The Tibetan Literature And Its Development

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A literature communicated the social cultural status of a group of human beings to describe its mind and face. The Tibetan literature becomes thematically diverse. It maintains oral traditions as well as the written materials which developed through specific periods, such as:

(i) Early period of Tibetan literature (upto cent. 10 A.D.)
(ii) Middle period of dimensional diversity (cent. 11-18 A.D. and, which may be subdivided in two epochs (a) Epochs of radical progress upto cent. 15 A.D. and (b) Thas of momentum of creative diversity (cent. 16-18 A.D.)
(iii) Modern period (upto 1450 A.D.) of the literature.
(iv) Contemporary Literature (1450 A.D. downwards) in Tibetan.

The above periodic distribution is based on thematic relevance in the time context.

The perimeter of Tibetan literature happens to be somewhat distinct in its dimensional growth.

EARLY PERIOD (UP TO CENT. 10 A.D.)

The heroic tales of Gesar Ling which had been popular in oral traditions, may claim to be the conspicuous evidence of the early phase of creative composition among the Tibetans and other Tibetan speaking peoples of Mongolia, China and those of the Indian Himalayas.

The tale regarding the falling the scriptures on the roof of the royal palace of Lhasa the rich (4th century A.D.) probably was an symbolic myth. The script was not communicable to then seers and onlookers. In which language these scriptures were? Zhang-zhong? Urgan? Burush? The entrance of Bon, carried by the priests in the southwest Tibet, as the tradition speaks, during the early consolidation of Yar lungs leadership leaves meagre literary records to construct a separate chapter. A chapter dealing with the Tibetan literature regarding the ecclesiastic Bon precepts does not narrate its early period. The use of Zhang-Zhong scripts in the model of lancha (rangjalanpi) or lanche, as claimed by the Bon po priests prior to the invention of Tibetan scripts (cent. 7th A.D.), may be hard to substantiate. Neither the Iranian source, nor the Chinese materials of the Wu dynasty records the detail about their neigh-
bouring people of the Trans-Himalayas. The folklores and myths which have come down up till now suggest the prevalence of verbal communication as they were then understandable to the listeners residing in the valleys and ravines of the high plateau.

The ecclesiastical hierarchy which developed subsequently, whether Bon or Buddhist, did not appreciate such popular outpourings. An emphasis was laid upon regulated vows of the human life towards the higher achievement where the mundane becomes secondary. A camera study of the Tibetan literature reveals those facts.

The Bon-po priests in 'Bru dza (zha) might claim their resemblance with the speech Bruski (or zhi) which might have been in vogue by cent. 2 A.D. in the western (pratigya) country in between the down course of the Sint (hu) and the northeastern border of Iran. The specimens, as referred by Siddheswar Verma (1920), require further probing. Zhang Chung and Bruski or Puruski were probably in usage prior to the systematisation made by Thon mi Sambhota the 7th cent A.D. In course of systematisation Thon mi Sambhota probably took care of the then prevailing speech specimens used in popular tales, folklores as Panini endeavoured in Western Himalayas by 400 B.C.

The Dun huang documents which refer to the Yar luns are silent about the Olmo lun/hin Bon tradition. The latter generated in the remote areas like 'Bru dza, Spurans and Gu ge in the northwest Himalayas. It was admixed with the local rituals of nature-worship which subsequently became a kin to pre-Vedic Siva cult of Kashmir. Prior to the consolidated state formation in Tibet, many sporadic groups of the Trans-Himalayas used to practise their indigenous rituals. No systematisation of the faith was ventured. The Dun huang documents substantiate them. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956) and R.A. Stein (1957) refer to some Pre-Bon local faiths resembling to Mother Tantra which might be indigenous. Egon Von-Eickstedt (1926), the Man in India (Vol. Vi pp. 237-74) traced them among some ethnic types of Western Himalayas. Moreover several edicts and inscriptions come in the purview.

Thon mi Sambhota (7th cent. A.D.) otherwise named Anu, is accredited with the authorship of Sum cu pa and Rtag pa'i as he endeavoured to systemise the Trans-Himalayan speeches spoken by the inhabitants of Stod bod. Its linguistic study may not be relevant in the present context. The Proto-Tibetan literature requires further research in contrast to the speeches belonging to the neighbouring peoples of Tibet. Numerous oral traditions about 'dre, sni, khyi, gdon, btsan mo, sgra gtsam, nam, a phyi lho khyun, 'bran etc. make one inquisitive regarding the nomenclature of the early Tibetan literature prior to the growth of ecclesiastism in Tibet. Giuseppe Tucci (1980:165) aptly remarks: "In general it can be asserted that the religious practice of the laity is still strongly under the influence of the pre-Buddhist and folk heritage, he is familiar from his childhood with the epic deeds and marvelous happenings with which the literature and traditions deriving from this heritage are filled. The particular kind of religious feeling which gives life to them regulates all the relationship between
the Tibetan people and the immense, uncertain world of the demonic and the divine.

The advent of Buddhist literature in Central Tibet and its predominant role through the patronisation of the Btsan rulers was well documented. Also the support of the Tang emperors of China, the assistance of the Buddhist teachers from Nepal with the sources, materials and the influx of the Buddhist erudition for centuries paved the path for the Early spread (sna dar) of Buddhism in Tibet. It was the glamorous period of the Tibetans when they could control over the Central Asian silk routes on the north and the Ugyurs and the Arabs in the west. As a result of that the Tibetan language and literature obtained a wide scope to grow.

The Buddhist literature in Tibetan extends in three sections e.g. Yig bsgyur (translation work), Gter ma (revelations) and Bstan bcos (elucidatory compilations) by the Tibetan Buddhist scholars.

Pad ma byun gnas (Padmasambhava) is said to have been initiated by Thisong detsan (Khris ston lde btsan cent. 8 A.D.) to visit Tibet for facing the severe challenges from the Bon-poo nissens when the Tibetan chieftains adhered to the Pre-Buddhist Bon tradition prevalent then in 8th cent. A.D. Pad ma byun gnas succeeded in application of the Rnins rgyud to subdue his opponents. He therefore ensured the base of Buddhism in Tibet by installing the Bsam-ys nas monastery in Tibet (750 A.D.).

Padmasambhava is said to have carried some Sanskrit Tantric texts from India. The Drag snags 'dus pa rdo rje rtsa-ba'i rgyud (Vajramantra-bhuri-sandhinjula-tantra) which was translated by Padmasambhava in collaboration with Vairocana, was one of those texts.

After the model of Odantapuri vihara of magadh, the Bsam-ys nas (Sarnya) monastery was built in 749 A.D. Padmasambhava and Santarakshita took active part in building the monastery and the latter was made the first abbot (mikan po) there. He laboured thirteen years for the spread of the Indian thought, especially Buddhism. On account of his continuous efforts for good and welfare of beings he has been epitomised Bodhisattva.

Regarding the visit of Santarakshita in Tibet, the Pad ma'i bka' than refers to a story regarding the request made by Sba gsal sman, (also known as Ye shes dban po) to Santarakshita for preaching the Buddha's teaching in Tibet. Santarakshita is said to be present in Nepal then (c. 40 A.D.). They had taken a vow, saying: "We should establish the Doctrine of the Buddha in Tibet." And, thereafter, Santarakshita is said to have proceeded to Tibet for the cause of the Tibetan people.

The teachings of Sakyamuni the Buddha were carried to Tibet in Indian original since the introduction of Buddhism by the Indian Buddhist missionaries. The Tibetans also paid high regard to those sayings by preserving them in Tibetan translation and by codifying them as the sacred texts of the Indian. Those texts are generally known as the the kanjur (bka' 'gyur: Buddhavacana) and the tanjur (bstan 'gyur: Sutra). The latter collections consists of the works composed by

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the Indian Buddhist exponents like Nagarjuna (1st-2nd Cent. A.D.), Aryadeva (2nd Cent. A.D.) Asanga and his brother Vasubandhu (4th cent. A.D.), Padmasambhava and his contemporaneous Santaraksita (8th cent. A.D.) Kanakasila (8th cent. A.D.), Naropa (9th cent. A.D.) Birupa (10th cent. A.D.), Atiśa Dipankara (11th cent. A.D.) and many other Indian teachers. Thus the bilateral relationship was established between the Indian and the Tibetan Buddhists.

The Kanjur (bka' 'gyur) collection includes the Vinaya texts belonging to the Mulasarvastivada nikaya of schismatic Buddhism which is partially available in Sanskrit from Central Asia and that from Gzigg in western India.

The Sutra and the Tantra texts as preserved in Tibetan translations have great importance in the Indological Studies. Actually speaking, the demarcation between the Sutra and the Tantra, as we understand now, did not prevail in olden time. The ideal of Bodhisattva who takes the vow to dedicate himself for the cause of redressing suffering of others has been elaborated in theory and in practice in the Sutra and the Tantra texts respectively. The latter has more acceptance among the common people through esoteric and spiritual achievements and their application through rituals and modalities in observances. Thus ritualistic prayers, songs and incantations of mystic Sanskrit and Dramil syllables mantra (arya and anarya respectively, invocations, physiological ritualistic dances with gesticulations (mudra), music, oracles, and mystic rites are preserved in the rgyud(d) Tantra, snag (mantra) and gzuns (dharani) texts translated from Sanskrit original.

The Tantra texts preserved in Tibetan comprised of four main traits, namely, rituals (kriya), vowed livelihood (carya), esoteric (yoga) and higher esoteric (anuttarayoga) practices. The texts are arranged in the Kanjur in reverse order of the said four traits; while the arrangement in the Tanjur collection is occasionally based on deities with the ritualistic formulae and modalities of worship.

But what was the case of the lay people outside the Yar Luns valley? In Mna ris khor gsum the Bon priests took care of them. They undertook a competitive task to provide ethno-cultural nourishment in the Tibetan literature of the Bon. Because they had no access into the Buddhist monastic environment for socioeconomic background. They reproduced Gsen rab glorification at par with that of Sakymuni the Buddha. The healthy competition lost its fervour after being loathed by potenical powergame during Glandar ma and subsequent Yum brtan regime in Central Tibet and in Western Tibet. The diversity of the Tibetan literary history become explicit herein.

The Tibetan zhang zhung (bsang sung) Dictionary published from New Delhi (1969) preserves an Old Tibetan map of the world with Pasargadai (byruts) city at the centre. In this regard David Stronach observes the following: “Turning to the details of the map at large we not only find Pasargadai at the centre of the composition at the navel of the world to employ an expression more commonly used of Jerusalem but we discover that the map is more or less confined to the geographical limits of the Achaemenian Empire, running from Egypt in the west.
to possibly the Pamirs of Central Asia in the east. There can be little doubt therefore that the original map which the Tibetan cartographer copied or adapted was a 'world map' composed in Iran during the period of Achaemenian rule''. (Tibetan Review XIII, No. 1 Jan. 1977 p 15).

Ernest Hettney, Director of Alexandar Csoma de Koros Institute, Budapest (Hungary) points out the following: "From the fact that the centre of the map is occupied by Parthagadea, (the capital of Cyprus Empire) and other regions of Iran, we can obtain the result, that the map was created in Iran, and a Tibetan cartographer copied or adopted it. (But only after the 7 century A.D. since the Tibetan alphabets from the Lan-cha alphabet were adapted by Thon-mi-sambho-ta, Minister of the Tibetan King Ston-Bstam-sgam-po'). The above fact goes in favour of supporting the antiquity of Tibet during the Achaemenian rule.

MIDDLE PERIOD OF DIMENSIONAL DIVERSITY

As usual the creative intellectual of Tibet were engaged to produce in multifarious directions, which had then been known to them. The patronage of the Sakya hierarchy enhanced the inquisitiveness of the Tibetan scholars when the Buddhist of Bharatavarsha got their asylum either in Nepal or in Tibet. The diverse literary production of the 8th teachers deserves a separate mention.

On the other hand, the inhabitants of Central Tibet had the occasion to be in torch of the Yuan emperors of China as well as the vast population of the Kokonor Mongols. Again, a fusion in the Tibetan culture could generate a new dimension of the Tibetan literature through patronage and hostility: the geography of Tibet expanded in the north and northeast of China.

Besides the translation works from the Indian, the Chinese and the Central Asian sources, the Buddhist teachers and authors belonging to Tibet and Mongolia are accredited with the literary contribution in Tibetan about different aspects of the Buddhist thought. Those may be broadly divided into five heads.

(i) Annotations, elucidations and commentary works of the Tibetan translated works which led to further division in the Buddhist order of Tibet. Among them,

(a) Rin ma School advocated by Padmasambhava in the 8th Cent. A.D.
(b) Kargyu School reformed by Lama Marpa (Cent. 11 A.D.)
(c) Sa-skya School founded by Dkon mera gyal po (Cent. 11 A.D.)
(d) Ge lu School propounded by Tson Kha pa (Cent. 15 A.D.) are major. Other minor schools like Karmapa founded by Rin chen dorje, Dikhung pa, Talung pa, Shig pa grew subsequently.

(ii) Esoteric experiences (sgrub thabs) with or without ritualistic formulae (cho/ga) prescribed in the Tantra as related to deities in singular or in multiple. Such as, lam rim, ra khrig, sgrub skil texts were composed by eminent Buddhist teachers in their collected works (gsun bum). Occasionally they preserve the exposition on the particular Tantra practice. For instance, Mi bskod dkyil khor gyi choga and Dhan don rab gsal ascribed to Tson Kha pa (Toh. 5287) belong to the Guhyasamaja class. Similarly, Dbyangs can dga’ ba’i blo gros composed on the
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Guhyasamaja practice in his work lam gzhag leg bsad.

In propitiation of multiple deities several works are also written by scholars according to their personal experience. Tson Kha pa's work entitled (i) Rin po ché'i 'phreng ba and (ii) Dpal gzhin 'rje gsal lha beu gsum ma 'manis kyi dkyil khor du dban 'sgsurs ba gsgubs par thabs kyi cho ga (Toh, 5339) are followed by the Dge lugs pa practitioners.

(iii) Epistemological analysis and doctrinal interpretations for general understanding. Several Buddhist philosophers like Mātreyānātha, Vasubandhu, Sāntaraksīla and Kamalaśīla have comprehended in conformity of the logical ground of nonsubstantiality (nairatmya/sunyaśāta) among the Abhidharmikas, the Madhyamikas and the Yogācāra-Vijnaptimatāra standpoints. Resultantly, some philosophical texts basing on the Prajināparanīta Sutras were composed with a tendency of compromise in Madhyamika Sautrantika, Yogācāra-Madhyaṃka (Svatantika) standpoints. For example, Abhisamayālankāra (Toh 3796) ascribed to Mātreyānātha lays emphasis on such assimilation of Yogācāra-Madhyaṃka Tattvasamgraha (Toh 4266) of Sāntaraksīla (Cent. 8 A.D.) with its commentary Kamalaśīla (Toh 4267) a comprehensive attempt in this respect.

Similar endeavours are also observed among the Buddhist philosophers of Tibet like Sa Skya Pan chen (12th Cent. A.D.), Nag Lo tsa ba (13th Cent. A.D.) Tson kha pa (15th Cent.) Gyal-ba nga ba (16th cent. A.D.) who followed the legacy of the Buddhist philosophers of India.

(iv) Historical annals (deb ther) including biographies (mam thar) didactic deliberations (man nag) spiritual correspondence (phrin yig), those of pilgrimage account (lam yig) on Buddhist culture were composed. With reference to four major tenets of Buddhist thought which developed in Tibet since the 11th century A.D. the Tibetans showed their excellence in preservation of historical records carefully. Thus an awareness of historiography could grow among the Tibetans.

A momentum in the Tibetan popular writings may be traced in snan nag (poems), sgrunrs (tales), tshigs bcad (metrical verses), rtsom tshig (essays) and mam thar (biography) in the Tibetan literature.

The triangular political struggles among the Chinese, the Mongols and the Tibetans in the mediaeval period could bring forth a new dimension of the Tibetan literature when ecclesiastical authorities like Gyalwa ngapa produced important political memoirs through epistles and correspondence.

It was a fact that orthodox fundamentalist of Mediaeval Tibet decreed the sentimental songs of egodeal mind of the Sixth Dalai Lama by charging them as sensuous expressions of erotic love laden mind. Yo Dawa'chen (1930) remarked that the structure was labelled as the preconditions in respect of a yellow robed one. Presumably, the lucid expressions from such exalted high ecclesiastical dignitary became instrumented. The monkish garment of the poet could not hide his poetic skill and aesthetic awareness.

Innumerable metrical compositions and devotional songs could provide the mental food of the monks and nuns with a vow of attaining the aesthetic value of impressive sentiment of santa-rasa overwhelmed with the Bliss (rab tu dga' ba).
The spontaneous songs of Milarepa become the classic in the Tibetan literature.

The history of literature in Tibet has a wide scope to cover various aspects of literary contributions. In that respect the historical writings and philosophical texts of the Buddhists and the Bon po teachers enrich the literature during its Middle period. The grammatical compositions and lexicons in Tibetan provide the base in building up the elevated literary spread in Tibet. The erudition on the traditional scriptures of the Buddhists including the Tantra (authors) and those of the Bon priests surpassed in magnificence.

The teachings of Sakya Gampopa the Buddha flourished in Mongolia since the inhabitants accepted Buddhism from the Sa skyas pa teacher Sakya panchen Kun Dga' rgyal mtshan (1162-1251 A.D.) and his nephew Phags pa (1235-86 A.D.).

Prior to that, the sayings of the Buddha are said to have reached Mongolia as early as in the 4th century A.D. when the Chinese monks used to cross the Mongol-Chinese boundary. In olden days the national boundaries were not so defined as they are now. The Chinese inscription located at Yinissel of Mongolia-Chinese border shows the evidence of prevailing Buddhist thought there. The silk route crossing over Central Asia was the source of inquisitiveness to know more about the world outside Mongolia. The archaeological evidence of the murals installed in the Uighar palace in Karakorum, the Mongol capital are believed to have been collected from a nearby Buddhist temple.

The Tibetan monks were the source of inspiration to the Mongols erudites who devoted to extensive translation of the Buddhist scriptures, especially those of the Kanjur (bka’ gur) and the Tanjur (bstan gur). The royal family members preferred to hold the Buddhist faith avowedly at the early phase. In due course Buddhism became so popular as many authors in Mongolia composes ingenious Buddhist texts in Tibet as well as in Mongolian.

As a result of that, the Buddhist literature in Tibetan focused in a new dimension for no less than seven hundred years up to the 12th century. The lineages of ecclesiastical heirarchies belonging to different monastic schools and sub-schools of Buddhists in Tibet have grown for about thousand years. The unique process of re-incarnation in succession becomes an important feature in the Buddhist society of Tibet and Mongolia. The literary contributions of the eminent Mongolian teachers like Syan shes po in poche (Bo gros rgyal mtshan 1390-1448 A.D.), Leon skyas huyu (Nag dban blo bzan chos idon) 1642-1714 A.D., Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (Nag dban brtson grus) 1648-1721 A.D., Lcan skyas Huyu (Roi po) rdlo rje) 1717-1786 A.D. achieved prominence.

In spite of shouldering the ecclesiastical responsibility of carrying out the task laid down by the predecessor teacher (dge rgyan) to the junior one (dge phrug) or successor devoted to elucidate the ideas inherited in spiritual generation. The expansion of creative outlook therefore continued with the tenets of thoughts to which an author subscribed. For instance Rgyal dban rje kun Dga’ dpa’ b’gyor (1428-1476 A.D.) who is said to be tenth spiritual generation of Ye ses rdlo rje (1161-1211 A.D.) belonging to the Rgya clan of ‘brug pa Bka’ brgyud. His incar-
nation (sprul skri) 'Jamsbyans kyi grags pa (1478-1823) and his successor Padma Dkar po Nag dbang nor bu (b. 1522) became an eminent creative author in Tantric Buddhism. Similar instance may be the cases of the Opal chos kyi grags pa 1110-1193) of the Zhwa nag Karmapa lineage and that of Bka’is sras grags pa (d. 1262) of the Zhwa dmar Karmapa lineage succeeding to Situ of Ugo Karmapa lineage succeeding to Situ of Ka’thog lineages. Subsequently, Rje ral byun rdo rje a prominent literary personage appeared among the Karma pa lineages in 1284-1339 A.D. Also Situ Panchen deserve a special mention here.

Among the Jo-nan pa lineage which was founded by Grub chen yo ngo mi sknyod rdo rje (11th cent. A.D.) Tara^natha (b. 1576-A.D.) became well known for his Gsuns ‘bum or Collected works.

In respect of the Dge legs pa lineage Tsol khapa Blo bzang grags pa (1357-1419 A.D.) was the mastermind personally accredited with a large number of Buddhist works in different aspects. Among the successor of the lineage the collected works (gsun ‘bum) of Rgyal ba Dge ‘dun grub (Dalai Lama I, 1391-1474), Rgyal ba Dge ‘dun rgya mtsho (Dalai Lama II, 1475-1542 A.D.), Rgyal ba Bsood rnams rgya mtsho (Dalai Lama III, A.D.) Rgyal ba ina na Nag dbang rgya mtsho (Dalai Lama V, 1617-1682 A.D.). Rgyal ba Chos grub pa Blo bzang bskal bzang rgya mtsho (Dalai Lama VII) enrich the Tibetan Buddhist literature. In this, the Dalai Lama XIV Bstan ‘dzin rgya mtsho manifests his literary excellence by his recent works in Tibetan on universalbrotherhood among the human beings with the suggestions to achieve the peace in the world. His Sgrub mtha’ in po is an attempt to integrate the differences in Buddhist tenets prevailing in Tibetan.

Miscellaneous writings (thor bu sna thogs) cover manifold subjects of Buddhist Studies, such as, Sgrags rgyas (grammar), chig chad (rhetoric), tshigs mdzod (lexicon), gso-rig i.e. texts on medicine and therapeutics and bhro rgi i.e. treatises on the arts like Buddhist visual art, skiu thang or than ka painting, temple and monastic architectural design drawing, iconometry, decorative art for internal beautification and Buddhistic performing art like chlam, du’khor.

The Tibetan Literature also preserves important materials on the popular sciences like astronomy, mathematics, mensuration, calculus, accountancy, chemical knowledge of inorganic matters, animal husbandry and agricultural know-how etc. Moreover, the excellence of the Tibetan workmanship in Masonic technique is unique. In the field of the applied arts like painting, leather work, carpet weaving, paper making, wooden block carving, litho printing, wool processing, mineral and herbal dye preparation, woodcraft, metalware technique weaving designs the Tibetans manifest their basic knowledge of sciences behind the arts. Their artisan methodology in written form delineate the extensive perimetre of the Tibetan literature. The texts on performing arts deserve mention here. Thus rgya gnas rna could not exclude the therapeutic science, and ch الأمريك/manship howsoever improvised it might be from the monastic curriculum in Tibet.

It is to mention that the Tibetans came in touch of the Arabs since the 9th cent. A.D. and they faced threats from the Muslim Chiefs of Khasgar in Central Asia.
since then. In due course the inhabitants of Central Asian principalities embraced Islam while the Tibetans adhered to either Buddhism orBon until Baktisan was invaded by Shihabuddin (1359-76) and Sultan Sikander (1394-1416) of Kashi-
mir. In spite of repeated attempts by the Muslim rulers of Kashmir, Tibet and Central Asia to conquer Ladakh, the inhabitants of Ladakh maintained their separate identity. Meanwhile the sectarian conflicts between Rinopma of Ladakh and Dge lugs followers of Guge worsened the situation. Delton Nam gyal (1648-
75) had to compromise lastly with the Mughal ruler of Kashmir and accepted Islam by assuming the name of Aqbal Khan. He ordered to build a mosque at Leh in 1665. The attempts for translation of the Quran with other writings like Kha-chu pha hu could lead the Tibetan literature towards a new development.

MODERN PERIOD UPTO 1950 A.D.

The proselytism of Christianity and Islam (Aminuddin 1985) leaves a room for diversion in the Tibetan literature. As a result of that the Buddhist and the Chris-
tian translation of literature in Tibetan from external sources tended to mutual
tolerance and harmony. Such tendency makes the Tibetan literature not only comprehensive but also universal.

The Christian Missionaries in India took an active part by translating the Bible in Tibetan for the Tibetan speaking people in India. It may be mentioned that the first Tibetan Dictionary in European Languages in India was composed by an
Indian Missionary from Serampur of Bengal in 1926. A Ronan Catholic Indian
Missionary while working in the frontiers of Bhutan, ventured to collect Tibetan
vocabulary with brief grammatical notes for the use of the Europeans. The
name of the said Indian missionary has been now lost but his papers were ed-
ted by Mr. Schrter, a missionary of Bengal. H.A. Jaschke, a member of the
Moravian Missionary, who worked at Kyeilang of British Lahou published his
Tibetan English Dictionary in 1831. And his Tibetan Grammar was printed later on in 1890. In this connection, the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta played an
important role for printing the Tibetan materials in those days.

The Tibetan literature had a new turn when the Gospel of Mathew of the Holy
Bible was translated in the first half of the 19th cent. A.D. by Rev. William, The
Scandinavian Alliance Tibet Mission at Ghoom translated the New Testament in
seventeen fascicules (1903). The contributions of Joseph Gergain, Eliyah Tseten
Phuntshog show the continuity of the trend.

Special characteristic of the translations of Bible shows the development of
the literature in the following lines.

(i) In many cases the translations use local words and expressions from the
colloquial language in the Kanauri translation of the Bible.

(ii) The Tibetan script in the case of dialects is modified to show peculiarities
of the local pronunciation by exhibiting many phonetic changes in Tinor, Bunor,
Manasarowar and translations.

(iii) Conscious attempts at creating written from of the respective dialects

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which have otherwise been written in the Standard Literary Tibetan spelling and idioms in the case of Laoskhi, Zanskar, Dzongka translations.

(iv) A lot of materials for the study of different scripts for the same phonetic system as found in translating the Bible in (a) Balti (in Arabic script), (b) Kham (in Tinkian & Han script), (c) Punjabi, (d) Balti in Roman script.

On the other hand, the Tibetan Schools like Mi Phanti, Phyogs las mam par gyal ba (1846-1914) of Khams, Dge 'dun chos 'phel, Gyalya cuurnpa (1876-1933 A.D.) start reformation against the orthodox outlook. Dge 'dun chos 'phel and Doe sgrub rgyal (1953-1985) had to suffer for that.

Several Mongolian Buddhist authors however continued the tradition of earlier composition. Such as, Mi Phani Chen rab bston pa Chos 'phel (1840-1906), Mi Phani rjei dmab po Jam dbya (1820-1892). Sgo man mkhan Chen Mickhen rab bston pa Chos 'phel followed the tradition. Such as, Lokeshe Chandrak has enumerated their literary works in his Materials of the Tibetan History of Literature.

The Dalai Lama XIII continued in the field of Dge lugs and the Rin ma authors like Gter Ston Mchog gpur glin pa (1829-1908).

CONTEMPORARY PERIOD (1950 DOWNWARDS)

The Contemporary Tibetan Literature bifurcates from the traditional trends by the change of human values as one Worldism expands with the help of modernity. Economic disparity, tendency of equality in social strata and urge for socialization have prompted the Tibetans to accept Marixian thoughts after sharing the political ideology of the People’s Republic of China.

Ven. Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama XIV administration in exile and the traditionally learned Tibetans outside Tibet endeavours to maintain the standard literary trend by adapting some reformed style in composition as far as practicable, in their writings by compromise with the modernism. Obviously, that makes them aware now to adjust the literary style in the changed conditions. Thus a transitional phase goes in the Contemporary Tibetan literature for the last few decades. The diversity in approaches may bring forth a new horizon with tendency towards the adaption of modernity with tradition in the human values.

Some verses may be relevant to cite here from the Contemporary Tibetan Literature. 

Rgya mtho : Bikra sI sI dban rgyal
rgya mtho'i gru la brten nas su/
pham tshun 'brel bcun brtan po 'gyur/
so sI skad dan ses rig la /
yar rgyas ni ma spin 'bra'i sar/
den san tshin rig pa kun gyis/
dpyad nas sa snum mtho las med/
rig gnas rgya mtho thugs 'je can/
hyed kyi bk'a' dUn sus bRig thub/
The translation work form the Indian works of Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru speak about the interaction of young generation with the modern Indian Literature.

Again, the Tibetans residing in TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region) have also been enthusiastic in creative composition with their latest political trend towards socialism and Marxism. Several Journals and news papers which have been published since 1950 from Lhasa and Beijing show their literary merits with creative excellence. Moreover, Tibetan translations of Marxian works from Chinese have been popularly distributed among the Tibetans minorities of PRC.

In fine, the propensity of a literature, as it is generally understood, is elaborated by Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan in the following.

"Literature is a sacred instrument and through the proper use of it we can combat the forces of ignorance and prejudice and foster national unity and world communion. Literature must voice the past, reflect the present and mould the future. Inspired language, feqoymay vel, will help readers to develop a human and liberal outlook on life, to understand the world in which they live, to understand themselves and plan sensibly for their future.

In that respect the Tibetan literature may claim its distinction from that which a literature refers to. A contest between monkish rigorosity and the commoners in expressing the human feelings and emotions tends to a broad bifurcation in the Mediaeval Tibetan literature.

As one of the prominent literatures of the world, the Tibetan literature has a multidimensional growth within the span of about one thousand five hundred years in East Asia. The Tibetan literature becomes a varied exposition of a culture-complex which has been contributed by diverse ethnic groups. The inhabitants of Tibet since the olden days in the highland of Trans-Himalayas preserve a tendency of cultural integration in spite of their ethnic plurality. Tibet (Bod Yul) which is now podically TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region) of China, has been strategically important for being surrounded by the countries like Li-yul (Khotan), Khatsar, Karasar, Horyul of Central Asia, China, Mongolia; Iran (Persia); Arab, Nepal, Bhutan (Bhotanta) and India (Bharatavarsa).

The Tibetans also endeavoured to enrich their ways of life by assimilation and compromise with the neighbouring peoples. Those are vary presented in classical Tibetan literature.
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<tr>
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<td>Helmut Elmer</td>
<td>1972-78</td>
<td><em>Handlist der Tibetoskoten unter Sven-Hedin's Stiftung und des Ethnographischen Museums zur Stockhorn</em> (Zentralasiatische Studien 6-12).</td>
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<td>Laufer, Bherthold</td>
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<td><em>Loan works in Chinese (Tibetan)</em> (Youg Pao, pp. 403-552).</td>
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