

SCRIPT OF MR. L. L. MEHROTRA'S TALK AT THE NICHOLAS  
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"GLIMPSES ON TIBETAN CULTURE"

For centuries past Tibet had flourished as a repository of an ancient culture thriving under the silence and solitude of a vast firmament away from the tumult and turmoil of the world. Tibet was known to mankind not for its wealth and weaponry but for its fables and fantasies, its myths and cosmologies, the heights of its spiritual glory and the depth of its philosophical thought. Religion had been the keynote of this culture, governing the lives of a sturdy but contented humanity that shared its joys and sorrows with the sun and shower, the stars and storms that greeted that roof of the world from morn till dusk and dusk to dawn. Here man was not the measure of all things but an humble creature with his share of Karma in the Samsara, of activity and fruits thereof in the inexorable vortex of life. What was titanic in him was not vanity but the effort to emerge out of it, through suffering and sacrifice, meditation and prayer, compassion and congregation. Life continued in its spiritual endeavour in the mountain fastnesses, the glens and plateaux of Tibet until recently the force of circumstances changed the shape of things.

Buddhism went to Tibet from India as you know. Being the Land of Phak-pa - the Arya - Noble Master, India represents to the Tibetan mind the birthplace of all that is noble in thought and deed. Tibet's religion, philosophy, art, poetry all show a deep Indian influence. In order to understand what the Western scholars have termed as the 'tremendous civilizing influence' of Buddhism in Asia, it will

be necessary to have a look at the religion that was in vogue in Tibet before the introduction of Buddhism in the 6th - 7th century A.D.

That religion is known as Bon. The verb Bob-pa means to "murmur spells." The founder of Bon according to its tradition was one Tomba Shenurb. The followers of Bon are called Bonpos. The highest deity of the Bonpos is the blue sky who is supported by a swarm of lhas or goodspirits and is in perpetual conflict with the ldes or goblins. Men were often pawns in the spiteful squabbles and jealousies of lhas and ldes and the way to keep from their wrath was through bloody sacrifices including those of human beings. Gods and demons alike could be controlled by thaumaturgic power developed by Shens or high priests. These wizards killed to heal, their magic being always black, employing methods at once violent and vulgar. The impact of Buddhism on this creed was so strong that the Bon came to have even a Bon Sangye or Bon Buddha and like the Kon Chhok Sum, Buddha dharma and Sangha of Buddhism, the Bon developed their own Yung Dhung Sum, the three swastikas. The Bon architecture, iconography and sacred furnishings are none too different from those of Tibetan Buddhism. The Buddhist 'onslaught, if I may use that term, succeeded in diverting the larger section of the Tibetan population from the basic savagery of the Bon religion. However, in spite of the Buddhist triumph, the Bon religion continued to flourish in some parts of Tibet with its inhuman practices. And just as Buddhism transformed the Bon religion, the latter in turn infected Buddhism itself in its battle for survival. We see a whole mass of Dus, and Nyans, Sadhaks, thab lhas, pho lhas, i.e., the black demons, the argalies, the serpent spirits, the hearth gods, the titular gods, creeping into the Buddhist pantheon on the Tibetan soil. The atmosphere in quite a few Tibetan paintings does not fail to convey this satanic influence.

It is true that a Bon temple and a lamaist temple have much in common. The architecture is the same, the wall paintings look similar, drums, trumpets, butter lamps, the thrones, the masks, all look alike, the iconography is so similar the Thomba Shen Rabs might not appear any different from Shakya Thubpa, but the basic distinction between the two religions continues to be not so much of form as of spirit. the Bon is mundane, is worldly oriented, aims at making the life being lived successful and healthy. The aspirations of a Bonpo at best stop at reaching the heaven the blue sky for obtaining a life of perpetual luxury and mirth. The lamaist approach is essentially extra mundane and crosses the blue sky to reach the state of Sunyata and Nirvana. The conflict between the Bon and Tibetan Buddhism is so basic that centuries of coexistence have not resolved it.

Buddhism was introduced in Tibet by the memorable efforts of Srong-tsen Gampo and Khri Srong Deu Bsan, the two kings whose names are written in the golden pages of Tibetan history. One flourished in the first half of the 7th century A.D. and the other in the second half of the 8th. Srong Tsen Gampo married a Chinese princess and a Nepalese princess, both Buddhist, and sent a delegation to India under his able minister Thon ni Sambhota to evolve a script for the Tibetan language. Just as the introduction of Buddhism changed the Tibetan way of life, the introduction of the Brahmi Script of India heralded a new era of literacy in Tibet. Some of the sacred books of Buddhism which had been coming to Tibet since the reign of Iha-The-Ri-Nyen-Tsen about a century earlier were translated during the life-time of Srong Tsen Gampo. This should have greatly accelerated the progress of Buddhism in Tibet. Khri Srong Deu bstan declared Buddhism to be the state religion. His reign was marked by the visit of two famous Indian Pandits, viz., Bhikshu Santa Rakshita and Guru Padma Sambhava. The latter is known as Poma jhung ne or Guru

Rimpocho and is only next to Buddha in the esteem of Tibetans. By various magic feats including bringing the dead back to life he is credited with having firmly established the supremacy of his creed, Mahayana Buddhism, over native Bon. Santarakshita established the first Buddhist Gompa or monastery of Tibet at Samyo, about 30 miles from Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, and ordained the first seven Tibetan monks. The seeds of Buddhist faith and monastic order were thus sown. Kamalasila one of the chief associates of Shanta Rakshita defeated the Chinese Wu Weis or nihilistic monks in disputation at the court of King Khri Srong Deu bsan. This made the way for 'Indian' Buddhism to gather roots in Tibet instead of its Central Asian or Chinese variety. The Central Asian or Chinese variations of Buddhism themselves were of Indian origin no doubt, but they were based on Buddhism which went from India centuries earlier from the time of Emperor Ashoka to Kanishka and so on. In the meanwhile, Buddhism in India itself had undergone a profound evolution in its doctrine and practice starting from the compilation of the Three Pitakas, viz., Vinaya, Sutra and Abhidharma, through the transformation of 'Hinayana' into 'Mahayana' to its subsequent assimilation of Yoga School of Hindu Philosophy which led to the growth of the Yogaachara School. Later Buddhism drew heavily from Tantrayana and Mantrayana. The former emphasized the Cult of sakti (lit. Energy) and the latter the magic of spells. It would, therefore, be seen that though the form of Indian Buddhism that came to Tibet in the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. - over a millennium after the Mahaparinirvana, the Great Passing Away of the Master had the simple truths uttered by Buddha as its basis, it was much more elaborate than its pristine form.

The four Noble Truths or Den pa shi viz., Suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of Suffering and the Eightfold Path which leads to its cessation constitute

the fountain spring of the entire Buddhist philosophy. The Tibetan texts mention them thus:-

(TIBETAN TEXT)

I would turn to Mahavagga (Vinaya Pitaka) to show how Lord Buddha himself is stated to have explained these four Noble Truths in his first sermon at Sarnath, near Varanasi.

"This, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering; birth is suffering; decay is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering, presence of objects we hate, is suffering; separation from objects we love, is suffering; not to obtain what we desire is suffering.

In brief, the five aggregates which spring from grasping, they are painful.

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the origin of suffering; verily it originates in that craving, which causes the renewal of becomings, is accompanied by sensual delight, and seeks satisfaction now here, now there; that is to say, craving for pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for not becoming.

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the Cessation of Suffering. Verily, it is passionlessness, cessation without remainder of this very craving; the laying aside of, the giving up, the being free from, the harbouring no longer of, this craving.

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering. Verily, it is this Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavour, right mindfulness and right meditation."

suffering and Samsara are inseparably linked with each other - are rather synonymous. Samsara is the cycle of birth and rebirth to which the whole round of existence is subject. It is eternally bound by a chain of interdependent causes called rTen-hBrel or Pratitya Samutpat, which has been detailed as follows:-

Ma-Rik-pa, Avidya, ignorance,  
hDu-Bhye-Sanskara, synergies,  
rNam-Shes, Vijnana, consciousness,  
Ming-gSuks, Nama-Roopa, name and form  
sKyed-mChhed, Shadayatana, six sense organs  
ReK-pa, Sparsa, contact  
Tshor-Va, Vedana, feeling  
Sred-pa, Trshna, craving  
Len-pa, Upadana, grasping  
Srid-pa, Bhava, becoming  
sKyed-pa, Jati, birth  
rGas-Shi, Jara-Marana - decay and death.

The Eightfold Path prescribed by Buddha, quoted above in the extract from the Mahavagga, led to the liquidation of one and all of those elements of bondage and made way for Nirvana or release. Mahayana lays emphasis on six Paramitas, Six Pha-Roltu-Phyinpas as they are called in Tibetan for the attainment of Nirvana. Ju-dub or Nagarjuna, the most important figure in the history of Mahayana Buddhism, speaks of them thus:

( TIBETAN TEXT )

byinpa or Daana is charity  
Tshul Khrim or Sheela is morality,  
bSodpa or Kshanti is fortitude  
brTson-drus or Veerya is vigour and industry  
bSamgtan or dhyana is meditation,  
Shosrabs or Prajna is Supreme wisdom.

Subsequently Thabs smonlam, sTobs and Yoshas, i.e., ritual, prayer spiritual power and divine knowledge were added to the paramitas and this brought their total number to ten. Whether Nirvana is a completely negative State or a positive one it is difficult to say. Nagarjuna and Asanga the works of both of whom have been preserved in Tibetan literature come very close to Neti-Neti in so much as they meant Nirvana to be neither this nor that but it is hard to conceive of release without thinking of the release of what, and what state that release is. Earlier literary works such as Udana probably come closer to Buddha's own thinking on this than what the polemics of later scholars would suggest; Udana Speaks of Nibbana as an Ayatan or Space, a positive entity but where there is no Pathavi or earth, no apo-water, no tejah-fire, no vaayu-air, no Akasa - sky. As it is beyond all Dhammas, material attributes, it is beyond the range of conventional language as well.

Many of us may be philosophic but few are philosophers. Most of us thrive on the emotional plane. Religion to be acceptable and to be able to become the sheet anchor of the common man has to cater to their requirement. Mahayana Buddhism did this by first deifying the historical Buddha and then weaving round him a host of other divinities. Tibetan Buddhism revels most in giving expression to this aspect through a multitude of paintings, sculptures and literary works. Thus you have the Chhog-gi-Dhang-pohi Sans-rgyas-the Adi Buddhas, the rGyalwa Rigs Ina-the Dhyani Buddhas, the Manushi Buddhas of whom the historical Sakya Muni is just one, and a series of other Buddhas such as Mar Me dse-Dipankara and sMan-bja-Bhaisajya Guru. Then you have Dhyani Bodhi sattvas including sPyan-ras-gzigs or Avalokiteshvara of whom the Dalai Lama is an incarnation. There are female Bodhisattvas and green, white and yellow, blue and red Dolmas or Taras, Dhyani Buddha

Saktis, Dakinis, Iha-mos, and eight mothers from Gog mo ma to Di chab ma. There are Yab yum forms of divinities too, integrating the maternal and the paternal origins of creation, the Dharma palas and the Lok palas. There are Yakshas and Yakshinis, Nagas and demons, witches and fairies, all reminding one of the later accretions to pristine Buddhism. And there are spells and charms deified, thanks both to the mantrayana and the Bon. The simple doctrine of Siddhartha, Dhon dub, thus got lost in the paraphernalia of gods and ritual. It is a sharp reminder to what the Master had said a millennium ago: - " I perceive danger in the practice of mystic wonders that I loathe, and abhor, and am ashamed thereof." Buddhism might have assumed forms which Buddha could not have appreciated but it created a pageantry of cultural patterns which Tibetan Buddhism so beautifully represents. All these forms from the Cho ki Dhang poi Sangye or the Primordial Buddha downwards in the Tibetan pantheon do seem to be quite a departure from Buddhas own approach, for his was basically a call against the multiplying forms of Brahmanic divinities, the rituals to propitiate them and the superstitions that corroded the philosophical depths of India's philosophy. However the road of Buddhism is the road of all other creeds. Each religion has for its core the words of a prophet - saint. Gradually this core gathers mass. Legends grow around the events of the life of the 'Founder' and a simple faith assumes a complex form. But then these legends are translated through the medium of the fine arts into forms of beauty and lead to the flowering of a distinguished culture. This is how the Tibetan culture grew.

As religion could not be divorced from philosophy in the true oriental tradition, every stage of the divine hierarchy in Buddhism was given a philosophical signification.



The self creative Adi Buddha creates by thought the Dhyani Buddhas who live in perpetual Nirvana with a Dharma-kaya, body of Truth-essence, not a physical body. These five Dharmakaya Dhyani Buddhas, the royal Wa Rigs lna have the following description:

Mi skyo pa or Akshobhya, the unagitated one, is rNam Shes kyi Phung po, the aggregate of consciousness comprising all knowledge that is conveyed to the mind; he is She sDan bhyeng wa, one who purges the mind of anger and is Chhos bying ye shes mGon du bhye pai nu pa chen, i.e., he has the power to manifest, the Dharma-Dhatujnana, the absolute divine wisdom of the entire perview of religion.

Rin Chen hbyung lden, Ratna Sambhava, the one born of a jewel, is the congregation of perceptions, purges the mind of avarice and has the ability to manifest the knowledge of equanimity. Hod pa med, Amitabha, the Infinite Light is the aggregate of sensations, purges, the mind of lust, and is capable of manifesting the science of self perception.

Don yed Grubpa, Amogha Siddhi, the Infallible Success, is the aggregate of consciousness based on Samskara, impressions created by repeated experience, purges the mind of jealousy and has the power to manifest the science of success in action.

sNam sNang, Vairochana, the Brilliant Light, is the aggregate of external forms, purges the mind of the foul smell of ignorance and is capable of manifesting mirror-like pure knowledge.

Above everything else the above analysis reveals the height of Buddhist accomplishment in the domain of psychology for here you witness the proper classification of experience

through the five successive stages - Phung pos or Skandhas - of ySugs tshorva, hDu-Shes, hDu - bhye, and rNam Shes i.e., of Rupa - the external stimulant, Vedana - sensation, Samjna - consciousness, Samskara - synergy, and Vijnana or fuller knowledge of the experience.

From the Dharmakaya Buddhas emanate the Sambhogakaya Bodhi Sattvas, and from them in turn the Nirmana kaya Manushi Buddhas. Sambhoga is experience of infinite happiness. In the Buddhistic terminology, the term has been lifted from its ordinary meaning of carnal pleasure to spiritual beatitude. Whereas the Dhyani Buddhas live in meditation, the Dhyani Bodhisattvas experience Supreme happiness, not through the medium of senses, but in mind state. However they do assume a body built of the elements, earth, water, air, fire etc. the mortal body, the Nirmana Kaya, once in every Kalpa or world cycle. Goutama Buddha is the Manushi Buddha of the present, the fourth cycle, and Avalokiteshwara, its Dhyani Bodhisattva, creator. There are five Dhyani Bodhi Sattvas of the Trikaya system viz., Kuntu-bzan-pa-Samanta Bhadra - the all benign, Phyang-na rdo-rjo-Vajra pani - the bearer of thunderbolt, Phyang-na-rin-chen-Ratnapani - the Jewel bearer; sPyan - ras-gzigs-Avalokiteshwara - of Compassionate look; and Phyang-na-sna-tshogs-rdo-rje-Vishvapani - Crossed Thunderbolt bearers. Apart from them, there are other Bodhisattvas such as Byams-pa, lJam-dpal, Nam-snin, Sahi-snin, hZig-rTon-gsum, sGrib-pa rNam-sel, Mahasthamaprapta, Maitreya, Manjushri - Akash-garbha, Kshiti-garbha, Trailokya-vijaya and Sarva-Nirvarana-Vishkambhin etc. They embody various aspects of divinity such as love, Compassion, Beatitude, Strength, Lordship etc. There are female Bodhisattvas as well. Yangchen ma associated with learning and fine arts, Norgyun ma, with abundance, Ses-rab-Kyipa-rol-tu-phyin-pa with superior wisdom and others endowed with various powers and attributes. It is the Bodhisattva ideal,

which distinguishes Hinayana from Mayayana as you know. Bodhisattvas, having emanated from a higher state, or having risen from the imperfect state of ordinary men to that of Arhat, are fully qualified to become Buddhas. But as individual interest must be sacrificed for the sake of common good, and as the endeavour to liberate others is nobler than the liberation of one's own self, these Bodhisattvas choose not 'to disappear like a flame freed from name and form.' They live in the midst of suffering humanity sharing their experiences as incarnations and lifting them from their lot - Karman. Karuna or Compassion gains supremacy over self centred individual Moksha or release. The core of the entire Tibetan attitude to life, in conformity with this ideal, is Karuna, their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama is Karuna's incarnation par excellence. He dominates by the power of love through the conquest of the heart. The next important incarnation is Panchen Lama representing Ho pa med or Amitabha - Infinite Light - the Dhyan Buddha of the existing Kalpa. Apart from these two Grand Lamas, there are numerous incarnate Lamas called Tulkus. They are believed to be incarnations of accomplished Indian, Tibetan or Mongolian Saints. The term Hutuktu or Khutuktu represents a rank. It does not represent a category of incarnate Lamas. A Hutuktu may or may not be an incarnate Lama. The word Lama (bLa-ma) means the superior one and applies to incarnate monks, though in common parlance it has come to apply to even ordinary ones. Almost every family contributes one Lama to the order of monks. This Lama grows in the spiritual tradition from childhood passing his grades of Ge-tshul and Ge-long. The laity is only entitled to the title Ge-nyen. Some of the monks become Khompos or Abhots of monasteries depending upon the state of their spiritual development.

There are five major sects or orders of Tibetan Buddhism: Nyingmapa, Sasyapa, Kargutpa, Kadampa and Gelunkpa. The Nyingmapa means the ancient order. Its founder was the Indian saint Padma Sambhava who came to Tibet in the reign of Thi Srong De chen in the second half of the 8th century. The Nyingmapas are popularly known as red hat sect by virtue of the colour of the cap they wear. A master Tantrist, Padma Sambhava (Tibetan - Pema Jhung Ne) introduced the Dzok Chhen, read to perfection through Adi yoga, whereby the Siddha sees light through Yogic practices and acquires Yogic powers in the process. The most famous Nyingma monastery is Samye of which I have spoken earlier. Sasyapas, the followers of the second important sect of Tibet, are little different from Nyingmapas. They are associated with the Saskya monastery in Tsang province in Western Tibet. The word Saskya means Pandu Bhumi, grey earth, which is the colour of the soil where the monastery is located. Kargyutpa is the third great monastic order. It was founded in the 11th century by the Tibetan saint Marpa on the basis of the teachings of his Indian Guru Naropa. The greatest emphasis of this sect is on mystical Vajrayana and its greatest mystic saint is Milarespa. The first saint in Kargyutpa's apostolic succession is Tilopa, an Indian sage of the 10th century, who propounded the Mahamudra philosophy known in Tibet as Phyang Chhen, the Great Symbol. Tilopa is believed to have received his doctrine direct from Dorje Chhang, Adi Buddha Vajra Dhara, and this esoteric tradition was orally transmitted in succession from Tilopa to Milarespa through Naropa and Marpa. Milarespa is the most celebrated of the poet saints of Tibet and his life sketch and philosophy have been rendered eternal in Jhe Tsun Ka bum. He speaks of mind control in his 'Song of the Yogis Race' as follows:

To catch the Horse of Mind, use as the lasso One-pointedness,  
It must be tied, when caught, to the post of meditation,  
It must be fed, when hungry, with the Guru's teachings,  
It must be given to drink, when thirsty, of the stream  
of consciousness,  
It must be kept, when cold, in the enclosure of Voidness  
For saddle use the Will, for bridle, Intellect,  
Attach to it as girths and cruppers, Fixedness Immovable  
Around it pass as Head stall and Nose Band the Vital Airs.

The above verse lays emphasis on Pranayama, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi of Yoga. Milarespa has significantly added to it Compassion, Karuna, the supreme Buddhist Virtue:

Its rider is the Youth of Intellect, Keen Watchfulness,  
The helmet which he weareth is Mahayanic Altruism.

The entire verse looks so similar to the sayings of the Buddha as quoted in Samyutta Nikaya, a Pali work.

Whose the Faith and Wisdom hath attained  
His state of mind well harnessed leads him on,  
Conscience the pole and mind the Yoke thereof,  
And heedfulness the watchful charioteer,  
The furnishings of righteousness the Car,  
Rapture the axle, Energy the Wheels,  
And Calm, Yoke fellow of the balanced mind,  
Desirelessness the drapery thereof.

And to attain the peace that Car rolls on,  
'Tis built by self, by one's own self becometh -  
This chariot incomparable supreme!  
Seated therein the sages leave the world,  
And verily they win the Victory.

Tibetan Jetsun Kabum and Pali Samyutta Nikaya are separated from each other by about 1500 years and yet they speak the same language.

Kadampas constitute the Fourth important sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Its founder was Atisha, a scholar of Philosophy from the Vikrama Shila Monastery of India who arrived in Tibet in 1038 A.D. His was the first major effort to reform Tibetan Buddhism. He lived for 13 years in Tibet and breathed his last there. Ka Dampa means to give precept. Atisha emphasised virtuous living in accordance with Buddha's precepts and attempted to divert the Buddhists of Tibet from the undesirable accretions of centuries to the essence of Mahayana Buddhism.

His attempt at reform was followed up with much greater vigour and effect by Jne-Tson-Khapa three centuries later. Tson-Khapa who lived from 1348 to 1419 recognised monastic celibacy as the only form of religious life. He laid the foundation of the Gelukpa sect, the most important and powerful monastic order of Tibet, known as the Yellow Hat sect after the colour of the hat its followers wear. Tsong-Khapa placed the greatest accent on the purity of mind and purging of the consciousness of all evil thought:

All white or black Karma dependeth on the  
goodness or otherwise of mind itself,  
Good if the mind be, the course of action  
would be but good,  
Else if the mind be bad, bad the Foundation  
and Way would be,  
For all dependeth on the character of mind.  
To hold to the desire to be on level with others,  
Partiality to one's own sect, indignation for others,  
Being pulled to and fro by attachment to distinctions  
of class,  
Of everyman's suffering is this not the root cause.

(TIBETAN TEXT)

How much does this remind us of the ancient Sanskrit saying:

(HINDI TEXT)

' Mind is the cause of Man's bondage and release both.'

The above verse of Tson-Kha-pa also reminds us eloquently of the catholicity of spirit emphasised in the Indian philosophy over and over again:

(Hindi Text )

'Of all men, treading all manner of direct or  
winding ways,  
Thou alone art the goal like the ocean of all  
streams'.

On the outskirts of Lhasa there are three very famous monasteries of Tibet. They are Ganden, Drepung and Sera. All three belong to the Geluk sect. Ganden was established by Tson Khapa himself and the other two by his immediate disciples. At Shigatse to the south West of Lhasa there is another well known Geluk monastery called Tashi Lhunpo which is the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama. Gendun Dub pa who built Tashi Lhunpo was actually the abbot of Depung monastery. He was the first Gyal-wa-rimpoche, the precious Victor which is the traditional title of the Dalai Lama. The word Dalai Lama is a Mongol word. It is the Mongol translation of the Tibetan word Gyatsho, which means 'Ocean'. The third Gyal wa Rimpoche was Sonam Gyatsho. He was invited by Altan Khan the Mongol Emperor in 1577 and was called Dalai Lama by the latter. Subsequently, all his preceding and succeeding incarnations were called Dalai Lama. From 1391, the unbroken tradition of this institution of the Dalai Lama from Gendun Dub pa to the present, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, is a very notable feature of the history and culture of Tibet. Even the 'system' of reincarnation, originally Indian, and familiar to the Tibetans since the advent of Buddhism in Tibet came into popular vogue in their country only from the time of Gendun Dub pa. This peculiar system of heredity does not automatically pass the title from father to son but is based on a very discreet process of selection of the true reincarnation of the deceased Rimpoche or Tulku. The process of selection is so rigorous it might take years before the 'right' choice is made and the reincarnation may be found thousands of miles away from the place where the previous incarnation departed from his body. The basis of this belief and practice is the old Indian philosophy of rebirth, which does not see death as an end, but

as an occasion for the soul to assume a new cloak after the previous one no more remains fit to serve it.

(HINDI TEXT)

These monasteries Depung, Sera, Ganden, Tashi Ihunpo, Samye, Saskya and many others spread throughout the length and breadth of the country are cradles of Tibetan culture. The atmosphere inside them is darkish which immediately transports the visitor into a realm of inner depth and makes him look within for Atma Paryavekshana self - scrutiny. The presiding divinity installed in the shrine at the back of the prayer hall dominates the cosmos, of which the temple is the symbol and the devotee a part. The images in the temples and monasteries fall into various categories of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Taras, Dakinis, Yidams, Dharmapalas, historical personages and non-human types etc. The images may be of gold, silver, copper, bronze, stone, wood or clay. The benign images wear what is known as Bodhisattva garments such as five leafed crowns, ear rings, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, wristlets, anklets, scarves, shawls, garlands to the navels and sometimes to the thighs. The fierce images or angry ones will have Dharmapala garments consisting of five skull crowns, necklaces often of snakes, and garlands and belts of skulls. They are often draped in tiger or elephant skins. Sometimes you find them wearing aprons of human bones carved with deities and symbols. Some images have only monastic garments, distinct from the above two princely categories of Bodhisattva and Dharmapala garments. Manushi Buddhas, for example, are shown in monastic garments, wearing a shawl draped on the shoulders, with a peaked cap most often but no princely paraphernalia. Some of the figures are nude, e.g., those of Kuntz Zangpo, Adibuddha Samantabhadra. The divinities may have a Tantric or a



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non-tantric form according to the number of heads and arms they have. Those with one head and two arms are non Tantric. Some Yab Yum figures always show the divinity with his Shakti, his energy to create, sustain and destroy the universe. Whereas the majority of images radiate spiritual calm and serenity, some have an utterly demonic aspect reminiscent of the Bon cult. The non-Tantric forms carry with them non-Tantric symbols such as the rosary, the book, the lotus, and the jewel. The Tantric divinities on the other hand will have such symbols as the skull cup, sculldrun, chopper, axe, elephants goad and the skeleton wand. Padma Sambhava generally carries a Khatwang with him - it is a ritual wand with the thunderbolt top and a skull, two heads and a trident above. Avalokiteshvara, spyen-ras-gzigs, has 108 forms, Tantric and non-Tantric. Whereas the images, serene or fierce, give depth to the atmosphere in Tibetan monasteries and temples, the paintings lend colour to it. The colours on these paintings are lustrous, made of vegetables and flowers, which last for centuries. The wall frescoes are as colourful as the thankas are. The thankas - scrolls painted on either silk or thick paper - are rendered more attractive by the embroidery around them. Tibetan paintings have a huge variety of themes. Scenes from the life of the Buddha taken from the Jatakas are reminiscent of Ajanta paintings of India, though the direct inspiration to the Tibetans came not from Ajanta, but from the art of the Pala Kings of Bengal. Other three categories of Tibetan painting, unique in character and style, are those depicting Bhava Chakra, Tshok Shing and Mandala. Bhava Chakra is the Vortex of Existence; the Tshok Shing is the tree of divine assemblage, and the Mandala is a geometrical pattern with numerous divinities and symbols set into its various sections. The hub of Bhava Chakra has a cock signifying lust, a snake signifying anger and a pig signifying ignorance. There are three circles around the central circle.

The first is divided into two parts, one dark, showing the way to the nether region, the other, lighted, showing the upper forms of existence. The upper semi-circle has the region of the Lhas or gods in the centre Mi or men to left and Lha ma yins, not-yet-gods, to the right. In contrast to this, the lower semi-circle describes the state of nyalwa, hell, in the centre, of Dundos or animals to the left, and yi dhaks, tortured spirits, to the right. The outermost circle, demonstrates the Pratitya Samutpat, rTen hbrei, the chain of 12 interdependent causes leading to the cycle of births and deaths mentioned earlier.

Apart from these beautiful and sublime paintings and images each Tibetan monastery has a set of sacred Tibetan scriptures known as Kanjur and Tanjur often encased in neat glass almirahs. Ka means the word or command. Kanjur contains 100 volumes ( in another edition 108) incorporating what is believed to be the original words of the Buddha. 225 volumes of Tanjur on the other hand, are commentaries on the original. All of them are on hand-made paper, which preserves very well for hundreds of years - with printing done on them with incised wooden blocks. The entire lot has been translated from the Sanskrit works of India by a very successful and scientific method employing two experts, one of each language. The translations are so perfect that if one translates them back, the original is restored almost in its entirety. As a matter of fact, in the history of Mahayana Buddhism, all its literature was catalogued and preserved for the first time in the Tibetan language. It is also true that many works no more available in their original Sanskrit form are extant only in the Tibetan language.

All these monasteries, temples and Chortens are fine examples of Tibetan architecture. Potala and Norbulingka, the two palaces of the Dalai Lama are said to represent the

pinnacle of Tibet's architectural glory. Jo Khang temple, the central Cathedral of Lhasa, and Ganden, Sera, Depung and Samye monasteries, all in its vicinity, make the city of Lhasa a temple of architecture. Apart from architecture, sculpture and painting, Tibet is very rich in other fine arts such as music, dance, drama and poetry as well. The sixth Dalai Lama was Tibet's greatest poet of romantic lore. The Tibetan culture combines with extraordinary success a mystique tradition of rigorous religious life with the charm and mirth of social living. The Tibetan way is truly the Middle Way, the Majjhima Path, prescribed by the Blessed One 2500 years ago, the path which avoids both extremes: of the mortification of the flesh and of excessive indulgence in its pleasures. So says the Mahavagga:

'By avoiding these two extremes, monks, the Tathagata has gained the knowledge of the Middle Path, which leads to insight which leads to wisdom, which conduced to calm, to knowledge, to Sambodhi.'

The culture of Tibet, above everything else, is a glowing example of how this stream of Indian consciousness, crossed the Himalayan frontiers and flowed into far-off lands, transforming them body, mind and soul into an eternity of Love, Peace and Compassion through a community of ideals and institutions.

Like Om Mani Peme Hum, like the jewel in the lotus, let these ideals inspire us into a life of virtue, devotion and sacrifice and save us from total dissolution which human imperfection is quite capable of visiting on us.

OM MANI PEME HUM.

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Script of Mr. L. L. Mehrotra's talk at the Nicholas

Roerich Museum of Art, New York.

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" GLIMPSES ON TIBETAN CULTURE "

For centuries past Tibet had flourished as a repository of an ancient culture thriving under the silence and solitude of a vast mountain range away from the tumult and turmoil of the world. Tibet was known to mankind not for its wealth and weaponry but for its fables and fantasies, its myths and cosmologies, the heights of its spiritual glory and the depth of its philosophical thought. Religion had been the keynote of this culture, governing the lives of a sturdy but contented humanity that shared its joys and sorrows with the sun and shower, the stars and storms that greeted that roof of the world from morn till dusk and dusk to dawn. Here man was not the measure of all things but an humble creature with his share of Karma in the Samsara, of activity and fruits thereof in the inexorable vortex of life. What was titanic in him was not vanity but the effort to emerge out of it, through suffering and sacrifice, meditation and prayer, compassion and congregation. Life continued in its spiritual endeavour in the mountain fastnesses, the glens and plateaux of Tibet until recently the force of circumstances changed the shape of things.

Buddhism went to Tibet from India as you know. Being the Land of Phak-pa - the Arya - Noble Master, India represents to the Tibetan mind the birthplace of all that is noble in thought and deed. Tibet's religion, philosophy, art, poetry all show a deep Indian influence. In order to understand what the Western scholars have termed as the ' tremendous civilizing influence ' of Buddhism in Asia, it will be necessary to have a look at the religion that was in vogue in Tibet before the introduction of Buddhism in the 6th - 7th century A.D.

That religion is known as Bon. The verb Bon-pa means to " murmur spells." The founder of Bon according to its tradition was one Tomba Shenurb. The followers of Bon are called Bonpos. The highest deity of

the Bonpos is the blue sky who is supported by a swarm of Lhas or goodspirits and is in perpetual conflict with the hdes or goblins. Men were often pawns in the spiteful squabbles and jealousies of Lhas and Ldes and the way to keep from their wrath was through bloody sacrifices including those of human beings. Gods and demons alike could be controlled by thaumaturgic power developed by Shens or high priests. These wizards killed to heal, their magic being always black, employing methods at once violent and vulgar. The impact of Buddhism on this creed was so strong that the Bon came to have even a Bon Sangyo or Bon Buddha and like the Kon Chhok Sum, Buddha Dharma and Sangha of Buddhism, the Bon developed their own Yung Dhung Sum, the three swastikas. The Bon architecture, iconography and sacred furnishings are none too different from those of Tibetan Buddhism. The Buddhist onslaught, if I may use that term, succeeded in diverting the larger section of the Tibetan population from the basic savagery of the Bon religion. However, in spite of the Buddhist triumph, the Bon religion continued to flourish in some parts of Tibet with its inhuman practices. And just as Buddhism transformed the Bon religion, the latter in turn infected Buddhism itself in its battle for survival. We see a whole mass of Dus, and Nyans, Sadhaks, thab lhas, pho lhas, i.e., the black demons, the argalies, the serpent spirits, the hearth gods, the titular gods, creeping into the Buddhist pantheon on the Tibetan soil. The atmosphere in quite a few Tibetan paintings does not fail to convey this satanic influence.

It is true that a Bon temple and a lamaist temple have much in common. The architecture is the same, the wall paintings look similar, drums, trumpets, butter lamps, the thrones, the masks, all look alike, the iconography is so similar the Thomba Shen Rabs might not appear any different from Shakya Thubpa, but the basic distinction between the two religions continues to be not so much of form as of spirit. The Bon

is mundane, is worldly oriented, aims at making the life being lived successful and healthy. The aspirations of a Bonpo at best stop at reaching the heaven the blue sky for obtaining a life of perpetual luxury and mirth. The lamaist approach is essentially extra mundane and crosses the blue sky to reach the state of Sunyata and Nirvana. The conflict between the Bon and Tibetan Buddhism is so basic that centuries of coexistence have not resolved it.

Buddhism was introduced in Tibet by the memorable efforts of Srong-tson Gompo and Khri Srong Dou Bsan, the two kings whose names are written in the golden pages of Tibetan history. One flourished in the first half of the 7th century A.D. and the other in the second half of the 8th. Srong Tson Gompo married a Chinese princess and a Nepalese princess, both Buddhist, and sent a delegation to India under his able minister Thon ni Sambhota to evolve a script for the Tibetan language. Just as the introduction of Buddhism changed the Tibetan way of life, the introduction of the Brahmi Script of India heralded a new era of literacy in Tibet. Some of the sacred books of Buddhism which had been coming to Tibet since the reign of Lha - Tho-Ri-Nyen-Tsen about a century earlier were translated during the life-time of Srong Tsen Gompo. This should have greatly accelerated the progress of Buddhism in Tibet. Khri Srong Dou bstan declared Buddhism to be the state religion. His reign was marked by the visit of two famous Indian Pandits, viz., Bhikshu Santa Rakshita and Guru Padma Sambhava. The latter is known as Pema jhung ne or Guru Rimpoche and is only next to Buddha in the esteem of Tibetans. By various magic feats including bringing the dead back to life he is credited with having firmly established the supremacy of his creed, Mahayana Buddhism, over native Bon. Santarakshita established the first Buddhist Gompa or monastery of Tibet at Sanyo, about 30 miles from Lhasa, the capital

of Tibet, and ordained the first seven Tibetan monks. The seeds of Buddhist faith and monastic order were thus sown. Kamalasila one of the chief associates of Shanta Rakshita defeated the Chinese Wu Weis or nihilistic monks in disputation at the court of King Khri Srong Deu bsan. This made the way for ' Indian ' Buddhism to gather roots in Tibet instead of its Central Asian or Chinese variety. The Central Asian or Chinese variations of Buddhism themselves were of Indian origin no doubt, but they were based on Buddhism which went from India centuries earlier from the time of Emperor Ashoka to Kanishka and so on. In the meanwhile, Buddhism in India itself had undergone a profound evolution in its doctrine and practice starting from the compilation of the Three Pitakas, viz., Vinaya, Sutra and Abhidharma, through the transformation of ' Hinayana ' into ' Mahayana ' to its subsequent assimilation of Yoga School of Hindu Philosophy which led to the growth of the Yogachara School. Later Buddhism drew heavily from Tantrayana and Mantrayana. The former emphasized the Cult of Sakti ( lit. Energy ) and the latter the magic of spells. It would, therefore, be seen that though the form of Indian Buddhism that came to Tibet in the 7th and 8th centuries A.D -over a millennium after the Mahaparinirvana, the Great Passing Away of the Master -had the simple truths uttered by Buddha as its basis, it was much more elaborate than its pristine form.

The four Noble Truths or Den pa shi viz., Suffering, the origin of Suffering, the cessation of Suffering and the Eightfold Path which leads to its cessation constitute the fountain spring of the entire Buddhist philosophy. The Tibetan texts mention them thus:-

TIBETAN TEXT.

བདེན་པ་བཞི་ནི་—  
 འཛོམས་བདེན་ ལམ་བདེན་ ལྷན་རྒྱུ་བདེན་པ་ ལྷན་བསྐྱེད་བདེན་པ་



I would turn to Mahavagga ( Vinaya Pitaka ) to show how Lord Buddha himself is stated to have explained these four Noble Truths in his first sermon at Sarnath, near Varanasi.

" This, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering; birth is suffering; decay is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering, presence of objects we hate, is suffering; separation from objects we love, is suffering; not to obtain what we desire, is suffering.

In brief, the five aggregates which spring from grasping, they are painful.

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the origin of Suffering; verily it originates in that craving, which causes the renewal of becomings, is accompanied by sensual delight, and seeks satisfaction now here, now there; that is to say, craving for pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for not becoming.

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the Cessation of Suffering. Verily, it is passionlessness, cessation without remainder of this very craving; the laying aside of, the giving up, the being free from, the harbouring no longer of, this craving.

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering. Verily, it is this Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavour, right mindfulness and right meditation."

Suffering and Samsara are inseparably linked with each other - are rather synonymous. Samsara is the cycle of birth and rebirth to which the whole round of existence is subject. It is eternally bound

by a chain of interdependent causes called rTen-hBro1 or Pratitya Samutpat, which has been detailed as follows:-

- Ma-Rik-pa, Avidya, ignorance,
- hDu-Bhyo-Sanskara, synergies,
- rNam-Shos, Vijnana, conciousness,
- Ming-gSuks, Nama-Roopa, name and form
- sKyod-mChhod, Shadayatana, six sense organs
- ReK-pa, Sparsa, contact
- Tshor-Va, Vedana, feeling
- Srod-pa, Trshna, craving
- Len-pa, Upadana, grasping
- Srid-pa, Bhava, becoming
- sKyed-pa, Jati, birth
- rGas-Shi, Jara-Marana- decay and death.

The Eightfold Path proscribed by Buddha, quoted above in the extract from the Mahavagga, led to the liquidation of one and all of those elements of bondage and made way for Nirvana or release. Mahayana lays emphasis on six Paramitas, Six Pha-Roltu-Phyinpas as they are called in Tibotan for the attainment of Nirvana. Lu-dub or Nagarjuna, the most important figure in the history of Mahayana Buddhism, speaks of them thus:

ཕྱིན་དང་རྒྱུ་ལ་སྲིལ་ས་པ་ཟེ་དེ་བཙུན་བསམ་གཏན་དང་  
དེ་བཞེན་སྲིལ་ས་པ་ལས་ལེན་མེད་པ་རྩིས་ཕྱིན་།

- byinpa or Daana is charity
- Tshul Khrin or Shoola is morality,
- bSodpa or Kshanti is fortitudo
- brTson-drus or Veerya is vigour and industry
- bSangtan or Dhyana is meditation,

Shosrabs or Prajna is Supreme wisdom.

Subsequently Thabs sMonlan, sTobs and Yoshos, i.e., ritual, prayer spiritual power and divine knowledge were added to the paramitas and this brought their total number to ten. Whether Nirvana is a completely negative State or a positive one it is difficult to say. Nagarjuna and Asanga the works of both of whom have been preserved in Tibetan literature come very close to Neti-Neti in so much as they meant Nirvana to be neither this nor that but it is hard to conceive of release without thinking of the release of what, and what state that release is. Earlier literary works such as Udana probably come closer to Buddha's own thinking on this than what the polemics of later scholars would suggest: Udana Speaks of Nibbana as an Ayatan or Space, a positive entity but where there is no Pathavi or earth, no aapo-water, no tejah-fire, no vaayu-air, no Akasa - sky. As it is beyond all Dhammas, material attributes, it is beyond the range of conventional language as well.

Many of us may be philosophic but few are philosophers. Most of us thrive on the emotional plane. Religion to be acceptable and to be able to become the sheet anchor of the common man has to cater to this requirement. Mahayana Buddhism did this by first deifying the historical Buddha and then weaving round him a host of other divinities. Tibetan Buddhism revels most in giving expression to this aspect through a multitude of paintings, sculptures and literary works. Thus you have the Chhog-gi-Dhang-pohi Sans-rgyas-the Adi Buddhas, the rGyalva Rigs lna-the Dhyani Buddhas, the Manushi Buddhas of whom the historical Sakya Muni is just one, and a series of other Buddhas such as Mar Mo dse-Dipankara and sMan-bLa-Bhaishajya Guru. Then you have Dhyani Bodhi sattvas including sPyan-ras-gzigs or

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Avalokiteshvara of whom the Dalai Lama is an incarnation. There are female Bodhisattvas and green, white and yellow, blue and red Dolmas or Taras, Dhyani Buddha Saktis, Dakinis, Lha-mos, and eight mothers from Gog mo ma to Di chab na. There are Yab yum forms of divinities too, integrating the maternal and the paternal origin<sup>s</sup> of creation, the Dharma palas and the Lok palas. There are Yakshas and Yakshinis, Nagas and demons, witches and fairies, all reminding one of the later accretions to pristine Buddhism. And there are spells and charms deified, thanks both to the mantrayana and the Bon. The simple doctrine of Siddhartha, Dhon dub, thus got lost in the paraphernalia of gods and ritual. It is a sharp reminder to what the Master had said a millennium ago:- " I perceive danger in the practice of mystic wonders that I loathe, and abhor, and am ashamed thereof." Buddhism might have assumed forms which Buddha could not have appreciated but it created a pageantry of cultural patterns which Tibetan Buddhism so beautifully represents. All these forms from the Cho ki Dhang poi Sangye or the Primordial Buddha downwards in the Tibetan pantheon .

do seem to be quite a departure from Buddhas own approach, for his was basically a call against the multiplying forms of Brahmanic divinities, the rituals to propitiate them and the superstitions that corroded the philosophical depths of India's philosophy. However the road of Buddhism is the road of all other creeds. Each religion has for its core the words of a prophet - saint. Gradually this core gathers mass. Legends grow around the events of the life of the ' Founder ' and a simple faith assumes a complex form. But then these legends are translated through the medium of the fine arts into forms of beauty and lead to the flowering of a distinguished culture. This is how the Tibetan culture grew.

As religion could not be divorced from philosophy in the true

oriental tradition, every stage of the divine hierarchy in Buddhism was given a philosophical signification. The self creative Adi Buddha creates by thought the Dhyani Buddhas who live in perpetual Nirvana with a Dharma-kaya, body of Truth-essence, not a physical body. These five Dharmakaya Dhyani Buddhas, the rGyal Wa Rigs Ina have the following description:

Mi skyo pa or Akshobhya, the unagitated one, is rNan Shes kyi Phung po, the aggregate of consciousness comprising all knowledge that is conveyed to the mind: he is She sDan bhyong wa, one who purges the mind of anger and is Ghhos bying ye shes nGon du bhye pai nu pa chen, i.e., he has the power to manifest, the Dharma-Dhatujnana, the absolute divine wisdom of the entire perview of religion.

Rin Chen hbyung lden, Ratna Sambhava, the one born of a jewel, is the congregation of perceptions, purges the mind of avarice and has the ability to manifest the knowledge of equanimity. Hod pa mod, Arisabha, the Infinite Light is the aggregate of sensations, purges, the mind of lust, and is capable of manifesting the science of self perception.

Don yod Grubpa, Anogha Siddhi, the Infallible Success, is the aggregate of consciousness based on Samskara, impressions created by repeated experience, purges the mind of jealousy and has the power to manifest the science of success in action.

sNam sNang, Vairochana, the Brilliant Light, is the aggregate of external forms, purges the mind of the foul smell of ignorance and is capable of manifesting mirror-like pure knowledge.

Above everything else the above analysis reveals the height of Buddhist accomplishment in the domain of psychology for here you

witness the proper classification of experience through the five successive stages - Phung pos or Skandhas - of ySugs tshorva, hDu-Shos, hDu - bhye, and rNan Shos i.o.o., of Rupa - the external stimulant, Vedana - sensation, Samjna - consciousness, Sanskara - synergy, and Vijnana or fuller knowledge of the experience.

From the Dharmakaya Buddhas emanate the Sambhogakaya Bodhi Sattvas, and from them in turn the Nirmana kaya Manushi Buddhas. Sambhoga is experience of infinite happiness. In the Buddhistic terminology, the term has been lifted from its ordinary meaning of carnal pleasure to spiritual beatitude. Whereas the Dhyani Buddhas live in meditation, the Dhyani Bodhisattvas experience Supreme happiness, not through the medium of senses, but in mind state. However they do assume a body built of the elements, earth, water, air, fire etc. the mortal body, the Nirmana Kaya, once in every Kalpa or world cycle. Gautama Buddha is the Manushi Buddha of the present, the fourth cycle, and Avalokiteshwara, its Dhyani Bodhisattva, creator. There are five Dhyani Bodhi Sattvas of the Trikaya System viz., Kuntu-bzan-pa-Samanta Bhadra - the all benign, Phyang-na rdo-rjo-Vajra pani - the bearer of thunderbolt, Phyang-narin-chen-Ratnapani - the Jewel bearer; sPyan-ras-gzigs-Avalokiteshwara - of Compassionate look; and Phyang-na-sna-tshogs-rdo-rjo-Vishvapani - Crossed Thunderbolt bearers. Apart from them, there are other Bodhisattvas such as Byans-pa, lJan-dpal, NaD-snin, Sahi-snin, hZig-rTen-gsum, sGrib-pa rNan-sol, Mahasthanaprapta, Maitreya, Manjushri - Akash-garbha, Kshiti-garbha, Trailokya-vijaya and Sarva-Nirvarana-Vishkambhin etc. They embody various aspects of divinity such as Love, Compassion, Beatitude, Strength, Lordship etc. There are female Bodhisattvas as well. Yangchen na associated with learning and fine arts, Norgyun na, with abundance, Ses-rab-Kyipha-rol-tu-phyin-pa with Superior wisdom and others endowed with various powers

and attributes. It is the Bodhisattva ideal, which distinguishes Hinayana from Mayayana as you know. Bodhisattvas, having emanated from a higher state, or having risen from the imperfect state of ordinary men to that of Arhat, are fully qualified to become Buddhas. But as individual interest must be sacrificed for the sake of common good, and as the endeavour to liberate others is nobler than the liberation of one's own self, these Bodhisattvas choose not to disappear like a flame freed from name and form. They live in the midst of suffering humanity sharing their experiences as incarnations and lifting them from their lot - Karma. Karuna or Compassion gains supremacy over self centred individual Moksha or release. The core of the entire Tibetan attitude to life, in conformity with this ideal, is Karuna, their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama is Karuna's incarnation par excellence. He dominates by the power of love through the conquest of the heart. The next important incarnation is Panchen Lama representing Ho pa med or Amitabha - Infinite Light - the Dhyani Buddha of the existing Kalpa. Apart from these two Grand Lamas, there are numerous incarnate Lamas called Tulkus. They are believed to be incarnations of accomplished Indian, Tibetan or Mongolian Saints. The term Hutuktu or Khutuktu represents a rank. It does not represent a category of incarnate Lamas. A Hutuktu may or may not be an incarnate Lama. The word Lama ( bLa-na ) means the Superior one and applies to incarnate monks, though in common parlance it has come to apply to even ordinary ones. Almost every family contributes one Lama to the order of monks. This Lama grows in the spiritual tradition from childhood passing his grades of Ge-tshul and Go-long. The laity is only entitled to the title Ge-nyen. Some of the monks become Khonpos or Abhots of monasteries depending upon the state of their spiritual development.

There are five major sects or orders of Tibetan Buddhism: Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Kargutpa, Kadampa and Gelunkpa. The Nyingmapa means the ancient order. Its founder was the Indian saint Padma Sambhava who came to Tibet in the reign of Thi Srong De chen in the second half of the 8th century. The Nyingmapas are popularly known as red hat sect by virtue of the colour of the cap they wear. A master Tantrist, Padma Sambhava ( Tibetan - Pema Jhung Ne ) introduced the Dzok Chhen, road to perfection through Adi yoga, whereby the Siddha sees Light through Yogic practices and acquires Yogic powers in the process. The most famous Nyingma monastery is Samye of which I have spoken earlier. Sakyapas, the followers of the second important sect of Tibet, are little different from Nyingmapas. They are associated with the Sakyapa monastery in Tsang province in Western Tibet. The word Sakyapa means Pandu Bhumi, grey earth, which is the colour of the soil where the monastery is located. Kargutpa is the third great monastic order. It was founded in the 11th century by the Tibetan saint Marpa on the basis of the teachings of his Indian Guru Naropa. The greatest emphasis of this sect is on mystical Vajrayana and its greatest mystic saint is Milarespa. The first saint in Kargutpa's apostolic succession is Tilopa, an Indian sage of the 10th century, who propounded the Mahamudra philosophy known in Tibet as Phyag Chhen, the Great Symbol. Tilopa is believed to have received his doctrine direct from Dorje Chhang, Adi Buddha Vajra Dhara, and this esoteric tradition was orally transmitted in succession from Tilopa to Milarespa through Naropa and Marpa. Milarespa is the most celebrated of the poet saints of Tibet and his life sketch and philosophy have been rendered eternal in Jhe Tsun Ka bun. He speaks of mind control in his ' Song of the Yogis Race ' as follows:



To catch the Horse of Mind, use as the lasso One-pointedness,  
It must be tied, when caught, to the post of meditation,  
It must be fed, when hungry, with the Guru's teachings,  
It must be given to drink, when thirsty, of the stream  
of consciousness,  
It must be kept, when cold, in the enclosure of Voidness  
For saddle use the Will, for bridle, Intellect,  
Attach to it as girths and cruppers, Fixedness Immovable  
Around it pass as Head stall and Nose Band the Vital Airs.

The above verse lays emphasis on Pranayama, Dharana, Dhyana,  
and Samadhi of Yoga. Milarepa has significantly added to it  
Compassion, Karuna, the supreme Buddhist Virtue:

Its rider is the Youth of Intellect, Keen Watchfulness,  
The helmet which he weareth is Mahayanic Altruism.

The entire verse looks so similar to the sayings of the Buddha  
as quoted in Sanyutta Nikaya, a Pali work.

Whose the Faith and Wisdom hath attained  
His state of mind well harnessed leads him on,  
Conscience the pole and mind the Yoke thereof,  
And heedfulness the watchful charioteer:  
The furnishings of righteousness the Car,  
Rapture the axle, Energy the Wheels,  
And Calm, Yoke fellow of the balanced mind,  
Desirelessness the drapery thereof.

And to attain the peace that Car rolls on.  
'Tis built by self, by one's own self becometh -  
This chariot incomparable supreme:  
Seated therein the sages leave the world,  
And vocally they win the Victory.

Tibetan Jetsun Kabun and Pali Sanyutta Nikaya are separated from  
each other by about 1500 years and yet they speak the same language.

Kadampas constitute the Fourth important sect of Tibetan Buddhism.  
Its founder was Atisha, a scholar of Philosophy from the Vikrama Shila  
Monastery of India who arrived in Tibet in 1038 A.D. His was the first  
major effort to reform Tibetan Buddhism. He lived for 13 years in  
Tibet and breathed his last there. Ka Dampa means to give precept.  
Atisha emphasised virtuous living in accordance with Buddha's precepts  
and attempted to divert the Buddhists of Tibet from the undesirable  
accretions of centuries to the essence of Mahayana Buddhism. His

attempt at reform was followed up with much greater vigour and effect by Jho-Tson-Khapa three centuries later. Tson-Khapa who lived from 1348 to 1419 recognised monastic celibacy as the only form of religious life. He laid the foundation of the Gelukpa sect, the most important and powerful monastic order of Tibet, known as the Yellow Hat sect after the colour of the hat its followers wear. Tsong-Khapa placed the greatest accent on the purity of mind and purging of the consciousness of all evil thought:

All white or black Karman dependeth on the goodness or otherwise of mind itself,  
 Good if the mind be, the course of action would be but good,  
 Else if the mind be bad, bad the Foundation and Way would be,  
 For all dependeth on the character of mind.  
 To hold to the desire to be on level with others,  
 Partiality to one's own sect, indignation for others,  
 Being pulled to and fro by attachment to distinctions of class,  
 Of everyman's suffering is this not the root cause.

ཇི་ཅིང་ཁ་པའི་གསུང་ལས་  
 དཔལ་ནག་ལས་རྣམས་བསམ་པ་ཟང་ངན་ལས་  
 བསམ་པ་བསམ་ནས་དང་ལས་ལང་པ་ཟེང་  
 བསམ་པ་དམ་ན་ན་ས་དང་ལས་ལང་དམ་ན་  
 གྲམས་ཅད་བསམ་པ་དག་ལ་རྟལ་ལས་བས་  
 མཉམ་མཉམ་འགྲའི་འདྲིང་བསམ་ངན་འཁོར་བ་དང་  
 ལྷོགས་ལྷོགས་ལྷོགས་སྤང་རྒྱུ་ལྱིན་འཐེན་པ་ལང་  
 རང་རང་སྤྱོད་པ་སྤྱི་ལྡོ་རྒྱ་མི་འདུག་གསུང་།

(སྤྱི་བ་སྤྱི་བ་སྤྱི་བ་སྤྱི་བ་སྤྱི་བ་)

How much does this remind us of the ancient Sanskrit saying:

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्ध मिच्छिनः ।

'Mind is the cause of Man's bondage and release both.'

The above verse of Tson-Kha-pa also reminds us eloquently of the catholicity of spirit emphasised in the Indian philosophy over

and over again: रुचीनां वै निःश्याद्भुज कटिल नाना पथिजुषाम् ।  
नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमसि परसामगतिव ॥

' Of all men, treading all manner of direct or winding ways,  
Thou alone art the goal like the ocean of all streams '

On the outskirts of Lhasa there are three very famous monasteries of Tibet. They are Ganden, Drepung and Sera. All three belong to the Geluk sect. Ganden was established by Tson Khapa himself and the other two by his immediate disciples. At Shigatse to the South West of Lhasa there is another well known Geluk monastery called Tashi Lhunpo which is the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama. Gendun Dub pa who built Tashi Lhunpo was actually the abbot of Drepung monastery. He was the first Gyal-wa-rimpoche, the precious Victor which is the traditional title of the Dalai Lama. The word Dalai Lama is a Mongol word. It is the Mongol translation of the Tibetan word Gyatsho, which means ' Ocean.' The third Gyal wa Rimpoche was Sonam Gyatsho. He was invited by Altan Khan the Mongol Emperor in 1577 and was called Dalai Lama by the latter. Subsequently, all his preceding and succeeding incarnations were called Dalai Lama. From 1391, the unbroken tradition of this institution of the Dalai Lama from Gendun Dub pa to the present, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, is a very notable feature of the history and culture of Tibet. Even the ' system ' of reincarnation, originally Indian, and familiar to the Tibetans since the advent of Buddhism in Tibet came into popular vogue in their country only from the time of Gendun Dub pa. This peculiar system of heredity does not automatically pass the title from father to son but is based on a very discreet process of selection of the true reincarnation of the deceased Rimpoche or Tulku. The process of selection is so rigorous it might take years before the ' right ' choice is made and the reincarnation may be found thousands

of miles away from the place where the previous incarnation departed from his body. The basis of this belief and practice is the old Indian philosophy of rebirth, which does not see death as an end, but as an occasion for the soul to assume a new cloak after the previous one no more remains fit to serve it.

वासंसि जीगनि यथा विहाय  
नवानि कृत्वाति नरोऽपराणि ।  
तथा शरीरानि विहाय जीगानि  
अन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

These monasteries Doping, Sera, Ganden, Tashi Lhumpo, Samyo, Saskya and many others spread throughout the length and breadth of the country are cradles of Tibetan culture. The atmosphere inside them is darkish which immediately transports the visitor into a realm of inner depth and makes him look within for Atma Paryavokshana self - scrutiny. The presiding divinity installed in the shrine at the back of the prayer hall dominates the cosmos around, of which the temple is the symbol and the devotee a part. The images in the temples and monasteries fall into various categories of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Taras, Dakinis, Yidams, Dharmapalas, historical personages and non-human types etc. The images may be of gold, silver, copper, bronze, stone, wood or clay. The benign images wear what is known as Bodhisattva garments such as five leafed crowns, ear rings, necklaces, armlots, bracerlots, wristlots, anklets, scarves, shawls, garlands to the navels and sometimes to the thighs. The fierce images or angry ones will have Dharmapala garments consisting of five skull crowns, necklaces often of snakes, and garlands and bolts of skulls. They are often draped in tiger or elephant skins. Sometimes you find them wearing aprons of human bones carved with deities and symbols. Some images have only monastic garments, distinct from the above two princely categories of Bodhisattva and Dharmapala garments. Manushi Buddhas, for example, are shown in monastic garments,

wearing a shawl draped on the shoulders, with a peaked cap most often but no princely paraphernalia. Some of the figures are nude o.g., those of Kuntz Zangpo, Adibuddha Samantabhadra. The divinities may have a Tantric or a non-tantric form according to the number of heads and arms they have. Those with one head and two arms are non Tantric. Some Yab Yun figures always show the divinity with his Shakti, his energy to create, sustain and destroy the universe. Whereas the majority of images radiate spiritual calm and serenity, some have an utterly demonic aspect reminiscent of the Bon cult. The non-Tantric forms carry with them non-Tantric symbols such as the rosary, the book, the lotus, and the jewel. The Tantric divinities on the other hand will have such symbols as the skull cup, skull drum, chopper, axe, elephants goad and the skeleton wand. Padma Sanbhava generally carries a Khatwang with him - it is a ritual wand with the thunderbolt top and a skull, two heads and a trident above. Avalokiteshvara, spyan-ras-gzigs, has 108 forms, Tantric and non-Tantric. Whereas the images, serene or fierce, give depth to the atmosphere in Tibetan monasteries and temples, the paintings lend colour to it. The colours on these paintings are lustrous, made of vegetables and flowers, which last for centuries. The wall frescoes are as colourful as the thankas are. The thankas - scrolls painted on either silk or thick paper - are rendered more attractive by the embroidery around them. Tibetan paintings have a huge variety of themes. Scenes from the life of the Buddha taken from the Jatakas are reminiscent of Ajanta paintings of India, though the direct inspiration to the Tibetans came not from Ajanta, but from the art of the Pala Kings of Bengal. Other three categories of Tibetan painting, unique in character and style, are those depicting Bhava Chakra, Tshok Shing and Mandala. Bhava Chakra is the Vortex of Existence; the Tshok Shing is the tree of divine assemblage, and the

Mandala is a geometrical pattern with numerous divinities and symbols set into its various sections. The hub of Bhava Chakra has a cock signifying lust, a snake signifying anger and a pig signifying ignorance. There are three circles around the central circle. The first is divided into two parts, one dark, showing the way to the nether region, the other, lighted, showing the upper forms of existence. The upper semi-circle has the region of the Lhas or gods in the centre Mi or men to left and Lha ma yins, not-yet-gods, to the right. In contrast to this, the lower semi-circle describes the state of nyalwa, hell, in the centre, of Dundos or animals to the left, and yi dhaks, tortured spirits, to the right. The outermost circle, demonstrates the Pratitya Samutpat, rTen hbrcl, the chain of 12 interdependent causes leading to the cycle of births and deaths mentioned earlier.

Apart from these beautiful and sublime paintings and images each Tibetan monastery has a set of sacred Tibetan scriptures known as Kanjur and Tanjur often encased in neat glass almirahs. Ka means the word or command. Kanjur contains 100 volumes ( in another edition 108) incorporating what is believed to be the original words of the Buddha. 225 volumes of Tanjur on the other hand, are commentaries on the original. All of them are on hand-made paper, which preserves very well for hundreds of years - with printing done on them with incised wooden blocks. The entire lot has been translated from the Sanskrit works of India by a very successful and scientific method employing two experts, one of each language. The translations are so perfect that if one translates them back, the original is restored almost in its entirety. As a matter of fact, in the history of Mahayana Buddhism, all its literature was catalogued and preserved for the first time in the Tibetan language. It is also true that many works no more available in their original Sanskrit form are extant only in the Tibetan language.

All these monasteries, temples and Chortens are fine examples of Tibetan architecture. Potala and Norbulingka, the two palaces of the Dalai Lama are said to represent the pinnacle of Tibet's architectural glory. Jo Khang temple, the central Cathedral of Lhasa, and Ganden, Sera, Drepung and Samye monasteries, all in its vicinity, make the city of Lhasa a temple of architecture. Apart from architecture, sculpture and painting, Tibet is very rich in other fine arts such as music, dance, drama and poetry as well. The sixth Dalai Lama was Tibet's greatest poet of romantic lore. The Tibetan culture combines with extraordinary success a mystique tradition of rigorous religious life with the charm and mirth of social living. The Tibetan way is truly the Middle Way, the Majjhima Path, proscribed by the Blessed One 2500 years ago, the path which avoids both extremes: of the mortification of the flesh and of excessive indulgence in its pleasures. So says the Mahavagga:

' By avoiding these two extremes, monks, the Tathagata has gained the knowledge of the Middle Path, which leads to insight which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to Sambodhi.'

The culture of Tibet, above everything else, is a glowing example of how this stream of Indian consciousness, crossed the Himalayan frontiers and flowed into far-off lands, transforming them body, mind and soul into an eternity of Love, Peace and Compassion through a community of ideals and institutions.

Like Om Mani Peme Hum, like the jewel in the lotus, let these ideals inspire us into a life of virtue, devotion and sacrifice and save us from total dissolution which human imperfection is quite capable of visiting on us.

OM MANI PEME HUM.