

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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A study on king Ashoka's achievements in relevance to present scenario

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Abstract: Ashoka the “emperor of all ages”, the Mauryan Empire's third ruler is most remembered for his repudiation of violence, establishment of the notion of dhamma (virtuous social behaviour), and endorsement of Buddhism, as well as his efficient leadership of a virtually pan-Indian political entity. Along with these contributions he took many initiatives for the welfare of people, wildlife, art, architecture, many more innovative projects, female education etc. The present article is review based hence the collected is from all possible secondary sources. The current research paper explains historical development of Mauryan dynasty and discusses the achievements of king Ashoka and its relevance in present scenario. Also the article critical discusses the incorporation king Ashok's initiatives and techniques to the present society.

Key words: Ashoka, Mauryan dynasty, Achievements, Initiatives

Introduction

King Ashoka is one of the most eminent ruler of Mauryan dynasty. He was the first monarch to use inscriptions to convey his message to the people. His period of administration is from 304BC-232BC. Most of Ashoka's inscriptions were in Prakrit and were written in the Brahmi script. For the first time in history, he united the Indian subcontinent and saw it blossom to its full potential. His imprint was nearly lost in India's subsequent Islamic history until late-eighteenth-century European orientalist rediscovered it. His progeny, as well as the rest of the world, have acknowledged and admired him. (Kumar, 2015). His administration was total based on social development and welfare.

Ashoka is a Sanskrit word that meaning "without sorrow," and it was most likely his given name. In his edicts etched in stone, he is referred to as DevanampiyaPiyadassi, which means "Beloved of the Gods" and "gracious of mien," according to researcher John Keay (and academic consensus). Early in his reign, he is said to have been particularly ruthless until launching a movement against the empire of Kalinga in c. 260 BCE, which resulted in such carnage, destruction, and death that Ashoka renounced war and converted to Buddhism, devoting himself to peace as exemplified in his concept of dhamma. Outside of his edicts, much of what we know about him comes from Buddhist writings that portray him as an example of conversion and ethical

life. Even 50 years after his death, the empire he and his family established did not last. Despite being the supreme of the rulers of one of antiquity's biggest and most influential empires, his name was lost to history till the British historian and orientalist James Prinsep (1799-1840 CE) recognised him in 1837 CE. For his choice to abstain from violence, his persistence on religious tolerance, and his nonviolent attempts to establish Buddhism as a prominent world religion, Ashoka has become one of the most interesting ancient rulers. The reign of the Mauryans is a significant period in our cultural history. Art and architecture were at their pinnacle during the Ashoka period and fell under the genre of court art. Following Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism, massive Buddhist missionary operations spurred the creation of distinct sculptural and architectural styles. Let us investigate several works of art and architecture from the Mauryan period that were linked to the lives, activities, and patronage of common people.

Review of literature

According to (Malakar, 2017) In the Mauriyan dynasty, Asoka was the most powerful ruler. He was a huge supporter of Buddhism, as well as art and architecture. This study aims to provide insight on the legendary Mauryan emperor Asoka's early life and career. There have been many great emperors in Indian history who have left their names in gold letters in history, and Asoka was one of them. Asoka's life and work were examined by a number of famous writers. This research attempts to examine how Asoka began his profession and achieved success throughout his time in the region. This study also aims to emphasise Asoka's Dhamma as well as his sponsorship of architecture and art throughout his reign. Asoka's sponsorship of Buddhism is also discussed in this study.

According to (Voss, 2016) Asoka was a famous emperor in 3rd century BCE India, revered for his political achievement but much more so for his unique compassionate approach to administration, which was heavily impacted by the Buddhist assurance he adopted. In the hunt for a new inspiration of cross-cultural guidance excellence, his great historical example demands a closer examination of his character and behaviour patterns. This paper compare and contrast today's leadership techniques, which are heavily inspired by the Western academic world, with the holistic, human-centered perspective that Buddhist teachings can provide. Then, as much as we can reinterpret from the existing historical evidence, it also endeavours Asoka's history and character to see how well he represented the role. The Buddhist leadership ideal. To accomplish current paper rely on archaeological evidence in the form of emperor-issued epigraphs as much as feasible. In this approach, author wish to encourage leaders, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, to explore and adopt a leadership style that is deemed most appropriate for the globalised world we live in.

As per the study of (Suresh, 2018) In Ancient India, Ashoka was the most well-known ruler. No other character from Ancient Indian history is as well-known to us, and no one has such a strong

personality as Ashoka. This is due to the fact that he was the first king to declare war to be a bad thing. He was the Maurya Dynasty's third ruler. He lived between 302 and 232 BCE. He was a monarch who attempted to communicate with the people through inscriptions.

According to (Kumar, 2015) Knowing our history in the present world is a difficult task. When it comes to Indian history, Ashoka is remembered foremost for his social, religious, and inscription activities, through which he extended his Dharma over the globe. At the same period, historians have discovered other Ashoka inscriptions with the names Devanampriya and priyadarshi throughout India. Every inscription reveals the majority of Ashoka's religious and humanitarian policies. The Maski rock edicts revealed for the first time that Devanampriya is also known as Ashoka the Great. We may learn why Ashoka came first in history by practising nonviolence after the Kalinga War by studying this paper.

According to (Darade, 2012) Ashoka changed his foreign policy from expansionism to cohabitation and harmony with his neighbours, avoiding more conquests and making his kingdom simpler to manage. In keeping with his Buddhist beliefs, he said that he was committed to ensuring the safety, happiness, and peace of mind of all "animate creatures" in his domain. He said that from now on, he would only seek conquest in subjects concerning the human spirit and the propagation of "good behaviour" among people. And he made it clear to other forces that he was both compassionate and strong. Famines and natural catastrophes had no effect on Ashoka's yearning for peace. He was not subjected to any major migrations during his reign. And no surrounding kingdoms attempted to steal any of his realm throughout his reign, maybe because these kings were accustomed to fearing the Maurya monarchs and believing them to be powerful. The resultant peace aided in the expansion of economic development. The harsher rules of Ashoka's grandfather, Chandragupta, were loosened. He gave up hunting game as a kingly pleasure and instead embarked on religious pilgrimages. He began donating to charitable organisations. He preached nonviolence and proselytised for Buddhism. vegetarianism, altruism, and compassion for all life beings.

Objectives of the study

1. To study brief history of Mauryan empire.
2. To study analyse the achievements of Ashoka.
3. To study the relevance of his achievements in present scenario.

Methodology

The relevant data is collected from various research articles and internet sources

History of Mauryan Empire

The period of Mauryan dynasty is from c.324-187BCE which is most noticed in the history of India. The creations of new governing techniques were both inventive and durable. The Mauryans

conquered practically the entire Indian Subcontinent, with the exception of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and certain sections of north-eastern India. For the first time, we have a number of sources (literary sources such as Kautilya's Arthashastra, Megasthenes' Indica, and Rudradaman I's Junagarh inscriptions, which are characteristic to the beginning of construction of Sudarshana lake during Chandragupta's reign) and Ashoka's edicts that shed light on the history of this period. (<http://www.jiwaji.edu>)

The Mauryan empire was founded by Chandragupta Maurya, who fought several wars for power. However, few historians agree on the sequence of events in this struggle for regional domination. Chandragupta belonged to the Kshatriya class of Magadha, and he spent his adolescence at glorious Taxila learning many subjects. He met Kautilya Chanakya, his teacher, with whom he plotted his succession to the throne. Following his education, he gathered an army from many regions to fight with Chanakya Kautilya, finally leading a vast army. As the leader of a powerful anti-Nanda coalition, he pushed for an alliance between Alexander and Porus. Chandragupta made a mistake by ignoring the boundary provinces. Instead of attacking cities one by one, he attacked the centre directly and was routed. He sought an alliance with the next great ruler in northwest India as a result of his unsuccessful operations. Porus and Chandragupta decided to split the empire in half after their victory against Nandas. The Greek warriors headed by Alexander marched west and completely abandoned the country as the army desired to return home. The captured territory was divided between the satraps, which included Indian monarchs. Chandragupta benefitted from the situation in Punjab, and his warriors began to acquire the requisite strength. He assumed possession of both the Porus Nandas kingdoms after King Porus died. He even took control of Punjab and planned a large-scale attack against the Nandas. The battles against the Greeks and his ascension to the throne were two of Chandragupta's most pivotal occasions. He was helped by non-monarchic factions in northwest India, according to western narratives, however some Indian sources state that Chandragupta was aided by certain non-monarchic forces in northwest India. These nonmonarchic troops in Punjab were efficient in resisting Alexander's army during his invasion. Chandragupta took advantage of the current circumstances in Punjab, and because the environment was favourable, he was confident in garnering their support in the fight for freedom against foreign invaders. Punjab was emancipated by Chandragupta, who promised its inhabitants safety and prosperity, as well as a robust rear-guard. His major goal was to take the Magadha throne, thus he travelled to Pataliputra, where he wanted to establish the Maurya Dynasty. His triumphs over the Greeks and the liberation of the Punjab from foreign invaders had undoubtedly benefited him in building the Mauryan Dynasty. (Sharma uma, 2021)

Chandragupta forged a pact with Seleucus on his way to the Magadha throne in which he gained specific Ariana territories in exchange for giving Seleucus war elephants. Seleucus even send an envoy to Chandragupta's palace as a consequence of their arrangement. Because of the agreement with Chandragupta, the Seleucus was free to begin on a long march against Antigonus, whose forces were routed at Ipsus (301 BC). The war-elephants of the

Mauryans, headed by General Seleucus, were important to his victory. Chandragupta retained friendly relations with even after the treaty was terminated. Chandragupta was recognised as one of India's greatest kings, and his name was linked to many of the legends that defined the country's history. Bindusara, Chandragupta's son, replaced him when Chandragupta's reign ended; he was known as "the slayer of his foes." The Mauryan kingdom reached its apex under its third emperor, the great 'Ashoka, son of Bindusara and grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, who reigned from 273BCE to 232BCE. Ashoka is recognised as one of the finest rulers of ancient India. The Mauryan Empire ruled the subcontinent from Kashmir and the Himalayas in the northwest to the Bay of Bengal in the east under Ashoka's leadership. He developed diplomatic relations with Hellenistic powers in the West and several kingdoms in the East throughout his reign. After a particularly deadly struggle in the Kalinga territory (modern-day Orissa, an Indian state), Ashoka discarded bloodshed in favour of "conquest by dharma." Ashoka's sponsorship of the spread of Buddhism and the ideas of dharma across the empire is one of his most enduring legacies. If you're the Emperor, you may use a variety of techniques to persuade others to do what you want. The use of swords and armies has always been popular, but Ashoka's victory via dharma was a revolutionary concept. This was a warrior who was famed for his ferocity in battle. He was transformed by his conversion to Buddhism, as well as his disgust at the death and suffering he perpetrated. The new, gentler Ashoka vowed never to seek military conquest again, instead devoting the remainder of his rule to the spread of Buddhism and the wellbeing of his people. He travelled the realm personally, preaching his teachings and creating Buddhist structures. His support for Buddhist missionaries was one of the most essential aspects of his dharmic success. (uma & Gupta, 2021)



Contribution of Ashoka

Ashoka's Inscriptions

The Edicts of Ashoka are India's oldest inscriptions. As a result, Ashoka was known as the "Father of Inscriptions." The Ashoka edicts are the most reliable source of Mauryan history. The majority of his inscriptions were carved into rocks, boulders, cave walls, and stone pillars. Their native tongue is Pali, with regional variations. Apart from the north-west, where Kharoshti is used, the script is Brahmi. There are two types of Ashoka inscriptions. The king's statement to his church as a lay Buddhist is part of the smaller group. These words define his Buddhist acceptance and his affiliation with the Sangha. Major and minor rock Edicts, as well as pillar Edicts, makes up the second category of noteworthy inscriptions. They outline his well-known 'Dhamma' policy. These inscriptions were placed in prominent locations, such as in towns, along vital commerce and travel routes, and near religious centres and religiously significant sites.

1. **Fourteen Major Rock Edicts:** A sequence of 14 important Ashoka Rock Edicts written on massive stones were discovered:- Girnar (Gujarat), Kalsi (Dehradun), Yerragundi (Andhra Pradesh), Mansehra (Pakistan), Sapara (Maharashtra), Shahpazgarhi (Pakistan), Jaugada (Orissa), and Dhauili (Uttar Pradesh) (Orissa) (Kumar, 2015)
2. **Minor Rock Edicts:** Siddapura, JatingaRameshwara, Bairat, Brahmagiri, Maski, Sahasaram, Rupnath, Govinath, and Palaigunda all contain tiny rock edicts and inscriptions. Northern Injunctions The northern Edict at Taxila is written in Aramaic script, whereas the northern Edict at Kandhar is bilingual, inscribed in Greek and Aramic. (Kumar, 2015)
3. **Bhabru Edict:** It is engraved on a boulder that was transported from the top of a hill in Bairat and is currently in Calcutta.
4. **Seven Pillar Edicts:** These seven pillar edicts located at Allahabad- Kosam, Delhi-Topara, Delhi –Meerut, Rampurva, Laurya- Araraja, Lauriya – Nandangarh and Nigali – Sagar.

Table No 1: pillar edicts and inscription details of Ashoka((The Mauryan Empire)

Pillar Edict	Ashoka Inscription Details
Edict I	The notion of Ashoka's protection of his people.
Edict II	Dhamma
Edict III	Avoiding practices of cruelty, sin, harshness, pride and anger among his subjects.
Edict IV	Responsibilities of the Rajukas.
Edict V	List of animals and birds that should not be killed on certain days. Another list which mentions animals that should never be killed.
Edict VI	Dhamma policy of the State.
Edict VI	Ashoka's work for fulfilling Dhamma. Tolerance for all sects.

5. **Minor pillar Edicts:** There are 3 minor Edicts which deal with schismatic of punishments which were found at Sanchi, Saranath and Kaushambhi. The fourth minor Pillar Edict is known as the Queen's Edict. (Kumar, 2015)
6. **Kalinga Rock Edicts:** Two Kalinga Edicts are exceptional additions to the fourteen Rock Edicts series. Dhauli and Jaugada both have these Edicts. These two Kalinga Edicts established the rules of governance for the newly acquired province of Kalinga. (Kumar, 2015)
7. **Commemorative Pillar Inscriptions:** They have been discovered in the Nepalese Tarai at Rumminei (Lumbini) and Nigilva. These inscriptions establish beyond a shadow of a doubt that Ashoka visited the sacred sites associated with Buddha's life. (Kumar, 2015)
8. **Cave Inscriptions:** Three Ashoka cave inscriptions have been discovered in the Barbara Hills near Gaya, Bihar. Between 257 and 250 B.C., the cave inscriptions were carved. According to the inscriptions, Ashoka dedicated these caverns to the Ajivikas monks. (Kumar, 2015)

Early life achievements of Ashoka and its relevance to current scenario

1. Measures taken by Ashoka for welfare of people.
2. Spreading of Buddhism across Asia.
3. Wild life protection.
4. Art and Architecture.
5. Infrastructure projects.
6. Ashoka emblem as National emblem.
7. Female education.

Discussion

➤ **Measures taken by Ashoka for welfare of people:**

1. He constructed many good roads and planted trees on both side of road which we can observe in current days in many metropolitan cities and in highways which helps in maintaining humidity and controlling pollution.
2. Many rest houses were constructed for travellers along road side which are lodges nowadays which help travellers and make their journey easier.
3. He dug large number wells to provide water supplies to his citizens which were flourished as 24x7 water supplies in present days.
4. He constructed many hospitals for people and animals which were termed as civil hospitals and veterinary hospitals in present scenario.

➤ **Spreading of Buddhism across Asia:** Ashoka is one of the eminent ruler who put forth in spreading Buddhism across ancient Asia which plays important role in maintain peace and tranquillity all over world since his period to present days.

➤ **Wild life protection:** King Ashoka introduced forest protection laws through which cruelty towards domestic and wild animals were restricted and banned hunting of certain animals

and species. He established many forest and wildlife reserves to protect animals which is referred as one the guidelines for current Wild life protection Act.

- **Art and Architecture:** Ashoka pillars are best contributions which embraces Mauryan Art. They engraved many single stones cut put from chunars sand stones which contain finest polish which contains silicious varnish on stones and installed more than 30 pillars all over India which is evident of application of science in those days. (Saranya, 2018)
- **Infrastructure projects:** Ashoka sponsored the construction of thousands of roads, waterways, canals, rest houses, hospitals, and other types of infrastructure for the well being of people which explains the proper planning of current cities. (khan Acedemy)
- **Ashoka emblem as National emblem:** Ashoka emblem is adopted as national emblem on January 26, 1950 as a “symbol of contemporary India's reaffirmation of its ancient commitment to world peace and goodwill”. This embraces his great idea towards peace of nation. (Banerjee, 2014)
- **Female education:** Females were educated and also allowed to enter religious organisations under his rule. Bhikkhuni, a female Buddhist monk, was allowed to join him, which related to current women education.

Conclusion: Ashoka was seen to be a wonderful emperor. Ashoka's grandeur rested not only in the size of his empire and his ability to administer it successfully, but also in his character and the ideas and goals he strived to uphold as a king. As a result, Ashoka is not just one of India's greatest kings, but also one of the world's. His contribution towards art and architecture is remarkable. He is one of the eminent king who took many initiatives for the growth and well being of his citizens during his period by constructing hospitals and digging of wells for the welfare of his citizen with adoptions of new scientific techniques and formulated many more effective regulations towards wildlife conservation. The above mentioned initiatives of King Ashoka are used as foundation for the betterment and effective construction of our nation till present day.

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