Project Paper: Comparative Essay

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This small planet of the Solar System called Earth has observed the rise and fall of countless great empires and emperors, two of them are *Ashoka the Great* (304 BC – 232 BC) from the East and *Constantine the Great* (272/285 CE – 337 CE) from the West. They belong to the two poles of the ancient world and they have left a legacy that is still acknowledged. I have chosen their names for the same cause. They both have many similarities and dissimilarities that have been discussed below. Ashoka is a Pre-Common-Era emperor who ruled almost the whole Indian subcontinent, and Constantine-I is an early Post-Common-Era emperor who ruled almost the whole Europe. They both showed compassion to the new emerged religions in their respective lands and later adopted those religions. Ashoka's symbol the Four Lions is the national symbol of the modern republic of India, and Constantine's adopted religion is still dominating the whole West rather it is the largest religion of the world.

***Ashoka*** the Great ruled from 268 BC to 232 BC. His father was King Bindusara of the Mauryan dynasty and mother Devi Dharma (the daughter of a *priest*). He had five wives and five children. Ashoka was the least favored son of his father, but he was a great man of letters and an admirable warrior. He spent more of his life fighting hard battles and earned much respect. King Bindusara died of illness and Sushima (the Crown Prince) ascended the throne but unsuccessful because of his cruel nature. Ashoka won the support of Mauryan ministers and crowned himself killing all his rival siblings (Wasson, D., & Wasson, 2019). Ashoka expanded his empire from Afghanistan in the north to Bengal in the South of the Indian subcontinent. Buddhist scriptures mention him as a cruel monarch before embracing Buddhism. Once, he headed to Kalinga with a large army and plundered the city, but this act of him disappointed him by his self. He regretted his action and promised to repeat such an act never again. He embraced Buddhism to purify his soul and became Dharamshoka (the pious Ashoka), from Chand Ashoka (the cruel Ashoka).

Buddhism became the state religion, but no religion faced discrimination because of this change. Ashoka, being a Buddhist king, purified his actions and reformed the empire. He turned his focus from unnecessary conquests to the well-being of his people. He divided his administration into provincial, divisional, and sub-divisional bodies. The crown prince had partial authority over provinces although the sole authority was Ashoka himself. He reorganized the markets and introduced a system of check-and-balance. His governors were transferred frequently to avoid them to have absolute authority over any state. His espionage played a critical role in strengthening his authority over his subjects. He raised many admirable buildings. He built thousands of Stupas and Viharas for the cause of Buddhism. One of his stupas, the Great Sanchi Stupa, was declared as a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO. His Ashoka Pillars survived centuries after his death (still present in Sarnath India) although his empire could not survive even half a century after him. Four Lions on the top of those pillars is the national emblem of the modern republic of India.

***Constantine-I*** (reign: 306 CE – 337 CE) also called Constantine the Great was a Roman emperor who unified the whole of Europe under his rule. He was the son of Constantinus-I from his Greek wife Helena. Constantinus was a pagan but Helena was a Christian. Constantine was raised in the court of Diocletian (284 CE – 305 CE). He became a self-proclaimed *Augustus* after the death of his father *(Life History Of Ashoka The Great,* 2019). He campaigned against every monarch throughout Europe using both diplomacy and sword. He established himself as the absolute Emperor of the whole Roman Empire by 324 CE. This chivalrous monarch was lenient to Christianity and he helped it a lot to prevail. He issued Edict of Milan (312 CE) which legalized Christianity and gave freedom of worship to everyone. He arranged the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) which produced Nicene Creed, and Jesus Christ was acknowledged as a divine creature *(19 Interesting Facts About Constantine the Great*, 2019). Constantine built the Jesus Tomb in Jerusalem which became the holiest for the Christians. His legacy is the great city of Constantinople (Istanbul), and an organized military system. He did not renounce his old pagan religion wholly, but he embraced Christianity when he was on the verge of grave.

Constantine and Ashoka have many *similarities* that they both were from the less favored wives of their fathers. They both renounced their old religions and adopted new religions. They both expanded their empires to the whole territory of their respective regions. They both had to shed blood to become successful emperors, but they both brought prosperity to their land once they stabled. Ashoka sent Buddhist missionaries outside India to preach Buddhism, and Constantine helped Christianity in this way. They both gave the status of state-religion to the suppressed religions in their lands. They both were interested in raised admirable buildings as mentioned above. Those unprecedented buildings are their legacy. They both have a strong grip on administration which enabled them to rule with full authority.

Apart from that, they both have many *dissimilarities* as well. Constantine is accused of adopting a religion for the political purposes, but Ashoka did so to purify his soul because he had not to face circumstances like Constantine. Ashoka embraced Buddhism during his youth, and he practiced it throughout his life, but Constantine was baptized in old age when he was near to death *(19 Interesting Facts About Constantine the Great*, 2019). Ashoka gave more attention to administration during most of his life, but Constantine was mostly engaged in expeditions. Constantine’s established empire longed for centuries, but Ashoka’s empire vanished soon after his death.

Ashoka the Great and Constantine the Great albeit belonged to two different isolated parts of the world, but they shared much in their ways of life. Their legacy has not let them die from human history.

**Reference**

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