

# INDIA AND TIBET

—Historical Considerations—

—NIRMAL C. SINHA

## I

### EARLIEST CONTACTS

Exchange of ideas like exchange of commodities between two neighbouring countries is the ideal norm of nations. Relations between India and Tibet in the past amply illustrate this ideal. Even the Himalayas were not sufficient barriers and the Indo-Tibetan relationship was not a one-way traffic in commerce or culture.

While much is on record regarding India's influence on Tibetan culture, Tibet's impact on Indian culture remains obscure. With the antiquity of Tantra traced back to the Indus civilization and with Mount Kailas as the focal point in Tantra, regular contacts and exchanges between the Siddhas on both sides of the Himalayas in pre-Buddhist and even pre-Vedic times are no longer ruled out. Some scholars surmise that even Indian Tantra was developed from the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet called Bon.

Sufficient literary evidence is there to suggest fair knowledge of Himavat or Trans-Himalayan regions in North India in Buddha's time. Arjuna had reached Uttarakuru, beyond the Kun Lun mountains, by way of Lake Manas which was the country of the Hatakas. The offerings of gold at Yudhisthira's court included the variety recovered from the Pipilika in Western Tibet. The Gold-digging Ants of Herodotus and the Pipilikas of Mahabharata were no doubt the same obscure fauna. The traffic of pilgrims and merchants to and from Kailas-Mansarovar area was indeed a busy traffic in the Maurya period and Asokan missionaries like Kasyapa and Madhyamagotra might have scaled the Himalayas to acquire on-the-ground knowledge of the Himavat.

Advent of Buddhism in Tibet opened a fresh chapter not only in the history of Tibet but also in the history of Asia and this chapter closes in the middle of the current century.

## II

### BUDDHISM IN TIBET

The first kings of Tibet reputedly came from Magadha, the home province of Asoka, at a time when the Maurya Empire was breaking up. These kings down to 27th generation followed the old Tibetan religion Bon. During

---

This article presents the author's second lecture on "India and Tibet—a study in interdependence" at Calcutta University on 21 July 1977. The first lecture was published in *Bulletin of Tibetology* (1977 : 3); the third and concluding lecture will come out in the next number of the *Bulletin*. A synopsis of the three lectures is appended at the end.

the reign of Lha-tho-tho-ri, the 28th king, a volume of Buddhist canon reached the court; the Kushanas were then ruling over northern India and Inner Asia. The book, when deciphered later, was found to contain the exploits and virtues of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. As the Lord of Compassion, Avalokitesvara was the leading deity of Mahayana pantheon. In Tibet he came to be regarded as the father of mankind and adored as the Sole God of the Land of Snow.

Firm evidence about Buddhism in Tibet, however, dates from the time of Song-tsen Gampo (c. 605-650) whose two queens, one from Nepal and one from China, were devout Buddhist. He had a scholarly minister, Thomi Sambhota, who devised an alphabet from Brahmi script and founded the systematic translation of the Buddhist canon. Temples were built and images of the Buddha and Mahayana deities were installed. The principal temple was located in the newly founded capital at Lhasa. Monks and scholars from Nepal and India were invited to expound the Buddha's Doctrine. The king drew up a code of customs and morals which believers down to our time have acknowledged and observed as integral parts of the Cho or Dharma.

### GURU RIMPOCHE

The progress of Buddhism was by no means smooth for the first two hundred years as it had to reckon with the hostility of the native religion. The Bon was deeply rooted not only in the mind of the common man, it was strongly entrenched in the court itself. Ministers and even members of the royalty were often ambivalent and some continued die hard. The Bon priests disputed the authority of the Indian monks and challenged them to polemics and mysteries. Victory in doctrinal debates was easy for the scholar-monks who no doubt emphasized the doctrine of salvation for all. The field of magic was however not convenient for the monks from India as few of them were adepts in Tantra. In the second half of the eighth century, during the reign of Trisong De-tsen, the Buddhist monks failed to meet the Bon priests in an encounter of miracle. The Bon elements in the court proclaimed the foreigners' defeat and reconverted the bulk of the population into their native faith. But the king did not yield and invited the famous master of Tantra, Guru Padmasambhava, to visit Tibet. The Guru answered the call, reached Lhasa overcoming en route the demons set up by the Bon magicians and in a number of bouts conclusively proved the superiority of Buddhist Tantra. For example he could divert a hail storm conjured up by the native priests while the native priests could not contain a similar scourge set by the Guru. In short the superiority of Buddhist magic was indisputable and the Dharma emerged victorious in the field of mysteries also. Ambivalent believers soon sought refuge in Buddhism.

The saviour of Dharma came to be adored as Guru Rimpoche, that is, Guru Ratna. Guru Rimpoche was indeed the saviour of Buddhism in Tibet. While his miracles are a matter of belief, his achievements are solid facts of history. Besides proving the superiority of Buddhism over Bon, the Guru handled the great problem of a foreign religion with high statesmanship. He felt the imperative need of nationalizing the church and with the aid of Santarakshita, who was already in Tibet, he ordained the First Seven natives into the Sangha, thereby, founding the Lamaist Order. The Guru and Santarakshita helped the king to build a monastery on the river Tsang-po (Brahmaputra); it was modelled on Odantapuri and named after Achintyapuri as Samye. Significantly enough the Guru tolerated some Bon

mystic practices which, if not identical with, were not unlike the rituals of Tantra.

Buddhism as a universal religion acclimatized itself to the native genius of the country and the Guru's cult of Vajra (Dorje) no doubt became the national cult of Tibet. Under this impact even the Bon priests had to admit ideas and images of Buddhism into their creed, though a contra or wrong meaning was read into each such adaptation. Thus Buddhism had come to stay in Tibet in one form or other.

The few Chinese exponents of Dharma who used to visit Tibet from the time of Song-tsen Gampo's marriage with a Chinese princess failed to comprehend the moral and spiritual needs of the Barbarian of Tibet. A few years after Padmasambhava and Santarakshita, two conflicting opinions about attainment of Enlightenment were being expounded, one by the Indian Kamalasila and other by the Chinese Hashang. In a final debate, the assembly of believers voted for the Indian exponent. Both views, it is now found, were correct but the Indian master had spoken the Tibetan mind. The Tibetans ceremoniously expelled the Chinese exponent and banned for ever propagation of Dharma in Tibet by the Chinese. Nearly three centuries later when Atisa came to propagate the Sat Dharma, he also would not altogether reject the Tibetan sentiments.

### LIVING BUDDHAS

The historic reason for the success of Buddhism in foreign lands was the promise of universal salvation through Love, Compassion and Spirit of Tolerance. The Mahayana ideal of collective endeavour, in which devotees morally and intellectually superior would share their Punya with the handicapped ones, sharpened the edge of Dharma for the nomadic and pastoral communities. The Bodhisattva thus played the role of a hero in society in Tibetan sense of the term 'hero'. The Tibetans prayed, as they still pray, for the repeated rebirth of a Buddha in the making, or of one who is already a Buddha, or even of a celestial being. Thus there are incarnations of Padmasambhava and Atisa: the Buddhas in mundane form, and of Avalokitesvara and Amitabha: the Buddhas in celestial form. Such incarnations, known as Tulku, are wrongly described in Western idiom as Living Buddhas. Early European visitors to China picked up this nomenclature from confused Confucian literati.

### THE RED AND THE YELLOW

Another Western usage is to divide Tibetan Buddhism into Red and Yellow. By Red is meant the three earlier sects, Nyingma, Kargyu and Sakya and by Yellow is denoted the later Gelugpa. The Nyingma dates back to the advent of Padmasambhava, that is, the second half of the eighth century. The Kargyu traces their heritage to a great Siddha of eastern India named Naropa (died 1040), the Sakya to a scholar and patron of learning from Central Tibet named Khon-gyal (1034-1073) and the Gelug to a great monk-scholar from Kokonor named Tsongkhapa (1357-1419). There is a sharp difference of opinion regarding esoteric practices and monastic discipline between the so-called Red Sects on one hand and the Yellow on the other. For laity in general, all temples and monasteries of all sects are equally holy and good both for congregation and pilgrimage. Incarnations connected with Red

have been found in Yellow households while some highest Yellow incarnations have come from Red families. All incarnations of all sects, however, render obedience to the incarnation of Avalokitesvara—the Dalai Lama—as the Sole God of the Land of Snow.

### III

#### LANGUAGE OF INDIA IN TIBET

“The waters of Ganga made fertile the arid steppes of Inner Asia”. That is how a German scholar had described the great efflorescence of Buddhist literature in the sands and snows of Inner Asia. The Bhagiratha who took the stream to the arid north was in the grateful imagination of Northern Buddhists, come from Varanasi, where Buddha Sakyamuni had turned the Wheel of Law. In Trans-Himalayan legend the Sacred Lotus after it withered away in Varanasi blossomed in Lhasa, and the Master’s “body, speech and mind” made a reappearance in the Trans-Himalayan highlands. Lhasa in welcoming Sanskrit was no doubt sheltering the language of the Land of Enlightenment and Bod-skad (Tibetan) as the medium of the Dharma became as sacred as Sanskrit. The layout, content and presentation of Tibetan canon and all later works down to the last days of Lamaism have been such that a Nepali Vajracarya, proud of his country having been the refuge of Sanskrit learning, has no hesitation to describe Bod-skad as Lhasa Sanskrit. By the label Lhasa Sanskrit a Nepali Buddhist would not merely imply that the Tibetan script is derived from Sanskrit source but also acclaim that Tibetan literature preserves the treasures of Sanskrit literature. Much of the originals are lost to the world today while most of the remnants in Sanskrit the world owes to the care and zeal of Nepali scholars during the centuries when Sanskrit learning in the Land of Enlightenment was in shade. Western scholarship would testify that the monastic universities in Tibet and Mongolia not merely preserved the treasures of Sanskrit but also developed the Sanskrit traditions in their seats. Thus Logic and Metaphysics, Medicine and Chemistry from India flourished in Sakya, Tashilhunpo, Drepung, Derge, Kumbum and Urga.

Why the legendary author of Tibetan alphabet, Thomi Sambhota, did not seek inspiration for a script from the great neighbouring country in the east, has puzzled many Sinologists today. As the medium of expression in the Celestial Empire, the Chinese script had a sanctity of its own. Mastery of the ideograph was a hall-mark of academic and bureaucratic power inside the Middle Kingdom while beyond the outermost frontiers of the Middle Kingdom the ideograph was a symbol of culture. A barbarian speaking the Celestial language was a lesser barbarian and if a barbarian could read and write the script his access to power and privilege in the Celestial court was ensured. Besides dissemination of Chinese language and Chinese script beyond the Han frontiers was a fundamental principle of imperial statecraft throughout history. Thus the Manchu, the Mongol and even the Turki (Uighur) had to accept Chinese language and script for varying periods to varying degrees and the vertical form was adopted in Manchu and Mongol scripts. An American Sinologist has therefore described the Tibetan escape from Chinese language and script as an inexplicable phenomenon. The truth of the matter is that the Tibetan speech is not as near the Han as many Sinologists presume. If the term Mongoloid is used in a wide sense both Tibetan and Chinese languages are Mongoloid languages. Tibetan is also a

tonal speech like Chinese but Tibetan is not so predominantly monosyllabic as Chinese. Even if there are affinities, as presumed by some Sinologists, an ideograph established in one language is not necessarily adequate for the imagery and idiom of another. While linguistics and morphology conceal the secrets of failure of Chinese ideograph in Tibet, Tibetans have their own explanation for the success of Sanskrit Aksara. Twenty years ago in Tashilhunpo and Drepung I made enquiries as to why the pictograph was found unsuitable for transcription of Tibetan speech and how did Thomi Sambhota and his colleagues adjudicate the claims of different Indo-Iranian and Mediterranean scripts. I had in mind that the Brahmi script was possibly an import from the west of Saptasindhu and that in the first half of the seventh century Kharosthi and several other scripts were prevalent in the regions west and northwest of Tibet. The answer of the Tibetan scholars was, however, as simple as the Tibetan mind. I was told that there was no need to adjudicate the merits of different phonetic scripts known to Thomi and his friends. The need for a script had arisen out of the need for translating Buddhist texts in Tibetan language. It was thus "a good act" or "a natural process", interdependent on the other processes of Dharma as in Pratyayasamutpada. Thus the script had to be looked for in the same region from where came the Sacred Books. The process did not end with the Svara Vyanjana of Sanskrit or the horizontal Rupa from left to right. The Tibetan book, though made of paper, did not follow the format of Chinese scroll but adopted the palm-leaf format of India. An honorific designation for a Tibetan loose-leaf book is Poti derived from Sanskrit Punthi/Pustika. Indic or Sanskritic sentiments for books and learning have influenced Tibetan mind ever since.

To start with, the invention of alphabet was treated as a divine gift as in Sanskrit tradition; Brahmi was reputed to have come from the mouth of Brahma. It is not certain whether Thomi Sambhota, the formulator of alphabet, devised his set of thirty letters from the archaic Nagari (Ranjana/Lantsha) or from Kashmiri (Sarada) characters. What is certain and indisputable, both among Tibetan believers and modern scholars, is that the Tibetan alphabet was of Brahmi origin. It is curious that while the words Brahmi and Nagari were obsolete in many Indian vernaculars by the beginning of the nineteenth century, these words were current among the Lamas and other learned people all over the Tibetan-speaking world. It is relevant to point out that in India the term Brahmi was a re-discovery towards the middle of the nineteenth century, thanks to archaeologists and epigraphists. In Tibet terms like Aksara, Sabda, Vak or Varna came to be sanctified exactly as in India and each term was most meticulously translated to convey the different meanings under different contexts. The veneration for Aksara as in traditional India was fully reflected in Tibet in handling of books as if they were icons. I was surprised to notice such usage in Tibet in 1955-56. A Tibetan book, even if it be on a mundane matter, cannot be left on the floor or cast away like an old pair of shoes. The Imperishable Object, as the Sacred Letter or Aksara, is the heart of the matter. The Tibetan veneration for Nagari as the kin of Brahmi should be an enlightenment to those scholars who champion transcription of Sanskrit works in Roman and would discard Nagari as internationally less honourable than Roman. I am not a linguist nor by any means am good in reading scripts obsolete in our country today. But for me the most important evidence of Indian culture in Tibet and even the Baikals has been the most ubiquitous presence of the Six Mystic Syllables OM-MA-NI-PAD-ME-HUM on rocks and boulders, stupas and temples, prayerwheels and altars; and I had not the least doubt on my first sight of Six

Mystic Syllables that the Tibetan Aksara was a Rupa of Sanskrit Aksara.

The Tibetan veneration for the Sacred Letter from the Land of Enlightenment was also expressed in calling the vowels and consonants as *Ali* and *Kali*, the two mystic terms used in Tantra but can be traced back to the Veda. The learned Tibetan unhesitatingly affirms that Aksara goes back to pre-Buddhist times in the Veda. The adoration of *Vak* and *Aksara*, *Brahman* and *Sarasvati* in *Rg Veda* and later literature needs no presentation here. What needs emphasis here is that *Sarasvati* is the only Vedic deity and for that matter the only Brahmanical or Hindu deity who is held in highest adoration in Mahayana pantheon and therefore in Northern Buddhist countries like Tibet and Mongolia. While other Hindu deities like *Brahma*, *Indra* or *Ganesa* were incorporated into Mahayana pantheon simply as accessory deities aiding and serving Buddha *Sakyamuni* or other Buddhas and while even some Hindu deities were depicted under the feet of a Buddha or held in utmost ridicule, *Sarasvati* was admitted as a goddess on her own right. The Mahayana veneration for *Sarasvati* progressed across the Himalayas, and as *Yangchen* in Tibet and Mongolia *Sarasvati* is the deity for scholars and laymen alike irrespective of any sectarian considerations. The Tibetan literature from *Thomi Sambhota* down to the twentieth century abounds with utterances and remarks about the significance and sanctity of *Sabda Brahman*.

#### LITERATURE OF INDIA IN TIBET

The translation of the Buddhist canon from Sanskrit into Tibetan has been universally admitted as the most scientific and yet lucid ever before the present day UNESCO programme. The national endeavour in *Bod-yul* (Tibet) running through four centuries may be best described in esoteric diction as the union of *Prajna* (Wisdom) of India and *Upayakausalya* (Ingenuity) of Tibet. Infinite wealth and refinement of Sanskrit had to come to terms with the originality and independence of Tibetan. Western scholars who have mastered *Iranic*, *Sanskritic* and *Sinic* languages have not discovered any affinities between Tibetan and any of these groups. *Basil Gould* and *Hugh Richardson*—speaking, reading and writing Tibetan almost like the Tibetan—wrote in 1943 that “Tibetan is widely separated in vocabulary, grammar and mode of thought from any language with which the learner is expected to be familiar”. Earlier a renowned master of languages, *Denison Ross*, had admitted the same, though he felt that his mastery of Russian was complementary to his mastery of Tibetan and vice-versa. Knowledge of Sanskrit, which *Denison Ross* and *Hugh Richardson* had acquired before beginning Tibetan, did not determine the proficiency of such eminent Tibetologists.

To obtain the exact meaning of Sanskrit words and phrases *Thomi Sambhota* and his successors had first resorted to a servile imitation of Sanskrit layout and style and ignored the claims of Tibetan syntax. This resulted in monstrous compositions which misrepresented the grandeur of Sanskrit and denied the genius of Tibetan language. These translations were later on considerably revised or altogether replaced; a few survive in the manuscripts discovered from the Caves of *Thousand Buddhas* and other sites in the north and north-west of Tibet. In the later or revised translations imagery and idiom of Sanskrit underwent welcome Tibetanization along with honourable acceptance of native idiom and imagery.

No effort was spared to probe into the etymology of a *Sabda* or to unravel

the aphorisms of Vyakarana. Panini and later Sarasvata Vyakarana were studied with the same zeal as in the Tols in India. Thus while each word of the original was rendered into its exact appropriate in Tibetan, the Tibetan syntax was complied with. For every translation there would be one (or two) Indian scholar knowing Tibetan and one (or two) Tibetan scholar knowing Sanskrit. For support to translators, compilation of grammars and lexicons was also taken in hand. For widely used or commonplace terms like Buddha, Dharma or Sangha uniform sets of equivalents were fixed by a central council of translators. The result of the translations from the time of Thomi (c. 650) till the propagation by Atisa (c. 1050) were later incorporated into two encyclopaedic collections called Kanjur and Tanjur. Kanjur stands for Buddhavacana and Tanjur for Sastra. Thus Abhidharma, Prajnaparamita and Vinaya, the treatises of Nagarjuna, Asanga and Dignaga or the latest Mahayana tracts from Pala Bengal are all enshrined in these collections. But for this faithful and yet idiomatic translation many of the Buddhist Sanskrit works would have been lost forever.

Through such scientific translations and regular exchange with Nepali and Indian scholars, imagery and idiom of Sanskrit became a part and parcel of Tibetan literature and later, when Mongols embraced the Dharma, of Mongol literature. This impact is noticed most in the art of dialectics, science of poetics, and historiography. Buddhist logic with Indian art of polemics and Indian logician's mannerisms flourished in refuge in Sakya, Drepung and Urga. For models of rhetoric and prosody, men of letters in Tibet and Mongolia invariably referred back to Kavyadarsa and such works from India. Dialectics or poetics were, however, not much developed in Tibet before the advent of Dharma; therefore such Indic elements in Tibetan literature were more in the nature of innovations than revolutions. For a true revolution in Tibetan literature one has to notice the historiographical writings in Tibet. In the beginning, that is, before Sanskrit made its impact, the annals and chronicles of Tibet were inspired by the Chinese tradition of Shih-chi (the Record of the Scribe—the Record of a Historian). The Chinese method of record-keeping meant a meticulous regard for events and their dates. The Indian tradition of historical writings, as is well known, was indifferent to mundane happenings and their chronological sequence. The victory of Buddhism in Tibet was eventually the victory of Indian attitude to objects mundane. Men of letters including historical scholars, submitted to the Indian tradition. The Tibetan nomenclature for records, Yig-tshang, yielded to a new form Chon-jung (Chos-bhyung) or the Growth of Religion. As the new nomenclature suggests the subject-matter of history was now the Dharma, its origin in India and its growth in the Trans-Himalayas. The Dharma was eternal and everything else was transitory; therefore the story of Dharma was history par excellence. The ideal history was no longer the Records (Yig-tshang) or the Line of Kings (Rgyal-rabs) but the Dharmakahini (Chos-hnyung). The lives and thoughts of the saints and scholars, the doctrinal debates and the constructions of temples and monasteries were now the stuff for the historiographer. Even then a strong sense for historical sequence and a high regard for firm chronology continued to characterize the chronicles of Tibet. It cannot be denied that Tibetan historical writings contained much useful data for history of the neighbouring countries. Taranatha's 'History of Buddhism' abounds with legends and myths but provides some unimpeachable evidence where Indian literary sources are silent.

A measure of Sanskrit impact on Tibetan and Mongol languages is

provided by the wide currency of loan-words from Sanskrit. While a most faithful and yet perfect translation of the entire corpus of Sanskrit vocabulary was achieved and even many proper names like Asoka and Vaisali were rendered into Tibetan, for academic as well as sentimental grounds the Sanskrit forms of certain words were preferred. Thus while Buddha, Dharma and Sangha or Veda and Vijnana were always expressed in Tibetan forms, terms like Guru and Muni or Sakyamuni and Panini have been used in the original form down to our times. Not that good Tibetan equivalents could not be coined but that such coinage could not satisfactorily convey the full context of the term. It will be interesting to give a few examples of Sanskrit loan-words : Om, Mani, Padma, Varanasi, Nalanda, Taksasila. Some Sanskrit words underwent sea-change in spelling and pronunciation. Five such loan-words common to Tibetan and Mongol would be—Arya, Dharma, Pandita, Ratna, Vajra. In Mongol there was a greater zeal to have as many Sanskrit words as possible for the Mongol translators rightly found that in the relay of Dharma from Sanskrit to Mongol via Tibetan the original context would be more obscure. I need also record my most pleasant experience in the Baikals regions to hear the Buriat Mongols uttering the words like Adisa (Atisa), Bandita (Pandita) and Erteni (Ratna) without any efforts in their prayers in Mongol and their talks in Russian.

If I tell a Lama that modern researches have proved that there are substantial non-Aryan elements in Sanskrit vocabulary and that such words as Candana, Danda, Pandita and Bilva are probably of Dravidian stock the Lama would retort that whatever is Sanskrit is Arya. If I argue further I may offend the Trans-Himalayan believer be he a monk or a layman, a scholar or a muleteer. I had on several occasions told Lamas that in modern Indian opinion Buddha Sakyamuni would be traced to Tibeto-Mongoloid stock and not Indo-Aryan. Far from pleasing the Lamas my statement was a sort of blasphemy which pained them considerably. To a Northern Buddhist all moral and spiritual values are from Aryabhumi and Buddha Sakyamuni could not but be Arya and the language of Prajnaparamita was indeed Arya par excellence.

#### IV

### ROLE OF INDIAN SCRIPT

The role of the script in the evolution of Tibetan civilization has been as historic as that of the religion. The most amazing story of Tibet—as the only neighbour of China—to have gone out of the bounds of pictograph has been narrated above. Firm adherence to phonetic script not only ruled out any further association with Confucian literati or Han court but also opened wide the doors on the south as well as the west. With this new instrument of learning Tibet would not only absorb all that could be had from India but would also go west to Iran, Arabia, Byzantium and Rome. Under the auspices of AKSARA, the intelligentsia of Tibet could enjoy the Aesop's Fables and Sufi poems. Tibet was no longer a Barbarian neighbour of China and could now freely exchange ideas as well as commodities with a much wider world than the Celestial Middle Kingdom. As the Lamas would say the AKSARA made Tibet morally and materially independent of China. Tibet's intellectual as well as economic salvation lay in the AKSARA.

Political salvation of Tibet was also served in Tibet's rejection of the



Chinese script or refusal to have any adaptation of the Chinese script. Chinese anxiety to propagate their script in eastern regions of Tibet, particularly in Kokonor (Tsinghai) region, throughout the nineteenth century was both a symbol of Han colonial expansion and a move to liquidate the script as well as the language which distinguish the Bod-pa from the Han.

In ancient India, the Imperishable Object or Aksara was considered a divine gift come out of the mouth of Brahman. This Aksara migrated to the Land of Snows in the seventh century after Christ. In both India and Tibet the phonetic script was adored as most convenient and systematic form for expression of ideas.

For Tibet the phonetic script was also the symbol of identity and independence vis-a-vis China. An anxiety to disown any Chinese association with matters relating to DHARMA determined the Tibetan preference for Kamalasila and expulsion of Hashang from Lhasa. Propagation of DHARMA by Chinese scholars and monks was banned for ever after the Lhasa Debate. A mystery play which celebrated the Expulsion of Hashang was a favourite item in the New Year Month in different parts of Tibet till the middle of this century.

#### ROLE OF INDIAN RELIGION

The entry of Buddhism from India was the most decisive event in the history of Tibet, China as well as India. Significantly enough the Chinese annals do not record much and are quite silent about the first Tibetan king's conversion. On the otherhand the contacts with Chinese Buddhism, both before and after the official adoption of Indian Buddhism, feature in Chinese annals.

Denigration of Buddhism from China could not be defended on any metaphysical or theological grounds for the Chinese expositions were, at least in the contemporaneous Tang times, most faithful to the original Indian patterns. The Sino-phile scholars therefore describe Tibetan antagonism to Chinese Buddhism as bigoted servility to the scholars and monks from India. The Sino-phobe scholars would call this a natural tendency to have the religion direct from the land where it originated.

The truth of the matter lies in considerations other than metaphysical or theological. We have to find the truth in extra-spiritual or secular considerations which eventually led to decline and near-extinction of Buddhism in China. Buddhism could never become a national religion in China for three simple reasons. The Buddhist monks would not kowtow to the Son of Heaven while the Confucian literati did. Buddhism preached negation of soul and proscribed ancestor worship. Buddhism preached equality: equality between man and woman, and equality between 'barbarian' and 'civilized'. Buddhism was in short 'a barbarian religion' with priests in 'barbarian dress'. Thus except the Tang emperors, no Han Son of Heaven ever subscribed to Buddhism. Shrewd Tibetan statesmen were no doubt seized of the precarious position of Buddhism in China and when they had a choice between China and India they would go in for India. For Tibet, they rightly apprehended, Chinese Buddhism would be the Trojan Horse.

As later events proved, the DHARMA gained for Tibet freedom at home

and freedom abroad. Feudal lords and kings made room for the Lamas and Grand Lamas. In Tibetan (and Mongol) belief the emergence of the Lama as Protector (Kyabgon) was prophesied in *Saddharmapundarika Sutra*. When Atisa (Srijnana Dipankara) visited Tibet (1042-1054) he confirmed this; he prophesied the fall of monarchy in the Land of Snows and the advent of Sangharatna Avalokitesvara as the Dharmaraja.

Fourteen incarnations of Avalokitesvara—the fourteen Dalai Lamas—are known to have ruled Tibet in fulfilment of ancient prophecies. “As the supreme civil and religious ruler of Tibet the Dalai Lama enjoyed a real divine right and unlimited prestige”. There were no restraints, internal or external, on the Dalai Lama’s sovereignty.

Tibet owed her identity and independence to the DHARMA. Tibet acknowledged that DHARMA, the gift from India, had saved Tibet from Sinification.

## REFERENCES

### DOCUMENTS

*Constitution of Tibet* Promulgated by His Holiness The Dalai Lama on March 10, 1963 : Original Text in Tibetan with an English Translation (Dharamsala 1963).

*Tibetan Precise* by H. E. Richardson (Printed for Official Use by Government Press 1945).

### PUBLICATIONS

- DAS, S. : *Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow* (Calcutta 1893)  
DEMIEVILLE, P. : *Le Concile de Lhasa* (Paris 1952)  
ELIADE, M. : *Shamanism* (London 1964)  
HOFFMANN, H. : *The Religions of Tibet* (London 1961)  
PALLIS, M. : *Peaks and Lamas* (London 1974)  
SINHA, N. C. : *Prolegomena to Lamaist Polity* (Calcutta 1969)  
SINHA, N.C. : “Sanskrit across the Himalayas” in *Proceedings of the First International Sanskrit Conference* (New Delhi 1975)  
SNELLGROVE, D. E.  
& : *A Cultural History of Tibet* (London 1968)  
RICHARDSON, H. E.  
STEIN, R. A. : *Tibetan Civilization* (London 1972)  
TUCCI, G. : *Indo-Tibetica* (Rome 1932-41)  
TUCCI, G. : *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Rome 1949)

## INDIA AND TIBET

### —A STUDY IN INTERDEPENDENCE—

### SYNOPSIS

The theme will be presented in three lectures under the captions: (1) India and Tibet—Geographical Considerations; (2) India and Tibet—Historical Considerations; and (3) India and Tibet—Material Considerations.

The first lecture presents the theme of India and Tibet being a geographical unit, a unit of physical interdependence; India being more at the receiving end than Tibet. The second lecture presents the fact of India and Tibet in the past being in the same world of cultural, moral and spiritual values; Tibet being more at the receiving end than India. The third and concluding lecture contends that neither India nor Tibet could afford to have a hostile, indifferent or non-cooperative neighbour. Both for economic considerations and security reasons, Tibet and India have to cultivate active mutual aid in the race for survival.

The expressions India and Tibet in these three lectures would generally refer to the two geographical entities as known till the middle of this century. For India the terminal date is 1947 and for Tibet the terminal date is 1951. India and Tibet are in these lectures, by and large, terms of human and cultural geography and either expression (India or Tibet) stands more for the soul of a people than for the soil of a country. The three lectures in totality, however, trace the inter-relationship between the matter and the spirit.

The pioneer scholars and leading authorities whose works are being drawn upon are listed at the end of each lecture. Specific and detailed references to their works and publications are not made for the simple reason that the author has weighed fully the data provided by these pioneers and authorities with his own findings and therefore this author takes full responsibility for the facts stated and the opinions expressed in these three lectures. This responsibility is entirely personal or individual on the part of this author and no office or institution with which this author is or was ever connected should in any way be associated with the facts and opinions expressed in these lectures. NCS 19.7.77