

Monastic Education in Tawang District of Arunachal Pradesh, India

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Abstract

The Buddhist education in India is very old. It was broadly founded in traditions of Indian civilization, with students learning grammar, fine arts, law, medicine, arithmetic, and astronomy. The education provided in monasteries could be called monastic education. The monastic education is mainly concentrated on the study of sacred scriptures of the Buddhist. Monastic education aims at personality transformation into the highest form of humanity through ethical, intellectual, and spiritual perfection. In the ancient period Buddhist monasteries and in the later period which became Buddhist universities played important role in imparting education. The state of Arunachal Pradesh is situated in the easternmost part of India, bounded by Republic of China in North, Myanmar in east and Kingdom of Bhutan in the West. Tawang Monastery, the biggest and oldest monastery in India is situated in the westernmost district of Arunachal Pradesh called Tawang district. The habitants of this district are Monpas. The Tawang Monastery was founded by *Mera Lama Lotey Gyamcho* in 17th century. The monastery has a capacity for housing five hundred *Lamas* (monk) and there are more than 1000 books in the library and their great treasure is *Getongpa*, three volumes which are lettered in gold. The great monastery is the heart of Monpa life and culture. Varrier Elwin in his book “Philosophy of NEFA” has mentioned “The monastery reminded me of medieval Italian town or in many ways of Oxford”. Before India’s independence, Buddhist monasteries were centers of learning and the only formal educational institutions for Monpa community. Monks learn reading, writing and arithmetic as well as ethics and the Buddhist way of life. However with the emergence of modern education in the state, the system of monastic education also needed to modernize and its educational needs changed from time to time. Efforts are being made by the government to promote education in the monasteries of the state by extending financial assistance Therefore; this study aims to explore the present system of education practiced in Tawang monastery, and its relevance in present society.

Keywords: Buddhist, Education System, Culture Monasteries, Monpa, Monks