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Chedi (Mahajanapada)

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Chedi (Mahajanapada)

Practice MCQs

At a glance

This lesson explains Chedi, one of the sixteen great kingdoms of the Buddha’s age.

01 **7th**Chedi’s place on the Pali list.
02 **Suktimati**Capital in the Mahabharata.
03 **100**Offences Krishna promised to pardon.
04 **Discus**Weapon that killed Shishupala.

- Pali books spell the name Ceti or Cetiya.
- Shishupala was Krishna’s cousin.
- The Kalachuris of Tripuri came about 1,000 years later.

Source: Pali Proper Names, Mahajanapada.

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLIV.

Mahajanapada One of sixteen great kingdoms.
Rajasuya A royal sacrifice for an overlord.
Discus Krishna's throwing weapon.
Bundelkhand The region south of the Yamuna.

Chedi was one of the sixteen great kingdoms of the Buddha's age. Its story comes mostly from the Mahabharata, not from Buddhist books. At the centre of that story is King Shishupala and one broken promise.

Contents

1. Where Chedi lay
2. Shishupala's story
3. The Rajasuya
4. Later uses of the name
5. 4 questions to think through
6. 7 understanding checks
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Where was Chedi, and what was its capital?

Chedi sat in Bundelkhand, south of the Yamuna. Its capital was Suktimati, called Sotthivati in Pali.

1. Which Mahajanapada was Chedi?

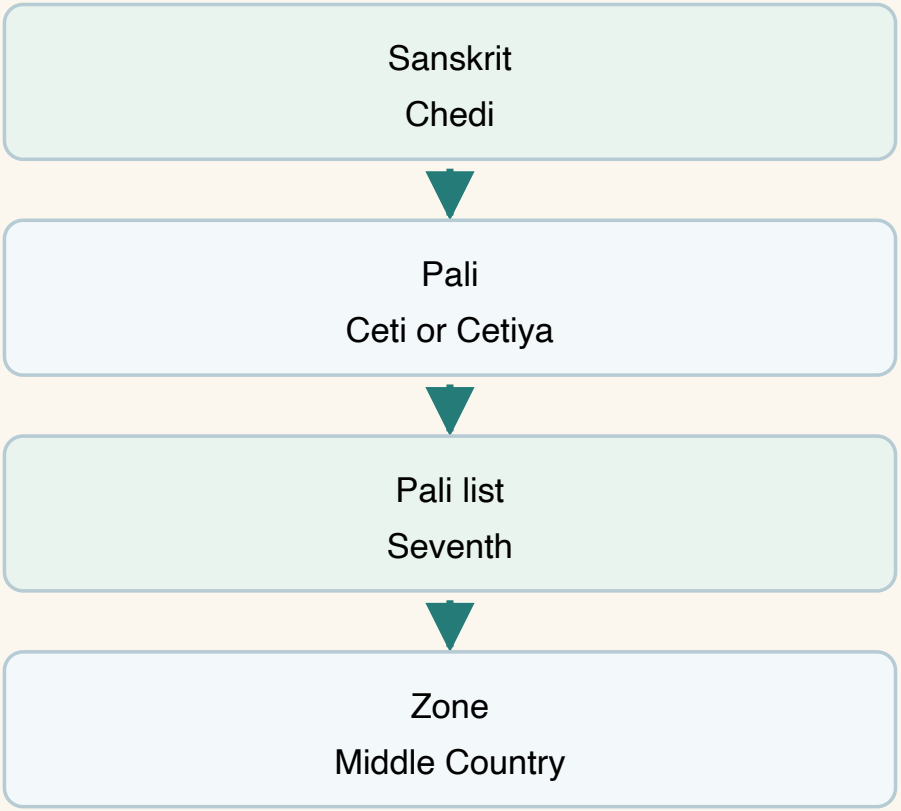
Chedi is the Sanskrit name. Pali books call it Ceti or Cetiya. It is one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas, the great countries of the Buddha's time.

The Pali list names Chedi seventh, after Malla. The first fourteen countries lie in the Middle Country, called Majjhimadesa. Only the last two, Gandhara and Kamboja, lie in the north.

The Pali dictionary says Ceti is probably the Cedi of older documents. It points to the Rigveda for those older mentions.



Chedi's place among the Mahajanapadas, in the Bundelkhand region south of the Yamuna. Map by Avantiputra7, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.



One country, three spellings.

True or False: Chedi was one of the two northern Mahajanapadas on the Pali list.
Source: Pali Proper Names, Mahajanapada, item 1

Source: Pali Proper Names, Cetiya, item 1

2. Where did Chedi lie?

Scholars place Chedi in Bundelkhand, south of the Yamuna. Pargiter puts it along the south bank of the river. He says it ran from the Chambal on the north-west to Karvi on the south-east.

Bhandarkar says the Cheta or Chetiya country matches modern Bundelkhand. Law says the Matsyas seem to have been its western neighbours. The Kashis lay to its east.

Some scholars say it also took in the northern part of Jabalpur. In the medieval period its southern frontier reached the Narmada. So the borders of Chedi shifted with time.

Chedi	Neighbours
Bundelkhand	Matsyas, west
South of Yamuna	Kashis, east

Chedi lay south of the Yamuna.

True or False: Chedi lay in Bundelkhand, south of the Yamuna.
Source: Early History of Orissa, page 286, item 2

Source: Law, Tribes in Ancient India, page 50, item 2

3. Why do the texts speak of two Chedi settlements?

The Pali dictionary notes two settlements of the Cetis. The older one was probably in the mountains, perhaps in Nepal. The later one lay near the Yamuna, next to the Kurus.

The Buddha visited the later settlement. He stayed in the Ceti country, then went on to Kosambi. The Anguttara Nikaya records several talks given to the Cetis at their town of Sahajati.

This shows that Chedi was a real country in the Buddha's day. It was also a centre of Buddhist teaching.

Older	Later
Mountains	Near Yamuna
Perhaps Nepal	Next to Kurus

The Buddha visited the later one.

Source: Pali Proper Names, Cetiya, item 3

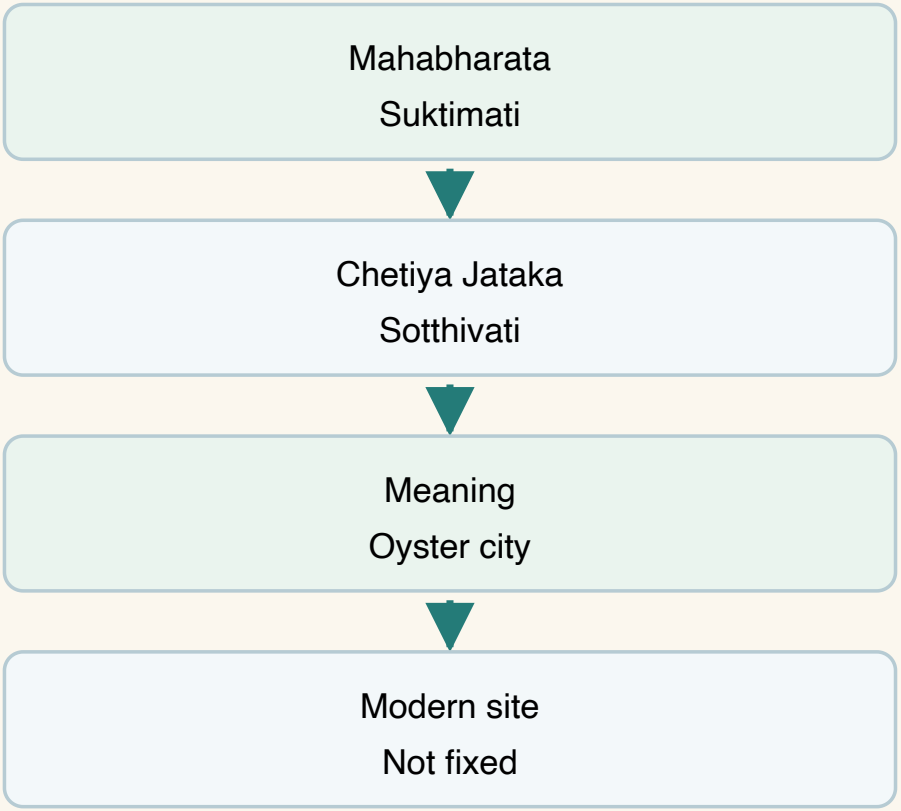
Source: Law, Tribes in Ancient India, page 50, item 3

4. What was the capital of Chedi?

The Mahabharata names the capital Suktimati. It also calls it Sukti-sahvya. The Pali Chetiya Jataka calls it Sotthivati.

The Pali dictionary says Sotthivati is probably the same city as Suktimati. Law says the name comes from sukti, an oyster. A river of the same name flowed near the capital of King Vasu Uparichara.

Our sources do not fix where the city stood today. Treat the capital as a name to remember, not a mapped site.



Two names, probably one city.

True or False: Suktimati and Sotthivati are probably two names for the capital of Chedi.
Source: Early History of Orissa, page 286, item 4

Source: Law, Tribes in Ancient India, page 50, item 4

Source: Pali Proper Names, Cetiya, item 4

Who was Shishupala, and what did Krishna

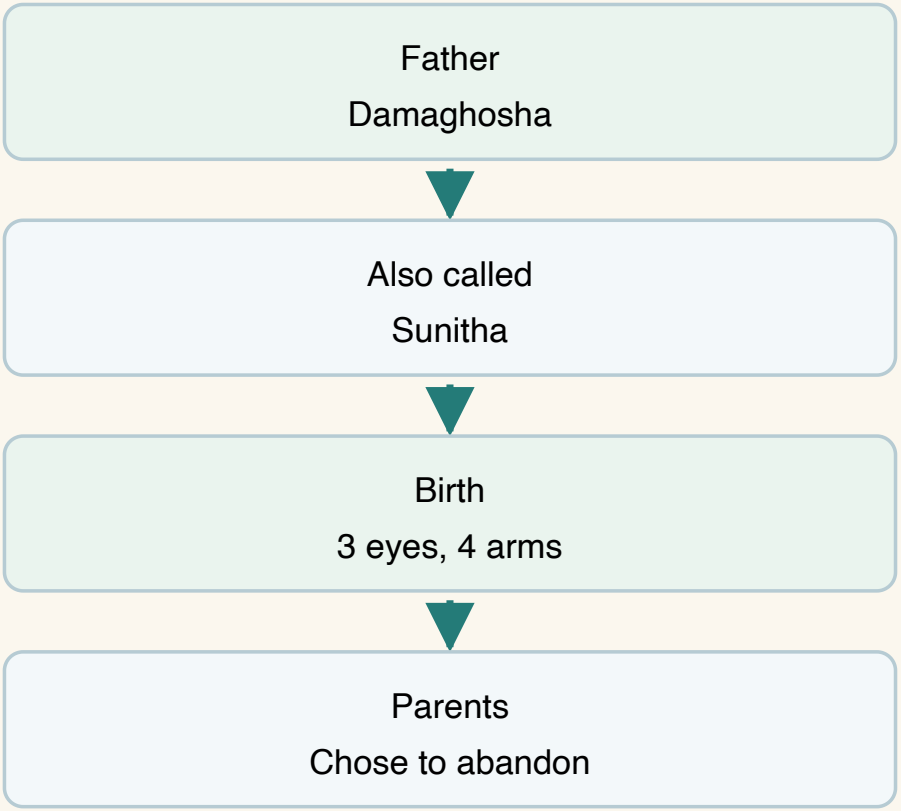
promise?

Shishupala was born under bad omens. Krishna promised his mother to forgive a hundred of his offences.

5. Who was Shishupala?

Bhishma tells his story in the Mahabharata. Shishupala was born in the line of the king of Chedi. He was the son of King Damaghosha. He is also called Sunitha.

He was born with three eyes and four arms. He screamed like an ass. His parents and relatives were struck with fear. They decided to abandon him.



His birth was marked by bad omens.

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLII, item 5

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLIV, item 5

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XXXVIII, item 5

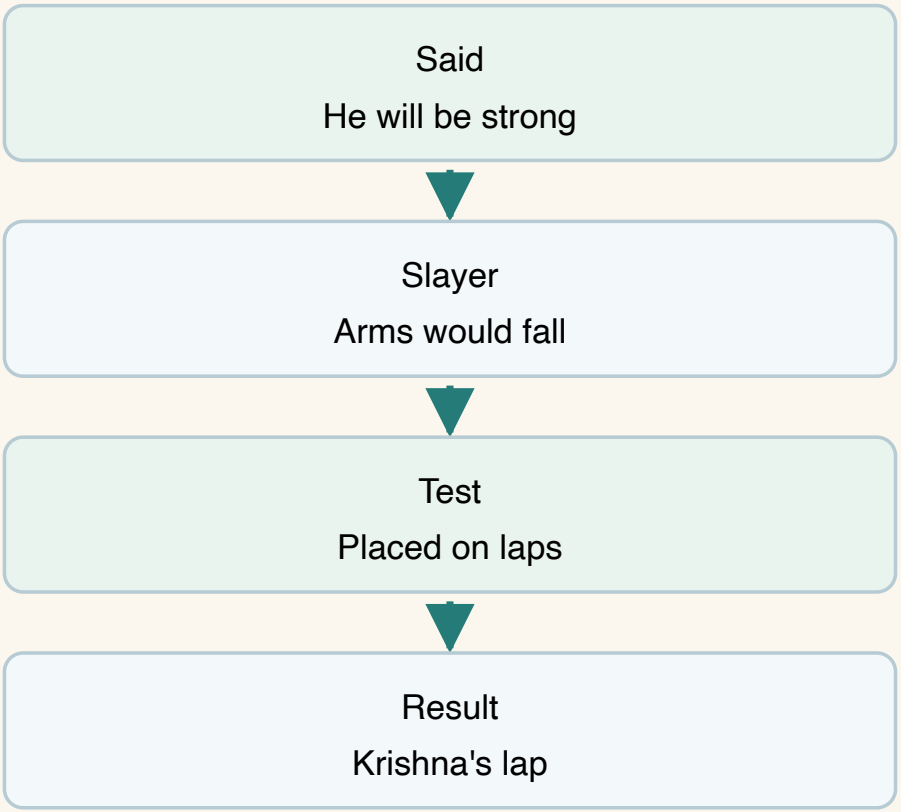
6. What did the voice from the sky say?

A voice without a body spoke to the king and queen. It said the boy would be fortunate and strong. It said his time of death had not yet come.

The voice also said who would kill him. The child’s extra arms would fall off in the lap of his slayer. His third eye would vanish at the sight of that person.

Kings came from all over to see the child. He sat on a thousand laps and nothing happened. Then the queen placed him on the lap of Krishna. The extra arms fell and the third eye vanished.

Krishna and his brother Balarama had come to see their father’s sister, the queen of Chedi. So Shishupala was Krishna’s cousin.



Krishna's lap broke the omen.

True or False: Shishupala was a cousin of Krishna.

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLII, item 6

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLIV, item 6

7. What did Krishna promise Shishupala's mother?

The frightened queen asked Krishna for a boon. She asked him to pardon the offences of her son. Krishna said he would pardon a hundred offences, even when Shishupala deserved to die.

Remember the number. The epic names a hundred offences, not ninety-nine or a hundred and one.

She asked	Krishna said
Pardon her son	A hundred
	offences

The promise was a hundred offences.

True or False: Krishna promised to pardon a thousand offences of Shishupala.

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLII, item 7

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLIV, item 7

What happened at Yudhishthira's Rajasuya?

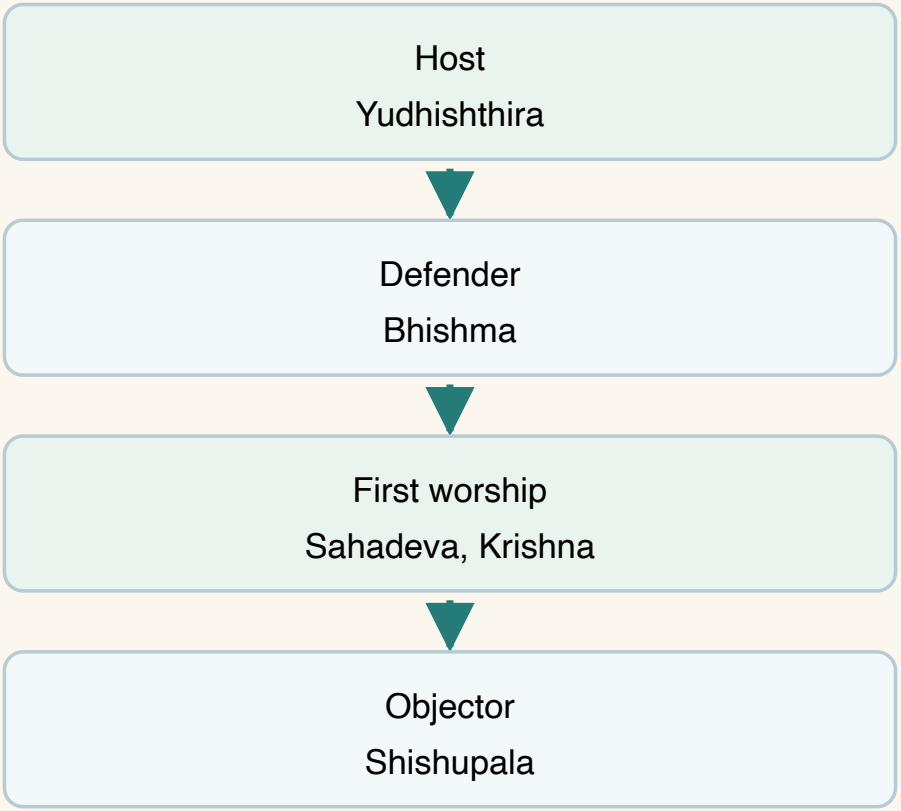
Shishupala insulted Krishna in front of all the kings. Krishna’s patience ran out.

8. Why did Shishupala object to honouring Krishna?

Yudhishthira held a great royal sacrifice, the Rajasuya. Bhishma defended the choice of Krishna for the first honour. Sahadeva then offered the first worship to Krishna.

Shishupala, also called Sunitha, was furious. His eyes turned red with anger. He tried to rouse the other kings to stop the sacrifice.

He called Krishna no king, a slave and a wretch. He said the Pandavas deserved to die for honouring such a man.



Shishupala objected to honouring Krishna.

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XXXVII, item 8

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XXXVIII, item 8

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLIV, item 8

9. What wrongs did Krishna list against him?

Krishna spoke to all the kings. He said he had borne many wrongs for his father’s sister. He then named them:

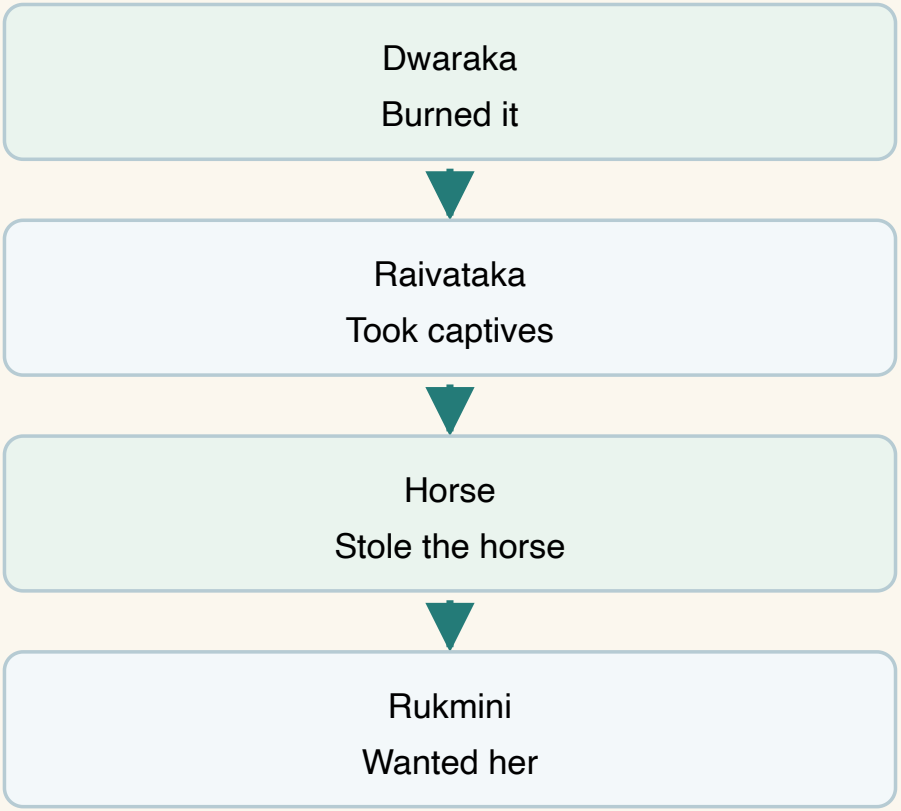
- Shishupala burned Dwaraka while Krishna was away at Pragjyotisha.

- He attacked the attendants of King Bhoja on the Raivataka hill and carried many away in chains.
- He stole the horse set free for the horse sacrifice of Krishna's father.
- He wronged the wife of Akrura, called Vabhru, on her way from Dwaraka.
- He had also wanted Rukmini, Krishna's wife.

Shishupala laughed and told Krishna to pardon him or not. He said Krishna could do nothing to him.



Krishna kills Shishupala at Yudhishthira's Rajasuya Yajna, in a 19th-century Indian painting. Artist unknown, circa 1850. Public domain, British Museum, via Wikimedia Commons.



Krishna named many wrongs.

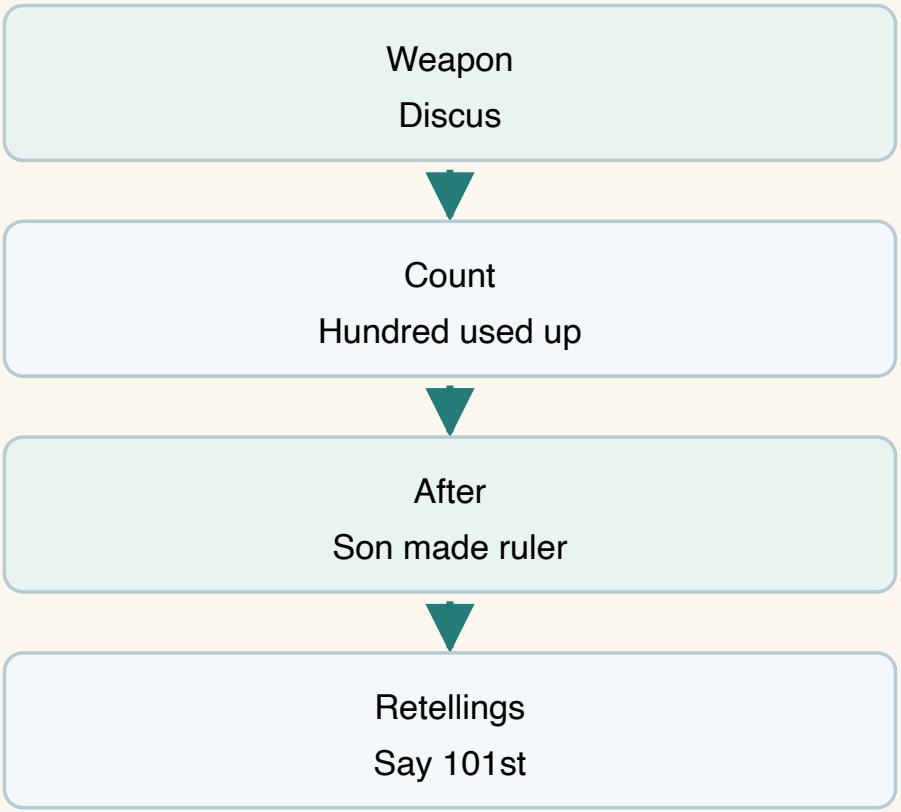
Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLIV, item 9

10. How did Shishupala die?

Krishna thought of his discus, and it came into his hand. He told the kings why Shishupala had been spared so far. A hundred offences were to be pardoned at his mother's request. He said that number had now become full.

Krishna then cut off Shishupala's head with the discus. The Mahabharata says a bright energy left the body and entered Krishna.

Yudhishthira had the funeral rites done. He then installed Shishupala's son as ruler of the Chedis. Many retellings speak of the 101st insult. The epic text speaks of the hundred being used up.



The epic speaks of a hundred.

True or False: Krishna killed Shishupala with a mace.
Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLIV, item 10

Source: Wisdom Library, Shishupala, item 10

Did the name Chedi live on, and what should I remember?

The name Chedi was used again in later times. Do not mix those uses up.

11. What did Kharavela's inscription say about Chedi?

The Hathigumpha inscription opens with praise of Kharavela, the overlord of Kalinga. A translation says he was increasing the glory of the Chedi dynasty.

A history of early Odisha discusses the Chedi country under the heading Lineage of Kharavela. So the Chedi name appears in Kalinga’s records too. Here it is a family name in a Kalinga record. It is not the kingdom of Bundelkhand itself.

Says	Means
Chedi dynasty	A family name
Overlord of Kalinga	Not Bundelkhand

Chedi is a family name in Kalinga.

Source: Live History India, Kharavela, item 11

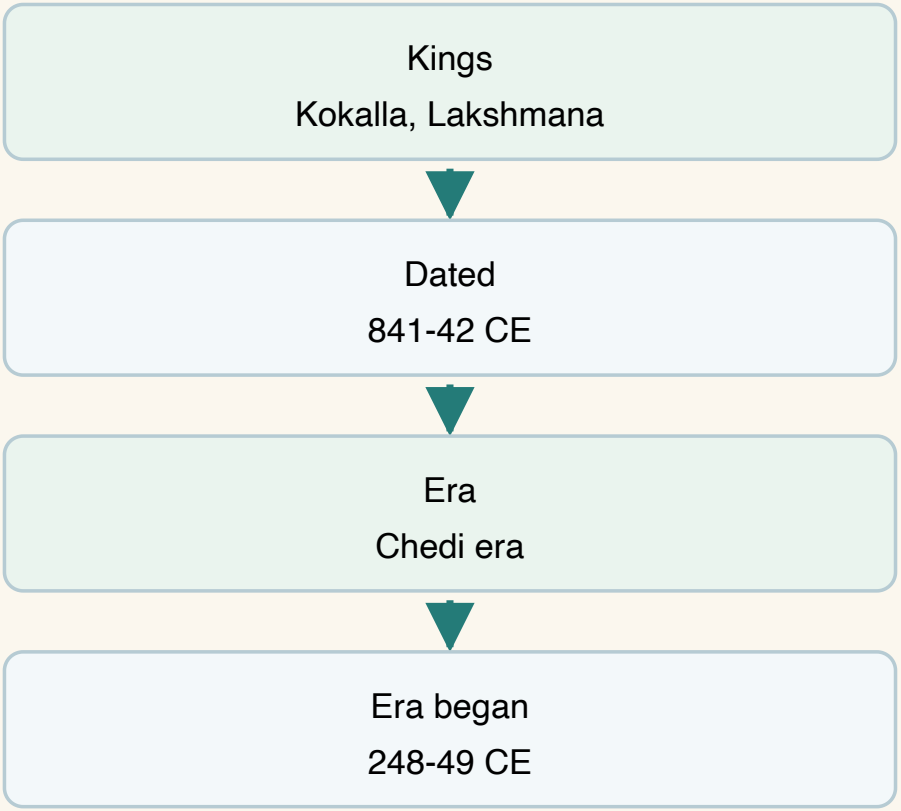
Source: Early History of Orissa, page 286, item 11

12. Who were the Kalachuris of Tripuri?

The Kalachuris were a medieval line. Kokalla I and Lakshmanaraja I ruled at Tripuri. An inscription of Lakshmanaraja I is dated 841-42 CE. So he ruled about 825 to 850 CE.

The Kalachuris used the Chedi era. Kielhorn showed it began in 248-49 CE. Law notes that Cedi was also called Tripuri.

These kings ruled long after the Buddha's age. They carried the old name. They are not the Mahajanapada kingdom.



A medieval line, not the Mahajanapada.

True or False: The Kalachuris of Tripuri were the Mahajanapada-age kings of Chedi.
Source: Kalachuri-Chedi era, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, item 12

Source: Kalachuris of Tripuri, Lakshmanaraja I, item 12

Source: Law, Tribes in Ancient India, page 50, item 12

13. What is the quick comparison for exams?

- **Name:** Chedi in Sanskrit, Ceti or Cetiya in Pali. Seventh on the Pali list.

- **Place:** Bundelkhand, south of the Yamuna. Matsyas to the west, Kashis to the east.
- **Capital:** Suktimati in the Mahabharata, Sotthivati in Pali.
- **King:** Shishupala, son of Damaghosha. Krishna’s cousin.
- **Promise:** a hundred offences forgiven.
- **Death:** at Yudhishthira’s Rajasuya, by Krishna’s discus.
- **Later uses:** Kharavela’s inscription and the Kalachuris of Tripuri.

Early	Story
Bundelkhand	Shishupala
Suktimati	Discus, hundred

Place and story to recall.

Source: Pali Proper Names, Mahajanapada, item 13

Source: Law, Tribes in Ancient India, page 50, item 13

Source: Mahabharata, Sabha Parva, section XLIV, item 13

Four questions to think through

Why does Chedi's story come mostly from the Mahabharata?

The Mahabharata tells the long story of Shishupala. Pali books give the list of sixteen countries and the Buddha's visits. So each kind of source tells a different part. Learn both parts together.

Was it the 100th or the 101st insult?

The epic text says a hundred offences were to be pardoned. It then says that number had become full. Later retellings often say the 101st insult. For exams, remember the hundred.

Why is the site of the capital hard to name?

The texts give two names, Suktimati and Sotthivati. They also name a river and give the origin of the name. They do not fix a modern site. So learn the names, not a point on the map.

How do I keep the uses of the name Chedi apart?

The Mahajanapada belongs to the Buddha's age. Kharavela's inscription uses Chedi as a family name in Kalinga. The Kalachuris of Tripuri ruled about the 9th century CE. Each is a different time and place.

Check your understanding

Your 7 quick checks Answered 0 of · Correct
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Continue to the practice MCQs

✅ Test Yourself

Try practice questions on Chedi and Shishupala.

Practice MCQs

1. The Mahajanapada of Chedi lay roughly in which modern region?

A. The Gangetic plain near Varanasi

B. Coastal Odisha

C. The Deccan plateau

D. Bundelkhand, between the Chambal and Ken rivers

See answer ↓

2. In the Pali list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas, which name stands for Chedi?

A. Vamsa

B. Maccha

C. Assaka

D. Cetiya

See answer ↓

3. Which city is named as the capital of Chedi in the Mahabharata?

A. Ujjain

B. Mathura

C. Suktimati

D. Kaushambi

See answer ↓

4. What did Krishna promise Shishupala's mother?

A. To pardon a hundred offences of her son

B. To raise her son in his own palace

C. To spare her son's life for ever

D. To make her son king of Dwaraka

See answer ↓

5. Who was the father of Shishupala?

A. Akrura

B. Vasudeva

C. Damaghosha

D. Jarasandha

See answer ↓

6. At whose sacrifice did Krishna kill Shishupala?

A. Yudhishthira's Rajasuya

B. Duryodhana's feast

C. Jarasandha's sacrifice

D. Bhishma's funeral rites

See answer ↓

7. Which weapon did Krishna use to kill Shishupala?

A. His discus

B. A spear

C. His bow Saranga

D. His mace

See answer ↓

8. Whose calculations placed the start of the Chedi era in 248-49 CE?

A. Pargiter

B. Rhys Davids

C. Kielhorn

D. Bhandarkar

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **D.** The answer is Bundelkhand, south of the Yamuna. Pargiter places Chedi along the south bank of the Yamuna, from the Chambal to Karvi. Bhandarkar says the Chetiya country matches modern Bundelkhand. The Gangetic plain near Varanasi was the land of the Kashis, to its east. The Deccan plateau and coastal Odisha lie far from all these limits. Memory hook: Chedi means Bundelkhand. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** Cetiya is the answer. Pali books call Chedi Ceti or Cetiya. The Pali dictionary says it is probably the Cedi of older documents. Vamsa, Maccha and Assaka are three other Mahajanapadas on the same list. Memory hook: Cetiya is Chedi in Pali. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** Suktimati is the answer. The Mahabharata also calls it Sukti-sahvya. The Pali Chetiya Jataka calls the capital Sotthivati. The Pali dictionary says the two are probably one city. The other cities are not named as the capital of Chedi in these sources. Memory hook: Suktimati means the oyster city. ↑ Q3
4. **A.** The promise was to pardon a hundred offences. The queen asked Krishna to forgive her son for her sake. Krishna said he would pardon a hundred offences, even if Shishupala deserved to die. The other promises are not in the epic. Memory hook: a hundred wrongs, then no more. ↑ Q4
5. **C.** Damaghosha is the answer. The Mahabharata calls Shishupala the brave son of Damaghosha, king of Chedi. Vasudeva was the father of Krishna. Jarasandha was another king, whom Shishupala praised. Akrura was a Yadava whose wife Shishupala wronged. Memory hook: Damaghosha begot Shishupala. ↑ Q5
6. **A.** The answer is Yudhishthira's Rajasuya. Sahadeva offered the first worship to Krishna there. Shishupala objected and insulted Krishna before all the kings. Krishna then killed him. The other events are not where this story took place. Memory hook: the insult came at the Rajasuya. ↑ Q6
7. **A.** The answer is his discus. Krishna thought of the discus, and it came into his hand. He then cut off Shishupala's head with it. The epic names no mace, bow or spear for this act. Memory hook: the discus ended the hundred. ↑ Q7
8. **C.** The answer is Kielhorn. He examined the dates of later Chedi inscriptions. He found the era began in 248-49 CE. Pargiter and Bhandarkar wrote on where Chedi lay. They did not date the era. Memory hook: Kielhorn fixed the era. ↑ Q8

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