

Kāśī as a janapada in the Vārāṇasī City.

The ancient kingdom of Kāśī was bounded by Kośala on the north, Magadha on the east, and Vatsa on the west. The Cedis and Karuṣas lived to their south.⁵⁸⁸ At the time of Buddha, the kingdom of Kāśī was absorbed by the kingdom of Kośala.⁵⁸⁹

We know that Lord Buddha gave his first discourse near Kāśī in the Deer Park at Sārnāth. Kāśī was an important Buddhist centre and was a seat of monastic establishments in the time of Aśoka.⁵⁹⁰ During the period of Gupta rule it was on its way to become a strong centre of Śiva worship with the mahāliṅgas set up in different parts of the city.⁵⁹¹ The Purāṇas include the region in the Gupta empire.⁵⁹²

It was a great centre of trade and commerce. Patañjali in his Mahābhāṣya⁵⁹³ mentions Kāśī cloth. The Buddhist literature gives us many accounts of the merchants of the city.⁵⁹⁴

Kāśī has been a place of much importance for Hindu pilgrimage. Its religious importance has been discussed at length in the Kāśīkhaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa. Lord Śiva never leaves it, hence it is known as Avimukta. A man who dies here is believed to get emancipation.⁵⁹⁵

6. Kosala (No. I, L. 19) :

It is spelt both ways with the dental as well as with the palatal sibilant. It is included in the list of the Dakṣiṇāpatha kingdoms whose kings were conquered but reinstated by Samudragupta. At that time Mahendra was its ruler. It has been identified with South Kosala corresponding to modern district of Raipur, Sambalpur and Bilaspur of M.P. and Orissa.⁵⁹⁶ Its old capital was Śrīpura (modern Sirpur), 40 miles north-east of Raipur.⁵⁹⁷ It is the same as Mahā-kosala⁵⁹⁸ which forms the largest unit among the three component parts of the State of Madhya Pradesh.⁵⁹⁹ The recent excavation at Eraṇ has thrown a flood of new light on the early history of eastern Malwa and Mahākosala between the period 1900 B.C. and A.D. 600. During the Gupta period several Brahmanical temples were built in this region. In the early medieval period i.e. from A.D. 600 to 1200, the Candellas and Kalacuris were the two chief ruling dynasties in the Mahākosala area. In the period of Muslim rule followed by Maratha supremacy, many forts and fortresses were built