

ABSTRACT

Arunachal Pradesh has 61400 Buddhists followers among its total population of 4,67,511 according to the 1971 census. The scheduled tribe's population of the Arunachal Pradesh is 3,69,408 and 41,430 of these are Buddhists. The Monpas with the population of 28,209, are the largest Buddhist tribe and 1284 Sherdukpens among its total population of 1639 profess Buddhism. The Sixth Dalai Lama was born on the soil of Arunachal Pradesh and even the present 13th Dalai Lama found its refuge and shelter in India through this land.

Most of the tribes inhabiting the land are ethnically similar having derived from an original common stock but their geographical isolation from each other has brought amongst them certain distinction. The principal tribes of Arunachal Pradesh from east to west are the *Wangchos*, the *Noctes*, the *Tangsas*, the *Lisus/Yobins*, the *Tutsa*, the *Khamptis*, the *Zakhrings*, the *Mishmis*, the *Meyors*, the *Khimiyangs*, the *Adis*, the *Galos*, the *Padams*, the *Minyongs*, the *Palibos*, the *Boris*, the *Bokars*, the *Membas*, the *Khambas*, the *Apatanis*, the *Nyishis*, the *Purioks*, the *Tagins*, the *Nahs*, the *Hill Miris*, the *Akas*, the *Khowas/Buguns*, the *Mijis/ Sajolangs*, the *Shertukpens* and the *Monpas*.

Before the advent of Buddhism, the Monpas believed in the existence of numerous Gods and Demons all around them. These were held to personify the powers and forces of their wild highland landscape and were believed to be responsible for all the calamities threatening their welfare. So, they propitiated these supernatural beings by performing rites in which sacrifice of animals formed an important part. The fundamental principles of that religion were the same as those of the Bon religion of Tibet. When this community took to Buddhism, it stopped these rites but accepted these indigenous supernatural beings in its pantheon as the local defenders of its faith and in return to the manner of the Buddhist rituals. Few of these supernatural beings, found unamenable to this new mode of rituals, are again being worshipped according to old rituals and with the help of religious functionaries of the old religion.

The study “**Tawang Monastery as a site of Memory: the role of Tawang Monastery in Preserving Cultural Methods and Practices**” is a sincere effort of the researcher to study the Tawang Monastery as a site of memory for the Monpa people and also to the general followers of Buddhism. The study is an attempt to see the impact of the monument Tawang Monastery as an architectural exemplary and also as a site of importance on the lives of the

people living in and around the Monastery. The study is to see how the Tawang Monastery since its construction is an important factor in preserving the age-old values and traditions and how it has helped in carrying it forward to the future generations.

The main idea behind the study is to study the history behind the construction of Tawang Monastery and how this monastery has affected in the ways of life of the people living in and around the monastery. The role of the monastery in shaping the lives of the people and also to study the role of the laymen in continuing to preserve the rich cultural practices which are on the verge of extinction. Therefore, this research work presents in depth study on the role of Tawang Monastery in preserving the cultural practices and traditions.

Religion is a way of life among the Monpas. They are Buddhist by religion with perhaps an admixture of their original animist-shamanist beliefs. The Monpas are devout Buddhist and their life centres round the teachings of Lord Buddha and their spiritual masters. As such, we find that the values of Buddhism deeply integrated in their ways of dealing with various life situations. The form of Buddhism practiced by the Monpas is broadly of the Lamaist Mahayana School popularly known as the "*Yellow Hat Sect*". Every village has a Gompa with one or more officiating lamas (ordained monks) affiliated to it. These lamas help in the religious affairs of the villagers. It is the duty of the villagers to look after the Gompa.

The data collected for the study is mostly on individual and social memory of the proposed community. The data are collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data is collected by conducting field studies. Primary data were collected from the field through an ethnographic approach of participant observation by actively taking part in the festivals, rituals, religious activities in and of the monastery. Interviews of people residing in the monastery (the monks) along with the people who visited the monastery were conducted.

Most of the primary data was collected by Mixed Method which includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches of empirical survey with data collection. Other methods such as focused group discussions were used for collection of data. Interview of the Oral narratives were also used for collection of data. For interview schedules and other methods such as Recordings of the rituals; tape recorder, video recordings and video clips etc. were used. Photographs were taken for authentic documentation of the research topic.

Other than the primary sources, secondary sources were also consulted like the books on the Monpa tribe were consulted to see the importance of Tawang Monastery on the tribe. Books, articles and internet sources on memory were also consulted along with books available on the Tawang Monastery were also referred for collection of data. Studying of primary historical and archival sources were also explored. Religious scriptures, archival of the Tawang Monastery was also consulted. The religious scriptures consulted were written in Bhoti script which were translated later for further translation to collect data related to the study topic.

The research work is divided into six chapters. Chapter I is the Introductory chapter, which gives us the detail information regarding the title of the thesis, the background setting of the study, the Area of the study, objectives, methodologies considered for the present study, literature review and limitations of the study has been discussed. Chapter II gives the idea about the methods and methodology which were used to collect data from the field. It also discusses about the theoretical concept under which the whole thesis has been interpreted and analysed. Chapter III gives a description about the profile of the community. It talks about Land, the people, and the geographical features of the tribe. it discusses also about the Cultural profile, Games and Sports, Dance, Arts and Crafts, Marriage System, Dress and Ornaments, Food habits, Settlements and Dwellings, Economic Organization, Treating Illness to have an understanding about the social, political, economic, cultural and other aspects of the said community. Chapter IV discusses in detail about the historical background of the monastery. The chapter also discusses on other aspects such as the festival Torgya, its importance and relevance to the monastery as well as to the people living in and around the monastery. It discusses in detail about the Monastic system practiced in the monastery since its construction. The various rites, rituals and festivals celebrated in the monastery are also discussed. It discusses on the Taxation System of the monastery which has been practiced by the monastery since time immemorial. Chapter 5 is discusses and analyse whatever data has been collected in Chapter 4 to understand the role of Tawang monastery as a site of Memory and its role in preserving it. This chapter mainly focuses on the rites, festivals and rituals celebrated and also on the other facets of the monastery. Its importance in playing a role in supporting Tawang Monastery as a site of memory. Chapter 6 is the Concluding chapter. This chapter presents the study's significant findings and conclusions.