

THE PALAS

(PART-2)

B.A, PART-2, PAPER-3

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DHARMAPALA (770-810)

- ◉ *Dharmapala*, the son of Gopala was the real founder of the dynasty. In the course of long reign, he raised Bengal to the position of the premier state in northern India, and did much to restore the greatness of the old imperial city of Pataliputra.
- ◉ Waged successful wars against his neighbors and *extended the kingdom far beyond Kanauj up to Gandhara in the western Punjab.*
- ◉ He held a durbar at Kanauj, installing *Chakrayudha* on the throne. This durbar was attended by many vassal chiefs.

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- ◉ The *nucleus of Dharmapala's empire was Bengal and Bihar*, which came under his direct control. Further to the west and south, the ruler of Punjab, western hill states, Rajaputana, Malwa and Berar acknowledged his sovereignty. According to the tradition preserved in the *Svayambu purana*, *Nepal was also a vassal state*. Dharmapala was a great patron of Buddhism.
- ◉ He was the *founder of the Buddhist monastery at Vikramashila*, which developed into a great centre of learning and culture. He also *founded the Viharas at Somapuri and Odantapuri*.

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- His reign witnessed *tripartite struggle* among the three great powers, the Pratiharas, the Palas and the Rastrakutas, for imperial suzerainty of northern India and for the possession of Kanauj, the imperial city of the time.
- in the westward expansion of his kingdom Dharmapala received two checks-first from Vatsaraja and next from Dhruva. Dhruva attacked Vatsaraja in 789 A.D., and therefore Dharmapala was defeated by Vatsaraja before that. Dhruva died before May, 794 A.D., and he must have defeated the Pala king before that date.

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- His overlordship was acknowledged, and the war of 'digvijaya' he had to undertake for this purpose speaks of the stupendousness of the task. The supreme political achievement was sanctified by holding the imperial assembly at Kanauj.
- The 7th verse of the *Monghyr plate of Devapala* states that his (Dharmapala's) army in course of 'digvijaya' visited Kedara (in the Himalayas) and Gokarna which has been sought to be identified with Gokarna- tirtham Nepal, Gokarna in the Bombay Presidency and in Odisha.

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- ◉ *Khalimpur plate* enumerates the countries that actuality acknowledged his over lordship.
- ◉ *Bhagalpur plate of Narayanapala* says that Dharmapala took possession of Kanauj from Indraraja and installed, his own protégé Cakrayudha on its throne by calling an imperial assembly.
- ◉ fight between Nagabhata II and Dharmapala for the overlordship of northern India was one of the most fiercely contested battles of the period and in all probability" both the parties were equally matched.
- ◉ Dharmapala after his defeat by Nagabhata II did not risk another encounter with the Rasthrakutas and thought it wise to submit to Govinda III, the Rashtrakutas.

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- ◉ Dharmapala is one of the greatest kings of the Pala dynasty and takes an honourable place among the great kings known to Indian history. He assumed the highest imperial titles of those days, viz. *Paramabhataraka*, *Paramesvara* and *Maharajadhiraja*, while his father was styled only *Maharajadhiraja*.
- ◉ *Poet Soddhala* of the eleventh century calls him *Uttarapathasvamin*. He assumed the *title Vikramasila* either to signalise his might or to commemorate the foundation of the Vikramasila monastery. The Somapuri-mahavihara also owed its origin to the great Pala king.

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- ◉ The 5th verse of the *Monghyr plate* of his son says that he believe in the policy that his subjects should be governed in accordance with their respective *Sastric* rules.
- ◉ *Mahabodhi inscription or Kesava prasasti* of the 26th year of Dharmapala's reign, records the setting up of a Caturmukha-linga of Mahadeva in the great Buddhist holy place.
- ◉ According to *Bhagalpur plate*, his taxation was equitable and just.
- ◉ The Tibetan historian *Taranath* describes Dharmapala's kingdom to have stretched from the Bay

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Of Bengal to Delhi and Jullundher in the north and to the Vindhya ranges in the south. In addition he also states that Dharmapala also had a large number of vassal states in the periphery of his kingdom in the Punjab, the western hills, Rajputana, Malwa and Berar.

- ◉ The exercise of supreme power in North India was transferred from the Pratiharas to the Palas, at least for a period of time.
- ◉ Dharmapala was also a zealous Buddhist and built the monastery of Vikramasila on a hill overlooking the River Ganges. The site of the monastery is considered to be at Patharghata in Bhagalpur district and it is stated that at its height it contained 107 temples and six colleges.

(To be continued)