

Ashoka bindusara
maurya the great
indian emperor
history essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Ashoka Bindusara Maurya, the great Indian emperor was a ruler during the Maurya dynasty, born in 265 BC to parents Bindusara and Dharma Maurya (Iloveindia. com, 2010). Ashoka's regime spread across most of India and modern Pakistan and Afghanistan which was due to a number of successful conquests that will be mentioned later. His name is often followed by the title " the great" mainly due to the fact that he was one of India's greatest rulers. His regime saw most of India united as one state under a democratic government. His name Ashoka is Sanskrit for " without sorrow." According to Iloveindia. com (2010), from a young age, Ashoka was quite a handful; he often got into trouble for beating up his fellow children and being cruel to animals but on the other hand was an extremely clever child who grasped all that he was taught, be it ancient Buddhist teachings or how to hunt for wild animals. By the time he was a teenager, he had his older brother's complaining to their parents and this got him sent away to the outskirts of the empire to pose as a general. Here he did things as he pleased, terrorizing small communities and various would be vigilante groups.

At this time, young Ashoka realized that he's brothers were against him so when he was sent away by his father; he instead exiled himself to Kalinga where he's greatest military conquest lay (Iloveindia. com, 2010). There he met a young maiden named Kaurwaki whom he got involved with but later abandoned. After two years in exile, Ashoka grudgingly returned to India where his father needed him to preside over a conflict in the Ujjain region. This conflict is what launched Ashoka's devotion to Buddhism. While peace keeping, Ashoka was injured and fortunately secretly tended to by Buddhist priests who did not want the news of his injury to reach his vengeful brothers

(Wold, 2010). During this period, he got to learn of ancient Buddhist teachings and values that helped cultivate his belief. In addition, he also met another young girl whom he married as his first wife.

Years after, the conflict between the siblings climaxed when their father passed away in 268 BC leaving them battling for the emperorship. After two long years of gross violence, Ashoka finally emerged victorious to sit on the much coveted throne (Sahu, 2005). Legend has it that Ashoka killed most of his brother while most of the retreated to various parts of India. After eight years of devoted and vigilant governance, Ashoka decided to expand his empire by invading Kalinga and annexing it to India. According to Munshi (1968) this was after he had successfully imperialized the borders of Iran, Afghanistan, west Bangladesh and eastern Burma. In 286 BC, Ashoka led the Indian army into Kalinga. Regardless of Ashoka having sentimental ties to Kalinga, Kaurwaki in particular, he plunged into war head first sparing no one. The region of Kalinga though greatly betrayed and dismayed fought back bravely but ultimately lost the war (Sahu, 2005). The morning after, Ashoka visited the battle field to view the extent of his "victory" but he somewhat did not feel good about it. Seeing to houses burned to ashes and bodies lying everywhere, Ashoka was horror struck by the sight. At that moment in time, Ashoka had an epiphany where he began to be aware of and regret the horrors of his actions. Corpses lay scattered on the earth, orphaned children cried for their mother all over, widows grieved for their husbands, the Daya River ran red with blood and various temples and monuments were destroyed in the nasty brawl.

The great Mauryan emperor surveyed his work on the Kalinga region and decided that never again will he put a people into such a saddening state. He vowed to devote himself to his ancient Buddhist teachings and values to cleanse him and ultimately seek forgiveness. Ashoka from this point embarked on a spiritual journey that remains etched in most parts of India today. It is safe to say that he is the father of devoted Buddhism in India. Had he decided to be a devout Buddhist since his childhood, the tough emperor probably wouldn't have been an icon in this day and age and throughout history. Moreover, after his spiritual transformation, Ashoka released a number of announcements and manuscripts that enlightened citizens on his new found glory (Munshi, 1968). He also went on a number of trips around India to let them know of his great plans for peace and unity for his beloved empire. In his proclamations, the emperor swore to care for his people and also promised the neighboring countries that the malicious and vicious attacks and will in turn live in harmony with them. In addition, Ashoka began a campaign against using animals for sacrifices and hunting but instead urged people to embrace vegetarianism. All in all, the emperor ruled with extreme good will after his epiphany. In one occasion, Ashoka quoted " I consider it best to meet with people personally" which saw him continue with his countrywide tours to meet and interact with his citizens.

Ashoka was indeed a violent and tyrannical person before the epic battle of Kalinga but his personality change proved quite important to history. He undoubtedly is the one who officiated Buddhism as a household religion, not only that but a lifestyle to many of the natives of India. Thanks to the great Mauryan emperor, India now boasts over 90% of its populace following the

great Buddhist principles. Physical evidences like the stupas, Sangharama, viharas, Chaitya and Buddhist monk residences sprinkled all over south and central Asia attest to Ashoka's utter devotion to Buddhism and making amends with his people. It would have been thought that he's change of attitude would have been short lived and for personal gain, but he proved his authenticity with his many actions throughout his remaining years on earth. In addition, Ashoka did not try to crush or put down non-Buddhist religions but in turn embraced them like his own (Wold, 2010). Like a contemporary leader, Ashoka gave all religions platforms as emperor and did not kill or harm them in any way. He additionally gave them hefty donations, as emperor, to support their causes though he was still forever inclined to Buddhism (Sahu, 2005).

All things considered, I think Ashoka is a good topic because although he was strong and brutal at the beginning and lost the trust of the people, he regained it later on. Furthermore, the man used the army that killed thousands of people with to spread Buddhism after he underwent his transformation. If Ashoka did not exist history would be different and Buddhism would have not caught on so fast or even exist as long as it did in India. I really meant destroyed because when you kill 100, 000 plus people one battle I don't call that a slap on the wrist. These people did not have guns and missiles back then so there was a lot of ground combat and suffering going on. The intent was to create the greatest empire and yes he did accomplish it, but the price he paid was huge. I say it was worth it because look at India today still unified and remember through India national flag, which bears the emblem of Ashoka wheel of law.