INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
THE GOVERNOR OF SIKKIM, PRESIDENT,

Distinguished guests and delegates to the National Seminar. Seekers of Truth, patrons of
learning friends,

At the very onset, I congratulate all of you being with us this morning to participate in
the National Seminar organized by the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology of Sikkim.
At a time when men are mostly engrossing themselves in the pursuit of materialistic gains and
sensate pleasures, only the fortunate and chosen ones are endowed with the desire and will
to utilize their time in fruitful search for higher knowledge and transcendental wisdom. The
sublime night of so many eager seekers as well as erudite savants and sages who have congregated
here today to mark a brilliant chapter in the annals of this land bums me infinite joy and
ecstatic delight.

The subject matters chosen for this Seminar are indeed most relevant to the proper
study and understanding of the history of Sikkim. Despite all the sociocultural changes that
have affected the traditions, folkways and polity of the land, Sikkim is even today known to
be a bastion of Buddhism, a veritable cradle of Buddhist thoughts and practice.

The Great Guru revered and devoutly worshipped by the teeming millions of sentient
Buddhists all over the world and especially in the Tibetan world as Lopen Chingpo Pema
Jungne or Guru Padmasambhava, the Lotus born is unequivocally accepted as the second
Buddha (Singyé-Nyup). Tradition has it that in the 8th Century A.D., He was born most
immaculately from a Lotus which was blossoming amidst the lake Dhanakosh. The historical
legend of His birth has been depicted here in this Institute in the form of the colossal
Statue of the Master seated on a Lotus pedestal amidst the waters of the lake. This exquisitely
carved Image is a befitting tribute to the Guru inspired by His own Compassionate Grace.
The place of his birth has been sanctified as Odiyan in the Swat Valley which now falls in
Afghanistan. From the very beginning, he was a precocious child with an innate propensity for
renunciation and inner search. He did renounce at a very early age and proceeded to Bodhigaya
(Vajrasana) where he performed the most arduous austeritys and penance for 35 years all that
attained complete enlightenment. Thence, he went to Mada in Himachal Pradesh where he
converted many ascetics and set them on the righteous path of Dharma. When he was at
Nalanda as the Principal Tantric Teacher (Vajracarya), he was invited by the Tibetan King
Thar Srong-ge-btsan to visit Tibet and establish the Buddha Shasana, at the behest of the
Royal Preceptor Pandit Shantarakshta. He proceeded to Tibet via Nepal and established the
first Buddhist Monastery known as Samye thereby laying the foundations of Buddhism in Tibet.

From Tibet, he made his journey to Sikkim which was known to the Tibetans as Beysal
Dempomg as described by the Master himself. Etymologically, Beysal meant Hidden Country
or Land and Dempomg meant The Land of Rice which figuratively meant the Land of Plenty
and Prosperity. In the apocalyptic works ascribed to the Guru, Beysal Dempomg was to be
regarded as the most sacrosanct land of pilgrimage. The Guru, accompanied by Pandit
Shantarakshita and his retinue of twenty-five cardinal disciples known as "Bhang Nyer La" visited Dhakhur Yamdung in Western Sikim where the importants of their body and physical body can be seen even today (stairscase inscribed on stones and rocks) as living testimonies of their historic visit. Thereafter, he tamed and exorcised the malignant spirits that were afflicting the land and entrusted them with the responsibility of safeguarding the Dzarma in the town of Dharmapalas (Nag Sun). The principal Dharmapalas guarding the northern, middle and the southern parts of the land were Ghang-Chen-Zop-La (commonly known as the mountain deity Kharchenpung) in the North, Pao Hurgr in the middle and Yab-Ond or Mahakala in the south. Monastic potencies depicting these three manifestations were wearing their respective masks during the monastic dances like Pang-Lha-Sot etc.

The Guru further consecrated four holy caves in Sikim situated in the four cardinal directions with Tsadhin as the center. These caves are Be Plug in the East, Dechen Phog in the west, Lhari Yung Plug in the North and Khando song Plug in the South. At Khando song plug, the entrails, blood and inner organs of a witch can still be seen in the form of fossils, who was tamed and vanquished by Guru Pema-samdrub-ba. At Tsadhin, the Guru sat in meditation at the cave called Tse-chho Plug where he materialized a potenti-al-source of sweet nectarine water to quench the thirsts of the natives inhabiting the adjoining area.

TEACHINGS: it may not be necessary to dwell upon the teachings of this great Master since days and months of deliberations on his teachings may not perhaps suffice to satiate our thirst for the sacred wisdom taught by him. Nevertheless, I will attempt to convey the essence of the Guru's Teaching in what is universally known as ATI YOGA OF Zampa-chho. We shall know that the Guru's doctrine can be classified into four categories. KRHYA YOGA, GARYA YOGA, YOGA TANTRA or ANUTARA YOGA and ATI YOGA. Auto Yoga thus is the culmination of substance of the Tantras. While at the Shutiglamana monastery in Bodbagaya, where he was performing penance, he had the vision of eight-knowledge-holders (Tib. Rigas Gyur) who imparted to him their respective teachings. These teachings later on formed the short-rootanchor his doctrine known as Dzam-pa-Ra Gyur. The Guru manifested himself in eight different forms collectively known as Guru lakh Gyur while performing the miraculous acts of subduing and vanquishing devils and propagating the Dzarma.

You will all agree with me that the entire gamut of Sakya's venerated culture has had and indelible impact on Buddhism. It is this context that we gratefully acknowledge the gargantuan contributions of Guru Pema-samdrub-ba in shaping the religious-cultural tapestry of Sikim. Way back in circa fifteenth century, there lived a Tibetan Cheffra named to be the precursor of immense strength equal to that of a hundred thousand men. He was Khun Barsa, who in his anguish for not having any issue to continue his progeny, met the Buddha's ancestral Thokchong Tag and his wife Nekung Nyer at Kabti Longtso in North Sikim where a blood-covenant was made between these two cheffra to consider each other as ethically bound together. The Tibetan Cheffra was duly blessed with three valiant sons, amongst whom the youngest one named Miphen Ral (Leader among men) became the progenitor of the ruling over the land for three centuries and three decades.

In the mid 17th century, A.D., our Siddhhas or Yogins met at Yutum Norbang as predestined by the Guru's Prophecy. These Yogins collectively known as the Na-la-Chok-Zhi were Thubten Namkha Kaling Rigzin chempo, Ngagay Snupa Chempo and Phuntog
Namgyal. The former three deliberated together at Yulchum and crowned the fourth one as the first consecrated Dharma Raja of Sikkim. These Siddhas laid the foundations of cultural centres like monasteries, stupas, temples etc. in Sikkim and also consecrated the four holy caves besides many other subsidiary caves and shrines.

Thus we find that the Tibetans were the first settlers group of people who came to Sikkim from the early part of the eighth century. Although the main bulk of the Tibetans reached Sikkim only after the advent of the four Yogins, Guru Rinpoche’s sojourn to this land proves it in ample measure that there did exist some type of social-cultural intercourse between Tibet and Sikkim from the early eighth century.

The next group of people to come and settle in this region were the Nepalis form the early part of the 19th century though castes like the Tsongs and Limbus who were really mongoloid did anticipate the Novars by atleast five centuries approximately. The beginning of the 20th century marked the influx of settlers from the plains of India who were predominantly Marwaris and Biharis. Although the early history of Sikkim is marked by the influence of Buddhism, the racial influx of the latter times ushered in many cultural streams which got amalgamated with the existing system in a splendid process of acculturation. Today, there are Hindus, Buddhists and small cross section of Muslims and Christians too who are coexisting together in a unique atmosphere of accommodation, tolerance and harmony.

Dear friends and fellow pilgrims, to me all these appear to be the logical sequence of history. Tibet which was once inhabited by shamanists and neomaneans derived the soothing and enshrining doctrine of the Buddha from India. In eternal gratitude, the Lomtsechas or translators while translating the voluminous treatises from either Sanskrit or Prakrit Tibetan always prefixed their work with the legend - Gnyan Dupa followed by Bed Kye Dupa which meant "In the Indian language known in the Tibetan language thus” I may not be wrong if I further enumerate this by contending that what is now extant in the Tibetan translational works are more or less extinct in their Sanskrit originals. In this broad way, Tibetology is verified the study of Indology.

Sikkim is thus the cauldron in which the great cultures of Tibet and India have been wrought and combined to evolve as a land of variegated cultures and traditions.

Once again I congratulate you all to have come from various parts of the country far and near to this unique land. The State of Sikkim to take part in a Seminar which will be immense fascination to all historians and scholars. I am also confident that much of the oral facts and conventions would be gathered during the personal discussions. There is a lot to be written and told about the profound cultural links of this place with the rest of the country which stands unique in many ways. Perhaps this is for the first time in the history of the Institute that a scholarly deliberation and exchange of thoughts on the historical perspective of Guru Padmasambhava’s Contributions to Sikkim and also Cultural Aspect of Sikkim is being organised. I need not remind those who are present here today of the tremendous impact that this beautiful Himalayan State has had in shaping the history and culture of our country through the ages. I do sincerely wish that you will all leave the State with more enlightened views about Tibetology and the Historical perspective of the Himalayan region.