

The Dissemination of Buddhism in Sikkim: A Drop of Ocean

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Abstract

Dissemination of Buddhist culture in phase manner in Sikkim, with extreme hardship and enthusiasm the great saints and sages of the yore have had disseminated Buddhism in India and in Tibet at large. As a result of their tremendous hardship and enthusiasm later it spread towards Asia and the subcontinents widely. Simultaneously, the Buddha's teaching also flourished in the beautiful sacred land of Sikkim commonly known as Beyul Dremojong. So, here I shall highlight brief history on how Buddhism spread in Sikkim in the form of drops of ocean.

In General, the great Guru Padmasambhava who is considered as the second Buddha, consecrated and blessed each and every part of places like India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and Sikkim followed by living many testimonies behind. He bond under oath to all the deities and other spirits of these places through incredible miraculous activities and methods for the benefit of sentient beings and the sublime teachings. Particularly, in the 8th century the great Guru has benefited Sikkim incalculably. To understand the Sikkim's history one must categories the Sikkim's history into three different types of disseminations, namely; the first phase dissemination, the second phase dissemination and the third phase dissemination.

Keywords: Beyul dremojong-(known as Sikkim by Buddhist community,. Guru Pedmasambhava-(saint patronage of Sikkim), 8th century-(period when saint guru Rinpoche advente to beyul dremojong), Dissemination-(particularly Buddhist doctrine being came to known in Sikkim).

Introduction

With extreme hardship and enthusiasm the great saints and sages of the yore have had disseminated Buddhism in India and in Tibet at large. As a result of their tremendous hardship and enthusiasm later it spread towards Asia and the subcontinents widely. Simultaneously, the Buddha's teaching also flourished in the beautiful sacred land of Sikkim commonly known as Beyul Dremojong. So, here I shall highlight brief history on how Buddhism spread in Sikkim in the form of drops of ocean.

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Aims of the Study

Through intense hardship and eagerness, the great Buddhist Nal-jorpas (The great Yogis) of the erstwhile have had disseminated Buddhism in India and in Tibet at large as a result of their marvellous dedication and keenness later it spread towards Asia and the subcontinents widely. Subsequently, Buddha's teaching also flourish in the tiny Himalaya Sikkim consider as a sacred land so called Beyul Dremojong literally mean sacred hidden land the great saint Guru Padma Sambhawa who advent in Sikkim in 8th century and blessed the land and concealed five treasures for dharma followers and also prophesized along with destine the future Yogis who discover and reveal the hidden sacred texts and treasures. Like said, consequently in 12th -13th century the great yogi Lama Rigzing Godemchen

advent in sanctified land Beyul Dremojong and within no more time he discovered many precious texts and treasures. Accordingly, in the 16th century three yogis two from Tibet Lama Lha-tsun Chenpo and Lama Nga-dak Sempa Chenpo as well as one from western India lama Kathok Rinjing Chenpo entered Sikkim along with prophesied by Guru Padma Sambhava in 8th century to flourish Buddha dharma in Sikkim, as search out first Buddhist king called Chogyal Phuntshok Namgyal formally enthroned by three brother-hood yogis in 1642AD this tiny Himalaya became formally Buddhist kingdom afterward. Consequently, when we see today's Sikkim there are numbers of monuments and monumental objects are recorded and Buddhist dharma's being follow up and reach every nook and corner of Sikkim. If we go through the history of Sikkim from Buddhist perspective, all the shrine, sculptures and precious objects were predetermined in holy texts by Guru/Yogis of yore.

There are substantial avenue in Sikkim to pursue a field base study and to research on Buddhism from cultural perspective, considering the fact that, here in Sikkim some unique Buddhist practice and belief has prevail in society from abundant time back. With keeping in view all the above fact, here author endeavour to highlight some Buddhist culture like drop in the Ocean practices being prevail in Sikkim since past many years.

The First Phase Dissemination

In this section, it describes about the advent of Guru Padmasambhava and his twenty-five disciples in Sikkim. In the treasure or Terma teachings of Padma Lingpa so called The Thangyig Shaldrakma says that, Sikkim is prophesied as one of the most sacred sites among other five places, one continent, three hidden Himalayas and twenty mountain peaks¹. Likewise, in the treasure text called Lama Dgongspa 'Düpa of Sangay Lingpa it denotes that, Sikkim is an anode inhabited entirely by the Lamas, Tutelary Deities, Peaceful and Wrathful Deities, Dakas and Dakinis. The sacred sites, mountain peaks, lakes and springs, caves and trees are the palace of gods and goddess. It is inevitable and inseparable realms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas' and so forth. Needless to say or state that one who visits or resides in the sacred land of Beyul are so darn fortunate and will accumulate tremendous merits² even on hearing the names of Beyul Dremojong. Imagine such importance it holds. And, Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo said; Grasp the mind itself by Padma's sacred place, whatever a mere moment of intention and action be, accomplish the solemn asseveration of divinely innate of four yogi brothers, whatever one wishes satisfied through bestowing ordinary and supreme siddhi³. As such it is said that, if one contemplates Beyul Dremojong for a second also then he/she will eventually gain benefits or accumulates lots of merits. At sight, the sacred and blessed Beyul Dremojong is beautiful filled with lush green, varieties of floras and faunas, sounds of cascading lakes and falls which is none other than the abode of Bodhisattvas'.

The high mountains rose like the majestic posture and the minor ones as a symbol of bowing

down. Additionally, the sacred place is filled with ever flowing famous rivers Teesta and Rangit which originates from the sacred Tsho Lhamu and Tashi Drak peaks respectively. In the southern part of Sikkim one can witness the Statue of Maha Guru Padmasambhava at Samdruptse, the famous Char Dham of Lord Shivaji and well known Buddha Park in Rabongla. In the western part we can see the abode of Avaloketshera's blissful statue standing at the top of sublime Sanga Choling Monastery along with the first ever sky walk of Sikkim. Beyul Dremojong is protected and bounded by the chief deity of Beyul Dremojong as well as the World's third highest Mountain known as Mount Khangchendzongnga which stands at the height of 28140 and the other protecting deities of three regions and local deities. The people of Sikkim and especially Monks and Shamans invoke and offer supplications and prayers annually to the above mentioned deities during the distinct Pang-lha-sol ceremony, which falls on the 15th day, 7th month of lunar calendar according to the old age tradition in different monasteries, sacred historical sites and at respective homes.

The most sacred and the centric site of Beyul Dremojong is Dakar Tashiding, towards the four directions of this sacred site lies four caves of activities namely; in the eastern part, the sacred peaceful cave call "Sharchoy Beyphug" is found nearby Rabongla, in the southern part the sacred pacifying & enriching cave call "Khandro Sangphug" is found in-between Legship and Reshi, in the western part of Tashiding the sacred powerful cave so call "Dechen Jahodphug" is found, and in the northern part the sacred wrathful cave call "Lhari Hodsol Nyingphug" is found. The devotees pay homage and pilgrimage to these sites on an auspicious occasion and it is believed that if one visits these sites then eventually the sins and obscuration may be pacified. In the end of 9th century the total area of Beyul Dremojong was 2818 sq feet. This place is surrounded by four countries and state, in the west lies Nepal, in the east Bhutan and Chumbi, in the north China occupied Tibet and in the south West Bengal; one of the states of the world's largest Democratic country.⁴ As saying goes, the water originates from the mountains. Likewise, the Buddhism in Beyul Dremojong originated from Tibet through the efforts of kind and compassionate Bodhisattvas as accorded in the length and breadth of Sikkimese history. In Beyul, Guru Padmasambhava accompanied by his 25 disciples in entourage paid a miraculous visit to Dakar Tashiding in west Sikkim the centric point of hidden land. He blessed each and every land without any trace and concealed a vast number of textual and material treasures in the region.

The Second Phase of Disseminations

In the medieval disseminations, the great Nanam Dorje Dudjom's direct incarnation Terchen Rikzin Neydrup Gyaltzen alias Rikzin Godemchen (1337-1408 C.E.), one of the three supreme treasurer revealers was born in Tibet in the year 1337 C.E. and at the age of 37 in the year 1373 C.E. he unlocked the sacred gate way of hidden land from the northern direction for the first time as prophesied by Guru

Padmasambhava in 8th century and resided in this sacred for more than eight years in practicing and benefiting sentient beings.⁵ In the History of Sikkim it says that, an incarnate treasurer reveller Rikzin Godemchen with miraculous power paid a visit to Beyul and whereupon he revealed treasure of Wrathful Guru's statue from the Khangchendzonga's sacred site.⁶ He blessed and consecrated the land and sent letters to his followers in Tibet accessing through vulture's neck, twice. Later, the second incarnation of Rikzin Godemchen; Ngari Rikzin Legdenje (1500-1613 C.E.) along with his elder brother Ngari Padma Wangyal revealed the deep treasure text of Rikzin Yongdue in Tibet. At the age of 68 corresponding to the modern era of 1568 he visited the hidden land and paid invocation to all deities and revealed treasure text of Amitayus from the most sacred cave of Lhari Nyingphug and propagated to his devotees.⁷ This teaching in now fortunately found in the famous text of Rinchen Terdzod or the Treasury of Precious Treasures which contains large volumes of treasures. He built hermitage at Pawo Hungri in western part of Sikkim where still today also we can witness the ruins with our naked eyes and devotees who pays a visit here in several occasion for the blessings. Thus, the second phase of dissemination of Buddhism in Sikkim can be clearly understood through the visits and contributions of the lineages of Rikzin Godemchen and others.

The Third Phase of Dissemination

In this dissemination it highlights about the activities and advent of four yogi brothers namely; 1. Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo, 2. Ngadag Sempa Chenpo Phuntsok Rikzin, 3. Ka Thog Kuntu zangpo, and 4. Chogyal Phuntsok Namgyal.

Ngadag Sempa Chenpo Phuntsok Rikzin

Ngadag Sempa Chenpo Phuntsok Rikzin was born in the year 1592 C.E. in the unbroken descendants of Dharma King Trisung Deutsen of Tibet. At the age of 51, in the year 1642 C.E. he paid a visit to Yuksam (the first capital of Sikkim), Beyul Dremojong with his entire galaxies of faithful followers on the very auspicious 3rd day, 8th month of the lunar calendar. He enthroned and bestowed the name of Phuntsok Namgyal as the first dharma king of Sikkim who was an uninterrupted lineage of Gyed-Bhum-Sak.

He established and consecrated Tharpa Ling as his first monastery in the year 1643 C.E. in Yuksam. Then in the year 1646 C.E. in collaboration with his son, they both established Tashi Gelek Monastery followed by Jampa Lhakhang in the sacred Tashiding. Moreover, in the year 1649 C.E. he established Zilnon Monastery and also started conducting the first ever recitations of Mani Mantra and its Sadhana practices of sacred vase, as a results, there were good signs of prosperous and happiness in the land. This amazing tradition of recitations and Sadhana practices still continues with full spirits at Tashiding Monastery on 15th day, 1st month of every year, where devotees from all across the globe come to witness this sacred vase and its blessings.⁸

Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo

Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo was born at Jayul near a sacred place called Tsari, Tibet in the year 1597 C.E. At the repeated request made by his great masters and according to the prophecies of Guru in the year 1646 C.E. i.e. on the first week of the 10th month of the Fire-Dog year he set his foot at Yuksam and opened the holy Northern Gate of Beyul Dremojong. He revealed complete pure vision and profound teachings of Dorjee Nyingpo Tringi Thlo and Lama Rigzin Sogdrup. He established Drupde Sangag Dorjeden, the first recognized monastery of Sikkim in the year 1647 C.E. followed by Sangag Choling and Sangchen Pemayangtse Monastery. He also encouraged and started the teachings and practices of indepth Buddhist teachings in these monasteries at large. He passed away at the age of 56 in the Water-Dragon year i.e. 1652 A.D. at Yarlung Sheldrag Monastery, in Tibet. His unmistakable incarnations were namely; 1. IInd incarnation Lhatsun Ngawang Kunsang Dorjee (1656-1675), IIIrd incarnation Lhatsun Takthung Jigmed Pawo (1682-1735), IVth incarnation Lhatsun Kunzang Jigmed Gyatso (b.1741-?), Vth incarnation Lhatsun Pema Dechen Gyatso (b.1787-?), VIth incarnation Lhatsun Jetsun Kunga Chonyid,⁹ above mentioned great masters no doubt, has immensely contributed a lot to Sikkim.

Ka Thog Kuntu Zangpo

Ka Thog Kuntu zangpo was one of the reputed lamas of Kha Thog Dorje-Den monastery in Tibet. As per the prophecy of Guru Padmasambhava he entered Beyul Dremojong by opening the sacred western gate way and set his foot in the place called Yuksam. He established his seat as Ka Thog Monastery and with his power he miraculously revealed a beautiful lake in Yuksam which came into existence as Ka Thog Tsho or Ka Thog Lake. Later the people of Yuksam started celebrating lake festival "Tshoi Dhu-then" or commonly known as Pokhari Mela on the 15th day, 1st month of lunar calendar annually.

Chogyal Phuntsok Namgyal

Chogyal Phuntsok Namgyal alias Shalngo Apa Dorje, an uninterrupted, perfect and direct family lineage of Gyed-Bhum-Sak was born in the year 1604 C.E. at Zilnon Tsho in Gangtok. According to the prophecy of Guru Padmasambhava he was enthroned as the first Chogyal of Sikkim by Ngadak Sempa Chenpo and others in the year 1642 C.E. Again in the year 1646 C.E. Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo blessed and enthroned for the second time with tremendous fest. In the same year Chogyal established Tashi Tenkhar Dzong and begin to rule greater Sikkim through spiritual and temporal way.

In brief, the four yogi brothers jointly built the great Chorten Tashi Hodbar Stupa in Yuksam, Chorten Thongwa Rangdrol Stupa in Tashiding, established institutions to impart teachings and contributed to flourish the dharma in general and Nyingmapa School of thoughts in particular.

Conclusion

Utmost happy with narrative texts and implies of sacred land of Beyul Dremojong where

numerous reverend saints and yogis advents in to this sacrosanct hidden land more than ever great patronage Guru Padmasambhawa himself visit to Sikkim and within no more time he consecrated numerous monumental holy objects in rocks, trees, rivers, and earth etc, therefore, the devotees from across the world are believes thus, the commentary scripted in the texts since 8th century. While observing on Buddhist inheritate culture and holy object found that this sacred land has got a huge potential to pursue research study on Buddhist culture as well holy objects at primary level as well as secondary base, also, in compare to other side of Buddhist community, belief and practices of Buddhist prevails in Sikkim has exceptionally unique indeed it's said by many holiness Rinpoche and learned personality, one uniqueness apart from some important concern is social religion culture both are being switch over one to another, like you can say, dual religion being performing in every household. My utmost suggestion, it could be prospective subject and anthropological topic over to pursue a research toward transcultural society as historical series. My sincere gratitude to Dr Namdol Bhutia, Asst. Professor/HoD, NBBDC, for bringing out many resourceful materials during shaping of my articles, without his support it could not be well standard at this level.

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