

Notes & Topics

The article entitled "More Early Inscriptions From Tibet" by Hugh Edward Richardson was published in the Bulletin No. 2 of 18 July, 1988. The author has now written to us regarding an erroneous reference in respect of a date in that article.

Relevant portion of the letter from Mr. Richardson is reproduced below :

"May I make correction to my article "More Early Inscriptions from Tibet" in the Bulletin for 1988 No. 2? On p. 6 in the first para I wrote that the monkey year in which the inscription was made "can only be 804 A.D" I had assumed that Khri Lde-srong-brtsan died in 815 — a year before the monkey year 816; that date is given also in Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa's "Tibet". But Sa-skya Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan in his Bod-gyi rgyal-rab states that Khri Lde-srong-brtsan died in a bird year; and in the Tang Annals his death is stated to have been reported in China in 817. That was a Tibetan bird year. It is most likely that the monkey year of the inscription is 816 by which time negotiations for a treaty had been going on since 810 when the Chinese Emperor sent a letter on the subject to the great monk-minister Bran-ka Dpal-gyi yon-tan (See Pelliot, Histoire Ancienne du Tibet, p 125; and Demieville, Le Concile de Lhasa p. 224)"

Summary of the Wheel of Life

We know that the Karmic formation and ignorance whose intrinsic nature is misery, produce the afflicted mental and physical aggregates (Phung-po). Here the reason for contemplating on the Wheel of Life from the standpoint of twelve causal factors is to know that all the declining elements have their root in ignorance. This ignorance, which is like an obdurate darkness, has to be conquered.

How does one conquer this obdurate darkness? First by clearing the erroneous view that all the internal and external elements have no cause or that they arise out of different causes as fire out of water. Having absorbed, contemplated and developed the Buddha's rich treasure of knowledge, it generates awareness to the path of emancipation after being disgusted with the transient life. One who has endeavoured on this in his past lives is gifted with inborn inclination to progress towards the exalted state.

In Arya-Subahu-pariprccha-nama-tantra(Tib.'phags-pa dpung-bzang rgyud), it is mentioned that in order to overcome ignorance, one has to contemplate on the twelve dependent origination. Having fully perceived the twelve causal factors, according to Arya-Salistambha-nama-mahayanasutra (Tib. 'phags-pa Sa-lu-ljang-pahimdo), one will be freed from the retribution of his Karma and can foresee the end of his future rebirth. Moreover, he will not hold on the fallacious views and by virtue of this, no heretical views can arise within him. According to Nagarjuna, the meaning of the twelve dependent origination is the essence of all the teachings of the Buddha. For him the victorious were those who have understood the essence of the doctrine of relative existence and those who have diligently studied its subtle meaning.

- J.K. Rechung