

JOURNAL  
OF THE  
BOMBAY BRANCH  
OF THE  
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

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JANUARY, 1851.

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ART. I.—*Account of the great Hindu Monarch, Aso'ka, chiefly from the Indische Alterthumskunde of Professor Christian Lassen.* BY THE HON'BLE SIR ERSKINE PERRY.

The Mussulmans of India may justly boast in Akbar of one of the greatest sovereigns whom the world has seen. Nearly a contemporary of three very celebrated Monarchs in Europe, the crafty and superstitious Charles V., the sensual and unprincipled Henry VIII., the libertine Francis I., sink into common place individuals when placed in comparison with the great Mussulman Emperor. Pre-eminent for genius in war, some of his movements recall to mind the most celebrated exploits of Alexander or Napoleon. His rapid march, for example, from Agra to Ahmedabad after the rains had commenced, when to quell an insurrection in his recent conquest of Gujerath, he placed himself at the head of his body guard, and, almost without drawing bit, reached the capital, 450 miles distant, in nine days, where by his unexpected presence he at once restored good order, is one of the most memorable feats in Indian History.

But in Civil Government he was still more distinguished, and his policy to consolidate a grand Indian Empire by a fusion of races and equal treatment of religions, bears all the marks of a great original idea. The *Ayin Akbari* is a splendid memorial of the prosperous state of Akbar's government, and the world probably never beheld a more brilliant court than that of Agra, where the 'barbaric pearl and gold' of the gorgeous East were subordinated to the exquisite taste and high intelligence, which the architecture of that period still betokens, and traces of which are still clearly perceptible in the dignified bearing and high polish to be met with even in the poorest Mahomedan Durbar of the present day.

But a still higher phase of Akbar's character remains to be mentioned. Conquerors but too often employ their energy of soul for mere personal ambition, and self-aggrandizement; statesmen in their intercourse with the world are frequently seen to contract a contempt for their fellow-men, and to become hard and cynical. If, however, we follow Akbar into private life we find that our admiration of the Monarch is exceeded by our love for the man. His philosophic speculations with the choice spirits whom he attracted to his court, remind the reader of the learned leisure of the Antonines, but his delicate treatment of the high born Rajput, who, for the first time subdued in arms, was forced to bend the knee as a subject at his throne, displays a soul of chivalry of which even Bayard might have been proud. If Akbar in short had been a European, we might have summed up his character by stating that he possessed all the great qualities of a Conqueror, a Christian, a Philosopher, and a Gentleman.

It is impossible that the race who claims so great a man can, fail to feel ennobled when dwelling on his story. But there is reason to believe that the Hindus can also bring forward a Monarch of equally extended empire, and on whom none of the eulogiums which have been bestowed upon Akbar, would be exaggerated. It is remarkable that an English reader of History is unable to obtain any authentic account of *Asóka*, or *Dharmasóka* as he is frequently called. He was apparently unknown to Sir William Jones; even so late as 1636, James Prinsep when on the eve of his brilliant discoveries, consider-

ed him an "ideal personage;" (a) Professor Horace Wilson in the year of Grace 1849, would seem to cling to the idea, that his is only "the shadow of a name;" Mr. Elphinstone despatches him in a few sentences; and other historians make no mention of him.

And yet the materials exist for a more full and accurate history of *Asóka* than of any Hindu king who ever reigned (b). I trust therefore that whilst spending a few days vacation in a purely Hindu district (c.) where the name of the great Hindu Sovereign is still preserved, and where a beautiful grove on an adjoining hill of Asok Trees (*Jonesia Asóka*) attracts a pious crowd once a year, when according to Sir William Jones, "the vegetable world scarcely exhibits a richer sight than an *Asóca* tree in full bloom," (d). I say, I trust that I may employ my time profitably by presenting in an English dress what the great oriental scholars of Europe, Lassen, Burnouf and Ritter (but principally the former) have worked out for us from the literature of the East, and from the raw materials collected by our countrymen in India.

An authentic chapter of ancient Indian history upwards of 2,000 years old, can scarcely fail to be interesting to the English reader in this country, whether he be the hard worked official, whose important duties in the administration of government leave him but little time

(a.) Jour. of Beng. A. S. Vol. v. p. 523.

(b.) It is gratifying to national pride to think that in the three great achievements of modern scholarship in this century, the decyphering of hieroglyphics, of wedge-formed characters, and of the Lath inscriptions, the names of our countrymen Young, Prinsep and Rawlinson should stand forth so pre-eminent, and although Dr. Young was subsequently eclipsed by the more extended discoveries of Champollion, the glory belonging to the former two, and especially to Prinsep, is shared by none.

(c) Angria's Colaba, though forming the southern headlands of the harbour of Bombay, was almost a *terra incognita* to Europeans, till its escheat to the British Government in 1840, and even now is but little visited.

(d) It would be gratifying to think that the lovely shrub, which is known by this name as well in swampy Bengal as in the wild jungles of the Bombay Concan, is indebted for it to pious Buddhists, who thus strove to embalm the memory of their great Monarch; and the finding it in the neighbourhood of Buddhist Caves, such as Kenari and Carli, cherishes this notion; but I learn from Dr. Wilson, that the *Asóka* tree is mentioned in the *Ramayana*, the bulk of which is set down by the best Sanscrit scholars as anterior to Buddha.

for the comparatively trifling pursuits of philology and antiquities, or whether the inquiring Native student, who may be surprised to find that the most accurate accounts of the good old times of his own country are to be obtained through the literature of Europe.

Haply also, the European statesman, amid all the civilization of the nineteenth century, but with the same, perhaps even exaggerated, social evils pressing upon his attention, which engaged the benevolent *Asóka*, may pick up one or two hints for good government from the enlightened despotism of India twenty-one centuries ago. The genial climate of tropical Asia, its fertile soil, the simple wants of its inhabitants, and the absence of any densely peopled manufacturing districts, may render it more easy for an Indian Sovereign to contribute by slight acts of beneficence to the happiness of his people than it would be for a Government in Europe; yet some of the Hindu institutions, the wayside well and avenue, the groves of mango, and other fruit trees, sometimes extending for miles (*a.*) the Dharmasála or caravanserai for poor travellers, seem capable of a worldwide application, and their universal appearance in all Hindu States is a most gratifying recognition of the claims of the poorer classes of society by the rich and powerful.

The grandfather of *Asóka* was *Chandragupta* who, by a happy divination of Sir W. Jones, once much doubted but fully established by modern scholarship, is clearly identified with the Sandracottus of the Greeks. From native records but still more from the testimony of the Greek historians and ambassadors, we are enabled to obtain a tolerably clear view of this founder of the Maurya Dynasty. *Chandragupta's* birth and origin are uncertain; Buddhist accounts make him out to be of royal descent, and of the family of the *Sakyás* to which Buddha himself belonged, but the fact of his having founded an empire and of his grandson *Asóka* having made a still more powerful impression on the Asiatic mind by his conversion to Buddhism, and by his successful exertions to propagate his new faith, would readily account for the royal genealogy afterwards attributed to the founder of

(*a.*) One such tope of mango trees I saw near Goruckpur, extending for at least three miles.

the race. In a Sanscrit play (*a.*) which has for its hero the Bramin minister of *Chandragupta*, the latter is mentioned as a *Vrishala* or *Súdra*, though he is also called a scion of the previous Nanda dynasty which he had deposed; but Lassen, on a comparison of all the authorities, feels no doubt that he was a man of low cast, though, with our knowledge of royal dynasties in India, this fact does not appear conclusively to decide that his family had not previously been seated on a throne.

On the invasion of India by Alexander, he appears to have served as a young man in the opposing forces, and there seems little reason for doubting that Justin (*b.*) contains a portion of true history, when he describes *Chandragupta* as the leader of the successful insurrection which drove the successors of Alexander out of the Punjab. But he observes that he made use of the victory to convert the liberty so acquired for his fellow countrymen into a despotism for himself. . . . .  
 "titulum libertatis, post victoriam, in servitutem verterat, siquidem occupato regno populum, quem ab externá dominatione vindicaverat ipse servitio premebat."

It is probable that at this period he obtained for himself the kingdoms of Porus and Taxiles in the Punjab, and the intrigues of a Bramin named *Chanakia* are mentioned as having been very serviceable to him in placing him on the *gádi*. He extended his possessions rapidly to the eastward, and soon afterwards succeeded in ejecting from his capital of Pataliputra, (the Palibrothra of the Greeks) (*c.*) the powerful monarch of the Prasü whom the Buddhist writers call *Dhána Nanda*, or the Nanda of wealth; but the historians of Alexander, Xandrames, the similarity of which name to the Sanscrit Xandramas (moon) is pointed out by Lassen.

It would appear that this latter victory was not obtained without

(*a.*) *Mudrá Raxava*. 2. Wilson's Hindu Theatre.

(*b.*) L. xv. 4.

(*c.*) The site of this town seems now to have been clearly made out by Schlegel to be on the Ganges at the confluence of the Soane, and near the more modern Patna; see Ritter's Asien, V. 508; the Chinese traveller Hiun Tshan'g whom Klaproth has translated, describes the city as still flourishing, A. D. 650.

difficulty or the new kingdom enjoyed without opposition, for the Bramin minister of the ejected Nanda dynasty seems to have succeeded in forming a powerful confederacy composed of five independent Indian Rajahs, and the great king of the *Mlechas* or *Parasikas* (Persia) who can be no other than Seleucus, the then reigning Prince of Persia. The wily Bramin *Chánakia*, however, was at hand to defeat this powerful coalition which sought to reinstate the heir of the Nandas on the throne of *Pataliputra*, for by sowing jealousies amongst them he contrived to break up their force, and *Chandragupta* from that time enjoyed the throne undisturbedly and was able to extend his rule far and wide. Lassen thinks that he even met Seleucus himself successfully in the field, and that the fact mentioned by the Greeks of the latter having exchanged the provinces of Gedrosia, Arachosia, and Paropamisus with *Chandragupta* for five hundred elephants, is only to be explained on the assumption of a successful campaign on the part of the latter against the Greeks.

From this period, however, it is clear than the relations between Seleucus and *Chandragupta* became most intimate. They interchanged presents and the celebrated Megasthenes was sent to Palibrotha as the Greek ambassador, the exact date of which important occurrence does not appear, but it was previous to the year 260 B. C. as in that year Seleucus died. If the work of Megasthenes on India had come down to us, it would have been the most important gift to the oriental Scholar, Antiquary, and Statesman, that antiquity could have bequeathed; for it would have displayed an authentic picture of the greatest Hindu Monarchy which had existed up to that time by a European Scholar of the age of Aristotle, and one apparently gifted with every endowment for truthful and philosophic narration. As it is, the industry of learned Germans of our day has collected a mass of accurate information respecting the India of that period, which is nearly all traceable to Megasthenes. (a.)

The extent of the kingdom which *Chandragupta* carved out for himself, can be ascertained much more accurately from Greek than

(a) See Swanbeck; and E. Möller's, *Fragmenta Historicorum Græcorum*.

from Hindu authorities. The latter only inform us that he reigned at *Pátaliputra*, and that he subjected the peninsula of Kattyawar to his rule. From the former we gather that his empire extended to the Indus on the one hand, to the mouths of the Ganges on the other, and to the south was only bounded by the Vindhyan range. Ougein in Malwa was therefore within the limits of his empire, and he placed his grandson *Asóka* in that province as his Lieutenant. He appears to have acquired Gujerath by conquest in the latter period of his reign, but the wild country bordering the Aravulli range, now held by the Rajputs, and never fully conquered till the time of the great Akbar, does not seem to have acknowledged his sway. If then the expression of Plutarch that he conquered the whole of India, be an exaggeration, there can be no doubt that he founded a mighty empire, and all the accounts are unanimous as to the overwhelming force he was able to maintain in arms. (a.) *Chandragupta* reigned for four and twenty years, and died 291 B. C. He was succeeded by his son *Vindusára*, of whom we know but little. *Duimachos* was sent to him as ambassador by *Antiochus Soter*, and the Greeks who do not mention him by his proper name, but under another title *Amitochates* or *Amitraghâta* (Slayer of the enemy), state that he requested *Antiochus* to buy for him some sweet wine, some figs, and a Sophist versed in the Greek philosophy. The Greek Monarch sent him the wine and the figs, but remarked that it was not usual among the Greeks to sell philosophers. Upon which Lassen remarks that as such also was not the custom amongst Hindus, the latter part of the story was probably a flourish for Greek glorification.

During the reign of this Monarch, relations were also entered into with the Greek rulers of Egypt, and Ptolemy Philadelphus sent to him *Dionysius* as his Envoy.

*Vindusára* is said to have had sixteen wives, and a hundred and one sons, of whom *Asóka* and *Tishya* were born of the same mother.

*Asóka* was sent during his father's lifetime to quell a serious insurrection which had broken out at *Taxasila* in the Punjab. On ap-

(a.) Strabo xv. 1, 53. Plin. H. N. vi. 22, 5.

proaching the city the inhabitants came out to meet him, and assured him that they were not enleagued against the Maha-Rajah but against his minister who had been oppressing them, whereupon *Asóka* made a grand peaceable entry into the town. He subsequently conquered the adjoining territory of the *Khásas*, who cannot be the people of that name in the North (Kashgar), but were probably a colony planted by the latter in the neighbourhood of the Indus.

At a later period *Asóka* was sent by *Vindusára* to *Ougein* to take charge of the province now called Malwa; the reason assigned for which move is that he had been discovered plotting against his father's life, who thereupon took steps to remove the dangerous intriguer from his capital. According to another account, *Vindusára* destined the throne for his son *Susíma*, whom a short time before his death he had sent to *Tazasila*, which had again revolted. When *Asóka* heard shortly afterwards of his father being on his deathbed, he posted without delay from *Ougein* to *Pátaliputra*, where he made himself master of the government, and put all his brothers to death with the exception of *Tishya*. It is to be hoped that this general massacre is a calumniating invention of the Bramins, although we find it narrated in the *Mahawanso*, p. 21.

If *Chandragupta* holds a distinguished place in ancient Indian history from his having established the greatest Indian empire which the world had then seen, his grandson *Asóka* shines forth much more prominently from his having been the monarch to propagate Buddhism with such wonderful ardor, and still more from his being the first Prince of whom we possess undoubted historical records in his own language. As his history is derived in great part from the inscriptions left by him, it may be useful to give a short sketch of the character and discovery of these monuments.

These inscriptions are to be found on columns, and on rocks. The latter are to be met with at *Girnar* in Kattyawar, at *Dhauí* in *Orissa*, and at *Kapur-di-giri* near Pesháwar. But as the former were the earliest made known to us, it will be well to describe them first.

The Delhi column, was the first of which notice was given to the world. It is situated near the banks of the Jumna within the old wall

of the city to the N. W., and is called the Láth, or pillar, of Firuz-Shah, because it stands in a palace erected by that Emperor; but whence he obtained it is unknown. The second is at Allahabad, and equally betokens the dominion of the Mussulmans, as it presents an inscription of the Emperor *Jihángír*, who on mounting the throne in 1605, caused it to be again erected. It had been pulled down by the previous fanatical Mahomedan rulers of India, as a monument of superstition, about the middle of the fourteenth century; and at an earlier period it must also have been prostrated for some reason or other not now ascertainable, as we find on it an inscription of the Rajah *Samudragúpta* who reigned in the fourth century after Christ, and who must have again erected the column, as inscriptions are to be found upon it which could not have been carved whilst the column was standing, and which are of a later date than the inscription of *Asóka*. This remarkable pillar maintained its old position in the fort built by Akbar, and *Jihángír* until the year 1799, when the English officer in charge who was making alterations in the fortress allowed it to be pulled down. (a.)

A third column is still standing on the spot where it was originally erected at Bakhra, on the road from Patna to Kajipur; it has no inscription, but is otherwise uninjured. The same part of India contains two other pillars with inscriptions, one at Matthiah in the Rajah of Bettiah's district; and one at Rádhia, near the Nepal frontier to the east of the Gandak. From so many columns being found in one neighbourhood it is easy to believe the accounts which have been handed down that *Asóka* erected very many of them throughout his territories.

They appear to have been all alike both in size and ornament, and are all of the same material, a red sandstone. Their height was a little more than 40 (French ?) feet, their circumference at the base 10, and below the capital 6 feet. The latter was ornamented with a chaplet of lotus flowers, and was surmounted by an abacus on which was a couching lion; including the lion, the capital was

(a.) *J. of As. S. of Beugal.* iii. p. 106; iv. p. 127. vi. p. 766.

6 feet in height. The lion has a clear reference to the name of Buddha, *Sákyasinha*, (The lion of the Sakyas); such pillars therefore were called *Sinhastambha*, Lion-pillars. *Asóka* himself terms them *Silastambha*, virtue-pillars, because he had engraved upon them his laws, and exhortations to good conduct. On this account they are also called *Dharmastambha*.

The inscription which is to be found of identical import on all four columns is divided into four parts, directed to each quarter of the heavens. On the Delhi column another inscription is found running round the pillar beneath the others, and an addition is also found to the inscription on the east face, which is wanting in the others. The Allahabad column has also got a special inscription of four lines.

The oldest of these inscriptions is dated in the twelfth year after the Maha-Rajah's coronation, the remainder in the six and twentieth year.

The second class of inscriptions which are engraved on the rock are to be found on the west, the northwest, and the east side of India. Those on the west are below the hill of Girnar, in the Kattyawar Peninsula, near Junaghur, whose old name *Javánagada* marks it out as a seat of ancient Greek dominion. They are found on a projecting block of granite, three sides of which are covered with inscriptions; the easterly one belongs to *Asóka*, the westerly to the king and great Satrap *Rudradáman*, the northerly to *Skandagúpta*.

The first, which alone concerns us now, is divided by lines into fourteen edicts which are so placed that the first six follow each other to the left, the second to the right, and the thirteenth and fourteenth are beneath the latter. (*a.*) The fourth edict dates from the 12th year after the Rajah's coronation. The third mentions a Regulation of the same year, which was, probably, then also promulgated. The eighth edict refers to an occurrence in the tenth year, but which doubtless had not been published till a later period. In the fifth edict

(*a.*) See 12. *As. Jour.* p. 153. where a lithograph of the inscription and a most valuable critical revision of the text in Roman characters by Professor H. H. Wilson, are to be found.

a general order of the 13th year is to be found. The conclusion contains no date, but from the above premises we may collect that the whole inscription was not engraved until after the 13th year.

The inscriptions of *Asóka* next to be mentioned were discovered near *Bhuvanewara* the old capital of Orissa, on one of three low rocks called *Asvustama* near the village of *Dhauki*. The first ten edicts, and the fourteenth, correspond in meaning entirely with the preceding, but the language is somewhat different, though it is not a translation, but a repetition of the same ideas with slightly varying phraseology. There occur here also two special inscriptions not found elsewhere. These inscriptions contain no date, but the third and fourth belong to the 12th year after the coronation like the corresponding ones in Girnar.

The third edition of this inscription is in the Arian character, and is to be found on a block of stone standing on a rock near the village *Kápur-di-Giri*, which is situated on the small rivulet *Kálapáni*, a day's journey to the N. of the Cabul river. The inscription on the northern side corresponds with the first eleven edicts of Girnar, that on the southern side with the three remaining ones. This inscription also is no translation of either of the two others, but about half of it corresponds in words with the Girnar inscription; the second edict is shorter, the sixth on the contrary much longer; the ninth differs greatly from the two others, the three last edicts are also much more full than those at Girnar.

It appears from *Asóka's* own words that he caused these inscriptions to be engraved in many other places. He not only published inscriptions of different import, but he caused the same inscription to be set up in different forms, at full length, abridged, and in a form between the two others; (a.) they were repeated thus often on account of the beauty of their contents, which it was desirable that the people should become acquainted with.

These inscriptions possess the inestimable value of giving us the

(a.) The Girnar inscription XIV, states. "The god-beloved benevolent minded Maha-Rajah, has caused this Law to be engraved; it is (appears) with abbreviation, in a middle form, and expanded, but the whole never in any one place, confuses."