

## Chapter 7: Ashoka The Emperor Who Gave Up War

### Intext Questions:

**Question 1.** Name the countries where Ashokan inscriptions have been found. Which Indian states were outside the empire?

**Answer:** India, Pakistan and Afghanistan are the countries where Ashokan inscriptions were found. Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Sikkim and all North east states were outside of Ashokan empire.

**Question 2.** Why do you think the king had special servants to taste the food he ate?

**Answer:** During the times of Chandragupta Maurya, there were frequent wars to conquer more territories. The others sent their spies to know more about the king. So Chandragupta Maurya was always afraid that his life was in danger. So he had special servants who tasted the food before he ate.

**Question 3.** In what ways was Pataliputra different from Mohenjodaro? (hint: see Chapter 3)

**Answer:**

Pataliputra	Mohenjodaro
The king's palace was made of wood and decorated with stone carving.	There was no king, hence no palace. The city was divided into two Parts – the citadel and the surrounding area.
The houses of two or three stories are built of wood and mud brick.	Houses were single-storeyed, made of burnt bricks.

**Question 4.** How did the Kalinga war bring about a change in Ashoka's attitude towards war?

**Answer:** After winning Kalinga war Ashoka was filled with sorrow and remorse when he saw a huge carnage of people and animals. About a lakh of people were killed in the war. He heard the wailings and cries of the women and children. Ashoka decided to give up warfare and decided to observe Dhamma and spread Dhamma.

**Question 5.** Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, wrote: "His edicts (instructions) still speak to us in a language we can understand and we can still learn much from them." Identify the parts of Ashoka's message that you think are relevant today.

**Answer:** In his message, Ashoka speaks about-

- Respecting the elders
- treating all creatures with compassion
- respect for all religions

These ideas and messages are still relevant today

- We must respect our elders, especially our parents and teachers.
- We have international organizations like SPCA (Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals) and other societies like PETA (Peoples for Ethical Treatment of Animals).  
These organizations spread the message of compassion to animals.
- Secularism is part of our constitution. It means that there is no state religion. Secondly, people are free to worship in any manner. In other words, it means we must respect all religions.

**Question 6.** In what ways do you think Ashoka's attitude toward neighbouring peoples was different from that of the Chinese emperors?

**Answer:** Ashoka's attitude towards neighboring peoples was total-different from the contemporary Chinese emperors. For example, the Chinese emperors constructed a wall to protect the northern frontier of the empire from pastoral people, whereas Ashoka expanded its empire of Dhamma by sending officials to spread the message of non-violence. This example presents open-mindedness-of Ashoka.

### Imagine

**Question:** You live in Kalinga, and your parents have suffered in the war. Messengers from Ashoka have just arrived with the new ideas about dhamma. Describe the dialogue between them and your parents.

**Answer:**

Parents: Who are you? You seem to be outsiders.

Messenger: We have been sent by Emperor Ashoka to spread his message of love and piety.

Parents: After a huge carnage, he wants to love us. Why? We can see no reason for it. You can go away.

Messenger: We have come to spread the message of love and we will leave, till we have your hearts.

Parents: Can your emperor return our friends & relatives.

Messengers: No, it is true. But if a man realizes his mistakes and promises not to repeat them, he deserves your love. Even Lord Buddha spread the message of love.

### Let's recall

**Question 1.** Make a list of the occupations of the people who lived within the Mauryan empire.

**Answer:** The Mauryan empire consisted of people who were merchants, officials, craftspersons, farmers and herders, etc.

**Question 2.** Complete the following sentences:

- Officials collected \_\_\_\_\_ from the area under the direct control of the ruler.
- Royal princes often went to the provinces as \_\_\_\_\_ .
- The Mauryan rulers tried to control \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ which were important for transport.
- People in forested regions provided the Mauryan officials with \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:**

- Taxes
- Governors
- Roads and rivers
- Tribute

**Question 3.** State whether true or false:

- Ujjain was the gateway to the north-west.
- Chandragupta's ideas were written down in the Arthashastra.
- Kalinga was the ancient name of Bengal.
- Most Ashokan inscriptions are in the Brahmi script.

**Answer:**

- False
- False
- False
- True

## Let's discuss

**Question 4.** What were the problems that Ashoka wanted to solve by introducing dhamma?

**Answer:** There were a number of problems in the empire that led Ashoka to introduce his 'dhamma'. People in the empire followed different religions, usually causing conflicts. Animal sacrifice was common. Slaves and servants were ill-treated by their masters. There were quarrels among civilians. To solve these problems, Ashoka introduced his 'dhamma'.

**Question 5.** What were the means adopted by Ashoka to spread the message of dhamma ?

**Answer:** The means adopted by Ashoka to spread his message of Dhamma were :

1. He appointed officers known as Dharam-Mahamatras to spread and explain the message of Dhamma.
2. He wrote his message on rocks and pillars which were erected in different parts of the empire. They were written in Prakrit, the language of the people.

**Question 6.** Why do you think slaves and servants were ill-treated? Do you think the orders of the emperor would have improved their condition? Give reasons for your answer.

**Answer:** Slaves and servants were ill-treated because their masters felt superior to them. The masters treated them like animals. It was because of the old Varna' system. The emperor's orders might have helped to some extent. Ashoka was a king who was loved by his subjects. Moreover, his 'dhamma' was a real innovation.

## Let's do

**Question 7.** Write a short paragraph explaining to Roshan why the lions are shown on our currency notes. List at least one other object on which you see them.

**Answer:** If you look at the Ashokan pillar at Samath (or a picture of it) you will find the capital of the pillar has 4 lions sitting back to back. The lion represents the attainment of Buddhahood. The four lions surmounting the capital symbolize the kingship of the Buddha and his roar over the four directions.

There is also a non-religious interpretation of the symbol, describing the four lions as the symbol of Ashoka's rule in the four directions. Just as Buddha & his follower Ashoka wanted to spread the message of peace & friendship.

Similarly, India after she gained independence wanted to spread the same message. So India adopted the emblem of 4 lions after she gained independence. We can find this emblem on the cars of the President of India, Prime Minister, and the other Indian dignitaries.

**Question 8.** Suppose you had the power to inscribe your orders, what four commands would you like to issue?

**Answer:**

- Slavery is abolished.
- Animal sacrifice is stopped.
- People should not fight among themselves.
- No discrimination is practiced based on gender, caste, creed, etc.