

# Atisa Dipankar Srijnan saint

Atisa Dipankar Srijnan, world reputed Buddhist saint-scholar, versatile genious multi-linguist, philosopher, physician, technician was fortunately a glorious and illustrious son of this soil. Born in a Royal Family in the last part of the 10th century (992 A.D.) at Vajrajogini under Vikram-pur parganas of Dhaka, Bangladesh, Dipankar Srijnan, whose early name was Chandragarbha, after completing Priseducation on Sanskrit medicine, technical arts etc. renounced the royal inheritance and worldly life and went to Rahul Gupta of Krlshnagiri modern Kanheri near Bombay presidency of the then India for learning Tantric Buddhism. Within a short period, he became master in Tantric Buddhism by his very brilliant and diligent learning capacity. Thereafter, he went to Odantapuri Mahavihara a renowned Buddhist seat of learning, where he was ordained by the Mahasanghika Acharya Shilarakhit, the Principal of Mahavihara and named "Dipankar Srijnan". Dipankar also studies Bodhisattvahood at Nalanda Mahavihara under Dhammarakhit for a few years.

In the meantime, having heard that there was an authoritative Buddhist teacher named Dharmapal Acharya Mahajogi at Suvarnadipa, a famous Buddhist Center of learning, Dipankar, after a perilous and tedious journey of 14 months reached Suvarnadipa with 125 disciples and learned Buddhist philosophy like Abhisamayavajra, Bod-

hicharyabatar including scriptures, and meditation under Dharmapal for 12 years. Dipankar returned to Magadha in 1025 A.D. v.a Tampraparni (present Sri Lanka).

Magadha pandits being charmed by his sublime personality, profound knowledge, analytical power and unparalleled talent made him the Chief of pandits. Dipankar was then staying at Vajrasana Maha Bodhi Vihara (Monastery) from where he had been invited by the King Nayapaldev to accept the post of high priest at Vikramasil Mahavihara. It was said that Vikramasil became so famous that pupils from Tibet, Gandhara, Turkey, Ujjyo, Benares and Kashmir used to come there for higher studies in Buddhism and related subjects as a result of which Tibet later on became a focal point in his career.

During that time, when Dipankar's thoughts, wisdom and power gained by intensive meditation had spread beyond the territory of his homeland, King Yeses-hod of Tibet, witnessing the degeneration following in its wake due to invoking demon spirit and angels under the banner of Tantric religion, 'Bon' as a result of which the true spirit of Buddhism and meditation declined, felt the necessity of survival of the Dhamma and decided to invite Dipankar Srijnan to Tibet for propagation and reformation of Dhamma in his kingdom. But the envoys sent by him to Vikramasil failed to

convince Dipankar.

After the death of Yeses-hod, his son Byan-Chup-hod, as promised to his father, sent Dige-bes Gon-Than-pa (Nag-tsho Locaba) alongwith ten followers to bring Dipankar to Tibet. Hearing the tragic story of death of the King who dedicated his life for the cause of Dhamma, Dipankar decided to set off for Tibet for which he took permission from Taradevi, a Tantric goddess who allowed him to go to Tibet for reformation of Dhamma there. It was said that Dipankar after paying homage to Lord Buddha at Vajrasana Gandha Kuti Vihara at Bodhagaya Gaya came to Pandit Vihar at Chitragong to pay his respect to Tantric teacher Prajnahadra (Tilopa) and to visit his relations, from where he went to Chakrasala (Dham-machakra) Vihar and via Sompuri Jagaddal Vihara and Dirajpur Sifakot Vihara which were also seats of re-learning for Tibetans, he reached Nepal border where he had been received by the envoys of the Nepalese King Anantakri and by whose request Dipankar stayed at Nepal for one year and ordained a Royal Prince Padmaprabha. Dipankar reached Tibet in 1038 A.D. after an arduous and troublesome journey through snowy Himalayas. Dipankar passed a week at Manas Sarobar, a vast lake near Himalayas region and was cordially received by the special envoys of the King of Tibet at Guze palace. Amidst pomp and grandeur and

## a great Buddhist

DR. BIKIRAN PRASAD BARUA

great enthusiasm the King welcomed Dipankar Srijnan at Maha-ldin monastery and conferred him with the title Jove-ja i.e. Supreme Patriarch for his matchless talent and various virtuous qualities. From then the people of Tibet started paying their highest respect by calling him 'Atisa' meaning 'Superiority'.

At the request of the King the Ven. Atisa composed a famous book Bodhipathapradipa and translated this treatise into Tibetan language with the help of Nag-tho, Lutaba. From Maha-ldin Monastery he went to Dong-ri province for reformation of Buddhism there and enlightening the Tibetans with the true doctrine of Buddhism thus freeing them from their old heretical religion and many pride and prejudices. The Ven. Atisa won the hearts of the common people by his compassion and behaviour sincerely and honestly, particularly by his vast knowledge in different subjects. This glorious and historically notable son of Bangladesh enriched the Tibetan literature by translating many the then Indian works with Tibetan language and writing more than 80 books on esoteric doctrine and more than 35 books on religion. Most interesting and noticeable thing was that, based on the teaching and ideology of Dipankar, a sect known as Bkag-Damps-Pa was born which was later on known as Gelupa (Yellow Hat)

sect whose chief is now Dalai Lama.

Dipankar, completing his term for three years, decided to return to his homeland and accordingly reached Sino-Nepalese border which he could not cross due to outbreak of war. At the request of the inhabitants there he went to Bsam-Yas Monastery where he was very delighted to find large quantity of Sanskrit Texts. From Bsam-Yas he went to Sra-than monastery where he spent later part of his life which is a place of pilgrimage for the Buddhists and where he breathed his last at the age of 72 in 1054 A.D. It is to be noted that his personal belongings such as Yellow robes, alms pots are still preserved at Sra-than Monastery. His most favourite disciple Hbrom-Ston rebuilt the Ra-Sgren monastery at Ra-sgren dedicated exclusively for the propagation of Atisa's teachings. The Ven. Atisa made a remarkable contribution to the Buddhism in Tibet by his vast accomplishments, his unparalleled endeavour, benevolence, sacrifice and humanity for seventeen years in Tibet.

The Government and the people of Bangladesh have done a noble job by paying homage to such a talented saint-scholar through an International seminar. Let the long-continued historic contributions be the source of inspirations to the generations coming.