



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

The role of contributions of Asoka to Buddhism in India

KEY WORDS:

Mr. Ton Ngoc Hung

Ph. D. Research Scholar in Department of Buddhist Studies, Faculty of Arts

Mr. Le Van Muoi

Ph. D Research Scholar in School of Buddhist Studies & Civilization

Ms. Hoang Thi Le Hang

Ph. D Research Scholar in School of Buddhist Studies & Civilization

INTRODUCTION:

In Buddhism, liberation is considered as the only pursuit of religion to gain the only goal worthy of human life. Therefore, the role of the transformation of the own individual to gain the final liberation from suffering always takes an important part in the nature of Buddhism. To achieve this purpose, Buddhism all times emphasizes the importance of understanding and practicing the Buddha's teachings like the antidotes to cure or heal the incurable, it means the liberation from the samsaric realms. Buddha's dharma becomes meaninglessly when its nature is not practical, therefore, the whole life of Buddha, he devoted tirelessly to give the sermons to his disciples to awake them and guide them to the path of Nirvana, the final release from suffering. We must again recall the statement that a Buddha arises "for the welfare of the multitude, for the happiness of the multitude... out of the compassion for the world, for the good, the welfare, and happiness of the devas and humans. Who is that one person? The Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One. This is that one person who arises in the world... for the good, welfare, and happiness of devas and human beings."¹

In this way, we can see that the function of the Buddha's dharma is to end suffering and to bring the happiness for human beings. Therefore, the purification of unwholesome mind to gain this goal is regarded as one of the most important steps in Buddhist thought, it is morality. Buddhism always emphasizes morality as the most fundamental basis of attainment of happiness in present life and thereafter. It is also considered the first step to achieving the concentration and wisdom, one of the most significant three Buddhist Learnings. On the other words, it is the morality has making Buddhism become a great religion in the world and influencing very much in various aspects of modern life.

One of the significantly remarkable aspects of Buddhism in India is that nobody denies that the success of Buddhism is due to the great contributions of various monarchs as well as wealthy lay devotees in ancient times in terms of objectivity speaking. Many monasteries were built by the rulers and by the wealthy lay followers and the Sangha thrive anywhere merely on royal patronage and good lay devotees. Perhaps the most important king in the history of Indian Buddhism is emperor Aśoka. His contribution to Buddhism in particular and to India cultural heritage, in general, can be indescribable. It is important to note here is that having converted to Buddhism, Asoka took the morality of the standard policy in governing his kingdom. It is known as Asoka's Dharma Policy. This feature will be discussed in the next part. Thus, the role and special contributions of rulers towards the development of Buddhism in ancient India must be kept these facts in mind.

Before discussing on morality in Asoka's Dharma policy, we should understand what the morality is according to Buddhist view. According to some scholars view that term 'morality' origins from the Latin "Moralitas," in a sense of that "manner, character, proper behavior" is the differentiation of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are distinguished as proper and those that are improper. In other words, it is the disjunction

between right and wrong.² Morality can be a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion or culture. Morality may also be specifically synonymous with 'goodness' or 'rightness'. However, in the Buddhist view, Morality is considered as Śīla. Śīla in Buddhism is one of three sections of the Noble Eightfold Path and is a code of conduct that embraces a commitment to harmony and self-restraint with the principal motivation being non-violence or freedom from causing harm. It has been variously described as virtue, right conduct, morality, moral discipline, and precept.

Differently to note here is that Śīla in Buddhism is an internal, and intentional ethical behavior, according to one's commitment to the path of liberation, it is an ethical compass within self and relationships rather than what is associated with the English word 'morality' namely, obedience, a sense of obligation and external constraint. From this view, we can understand that morality is a very important quality in Buddhism that decides the success of the individual on the religious life of seeking the liberation. In the absence of morality, a person whether bhikkhu or upāsaka cannot be regarded as a disciple of Buddha.

The general principles of morality recommended for the lay people and monastic followers are the five precepts (pañca-śīla):

1. Abstain from killing living creatures.
2. Abstain from taking what is not given.
3. Abstain from engaging in sexual misconduct.
4. Abstain from lying and
5. Abstain from consuming intoxicants that cause heedlessness and a lay Buddhist promised to observe the five precepts immediately after declaring this faith in the three jewels.

Morality is the second perfection of six pāramitās and ten pāramitās.⁶ On other words, morality is one of the most important principles in Buddhism that places mainly on the essential foundation of the spiritual path leading to enlightenment and liberation.

Out of the importance of morality, perhaps an analysis of morality in Asoka's dharma policy is noteworthy. Especially, in the current social context, the shortage of morality has been degenerating and conflicts happening everywhere in the world, the reevaluation of morality in Asoka's dharma policy can give some lights on solving modern problems, particularly, violence is becoming dangerously daily in the global warnings. Buddhism says that if one wants to attain prosperity, amicable social relationships or a good reputation, self-confidence or calm and joy, a good rebirth or progress towards Nibbana, then a moral life is considered to be the most important practice to aim this results. Besides, a moral life is not a burdensome duty but an uplifting source of happiness, in which the sacrifice of lesser pleasures facilitates the experiencing of the more enrich and satisfying ones.⁶ Therefore, an attempt is made here to delineate the morality in Asoka's dharma policy is an integral part in response to the waves of social and cultural change.

1. Aśoka and his conversion to Buddhism:

Emperor Asoka belonged to the Maurya Empire, one of the mighty empires in the Indian history. The founder of this empire was Chandragupta (c.324-300) in the fourth century B.C. is an important landmark in the political history of ancient India. Chandragupta ruled over a vast empire. The overthrow of the Nanda dynasty and the liberation of the Punjab from the Macedonian rule were not his only achievements. He brought the Punjab, Sins, Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Himavatkuta, Nepal and Kashmir under his rule. It is believed that his empire extended up to Mysore in the south and beyond the natural boundaries of India up to the borders of Persia in the north-west.⁷ Some scholars refer to Chandragupta as a Jain, he ruled for twenty-four years and Chandragupta was succeeded by his son, Bindusāra (300-273 B.C.) who was also known as Amitraghāta "slayer of foes." According to the Mahāvamsa which is a reliable and trustable work does not mention anything about the development of Buddhism in the reign of Bindusāra and his patronage to it.⁸

It is a legend that Bindusāra was succeeded by his son Aśoka who occupied a unique place among the rulers of the world. He has been described by historians as the greatest of kings and that not because of the physical extent of his empire, extensive as it was. It is said that Bindusāra had sixteen wives and one hundred one sons. The Aśokāvadāna refers to Subhadrā gī, the daughter of a brāhmana of Campā, as one of his wives. She after giving birth to her first child, said: 'Now I am without sorrow (a-śoka), the child got the name from it. According to Vi sa happakāsinī, the Mahāva sa commentary, Aśoka's mother's name was Dhamma and Aśoka got his name from the fact that he did not give any pain to his mother at the time his birth.⁹ The child had rough skin and for this reason, Bindusāra did not like him, thus, his mother had to take him away to save his life.

Emperor Aśoka was the grandson of King Chandragupta Maurya and son of king Bindusāra. When he grew up, Bindusāra sent him to Takkaśilā or Taxilā to suppress a revolt. During the time of his governorship at Avanti, it is said that here Aśoka met Viśiṣādevi, who later gave birth to Mahinda and Saghmittā.¹⁰ He heard that his father had approached the end of his life, he rushed forward back to Pā aliputta, the capital of his father, and took the charge of the administration of the Maurya empire in his own hand. He started his reign at Pā aliputta in the year c 271 BCE after his father died. We are told in the Mahābodhiva sa as well as in the Dīpava sa that in the war of succession, Aśoka killed his 99 brothers and succeeded in seizing the throne. But the question of succession was settled only in the fourth year because of a strong popular opposition aroused. According to V.A. Smith did not agree with the Ceylon legends and he never accepted the credibility of the account that Aśoka killed his ninety-nine brothers, because it was quite certain that Aśoka's brothers and sisters were alive in the seventeenth or eighteenth year of his reign.¹¹

Aśoka's thirteenth rock edict says that at the end of the eighth year of his reign (256 B.C.), or the thirteenth from the date of his accession, he invaded the country of Kāli ga, the powerful kingdom of the east coast lying between the rivers Mahanadi and the Godavari and Krishna, modern Orissa. In this successful campaign, which ended with Kāli ga becoming a new province of the Magadhan Empire,¹² it is said that in that invasion many thousands of men were slain, several thousands were carried off into captivity and thousands died from the effects of the war.¹³ The sufferings, the cruelties and the horrors of the war brought a complete revolution on his mind and his attitude towards conquest. The sight of the misery and bloodshed in that sanguinary campaign made a deep impression on him and awakened in his breast feelings of remorse, profound sorrow, and regret.¹⁴ Historically, in this war as many as 150,000 people were deported, 100,000 were killed and many times that number perished in the Kalinga War.¹⁵ Aśoka felt remorseful after the conquest of Kalinga War, and since then, there were no further political-military campaigns of his reign carried out by him.

It is well-known that this tremendous loss of life witnessed to be a transforming point in Aśoka's life. Aśoka expresses his profound sorrow not only for the killer of fighting men and the misery of the

prisoners of war, but also for the Brāhma as, pious men of all sects and for the households within the Aryan pale, their friends, acquaintances, comrades, and relatives," who had suffered all the cruel consequences of war, violence, slaughter, and separation from those whom they love.¹⁶ The proclamation went on even the forest tribes, "His Majesty has compassion and he seeks their conversion, inasmuch as the might even of His Majesty is based on repentance."¹⁷ The Rock Edict XIII says: "Thereafter, now the Kāli ga being annexed, became intense His Sacred Majesty's observance of Dharma, love of Dharma and his preaching of the Dharma."¹⁸ The proclamation implies in his Majesty's opinion that the only true conquest lies in the conquest of self (by the Dharma). In the Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata, Bhi ma expressed the same opinion when he talked about kingly virtues: "a king should first subdue himself and then seek to subdue his foes. How should a king who has not been able to conquer his foes?"¹⁹ Aśoka felt happy to accept the religion of Ahimsa or non-violence in his life and gradually he influenced Buddhism on the teachings of non-violence, because of being so attracted by the noble teachings of Buddhism, Aśoka gave up his old religious faiths as well as practices and embraced Buddhism. We are told that the evil consequences of the Kāli ga war brought about a great change in Aśoka's individual and public life that led him to a real conversion to Buddhism.

According to the Buddhist tradition, Aśoka's conversion to the faith of the Buddha was drawn by Nigrodha Sāma era, who posthumous son of his eldest half-brother Sumana. The Mahāva sa states that one day Aśoka saw his nephew, the young novice from the window of his palace. Aśoka was happy to see him and he asked him to come to the palace, and the young novice Nigrodha came and preached to him the Appamādavagga which deals with the necessity of developing in life and the quality of Appamāda or the principle of action as the essential point of the good faith. The concept of Appamāda is the single term that sums up the whole teachings, this word implies the meanings of 'acting energetically, exerting oneself strenuously, striving mindfully and with self-confidence.'²⁰ Thereafter, it is the concept of Appamāda that influences greatly on the whole edicts of Aśoka, which promulgate through his empire. In this way, we can see that action and action alone became the fundamental principle of Aśoka's dharma and administration system.

The meeting between Aśoka and Nigrodha marked a significant event in the history of Indian Buddhism. Addressing Nigrodha, Aśoka told: "This very day I accept as my refuge thee and the Buddha and the Doctrine and the Order, together with my wives and children, with my kith and kin. I declare to thee the face of my having become a lay worshipper and thereafter Aśoka was happy to accept Buddhism as his religion and he gave his patronage to Nigrodha and other monks of Buddhist Sa gha as well as he became a devout worshipper of the Buddha and he stopped all his grants to other religious sects."²¹

2.The contributions of Aśoka in the developmental history of Indian Buddhism:

Buddhism seems to have gained a great growth from Aśoka's patronage. After conversion to Buddhism, Aśoka helped it to develop as a popular religion. Although he treated other religions fairly, in Rock Edict XII states that "he gave alms (dāna) and honored (pūjā) both members of religious orders and the laity of all religious groups." In this Rock Edict XII, he declared that he wished members of all religions to live everywhere in his kingdom." In Pillar Edict VII, Aśoka appointed ministers of Dharma to be responsible for affairs related to the Buddhist Order. Other ministers of Dharma were responsible for the affairs of Brahmans, Ājivikas or Jainas.²² However, Aśoka was particularly devoted to Buddhism as illustrated by the inscriptions relating to his own life, therefore he was praised and called 'Dharma Aśoka'. Many supports were made by Aśoka after becoming a fervent convert to Buddhism, we can mention about what Aśoka have done to Buddhism according to some trustable accounts for discussing his contributions. One of them is obvious to see here is to support his benefaction to the Buddhist order, notably, according to Samantapāsādikā, Aśoka offered to Nigrodha and the Buddhist

Sangha. It says that King Aśoka spent 5,00,000 gold pieces daily for the religion of the Buddha. Out of 5,00,000 gold pieces, he offered 1,00,000 gold pieces to Nigrodha to spend for religious purposes; he gave 1,00,000 gold pieces to spend for offering of perfumes and flowers at the Buddha's shrines; he granted 1,00,000 gold pieces to spend the preaching and development of the religion of the Buddha; and he gave 1,00,000 gold pieces to spend on medicines for the sick monks.²³

It may be one of the best sources for proving that Aśoka related to the contribution to Buddhism is that the Third Buddhist Council was said to have held by the behest of Aśoka in the thirteenth year of his reign. This Council was organized in Pālipputa and was lasted for nine months. The Third Buddhist Council was compulsory by the development of heretical doctrines within the Buddhist Sangha, causing schisms. On this occasion, the 62 heretical viewpoints of seventeen sectarian schools were revealed and criticized. As a result of its deliberation, there were the expulsion of 60,000 heretics as recorded to eject away from Sangha in this Council. As this Council was ended, it was determined to send Buddhist missionaries to different countries, including "Kamboja (northern Afghanistan and parts of Kashmir), Gandhāra (northern Pakistan, eastern Afghanistan and parts of Kashmir), the Yavanas i.e. the Ionian Greeks (Northwest Frontier State of Pakistan and adjoining part of Iran), the Himalayas, Mahāraṣṭra and Apārāntaka (Maharashtra, Gujarat and Singh), Andhras, Pulindas, Kanaras, Colas, Keralas, and Pāyās (south India), Bengal, Sihaladīpa (Sri Lanka). King Aśoka was said to have sent his missionaries to Syria in Western Asia, where king Antiochos Theos ruled, to Egypt and Cyrene in North Africa, where kings Ptolemy Philadelphus and Magas respectively ruled. It was said that King Aśoka also sent his Dhamma ambassadors to kind Alexander of Epirus (north of Greece) and Macedonian King Antigonos Gonatas in Europe."²⁴ This is considered one of the most remarkable contributions of Aśoka made for Indian Buddhism under his reign.

According to Aśoka's rock inscription of Bairā or Bhābru (present day Calcutta museum) refers to seven texts, which are recommended by king Aśoka both for the monks and laymen for study.

These texts are said to have been identified with parts of Theravāda canon as below:

1. Vinaya Samukase: It is identified with Sāmukkamsikā Dharmadesanā. It deals with the Buddha's principal sermon concerning the Four Noble Truths.
2. Aliyavasā: It is identified with Dasa Ariyava sa. It relates to the principles or rules of noble life.
3. Anāgatabhayāni: It is similar to Anāgatabhayāni. It contains the five future dangers to be feared.
4. Munigāthā: It is identified with the Muni Sutta. It relates to praise of a Sage by the Wise.
5. Moneyasute: It is the same as Moneyasute. It related to moral perfection in the three actions (karmas)—body, speech, and mind.
6. Upatisapasine: It is the same as the Sāriputta Sutta or the Therapaṇha Sutta. It relates to the questions of Sāriputta and answered by the Buddha.
7. Lāghulovāde: It is the same as the Rāhulovāda Sutta. It relates to exhortation in regard to lying.

Another aspect in connection to supporting of Aśoka to Buddhism is that he erected many stūpas, endowed new monasteries and enlarged existing Buddhist establishments. Specifically, in Niḡālisāgar Pillar Edict recorded that in the fourteenth year of his reign, Aśoka had a stūpa dedicated to the past Buddha Konākamana repaired and then personally made offerings at this stūpa. The Lumbinī Pillar Edict stated that after the twentieth year of his reign, Aśoka traveled to the Buddha's birthplace and personally made offerings there, furthermore, he then had stone pillar erected and reduced the taxes of the people in that area. The edicts at Sāñcī, Sānārth, and Kauśāmbī all warned against schism in the Buddhist Order and declared that any monk and nun who tried to cause a schism would be defrocked.²⁷

In addition, not only did Aśoka repair a stūpa belonging to the past Buddha Konākamana but also there were 84,000 stūpas erected throughout the realm to benefit many people as described in literary sources such as the A-yū-wang ching 阿育王經²⁸ (Aśokarājasūtra). At the urging of Upagupta, Aśoka embarked on a series of pilgrimages in order to all the places where the Blessed One lived and to mark them with signs, as a favor to future pilgrims. They visited various sites associated with the Buddha, beginning with a birthplace in Lumbini and ending with his parinirvā at Kuśinagara. Relating to an aspect of Aśoka's pilgrimage it is striking that in the Aśokāvadāna as stated the number of sites visited by Aśoka and Upagupta total exactly thirty-two.²⁹ Besides, not only many stūpas at these sites were built by Aśoka, and stūpas were erected for two of the Buddha's most important disciples, Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana but also important to remember that at each of the major sites of the pilgrimage, king Aśoka built a Caitya, a commemorative monument for himself and posterity to worship. Afterwards, as Chinese pilgrims Fa-hsien and Hsuan-tsang traveled throughout India, they recorded that many stūpas still remained and in the recent times, archaeologists have excavated and studied many stūpas and discovered that the oldest parts of the stūpas often date back to Aśoka's time, indicating the accuracy of these records.³⁰

Last but not least, Aśoka's contribution to Buddhism is that the Buddhist missionary activities were carried out under the reign of Aśoka. After his conversion to Buddhism, Aśoka strove for the diffusion of this religion by sending missionaries to various countries. Aśoka's sending Buddhist missionaries to Hellenistic countries formed the beginning of the spread of Buddhism in the West, however, Buddhism disappeared from the West in the Middle Ages.³¹ According to Theravādin sources record that the monk Tissa Moggaliputta sent out parties of monks to a number of border areas. Aśokan edicts also record that the emperor sent out embassies to a number of foreign lands since he wished to spread the ideals he followed, namely, a conquest by Dharma rather than a military conquest. Therefore, according to Buddhist literary sources, religious missions were sent to various countries including Kamboja (Northern Afghanistan and parts of Kashmir), Gandhāra (northern Pakistan, eastern Afghanistan and parts of Kashmir). To the north-west embassies were sent to the land of the Yavanas i.e. the Ionian Greeks (north west frontier state of Pakistan, and adjoining part of Iran), and the Himalayan regions in the North, to the western part of India such as Aparāntaka, they went to Suva a-bhūmi, probably the Mon country of lower Burma or central Thailand. To the south, he dispatched medical missions to the Vanavāsī, Mysore, Chola, Pandya, Satiyaputra, and Keralaputra kingdoms of southern India with remedies for man and beast and to the island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka)³². Aśoka also sent his missionaries to Syria in Western Asia, where king Antiochos Theos ruled, Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt and the kings of Macedonia, Epirus, and Cyrene in North Africa to spread the wisdom of the Enlightened One.

Although the relationship between the missions and the embassies is not clear, however, monks could well accompany the embassies as well as there was clearly cooperated in the case of Sri Lanka. Especially, according to Sinhalese tradition, the most important and successful of these missions was the religious missions to Ceylon where Aśoka had sent his son Mahendra and his daughter Sanghamitrā. This information and records are confirmed and further supplemented by Aśoka's thirteenth rock edict wherein it is stated that he tried to spread Dharma not only in his territory but also in kingdoms far off as were mentioned above. This means that Aśoka's zeal for the advancement of the popularization of the Buddhavaçana in and outside India. It is he who paved the way for the subsequent Buddhist missionaries which helped by kings like Kani ka to take Buddhism went beyond India to Central Asia, China, Japan and Tibet in the north and to Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and other countries in the south.

3.An analysis of morality in Aśoka's dharma policy:

During the reign of Aśoka (268-239 B.C.E.), Buddhism spread more widely, reaching most of the Indian sub-continent and also

beyond, thus Buddhism became a world religion. The peoples in his empire, in his territory and in kingdoms far off as well, under the time of Maghada empire which Aśoka inherited and ruled perhaps became peaceful, harmonious and prosperous in terms of social, political, religious and cultural changes. To gain this marvelous purpose, it is sure to agree with it by scholars and historians that Aśoka surely adopted the social ethics of Buddhism or applied morality i.e. non-violence, beneficence, compassion...as the guiding or underlying principle of administrating to his country. What Aśoka has done is extremely significant and for the Buddhists, Aśoka is said to be the model of a compassionate Buddhist ruler. Therefore, to understand the morality in Aśoka's Dharma policy, perhaps the most key sources for our knowledge of Aśoka are his numerous edicts which are promulgated on rocks as well as stone pillars in a variety of languages throughout his empire.

The motive that has changed the mind of Aśoka to live in the moral life became a beneficent ruler and to call upon the people within his empire living with this moral principle is the Kali ga War, which later actually played a very important role in converting Aśoka to Buddhism as well as in administrating his empire. The cruel consequences of the Kali ga war that brought about marked a turning point in his life or made a great reaction on Aśoka's personal and public life. Therefore, he considered Dharmavijaya as moral conquest, was the principle conquest and the true conquest lies in the conquest of self by the dharma. It can say that Aśoka's concept of the conquest of self is the most is similar to the teachings of Buddha in Dhammapālasutta no. 103, saying: "Greater in battle than the man who would conquer thousand-thousand men, is he who would conquer just one-himself. Better to conquer yourself than others." From then on, Aśoka accepted the religion of ahimsā or non-violence in his life.

What is the notion of Dharma in Aśoka's Dharma? Aśoka understood that the holiness of life and condemned the killing of animals whether as religious sacrifices or otherwise. The policy of Dhamma, which Aśoka used to rule through his empire, is the tenet of toleration that denotes the meanings of the morality of Aśoka. The diverse nature of the vast empire under the Aśoka was exposed to social tensions and schismatic conflicts. Therefore, King Aśoka devised the policy of dhamma which later well-known because it promoted a harmonious relationship between the diverse elements of the empire. The word dhamma is a Prakrit term and it numerous used in Ashokan inscriptions that have been translated as a religion by several scholars, the term Dhamma was used by Aśoka after the Kalinga war. However, according to H. C. Raychaudhuri suggested that "the Ashoka's Dhamma represented the moral and ethical principles common to all religions, Nilakantha Shastri has analyzed it as an ethical code of conduct formed by Ashoka for his subjects who were expected to follow it."³³ In addition, Romila Thapar "argues that the Dhamma was an invention of Ashoka based on the moral and ethical principles borrowed from both Buddhism and Brahmanism."³⁴ Dhamma is difficult to render but penetrated with positives and idealized connotation in both orthodox and Vedic literature as well as in the heterodox doctrines of Buddhists, Jains, and Ajivikas. Dhamma is included in purity, truthfulness, liberality, compassion, piety and many good deeds. Here "Dhamma had tolerance because of its basis as aiming to bring out a peace loving life within the family and society. Religious and cultural meetings and festivals were banned; only the state-led functions were allowed. Dhamma also emphasized non-violence.

Aśoka banned observance of useless rituals and ceremonies to cut down the influence of priests and religious leaders. He defined the code of duty based on practical ideas like daya (mercy), dana (charity), sathya (truthfulness), namrata (gentleness), and souche (purity)."³⁵ King Aśoka was said to have founded dharmasalas, hospitals, and sarais throughout his empire. Dharma Mahapatras were appointed to preach to people. Buddhism was transmitted during his reign as a state religion and inscriptions of Buddhist principles were carved on rocks and so on.³⁶

About the Policy of Dhamma of Aśoka, according to R. L.

Mukherjee, has two aspects—(1) "The doctrinal aspect," (2) "The practical aspect." The doctrinal aspect consists of Ahimsa, belief in parloka, swarga etc. While the practical aspect is more deep significances, Aśoka exhorted the people to gain virtues like mercy, truthfulness, charity etc. According to Ranjeet Kedarta, to fulfill these aspects, "Aśoka not only prepared a code of moral duties for his subjects but also took practical steps to propagate his Dhamma among his people." Firstly, he himself set an example: He gave up the practice of pleasure tours, instead started to undertake 'Dharma-Yatras'.

'Secondly, he stopped giving secular messages, instead we find him giving the message of Dhamma or righteous living.' 'Thirdly, the principles of Dhamma were carved on rocks and pillars in the different parts of the Empire, so that the policy and Dhamma of their Emperor.' 'Lastly, he appointed a special class of officers-Dhamma Mahamatras.'

Some scholars hold that Aśoka's pacifist policies mainly responsible for the decline of the Mauryan Empire. According to them, his pacifist policies weakened and destroyed the empire of its strength because of his policy of non-violence exterminates the killer instinct from the psyche of the Indians. Therefore, they could no longer maintain to be good soldiers, whose main function is to kill ruthlessly. This argument has been unnecessarily stressed to absurdities. Though Aśoka did not like killing of animals for food, however, he neither disbanded his army nor did he ban death sentence. Furthermore, if Aśoka had been a pacifist king, he would have reinstated Kali ga as an independent kingdom. However, he was a practical king and continued to maintain Magadhan supremacy over it. There were many indications of Asoka's assertion of his control the diverse people of his empire. Especially, king Aśoka had made it very clear that the misconduct of the tribes living in his empire would be tolerated up to a point only. All are mentioned above showed that although Aśoka carried out his dhamma over his empire, it did not weaken the army or administrative machinery of the Mauryan Empire.³⁷

To sum up:

Aśoka ruled from 269 to 232 BC and was one of the great and illustrious emperors in India. According to some inscriptions, in the aftermath of the massacre resulting from his campaign against the powerful kingdom of Kali ga (Orissa), Aśoka converted to Buddhism after the Kali ga war, became a zeal Buddhist, and he was said to have renounced bloodshed and pursued the doctrine or a policy of Ahimsa (non-violence), espousing a theory of rule by righteousness. Aśoka established the policy of Dhamma which highlighted the tenet of toleration, including not only the toleration for the people but also toleration of their various beliefs and ideas. Basically, the policy of dhamma aimed to create a harmonious and equal relationship for the people in his empire. He also laid emphasis on notions like showing consideration towards slaves and servants, obedience to elders, generosity towards the needy, Brāhmahama as and sama as and so on. During the reign of Emperor Aśoka, Buddhism developed strongly and worldwide propagated, according to Buddhist records, he convened the Third Buddhist Council at his capital, regularly undertook Buddhist pilgrimage within his country, built many stūpas, as recorded in Buddhist literature, there were 84,000 stūpas were constructed under the time of Aśoka. Besides, he also sent Buddhist missionaries and his Dhamma ambassadors to foreign countries to spread Buddhism. We can say that the contributions of Aśoka brought about the remarkable and significant impact for the illustrious growth of Indian Buddhism.

References:

1. Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.), *A guttara Nikaya*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012, pp.107-108.
2. A. A Long, D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1, Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary*, Cambridge University Press, 1987. pp. 366-367.
3. Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 616.
4. Rekha Daswani, *Buddhist Monasteries and Monastic Life in Ancient India (From the Third Century BC to the Seventh Century AD)*, New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2006, p. 226.
5. See Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014, p.624.

6. Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1990, p. 196.
7. Kanai Lal Hazra, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012, p. 51-52.
8. Kanai Lal Hazra, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012, p. 58.
9. Kanai Lal Hazra, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012, p. 59. And also see K.T.S. Sarao (ed.), *A Text Book of the History of Theravāda Buddhism*, Delhi: Vidyanidhi Prakashan, First Edition:1995, Second Revised Edition:2007, p. 89.
10. P.V. Papat (ed.), *2500 Years of Buddhism*, New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1956, p. 56.
11. Kanai Lal Hazra, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012, p.61.
12. Ernest Binfield Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India*, New Delhi, p. 91.
13. P.V. Papat (ed.), *2500 Years of Buddhism*, New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1956, p.56.
14. Kanai Lal Hazra, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012, p.69.
15. K.T.S. Sarao (ed.), *A Text Book of the History of Theravāda Buddhism*, Delhi: Vidyanidhi Prakashan, First Edition:1995, Second Revised Edition:2007, p. 90.
16. Ernest Binfield Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India*, London: Forgotten Books, 2013, p. 91.
17. Ernest Binfield Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India*, London: Forgotten Books, 2013, p. 91.
18. Mookerji Radhakumud, *Asoka*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi: Reprint 1995, pp. 162-163.
19. Mookerji Radhakumud, *Asoka*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi: Reprint 1995, pp. 165-166, also see Kanai Lal Hazra, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012, p.70.
20. Kanai Lal Hazra, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012, p.70.
21. Kanai Lal Hazra, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012, p.71.
22. Hirakawa Akira, Paul Groner (trans & ed.), *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Reprint: 1998, 2007. p. 100.
23. Kanai Lal Hazra, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012, p.71.
24. Shalini, "Role of Various Monarchs in Buddhism" in K.T.S. Sarao (ed.) & Arvind Kr. Singh (Assisted), *A Text Book of the History of Theravāda Buddhism*, Delhi: Department of Buddhist Studies, second revised edition 2007, pp. 77-98.
25. Shalini, "Role of Various Monarchs in Buddhism" in K.T.S. Sarao (ed.) & Arvind Kr. Singh (Assisted), *A Text Book of the History of Theravāda Buddhism*, Delhi: Department of Buddhist Studies, second revised edition 2007, pp. 77-98.
26. William Theodore de Bary (ed.), *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China, and Japan*, New York: Vintage Books, 1972, p. 8.
27. Hirakawa Akira, Paul Groner (trans & ed.), *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Reprint: 1998, 2007, p. 100.
28. CBETA CBReader 2010, 阿育王經, T. 50, no. 2043, p. 131, b7-9 – p. 170, a7.
29. John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 123.
30. Hirakawa Akira, Paul Groner (trans & ed.), *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Reprint: 1998, 2007, p. 101.
31. Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey With Bibliographical Notes*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Reprint 2007, p. 95.
32. Ernest Binfield Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India*, London: Forgotten Books, 2013, p. 95; also see Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1990, p. 77.
33. Kumar Sharma, *History BA (Hons) Semester II Course Pack*, University of Delhi, Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2012, p. 57.
34. Kumar Sharma, *History BA (Hons) Semester II Course Pack*, University of Delhi, Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2012, p. 57.
35. Edgar Thorpe Showick Thorpe, *The Pearson General Studies Manual 2009*, New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2009, p. 35.
36. Edgar Thorpe Showick Thorpe, *The Pearson General Studies Manual 2009*, New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2009, p. 35.
37. Shalini, "Role of Various Monarchs in Buddhism" in K.T.S. Sarao (ed.) & Arvind Kr. Singh (Assisted), *A Text Book of the History of Theravāda Buddhism*, Delhi: Department of Buddhist Studies, second revised edition 2007, pp. 77-98.