

**GURU RINPOCHE'S (PADMASAMBHAVA)
CONTRIBUTION TO SIKKIM**

-Ahmad Saeed

History bears the testimony to the fact that whenever and wherever the clouds of ignorance and obscurity have thickened so densely on man as to have stained the vision into a state of total blindness, a ray of hope and enlightenment has appeared from the horizon of knowledge and wisdom to pierce into the curtains of darkness and obscurity; and then has started the process of a Promising dawn. The beautiful land of Sikkim too stands no exception.

We know very little about the remote past of this region. However, whatever knowledge we have got about the primitive style of living of the people of this region, it has come to us through legends and myths.

The Indian mystic Saint-the Guru Padmasambhava who had already established Mahayana Buddhism in Tibet, himself brought the religion of Mahayana Buddhism to the land of Sikkim in 8th Century A.D.

Prior to the advent of Guru Padmasambhava to the land of Sikkim, the indigenous people of this land who were basically quite innocent, ignorant, shy, deeply religious and in fact extremely peace-loving were very lightly chained in the shackles of Primitive Style of living. They were intensely superstitious, the natural calamities like storms, floods, disastrous earthquakes or epidemics resulting in the heavy loss of living and properties had forced them to worship evil spirits. The self-woven curtains of superstitious beliefs were so thick and heavy as no light was allowed to come in even from the neighbourhood.

On the other hand, in Tibet Buddhism had already reached the peak of its glory in the 8th century A.D. and it was all due to the advent of Guru Padmasambhava to Tibet.

After coming over to Sikkim he introduced Mahayana Buddhism to the people of this land. He is said to have hidden several treasures in the form of Precious scriptures of miraculous teachings in Sikkim. He himself was earlier a spiritual head of Bodhi Vihar of Nalanda. He did not convert any Sikkimese to his cult but did select sites for the sacred places to be built in Sikkim.

According to one of the legendary accounts, the primitive kirats living in Nepal, also lived in Sikkim. It is a minor community in Sikkim. They are descendents of one of the Primitive tribes. The Limbus who are known to be one of the earliest Settlers in Sikkim are considered an offshoot of the Kirat. Guru Padmasambhava came here and preached Buddhism. It is suggested that in pursuance of his teachings, the Kiratis came out of the shackles of primitive living and slowly and gradually marched towards civilization.

The two red sects of Mahayana Buddhism prevalent in Sikkim are Nyingma-pa and Kargyu-Pa. In the Nyingma-pa sect Guru Padmasambhava is held in the highest esteem. It is believed that Guru had the key to the Buddhas esoteric teachings and without his interpreta-

tion there could have been no salvation, no religion, no understanding and no path to righteousness. There are three subjects of Nyingma-Pa and all of them worship Padmasambhava as the Second Buddha. His cult of vajra become the national Cult and was adopted everywhere.

Guru Padmasambhava who is regarded as the second Buddha, was no ordinary being. As Vajrayana and tantricism are synonymous so also the name of Padmasambhava cannot be disassociated from Tanticism. It was just due to his supernatural powers that he firmly established the banner of Buddhism. He travelled to many places in Indian Sub-continent and abroad. He never meditated for more than five years at a particular place. That is why he is called a migratory meditator. While in Sikkim, as a legend goes Guru Padmasambhava shot an arrow in the air saying that he would meditate at a place where the arrow fell. The arrow fell on the hill where Tshiding monastery stands today. It is certainly because of the direct association of Guru with this place that the fame of Tshiding monastery spread far beyond the frontiers of Sikkim. Buddhists from all parts of India and abroad visit this place as a place of pilgrimage. It is a Mecca for them. Every pious Sikkimese even today wants to meet his end at this place. It is said that Guru Padmasambhava had one of his treasures here also.

Prior to the advent of Guru Padmasambhava, as Dr. Lama T. D. Bhutia says in his book "Beyond Eternity through Mysticism", "Buddhism was like lightning in the dark sky. It appeared for some time and disappeared." But the credit for firmly planting the banner of Buddhism goes to Guru Padmasambhava.

I hope to be excused for any lapse which are bound to be there because of my limited knowledge of the subject and non-availability of sufficient sources.