

A Moral short story of Emperor Ashoka's Life

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Abstract: Ashoka the great and also he was known as Samrat Ashoka. He was the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya and the son of the second Maurya Emperor, Bindusara. In his life as a role of monarch and a missionary, he made his period one of the most glorious epochs of Indian history. He was persistently at war during the first eight years of his reign, expanding his empire across the Indian subcontinent. The furious and destructive war of Kalinga left over 100,000 soldiers and civilians dead and more than 150,000 crippled and it created an emotional shock to Ashoka. This large-scale killing of humans revolted Ashoka and thereafter he decided not to fight again and started practicing non-violence. Being a cruel Emperor how he changed himself as a peace represented king and how he respected Buddhist sages and how he established peace in his kingdom are discussed in this paper.

Key Words: War, Blood-shedding wars, Non-Violence, Acceptation of Buddhism, Peace Representation, Spreading Dharmas & Principles.

1. INTRODUCTION:

'*Devanampriya Priyadarshi*' Raja Ashoka the Great emperor of Maurya Dynasty was the third ruler. He was one of the most powerful kings of the Indian subcontinent in his time. Ashoka's period between 268 BC to 232 BC and was one of the most flourishing periods in the history of India. Ashoka's empire stretched most of the India, South Asia and beyond, kingdom stretched from Pakistan and Afghanistan in the west to Bangladesh and Assam in the east, and Mysore in the south, as Kerala and Andhra Pradesh in the East. Ashoka's headquarter treated as Magadha which is now called Bihar.

Ashoka was born to Mauryan King Bindusara and Devi Dharma. He was the grandson of the great Chandragupta Maurya, emperor and founder of the Maurya Dynasty. Devi Dharma was the daughter of a Brahmin priest from the kingdom of Champa and was assigned relatively low position in the royal household owing to politics therein. By the virtue of his mother's position, Ashoka also received a low position among the princes. Ashoka had only a younger sibling, Vithashoka, but, several elder half-brothers. Right from his childhood Ashoka showed great commitment in the field of weaponry skills as well as academics. Ashoka's father Bindusara, impressed with Ashoka's skill and knowledge, appointed him as the Governor of Avanti. Here he met Devi and married her. She was the daughter of a tradesman from Vidisha. Ashoka and Devi had two children; they were named as Mahendra and Sanghamitra.

In the early life, Ashoka was as a cruel and ruthless monarch who arduous change of heart after experiencing a particularly terrifying war, the Battle of Kalinga. After the war, he grasped Buddhism and dedicated his life towards dissemination to percept of the religion. He became a benevolent emperor, driving his administration to make a just and bountiful environment for his subjects. As a consequence of his benevolent nature as a ruler, he was given the title '*Devanampriya Priyadarshi*'. Ashoka and his glorious rule is integrated with one of the most flourishing period in the history of India and as a tribute to his non-partisan philosophy, the Dharmachakra adorning the Ashok stamp has been made a part of the Indian National Flag. The emblem of the Republic of India has been adapted from the Lion Capital of Ashoka.

2. The Battle of Kalinga and Acceptance to Buddhism

Ashoka initiated a thump to conquer Kalinga during 265 B.C. In the life of Ashoka the battle of Kalinga became a turning point. Ashoka personally led the conquest and secured victory. On his orders, the whole of territory was ransacked, cities were destroyed and thousands of people were killed.

The next morning after the victory he went out to examine the states of things and encountered nothing except burnt houses and scattered dead bodies. By looking at face to face with the consequences of war, for the first time he felt overwhelmed with the brutality of his actions in his life. He saw flashes of the destruction that his conquest had wrought even after returning to Pataliputra. Ashoka felt guilt for the terrible loss of human lives in the Battle of Kalinga. He found solace in the doctrine of non-violence of Buddhism He vowed never to practice violence again. When he was in such a remorseful mood, he met a Buddhist Monk Upagupta whose teachings touched his heart and made him to convert as Buddhist, Buddhism preached non-violence, he pursued the commands of

Brahmin Buddhist gurus Radhaswami and Manjushri and started promoting Buddhist principles throughout his kingdom and became himself a spiritual devotee to Buddhism completely. Emperor Ashoka expressed his devotion to Buddhist Dhamma, Sangha and the Lord Buddha. Prior to Ashoka Buddhism was a regional religion, which spread only in the Gangatic valley embracing mostly monks, in the time of Ashoka's the influence of the faith on Buddhism vastly expanded. The relation between the Buddhist Sangha and the society acquired a new character. Buddhism was transformed from a purely monkish religion and monastic movement supposed a social and great ethical character influencing the life of laymen. Thus Chandashoka morphed into Dharmashoka or the pious Ashoka. The principles of Buddhism awakened in his mind a sense of philanthropy and a spirit of welfare for the people. Here after in Ashoka's life an incident took place and it revealed how much change brought in after adoption of Buddhism. The story as follows:

One fine morning when Ashoka was in the assembly to administrate and solving problems of people, suddenly one messenger came and informed him, that soon some Buddhist Sages would be visiting the kingdom on the way of their spiritual journey. After hearing the message immediately the emperor asked the minister to arrange the things which are required for their staying in Mauryan kingdom.

The next day morning the king was waiting in the assembly for the arrival of Buddhist sages meanwhile he got the information that they reached the Mauryan kingdom. So, the king asked the minister to go and welcome them grandly to the assembly. The minister had welcomed them grandly and led them to the congregation hall. As soon as they reached the congregation hall, the king stood and went down and prostrated them for their blessings. Buddhist sages blessed him and stayed there for one night. The sages pleased with the arrangements of the Emperor Ashoka.

They started their spiritual journey on the following day. When they left the kingdom, the minister went towards the Ashoka and said like this. With your majesty I would like to ask a doubt. The king permitted the minister to ask his doubt. Then the minister questioned him as you are the emperor of this great kingdom and you are a great king but why did you prostrate to the sages? They are normal Buddhist monks. It couldn't be digestible by me my lord. Why you did like that? I would like to know the reason my lord with your permission.

Before you are answered to your question, you would obey my orders. Your majesty my lord order me what I have to do. Go and get a head of buffalo, goat, hen and a human being's. Your majesty I would get buffalo, goat, and hen but where could I get a human being's head my lord? Then he was suggested to go to burial ground and get the dead body's head.

The minister went to the market and gathered first a head of a buffalo, a goat, and a hen and then went to the burial ground there he got a human being's head. He presented all the heads in front of the king and asked "what should I do with these heads my lord"? I asked you a doubt but you asked me to bring all these without giving reply to my question. My dear minister first, do what I say; "your question will be answered later". Your majesty my lord. Now listen my instructions carefully. "Go to the market and sell them and come back to the congregation hall", the king ordered.

The minister went to the market and started selling the heads, first of all buffalo's and then goat's later hen's head were sold without having much pain. Even though the minister had to have patience for a long time and waited up to the dusk. But there was no use, because nobody was interested to buy it. The minister went to the kingdom and he told about the incident that nobody was showing interest to buy human being's head. Then, the emperor Ashoka ordered the minister to repeat the same activity to do for the following day too. But there is a small change instead of selling the minister was asked to offer some gold coin pockets on the human being's head. The minister went to the market and offered as the king said. If anybody would take this human being's head he would be given gold coin pockets. But nobody came to take it, so he waited up to the evening and went to the kingdom.

The next morning emperor Ashoka asked the minister whether anybody could take the human beings head. The minister answered it was not taken, and nobody was showing interest to take it even after offering the gold coin pockets my lord. Then the king said that even after the death, there is a certain value for the buffalo's and the goat's at last very small head of hen for that also having value. But there is no value for human being's head my dear minister. So tell me now if I prostrated in front of Buddhist sages what would happen I may be blessed, nothing to lose, after my death there is no value for my head too. The minister understood and agreed then he said that the king had opened his eyes with his words. By giving respect to elders nothing will be lost. Giving respect to elders will get respect to us only.

3. CONCLUSION:

Ashoka the emperor was very furious and anger in his early life. He used to bloodshed of enemies in the wars to stretch his empire in India. After the battle of Kalinga the destructive nature of the Kalinga war created an emotional shock with that he realized and left the violence and adapted Buddhism. Later he started to teach morals and ethics to his people and ask them to follow the Dharmas and moral principles which are the most powerful and important qualities should be possessed by everyone. At last the Emperor

Ashoka had spread peace in the kingdom and had a mark of identity by himself in the history of the World. With his Moral Principles, Dharma's and Ethical Non-disputing Principles made him outlived Emperor in the history of the world. In this way Ashoka was recalled for his efforts to spread the message of peace through Buddhism among the masses.



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