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

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 known as Padmasambhava and he will transmit the Esoteric Doctrine of the world." These were the last words spoken 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 4 years after the passing of the Buddha. Similar prophecies are recorded in the Sutras like "Parinirvana Sutra" and "Lankavatara Sutra" and in Tantric Treatises like "La-med Thon-chen" by Dusum Gyatso of the Buddhist teachings.

The supernatural birth of Padmasambhava from a Lotus blossom signifies immaculate incarnation, that is birth unattained by a human womb. Such birth is so the Kunit of the Buddha accounts implies, is essential to Tantric incarnation or emanation of the Buddha-essence.

In many of his Biographies, Padmasambhava is referred to 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-physical body, immune to illness, old age, and death. He is thus realised living exponent of Buddhism of the classic applied and in this respect, the second Buddha is more powerful than the Buddha Gautama, as the Tibetan Buddhists believe.

It is uniformly mentioned in all the biographies of the Guru revealed by the Dzog-Pa 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 "TEN CHI" 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 Egyen is situated in the North-West of Bodha Gaya. He said that modern Swat Valley in Peshawar is the place of Guru Ranpoche 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 Hien Travelsogue, Swat Valley, in Peshawar was described as Oddiyana where Dhanakosha Lake was.

Note: 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, he thought that he would not permanently establish the teachings in Tibet, the Land of Snow, and established tantric teaching firmly. In eight centuries, King Trisong Detsen, the 10th 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 the Stangsha and transmitting the Vinaya lineage to first Buddhist monks in Tibet. When difficulties arose in establishing Buddha Dharma, the king invited Padmasambhava the most powerful matter 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 pundits form 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 number of commentaries and treatises (Tengyur-225 Vols.) that supported the major four Buddhist philosophical schools. During this time, the great Vidyadhars, bearers of esoteric knowledge, transmitted Mantrayana teachings to their Tibetan disciples Guru Padmasambhava and the masters like Buddha guardians. Vimala Maitra and Tibetan Lobsang Vairochana conveyed the realization of the Tantras, the outer Tantras of Kriya, Charya and Yoga, the inner Tantras of Mahayoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga.

Therefore Khentchen Bodhisatta, Guru Padmasambhava and Chogyal Trisong Detsen became known as the “Khon-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 Nyingma, the old school and the schools that developed from the lineages brought to Tibet after the 10th century became known as gSharms or the New School. The three major gSharmas Traditions that continue today are the Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug.

3. Padmasambhava’s visit to Beval Demjag and His Blessings.

Demjag is purely a land of peace and prosperity since the establishment of Buddhism in the mid 17th century. It is historically known as Beval Demjag. The Sacred Hidden Land, as soon as Guru Padma visited personally and blessed it in 8th century by meditating 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 by his teachings and guidelines in sacred safe places under the care of Dharma-galpa and Dakinesh.

Jona Yeshi Tsegyal approached and received the essence of the tantric teachings from Guru Rinpoche. With an infallible memory, she transcribed his teachings reduced their mean-
The name of "Nal-jor Choe-Shu" 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 Buddhism Dharmma in this part of the land when the four masters found the Terma of the Guru and opened the gate of the Dharmma in Sikkim.

The first Lama Lhatsun Namdul Jigme was a native of Kangte, South-Eastern Tibet. He started his mission from the Northern Sikkim traversing the Kangla Nathu and finding no road beyond the cave, flew unceasingly 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 Kauthag Rgyaltsa Chendo who followed the Western route Single-La through Dorjealing and opened the Western Gate, entered the holy land and reached Yuksum, West Sikkim.

The third Lama Ngyo-Dag Sampa Chendo who opened the Southern Gate through Namdu and reached Yuksum West Sikkim. All the learned Lamas met together at Yuksum.

1. Dakini - an excited class of fairy-like spiritual beings.
2. Yeshe Ngokyal - was Guru's closest disciple and who mastered the great Guru's entire teachings. She did not die, but disappeared as a radiance of rainbow light. She symbolizes the status of the great Guru.
Norbulingka in mid 17th century. Therefore the place where three enlightened beings met was called by the local Lepcha 'Lamta' which means ‘the Three Superior One’ or ‘The Three Lamas’. Among the four noble brothers (Nai-jor Che-Siu) the fourth one was called Phuntsog by name who was a descendent of Nima ancestors of Khamp 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 the yulsham. 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 Nyimgmapa Order of Tibetan Buddhism by establishing religious centres thereafter.

The first and the oldest monasteries 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 1703. Pema Yang-Tse Gonpa is the biggest and the most honoured Gonpa in the history of Sikkimese Gompas. Many gompas like Enchey Gonpa, 1840, Phenthong Gonpa 1840 and other also adopted the same Terma of Lhatsun Chenpo and Rigzin Terdok Lhungpa that were practised and preached by Mhimbreling Monastery, one of the main Nyimgma centres in Central Tibet for their ritual practices and traditional system.

Tashiding Gonpa. 1716 A.D. and Zilmon Gonpa, 1716 A.D were built by Nga-Dag Setupa Chenpo in West Sikkim. Many gompas like Namchi Gonpa and Thangmochee Gonpa followed the same ritual practice and traditional systems as Tashiding and Zilmon Gonpa. These gompas adopted and gave pre-eminence to the Terton work of Rigzin-Gon-Den-Cam as a code of ritual which is preserved in Dorje-Dag Monastery, one of the main Nyimgma 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 Dorjechangpo at Soshing, South Sikkim. These gompas adopted the ritual system of Terma works that are preserved by Kathog Monastery at Dirigje 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 Gonpas all over Sikkim.

There are eight or nine main gompas in Sikkim. They are mainly Pema Yang-Tse and Tashiding Gonpa in the West Kalang and Doling Gonpa in the South. Rumtek Gonpa, Kathog Gonpa and Enchey Gonpa in the East, and Phodong Gonpa and Phenthong Gonpa in the North. Each of these Gonpas 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.

Some 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 those caves by Terton Rigzin Go-Den Cam 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 went these countries holy-places and seek blessings.

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

Gangchen Zol Nga literally means "the five repositories of the lodges of the great snow". It is clearly described in the "Denzong Lamay" of Guru Rinpoche revealed by Lhasam Chempo. The five repositories are real sthettouses of the god’s treasures: (1) The sthettouse 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 stone house of grains of every kind and all kinds of medicines. It is believed that Guru had hidden many treasurers in different parts of Baysal Demchog.

Padmasambhava’s contribution to Baysal Denzong and Tibet cannot be discussed within a short account. There are hundred of voluminous Terma of his teachings, for instance: "Rinchen Tserdro" is one of them. It has less than 65 Vols which five vols were once published from Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology.

Guru Rinpoche made detailed predictions of the future of Sikkim as to how and by whom Buddhism would be consolidated and preserved peacefully. According to the later centuries, Naga’s Choe-Gza, 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, Sikimese, Bhutanese, Chinese, Mongolians and the like. It has deeply influenced the cultural aspects of entire Himalayan region including Nepal. Many important holy places in Nepal are directly related with Guru Rinpoche, right from the great stupa Boudhha Nath, Kathmandu, to Yolmo and Yanglesho i.e. Dakshinakali.

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 if we could say that Guru Rinpoche and his teachings can be one of the main sources of peace and prosperity in today’s disturbed and destabilized world. They can act as a greater unifying force among different races, creeds and casts. They do have the potential for ushering in an era of everlasting peace, prosperity and harmony.

May Buddha and Padmasambhava bless all.
The most important seven line prayer to Guru Rinpoche

HUM
ORGYEN YUZ. GYI NED 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 KIYI
CHEN 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