

**A Critical Study of Monastic Education in Myanmar
AD 1044 (Bagan Period) to AD 1885 (Kone Baung Period)**

SUMMARY

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SUMMARY OF THESIS

The present work entitled "A Critical Study of Monastic Education in Myanmar A.D.1044 (Bagan Period) to A.D.1885 (KoneBaung Period)" is trying to shed light on the monastic schools which played crucial role in moulding the lives of the people of Bagan according to the Buddhist morality. Religion of Bagan before King Anawrahta was mixed with Mahayana and Tantra Brahmanism which led to the disunity among the people. The king, with the help of Shin Arahan, tried to be a Theravada Buddhist country. The objective of monastic education was (1) to revere the three gems--Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha (2) to flourish three types of Sasana--Pariyatti, Paripatti, Pativeda (3) to encourage people to hope that they would attain Nibbana (4) to be not only good at reading and writing but also well versed in Buddhist scriptures. Depending on the vicissitudes of the kings, the monastic education faced ups and downs. At the time of King Narathihapate or Ta Yoke Pyay Min (The King who ran away from the Chinese), Bagan was disintegrated into smaller states. Good education, from a Buddhist perspective, must consist of religious education and secular education. The education system of learning science is secular. On the other hand, focussing on spiritual development such as morality, concentration and wisdom are religious education. The aim of Buddha's teaching can be found in Dhammapada: "Not to do evil, to cultivate merit, to purify one's mind". Moreover, Singalovada Sutta explains the social duties of parents, sons and daughters etc. Thus, it becomes a main text for monastic schools' education. Among the preachings of Buddha, Mangala Sutta or Thirty-Eight kinds of Blessings is the fundamental of all Buddhist which is a text book in the monastic school education. The monastic education lost its popularity when the British colonized Myanmar. Three kinds of schools came into existence according to the colonial education system. The first commissioner of British Burma, Sir Arthur Phayre made some attempts to reform the monastic education system with the help of the abbots of monastic education. However, his plan was unsuccessful due to the higher policy makers from London. The majority of the monks did not accept the British plan. So, the colonial masters drew their own educational plan and established their own schools. The colonial schools gave job related lessons and the number of students rose. The result was the monastic schools became less popular.

The monastic education system took responsibility to give education mainly in the rural areas. It would be unfair to generalize and say that the sole aim of the monastic education system is preservation and propagation of Buddhism. This may be the aim at the

very first beginning when the teachings of Buddha were put to writing. Society since ancient times has always considered knowledge a moral value. So, the aim of monastic education was to make people literate. Moreover, the pupils learn discipline in monastic schools. These pupils therefore, learn about the importance of respect for the three Gems - The Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Furthermore, parents, teachers and elders are also respected. They also learn the value of discipline and obedience which is based on Vinaya Pitaka, the discipline and procedural rules for the Sanghas.

The main purpose of monastic education is self-discipline which is a corner stone of Buddhism. Knowledge requires mental discipline and morality requires discipline of both mind and body. Some may think the rules of monastery are too rigid to allow for free thinking. Schools in the west emphasize freedom of decision-making without giving any guidelines as to moral content that led to many social problems such as drug abuse and juvenile sex. Furthermore, the problem broke down family values and parents do not take no Responsibility's for their children.

The value of Myanmar monastic education lies in the fact that through the teachings of Buddha that instils moral and social awareness. According to the Singalovada Sutta, delivered by the Buddha for the benefit of the lay devotee, Buddha preached social duties for all human beings. They are taught Mangala Sutta where guidance is given on how to conduct oneself morally. Moreover, they are taught about respect for others as well as self-respect. Lessons in morality are crucial in the monastic education as learning to read, write and do sums. The first chapter "The Monastic Schools Play Important Role in Myanmar" is to trace the ways and means how monastic schools play crucial role since Buddhism arrived in Myanmar. The aim of the research is to focus on Buddhist way of teaching based on the three Pitakas. Historical background of teaching in monastic schools concerning morality focused on Singalovada Sutta and Mangala Sutta. Therefore, I present this research work related to the above-mentioned topic with the intention of achieving good moral conduct from the Buddhist perspective as well as Theravada tradition as taught by the Buddha.

Objectives of the Study

- (1) To find out the methods and techniques of monastic education.
- (2) To study Theravada tradition in Myanmar.

- (3) To understand the similarities and dissimilarities in monastic education and British colonial education.
- (4) To compare and contrast monastic education with respect to Theravada Buddhism.

Research Methodology

For the present study, historical method and literary criticism have been used. Historical data have been gleaned from Pitaka and articles. In order to establish the facts, all collected data have been analyzed and compared.

Assumptions

- (1) Monastic education is the essence of Buddhism that should be promoted.
- (2) Monastic education should be preserved for Buddhism and for the development of morality.
- (3) Monastic education has a long history and it has moulded the lives of the people of Myanmar.

Chapterization

The present work is divided into five chapters. The following section presents a brief description about the chapter of the proposed chapter:

Chapter-1 Introduction

This chapter consists of systematic introduction of the topic, objectives, hypothesis, methodology, context of study, review of literature and mention of sources and conceptual framework of the thesis are part of this chapter. Parents are eager for their children to learn and study and build up their ability to develop their social level. The mind like an empty vessel at the time of birth which keeps developing as human grows. Learning is an integral part of human life which is a never-ending process. Myanmar was colonized by the British. So, Myanmar way of life and institutions were under the influence of British colonial masters. Many monasteries in lower Myanmar were induced to cooperate with the education authorities of the British government between 1861-1886. But upper Myanmar did not change for it was under the rule of Myanmar kings.

Education of upper Myanmar of pre-British days were carried out by the Buddhist monks at their monasteries. The only additional agency for education was supplied by the

Ain-Kyaungs or Lay schools that gave to education to girls and boys who are too young to go to school. The important schools regarded as quality and wider scope of teaching were the monasteries. The lay schools were few in numbers and preparatory in nature.

Chapter-2 Strengthening Monastic Education School in Myanmar

Monastic education in Myanmar is very significant because children are taught the Buddha's teachings by monk teachers. According to the Buddha, there are two kinds of Sila-- CarittaSila and VarittaSila. The Buddha preached the Singalovada Sutta with the intention to show CarittaSila for lay people. CarittaSila means abiding by the rules of conduct or duties for the human beings. Since the arrival of Theravada Buddhism in Bagan from Thaton, Myanmar learnt Buddhist scriptures by heart which preserve the practice from generation to generation. Pali Pathamapyan examinations have been held in Myanmar every year. Its curriculum consists of only Pali and Myanmar language. But a monk who has finished Pali Pathamapyan examination has to face a lot of difficulties for their further study in foreign countries. The curriculum lacks secular subjects such as English, mathematics, sociology and science. So, they could not follow the lectures. Only a few student monks are good at English because they had studied at American centre and British Council in Yangon. Material influence lures away from their studies such as money, modern smart phones and face book. Some young monks do not understand spiritual development. They indulge in wrong way by misuse the internet and face book. Actually, these modern inventions may lead to deficiency of morality. Buddha admonished his disciples who inherited materials. According to the Buddha, "Bhikkhus, be my heirs in Dhamma, not my heirs in material things"

Chapter-3 The Role of Sangha Institution in the Customary Society

According to legends, Buddhism arrived into Myanmar during the life time of the Buddha. But scholars have accepted that the arrival of Buddhism into Myanmar is not earlier than the first millennium A.D. when Pyu urbanization is said to be thrived in the earliest city state of Sriksetra. Archaeological finds of the ancient city revealed the Buddhist artifacts which is related to Theravada Buddhism. But Pyu city state was destroyed due to Chinese invasion at the end of the first millennium A.D. King Anawrahta united the city states and built Bagan. He brought thirty sets of Pitakas from Thaton and Theravada Buddhism was introduced into

Bagan. The king made efforts for the purification and propagation of Theravada Buddhism in Bagan.

Chapter-4 Effectiveness and Benefits of Buddhist Monastic Schools

Education means the process of training and nurturing the growing human mind. In this way, education became as an essential part of man's cultural and social life. Man cannot stand without some form of education in life. Education may differ in many forms but the main point is to furnish the brain with fresh new knowledge. Education and knowledge have improved not only material wealth in life but spiritual wealth also. The fundamental aim of education to build better society. So, without education, the society will surely stagnate and finally collapse. There are two similar questions concerning the monastic education system in Myanmar: (1) what are the values aimed at in the monastic education. (2) What methods are used to instill these values? There is also a question that the monastic education system is still effective in teaching the monk students. Whether it can be improved to bring up to date.

Chapter-5 Theory and Practice of Buddhist Monastic Schools

Myanmar was colonized by the British between 1824 to 1885. Christian Missionaries came to Myanmar since 1600. It is said that Christian missionary education was introduced into Myanmar at the time of Nyaungyan period. The earliest missionaries were Italians. Among those of the missionaries, Father Calchi who came to Myanmar during the reign of King Tanninganwe (1714-1733) was the best known Roman Catholic Missionary. The best-known American missionary was Adonian Judson. Due to the efforts of these missionaries, printed books and newspapers were appeared in Myanmar. Missionary schools were established and text books were published. Judson compiled an English-Myanmar Dictionary that is the first dictionary in Myanmar. There were some developments resulted from the efforts of Christian missionaries. So, Monastic education in Myanmar became a rival of the missionary and colonial education.

Chapter-6 Conclusion

Monastic Education plays an important role in the lives of people of Myanmar. It is because of the Monasteries that even poor, children living in remote areas and orphaned can thing of getting educated, as it is free of cost.