

NOTES AND TOPICS

NOTE ON THE BIOGRAPHY OF LHA-BTSUN NAM-MKHA' 'JIGS-MED (1597-1650 A.D.)

THE PATRON SAINT OF SIKKIM

- *Dr. Rigzin Ngodub Dokham*

Lha-bTsun Nam-mKha' 'Jigs-Med is famed to have embodied in his person, the spiritual essence of the Indian Pandita Vimalamitra and the Tibetan Master kLong-chen rab-'byams (1308-1363 A.D.). He was born towards the southern end of byar-Yul in the family of Lha-btsed-po in the tenth sexagenary cycle (Rab-byung) of the fire-bird year of the Tibetan Calendar corresponding to 1507 A.D. He took his ordination as a celibate monk at the monastery of gsung-snyak Ri-khrod by virtue of which he was given the name Kun-bzang rnam-rgyal and studied Thong-hborg under the tutelage of illustrious masters Prul-sku U-rGyan dpal-hbyor. He undertook monastic studies at the feet of erudite scholars from a period of seventeen years in the course of which he comprehended the crux of all the doctrines and understood the essential nature of all external and mundane phenomena as illusory and void.

Thereafter, with the cardinal objective to practice and gain experience on the basis of his accumulated learning, he went on pilgrimage to every sacrosanct and holy place in India and Tibet and mastered the esoteric wisdom. On attaining the age of fifty summers, the Teachers Rig-hzin hja-chon snying-po and gTer-chen bdud-hdul rdo-rJe prophetically entreated him that the appropriate time to visit hBras-mo ljongs, the hidden land of Guru Padmasambhava had arrived. Accordingly, he started his sojourn from Sam-Yas and made his debut in hBras-ljongs from the northern point of Tsod-la. He discovered the hidden treasure of Rig-hzin srog-sgrub at Brag-dkar bkra-shis-sdings and disseminated the doctrine amongst those who deserved to inherit it. Next, guided by an intuitive flash and inner vision, he discovered

from the northernly cave called Lha-ri snying-phug, the hidden treasure entitled rDo-rJe snying-po sprin-gyi tho-glu.

He played pivotal role in establishing monasteries and stupas in the land and in widely disseminating the doctrine of Great Perfection, rZogs-Chen Ati-Yoga. His teachings gained so much currency and popularity among the masses that his followers came to be known as Zogs-chen-Pa. Using the earth and stones collected from all the quarters of the land, he along with other contemporary Yogins materialized the Stupa or mChod-rten called bKa-shis hot-hbar at Yuksam. These Yogins also performed the coronation of the first ever ruler of hBas-Mo-lJongs, Phun-tshogs rnam-rgyal at Yuksam thus heralding a new epoch in the history of the land.

The hermitage established by this great anchorite at Yuksam known by the name of Bag-tog-gdon was perhaps the first Buddhist establishment founded in hBras-lJongs. The great monasteries of Dubsde, gSang-srag chod-gling etc founded by him speak volumes about the devout and indefatigable zeal of this great visionary.

After fifty eight years of mortal existence, he summoned his disciples and addressed them thus: "Do not grieve for I am destined to depart from the world of mortal beings at this age. Even then, you have with you the great doctrines of Rig-hzin srog-sgrub and Rdo-rje snying-po and also my chief disciple Rig-hzin lhun-sgrub to guide you. However, if you insist that I should reincarnate again to come amongst you, look for me in the valley of Bumthang." With these words, he passed away. This occurred in a place known as bLon-chen gangs-kyi ra-wa. Miraculously, his body soon diminished into a diminutive size which further dissolved and metamorphosed into holy relics. In the course of time, his disciples searched for his reincarnation and discovered him at Bumthang where he was known by the name Mi-skyod rdo-rje. He died at a tender age and was born again as the famed Lha-btsun 'jigs-med dpa'-bo. In his fourth reincarnation, he was named as Kun-bzang 'jigs-med rgya-mtsho. Thus, the seen and unseen manifestations of Lha-btsun nam-mkha' 'jigs-med have been instrumental in the introduction and propagation of the great wisdom of rZogs chen-po n hBras-Mo-lJongs.

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