

THE ANCIENT UNIVERSITY OF VIKRAMSHILA (PART-2)

PG HISTORY, SEM-2, PAPER CC:7

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STUDENTS AND CURRICULUM

Like the other Universities, this University also provided specialized instruction in various subjects.

- Buddhist textbooks belonging to both branches of Buddhism- *Mahayanism* and *Hinyanism*- were taught.
- All the important branches of Hindu learning were also taught. Though the course didn't cover all the branches of Hindu Sciences but special stress were laid on grammar, logic, metaphysics and ritualism. A special significance was attached to study of Tantras.

STUDENTS AND CURRICULUM

In order to ensure a high standard of learning students were admitted to the University only if they satisfied the tests given by eminent authorities in charge of various subjects at different gate. Ratnakarasanti was placed at the east gate, Vagisvarakirti at the west, Naropa at the north, Prajnakaramati at the south, Ratnavajra at the first central gate and Jnana Srimitra at the second gate.

STUDENTS AND CURRICULUM

- For smooth functioning of administration, there were boards in charge of different duties connected with the day to day working of the university; one chief abbot worked as the president of these various boards.
- Complete academic autonomy and the teachers in charge of various departments were responsible for the academic work conducted in their departments.

SCHOLARS AND TEACHERS

Vikramshila University attracted a number of scholars who were well known not only in India but even beyond her frontiers for the depth and the width of their learning. Dharmapala of Bengal, its first patron, had appointed one hundred and fourteen teachers. A number of scholars came from other parts of India as well as from other countries.

In the twelfth century there were 3,000 monk scholars studying at this university. Acharya Buddha Jnanapada was the founder of the new cult, Vajrayanism, of which

SCHOLARS AND TEACHERS

Vikramshila was the only centre in those days. He was appointed first as the priest of King Dharmapala(774-806) and later as the Acharya for ordination at Vikramshila.

Vairochara Rakshita, Jetari, Prajnakaramati, Ratnakarasanti, Jnana Sri, Ratnavajara, Vagishvarakirti, Acharya Atisha, Abhyankargupta, Tathagatrakshita, Manjusri and Dharmakirti were important scholars attached with the Vikramshila University.

PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM

The most outstanding contribution of the Vikramshila University was in the field of the propagations of Buddhism in Tibet. The University had developed literacy and cultural contacts with Tibet. Scholars from Tibet were particularly interested in the Tantras, for the teaching of which special arrangements were made at the University all throughout the four hundred years of its existence. It was Vikramshila scholars who, as the custodians of piety, knowledge and religion have practically built up the culture and civilization of Tibet.

PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM

Many of these scholars wrote books on various sciences in Sanskrit and translated quite a few in Tibetan. Scholars in large numbers poured in from Tibet for whom a special arrangement for boarding and lodging was made.

Vairochara Rakshita, Ratnavaja and Dipankara Sri Jnana also known as Acharya Atisha were among those who visited Tibet, translated several books into Tibetan and preached Buddhism there.

PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM

The tallest among them was Acharya Atisha. Born in a royal family in 980, he took the sacred vow at nineteen. At thirty-one, he received the highest ordination. He was the master of Hinayana and Mahayana, Vaisheshika and Tantras. After completing his education he sailed to Suvarnadwipa(Pegu) and was further initiated into the mysteries of Buddhism by Acharya Dharmakirti Sri. There he studied for twelve years. On his return to India he defeated many scholars and was appointed head at Vikramshila.

PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM

Later he went to Tibet at the invitation of King. There he founded the new religion of Lamaism. He worked in Tibet for thirteen years and died at the age of seventy three. About two hundred works on Vajrayana are ascribed to him. He also translated twenty two Sanskrit works into Tibetan. He was helped by Viryasinha (Tibetan Name: Lotsava-rgya-btson-senge) in translating Sanskrit works into Tibetan.

PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism was preached in Ceylon also. Ratnakarashanti wrote thirteen works in Sanskrit and preached Buddhism in Ceylon, where he was invited for that work.

Dharmakirti was a native of Tibet itself. He learnt Sanskrit at Vikramshila and translated several Sanskrit works into Tibetan.

(To be continued)