

Sample research proposal on emperor ashokas influence on buddhism

[Religion](#), [Buddhism](#)



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Box #xxx

Emperor Ashoka's Influence on Buddhism

Emperor Ashoka is one of the central characters responsible for the spread of Buddhism, not only across the Indian subcontinent, but also across parts of Eastern Asia. A discussion on Buddhism and its geographical reach would remain incomplete without a discussion on the role of Emperor Ashoka.

Therefore, the choice of this topic enables one to understand the manner in which the great Ashoka lived and spread the message of the Buddhism.

The focus of this paper will be on the South Asian countries, namely India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. This paper will discuss the critical role played by Emperor Ashoka in the spread of Buddhism especially post-conversion after the bloody battle of Kalinga, and in doing so he gave back to the community by building roads, "resting" houses, giving alms, rock edicts, building of stupas and other similar public services and systems.

Ashoka's Role in the spread of Buddhism

The bloody battle of Kalinga changed Ashoka for the better and he became an upasaka and went on a 256 day pilgrimage to Buddhist religious places. In doing so, the war and the subsequent conversion changed his outlook completely, especially with regard to his method of ruling his kingdom. Ashoka looked outward to enable the spread of Buddhism instead of changing the faith of the people of his kingdom, Ashoka chose to incorporate the principles of Buddhism in his foreign policy and actively proselytized the religion. Further, Ashoka also did his bit to spread the messages of Buddhism through edicts of various types such as Rock Edicts, Pillar Edicts and other rock as well as pillar inscriptions.

Social and Community Work

The social and community work done by Ashoka is largely evident from the 2nd Rock Edict that talks about the services carried out by Ashoka towards his subjects. This edict talks about the social provisions that Ashoka had carried out for his subjects, particularly medical aid for men and animals and improved travel and other residential facilities for travelers. Such facilities as per the edict suggest that these services are not restricted to his own subjects, but were in operation even in the far south, possible even in Sri Lanka and even in the West.

Similarly, the Queen's Pillar Edict of the Allahabad Kosam mentions the concept of alms-houses to be registered in the name of the queen. Emperor Ashok had built such alms houses primarily for the Buddhist monks who had renounced all worldly pleasures and led a life of a mendicant. Such alms

houses would thus ensure that these category of religious men would be able to live life in a manner similar to that of the Buddha.

Rock Edicts

Emperor Ashoka was one of the first kings to employ the usage of rock inscriptions or rock edicts to convey the moral principles of Buddhism to the general public. Asoka's edicts are mainly concerned with the reforms he introduced and the moral principles he recommended. In doing so, he felt that he was attempting to create a just and humane society. Therefore, the edicts depict extremely detailed topics such as a list of things to abstain from including meat, animal killing and other prohibited items as per Buddhist philosophy. Some of the edicts also lay emphasis on the manner of leading one's life in accordance with the Buddhist teachings and a list of things one should avoid in the course of doing so. On a standalone basis, however, these rock edicts give us little information about either the life of the emperor or life at that particular point of time.

Building of Stupas

As a part of the campaign to spread Buddhism far and wide, Emperor Ashoka also built several stupas. Of these, the Samchi Stupa, Sarnath Stupa, Rumendei Stupa and the Nigali Sagar are the four minor ones that found mention in the works of the Chinese scholar Hiuen Tsiang. In addition, several stupas had been built by the Emperor. While some of these stupas cannot be deciphered due to the use of unknown scripts or due to structural damage, a few of these stupas contain the names of missionary Buddhist monks, while a few others as well as other minor details. However, the

construction of the 84, 000 stupas was one of the most significant efforts by Emperor Ashoka since this structure together housed all the relics of the Buddha that the eight kings had obtained from the parinirvan (death and cremation) of the Buddha.

In the topics discussed, one can clearly see the active role that Emperor Ashoka played in the spread of Buddhism. The rock edicts, stupas and pillars as well as the community services he built mainly helped further the cause of the religion. In doing so, unwittingly the Emperor also ensured that these teachings, rules and points were also available to future generations since a large number of these edicts and pillars are in good condition even to the present day.

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