

8th SEPT.

1.) How did Ashoka contribute to the moral and administrative welfare of his people? (10 M).

Ans) Ashoka was one of the greatest monarchs of Ancient India as well as in the history of India. The Mauryan polity assumed a paternalistic outlook under Ashoka, and he started to see his subjects as his sons and daughters.

For the moral progress of his subjects, Ashoka initiated the concept of Dhamma for his subjects. He himself asks in his 2nd Major edict as 'what is Dhamma' and explains it in 2nd and 7th

Major edict. It includes a set of Dos and Don'ts for people.

- Accepting virtues like truthfulness, kindness, mutual respect, respect to elders, brahmins, teachers, ~~resp~~ donations to shamanas and brahmins etc.
- Removing evil behaviours such as anger, violence, jealousy, ~~more~~ excessive materialism, pride etc.

He used the administrative machinery of his state to propagate his message of Dhamma among the people:

- Dhamma messages were inscribed on Rocks, Pillars etc. and placed at locations near to the people. It established direct communication of Ashoka with people to guide their behaviour.

- According to the 5th Major rock edict, Ashoka established ~~a~~ new officials known as Dhamma Mahamatras for the spread of the message of Dhamma.
- He ordered his officials to visit their areas once in 5 every 5 years. He himself visited areas of empire in his Dhamma Yatras.
- The edicts were written in the local language of the region such as Greek, Aramaic, Kharoshthi, Brahmi etc. to be understood by the people.
- He organised public exhibitions as well to spread Dhamma message.
- These edicts worked as modern day constitutions giving details of people's rights and duties and making them public.

However, it can also be said that the Dhamma Mahamatras failed to distinguish between Buddhism and Dhamma and merged them both. It reduced its effectiveness among people, and the policy was later abandoned by successive Mauryan rulers. Moreover, it also needed educated people to translate the message which might have reduced its effectiveness.

~~At~~ In the end, his message continues to live and has become the way of life of the Indians.

2) Give an account of Indian participation in the silk trade through Central Asia. (10M).

Ans) The silk route was established by the Chinese Han empire to consolidate the links with Western World and India. It got its name from the lucrative Chinese silk trade which happened with this route.

The route was mainly overland in the initial period, and connected China with Central Asia → Afghanistan and Iran → West Asia → Rome. The route through the Iran played an important intermediary in silk route. However, it got diverted to India during 1st century BC due to several factors:

#### EXTERNAL FACTORS:

- The disturbances in Parthian empire of Iran made the passage through region very dangerous.
- The Indo-Greeks, Sakas and Kushanas established their empires straddling across Central Asia and North West and North India, and brought the silk route under their control. They favored trade along the route and through Indian ports.
- The Han dynasty of China also favored trade with India.
- The Romans occupied the Mesopotamian region in 115 AD and trade with North West Indian ports became easier.

- Hippalus in AD 45 discovered the monsoon winds and the trade between India and West Asia increased many folds.

Thus, the silk route transformed into Maritime route and joined Roman West Asia with the parts of Barbaricum and Barygaza in North West India (Periplus).

Along with these, several Internal Factors also helped in fostering trade:

- Greater monetisation of Indian economy, starting with Indo-Greeks.
- State control over economy reduced and the private initiatives got a boost with formation of Guilds and merchants.
- Mahayana Buddhism also favored trade, which also helped in its proselytisation efforts.
- The unity and stability achieved during Kushanas and their vast empires helped in trade.

Thus the silk trade route shifted to Taxila, from where it followed 2 routes: Taxila → Mathura → Kanushambi → Ujjain → Bharuch (Barygaza); and Taxila → lower Indus valley → Barbaricum. The silk route helped in bringing urbanisation to many cities in India and the spread of Indian culture across the whole world.