

THE ANCIENT UNIVERSITY OF VIKRAMSHILA (PART-3)

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ART

From the archaeological excavation of the site of Vikramshila University, we find many examples of art and sculpture. Apart from several Buddha figurines; there are *statues of Lokanatha, Mahakala, Tara* and others. Among Hindu statues, we find *Uma, Ganesha, Kuber and Mahishasuramardini (proto-type of Durga)*. All these statues are carved according to the Pala School of art. Some of them are made of thick basalt with an everlasting shine. Other stuff in display is terracotta motifs, coins, household utensils, some inscriptions, iron arrowheads, ornaments, daggers etc.

ART

It was also customary in this university to exhibit on walls the portraits of leading alumni with outstanding merit. In accordance with this custom, *two portraits of Nagarjuna and Atisha were exhibited on walls of the university.*

DESTRUCTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

Vikramshila touched the zenith of its glory during the 12th century under the rule of Ramapala (1072-1126). Later, the rule of Pala dynasty came to an end due to internal conflicts, feudal uprisings and external aggression. Bengal came under the rule of Sena Dynasty. During the reign of Lakshmana Sena (1178-1205), Bengal had to face the Muslim invasions under the leadership of Bakhtiyar Khalji, who occupied Lakhnauti, capital of Senas, in 1202.

DESTRUCTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

In the course of occupation of Bengal by Bakhtiyar Khalji, the tragic end of university came. Vikramshila became just deserted debris. Sadly, it was Bakhtiyar Khalji who had destroyed the Nalanda University also. All the monks residing at the place had their heads shaved, and they were all slain. The glory of Vikramshila got vanished.

CONCLUSION

Vikramshila was one of the centres of high learning in India during medieval age. It was unique in its organization and scholarship during those distant times when, elsewhere in world very few had thought of organized education at the university level. It represented the great tradition of knowledge and continued the legacy of Taxila and Nalanda. During this period, it was the lone centre of higher learning in India, which catered to the needs of scholars and students having aspiration of excelling in higher education.

CONCLUSION

It proved to be the formidable centre where new knowledge was created and disseminated far and wide. Its special contribution was the propagations of Buddhism in Tibet, Pegu and Ceylon. Particularly in Tibet, Vikramshila is said to have contributed to the foundation of Tibetan culture. Due to Vikramshila University, India became centre of attraction for her neighborhood and India remained in touch with the development around her. From the cultural point of view, Vikramshila, apart from education,

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contributed to the evolution of new sect of Buddhism. It also proved to be an important centre of art, particularly the Pala School of art centered on the use of basalt. Sadly, the destruction of Vikramshila at the hands of Turks, not only put an end to the bright academic journey of Vikramshila, but also terribly shattered the great Indian tradition of knowledge.