

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
THE GOVERNOR OF SIKKIM, PRESIDENT,
S.R.I.T. NATIONAL SEMINAR ON 29TH MARCH, 1995.**

Distinguished guests and delegates to the National Seminar, Seekers of Truth, patrons of learning friends,

At the very outset, I congratulate all of you being with us this morning to participate in the National Seminar organised by the Sikkim Researched Institute of Tibetology of Sikkim. At a time when men are mostly engaging themselves in the pursuit of materialistic gains and sybaritic pleasures, only the fortunate and chosen ones are endowed with the desire and will to utilise their time in fruitful search for higher knowledge and transcendental wisdom. The sublime sight of so many eager seekers as well as erudite savants and sages who have congregated here today to mark a brilliant chapter in the annals of this land brings me infinite joy and ecstatic delight.

The subject matters chosen for this Seminar are infact most relevant to the proper study and understanding of the history of Sikkim. Despite all the sociocultural changes that have affected the traditions, folkways and polity of the land, Sikkim is even today known to be a bastion of Buddhism, a veritable cradle of Buddhist thoughts and practice.

The Great Guru revered and devoutly worshipped by the teeming millions of ardent Buddhists all over the world and especially in the Tibetan world as Lopen Chenpo Pema Jungne or Guru Padmasambhava, the Lotus born is unequivocally accepted as the second Buddha (Sangya-Nyipa). Tradigion has it that in the 8th Century A.D., He was born most immaculately from a Lotus which was blossoming amidst the lake Dhanakosha. The historical legened of His birth has been depicted here in this Instiute in the form of the colossal Statue of the Master seated on a Lotus pedestal amidst the waters of the lake. This exquisitely carved Image is a befitting tribute to the Guru inspired by His own Compassionate Grace. The place of his birth has been identified as Odiyana in the Swat Valley which now falls in Afghanistan. Form the very begining, he was a precocious child with an innate proclivity for renunciation and inner search. He did renounce at a very early age and proceeded to Bodhgaya (Vajrasana) where he performed the most arduous austerities and penance for 35 years till he attained complete enlightenment. Thence, he went to Mandi in Himachal Pradesh where he converted many agnostics and set them on the righteous path of Dharma. When he was at Nalanda as the Principal Tantric Teacher (Vajracarya), he was invited by the Tibetan King Thir Srong-deu-btsan to visit Tibet and establish the Buddha Shasana, at the behest of the Royal Preceptor Pandit Shantarakshita. He proceeded to Tibet via Nepal and established the first Buddhist Monastery known as Samye thereby laying the foundations of Buddhism in Tibet.

Form Tibet, he made his sojourn to Sikkim which was known to the Tibetans as Beyul Demojong as described by the Master himself. Etymologically, Beyul meant Hidden Country or Land and Demojong meant The Land of Rice which figuratively meant the Land of Plenty and Prosperity. In the apocalyptic works ascribed to the Guru, Beyul Demojong was to be regarded as the most sacrosanct land of pilgimage. The Guru, accompanied by Pandit

Bulletin of Tibetology

Shantarakshita and his retinue of twenty five cardinal disciples known as Je Bang Nyer Lna, visited Dhakar Tashiding in Western Sikkim where the imprints of their feet and physical body can be seen even today clearly inscribed on stones and rocks as living testimonies of their historic visit. Thereafter, he tamed and exorcised the malignant spirits that were infesting the land and entrusted them with the responsibility of safeguarding the Dharma in the form of Dharmapalas (Nag Sung). The principal Dharmapalas guarding the northern, middle and the southern parts of the land were Ghang-Chen-Zod-Lna (commonly known as the mountain deity Kanchenjunga) in the North, Pao Hungri in the middle and Yab Dud or Mahakala in the south. Monastic potentates depicting these three manifest themselves wearing their respective masks during the monastic dances like Pang-Lha-Sol etc.

The Guru further consecrated four holy caves in Sikkim situated in the four cardinal directions with Tashiding at the center. These caves are Be Phug in the east, Dechen Phung in the west, Lhari Nying Phug in the North and Khando sang Phug in the south. At Khando sang-phug, the entrails, blood and inner organs of a witch can still be seen in the form of fossils, who was tamed and vanquished by Guru Padmasambhava. At Tashiding, the Guru sat in meditation at the cave called Tche-chu-Phug where he materialised a perennial source of sweet nectarine water to quench the thirsts of the natives inhabiting the adjoining area.

TEACHINGS : It may not be necessary to dwell upon the teachings of this great Master since days and months of deliberations on his teachings may not perhaps suffice to satiate our thirst for the ancient Wisdom taught by him. Nevertheless, I will contend that the essence of the Guru's Teaching is what is universally known as ATI YOGA OF Zogpa chenpo. We all know that Tantric doctrine can be classified into four categories. KRIYA YOGA, CARYA YOGA, YOGA TANTRA or ANUTTARA YOGA and ATI YOGA. Anto Yoga thus is the culmination of zenith of the Tantras. While at the Sheetalavana cemetery in Bodhgaya where he was performing penance, he had the vision of eight knowledge-holders (Tib. Rigzin Gye) who imparted to him their respective teachings. These teachings later on formed the sheet-anchor his doctrine known as Dub-pa-Ka-Gye. The Guru manifested himself in eight different forms collectively known as Guru tshen Gye while performing the miraculous acts of subduing and vanquishing devils and propagating the Dhamma.

You will all agree with me that the entire gamut of Sikkim's variegated culture has had an indelible impact of Buddhism. It is in this context that we gratefully acknowledge the gargantuan contributions of Guru Padmasambhava in shaping the religio-cultural tapestry of Sikkim. Way back in circa fifteenth century, there lived a Tibetan Chieftain famed to be the possessor of immense strength equal to that of a hundred thousand men. He was Khey Bumsa, who in his anguish for not having any issue to continue his progeny, met the Lepcha anchorite Thekong Teg and his wife Nekong Nyal at Kabhi Longtsok in North Sikkim where a blood-covenant was made by these two chieftains to consider each other as ethnically bound together. The Tibetan Chieftain was duly blessed with three valiant sons among whom the youngest one named Mipon Rab (Leader among men) became the progenitor of the ruled over the land for three centuries and three decades.

In the mid 17th century A.D., four Siddhas or Yogins met at Yuksam Norbugang as predestined by the Guru's Prophecy. These Yogins collectively known as the Nal-Jor-Ched-Zhi were Lhatsub Namkha Kathog Rigzin chenpo, Ngadag Sempa Chenpo and Phuntsog

Namgyal. The former three deliberated together at Yuksam and crowned the fourth one as the first consecrated Dharma Raja of Sikkim. These Siddhas laid the foundations of cultural centres like monasteries, stupas, temples etc. in Sikkim and also consecrated the four holy caves besides many other subsidiary caves and shrines.

Thus we find that the Tibetans were the first migratory group of people who came to Sikkim from the early part of the eight century. Although the main bulk of the Tibetans reached Sikkim only after the advent of the four Yogins, Guru Rinpoche's sojourn to this land prove it in ample measure that there did exist some type of social-cultural intercourse between Tibet and Sikkim from the early 8th century A.D.

The next group of people to come and settle in this regions were the Nepalis from the early part of the 19th century though castes like the Tsongs and Limbus who were racially mongoloid did anticipate the Newars by atleast five centuries approximately. The beginning of the 20th century marked the influx of settlers from the plains of India who were predominantly Marwaris and Biharis. Although the early history of Sikkim is marked by the influence of Buddhism, the racial influx of the later times ushered in many cultural strains which got amalgamated with the existing system in a splendid process of acculturation. Today, there are Hindus, Buddhists and small cross section of Muslims and Christians too who are co-existing together in a unique atmosphere of accommodation, tolerance and harmony.

Dear friends and fellow pilgrims, to me all these appear to be the logical sequence of history. Tibet which was once inhabited by shamanists and necromancers derived the soothing and embalming doctrine of the Buddha from India. In eternal gratitude, the Lo-tsabas or translators while translating the voluminous treatises from either Sanskrit or Pali into Tibetan always prefixed their work with the legend - Gyagar Kyed Du followed by Bod Kyed Du which meant "In the Indic language known in the Tibetan language thus". I may not be wrong if I further enumerate this by contending that what is now extant in the Tibet Translational Works are more or less extant in their Sanskrit originals. In this broad way, Tibetology is verily the study of Indology.

Sikkim is thus the cauldron in which the great cultures of Tibet and India have been synthesised together to evolve as a land of variegated cultures and traditions.

Once again I congratulate you all to have come from various parts of the country far and near to this unique land, the State of Sikkim to take part in a Seminar which will be immense fascination to all historians and scholars. I am also confident that much of the unwritten facts and conventions would be gathered during the personal discussions. There is a lot to be written and told about the profound cultural links of this place with the rest of the country which stands unique in many ways. Perhaps this is for the first time in the history of the Institute that a scholarly deliberation and exchange of thoughts on the historical perspective of Guru Padmasambhava's Contributions to Sikkim and also Cultural Aspect of Sikkim is being organised. I need not remind those who are present here today of the tremendous impact that this beautiful Himalayan State has had in shaping the history and culture of our country through the ages. I do sincerely wish that you will all leave the State with more enlightened views about Tibetology and the Historical perspective of the Himalayan region.

TASHI DELEK JAI HIND



Mt. KHANGCHENDZONGA