



## Assimilated Thought of the Moral Guidelines in the Aśokan Edicts with the Anupubbikathā Dhamma

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**Abstract:** Thirty-three collections of the Aśokan edicts have been studied on account of his biographical and ethical standpoints. Moral terminologies in Aśoka's messages contained his attempt to create a sense of ethical improvement and social harmony among his people. During his reign, the moral governance was probably inspired by Buddhist thought. His guidelines can be claimed that are corporate ideas to the signified terms of *bahu kayāne* (defined as consisting of an abundance of good deeds), *pāpam* (sin, which one should be free from them), *dāna* (*dhamma*, piety), *sīla* (virtue), *svagga* (heaven), and *saucham* (inner and outer purity, the P.E.), etc. Additionally, the M.R.E. group particularly represented his intention on *dhamma* development after his association with the *saṅgha* and practicing through *parakrama* (or *prakama*, exertions), this might be connected to the path of renunciation and its fruitful effort, which was certainly expounded by him. More remarkable keywords found in his edicts are various versions of *munisā*, *misā kaṭā misā devehi*, *misibhūtā*, and *miṣaṃdeva kaṭā* (the "mingled" with gods, or gods certainly come to be closer "with the people") as regarding the context of this work, this can rely on the implication of seeking the ultimate truth. These signified terms can be found, are assimilated into the template of Buddhist thought shaped in the *Anupubbikathā dhamma* (*the Gradual Discourse*), one of the progressive discourses of the Buddha basically preaching to general laypeople, followed by the teaching of *cattāri ariya-saccāni* (the Four Noble Truths), which is the Buddhist pathway to attain enlightenment.

**Index Terms-** *Anupubbikathā*, Aśokan Edicts, *dhamma*, *dhamma* policy, Moral Guidelines, M.R.E., P.E.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Emperor King Aśoka of the Mauryan dynasty has been regarded as one of India's greatest emperors. He ruled almost the entire Indian subcontinent during his reign around 268-232 BCE. His honor appeared in the major role of the great ruler and the great religious supporter especially, of Buddhism. Concerning the ethical standpoint of his *dhamma* policy, it was reflected that he was the *dhammarajā*. The collections of his thirty-three inscriptions so far, have been found and studied by various scholars. The records of his moral guidelines and variously remarkable actions such as the administration and policy were inscribed on pillars and rock surfaces by using ancient scripts and languages which mostly was in the Brāhmī script of Prākṛit language in which the pieces of evidence of his biography under epigraphical study have expounded the Buddhist and historical value of ancient India throughout the world.

The early Buddhist religion could have prospected as a real being and establishment with other faiths in the ancient time of India. Under the teachings of the Buddha, Buddhism is recognized as having a prestige position in ancient Indian history since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, then major flourishing in the reign of Aśoka. The Buddhist thought, possibly, could play an important role as the influenced idea for his modification of *dhamma* governance delivered to his people. The degree of moral teaching through his words should be his thoughtfulness on the purpose of universal ethics among different faiths and based suitable for the general householders. Everyone can follow and develop their own quality with pleasurable steps, and thereafter in advance practice for more improvement of moral behaviors.

In this work, an epigraphical study on the Aśokan Edicts from various scholars will be interrelated information with the key moral terminologies mentioned in his inscriptions. These are narrated the interpretation by using literary analysis majored on the *Tipiṭaka*. We can realize the template of fundamental thought on the basis of the *Anupubbikathā dhamma*<sup>1</sup> (*The Gradual Discourse*), one of the progressive sermons preached by the Buddha, in which possibly, Aśoka has shaped the assimilated moral determination of the setup idea in his proposed *dhammalipi*.

<sup>1</sup> DN 3 (D.I.110), DN 5 (D.I.148), MN 56 (M.I.379), MN 91 (M.II.145), AN 8.12 (A.IV.186, 8.1.2.2), AN 8.20, AN 8.21, (A.IV.213, 8.1.3.2), Vin.I.15, etc.; it can be found many places, and plays an important role of the step-by-step discourse in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Sutta Piṭaka*.

## II. INSCRIPTIONS OF AŚOKA

Aśokan Edicts are divided into Major Rock Edicts, Separate Rock Edicts (Kalinga Edicts), Minor Rock Edicts, Major Pillar Edicts, Minor Pillar Edicts, and Cave inscriptions which are based on the content and location of the inscriptions. Thirty-three numbers of these and some more have been discovered in India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Aśoka's languages and scripts evolved in accordance with the region. Prākṛit language and Brāhmī script were used at sites in India and Nepal. In Pakistan, it was in the Prākṛit language and Kharoshthī script, while in Afghanistan, it was in both Greek and Aramaic script and language. This distribution of inscriptions reflects the vast territory of his empire, while his inscribed messages expressed his professional ruler, religious policy, and administration.

In 1838 CE, James Prinsep, the British antiquarian and colonial administrator was the first person to decipher the edict of King Aśoka. These inscriptions are the first concrete evidence of Buddhism. In his inscriptions, Aśoka is referred to as “*Devānāmpriya Priyadarśi Rāja*” the monarch who is the beloved of the gods and loves to see. At Maski, Gujara, Niṭṭur, and Uḍeḡolam, his name as Aśoka appears solely in his M.R.E. II. Only the Panguraria M.R.E. I refers to him as “*Piyadasi Nāma Rāja*”, or “*Priyadarśi*” king.

## III. MORAL TERMINOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE AŚOKAN EDICTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EARLY BUDDHIST DOCTRINES

There are different views on Aśoka's *dhamma* policy. Some scholars might believe that it was his own invention more than the thought of any religious faiths. However, many of the virtuous terms found in the Aśokan inscriptions appear to be used not only in Buddhism but also in sharing with other spheres of the Indian religions. Some of them are used in the same context, but some are particularly, related aspects due to the Buddhist philosophy. Besides, some are distinguished which depend on those traditions.

Historically, the Buddhist tradition had developed its philosophical thought since the time of the Buddha and has been recognized to flourish in its prosperity during the reign of Aśoka. The Buddhist conception, obviously, plays a certain part as it establishes its own character in peace and universal thought of righteousness. This strategy might intellectually influence Aśoka in his career as a *dhamma* ruler and as a Buddhist supporter. Under the Buddhist perspective, this view can be assumed as a mutual correlation between the conceptual teachings of the Buddha and the objective of his edicts on the idea of *dhamma* policy.

### 3.1 MEANING OF DHAMMA

The term “*dhamma*” can be said to be derived from its origin in Vedic literature. According to the tradition and linguistic analysis, *dhamma* (Skt. *dharma*) is a masculine or neuter noun that appeared to be derived from the root *dhr*, which means “to hold,” “to bear,” “to support” or “to sustain.”<sup>2</sup> Rhys Davids points out that etymologically, *dhamma* is identical to Latin “*forma*” and should stand for “good form.”<sup>3</sup> The meaning of *dhamma* is depicted in the Pāli commentaries on the *Dīgha-nikāya*, *Dhammapada*, and the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*.<sup>4</sup> Based on two sets of these definitions, the corresponding interpretations of those definitions can be realized as 1) doctrine, 2) right or righteousness, 3) condition and 4) phenomenon.<sup>5</sup>

In the Aśokan Edicts, Smith<sup>6</sup> states that *dhamma* can be translated into various ways, such as “religion”, “moral law”, “righteousness”, “law of piety”, etc. *Dhamma* in the Greek version of the bilingual (Greek and Aramaic) inscription from Kandahar, is translated as “*eusebeia*”<sup>7</sup> i.e. “piety”, and in the Aramaic version, as “*qsyas*”, i.e. “truth,”<sup>8</sup> or good deeds.” The latter meaning is influenced by Zoroastrianism which draws a contrast ‘between good and evil acts.’<sup>9</sup> Other Aśokan inscriptions ascribed in Brāhmī and Kharoshthī, generally, seem to bear a sense of “goodness”, and “morality”, without conveying the overtones of sectarianism.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE MORAL TERMINOLOGY OF THE AŚOKAN EDICTS

*Dhamma* of the Aśokan Edicts<sup>11</sup> seems not specific to *dhamma* or religious system, but the moral law that does not depend on caste or beliefs and tolerates the essence of all religions (R.E. XII). It has twofold aspects; 1) practical and 2) doctrinal sides. In its practical aspect, a comprehensive code of conduct covering the various relations of life is prescribed. It is described as consisting of:

- (1) *Sūsruṣa*, obedience to
  - (a) Father and mother [R.E. III, IV, XI, XIII and P.E. VII];
  - (b) Elders [R.E. IV.; (*anupaṭipati*) P.E. VII]
  - (c) Teachers (*gurus*) [R.E. XIII, P.E. VII]
  - (d) Men of high caste or pay [*agrabhuṭi* (or *bhuta*) *sūsruṣā* in R.E. XIII].
- (2) *Apachiti*, respect
  - (a) Of pupils (*antevāsī*) towards their gurus [M.R.E. II];

<sup>2</sup> Rin-chen-grub Bu-ston and Eugene Obermiller, *The Jewelry of Scripture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica; No. 42, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1987, p. 18, based on the explication in Vasubandhu's *Īyākhyāyukti*. Cf. T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, *The Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary* (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1921-1925), p. 335.

<sup>3</sup> T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, 1903, p. 292.

<sup>4</sup> The fourfold meaning of *dhamma* given in Da and Dha comprises as below:

- 1) *guṇa* good conduct
- 2) *desanā* preaching
- 3) *pariyatti* scripture and
- 4) *nissatta* the non-animated cosmic law.

<sup>5</sup> C. Jantrasrisalai, *Early Buddhist Dhammakāya: Its Philosophical and Soteriological Significance*. A thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Studies in Religion, The University of Sydney, 2008, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> V. A. Smith, *Aśoka the Buddhist Emperor of India*, 1997, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> A. L. Basham, in S. K. Maity and Upendra Thakur (ed.), *Indological Studies*, Prof. D. C. Sircar Commemoration Volume, p. 2. Bruce Rich, To Uphold the World, p. 180; see in K. K. Thapalyal, *Aśoka the King and the Man*, 2012, p. 187.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Rich, *To Uphold the World*, p. 180. Other Aramaic inscriptions found in Afghanistan, it has been translated as data, i.e. “Law”; see in K. K. Thapalyal, *ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>9</sup> Romila Thapar, in Maity and Thakur (ed.), *Indological Studies*, Prof. D. C. Sircar Commemoration Volume, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> A. L. Basham, in *Indological Studies*, Prof. D. C. Sircar Commemoration Volume, p. 2.; see in K. K. Thapalyal, *ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>11</sup> R. K. Mookerji, *Aśoka*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Revised Edition, 1962, pp. 69-70.



- (b) Towards *gurus* [R.E. IX].
- (3) *Sampatipatti*, proper treatment, towards
- Ascetics, both *Brāhmaṇa* and *Samaṇa* [R.E. IV, P.E. VII];
  - Relations [M.R.E. II, R.E. IV, and XIII];
  - Servants and dependents (*dāsa-bhataka*) [R.E. IX, XI, XIII, P.E. VII];
  - The poor and miserable (*kapana-valāka*) [P.E. VII];
  - Friends, acquaintances, and companions [R.E. XIII].
- (4) *Dānam*, liberality, towards
- Ascetics, *Brāhmaṇa* and *Samaṇa* [R.E. III, VIII, IX, and XI];
  - Friends, comrades, and relatives (*mita-saṃstuta-ñātikā*) [R.E. III and XI];
  - The aged (“*tharāṇaṃ hiraṇṇapaṭivindhāno*,” gift of gold to the aged) [in R.E. VIII].
- (5) *Praṇānaṃ anāraṃbho*, abstention from the slaughter of living beings [R.E. III, IV, XI, and P.E. VII]; *praṇānaṃ saṃyamo*, restraint of violence towards living beings [R.E. IX]; *avihīṣā bhūtānaṃ*, non-violence towards life [R.E. IV, P.E. VII]; *savra bhutana akṣati saṃyamaṃ* [R.E. XIII]; *pāṇesu drahyitavyaṃ* [M.R.E. II].

Furthermore, to some extent, the Code of Duties, or practical *dhamma*, can be more generally described as comprising the following virtues, viz.

- Dayā*, kindness [P.E. II and VII].
- Dānam*, liberality [P.E. II, P.E. VII and R.E. VII].
- Satyam*, truthfulness [M.R.E. II, P.E. II, and VII].
- Saucham*, inner and outer purity [P.E. II and VII].
- Mārdavam*, gentleness [R.E. XIII and P.E. VII].
- Sādhutā*, saintliness [P.E. VII].
- Apa-vyayatā* and *apa-bhāṇḍatā*, moderation in spending and saving [R.E. III].
- Saṃyama*, self-control [R.E. VII].
- Bhāva-śuddhi*, purity of heart [R.E. VII].
- Kṛitajñatā*, gratitude [R.E. VII].
- Dṛiḍhabhaktitā*, firm devotion [R.E. VII and R.E. XIII].
- Dhamma-rati*, attachment to morality [R.E. XIII].

According to Barua<sup>12</sup> the moral terms found in the Aśokan Edicts have been analyzed for their meanings in the related contexts of various sources among different faiths. In his work, the early doctrines of Buddhism appear to possess a great degree of their major role in Aśoka's *dhamma* policies. Barua has studied the terms and categorized some of them as follows:

- The *bahukayāne* or “much good” are *dayā*, *dāne*, *sache*, *sochave*, *mādvave* and *sādhave* (P.E. II, P.E. VII).
- The four concepts of *sayame* (self-control), *bhāvasudhiṭā* (purity of motive), *kataññatā* (gratitude), and *dadhabhatitā* (firm devotion) are connected with *dāna* (R.E. VII). These are reduced in the same edict to two, viz., *sayame* and *bhāvasudhi*.
- The concepts of *savrabhutana(m) akshati*, *saṃyama*, and *samachariya* are grouped together with *mādvava* in the R.E. XIII.
- The two terms *anāraṃbha* and *avihīṣā*, are mutually complementary.
- The principle of action is presented by such terms as *uṣṭāna* (readiness to action), *parākrama* (power of action), *pakama* (strenuous exertion), *uyāma* (effort), and *usāha* (zeal, ardor).
- The opposite states of mind and body are represented by *anāvuti* (non-application), *ālasīya* (indolence), and *kilamatha* (weariness for exertion).

All activities are on the basis of *dhamma* (piety) and *sīla* (virtue) which are corresponded with the *dhamma* practice (*dhammacharana*, R.E. IV) and that of properly behaviors (*samachariyā*, R.E. XIII), and it is to be directed towards feeling concern for oneself, for one's own people, and doing good to the whole world.

#### IV. ASSIMILATED THOUGHT OF THE AŚOKAN MORAL GUIDELINES WITH THE ANUPUBBIKATHĀ DHAMMA

It can be clearly seen that the messages in the ethical orders of Aśoka possess the response to both individual and social behaviors. Particularly, the classified terms of the varying righteous views concerned with the act of good deeds, far from sin, piety, virtue, heaven, self-control, and also the purity of mind are prescribed in a number of his edicts. In the area of this work, we can find mutual ideas of his *dhamma* message in one of the Buddha's progressive discourses, namely, *Anupubbikathā-dhamma* (*The Gradual Discourse*). On the basis of this sermon, it was usually delivered to new Buddhist followers for their pleasurable steps of *dhamma* practice. The *kathā* consists of *dāna* (generosity), *sīla* (virtue), *sagga* (heaven), *kāmānaṃ ādinava* (the danger of sensual pleasure), and *nekkhamma* (renunciation), then followed by the last preaching of *cattāri ariya-saccāni* (the Four Noble Truths), the Buddhist pathway to attain enlightenment.

##### 4.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AŚOKAN MORAL GUIDELINES

In this regard, King Aśoka's efforts in the R.E.X (*parākrama* or *utthāna*), seeks realizing through *atthasanīraṇa*, “prompt dispatch of national affairs”, and is directed to the act of good deed to the whole world (*sarvalokahita*). In the Major Rock Edicts (R.E.), Aśoka also expresses his belief in karma and rebirth, affirming that good deeds with being rewarded in this life and the next, in heaven (*svagga*). In other words, moral conduct makes all beings in happiness and enables all men to attain heaven especially, for the benefit of other worlds (*savaṃ pāratrikāya*).<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the following requirements to achieve happiness in this world and in the next life are mentioned in the P.E. I. which are:

- Dhammā-kāmatā*, the love of *dhamma*;
- Parīkṣā*, self-examination;

<sup>12</sup> B. M. Barua, *Aśoka and his inscription*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 1968, pp 277-278.

<sup>13</sup> B.M. Barua, *ibid.*, p. 251.

- (3) *Śuśrūṣā*, obedience;
- (4) *Bhaya*, fear (of sin);
- (5) *Utsāha*, enthusiasm (for *dhamma*).

The practical aspect of *dhamma* is also emphasized, which is clearly defined as consisting of an abundance of good deeds (*bahu kayāne*).<sup>14</sup> Due to this work, the M.R.E. group has been considered the relationship between King Aśoka and Buddhism. Initially, he was the first status a lay follower, later on, he had developed a closer relationship with the *saṅgha*. As a result, he became more enthusiastic about belief (*pakama*, *parakrama*, exertion). The consequence of this passion is that righteousness has significantly spread to the land. He encourages diligence on his subject as this leads to progress and intentionally emphasizes principles on the importance of individual efforts in moral conduct.

Half of his edicts introduce the idea of moral law and suggest practical ways in which it could be put into action (e.g., *mātari pitari susrūṣā*, and *Āchariye apachāyitaviye sususeta viye*).<sup>15</sup> Whether in a high position or not, diligence in the practice of *dhamma* can lead to the achievement of heaven. (*no hīyaṃ sakyē mahātpeneva pāpotave kāmaṃ tu kho khudakena pi pakami ...neṇa vipule svage sakyē ārādheteve*)<sup>16</sup> and this also refers to ancient customs and traditions.

Thus, the intention of Aśokan moral guidelines is enabled to occupy two comparable aspects, which are;

(1) The practical steps for three pleasurable levels: worldly of the present life, heavenly of the next life, and so far-reaching the highest goal, and

(2) Regarding this work, given the idea to shape the Aśokan *dhamma* by categorizing moral terms in an assimilated manner to the *Anupubbikathā*. Bearing this, the notable terms of Aśoka are *bahu kayāne* (defined as consisting of an abundance of good deeds), *pāpam* (sin, one should be free from them), *dāna* (*dhamma*, piety), *sīla* (virtue), and *svagga* (heaven), etc., in relation to *sayame* (self-control) and the practice for purification such as *saucham* (inner and outer purity), *bhāvasudhitā* (purity of motive).

These will be more discussed in the next part.

## 4.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANUPUBBIKATHĀ DHAMMA

Generally, when the Lord Buddha preached a sermon to the laypeople, there might be a wide variety of realizing among different persons. However, one would be able to develop and improve one own quality to attain the fruit of *dhamma*. Regarding the *Tipiṭaka*, the *Anupubbikathā* ("Gradual Discourse" or "Step-by-Step" Instruction") is found in many positions delivered by the Blessed One as the first step of new adherents, and to guide them to initially prepare the mind before gaining higher development to the path of the Four Noble Truths for the stage of enlightenment. This *Kathā* contains five steps including the pathway of the Four Noble Truths in order to clean the dispositions of human beings to be thoroughly in-depth as a simile of this which often found together of "the mind is prepared and ready to receive *dhamma* as a washed cloth which should be able to contain various dyes."

One of this examined *kathā* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (MN56; M.I.379; *Upāli Sutta*) is as the record saying:

*Atha kho bhagavā ... gahapatissa ānupubbīkatham kathesi. Seyyathidāṃ: dānakatham, sīlakatham, saggakatham, kāmānaṃ ādīnavam, okāram saṅkilesam, nekkhamme ānisamsam pakāsesi. Yadā Bhagavā aññāsi ... gahapatim kallacittam muducittam vinīvaranacittam udaggacittam pasannacittam atha yā buddhānaṃ sāmukkamsikā dhammadesanā, tam pakāsesi: dukkham samudayam nirodham maggam.*

(*Majjhima Nikāya*, vol. I: 379-380, PTS)

"Then the Blessed One gave the householder the progressive instruction, that is, talk on giving, talk on virtue, talk on the heavens; he explained the danger, degradation, and defilement in sensual pleasures and the blessing of renunciation. When he knew that the householder's mind was ready, receptive, free from hindrances, elated, and confident, he expounded to him the teaching special to the Buddhas: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path."<sup>17</sup>

According to the platform of stock passage of the *Anupubbikathā* in e.g. D3, D14, and MN56, as being mentioned above, the scope of this gradual instruction can be given into six categories,<sup>18</sup> which are initially, for the benefits of generosity (*dānakathā*), secondly, the benefits of morality or righteousness (*sīlakathā*) before holding out for the laity the prospect of rebirth in the heavens (*saggakathā*), next, the disadvantages of sensual pleasures (*kāmānaṃ ādīnava kathā*), then the benefits of renouncing sensual pleasures (*nekkhammakathā*) and lastly, followed by the complete training of the Four Noble Truths (*cattāri ariya-saccāni*) to pursue the ultimate goal of *Nibbānā*.

Thus, it can be said that the categories of *dhamma* in this gradual sermon are respectively set up, and in general, it is appropriately delivered on the basis of the progressive level of suitable laypeople, then finally the advanced step of practice to reach the highest goal of the ultimate truth.

## 4.3 THE ASSIMILATION OF THE AŚOKAN MORAL GUIDELINES AND THE ANUPUBBIKATHĀ

To a certain degree, it can be identified the development of Aśoka's guidelines that it was significantly influenced by Buddhist thought. Especially, the corresponding conceptions of his ethical orders are found assimilated to the philosophical essences of the *Anupubbikathā*. Presumably, the criterion is on the basis of how and what of the progressive *dhamma* matters should be properly delivered to pleasurable receptive laypeople. Basically, the group of moral terms e.g. *bahu kayāne* (defined as consisting of an

<sup>14</sup> R. K. Mookerji, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>15</sup> M.R.E. II Brahmagiri version; E. Hultzsch, "Inscriptions of Aśoka" *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, with 55 plates of Edicts, Vol.1, 1925, p. 176.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>17</sup> *Upāli Sutta* ("To Upāli," MN 56), verse 18, trans. by Ñānamoli & Bodhi (2001), p. 485. The final fourfold "special teaching" is a reference to the Four Noble Truths.

<sup>18</sup> This also can be pointed out as the ever higher values of four subjects (*dāna* — *kathā*, *sīla*, *sagga*, *magga*) i. e. charity, righteousness, the heavens, and the Path. Buddhaghosa explains the term as *anupubbikathā nāma dānānantaram sīlam sīlānantaro saggo saggānantaro maggo ti etesaṃ dīpana — kathā*: Taken from T.W. Rhys Davids, and W. Stede, *Pali-English Dictionary*, PTS, 1921-1925. p.47.

abundance of good deeds), *pāpam* (sin, one should be free from them), *dāna* (*dhamma*, piety), *sīla* (virtue), *svagga* (heaven), *sayame* (self-control) and *saucham* (inner and outer purity), etc., are notably mentioned in a number of his edicts. Evidently, half of the Aśokan edicts introduce the idea of *dhamma* and suggest moral behaviors which are proclaimed that anyone who attains the *dhamma* practice can result in the achievement to reach heaven including the higher benefit for the next lives.

By comparison, the idea of Aśokan moral terms as mentioned above can be based on the mutual concept with the constitutions of the *Anupubbikathā*. However, the last two orders on the aspects of renunciation and the pathway to get through the supreme goal are not yet clarified with his edicts. According to the Buddhist teaching, these two aspects signify the attribution of the intensive degree of effort. The moral and spiritual practices of these are much greater than the step for a general living as householders. In accordance with the M.R.E. group, King Aśoka was at first that of a Buddhist lay worshipper, then, later on, he became highly respected by the Three Jewels. His vision of moral development can be seen from the implication of the messages among the M.R.E I, II, and III which expressed his thoughtfulness for the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. His progress in *dhamma* practices was also in the higher steps by his *parakrama* (*prakama*, exertions), after one and a half years of his association with the *saṅgha*. Additionally, his messages in the Bhabru Edict, M.R.E. III represented the *Seven Dhammas*<sup>19</sup> laid down its purpose of moral law for the ascetic life. Thus, from this evidence, whether he became a *bhikkhu* status or not, it can be clarified that the path of renunciation and its fruit of practice on moral exertion is certainly expounded by him.

The last parallel will focus on Aśokan moral terms in relation to the pathway of the ultimate truth. It can be noticed in the implication of the “mingled” with gods, or gods come to be “with the people (*munisā, misā kaṭā* in the M.R.E. I, Rūpnath; *misā devehi* in the M.R.E. II, Brahmagiri; *misibhūtā* in the Maski version; *misamdeva kaṭā* in the Sahasram version)<sup>20</sup> and together with the practice of mind purification such as in relation to *sayame* (self-control) and *bhāvasudhitā* (purity of motive) as seeking the *Nibbāna* by following the Four Noble Truths, which is the Buddhist pathway to attain enlightenment. In other words, it can be said “to certainly come closer” the highest goal of the *Nibbāna* by pursuing the pathway of the *dhamma* practice of the Four Noble Truths presumably, can be the implication used for the “mingled with gods” in respect to this manner.

## V. CONCLUSION

From the study, the historical pieces of evidence of King Aśoka as recorded in his inscriptions bearing textual sources such as the Pāli canon, Ceylon chronicles, etc., lead to more understanding of his biography connected with the past events of both histories of ancient India and Buddhism. Additionally, the purposes of what was said by him from his edicts would be clarified.

*Dhamma* policy from his edicts, which can be identified as universal law, righteousness, or can be said codes of a social and religious order, were significantly inspired by the Buddhist teaching for the householder. Out of his concern for the welfare of the state and people, his ethical guidelines found e.g., non-violence, compassion, charity, reciprocated respect, understanding of others, purity of mind, etc., also can be said on the basis of a neutral manner of moral conduct which is important for the fundamentality and harmony of social living among various sects and beliefs.

As mentioned above, the research does not deny the view that his *dhamma* policy also belongs to the universal religions. By analyzing the purpose of his messages, this work emphasizes the study of classified moral terms in relation to the early Buddhist doctrinal perspectives. It can be justified assimilation between the conceptions of *dhamma* messages in the Aśokan edicts with one of the gradual discourses of the Buddha, the *Anupubbikathā*.

On account of this sermon, the Buddha gave five (six) instructions of *dāna, sīla, sagga, kāmānaṃ ādīnava, nekkhammakathā*, and lastly, by following the complete training of *cattāri ariya-saccāni* to pursue the ultimate goal of *Nibbāna*. The target of preaching is basically for developing the quality of laypeople. It can be said, the *dhamma* is preached step-by-step, as the path of progress suitably for new believers who have different backgrounds. Initially, the mind will be prepared in order which requires an effort on the basic quality of each training of both acts of deed and mind. The first step for the beginner is needed guiding in the first preparation followed by the elementary, intermediate, step by step respectively. Then, the final practice is the advanced teaching of the Four Noble Truths for the highest level of enlightenment. In the same manner, probably, we can identify the modification of the pattern on the basic concept of this discourse which could sufficiently be elucidated into the principle of the moral conducts of the Aśoka's *dhamma* for his people as well.

## ABBREVIATIONS

M.R.E.	Minor Rock Edict
P.E.	Pillar Edict
PTS	Pāli Text Society
R.E.	Major Rock Edict
S.E. / S.R.E	Separate Rock Edict
Skrt	Sanskrit

## ABBREVIATIONS OF TEXTS

A, AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
Ap	Apadāna
D, DN	Dīgha Nikāya

<sup>19</sup> (1) *Vinayasamukase*, the excellent treatise on Moral Discipline;  
 (2) *Aliya-vasāni*, the course of conduct followed by the sages-modes of ideal life;  
 (3) *Anāgata-bhayāni*, fears of what may come about in future-dangers threatening the Saṅgha and the doctrine;  
 (4) *Muni-gāthā*, poem on “Who is a hermit?”  
 (5) *Moneya sūte*, discourse on Quietism;  
 (6) *Upatisa-pasine*, the questions of Upatisa;  
 (7) *Lāhulovāde musāvādam adhigichya*, the Sermon of Rāhula beginning with the Sermon on falsehood, as delivered by the Lord Buddha.

<sup>20</sup> R. K. Mookerji, op. cit., p. 111.



Da	Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā
Dh	Dhammapada
Dha	Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā
Div.	Dīpavaṃsa
J	Jātaka
Ja	Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā
Khp	Khudhaka Pātha
Mhv.	Mahāvamsa
M, MN	Majjhima Nikāya
MNa	Majjhima Nikāya -aṭṭhakathā
Sn	Suttanipāta.
SN	Saṃyutty Nikāya
SNa	Saṃyutta Nikāya -aṭṭhakathā
Vin	Vinaya-piṭaka
Vina	Vinaya-piṭaka-aṭṭhakatha

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