


THIRD CONCEPT

 **UN & Afghanistan**

 **Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War**

 **Contemporary Tunisia**

 **Value Education**

THIRD CONCEPT

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Third Concept aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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Designed by: Pt. Tejpal

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Contemporary Relevance of Religious Policies of Ashoka and Akbar

Dr. Hemanta Saikia*

[There is a truth in every religion which teaches mankind how to live peacefully, and how to uplift the moral and ethical character of human beings. Ashoka and Akbar are two benevolent monarchs who had taken remarkable steps to unite the Indian people under one umbrella through their religious policies. Both Ashoka and Akbar laid the most stress on toleration. They believed that tolerance is the best way for solving all differences among people by expressing opinions openly regarding various matters. They tried to bring unity and integrity and show the path of a simple way of living.]

Religion unifies mankind, makes men sympathetic and tolerant, inspires morality, spreads love and brotherhood, and encourages national unity and integration. But on the contrary, religion becomes the cause of communal disharmony and conflicts among the people of India, especially between the Hindus and Muslims at present. This communal fighting is the greatest tragedy of our secularism and these also come to our deep consideration, whether religion is really a unifying force or a divine one. If we observe consciously all the religions in India then we find that there is a truth in every religion and all religions teach us how to live peacefully, and how to uplift our moral and ethical character.

In the long historical background of the evolution of human civilization, as we find, some great philosophers and prophets systematized the conception, faith, and all-round way of life of human beings in some particular nations or societies. For example, Jesus Christ in Europe, Muhammad in Arabia, and Buddha and Mahavira in India taught the faith and customs of life of the people in related areas. They taught the people or their followers how to upgrade as a whole the way of life. As history suggests in India for a greater and more magnificent human civilization some benevolent monarchs had also taken remarkable roles mainly in the religious spheres. Among them, Ashoka and Akbar were prominent and played a historical role in this regard.

Ashoka ascended the throne of the Mauryan Empire in 273 B.C. after the death of his father Bindusara. After eight years of his accession to the throne, he conquered Kalinga (Modern Orissa), because Kalinga was "a thorn

in the body politic of his dominion". But this war greatly affected his heart with the bloodshed and slaughter of the people which changed his mind and he gave up the war of conquest and tried to find solace in peace and non-violence.

After the Kalinga war, Ashoka was attracted to Buddhism and visited Sangha and Buddhist holy places and wherever he went he arranged discussions on religious subjects. According to Sri Lankan Chronicles, Ashoka was first converted to Buddhism by Nigrodha, a boy monk who was just seven years old and he afterward came into contact with Moggaliputta Tissa, head of the Buddhist Sangha.

Maggaliputta Tissa created such a deep impression on his mind that he sent his son and daughter to Sri Lanka to spread Buddhism there. Bhabru Edict opens with an expression of his faith in Buddha 'Dhamma' and Sangha. That is why some historians have greatly interpreted Ashoka's 'Dhamma' almost as a synonym for Buddhism and he wanted to make Buddhism the state religion.

But the 'Dhamma' of Ashoka is not so. His 'Dhamma' is the Prakrit form of the Sanskrit word 'Dharma' - meaning the 'universal law or righteousness, or by extension of the social and religious order'. Ashoka used his 'Dhamma' in a wide sense. The emperor got engraved his idea of 'Dhamma' on rocks, pillars, and caves throughout his dominion. The emperor was an anxious desire to uplift the morality of his subjects. In the Rock Edicts XIII, he described 'Dhamma' as the right attitude towards all, manifesting itself in non-injury restraint, equal treatment, and gentleness towards all creatures, human beings as well as beasts and birds. These were Ashoka's new innovations towards mankind.

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