

Asoka's Concept of Good Governance

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ABSTRACT

Emperor Asoka sense of governance has different significance and outlook. He emphasized on governance with moral principles. He never imposed governance to the common people rather convinced them to follow the right path accepted by the people. He considered his self as father of his people and treated them like his children. The sense of religion he wanted to spread every nook and corner of his country but it was not possible for him to be present himself for that so he had delegated this task to his representatives. They all taken this work seriously and helped Ashoka to spread the universal message of love and peace.

Asoka's Edicts & Good Governance : To Emperor Asoka of the 3rd century B.C. in India who is a Buddhist by faith, Governance appears to be only theoretically 'Autocracy', because he proceeds much further than the law-books to prescribe limitations upon his own authority by adding to his own duties and responsibilities, and emphasizing the supremacy of moral law even in the secular spheres of life.¹ He has laid, a great emphasis upon the paternal principle of governance in his Edicts 'All men are my children, and: just as I wish for my children that they should be connected with all good and happiness pertaining to this world and to the world beyond, so also I wish in the case of all men'. He also desires that the newly -subdued kalingas should be known the fact that the king is to them a father who loves them even as the loves himself and that they are to the king even as his children. But the abiding sense of paternal responsibility for his people is not confined to the king alone, it belongs also to his officers, to whom he has entrusted the care of his people as a man would make over his child to a skilful nurse and feeling confident, says to himself : 'Just as, to be sure, a person feels confident after making over his offspring to an expert nurse'.

The expert nurse will be able to comfortably being up my offspring, so my Rajukas are appointed for the good and happiness of the country people. Thus the king with such ideas of his position and sense of responsibility is practically more representative of hispeople than the so-called representative assembly or legislature in a regular democracy. AccordingRadhaKumudMookerji Asoka's relationship to the people is more natural and primary, more direct and intimate, than the legal, facetious, and consensual relationship of the electorate and the elected in modern democracies. Indeed, the Head of the stateand his people are but integral parts of one corporate and constitutional unity.²

Asoka's concept of 'Good Governance' includes also responsibilities, hard working and ideal public. The Emperor gives himself to public business at and all hours and places and so proclaims 'Formerly, in the ages gone by, there was no transaction of the household, in bed-chamber in the promenade, or in the carriage the pleasance, everywhere the reporters are stationed so that they may report to me the people's and everywhere I transfect the people's

business.³Contineously he has no satiety in exertion or dispatch of business. Doing good to the whole world is considered duty indeed by me. And again at the root of this exertion and dispatch of business. There is verily no greater duty than doing well to the whole world'. Apart from the three traditional debts like debt to ones' religion to the Fsis and to ones ancestors, which every person must discharge. Asoka reminds that a king has fourth debt to pay : And whatever I strive for, it is intended that i shall acquit myself of the debt to the living beings and that I shall make them happy and let then: attain heaven hereafter.⁴.

Being an Emperor of a large empire, Anoka has recognized his duty of touring throughout the country. He has toured neither for sport nor for personal pleasure like his predecessors, but for meeting the people of countryside's and those of towns. But he is quite aware of the vastness of his empire and could not visit personally every corner of it.⁵So he has to depend on his Edicts, some of which could not communicate his intention properly. That is why he has caused to be engaged : 'Here may be something written incompletely, either view of the place, or in consideration of reasons or due to the faults of the scribe. These blunders in his published Edicts are merely supposed by him. He could not referred to them if he had actually examined them on the spot, for there are hardly any such glaring blunders in so many of his separately executed and located Edicts.⁶

For good and efficient governance Asoka has divided into a number of provinces, of which the more remote ones arc placed under viceroys who become generally kumaras, princes at Taxila, Ujjain, Grosali and Suvarnagiri and alsoGandhara, according to the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien of the 5th century B.C. prince Dharmavivardhana, another name of Kunala, sent by Asoka towards the end of his as his viceroy to Taxila which has also included the province of Ganghara.⁷

Although the Rajukas as the ordinary provincial Governor have been in existence even before the 3rd century B.C., Asoka has invested thorn with greater authority saying 'My Rajukas are placed over mayhundred thousands of being amendment and 'Throughout my domain the Yuktas, the Rajukas the pradesikas shall every five years go forth on

official' tours of inspection for that purpose, for imparting this instruction in the Law of piety, just as well for doing duties and 'Rajjukas, confident and fearless, may initiate proceedings, my bring good and happiness to the people of towns and countryside, and do favor will know what causes happiness and distress, and will exhort the people of towns and countryside consistently with principle of piety, intending that they may attain the objects here and hereafter.

But some of the lofty ideals of duty prescribed for the Governor are not easily materialized. Thus some cases of their neglect of duty or indifference to his instructions would call forth vigorous but dignified protests from Asoka by these propensities, however, it does not succeed by malignity, by irascibility, by cruelty, by oppressiveness, by non-application, by indolence by weariness. This is to be desired and intending. These propensities my not be mine. At the root of all these are non-irascibility and non-oppressiveness.⁹This is the maxim of conduct. Those who are weary of exertion, they after getting up, are not fit u move about, or for the matter of that, to walk or proceed. Here it's you who sees the thing in this very way. by him, should be told, keep in view the acquitting yourselves of the debt such is the instruction of the beloved of the Gods that which is a fulfillment of this is of great bearing, the non-Fulfillment is of terrible consequence.

This s considered badly given effect to this, there is neither the attainment of heaven nor that of royal favor. It is difficult indeed to procure the equal of this work, what to think of anything in excess. But rightly giving effect to this, you will attain heaven and you will get yourselves free from the debt to me. Indeed these words of EmperorAsoka revealed his impassioned exhortations which are still applicable. Beside, least his words are forgotten by these to whom they are addressed, Asoka Emperor Asoka's Good Governance from the very nature of the case appears partly imperial, i.e. directly under the Emperor, and partly local, i.e. under the viceroys and Governors. Also the Emperor for good governance has assisted by his parisad, Privy Council', referred to in his Rock Edicts III and IV. With due consideration, makes the people devoted to righteousness and to works productive of wealth and enjoyment, while punishment, when III awarded under the

influence of greed and anger or owing to ignorance, excites fury even among hermits and ascetics dwelling if forests. not to speak of householders. The earlier opinion of Law and polity fuvouredUdyata or TikanaDanda. The pursuit of the middle courses proposed by Asoka.¹⁰

Asoka's good governance largely depends on his Statement : 'The chief conquest is the conquest or Right and not of Might'. Through this statement he tries to spread to following messages :

- (i) War should be abolished
- (ii) sovereignty of the smaller states and weaker peoples should be respected as a matter of principle of many subdued borders his declaration : the king desires that they should not be afraid of him not sorrow but happiness', and also 'even upon the forest fold in his dominion. His sacred Majesty locks kindly¹¹Thesemessages are meant not only for his own people but also forth foreigners on the borders and beyond. Thus his messages of freedom, of peace of earth, of goodwill among the peoples and of international peaceful coexistence have constituted the basic pillars of the grand edifice of Good Governance that is still relevant for the humanity to survive and progress.¹²

But the best example of Asoka's conceptof Good Governance has been reflected in this following statement addressed to Mahamatras who the city-judiciaries at Tosali 'Therein you are to desire tending, we will fulfill the mean here implies a mean or 'middle course between two extreme courses and one hasty, precipitated and the other slow lethargic. Behind hasty action are such immoral mental dispositions as is asulop and tulana, and behind slow action are such bad mental habits as anavuti, alasiyam, and kilamatha. The best commentary on Asoka dictum is offered by Kautilya when he argues and opines: Whosoever imposes severe punishment becomes repulsive to the people, while he who awards mild punishment become contemptible. But whoever imposes punishment as deserved becomes respectable.

References

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