GURU RIN-P0-CHE AND LAMAISM IN SIKKIM

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The great Tantric guru Padmasambhava is popularly known as Guru Rin-po-che in Tibet and other Himalayan states. At present very little record is available about his life and career prior to his departure to the land of Snow. It is known to us that he was the son of King Indrabhuti. According to the opinion of the historians, the king Indrabhuti was the ruler of Udvanā of Odvanā.1 Regarding the identification of this place, scholars differ in their view. Some suggest that this is identical with Udvanā or Uryvan B.C. Law opines that “it was situated on the river Su-p'o-fa-sa-su, the Subhavastu in Skt., the Suustus of Arrian, and the modern Swat river. Udvanā embraces the four modern districts of Pangkora, Bajazaw, Swat and Bumii.”2 However, during the visit of Fa-hsien this place was a part of North India. In this connection T.T. Rinpoche remarks that Padmasambhava “was born from a lotus blossom on the milk-ocean in the country of Uryvan which modern scholars believe to be the Swat Valley of Pakistan. He took birth eight years after Buddha’s Mahaparinirvana. He attained deathless Siddhi through tantric practice and at the age of more than 1000 years went to Tibet.”3 This remark of Rinpoche is not based on the historical data but based on the popular belief.

On the other hand, another group of the historians opine that Udvanā was the ancient name of modern Orissa and Indrabhuti was the ruler of this area.4 Indrabhuti is said to have composed the work entitled Janaśidhi, expounding the principles of the Vajrayāna system. He writes that the voidness or śūnyāya of the nature can neither be explained nor expressed by citing similes. It remains all the more indescribable and incomprehensible. He lays emphasis on the formlessness or nirakārata of bodhi. This work of Indrabhuti begins with an invocation of Lord Jagannatha in consonance with the tradition which requires writers from Orissa to begin their works after an invocation prayer to Jagannatha.5 According to law Jagannatha is sarvaśuddhamayam or the supreme embodiment of Buddha. He has been regarded as representing the formlessness aspect of the supreme force and innumerable works, particularly of the medieval period, describes Lord Jagannatha so. For the example the famous Orisa Srimadbhaṅgavata of Jagannath Das begins with an invocation to this formlessness aspect of the Lord.6 Thus, it may be suggested that Indrabhuti was the king of ancient Orissa and Padmasambhava being his son was born in ancient Orissa. Regarding the age of Indrabhuti, it may be argued that since his son Padmasambhava, who was equally a luminary in the Vajrayāna system, carried forward the doctrine of this sect to Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim etc. in the 8th/9th century A.D. Indrabhuti, as a king may be presumed to be living by this period.

However, unfortunately his identity as a king of Orissa is difficult to establish. By this period the Bhuama rule in central place and the Somavamsi in the Western Orissa has been firmly grounded, but no ruler occurs with the name indrabhuti. His sister Lakshmikara, the expounder of the Sahajayāna system, seems to bear the Bhusamakara title and there is in fact a king of this dynasty bearing the name Lakshmikara (9th century A.D.) Indrabhuti’s territories Sambhala has been identified as Sambhalpur region by Sahu.7 mainly on the ground that Proleny has referred to a region Sambhalaka as situ-
at the bank of the river Manada, which has been identified with the river Mahasabdi. Pandragi expresses doubt over such identification of Sambhala with Santhalpur, because at no point of time, Santhalpur, a part of Kolaj, was ever a part of Udvipla or Udvipla, more so when no antiquity of monument there exists prior to the 15th-16th century to support this identification.

Again, it is known that Padmasambhava was the brother-in-law and collaborator of Sanaraksha, a great scholar and abbot of Nalanda University, who visited Tibet to spread the Dharma by the request of the king Thrisong Detsun. It is known from the history of Tibet that during the reign of the 17th king of the Chogyal, hundreds of Indian scholars and yogic masters were invited to Tibet.

Chaitopadhyaya suggests that Padmasambhava had many wives and Mandaravā, the sister of Sāntarakṣita was one of them. Again, Ram mentions that Mandaravā was the daughter of King Indrabhuti. Hoffmann, on the other hand, says that form the legendary account pregnant, with historical gleanings it appears that Padmasambhava was an adopted son of king Jñabhabuti. Thus, the personal life of Padmasambhava is not clear before us. Hoffmann further suggests that Padmasambhava got his intellectual and spiritual training under two Buddhist monk-scholars, viz, Guru Buddha-sāhanā and Aṃāravajra. His revision with Sāntarakṣita and academic apprenticeship under the erudite scholarly guidance of two intellectual giants of his time are the testimonies of Padmasambhava’s wide and deep knowledge of Buddhist. His proficiency in Tantric Buddhism has been ascertained by his study of the “Tripāda” philosophy, logic and social sciences in India. Besides, he reinforced his theoretical knowledge with practical experience by defeating several scholars in Tantric contests. He successfully manifested his abilities as the Professor of Yogacāra school of Tantric Buddhism at Nalanda Mahāvihāra. Sakāsita states that leaving aside the folk-tales about his birth and early life, which cannot be well relied upon, what we know positively of him is that he resided at the Nalanda University when the Tibetan king sent an invitation to him by the advice of Sāntarakṣita, and that he was a prominent exponent of the Yogacāra school. Thus he equipped himself with learning of his contemporary Buddhist scholars and went to Nepal enroute to Tibet on a state call which was around them. However, according to the Tibetan tradition he was 1000 year old during his visit to Tibet. Again, some scholars think that Padmasambhava had visited Śikṣitā, Bhusan and Nepal before entering into Tibet. Now we would like to say something about his visit to Nepal before entering into Tibet.

The great Tantric scholar required to equip himself with many things from Sāntarakṣita before his final journey to Tibet. A prior knowledge of Tibetan religious and political conditions was an important task for him. He stayed in Nepal for four years and this proved to be an advantage for him from where he could observe and survey the course of events taking place in Tibet and the Nepalese Buddhists who were familiar with the Tibetan mysteries helped him as the first hand informants. As he was entrusted with the task of dealing with Tibetan religious affairs for which he was not well prepared, he had to train proper holymates in Nepal as the special Śikṣitās to be used in Tibet. He, in addition to his consort Mandaravā, took three Śikṣitās from Nepal viz., a Tibetan Śikṣitā named Bkra-shis-shes-drun, domiciled in the Himalayan District (Mon) and two other of Nepa-
kece or known as Kālsiddhi and Śākyadevi. Chattopadhyaya is of opinion that Mandarava and the Tibetan Dākinī are often portrayed to the left and right of the master in religious pictures of the Nying-ma-pa sect. 23

Thus Padmasambhava, when visited Tibet by the request of king Khriśto-ndöl-ubtsan in 8th century A.D., being well acquainted with the secrets of Tibet, easily dominated the evil spirits as well as the Bon-priests. It is believed that in Tibet, Padmasambhava "turned barren land into fruitful land and diverted the river Brahmaputra into an underground cavern." This remark simply suggests that he took steps to improve agriculture and ensured economic welfare of the Tibetans by developing the irrigation facilities. Thus, Padmasambhava was not only the religious in Tibet, but he made all round development of Tibet and, therefore, he was widely accepted by the Tibetans in the name of Guru Rinpoche.

Again, Sāntarakṣita returned to Tibet to assist the Guru in the fulfillment of his mission. They established the "Samye" monastery at Lhasa which became the Vācaea of the Mahāyāna Buddhism beyond the Himalayas. In this monastery the first seven Tibetan took ordination as Bhikṣus. Some more Indian scholars also invited to Tibet by the instruction, such as Vairocana and Kāva Paltses, translated numerous sūtras and tantra texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Thus, by the grace of Guru-Tibet attained a high degree of spiritual development. Gradually the Tibetan Buddhism, founded by Guru Rinpoche, was accepted unanimously and this religion also crossed the boundaries of Tibet and went to Mongolia, Russia and Kalmykia. This religion was also accepted by the Himalayan tribes of Ladak, Bhutan and Sikkim in due course.

However, we have no information regarding the role of Guru Rinpoche in Tibet after the death of Santarakṣita. Scholars differ in this matter. Majumdar says that he left Tibet after a residence of short period to preach the Dharma in other adjoining areas. 24 Hoffman believes that he remained in Tibet for a total period of 18 months. 25 He, however, does not mention anything in this matter. The followers of the Guru claim that he stayed in Tibet about 53 years. 26 On the basis of this suggestion made by Majumdar it may be claimed that Guru visited Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and other Himalayan region to make popular the Lamaist faith in these areas so that the Tibetan Buddhist followers might get his constant spiritual guidance in time of general crisis.

Earlier it has been mentioned that many Pandits were invited to Tibet and they worked with Tibetan scholars for the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Tibet. In one of the smaller temples (sgra-bshisgyur-gya-gar-gling) if Samey monastery, 100 Indian Pandits and Tibetan translators worked together on the translation of sūtras and tantras. Many texts were also brought from other lands by the miraculous power of Guru and were translated. Atsid became surprised to find so many Tantras in the library of Samey monastery, which he had never seen in India.

Thus the mission of Guru Rinpoche to Tibet firmly established Buddhism in the land of snow. He cleared away the forces that were hindering it and taught the Dharma in such a skilful manner that many Tibetans attained realization. The school that grew out of his mission is known as the Nyonma and it has survived through an unbroken lineage of masters until the present day.

Before going to mention about the Lamas in Sikkim we would like to mention here...
about the doctrine of the Nyingma school. This sect classifies all of the Buddha's teachings and paths to enlightenment into Nine Yanas. The first three are called the Henulakasanyânânas "Yanas of cause". They are known as the Srîvâkyānâna, Pratyakṣa-buddhayâna and the Bodhisattvayanâna. The last six yanas are called Phalavrâyanâ "Yanas of Result". These yanas contain the tantric teachings and are known as the Three Outer Tantras (Phyir-rgyud-sde-gsum) and Three Inner Tantras (sngon-rgyud-sde-gsum). They are Kriyâyoga (Tib. bya-rgyud), Catur-yoga (Tib. skyod-rgyud), Yogatattva (Tib. rnal-bgyor-rgyud), Mahâyoga, Anûyoga and Atiyoga (Tib. rdzogs-pa-chos-pa). The last one is Atiyoga, which is the highest teaching of the Nying-ma-pa sect and is exclusively a Nyingma practice.21

Deongchen practitioners think that all the appearances are illusions of the deluded mind. They are false because in reality their nature is free from conceptualizations. In nature all existents are the same and they are pure in the Dharma-kaya. In practice there is no acceptance of rejection, rather all existents are accepted as manifestations of the nature Dharmata. There are three aspects here: Smde (Skt. Cittavarga), Longde (Skt. Abhyantavarga) and Men-ngagde (Skt. Upadesavarga).

These teachings are instructions which introduce a novice to the nature of the mind or the nature of all existences, the Dharmata, by means of direct method of practice. After receiving the introduction to the nature, one maintains the practice to make clear and to stabilize this state of awareness and to attain freedom from worldly defilement for ever. When this meditation on the nature of mind is perfected, all existences will dissolve into the vast expanse of Dharmata, the Dharma-kaya.

Buddhism in Tibet is known as Lamayism. A Lama is a superior monk and a religious teacher. A Lama is also a "guru" (Preceptor) of the practicing religion which is known as Lamayism. Lamayism is not a distinct form of either Mahâyâna of Theravâda. It is an admiss- ture or Bon practices and elements of Tantricism at the centre of which the Buddha has been placed.22 Lamayism has different sects of which Nying-ma is the oldest. It was established by Guru Rinpoche. This sects is respected for its strict norms of monastic life and maintenance of the purity of the doctrine. Kâdam, a sect of Lamayism originated with the famous Gelug which is less ascetic but highly ritualistic. From Kâdam developed two other sects known as Kagyud and Sâkya. There are some Buddhist of Sikikim and Darjeeling are follower of Karma. Dug school is prominent in Bhutan and Ladakh. Dikung is another school which has a large monastery, hundred miles North-East of Lhasa.

It is known from the history of Sikikim that Guru Rinpoche did not convert any Sikikimese to cult introduced by him, but did select some for the sacred places to be built in Sikikim. 23 It was his follower Lhatson who preached Lamayism in Sikikim much later. At present we get three facts based on the traditions: regarding the introduction of Lamayism in Sikikim. According to the first one, the struggle and conflicts among the followers of the "Yellow Hats" and the "Red Hats" in Tibet forced the latter to seek refuge in Sikikim, where they attained the status of aristocracy. They tried to convert the Sikikimese, those who were the worshippers of nature, to Buddhism. Though the Lepchas tried to keep themselves aloof, still they succeeded to some extent to order to avoid any possible opposition from Lepchas, these immigrants
now chose one venerable person Phuntsog Nangyal as the temporal and spiritual leader of Sikkim, whose ancestry they trace from a legendary prince who founded the kingdom of Minyog in eastern Tibet in 9th century A.D.

The second fact is that a Tibetan named Zo-khye-bumtsi his country under pressure from the Chinese and Mongols and came to Sikkim during the reign of last Lepcha king. He approached the chief priest Ti Kung Tse for his blessings so that he might beget some children. He got three sons and they conquered Sikkim. All the Lepcha books and manuscripts were burnt and Lamaste was introduced.21

The third tradition suggests that Lhatun, a follower of the Nyingma school, preached the teachings of Guru Rinpoche in Sikkim for the first time in 17th Century A.D. Lhatun suggested the name of Phuntsog, a resident of the Khun region of eastern Tibet should be the spiritual and temporal ruler of Sikkim on the basis of the prophecy of Guru Rinpoche. The Lepchas accepted the suggestion and made Phuntsog their Leader. Thus, Lamasum was introduced by Lhatun with the support from the ruler. It is believed that Lamasum was introduced by Lhatun with the support from the ruler. It is believed that Lhatun was the incarnation of Bimalamitra, the great religious preacher of Ascent India and Tibet.

In this context the remark of Chopra is noteworthy. He says that Phuntsog Nangyal was born in Gangtok in 1604 A.D. and was proclaimed king in 1641 A.D. by the three Lamas in the initiative of Lhatun Chhogo, the well-known Lamasum model, and received the title of Chogyal.20 However, we may opine safely that Lhatun, a follower of the teachings of Guru Rinpoche, preached the teaching of Guru in Sikkim in 17th Century A.D. and in this way the Nyingma doctrine, for the first time, entered into Sikkim.

It is also known from the records that two other Nyingma Lamas arrived in Sikkim during the term of Lhatun from two other directions. They met with each other in the place called Yul-sam which literally means the meeting place of three peoples. Thus this place may be treated as the place of origin of Lamasum in Sikkim.

Now we would like to study on the rise and development of the Lamasum in this small state. The Lamasum of this region belongs to the sect known as Red Hat Sect and consists of the two sects of Mahayana-Nyungma and Kagyu.22

The Kagyu school was established by the great yogi Khyangpo Naljar (A.D. 974-1079). The main teachings of this school were on the five Tantras: the Chakrasamvara, the Hevajra, the Mahamanyika, the Gahyasaamaj and the Vajrabhairava. This school has two main sub sects and many minor ones. The two main schools are: Shangpa Kagyu and Dzogpo Kagyu.22

Dagpo Kagyu translated literally means transmission of the order of Dargo. Dargo is one of the names for the great scholar and yogi Gangpopa who lived in Dargo valleys and played a decisive role in the establishment of this school in Tibet. The founder of the school was Marpa Lotsawa (A.D. 1012-1099). It is known that his two main teachers were Matripa and Naropa, both of whom were among the eighty-four Mahasiddhas of Buddhism India. Through the teaching and blessing of Matripa he accomplished the absolute realization of Mahamudra. Upon returning to Tibet he transmitted the teaching of Chakrasamvara. Gahyasaamaj, Hevajra Mahamanyika and other tantric to his disciples. Milarepa, the great yogi was one of his four principal disciples. The four major sub-schools and eight minor sub-schools are the Karma Kagyu, the Phagtrula Kagyu, the Tshalpa Kagyu and the

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Baron Kargyud

Here, the Lamazum of Sikkim has retained some elements of the earlier Bon religion, which they had replaced. According to the opinion of Choepa, its prominent example is that all charity and abstinence are very rare, practised by its followers in Sikkim.

In Sikkim, as Waddell suggests, there are three sub-sects of the Nyungma school. They are: I. Lhatson-pa which belong most of the monasteries with Pemongshi (Pemaye-gye) as the head, II. Kathok-pa with monasteries of Kathok and Doling and III. Nga dakh-pan with the monasteries of Namchu. Tashiding, Simon and Thong-moche. These sub-sects differ in their emphasis on some particular spiritual work such as L-cho Ling-pa by Lhatson pas, Long-chhen ral-jamnyag by kathokpas and Rag-chen go dem can by Nga dakh-pa. However, the followers of all these sects believe in Dhog-chen-bo or the great lord, which is equivalent to the Indian Nisih yoga. All of them worship Guru Rinpoche. Their highest guru or kuntu zang po, their spiritual tutelary deity in Duh-pa kha gye, and their special guardian deity is Pal-gon den. They were a red hat, which has a special name. I. Gyungshi Zho Guru Rinpoche is worshipped under eight forms by the Nyungmapas. These eight forms are called Guru Tson-gye or the eight worshipful names of the teachers. Waddell, in his work, mentions these, together with their usual paraphrase. They are mentioned below on the basis of the work of Waddell.

I. Guru pad-‘ma byung-gnas “Born of a lotus” for the happiness of the three worlds.
II. Guru Padmasambhava “Saviour by the Religious Doctrine”.
III. Guru Padma Guvalpo “The king of the Three Collections of Scriptures”.
IV. Guru Donj Do-cho “The Dorje or Diamond comforter of all”.
V. Guru Nijma “Od-ser “The Enlightening Sun of Darkness”.
VI. Guru Saiw si Song-go “The Second Sakya-the-lor” who does the work of eight sages.
VII. Guru Seng-ge-sa dock (Seng-ge-sgra-drjor) propagator of religion in the Six worlds with “rearing lion’s voice”.
VIII. Guru blo-gan Mchog-‘khrad “The conveyor of knowledge to all worlds”.

The Karmapa was one of the easiest sub-sects of the Kargyupa. Waddell suggests that “it differs from its parent Kargyupa in the adoption of the Nyungma ‘hidden revelation’ known in Kongbo, and entitled L-cho Ling-pa as ‘the locally revealed merit’. He further opines that the first Karmapa monastery in Sikkim was built at Ralung about 1730 A.D. by the Sikkim ruler Gyu-rim med Namgyal at the special request of the North Karmapa Grand Lama-dling-chug-chen. These Lamas claimed to be the incarnation of the celestial Buddha Vajradhara. The central image of a temple of this sect is usually that of the founder of the sect i.e. Karma “Bakhshi” otherwise their temples do not differ those of the Nyungmapas.

Now we would like to say some words on the monasteries of Sikkim. Cikopa gives a list of seventy-five monasteries. According to his opinion during the eighteen fifty-two monasteries were receiving annual subsidy from the Government. The rest twenty-three were managed by the donations from public. He further says that though there are 67 monasteries, still now one finds a monastery almost on every top of a hill. The total number including these Dhakhung exceed 160.
As far as we know there are three types of monasteries in Sikam: Rockcaves (tak-phu), Gompas and Temples (bla-khang). The four great caves which attract pilgrims from far and wide are Lhariyamgphu in north of Tashiding, Kahosamgphu in the south, Bephu in the east and Detchhurpa in the west near Jorgi. Most of the Gompas are used by monks for meditation. These are far away from settlements. Most of the villages have a monastery of its own. According to Chopra Lachen villagers have several types of monasteries. One is for the Lamas, the other for the nuts and the third for the public.

Among the monasteries the oldest one is the Duhde monastery and it was established by Gyalwa Lhatsun chempo during the reign of the first king of Sikam. The second oldest monastery is Sanga choling and it was during the reign of the same king. He also built the Tashiding and Pemayangtse monasteries. All these four monasteries are the leading monasteries of Sikam.

Thus, the Buddhism or the Lamaism was introduced in Sikam in the mid of 17th century A.D. and gradually this new religion was widely accepted by the inhabitants of this small Himalayan state. The Dharma which was preached by the great guru Padmasambhava in 9th century A.D. was spread and accepted in Sikam. A majority of monasteries of this State are also affiliated to the school called Nying-ma-pa which was also founded by Guru Rinpoche.

Notes and References:

2. Law, B.C.: 1983, Historical Geography of Ancient India, First Indian Edition, Delhi: p. 132, Bhattacharya discusses about the identification of the place Uddiyana in detail. He however, opines that the exact situation of this ptha has been a matter of great controversy. At the end of his discussion he try to establish the fact that Uddiyana was located either in Bengal or Assam. This view of Bhattacharya is also not conclusive and we feel to accept him due to lack of sufficient arguments in his favour.

Again, the Tibetan scholar Pag-sam-jon-lan opines that Uddiyana is the place where Tantric Buddhism first developed (vide, Bhattacharya, B, An Introduction to Buddhist Esotericism, O.U.P.: 1952, p. 45) Some scholars suggest that this branch of Buddhism was developed from ancient Orissa. Then Orissa may be identified as Uddiyana. The king Indrabhūṣu who was ruler of Uddiyana is the author of the Jnanasiddhi. In his work he idealizes Lord Jagannatha with Buddha and he, not only begins his work with an invocation of Jagannatha he cites the word Jagannath and describes Him as sarva-jñānamaya at least in ten verses. Thus, we may safely infer that Uddiyana was ancient Orissa.
5. Ibid: p. 87.
A close study of the work of indrabhuti suggests that Lord Jagannatha not only has been invoked at the beginning of the Jñānasiddhi, as a form of Buddha viz...

Prasanna Jagannathadham sarvajana varāhāritaṁ
Sarvabhūdhamayāt siddhihāpūnām gaganopananam!

9. Chattopadhyay opines that Padmasambhava had many avatars, one of whom is said to have been Śāntarakṣita’s student Mandaravā, who accompanied him during his Tibetan expedition. Chattopadhyay, A. 1967, Atisha and Tibet, Calcutta: p 235.

However, Roccric mentions only two Nepalās, Māras namo, Kīlaśādhi and Šākyadevi.

Roccric, G. N., 1949, The Blue Annals. pt 1, Calcutta; p 43.
16. Ibid, p 42.
20. Rimpoché opines that Padmasambhava transformed barren, rocky lands into pastures and eased water to spring from rocks. He further says that Guru remained for forty-five years and six months in Tibet and he (Tibet during the reign of king Thronoon De utsen’s son, Prince Mathur, chompo.
22. Waddell defines the word Lamaism as a mixture of Buddhism with a preponderating amount of mythology, mysticism, and magic. the doctrine of incarnate lamas and the worship of canonized saints, now such prominent features of Lamaism, are of recent origin. He, further, opines that it was readily accepted as it protected the people from devils. p 5.
25. Ibid, pp 24-34.
26. Chopra opines that Gyalwa Lhasun Chhuppo came to Sikkim in early 17th century A.D along with two other Lamas Nga-Tsug Syen-pa Cherpö and Kathog Rigzin Chhupa, following the instructions of Guru Padmasambhava. They selected Chogyal Phuntsok Namgyal as the first Dharma king of Sikkim and consecrated him at Yumkhang in 1604 A.D. Chopra, P.N. 1979; Sikkim, p 85.

27. Ibid; pp. 78-81.
28. Ibid.
29. Refer the "Buddhist Civilization in Tibet by Rinpoche, T T; 1987; pp. 48-49.
31. Ibid; p 11.
32. Ibid; p 12.
33. Ibid.
34. See Appendix I and II; pp. 99-103.
35. Ibid; p 86.
36. Ibid; p 82.