

# THE SACRED BOOKS AND EARLY LITERATURE OF THE EAST

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## VOLUME X INDIA AND BUDDHISM

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## A MESSAGE TO FOREIGN NATIONS

(FROM THE THIRTEENTH EDICT OF GIRNAR)

1.

Far, far extend Kalinga's plains,  
And Bengal's fertile coast;  
Asoka, of the gods beloved,  
There sent his conquering host.  
They slaved a hundred thousand men,  
A hundred thousand died —  
"And is this what a conquest means?"  
The pious monarch cried!

2.

"Brahmins pure and Sramans good,  
And men who toil in life;  
Parents to their children dear,  
Fond husband, weeping wife —  
These I've killed, enslaved, and sold,  
And bade the helpless die!"  
A throb was on the monarch's brow,  
A tear was in his eye!

3.

Repentance wrung his royal breast,  
And he was meek and lowly;  
And virtuous wishes filled his soul,  
And aspirations holy.  
He thought of Sakya, noble Teacher,  
Buddha, high of birth,  
Who left his throne and toiled for men,  
And spread good-will on earth!

## 4.

"Ho! other conquests I will spread,  
 And other trophies win" —  
 The pious monarch thus he cried —  
 "I'll conquer crime and sin!  
 Unto the frontiers of my realm,  
 And far beyond, proclaim,  
 Asoka fights in faith alone,  
 And wins the righteous fame!

## 5.

"To Antiochus, Syria's lord,  
 To Egypt's Ptolemy,  
 To Antigonus, mighty King  
 Of Macedon the free,  
 To Magas of Cyrene fair,  
 To Alexander, King  
 Of mountain-covered Epiros<sup>5</sup> —  
 The joyful tidings bring!

## 6.

"To far Kaveri's fertile banks,  
 Where mighty Cholas live,  
 To Kumarika's distant point,  
 Where Pandya clans still thrive,  
 To Tamraparni's verdant isle,  
 For pearls well known to fame,  
 To Henaraja Vismavasi<sup>6</sup>  
 The joyful news proclaim!

<sup>5</sup> These kings of Syria, Egypt, Macedon, Cyrene, and Epiros were contemporaries of Asoka; and Asoka sent missionaries to proclaim Buddhism in their countries. The Essenes of Syria and the Therapeuts of Egypt were the results of these missions.

<sup>6</sup> The Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas were the greatest powers in India south of the Krishna river in the olden times. Kumarika is Cape Comorin, and Tamraparni is Ceylon. Henaraja Vismavasi was in Southern India.

## 7.

"To our friends the Bactrian Greeks,  
And to the bold Kambojas,  
To Nabhakas and Nabhapantis,  
And to the sturdy Bhojas,  
To Petenikas in the south,  
To Andhras in Deccan,  
To far Pulindas tell the news —<sup>7</sup>  
Tell it to every man!"

## 8.

Far and wide the news they told,  
And Buddha's faith proclaimed;  
Strange nations. Buddha's precepts learned,  
His holy name they named.  
Asoka felt a joy intense,  
His life's great work was done,  
For he had won the righteous fame,  
And fought in faith alone!

— ROMESH DUTT.

<sup>7</sup>This and the previous stanza throw light on the geography of India in the third century B.C. The Bactrian Greeks and the Kambojas of Kabul lived on the western frontier. The Nabhakas and Nabhapantis lived in Central India, and the Bhojas in Malwa. The Petenikas had their capital, Pratisthana, on the Godavari river. The Andhras were the mightiest race in the Deccan, and the Pulindas also lived in Southern India.