

The background of the slide is a photograph of the Mohenjo-daro archaeological site. It shows the well-known 'Great Bath' and surrounding structures, which are built from baked bricks. The ruins are situated on a raised platform, with a sandy area and some trees visible in the distance under a clear sky. A large, faint watermark with the text 'Moh. ep' is visible across the top half of the image.

Chapter 4

New Beginnings: Cities and States

Class VII
Social Science



The Big Questions?

What is meant by
'Second Urbanisation
of India'?

Why were the
janapadas and
mahājanapadas an
important development
in India's early history?

What kind of system of
governance did they
evolve?



Ruins of a major structure at Rājagṛiha (modern-day Rajgir in Bihar), when it was the capital of the Magadha mahājanapada.

Around the early 2nd millennium BCE, the Indus/Harappan (Sindhu-Sarasvatī) civilisation declined.

Many cities were abandoned; some continued but shifted to rural or village life.

Urban features disappeared, including:

- Public and private structures
- Streets and markets
- Specialised occupations (like potters, metalsmiths, weavers, etc.)
- Writing and sanitation systems
- Administration and state structure

Urban life disappeared for about 1,000 years.

Only a few towns may have existed in north India during this period.



The fertile
Gangetic plains
helped the
mahājanapadas
to grow and
prosper.

India's Second Phase of Urbanisation



In the 1st millennium BCE, a new phase of urbanisation began in the Ganga plains, parts of the Indus basin, and nearby regions.



This urbanisation gradually spread across the Indian subcontinent.



Evidence comes from two main sources:



Archaeological excavations confirming ancient cities.

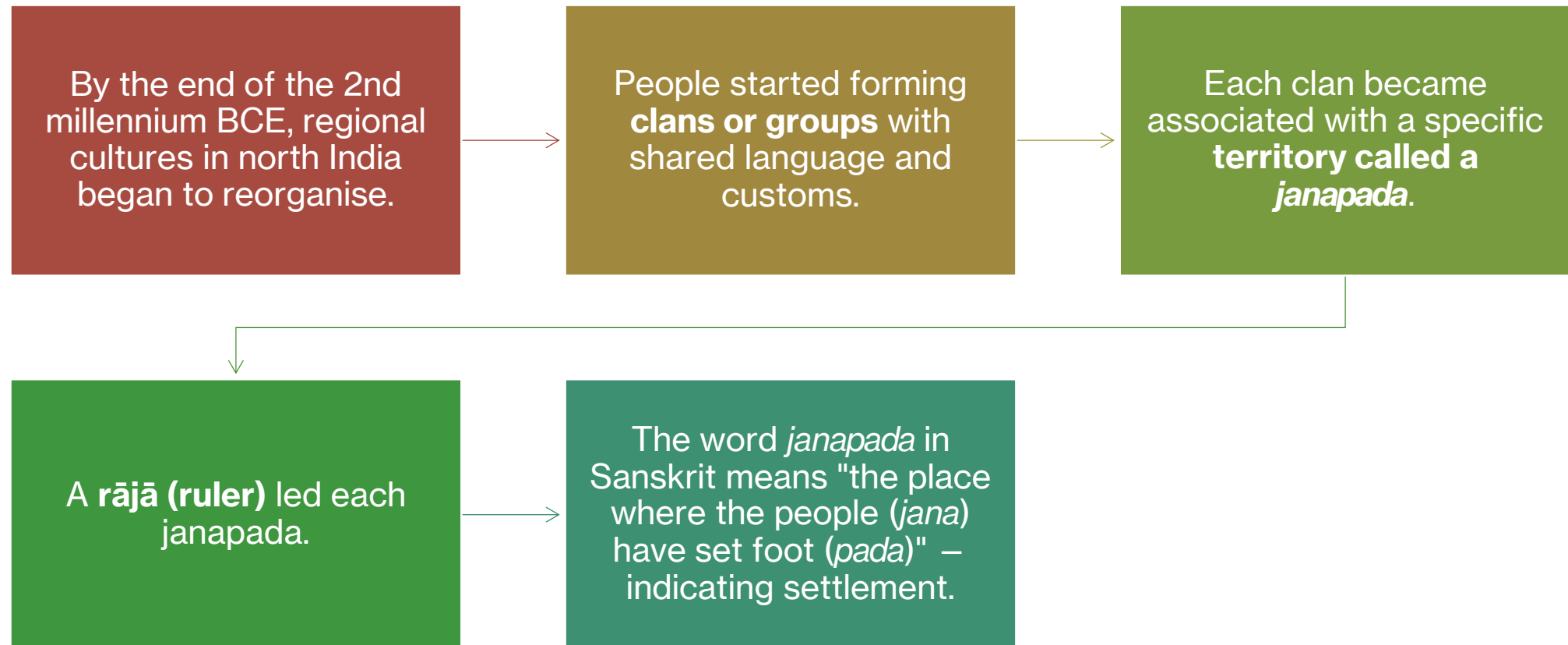


Ancient literature such as late Vedic, Buddhist, and Jain texts mentioning urban centres.



It marked the beginning of continuous urban growth that continues to the present day.

Janapadas and Mahājanapadas



Mahājanapadas

1

Janapadas grew as trade networks expanded and connected different regions.

2

By the **8th or 7th centuries BCE**, some janapadas merged to form larger states called **mahājanapadas**.

3

Ancient texts list **16 major mahājanapadas**, though lists may vary.

4

These stretched from **Gandhāra (northwest)** to **Anga (east)** and **Aśhmaka (central India)** near the Godavari River.

Many mahājanapadas were located in the Ganga plains due to the following reasons:

Fertile land
supporting the
growth of
agriculture.

Availability of iron
ore in nearby
mountains and hills.

Emergence of new
trade networks
connecting the
region.

Early Democratic Traditions

Each **janapada** had a **council or assembly**, called **sabhā** or **samiti**.

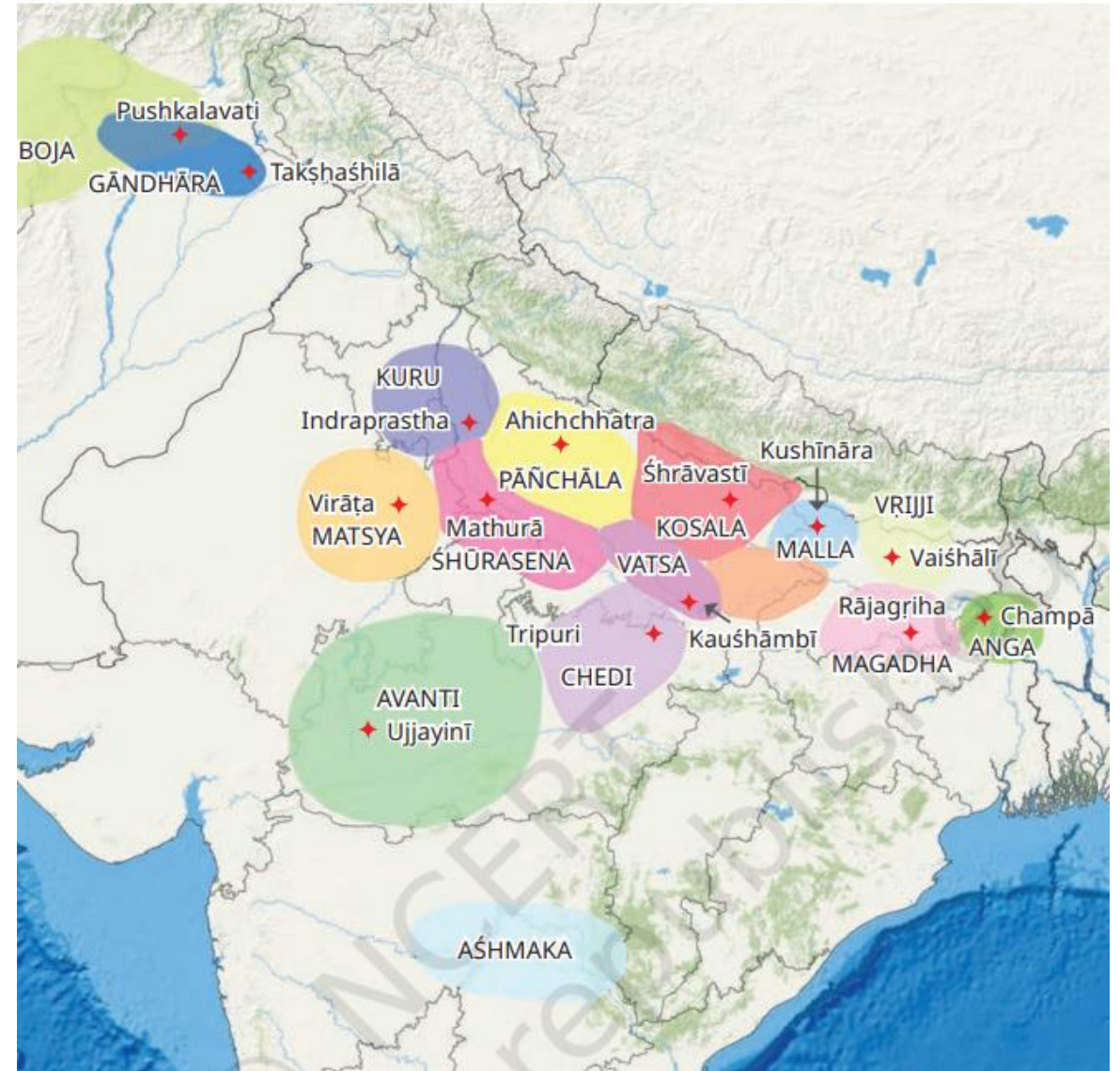
These bodies discussed important matters related to the **clan**.

The terms *sabhā* and *samiti* first appeared in the **Vedas**, India's oldest texts.

Most members of the assembly were likely **elders** of the clan.

The **rājā (ruler)** was **not expected to rule alone or arbitrarily** – he had to consult the council

Map of the sixteen mahājanapadas. Note that their borders are approximate.



Assemblies



A **good ruler** was expected to **take advice** from the **assemblies**, as well as from **ministers and administrators**.



Some texts mention that an **incompetent ruler could be removed** by the assembly.



However, this was **not necessarily a fixed law**.



Historical evidence from this early period is **limited and incomplete**, so conclusions should be cautious.

Mahājanapadas



The **mahājanapadas** built upon the political systems of the **janapadas**.



Some mahājanapadas were **monarchies**, where the **rājā held ultimate authority**.



The rājā was supported by **ministers and an assembly of elders**.



Kingship was often **hereditary**, usually passed from father to son.

Duties of the king included



**COLLECTING
TAXES/REVENUE**



**MAINTAINING LAW
AND ORDER**



**BUILDING
FORTIFICATIONS AROUND
THE CAPITAL**



**MAINTAINING AN
ARMY FOR DEFENSE
OR WAR**



**MAGADHA, KOSALA,
AND AVANTI WERE
AMONG THE MOST
POWERFUL MAHĀJANAP
ADAS.**

Early Republics

Vajji (Vṛijji) and Malla had a **different political system** from monarchies.

In these states, the **sabhā or samiti held real power**, making key decisions through **discussion and voting**.

Even the **selection of the rājā** was done by the assembly.

These states were known as **gaṇas or sanghas**, not monarchies.

Their system is considered **democratic in nature**, as rulers were **chosen by the assembly**.

Scholars often refer to them as '**early republics**', among the **earliest in the world**.

More Innovations

- The janapadas and mahājanapadas period was a time of **significant change** in Indian civilization.
- New **schools of thought** emerged, including **late Vedic**, **Buddhist**, and **Jain** traditions.
- These teachings spread through **scholars, monks, nuns**, and **pilgrimages** across India.
- Indian **art experienced a renewal** during this time.
- This artistic growth would **flourish further in the age of empires**.

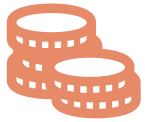


Technological Advances

- Urbanisation depends on **technological advances**.
- The **Harappan civilisation** excelled in **copper and bronze metallurgy**.
- During the **Second Urbanisation**, there was a major shift to **iron metallurgy**.
- Techniques for **extracting and shaping iron** were developed from the early 2nd millennium BCE.
- By the late 2nd millennium BCE, **iron tools became widespread**, boosting agriculture.
- Iron weapons were **lighter, sharper, and better** than bronze (e.g., swords, spears, arrows, shields).
- Evidence suggests **conflicts and warfare** between mahājanapadas, though frequency and intensity are unclear.
- Such wars and alliances led to the rise of **new kingdoms and empires**.



Coins in India



Growing trade led to the **first use of coins in India.**



Coins were quickly **exchanged across regions and internationally.**



The earliest Indian coins were made of **silver** and are called **punch-marked coins** because symbols were punched into them.



Later, coins were also made from **copper, gold,** and other metals.



Each **mahājanapada** **usually issued its own coins**, but coins from neighbouring regions were also accepted and used in trade.

Advancement of civilisation



As civilisation advanced, **human societies became more complex.**



Societies organised themselves into **different groups based on class, occupation, or other criteria.**



These groups included roles related to **governance, administration, religion, education, trade, town-planning, farming, crafts, arts, and various other professions.**

A panel of the Sanchi stūpa depicting a smithy (or metal workshop), where different workers bring firewood, water, stoke the fire, beat the iron, etc





A few punch-marked coins from various ancient cities of north India.



Jāti



Indian society was organised into a **two-fold system**.



One key category was the **jāti**, a group based on **specific professional occupations**.



Occupations included **agriculture, metallurgy, commerce, crafts**, etc.

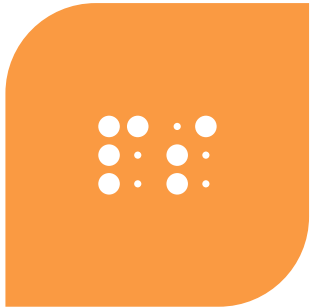


Skills and professions were usually **passed down through generations**.



Each jāti could be **subdivided into sub-jātis**, with their own **customs and traditions** (e.g., marriage, rituals, food habits).

Varṇas- Alongside **jāti**, Indian society was also divided by the concept of **varṇa**, which came from **Vedic texts**. There were **four varnas**:



BRAHMINS – RESPONSIBLE
FOR KNOWLEDGE,
EDUCATION, AND RITUALS.



KSHATRIYAS – TASKED WITH
DEFENDING SOCIETY AND
WARFARE.



VAISHYAS – ENGAGED IN
TRADE, BUSINESS, AND
AGRICULTURE.



SHUDRAS – WORKED AS
ARTISANS, CRAFTSPEOPLE,
LABORERS, AND SERVANTS.

Caste

The English word "**caste**" comes from the **Portuguese word *casta***.

Portuguese travellers used it in the **16th century CE** to describe Indian society.

Some scholars believe "**caste**" refers to **varnas**, while

Most scholars think it refers to **jātis**.

Others use "**caste**" to describe the entire **varna-jāti system**.



In early periods,
individuals and
communities could
change professions
based on
circumstances.

Natural calamities (e.g.,
droughts) could force
farmers to migrate and
adopt new jobs.

Even Brahmins
sometimes took up
trade or military roles.

This flexible system
helped organize society
and maintain stability.

Over time, the system
became rigid.

It led to social
inequalities and
discrimination,
especially against lower
jātis and those outside
the varṇa-jāti system.



Influence of **varṇa-jāti** system on Indian society

The **varṇa-jāti system** has deeply influenced Indian society.

Scholars have studied its many aspects over generations.

It was **more flexible in earlier periods**, allowing social mobility.

The system became **more rigid over time**, especially during **British rule**.

While important, varṇa-jāti was **not the only social system** in India.

Other systems and traditions also shaped society.

Developments Elsewhere in India

In the **1st millennium BCE**, key communication routes developed for **trade, pilgrimage, and military campaigns**.

Two major routes frequently mentioned in texts are:

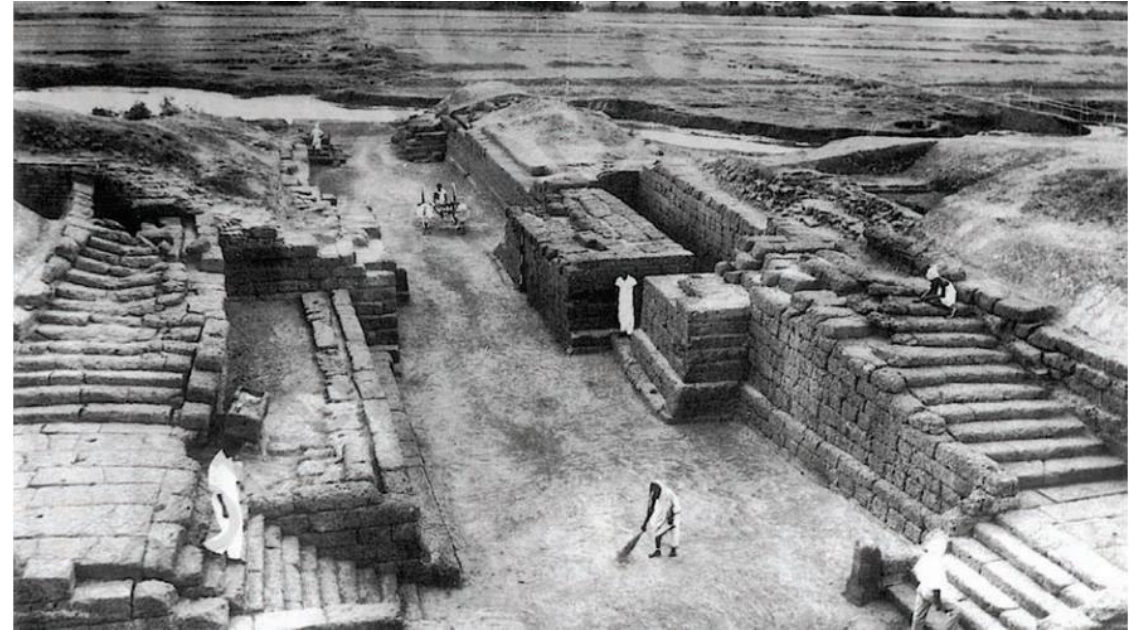
Uttarapatha: Connected the **northwest regions** to the **Ganga plains** and **eastern India**.

Dakṣiṇapatha: Started from **Kauśhāmbī** (near **Prayagraj**), then a capital city.

These routes played a vital role in facilitating movement and cultural exchange across regions.

Śhiśhupalgarh

- **Śhiśhupalgarh** (now a suburb of **Bhubaneswar**) was first **excavated in 1948**.
- It had a **fortified gateway** leading into the city.
- A **moat filled with water** surrounded the gateway for protection.
- The **gateway narrows** to help **control the movement** of people and goods.
- This shows advanced planning in **urban defense and regulation**.



Different Routes

- **Dakṣhiṇapatha** was a route from **Kauśhāmbī** that crossed the **Vindhya Range** and extended to the **south**.
- These routes will be studied again when learning about the **formation of empires**.
- **Lateral roads** connected with other parts of India, especially to **important coastal ports** on the **east and west coasts**.
- Ports were **active trade centers**.
- In the **eastern region**, cities like **Śhiśhupalgarh** (now **Sisupalgarh**, Bhubaneswar) emerged.





Śhiśhupalgarh was the **capital of Kalinga**, known for:



**A strict square
ground plan**



**Strong
fortifications**



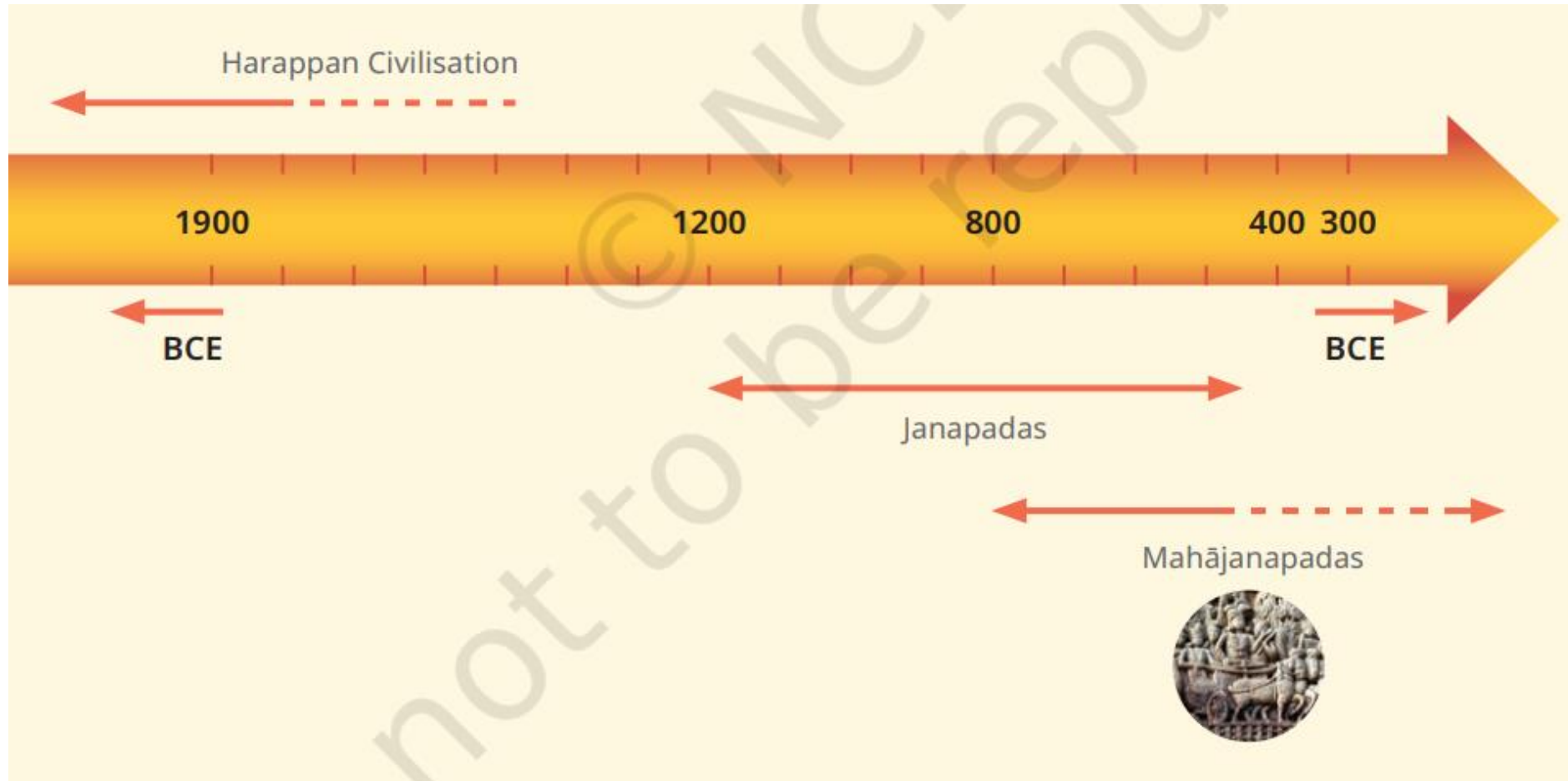
Broad streets for
organized city life



Major Kingdoms

- In **southern India**, cities began to emerge around **400 BCE**.
- **Recent excavations** suggest **commercial activity may have started earlier**.
- Around this time, **three major kingdoms** rose to power:
- The **Cholas**
- The **Cheras**
- The **Pāṇḍyas**
- These kingdoms played a key role in the region's **political and economic development**.

Timeline covering the period from 1900 BCE to 300 BCE.



Shell and gemstones industries at the site of Kodumanal (near Erode, Tamil Nadu)



Southern India



Ancient Tamil literature mentions the **Cholas, Cheras, and Pāṇḍyas**, along with their **kings**.

Southern India was rich in **resources** like **gold, spices, and precious stones**.

These regions traded **profitably within India** and with **overseas kingdoms**.

By **300–200 BCE**, the **entire Subcontinent** was a **vibrant, interconnected region**.

Goods and culture moved across India and also to **Central and Southeast Asia**.

Around the same time, the **mahājanapadas disappeared**, making way for **new developments** that would **reshape Indian history**.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- **What were the two major ancient trade routes in early India, and which regions did they connect?**
- **How did the varna-jāti system change over time, and what impact did British rule have on it?**
- **What do we learn about the city of Śhiśhupalgarh from archaeological findings?**
- **Which three kingdoms emerged in southern India around 400 BCE, and what made the region prosperous in trade?**
- **By 300–200 BCE, how was the Indian subcontinent interconnected, and what major political change occurred during this time?**

THANK YOU