

NOTES & TOPICS

The concept of Dharmaraja has great significance not only in ancient Indian history but also in Tibetan history as they are known as Chos-rgyal. The concept of the phrase has been taken from Brahmanical and Buddhist literature. It was introduced in Tibetan literature through the dissemination of Buddhism and translation of scriptures from Sanskrit in 7th – 8th C. A.D.

In general the word Dharmarāja means the king who protects his subject and rules according to Buddhist tenets/Chos. The recognition of the Chos-rgyal began during the reign of Srong-btsan sgam-po, i.e., 7th century. But even earlier during the period of Thi-ri Nyan-tsen there was no bar on using the phrase Chos-rgyal since the phrase was used in the Kadam Legbum and in the biography of Sonam Chogden written by the Fifth Dalai Lama. But the usage of the phrase was greater during the reign of Srong-btsan sgam-po since Buddhism flourished during this period.

As noted in the famous Tibetan phrase 'Chos-rgyal mid-dbang rnam-gsum' the designation of 'Chos-rgyal' had been put to a regular use from the time of three distinguished rulers of Tibet, i.e., Srong-btsan sgam-po, Thri-srong lde-btsan and Ral-pa-can onwards.

In general the Chos-rgyals are regarded as the reincarnation of Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteshvara and Samantabhadra, etc. The reason for the Bodhisattvas to be reborn as kings is because of the fact that the Tibetan people greatly respected their kings and as such the position and power of kings was used to propagate the Chos among the subjects. This fact has been reflected also in the Kadam Legbum and other books such as the Blue Annals and the Biography of the IVth Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso written by the Vth Dalai Lama.

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