

GURU PADMASAMBHAVA'S CONTRIBUTION :
The Genesis of Buddhism in Sikkim.

-Chewang Acharya

1 Some views and opinions about the time and place of Guru padmasambhava's birth.

When the Buddha was about to pass away at Kushinagar and his disciples were weeping. He said to them, "The world being transitory and death inevitable for all living beings, the time for my own departure has come, but weep not, for twelve years after my departure, from a lotus blossom in the Dhanakosha Lake, in the North-Western direction of the country of Ugyen there will be born one who will be much wiser and more spiritually powerful than Myself. He will be called Padmasambhava and he will transmit the Esoteric Doctrine in the world". These were the last words predicted by the Buddha Gautama just before the day of his Parinirvana. These lines were based upon a passage in the Tibetan Canonical *KANJUR* Buddhist Canon of Tibet.

Padmasambhava himself is quoted as having said it was 8 years after the passing. Similar prophecies are recorded in the Sutras like "Parinirvana Sutra" and "Lankavatar Sutra" and in Tantric Treatise like "La-med Thon-rZogs hDuspai rGyud" of Buddha's teachings.

The supernormal birth of Padmasambhava from a Lotus blossoms signifies immaculate emanation, that is birth unsullied by a human womb. Such birth, so the Kanjur accounts implies, is essential to Tantric incarnation or emanation of the Buddha-essence.

In many of his Biographies represents the great Guru as having flourished in India and elsewhere in the human world for many centuries. He being a master of Yoga, lived, as been already suggested above in a non-fleshy body, immune to illness, old age, and death. He is thus idealised living exponent of Buddhism practically applied and in this respect, the second Buddha is more powerful than the Buddha Gautama, as the Tibetan Buddhist believe.

It is uniformly mentioned in all the biographies of the Guru revealed by many Tertons¹ that the Guru's Day of birth is held to be the Tenth of the Fifth Month of Tibetan Calendar, this day, the Tenth is called "The Blessed Day for the World" and correlatively, the Tenth Day of every month of Tibetan Calendar is observed as the Great Guru's Day and the Tibetan call it "*TSE-CHU*" which means "The Tenth Day".

Amdo Gedun Chopel was a renowned scholar who spent his life in writing about and travelling almost all Buddhist Holy places said that Oddiyana the land of Ugyen is situated in the North-West of Bodha Gaya. He said that modern Swat Valley in Peshawar is the right place of Guru Rinpoche i.e. Oddiyana. Gedun Chopel personally visited and had seen the ruins of stupas and other evidences from the Swat Valley.

Even in the memories of Alexander the Great and Fa Heins Travellogue, Swat Valley, in Peshawar was described as Oddiyana where Dhanakosha Lake was.

Note: 1. Terton, is an accomplished being who reveals the Hidden Treasure

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No matter where and when the great Guru was born his teachings and sacred holy places where he visited were the real living proof and evidence. Because of his Tantric teachings many of his disciples attained the highest stage of Buddhahood.

2. A brief account of the Founding Fathers of *Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet* :-

When Padmasambhava was at Bodha Gaya strengthening the Doctrine, the thought came to him that the time had come for him to proceed to Tibet, the Land of Snow and established Tantric teaching firmly. In eighth century, King Tri-Srong Deu-Tsan, the 38th ruler of the royal lineage, took action to bring the full blessing of the Dharma to Tibet. The King invited Bodhisattva Shantarakshita from Nalanda University, India's foremost scholar, to come to Tibet for the purpose of establishing the foundation for a Sangha and transmitting his Vinaya lineage to first Buddhist monks in Tibet. When difficulties arose in establishing Buddha Dharma, the king invited Padmasambhava the most powerful master of Oddiyana, from Buddha Gaya to dispel and subdue all evil spirits. These three Bodhisattvas built the great Monastic University-Samye and established a firm foundation for the Dharma in Tibet.

The king invited many more scholars and Pandits from India and within a generation, these Scholars from India and Nepal working with Tibetan Translators had rendered into Tibetan almost the entire bulk of the Buddha's teachings. These Translations were preserved in the Tibetan Canon: Kanjur (108 Vols.) together with a large numbers of commentaries and treatises (Tengyur-225 Vols.) that supported the four major Buddhist philosophical schools.

During this time, the great Vidyadharas, bearers of esoteric knowledge, transmitted Mantrayana teachings to their Tibetan disciples. Guru Padmasambhava and the masters like Buddha guhya, Vimala Mitra and Tibetan Lotsava Vairochana conveyed the realisation of the Tantras, the outer Tantras of Kriya, Charya and Yoga, the inner Tantras of Mahayoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga.

Therefore Khenchen Bodhisattva, Guru Padmasambhava and Chogyal Tri-Srong Dentsan became known as the "Khen-Lop-Chos-gSum" (Abbot, Master and Dharma King) became the founding fathers of the Dharma in Tibet.

The lineages established by the early masters, transmitted unbroken from masters to disciples for nearly twelve centuries have come down to modern times through the Nyingma Tradition, the oldest of the four major Tibetan schools of Buddhism that survived today. The Tradition that preserved the lineage since Buddha, and Padmasambhava introduced earlier in Tibet is known as rNyingma, the old school and the schools that developed from the lineages brought to Tibet after the 10th century became known as gSarma or the New School. The three major gSarma Traditions that continued today are the Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug.

3. Padmasambhava's visit to Beyul Demojong and His Blessings :-

Denjong is purely a land of peace and prosperity since the establishment of Buddhism in the mid 17th century. It is historically known as Beyul Demojong: The Sacred Hidden Land, as soon as Guru Padma visited personally and blessed in 8th century by mediating in its four corners and fortifying it against all the obscurities of human existence and establishing Nyingma order of Tibetan Buddhism here. Many of his teachings compiled and left behind his teachings and guidelines in sacred safe places under the care of Dharmapalas and Dakinis¹.

Jomu Yeshi Tsogyal² requested and received the essence of the Tantric Teachings from Guru Rinpoche. With an unflinching memory, she transcribed his teachings reduced their mean-

ing to symbolic form in a codified script (Khadro Dha-Yig), known only to the inner circle of initiates. She prepared these Terma Texts on special yellow parchment, some of which were abbreviated to one page while others contained many folios and were much more extensively detailed. Hundreds of these Texts were then carefully wrapped, immune to the hazards of weather and natural deterioration and hidden away for safe keeping in specific locations designated by Padmasambhava in different places of Tibet, Nepal, India, Sikkim, Bhutan and Afganistan etc. These are to be discovered, identified, deciphered and interpreted later by predestined persons of Tertons who have powers to discover and bring forth the secret writings.

Because of the discovery of such hidden texts, Sikkim was once again introduced Buddhism during the time of "rNal-Byar-mChed-bZhi" the four legendary masters from Tibet whose name and time were mentioned in one of such Hidden Texts, discovered by pioneer Lama Lhatsun Chenpo in 17th century. By this time Buddhism had become a most powerful hierarchy in Tibet and was extending its creed among the Himalayan and Central Asian tribes.

4 Efflorescence of Buddhism in Sikkim.

The name of "rNal-jor Che-Shi" is very famous in the history of Sikkim. So it is must and most important to explain its brief account, how these four legendary masters followed the guidelines given in the Holy Prophecy of Guru Padmasambhava, and establishment of their respective centres in this holy land.

As mentioned above, all the works of Padmasambhava which were secretly hidden in order to preserve them for posterity, and which were to be revealed to the world when the time was ripe. So accordingly, the time came for establishing Buddha Dharma in this part of the land when the four masters found the Terma of the Guru and opened the gate of the Dharma in Sikkim.

The first Lama Lhatsun Namkha Jigmed was a native of Kongpo, South-Eastern Tibet. He started his mission from the Northern Sikkim traversing the Kangla Nangma and finding no road beyond the cave, flew miraculously to the upper part of the Kabru Mountain (24,000 ft.) and opened the Northern Gate via Dzongri and reached modern Yuksum, West Sikkim. The Northern gate according to Guru was the most difficult pass among the four Gates mentioned in the prophecy.

The second Lama Kathog Rigzin Chenpo who followed the Western route Single-La through Dorjeeling and opened the Western Gate, entered the holy land and reached Yuksum, West Sikkim.

The third Lama Nga-Dag Sempa Chenpo who opened the Southern Gate through Namchi and reached Yuksum, West Sikkim. All the learned Lamas met together at Yuksum

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1. Dakini :- an exalted class of fairy-like spiritual beings.
 2. Yeshe Tsogyal :- was Guru's closest disciple and who mastered the great Guru's entire teachings. She did not die, but disappeared in a radiance of rainbow light. She symbolises the shakti of the great Guru.

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Norbugang in mid 17th century.

Therefore the place where these three enlightened beings met was called by the local Lepchas "Yuksum" which means "the Three Superior One" or "The Three Lamas". Among the four noble brothers (Nal-jor Che-Shi), the fourth one was called Phuntsog by name, who was a descendent of brave ancestors of Kham in Eastern Tibet. He possessed all the qualities that were mentioned in the prophecy. He was found from Gangtok, East Sikkim and finally invited to Yuksum. The three learned Lamas traditionally enthroned him as the first Chogyal of Sikkim in 1641 A.D. in the presence of many local people and named him Chogyal Phuntsog Namgyal. So the Namgyal Dynasty came into being.

5. Consolidation of Nyingma Order of Tibetan Buddhism by establishing religious centres thereafter.

The first and the oldest monastery Dupde Gonpa was established in the year 1701 founded by the pioneer Lama Lhatsun Chenpo at Yuksum and it is still intact and its wall painting are superb. Its sanctity is maintained for it is the oldest Gonpa in the history of Sikkim. Then followed by Sang-Nga Choling Gonpa and Pema Yang-Tse Gonpa in 1705. Pema Yang-Tse Gonpa is the biggest and the most honoured Gonpa in the history of Sikkimese Gompas. Many Gompas like Enchey Gonpa, 1840, Phenzang Gonpa 1840 and other also adopted the same Terma of Lhatsun Ghenpo and Rigzin Ter-dak Lingpa that were practised and preached by Mindroling Monastery, one of the main Nyingmapa Centres in Central Tibet for their ritual practice and traditional system.

Tashiding Gonpa, 1716 A.D. and Zilnon Gonpa, 1716 A.D. were built by Nga-Dag Sempa Chenpo in West Sikkim. Many gompas like Namchi Gonpa and Thangmoche Gonpa followed the same ritual practice and traditional systems as Tashiding and Zilnon Gonpa. These gompas adopted and gave pre-eminence to the Terton work of Ringzin-Go-Dem-Can as a code of ritual which is preserved in Dorje-Dag Monastery one of the main Nyingmapa Centres in South East, Lhasa.

Kathog Gonpa, 1840 A.D. was established by the follower of Kathog Rigzin Chenpo at Pakyong, East Sikkim and Doling Gonpa 1840 was the site of Terton Dorjeelingpa at Soshing, South Sikkim. These gompas adopted the ritual system of Terma works that are preserved by Kathog Monastery at Derge in Kham, Eastern Tibet.

Since then the incarnation of Lhatsun Chenpo and other learned Lamas, came into Sikkim and consolidated Buddhism every corners of this land. Till the date of 1884, it is said that there are more than 40 Gompas all over Sikkim.

There are eight or nine main gompas in Sikkim. They are mainly Pema Yang-Tse and Tashiding Gonpa in the West, Ralang and Doling Gonpa in the South, Rumtek Gonpa, Kathog Gonpa and Enchey Gonpa in the East, and Phodong Gonpa and Phenzang Gonpa in the North. Each of these Gompas have their annual function during which they organise Cham i.e. Mask Dances and Black Hat Dances to dispel obstacles and bring peace for all.

Name of the monasteries in Sikkim are mostly in Tibetan language and are of an ideal or mystic nature, but some are physically descriptive of the site. Few are Lepcha place names which are also of a descriptive character.

According to prophecy of Guru Rinpoche, there are four main holy caves where Guru had meditated and consecrated. Some of his secret writings were revealed from these caves by Terton-Rigzin Go-Dem Can and Terton Lhatsun Chenpo. These holy caves are now being

the objects of pilgrimage for all. People from all over India, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and others visit these countries holy-places and seek blessings.

Finally, the principal abode of Sikkim is "Gang-Chen Zod-Nga" who was entrusted as the guardian God of Denzong by Guru Rinpoche. He dwells in a snow mountain. The Mt. was named after the name of the God as Khancanzonga the second highest mountain after Everest.

Gangcen Zod Nga literally means "the five repositories of the ledges of the great snow". It is clearly described in the "Denzong Lamyig" of Guru Rinpoche revealed by Lhatsun Chenpo. The five repositories are real storehouses of the god's treasures (1) The storehouse of salt. (2) Gold and Turquoise. (3) Secret writings of Guru and various methods of increasing wealth. (4) Different kinds of useful arms and weapons etc.. (5) and the store house of grains of every kinds and all kinds of medicines. It is believed that Guru had hidden many treasures in different parts of Beyul Demojong.

Padmasambhava's contribution to Beyul Demozong and Tibet cannot be discussed within a short period. There are hundred of voluminous Termas of his teachings, for instance, "Rinchen Terzod" is one of them. It has not less than 66 Vols. which five vols were once published from Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology.

Guru Rinpoche made detailed predictions or prophecies about the future of Sikkim as to how and by whom Buddhism would be consolidated and preserved peacefully. Accordingly, in the later centuries, Nal-jor Ched-Zhi, the four masters came and established Buddhism smoothly, its rules and practices which in due course of time were adopted by the inhabitants of this Holy Land becoming an integral part of their life then onwards.

Padmasambhava's teachings are deeply rooted in the minds of Tibetans, Sikkimese, Bhutanese, Chinese, Mongolian and the like. It has deeply influenced the cultural aspects of entire Himalayan regions including Nepal. Many important holy places in Nepal are directly related with Guru Rinpoche, right from the great stupa Boudha Nath, Kathmandu, to Yolmo and Yanglesho i.e. Dakshinekali.

In modern times his teachings have transcended all natural barriers and reached the remotest corners of the world. There is far greater awareness and understanding of his teaching today in even the so called advanced countries of the world. It would be no overstatement and exaggeration to say that Guru Rinpoche and his teachings can be one of the main sources of peace and prosperity in today's disturbed and destabilised world. They can act as a greater cementing force among different races, creeds and castes. They do have the potential for ushering in an era of ever lasting peace, prosperity and harmony.

May Buddha and Padmasambhava bless all.

The most important seven line prayer to Guru Rinpoche

HUM
ORGYEN YUL GYI NUB CHANG TSAM
PEMA KESAR DONPO LA
YA TSEN CHOG GI NGO DRUP NYE
PEMA JUNG NE SHE SU DRAG
KHOR DU KHANDRO MANG PO KOR
KHYE KYI JE SU DAG DRUP KYI
CHIN GYI LAP CHIR SHEK SU SOL
GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM

HUM
In the North-West of the country of Oddiyana
In the heart of a lotus flower
Endowed with the most marvellous attainments
You are renowned as the Lotus-Born
Surrounded by many hosts of Dakinis
Following in your footsteps
I pray to you to come and bless me with your
grace! GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM