

Some Pages From The Glorious History Of India

Emperor Ashok's Religious Tolerance

Emperor Ashok, the third monarch of the Indian Mauryan dynasty, is regarded as one of the most admirable rulers in world history. The British historian H.G. Wells has written: "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history ... the name of Ashok shines, and shines almost alone, a star."

Ashok, who was also known as Priyadarshi, had a number of edicts carved in rocks displayed throughout his empire. His Rock Edict XII contains the following statements regarding his respect for all different religions:

King Priyadarshi honors both ascetics and householders of all religions ... But King Priyadarshi does not value gifts and honors as much as he values this -- that there should be growth in the essentials of all religions. Growth in essentials can be done in different ways, but all of them have as their root restraint in speech, that is, not praising one's own religion, or condemning the religion of others without good cause. And if there is cause for criticism, it should be done in a mild way. But it is better to honor other religions for this reason. By so doing, one's own religion benefits, and so do other religions, while doing otherwise harms one's own religion and the religions of others. Whoever praises his own religion, due to excessive devotion, and condemns others with the thought "Let me glorify my own religion," only harms his own religion. Therefore contact [between religions] is good. ... All should be well learned in the good doctrines of other religions.

Chhatrapati Shivaji's Character

Chhatrapati Shivaji was a famous Hindu warrior of his times with an impeccable moral character. The court historian of Emperor Aurangzeb, Kafi Khan, in his 'History of India', has written that whenever Shivaji went on any campaign, he instructed his soldiers to make sure that no harm was done to any mosque, to the Book of God, or to any women. Whenever, a copy of the Holy Quran came into his hands, he treated it with respect, and gave it to some of his Muslim followers. When his men took as prisoners Hindu or Muslim women who had no friends to protect them, he watched over them until their relatives were able to secure their freedom.

Lal Bahadur Shastri: An Exemplary Leader And A Gentleman

Lal Bahadur Shastri, the third Prime Minister of independent India, was a remarkable personality with inimitable character. He was a man of principles and

never indulged in any unscrupulous action throughout his life. He did not exploit his position to further his status or the status of his family and friends.

Lal Bahadur Shastri's father was a poor schoolteacher, who later became a clerk in the Revenue Office at Allahabad. Lal Bahadur struggled through his formative years. He went to a high school in Varanasi. While in high school, he once crossed the river Ganges by boat to go to a fair on the other bank. On his way back when he found that he had no money for the boat fare, he swam back rather than seeking others' help. During his marriage ceremony, in spite of the lavish dowry system, Shastri accepted only a charkha (spinning wheel) and a few yards of khadi (hand-woven cloth) as a dowry. Mahatma Gandhi had instituted Charkha and khadi as symbols of dependence on self for the advancement of individuals and society.

Lal Bahadur Shastri was a significant figure in the Indian independence movement. He was kept in jail for many years by the British. After India attained independence, Shastri worked in the government in various positions. In 1961, he was appointed to the prestigious position of Home Minister in the Federal Government.

Lal Bahadur Shastri believed in simple living and high thinking. Once during his tenure as the Home Minister, he had to travel on government business. When his train reached the station, Lal Bahadur Shastri picked up his baggage and alighted from the train. A large group of dignitaries was at the train station to greet him and were looking for him in the first class compartments. They did not find him and so they were rather disappointed. When they passed by Lal Bahadur Shastri, he asked one individual who they were looking for. All were surprised to see that the Home Minister of India was traveling in second class without any fanfare and carrying his own baggage.

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Evolution Of Indian Culture

“... it was India's historic destiny that many human races and cultures should flow to her, finding a home in her hospitable soil, and that many a caravan should find rest here... Eleven hundred years of common history [of Islam and Hinduism] have enriched India with our common achievements. Our languages, our poetry, our literature, our culture, our art, our dress, our manners and customs, the innumerable happenings of our daily life, everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavor... These thousand years of our joint life has molded us into a common nationality.”

- Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
- at the Convention of National Congress, 1940