

10 Trace the rise of Magadhan imperialism up to the times of the Nandas with particular reference to its policy towards non-monarchical state. Discuss the factors that contributed to its success.

From the 6th century B.C. various large territorial states started to emerge. The use of iron facilitated this process as it was used to make weapons as well as agricultural tools which led to an increase in agricultural production. This increased production led to the rise of urban centres & territorial states. Out of the 16 Mahajanpadas Magadha gradually rose in power.

Magadha came into prominence under the leadership of Bimbisara who belonged to the Haryanka dynasty. He started the policy of conquest. He annexed Anga which laid the foundation of Magadhan imperialism. He also used matrimonial alliances as a means to strengthen his position. His first wife Kosaladevi brought a Kashi village in dowry which yielded much revenue. The marriage also ended the hostility with Kosala. His second wife Chellana was a Lichchavi princess from Vaishali and his third wife Kshema was a daughter of the Chief of Madra clan of Punjab. These matrimonial alliances gave enormous diplomatic prestige to Magadha & also paved the path for its further expansion.

Ajatsatru succeeded his father Bimbisara. He strengthened the defence of Magadha by building a fort near the banks of Ganges and named it Patali Grama. He fought against

Kosala & ultimately Kosala king was compelled to purchase peace by giving his daughter in marriage. He also defeated Lichchavis as well as Vaishali. After this he conquered 36 republican states surrounding his kingdom. Avanti arose as a stronger rival of Magadha but Ajatshatru could not conquer it. Apart from this, Ajatshatru has a respectable place in both Buddhist & Jain texts and he also conducted the first Buddhist council.

Udayin succeeded his father Ajatshatru. He moved the capital from Paal Rajgriha to Patliputra. After Udayin, some texts say Nagdaska became the king but he was soon succeeded by the Shishungga dynasty. They temporarily shifted the capital to Vaishali. Their most important contribution in the Magadhan imperialism was the conquest of Avanti. Under Kalashoka, probably the second ruler of this dynasty, capital was again shifted to Patliputra.

Shishunggas were succeeded by the Nanda dynasty. First Nanda king Mahapadma Nanda has been described in the Puranas as the 'destroyer of Kshatriyas'. He was also known as the 'Ekrat' (the sole king who destroyed others). He expanded his territory south of the Vindhya range, into the Deccan plateau. He conquered Kalinga and Hathigumpha inscription of Kharvela mentions this. He defeated many other kingdoms like Panchal, Kurus, Mithila, Surasena etc. Nandas had a vast army. Various Greek writers wrote about exaggerated numbers when it came to describe

while describing Nanda army. However, Nanda army never faced Alexander's army who invaded India at the time of Dhan Nanda. Apart from their army, Nandas were also famous for their wealth. They undertook irrigation projects & introduced standardized measures for trade across their empire.

Thus, this was an account of the rise of Magadhan imperialism till the period of Nandas. But to have a proper understanding of the period it is important to acknowledge the factors which led to the rise of Magadha. Some of which are -

i) Geographical factors

a) Capitals at strategic locations - Rajgir was surrounded by 5 hills and Patliputra was surrounded by Ganga, Gandak, Son & Ghagra river. It was a true 'Saldurga'.

b) Magadha lay on the main land route connecting East India with West. It could easily control trade between the two regions.

c) Availability of Elephants in the nearby forest who can be used in wars.

ii) Minerals - Iron became an important metal which was used for making agricultural tools as well as mines. Magadha had abundant iron supply from Rajgir mines & also from the adjacent Chotanagpur plateau.

iii) Economic factors - The people of Magadha were able to produce surplus agricultural products in agriculture.

Thus, they could have supported their soldiers & artisans and in this way empire automatically became rich & powerful.

iv) Culturally - Magadhan empire had the traces of both Aryan & non-Aryan cultures. Moreover, the philosophies of Buddhism & Jainism further supported the rise of Magadhan imperialism.

v) Able rulers - An unbroken chain of able monarchs also helped a lot in the rise of Magadhan empire. Bimbisara, Ajatshatru, Mahapadma Nanda were exceptional kings.

Therefore, because of these factors Magadha was able to rise against the 16 Mahajanapadas and eventually led to the formation of first territorial empire in the Indian subcontinent.