

THE ANCIENT UNIVERSITY OF NALANDA (PART-3)

PG HISTORY, SEM-2, PAPER CC:7

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Scope of the study at Nalanda (नालन्दा में अध्ययन का दायरा)

Imparting practical knowledge and learning were applauding aspect of the study at Nalanda. The theoretical teachings were also introduced in the lives of the monks practically.

- Education means all round development-intellectual, moral, spiritual and aesthetic.
- Education covered both leading a successful and peaceful life in society and at times to get jobs in the royal administration.
- According to I-Tsing, sometimes the monks of Nalanda went to the king's court and after showing their abilities in Buddhist scripture got position.

Admission and method of Instruction (प्रवेश और निर्देश की व ध)

- Admission was a prestigious matter and by no means an easy task.
- The *dwarpundits* or gatekeepers who were specialists in discussions and expert at religious controversialists admitted the students at Nalanda University through an interview.

Method of study (अध्ययन की व ध)

- The old Brahmanic practice of reciting the texts and understanding their meaning were also in practice at Nalanda on a large scale.
- Both tutorial and discussion methods followed.
- Besides formal lectures given by the teachers, instruction was imparted orally, which was carried by way of discussion and interrogation.
- Everyday about 100 lectures were organized.
- Sometimes learned men from different cities attended discussions at Nalanda which were like modern Seminar and Conferences.

Method of study (अध्ययन की व ध)

- Academic Calendar of the university was very tight and it kept both the teacher and the students fully occupied throughout the year.
- It was a centre of higher education and students were instructed in all varied branches of learning.
- Students studied Mahayana Buddhism in the university

Curriculum (पाठ्यक्रम)

- Vedas and other books such as *Yogasastra*, *Hetuvidya*, *Sabdavidya*, *Chikitsavidya*, *the works of Magic (Atharavaveda)*; and *Samkhya* were studied.
- Study of Theology and Philosophy was compulsory for all students.
- Encyclopedia was composed e.g. *Tattvasangraha*
- Probably there was an astronomical observatory, and that Astronomy formed part of Curriculum.

Curriculum (पाठ्यक्रम)

- The University had a water clock which gave correct time for Magadha
- According to I-Tsing, medicine was also studied
- Study of Tantric Knowledge in Later Pala period.
- The art of metal casting was perhaps a part of the curriculum as evident from the furnace discovered at temple thirteen.

Teachers (अध्यापक)

All educational institutions, it is said, are extended shadows of its great teachers and students, of which they are the makers and the destroyers. Nalanda, for instance, was like the extended shadow of its *pundits*(generally scholars and particularly teachers)and students. In Nālandā, It appears that *pundit* was a distinctive title bestowed on the head of the institution. out of the total number of 10000 resident monks at Nalanda, as many as 1510 belonged to the rank of teachers.

Teachers (अध्यापक)

Hiuen Tsang mentions, “Of course there are 1000 men who can explain twenty Collections of Sutras and Śāstras; 500 who can explain thirty collections and perhaps 10 (including HiuenTsang) who can explain 50 collections. The number of students residing at Nalanda accounted to 10,000 in HiuenTsang’s time while in I-Tsing’s time; the number of students exceeded three thousand more. Basham believes that no tall figures are compatible with the findings of the excavations and thinks that the number could have exceed 1000.

Teachers (अध्यापक)

Sankalia had already considered the number of 10,000 too high, but he having closer to the number given by I Tsing, he assumed approximately 4000 students lived there.

The teachers were divided in the two categories

- (1) Acaryas
- (2) Upajjhayas (professor)

Monk teachers performed different tasks:
teaching, reading, writing, administration

Upajjhaya:

- Primary duty was to teach or deliver lectures

Teachers (अध्यापक)

- Basically worked like the modern guide or supervisor in the sense to guide or supervisor a monk towards the achievement of nibbana or salvation.
- Almost every professor have written either commentary on earlier Buddhist scriptures or translated those into various languages.
- They also travelled abroad to propagate Buddhism. Example, Santrakkhita, Kamalashila, Atisa dipankar and Padmasambhava were the first among many

Teachers (अध्यापक)

to visit Tibet, where they learnt the Tibetan language and translated Buddhist and Sanskrit works into Tibetan and consequently transformed the inhabitants into Buddhism.

- The senior most Upajjhayas also succeeded as the abbot of Nalanda Mahavihara. The abbot had to run the administration of the Mahavihara and also control and regulate the moral, pious and spiritual life of the monastery, when Hiuen-Tsang visited Nalanda in 635 A.D., Silabhadra was head.

(To be continued)