



# Sambhav

## Day 36

**Question 1:** Discuss the reasons for the rise of Magadha as an empire. (150 Words)

**Question 2:** The advent of Buddhism and Jainism in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. was the first religious movement in ancient India. Discuss the factors which led to the decline of Buddhism. (250 Words)

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## Approach / Explanation / Answer

### Answer 1

#### Approach

- Introduce Magadha as an empire of 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
- Discuss the factors which had contributed to rise of Magadha as an empire.
- Conclude suitably.

#### Introduction

In sixth century, BCE sixteen states came into prominence known as mahajanapadas. Among them Vajji, Magadha, Koshala, Kuru, Panchala, Gandhara and Avanti these were amongst the most important mahajanapadas.

Magadha came into prominence under the leadership of Bimbisara, who belonged to the Haryanka dynasty. He was a contemporary of the Buddha. He started the policy of conquest and aggression which ended with the Kalinga war of Ashoka. Bimbisara acquired Anga and placed it under the viceroyalty of his son Ajatashatru at Champa. He also strengthened his position by marriage alliances.

#### Body

##### Causes of Magadha's Success

- The formation of the largest state in India during this period was the work of several enterprising and ambitious rulers such as Bimbisara, Ajatashatru and Mahapadma Nanda.
  - They employed all means, fair and foul, at their disposal to enlarge their kingdoms and to strengthen their states.
- Magadha enjoyed an advantageous geographical position, because the richest iron deposits were

situated not far away from Rajgir, the earliest capital of Magadha.

- The ready availability of the rich iron ores enabled the Magadhan princes to equip themselves with effective weapons.
- The capitals of Magadha were very strategically situated like Rajgir was surrounded by a group of five hills, and so it was rendered impregnable in those days.
  - In 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the Magadhan capital was shifted to Pataliputra, which occupied a pivotal position commanding communications on all sides because of its situation at the confluence of the Ganga, the Gandak and the Son.
  - Patna itself was rendered invulnerable because of its being surrounded by rivers on almost all sides. Pataliputra therefore was a true water-fort (jaladurga), and it was not easy to capture.
  - Magadha lay at the centre of the alluvium middle Gangetic plain. The cleared jungles proved immensely fertile land with enough rainfall and the area could be made productive even without irrigation.
- The Magadha benefited from the rise of towns and use of metal money and flourished of trade and commerce in north-east India.
  - It enabled rulers to levy tolls on the sale of commodities and accumulate wealth to pay and maintain their army.
- Magadha enjoyed a special advantage in military organization. Although the Indian states were well acquainted with the use of horses and chariots, but **Magadha was first to use elephants on a large scale in its wars** against its neighbours.
  - E.g., Greek sources that the Nandas maintained 6000 elephants. Elephants could be used in storming fortresses and in marching over marshy and other areas lacking roads and other means of communication.
- The unorthodox character of the Magadhan society.

## Conclusion

On account of all these reasons Magadha succeeded in defeating the other kingdoms and in founding the first empire in India.

## Answer 2

### Approach

- Introduce the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
- Discuss the reformative steps taken by these two religious movements. Also, discuss the factors which led to the decline of Buddhism.
- Conclude suitably

### Introduction

Both Jainism and Buddhism was founded in the 6th century BC and emerged as the most potent religious reform movements during later Vedic period.

### Body

**The origin of these two religions were based on the socio-religious condition of the time such as:**

- Hinduism had become rigid and orthodox with complex rituals and dominance of Brahmins. Religious life became too much complex, ritualistic and sacrifices. Blind faith and superstitious beliefs confused the people.
  - Caste system created social inequality.
- The Varna system divided the society into four classes based on birth, where the two higher classes enjoyed several privileges.
- Kshatriya's reaction against the domination of the brahmanas.
- Spread of the new agricultural economy in the north-eastern India due to the use of iron tools and

animal force due to principle of nonviolence brought by Jainism and Buddhism.

- The growth of trade led to the improvement in the economic conditions of the Vaisyas. Now, they wanted to enhance their social status and merchant class extended the chief support to these new religions.

### **Reformative steps taken by these two religions:**

- Provided non-violent, peaceful, egalitarian society and prevailed economic and social development.
- Recognized and alleviate the status of women, lower caste and other depressed section of the societies.

**The Decline of Buddhism was due to following reasons:** By the early twelfth century A.D. Buddhism became practically extinct in India. It had continued to exist in a changed form in Bengal and Bihar till the eleventh century but after that this religion almost completely vanished from the country.

- In the beginning Buddhism was inspired by the spirit of reform, but eventually it succumbs to rituals and ceremonies it originally denounced. It became a victim to the evils of Brahmanism against which it had fought in the beginning.
  - On the other end to meet the Buddhist challenge the brahmanas reformed their religion.
  - They stressed the need for preserving the cattle wealth and assured women and shudras of admission to heaven.
- Gradually the Buddhist monks were cut off from the mainstream of people's life; they gave up Pali, the language of the people, and took to Sanskrit, the language of intellectuals.
- From the first century A.D. onwards, Buddhists practised idol worship on a large scale and received numerous offerings from devotees.
  - The rich offerings supplemented by generous royal grants to the Buddhist monasteries made the life of monks easy.
  - Some of the monasteries such as Nalanda collected revenue from as many as 200 villages.
- By the seventh century A.D., the Buddhist monasteries had come to be dominated by ease-loving people and became centres of corrupt practices which Gautama Buddha had strictly prohibited.
  - The enormous wealth of the monasteries with women living in them led to further degeneration. Buddhists came to look upon women as objects of lust.
- The brahmana ruler Pashyamitra Shunga had persecuted the Buddhists. The Huna king Mihirakula, who was a worshipper of Shiva, killed hundreds of Buddhists.
  - The Shaivite Shashanka of Gauda cut off the Bodhi tree at Bodha Gaya, where the Buddha had attained enlightenment.
  - In south India both the Shaivites and Vaishnavites bitterly opposed the Jainas and Buddhists in early medieval times. Such conflicts may have weakened Buddhism.
- For their riches the monasteries came to be coveted by the Turkish invaders'. They became special targets of the invaders. E.g., Nalanda university was attacked and destroyed by the Bakhtiyar Khilji.

### **Conclusion**

Despite its ultimate disappearance as an organized religion, Buddhism left its abiding mark on the history of India. The Buddhists showed a keen awareness of the problems that faced the people of north-east India in the sixth century B.C.

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