aravali tract of the south. Good quality limestone occurs in Ambala and Mahendragarh districts. The other important minerals is slate, which is available in Gurgaon and Mahendragarh districts.

(iii) Upper Ganga Plain: The plain (73°3' E-82°21'E and 25°15' N-30°17'N), according to Stamp covers about 1,49,029 sq km (about 51%) of the area of the old Uttar Pardesh. This region has anciently held a unique position in the march of Indian history. Several Janapadas took their birth in the lap of this plain such as Kuru (with capital at Hastinapura), southern Panchala (with capital at Kampilya), northern Panchala (with capital at Ahichchhatra), and Sursena (with capital at Mathura), etc.

This region is sub-humid and have four well marked seasons i.e., the hot summer, the wet summer, the pre-winter transition and the winter. The gradual rise in temperature which starts from February becomes more rapid increasing by 5°C by March and continuous till May-June (Maximum over 40°C). The scorching effect

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12 Singh, R L., *op cit.*, pp 133-135
Map No.4- Upper Ganga Plain

of loo (the hot and dry westerlies) can be seen in the month of May and June. The average annual rainfall varies between 50 cm and 140 cm, with an uneven spatial distribution in this region of almost uniform topography and lithology. The alluvial soils with variants, the usar and bhur depending on drainage condition, mechanical and chemical constituents and the climate characteristics are observed in different parts. In addition, there are minor variations in certain properties. The two common types the khader and bhangar soils are available in this region with different local names.

The main drainage system of this region is the Ganga. Besides the Ganga two important tributaries, the Ghaghara and the Gomati join the master stream in the middle Ganga plain. The Ganga and its major tributaries, the Yamuna, the Ram Ganga and the Ghaghara are the only Himalayan rivers which carry sufficient water, whole year around, though with high seasonal fluctuations. From the south the Chambal is the only tributary which runs parallel for miles together before joining the Yamuna.

The Upper Ganga plain is further divisible into Awadh and Rohilkhand plain. The Awadh and the Sarayapur plains are drained by the Ghaghara and the Gomati while the Ram Ganga collects most of the drainage of the Rohilkhand plains. This region is covered with
thick forest. The plant species available from the tarai forest are kans, munj (Phaseolus radiatus) etc. In the western part shisham (Dalbergia sissoo), babul (Acacia nilotica) khaïr (Acacia catechu) and semal (Bombax ceiba) are the main species.

(iv) Middle Ganga Plain: The large physical area (24°30'N-27°50'N and 81°47'E-87°50'E) of 144, 409 sq km of this plain is recognized as the heart region of India because of its immense demographic, cultural and economic significance (Map No 5). It covers the Bihar plains and eastern Uttar Pradesh (mostly purba plains) in their entirety.

The region appears to have human settlements during the prehistoric time and it has remained a crucible of numerous ethnic groups. Among the sixteen great states (sodasmahajanapadas) during the time of Lord Buddha, the Kosala of Saket and Sravasti, the Vatsa of Kausambi, the Magadha, and the Anga belong to this region. Besides it several confederacies such as the Vajjians of eight clans, i.e., the Lichchhavis, the Janatrikas, the Videhas, the Vajjis etc, the Mallas of Pawa and Kusinagar and the Sakiyas in northern Saryupur belongs to this plain.

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13 ibid, pp 136-137
Map No.5- Middle Ganga Plain

Climatically it is transitional in character between the relatively drier upper Ganga plains and humid lower Ganga plains. With moderate to fairly high rainfall and fertile soil, the region is a natural habitat of dense forest cover of sal (Shorea rubusta) and other species like shisham (Dalbergia sissoo), jamun (Syzygium cumini), mahua (Madhuca indica), ber (Zyzyphus mauritiana) etc. But the village waste lands or vacant places are covered by naturally growing trees like the peepal (Ficus religiosa), palmyra, date-palm (Phoenix dactylifera) etc. While, such grasses as bher (Cuscuta ceanothi), moonj (Phaseolus radiatus), kans, jhau (Tamarix gallica) etc are found in diaras, tarai or the other low-lying areas.

(v) Bundelkhand Region: The region (24°00'-26°30'N and 78°10'-81°30'E) bounded by the Yamuna in the north, escarped ranges of the Vindhyan plateau in the south, the Chambal in the west and Panna-Ajaigarh ranges in the south-east is known as Bundelkhand (Map No.6). It comprises of four districts of Uttar Pradesh (Jalaun, Jhansi, Hamirpur and Banda) and four districts of Madhya Pradesh (Datia, Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur and Panna) together with Lahar (Bhind district) and Bhandar (Gwalior district) tahsils in the northwest with the total area of about 54,560 km\(^2\). The early history of this region unfolds itself through traditions, inscriptions and some records of early and medieval writers. These

\(^{16}\) Singh, R L, 2003, *op cit*, p 597
Map No.6- Bundelkhand Region

sources strongly suggest that the original settlers and colonizers in this region were the Gonds, traces of whose socio-cultural profiles were subsequently obliterated. The earliest information about this region dates back to the time of sixteen mahajanapadas in the 6th century B.C., when one of the janapada (state) known as Chedi with capital at Shuktimati or Sandhivate, covered a major part of present Bundelkhand and the adjoining areas.

The Yamuna river\textsuperscript{17} is the main source of water in this region and the Betwa, the Ken and the Bagliain are its main tributaries. The average annual temperatures of Bundelkhand are uniformly high (over 25°C). The mean annual temperature of Orai is 25.5°C, that of Jhansi 26.5°C and Nowgong 25.5°C but their mean monthly values considerably vary from their annual means and consequently their ranges are high (17.5° to 21.5°C). The mean annual precipitation varies from 75 cm in the northwest to about 125 cm in the southeast. The average may be taken as 100 cm of which 90% falls between June to September.

The soil of this region may be conveniently grouped into three types (1) upland soils (rocky soils) (2) low land soils; black soil (mar kabar) and red and yellow soil (parua, ranker) (3) riverine soils (kachhar and tari). This region an ecologically degraded has an

\textsuperscript{17} ibid, p 601
estimated area of 0.64 million hectares under forest (7.2%). Teak is found in small patches. Dhak (Butea monosperma), semal (Bombax ceiba), salai (Boswella servata) and babul (Acacia milotica) are the principal types of acacias. Khair (Acacia catechu) is a common tree but not much utilized. Grasses of various kinds such as musel, uara, gunaa, karta, pasai, dula, kans, dhak (Butea monosperma) and gandar, etc., grow profusely in the rainy season. Of these musel, ukra and gunar are useful for animals as fodder.

District of Panna lies between the Rewa and the Upper Vindhyan series famous for diamond mines. Besides it this region is rich in stones used as building materials, such as granite, sandstone and shale. Numerous forts and fortresses made of these stones testify to their usefulness for structural and monumental purposes, but they are so heavy as to discourage distant transportation, hence mostly used locally. The iron pockets, associated with the regions of Gwalior and Bijawar were once exploited by the Bundela chiefs for their armament. Today they are exhausted and mining is abandoned. Agates of great beauty and variety are found in the bed of river Ken. Known as ‘Banda stone’.18

(vi) Malwa Region: On the basis of physiography, historico-cultural relations, political background as well as geographical

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18 Brockman, D.L., 1909, District Gazetteer of Banda, p.31

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regional characteristics, Malwa region (27°70'-25°10'N and 73°45'-79°14'E) forms a distinct unit lying almost in the heart of India\textsuperscript{19} (Map No 7). It has an area of 1,50,000 sq km. The region has length of 530 km. and width of 390 km. The Tropic of Cancer passes almost through its middle. It covers 18 districts of Madhya Pradesh, Pratabgarh and Achnera tehsils of Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan and parts of eight tehsils of Dhulia and Jalgaon districts of Maharashtra. (Not included in the area of my research).

Early Buddhist and Jain literature, and Hindu epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata speak highly about Malvas. The word "malav" is a composition of two Sanskrit words "Ma" and "Lav". "Ma" stands for "The goddess Laxmi" and "Lav" for 'part', thus meaning that it is the part of the abode of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth. The earliest known kingdom of this region is Avanti in the 6\textsuperscript{th} century B.C. and its capital was at Ujjain. King Pradyota of this dynasty was contemporary of Bimbisara and Ajatshatru of Magadh, Prasenajit of Kosala, Udaiyin of Kosambi and Lord Buddha. This region was referred to by Panini as Ayudhijivan.

The main feature of the climate\textsuperscript{20} here is its latitudinal location giving fairly high temperatures throughout the year and altitudinal.

\textsuperscript{19} Singh, R L, 2003, \textit{op cit}, p 565
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{ibid}, pp 570-575
variation introducing significant variations in the rainfall. Climate on the whole is healthy and the elevated plateau is notable for its cool night in hot seasons. Broadly the year’s falls into three characteristic seasons, viz, the cold season (Oct-Feb), the hot weather (March-June) and the rainy season (July-Sept). The average rainfall is about 106 cm varying from 8 cm in the west to 202 cm in the east. The rainiest months are July-Sep, the monsoon gives over 90% of the annual total. This region has two system of drainage, firstly of the Arabian Sea in which the Narmada, the Tapti and the Mahi fall. The last two is flowing through tectonic rifts, and the other is the Bay of Bengal with the Chambal and the Betwa joining the Yamuna.

The soil of this region is generally black. It varies in depth and is usually loamy to clayey in texture. This soil is usually ill supplied with phosphate, nitrogen and organic matter but is sufficient in potash and lime. Thus it is suitable for crops like cotton, Jawar, wheat, sugarcane, ground nut etc. the species available from the forest are date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*), babul (*Acacia nilotica*), neem (*Azadirachta indica*), mahua (*Madhuca indica*), tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), jamun (*Syzygium cumini*), karanj (*Pongamia pinnata*) etc. But as far as mineral deposits are concerned they are available to us in varieties, such as coal, manganese ore, mica, iron, copper, bauxite, limestone, marble etc.
Map No.7- Malwa Region

(vii) Udaipur – Gwalior Region: This region (72°7'-79°5'E and 23°20'-28°20'N) commands on area of about 1,67,872 sq. km. (Map No. 8). It comprises mostly eastern part of Rajasthan, northwest part of Madhya Pradesh, contiguous to Malwa and Bundelkhand and smaller part of Gujarat (Not included in the area of my research). Historically this area was settled easily by pre-Aryan people as is evidenced by relics of Virat (modern Bairat), the capital of Matsyas and the Pushkararanya (modern Pushkar in Ajmer) which is regarded a non-Aryan settlement. The literary texts mentioned the Matsya as one of sixteen Janapada and Pushkar as a seat of Buddhism, which was flourishing as a town. The later period saw the rise of several kingdoms and dynasties, which were periodically under the great empires such as Maurya, Kushana, Gupta etc.

The master stream of this region is surely the Chambal (ancient Carmanvat) which rises from Janpao spur of the Vindhyas near Mhow. Interestingly enough, this region presents a transition between two major climatic regions of India, the humid east and the arid west. It may thus be designated as semi-arid marked by extremes of temperatures and great variability and uncertainty of rainfall. Winters are normally cold, while, the summer is hot and dry. The rainy season is quite pleasant with greenery. January is the coldest month of the year when the average temperature ranges between 10.9°C in the north to 16°C in the south, while May and June are hottest months.

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21 ibid., p. 517
22 Law, B. C., op. cit, pp. 42, 51, 320.
23 ibid., pp. 35 & 312.
Map No.8- Udaipur-Gwalior Region


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On the basis of the survey\textsuperscript{24} in Gwalior and Shivpuri districts and the Chambal command areas in, both, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan soils of this region have been found to be broadly divided into six kinds, as follows (a) alluvial soils (b) medium Black soil (c) mixed red and black soils (d) grey and brown soils (e) red and yellow soils (f) ferruginous red soils This region has a great variety of natural vegetation\textsuperscript{25} Mount Abu has one of the richest forest of this region. On the higher elevations it has humid types of jungles containing amkbartari, stinging nettle, karaunda (\textit{Carissa carandus}), varieties of jasmine (\textit{Jasminum}), weeping willow (\textit{Salix babylonica}) and \textit{kara}, on the lower slope dense forests of \textit{dhau}, \textit{haldu} (\textit{Haldina cordifolia}), \textit{bel, siris} (\textit{Alibizia lebbeck}), mango, \textit{jamun} (\textit{Syzygium cumini}), \textit{kachnar}, are common. In the Mewar hills particularly in the southern part teak and bamboo (\textit{Dendocalamus strictus}) are found in association with \textit{dhokra} (\textit{Butea monosperma}), \textit{salar} (\textit{Boswellia serrata}), \textit{gurgan, anwal} (\textit{Cassia auriculata}), \textit{tendu} (\textit{Diospyros melanoxylon}), \textit{khair} (\textit{Acacia catechu}) etc. Among the large varieties of minerals\textsuperscript{26} in the region lead, zinc, mica, building stone, soapstone, manganese, asbestos, emeralds, copper, silver and iron ores are important.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{24} Singh, R L , 2003 , \textit{op cit}, p 528
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{ibid}, pp 527-528
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{ibid}, pp 529-531
\end{footnotesize}
POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE PERIOD

In c.600 B.C. there was no paramount power in North India. The region was divided into many independent states. The period, however, was politically very important in the history of India and marked the end of the tribal stage of society. It gave rise for the first time to those organized states, known as sixteen great countries "solasa Mahajanapada" of considerable extent and power (Map No.1). These states included Anga, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kuru, Panchala, Matsya, Suñasena, Avanti, Magadha, Gandhara, Kambhoja and Asmaka (the last three are beyond the sphere of my research). These states formed some definite territorial units and included both monarchies and republics.

Anga: Its actual sites are marked by the villages named Champanagara and Champapuri. These names still exist in the Bhagalpur district in Bihar. The kingdom of Anga had its capital named Champa, situated on the river of the same name. The Dīgha Nikāya refers to Champa as one of the six principal cities of India. According to Mahābhārata, possibly comprised the district of

27 Anguttara Nikaya, I 213, IV 252, 256, 260
28 Law, B.C., op cit., p 43
29 Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1897, p 95
30 Jain, K C., 1974, Lord Mahavira and His Times, Delhi, p. 198.
Bhagalpur and Monghyr The *Mahabharata*,\(^1\) however further tells us that Anga was so called after its king named Anga.

About the dynastic history of Anga, our information is meager. Jain literature mentions king Dadhivahana and places him in the beginning of the sixth century B.C. His daughter Chandana or Chandrabala is said to be the first female who embraced Jainism shortly after Mahavira had attained the *Kevaliship*\(^2\).

The Anga king preferred to have a friendly relation with Vatsa *Janapada*, probably because he was threatened by the ascending power of Magadha\(^3\). But the success of Anga did not last long. In the middle of the sixth century B.C., Bimbisara of Magadha is said to have killed Brahmadatta, the last king of Anga and avenged the defeat of his father. His son Ajatasatru resided there as his father’s viceroy\(^4\). Henceforth Anga became an integral part of the growing empire of Magadha.

**Kasi:** Kasi was probably the most powerful *mahajanapada*. Banaras was the capital of the people of Kasi\(^5\). It was known by various other names, namely, Surundhana, Sudassana, Brahmavaddhana, Pupphavati, Ramma and Molini. The City\(^6\) is

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\(^{1}\) *Adiparva*, IV 4179ff

\(^{2}\) *Journal and proceeding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1914, pp 320 – 321


\(^{4}\) *Journal and Proceeding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1914, p 321

\(^{5}\) *Jataka*, IV, 119 – 120, IV, 15

\(^{6}\) Law, B C  *op cit.*, p 46
described as prosperous, extensive and populous. Before the time of lord Buddha, Kasi was a great political power. Sometimes Kasi extended its suzerain power over Kosala and sometime Kosala conquered Kasi, but at last, Kasi lost its political power. It was incorporated into the Kosala kingdom for some time and for sometime into the Magadha kingdom. There were fights between king Prasenajit of Kosala and Ajatsatru of Magadha for the possession of Kasi. Kasi was finally conquered and incorporated into the Magadhan kingdom. Ajatsatru became the most powerful king of northern India after defeating the Kosalan. The Buddha spent a great part of his life in Banaras. Here, he gave his first discourse on, the wheel of law (Dhammacakka) in the dear park of Sarnath near Benaras. The twenty third Jaina tirthankara Parsvanath, who died 250 year before Lord Mahavira, i.e., in or about 777 B.C. was son of the King Asvesena of Banaras.

Besides political and religious centre, it was also a great centre of trade and commerce. Rich merchants of the city of Banaras used to cross high seas with ship, laden with merchandise other side wealthy merchant came to Banaras with the object of trade.

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37 Jataka, III, 115
38 Samyukta Nikaya, I, 82 – 85
39 Majhima Nikaya, I, 170ff
40 Jain, K C, op cit, pp 198 – 199
41 Law, B C, op cit, p. 47.
Kosala: The kingdom of Kosala was bounded on the west by the Gumti, on the south by the Sarpika or Syandika (Sai) river and on the east by the Sadanira. This separated it from Videha, and on the north by the Nepal hills. Kosala proper contained three great cities, namely Ayodhya modern Faizabad, Saketa and Sravasti (capital city), (modern Bahraich). The Buddha spent much of his time at Sravasti, the capital of Kosala. The king Prasenajit of Kosala, a contemporary of Mahavira and Buddha figures as one of the most important rulers of the time. His father Mahakosala gave his daughter Kosaladevi in marriage to Bimbisara of Magadh along with the dowry of a village in Kasi fetching a revenue of 1,00,000. A fierce fight took place between Prasenajit of Kosala and Ajatsatru of Magadh. But the two kings came into a sort of agreement. Ajatsatru married Vajira, daughter of Prasenajit and got possession of Kasi. Vidhudabha, who succeeded Prasenajit, seems to be the last ruler. The rivalry with Magadha ended in the absorption of the kingdom into the Magadha empire.

Vajjis: The Vajji territory lay north of the Ganges and extended as far as the Nepal hills. It is said to have included eight confederate clans, of which the old Videhas, the Lichchhavis, the Jnatrikas and the Vajjis proper were the most important. The identity of remaining clans

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42 *Ramayana*, II. 49. 11 – 12; VII. 104.15.
43 *Jataka*, II, 237.
remains uncertain. Vaisali was the capital of the Vajjian confederation. The old territory of the Videhas had, its capital at Mithila, which has been identified with Janakpur within the Nepal border. The Ramayana\(^45\) clearly distinguishes it from the region around Vaisali. The Lichchhavi capital was at Vaisali, which is represented by modern Basarh (to the east of the Gandak) in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar. The Jnatrikas\(^46\) were the clan of Siddhartha, the father of Lord Mahavira. They had their seats at Kundapura or Kundagrama and Kollaga, suburbs of Vaisali.\(^47\) The other confederate clans, the Ugras, Bhogas, Kauravas and Aikshvakavas, resided in the suburbs and in villages or towns like Hatthigama and Bhoganagara.\(^48\)

The political relation of Vajjis with Magadha and Kosala was friendly. That Ajatsatru is called vaidehiputra goes to show that Bimbisara established matrimonial relation with Lichchhavis by marrying a Lichchhavi girl.\(^49\) They were also on friendly terms with king Prasenajit of Kosala.\(^50\) But Magadhan king Ajatsatru made up his mind to destroy the Vajjian power. Findings the Vajjians too powerful to overcome Ajatsatru seems to have struck to the strategies perhaps taking cue from Buddha’s prophesy that so long as the Vajjians are

\(^{45}\) Ramayana I, 47 – 48

\(^{46}\) Raychaudhuri, H C, op cit, p 106

\(^{47}\) ibid, p 107

\(^{48}\) ibid, p 121

\(^{49}\) Samyukta Nikaya, II, 268

\(^{50}\) Majjhima Nikaya, II 100-101
united they are invincible. He therefore sent his two ministers, Sunidha and Vassakara, to sow the seed of dissention among the Vajjians. Thus Ajatsatru could finally destroy them.\textsuperscript{51}

**Malla:** The Malla territory, ancient *Malla-rattha*, the *Malla rashtra* of the Mahabharata\textsuperscript{52} was split up into two main parts which had their capitals\textsuperscript{53} the cities of Kasavati or Kusinara and Pava. Kusinara may be identified with Kasia on the smaller Gandak in the east of Gorakhpur district and Pava with village named Padaraona, twelve miles north east of Kasia.\textsuperscript{54} The river Kakuttha, the Cacouthes of the classical writers, identified with the modern Kuku\textsuperscript{55}, probably formed the dividing line. The *Jaina Kalpasutra*\textsuperscript{56} refers to the nine clans of the Mallas, and each of them ruled over a separate territories.

The relations between *Mallas* and the *Lichchhavis* were sometimes hostile and sometime friendly. They became allies in self-defense at the time of Ajatsatru's invasion, though the *Bhadasala Jataka*\textsuperscript{57} offers us an account of a conflict between them. At the time of Buddha's death both the main sections of the Mallas claiming a share of his bodily remain.\textsuperscript{58} This also proves that these two main clans retained their distinctive independence. But soon after the

\textsuperscript{51} *Digha Nikaya*, 11, 72ff.
\textsuperscript{52} VI.9.34.
\textsuperscript{53} *Kusa Jataka*, no. 531
\textsuperscript{54} Law, B.C., *op cit*, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{56} Jain, K.C., *op cit*, p. 201.
\textsuperscript{57} *Jataka*, No. 465.
death of Buddha, the territory of Malla, was finally annexed to Magadha.\textsuperscript{59}

**Chedi:** In ancient times it corresponded roughly to the eastern part of modern Bundelkhand and some adjoining tracts.\textsuperscript{60} The capital of the Chedi country was *Sotthivatinagara*, probably identical with the city of Suktimati of the *Mahabharata*.\textsuperscript{61} Sahajati and Tripuri were other important towns of the Chedi kingdom.\textsuperscript{62} In the *Vedabhha Jataka* that the road from Kasi to Chedi is shown to be unsafe.\textsuperscript{63} Chedi was an important centre of Buddhism.\textsuperscript{64}

The Chedi people are mentioned as early as the Rigveda.\textsuperscript{65} Their king Kasu Chaidya is praised in a *Danasatuti* (praise of gift) occurring at the end of one hymn. The *Mahabharata* and some of the *Jatakas* mention the names of the early kings of Chedi, but their accounts are legendary and cannot be relied upon for genuine historical purposes.

**Vatsa:** The kingdom of the Vatsas or Vamsas had *Kausambi* as their capital, identified with modern Kosam near Allahabad. The origin of the Vatsa people however is traced to a king of Kasi.\textsuperscript{66} According to

\textsuperscript{59} Raychaudhuri, H.Ç., *op cit*, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{60} *ibid*, pp. 115 - 116.
\textsuperscript{61} III. 20, 50 and XIV, 83.2.
\textsuperscript{62} Anguttara Nikaya, III. 355.
\textsuperscript{63} No. 48.
\textsuperscript{64} Anguttara Nikaya, III. 355 - 356.
\textsuperscript{65} VIII. 5.37 - 39.
\textsuperscript{66} *Mahabharata*, XII, 49.80.
the Puranas, “when the city of Hastinapura was washed away by the Ganges, Nichakshu, the great-great grandson of Janamejaya abandoned it and moved to Kausambi.” We have a Puranic tradition about the Kuru or Bharta origin of the later kings of Kausambi. It is also confirmed by the two plays attributed to Bhasa. At the time of Mahavira, Udayana was the king of Vatsa. His father’s name is said to be Satanika. He married a princess of Videha on account of which his son is called Vaidehiputra. He is said to have attacked Champa, the capital of Anga during the reign of Dadhivahana.

There are legendary traditions about Udayana Vatsaraja of Kausambi and his contemporary Pradyota of Avanti. Both these rulers appear to have been connected by marriage yet engaged in war. However, nothing definite is known about the kingdom of Vatsa after Udayana.

Kuru: There was a Janapada named Kuru and its king used to be called Kurus. Kuru is identified with modern Kurukshetra or Thaneshwar. The other district included Sonapat, Amin, Karnal and Panipat. According to Maha-sutasoma Jataka, Kuru was three hundred leagues in extent. The capital of Kuru was Indraprastha near modern Delhi. Another important town was Hastinapura.

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67 Raychaudhuri, H C, op cit, p 118
68 Ibid
69 Majjhima Nikaya, II 97, Jataka, III, 157
70 Jain, K C, op cit, p 203
71 Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1914 p 321
72 Law, B C, op cit, p 50
73 No 537
small towns and villages known to us, were Thullakotthita, Kammassadamma, Kandi and Varanavata. At Kammassadamma, Buddha delivered some profound discourses to the Kurus.

The *Jatakas* mention the names of some Kuru kings and princes such as Dhananjaya, Koravya, and Sutasoma, but their historicity is doubtful because of the absence of further evidence. The *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* mentions a king named Ishukara ruling at a town called Ishukara in the Kuru country. It seems that the Kuru realm was divided into small states of which Indraprastha and Ishukara were apparently the most important. Kings are known to us as late as the time of Buddha, when one of them paid a visit to Ratthapala, son of a Kuru magnate, who had become a disciple of the Sakya sage.

**Panchala**: Panchala roughly corresponds to the modern Badaun, Farrukhabad, and the adjoining districts of the Uttar Pradesh. The Panchala country was divided into two parts viz., *uttara* or northern Panchala and *dakshina* or southern Panchala. The *Bhagirathi* (Ganges) formed the dividing line. According to the *Mahabharata*, northern Panchala had its capital at Ahichchhatra, the modern

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74 Jain, K.C. *op cit*, p. 207.  
75 Law, B.C., *op cit*.  
76 Nos. 276, 413, 515 and 545.  
77 *Sacred Book of the East*, XLV, p. 62.  
78 *Raychaudhuri, H.C., op cit*, p. 120.  
79 *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, II, 706f.  
81 I 138, 73 - 74.
Ramnagar near Aonla in the Bareilly district, while southern Panchala had its capital at Kampilya identical with modern Kampila in Farrukhabad district.

The history of Panchala from the death of Pravahana Jaivala to the time of Bimbisara of Magadh is obscure. A great Panchala king named Chulani Brahmadatta is mentioned in the Maha-Ummagga Jataka, the Uttaradhyayana sutra and the Ramayana. In the Uttaradhyayana Sutra, Brahmadatta is styled as a universal monarch. The story of the king is, however, essentially legendary, and little reliance can therefore be placed on it. The Uttaradhyayana Sutra mentions a king Sanjaya of Kampilya, who gave up his kingly power and adopted the faith of Mahavira, the Jain preceptor. We do not know what happened after Sanjaya renounced his throne.

Matsya: The Matsya country corresponds to the modern territories of Jaipur and Alwar. Its capital was Viratanagara (modern Bairat) named after its founder king Virata. According to the Rigveda, the country of Matsya lay to the south or southwest of Indraprastha and to the south of Sursena. According to the Mahabharata, a king Sahaja reigned over the Chedis as well as the Matsyas. At the time of Lord Raychaudhuri, op cit, p. 121.

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82 Raychaudhuri H C, op cit, p. 121
83 No. 546
84 Sacred Book of the East XLV, pp. 57–61
85 I 32
86 Sacred Book of the East XLV, pp. 80–82
87 Jain K C, op cit, p. 209
88 VII, 18, 6
89 V 74 16, VI 47 67
Buddha and Mahavira, the Matsyas had no political importance of their own. It was finally absorbed into the Magadhan Empire.

**Sursena:** The country of Sursena had its capital at Mathura which, like Kausambi, stood on the Jamuna. Mathura is generally identified with Maholi, 5 miles to the southwest of the present town of Mathura. In the *Mahabharata* the ruling family of Mathura is styled as the Yadu or Yadava family. The Yadavas were divided into various sects, namely, the Vitihotras, the Satvatas etc.

At the time of Lord Buddha, Avantiputra was the ruling chief of Surasena country. It may be inferred from the epithet 'Avantiputra' that Avanti and Surasena were bound to each other by a matrimonial alliance. Avantiputra, king of the Surasena was the first among the chief disciples of the Buddha through whose help Buddhism gained ground in the Mathura region.

**Avanti:** The country of Avanti roughly corresponds to the Ujjain region, together with a part of the valley of Narmada from Mandhata to Maheshwar and certain adjoining districts. The capital city Ujjain was built by Accutagami. Bhandarkar points out that ancient Avanti was divided into two parts, one placed in the

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90 Raychaudhuri H C, *op cit*, p 124
91 Law, B C, *op cit*, p 51
92 Raychaudhuri, H C, *op cit*
93 *Majjhima Nikaya*, 2 83
94 Raychaudhuri H C, *op cit*, p 129
95 Law, B C, *op cit*, p 52
96 *cf ibid*
Dakshinapatha having Mahishmati for its capital, and the other, i.e., the northern kingdom, having its capital at Ujjain. The Dakshinapatha kingdom was ruled by Visvabhu mentioned by Digha Nikaya. At Ujjain, a minister named Pulika is said to have killed his master and appointed his son Pradyota. Pradyota founded a dynasty to be identified by his name. He was one of the most powerful Kings of his time. His relation with Bimbisara of Magadha were cordial. But Ajatsatru adopted an aggressive policy of attacking and conquering Vaisali. Being an ambitious ruler himself, king Pradyota could not tolerate the aggression launched by Ajatsatru. Probably because of it, Pradyota was planning an attack upon his rival's capital at Rajagriha. Apprehending this invasion by Pradyota, Ajatsatru fortified his capital Pradyota was also engaged in war with Udayayana but later on amity between them was restored. Pradyota gave his daughter Vasavadatta in marriage to Udayana. Pradyota had hostilities with Pushkarasarin of Taxila, too, but he was unsuccessful in his war. He is said to have ruled for twenty-three years.

Magadha: Magadha roughly corresponds to the modern Patna and Gaya districts of south Bihar. Its earliest capital was Girivraja. This

97 cf ibid
98 Jain, K C, op cit, p 211
100 Rhys Davids, T W, 1903, Buddhist India, London, pp 4 – 7
101 ibid, p 15
102 Jain, K C, op cit, p 212
103 Journal and proceeding of Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1897, p 86
city was encircled by five hills. Girivraja was burnt down by fire during the reign of Bimbisara, after which a new capital city new Rajagriha was built. Magadha was an important centre of Buddhism and Bimbisara was a staunch follower of Buddha When Buddha was at Rajgir, he told the king that he (Buddha) would pay a visit to Vaisali. The king then prepared a road for Buddha through the policy of conquest and matrimonial alliances enlarged his influence and power. His first wife was a sister of Prasenjit, the king of Kosala and his second wife was Chellana, the daughter of the Lichchhavi chief Chetaka. His third wife was Vaidehi Vasavi and the fourth was Khema, daughter of the king of Madra (Central Punjab). Bimbisara was completely successful in enlarging Magadha by conquering and annexing the powerful and prosperous kingdom of Anga. His son Ajatsatru started war against Kosala and later on against Lichchhavis. The conquests of Lichchhavis helped Ajatsatru to become the paramount power of this region. It provoked feelings of hostility in his equally ambitious rival king Chanda Pradyota of Avanti. He was planning an attack upon his capital at Rajagriha. Ajatsatru applied himself to the task of strengthening its fortifications. But the king of Avanti could do

104 Samyuktta Nikaya, II, pp 191 - 192
105 Law, B C, op cit, p 45
106 ibid
107 Jain, K C, op cit, pp 204 - 5
108 Digha Nikaya, II 72ff
nothing against him. \footnote{Jain, K.C., \textit{op cit}, p. 207.} He, thus, extended the boundaries of his kingdom and laid the foundations of the Magadhan empire on solid grounds, which came to an end in c.320 B.C.