

PATALIPUTRA (PART-2)

M.A.(HISTORY) SEM-2 PAPER CC:7

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HISTORY OF PATALIPUTRA

In this period the industries of various shapes and kinds, organized under the guilds had come into existence. The findings of this period suggests that *a good number of industries of textiles, terracotta figurines, carpentry, smith's work and others flourished* in the localized centres of Pataliputra.

The city has religious importance also. The remains of Buddhist monasteries are the clear evidence of it. The Kushan kings were the great patrons of Buddhism which helped in building activities of this period. After the end of Kushanas rule in 150 A.D. the Scythian chiefs continued to rule Pataliputra till the arrival of Guptas on the political scene.

HISTORY OF PATALIPUTRA

The history of Pataliputra emerges once more clearly with establishment of Gupta dynasty in 275 A.D. .It was the capital from the days of its foundation by Srigupta. *The Allahabad Prasasti of Samudragupta and Udaigiri cave inscription* suggest the unanimous view of its having the capital of Gupta surpassing in its glory from any other city of India at that time. The literary works also testifies the prosperity and grandeur of Pataliputra.

The city was the *centre of learning*, it was not less important a centre of commerce & industry. *Dandin*, the author of *Daskumaracharita*, informs us that the markets of Pataliputra were like a treasure-house in which countless commodities and various articles such as precious gems and others used to remain spread out of at all times for sale.

HISTORY OF PATALIPUTRA

According to *Chinese traveller Fahien*, who visited during the reign of Chandragupta II, *Pataliputra was famous centre of learning* where he himself had studied for three years. He give a vivid account of Ashoka's palace in particular still stood intact in the 5th century A.D. He also mentions about the two monasteries - one *Mahayana* and another *Hinayana*, the two together contained a six or seven hundred monks.

When *Hiuen-Tsang* visited the city in 637 A.D. he found it with deserted look. From the Jaina work '*Tilthogalipainniya*' we know that about 50 years before the visit of Hiuen-Tsang , i.e. in 575 A.D. the city perished in a terrific and unprecedented flood of the river Son. This is confirmed by the account of Hiuen-Tsang. The excavations at Kumrahar also showed that the area was deserted from about 600 to 1600 A.D.

HISTORY OF PATALIPUTRA

In addition to flood other causes also contributed to its decline as the centre of imperial activity. The real death blow to it came when *from the time of Harsha onward Kanauj, and not Pataliputra, became the symbol of sovereignty of northern India* due to its proximity to the north west .The tripartite struggle for mastery of Kanauj is the best example. This greatly contributed in the downfall of the city of Pataliputra.

Decline of Pataliputra is in tune with the general trend of de-urbanization of the post-Gupta period. The strategic-geographical location of the city and its erstwhile advantages had turned by this time into its disadvantages, primarily due to the change in the course of the river system and strategic interests of the contemporary India.

HISTORY OF PATALIPUTRA

The next indication of Pataliputra as the place of some importance, is revealed from *Khalimpur plate inscription of Dharmapala*. It gives indication that Pataliputra was an important river port and recovering rapidly as a place of commercial interest. It also mentions that the Feudatories of Dharmapal had assembled there to pay homage. This inscription only shows that *Pataliputra was coming up fast from its recent decline and the Palas were often encamping there during their campaigns.*

During medieval period in the 11th Century, Pataliputra was the site of some importance is clear from the account of *Al-beruni* who has given its distance from Banaras(Varanasi). But in that time also the city did not enjoy any royal patronage.

HISTORY OF PATALIPUTRA

The invasion of Turks from 1200 A.D. onwards and their occupation of Bengal & Bihar completely took away its hitherto a little importance. Instead of Patna proper, *Bihar Sharif* in this period comes as a place of greater importance. Not surprisingly is the fact therefore, that Muslim rulers were induced to make it their capital.

(To be continued)

