

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON EMPERORS ASOKA, KANISHKA AND HARSHA

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ABSTRACT

Among the many kings who extended their patronage to Buddhism, the most prominent are Asoka, Kaniska and Harsha. Asoka was the person that made Buddhism a world religion. It was during his time well known nine missions were sent to various countries. Many inscriptions to impart the knowledge of morals were erected everywhere in his kingdom. After Ashoka a Kushana king called Kaniska supported Sarvastivada School, although it was during his times that the first Mahayana Sutras marked their appearance. King Harsha Wardhana was also a great patron of Buddhism in India.

Asoka (268-232) is mentioned by historians as 'the greatest of kings', 'not because of the physical extent of his empire, extensive as it was, but because of his character as a man, the ideals for which he stood and the principals by which he governed. Whatever religion Asoka believed in before his deeply moving experience of Kalinga war, he had converted himself to Buddhism at the time of third council. His conversion to Buddhism is compared by Rhys Davids with the Roman Emperor Constantine's to Christianity.¹ His pilgrimages to the Buddhist sites were followed by erection of pillars with inscriptions that record the historical significance of those places.

Kaniska ruled from 78 A. D to 101 or 102 A. D. His capitol was Purushapura (modern Peshawar) had a vast empire extending from Bihar in the east to Khorasan in the West and from Khotan in the north to the Konkan in the south. He accepted Buddhism as his religion and built many monasteries and stupas that were seen and admired by itinerant monks from China.

Harsha Wardhana, ascended to throne in the seventh century when he was 16 years old under tragic circumstances and ruled for over forty years from 606 to 647 A. D. He changed his capital from Thaneswar to Kanauj after capturing it for political and administrative reasons. The young Buddhist prince managed to become a powerful ruler of a vast stretch of Land in India. He was very powerful yet well known for his kindness and wisdom. He was a strong believer in the Bodhisatva Avalokitesvara. As Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang described he was an energetic ruler.

I hope to view service regarding the kings of Asoka, Kanishka and Harsha. There are kings had been big servicing procure developed the Buddhism. As a result of pervade had Buddhism in to the Asian Countries. Because I think this research will important all philosophers.

KEYWORDS: Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Asoka Inscriptions, Mahawamsa & Buddhist Scripture

¹ Rhys Davids *Buddhist India* p.298