

DHARAMRĀJA AŚOKA

• *Nirmal C.Sinha*

A propos my article "Making of Dharmaja" in Bulletin of Tibetology 1992, No.1, a question is raised whether Asoka deviated from Buddha's ideal of Great Elect (Maha Sammata) when the former asserted thus: "All men are my children". Reference is made to some scholars who consider Asoka's assertions an assertion of paternal despotism. I am aware of such finding about Asoka but do not accept the same. I make my submission below.

"All men are my children" is an expression special to Kalinga Edicts (Dhauli Separate Edicts 1 & 2 and Jaugada Separate Edicts 1 & 2). As is well known Asoka had inscribed these Separate Edicts for Kalinga to soothe the wounds of war and conquest in the minds of Kalinga people. Asoka expressed his kinship with people of all regions and all religions in the Fourteen Rock Edicts all over. Asoka chose the ancient and traditionally current idiom of filial affection for the Kalinga people suffering from the wounds of war and conquest.

Asoka in Kalinga Edicts spoke thus: "All men are my children. As on behalf of my own children I desire that they may be provided by me with complete welfare and happiness in this world and the other world, even so is my desire on behalf of all men" (Eng. Trans. Hultzsch). In Kalinga Edicts, as in Rock Edicts, Asoka made clear that in all his services for material and moral wellbeing of his people he was discharging the debt he owed to the people. That was indeed the king's duty in return for the tax received from the people. The Aganna Suttanta prescribed for the king the duty of protection and security for the community. Asoka added the provision of material and moral wellbeing and called this a filial duty as in Kalinga Edicts. I do not read any paternal despotism in any Asoka inscription.