

(A) Sources

Literary Sources

- Buddhist Literature:
 - Dipvamsha and Mahavamsha - biography of Ashoka, his life before and after.
- Jaina Literature:
 - Parishista Parvan, Bhadrabahu Charit - story of a great famine in Magadh
- Sanskrit sources:
 - Mudrarakshasa of Vishakhadatta
- **Arthashastra of Kautilya:**
 - R Shamasastry discovered it in 1905.
 - Divided into 15 adhikarana (books); 8 of which deal with foreign relations, 5 deal with internal administration and 2 deal with miscellaneous issues. (total 150 topics)
 - The chapters are written mainly in prose but conclude with verses.
 - Work on statecraft
 - Encyclopedic text giving information on polity/economy/society/military strategy.
 - He devised a bureaucratic system that addressed practically all the requirements of an efficient administration and a legal system that covered civil and criminal law. Topics such as the education of a future king, his duties, foreign policy, theories on war and peace, markets and trade all find a place in this text.
 - On many issues, it paints a frank picture; and going against the grain of the time, it emphasises more on Artha than Dharma.
 - In addition, the Arthashastra deals with several aspects of social welfare and lays emphasis on dharma, or the code of ethics that binds society, following the traditions of Hindu philosophy.
 - Why important?
 - A work of such wide-ranging scope and vision was written in our country centuries ago demonstrates the quality of scholarship and discourse that had evolved in ancient India.
 - The vastness of this work is incredible – it covers almost every subject concerning governance in extensive detail. Sometimes scholars compare it with Ain-e-Akbari of Abul Fazl.
 - Kautilya shows an approach that is both practical and humanitarian. It has been accorded an important place among classic works on the science of government.
 - It provides us with valuable insights into the kind of society that existed in that era.
 - Limitations
 - Chronology, interpolations, dating, authorship are debated.
 - It details the ideal state and not historical outline.

- **Indica of Megasthenes**

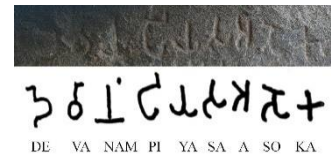
- Megasthenes was the ambassador of Seleucid Emperor, Seleucus Nicator, to the court of Chandragupta Maurya.
- Megasthenes illustrated different areas of Mauryan administration and state.
 - Pataliputra administration, astronomoyi and agronomoyi officers, military management etc
- Limitations
 - Contemporary source but its text is now lost and later authors fragmentary survival (various later Greek/Roman authors – Arrian, Strabo, Diodorus, Justin, Plutarch, Pliny)
 - Court-centric observation, limited access to society?
 - Foreigner's view?

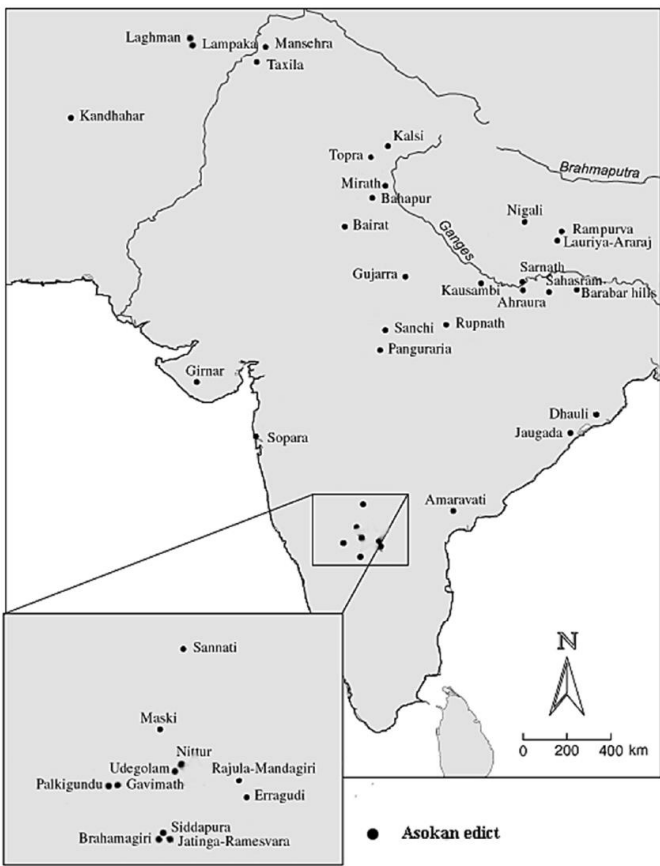
| Idealization and mythification by Megasthenes | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven castes? • No slavery? • No theft? • Farmers not harmed in war • No famine? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical military and city administration matching each other. • No usury? • All land owned by king? • No written laws, all by memory? • Fantasy stories (reversed legs, gold-digging ants etc) |

Ashokan Inscriptions

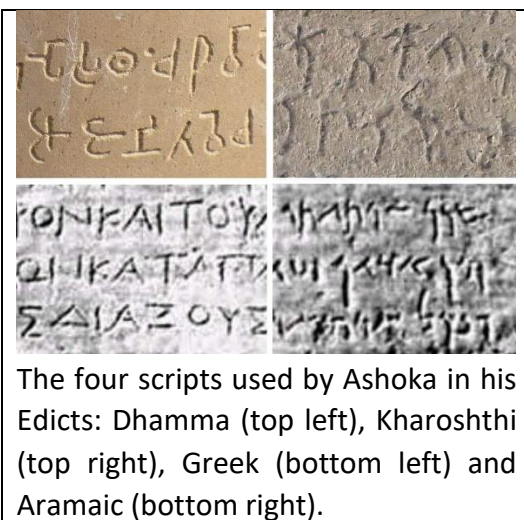
James Prinsep deciphered Brahmi in 1837 “*Devanampiya Piyadasi Laja Hevam Aha*”

Maski (KN) – clinching evidence in 1915. (Devanam Piyasa Ashoka). Slowly more inscriptions came to light from other parts. Today there are 4 such inscriptions (**three in Karnataka, Udegolam, Nittur, Maski; and one in MP, Gurjara in Datia**) which mention the name of Ashoka directly.



| | | |
|--|-----------------|--|
|  | | Years (beginning) |
| | | |
| Rock Edicts | Minor RE | 10 th regnal year (oldest) |
| | Major RE | 12 th regnal year (mostly within a span of 2-3 years) (around 260 BCE) 4 years span he altered administrative focus towards creation of a moral empire |
| Pillar Edicts | Minor PE | 12 th regnal year Intervening years: Ashoka's perception altered, he aged, consequently, some changed viewpoints and tweaks in edicts. |
| | Major PE | Final edicts in the 26 th regnal year (latest) 243 BCE (after a gap of 13 years since Major RE) Last Major PE in 27th year. It is the 7th PE. After that, the last decade of life is in dark. No edict so far found. |
| Separate RE: I, II | | |

- 4 Scripts – Brahmi, Kharoshthi, Greek, Aramaic
 - The stylised public use of the Brahmi script may be attributed to Asoka, even if the script was known prior to Asoka's time.
 - Kharoshthi script emerged in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent.
- 3 languages – Prakrit in most parts while Greek and Aramaic in NW



The different categories of Ashokan inscriptions and their location

The set of 14 major rock edicts (or portions thereof) occur at:

1. Kandahar (in Kandahar district, south Afghanistan) (only portions of rock edicts 12 and 13)
2. Shahbazgarhi (Peshawar district, North-West Frontier Province [NWFP], Pakistan)
3. Mansehra (Hazara district, NWFP, Pakistan)
4. Kalsi (Dehradun district, Uttarakhand)
5. Girnar (Junagadh district, Gujarat)
6. Bombay-Sopara (originally at Sopara in Thana district, Maharashtra; now in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai only fragments of rock edicts 8 and 9)
7. Dhuli (Puri district, Orissa; separate rock edicts 1 and 2 replace major rock edicts 11–13)
8. Jaugada (Ganjam district, Orissa; separate rock edicts 1 and 2 replace major rock edicts 11–13)
9. Erragudi (Kurnool district, AP)
10. Sannati (Gulbarga district, Karnataka; portions of rock edicts 12 and 14 and separate rock edicts 1 and 2 were found on a granite slab in a medieval goddess temple.)

The set of six (and in one case seven) pillar edicts, or portions thereof, occur at:

1. Kandahar (Kandahar district, south Afghanistan) (only portions of pillar edict 7)

2. Delhi. The Delhi–Topra pillar originally stood in Topra (Ambala district, Haryana). This pillar has seven edicts.
3. Delhi. The Delhi–Meerut pillar originally stood in Meerut (Meerut district, UP).
4. Allahabad. The Allahabad–Kosam pillar was probably originally located in Kosam, i.e., Kaushambi (Allahabad district, UP).
5. Lauriya–Araraj (Champaran district, Bihar)
6. Lauriya–Nandangarh (Champaran district, Bihar)
7. Rampurva (Champaran district, Bihar)

The minor rock edicts (MREs) occur at:

1. Bahapur /Srinivasapuri in New Delhi (MRE 1)
2. Bairat (Jaipur district, Rajasthan) (MRE 3)
3. Ahraura (Mirzapur district, UP) (MRE 1)
4. Sahasram (Rohtas district, Bihar) (MRE 1)
5. Gujjara (Datia district, MP) (MRE 1)
6. Rupnath (Jabalpur district, MP) (MRE 1)
7. Panguraria (Sehore district, MP) (MRE 1)
8. Maski (Raichur district, Karnataka) (MRE 1)

9. Gavimath (Raichur district, Karnataka) (MRE 1)
10. Palkigundu (Raichur district, Karnataka) (MRE 1)
11. Nittur (Bellary district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)
12. Udegolam (Bellary district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)
13. Rajula–Mandagiri (Kurnool district, AP) (MRE 1 and 2)
14. Erragudi (Kurnool district, AP) (MRE 1 and 2)
15. Brahmagiri (Chitradurga district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)
16. Siddapura (Chitradurga district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)
17. Jatinga–Rameshvara (Chitradurga district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)

As for the minor pillar inscriptions, versions of the schism edict have been found at Sanchi (Raisen district, MP), Sarnath (Varanasi district, UP), and Kaushambi (Allahabad district, UP). Commemorative inscriptions occur at Nigali Sagar and Rummindei (both in Bhairwa district, Nepal). A fragmentary inscription, which may be Ashokan, has been found at Amaravati (Guntur district, AP). Three cave inscriptions of Ashoka's time have been found in the caves in the Barabar hills (Gaya district, Bihar). A donative edict of one of Ashoka's queens is inscribed on the Allahabad–Kosam pillar.

(B) Impact of Greek invasion on India

Alexander is supposed to have invaded the Punjab in 326 B. C.

Several indirect influences:

- **Communication** between India and Greece increased after Alexander's campaign. Trade received an impetus.
 - Alexander followed the Persian route to India, and he further extended it to the west.
 - Sea routes also were opened. Greek and Oman settlements were seen in both the western and the eastern coast.
 - Greek colonies were established in Afghanistan, Bactria and Northwest frontiers. There was a floating population as a result of the trade routes and trade.
- **Indian philosophy, religion, astronomy, mathematics** was influenced by the Greek invasion.
 - There was Greek influence on Indian astrology and the method of preparing horoscopes. Indians borrowed the concept of the twelve signs of the Zodiac from the Greeks.
- **Art and literature:**
 - Greek sculpture influenced Indian sculpture, giving rise to the Gandhara School of art. The Kushana ruler Kanishka adopted Mahayanism and invited Bactrian artists to make the images of Buddha. This gave rise to a fine blending of Indian and Greek image sculpture.
- **Coinage:**
 - The Indians adopted the Greek idea of minting well-formed coins of particular shapes. Although the Greeks did not introduce coins here, their coins were designed as works of art. The Shakas, Parthians and others later copied them.
- The reports of Alexander's companions and of the first Greek ambassador at the court of the Mauryas were the main **sources of Western knowledge about India** from the ancient to the medieval period of history.
 - "The notions of Indian philosophy and religion, which filtered into the Roman Empire, flowed through channels opened by Alexander." – Vincent A. Smith

(C) Expansion of Mauryan Empire: Chandragupta

- Conquering areas **between the Beas and Indus** Rivers in the North-West
 - According to the Mudrarakshasa of Vishakhadatta, Chandragupta Mauryas with the aid of his Guru, Chanakya, exploited the political chaos/vacuum created in the wake of Alexander's withdrawal from North-West and brought that region under his control.
- Chandragupta Maurya **overthrew the king Dhanananda of Magadha's** Nanda Dynasty and brought the Magadhan state under his rule in c. 322 CE. Due to this manoeuvre, the area east of River Beas and up to Godavari River in south and Bengal frontier to the east was brought under the reign of Mauryas (this was the whole region was already under the Magadha)
- Conquering the region **between the Indus River and Hindu Kush** mountains:
 - Alexander's death was sudden, and his empire disintegrated into a 40-year period of war and chaos in 321 BCE. The Hellenistic world eventually settled into four stable power blocks.
 - Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt
 - Seleucid Empire in the east
 - Kingdom of Pergamon in Asia Minor
 - Macedon
 - In a war with Seleucus Nicator, Chandragupta Maurya received 4 territories.
 - Aria (Herat)
 - Arachosia (Kandahar)
 - Paropamisadae (Kabul)
 - Gedrosia (Baluchistan)
- Expansion south of the River Godavari till Brahmagiri (**trans-Vindhyan conquest**)
 - There is debate on who expanded the Maurya Empire south of the Godavari River, whether it was Chandragupta Maurya or one of his successors?
 - Sangam poet Mamulanar talks about Moriyas - not clear which king.
 - Plutarch states that **Sandrocottus** over-ran and subdued the whole of 'India' with an army of 600,000.
 - Taranath (Lama) claimed it was Bindusara.

- First known international treaty of India ever recorded in the history: between Chandragupta and Seleucus.
- This treaty was advantageous to Chandragupta. He was freed to pursue policy of the conquest of the subcontinent without worrying about the vulnerable northwest.
- Perhaps after this treaty Megasthenes came to India.

V. A. Smith rightly comments on the greatness of Chandragupta and says, "In the course of some eighteen years, Chandragupta had (i) expelled Macedonian garrisons from the Punjab and the Sindh, (ii) repulsed and humbled Selucus, the conqueror, and (iii) established himself as undisputed supreme lord of at least all northern India. These achievements fairly entitle him to rank among the greatest and most successful Kings, known to history."

Thus, was created the largest empire in the history of ancient India ever. Chandragupta was the first Indian king to realise the ideal of the Chakravarti ruler and create almost unified India. And after being the Chakravarti Samrat, he became a monk. Chandragupta Muarya possibly retired as a Jain Shramana into South India, later after ruling for about 25 years, near Mysore on Chandragiri Hill (14th century copper plate inscription).

(D) Bindusar (king of Polibothra) (297-273 BCE)

Not much is known about him. He appears to be a man of broad intellectual interests, of urbane lifestyle and probably maintained a brilliant court.

| Extension of the Empire (specifics of conquests not known) | Foreign relations (Greek sources refer to diplomatic relations) |
|--|--|
| a. Amitrochates or Allitrochates by Greeks <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Amitra-ghat in Mahabhashya: Killers of the enemies Amitra-khad: devourer of the enemies b. Tibetan monk Taranath (16 th c): "His empire extended between the two seas" c. He appointed his son Ashoka as the governor of Takshashila and then of Ujjain. | a. The contacts between India and the western world continued. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Deimaches – Ambassador of Antiochus of Syria (son of Seleukus) Dionosyios – Ambassador of Ptolemy II of Egypt b. There is a story that Bindusara requested Antiochus to buy and send him some sweet wine, dried figs, and a sophist. |

Buddhist sources are relatively silent on Bindusara.

- It is also said that Bindusara was a pleasure seeker.
- A fragmentary inscription at Temple 40 in Sanchi suggests Bindusara may have been connected to its construction and to Buddhism. Other stories indicate that perhaps he followed Ajivikas.
- The Puranas state that Bindusara ruled for 25 years. His death followed 4 years succession crisis. He was succeeded by Ashoka.

(E) Ashoka

(Basileus Piodasses, 304-232 BCE)

- Greatest Mauryan king, 3rd in line
- Ashoka's mother was Subhadra (Janapadakalyani or Dharma) who had two children – Ashoka and Vitashoka.
- Bindusara had 16 wives, 101 children.
 - The eldest son was Sushima was in charge of Taxila
 - Second son was Ashoka, who was in charge of Ujjain.

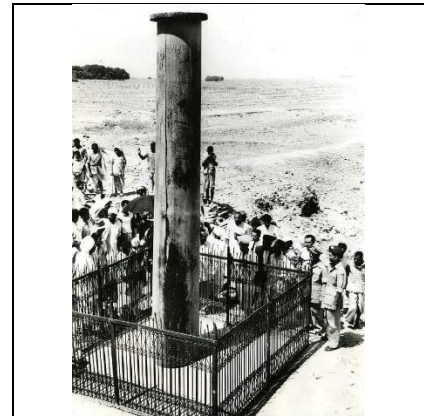
Ashoka's Transformation (Chandashoka → Dharmashoka)

| Buddhist legend: sudden transformation | As per his own Edicts – Gradual process |
|--|---|
| <p>In Ujjain, Vihara yatra, marriage with Devi. Daughter Sanghamitra and son Mahinda.</p> <p>After father's death, he abruptly left Ujjain, marched to Pataliputra and engaged in <u>fratricidal warfare</u>. Bindusara had chosen the eldest son Sushima. A minister named <u>Radhagupta</u> seems to have played an especially important role during the fratricidal war. Buddhist books tell us that Ashoka killed 99 brothers to usurp the throne (sparing Vitashoka who later became a monk). Coronation after 4 years of assuming throne.</p> <p>Buddhist books (Ashokavadana) paint him as a violent king with tyrannical tendencies (Chand Ashoka) – burnt 500 women alive, killed hundreds of ministers. Huen Tsang mentions a torture chamber for prisoners.</p> <p>Then, <u>sudden transformation</u> took place in Ashoka. A wicked king became good under the influence of Buddhism. Some books talk about the role of <u>Nigrodha</u> while others talk about the role of <u>Upagupta</u>. But no Kalingan war is mentioned in the Buddhist books.</p> | <p>The war of Kalinga (8th regnal year) was the first major milestone while the visit to Mahabodhi temple a few years later was the second important milestone in his conversion and conviction.</p> <p>Kalinga War</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRE 13 says he 'killed 1,00,000 people, many lakhs died and imprisoned 1,50,000' It may be an exaggeration, yet the war was of a considerable scale. • The carnage led to suffering of all. It inflicted general misery. Ashoka was struck with grief and remorse, causing dramatic change in him. • Far-reaching consequences in his mind, which in turn had far-reaching consequences for the world. <p>Bherighosha → Dhammaghosha</p> <p>There was no sudden transformation after conversion to Buddhism. Ashoka first became an <u>upasaka</u> (in minor RE 1, the first edict ever he calls himself Shakya ie the follower of Buddha and in other edicts upasaka). It was only after 2.5 years, that he became an ardent supporter of Buddhism. Possible reasons for him becoming zealous are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plausible constant interaction with Sangha in and around Pataliputra. • Watershed event of visit to Mahabodhi in the 10th regnal year (MRE VIII) (Vajrasana gift) |

Ashoka as Buddhist Emperor??

Ashoka as a Buddhist convert, patron, pilgrim, spiritual regulator and protector of Buddhist unity.


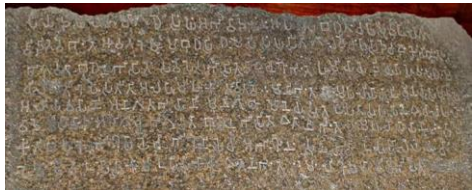


- Conversion
 - Minor RE I (Shakya)
 - Major RE VIII (visit to Mahabodhi)
 - Bhabru/Bairat edict (sanghe upete)
- Patron, pilgrim
 - Dhammayatra in place of Vihara yatra.
 - Nigali Sagar – Kanakamuni Stupa
 - Lumbini – tax discount
- Spiritual regulator/guide: Bairat – Raja Magadhe
 - Advice to monks and nuns to read specific books.
 - Remarkable: confidence of the emperor to give advice to the Buddhist community. It is as if he sees himself as the Buddha's preacher-successor.
- Protector of Buddhist unity
 - Third Buddhist Council (President – Mogaliputta Tissa)
 - Schism edicts → Sarnath, Kaushambi, Sanchi
- Barabar Caves

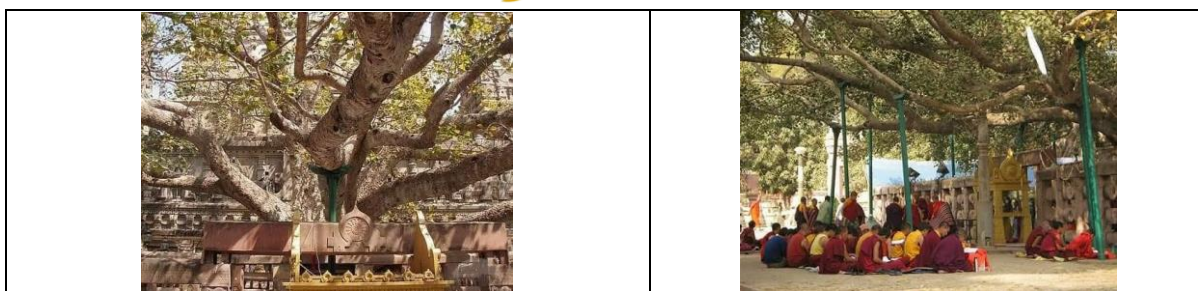


Lumbini Pillar



A mural depicting the Third Buddhist Council at Nava Jetavana in Shravasti, Uttar Pradesh.

| Bairat Edict (Jaipur district) | |
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| Nigalisagar (20 km NW of Lumbini, 7 km NE of Kapilavastu) | |
|  |  |
| Bodh Gaya (UNESCO) | |



Ashokan Dhamma

Topic of major debate about its nature/purpose/intent over last century. Is it a Buddhist religion? Is it a new religion? Is it a moral code of conduct? What is its nature? To understand, the source is Ashokan edicts –

Constituent elements of Ashokan Dhamma:

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| <p><u>Good Conduct</u> (moral code of general behaviour)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Inculcate virtues: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> MPE II: What is Dhamma? Much good, less bad, kindness, charity, truthfulness and purity. Avoid vices: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Violence, anger, jealousy (isya), anger (krodhe), pride (mane) Harmony in society and family: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Respect elders/parents/teachers Kindness towards weak/miserables/servants/slaves |
| <p><u>Religious Tolerance</u></p> | <p>More of mutual acceptance, mutual respect and concord.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Equal respect to Brahmanas and Shramanas MRE 12: Samam Vachaguti (restraint on speech) Reflection of today's Sarvadharma samabhava |
| <p><u>Non-violence</u> (It is important aspect of Buddhism too)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ashoka abjured policy of war (<u>Dhammaghosha</u>) He could not rule without coercive power he was stern towards tribes and didn't abolish death penalty. But he tried to make <u>criminal code</u> humane. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 days <u>respite</u> before execution after rajuka's pronounced punishment.. Annual <u>amnesty</u> (at least 25 times) Advised officers for <u>impartiality</u> in justice (samata) Officers not to <u>torture</u> anyone without due cause <u>Animal sacrifice</u> (proto-conservation) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ban on animal slaughter for needless sacrifices. Drastic reduction in animal consumption in <u>royal kitchen</u>. Still continued with 2 peacocks and 1 deer in royal kitchen. "Even these three animals are not to be killed in future" Establishment of veterinary hospices Provisions for pack animals along the road (tree shade, water to drink etc) |

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|--|--|
| | 5. <u>MPE 5</u> : List of 24 creatures (animals, birds, fish) protected from killing during some time or in some manners. Exceptionally humane provisions. |
| King's Duty (Ashoka's ideal of kingship) (Source: MRE 2, MRE 6) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paternal Care: Sabe Manushe Paja Mama 2. Welfare activities: In India and beyond + Humans and Animals – all sentient <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Planting trees for shadow, banyan trees along highways, medicinal trees b. Manusha Chikitsa, Pashu Chikitsa c. Digging wells d. Building rest houses 3. Material welfare as well as moral welfare. 4. Hidaloika, Palaloika |

Ashoka undertook many measures to spread his Dhamma:

If people could be made to lead civilized life through dhamma propagation, Governance would become humane. This was a revolutionary notion, that people could be persuaded and not coerced (Kautilyan ideas). DD Kosambi has said, 'The real conversion of Ashoka was not of the king but of the whole system.' For that, Ashoka had no hesitation in using the administrative machinery of the state to propagate dhamma, for he considered it as an essential function of the state.

Measures

- Edicts in all corners
- Dhamma Mahamattas (Important administrative innovation)
 - Anta Mahamatta – Frontier
 - Itijhala/Stri Mahamatta – Inner chambers
 - Vajrabhumika Mahamatta – Pastures/meadows
 - Nagalaviyohalaka Mahamatta – Judicial department
 - Dhamma Mahamatta – Ashoka's innovation of enforcers of virtue
- Rajukas given additional powers, to disseminate Dhamma in the countryside
- Dhamma Yatras
 - Dhamma Yatra of the emperor himself
 - Officers like Rajukas, Yuktas, Pradeshikas, Dhammamahamattas are required to constantly be on tour
- Messengers of peace across the world
- Positive steps taken by Ashoka regarding specific actions he considered harmful.
 - Banned **Samajas** (festivities which might have involved licentiousness, merry-making and drinking)
 - Banned needless/superstitious mangalas (esp by women, and those at birth/marriage, illness/death etc) and replaced them with **dhamma-mangalas**
- Established Samata in Justice

Ashokan Dhamma = Buddhist Dhamma?

| | Yes | No |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Ashoka | Himself a devout Buddhist (yatras, stupas, missions, councils, patronage) | Minor edicts refer to his Buddhist message but they are separate from Major Edicts that contain the message of Dhamma |
| Content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metta, Mudita, Karuna, Dana – all terms are in Buddhist context, which are mentioned in the Edicts. • Major PE 3 – talks about insistence on self-responsibility which is a typically Buddhist idea | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main components of Buddhist philosophy (Dukkha, 4 noble truths, 8-fold path) are totally absent. The difficult ideas of transmigration are also totally missed. • Goal of Ashoka's dhamma is stated to get into svaga (svarga) and not attain Nibbana. • Brahmanas and Shramans mentioned together. The term he uses Sava-Pasanday (sarva-parashad – all religions) |
| Location | Sites related to life of Buddha or Buddhist pilgrimage routes | Not all sites had Buddhist context. Some may have been pre-existing sacred sites. Others on trade routes, mineral belt, important cities etc. |
| Iconography | Lion, elephants, horse etc have distinctly Buddhist symbolism. | Shares pool of symbols amongst all Indic religions. |

Ashoka's dhamma was not simply Buddhist dhamma. But it was certainly embedded in the upasaka dhamma mentioned in Dhammapada, the duty-oriented ethics of Buddhism. People didn't have to be Buddhist to follow Ashokan Dhamma. His focus on Dhamma edicts is not religious fervour but what benefits individual, society and state.



BU DHA
BU DHA

Its nature can be summarized as below:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <u>Universal ethical outlook to create a social order</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egalitarian and inclusive • Non-sectarian • Essence of all religions (saravadhi) • Based on custom and tradition (porana pakiti, age-old wisdom) | <u>Manifestation of paternalistic outlook</u> – king as the cornerstone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Didha Bhakti – unquestioning staunch allegiance • Subjects of independent kingdoms were also asked to repose faith in him. | To accommodate diversity in overarching framework with unquestioning allegiance to king was its central component. The political rationality was to weld the subcontinent together. Emotional integration as the best defence in the long term. It is the logical next step after political unification to go for cultural conquest. |
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(F) Decline and fall of the Mauryan Empire

Ashoka died in 232 BCE (at the age of around 70 years old after ruling more about 37 years) However, the Empire continued till 180s BCE, ie almost for 50 years after his death. After them, around 3-4 kings came in quick succession. The last king was Brihadratha who was slain by his own Senapati, a brahmin named Pushyamitra, during a military parade, and he established the Shunga dynasty.

Responsibility of Ashoka's Dhamma

| Theory | Supporting Arguments | Opposing Arguments |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Pacifist Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoning <u>war</u> declined strength and the <u>army</u>. He softened the martial vigour essential to sustain the empire. Law and order suffered because of <u>compassion</u> towards rebels and criminals. Softness towards <u>frontier</u> people emboldened them to make incursions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He <u>didn't demobilize army</u> (stern warning given to the tribes) <u>Didn't ban capital</u> punishment, only made it more humane. Added punishing powers of the <u>rajukas</u>! <p>Even if some martial vigour was lost, there was <u>no serious external aggression during the time of his immediate successors</u>. Incursions of Bactrian Greeks to the end of Mauryan era was the consequence and the cause of the collapse.</p> |
| Anti-Brahmanical Dhamma? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patronage to Buddhists Banned sacrifices Appointment of Dhamma-mahamattas. <p>All these alienated and antagonized Brahmins, who staged a coup to establish their own dynasty (Shungas).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashokan Dhamma was not anti-Brahmin: <u>equal respect</u> to both He extended <u>patronage to all</u> <u>Coup happened 50 years after his death?</u> <u>Pushyamitra</u> was a Brahmin and still could <u>become Senapati</u>. Thus, not excluded. <u>No evidence of vigorous persecution of Buddhists by Shungas.</u> |

Then what happened? Why did India's first subcontinental empire not last for long?

- Weak successors of Ashoka (Great Man Theory)
 - Highly centralized administration requires capable man at the centre
- Misgovernment and corruption à discontent à
 - Popular revolt in Taxila against 'Dushta Amatya'
 - People might have been looking for better alternative
- Fiscal crisis due to large bureaucracy and welfare state?
 - Possible evidence: Excessive taxation, Minting debased currency, Panini mentions Maurya officers selling idols of gods
- Neglect of the NW frontier
 - Movement of Central Asian Tribes and many foreign invasions (Greeks, Shakas, Parthians, Kushanas) coming upto Saket (Ayodhya) and Madhyamika (Chittore)

- b. At the same time, China was finishing construction of its Great Wall (by 200 BCE)
- 5. Fissiparous tendencies in the empire that has reached its limit/peak of maximum expansion:
 - a. Too extensive an empire to be governed efficiently, given the ancient technology/communication barriers. As power stretched over vast area, it also stretched thin. Thus, in a sense, the Empire crumbled under its own weight.
 - b. Expansion of material culture outside Ganga valley: decline in power asymmetry

Dr. R. K. Mookaerji commented on the downfall thus, "But even if Ashoka's policy brought about the downfall of the Mauryan Empire, India has no cause to regret the fact. That Empire would have fallen to pieces sooner or later, even if Ashoka had followed the policy blood and iron of his grandfather. But the moral ascendancy of Indian culture over a large part of the civilized world, which Ashoka was mostly instrumental in bringing about, remained for centuries, as a monument of her glory and has not altogether vanished even now, after the lapse of more than two thousand years."