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ASPECTS OF MONASTIC EDUCATION IN SIKKIM

- Dr. Chowang Acharya

An Introduction to the Monastic Heritage in Sikkim

Sikkim is basically a land of monasteries established in the middle of the 17th century by the great masters who were renowned followers of Guru Padmasambhava. The land is historically known as Beyul Demojorg and it was personally blessed by Guru Rinpoche. Ever since the time His Holiness Guru Rinpoche set his holy feet on this land, Gonpas have consistently been constructed one after another basically as places of worship. Today one can hardly travel a few miles in Sikkim without coming across a Gonpa erroneously almost always equated with an ideal monastery.

A mere construction of Gonpas is not enough in itself. Unless a monastery is equipped with a Sheda—a centre of higher learning and a Dupda—a meditation centre, it is, for all practical purposes incomplete. A well established Sheda and an equally suitable Dupda are the two essential components to lend significance and respectability to a monastery. A Sheda provides the facility for acquiring knowledge and skill of all sorts while a Dupda is helpful in providing higher training in developing control over the mind, the soul, and the senses to person. However it is not always possible to have these two essential organs in all the Gonpas due to so many factors. This is true in the case of Sikkim also.

In the Gonpas of Sikkim there are very few well organised monastic schools. Earlier, in the Gonpas there was a system of apprenticeship for the new entrants. Young monks got their education from the elders who looked after and taught them traditional ritualistic prayers, religious tenets, the use of religious musical instruments during rites, mask dances and many other things and practices.

Monastic education is one of the oldest form of learning. It can be traced back to the ancient Indra educational system. The Gurukuls of the Ramayana and Mahabharata periods and then Nalanda and Vikramashila Universities were nothing but well developed monastic schools where Hindu and Buddhist scholars could acquire higher knowledge in general, as well as in respect of their individual faiths.

This system of education was very much prevalent in Tibet from where it came to Sikkim lock, stock and barrel, but subsequently underwent some changes here according to the local conditions and realities. The model monastery in Tibet which inspired the Sikkimese effort was the SAMYE University estd. in Tibet in the 8th century by Khon-lorp-Cho-Sum. This monastic establishment initiated the development of a whole new religious culture on an unprecedented scale. The learning of foreign languages was instituted. With it came the activities of translating Buddhist texts from Sanskrit and Chinese into Tibetan. Foreign Buddhist masters soon flocked to Samye University, Lhama, Tibet. Tibetans monks, for the first time, were able to
begin to contemplate writing Buddhist treatises.

Most of the great Siddhas, scholars, writers and thinkers were the direct products of this monastic institution in Tibet. This is the case in Sikkim too where monastic schools have been and still are the main centres of learning and source of higher knowledge.

Sikkim is basically a land of the Nyingma School of Buddhism which incidentally is the oldest of the four offshoots of the Mahayana system of Buddhism originating in ancient India. Just as the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism came to take roots in Sikkim some 300 years ago, having travelled a long way from India via Tibet, the Monastic system of education too flourished in Sikkim more or less on the lines of the Tibetan and Indian Gurukul systems. But all things, subject to change as they are, pass through various stages of transformation. This system of education too that I am going to talk about has naturally weathered winds of change and is here for all of us to see in its present form. But I must admit that it has been strong enough to maintain its basic identity, withstanding the onslaught of the changing times.

To be precise, monastic education has, from time immemorial, been a very effective mode of education. In fact, it would not be stretching things too far to say that modern residential schools and colleges are nothing but modern derivations of this system.

Buddhism has two main schools: Hinayana and Mahayana. Hinayana is the pristine form and is mainly followed in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and its sacred language is Pali. Whereas the Mahayana form is followed in Sikkim and many other parts of India, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Japan, Nepal and Bhutan etc. Its sacred language is Sanskrit, the original language of Arya Desh (India). Modern scholars questioned the accuracy of several points in this account about the language in which Buddha gave his teachings. Some claim Pali to be the language of Buddha while others claim it to be Sanskrit. The fact is that he taught the eighty four thousand sets of teaching containing his complete instructions to counteract the eighty four thousand delusions in accordance with the wishes, thoughts and capabilities of individual disciples in a layman's language of a given area. He did not follow any one particular language. It is said in one of his Sutras 'The Lalitvistara Sutra' that he gave teachings in the language of all living beings. The essential underlying point of this is that the language which the Buddha spoke was understood by all living beings. Such was the power of his speech.

Historically it is proved that the original Noble teachings of the Buddha were found in Pali and Sanskrit. But if at all there is a third language which has the closest affinity to the original, then it is the Tibetan language because of the manner in which the translations were done word-by-word, without diluting or distorting the inner meaning and various connotations of the original Pali or Sanskrit word. It was during Guru Rinpoche in the 8th cent. that almost all the teachings of the Buddha were translated into Tibetan.

Although the fundamental teachings of the Buddha are found mostly in Pali and Sanskrit, yet it is also a fact that in Pali we find only 46 volumes comprising of all
Tripitakas. These do not include many Mahayana Dharmas, Sutras and Tantras. In Sanskrit, although the priceless treasures of Buddhist canonical texts (Ka-gyur and Tan-gyur) containing more than four thousand sets of teachings are available, yet not all of them are available today. In fact not more than one hundred sets of teachings may be available in Sanskrit nowadays. The destruction of institutions and centres of learning in Northern India by a foreign invader took its toll. Irreplaceable works and monuments have been lost forever. However, this colossal loss is not so saddening as the complete collection of the noble teachings, the culture and tradition of Buddhism, are well preserved in the Tibetan language. That is why the Tibetan language is now honoured as the most important and sacred language of Buddhism all over the world. India alone has more than sixteen universities with Tibetan as one of their faculties while there are more than one hundred foreign universities all over the world which have Tibetan language as one of their independent faculties. Hence the source of the origin of Buddhist and monastic education, in Sikkim is that form of it which was introduced by Guru Padmasambhava in Tibet during the time of King Trisong Detsen in 7th century. It is this system which is considered to be the ancient school or the "Vajra tradition".

The Sikkimese Monastic Life in the Days of Yore

In the beginning, Pema Yangtse and Tashiding Gonpas and many others were in the practice of sending batches of young monks to Mindrol-Ling and Donji-Dak Monasteries in Tibet for instruction in strict discipline and religious rites. After undergoing this, these lamas used to come back to their respective Gonpas and teach whatever they had learned, to the interested devotees. Because of the lack of well-organised educational setups at the monasteries, only few people received this education of basically ritualistic practices. It was the beginning of Buddhist studies in Sikkim.

The term Gonpa literally means, a solitary place and most of the Gonpas are still found in solitary places. Isolation from the world has always been an essentially desirable thing for Buddhist monks, though not as an act of self-punishment, but more as an escape from the mundane temptations of day-to-day life.

All Gonpas are open to members of all communities and classes of Sikkim such as Bhutias, Lepchas, Limbus, Tamangs, Sherpas etc. The monastic education system has been sustained by the Sikkimese traditional custom of sending at least one male member from every family to some Gonpa. This practice imbided from the Tibetan way, is fostered by the innately religious nature of the people and the attractions attached with the high social position and the consequent privileges enjoyed by the lamas.

A monk student at a monastery is taught Tibetan Alphabet and afterwards to read and recite by heart some special prayer books and so on. By this time he is simply a learner. After some years of reading, writing and reciting of religious scriptures, by heart he is, now for the first time brought under monastic rules. He is ceremoniously shaved, has to take certain vows and take to the dress of a monk. He is given a reli-
The boy is now subject to the monastic rules and discipline and must abide by them. He has to learn by heart the books of all kinds of rituals.

Before being admitted as a junior monk the boy has to work as an apprentice running errands for and helping out the elder monks besides getting trained in making Tormas and playing various musical instruments.

The monk's perfect in ritualistic practices, is now free to learn science of language, astrology and painting etc. He is also given a different responsibilities to serve the Gonpa for its over all development. On completing all these services he becomes an important functionary of the Gonpa.

However, this system of education was followed only in a few renowned Gonpas like those at Penayangtse, Tashiding, Phensang, Enchey and Kathok-sil from Nyegmna school and RaLang, Runcik and PhoLong of Kagyuapa school.

This system has proved effective in maintaining a fairly high moral and intellectual standard within the religious community here. By modern standards, this system, though very good in itself has the inherent defect of entirely ignoring the scientific knowledge of recent centuries more or less because practitioners of religion have always tended to prefer to carry on their activities segregation from the mainstream life. The monastic system as such is not something strange or out of the way. The basic purpose of this system is to broaden and cultivate the mind by imparting a wide variety of knowledge relating to all kinds of subjects i.e. drama, dance and music, astrology, poetry and composition etc. But somehow of late (i mean, in terms of a few centuries) Shedra attached to gonpas have tended to concentrate only on religious education to the exclusion of all other subjects. This tendency has been reversed in the case of Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingmna Studies, Deogarh and Rumtek Sri Nalanda Institute for Higher education, where the course includes the art of healing (medicine), Astrology, Sanskrit, Pali, Arts and crafts, Tibetan Language, Dialectics and Metaphysics etc. The last being the most important and fundamental.

To preserve the traditional way of teaching and to give it a clearly identifiable face, commendable efforts have been made by the department of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Government of Sikkim. The Government extends financial help to the Gonpas for their maintenance besides doing everything to make it flourish with the objective of protecting and preserving this age old system.

As said earlier, an ideal monastery is that which has the facility of imparting higher studies through Shedra where monks can acquire Higher Buddhist Studies, and where there is Dapka to enable the scholars to utilize their knowledge to train their minds to attain Enlightenment. Besides, it also should have a worshipping main shrine where the monk students may practice the ritualistic system. So to develop the Ideal Monastic setup and to preserve and give a boost to the Nyingmapa Buddhist philosophy the Government of Sikkim is running Shedra for higher Buddhist studies. This
Sheda is established in the early 1960s by the then Chogyal SIR Tashi Namgyal of Sikkim with a view to promote and preserve Buddhist Dharma. The Chogyal took special interest in monastic education. It was his long cherished dream to set up an ideal monastery in Sikkim.

Realizing the need for preserving the traditional way of teaching higher religious philosophy with a touch of modernism, the government took initiative for its development and made it affiliate to the Sampumand Sanskrit University, Varanasi in 1983 as a post graduate level institute which offers a nine year advance study course leading to Acharya Degree (equivalent to M.A.). This University has full fledged Buddhist Philosophy Faculty and because Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Mahayana school, has been the bedrock of the University. This Sheda renamed as 'Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies', specialises in the line of Nyingma Tradition of Tibet Mahayana Buddhism.

Sheda at its present location enjoys an enviable unique privilege. Existing in close proximity to the sacred Chorten, the Dzo-tse and the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology it breathes an inspiring serenity, the effect of which is enhanced further by the right greenery that surrounds the whole area around it. The wisdom for an institution basically meant for preserving and furthering the quintessential religious and cultural heritage of Sikkim leaves us full of admiration for it. Later, Sheda came to acquire all the more importance when it became a seat of formal education too after its affiliation to Sampumand Sanskrit University, Varanasi. Thea onwards the thrust of its teaching facility became two-pronged—equipping the students to face the job market and the changing world at large besides fulfilling its primary objective stated earlier. It must always be borne in mind here that without a judicious blending of both traditionalism and modernism i.e.: tradition enriched by a fair sprinkling of modernity—it would be difficult to preserve or promote something.

We are all only too aware of the fact that there are occasions when great scholars have been unable to express their innermost feelings simply because they have lived too secluded and existence unaware of the developments of the fast-changing world, or because they are not trained in any language other than their own. Translations by third persons do help to some extent but they lack the real spirit of the original speaker or commentator.

Hence the need for studying traditional as well as modern languages cannot be overemphasized. For propagation, promotion and perpetuation of one’s point of view by a certain language group to other target groups this pre-supposes the use of one or more languages as a common link. Sheda is a living, vibrant example of such an academic pursuit. Here, in the midst of pulsating life all around it and yet blissfully isolated from all this too, a different sparkling streams of languages coexist side by side on the Sheda campus and in effect, traditional ways are gently blown over by some of the fragrances of contemporary thoughts and realities.

Sanskrit, Tibetan language, Religion, History of India and Tibet. Astrology and English are also taught as a compulsory subjects in this Institute up to the graduation level to enable the mask students to equip better to face the world and to contemplate...
religious thoughts, translate Tibetan texts and put across his feelings in a better way.

Now serious efforts are being made by the government to promote education in various Gonpas. There are now 268 Gonpas including Lhakhangs and Tashamkhangs in this State. The Government extends financial assistance towards their preservation and maintenance from time to time on the basis of their needs. Starting with 15 Monastic schools in addition to two already in existence in 1985, there are now 50 such schools scattered all over the State. Most of them are located in rural areas. Besides, some improvements were also brought into traditional monastic arts such as the training of Thangka Paintings, Wood-carving and Clay Statue making.

Revival and encouragement of this traditional system of education in monasteries has given a breath of fresh air to most of the monasteries in Sikkim. The happiest development of all in recent times, in the field of monastic education in Sikkim, is a proposal, though still in the melting-pot, to introduce formal primary education in all the monasteries. If it comes through it will be a landmark development in the history of Sikkim and naturally will make the traditional monastic education a quantum jump. This mingling of the traditional and the modernism will lend more worthwhileness to the earlier system and make it more relevant and in tune with the modern times.

I have tried to keep myself confined to the confines of the given subject and not touched upon the general educational system in the State. Besides, I may have gone wide off the mark sometimes, but that, I think is only human. Moreover, I may have left untouched some aspect of the monastic education system as well, but this, again is not beyond a human folly.
As we all know, Buddhism is originated from India and the type of Buddhism which we are following and practising here in Sikkim right now was reshaped in Tibet and came to us through that country. When Buddhism was first established in Tibet in the 7th century by Maha Guru Padmasambhava and Khenschen Bodhisatvya in the Land of the Snows, Tibet was not without a native religion of its own. At the time when King Trisong Detsen of Tibet invited Guru Rinpoche to subjugate the evil spirits of that land, Tibet already had a highly developed indigenous religion of its own known as ‘Bon’ and the followers of this religion were called as "Bonpos".

What is Bon? Bon is regarded as the native religion of Tibet prevalent in that country before the introduction of Buddhism and it is said to have come from the land called Shangshung which is believed to have existed somewhere in upper Tibet around Mt. Kailash extending towards the region of Ladakh. In the same way as Lord Buddha is the founder of Buddhism, Bon religion came from its Lord Togo Sherab Mo who was born at a place called Wollmoaring in Shanghang under the parenthood of Yah Mugsyul Thokar and Yum Gyalsteedna. The teachings and life history of Bonton Sherab Mivo are very similar to those of Lord Buddha who was born at Lumbini under the parenthood of Shakyamukhodana and his queen Maya Devi about 566 B.C. In Western countries Bon religion is sometimes referred to as ‘Santanism’ which is perhaps derived from the name of its founder ‘Sherab Mivo’. From the very beginning these two religions of Tibet lived with hostility against each other. But wherever the differences there might have been between the two, both of them played a very important role in shaping the system of people’s life in Tibet which has directly or indirectly affected us here in Sikkim. We can understand the influence of Buddhism upon the Bon religion by going through the Bon scriptures. In the same way worshiping of spirits by erecting prayer flags and burning incense (Lhabsol) and throwing effigies of evil spirits (Lad Tongwa) could be the examples of Bon influence upon Buddhism. Because of this very uniqueness of our way of practising the religion that was developed in Tibet and came to us in Sikkim, the way of Buddhism which we are now practising in the Himalaya regions including Sikkim is popularly known as ‘Tibetan Buddhism’ or more conveniently as ‘Lamain’ in the West. But in our own dictionary, we do not have such a thing called ‘Tibetan Buddhism’ or the ‘Lamain’. But I feel that the native religion of Bon has dominated the people’s life prior to the dawn of Buddhism in Tibet and thus its influence upon the ways of Buddhist practices has something to do with this uniqueness of our religion so that it is known as Lamain.

In Sikkim Guru Padmasambhava visited the holy places of this land and personally sanctified them in the 19th century. It is said that he has kept twenty-four ‘Hidden Lands’ known as ‘Beyul’ for the benefit of future generations and Sikkim is regarded as the holiest and most important of them all. It was Guru Padmasambhava himself who gave the name ‘Beyul Demojong’ to this land it was he who had hidden five treasures under the snowcapped peaks of Klangcherdzongka or the ‘House of Five
Treasures'. But the real foundation of Buddhism in this land of Sikkim was laid by three great Nyingmapa Lamas Gyawal Lhatsun Chenpo, Kathok Kuntu Sangpo and Ngakak Sempa Chenpo who entering through three different direction according to the prophecies in religious books consecrated the first king of Sikkim, Chogyal Phuntsog Namgyal, at YUKSAM Norbugang in 1642. Since then Buddhism not only took its root but also flourished well in this land right up to now. The form of Buddhism which we are practicing here in Sikkim right now is the direct product of the Buddhism that was propagated by our Great Guru Padmasambhava in Tibet.

Like in Tibet, Sikkim was not without a native religion of its own at the time when Guru Rinpoche along with his twenty five disciples known as 'Jebang Nyersga' visited this land. Lepchas are the original people of Sikkim who believe that they are the sons and daughters of the virgin snow of Kanchenjunga and prior to the introduction of Buddhism in this land there used to have a highly developed Shamanistic form of a native religion very much prevalent in Sikkim. Known as 'bongthings' the Lepcha priests used to worship spirits and they are so powerful that they could treat and cure sick people and exercise the harmful spirits. In place like Phagmojong in West Sikkim between Tashiding and YUKSAM we can still see the amazing manifestations of such Lepcha priests. Among the Lepchas the anecdotes about the miraculous performances of Thaktong Mon Salang are well known. Though presently we do not have any written records to prove, it is very probable that it would not be wrong if we say that a sort of Bon religion was in practice here in Sikkim before Buddhism influenced the life of the people.

Since Bon, is the native religion of Tibet, its interaction with Buddhism was only in Tibet. Therefore, when I speak here about Buddhism and Bon, I will confine myself only to the Buddhism that was developed in Tibet and which has a direct contact with Bon religion. And here I will mostly deal with the development of Bon since the time of Tibet's first king and Buddhism since the time of Tibet's 28th king up to the death of the 42nd king lang dharma.

Regarding the three great personalities who were responsible for the real foundation of Buddhism in Tibet i.e. Khenchen Bodhisattva, Lopon Pema Jungpe and Chogyal Trisong Detsen who are collectively known as 'Khen-Lop-Choe-Sum' in the annals of Tibetan history. Thanks to the great deeds and contributions of these personalities for the establishment and preservation of Buddhism in Tibet, today we are able to organise seminars and symposiums. Even in Sikkim the reflections of their deeds can be still seen through the volumes of Buddhist texts that are preserved in the libraries like that of the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology.

In the following statements, now I would like to give you a comparative study of how Buddhism and Bon religion were developed in Tibet. King Trisong Deutsen of Tibet (Born in 742 A.D.) invited Khenchen Bodhisattva to Tibet to preach Dharma. But Tibet by that time was a land full of evil spirits that were both harmful as well as powerful. They did not like the presence of Bodhisattva and they never allowed him to lay the foundation of Samey Monastery. Instead the evil spirits caused lots of calamities among the people. So, Khenchen Bodhisattva had no choice but to advise the
king to invite Guru Padmasambhava, the most powerful Tantrik saint at that time from India. So under the invitation of Chogyal Trisong Deutsen, Guru Rinpoche came to Tibet through Nepal subjugating all those evil spirits of Tibet on the way and making them the guardians of the Dharma. It was in 764 A.D. when Guru Rinpoche and Bodhisattva visited Tibet and in the same year they laid the foundation stone of Tibet's first monastery, Samye Migyur Drubpa Tsuglagkhang, as desired by the king. With the construction of this monastery they laid the real foundation of Buddhism in that land.

After this Khchen Bodhisattva ordained seven Tibetan boys into monkhood to experiment the Tibetan boys capability to become Buddhist monks. These seven pioneers of Tibetan monks were called 'Sem-Mi-Dan' or seven experimental monks. They were Paghur Vairocana, Chintikhu Shakya Deva, Ba Salung, Naglam Gyalwa Chokyang, Ma Rinchenchok, Khen Luyo Wangge and Tsang Legdrup. The Buddhist monks we see around here these days are originated from those seven boys.

Chogyal Trisong Deutsen was very enthusiastic to translate the entire Buddhist teachings from Sanskrit language into Tibetan and so he opened a translation chamber and named it as 'Saraye Dragyurling' and requested the two Indian saints to teach Sanskrit language to the Tibetan boys. The boys were not able to pick up the Sanskrit language. But under the prophecy of Guru Rinpoche the king found an extraordinary boy named Ganjak Thanglung who was later renamed by Guru Rinpoche as Vairotsana. He was personally taught by Guru Rinpoche and Khchen Bodhisattva along with other boys. The Vairotsana was deputed to India along with Tsang Legdrup to study Sanskrit language. The two boys completed their studies successfully. But Tsang Legdrup died on the way back home. So Vairotsana returned back successfully and Chogyal Trisong Deutsen at once accepted him as his Guru. Vairotsana became the greatest Tibetan translator and he had translated countless volumes of Buddhist texts into Tibetan at the same time giving extensive sermons to the king. But at that time more than half of the ministers including his own queen in the court of Trisong Deutsen were Bonpos and the clash between the followers of the two religions were so strong that this great translator could not live comfortably. Finally he was banished to a place called Tshawarong. The reign of Chogyal Trisong Deutsen in the 8th century is a memorable one as it marked the establishment of Buddhism as much as the decline of Bon. The real foundation of Buddhism was laid during this time. Besides translations of countless volumes, Guru Padmasambhava had concealed so many secret treasures known as 'Yerma' to be discovered in future times.

In the same way as the Buddhism overshadowed the lives of people since the reign of king Songtsen Gampo, once there used to have a time prior to this when every aspect of life was influenced by the teachings of Bon religion. Looking at the Bonpo literatures, we could not understand that 2125 years ago twelve native Bonpos enthroned a man who descended down the hill of Lhari Gyangtho in the fertile valley of Yarlung Tsangpo, the cradle of Tibetan civilization, by carrying him on their neck and name him as 'Gyalpo Nyatri Tsenpo' or the 'neck enthroned king' and made him as the first Tibetan king. Professor Namkhai Norbu is of the view that Bon religion was
well established at the time when Nyatri Tsenspo was enthroned. The domination of Boh religion upon the life of the Tibetan people was so much that even great historians like Anu Geden Choephel agree that even the very name of the country 'Bo' for Tibet in Tibetan language could have been derived from the name of the native religion 'Bon'. During those days Bon was divided into such sects as Chhaskhen, Nangshen, Sisthen and also Choekyi Thabon, Droughi Durbon, Yangdhangni Senpa etc. Bon records also tell that during the time of Nyatri Tsenspo there lived twelve highly reputed Bohpo scholars who were famous for their mastery in their respective fields of specialization such as Tibetan medicine, astrology, handicraft and the like.

Under the patronage of the ninth king Gyaplo Pudhe Chungyal Bern religion reached at its zenith. During his time it is said that so many texts were translated from Shangshung language into Tibetan. He is reputed to have invited one hundred scholars at a time and some of the most famous Bohpo scholars he invited from Shangshung were Shangshung Linda, Khupungo Mukhinyung Gyen and Shakhnyung Gyen. They taught the people how to make divinations (mo graipa), how to worship spirits (Lha sowa), how to exorcise evil spirits (De donpa) and how to practise Bon religion in general (Bon jepa). Pudhe Chungyal ran his state administration through the medium of 'Drod dzhangden Bon sum' which means that he ran the administration by simplifying the basic teachings of the Bon religion he brought much economic prosperity as it was during his reign that lands were first ploughed for fields, irrigation system was developed and the science of metallurgy was begun to be practised. According to Tibetan history (Gyalrab) as well as Buddhist chronicles (Choegung), Buddhism first came to Tibet during the time of its 28th king Lha Thothori Nyentsen when some Buddhist images and gold stupas were landed on the roof of Yumbha Lagang Palace. But having no means to read the contents of the scripts the king named them as 'Gyumchoshe Nyedo Sangwa' or the secret treasures and preserved them within his own palace and worshipped them secretly. In his book, Political History of Tibet, Tibetan historian T.W. Shakalpa says that Lha Thothori Nyentsen was born in the year 173 A.D. and that when he was 60 years of age those holy objects dropped upon his palace. This historic event took place in the year 233 A.D. which corresponds with the 77th death anniversary of Lord Buddha. According to Shakalpa this year was recognised by the government of Tibet as the year of the first establishment of Buddhism in Tibet and in commemoration of it this year was printed on the Tibetan legal currency. During this time two Indian sadhus Pandit Lijn and Pandit Lathi along with a translator Lobsawa Lozentso visited the court of Lha Thothori Nyentsen and gave him religious sermons. But having no written scripts in Tibet at that time they have no choice but to return back to their land. However, some people believe that those two were the first Indian scholars to have visited the land of Tibet.

However, the real establishment of Buddhism in Tibet came into effect during the time of the 33rd monarch, Changjal Songtsen Gampo, who is known as the greatest king of Tibet when he invented the Tibetan written script through his famous minister, Thanmi Sambhota, for the purpose of preserving teachings of the Buddha. In the year 633 A.D. the king sent sixteen Tibetan boys to India with a lavish gifts of
gold for studying the language of India (Gyaghar gyi k'lo), out of whom one boy came back with outstanding results. He was so good in his studies that his Indian masters gave him the name Thonmi Sambhota which in Sanskrit means 'Thonmi, the good Tibetan' because he came from the village of Thon in Tibet. Back home king Songtsen Gampo at once accepted him as his Guru and provided him the palace of Nyangzden Phaplogkha Kukhar Maru for his residence in which Nyapla Thonmi Anu's son Sambhota reshaped the history of Tibet by inventing the Tibetan script based on Devanagari script (Legiari Lhavi k'lo) and formulated the Tibetan alphabet on the basis of Sanskrit as well as made an entirely new Tibetan grammar which has been in effective use for the last 13 centuries up to this day. For those of us who profess the Tibetan form of Buddhism the great deeds of this genius pervades every aspect of our life in the same way as the scientific genius of Thomas Alpha Edison pervades our life right from the electric bulb to the cinema hall. Songtsen Gampo's contributions for the development of Buddhism does not end here. His other deeds like inviting of two royal princesses from Nepal and China, the constructions of Tsuglagkhangs and lhakhangs in and around Lhasa for the spread of Buddhism are so great that it requires much more time and space to state about them.

But the Bon scholars do not agree with the theory that the present form of Tibetan written language was invented by Thonmi Sambhota. They feel that there must have been a written form of language in Tibet during the time of Songtsen Gampo which was based on the latter of Shangshung called Shangshung Maryig'. Though they are ready to agree that the existing written language of Tibet based on Shangshung Maryig' might have been in a crude form and that Thonmi Sambhota might have refined and polished that existing language, they are not ready to believe that Thonmi Sambhota invented the Tibetan alphabet for the first time. Rev. Namkhai Norbu, a renowned Bonpo scholar, in his book titled 'Necklace of Zhi' argues that Tibetan written language based on Shangshung Maryig' was in existence even during the time of Tibet's first king Nyatri Tsespo. He feels that during that time the founder of Bon religion, Tonpa Sherab Miwo, visited Central Tibet and gave extensive teachings on the Bon religion in places like Kongpo. Taking this as a reason he says that without having a language that was in written form at that time it was not just possible for the human memories only to remember all those extensive teachings of the Bon Master.

Both the parties who support that Thonmi Sambhota made the Tibetan alphabet as well as those who oppose it have interesting evidences to prove and illustrate their own point of view. While this could be a subject of thorough research for the future scholars, presently one must not fail to appreciate the magnitude of this man's contribution for the very reason that whatever culture and religion we have today are preserved in a language that is his gift.

During the time of Tibet's 41st king, Chogyal Trilapachen, Buddhism was at its highest peak. Under his reign extensive revision were done upon the translations that were already made, catalogues of Buddhist texts were prepared, Tibetan written language was restructured and repolished as 'Ke sarche kyi tenla phab' and out of respect the state provided seven families each to a monk. But those activities of the
monarch angered the Bonpo ministers and the clash between supporters of those two faiths culminated with the assassination of the king in 841 A.D. by two of his Monpo ministers: Tagna and Chokro Lhalung in collaboration with his own brother Lang Dharma who at once ascended upon the Tibetan throne as the 42nd king. During his short reign Gyalpo Lang Dharma destroyed Buddhism to such an extent that he nearly uprooted it from the soil of Tibet. But in 846 A.D. Lhalung Palgyi Dorjee, a meditator in Drung Yerpa cave, assassinated Gyalpo Lang Dharma by shooting an arrow right into the heart, thereby putting an end to the dynastic rule in Tibet. With the fall of Lang Dharma, Tibet was thrown into a state of anarchism in which the entire nation was fragmented into many petty kingdoms which is known as 'Bhod silbur gyurpa'. Buddhism was able to revive only after the arrival of the famous Indian Pandit Jowoje Palden Atish Dipankara Srijana to Tholing Monastery in the year 1040 A.D.

Thus, what I have stated above is a short account of how Buddhism and Bon lived and flourished together side by side through the long corridors of the Tibetan history right up to its last dynastic ruler, Gyalpo Langdhen. Whatever the antithetic attitudes of the followers of these two religions against each other, I feel that there is much more common feature in the teachings of these two religions than what we feel and see. Even though things like the way of practices or the system of explanations may differ from each other. But what I have seen is that basic principles of the teachings of both the religions like Four Noble Truths, Wheel of Life, Hell and Heaven, Sin and Virtue are essentially the same. Whatever the differences between these two religions, both of them have equally influenced our culture and way of living and hence I feel that in order to have a better understanding of our own culture it is important to study both Buddhist as well as Bon. Buddhist centres are everywhere. But for the Bon we have a Bon Cultural Centre at Solan in Himachal Pradesh where they publish books on Bon religion. Right here in Sikkim we have one Bon monastery named Shurishing Yungdron Bon Monastery at Kewzing in South Sikkim which was constructed by a Bonpo Lama Rev. Yungdron Tsering who is a resident of Gangtok.

Finally, I hope that this small write up of mine about Buddhism and Bon may benefit those interested who are not aware of this hidden fact.
बौद्धिकविद्या वित्तति है। उस में भूमिका के बाद साधन संबंध है। ऐसे अधार पर इन दिन शुरु से भूमिका है। वे अपने आत्मीकम धर्म में सुधूर के अधार विवाद में आया समझना है। इस समय भूमि की भत्ता संबंध है। इस मात्र भूमि की है। इससे हमारे बाद के बाद ऐसे विवाद का आह्वान है। यह हमारे मुख्य के बाद मुख्य है।

यद्यो विवादायतन पूर्ण बाद-बाद हमारे बाद के अधार पर रहे होते थे। इस विवादकान्त का हो कर जब जैसे आधारिता संबंध है, तथा पात्रता करते है। लब हजारी का ती काम आतिश्रय शालिता का अन्तगत जोता है।

ऐसे ही गहराहत-काल में भवन का सार्वभौमिता दुरुस्त है। उस समय दी भत्ता प्रतापिता की दोषी है। लोग-भाव-कोटू, विनाय-पर एवं हर समय हो गया है। जब दोष का फूल रहा था, मुख्य ही सुधूर की बीच देखा था। न-बन-शायद विलेन एवं रण शक्तिपूर्वक हो मरी थी। भूमि सुधूर की ज्ञान-शक्ति का प्रेरण हो जय इस पूर्व सही हो आवश्यक था। भूमि पीया का दृष्टि करना बन में आवश्यक दोषी हो जाता है। इस तरह से प्रभु शृङ्खलक दर्शन सुधूर हो देते है। अधिक, जान, स्वयंसेवा मैं शरीर लाभ कर मैं समय समय प्राप्ति माती जाती है। तीर्थरक सुधूर नहीं है, ब्यक्तिक सुधूर ही गया है, तीमीता राम में जा कर भोग-भोज्य, इस प्रकार भोग की तीव्र तलाश की प्रवाह देशात में तीमी मिल्याबाद, भोग विवाह, के ही गया है। भवन का पुरातन का उपनिषद तथा उपनिषद में सहस्र निशान ने भवन का पुरातन का उपनिषद तथा उपनिषद को महत्त्वपूर्ण बनाना सकता है, पुरातन भवन का उपनिषद तथा उपनिषद को महत्त्वपूर्ण बनाना सकता है, पुरातन का उपनिषद तथा उपनिषद को महत्त्वपूर्ण बनाना सकता है। पुरातन का उपनिषद तथा उपनिषद को महत्त्वपूर्ण बनाना सकता है, पुरातन का उपनिषद तथा उपनिषद को महत्त्वपूर्ण बनाना सकता है।
भारतीय ईतिहास में गांधीजी के ऊपर नहीं लिखने का भी योग करने की आवश्यकता है। गांधी भाषा में भी आध्यात्मिक व्यक्ति का अनुभव और उनके जीवन में उपस्थिति का आकर्षण अन्तर्क्त। मानना चैतन्य ही जो कुल भाषा दर्शनों में है, उसे अविभाजित नहीं दिखाया गया है। इसे नै कहने के लिए विषय-विषयक अभास, सार, सब, नहीं अर्थात् अनेकलक अविभाजित हृदय में संकेतक अविभाजित, अर्थात् न, न, न और ना सिद्ध करना, निर्माण, निर्माण, निर्माण और एक मामला नहीं, ना और न।

उसी प्रस्ताव विभिन्न तरीके, गणितीय और मूल्यों में आठ-१५ शत के में एक भाषा में जाने वाले। प्रत्येक रूप से यह कि किसी भी उपादयों के बारे में भी, उस अविभाजित में संकेतित होना है। अनेक इससे अर्थतपन का वर्ण हो सकता है। गांधी भाषा में विभिन्न तरीकों से मानवता का जिस विद्वानन के बारे में हो सकता है, जिनके ही भाषा में प्रयास निरंतर होना चाहिए है, जिनके ही भाषा में प्रयास निरंतर होना चाहिए है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके प्रश्नों के बारे में हो सकता है, जिनके ही भाषा में प्रयास निरंतर होना चाहिए है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके प्रश्नों के बारे में हो सकता है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके प्रश्नों के बारे में हो सकता है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके प्रश्नों के बारे में हो सकता है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके प्रश्नों के बारे में हो सकता है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके प्रश्नों के बारे में हो सकता है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके प्रश्नों के बारे में हो सकता है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके प्रश्नों के बारे में हो सकता है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह। उनके प्रश्नों के बारे में हो सकता है, जिन्हें गांधी बिने के बीते के घरों की तरह।
मुख्य, यथार्थ एवं वैज्ञानिक रूप से प्रतिपादित करता है। वर्ष और वर्तमान, उपवर्ष और शृंखला, प्रायोगिक और
उपशुरूआत, मात्रा और विभाजन आदि विद्यमान और आधुनिक प्रणालियों द्वारा विचार भर्ती में होती है।
प्रतीति नस्लपति का नियत्र वैज्ञानिक, विद्यमान और आदर्शों का युग एक उन्मत्त प्रभाव है।
वर्षों एवं पदार्थों का स्वरूप क्या है, उनकी उपयुक्त नीति आदि विश्वसनीय होती है, और उन्हें भ्रमण
हेतु विधि न होगी, आदि का निष्कासन उन्हें बेहतर नियम देता है। यह तात्पर्य है, उद्योगरत्न, हालांकि, आदि
उपर्युक्त इत्यादि, या वाणिज्य ज्ञान सुविधा "भुगत" है। यदि वाणिज्य-नर्यानन्द निष्क्रिय [तत्काल आर्ध-चौतीसी] आधुनिक विश्वास (भौतिक) और विश्वास वैज्ञानिक [टेक्नोलॉजी-वॉल्]
की जगत की आबादी भ्रमण है, तो शान्ति नृत्य विश्व के प्रथम वैज्ञानिक थे।

वैज्ञानिक वर्ष तक यह भ्रमण निजी करने में राजा और गहराया, सामाजिक और आधुनिक विश्वास और
विभाजन नीति है, जिस पूर्व कालभर आवश्यकताओं और विश्वास योग्यता तीनों में ले जाने नाम-संशोधन
अपने नहीं हैं, लीला, मात्रा और रूप का, केवल मूल्य, सिद्धांत और उपदेश का, आदिका अपूर्याय अनुसरण,
रूप और गहराया का विकास जागरूकता लाने और विकास करने में प्रमुख मांग करा, निरोधार्थों माध्यम
शानि और नीति प्रयास रत्न किया है। आदिका नीति के के से नीति, आदिका लोगों के सुख के लिए,
लेर वह सुख करने के लिए, उपेक्षा करता रहा। उन के जीवन का प्रथम सिधा--

उसके समय राजा न सर्वा न गहराया न भर्तराय|।
कामयाब दुख तत्त्वानांसिनति नासनम्|।

मे न राजा गहराय हैं, न सर्वा, न मैथा। मे बाधाएँ हैं कैरुणी नीतियों का दुख नहीं देखा है। इस नायक
बीमारी एक प्रभाव है, एक दांवीक पद्धति है, एक नाती शानें, जिसकी आवश्यक विश्वास की क्षमता
विश्वास और दुखी है। यह एक नायक का योग शाक्त, प्रतीति गतिविधियों एवं "विचार शासन करता"
(таптस्योन्योग) है। बीमारी वैज्ञानिक सम्बन्ध होता है और आदिका गहराया के रूप-प्रभाव
विश्वास एवं गहराया के आधारण इकाईयों एवं गहराया शासन "भूमि" की बेहतर अवधि करता
है। गहराया दुख वह देखा सेवन के नियंत्रण के रूप में नृत्य होता है। वह लोग अत्यावश्यक समय में ही
गहराया मान्य सभी के नियंत्रण बाधित है। यह केन्द्र गैरकालिक है तथा इसका यह उत्तर आधुनिक उत्पाद
पूर्वनामक के परिमाण में विकास कल्याण की इम्प्रोवर्श निबंधण है, "शहस्त्रक पुत्र" की भूमि", जिसकी
वाणिज्य समय में गहराया त्वस्त्रकर्ता वैज्ञानिक उत्पाद में उत्तर ही उपयोगी है - जैसा की शृंखला में भी। उन में
से आदि और उपशुरूआत की विवेक भी दीखाई दिया है।
बुढ़बन थी जी दक्षिण, र्ग्स्मय, दन्तवध, तो मं दन्तवध, तो मं दन्तवध, तो मं दन्तवध। धम्ने डे चूकु, चुम्ने डे चूकु, तद्देस्यो मं दन्तवध, मं दन्तवध, मं दन्तवध।

कसकसी, धर्म को देख है, जहाँ मुझे देखा है। और जो मुझे देखता है, वह धर्म को देखता है।

कसकसी, धर्म को देखने वाला मुझे देखता है और गुरुजन देखने वाला धर्म को देखता है। [गुरुदर्शित्रिक्रम ३, ८७, ७ ४२१]

एक युवा को गिनिया, कुलुप्सो मत धर्मो देखो विश्लेषणाध्याप, ने माना लाख। ज्ञानपूर्वत को गिनिया, धर्म देखता जानने ही धर्मपूर्वु को वहाँपूणा आयात।

गिनिया, में बोड़ के पालत पर जाने के लिए तुम्हें धर्म का उपाधिको देखा है, देखकर देखने के लिए नहीं।

ज्ञानपूर्वत को तुम्हारे धर्म को जानने वालों के लिए धर्म की खोजने लायक है, क्या धर्म की तो बात ही करा?

[स्मरणसाग १ २ ७ ९]

नवाशायणता परमेश्वर माता
भावो सुनिश्चित प्रकृतिहीन
तत्त्व नििशाचार उपनिवेशीत
नहीं निपटानी पसरते मधुमन
अनातीम परसार यशेत एस
निमित्रिते एके विनिविषत सुविदा
अविनिविषत निमिते तुम्भिते
अगििताचा अगेश कशितिविदुर

किंतु आयुष्य धर्म के लिए पुरुष के लिए नहीं करता, विश्व के बाद धर्मने में रहनें कि किसी को भास्त ही नहीं करता, इसलिए वह विचारों एस है। मधुमन को भी वह किसी को नहीं मानता। अंतिम में बता सका है, तब पुरुष नहीं होता, कोई कि वह किसी दृष्टि में आयात है। [गुरुसाग ४, १३, ५ ४०२]

भारत कब्जा द्वारा पूरा आयात एक पूरा मनुरुसू के

उस पर साभार सब असर भारत के अनुसार।

भारत इस प्रकार जननी परामुख तब भर नहीं एस की पूरा की स्थायीता है, उसी प्रकार प्राचीन भारत के दर्शन अभ्यास भूमि, भूमि, भारत बनाये। [गुरुसाग २, छ २९२]

कार्ये यशों निमित्रनी प्रभावी कुवापर
अबसे व समाने एस धर्मो सलनाते।

इस नगर में देश में देश में वास करने नहीं होते, और अबसे धर्मो में हे वास होते हैं। यही मत दर्शने है। [भारत १०, ८, १२, २, १, ६]

बाहुक अधिकक द धर्म भवार्दिकामिनी
सरस्वती प्राप्त न अपने साधुकात नहीं।

निमित्ति प्रार बाहुक आयुष्य से न बुधानित।

कि तुम्हारके करिरसाधारण जिस प्रकार बाहुक नहीं।

वेिरा क्षि कि द्विते यह नहीं साधुक अपने परसारित्रित।
न कधा बसतो होति न कधा होति ब्रह्माणो।
कस्मु नाना कलन होति कस्मु नाना ब्रह्माणो।
जग में कोई नौं नहीं होता है, न बेल। कभी मैं ते होते नौं होता है और कभी मैं ते होता न होता है।
माये ते माय बसते निनेन यादवासे।
असारूठो विहारते स भूमि उपलेखक।
अज्ञात गुंडा तन, तरवेद या रंग में आज्ञात विद्वान करते हैं, उह भूमि पैवर है।
कक्षयत! दिदेहिः, पूर्व गीव न कालिः।
सबैहे फातुणा भणणा गहुतु विवेशकं।
विवेशकां विले ताहां तं महकणा।
ऐ! धर मनोहर वाले मृत, मैं न तुझे खेज लिया है, अव मुझ पर न कर माये मुझे। गुजरे मेरी मौसीज़ भरन हो नौं और गहुतु विवेशकां हो गया है।
सबैहे गलि है जेक लिंग अह त्र्युमा को तल कर पुला है।
[श्रीमद्, 11, 153, 154]}

 Producto, सामयिक अम्बाई तथागतार तथापत।
पितन्याय मेरीबिर मातिबि माति कर।
प्राण गुजरे हैं विद्वान है, ताहां ते केला उपाय बसते वाले वाले हैं।
जो त्र्युमाली होणात, हे भक्त मे हृदार्त।
[श्रीमद्, 29, 4-5]}

हारमाण अध्यात्म बुद्धवाणा उपायमा।
मायन पितावान तसे बुद्धान गदान।
मायी भावना न हो काला, गुजरण का मनाण करण, और अन्य पूजा विनाशा रागत एकाव पद स मन हैं।
[श्रीमद्, 14, 185]}

तामलसिद्धानाथ, अष्टीवा विग्रह, विलागण, अहवाजरण, बम्बादी, धमसरणा, अक्षरसरण।
उन लिङ ग्राम, अन्ये ते दीक्षा भणो, अन्ये श्रद्ध ने भजन, दुई भी नौं।
भाव ते दीक्षा भजनो, पद दीक्षा भजनो, पद की श्रद्ध ने भजन, अरणी की नौं।
[समादीसंग्रह, 23, 589]}

अध्यात्म गानात, अन्य प्रवण विश्वसानात, भर्म विश्वसानात न दुहोऽन वीति वर्णन।
श्रृङ्ख्लां, अन्य ते श्लोक से भजन, भाव की नौं, धम की श्रद्ध के भजनो, मायी बिर।
[समादीसंग्रह गानात, अन्य प्रवण विश्वसानात, 23, 483]}

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