

# **A Critical Study of Contemporary Buddhism in Rakhaing: a Focus on the Buddhist Societies – Progressions and Regressions**

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## **Abstract**

Buddhism in Rakhaing state has been a majority religion for the Rakhine community. The Buddha himself introduced Buddhism to King Candasuriya in Daññawady period about 600 BC. There is a need to conduct a focused study of the contemporary Buddhism in Rakhaing state to observe the current situations in order to develop a genuine understanding and provide solutions to emerging issues. This study is an attempt to investigate the Rakhaing contemporary Buddhism with a focus on current socio-economic, religious and political movements. In this study a mixed method was applied; a descriptive analysis of data from Pāli canons, its commentaries, Buddhist literatures, in particular related Arakanese chronicles and a qualitative data analysis of the semi-structured interview results. The findings reveal numerous conflicts – mostly social and communal strife stemming from religious factors – and hard times rooted in such issues leading to regression of Buddhism such as illegal immigration which resulted in a refugee crisis along with current political, economic, and social issues. Moreover, it is found that many young monks in Rakhaing disrobed within one decade, from 2009 to 2020 possibly due to political and economic unrest and decline in the studies of Buddhist Pāli literatures (Pariyatti). The findings also indicate that The Sangha movements are not sufficient to facilitate the progress of contemporary Buddhism in Rakhaing. The findings of this research are expected to be of a great help to those who are trying to bring progress to contemporary Rakhaing Buddhism and society.

Key words: Contemporary Buddhism, Rakhaing, Buddhist Society, Progressions and Regressions.

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