

Vikramshila University

Prelims - History of India.

Mains - GS I | Indian Heritage and Culture.

Why in News?

A decade after the revival of Nalanda University in Rajgir, the process of reviving another ancient centre of learning 'Vikramashila University' in Bihar has gained momentum.

- **Location** - Situated in Bhagalpur, Bihar, along the banks of the river Ganges.
- **Founded by** - **King Dharmapala** of the Pala dynasty in the late 8th to early 9th Century AD.
- It simultaneously existed and flourished during Nalanda's time.
- **Architecture** - Cruciform brick stupa is the centrepiece of the Vikramshila site.
- All around the stupa are the cells, 208 of them, 52 on each side where student-monks of one of the most splendid universities of its times practised Tantrayana.

Tantrayana is the last of the 3 great vehicles of Indian Buddhism after Hinayana and Mahayana.

- It included a library equipped with a **unique cooling system**, channeling water from a nearby reservoir to preserve delicate manuscripts.
- **Education** - Vikramshila was the only university that specialised in tantric and occult studies.
- At its peak, subjects such as *theology, philosophy, grammar, metaphysics and logic* were taught at Vikramshila.
- The university produced several eminent scholars, among them, **Atisa Dipankara**, who played a key role in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet.
- Vikramashila attracted numerous teachers and students, it is said that during the time of **King Ramapala** there were 160 teachers and 1,000 students.
- Students flocked to the university from all over north India as well as *Kashmir, Java, Nepal and Tibet*.
- Nalanda is the older of the two universities; at one point, the two centres of learning, which had a typical patron in King Dharmapala, exchanged knowledge and even teachers, who were called **Acharyas**.
- **Downfall** - It was destroyed by **Muhammad Bin Bakhtiyar Khalji's** forces Around 1203 AD.
- **Revival** - Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has, since December last year, been developing the site of the ancient Vikramshila university to attract more tourists.

Reference

[The Indian Express | Vikramshila university](#)

