

50 YEARS OF BUDDHISM IN SIKKIM: HISTORY, CULTURE, AND CHALLENGES

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND NATIONAL SEMINAR

DEPARTMENT OF BUDDHIST AND TIBETAN STUDIES
NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY
SIKKIM, 2026

Editorial Board:

Anup Gurung

Jigme Losel

Kunzang Namgyal Shangderpa

Sonam Zawa Bhutia

Tashi Pintso Lepcha

Tsewang Gyatso Bhutia

Editors:

Norbu Gurung

Tenzing Longsel Barphungpa

Tashi Pintso Lepcha

ISBN :978-81-981805-9-9

Copyright 2026 by the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, 737102, Sikkim, India.

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission from the publisher.

Typesetting & Cover design: Karma Gyaltsen Lepcha



ཨ། རྒྱལ་ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་ཤེས་རིག་ཉམས་ཞིབ་ཁང་།

NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY

Deorali, Gangtok, Sikkim - 737102, India

Tel: +91-(03592) 281525

+ 91-(03592) 280822

E-mail: directornitsikkim@gmail.com

Website: www.tibetology.net

FOREWORD

The second National Seminar on *50 years of Buddhism in Sikkim: History, Culture and Challenges*, organised by the Department of Buddhist & Tibetan Studies, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, on the 6th and 7th of March, 2025, was a roaring success. The topic was in keeping with the spirit of celebration, as 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of Sikkim's accession to India as its 22nd state.

The various speakers spoke on a wide range of topics such as the etymology of Beyul Demojong, modern challenges faced by monastic education, learning from history and transitioning to the 21st century world to ensure a bright future for Sikkimese Buddhism. The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology is uniquely positioned to bring together such great minds and foster research in Buddhism, Tibetology, and Sikkimese Studies.

This time, the seminar was held both in English and in Tibetan/Bhutia languages, presenting a rare opportunity for regional scholars and researchers to present their findings in their mother tongues, thus promoting linguistic diversity and preserving cultural heritage.

This seminar proceeding has been well compiled, and the selected articles are engaging and substantially contribute to knowledge creation. It is hoped that the Department of Buddhist & Tibetan Studies will continue its good work and host many more stimulating seminars in the future.

Dr Passang D. Phempu

DIRECTOR

Namgyal Institute of Tibetology
Gangtok, Sikkim

Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

Contents

Foreword	III
Editors' Note	1
Acknowledgements	5
Seminar Proceedings	7
A Study on the Evolution of Nyingma Lama Sheda from Chogyal's established traditional Monastic Institution to UGC recognised Higher Education Institution in Sikkim	11
The Significance of Buddhist Stūpas in Sikkim: An Overview	33
The Karma Gon Monastery of Kolkata A socio-historical Study	43
Sikkimese monks in a Hindu temple and the guardian for Beyul Demojong – A Case Study of Mahakal Mandir and Senchal Dhaam in Darjeeling.....	49
Visible, yet Invisible Daughters of the Buddha: The Struggle for Identity and Quest of Enlightenment of the Tibetan Buddhist Nuns in Sikkim	63
(Examining the beginning of Buddhism in Beyul Demojong) སྐས་ཡུལ་ འབྲས་མོ་ རྫོང་ས་ལོ་ རྒྱ་ལོ་ སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ བསྟན་པོ་ དར་རྒྱུད་ ལུང་ཚུལ་ ལྷེང་ལོ་ དབྱུང་པོ།	91
(Examining the eighteen types of Sikkimese Bhutia Songs) འབྲས་རྫོང་ས་ ལྷོ་པའི་ གཞུང་མུ་ མུ་ཐང་ བཙུ་བརྒྱུད་ ལྷོང་ལོ་ ཞིབ་དབྱེ།	99
འབྲས་རྫོང་ས་ སུ་བྱའ་ཆེན་ལྷགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་སངས་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་པ་བྱུག་རྩེས་མཛད་ཚུལ།	109
The Development of Buddhism in Sikkim and Its Influence on Sikkimese Culture and Religion	113
A Study on the Uniqueness of the Contribution of Sikkim Mahinda Thero to the Independence of Sri Lankans during the Colonial Period	117

Understanding the Historical and Cultural Development of Thangka Painting: With Special Reference to Peaceful Deities in Sikkim	125
Notes on Contributors	136

EDITORS' NOTE

The articles collected in this volume were originally presented at the second National Seminar organised by the Department of Buddhist & Tibetan Studies, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT), on the theme “*50 Years of Buddhism in Sikkim: History, Culture and Challenges*,” held on 6–7 March 2025 at NIT. The theme was chosen to reflect on Buddhism’s growth, achievements, and challenges in Sikkim over the past five decades, while also considering the issues and opportunities that lie ahead.

The Department of Buddhist & Tibetan Studies conducts annual seminars to promote scholarship in Himalayan Buddhist Studies and in Buddhist Studies more broadly. To encourage participation by local Sikkimese scholars, this year’s seminar was conducted in English, Tibetan/Bhutia, and Nepali. From among the papers submitted and presented in Bhutia and English, the editorial board selected seven for publication in these proceedings.

In the opening article, *A Study on the Evolution of Nyingma Lama Sheda from Chogyal’s Established Traditional Monastic Institution to UGC-Recognised Higher Education Institution in Sikkim*, Dr Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia presents a comprehensive overview of Sikkim’s monastic education system, with particular reference to the Sikkim Government Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (SGIHNS). He examines its historical background, current status, and academic curriculum, demonstrating how the institution preserves authentic Buddhist teachings while meeting contemporary educational standards.

Buddhist material culture encompasses a wide range of objects, materials, and ritual contexts. In *The Significance of Buddhist Stūpas in Sikkim: An Overview*, Sonam Zangpo studies one of its most enduring forms. The paper begins with an introduction to the Buddha and the spread of Buddhism, followed by a discussion of Guru Padmasambhava and his connection to Sikkim. Zangpo analyses the roles and types of stupas and concludes with a focused study of the Do-drul Chorten at Deorali, Gangtok, including its representation in the logo on the frontispiece of the *Bulletin of Tibetology*.

Sapana Rai’s paper, *Understanding the Historical and Cultural Development of Thangka Painting: With Special Reference to Peaceful Deities in Sikkim*, offers an insightful study of the evolution of thangka painting and its thematic emphasis on peaceful deities within the Sikkimese context.

Two subsequent articles examine Sikkimese monasteries located beyond the state’s present political boundaries, institutions that have remained relatively underexplored due to shifting historical and geopolitical circumstances.

In the first of these, Andrea Loseries investigates the history, activities, and practices of Kolkata's Karma Gon Monastery in her article, *The Karma Gon Monastery of Kolkata: An Ethno-Historical Study*. She highlights the efforts of a small Sikkimese community in exile to sustain a spiritual home over nearly nine decades.

Jigme Yeshe Lama follows with *Sikkimese Monks in a Hindu Temple and the Guardian for Beyul Demojong – A Case Study of Mahakal Mandir and Senchal Dhaam in Darjeeling*. This study explores the historical and cultural significance of the Mahakal Temple and Senchal Dhaam, underscoring the shared Buddhist heritage of Darjeeling and Sikkim.

The sixth article selected for publication is Diptangshu Dutta Gupta's *Visible, yet Invisible Daughters of the Buddha: The Struggle for Identity and Quest for Enlightenment of the Tibetan Nuns in Sikkim*. Drawing on field research conducted in Sikkim, the author examines issues related to ordination, institutional constraints, and gendered challenges within Buddhist communities, and identifies powerful female deities in the Buddhist pantheon as sources of inspiration for women in the Saṅgha.

In addition, we received numerous papers from local scholars in Bhutia and Tibetan. From these submissions, three papers by young Assistant Professors have been selected for publication. Due to variations in spelling among the scholars, we have reviewed the Bhutia article solely on content.

In *Examining the Beginning of Buddhism in Beyul Demojong*, Neydup Bhutia discusses the opening of the sacred land, drawing upon narratives of divine blessings and prophetic visions of realised masters. He examines retreat centres, Mani Lhakhangs, Shedras, and Dharma centres, highlighting their roles in the dissemination of Buddhism in Sikkim.

In *Examining Eighteen Types of Classical Sikkimese Bhutia Songs*, Yeshey Namgyal Bhutia analyses traditional songs and melodies, particularly group performances associated with marriages, offerings, and other auspicious occasions.

In *Contributions of Chaktha Rinpoche in Spreading Buddhism in Sikkim*, Thupten Palzang Bhutia presents a concise portrait of the Sikkimese yogi Chaktha Rinpoche, detailing his role in constructing stupas and recounting accounts of his extraordinary activities, including healing and protective interventions. The article also briefly outlines the aims and objectives of the Chaktha Rinpoche Foundation.

Buddhism has long been integral to Sikkim's history and cultural identity. In the ninth article, *The Development of Buddhism in Sikkim and Its Influence on Sikkimese Culture and Religion*, Tashi Pintso Lepcha examines the origins and evolution of Buddhism in Sikkim and its deep interconnections with Sikkimese social and religious life.

Finally, Meedeniye Dhammawansa's *A Study on the Uniqueness of the Contribution of Sikkim Mahinda Thero to the Independence of Sri Lankans During the Colonial Period* sheds light on a remarkable Sikkimese monk whose social and political influence extended to Sri Lanka during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Together, these contributions reflect the richness, diversity, and continuing vitality of Buddhist scholarship and practice in and beyond Sikkim.

Norbu Gurung
Tenzing Longsel Barphungpa
Tashi Pintso Lepcha

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of this seminar was made possible through the support and contributions of many individuals and institutions, to whom we express our sincere gratitude.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Shri Mingma Norbu Sherpa, Hon'ble Speaker of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, for taking time out of his busy schedule to grace the seminar as the Chief Guest. We are deeply indebted to Ven. Sonam Lama, Hon'ble Minister of the Ecclesiastical Department, Public Health Engineering Department, and Water Resources Department, Government of Sikkim, for graciously attending as the Guest of Honour.

We express our sincere appreciation to the Director of NIT, Dr. Passang D. Phempu, for his invaluable guidance and unwavering support, without which the seminar would not have been possible. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the Administrative Officer, Mrs. Angee Denzongpa, for her patience, dedication, and tireless efforts.

We are grateful to the Late Prof. Jyoti Prakash Tamang, officiating Vice-Chancellor of Sikkim University, for gracing the Valedictory Session as the Chief Guest. For providing the necessary funds and institutional support, we once again express our sincere thanks to the Vice-Chancellor of Sikkim University and the administrative staff. We also acknowledge with appreciation the generous support of our co-sponsor, the State Bank of Sikkim.

We thank Ven. Khen Rinpoche Lha Tshering for kindly accepting our invitation to deliver the keynote address, and Dr. Anna Balikci-Denzongpa for accepting our invitation to serve as Guest Speaker. We also express our gratitude to the Nodal Officer of Sikkim University, Dr. Sangmu Thendup, whose constant assistance contributed significantly to the seminar's success.

We acknowledge with appreciation the Chairpersons of the seminar's parallel sessions: Ven. Khen Rinpoche Lha Tshering, Acharya Tsultsem Gyatso, Dr. Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, Dr. Sangmu Thendup, and Dr. Jigme Losel. The NIT staff, along with the faculty and students of the Department of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies, undertook much of the organizational work, coordinating with speakers, arranging logistics with caterers and hotels, and attending to numerous responsibilities. Their dedicated efforts ensured the smooth conduct of the seminar.

Finally, we are grateful to Ms. Tenzin C. Tashi for her careful proofreading and editing of this volume, and to Mr. Karma Gyaltsen Lepcha for the layout and typesetting.

Norbu Gurung
Tenzing Longsel Barphungpa
Tashi Pintso Lepcha

SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS



Keynote Speaker

VEN. KHEN RINPOCHE LHA TSHERING delivered an engaging talk on the history of Buddhism in Sikkim. He began with stories from his childhood, gradually delving into the origins of Buddhism in Sikkim, which dates back to the 8th century CE.

The journey started with Guru Rinpoche's arrival in Sikkim, a significant event that introduced prophesied scriptures and laid the foundation for Buddhism in the region. Khen Rinpoche also shed light on notable individuals who travelled to Sikkim to spread the Dharma, emphasising the establishment of the Namgyal Dynasty, which marked the beginning of a Buddhist kingdom.

In modern times, the creation of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology was a landmark step, acting as a repository of Tibetan Buddhist wisdom during a challenging period caused by the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Additionally, the establishment of the Nyingma Shedra provided a platform for traditional Buddhist studies, aimed at preserving and promoting the Buddha's profound teachings.



Guest Speaker

DR ANNA BALIKCI-DENJONGPA presented her research on the evolution of Sikkim Studies, highlighting shifts in academic focus before and after 1975. Her paper celebrated Queen Yeshe Dolma's contributions, notably her book, *The Royal History of Sikkim*. She also acknowledged the vital role of scholars such as Kazi Dawa Samdup and Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa in preserving and translating Sikkimese history. Dr Balikci-Denjongpa shared updates on the forthcoming second edition of *The Royal History of Sikkim*.

Speakers

JIGMEE WANGCHUK BHUTIA

A Study on the Evolution of Nyingma Lama Sheda from Chogyal's established traditional Monastic Institution to UGC recognised Higher Education Institution in Sikkim

ANDREA LOSERIES

The Karma Gon Monastery of Kolkata: An Ethno-Historical Study

MEEDENIYE DHAMMAWANSAS

A Study on the Uniqueness of the Contribution of Sikkim Mahinda Thero to the Independence of Sri Lankans during the Colonial Period

SONAM ZANGPO

The Significance of Buddhist Stupas in Sikkim

JIGME YESHE LAMA

Sikkimese monks in a Hindu temple and the guardian for Beyul Demojong: A case study of Mahakal Mandir and Senchal Dhaam in Darjeeling

PASSANG TSHERING LEPCHA

Sacred Landscapes of Sikkim: Folkloric Reflections from the Lepcha Tradition

DAWA DOMA

Role of Religious Tourism in promoting Cultural Heritage and Socio-Economic Development in Sikkim

MEDHA SINHA

Dancing the Way to Divine Bliss: How Spiritual Dances Practiced by Vajrayana Buddhist Monastic Communities in Sikkim help in Connecting the Divine

TENZING LONGSEL BARPHUNGPA

Major Achievements of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in the 50 Years of Statehood of Sikkim (1975-2025)

NEYDUP BHUTIA

༡༣། སྤུལ་ལྷུང་འབྲས་མོ་སྒོངས་མོ་ནང་པོ་སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་པསྟན་པོ་དང་རྒྱད་ལྔ་མེད་མོ་དཔྱད་པོ།

(Examining the beginning of Buddhism in Beyul Demojong)

༡༣༥ ། འབྲས་ལྗོངས་རྩིས་གྱུ་ལྟ་རབས་དང་མྱོང་གི་སྤྱོད་པའི་ཁྱིམ་རྒྱུད་པར་གྱི་གཉེན་ཐོལ་ལ་དབྱུང་བ། [དུས་རབས་ ༡༧ པའི་ ༡༦ བར]

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་སུ་གྲུབ་ཆེན་ལྷགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་སངས་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་པ་ལྷག་རྗེས་མཛད་ཚུ་ལ།

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ལྟེ་པའི་གཞུང་ལྷ་ལྷ་ཐང་བཙོ་བཞུད་སྐོར་ལོ་ཞིབ་དཔུད།
(Examining Eighteen Types of Classical Sikkimese Bhutia Songs)

Buddhism: Time, Timelessness and Being Time

The Spread of Buddhism in Sikkim: Some Unresolved Questions

Sifting Stories of Termas by Rigdzin Godem, the Vulture-Feather-Crowned Terton

Visible, yet Invisible Daughters of the Buddha: The Struggle for Identity and Quest for Enlightenment of the Tibetan Nuns in Sikkim

Religious Representation in Democracy: The Uniqueness of Sikkim's Sangha Assembly Constituency

The Development of Buddhism in Sikkim and Its Impact on the Culture and Religion of the Sikkimese people

Understanding the Historical and Cultural Development of Thangka Painting: With Special Reference to Peaceful Deities in Sikkim

Development of Monastic Schools

A STUDY ON THE EVOLUTION OF NYINGMA LAMA SHEDA FROM CHOGYAL'S ESTABLISHED TRADITIONAL MONASTIC INSTITUTION TO UGC RECOGNISED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN SIKKIM

Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia

INTRODUCTION

The *Abhidharmakosha* states:

**“The sacred teachings of the Buddha are of two types:
Scriptural authority and realized knowledge.
Those who uphold them are the ones who explain,
Engage in discussion, and practice to accomplish them”** (Vasubandhu, 2001).

Accordingly, Buddhist education fundamentally rests upon two main pillars: scriptural authority and realised knowledge (Tib. *lung rtogs*). The scripture comprises three collections, known as the *Tripiṭaka*, which include the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Sūtra Piṭaka*, and the *Abhidharma Piṭaka*. Realisation is characterised by the three-fold training (Skt. *Tri-śikṣā*, Tib. *bslab-pa gsum*), encompassing discipline, concentration, and discriminating knowledge. These teachings are sometimes described as the Buddha's Words, as well as the treatises found in *Sūtras* and *Tantras*.

It is said that:

**“All Dharma teachings are included in the Buddha's word and the treatises,
The excellent speech and the commentaries on its intended meaning,
By means of these, the teaching of the Śākya
Will remain for long within this world”** (Nangwa, 2005).

Collectively, these teachings form the Buddha Dharma, or the teachings of the Buddha, as preserved and transmitted through *Sūtras* and *Tantras*, widely known as Kangyur (Tib. *bka' gyur*) and Tengyur (Tib. *bstan gyur*). These teachings are studied in two main institutions: Monastic institutions or shedras (Tib. *bshad grwa*)¹ and meditation centres or dubdra (Tib. *sgrub grwa*)², which together form Choda Chenpo (Tib. *Chos grwa chenpo*).

In Sikkim, the concept of dubdra dates back to the 8th century with the introduction of Vajrayana Buddhism by Maha Guru Padmasambhava, the 25 Maha Siddhas, and their entourage.

1 Sometimes termed as Chos grwa

2 Sometimes termed as sGom grwa

For instance, the existence of the monastery can be traced back to Rigdzin Gödemchen's second visit in 1374 C.E., when he stayed at Dingchen (Tib. *sdings-chen*)³ monastery, as mentioned in *A Saga of Sikkim's Supremely Revered Four Pioneer Nyingmapa Reincarnates and Their Torchbearers* by H.E. Khenchen L. Tshering Rinpoche. Likewise, Pawo Hungri Monastery, built by Ngari Rigdzin Legden Je around 1568,⁴ was followed by the construction of Kathog Monastery, possibly after the enthronement of the first Chogyal, along with Lhakhang Marpo in 1643, and both Sangngag Dorjeden and Pemayangtse Monasteries in 1647. These institutions stand as enduring symbols of the meditative and retreat-based traditions of that era.

Later, in Pemayangtse, during the time of Lhatsun Chenpo, there were twenty-one accomplished practitioners or Drubthobs (Tib. *grub thob*) whose connections were meaningful, and fifty practitioners who could maintain mountain retreats (Tib. *ri tshugs thub pa*), clearly indicating the presence of well-established meditation centres in earlier times (Bhutia, 2022).

However, a closer examination reveals that *bshad grwa*, comprising schools and colleges (*yig grwa*, *slob grwa* & *bshad grwa*), was only established in the 17th century during the reign of Drejong Miwang Chogyal Chagdor Namgyal (1686-1717) and his Guru Dzogchen Jigmed Pawo (1682-1640).⁵ This development is well-documented in the *rdzongs chen 'jigs med dpa'bo bka' 'bum*, *Bla ma che mtshan gsum 'bras ljongs sbas gnas phebs tshul*,⁶ and the *History of Sikkim*.

Before the establishment of *bshad grwa*, during the time of Chogyal Tensung Namgyal (1644-1700), Pemayangtse used to send batches of young monks to Mindroling for instruction in strict discipline and rites. However, this practice has lapsed in recent years (Risley, 2010; Bhutia, 2022). After completing their studies, these lamas returned to their respective Gonpas and taught what they had learnt to interested devotees (Acharya, 2018). Much later, during the 1940s, Sikkimese monks studied at Lingbu Mindroling Monastery under Taring Rinpoche (1886-1947), following the Mindroling period, as noted by H. H. Risley.

Pemayangtse Monastery was the first to implement a dual system of *bshad grwa* and *sgrub grwa* in a *guru śikṣā*⁷ form, along with the enforcement of strict *Vinaya* discipline for ordained

3 This monastery is most likely located in the borderland between Sikkim and Nepal, in the western part of Sikkim—a route frequently traversed by accomplished masters in earlier times.

4 For more details see *A Saga of Sikkim's Supremely Revered Four Pioneer Nyingmapa Reincarnates and Their Torchbearers* by Khenpo L. Tshering, the Lineage Holder of Pal Gyalwa Ngadagpa.

5 In most sources, the death date of Dzogchen Jigmed Pawo is recorded as 1735 C.E. However, a close examination of the collected works of Changkya Rolpai Dorje suggests that he entered into the state of Dharmadatu in 1740 C.E. This is supported by the text which states: “*phogs nas dd 'dus kyi ser sky stong phrag du mar mjal kha dang 'bras ljongs rdzongs chen sprul sku gshabs pa'i bsngo rten phul bar ljgs bsngo skybs 'jug rnam par dag pa mdzad*.” Lchang skya rol pa'i rdo rje'i gsung 'bum, (p. 334).

6 *Lha btsun nas padma yang rtse dgon pa bzhangs grwa tshang sde btsug* (p. 2).

7 For those studying the history of Guru Śikṣā (the teacher-student tradition) in Sikkim, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*

monks—a code (Tib. *bca' yig rinpo che*) composed by the King and the Lama. The *Royal History of Sikkim* states that on the 14th day, Dzogchen Jigmed Pawo initiated the Chogyal Chagdor Namgyal and his son Gyurmed Namgyal (1707-1733), along with 36 monks of Pemayangtse Monastery, into the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* cycle of ritual practices, including the main and ancillary empowerments. He also bestowed many other ritual practices, such as the *drag dmar gtor zlog*, and re-established the *sgrub mchod* rituals called *bde gshegs kun 'dus*. He also founded the ritual practices called *rdor rje snying po'i phur chog* and the ritual evocation festival of the female Bodhisattva Tulku *rdo rje phag mo*. Various modes of chanting and ritualistic music, as practised and learned by the monks at Mindroling, along with general chanting and invocation modes, were presented by Rigdzin Thinley Rolpai Dorje (b. 1684-?). (Chogyal Thutob Namgyal and Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma, 2003); (*The Royal History of Sikkim*, 2023).

A parallel system can be observed in Tibet, where King Trisong Detsen (Tib. *Khri srong lde btsan*) made 150 families, along with their estates and property, responsible for supporting the temple of Samye (Tib. *bSam yas*) and the performance of the prescribed rituals. A further hundred families were responsible for the maintenance of the monastery. The produce of the estates and pastoral lands had to provide everything necessary: 75 measures (*khal*) of barley annually (according to other sources, monthly) for the abbot, who had also to receive 1,500 ounces of butter, a horse, paper, ink, and salt. The monks devoted to meditation, the *sgom chen*, were entitled to 55 measures of barley and 800 ounces of butter, the Indian masters (*Acharya*) living in the monastery to 55 measures of rice and 100 measures of butter, those not obliged to live permanently in the monastery (*bandhya*) to 800 measures of barley, and to paper and ink, the pupils to 25 measures of barley and pieces of cloth (Tucci, 2011).

This Tibetan model of monastic sustenance and structured support strongly influenced Sikkim's monastic system. Similarly, in Sikkim, the King mandated that the middle son of every family around Pemayangtse Monastery, from the 12 lineages of Lhopo families, be assembled and enrolled as monks, thereby greatly expanding the institution. Families were held responsible for supporting the monastery's monks, enabling them to focus on study and meditation without hardship. The Chogyal enforced a written agreement linking the 108 monks of the monastery with 108 local families of monastery servants and others who had taken an oath. He also provided huge lands as an endowment to support the monastery. At that point, Chogyal Chagdor Namgyal presented to the *grwa tshang*, or the monk body of Pemayangtse, a land ownership document bearing his handprint in gold (Chogyal Thutob Namgyal and Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma, 2003; *Royal History of Sikkim*, 2023). During this period, Chogyal brought the Kangyur written in gold from Tibet, but, to my knowledge, it is no longer there (Tsultrim, 1972).

by H. H. Risley can be a useful resource, although some portions of this book are unreliable. Pages 294 to 302 provide a detailed account of how the Guru Śikṣā system functioned during that period in Sikkim.

The author, Tibetologist and British Trade Agent in Tibet, D. Macdonald (1930) stated, “the maintenance of the monasteries forms a great drag on the lay portion of the population, for the lamas are non-productive, and have to be fed and clothed by their lay fellow-countrymen” (p. 16). This statement reflects a limited understanding of the interdependent relationship between the monastic and lay communities in traditional Buddhist societies. While laypeople provide for the basic needs of lamas, the relationship is far from one-sided.

Lamas and the lay community are interdependent and inseparable, forming a mutually supportive bond. In traditional societies, lamas were essential to the well-being of lay people across critical aspects of life; for instance, they played a role at every stage, from birth to death. Their presence and blessings were considered vital for ensuring the spiritual well-being of individuals and families, guiding them through rites of passage, performing rituals, and helping them accumulate merits and generate Bodhicitta.

Likewise, during those times, lamas were often the sole educators in Sikkim, teaching not only religious texts but also basic literacy, ethics, and cultural values. Lamas served as healers, leveraging ancient medicinal knowledge to diagnose and treat illnesses through secret mantras, tantras, and traditional herbs.

Lamas also frequently acted as intermediaries between the lay population and the Government, as we can read widely in the History of Sikkim by Their Highnesses Chogyal and Gyalmo. In times of crises, conflicts, or uncertainty, lay people turned to lamas for counsel, solace, and stability. Monasteries served as centres of refuge, peace, and wisdom for communities.

The material support provided by laypeople to lamas was minimal and aimed solely at sustaining their monastic lives. Lamas did not accumulate wealth, build houses, or pursue fame. Instead, they dedicated their entire lives to selflessness and the liberation of all sentient beings from suffering.

Macdonald’s characterisation of lamas as “non-productive” ignores their profound contributions to the spiritual, social, and cultural fabric of their communities. The relationship between lamas and lay people is an exemplar of interdependence, where mutual support preserves both spiritual values and societal harmony. Thus, his assertion dismisses the essential role lamas played in society, reducing their contributions to a burden on laypeople. A more nuanced understanding reveals that lamas were not only integral to the daily lives of their communities but also pivotal in maintaining cultural and spiritual continuity.

An experienced monk, chosen by the King, served as the abbot (*mkhan po*) with significant authority. As stated earlier, the schools of exposition or teaching (*bshad grwa*) and practice (*sgrub*

grwa) were formed, and a code of monastic behaviour was prepared in accordance with the Vinaya and Prātimokṣa texts. Thereafter, the Pemayangtse Lamas were established as the chief spiritual guides of every succeeding Chogyal (Chogyal Thutob Namgyal and Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma, 2003).

Later, Chogyal Gyurmed Namgyal established the Ralang Karma Rabtenling Monastery and assigned communities between the Teesta and Rangeet rivers—Barfung, Lingdam, Barnyak, Timi Ben, Sangmo, Yangang, and Lingmo—as patrons. Gyalwa Karmapa Changchub Dorje (1703–1732) consecrated the monastery from Tibet. During the 14th Karmapa, Thegchog Dorjee (1797–1867), the monastic educational process continued, marking the formation of monastic education within the Kagyu tradition (Chogyal Thutob Namgyal and Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma, 2003).

Over the past 1,225 years, many monasteries have been established in Sikkim. However, invasions by Gorkhas and Bhutanese led to the destruction of many, akin to paintings swept away by a river. Despite this, historical records show resilience and growth. By 1890, Sikkim had 42 monasteries, excluding small shrines and Mani Lhakhangs, with one more added that year. By 1900, another was built, but the number remained at 43 in 1910. Remarkably, during the subsequent 37 years of British rule, 24 additional monasteries were established (McKay, 2021). According to official records maintained and published by the Ecclesiastical Department in 2008, Sikkim has a total of 108 major and minor monasteries, 166 Manilhakhangs and 35 hermitages. These figures are corroborated by *Brief Accounts of the Monasteries of Sikkim*, a work compiled, annotated and edited by Tashi Tshering, based on the rare manuscript collection of the late Rai Bahadur T.D. Densapa. At present, there are 102 monastic institutions attached to the various monasteries across the state. These institutions are government-aided and are run according to the monastic tradition, though a certain amount of general education is also imparted.

Table 1							
Number of Monastic Schools District-wise under the Ecclesiastical Department, Government of Sikkim (2023-24)							O u t s i d e Sikkim
Gangtok	A r t s School	Pakyong	Gyalshing	Soreng	Mangan	Namchi	Darjeeling
22	1	10	11	8	20	26	1
Total Schools							99

Table 2							
Number of Monastic School Students District-wise under the Ecclesiastical Department, Government of Sikkim (2023-24)							O u t s i d e Sikkim
Gangtok	A r t s School	Pakyong	Gyalshing	Soreng	Mangan	Namchi	Darjeeling Ging
768	30	98	156	257	190	364	6
	Total No. of students, including Arts students						1869

Table 3								
Number of Monastic School Teachers District-wise under the Ecclesiastical Department, Government of Sikkim (2023-24)							Outside Sikkim	
Regular	Gangtok	Pakyong	Gyalshing	Soreng	Mangan	Namchi	Darjeeling	Total
	27	5	17	3	23	21	NIL	96
Ad-hoc	33	7	19	14	11	16	1	101
Total No of Teachers								196

Table 4		
Sl. No.	Name of Monastic School ¹	District
	Rumtek (Old) Monastic School	Gangtok
	Enchey Sangngag Rabten Ling Monastic School	Gangtok
	Simik Sangngag Dudul Ling Monastic School, Simik	Gangtok
	Pabyuk Monastic School, Pabyuk	Gangtok
	Sa-Ngor Chotshog Monastic School, Rongney	Gangtok
	Burtuk Gurung Tamu Monastic School, Lower Burtuk	Gangtok
	Martam Namzong Monastic School	Gangtok
	Samdong Monastic School	Gangtok
	Martam Tsenkhar Monastic School, Martam	Gangtok
	Rey Mindu Monastic School	Gangtok
	Burtuk Manilhakhang Monastic School, Lower Burtuk	Gangtok
	Taktse Ani Gonpa Monastic School, Bojoghari	Gangtok
	Tumin Monastic School	Gangtok
	Kagyud Gonpa Monastic School, Chandmari	Gangtok
	Tsuklakhang Monastic School	Gangtok
	Sang Monastic School	Gangtok
	Taktse Drubdra Monastic School, Bojoghari	Gangtok
	Chorten Gonpa Monastic School, Deorali	Gangtok
	Gonjang Ogen Dongag Choling Monastic School, Bojoghari	Gangtok
	Dzogchen Tensung Monastic School, Rakdong	Gangtok
	Dechen Choling Tamang Monastic School, Sichey	Gangtok
	Karma Thuzi Choling Monastic School	Gangtok
	Martam Nyingma Thegui Tholop Legshed Ling Monastic School	Gangtok
	Renock R.P. Phencholing Monastic School	Pakyong
	Dro-Phen Phalgey Ling Monastic School, Dikiling	Pakyong
	Sumin Monastic School	Pakyong
	Katek Pema Choling Monastic School	Pakyong
	Buddha Sanskrit Gonpa Monastic School, Dalapchen, Aritar	Pakyong
	Amba Mamring Monastic School	Pakyong
	Pachey Bodh Gonpa Monastic School	Pakyong
	Kathok Monastic School	Pakyong
	Tashi Palden Monastic School, Central Pandam	Pakyong
	Serdup Lakshed Ling Monastic School	Pakyong
	Pemayangtse Tholop Legshed Ling Monastic School, Pelling	Gyalshing
	Tashiding Monastic School	Gyalshing
	Silnon Monastic School	Gyalshing
	Sangngag Choling Monastic School	Gyalshing
	Khachodpalri Monastic School, Khachodpalri	Gyalshing
	Pema Choling Monastic School, Yuksam	Gyalshing
	Tashi Chokhor Ling Monastic School, Melli Aching	Gyalshing

	Dubde Sangngag Dorjeden Monastic School, Yuksam	Gyalshing
	Sanku Tashi Choling Monastic School	Gyalshing
	Labdang Gurung Manilhakhang Monastic School, Labdang	Gyalshing
	Hungri Gonpa Monastic School	Gyalshing
	Okharey Monastic School, Okharey	Soreng
	Lhundrub Yangtse Monastic School, Mangalbaria	Soreng
	Aden Walung Monastic School, Sombaria	Soreng
	Padma Drodul Phelgye Ling Monastic School, Rinchenpong	Soreng
	Buriakhop Monastic School	Soreng
	Palyul Ugen Thosam Ling Monastic School	Soreng
	Rinchen Choling Monastic School	Soreng
	Dechen Choling Monastic School	Soreng
	Phodong Karma Tashi Thupten Choling Monastic School, Phodong	Mangan
	Phensang Sangngag Choding Monastic School, Phensang	Mangan
	Lachen Nyedup Choling Monastic School, Lachen	Mangan
	Lachung Samten Choling Monastic School, Lachung	Mangan
	Sheep Kunzang Choling Monastic School, Sheep-Gyer, Upper Dzongu	Mangan
	Singchid Ngadak Gonpa Monastic School, Singhik	Mangan
	Chungthang Monastic School, Chungthang	Mangan
	Tashi Choling Monastic School, Hee-Gyathang, Upper Dzongu	Mangan
	Labrang Palden Phuntsok Monastic School, Tumlong	Mangan
	Tingbung Tharling Monastic School, Tingbung, Upper Dzongu	Mangan
	Sontam Tensung Monastic School, Singhik	Mangan
	Ringhim Monastic School	Mangan
	Tsawang Ani Gonpa Monastic School, Chawang	Mangan
	Rigzin Chogdrub Ling Monastic School, Tholung, Upper Dzongu	Mangan
	Naga Ugen Zangdok Ling Monastic School, Naga	Mangan
	Salaem Phagyal Monastic School	Mangan
	Kabi Ganak Tharling Monastic School, Kabi	Mangan
	Gnon Sandong Dupling Monastic School	Mangan
	Mon Rongong Manilhakhang Monastic School	Mangan
	Thugchen Manilhakhang Monastic School	Mangan
	Ralong Karma Rabten Ling Monastic School, Ralang	Namchi
	Perbing Samten Choling Monastic School, Perbing	Namchi
	Bumtar Tamang Gonpa Monastic School, Bumtar	Namchi
	Bermiok Odsel Choling Monastic School	Namchi
	Serdup Choling Monastic School, Alley, Namchi	Namchi
	Bon Monastic School, Kewzing	Namchi
	Namchi Ngadak Monastic School, Gurbeshe Namchi	Namchi
	Lingee Phagyal Monastic School, Lingee	Namchi
	Doling Monastic School, Barfung, Kewzing	Namchi

	Sangmo Shede Chog Baryong Monastic School, Sangmo, Ravangla	Namchi
	Melli Tamang Namdroling Monastic School	Namchi
	Kewzing Monastic School, Kewzing	Namchi
	Lingmo Rabten Ling Monastic School, Lingmo	Namchi
	Bermiok Norbu Gang Monastic School, Bermiok-Tokol	Namchi
	Nima Choling Monastic School	Namchi
	Alley Dechen Choling Monastic School, Alley, Namchi	Namchi
	Mani Chokhor Ling Monastic School, Ravangla	Namchi
	Yangang Gurung Monastic School, Yangang	Namchi
	Ben Karma Choling Monastic School, Ben	Namchi
	Maniram Pheri Manilhakhang Monastic School, Maniram	Namchi
	Perbing Manilhakhang Monastic School, Perbing	Namchi
	Borong Tamu Monastic School, Borong	Namchi
	Norbu Tsholing Monastic School	Namchi
	Thegling Namthang Monastic School	Namchi
	Yangang Tashi Palding Monastic School, Yangang	Namchi
	Palchen Choling Monastic School, Ralong	Namchi
	Sangchen Thongdrol Ling Monastic School, Ging, Darjeeling	West Bengal
Total No. of Monastic Schools =		99

The modern institutionalisation of Buddhist monastic education in Sikkim began with the establishment of the Enchey Lama School (Enchey Monastic School) in Gangtok on 29th July 1909 C.E., during the 15th Rabjung cycle in the Earth Female-Bird Year of the Lunar Calendar. Founded by His Highness the 10th Chogyal Sidkyong Tulku through a Tibetan charter, this school marked a significant milestone in formal Buddhist education, representing the first structured effort to institutionalise monastic learning under state recognition (Dr Jigme Wangchuk Bhutia, & Co., 2021).

Although monastic education had existed prior to this, since the government itself was structured around two main bodies, lha sde (Spiritual) and mi sde (Temporal), integrating monastic education into governance, it was during the reign of Chogyal Sidkyong Tulku that these institutions were systematically brought under the Ecclesiastical Department. This restructuring led to a more organised approach to Buddhist learning and administration, reinforcing the monastic education system within Sikkim's governance framework.

The importance of monastic education in governance was further reinforced by historical official notices issued by the Sikkim Government. Notice No. 1289/J., dated 7th July 1934, from

the Judicial Department of Sikkim State, and Notification No. 369/P.S., dated 16th May 1942, from the Private Secretary's Office, reveal that monastic examinations were conducted with great seriousness. Monks from all monasteries were required to appear before Their Highness and other officials to ensure academic and spiritual rigour (Department E.A., 2006). At Pemayangtse Monastery, a tradition of conducting three major examinations, known as *cho rgyugs gsum*, was maintained before the assembled *maha sangha* in the hall. Only those who successfully passed these examinations were permitted to sit in the front row, a position regarded as sacred and prestigious, marking a step toward attaining the highest monastic rank.

Building on earlier monastic initiatives, in 1958, Chogyal Tashi Namgyal (1893-1963) and the 9th Kyabje Khachod Dudjom Dorjee Rinpoche (1920-1981) established the Pemayangtse Monastic School, further strengthening the Buddhist academic tradition in Sikkim. Initially managed by the Ecclesiastical Department of the Government of Sikkim, the Enchey Monastic School was later transferred to the Education Department as a public school, whereas Pemayangtse Monastic School continues to function as a *slob grwa* dedicated to preserving Buddhist teachings (Department, 2006).

Education Structure in Sikkim's Monastic Institutions

Jangira (1977) describes Sikkim's education system before the early 20th century as informal. However, this characterisation overlooks the structured and institutionalised nature of monastic education, which played a crucial role in Sikkim's governance and cultural identity before 1975, when it was a democratic Buddhist kingdom. Monastic schools were not only centres of religious learning but also formally recognised institutions that educated and trained monks in Buddhist philosophy, rituals, and ethical conduct. The governance of Sikkim was deeply intertwined with monastic traditions, as the state itself was structured around two main bodies—*lha sde* (spiritual) and *mi sde* (temporal)—reflecting the seamless integration of monastic education into state affairs.

Before Sikkim's merger with India in 1975, the official language of governance, administration, and education in monastic institutions was Classical Tibetan (*chos skad*), reinforcing the State's historical ties with Tibetan Buddhist traditions. These monastic schools operated under structured curricula that focused on Buddhist philosophy, ethics, and rituals, with defined roles for both teachers and students. The education provided by these institutions was supported and endorsed by the government, making it the state's official education system. Notable monastic schools at places such as Pemayangtse, Tashiding, Phensang, Ralang, Rumtek, and Phodong were central to the educational and spiritual leadership of Sikkim (Jangira, 1977). Therefore, categorising monastic education as informal diminishes its well-defined structure, its official status in the pre-merger governance system, and its profound influence on Sikkim's intellectual, religious, and political landscape.

The educational structure of monastic institutions in Sikkim varies across different Tibetan Buddhist sects, but they generally follow a similar framework. In the Nyingma tradition, monastic education is categorised into five progressive stages⁸:

1. *Zhi rim slob grwa* (Primary): An eight-year foundational stage.
2. *Sadslob/Sngon 'gro* (Preliminary): A one-year preliminary program.
3. *Uma* (Secondary and Senior Secondary Levels): A four-year secondary and senior secondary level course.
4. *Bstan chos* (College Level): A three-year college-level program.
5. *Slob dpon* (University Level): A two-year advanced university-level program.

Table 4				
Educational Equivalents in SGIHNS Sheda				
Monastic Level		Equivalent	Academic Level	
<i>Slob dpon</i> (Acharya)	II		MA	II
	I		MA	I
<i>Bstan bcos</i> (Shastri)	III		BA	III
	II		BA	II
	I		BA	I
<i>Dbu ma gong ma</i> (Uttar Madhyama)	II		XII	
	I		XI	
<i>Dbu ma 'og ma</i> (Purva Madhyama)	II		X	
	I		IX	
Selop/Ngondro	I		Preliminary	

Together, these levels of education are referred to as *slob grwa* and *bshad grwa*. While there are no strict age restrictions, most institutions accept students from age 5 and above. Most monastic institutions in Sikkim are directly or indirectly affiliated with the *'bras gzhung dgon gnas las khungs* (Ecclesiastical Department, Government of Sikkim). The medium of instruction is primarily *Chos skad* (Classical Tibetan), but in recent years, English and Mathematics have been introduced with support from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Education Department, Government of Sikkim. Upon completing the *zhi rim slob grwa* stage, students have the opportunity to pursue higher education at institutions such as the Sikkim Government Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (SGIHNS) Sheda in Pangthang, which offers courses up to

⁸ This is approved categorization of monastic education system, recognized by both traditional and government authorities.

the postgraduate level. This institution, the best-known of these, was established to preserve and develop the Nyingma sect of Buddhism and to improve the standards of Nyingma monasteries (Baldev Mahajan, Srilekha Majumdar, and D.C. Agnihotri, 1992).

Other monastic institutes include *Theg dgu'i legs bshad gling bshad grwa* in Martam and *stag rtse* Sheda, both dedicated to higher Buddhist studies. For students seeking advanced Buddhist philosophical studies beyond Sikkim, institutions such as Ngagyur Nyingma Institute in Mysore, Ngagyur Mtho Slob Mdo Rgyud Legs Bshad Gling Bshad Grwa in Dehradun, and the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Sarnath offer opportunities for deeper academic engagement.

At the primary level, monastic schools focus on basic Buddhist education and rituals, and some students may choose to enter three-year or lifelong meditation retreats, either before or after completing their entire education. Upon completion of their studies, monastic graduates follow diverse paths. Some become village monks, serving their communities, while others take on administrative or spiritual roles within monasteries, depending on their rank and qualifications. Certain individuals pursue employment in government sectors based on their degrees, while others dedicate their lives as volunteers, Dharma teachers, or retreat practitioners.

Among all monastic educational institutions in Sikkim, SGIHNS Sheda remains the only government-recognised institution offering degrees up to the Acharya *Slob dpon* level, equivalent to a Master of Arts (MA). This institution plays a crucial role in preserving and promoting Buddhist education, providing a bridge between traditional monastic training and contemporary academic standards.

Brief Background of SGIHNS Sheda

The spiritual and cultural heritage of Sikkim provides deep roots to the Sikkim Government Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (SGIHNS) Sheda. Its origins can be traced to the 8th century, when Guru Padmasambhava visited Beyul Demojong (present-day Sikkim) and declared it a sacred land. In the 13th century, *Chos rje 'dzem*, the treasure revealer Terchen Rikzin Godemchen and other eminent Lamas further sanctified the region through propitiatory rites.

The 17th century saw the arrival of four prophesied incarnate Lamas, *lung zin sprul pa'i rnal 'byor mched bzhi*, who established the teachings of Buddhism formally in Sikkim. Over the centuries, these teachings have flourished, with numerous learning centres emerging to preserve Buddhism and Sikkim's cultural heritage.

Recognising the need to sustain this legacy in modern times, the Sikkim Government established SGIHNS Sheda in the 1960s as part of the Ecclesiastical Department. Founded

under the visionary guidance of Drejong Miwang Chogyal Chenpo Palden Thondup Namgyal (22.05.1923-29.02.1982), the institute aims to preserve and promote Sikkim's religious and cultural heritage, focusing on the philosophies of renowned Nyingma scholars like Longchenpa, Rongzom Pandita, and Mipham Rinpoche.

Genesis of Sheda

The proposal of the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs to affiliate the SGIHNS Sheda to Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi, UP, was examined by the Committee constituted via Notification No. 825/Home/1982, dated 16th May, 1982 (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\01, 1982), in its two sittings on 4th August, 1982 and 24th September, 1982. Opinions favouring affiliation were also received from the four premier Nyingma monasteries, as requested by the Committee. As a result, the committee unanimously resolved to recommend affiliation to the Government of Sikkim (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\02, 1982).

The first provisional affiliation to Sampurnanand Sanskrit University was granted via the Vice-Chancellor's letter dated March 1, 1983 (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\03, 1983). After completing all required formalities, including an inspection of the institution by a high-level team from the University, headed by the Vice-Chancellor on 9th and 10th Jun 1983 (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\04, 1983), temporary affiliation was granted by the University in 1983 via Letter No. G682/4766/83, dated 30/8/1983 (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\05, 1983).

The Registrar, SSVV vide letter No. 12/89, dated 23.02.1989, clearly mentioned the different classes, namely: Purva Madhyama, Uttar Madhyama, Shastri and Acharya examinations conducted by the university, which signifies the affiliation of classes IX to MA Level studies in SGIHNS Sheda (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\06, 1989).

As indicated in Letter Reference No. 430/SGIHNS, dated 9th September 1993, and Letter Reference No. 970/EA, dated 26/11/1993 (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\07\08, 1993), following considerable hardship and constant effort from the institute and the Government, after a gap of 10 years, permanent affiliation was granted by the University via Letter No. G2173/04-95, dated 23/7/1995 (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\09, 1995). A 4-member team from the university, led by its Registrar, Shri. Girja Shankar Mishra visited Gangtok in the 4th week of September 1994, to inspect SIHNS in connection with the permanent affiliation of the institute to the university (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\010, 1994).

Later, the Home Department, Government of Sikkim vide Notification No. 41/Home/99, dated 12/07/1999, signed by the Chief Secretary of Sikkim (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\011, 1995) declared that the Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies Sheda is a recognised Post-

Graduate Institution for studies up to the Acharya (equivalent to MA) with effect from 26th March, 1995. Letter Reference No. Dev. 2240/2000, dated 29/01/2000 was forwarded to the Secretary, University Grants Commission, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110001, by the Registrar of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi, U.P., regarding recognition of the college under the regulations framed under Section 2 (F.)/12 (B.) of the UGC Act, in connection with the development of the college during the Ninth Five-Year Plan, the UGC, via Letter Reference No. F.8-16/2000 (CPP-I), dated 10th May, 2000, listed the Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (Sheda), now Sikkim Government Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies Sheda, under Sections 2(f) and 12(B) of the UGC Act, 1956, for the inclusion of new colleges (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\012\013, 2000). This letter was sent through the Registrar of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University.

Other components:

Registration of Sheda which was registered under Land Revenue Department, Government of Sikkim, Vide Memo No. 760/L.R., dated: 26/9/1984 and under Item No. 184, Volume No. 1 under Notification No. 2602/A/H, dated: 25th March, 1960, Office of the Secretary Land Revenue, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok as Sikkim Nyingma Sheda Welfare Association (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\014\015, 1984).

The Institute has been operated by the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs since its inception. However, it came under the jurisdiction of the Education Department Vide Allocation of Business Rules No. 42/Home/1994, dated July 18, 1994 (Sikkim Government Gazette Notification No. 202, dated December 30, 1994). This department was later redesignated as the Human Resource Development Department and subsequently as the Education Department (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\016, 1994).

The Institute has been categorised under Government Colleges and Institutes (03.103) within the University and Higher Education Head (03) of the Education Department. Its exclusive Plan Budget Head is 67, which includes various Sub-Heads such as 01, 11, 13, 34, and 50. The Principal and the Administrative Officer of the Institute have been designated as Head of Office and D&DO, respectively, in accordance with Sikkim Government Finance Rules (Khenpo L. Tshering and Himanshu Ranjan, 2020).

In 2015, following a request from the then Principal, the HRDD (now the Education Department) issued Notification No. 267/SCH/HRDD, dated July 25, 2015. This notification provided the students with stipends ranging from Rs. 200 to 500 per month for Selop (VIII) to Uttar Madhyama (XII) students, and Rs. 200 to 800 per month for Shastri (BA) to Acharya (MA) students of the Institute (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\017, 2015). Also refer to the Amendment to Sikkim Financial Rules, 1979 No. 17(1)/FIN/ACCTS/23 Dated Gangtok, 21st February, 2013, Finance Revenue and Expenditure Department, Government of Sikkim.

The Sikkim Government Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (Sheda) was accredited with a CGPA of 2.06 on a seven-point scale, receiving a ‘B’ grade by NAAC on 10th April 2019, marking a significant achievement in its first attempt (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\018, 2019). Additionally, the institute was certified by the All-India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) in 2019, and it has continued to maintain this certification. Recently, a Green Audit was conducted, and we were privileged to receive outstanding results, with only minor areas identified for improvement (NLS\SGIHNS\PF\020, 2024).

Recruitment Rules for Sheda’s Teaching and Non-Teaching Faculty

The recruitment rules for teaching and non-teaching faculty at Sheda are distinct and uphold the traditional and spiritual ethos of the institution, setting it apart from other colleges. These rules are governed by both governmental notifications and institutional traditions, ensuring alignment with academic and monastic requirements.

The recruitment of the principal is governed by Notification Ref. No.: 05/DIR(HE)/EDN, dated: 21/02/2021, which is based on the approval of the Government of Sikkim and the provisions recorded in the Note Sheet produced by the then Principal, Khenpo Dechen Dorjee, on 09/02/1997.

In addition to fulfilling traditional monastic requirements, candidates for the position also adhere to the UGC guidelines. Since the institute’s inception in 1964, the position of Principal has been exclusively reserved for a fully ordained monk *dge slong*⁹ with the Khenpo¹⁰ *mkhan po* title, conferred by eminent Nyingma Lamas, such as His Holiness Kyabje Dodrubchen Rinpoche and others. The lineage of Khenpos who have held the position of Principal at Sheda includes:

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Khenpo Rinchen Lama | (1964 - 1966) |
| 2. Khenpo Dazer | (1966 – 1972) |
| 3. Khenpo Tsundu | (1972 - 1979) |
| 4. Khenpo Dechen Dorjee | (1979 - 1997) |
| 5. Khenpo L. Tshering | (1997 - 2019) |
| 6. Khenpo S. Palden (<i>In-charge</i>) | (2019 -) |

The recruitment of teaching faculty is similarly rooted in the institute’s monastic traditions. According to Advertisement No. 21/SPSC/EXAM/2023, issued on 04/08/2023 by

9 A monk who has renounced worldly life and has taken the pledge to observe the 253 precepts of a fully ordained monk in order to attain liberation from samsara.

10 Khenpo - A title for a preceptor who has the authority to confer the ordination upon novice (*brtan pa'i yon tan*). It is granted to one who has completed all the minor and major courses in Buddhist Philosophy at Sheda over ten or more years and has mastered the knowledge of the Tripitakas and is authorized to teach it. (*mkhas pa'i yon tan*).

the Sikkim Public Service Commission (SPSC), candidates are required to be Ordained monks, with eligibility criteria ensuring their alignment with the institute's spiritual objectives and be academically qualified.

The recruitment rules at Sheda emphasise a unique blend of academic and monastic values. The focus on fully ordained monks in both leadership and teaching roles helps preserve the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Nyingma tradition. These practices maintain the institution's integrity while meeting contemporary academic standards. Through these well-defined recruitment rules, Sheda continues to uphold its dual role as a centre of Higher learning and a bastion of Nyingma tradition.

Shifting of Sheda, Deorali to its New Campus at Pangthang

The decision to shift the SGIHNS Sheda from Deorali to its new campus at Pangthang was primarily guided by the prophecy which reads: "*khyad par drag po sgrub pa'i, stan chags 'di la nang khul sel, 'byung rnyog phra 'dr 'byung na dge rtsa sngar yod sgrib*". "In accomplishing great distinction, when internal conflicts arise in this established seat, if minor difficulties emerge, they obscure the previously existing virtuous merits" (Tshering, 2023) and letter dated: 22/4/2013, Chorten Gonpa, Deorali of the root guru, Late H.H. Kyabje Dodrubchen Rinpoche. Following several discussions among the Principal, Rinpoche, the trustees, and the Sheda family, the final decision for relocation was made in 2014.

When the HRD Department was approached for granting approval to the formal shifting of the Institute, it was found that even the new campus at Pangthang was virtually complete in all aspects, the main stumbling blocks in the way hampering the process were the absence of certain basic amenities such as independent 24-hr water supply connection, an independent and permanent power connection and the non-existence of a smooth metalled approach road. However, the department proceeded with plans for an inauguration ceremony marking the formal activation of the new campus, after requesting the Sikkim Armed Police Commandant to ensure a continuous water supply in the interim to address the immediate problem until a permanent connection was obtained from the PHE Department.

On 02.04.2015, the HCM, Government of Sikkim, approved the proposed shifting and the inauguration ceremony. Thereafter, a ceremony was organised by SIHNS at the Chorten residential quarters of H.H. Dodrubchen Rinpoche to formally seek blessings on the eve of formally vacating the Chorten Gonpa Complex, Deorali. The ceremony was attended by the Principal Secretary, HRDD; the Director (HE), HRDD; the principal; the teaching and non-teaching staff; and the students of the Institute. Everyone expressed their gratitude to H.H. Rinpoche for his significant contribution to this major endeavour.

A special puja was organised at the new campus site of SGIHNS, Pangthang, on 08.04.2015 to purify and consecrate bkra shis rab gnas, the same on the eve of its forthcoming formal inauguration, before starting its normal day-to-day activities.

The inauguration of the new campus was organised on the 10th of April, 2015. The official ceremony was held in the *gtsug lag khang* of the newly established Institute complex. The then Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim, Shri. Pawan Chamling inaugurated the campus. The grand function was attended by many dignitaries of the Government and the public. The Hon'ble CM inspected the Computer Lab and the Library (Khenpo L. Tshering and Himanshu Ranjan, 2020).

Current structure and academic offerings:

The Sikkim Government Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (SGIHNS) Sheda is structured around seven internal academic departments, each dedicated to deepening the understanding of Buddhist teachings and Sikkim's cultural heritage:

1. Nyingma Philosophy
2. Buddhist Philosophy
3. Religious History
4. Buddhist Astrology
5. Sanskrit/Pali
6. English
7. Environmental Studies

Supporting these departments are various administrative and extracurricular bodies, including the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), Anti-Ragging Cell, Students' Grievances Redressal Cell, NSS Unit, Photography Club, Alumni Association, Eco Club, Four Houses, Infirmary, Boys' Hostel, and a Research Cell. The campus, generously sponsored by His Holiness the 4th Kyabje Doderubchen Rinpoche, is equipped with modern facilities that foster a conducive learning environment. Committed to sustainability, the Sheda adopted a plastic-free policy in September 2024, reinforcing its dedication to environmental responsibility.

Through its evolution and current academic endeavours, SGIHNS Sheda remains a beacon of higher education, promoting the values of Nyingma studies while preparing students to engage with their cultural and spiritual heritage in the modern world.

Academic programs at Sheda:

SGIHNS Sheda offers a comprehensive nine-year integrated curriculum designed to cultivate a deep appreciation for Nyingma traditions and Buddhist philosophy. The programs include:

1. **Purva Madhyam I and II** (equivalent to classes IX and X): Introduction to foundational concepts in Nyingma philosophy and the Buddhist path.
2. **Uttar Madhyam** (equivalent to classes XI and XII): Further exploration of Buddhist teachings and practices.
3. **Shastri I, II, and III** (undergraduate level): Advanced studies in Nyingma philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, Tibetan language, Buddhist history, and astrology.
4. **Acharya I and II** (postgraduate level): Specialisation in advanced philosophical concepts and Vajrayana practices.
5. **Selop**: An elementary preparatory class for admission into the Purva Madhyam program.

The academic framework includes a rigorous examination process to ensure comprehensive assessment and mastery of the curriculum. Students undergo two sets of exams each year. The first set consists of Internal Preparatory (for PM to Shastri) and Semester Examinations (for Acharya), serving as mid-session formative assessments. The second phase comprises Annual University Examinations held at the end of each academic year, typically from November to December.

The institute follows a unique academic session from January to December, as structured by the affiliating university. This rigorous approach to learning and assessment underpins SGIHNS Sheda's commitment to academic excellence and the preservation of Sikkim's rich cultural heritage.

Admission Process

Students from various monasteries are admitted into Selop at Sheda upon submission of a valid certificate from their monastery or monastic school, along with a marksheet confirming completion of class V. Since the monastic schools under Ecclesiastical Department do not provide education up to class VIII, Selop serves as a bridging course, covering the syllabi for Classes VI, VII & VIII within one academic year.

Students from general public schools are also eligible for admission at Sheda, provided they submit a marksheet and certificate indicating completion of Class VIII from a recognised school within India. However, these students are initially placed in Selop to receive fundamental training before progressing to higher classes for in-depth Buddhist studies.

Applicants who are well-versed in both Tibetan, Hindi, and English languages and have a basic understanding of Buddhist studies must undergo an entrance examination conducted by the institute. Based on their performance, they may be directly admitted to Class IX if they pass the entrance exam. Applicants who have passed Class X will be admitted to Class XI. Applicants

who have passed Class XII will be admitted to the Shastri program without completing the Selop course.

International students are also admitted, subject to obtaining the necessary clearances from both the central and state governments. The admission process takes place annually from February to March and is overseen by the Admission Committee, which verifies all required documents.

Applicants must submit the following documents:

1. Monastery/Monastic/General/Public School Transfer Certificate
2. Marksheet(s)
3. Identification Certificate (COI for Sikkimese)
4. Income Certificate of parents
5. Birth Certificate
6. Passport-size Photograph
7. Caste Certificate (if applicable)
8. ID Proof (Aadhar Card/ Voter Card)
9. Bank Passbook
10. Blood Group
11. Passport size Photograph

Students are free to pursue their studies at Sheda without financial constraints unless they opt to stay in the hostel, in which case they are required to pay a minimal mess fee. All students receive a stipend from the Education Department, and additional scholarships are available through various organisations, such as the Social Justice and Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, based on merit, financial status, or category, to support their academic journey. The university has implemented a structured examination fee system, with different fee ranges applicable to different classes.

Infrastructure details of the Institute:

His Holiness Kyabje Dodrubchen Rinpoche has graciously sponsored the entire infrastructure, including 2.06 acres of land for the Institute. Currently, on this 2.06-acre site in Pangthang, Taktse, the following structures are in place:

1. A two-storey administrative block that houses the administrative offices and a prayer hall (*Guru Lhakhang/gtsug lag khang*).
2. A four-storey academic block dedicated to educational activities.
3. A four-storey boys' hostel, known as Kabi Lungtshug Boys Hostel, which has an intake capacity of 125 students.

4. A single-storey kitchen to serve the needs of the students.
5. Two single-storey residential quarters for staff.

All these buildings were sponsored by His Holiness Rinpoche, along with the land. Additionally, there is a well-maintained approach road leading to the Institute, enhancing accessibility for students and visitors. In 2021, the RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan) constructed an additional two-storey building that serves as an auditorium, dining hall for students, and one hostel warden's quarter and one single-storey hut for academic use.

The Institute is surrounded by lush greenery, creating an eco-friendly environment conducive to learning. As of September 17, 2024, the Institute has proudly adopted a plastic-free policy, further promoting sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Conclusion

The development of Buddhist monastic education in Sikkim demonstrates a remarkable evolution from its 8th-century origins to its current institutional framework. The establishment of 99 monastic schools serving 1,869 students, culminating in institutions like the SGIHNS Sheda, represents a successful integration of traditional Buddhist education with modern academic standards. This is evidenced by NAAC accreditation, UGC recognition, and a comprehensive curriculum from the Selop to the Acharya level.

The research reveals that, contrary to previous characterisations, Sikkim's monastic education system was highly formalised and integral to the state's governance structure. The current system, which maintains traditional recruitment practices while meeting contemporary academic requirements, preserves authentic Buddhist teachings alongside modern educational standards.

Reference

- Baldev, M., Majumdar, S., & Agnihotri, D. C. (1992). *Educational administration in Sikkim: Structures, processes, and future prospects*. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration.
- Bhutia, J. W., & Co. (2021). *History of Enchey School: The legacy*. Enchey Government Senior Secondary School, Education Department, Government of Sikkim.
- Bhutia, D. J. (2022). *dpal ri 'bras mo ljongs kyi chos sde chen mo 'gyur med bde chen padma yang rtse dgon gyi byung rbas brjod pa heruka'i dgongs rgyan*. Namgyal Institute of Tibetology.
- Chogyal, T. N., & Gyalmo, Y. D. (2003). *History of Sikkim* (2nd ed., pp. 71-73, 74, 77, 91-92). The Tsuklakhang Trust.

Ecclesiastical Affairs Department. (2006). *Ecclesiastical affairs in Sikkim* (pp. 46-47, 137, 140). Government of Sikkim.

Ardussi, John, Balikci-Denjongpa, Anna, Sørensen, Per K. (2021). *The Royal History of Sikkim: A Chronicle of the House of Namgyal*. Chicago: Serindia Publications.

Jangira, N. (1977). *Educational change in Sikkim*. *Sikkim Education Newsletter*. Gangtok: Department of Tourism.

Macdonald, D. (1999). *Touring in Sikkim and Tibet*. Asian Educational Services.

McKay, A. (2021). *The Mandala Kingdom: A Political History of Sikkim*. Rachna Books & Publications.

Nangwa, K. S. (2005). *Prologue to Abhisamayālaṃkāra commentary*. Nyingma Student's Welfare Committee, CIHTS.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\01. (1982). Notification No. 825/Home/82, dated Gangtok, May 6, 1982.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\02. (1982). Minutes of the meeting (1(23) EA).

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\03. (1983). Letter dated March 1, 1983.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\04. (1983). Minutes of the meeting, June 9-10, 1983.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\05. (1983). Letter Ref. No. G 682/4756/83, dated August 30, 1983.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\06. (1989). Letter Ref. No. 12/89, dated February 23, 1989.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\07. (1993). Letter Ref. No. 430/SIHNS, dated September 9, 1993.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\07\08. (1993). Letter Ref. No. 970/E.A., dated November 26, 1993.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\09. (1995). Letter Ref. No. G2173/94-85, dated July 23, 1995.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\010. (1994). Minutes of the meeting, September 24, 1994.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\011. (1995). Notification No. 41/Home/99, dated July 12, 1999.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\012\013. (2000). Letter Ref. No. Dev. 2240/2000, dated January 29, 2000, & Ref. No. F.8-16/2000 (CPP-I), dated May 10, 2000.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\014\015. (1984). Registration Certificate Memo No. 760/L.R., dated Gangtok, September 26, 1984, & Memo No. 736/L.R., dated Gangtok, September 21, 1984.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\016. (1994). Notification No. 42/Home/1994, dated July 18, 1994.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\017. (2015). Notification Ref. No. GOS/HRDD/H.E./270/2014/144, dated January 28, 2015.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\018. (2015). Letter Ref. No. 40/DIR(HE)/HRDD, dated April 20, 2015, & Notification Ref. No. 267/SCH/HRDD, dated July 25, 2015.

NLS\SGIHNS\PF\020. (2019). Certificate of Accreditation, dated April 1, 2019.

Risley, H. H. (2010). *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*. B. R. Publishing Corporation.

Tsultrim, K. (n.d.). *Rig 'dzin mchog sgrub gling gi dkar chag mdor bsdus bzhugs so*.

Tshering, K. L., & Ranjan, H. (2020). *Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (Sheda): Evolutionary passage through time*. Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (Sheda).

Tshering, K. L. (2003). *A saga of Sikkim's supremely revered four pioneer Nyingmapa reincarnates and their torchbearers*. Self-published.

Tucci, G. (2011). *The religions of Tibet*. New Age Books.

Vasubandhu, A. (2001). *Abhidharmakośa with the commentary of Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche*. 27th Nyingma Student's Welfare Committee, CIHT

(Footnotes)

- 1 The names of the monastic schools are according to the records of Ecclesiastical Department.

The Significance of Buddhist Stūpas in Sikkim: An Overview

Sonam Zangpo

Introduction

Sikkim is the least populous and one of the smallest states of the Indian Himalaya. The state is known as *Drenjong* in Tibetan, which means “*Valley of Rice*”, while the local Bhutia people refer to it as ‘Beyul Demojong’, which means “the Hidden Valley of Rice”. The state is divided into four major districts: East Sikkim, West Sikkim, North Sikkim, and South Sikkim. But from the administrative point, it is divided into six districts¹ in the present day.

Moreover, the state is famous for sacred mountains, holy ponds and lakes, religious mysticism and rich, diverse cultures. It is bordered by Bhutan in the east, Nepal in the west, the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China in the north, and the state of West Bengal, India, in the south. The Buddhist people of the state are mostly the followers of the Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna, the schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Due to the influence of Tibetan Buddhism, the state houses many famous Buddhist monasteries and stūpas. Hence, *Do-drul Chorten*² is one of them.

Buddha & Buddhism

The Śākyamuni Buddha (563-483 BCE), also called Gautama Buddha, who lived in the 6th century BCE in India, was one of the greatest torch bearers of the ancient Indian Knowledge Systems. His ways of thought, conduct, etc., flourished under the designation of Buddhism. Thus, Buddhism originated in ancient India and is one of the most valuable as well as relevant knowledge systems of the country and the entire world in the present time.

Later, it was bifurcated into two major schools or traditions, i.e., Theravāda and Mahāyāna. In the course of time, both schools were developed and expanded in many countries of the globe. Today, Theravāda is mainly followed in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma (Myanmar), etc., and similarly, Mahāyāna is practised in Tibet-China, Bhutan, Nepal, Mongolia, Japan, etc. In addition, it is widely practised across the Indian Himalaya, from Arunachal Pradesh in the east to UT Ladakh in the north. The Sikkim state also lies in the Indian Himalayan region, where many inhabitants have been practising the Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna School of Buddhism. Guru Rinpoche or Ācārya Padmasambhava is revered and worshipped in the form of the second Buddha by every Himalayan Buddhist. The state of Sikkim is one of the most sacred places, as blessed

1 1. Gangtok, 2. Mangan, 3. Pakyong, 4. Soreng, 5. Namchi and 6. Gyalshing.

2 Tib.: bdud 'dul mchod rten

by him through the stamp of his tantric teachings and his sojourns throughout the Himalaya and Trans-Himalaya during the 8th century.

Ācārya Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche)

Historically and traditionally, Guru Rinpoche is a spiritual icon for Buddhists in Sikkim, in particular, and for all followers of Tibetan Buddhism in general. The different Chogyals of Sikkim favoured Buddhism faithfully and wisely, by head, heart and hands for the peace, prosperity, and prospective and possible developments of the indigenous people of the land. Moreover, the scholar masters, dedicated practitioners, devotees, etc., who follow and keep faith in Guru Rinpoche have constantly been establishing Buddhist *Gonpas* (monasteries), *Chortens* (stūpas) as sacred monuments in the holy land of Sikkim.

Such meritorious works got more encouragement and sped up from the middle of the 17th century onwards in the state. As a result, the emerging number of *gonpas*, most of which are equipped with *Sheda*³ and *Drubda*⁴ facilitated for the monk communities of the state and beyond were established from time to time in the state. At the same time, the construction of stūpas had flourished with the establishment of various monasteries in the region. So, as much as the monasteries are significant, there is given that much importance to the stūpas as well, by the Bhutias and Buddhists. In fact, wherever one travels in the parts of this region and visits the monasteries over there, one will definitely encounter the scene of stūpas too. It will be seen either inside the chambers of different shrines of the monasteries or completely outside, near some places.

Sikkim

The name ‘Sikkim’ is said to be a variation of the Limbu (Nepali) word ‘Su-Khum’, meaning ‘New Place or Paradise’, as the establishment of the ‘New Himalayan Kingdom’ by Phuntshog Namgyal in 1642, the first Dharma King of the state. The state is guarded by the mighty peak named Khangchendzonga, which is 8586 meters above sea level, (probably the name is derived from the Tibetan word *Gangchen Dzung*⁵ meaning ‘the mighty fortress-region of snow’). This popular mountain peak is considered the holy guardian deity of the land.

The Lepchas are considered the original inhabitants of Sikkim. At present, Sikkimese Buddhist consist of Lepchas, Bhutias, Tamangs, Limbus and other tribes of the state. They were influenced by Tibetan scholar Lamas, i.e., Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo, Ngadag Sempa Chenpo and Kathog Kuntuzangpo of the Nyingma school of Tibet. With the consent of local Lepchas, they appointed a Bhutia youth named Phunthosog Namgyal as the First Chogyal or Dharma King of

3 Tib.: bshad grwa: A traditional Centre for Higher Buddhist Studies and Learning

4 Tib.: sgrub grwa: A traditional Centre for Tantric Yoga-Practices and Meditation Training

5 Tib.: gangcan rdzong gar

Sikkim. The Namgyal Dynasty ruled over Sikkim for 333 years. During that period, the twelve Chogyals⁶ have ruled over the land.

The clear history of Buddhism in Sikkim is found from early 17th century. Buddhism was promoted during the righteous patronage of the Namgyal Dynasty in Sikkim. As a result, the establishment of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries began one after another in the region. The first Nyingma monastery, Sangngag Choeling, was built under the supervision of the spiritual Lama Lhatsun Chenpo in West Sikkim. Next, Pemayangtse and Tashiding monasteries were built by the third Chogyal Chagdor Namgyal. Later, in 1730, the first Karma Kagyud monastery at Ralang was built by the fourth Chogyal Gyurmed Namgyal. Lastly, Sikkim merged with India, becoming the 22nd state of India in 1975.

The glorious Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT) at Gangtok was founded by the 12th Chogyal, Palden Thondup Namgyal. The foundation stone of the institute was laid by the 14th Dalai Lama on Feb. 10, 1957 and inaugurated by India's First Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on 1st Oct. 1958. The institute published books and journals under the title of *Bulletin of Tibetology* since the 1960s, themed on varied dimensions of Buddhism, Tibetan Studies, culture, arts, and traditions and so on. The organisation of the present seminar is one of its best practices.

Sacred Sites

Sikkim is a holy land for Buddhists as there are many *Gonpas* (monasteries), *Lhakhangs* (temples), *Tsamkhangs* (Retreat Centres/ Hermitages), sacred and blessed *Phugs* (caves), *Chortens* (stūpas) and so on. The land is auspicious due to Ācārya Padmasambhava's presence in the region in past. So, there are four holy caves which are believed as retreat abodes of *Lopon Pema Jungne* (Ācārya Padmasambhava) or *Lopon Rinpoche* (Guru Rinpoche) during his tantric expedition and exploration of appropriate places and fortunate people. The four caves are known as *Shacho Phu*, *Khandro Phu*, *Chang Lharining Phu* and *Dechen Phu*. These are located in the South and West parts of Gangtok, Sikkim. Throughout the year, devotees and tourists used to visit those sacred caves and offer lamps, incense, and *Khatags*⁷, etc. Hence, the images of Guru Rinpoche can be easily seen in every sacred site as well as in the Gonpas of the state.

6 They are: 1. Phuntsog Namgyal (1642-1670), 2. Tensung Namgyal (1670-1700), 3. Chagdor Namgyal (1700-1717), 4. Gyurme Namgyal (1717-1733), 5. Phuntsog Namgyal II (1733-1780), 6. Tenzin Namgyal (1780-1793), 7. Tsugphu Namgyal (1793-1863), 8. Sidkyong Namgyal (1863-1874), 9. Thutob Namgyal (1874-1914), 10. Sidkyong Tulku Namgyal (1914), 11. Tashi Namgyal (1914-1963), and 12. Palden Thondup Namgyal (1963-1975).

7 Tib.: *kha btags*; The presentation or salutation scarf(ves) place before any acceptance of a person or put on over to neck as part of Tibetan social custom. It is presented in many occasions in their life. There are various descriptions of Khatags or Scarf. The longest and best ones are presented to the great lamas, high officials and other reputed dignitaries. They carry respect according to their quality, colour, and length and so on.

The chorten in Tashiding monastery, *Thongwa Rangdol*, is considered to be the most holy stūpa in Sikkim because it is believed that it holds the relics of Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. The sacred spot ‘Yoksam’ in west Sikkim, where the three spiritual Tibetan Lamas had consecrated a Bhutia Chief named Phuntshog Namgyal as the first king of the Lepcha land, the Sikkim in 1642 C.E. The site was marked with a stūpa where the consecration ceremony took place. Because of the event, a stūpa was constructed there and is considered a holy place and a monument of the state. It attracts large numbers of pilgrims and tourists every year.

Origin of Buddhist Stūpa

The Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra states that the Buddha told Ānanda about the construction of a stūpa after cremation of his body, once he passed away, to keep his mortal remains with a memorial. Eventually, after the Mahāparinirvāṇa (demise), his bodily remains, i.e., ashes, relics, etc., were divided into eight parts and distributed among the closest followers and the patron rulers of ancient India. In this way, the eight types of stūpas came into existence. Usually, these stūpas are known as the Eight Tathāgata Stūpas in Sanskrit.

The construction traditions of these stūpas are highly pervaded in Vajrayāna schools of Buddhism. Initially, these were built up at the sacred sites where the eight major events and incidents of Gautama Buddha had taken place during his life. But none of them is available in their original state to visit today due to a long time and other internal and external factors as well. Of course, some of them are available to visit in the form of their ruins, and some are preserved through renovation processes.

Nevertheless, Tibetan Buddhists began to construct all eight stūpas in a single place, in a sequence corresponding to the Buddha’s life events. This tradition is very much propagated among the Vajrayāna Buddhists of the world. As a result, all eight types of stūpas are readily observed in a single place across all Himalayan states. In fact, in Tibetan tradition, they regularly do offerings, prayers, worship, etc., to the Three Jewels (Triratna): the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. But in the present moment, the Buddha does not exist in his physical form. Owing to that, the symbol of his image refers to his body, the available scriptures refer to these words or teachings, and the symbol of the stūpa refers to his mind. So, the images, scriptures and stūpas are the sacred and significant religious entities of every Buddhist. By and large, the ultimate sense of the structural components of the stūpa symbolised the essence of the Tathāgata’s Dharmakāya (the Truth Body).

The word ‘*rten*’ is used or combined with the main word ‘*mchod*’. It can be understood as ‘*Sku-rten*’ means an image of Buddha or of a saint. It is a contraction of the *Sku*, *gsung*, and *thugs-rten*, the holy image, i.e., of a Buddha, or a saint, the sacred texts or volumes containing religious precepts; and the chaitya (*mchod rten*), the symbol of the resting of the *thugs* or heart.

In the case of Vihāra, it must be contained with the three types of icons or precious supportive things, i.e., ‘*rten gsum*’ in Tibetan. They are, namely, the image support is a statue or painting, the word support is a voice or speech, or holy books, writings, etc., and the support of the mind is a stūpa.

Stūpa: Art and Architecture

The Stūpa is an identity of Buddhist art and architecture. Various types of stūpas have been built and continue to be built in Buddhist countries worldwide. The basic structure and the topmost parts of all stūpas are quite similar and simple. But the in-between parts and bodies of stūpas vary from each other. It can be constructed inside a temple or outside in an open place. It can be drawn on paper, canvas, stone slabs, etc., in the form of pictures, *thangkas*⁸ and so on.

The stūpa is originally a kind of funerary spot or mound, a huge heap of earth, or a mound structure, etc., which is enshrined with ashes and other remaining relics of some great personalities. For instance, great spiritual teachers, ideal and icon personalities, super heroes, i.e., Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhants, or Dharma Kings, renowned socio-religious reformers, and so on. The term stūpa is also understood by other senses and terminologies, such as Chaitya, *Dungten*, *Sku dung*, etc.

According to time, place and knowledge system of people, the application and sense of terminology have gradually changed, as in the case of chaitya and stūpa. Today, stūpa is used as a general term in Tibetan Buddhist traditions, while it was not the case in ancient times. In the Himalayan regions, *Dungten* is another term that refers to the stūpa. It is built similarly to a chorten or stūpa. It is very essential to keep a *dhāranī* inside all kinds of stūpas. In general, as a *dhāranī*, an image of Buddha, his disciples, or spiritual masters or lamas’ relics are needed and have to be enshrined in the *Dungten*. In addition to the above-mentioned, as a *dhāranī* in the stupa, mantras, sacred texts, incense, gold, silver, consumable grains, etc., are also placed therein.

The great emperor Aśoka (268-232 B.C.E.) was the one who brought revolutions in the history of the construction of stūpas throughout the sub-continent of India in ancient times. Similarly, in the Himalayan states, the Tibetan scholar-translator Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055 C.E.) was instrumental in promoting the construction of Buddhist temples and stūpas in the 11th century. Likewise, many masters and kings in Sikkim had established Buddhist monasteries, nunneries, statues, stūpas, and so on in the past.

Kinds of Stūpas

In the beginning, stūpas were considered Buddhist memorial monuments generally containing the remains of a popular historical and spiritual figure. In the course of time, it has taken a

8 Tib.: *thang-ka*; any portrait, painting, or picture of any icons or deities on cloth or paper.

prominent place in Buddhist thought, culture, science, arts and so on. Besides, they are sacred symbols of respect and worship, to facilitate recollection and genuine honour to such popular individuals and personalities as well.

In the context of the historical Buddha, the major events of his life and specifically the eight great events of his life, have been marked with the erection of eight different stūpas after the Mahāparinirvāṇa of the Buddha. This is known as *Desheg Chorten Gyed*⁹ (The Eight Kinds of Tathāgata Stūpas). They were constructed at the places where the particular major events of Buddha's life had occurred. They are, namely, the birthplace, Lumbinī Garden at Kapilavastu, the Jāti Stūpa. The place of attainment of His complete Enlightenment at Bodhgayā, the Bodhi Stūpa. The place of turning the First Dharma Wheel at Sārnāth, Vārāṇasī, the Bahu Mangala Dwāra Stūpa. The place of manifestation of the grand miracles at Jetavana, Śrāvastī, the Prātihārya Stūpa. The place of descent from the Tuṣita heaven at Kānyakubja or Sāṅkāśya, the Swargāvtaran Stūpa. The place of reconciliation of schism among the Buddhist Sangha at Rājagṛha, the Prabhāsvarī Stūpa. The place of announcement of nirvāṇa at Vaiśālī, the Vijaya Stūpa. The place of passing away at Kuśīnagar, the Nirvāṇa Stūpa.

Sometimes sacred texts and other valuable objects were housed within stūpas in lieu of the individual's physical remains. Stūpa architecture has gone through a variety of developmental phases, beginning with a simple hemispheric structure erected over a circular base and with a post-like top, but eventually evolving to the complex mandala-like structure as well. Many stūpas are pilgrimage sites for Buddhists and also a sphere for pūja or worship.

There are various enumerations of the eight popular stūpas in Tibetan sources. They are discussed below.

1. Bde gshegs mchod-rten (stūpa)
2. Byang chub mchod-rten (stūpa)
3. Chos 'khor mchod-rten or yeshe mchod-rten (stūpa)
4. Cho 'khrul mchod-rten or mu stegs pham byed kyi mchod-rten (stūpa)
5. Lhabbas mchod-rten or sumcu rtsa gsum lha' mchod-rten (stūpa)
6. Dbyen dzlum mchod-rten or 'od zer can mchod-rten or byams dngos mchod-rten (stūpa)
7. Rnam rgyal mchod-rten or byim rlabs mchod-rten (stūpa)
8. Myang 'das mchod-rten (stūpa)

9 Tib.: bde gshegs mchod rten bgyad.

Besides, the eight types of stūpas, a unit of three stūpas known as ‘*Rig Sum Gonpo*’, is also constructed in some parts of the Himalayan regions in the country. These three unitary kinds of stūpa are dedicated to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, i.e., Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteswara, and Vajrapāni. They symbolise the mind of each individual and are coloured yellow, white and blue respectively. Furthermore, the stūpa structures have a resemblance to the Vijaya stūpa, Bodhi stūpa and Sangha Bheda Nivārana stūpa, respectively. This tradition is particularly prevalent among followers of Tibetan Buddhism across the Himalaya.

Purposes of Stūpa Construction

Purposes are blessing, auspiciousness, merit accumulation, spreading the message of the Buddha, and for the development of wisdom, compassion, and power to diminish all sorts of calamities like famines, conflicts, diseases, misfortunes, etc.

Stūpas are not merely a Buddhist symbolic entity. It reflects all important life events and valuable teachings of the Buddha in the history and tradition handed down to us.

Sikkim and Tibetan Buddhism

Sikkim was blessed by Ācārya Padmasambhava in the 8th century. Thereafter, Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo (born 1595), originally from Tibet, was the chief spiritual master of Sikkim who skilfully established Tibetan Buddhist Gonpas, such as Sangha Choeling, Dubdi and Pemayangste. He was ably assisted by his two competent spiritual companions named Ngadag Sempa Chenpo and Kathog Kuntuzangpo. They travelled in different parts of the region to preach Buddha’s teachings to the native people. Both of them also founded monasteries in the region. The Tashiding Monastery in west Sikkim was founded by Ngadag Sempa Chenpo, and Kathog Monastery in East Sikkim by Kathog Kuntuzangpo.

Almost 75 years later, at the beginning of the 18th century, the Karmapa tradition of the Kagyud School was introduced during the reign of the fourth Chogyal of Sikkim Gyurme Namgyal (r. 1717-1733 C.E.). The Rumtek Monastery was first built by the 12th Karmapa Lama Changchub Dorje in 1730 C.E., but somehow, it was destroyed in a fire mishap. Hence, the ruin of the Rumtek Monastery was rebuilt and inaugurated by the 16th Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje in 1966, making it the official seat of the glorious Karmapa tradition in India.

The construction of monastery complexes, monastic education systems, stūpas, Dharma and social cultures, traditions, etc., of Bhutias and Buddhists in Sikkim are directly linked with Tibet. Tibet-based principal monasteries belong to different Tibetan Buddhist schools, especially *Nyingma* and *Kagyud* traditions. Consequently, many great scholars, philosophers, writers, and practitioners *Siddhas* from Sikkim had a direct connection with Tibetan monastic institutions for higher studies in the past. Nevertheless, Sikkim is basically a land of the Nyingma School

of Buddhism, which was founded by Guru Rinpoche in the 8th century with the successful establishment of Samye Monastery, the first monastic University of Tibet.

Some of the important Nyingma gonpas of Sikkim are Pemayangtse, Tashiding, Phensang, Ehchey, Kathok and so forth. On the other side, some of the renowned Kagyud gonpas are Ralang, Rumtek, Phodong and so on. In the establishment and development of the above-mentioned gonpas, many practitioners and spiritual masters had worked remarkably. Among them, some of the highly regarded personalities are Gyalwa Lhastun Chenpo, Ngadak Sempa Chenpo, Rigzen Chenpo, Khenchen Rolpai Dorjee, Lama Jigme Pawo, the 16th Karmapa Rinpoche, and Chogyals of the state.

Sikkim and Do-drul Chorten

This stūpa is known by another name as well, and that is ‘Cho-Thrul Chorten’. The reason behind this name was the commemoration of one of the great events of Śākyamuni Buddha’s life. The event was that during his stay at Śrāvastī, the Six Heretic (non-Buddhist) Teachers¹⁰ A challenge to him to show off the miracle powers. He accepted the challenge and defeated all of them well. Thereafter, they accept his skilful path. Owing to that, the Licchavi had constructed the stūpa in memory of the above-mentioned great event of the Śākyamuni Buddha. The characteristics of the stūpa are as mentioned hereby, the seat is square-shaped, then upon all four steps or rows in square shapes, as well on all four sides

The event is commemorated as a grand religious feast known as *Cho thrul Ducan* by Buddhist across the world. According to some Vinaya texts, Śākyamuni Buddha met his father, the King Sudhodana, after six years of his attainment of complete Enlightenment. Next year, or the 7th year of his Enlightenment, he had exhibited his grand miracles. Even today, the auspicious day is celebrated with great pomp and show by the Himalayan Buddhist of the world.

In Sikkim, Cho-Thrul Chorten is one of the heritages of the state and a sacred site for Buddhist people. It is mentioned that inside the stūpa a complete set of *Dorjee Phurba*¹¹ (Vajrakīla), *Kangyur*¹² (Holy Books), and other valuable and religious objects are placed. The stūpa is surrounded by 108 prayer wheels (*mani lagkor*), and these prayer wheels are turned by the devout Buddhist while chanting ‘Hail to the jewel in the Lotus’, to invoke the Boddhisattva., The Chorten is surrounded by Chorten Lakhang, where there are two huge statues of Guru

10 1. Pūraṇa Kāśyapa, 2. Maskarī Gośalaputra, 3. Sañjayī Vairadiputra, 4. Ajita Keśakambala, 5. Kātyāyana and 6. Nirgrantha Jñātiputra.

11 Wyl.: *rdor-rje phur-pa*; a religious instrument the upper part of which is of the shape of dorje or vajra and the lower part a phurpa or kīla means mystic dagger. Used for suppressing the evil spirits.

12 Wyl.: *bka’-’gyur*: *Buddhavacana*; the collection of Buddha’s teachings translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit. The number of volumes varies according to different popular Tibetan editions. Nevertheless, generally it consists of 108 volumes.

Rimpoche (Guru Padmasambhava). The Do-Drul Chorten (stūpa) was built by the Venerable Trulshi Rimpoche, head of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism in 1945.

Conclusion

There are many popular and most magnificent Buddhist stūpas that still exist in the world. Most of them are in India, and a few are in other countries. For instance, Mahā Bodhi Stūpa at Bodhagayā in Bihar, Dhamekh Stūpa at Sārnāth, and Rāmabhar Stūpa at Kuśinagar in Uttar Pradesh, Sanchi Stūpa at Raisen, in Madhya Pradesh, Śānti Stūpa at Leh in UT Ladakh, and Do-Drul Stūpa at Gangtok in Sikkim. The chorten or stūpa is the motif of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT), which is seen on the frontispiece of the Bulletin of Tibetology as published by the NIT.

With the advent of trio-spiritual Lama Masters from Tibet to Sikkim in the 17th century, the fruit-like teachings of Ācārya Padmasambhava were finally able to spread in every nook and corner of Sikkim. Lhatsun Namkha Jigme, the great tantric master and practitioner from Tibet, had come to Sikkim in the 17th century and helped to promote Tibetan Buddhism. As a result, the state remained a Buddhist Kingdom for more than 3 centuries. It was the heyday of Buddhism. In fact, the present form and condition of Buddhism in the state was the great contributions of Tibetan Buddhist scholar missionaries, great Dharma practitioners, Dharma Kings, popular spiritual masters and so on. Lastly, we have to understand the significance of our rich culture and traditions. We have to preserve and protect all of them in our lives as much as possible from our end. It is because our future posterity could be able to maintain all these in the same spirit of faith and wisdom in their own rich traditional culture.

Reference

Humkara Voice of Spark I No. 2. Lhabab Deuchen (1998).

Bapat, P.V. (2500). Years of Buddhism. Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India, Eighth Ed. 2012.

Ahir, D.C. Himalayan Buddhist Past and Present. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publisher, 1993.

Raw, S.K. Ramachandra. Tantrik Traditions in Tibet. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publisher, 2002.

Tucci, Giuseppe. Stupa: Art, Architectonics and Symbolism (Indo-Tibetan-I). Translated into English by Uma Marina Vesci, ed. Lokesh Chandra, New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, First Published in Italian in 1932, English 1988.

Namgyal Institute of Tibetology- Golden Jubilee Souvenir 1958-2008 (50 Years). NIT, Gangtok, Sikkim, first ed. 2008 and 2nd ed. 2010.

Bulletin of Tibetology, Volume 45-46 (Special Issue), NIT, Gangtok, Sikkim 2010.

Davids, T. W. Rhys. Buddhist Sutras (Translated from Pali), Delhi: Sri Satguru Publisher, 2003.

King Kshemendra. Pagsam Khrishing, Tibetan Cultural Printing Press, Kangra, Dharamsala, 1986.

Sangharakshita. Tibetan Buddhism: An Introduction. Delhi: New Age Books, 2010.

Das, Sanjib Kumar. What is Buddhist Studies ?. Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2017.

The Lotus of the True Law (Thegchen Do Padma Karpo). Lotus Association for World Enlightenment, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul, Korea. Free Distribution Book.

The Karma Gon Monastery of Kolkata

A socio-historical Study

Andrea Loseries

Prologue

For centuries, Kolkata has been a melting pot for communities of different cultures and religious beliefs. The city hosts many Christian churches of often uncommon branches, as well as mosques, synagogues and temples belonging to various religions. Kolkata has a Buddhist community mainly of Bengali and Tripura Buddhists, as well as those affiliated with the Sri Lankan Mahabodhi Society. Only some of them date back over a hundred years. Among several Chinese temples, a Japanese and a Burmese Vihāra, there is also a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery in the concrete jungle of South Kolkata that belongs to the Karma Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism. It is until date the only functioning temple and monastery of Tibetan Buddhism in Kolkata.¹

Despite being a close disciple of His Holiness, the 16th Karmapa and devoted to the 17th Karmapa Urgyen Thinle Dorje, I had vaguely heard over the years of a Karma Kagyu Gumpa existing in Kolkata, but never found out its precise location. It was only recently, just a few months ago, that I discovered that the monastery is located just ten minutes' walk from my present Kolkata residence in Ballygunge, South Kolkata. Since then, I have been a regular visitor and have even taken official membership. With my academic background in Tibetan and Buddhist studies, I can converse with the few resident monks, although, as Sikkimese from Phodong or Rumtek monasteries, they use among themselves their native tongue Bhutia. On several occasions, such as on *Lha babs dus chen*, I participate in their special pujas and offering rituals or come for solitary meditation in the quiet temple hall on the first floor of the Gumpa, which has in its centre a life-size statue and spitting image of the 16th Karmapa.

At annual festivals, the lay members of the Gumpa association with their families host the visitors with snacks and tea. They are mostly people from Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong, whose families have long ago settled in Kolkata, and many of their offspring have been born in the city. Indian friends of theirs or local neighbours also frequent the monastery and participate with offerings in the rituals. They are not necessarily Buddhists, but also Hindus or Christians. I could witness their active involvement during a fire puja on the roof of the Gumpa on the occasion of *lha babs dus chen*, after having taken part in the traditional ten-kilometre-long procession carrying the Buddhist canon volumes on their shoulders, apparently an event much applauded and welcomed by the neighbourhood. (Photos 1 – 14)

1 There existed another Tibetan Buddhist Temple called Bod Bagan at on the west side of the Hooghly River in the Howrah District at Ghusuri which was founded in 1776 by the 6th **Panchen Lama Lobsang Palden Yeshe (1738-1780)**. By the early 19th century, Hindu rituals replaced Buddhist rites. Now only ruins remain of this Tibetan monastery. The history of Bod Bagan will be published in a separate article.



At the occasion of a picnic organised at the beginning of February 2025 by the Gompa management, I had the opportunity at that social gathering to interview some of their oldest members on the history of Karma Gon. In addition, the present General Secretary, Sri Lakpa Tshering Bhutia, kindly provided me with data from records preserved in the archive of the monastery for further corrections and adjustments.

Based on these structured and unstructured interviews and archival studies, this ethno-historical research was to reveal the challenges and cultural adaptations of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Sikkimese origin in Kolkata for nearly nine decades.

Historical Background²

The original Himalayan Buddhist Monastery was founded in March, 1937. In the records of the monastery's archive, a certain Aung Pemba Sherpa, son of the late Dorjee Sherpa, resident of Sherpa Villa, Tirpai, Kalimpong, is listed as the official founder and first president of the Himalayan Buddhist Gompa. He was a businessman who used to trade between Lhasa, Tibet, and Calcutta via Kalimpong. He had a head office in Lhasa and a branch office at Chitpore Road, Calcutta.

Under his initiative and with the aspiration to create a spiritual refuge and support for his Buddhist family and associates, a committee was formed under his presidency and registered in the name of "Himalayan Buddhist Gompa" under the Act xxi of 1860 in the year 1937. Shri R.B. Singh was the first General Secretary, as per the available record.

2 The facts and brief history of the monastery was prepared as per available records by the General Secretary, L.T. Bhutia, Kolkata 8th February 2025.

The land where the present monastery is situated was initially taken for rent, and seven tenants used to stay there, from whom the committee collected rent. A small Puja altar was installed by the committee for performing rituals on a portion of the said land.

Apart from the archive records summarised by the present General Secretary, L.T. Bhutia, a senior member of the Karma Gon Kidu organisation and herewith my informant, P.T. Lama, filled in more personal details for this research during the Kidu picnic held on 2nd February, 2025, in a nature park on the outskirts of Kolkata. P.T. Lama claimed to be the grandson of A.K. Dorje, who seemed to have played a vital role in the establishment of the then-Himalayan Buddhist Monastery in Kolkata. P.T. Lama, the son of A.K. Dorje's only son, Ami Deba and his Sikkimese wife Piguli, remembered that at the time of his birth, A.K. Dorje was the head Lama of Karma Choling Monastery in Bhutia Busty, Darjeeling, which then was under the control of the Royal Government of Sikkim.

According to my informant, A.K. Dorje was a native of Phodong, where the 9th Karmapa Choedrak Gyatso (1556-1603), on the invitation of the King of Sikkim, had founded a monastery, as well as in Rumtek and Ralang. A.K. Dorje, as a novice, was trained at Tsurphu Monastery in Tibet, where at that time the young 16th Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (1924 -1981) resided. It was said that the 16th Karmapa had been very fond of him and had called him Lopon-la. Later, A.K Dorje had married a woman from Tsurphu with whom he returned to Phodong.

Then, at one time, the ruling King of Sikkim, Chogyal Tashi Namgyal (1893 – 1963) had sent A.K. Dorje to Darjeeling, which was then part of the Kingdom of Sikkim, with a statue of Guru Rinpoche for the Bhutia community in Bhutia Busty, where a branch of the Phodong Monastery had been relocated. Its original site had been on the Observatory Hill in Darjeeling. In 1788, when Nepali troops overran the land, the monastery was destroyed and, on its site, a Mahākāla sanctuary was established. The Nepali troops were driven out by the British East Indian Company, and the territory was returned to the Chogyal of Sikkim in 1817. In 1860, the monastery was relocated to Bhutia Busty, but was later destroyed in an earthquake in 1934, which the Chogyal Tashi Namgyal helped to rebuild. It is called Karma Dorje Choling.

A.K. Dorje must have been a controversial figure in his community, as according to his grandson, he had frequented the cremation ground of Darjeeling for the practice of *gCod* and generally engaged in the lifestyle of a Tantric practitioner. For this reason, and jealous of his learning despite his young age, the local community resented and disrespected him. Therefore, he left Darjeeling with his family and settled in Kolkata.

There, according to my informant P.T. Lama, A.K. Dorje and his family were well received in Kolkata, and as he practised successfully Tantric healing, he was highly respected and sought after for spiritual counselling and healing. He seemed to have been active on the site known as the Himalayan Buddhist Monastery, of which P.T. Lama claimed to be the founder, although the archive records do not state him as such. He may be called unofficially the founder who had attracted a number of followers due to his special skills and charisma. However, when Chogyal Tashi Namgyal was visiting Darjeeling, A.K. Dorje was expected to welcome him personally. Therefore, despite the grievances of his Kolkata followers and being personally reluctant to go, he had to obey the royal order and return to Darjeeling. However, he promised to send a Lama to his replacement. A.K. Dorje was never to return to Kolkata.

Jho Lama, whom A.K. Dorje had sent from Bhutia Busty to Kolkata as his successor, is officially recorded as the first acting monk of the Himalayan Buddhist Gompa Lama. The committee used to pay him some remuneration for performing Puja in this provisional Gompa as per a record dated 9th November, 1940, archived in the Gompa.

According to the archive material, in 1940, a small Gompa made of mud was constructed on this 7 Chakraberia Land with donations from the members and well-wishers. The then Vice-President of the committee, Mrs Ahiming of Kurseong, had made a great effort in collecting the donations for the construction of the Gompa. After completing the construction, the Gompa was inaugurated on 6th February, 1941 by the Vice-President Mrs Ahiming, as the President A.P. Sherpa was at Kalimpong at that time. As the committee could not buy the said land due to a lack of funds, the President, Aung Pemba Sherpa, purchased this land in 1940/41.

The available records show that the Mahārājadhiraja of Burdaman and Sri Jugal Kishore Birla of the Birla Company made donations to this Gompa during the 1940s. The Committee in the General Meeting held on 23. 01.1949, it was decided to transfer the control of this Gompa to the Government of Tibet, for which the recommendation had to be made by the Tibetan Language teacher of St. Joseph's School, Darjeeling. But due to increasing Chinese infiltration in Tibet, nothing resulted from it. The committee could ultimately purchase this land in 1970/71 from the son of the late Aung Pemba Sherpa.

The Executive Committee, in its meeting held on 17.01.1971, decided to hand over the monastery to His Holiness the 16th Karmapa and passed the following resolution:

Resolution No. 1: "This resolution is passed for dedication of the houses and estates of the Himalayan Buddhist Gompa, situated at 7 Cakraberia Lane, Calcutta-20, wholly to His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa of Rumtek-Pal Karmaii-Densa-Shedup-Chokhorling Gompa, Sikkim."

Resolution No.2: “The resolution is passed for the change of the registered name of this holy temple, Himalayan Buddhist Gomba, to the new name Calcutta-Karma-Gon and be registered in the Government Court.”

The then President of the Himalayan Buddhist Gomba, Sri D. D. Lama, and committee through the resolution dated 26. 7. 1970 authorized the head monk of the Gomba, Tshering Dhandup Lama, to approach His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, meanwhile residing in Rumtek Gomba in exile, for all help in cash or in kind for the construction of a new monastery. It is learned from the people of that time that His Holiness agreed to extend all help for the construction of the monastery, but suggested that “if the members and the well-wishers could contribute even a small amount towards the construction of the monastery, it would bring good Karma to them.” So many people, even poor people, had made contributions for this noble cause at that time.

On 15th May, 1973, the so-called Himalayan Buddhist Gomba was officially changed to Calcutta Karma Gon Kidu and registered under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act with the Registration Number S/10258.

Then, after the Executive Committee and members of the Calcutta Karma Gon Kidu in the General Meeting held on 25.05.1975 decided to demolish the old Gomba for the construction of a new Gomba and appointed B.M. Mehrotra as treasurer to supervise the construction of the building. Accordingly, in July 1975, the old Gomba was demolished, and the construction of the new Gomba building was started.

Thus, this Gomba at the heart of Calcutta City is very auspicious and blessed by His Holiness the 16th Karmapa.

On 05.11. In 1976, the Calcutta Karma Gon Gomba was officially offered to His Holiness, the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa vide Deed of Gift signed and registered on the day (Photo Archive Kidu 15 & 16)

Since then, the management of the Monastery Gomba has been looked after by an Executive Committee of Calcutta Karma Gon Kidu under the guidance and supervision of the Dharmacakra Centre, Rumtek. Monks from Rumtek and Phodong Monastery are posted as resident monks of this monastery. During the big pujas, additional monks come from these two monasteries.

Presently, the Kidu has around a hundred registered families as its members and around twenty life members. In addition, many people of Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and other places who are working and studying here in Kolkata visit this monastery. There are some

spare rooms available in the Monastery, and the Committee allows sick people from Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong to stay on a temporary basis during their treatments at Kolkata. Also, students are allowed to stay there for a short period. The present committee has taken charge of the management since 2011, and since then, the committee has maintained good liaison and coordination with the Rumtek authority for the functioning and development of the monastery.

Despite the controversy and the opposition created by followers of Thaye Dorje, who also claimed to be the 17th Karmapa, Karma Gon, in accordance with Rumtek Monastery, has remained loyal to Urgyen Thinle Dorje as the genuine 17th Karmapa incarnation. On the occasion of the Kagyu Monlam in Bodhgaya 2016, a delegation of Karma Gon extended an official invitation to the 17th Karmapa Urgyen Thinle Dorje. But the scheduled visit of the Karmapa to Karma Gon could not take place due to the opposition of Thaye Dorje's party. However, according to my information, an unofficial meeting could take place in Kolkata with some devotees. For the members of Karma Gon Kidu, the monastery has become all that once inspired its initial sponsor and founder Sri Aung Pemba Sherpa, as well as A.K. Dorje and Jho Lama, a spiritual home and refuge for the Sikkimese descendants of settlers in urban Kolkata.

Affiliations:

Vienna University (Ph.D.), Visva-Bharati Santiniketan (former HOD and Director),
Nalanda University (former Senior Professor), Jharkhand University (Board Member)

SIKKIMESE MONKS IN A HINDU TEMPLE AND THE GUARDIAN FOR BEYUL DEMOJONG – A CASE STUDY OF MAHAKAL MANDIR AND SENCAL DHAAM IN DARJEELING

Jigme Yeshe Lama

This paper explores the Buddhist interconnections between Sikkim and Darjeeling through investigating two sacred sites in the district of Darjeeling, the Mahakal Mandir or Dara and the Sencal Dhaam. The former is located on top of Observatory Hill, whereas the latter is based on Tiger Hill. Both are popular tourist spots and figure as important sites in the popular imagination of the hill station. The historical connections between Darjeeling and Sikkim are a known fact, as prior to 1835, Darjeeling was a part of the kingdom of Sikkim, and it was granted to the British East India Company by the Chogyal Tsugphud Namgyal (Ardussi et al., 2021, p.250). It should be noted that the “Deed of Grant” by the Sikkim Chogyal to the British is a controversial and debatable issue, which, however, is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, the paper’s objectives are to outline the present-day connections between Sikkim and Darjeeling by focusing on the Buddhist interconnections. However, the historical connections will figure prominently in the narrative of this paper. It attempts to understand how a Buddhist cultural fabric forms the thread that binds both spaces. The past of both sites focused here is important and forms a core component in our understanding of the shared Buddhist histories between Darjeeling and Sikkim.

The paper is based on a qualitative research methodology which employs ethnography as an important research tool. Also, it relies heavily on historical methodology, especially analysing historical texts, religious manuscripts and government gazetteers. The first site, Mahakal Mandir, is presently a popular Hindu temple dedicated to the deity Shiva, who is worshipped in the form of Mahakal. The temple has a Hindu priest, a Brahmin, presiding over the rituals and seated opposite to him is a Buddhist lama who conducts the needed Buddhist rites and rituals. Hence, the main shrine is a space shared between the Hindus and the Buddhists. The 3-4 monks present in the main temple are mostly Sikkimese or affiliated to the Dotsuk monastery, which is popularly called the Bhutia Busty monastery. It is a Sikkimese monastery that occupies an important part in the overall narrative of the paper. It can be dubbed as a ‘Sikkimese’ monastery due to two main reasons: firstly, it is a branch of the Karma Kagyu-based Phodang monastery located in Sikkim. Secondly, the Dotsug monastery’s patrons come from the predominantly Sikkimese Bhutia community who reside nearby, with them forming the management committee of the monastery. Along with the Ging monastery, the Dotsuk monastery is under the administrative control of the Government of Sikkim. According to the website of the Ecclesiastical Affairs Department of the Government of Sikkim, both monasteries, on historical grounds, are administered by the state government of Sikkim.

Under the RTI Act of 2005, the Ecclesiastical Department in 2013 had published a list of monastic school teachers who were paid a salary of ten thousand rupees by the Sikkim state government; Shri Lama Tenzin, who was the then teacher in the Dotsuk gonpa monastic school, was also included here. Apart from this, the monastery also receives aid from Sikkim. The above-mentioned Lama Tenzin is currently one of the monks who presides at the Mahakal Temple. Sikkimese monks also manage the Hindu temple devoted to the goddess Mahakali, located close to the main Shiva temple. These temples are located on Observatory Hill, which overlooks the town of Darjeeling. The majority of the space has Hindu sites of worship and is considered to be sacred by the local Nepali and other Hindus. There are a few temples affiliated with the Rai and Limbu communities, who mainly follow an animistic form of worship. Along with the presence of Sikkimese monks, the presence of Buddhism is also denoted by the presence of a small chorten with a shrine that is maintained by the local Tibetan community. The caretaker of this space is appointed by the local settlement office of the Tibetan government in exile. While Lama Tenzin and a senior monk have remained in the Mahakal Temple for a long time, the other monks are sent on a rotational basis from the Dotsuk monastery. The presence of both Hindu and Buddhist institutions on the Observatory Hill has been termed as an example of peaceful coexistence of two religions (Gahatraj, 2022). The paper asserts that peaceful coexistence is present in the socio-cultural fabric of the Darjeeling and Sikkim hills, where multiple communities reside and interact with one another. Presently, the Observatory Hill is a predominant Hindu space, with the space being managed by a majority Hindu committee. Thus, a question that arises is why Sikkimese Buddhist monks are present in the Mahakal Mandir. To seek an answer, this paper delves into the history of the so-called Observatory Hill. However, it needs to be understood that much of the historical narrative and subsequent understanding of this space comes from British colonial accounts, especially the district gazetteers. Alternatively, a different historical narrative of Observatory Hill can be derived from analysing the Royal History of Sikkim. Also, Lepcha or Rong narratives about the hill provide a deeper understanding of the history of the present-day Mahakal Mandir on Observatory Hill.

Histories of the Mahakal Mandir – Loss of a Buddhist Past

One of the first ‘official’ traces of the history of Observatory Hill comes from the Gazetteer of the Darjeeling district compiled by LSS O’Malley in 1907. He writes how a Buddhist monastery named Dorjeling once stood on the Observatory Hill, and the place Darjeeling is a corruption of the name Dorjeling (O’Malley, 1907, p.1). Thus, the former monastery on the hill had a significant role in the formation of the place Darjeeling. The British narrative further elaborates how ‘the hill was crowned by a Buddhist monastery, which was destroyed by the Gurkhas when they overran the country in the early part of the 19th century. This monastery, which was a branch of the Doling monastery in Sikkim, was rebuilt on its old site above the cave, which is reputed to lead underground to Lhasa, but it was subsequently removed to Bhutia Busty lower down the hill to

the spot where it still stands (O'Malley, 1907, p.186). The Gazetteer does mention how Dorjeling was a part of the dominions of the Raja of Sikkim (O'Malley, 1907, p.2). Sikkim had lost these lands during the Gurkha invasion, and it was after their defeat at the hands of the British that Darjeeling was returned to Sikkim. Further, the Britishers who ventured into Darjeeling termed the space as being uninhabited or sparsely populated. However, the narrative mentions how it was formerly occupied by a large village and was the residence of one of the principal Kazis, which had been deserted (O'Malley, 1907, p.21). The British colonial discourse on Darjeeling has created an idea of how it was practically an empty space, which was eventually populated and developed by the British. This narrative has influenced several academic and non-academic writings on the region. The history of Darjeeling is said to have started with the arrival of the British.

The colonial ideas of progress and development have shaped the history of the Darjeeling hills. Through this, the pre-colonial pasts, such as that of the Dorjeling monastery on top of the hill is inconsequential and turned into a footnote. In the early 20th century, with the demographic transformation of Darjeeling and the emergence of identity movements, this further led to a strategic silencing of the region's past association with Sikkim. In the subsequent British narratives on Darjeeling, the story of the Dorling monastery has been repeated. For instance, the 1947 Bengal District Gazetteer by Arthur Jules Dash repeats much of O'Malley's narrative regarding the monastery on Observatory Hill. However, it does mention how, after its destruction in the hands of the invading Gurkhas, the monastery was rebuilt on its former site but was then removed to Bhutia Busty, lower down the hillside (Dash, 1947, p.256). Aditi Chatterji (2007) writes how the monastery was first rebuilt in 1860-61 on the flat to the northeast of St. Andrew's Church, and in 1878-79 was finally removed to its present location in Bhutia Busty. She further mentions that the lamas who successfully held charge over the Dotsuk monastery were Karchang Tulku, Ponlop Sey, Ponlop Yamku, Dorlop Nimadhypa, Karchang Tulku and Ladakh Amchi. Chatterji terms that the last was a Ladakhi who had been appointed by the Karmapa and also acknowledged by the Chogyal (Chatterji, 2007, pp. 194-95). Her sources for this information are primarily from E.C. Dozey's 'A Concise History of Darjeeling District since 1835', which was published in 1922. Dozey was a British author and one of the first to write a history of Darjeeling. As a colonial, his narratives are deeply colored by the existing British historical constructions of Darjeeling. However, he does mention the role played by the Chogyal in the appointment of the head lamas of Dotsuk monastery, providing evidence of a linkage between the Bhutia Busty monastery and Sikkim. This idea is strengthened in the 1947 Gazetteer, which mentions how the Chogyal Tashi Namgyal had funded the reconstruction of the monastery as it had been destroyed in the 1934 earthquake (Dash, 1947, p.256). Dash writes how the management of the monastery was in the hands of the leading Buddhists of Darjeeling and high Sikkimese officials (Dash, 1947, p.256). Also, a fixed date with regard to when the Hindu practices started in Observatory

Hill cannot be pinpointed. Chatterji (2007) mentions how the site, which had the ruins of the old monastery, was sacred for both Buddhists and certain classes of Hindus who performed their rituals within its sacred space.

Interestingly, according to Chatterji (2007), the devotees' (Hindus and Buddhists) rituals were then performed by a Buddhist monk/lama. The Europeans were allowed to view this ritual from outside the sacred enclosure, a small space fenced off with bamboo, from which the prayer flags fluttered in the wind (Chatterji, 2007, p.197). Such practices were present in the 1920s, which denotes how the lama, who was then definitely Sikkimese, had started performing rites for Hindus who visited the Observatory Hill. While the British accounts provide a rather sanitised understanding of the coming of the Hindus to the hill, authors such as K.C. Bhanja (1948) write how Hindu priests used to offer their prayers at the Observatory Hill from as early as 1815. He mentions how the Dorje Lama, who had built the Dorling monastery, appeared on the scene much later than the advent of a Hindu priest (Bhanja, 1948, p.25). He goes on to mention that this information was gathered from a reliable source. His narrative has spawned similar writings regarding the background of Observatory Hill. A more holistic narrative regarding the entry of Hinduism in the hill is presented in a letter by S.W. Laden La to British authorities. Sonam Wangfel Laden La (1876-1936) was the adopted son of Lama Ugyen Gyatsho, the famous scholar, translator and teacher in the Bhutia Boarding school, Darjeeling. Lama Ugyen Gyatsho was the chief Tibetan interpreter during the British Sikkim Expedition of 1888, and he assisted Sarat Chandra Das in bringing out his well-known Tibetan English dictionary. In 1879 and 1882, he visited Tibet with Sarat Chandra Das. S.W. Laden La was Lama Ugyen Gyatso's first wife, Choki's brother's son (Ardussi, 2022, pp.420-21).

Laden La received a formal Western education in the Bhutia Boarding School and acquired an education in Tibetan language and Buddhism from the abbot of Yiga Choling monastery, the Buriyat Geluk monk Sherab Gyatso. Laden La rose to become a police inspector and the vice-chairman of the Darjeeling municipality. He is primarily remembered for his work with both the colonial government of India and the Tibetan government in Lhasa as a key intermediary figure in the negotiations of Anglo-Tibetan relations. Significantly, he was one of the first generation of modern Buddhist revivalists and transmitters of Tibetan Buddhism to Western and Indian audiences (Huber, 2008, p.297). What is relevant for this paper is that a former head monk/lama of the monastery on the Observatory Hill was Laden La's great-grand-uncle. This is made clear in the letter he wrote to the British authorities. Titled 'Report from S.W. Laden La on Observatory Hill', dated 9th May 1912 and written from Kalimpong, the letter mentions the monastery on the Observatory Hill being a branch of the Doling monastery in Sikkim. The monastery in Darjeeling was destroyed by the Gurkhas in 1788. Laden La's letter provides us with the regular history of the monastery, how it was shifted to Bhutia Busty. Furthermore, he writes how, as a school boy, he saw the remains of the wall of the old monastery on the spot where the Buddhists still worship.

According to him, the place is viewed as a space of great sanctity where the local Buddhists made ‘quaint’ offerings and libations and also set up their prayer flags, an act that was performed on certain holy days of the month. He writes in the letter that the local Buddhists used to worship the ‘country god’ or ‘guardian’ of the temple, who is termed as an autochthonous deity, an entity who lived in the site before the advent of man (Santosh et al, 2018, p.413). The paper will briefly divert from the main argument and address the idea of the indigenous deity or ‘country god’ who resided at the site.

Sungmas, Zhibdags and Gyalpos – Protector Deities in the Mahakal Temple/ Observatory Hill

The Mahakal Mandir on the Observatory Hill is currently still associated with the guardian or protector deity by the local Buddhists in Darjeeling. Their deity is known through several names, which include sungma (གསུང་མ།), zhibdag (ཞི་བདག་), Gyalpo (རྒྱལ་པོ་), etc. During the course of my research for this paper, I spoke to several Tibetan Buddhists, who mentioned how the deity on the hill could also become either a yul lha (ཡུལ་ལྷ།), which literally means a ‘country-god’ or a kyi lha (སྐྱིད་ལྷ།), a ‘birth-god’. Thus, the deity residing in the Observatory Hill was a ‘birth god’ for those Tibetan Buddhists born in Darjeeling and a ‘country god’ for those whose origin was outside. This idea has its roots in the pre-Buddhist period, and it is a part of the worship of mountain deities. According to Samten Karmay, one of the prominent authorities on the cult of mountain worship writes that in the Tibetan popular tradition, the mountain deities known as the owner of the base or ཞི་བདག or ‘deity of the local territory’ or ཡུལ་ལྷ། are often thought of in folk tales as being interrelated with each other in a pattern of family relationship whether at the village or regional levels. This is further explained through geographical formations, whereby the mountain deity is viewed as the male spirit and the lake situated near the mountain is the female (Karmay, 1996, p.59). Karmay further asserts that the mountain deities are a part of the founding myth of the Tibetan micro societies, which is understood through the presence of the term ‘amyes’ or ancestor in toponyms and especially the paternal role played by the mountain ཞི་བདག or ཡུལ་ལྷ། (Blondeau and Steinkellener, 1996, p.ix). A similar idea exists among the Lepcha clans, where they are knotted together with the 108 peaks of the Sikkim Himalayas (Steinmann, 1996, p.185).

The mountain Kongchen, or Khangchendzonga, and Mount Pandim are termed as places of origin for the Lepchas. Similar to the pre-Buddhist worship of the mountain cult, where the mountain is seen as an ancestor, the Lepchas also associate the mountains with their ancestors. For Sikkimese Buddhists, Khangchendzonga is the abode of a mountain deity, who is known as Dzo-Nga (རྩོ་ང།). He is considered to be the chief of all the autochthonous deities in Sikkim (Denjongpa). According to Samten Karmay, there are broadly two reasons for the worship of mountains or for dubbing them as sites where deities reside. These are, firstly, certain mountains that are the dwelling of local deities and are the object of worship for mundane pursuits by the

local people. These are mostly the pre-Buddhist sites. On the other hand, the second reason for worshipping the mountains is from a pure Buddhist sense – the holy places are termed as *གནས་རི།* mountains where holy persons lived or ‘places blessed by certain divinity’ *བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབས་པའི་ས་ཆ།*. They are venerated not only by the local community but also by people coming from other parts of the country. These spaces are sites which were not only blessed by saints but also where ‘ter’ (*གཏེར་*) or treasures were hidden by numerous sacred personalities. The important figure associated with hiding the ‘ter’ was the semi-mythical Indian tantric saint Guru Padmasambhava and his twenty-five disciples, plus their reincarnates, which also includes Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo. Significantly, the mountain deities of the spaces where the ‘ter’ have been hidden are termed as the ‘ter-dag’ (*གཏེར་བདག།*) or ‘guardian of the treasure’. These deities assume a major role during the period when the treasure revealer (*གཏེར་སྟོན།*) is on the verge of extracting the treasure. In many cases, they guide the faithful and the *གཏེར་སྟོན།* in their journey. The mountain deities, especially the *ཞི་བདག།* are worshipped through *sangsol* (*བསང་གསོལ།*) rituals, popularly practised inside Tibet and the larger Himalayan Buddhist communities.

The sacred site on the Observatory Hill in Darjeeling is also a popular space for holding the *sangsol* rituals. Local Buddhists still perform the rituals on the hill and in many cases use certain ritual texts which specifically invoke the local deities. These deities were ‘bound’ or ‘tamed’ by past Buddhist masters, including Guru Rinpoche. The process of ‘binding’ is an important way through which Buddhism spread in Tibet and the larger Himalayas. They have been incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon and invoked through various rituals. For instance, the guardian deity on the Observatory Hill is also invoked as a ‘tsen’ (*ཅེན།*) who is one of the guards of the mountain deity, Khangchendzonga. This narrative has been derived from a ‘lha-sol’ (*ལྷ་སོལ།*) and ‘serkyem’ (*སེར་སྟེན།*) text written by a yogi named Yeshe Nyingpo that might correspond to either 1910-11 or 1970-71. Another text used for similar purposes was composed in the Yiga Choling monastery or the ‘Old Ghoom monastery’, which talks about propitiating the ‘guardians of the holy site’ of Beyul Dorjeling. Terming Dorjeling as a part of the Beyul Demojong, the text elaborates on how the centre of the Beyul is Drakar Tashiding. There are two guardians in Dorjeling - Jowo Senchal and Dorje Wangdue. The invocation of the two guardian deities based in Darjeeling, who in turn are tied to the Beyul Demojong and especially to Tashiding, provides us with examples of strong interconnections between Sikkim and Darjeeling. Significantly, through these texts, the space that we know as Darjeeling is imagined to be a part of the sacred geography of Sikkim or Demojong. Alternatively, through these rituals directed at the local autochthonous deities, Darjeeling or Dorjeling is incorporated within the Buddhist geography of Sikkim.

The centrality of Mount Khangchendzonga, a deity of prime importance for Sikkim, is also invoked in a *sangsol* text which has been incorporated in a volume of daily prayers compiled by the local Tibetan settlement office of Darjeeling. In this liturgical text, the deity ‘Dzonga’ is equated with ‘Namthösey’ (*ནམ་ཐོས་སྤེས།*) in Tibetan or Vaisravana in Sanskrit. He is part of the

four guardian kings and the chief of the four. He is also associated with the Hindu god of wealth, Kubera. In fact, several locals, including Tibetans and Bhutias, mentioned that the prosperity of Darjeeling and Sikkim was tied to the fact that the god of wealth was residing in Khangchendzonga. Nonetheless, these pre-Buddhist deities, including Dzonga, were worshipped by communities such as the Lepchas and Limbus in Darjeeling and Sikkim prior to the coming of the Bhutias and the Nepalis. The Lepchas should be credited with initiating worship at the site where the Mahakal Mandir stands. With clear views of their sacred Mount Kongchen or Khangchendzonga, the present-day Observatory Hill became an important site for them to propitiate the deity. Hence, Lepcha altars of worship were erected in the form of standing stones known as the Longtsuk or Dotsug in Tibetan (Ardussi et al, 2021, p.180). Early photographs of the hill show these Dotsugs, before sectarian turbulence in the 19th century induced the Sikkimese colony to move down to its present location in Bhutia Busty, with the monastery still termed as Dotsug monastery. However, the ancient Lepcha stone cairns still remain on top of the hill where they have been integrated into a more recent Hindu temple on the site and reinterpreted as a Shiva linga (Ardussi et al, 2021, p.180). The next section will discuss the way through which this transformation took place and trace the history of the emergence of Hindu forms of worship in the Observatory Hill.

From the Dorje Wangdu monastery to the Mahakal Mandir

The letter written by S.W. Laden La on Observatory Hill on 9th May, 1912, provides a background regarding the transformation of the space, with the entry of Hindu worshippers. He mentions how in the 1880s-90s, only the Buddhists and a few Nepalese went up to worship, whereby the Nepalese used to mention that they went up to worship Dorje Gompa. Further, they sacrificed some animals to appease the deity, which was stopped after the Buddhists, including notables such as Raja Tenduk Pulger, moved the matter to the British authorities (Santosh et al, 2015, p.413). It should be noted that the Nepalese mentioned by Laden La are a diverse group, which also includes followers of Buddhism. These include the Tamangs, Gurungs and Limbus. Alternatively, Laden La's letter mentions how it was in early 1900 that three Hindu jogis occupied the upper cave, near the round pavilion, and since then, the Marwaris, Biharis, Bengali and other plainspeople started visiting the place and offering sweets, paan leaves and nuts. They also offered money in front of the stone figures, leading to them also visiting the place at night. He further writes that when these people were interrogated regarding the object of their worship, they replied that they were worshipping Mahakal Baba. Laden La firmly asserts that the present site is purely a Buddhist sacred place, which is adjoined to the cave below. According to him, the cave is reputed to lead to the three sacred Buddhist caves in Sikkim and also to Lhasa. He had seen some Buddhist hermits occupying the cave some fifteen to twenty years ago (Santosh et al, 2018, pp.413-414). There was a stupa or chorten which contained images and scriptures that was worshipped by the local Buddhists. They used to perform their circumambulation around this structure. Eventually, the Hindu Brahmins started sitting at the place where they had also bought a large bell through public

donations. He mentions how, eventually, this place is turning into a Hindu sacred place (Santosh et al, 2018, p.414). Furthermore, the Hindus were smearing the stone idols of the guardian deities with vermilion and other colours, practices which are absent in Tibetan Buddhism. Finally, in the letter, he suggests that the authorities restrict the Hindus from performing their worship at night and not allow them to remain on the hill throughout the day. He mentions that the sacred site is turning into a place for earning an income and also would attract more Hindus in the days to come (Santosh et al, 2018, p.414).

What is interesting is that it was Laden La who was ultimately responsible for formalising the sharing of the Observatory Hill between the Buddhists and Hindus. As a part of his efforts in advocating the rights of the local people and also generating communal harmony, he, in his capacity as the vice-chair of the Darjeeling Municipality, approved Nepali priests to perform prayers in the hill and entitled them to 40 per cent of the donations received by the place (Darjeeling Times.com, 2015). Alternatively, it should be understood that the first entry of the Hindus in the hill started much earlier, especially during the Gorkha invasion of Sikkim in the 1780s. The invading forces were stationed at the Observatory Hill and Nagri, near Darjeeling (Pradhan, 2009, p.147). The monastery Wangdu Dorjeling was destroyed during this invasion, and according to several monks that I interacted with, the invading Gorkhas had discarded several of the stone images and cairns that were earlier objects of worship. They also mentioned how the Gorkha soldiers had installed the stone cairn or Longstuk as a representation of Lord Shiva. Alternatively, a different historical narrative regarding the Wangdu Dorjeling monastery and the Observatory Hill can be gleaned from Sikkimese sources. The 2021 edition of the Royal History of Sikkim – A Chronicle of the House of Namgyal, which is based on the narration by Chogyal Thutob Namgyal and Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma, mentions how, according to tradition, there were two Nyingma monasteries in Darjeeling prior to 1788. The oldest one was located just below the summit of the Observatory Hill and was founded by a certain Chuzang Tulku and was sponsored by Sikkim's Chagzod Garwang (Ardussi et al, 2021, p.180). It was termed as Wangdu Dorjeling. Garwang was a powerful Lepcha minister who played a pivotal role in Sikkim's history during the reign of the fifth Chogyal Namgyal Phuntshog (1733-1780). Chagzod Garwang was an ancestor of the Barfung clan and a governor of Tanag dzong. His son was Chagzod Chogthub, who in the later wars with the invading Gorkhas could repeatedly defeat them several times. His bravery had earned him the title of "Satrajit" from the Gorkhas (Ardussi, 2021, p.199). His father, Garwang, used to live in Darjeeling and was the patron of Wangdu Dorjeling (Ardussi, 2021, p.179).

A Sikkimese history of the Observatory Hill

The 'Sikkimese' history of the Observatory Hill strengthens the idea of the Buddhist interconnections between Darjeeling and Sikkim. Laden La, as well as S.G. Dokhampa, has mentioned how the Dorling monastery in Darjeeling was the branch of the older Dorling monastery in Sikkim. This

was established by the eldest son of the tertön Ugyen Dorje Lingpa, who was born in the year of the fire tiger (corresponding to 1686), named Rigdzin Longyang, who arrived in Sikkim to fulfil Terdag Lingpa's prophecy (Tsering, 2008, pp. 64-65). Ugyen Dorje Lingpa had arrived to consecrate the monastery in Sikkim and might have travelled via Darjeeling to Bhutan, where his youngest son was based. He may have established a temple or a monastery on Observatory Hill, as a branch of the Doling monastery (Ardussi, 2021, p.180). Laden La's letter further states that his ancestor presided over this monastery. Also, another monastery was established near what is today St. Andrew's Church, slightly below Observatory Hill, which was originally a monastery belonging to Pemayangtse monastery. This was first constructed around 1728 at Rishihat, 13 kilometres west of Darjeeling. The abbot of Pemayangtse, Khenchen Rolpai Dorje, used to spend his summers in this monastery (Ardussi et al, 2021, p.181). After being destroyed in the Gorkha expansion in Darjeeling-Sikkim, it was established in 1817 below the Observatory Hill. However, due to complaints of noise from the British, it was shifted to its present location in the Ging monastery in 1879 (Ardussi et al, 2021, p.181).

The present Pemayangtse-affiliated Ging monastery's linkage to the Observatory Hill was expressed in a unique manner by the present head monk of the Ging monastery. He stated that a popular idea among the monks and adherents is of how the 'protector deity' or གཞུང་མཁའ་ལྔ་པ་ of the monastery rides a white horse and travels uphill from Ging to the Observatory Hill. He further mentioned how a series of stupas/chortens used to connect the monastery to the Hill. In this narrative, the role of the protector deity, which in most cases is an indigenous deity, is important. As mentioned earlier, the autochthonous deities provide a form of continuity, which is important in terms of establishing a historical narrative. While they (Ging) do not express any kind of claims over the Observatory Hill, the above narrative presents an understanding of linkages between the Observatory Hill and the Ging Nyingma monastery. What is interesting is how the Kagyu monks from the Phodong monastery at Bhutia Busty, established in the 1860s, claim that their monastery originally stood at the top of the Observatory Hill, though there is no evidence supporting such a claim. The Kagyu lamas together with Darjeeling's Buddhist community may have felt so because of their strong association with the location of the first Wangdu Dorjeling monastery, as their lamas have consistently and till this day maintained a Buddhist presence at the now predominantly Hindu Mahakal temple at the top of the Observatory Hill (Ardussi et al, 2021, p.181). The reason that can be cited for the presence of the Kagyu lamas and not their Nyingmapa counterparts on the Observatory Hill, even though the space originally had an institution built by a Nyingma master, is that the Nyingmas, represented here by Ging monastery, lacked the organisational and institutional strength which is much present in the Kagyu order. It is only recently that the Ging monastery admitted more monks, the majority of whom are young boys. The consecration ceremony of the newly renovated Ging monastery took place on 22 May 2024. It had been severely damaged by the earthquake in 2011. Also, it was after a long period that the Pemayangtse monastery had deputed a head lama to the Ging monastery (Chettri, 2011).

Sikkimese monks in a Hindu Temple

The Observatory Hill is presently known and portrayed as a Hindu temple. A signboard welcoming visitors and devotees opposite the flight of steps that leads to the Observatory Hill proclaims that the space is home to one of the holiest Hindu shrines dedicated to Mahakal Baba, but is uniquely shared with Buddhist worshippers (Rotary Club of Darjeeling). Erected jointly by the Rotary Club and the West Bengal Tourism Department, the signboard emphasises the Hinduism of the Hill. Furthermore, the entire hill has several temples of varying sizes dedicated to various Hindu gods and goddesses. In 2023, the Mahakal Mandir Shivratri Committee, a relatively new association that organises the annual Shivratri puja dedicated to the deity Shiva, constructed the twelve (12) Jyotirlingas, symbols of Shiva, outside the main temple. It was brought and consecrated by a Hindu priestess from Ujjain on 5 July, 2023. According to Nima Tsering, the senior monk in the Mahakal Temple, it was during the tenure of the late Gorkha leader, Subash Ghising, in the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) that three smaller Hindu temples were built adjacent to the main temple. The Buddhist lamas are in a minority but do exercise considerable authority and influence in the hill. For instance, the senior monk mentioned how the Shivratri festival, which started from 2014-15, is coordinated with the Bhutia Busty monastery. The Hindu priests, mostly from Nepal, are appointed from the Dhirdham temple, an institution that was established by the Nepalese government in the 1930s. However, the current Hindu officiant in the Mahakal Temple, Balaram Sharma, mentioned that the Bhutia Busty monastery played a role in his appointment in the temple. The strong connections between the monastery and the Mahakal Temple are evident through the '*dakshina*' (donations) given by the devotees and pilgrims to the monks in the Mahakal Temple, which in turn is transferred to the Bhutia Busty monastery. These are used to perform various rites and rituals propitiating different Buddhist deities. According to Ugyen Tshering Bhutia, secretary of the Mahakal Dara Committee, the offerings from the devotees are utilised while performing prayers during sacred Buddhist days such as Tsechu and Gutor in the Bhutia Busty monastery (Santosh et al, 2018, p.54).

The above narrative is significant as this transfer of money by the devotees (both Hindus and Buddhists) from the Mahakal Temple to the monastery subsequently binds them in a priest-patron relationship with the monastery. I witnessed this on 16th February, 2025, during one of my many sojourns to the Observatory Hill, when a Bengali couple offered some '*dakshina*' (money) to Lama Tenzin and mentioned that the prayers were to be dedicated in the name of 'Swastika Mukherjee'. The money collected in the temple is divided equally between the Buddhist monk and the Hindu priest. The temple on the Observatory Hill is also considered to be the 'head' of the Dotsug monastery. During British rule, the authorities had failed to construct a rest house on top of the hill. It was then that a monk from Phodong monastery had arrived on the site and, after seeing a discarded standing stone, had started worshipping it (Santosh et al, 2018, p. 103). While the identity of this lama is not known, Lama Nima Tsering, the current senior-most monk in the

Mahakal Temple, mentioned how, before him, the senior monk was Khyapu Lama. Prior to him were others such as Prem Dorje Lama, Ongay Lama and Tsering Lama (Santosh et al, 2018, p. 96). Presently, there are five monks at the Mahakal Temple on Observatory Hill. They are more or less affiliated to the Kagyu monastery in Bhutia Busty. Lama Tenzing, the former teacher at the monastery school and one of the five in the Hill, mentioned that they were transferred every six months. He is a well-built individual with a good command of Tibetan, who constantly emphasised the need to preserve the Buddhist identity of the Hill. He started his life as a monk in the Shangpa Kagyu-affiliated Bokar Ngedon Chokor Ling Monastery in Mirik, but eventually came to the Dotsug/Bhutia Busty monastery. He mentioned that there are 25-26 monks in the monastery, with 12 monks living in the monastic quarters built behind the main monastery. The monastery is managed by a committee of 26 members, which comprises both lay individuals and the clergy. Lama Tenzin is also an executive in the monastery committee.

According to him, the committee does play a role in the affairs of the Mahakal Temple. Nevertheless, it is the monk's body that decides the transfer of monks to the Observatory Hill. The Bhutia Busty monastery also receives an annual grant of 6000 rupees from the Sikkim State Government, which also strengthens the priest-patron relationship between the monastery and Sikkim. Recently, the Sikkim State Government provided funds for constructing new floors in the monk quarters. Lama Tenzing also remarked that while Phodong monastery does not have direct authority over the Bhutia Busty monastery, the majority of the monks belong to Phodong. Moreover, it is only after a request for monks from the Bhutia Busty monastic management committee that Phodong sends monks. It is with the Ecclesiastical Department of the Sikkim Government that the Bhutia Busty monastery has a direct connection. Lama Tenzing, as well as the senior Lama Nima, mentioned how they associated the Buddhist tantric deity Mahakala, a powerful dharma protector and a yidam (tutelary deity), as being the primary divinity located in the Observatory Hill. The deity is the chief protector of the Karmapas. Kyabje Gyaltsab Rinpoche, one of the heart sons of the Karmapa and who had founded the Ralang monastery in Sikkim, had also donated a statue of a protector deity to be kept in the Mahakal Temple. Every evening, the monks in the temple as well as the monastery perform the Mahakala kangsol. They also propitiate the goddess Jetsun Dolma (Tara) on the 8th day of the Tibetan month, the tsechu worship of Guru Padmasambhava, Vajravarahi (Dorje Phagmo) on the 25th day and also the Pang Lhabsol. The last ritual is a unique 'Sikkimese' ritual tied to propitiating Mount Khangchendzonga. It was started by Chogyal Chagdor Namgyal along with the Dzogchen reincarnate Jigme Pawo, with both of them choreographing the ritual dances of the Pang Lhabsol. Along with Mount Khangchendzonga, all the deities of the land are also worshipped through the "neysol" texts that were started by Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo (Ardussi et al, 2021, p.137). Hence, the observation of the Pang Lhabsol by monks in the Mahakal Temple and the Bhutia Busty monastery in Darjeeling further strengthens the interconnections between Sikkim and Darjeeling.

The Senchal Dhaam on Tiger Hill – A Guardian for Beyul Demojong

The second site in Darjeeling investigated in this paper, which highlights the Buddhist interconnections between Sikkim and Darjeeling, is the Senchal Dhaam located on Tiger Hill. It is situated at an elevation of 8500 feet above sea level, making it the highest spot in Darjeeling and is a popular tourist spot, famed for its views of the sunrise and the Himalayan range. For the benefit of the tourists and other visitors, the government has built an elevated platform on top of the hill. A few meters below this platform are a few Hindu temples, dedicated to different deities. However, the most prominent and tutelary deity of the hill is the Goddess Durga, who is known in the form of Senchal Devi. Unlike the Mahakal Mandir in the Observatory Hill, the Senchal temple is completely presided over by the Hindu priests. The Buddhist presence in the premises of the temple is in the form of a few iconographic images of the historic Buddha Shakyamuni and framed photographs of Guru Rinpoche and his consort Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal. Also, there is an earthen vat outside the temple where people can perform the ‘sang’ rituals. Furthermore, the Buddhist icons are kept outside the main shrine. However, the space above the temple is covered with Buddhist prayer flags or ‘lungta’. Interestingly, above the entrance of the main temple is an image of the Goddess Durga, who is riding a distinct snow lion, a mythical beast that also adorns the national flag of Tibet. As a place, Senchal is mentioned in the Royal History of Sikkim as it is the place where the Lepcha minister Chagzod Garwang, who supported the Chogyal Namgyal Phuntsog (1733-1780) and had taken him to Senchal near Darjeeling (Ardussi et al, 2021, p.171). The minister had taken the young king to safety during a period marked by civil war.

Hence, Senchal might have had a Lepcha settlement, an idea which is further strengthened by the fact that the Lepchas considered the hill to be sacred. For them, the hill was associated with their deity Sinchul. Queeny Pradhan (2017) writes that there was a Lepcha shrine around Tiger Hill where a white swan resided. The British in 1857-60 attempted to destroy the shrine and kill the swan, which led to them suffering divine retribution. The story goes that many of the British officers had committed suicide (Pradhan, 2017, p.32). Eventually, the space became associated with the Hindu goddess Durga. Interestingly, the idea of divine punishment for various transgressions committed in the vicinity of the temple is present as understood through the various anecdotal stories narrated by people from all walks of life. This includes the Tibetan Buddhist monks from the ‘Ngayab Choling’ monastery or the Jorebunglow monastery, which was restored by Kyabje Chadril Rinpoche. According to the Lama Gendun la, a senior monk, the goddess residing in Senchal is a རྒྱལ་པོ་ལྷ་མོ་ or the deity of the local territory. He narrated a story of a punishment that was meted out by the deity on a young monk, in the form of painful blisters on his back, after he had urinated in the bamboo grove below the main temple. It was only after performing the ‘smoke offerings’ or sangsol to the deity by the monks that the young monk was slightly cured. Furthermore, the late Nyingma yogi Kyabje Chadril Rinpoche used to regularly visit and pay his respects at the shrine in Tiger Hill (Lauren, 2016). The Tibetan Buddhist master

was also instrumental in ending the practice of animal sacrifices on the hill. Significantly, it is Chadral Rinpoche who establishes a Buddhist interconnection between Senchal and Sikkim. The narrative goes that the deity on the Tiger Hill had appeared in the dreams of the great Nyingma yogi, prompting him to compose a 'serkyem' for propitiating the Jowo Senchal. The text is in the form of an instruction from Chadral Sangye Dorje that was written down by a monk, Karma Lodoe, in the Jorebunglow monastery in 2000. The text mentions Dorjeling as a 'beyul', with the sacred land being protected by the 'ney-dag', Jowo Senchal (Lodoe, 2000, p.2). Furthermore, the sacred site of Dorjeling is a part of the larger sacred geography of Beyul Demojong, whose centre is Drakar Tashiding (Lodoe, 2000, p.4).

References

- Ardussi, J.A., & Denjongpa, A.B., & Sorenson, P.K., (2021). *The Royal History of Sikkim: A Chronicle of the House of Namgyal*. Serindia Publications.
- Bhanja, K.C. (1948). *Mystic Tibet and The Himalaya*. Gilbert and Company.
- Blondeau, A.M., & Steinkellner, E., (1996). *Reflections of the Mountain – Essays on the History and Social Meaning of the Mountain Cult in Tibet and the Himalaya*. Verlag Der Osterreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften.
- Chatterji, A., (2007). *Contested Landscapes: The Story of Darjeeling*. Indian Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage.
- Chettri, V. (2011, November 11). 200 year monastery in aftershock. *The Telegraph Online*. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/200-year-monastery-in-aftershock/cid/324082>.
- Dash, A.J., (1947). *Bengal District Gazetteers – Darjeeling*. Bengal Government Press.
- Denjongpa, A.B., (2002). Kangchendzonga: Secular and Buddhist perceptions of the mountain deity of Sikkim among the Lhopos. *Bulletin of Tibetology*, 38(2), 5-37.
- DarjeelingTimes.com.(2015,March 1).Sonam W.LadenLa: Makers of Darjeeling.Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=637733526370262&id=613509092126039&set=a.619268708216744>.
- Huber, T., (2008). *The Holy Land Reborn – Pilgrimage and the Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India*. University of Chicago Press.
- Karmay, S.G. (1996). The Tibetan cult of mountain deities and its political significance. In Blondeau, A.M., & Steinkellner, E (Eds.) *Reflections of the Mountain – Essays on the History and Social Meaning of the Mountain Cult in Tibet and the Himalaya*. Verlag Der Osterreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften.

O'Malley, L.S.S., (1907). *Bengal District Gazetteers – Darjeeling*. The Bengal Secretariat.

Pradhan, Q., (2017). *Empire in the Hills: Simla, Darjeeling, Ootacamund, and Mount Abu, 1820-1920*. Oxford University Press.

Steinmann, B., (1996). Mountain deities, the invisible body of the society – A comparative study of the representations of mountains by the Tamang and the Thami of Nepal, the Lepcha and Bhotia of Sikkim. In Blondeau, A.M., & Steinkellner, E (Eds.) *Reflections of the Mountain – Essays on the History and Social Meaning of the Mountain Cult in Tibet and the Himalaya*. Verlag Der Österreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften.

Visible, yet Invisible Daughters of the Buddha: The Struggle for Identity and Quest of Enlightenment of the Tibetan Buddhist Nuns in Sikkim

Diptangshu Dutta Gupta

Introduction:

Is every woman like Māra's Daughters?

Sundari is your disciple, Great Hero (Verse 337)
She left Benares and came to where you are,
and now she bows to your feet.

You are the Buddha, you are my teacher; (Verse 338)
Brahman, I am your daughter,
your own child, born from your mouth,
all that needs to be done has been done,
I am free from all that defiles from within.

- *The Therīgatha* (Hallisey, 2021, p. 78)¹

I have been travelling in the Himalayas frequently for the last decade, and my experience with the Tibetan Buddhist Culture has therefore been a long one. The Himalayas are strewn with prominent, beautiful monasteries, some being important centres of different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. It is easier to spot monasteries than nunneries as one travels in the Himalayas. Nunneries often tend to be located in places far away from the cities and towns where the human population is generally less and where there is less social contact. The controversy over the ordination of Buddhist nuns is one of the major issues that the Buddhist world faces today. But this problem has a long historical origin predating the foundation of Buddhism.

As sources tell us in the Buddhist literature like *Samyutta Nikāya* of the *Suttā Pitākā*, the *Samyukta-āgama* and the *Lalitavistāra*, on the eve of attaining enlightenment, Prince Siddhārtha was troubled by the daughters of Māra - Taṇha, Arāti, and Rāga who intended to seduce the Sakya prince (Sander & Waldschmidt, 1985, p. 257; Lefmann, 1902, p. 378, 14).² Siddhārtha was undeterred by the wiles of the handsome daughters of Māra, as he was persistent in achieving his enlightenment to become the Buddha. The success of early Buddhism in prehistoric India was attested by the fact that it was a respite for the women, *śudras* and the outcastes who were not welcomed in Brahmanism. Although laywomen could attend the discourses of the *bhikkhus* and serve them, they were generally not welcomed in the Buddhist Saṅgha. The Buddha's negative perception of women might be traced to Māra's three daughters. The foundational history of

the order of nuns is basically a *Vināya* narrative that reveals the patriarchal anxieties towards women's ordination and involvement in the Saṅgha. Mahāprajāpatī Gotami was the first nun to be ordained in the Buddhist Saṅgha. There are seven traditions regarding the story of the foundation of the nun's order, each having its own version (Anālayo, 2016). But what was common in all these Chinese translations and Sanskrit and Pali writings was that Gotami's appeal to the Buddha was rejected. Gotami, the Buddha's aunt and foster mother, would be finally ordained upon the intervention of Ānanda, the Buddha's favourite disciple, who requested the Buddha to allow nuns to join the Saṅgha (Anālayo, 2016, pp. 16 – 25). Early Buddhist discourses do not unilaterally consider females as snares of Māra who lure innocent males into sexual desire. Instead, as the present set of discourses plainly shows, it is the male Māra – and by definition, only a male can be Māra – who stands for sensual temptation and sexual aggression (Anālayo, 2016, p. 81). Thus, it can be argued that the ordination of nuns in the contemporary Buddhist world is not a new matter; rather, it dates back to the life of the Buddha.

The ordination of nuns in the Buddhist order has always been a contested one, and there is continued activism over their rights of recognition with feminist approaches from both Western and Eastern scholars. In the field of Buddhist Studies, several prominent Western feminist scholars in the context of gender studies have examined the intersection of 'Women' and 'Religion' to lay the groundwork for feminist theological studies in Buddhism (Choden, 2019, p. 4). Some of them include Miranda Shaw, Kim Gutschow, Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo and Rita Gross. Most importantly, there is a pressing need for more women from the Himalayan region with a Buddhist-rich environment to address this and develop a perspective on Eastern scholarship (Choden, 2019, pp. 4–5). Although this study attempts to locate the current position of Tibetan Nuns in Buddhism, it solely focuses on the conditions of Sikkimese nuns (*anis*) and how their actions and struggle for enlightenment have affected and impacted the current scenario of Buddhism in Sikkim.

Method –

The Daughters of the Buddha, then and now –

If the nuns were truly to be considered as the daughters of the Buddha, the reality may not seem as pleasing. Gotami and other women approached the Buddha three times for their inclusion into the Saṅgha, only to be rejected each time. The women left weeping, but they persisted. They cut off their hair, put on saffron robes, and, travelling on foot, went on to the Buddha's next stopping place (Gross, 1993, pp. 39 – 64). Gotami was allowed to be ordained by the Buddha only upon the condition that she had to abide by the eight 'heavy' rules (*gurudharma* or *garudharma*), which were instructed to the nuns by Ānanda, who formally subordinated the

nuns to the monks. Among the eight rules, there is a rule that even if a nun has been ordained and is 100 years old, she must still bow to a monk ordained for only one day (Strong, 2002/2008, pp. 51 – 55). The Gurudharmas vary in different versions of the Buddhist literature (like the Haimavata, Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka and Theravāda versions), but Analayo has categorised them in his scholarly work into two categories – the Gurudharmas on Communal Transactions³ and the Gurudharmas on Homage and Criticisms⁴ (Analayo, 2016, p. 95). Moreover, it is the only Haimavata version that spells out the eight rules in full detail.

Women's access to full ordination as Buddhist nuns (*bhikkhunī*) and proper recognition of ordained nuns is one of the most contested issues in the Buddhist world today (Mrozik, 2009, p. 360). Buddhist nuns are still in a struggle for their proper recognition, even in these contemporary times, right from the historical period. There are instances of what conditions the nuns will be fully ordained and give equal spaces to represent themselves on international platforms, especially where *bhikkhunī* lineages are dying out. For example, the first Sri Lankan women were fully ordained in 1996 and 1998 since their order died out in the eleventh century due to war. Theravada Buddhists were reluctant to ordain new nuns and monks of different Buddhists tradition. The first Sri Lankan *bhikkhunīs* were ordained in international ceremonies hosted in India by Korean and Taiwanese monasteries. Since 1998, women can also become fully ordained in Sri Lanka. (Mrozik, 2009, p. 361). Tibetan Buddhist Nuns observe an expanded list of 36 novice precepts and cannot become fully ordained, yet they are part of the Saṅgha (Mrozik, 2009, p. 364). As for the Theravada Nuns in Southeast Asia, they are barred from novice ordination and are categorised according to civil and religious law as laity rather than Saṅgha (Gutschow 2004, p. 173). Buddhism has itself proliferated into many schools largely under the Theravāda, Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna traditions. Their struggle is not only restricted to just recognition but also in terms of empowerment in both ecclesiastical and social domains. The Buddhist monks are very publicly visible as opposed to the obscure nuns. Even if one visits the Himalayan regions of India, Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan, one can easily locate a monastery but not a nunnery, which is located in quiet and isolated areas far away from the monasteries.

The rules of monastic discipline in the *Vināya* were said to be laid down by the Buddha himself, which were compiled as texts by his disciples after his *Mahāparinirvāṇa*. Since maintaining the perception of an unbroken monastic lineage is vital to the legitimacy of present-day monks, nuns, and their institutions, the fate of the *bhikkhunī* movement rests, in part, on painstaking *vināya* research to determine whether there is any way to ordain nuns without compromising the integrity of a particular lineage (Mrozik, 2009, p. 363). Though we do find nuns taking an important initiative in ordination and imparting discourses, such instances are rare. One prominent example can be of Maurya Emperor Aśoka's diplomatic mission to Sri Lanka under the King Devanampiya Tissa, where Aśoka sends his daughter Saṅghamitra (Pali – Saṅghamitta) to lead this diplomatic mission from Pataliputra to Anuradhapura. Saṅghamitra

takes a sapling of the Bodhi Tree to be planted there as part of an important diplomatic exchange. There, she founded the order of nuns or the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in Sri Lanka. Rita Gross shows that the *Therīgāthā* attributes a conflict with regard to the lack of success of the early Buddhist nuns to the Buddha's reluctance to allow them to join the Saṅgha. Gross states that from the beginning, Buddhists advocated both that there is some problem with women and that women are just as capable as men of achieving Buddhism's goals. But from the beginning, the Buddhist position is unclear and ambiguous because the Buddhist approach was either very egalitarian or negative to women, and the relationship between Early Buddhism and women was not quite a harmonious one (Gross, 1993, p. 30). The negative perception of females and the female body is not new to Buddhism. The *Jātakatthavahana*, or the Pali Jātakas, which deal with the stories of the previous births of the Buddha as Bodhisattvas (Pali – Bodhisattas), are filled with such stories. The *Jātakatthavahana*, which forms a part of the Kuddhaka Nikaya, forms a collection of 550 stories that throw light on early Indian society. For example, Sattubhastha Jātaka outlines sixteen things that could not be satisfied, wherein it states that “women cannot be satisfied of their need for three things: intercourse, adornments and child bearing” (Cowell, 1907, vol. III, p. 402). Again, the Maccha Jātaka (Cowell, 1895, vol. I, p. 34) and Mora Jātaka (Cowell, 1895, vol. II, p. 159) state that males have died due to their passion towards females, where the latter are presented as iron fetters. Another story from Takka Jātaka (Cowell, 1895, vol. I, p. 63) shows that women were a direct threat to Buddhist asceticism; the moral of the story simplifies that women are ungrateful beings who can sow the seeds of dissension and strife in the Saṅgha and hence must be avoided at any cost. In this story, a princess is saved from a hermit and then marries him, causing the hermit to lose his ascetic powers, and then becomes lustful for a bandit and plots to kill her husband. A similar parable to this one, the Cullapadma Jātaka, states that a woman goes away with the robbers, abandoning her once-ascetic husband, who had saved her life by giving her blood from his knee to drink (Cowell, 1907, vol. III, p. 193).

Stories we come across in the Mahāyāna sūtras also show how women had to undergo gender change in order to become the rightful recipients of Dharma. Mahāyāna Buddhism was more sympathetic to the existential concerns of the laity, but it did not likewise escape from the element of misogyny as found in its literature. Diana Y. Paul argues that preservation of societal order was very similar to monastic order, and that may have dictated that a woman's position should not be elevated (Paul, 1985, p. 8). As regards to sex change for females to become the rightful recipients of dharma and finally becoming a Bodhisattva, Mahāyāna sūtras like the *Aṣṭasāhasrika PrajñāpāramitāSūtra* (Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses), *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (The White Lotus of the Good Dharma, popularly the Lotus Sūtra) and the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* (Pure Land Sūtra) give examples where women were denied entry into a Buddha land or fields or, even if accepted, they would be allowed as lower-stage Bodhisattvas (Paul, 1985, pp. 168 – 169). Chapter 19 of the *Aṣṭasāhasrika PrajñāpāramitāSūtra* (AsP) throws light on the

patriarchal perspective of the nature of texts – the River Goddess Ganga, who was present in the assembly where the Buddha was giving discourse, happens to stand up from the gathering as she wanted to be a Bodhisattva. The Buddha speaks to Ānanda that in the future, the Goddess Ganges would be reborn as a man in Abhirati, the Buddha-field of the Tathagata Akshobhya, to become a successful arhat and attain enlightenment (Conze, 1958, pp. 140 – 142, *AsP* 19.5). The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* or the Lotus Sūtra also tells the story of how the snake princess or nāgīni who is said to be the daughter of King Sāgara undergoes a sex change when questioned by Sariputra on her inability to attain Buddhahood because of her lack of achievement of five states – to be a Brahmā, Śakra, one of the four mahārājas, a chakravartin and an irreversible bodhisattva (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka: The White Lotus of the Good Dharma*, 2018, 11.98, 11.100 – 102). Of course, it goes without saying that Buddhism shared misogynist perceptions like Brahmanism as reflected in its literature. This is because the period of second urbanisation⁵ from c. 800 – c. 600 BCE saw changes in the early Indian economy and society that led to a system of patrilineal inheritance, which ultimately sought control over women's sexuality, which took a shape in Brahmanical law discourses that, in turn, also affected Buddhism as well (Chakravarti, 1993, p. 4). The subordination of a woman's authority to that of a man reflects the social order of India and the monastic community of that time, where even the senior nun must be deferential to the youngest novice monk (Paul, 1985, p. 170). The Brahmanical law treatises or the *smṛti* texts like the Dharmasūtras and *Manusmṛti* give elaborate discourses on females in early Indian society. As Karma Lekshe Tsomo argues, the legacy of the Buddhist women starts with the Buddha's birth mother, Mahāmāyā, without whom the existence of Gautama Buddha would not have been possible. Tsomo further views Mahāprajāpati as the first great Buddhist social activist, whose leadership in advocating for the admission of women to the monastic order is among the earliest recorded instances of what today is termed feminist advocacy (Tsomo, 2014, introduction). This stereotypical image of women and their bodies as inferior to the monks even exists today in Buddhism; Tibetan nuns were not an exception to this. As case studies on the Sikkimese nuns show (Choden, 2019), the gender discrepancies are those challenges that are currently underway for Sikkimese Buddhism. These case studies, as shown later in the following sections, show the lived experiences of nuns in Sikkim and what could be the possible resolutions.

The Exiled Daughters and their Dual Struggle for Identity: The Double Subalternisation of the Tibetan Buddhist Nuns –

Tibet was annexed by China in 1951. Later the His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama escaped to India from Lhasa in 1959. The Cultural Revolution of 1966-76 witnessed the destruction of Buddhist institutions, temples and monasteries by the Communist regime of China led by Mao Zedong (Schneider, 2022, p. 2). Gradually, Tibetans were being expelled from Tibet to different parts of the world in order to escape the autocratic communist Chinese occupation of Tibet. Before I take up the issue of Sikkimese nuns, I first plan to lay out the current conditions

of Tibetan Nuns in general so that while dealing with the context of the Sikkimese nuns or anis, the contexts of their challenges and problems they face and the subsequent resolutions to those challenges and problems would be clearer to the readers of this paper. With the monks, nuns too accompanied the entourage of the Dalai Lama who was then en route to India (Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh) in 1959.

The subordination of the identity of nuns is not new, something which has been attested by historical sources at the beginning of this paper. The monks are more revered in the socio-religious sphere as they not only dictated and interpreted the scriptures, but they also received education, which allowed them to connect not only with the local people but also internationally, as they are well-equipped with the new technologies of this age. There were by far fewer nunneries than monasteries in Tibet, and 99% of nuns who arrived as refugees had received no formal education. These are the nuns who initially fled to India from Tibet following the immediate Chinese occupation. Many could not even write their names. For the first nuns who escaped to India, such academic achievement was unimaginable (Chawla, 2018). Now nuns are receiving more and more formal education as they travel to places far and wide, spreading and preaching the message of the Buddha and the Dhamma. Moreover, the nuns back then were not fully ordained in the Saṅgha. Therefore, the challenges posed to the nuns were many that often overlapped with each other – be it lack of education or employment opportunities, rights to full ordination or recognising them at the same level as that of the monks. Their status as minority refugees in India and persecuted minorities under China also needs to be factored in. Therefore, I have identified that these nuns are doubly-subalternised, one under the authoritarian state (with Tibet under Chinese occupation) and as a refugee status (in India) and secondly, under monastic patriarchy. My view to designate the nuns as those who are dually subalternised comes from Partha Chatterjee's argument on the resolution of women's question in Colonial India, where he identifies the women in the colonial period who were subalternised firstly, under the colonial state, and secondly, under the new patriarchy of the late 19th Century which witnessed the emergence of Hindu revivalism (Chatterjee, 1993). In one way, the nuns were already in a weak position in terms of political representation both in India and China since the post-colonial times, and then their life in the Saṅgha was itself marked by misogyny and unequal ecclesiastical representation.

Likewise, in the case of Sikkim, the reality of nuns is almost similar because the lack of literature on them is a major factor in investigating their agency within the monastic sphere. Comparatively, in other areas like Zangskar, Spiti and Ladakh, nuns there have been extensively documented by feminist researchers for a long time. Even Bhutan has shown a consistent commitment to improving the self-reliance of the nuns of Bhutan by uplifting their socio-economic conditions, spiritually, and creating economic and intellectual self-sufficiency (Choden, 2019, p. 6, 24). This project is known as the Bhutan Nuns Foundation. The stories

from the case studies of different Sikkimese nuns show the problems and the obstacles that they go through within the Sikkimese society and inside the Sikkimese monasteries (Bhutia, 2014, chapter 13; Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, 2014). I term this as their “Hidden Struggle in Hidden Land”.

The Hidden Struggle in Hidden Land –

Sikkim had been historically considered a Hidden Land (Tib. *sbas yul*), set aside by Guru Padmasambhava or Rinpoche as one of the sites only to be revealed to those from the mundane world at an appropriate time of spiritual insight (Ehrhard, 1999, pp. 227 – 239). The very etymology used to address the Tibetan nuns in Sikkim is androcentric in nature. Though ‘Lama’ is a respected term used to address the monks, the nuns are addressed as ‘Anis’ or aunts and are treated simply as lay people in the monastic order. Similar to Southeast Asian nuns, the honorific vocabulary and gestures of respect for the Saṅgha are somewhat omitted or modified (Kawanami, 1990, pp. 28– 36). Nuns cannot call themselves *sāmaṇerī* or novices but instead go by the terms *maechee* (mother ascetic) in Thailand and *tilashin* (possessors of morality) in Myanmar (Mrozik, 2009, p. 364). Although secondary literature mostly reflects this view, I have seen during my brief visit to Sikkim in March, 2025 that although the nuns are addressed by the term ‘Ani’, they are not offended. Because the anis see nothing demeaning in this, they are revered and quite popular in places where spiritual services are mostly catered to by nunneries rather than monasteries. Tashi Tsering mentions that the use of term ‘Anis’ is common in Central Tibet (Tucci, 1970/1980, p. 87), *jomo* in western Tibet, Ladakh and Amdo (Tucci, 1970/1980, pp. 87 – 93), and *germa* is a term used in the northeastern part of Kham province of Tibet (Havnevik, 1989, p. 44). Failure to recognise patriarchy as a gateway to gender imbalance has tricked people into believing that things are running quite smoothly. Understanding reality may not seem either easy or pleasing when one goes through the many layers which are there within the monastic order, be it in historical and contemporary times. Before I start with the contemporary scenario of the Anis, I begin with the origins of their struggle, drawing on sources about two important figures in Sikkimese History: Jetsun Mingyur Paldron (Bhutia, 2014) and Pelling Ani Wangdzin (Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, 2014).

The first case, Jetsun Mingyur Paldron (Tib: *Rje btsun Mi ‘gyur dpal sgron*, 1699–1769), forms an important figure in the list of female practitioners of the Mindroling (tib: *Smin gro gling*) tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Her father was the founder of the Mindroling tradition, Terdag Lingpa (Tib: *Gter bdag gling pa*, 1646–1714). What is most fascinating is her contribution towards the rebuilding of the Mindroling Monastery after it was destroyed in 1718 by the Dzungar Mongol forces. She and her brother both worked on the rebuilding of the monastery (Bhutia, 2014, chapter 13). Her efforts in this case are very similar to the nuns or *bhikkhunīs* of Early Buddhism in Ancient India, who are known for their generous donations of stupas and Buddhist

images at important Buddhist sites in early India. A notable example can be made of Queen Karuvaki, the wife of Emperor Aśoka, who was the first Buddhist woman to figure by name in Indian inscriptions incised on the famous Ashokan pillar at Allahabad, otherwise known as the ‘Queen’s Pillar Edict’ (Mokashi, 2017, p. 108). The Mahastupa at Sanchi, also popularly known as the Sanchi Stupa in Madhya Pradesh, India, owes its existence to eighty-seven female devotees of whom Bhikkhunī Kadi from Ujjayini features among the list of donative inscriptions. Also, *therī* (revered nun) Ponakisana and the bhikkhunī Damila donated at various sites (Mokashi, 2017, p. 109). The activities of Mingyur Paldron are known from her biography written thirteen years after her demise by her student Khyungpo Repa Gyurme Osel (Khyung po ras pa ‘gyur med od gsal, 1715–1782). Her history begins in Sikkim when she, along with her family, escapes to Sikkim from Mindroling during the Mongol invasion of 1718. Her arrival marks the beginning of an important history of the Mindroling lineage in Sikkimese Buddhism. She was received with a royal welcome by the Sikkimese *Chogyal* upon her arrival in the kingdom. Different accounts record her activities in Sikkim; one anecdote informs us that she gave public teachings during her visits to different Buddhist shrines in Sikkim. Local oral history also reveals that she had been invited up to the Pemayangtse (Tib: Pad ma dbyang brtse) monastery but had declined on the grounds that it was inappropriate for a nun to visit an institution for male Vināya holders (Tib: dge slong). This shows that internalised monastic patriarchy is not something new faced by the anis or nuns now, as is evident from this story. Nevertheless, other anecdotes do explain her spiritual powers when she performed an *abhicara* (wrathful ritual) as a form of war magic to impale the invading Mongol army through internal feuding. Her life in exile also shows some important aspects of the history of Tibetan nuns. She had to lead the entourage towards Sikkim for safety when the Mongols invaded. Moreover, despite being separated from her family, she didn’t let herself stop practising the tradition of her lineage. Instead, she was an important teacher of its promotion in Sikkim before she returned home (Bhutia, 2014).

The second case can be made of Pelling Ani Wangdzin. Her story reveals the ambiguities of monastic and societal perceptions on gendered experience of nuns (in Sikkim). Her family was associated with the Pemayangtse Monastery (H.R.H. Mthu stobs Rnam rgyal the Chos rgyal of Sikkim & H.R.H. The Maharani Rgyal mo Ye shes sgrol ma, 1908/2003). ‘Pelling Ani Wangdzin was born into a well-connected and religiously oriented family - her father was a generous patron of Buddhism, and her two older brothers were ritual specialists at Pemayangtse, counted among the important religious advisors to the king (Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, 2014). When exactly she adopted robes is uncertain. Oral traditions say that she accepted the vows of being a bhikkhunī at the age of ten. Her resistance to attempts to secure her a marital alliance with another wealthy or religious family is a common story. Nuns sought to escape the trials and tribulations of a material world by joining the Saṅgha, which offers a space for respite. As a nun, she made pilgrimage tours alone to Bodhgaya from where she toured pilgrim sites

in Nepal and Tibet. In Tibet, she travelled to Kham, where she is said to have studied with the renowned teacher Tokden Shakya Shri (Tib. Rtogs Idan Śākyashrī, 1853–1919). Unlike written sources, oral sources, being intangible, are difficult to rely on and hence have to be justified with caution while writing and understanding history. Given her unparalleled initiative and efforts to undertake pilgrimage tours, learning and preaching to people, one memory remains clear in the popular history of Sikkim: she participated in the Tsari Rongkhor Chenmo. The Tsari Rongkhor Chenmo (Tib. Rong skor chen mo, literally “the great circumambulation of the valleys”) was a physically gruelling and spiritually challenging pilgrimage that went the entire way around Tsari (Southern Tibet), travelling a circuit that went through jungles and over mountain tracks (Huber, 1999, chapter 8). Three of these events happened during her lifetime - in 1884, 1896, and 1908. Assuming that she did the Tsari Rongkhor Chenmo in 1908 while she was in her late teens or early twenties, it seems likely that she studied with Shakya Shri at about that same time.

Contemporary stories about Sikkimese nuns show their hidden struggle in action in the hidden land. Sikkim is home to five nunneries with only about 400 nuns or fewer. Merit (Skt: *punya*) by undertaking virtuous acts is a typical feature in Tibetan Buddhism, in which joining religious or monastic spaces counts as one. It is considered an act of Dharma (Choden, 2019, pp. 16 – 17). Their quest for Dharma may not be as simple as it is for the monks, for Buddhist literature itself gives ample evidence of the dual struggle for nuns to become the rightful recipients of Dharma. As shown at the beginning of this paper, one of the obstacles in achieving Dharma for any sentient being is to take birth as a female. The female body is considered a defilement to the path of being a bodhisattva.

Ani Pema left her nunnery to study in a government college in Gangtok. The nunnery was a respite from her abusive, alcoholic father. But for nuns to leave the monastic life, as compared to monks who can easily embrace family life, is quite challenging. Making independent choices comes with lots of backlash, both in the monastic sphere and society, for the nuns whose independent agency is completely controlled by patriarchal ethos. Ani Pema’s story shows the nunnery is a safe haven for nuns whose futures are uncertain. But the moment they step out of it, their future again comes into question. Sonam Choden questions the reality of the ‘sense of security’ of these nunneries because these nunneries aren’t self-reliant institutions due to their continued dependence on male authority and patronage, and secondly, the lack of female leadership, administrators and financiers is another issue (Choden, 2019, p. 19). It is also unfortunate to see the lack of nuns because, most importantly, I feel there is still a lack of community consciousness in order to place their stance firmly in the Buddhist World. Another issue the Sikkimese nuns face is that they cannot go to retreats alone. To go to retreats as a group in forests or isolated places for meditation is not possible due to the lack of mobility of nuns, despite Sikkim being well known for women’s safety. The Lingdum Nunnery has a spacious structure above the nunnery for the nuns to meditate in a safe space. It can be said without hesitation that with internalisation

of patriarchy comes internalisation of fear, which is seen among the nuns who are not confident enough to find solace in their desired retreat spots.

Ani Kesang is another example who feels that the monks should not be superior to nuns, but cannot materialise this thought as society compels nuns to think that they are subordinate to the monks. The reservation of a Saṅgha seat was introduced at the second election to the Sikkim State Council in 1958 by Sir Tashi Namgyal, the eleventh *Chogyal* (1893-1963). In the Proclamation of 17 March, 1958, the Chogyal announced the reservation of one seat for the Buddhist Saṅgha and one seat for the ‘general’ population. The seats were distributed as follows: six seats for Bhutias and Lepchas, six for Nepalese, one for the Saṅgha, one general and six for representatives nominated by the Chogyal (Thapa & Inbanathan, 2022, p. 4). The king introduced the Saṅgha seat based on the Tibetan political theory of *Chos srid lugs gnyis*, which involves the unification of the political and spiritual worlds, and on the concept of *Lhade-mide*, a traditional State Council of Sikkim that existed in the past (Thapa & Inbanathan, 2022, p. 5). Saul Mullard describes the unification of theological and temporal worlds as considered a perfect mode of government, where the religious sphere influences and shapes the political sphere, and likewise, the political sphere (through sponsorship, for example) influences the religious sphere. In this way, a political figure or a government is obliged to actively preserve and promote Buddhism. In Western societies, the ideal is the separation of the spiritual orders and the political realm as governance is expected to be strictly secular in nature (Mullard, 2011, pp. 24 – 25). The process of selecting the Saṅgha candidate is not like general voters who will cast their ballots in favour of a candidate of a particular constituency, because voters of the Saṅgha seat, irrespective of the constituency they live in, elect a representative through a separate electronic voting machine (EVM) (Sinha, 2009).

A nun named Ani Lhadol gives up hope to compete with the monks because her very birth as a woman is a physical defilement (to attain Dharma). This notion reflects what is found in the Mahāyāna literature and likewise was noticed by Gutschow in her survey of the Tibetan nuns of Zangskar. Asaṅga, in his *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, in the 4th Century explains why Buddhas are never females:

“Completely perfected Buddha-s are not women. And why? Precisely because a bodhisattva, from the time he has passed beyond the first incalculable age (of his career) had completely abandoned the woman’s estate (sribhavam). Ascending (thereafter) to the most excellent throne of enlightenment, he is never again reborn as a woman. All women are by nature full of defilement and of weak intelligence. And not by one who is full of defilement and of weak intelligence is completely perfected Buddhahood attained” (Willis, 1985, p. 69).

An Emic Feminist Approach –

Stories of Jetsun Mingyur Paldron and Pelling Ani Wangdzin show how nuns attempted to become the agents of their own history, which is quite a rare phenomenon in the case of Sikkimese

Buddhism, where oral sources and lack of written literature often make the writing of history challenging for historians and theologians. Holmes-Tagchungdarpa demonstrates how women participated in transnational Buddhist education and pilgrimage cycles that linked India, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, Mongolia, and China in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, 2014).

The nuns have come forth to solve their problem. As said earlier, the *Vināya* itself can't be changed due to the core principles laid down by Gautama Buddha. The Tibetan Nuns recently started to advocate equal representation of both nuns and monks. Surprisingly, they never claim to be feminists as such, although their endeavours might seem like it. To the Tibetan nuns, concepts like 'Gender Equality' and 'Feminism' are all Western foreign concepts which are alien and unknown to Tibetan culture. Nirmala S. Salgado critiques that the foreignness of feminism and Buddhism is also emphasized by critics of western liberal feminist overreach, who expose the ways that "feminist Buddhism" and "Buddhist feminism" superimpose liberal discourses of freedom, egalitarianism, and human rights onto Asian Buddhist women's lives, without regard for whether/how these accord with their self-understanding (Salgado, 2013). In an article, Padma'tsho interviews the nuns (known as khenmos) of the Larung Gar Monastery in Sichuan province of the Tibet Autonomous Region, where she finds that although they resist being labelled as feminists and certainly do not see themselves as starting a new religious movement (Haas, 2016),⁷ in their words, they are actively working to dismantle "the view that men are superior and women are inferior" (Tib: *pho mchogmo dman gyi lta ba*). The Larung Gar nuns openly denied to the interviewers any foreign, secular, or feminist influences that made them take this initiative for recognition of the khenmos or the nuns (Padma'tsho & Jacoby, 2020, pp. 2 – 4). Even Jetsunma Mumé Yeshé Tsomo (b. 1966), the renowned Larung Gar khenmo and niece of the academy's founder Khenpo Jikmé Puntsok (1933–2004), has maintained a comparatively low profile, making far fewer public appearances and travelling much less than the well-known Larung Gar khenpos (monks). The khenmo who was interviewed by Padma'tsho was conscious enough to let the journalist know that as a nun, she is criticising the custom of male superiority in Tibetan society but not attacking the Tibetans as an ethnic group.

The desire to be born as a male so that one can become a monk to achieve enlightenment was also seen by Kim Gutschow in the Zangskar region of Ladakh in India when she visited in 1989 and 1991. The gender binary that men are superior to women is something which is internalised in almost every society, and Tibetan society (whether in Tibet or in diaspora) is not an exception to this. She interviews the nuns of the Karsha nunnery in Zangskar, where the nuns were struggling to subsist themselves as nunneries have little or no endowment and their members are rarely called to perform public or household rituals in contrast to the monks who perform rituals and ceremonies through which they have secured a vast endowment from the laity (Gutschow, 2004, pp. 4 – 6). The nuns serve the laity, but in vain, for the laity contributes nothing

to their survival, as they are deemed inferior and impure. Ani Tsering from the Taktse Nunnery in Sikkim wishes to be reborn again as a nun. As reported by Sonam Choden in her interview with Ani Tsering, the Ani was the first one to make humble suggestions to the monastic authority to let nuns sit in the same rows as monks, as the nuns are expected to sit behind them (Choden, 2019, p. 22). This could be taken as the first step to lead the nuns in a monastic community as teachers and dharma practitioners. The nuns are making merit, but they lack the donations on which they could subsist to lead a monastic life. Buddhist monasticism is structured around the same division of labour and dualities of sex as the lay communities. Nuns reject the high status that marriage and motherhood offer, but they cannot avoid the burden of gender roles. Even if they renounce the material world, donning themselves with androgynous robes, still their ascetic discipline cannot absolve them from the pitfalls and defilement of the female body (Gutschow, 2004, pp. 6 – 7).



Figure 1: The Dalai Lama with the first batch of *Geshema* graduates. Convocation ceremony at Drepung Lachi Monastery in Mundgod, Karnataka, December 22, 2016. (Source: Geshema Degree, Tibetan Nuns Project, Open Domain)

The lack of education is another factor that contributes to their silent subordination. The khenmos of Larung Gar in Tibet advocates the schooling of nuns like the monks and the belief that the nuns are capable of doing things just like monks. It only becomes so if women support each other, in this case, the nuns (Padma'tsho & Jacoby, 2020, pp. 4 – 7). But I must remind they are not advocating anything that they want to be labelled as 'feminism'. In my observation, the khenmos are advocating a sort of feminist consciousness which they want to apply in real life through action or praxis. I see that this application of feminist praxis stems from the belief

that the nuns (and the monks) are the practitioners of Dharma. They don't believe in the utility of unending talks and debates on women's empowerment unless effective action is taken. This action starts with introducing academic degrees like the *Geshema* and recovery of histories, hagiographies and literature, which are completely authored by and on the nuns. Only monks could enrol in the *geshe* program until 2012, when the Dalai Lama supported a decision to make it available to nuns for the first time in history (Figure 1), ending years of deliberation among representatives from Tibetan nunneries, the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics and the Tibetan Nuns Project (TNP). The *geshema* requires over 17 years of monastic training to be eligible for this course of study, and very few nuns had come that far until recently (Chawla, 2018).⁸ Tibetan monastic education has been compared to Western scholasticism as it is likewise a method of critical thought with its emphasis on interpreting great texts in a coherent system of logic and argumentation (Dreyfus, 2003, pp. 10–13; Cabezón, 1994, pp. 11, 13; Kværne, 2014, p. 85). It has its origins in Indian Buddhist monasticism, particularly the Nālandā tradition, and dates back to the later diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (Tib: *phyi dar*), that is, after the tenth century (Schneider, 2022, p. 3). In Tibet, there were no such monastic universities for nuns.

In the Dragkar Lama's religious encampments in Tibet, debate practice was not part of the curriculum for nuns, contrary to the case of monks. A lot of changes have taken place in the last fifty years, not only for nuns but also for monks who face now fewer hurdles to finance their studies, at least in the Tibetan exile communities in India and Nepal (Schneider, 2022, p. 3). When Dolma Ling was founded by the Tibetan Nuns Project (Tib. *Bod kyi btsun ma'i las 'char*) in the beginning of the 1990s, only a handful of nunneries existed in the Tibetan exile community. The Tibetan word “*geshe*” is derived from the Sanskrit term “*kalyāṇa-mitra*” (Schneider, 2022, p. 2), literally meaning a ‘wise friend’ or a ‘spiritual adviser’. The degree makes nuns eligible for teaching and other leadership positions within lay and monastic institutions. Many join schools and nunneries in Tibetan settlements across India, as well as in Tibetan-speaking regions like Ladakh and Spiti (Chawla, 2018). Education indeed gives the nuns the courage and power to carve out their agency and reform the monastic system step-by-step. As in the case of Sikkim, we see Lamas or monks advocating rights for nuns. For example, Tulku Nawang Jigdral, who graduated from the Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies, contested the idea of gender binaries by arguing that Vajrayāna is about nature or energy. To him, gender becomes irrelevant as the mind is the main factor and one should strive to have mastery over it (Choden, 2019, p. 22).

The nuns of Larung Gar in Tibet see the recovery of history through female masters in Tibetan Buddhism as a starting point for reclaiming the importance of nuns and safeguarding their legacy in Buddhism. The recovery of histories of nuns in Buddhism was itself a humongous project, which involved the collaboration of nuns of Larung Gar to retrieve the manuscript copies of women's writings scattered in Tibet and India since 2011. This painstaking retrieval

of manuscripts involved no financial support from the areas of Larung Gar and the Chinese government. After compiling the manuscripts into books and publication, they then digitised those books with the help of computers, with the support they received from the khenpos after they came to know about this project of the nuns.⁹ In 2016, the “Arye Tare Book Association Editorial Office” (named after the goddess Tārā) founded by the seven Tibetan nuns of Larung Gar, published the book *Garland of White Lotuses: The Biographies of the Great Female Masters of India and Tibet* (divided into 16 volume edition) and in 2017, the *Dakinis’ Great Dharma Treasury* (divided into 53 volume version) (Schneider, 2022, p. 13; Padma’tsho & Jacoby, 2020, pp. 7 – 10). Reflecting back, the works authored by nuns are interesting because this tradition may be rare in history, but not absent. The best example is the *Therīgāthā*, which is an anthology of poems by and about the first Buddhist women. These women were *therīs*, “senior ones,” among ordained Buddhist women, and they got that epithet because of their religion, which they recorded most of the poems (*gāthā*) in the anthology are songs of their experiences. The *Therīgāthā* is not merely a collection of historical evidence of the needs, aspirations, and achievements, but is also one of the ‘first’ poems by women in India; this is the first collection of women’s literature in the world (Hallisey, 2021, pp. VII – VIII).



Figure 2: The Ani Gompa or Nunnery at Ranka Village in Sikkim.

(Photo by author during his visit in March 2025)

During my visit to Sikkim in March, 2025, I visited the Ani Gompa in Ranka Village (see figures 2 and 3), which is about 1.5 hours from the city of Gangtok. Ranka is a famed tourist site due to the Ranka Monastery, but the Ranka nunnery is also an important place, mostly frequented by locals. The official name of the nunnery is ‘Khachod Pema Woeling Tsungen’. The nunnery was established by Ven. Khamtul Jigme Thinley Lhundup Rinpoche (1922 – 2016) in 2006. The very plaque (see figure 4) alongside the great stupa in the nunnery states that the nunnery is dedicated to the practice of Dudjom Tersar, which is a collection of terms (treasured scriptures, relics) which is said to have been revealed by Dudjom Lingpa (1835 – 1904). The nunnery, like other religious institutions of Sikkim, follows the Nyingma Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. There, I met a nun called Ani Wangden who belonged to the junior ranks of the nuns there. During our brief conversation, I came to know interesting information which often breaks down the stereotype that people generally have about Buddhist nuns. The ground reality offers an alternative and quite interesting scenario. The anis of the nunnery are said to enjoy the same rights as enjoyed by a Buddhist lama. The time when I visited the nunnery, it was looked after by the group of junior nuns there because the anis of senior age/ranks were on a pilgrimage tour to Nepal. To be a nun of a higher rank, one has to complete the course of Losum Dasum. The Ranka Nunnery is currently led by 9 learned anis who have completed Losum Dasum. This nunnery is also supported by a US-based laywoman named Kisu Bhutia, who channels all of her funds towards supporting the nunnery. This includes sending food and money regularly every month to the nunnery. Surprisingly, I came to know that laypeople of Ranka (at least the areas within the vicinity of the nunnery) call the anis to perform the last rites of the deceased one, notwithstanding that we see the general dependence is on the monks for performing the last rites. But this does not mean that all nuns have the prerogative to perform such rites. Anis who have done the retreat practice and Losum Dasum and are serious practitioners of Dharma are the ones who perform the last rites of a deceased layperson. People come from all over Sikkim to support them, and devotees also approach the anis for performing various pujas or religious rites. I saw that anis from Nepal and Bhutan come to Sikkim to train younger anis to take on leadership positions in the Saṅgha. That is why I have often seen anis going on pilgrimage tours to Nepal and to places in India like Bodhgaya and Sarnath. Apart from Nepal and Bhutan, anis also come to practice Dharma in Sikkim from other places of India like Arunachal Pradesh and Sonada in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The Ranka Nunnery has a total of 30 anis or nuns, of which 9 have already finished the three years of Losum Dasum or meditation, while 7 are about to complete the meditation practice of three years. Therefore, the Ranka Nunnery now has 24 anis who are currently learners.



Figure 3: The altar inside the Ranka Nunnery. A child-nun recently ordained is seen performing puja to the images of Guru Padmasambhava flanked by ḍākīni/yogini deities, Thema Lhamo and Dorji Phagmo, to the left and right of Padmasambhava, respectively. (Photo by author during his visit in March 2025)

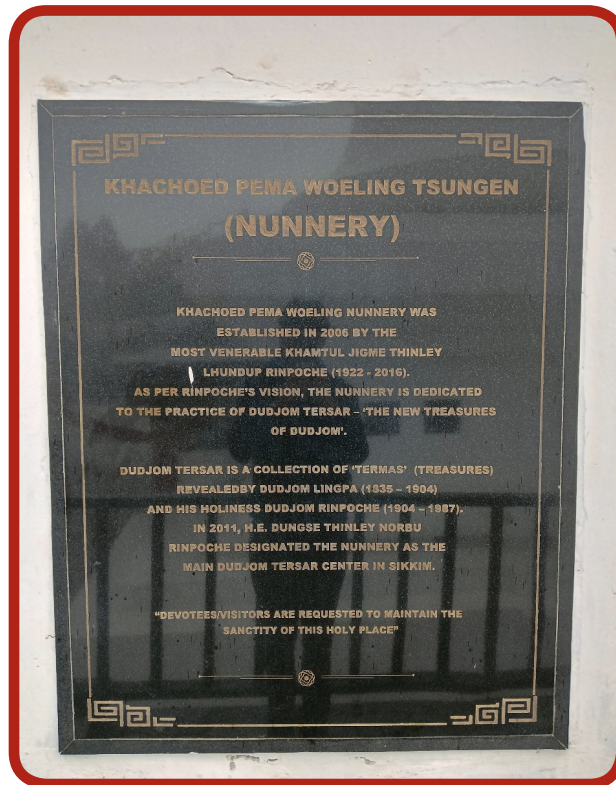


Figure 4: The stone plaque right next to the entrance of the gigantic white stupa at Ranka Nunnery. (Photo by author during his visit in March 2025)

The Resolution on the Question of Bhikkhunī Ordination –

As of now, I have discussed the problems the nuns face that overlap their world in and outside the Saṅgha and methods to overcome such overlapping challenges through recovery of their history, introduction of schooling and academic degrees, and efforts for a feminist praxis towards gender equality on their own terms and so on. This section purely deals with the religious controversy over their rights to full ordination. Founded in 1987 in Bodhgaya, India, Sakyadhita is a transnational Buddhist women's organisation. Its objectives have included the creation of a network of communication for Buddhist women, lay and ordained from all traditions and regions; the promotion of education and the improvement of facilities for women to study, practice, and teach Buddhism; a campaign for the full ordination of women in every Buddhist tradition; the facilitation of understanding among the various Buddhist traditions; and the fostering of world peace through Buddhist teachings (Fenn & Koppedrayar, 2008, p. 47). Sakyadhita means the 'Daughters of the Buddha'. The Dalai Lama is its key patron. Sakyadhita has convened conferences in the West in North America and Germany that have focused primarily on Western practitioners (something which traditional Tibetan nuns see with suspicion when concepts like feminism are imposed on them).¹⁰ The organisation has engaged in a wide variety of projects for the improvement of women and worked towards the re-establishment of the full ordination of women in the Theravada and Tibetan traditions (Fenn & Koppedrayar, 2008, p. 49). A few liberal Tibetan teachers, including the Dalai Lama, have granted women permission to receive bhikkhunī/bhikshuni ordination in the Chinese lineage (Havnevik, 1989, pp. 199–200), but Tibetan communities still question the legitimacy of non-Tibetan ordinations.

In 2007, at the Dalai Lama's request, monastic and academic *vināya* specialists convened an international conference in Hamburg, Germany, to determine whether a Tibetan bhikshuni lineage could be established without violating the Tibetan *vināya* (Mrozik, 2009, pp. 369 – 372). The Hamburg Conference proposed three options on bhikshuni ordination, each of which had some scriptural and/or historical precedent, where the option of Senior Tibetan Buddhist nuns ordained as bhikshuni in the Chinese Dharmagūptaka lineage could be adopted into the Tibetan Mulasarvastivada lineage either by an informal agreement or a formal act of the Saṅgha. Equally disappointing was the fact that these nuns, who came from India, were omitted from the conference program because they did not submit the requisite paperwork to conference organisers. Lastly, only one ethnic Tibetan nun was allowed to speak. Conference organisers sought to rectify the problem by inviting the nuns to speak during a discussion session on the penultimate evening. They spoke from the floor without formal introduction, making it difficult to know who said what, and on whose behalf (Mrozik, 2009, p. 370). The Hamburg Conference brought tensions between local and international visions of the Buddhist monastic community to the foreground because, to some, it is a Western solution to an Asian issue with the proposition of the third option. But as Bhikkhu Sujato, an Australian Theravada monk, rightly argues, the third option

was first proposed by a Vietnamese monk and a Taiwanese nun, and even that may be considered as an international resolution, ‘it was difficult to avoid having this decision...being characterised as “western”. To Sujato, the evening’s debate is best characterised as one between ‘local’ and ‘international’, rather than ‘eastern’ and ‘western’ perspectives (Sujato, 2008). The outcome of the ordination controversy resulted in the Dalai Lama’s support for bhikkhuni ordination, but in a democratic tone, he said women’s rights to full ordination can’t be reached unless the Saṅgha provides full consent. But at what cost when the Saṅgha is dominated by monks?

Results and Discussion –

The study shows the many approaches towards the resolution of a major ongoing issue dating back to the time of the Buddha. From a broader perspective, it can be said that Tibetan Nuns, vis-à-vis the Nuns in Sikkim, are going through the same fate as nuns are going through in the Buddhist world today. The resolutions to their problems cannot be solved through aid coming from Western approaches; rather, their proper communication of an affirmative stance is very much required. The need to have a community consciousness, therefore, becomes very important. As seen from the Tibetan Nuns in Larung Gar Monastery – firstly, their interpretation of feminism from an emic perspective and secondly, their painstaking retrieval of historical texts – serves as the foundations for their demand for rights to ordination. The internalisation of patriarchy and fear is a major factor that prevents the Sikkimese Nuns from fully realising their potential. Moreover, the deliberate denial of lay and monastic patronage towards the nunneries shows how socio-economically these nunneries are suffering. The rights of nuns to ordination and recognition therefore intersect with gender, religion, society and economy.

Female monastics remain rare in Sikkim today. So does literatures on them. In the 2009 election, only thirty-seven nuns were enrolled to vote within the unique Sikkimese *saṅgha* constituency, in contrast with 3,021 monks (Thaindian News, 2009). Nevertheless, it was the first time that we saw nuns allowed to participate in the democratic institutions and structures of the country. Holmes-Tagchungdarpa argues that written and oral sources prior to Sikkim’s incorporation into India confirm that women enjoyed a considerable amount of power within Lhopo communities -they had equal rights with men to the family inheritance, and upon marriage were bestowed with their own estates and wealth rather than having a dowry transferred to their husband’s families. Still, this does not justify the fact that women are absent from the religious institutions that held political and spiritual power in Sikkim prior to 1975. There are no records of nunneries earlier than the 1950s, when Tibetan refugees began to arrive from the north, and also no tradition of female monasticism, which explains the ambivalence regarding whether Pelling Ani Wangdzin really was ordained and where she was ordained (Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, 2014). The writing of history for a historian at this point gets very challenging and tedious. The contemporary legacy of Ani Wangdzin continues to provide aspirations for a community of nuns

who can lead themselves in the future. A recent example can be of Taktse ‘Ugen Chokhorling’ Ani Gompa, where after the passing away of Ani Damchho at an early age, her sister Ani Ganga Lhamo took over the charge of this Gompa who in recent years, constructed a small Dubkhang or meditation Centre for the nuns to go for Losum Dasum, which is a three years and three months retreat course.¹¹ This Gompa was established by Ani Damchho (Ecclesiastical Affairs Department, Government of Sikkim, 2012).

Conclusion:

Coming to the question and challenges that are currently underway for Sikkimese Buddhism with regard to the question of nuns, we can now ask some questions and perhaps wait for the possible resolutions to it in the near future. The recorded histories of monks and monasteries surpassed those of the nuns and nunneries anywhere in the historical Buddhist world and the contemporary Buddhist world today. Talking particularly about Sikkim, major literature on the documented history of anis is still lacking. Of course, we cannot judge the condition of nuns and nunneries in Sikkim from an overarching perspective until proper ethnographic surveys are conducted. But one challenge that lies in conducting ethnographic surveys of nunneries is that unlike monasteries which are popular and are known to everyone as those are mostly tourist sites and could be tracked down easily from the internet, the locations of these nunneries in remote and isolated areas often makes it difficult for researchers and ethnographers to reach there to conduct surveys and interviews to know the reality of those nunneries. Efforts from the Ecclesiastical Affairs Department of the Sikkim Government to document a list along with the location of nunneries in Sikkim could be a major turning point for researchers to start conducting their research efficiently, enabling them to document the history of nunneries in Sikkim.

It is very important to revive the legacy of Sikkimese nuns, as I firmly believe that they played a very crucial role in shaping Sikkimese Buddhism, as attested by the stories of Mingyur Paldron and Pelling Ani Wangdzin. In this matter, retrieval of texts and histories for and about the anis or nuns becomes very important. Another question, which is very important, is to see the current status of the ordination of the Sikkimese. The nuns are quite beloved and respected among the natives of Sikkim, and it contrasts starkly with the general belief that they are relegated to an inferior position. Still, that does not answer the question regarding their current ordination status. Questions like at what percentage they are ordained and who ordains them need to be answered through proper surveys and data. Generally, the monks ordain the nuns, but very rarely do we see a nun ordain another nun. But as my survey in the Ranka Nunnery shows, the nuns indeed play a major role in catering to the spiritual needs of the Sikkimese laypeople and shaping the socio-religious landscape of Sikkim. Aspiring from the initiatives like the Bhutanese Nuns Foundation and retrieving and digitising the history of female dharma practitioners like the Larung Gar Nuns in Tibet, an indigenous consciousness for the anis combined with praxis needs to be enforced in

order to materialise such initiatives, which would finally enable them to etch their legacy in the public history of Sikkimese Buddhism and the contemporary Buddhist world.

As of now, we have seen many trajectories that go into the making of an independent identity and a struggle for enlightenment among the Tibetan Buddhist Nuns. The concluding section will explore some key areas where the nuns in today's Buddhist world can find inspiration for achieving equal rights and representation to overcome their subordinate status. This I have identified with the presence of powerful feminine deities in the Buddhist pantheon, both as independent and consort deities. The first common and popular deity encountered is Tārā, the universal mother in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions. No other Bodhisattva is given the title of the Buddha in Buddhist tradition except Tara, where she is termed as the 'female Buddha'. Although she has her 21 emanations, she is popularly known for two types of emanations – Khadiravani Tārā or Green Tārā (see figure 5) and Sitā Tārā or White Tārā (see figure 6) (Shaw, 2006).



Figure 5: Thangka of Green Tārā, c. 1260s, Central Tibet (gum tempera, ink, and gold on sized cotton). Now in the Cleveland Museum of Art. (Source: Cleveland Museum of Art, Public Domain)



Figure 6: Thangka of White Tārā, 1900 – 1959, Tibet. Now in the Rubin Museum of Art, New York (Source: Rubin Museum of Art, Public Domain)

In view of Tārā's prominence in the Tibetan pantheon and pervasive presence in Tibetan cultural life, Terence Day has suggested that "it seems more appropriate to refer to Tibet's national religion as 'Tārāism' rather than 'Lamaism' (Day, 1990, pp. 83 – 121)." Even to this day, we do see the importance of nuns in domestic rituals. My observation of the performance of the last rites by the anis of Ranka Nunnery for the deceased laypeople rightly fits in this context. There are also priestly rites that may be performed in a monastery or private home on request, to generate merit and invoke Tārā's blessings. Such ceremonies-featuring offerings and recitation of Tārā texts, mantras, or prayers-may last one night or, in the case of the "Hundred Thousand Tārā Prayers," three months. Laypersons, in this matter, often prefer to employ nuns rather than monks, on the belief that the Tārā rites and prayers of female monastics are "more efficacious," with the fortuitous result that Tārā rituals may generate crucial income for a nunnery (which the nuns in Zanskar lack as per Gutschow) (Havnevik, 1989, pp. 122 – 23, 175 – 76, 199). She figures in protective rites for mothers during and immediately following pregnancy and for newborn infants. Recitation of the Tārā mantra is so effective that it can help a woman conceive without the assistance of a male. (Shaw, 2006, p. 347).

The deity Prajñāparamitā, the goddess of knowledge and wisdom after whom the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā PrajñāparamitāSūtra* or 8000 verses Perfect Wisdom Scripture is named is known

as *sarva-buddha-mātā* or the mother and creator of all Buddhas (Shaw, 2006, p. 168). Again, the presence of femininity and women as role models in popular Tantric texts like the Guhasamāja Tantra, Cakrasaṃvara Tantra and Hevajra Tantra as Vajrayogini, Vajravārahi, Nairatmya all show the presence of feminine ascendancy over the Buddhist male pantheon.¹² They are addressed as *ḍākīni* (sky walker), *yogini* (practitioners of yoga), *duti* (messenger), *vira* (hero) and *vidyādhārani* (holder of magical knowledge) (Shaw, 2022). Marici's presence as the martial deity like Durgā in Hinduism shows the ultimate ascendancy. As the goddess of dawn, monks of Tibet invoke Mārīci each morning by saluting the rising sun with raised right hands and reciting her mantra seven times (Shaw, 2006, p. 221).

It will be in these contexts that the struggle for nuns for an independent identity devoid of any male agency needs to be contextualised. The presence of a dominant feminine power and agency in Tibetan Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions can serve as an example to reclaim the importance of nuns in the monastic world. Their struggle for an identity is limited in one case, i.e., the conservative *Vināya* scriptures, which can't be changed unless popular monastic consensus allows it to be so. Further, their efforts towards gender equality in postcolonial times are remarkable, as the Asian Buddhist Nuns are interpreting their activism on their own terms without taking the help of any Western agency. Gotami's struggle didn't end once she was admitted into the Saṅgha, for if she escaped from the problems of one world, she had entered into another one. Her quest for identity is indeed a long and courageous one.

References

- Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita* (E. Conze, Trans.). (1958). The Asiatic Society.
- Anālayo, B. (2016). *The Foundation History of the Nuns' Order*. Projektverlag.
- Bhutia, K. D. (2014). The Importance of Jetsun Mingyur Paldron in the Development of Sikkimese Buddhism. In *Eminent Buddhist Women*. State University of New York Press.
- Cabezón, J. I. (1994). *Buddhism and Language: A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism*. State University Of New York Press.
- Chakravarti, Uma. (1993). Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(14).
- Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton University Press.
- Chawla, S. (2018). *From Illiteracy to PhD: How Exiled Tibetan Buddhist Nuns Are Ensuring Gender Parity*. The Wire. <https://thewire.in/religion/from-illiteracy-to-phd-how-exiled-tibetan-buddhist-nuns-are-ensuring-gender-parity>
- Choden, S. (2019). *Looking at Nuns in Tibetan Buddhism from a Gendered Lens*. Zubaan.
- Day, T. (1990). The Twenty-One Tārās: Features of a Goddess-Pantheon in Mahāyāna Buddhism. In *Goddesses in Religions and Modern Debate* (pp. 83–121). Scholars Press.
- Dreyfus, G. (2003). *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk*. University of California Press.
- Ecclesiastical Affairs Department, Government of Sikkim. (2012). *Taktse Ani "Ugen Chokhorling" Monastery (1980 A.D)*. <http://www.sikkimeccl.gov.in/History/Monasteries/East/TaktseAni.aspx>
- Ehrhard, F.-K. (1999). The Role of "Treasure Discoverers" and Their Search for Himalayan Sacred Lands. In *Sacred Spaces and Powerful Places in Tibetan Culture* (pp. 227–239). Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Fenn, M. L., & Koppedrayar, K. (2008). Sakyadhita: A Transnational Gathering Place for Buddhist Women. *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 9, 45–79.
- Gross, R. M. (1993). *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*. State University Of New York Press.
- Gutschow, K. (2004). *Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas*. Harvard University Press.
- H.R.H. Mthu stobs Rnam rgyal the Chos rgyal of Sikkim, & H.R.H. The Maharani Rgyal mo Ye shes sgrol ma. (2003). *Bras ljongs rgyal rabs*. Tsuklakhang Trust. (Original work published 1908)
- Haas, B. (2016). *Equal Rites: Tibetan Nuns Seek Matching Status*. Yahoo News. https://sg.news.yahoo.com/equal-rites-tibetan-nuns-seek-matching-status-061654368.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_

- referrer_sig=AQAAAIo_dC9yzSiNh6HRLHrgNvXi7VuY4UPi02hyvaLqPFID29EUIa
hFL2bfps7YBz79BoA3u-XTBUSJsLSjyMGbq7HjAPBS5B0Ph72EX3O7gnyqqUKbS7
Y0X12-Ddy0C1YjLMSFf5OCbJiUVGeEgpOdBdyClFhAN7m8I5GVbRHwu0OQ
- Hallisey, C. (2021). *Poems of the First Buddhist Women: A Translation of the Therigatha*. Harvard University Press.
- Havnevik, H. (1989). *Tibetan Buddhist Nuns: History, Cultural Norms and Social Reality*. Norwegian University Press.
- Hertog, J. (2019). *The Sakyadhita Movement - Lion's Roar*. Lion's Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time. <https://www.lionsroar.com/the-sakyadhita-movement/>
- Holmes-Tagchundarpa, A. (2014). The Legacy of a Female Sikkimese Buddhist Teacher: The Lineage of Pelling Ani Wangdzin and Gendered Religious Experience in Modern Sikkim. In *Eminent Buddhist Women*. State University of New York Press.
- Huber, T. (1999). *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape in Southeast Tibet*. Oxford University Press.
- Kawanami, H. (1990). The Religious Standing of Burmese Nuns (*thilá-shin*): The Ten Precepts and Religious Respect Words. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 13(1), pp. 17–40
- Kvaerne, Per. (2014). The traditional academic training for the Geshé degree in Tibetan monastic scholasticism. *L'educazione Nella Società Asiatica—Education in Asian Societies*, 87–95.
- Lefmann, S. (1902). *Lalita VisTārā, Leben und Lehre des Çākya-Buddha*. Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses.
- Mokashi, R. (2017). Female Patrons of Early Buddhism in Ancient India: An Epigraphical Analysis. *Journal of Historical Archaeology & Anthropological Sciences*, 1(4), 108–110.
- Mrozik, S. (2009). A Robed Revolution: The Contemporary Buddhist Nun's (Bhikkhuni) Movement. *Religion Compass*, 3(3), 360–378.
- Mullard, S. (2011). *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*. Brill.
- Padma'tsho, & Jacoby, S. (2020). Gender Equality in and on Tibetan Buddhist Nuns' Terms. *Religions*, 11(543), 1–19.
- Paul, D. Y. (1985). *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahayana Tradition*. University of California Press.
- Saddharmapuṇḍarīka: The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (Dharmachakra Translation Committee, Trans.). (2018). 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.
- Salgado, N. S. (2013). *Buddhist Nuns and Gendered Practice: In Search of the Female Renunciant*. Oxford University Press.

- Sander, L., & Waldschmidt, E. (1985). *Sanskriithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden, Teil 5*. Franz Steiner.
- Schneider, N. (2022). A Revolution in Red Robes: Tibetan Nuns Obtaining the Doctoral Degree in Buddhist Studies (Geshema). *Religions*, 13(9), 1–18.
- Shaw, M. (2006a). *Buddhist Goddesses of India*. Princeton University Press.
- Shaw, M. (2006b). *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*. Princeton University Press.
- sikkim.gov.in. (2025). *Government of Sikkim, India*. Sikkim.gov.in. <https://www.sikkim.gov.in/mygovernment/whos-who/mlas>
- Sinha, A. (2009). *Sikkim nuns on voters' list*. The Telegraph Online. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/sikkim-nuns-on-voters-list/cid/487890>
- Strong, J. (2008). *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations* (2nd ed.). Thomson/Wadsworth. (Original work published 2002)
- Sujato, B. (2008). *Dark Matter*. Thubten Chodron. <https://thubtenchodron.org/2008/05/conference-women-Saṅgha/>
- Thaindian News. (2009). Special EVMS for Sikkim's Buddhist Monks, Nuns. In <http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/politics/special-evms-forsikkims-buddhist-monks-nuns.100185797.html>.
- The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (E. B. Cowell, Trans.; Vol. 1). (1895a). Cambridge University Press.
- The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (E. B. Cowell, Trans.; Vol. 2). (1895b). Cambridge University Press.
- The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (E. B. Cowell, Trans.; Vol. 3). (1907). Cambridge University Press.
- Thapa, P., & Inbanathan, A. (2022). Religion and State in Sikkim: The Place of the Buddhist Saṅgha. *ISEC Working Paper, No. 548*, 1–19.
- Tsomo, K. L. (2014). *Eminent Buddhist Women*. State University of New York Press.
- Tucci, G. (1980). *The Religions of Tibet*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. (Original work published 1970).
- Willis, J. D. (1985). Nuns and Benefactresses: The Role of Women in the Development of Buddhism. In Y. Y. Haddad & E. B. Findly (Eds.), *Women, Religion, and Social Change* (pp. 59–85). State University of New York Press.

Endnotes

- 1 In the episode of Sundari, she said this to the Buddha recorded in the Poem with about Twenty Verses of the Therigatha.
- 2 Samyutta Nikaya 4.25.

- 3 As per Analayo's translation of the Gurudharma of the Communal Transaction category, these are – 1. A probationer (*śikṣamāṇā*), who has trained in the precepts, should request the higher ordination from the community of monks (Dharmaguptaka no. 4), 2. A girl of [at least] eighteen years, who has been instructed in the training and has completed the training for two years, should seek the higher ordination in both communities (Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottārāvāda Vinaya, no. 2, preserved in Chinese), 3. A probationer (*śikṣamāṇā*), who has trained in the precepts for two years, should receive the higher ordination in both communities (Mahīśāsaka, no. 4), 4. The nuns should seek from the monks the going forth and the higher ordination, the becoming of a nun (*Mūlasarvāstivāda*, no. 1), 5. A nun should seek higher ordination from the monks (*Sarvāstivāda*, no. 1), 6. A probationer (*sikkhamāṇā*), who has trained for two years in six principles, should seek higher ordination from both communities (*Theravāda*, no. 6), 7. undergoing penance (*mānatva*), incumbent on any fully ordained monastic who has committed a serious offence of the *saṃghāvaśeṣa* class, 8. invitation (*pravāraṇā*) to have one's shortcomings pointed out, an invitation to be made at the conclusion of the period of the rainy season (*varṣa*). The last two rules are based on monastic offences which are found in the Theravada Vinaya.
- 4 Under this category, every rule has their own versions in different texts. To see in details, read pp. 101 – 115. In short, the rules are as follows – a nun who has received the precepts or was ordained a hundred years ago should bow and pay homage to and rise up to welcome a monk who has just been ordained on that very day, nuns are not allowed to criticise the monks even if the monk breached precepts, proper conduct or right view and so on.
- 5 The period of first urbanisation era in Indian History was during the Indus Valley Civilisation.
- 6 Ani Wangdzin's family belonged from the Tagchungdarpa (Stag chung dar pa) clan. This clan belongs from Singyang (orthography uncertain) where agriculture is the main occupation.
- 7 To Benjamin Hass, the nuns at Larung Gar are holding study sessions on feminism, to which he sees this event that sparks a nascent religious movement.
- 8 The method of learning in the Gelukpa School consists of three main components: memorisation, study, and debate. Students had first to memorise a given text, before getting the necessary explanation from their teacher; they then analysed and discussed the content during debate sessions, which usually took place in the afternoon and sometimes even until late at night. The duration of this curriculum was long, between twenty and twenty-five years and at the end, the candidate could take the examination in order to become a *geshe* or "Doctor of Traditional Buddhist Philosophy" or "Doctor of Theology." However, it was difficult for the Gelukpa monks completed their studies in the past and not many were able to complete it as it needed perseverance, but also because they had to sustain themselves during all these years, which was difficult for those who had no financial support from their families or sponsors.
- 9 The project to collect and anthologise Buddhist texts authored by or about women starts in 2011 when seven Tibetan Buddhist nuns from Larung Gar Five Sciences Buddhist Academy in Tibet formed an association dedicated to publishing Buddhist women's writings. They found the "Larung Ārya Tāre Book Association

Editorial Office” after the Buddhist deity Tārā, who is a prominent bodhisattva of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, as well as a female Buddha in Tibetan Vajrayāna Buddhism. The first order of business for the fledgling association was to find Tibetan Buddhist texts written by or about women. After consulting and receiving sanction from their guru the nun Jetsunma Mumé Yeshé Tsomo, niece of the founder of Larung Gar Khenpo Jikmé Puntsok, they set out for their project. The work was challenging because finding extant Tibetan manuscripts about women sent them on searches all over the Tibetan region, and because often only one copy of a manuscript could be found, often with archaic or inconsistent spelling, as well as missing sections. Once the nuns did manage to collect texts about women, none of them were yet digitized, requiring the nuns first to teach themselves how to type and use computers, and then to painstakingly type the manuscripts into digital files themselves. When the nuns found the texts not only were they old but couldn’t be read by them. Lamas’ writing and women’s writing are different because for lamas’ writings, they are published by the Lhasa Publishing House once, by Sichuan Publishing House which republish their writings. Historical writings by women are very less and there are less sources on it for which it made the mission for the nuns even more challenging. Finally in 2013 they publish the 16-volume Garland of White Lotuses and in 2017 the *Ḍākinīs’ Great Dharma Treasury*. By 2018, the Ārya Tāre Book Association was formally incorporated into the Education branch (Slob ston khang) of Larung Gar, and its staff expanded to 11 nuns.

- 10 Sakyadhita was organized by Karma Lekshe Tsomo, an American Tibetan nun; Ayya Khema, a German-born Theravadin nun (now deceased); and Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (now Bhikkhuni Dhammananda), a professor at Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand. The conference was historically significant as it was the first international gathering of Buddhist nuns.
- 11 With the help of contributions from the devotees and the financial grant from the Government, Ani Damchho established this Ani Gonpa giving the name as “Ugen Chokhorling Gonpa” with the enrolment of 12 nuns and carried out all the periodical pūjas like the other monasteries.
- 12 These tantric texts have ample references where the feminine principle manifesting as different goddesses plays a central role for any esoteric ritual to be performed correctly, as it is believed that without invoking the divine feminine in any esoteric ritual where the divine feminine corresponds to prajñā or knowledge, the goal to attain Buddhahood remains incomplete. A critical reading of these texts would show this feature.

EXAMINING THE BEGINNING OF BUDDHISM IN BEYUL DEMOJONG

༡༡། །སྤུལ་ཡུལ་ འབྲས་མོ་ ལྗོངས་ལོ་ བླ་པོ་ སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ བསྟན་པོ་ དར་རྒྱུད་ བྱང་ཚུལ་ ལྷོང་ལོ་ དབྱུང་པོ།

Neydup Bhutia

༺ བརྒྱ་བརྒྱ་ ཞབས་ལ་ གྲུ་ཕྱག་ འཆའ་ལོ།

སྟོན་བརྗོད།

ད་ འདི་སྟེ་ དུས་རབས་ བརྒྱུད་པའི་ སྐབས་ལས་ ད་ལྟའི་ བར་ལོ་ སྤུལ་ཡུལ་ འབྲས་མོ་ ལྗོངས་ལོ་ ལྷོན་པོ་ རྩོགས་པའི་ སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ བྱང་རྩོགས་གྱི་ བསྟན་པོ་ གཉིས་པོ་ རིམ་གྱིས་ དར་འགོ་ ཚུགས་གོ་ལས་ ད་ལྟོ་ ཟངས་གྱི་ གནས་སྐབས་ གན་ཐོན་སྐྱེད་ལོ་ ཚོམ་ཤོག་ འདི་ནང་ལོ་ ཉམས་ཞིབ་ གྲུ་ལོང་། འགོ་ དར་པོ་ གནས་འདི་ བྱིན་གྱིས་ རྒྱབས་ཚུལ་ གནས་སྟོ་ བྱི་ཚུལ་ འདི་ལས་ རིམས་གྱིས་ དགོན་པོ། སྟོན་གྲུ་ བཤད་གྲུ་ སྐྱབ་གྲུ་ སོགས་ བྱགས་བཏབས་ཚུལ་ དང་ བླ་པོའི་ མི་རིགས་ ཉུང་བའི་ རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་ དང་ གསོ་བའི་ ཐབས་ལམ་བཅས་གྱི་ མཚུགས་ བསྐྱེད་ཡོད། འདི་ ཡང་ ཡིག་ཆ་ ཁྱད་སྤངས་ དག་པོའི་ གྱི་དེ་བ་ དང་ བརྒྱུད་ དང་ འདི་ལས་ ཁ་བར་ རྒྱུད་སྟེ་ བྱི་བ་ བྱི་ལེན་གྱི་ ཐོག་ལས་ དབྱུང་ཚོམ་ གྲུ་ལོ་ ཡོད་པོ་ཅིག་ ཡིན་ལོ།

གནས་འདི་ བྱིན་གྱིས་ རྒྱབས་ཚུལ་ དང་ གནས་སྟོ་ བྱི་ཚུལ་ནི།

ད་ལྟོ་ སྐབས་སུ་ བབ་པའི་ ཚོམ་ཤོག་ འདིའི་ བརྗོད་གཞི་ དང་ འབྲེལ་བའི་ གཏམ་ རྒྱབས་པའི་ སྐབས་ ལུང་པོ་ འདིའི་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་ནི་ དང་པོ་ འཕགས་པ་ རྒྱུན་རས་ གཟེགས་གྱིས་ ཐོད་གྱི་ ཡུལ་འདིའི་ གནས་དཔེན་པོ་ ཡུལ་ བཟང་པོ་ ཐམས་ཅད་ བྱིན་གྱིས་ རྒྱབས་པའི་ སྐབས་ སྤུལ་ཡུལ་ འབྲས་མོ་ ལྗོངས་ཡང་ བྱིན་གྱིས་ བརྒྱབས་པོ་ གནང་། ཨོ་འདིའི་ མི་ལོ་ སུམ་བརྒྱ་ལོ་ ལྷ་དབང་ བརྒྱ་སྟེན་ མཛད་པུ་ སྟག་ཅེ་ལོ་ བྱིན་སྟེ་ གནས་སྟོ་ བྱི་སྐབས་གྱི་ ལུང་གནང་། ཨོ་འདིའི་ རྒྱབ་ རྒྱ་གར་ འཕགས་པའི་ ཡུལ་གྱི་ སྤུལ་པའི་ མི་ལྷ་ བྱིན་སྟེ་ གནས་གྱི་ སྟོར་ལོ་ ལུང་ གནང་ འདི་ལས་ མི་ལོ་ སུམ་སྟོང་ སུམ་བརྒྱ་ དང་ བཞི་ལོ་ དུས་རབས་ བརྒྱུད་པའི་ སྐབས་ སྤུལ་ཡུལ་ འབྲས་མོ་ལྗོངས་གྱི་ ལམ་ཡིག་ ལྷེ་མིག་ འཁྲལ་གྱི་ དགུ་སྟོར་ བླ་པོ་ “རྒྱལ་པོ་ དགྲུང་ལོ་ སུམ་ཅུ་ ཅ་བརྒྱུད་ བཞེས་པ་ དང་། སྤུལ་ཡུལ་ འབྲས་མོ་ ལྗོངས་སུ་ བྱིན་ཏེ། ལྷ་སྟེན་ ཐམས་ཅད་ དམ་ལ་བཏགས། བྱི་མའི་ གོན་དུ་ བྱང་བུ་ བྱག་དང་། ལུང་བསྟན་ སུམ་ཅུ་ མཛད་དོ།” ཞེས་དགྲུང་ལོ་ སུམ་ཅུ་ སོ་བརྒྱུད་ལོ་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ལོ་ བྱིན་ ཡོད་པོ་ ཐག་ཆོད། ཆོས་རྒྱལ་ ཞི་སྟོང་ ལྷེ་ལུ་བཅན་ འཁྲུངས་ལོ་འདི་ དུང་དཀར་ ཆོག་མཛོད་ བླ་པོ་ ཆོས་རྒྱལ་མཆོག་ ཡོས་ ལོ་ དང་། ས་རྟ་ དང་ ལྷགས་རྟ་ ཞལ་བཞེས་ མ་འབྲུ་པོ་ གསུམ་གྱི་ བླ་པོས་ རྒྱལ་བ་ སྐྱེ་བའི་ ལྷ་པོའི་ དེ་བཟེར་ དབྱིད་ཀྱི་ རྒྱལ་ལོ་ དང་ ལོ་ཆེན་ རྩམ་ བྱིའི་ ཅིས་གཞུང་ ཉིན་བྱེད་ རྒྱང་བ་ ཉུན་ཏོང་གི་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་ ཡིག་རྩིང་ རྩམ་ དུང་དཀར་ སྟོན་བཟང་ བྱིན་ལས་ མཆོག་གིས་ མང་ཕྱོགས་ བཟུང་སྟེ་ ཆོས་རྒྱལ་ མཆོག་ དགྲུང་ལོ་ རྒྱ་རྟ་ བྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༣ ལོ་ལོ་ འཁྲུངས་པའི་ ཞལ་བཞེས་ གནང་འདུག འདི་སྟེ་ ཡིག་ཆ་ འདི་ཚུ་ལོ་ བསྟན་དུས་ གྲུ་ལུ་ རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ བྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༠ ལོར་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ལོ་ བྱིན་ཡོད་པོ་ སྐྱབ་ ཚུགས། རྩམ་འབངས་ འདི་ཚུ་ཡང་ བྱིན་འདི་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ འག་མིན་ རྩམ་དག་ བརྒྱ་ བ་ ཅན་གྱི་ གནས་ཡིག་ལས། དེ་དུས་ ཨོ་རྒྱུན་རྩེ་ དང་ མཁར་ཆེན་བཟུང་ལྷ་ རྒྱལ་སྤུལ་ ལྷ་རྩེས་ མཆོག་གྲུབ་ རྒྱལ་པོ་ དང་ཅེ།

པཎ་ཆེན་ བེ་མ་ བེ་རོ་ཅན་ དང་། རྣམ་མཁའ་འཛིན་ སྤྱིང་པོ་ སངས་རྒྱལ་ ཤེས་སོགས་ལྷན་གྱིས་ ཐུབ་ཆེན་ ཐམས་ཅད་ལྟ་ འབྲུལ་ཤུགས་ཀྱི་ ཁྱོན་
འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ཀྱི་ ས་ཆ་ ཉིག་ཉིག་ གཅིག་ཀྱང་ མ་ལུས་པོ་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ མ་འོང་པའི་ དོན་ལོ་ ཟབ་གཏེར་ཙུ་ བསྐྱར་པོ་ དང་ འིན་གྱིས་
རྒྱབ་སྟོད་ལས་བཟུང་ ཆོས་སྤྱིད་ གཉིས་འབྲེལ་གྱི་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་ འགོ་བརྩམས་ ཡོད་པོ་ ང་ཅག་ ཤེས་ཚུགས། འདིའི་ ཁུངས་ འདི་ཙུ་ནི་
བོད་ཡིག་གི་ ཡིག་ཆ་ ཉིང་ཀྱི་ འདི་ཙུ་ལས་ ཐོབ་པོ་ མན་པོ་ གཞན་ སྐད་ཡིག་ གན་ ལས་ཀྱང་ ང་ཅག་ ཐོབ་ མི་ཚུགས། དེང་སང་
ཁ་རྒྱུན་ལོ་ དུས་རབས་ བརྒྱད་པོ་ དང་ ཨོ་འདིའི་ སྟོན་གྱི་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་ བཤད་སྟོན་ ཨ་ཅི་མ་རེ་ དར་ ཡོད་རུང་ ཁུངས་དག་ ཨིན་མིན་
ལོ་ བརྒྱུས་དབྱེད་ བྱ་ས་དགོས། ད་ལྟ་ དམིགས་གསལ་ ཉམས་ཞིབ་ཀྱི་ སྐབས་ ཡིག་ཆ་ ཁུངས་དག་ གཅིག་ལོ་ རྒྱབ་བརྟེན་ བྱ་ས་
དགོས་པོ་ ཨིན་པས་ ཨོ་འདིའི་ རོས་ལོ་ མ་སོང་།

དུས་རབས་ བརྒྱ་བཞི་པའི་ སྐབས་ བལ་ཆེར་ མི་ལོ་ ལྔ་བརྒྱ་ དགུ་བརྒྱ་ ལོ་གསུམ་ སོང་པའི་ རྒྱལ་ གཏེར་སྟོན་ རིག་འཛིན་ རྟོན་
ལྷུ་མ་ (1337-1408) འི་ལོ་ (1373) ལོར་ ལྷ་རུའི་ སྤུས་གནས་ འདིའི་ནང་ ཁྱོན་ཨོ་འདིའི་ རྒྱལ་ འི་ལོ་ (1568)རྟོན་ལྷུ་མ་ ཡང་
སྤྱིད་ མངའ་རི་ རིག་འཛིན་ ལེགས་ལྡན་རྗེ་ སྤུས་གནས་ འདིའི་ནང་ ཁྱོན་སྟེ་ སྐབས་པའི་སྟེ་ ཡང་ན་ དགོན་པོ་ ཐམས་ཅད་ལས་ ལྷ་ལོས་
དཔལ་པོ་ ལྷོ་རི་ལོ་ བཞེངས་པོ་ གནང་དཔལ་པོ་ ལྷོ་རི་ དགོན་པོ་འདི་ ད་ལྟ་ བར་ ཐོབ་ ཡོད་པའི་ ཡིག་ཆ་ ཞིག་ཤུལ་གྱི་ ཁུངས་ དང་
འབྲན་ ལུང་པོ་ འདིའི་ དགོན་པོ་ ཐམས་ཅད་ལས་ ཉིང་ཤོས་ཅིག་ ཨིན་རུང་ ད་ལྱུབ་ ཟངས་སྟེ་ ལོག་བཅོས་ མ་ཐོན་པོ་འདི་ ང་ཅག་
སྟག་པར་གྱི་ རང་པོ་ སྟེ་ དང་ རྩེ་ཐག་ རྩེ་གཏེར་ ཆོས་རྒྱུད་ འཛིན་མཁན་ འདི་ཙུ་འི་ རོ་སྤྱང་ གནང་ དགོས་པོ་ འདེམ་ཅིག་ མཐོང་།

འདི་ལས་ རིམ་པོ་ བཞེན་ བརྒྱ་ཐག་ བརྒྱ་ལྷག་པའི་ དུས་སུ་ རྣམ་འཁྱོར་ ཆེད་བཞེས་ལས་ གཞོག་ རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོ། མངའ་བདག་
ཐམས་དཔལ་ ཆེན་པོ་ ལུན་ཆོགས་ རིག་འཛིན་། ལྷ་བརྩན་ ཆེན་པོ། འདི་ལས་ སྤུས་གནས་ འདིའི་ རྒྱལ་པའི་ ཐོག་ལོ་ ཆོས་རྒྱལ་
ལུན་ཆོགས་ རྣམ་རྒྱལ་ལོ་ གསེར་ཁྲི་ མངའ་སྟོན་ གནང་། ལྷ་བརྩན་གྱི་ ཡང་སྤྱིད་ རིམ་བྱོན་ དང་ མངའ་བདག་པའི་ གཤུང་འཛིན་
བཅས་ཀྱི་ སྤུས་གནས་ འབྲས་ལོ་ལྗོངས་ལོ་ སྐབས་སྟེ་ མཆོད་རྟེན་ མཎ་མདང་སོགས་ བཞེངས་སྟེ་ སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ བསྟན་པོ་ དར་རྒྱས་
ལོ་ སྟེལ་པོ་ གནང་།

འི་ལོ་ 1730 ལོར་ ར་ལོང་ གམ་ རབ་བརྟན་གླིང་ དགོན་པོ། འི་ལོ་ 1734 ལོར་ མོ་གདོང་ གམ་ བཟ་ཤིས་ ཆོས་འཁོར་གླིང་། རུས་
སྟེགས་ལོ་ དགོན་པོ་ གསར་རྟེང་ གཉིས་བཅས་ བཞེངས་པོ་ གནང་སྟེ་ ད་ལྟ་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ཡོངས་ལོ་ བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པའི་ དགོན་པོ་
ཡོངས་སྟོན་ ༥༩ བཅས་ཀྱི་ རང་ལོ་ བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ བཤད་སྟོན་གྱི་ བསྟན་པོ་ དར་རྒྱས་ལོ་ འགྲུ་བཞེན་ ཡོད་དོ།

འི་ལོ་ 1987 ལོར་ ཡོངས་གྲགས་ལོ་ རོར་དགོན་པོ་ ལུ་མཁན་ ས་སྐྱ་ དགོན་ དང་ འི་ལོ་ 2005 ལོ་ ལོར་ རི་པོ་ དགེ་ལུན་པའི་
དགོན་པོ་ མེར་བྱས་ འགོ་མན་གླིང་ ལུག་བཏབས་སྟེ་ ས་སྐྱ་ དང་ དགེ་ལུགས་ བསྟན་པའི་ ཅ་བ་ བརྩམས་ཀོ་ གནང་སྟེ་ བོད་ གངས་
ཅན་ ལྗོངས་ཀྱི་ རང་པའི་ ཆོས་རྒྱུད་ སྤུས་གནས་ འདི་ན་ རིམ་པོ་བྱ་ས་ དར་རྒྱས་ལོ་ སོང་པོ་ སྟེ།

སྐབས་སྟེ་ ཡང་ན་ དགོན་པོ་ནི། འི་ལོ་ བརྒྱ་ཐག་ བརྒྱ་ལྷག་ལས་ བརྒྱ་ཐག་ ཉི་ཤུའི་ བར་ལོ་ རང་པའི་ སྐབས་སྟེ་ ཡང་ན་ དགོན་པོ་ འདི་
ཙུ་ ལོ་ ལས་ ལོ་ འཕེལ་སྟེ་ བརྒྱ་ཐག་ བརྒྱ་ལྷག་པའི་ སྐབས་ལོ་ དགོན་པོ་ ལྷ་ བཞེངས་འདུག འདི་དང་ འབྲེལ་ བརྒྱ་ཐག་ བརྒྱ་ལྷག་
པའི་ སྐབས་ལོ་ དགོན་པོ་ བརྩམས་ བཅོ་བརྒྱུད་པའི་ སྐབས་ལོ་ ཉི་ཤུ་ ཅ་བཞི་ བརྒྱ་དགུ་པའི་ སྐབས་ལོ་ ལྷ་ཙུ་ ང་ལྷ་ དང་ བརྒྱ་

ཕྱག་ཉི་ཤུ་ལོ་ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༢༥ ཡི་ བར་དགོན་པོ་ བདུན་བཅས་ བཞེངས་པོ་ གནང་སྟེ་ བར་པོ་ སངས་རྒྱལ་པའི་ དགོན་སྡེ་ ཡོངས་སུ་
སྟོན་པོ་ བརྒྱ་ དང་ བརྒྱད་ བཅས་ ཡོད་པོ་ འདི་ནི་ ཡུལ་ ས་ཆའི་ སྟོན་རྒྱུད་གི་ ཆད་ དང་ དཔག་ན་ ལེབ་སྟེ་རང་ མང་དགས་ ཨིན་
པོ་ ང་ཅག་ ཤེས་ཚུགས་སོ།

མ་ཉི་ ལྷ་ཁང་ལྟེ། འབྲས་གཞུང་ དགོན་གནས་ ལས་ལག་གི་ Webside བར་ལྷར་ ཨིན་ན་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ 1745 ལོར་ རུམ་སྟེགས་ མ་ཉི་
ལྷ་ཁང་ནི་ ཐམས་ཅད་ ཉིང་ཤོས་ཅིག་ ཨིན། རིམ་པོ་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ བརྒྱ་ཕྱག་ བརྒྱ་བདུན་པའི་ སྐབས་ལོ་ གསུམ། བཅོ་བརྒྱད་པའི་
སྐབས་ལོ་ བརྒྱ་གསུམ། བརྒྱ་དགུ་པའི་ སྐབས་ལོ་ བརྒྱ་ དང་ ཉི་ཤུ་ ཅ་གཉིས། དུས་རབས་ ཉི་ཤུ་པའི་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༢༠༢༥ ཡི་ བར་ མ་ཉི་
ལྷ་ཁང་ ཉི་ཤུ་ བཅས་ ལྷ་མ་ དང་ དད་ལྡན་ སྟིན་བདག་ འདི་ཙམ་ འབྲས་ལྷོངས་ཀྱི་ རྫོང་ཁག་ བཞི་ལོ་ འགོ་བཤམས་ རྒྱལ་མ་ ཡོད་
པའི་ མཐོང་ བར་ལོ་ ཡོངས་སྟོན་ བརྒྱ་ དང་ ལྷ་བརྒྱ་ ང་བརྒྱད་ འདུག་ ཨིན་ན་ ཡང་ ཁོང་གི་ བརྒྱའི་ འདུན་ཤོག་ལོ་ ༡༩༨༣ བཞོད་
འདུག་ གང་ལྷར་ཡང་ བརྒྱ་ དང་ ལྷ་བརྒྱ་ ལས་ རྟུག་བརྒྱ་ འདེའོད་ ཡོད་པོ་ ཐག་ཆོད་ སྟེ།

མཆོམས་ཁང་ ཡང་ན་ སྐུ་ཁང་ལྟེ། ད་ལྟོ་ ཟངས་སྟེ་ མཆོམས་ཁང་ ཡང་ན་ སྐུ་ཁང་ འབྲས་ལྷོངས་ ཕྱོགས་བཞི་ལོ་ གཞུང་གི་ མངའ་
ལོག་ལོ་ ཡོད་པོ་ ཉི་ཤུ་ ཅ་ལྷ་ འདེའོད་ འདུག། འདིའི་ བར་ལོ་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༥༤ དང་ ༡༩༥༩ ལོར་ རུམ་སྟེགས་ དང་ འདབ་ར་སྤྱིང་
མཆོད་རྟེན་ དགོན་ལོ་ ཡོད་པའི་ སྐུ་ཁང་ གཉིས་པོ་ ཚུད་ མི་འདུག་ གཞན་ཡང་ ཡུལ་ཆོ་ གཅིག་གི་ བར་ལོ་ གྲ་རུ་ ལྷ་ཁང་ ལྷ་ཁང་
ལབ་སྟེ་ སུམ་རུ་ སོ་གངས་ཅིག་ འདུག་གོ།

བར་པའི་ རིག་གནས་ སྤངས་པའི་ སྟོབ་ལྷ་ལྟེ། འདི་ དང་ འབྲ་པོ་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༠༩ ལོར་ དཔེན་ཅན་ འབྲིང་རིམ་ མཐོ་བའི་ བར་ཀྱི་ ཤེས་
ཆད་བར་ཀྱི་ སྟོབ་ལྷ་ སྟོན་ རང་བཅོན་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ལས་ ད་ལྟོ་ བར་ གནས་ཡོད།

འབྲས་གཞུང་ དགོན་ཆོས་ སྟོབ་ལྷ་ལྟེ། བརྒྱ་ཕྱག་ བརྒྱ་དགུ་པའི་ སྐབས་ལས་ དགོན་པོ་ ག་ཡོད་ལོ་ གེས་སྟོག་ སྤངས་པོ་ དམིགས་
གསལ་གྱི་ བཅོས་ ཡོད་པོ་ མེད་རུང་ སྟོབ་ལྷ་ག་ འདི་ཙམ་ ལྷ་ཁོར་ ལྷ་ཁོར་ལོ་ གེས་ཤེས་མཁན་ སྐུ་འདུན་ལོ་ བཅར་སྟེ་ བསྐབ་སྟོལ་
ཡོད། ཨིན་ཀྱང་ རང་བཅོན་ གཞུང་གི་ སྐབས་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༥༤ ཟླ་པོ་ ༡ ཆོས་ ༡༠ ཡི་ ཉིན་ ཁྱད་ཆོས་ སྐུལ་སྐྱེ་ བདུན་འཛོམས་ རྫོ་རྩེ་
ལོ་ སྟོབ་ལྷ་འི་ སྟོབ་དཔོན་ བཞོ་བཞག་ གནང་སྟེ་ དགོན་ཆོས་ སྟོབ་ལྷ་ འགོ་བརྟགས་ཀོ་ གནང་འདུག་ འདི་ལས་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ 1986-87
ལོར་ འབྲས་ལྷོངས་ ཕྱོགས་བཞི་ལོ་ དགོན་ཆོས་ སྟོབ་ལྷ་ བརྒྱ་དགུ་ ལོག་སྟེ་རང་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ 2010-2011 ལོར་ སྟོབ་ལྷ་ བརྒྱ་གཉིས་
གསར་བརྟགས་ གནང་སྟེ་ ད་ལྟོ་ ཟངས་སྟེ་ ཤར་ རྫོང་ཁག་ལོ་ ༣༥ ལྟོ་ རྫོང་ཁག་ལོ་ ༢༩ རུབ་ལོ་ ༡༥ རྒྱང་ལོ་ ༢༡ བཅས་ ཡོངས་
སྟོན་ བདུན་བརྒྱ་ རོན་རྟུག་བཅས་ བརྟགས་ ཡོད་པོ་ སྟེ།

བར་པའི་ རིག་གཞུང་ ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཁང་ལྟེ། ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༥༥ ལོར་ རྒྱལ་བ་ སྐུ་ལྷོང་ བརྒྱ་བཞི་པ་ ཆེན་པོས་ མང་རྫོ་ བཞག་གོ་ གནང་
སྟེ་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༥ ལོར་ རྣམ་རྒྱལ་ བོད་ཀྱི་ ཤེས་རིག་ཁང་ བར་པའི་ རིག་གཞུང་ ཞིབ་འཇུག་ཁང་ དང་ བར་པའི་ གཞུང་ལུགས་ཀྱི་
དཔེ་མཛོད་ དང་ འབྲམ་སྟོན་ ཁང་ མཉམ་ཅིག་ ཞེངས་འདུག།

བཤད་ལྷ་ལྟེ། ཆོས་རྒྱལ་ བཟ་ཤིས་ རྣམ་རྒྱལ་ ཡབ་ལྷས་ གཉིས་ དང་ འཁྲལ་ཞིག་ དཔལ་པོ་ རྫོ་རྩེ་ རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ ༥་སྐབས་རྩེ་ རྫོ་ལྷ་བ་
ཆེན་ སྐུ་ལྷོང་ བཞི་པོ་ བཅས་ཀྱི་ ལུགས་རྩེ་ ལས་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ ལོར་ སྐས་གནས་ འདིའི་ བར་ བཤད་ལྷ་ དང་པོ་ ཉིང་མ་ བཤད་

གྲྭ་དབུ་བཅུགས་ཀོ་གནང་། འདི་ལས་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༥༠ ལོར་ རུམ་ སྟེགས་ ཀམ་ཕྱི་ བཤད་གྲྭ་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ ལོར་ འབྲས་
ལྗོངས་ ཆོས་རྒྱལ་ དབང་ཕྱུག་ རྣམ་རྒྱལ་ དང་ སྐབས་མེ་ མཁན་ཆེན་ རིག་འཛིན་ རྟོ་མེ་ གཉིས་ཀྱི་ ཐུགས་མེ་ལས་ སྤང་ཉོག་ སྟག་
ཅེ་ལོ་ སྤྲུལ་ ཐེག་དགྲུ་ ལེགས་བཤད་སྤྱི་ དབུ་བཅུགས་ཀོ་གནང་། ད་ལྟ་ ས་གནས་ སྟོ་སྟེ་ མར་གཏམ་ལོ་ ཡོད། འདི་ལས་ ཕྱི་ལོ་
༡༩༩༡ ལོར་ རུབ་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ རིན་ཆེན་སྤང་ལོ་ ༥་སྐབས་མེ་ མཁན་ཆེན་ བདེ་ཆེན་ རྟོ་མེ་ མཆོག་གི་ སྤྲུལ་ བཤད་གྲྭ་ བསྐྱ་
འགོ་འདུལ་ འཕེལ་རྒྱས་སྤྱིང་ ཐུག་བཏབས་པོ་ གནང་འདུག འདི་ལས་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ ལོར་ གསང་ཆེན་ བསྐྱ་ཡང་ཅེ་དེ་ དགོན་གྱི་
མངའ་འོག་ལོ་ གསང་ཆེན་ བསྐྱ་ཡང་ཅེ་ མཐོ་སྟོབ་ ལེགས་བཤད་སྤྱིང་ ལུ་མཁན་ བཤད་གྲྭ་ བཅུགས་སྟེ་ ད་ལྟའི་ བར་ བཤད་གྲྭ་ ལྟ་
འདེ་ཆོད་ རང་ལོ་ འཆད་ཅོད་ ཅོམ་གསུམ་ གནང་བཞིན་པོ་ ཡོད།

ཆོས་ཆོགས་དང་ ཁྲིས་མ་ཆོགས་པོ། ད་ དེང་སང་ དགོན་པོ་ མ་ནི་ ལྷ་ཁང་ལས་ གཞན་པའི་ ཆོས་ཆོགས་ ཁྲིས་མ་ ཆོགས་པོ་ ལུ་
མཁན་ གཙོ་པོ་ འཛིག་རྟེན་ ཁྲིས་པོ་ མོ་མོ་ འདི་ཅུ་གྱི་ ལྷ་མོ་ ལྷ་པོ་ སྟོབ་དཔོན་ མཁན་པོ་ གན་རུང་ གཅིག་གི་ འོག་ལོ་ སྤྱིས་སྟོག་
དང་ ཆོག་ ཐུག་ལེན་ བསྐྱབ་སྟེ་ རང་པའི་ དུས་ཆེན་ ཁག་ དང་ གྲང་མེད་གི་ སྐབས་ལོ་ ཆོག་ ཆོགས་མཆོད་ གྲྭ་ས་པའི་ ཆོས་
ཆོགས་ བལ་ཆེར་ ལྷ་རྒྱག་ཅིག་གྲང་ མགོ་ཕྱི་ གནང་འདུག

བསྟན་པོ་ སྟེལ་མཁན་ན། འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ རང་ དང་ ཕྱི་ འོག་གི་ བཤད་གྲྭ་ དང་ སྐབས་མེ་ ཐུགས་མེ་ལས་ ལྷ་ཆེན་ རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ ཡང་
སྤྱིང་ སྐལ་སྤྱུ་ མཁན་པོ་ སྟོབ་དཔོན་ སྐབས་མེ་ ད་རིང་ལས་ ལོ་ ལྷ་བཅུ་ རྒྱག་ཅུའི་ སྟོན་ དང་ ད་ལྟོ་ བསྟན་ན་ མང་དུ་ མང་དུ་ ཐོན་
བཞིན་པོ་ ཞིན། གཞན་ཡང་ རང་པའི་ ཆོས། རིག་གཞུང་། ལོ་རྒྱུས་ སྟེང་ལོ་ ཉམས་ཞིབ་པོ་ དང་ མཁས་པོ་ ཡང་ མང་དགས་ ཐོན་
བཞིན་ ཡོད། འདི་ལས་ གཏོར་བཟོ་ རྒྱབ་བཟོ་ ཆོག་ ཐུག་ལེན་ དང་ དགོན་པའི་ ཕྱི་འི་ རྣམ་པོ་ འདི་ཅུ་ ཉིན་ལས་ ཉིན་ ཡར་རྒྱས་
ཐོན་བཞིན་ ཡོད་པོ་ ང་ཅག་ མཛོན་སུམ་ མཐོང་ཚུགས།

ནང་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ན། ཡིག་ཆ་ ཁུངས་དག་ མེད་རུང་ རང་གི་ ཆོད་དཔག་ གྲྭ་ས་སྐབས་ ད་རིང་ལས་ ལོ་ རྒྱག་བཅུ་ བདུན་བཅུའི་
སྟོན་ལོ་ རང་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ ལྟོ་མོན་ གཉིས་ དང་ ལྟོ་པའི་ ཁུངས་གཏོགས་ ཁ་གསལ་ལས་ མེད་གྲང་ ད་ལྟ་ ཉ་དམག་ དང་ གྲུ་རུང་
གཉིས་གྲང་ ཁ་སྟོན་ རྒྱབས་ཡོད་པས་ མང་དགས་ ཐོན་བཞིན་ ཡོད་པོ་ ང་ཅག་ ཤེས་ ཚུགས་སོ།

ལོ་ཉི་ཤུའི་ རིང་གི་ མོས་ཤོག་གི་ མི་གྲངས་ན།

ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ ལོར་ ༣༠༥༩

ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ ལོར་ ༡༩༩༩ ༡༩༩ ཡ་མར་ སོང་ འདུག

ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ ལོར་ ༡༩༩༩ ༡༩༩ རྩུང་དུ་ སོང་།

ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ ལོར་ ༡༩༩༩ ༡༩༩ ཡ་མར་།

སྟོབ་ཐུག་གི་ གནས་སྐྱདས་ན། སྟོབ་སྐྱདས་ དགོན་ཆོས་ སྟོབ་ཐུག་ལས་ སྟོབ་ཐུག་ མང་ཆེ་ཤོས་ནི་ སྤང་ཐང་ བཤད་གྲྭ་ལོ་ ཐོན་དོ་ ཞིན་
པས་ བཤད་གྲྭ་ལོ་ ཐོན་མཁན་ འདི་ཅུའི་ ལོ་ཉི་ཤུའི་ རིང་གི་ གནས་སྐྱདས་ འདེམ་གཅིག་ བསྟན་ལྟེན་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༩༩ ལས་ ༡༩༩༩
བར་ ལོ་ བཅོ་ལུའི་ རང་ཆུད་ བལ་ཆེར་ སྟོབ་ཐུག་ ཉི་ཤུ་ ཅ་ལྷ་ལས་ རྩུང་མེད་པོ་ ང་ཅག་ ཤེས་ཚུགས་སོ།

ཨིན་ཀྲཱ་ ཕྱི་ལོ་ 1991 ལོ་ལས་ 2011 བར་གྱི་ ཆོས་ལུགས་ ངང་ འབྲེལ་བའི་ མི་རིགས་ཀྱི་ གྲངས་བོར་ བལྟ་དུས་ལོ་ ཨ་ཅི་མ་
ཉུང་ཉུང་ ཐོན་བཞིན་ འདུག

ཆོས་ལུགས་ ཆོགས་པོ་	མི་གྲངས་ % 1991	མི་གྲངས་ % 2001	མི་གྲངས་ % 2011
Hinduism	68.36%	60.93%	57.76%
Buddhism	27.15%	28.11%	27.39%
Christianity	3.29%	6.67%	9.91%
Islam	0.94%	1.42%	1.62%
Sikhism	0.09%	0.21%	0.31%
Jainism	0.001%	0.03%	0.05%
Other Religions	0.04%	2.38%	2.67%
No Religion	—	—	0.3%

འདི་ལས་ དགོན་ཆོས་ སློབ་ལྷན་ རེ་རེ་ ནང་གི་ སློབ་སྤྲུག་གི་ གྲངས་ཚད་ ལོ་ལྷན་ ཉུང་ཉུང་ ཐོན་བཞིན་ ཡོད་པོ་ ངང་ འདི་ལས་ ཕྱི་ལོ་
༡༩༩༡ བར་གྱི་ འབྲས་ལྡོངས་ཀྱི་ མིའི་ བོ་ཙཱ་ སྤྱི་ཚད་ ལྷ་སྐབས་ཡང་ ད་ལྟོ་ བུམ་གཅིག་གི་ སལ་ཆེར་ བོ་ཙཱ་ 1.1 སྤྱི་ཚད་
ཡོད།

མཐུག་སྒྲིམ།

གོང་གི་ ཡིག་ཆ་ལོ་ བལྟ་དུས་ འཁོར་བ་ མིའི་ མཐོང་སྒྲུང་ལོ་ དགོན་པོ། མ་ནི་ ལྷ་ཁང་། སློབ་ལྷན་ བཤད་ལྷན་ སྤྱི་ཡོ་ རྟེན། གསུང་
རྟེན། ཆོས་རྒྱུན་ སོ་སའི་ ཆོ་ག་ བྱུག་ལེན། ནང་པོ་ སངས་རྒྱུས་པའི་ རྗེས་འཇུག་ མི་རིགས་ མཐོ་བསམ་ བཏང་ན་ བརྒྱ་ཐག་ བཅུ་
དགུ་པའི་ སྐབས་ ཉ་དམག་ ངང་ གྲུ་རུང་ གཉིས་ཀྱང་ ཁ་སློན་ ཐོན་པོ་ ངང་ བསྐྱེད་པ་ལོ་ སན་པའི་ མཐུན་སྦྲེན་ རོག་རམ་ གན་ལྷར་
ཡང་ ནང་པའི་བསྐྱེད་པོ་ ངང་ཡོད་པོ་ མན་པོ་ ཉམས་པོ་ ཨིན་ཟེ་ ང་ཅག་ བྱུས་ མི་ཚུགས། འདི་ལས་ བརྒྱ་ཐག་ བཅུ་དགུ་པོ་འདི་
འབྲས་ལྡོངས་ཀྱི་ ནང་པའི་ བསྐྱེད་པོ་ ངང་ཞིང་ རྒྱུས་པའི་ བརྒྱ་ཐག་ཅིག་ ཨིན་ཟེ་ བྱུ་ཚུགས།

ཡང་ ཕྱོགས་ གཞན་ལས་ བལྟ་དུས་ འབྲས་ལྡོངས་ཀྱི་ མི་རིགས་ སྤྱིའི་ བོ་ཙཱ་ སྤྱི་ཚད་ ལོ་ལྷན་ ཉུང་ཉུང་ ཐོན་བཞིན་འགྱུ་པོ་ ངང་ བྱེ་བྲག་
ནང་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ ཉུང་ཉུང་ ཐོན་བཞིན་ འགྱུ་པོ་ འདི་ནེ་ ནང་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ ཡོངས་ཀྱི་ གཏན་གཏན་ ཐུགས་བསམ་ བཞེས་
དགོས་པོ་ རོན་ཚན་ཅིག་ ཆགས་ འདུག གན་བྱ་ས་ལུས་ན་ བསྐྱེད་པོ་ ཕྱི་ལོག་ བཞོ་སྟེ་ གཅིག་ཀྱི་ མ་ཨིན་པར་ གཙོ་བོ་ མི་ཚུས་
བསྐྱེད་སྐྱོབས་ བྱ་ས་དགོས་པོ་ ཨིན་ཅང་ ཆོས་ འཛིག་རྟེན་ གན་ལས་ བལྟ་དུས་ མི་འདི་ ཡོད་ དགོས་པོ་ ཐམས་ཅད་ལས་ གལ་ ཆེ་
ཤོས་ཅིག་ མཐོང་།

ད་ ནང་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ ཉུང་ཉུང་ གཙོ་བོ་ འདི་ནེ་ དེང་སང་གི་ སྤྱི་ཚུགས་ཀྱི་ གནས་སྐྱེད་པ་ལོ་ བརྟེན་སྤྱིས་ བོ་ཙཱའི་ སྤྱི་ཚད་ ལོ་
ལས་ ལོ་ ཉུང་པོ་ ངང་ ཆོས་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ བྱ་ས་བཞག་ དཔལ་སྦྱོར་ མཐུན་སྦྲེན། ངང་ རིགས་ཀྱི་ ཆགས་ཞེན། ངང་ གཞན་གྱི་ མགོ་

བསྐྱོར་ སོགས་ རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་ ལྷ་ཚོགས་ལོ་ བརྟེན་སྤྲེས་ ཚས་ལུགས་ བརྟེན་སྤྲེས་ བྱ་ས་བོ་ལོ་ བརྟེན་ བྱང་བའི་ མི་རིགས་ རྒྱང་བཞིན་ སོང་།

དགོན་ཚོས་ སློབ་གྲྭ་ དང་ དགོན་པོའི་ བླ་པོ་ རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་ནི་ མངའ་སྡེ་ བླ་ དང་ ལྷོ་འི་ བཤད་གྲྭ་ དགོན་པོ་ འདི་ཙུ་ མང་བའི་ རྒྱུན་ དང་ འདི་ལས་ སློབ་གྲྭ་ འདི་ཙུ་ ཡང་ ས་ཐག་ མི་རིང་བའི་ ཡུལ་ལོ་ གཉིས་གཉིས་ གསུམ་ ཡོད་པའི་ རྒྱུན་ ཡང་ ཡིན་ སྤྲོད། འདི་ལས་ དགོན་པའི་ བླ་པོ་ འཇུག་ཞུགས་ཀྱི་ སྐབས་ མི་རིགས་ཀྱི་ བཀའ་སློབ་ མི་རིགས་ སོ་སོའི་ རིགས་ལས་ གཞོག་སྟེ་ དགོན་པོའི་ མིང་བཏགས་ཤད་ འདི་ནི་ སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ གསུང་རབས་ དང་ རྒྱབ་རྒྱལ་ ཡིན་པོ་ ཞེས་དགོས།

སྒྲིན་ འདི་ཙུ་ ཐམས་ཅད་ལས་ ཐར་ཐབས་ དང་ རིགས་ཀྱི་ ཆགས་ཞེན་ དང་ དཔལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ ཆགས་ཞེན་ རྒྱབ་ལོ་ བཞག་སྟེ་ བླ་ པོའི་ བསྟན་པོ་ རྣམ་མོ་རང་། རོན་ལོ། དངོས་ལོ། དར་དགོས་པོ་ འདུག་ཟེ་ ཐུགས་བསམ་ ཞེས་ན་ ལྷ་མོ་ དབུ་ཚོས་ དང་ ཚོས་ཡོན་ སྒྲིན་བདག་ གཉིས་ཀའི་ རོས་ལས་ རྒྱག་ལས་ཙུ་ གནང་དགོས་པོ་ འདུག་ ལྷ་མོ་ དབུ་ཚོས་ཙུ་ ཡིན་ན་ ཞི་གསོན་ གཉིས་ཀྱི་ སྐབས་ ལོ་ ཚོས་ དང་ མཐུན་པོ་ སྒྲིན་བདག་གི་ གནས་སྐབས་ དང་ མཐུན་པའི་ རིས་འགོ་ གཞིན་ཚོས་ཙུ་ གནང་ཤད་ དང་ འདི་ལས་ བླ་ པོ་ སྤྱི་འི་ ཚོགས་པོ་ཅིག་ བཅོས་དགོས་པོ་ དང་ ལྷ་མོ་ སྤྱལ་སྤྱུ་ མཁན་པོ་ སོགས་ཀྱི་ དབང་ལུང་ དང་ མཉམ་ཅིག་ ཚོས་བཤད་ དང་ གལ་སྤྲོད་ ལྷ་མོ་ དང་ དགོན་པོ་ ལེབ་སྟེ་ དཔལ་འབྱོར་ ཡོད་མཁན་ ཡིན་ན་ བྱིས་ཆང་ རྒྱབ་ལུས་ འོར་པོ་ ཙུ་ལོ་ རྟོགས་རམ་ གནང་ དགོས་པོ་ དང་ རིགས་ སོ་སོའི་ དགོན་པོ་ མིན་པར་ རིག་རུས་ ཐམས་ཅད་ རྒྱ་པོ་ ཐོན་ཆོག་པོ་ དང་ འདི་ལས་ དགོན་པོ་ ཐག་ཉེ་ ཐག་ཉེ་ སློབ་གྲྭ་ གཅིག་ལས་ མང་བྲགས་ མ་བཅོ་པོ་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ ཡུལ་ཚོ་ གཉིས་གསུམ་ཀྱི་ སློབ་གྲྭ་ གཅིག་ བེད་སྤྱོད་ གནང་ཤད་ དང་ དགོན་པོ་ཡང་ གསར་བཅོ་ གནང་ཤད་ སྐབས་ཅིག་ བཞག་སྟེ་ ཡོད་པོ་ འདི་ཙུ་ ལེགས་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ བདག་གཅེས་ གནང་དགོས་ པོ་ མཐོང་། འདི་ལས་ སྒྲིན་བདག་ འདི་ཙུས་ རྒྱ་ཡོད་ ལལ་སྟེ་རང་ རྩིག་རྩིག་ བྱ་ས་སྤྲོད་ཀྱིས་ མེད་པོ་ཙུའི་ སྟེང་ལོ་ རོར་ ཐོག་གོ་ འདི་ཙུ་ མཁུན་སྤྲེས་ རྒྱག་ལས་ གནང་དགོས་པོ་ དང་ ཡམ་ གཅིག་གི་ རྒྱང་མཐའ་ལོ་ བོ་ཙོ་ གསུམ་ སྤྱེས་པོ་ གནང་ན་ ཚོས་ དང་ འཛིག་རྟེན་ གཉིས་ཀའི་ རྟོགས་ལས་ ཕན་ཐོག་ རྒྱ་ ཆེ་བྲགས་ ཐོན་ཤད་ ཡིན་པོ་ ཐག་ཆོད་ ཡིན་ནོ། འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ཚོས་སྤྲོད་ཀྱི་ བསྟན་པོ་ དར་བར་འོག་ བཟ་ཞིས་པར་འོག་

ཁྲངས་ལེན་ དཔེ་མཐོ།

1. འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ གནས་ཡིག་ རྟོགས་བསྐྱེབས། རྣམ་རྒྱལ་ བོད་ཀྱི་ ཞེས་རིག་ ཉམས་ཞིབ་ ཁང་ དང་ ཨ་ཕྱེས་ རྣ་ཆེན་ བོད་ཀྱི་ རིག་གཞུང་ ཞིབ་འཇུག་ ཁང་། ༢༠༠༩
2. དུང་དཀར་ཆོག་མཛོད། ཞེས་རིག་དཔར་ཁང་། ༢༠༠༩ བོད་ དང་པོ།
3. མཁན་པོ་ ལྷ་ཆེ་རིད། མཁའ་སྤྱོད་ འབྲས་མོ་ ལྗོངས་ཀྱི་ གཙུག་ལྷོར་ སྤྱལ་པའི་ རྣམ་འབྱོར་ མཆེད་བཞིའི་ རྒྱུད་འཛིན་ དང་ བཅས་པའི་ བྱང་བ་ བཛོད་པ་ རྫོགས་ར་ གཞོན་ལུའི་ དགའ་སྟོན། པར་དུས། ༢༠༠༢
4. དགོན་བྱང་ མཁན་པོ་ ཚོས་དབང་། འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ཀྱི་ ཚོས་སྤྲོད་ དང་འབྲེལ་བའི་ རྒྱལ་རབས་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་ བདེན་དོན་ ཀུན་གསལ་ མེ་ལོང་། རྣམ་རྒྱལ་ བོད་ཀྱི་ ཞེས་རིག་ ཉམས་ཞིབ་ ཁང་། ༢༠༠༣
5. Official Website of the Ecclesiastical Affairs Department (sikkimeccl.gov.in)

6. སྤུང་ཡུལ་ འབྲས་མོ་ལྗོངས་སུ་ དེང་རབས་ རིས་མེད་ ལྷ་མ་ སྤྱི་ཆེན་ དམ་པ་ རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ མཛད་པ་ ཕྱག་རིས་ རི་སྤྲངས་ཀྱི་
རྣམ་ཐར་ འིན་ཏུ་ བསྟུས་པ་ ལྟོགས་ར་ པར་ འཛུལ་པའི་ ཉི་ཟེལ་ ལྷ་ལྷ་ཅུ་ ལུ་ལྷ་མོ་ རྣམ་ཀྱུལ་ བོད་ཀྱི་ འཕེལ་རིག་
ཉམས་ཞིབ་ཁང་། ༢༠༡༣
7. འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ དགོན་སྡེ་ཁག་གི་ ལོ་རྒྱུས། འཛིགས་མེད་ ལྟོགས་ལ་ དང་ ལྷ་ལྷ་ཅུ་ སྤེན་པ་ རྩོམ་ཡུལ་ རྣམ་ཀྱུལ་ བོད་ཀྱི་ འཕེལ་
རིག་ ཉམས་ཞིབ་ཁང་། ༢༠༡༤
8. [Enchey Government Senior Secondary School.\(EGSSS\) | Facebook](#)
9. [Official Website of the Ecclesiastical Affairs Department \(sikkimeccl.gov.in\)](#)
10. སྤུང་ཡུལ་ འབྲས་མོ་ལྗོངས་སུ་ དེང་རབས་ རིས་མེད་ ལྷ་མ་ སྤྱི་ཆེན་ དམ་པ་ རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ མཛད་པ་ ཕྱག་རིས་ རི་སྤྲངས་ཀྱི་
རྣམ་ཐར་ འིན་ཏུ་ བསྟུས་པ། ལྷ་ལྷ་ཅུ་ ལུ་ལྷ་མོ་ རྣམ་ཀྱུལ་ བོད་ཀྱི་ འཕེལ་རིག་ ཉམས་ཞིབ་ཁང་། ༢༠༠༩
11. [Namgyal Institute of Tibetology \(namgyalinstitutesikkim.org\)](#)
12. *Evolutionary Passage through Time, Khenpo L. Tshering and Himanshu Ranjan, Sikkim*
Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies Sheda 2020
13. Memo. No.4(230)-s/59 300 Dated the 24th April 1962
14. [Nyingma-Home \(nyingmainstitutemartam.org\)](#)
15. [Sikkim Tamang-Buddhist Association \(stba.in\)](#)
16. [Sangha, Election Result 2024 Live: Winning and Losing Candidates & Parties, 2019 vs 2024 Results, Voting Percentage, Exit Polls-News18 Assembly Election 2024 Result News](#)
17. [Sikkim Wikipedia](#)
18. [Vital Statistics: Birth Rate: per 1000 Population: Sikkim Economic Indicators | CEIC \(ceicdata.com\)](#)

EXAMINING THE EIGHTEEN TYPES OF CLASSICAL SIKKIMESE BHUTIA SONGS

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ལྷོ་པའི་ གཞུང་ལྷ་ ལྷ་ཐང་ བཅོ་བརྒྱད་ སྐྱར་ལོ་ ཞིབ་དབྱད།

Yeshey Namgyal Bhutia

རོ་སྒྲི།

ད་ གཞུང་ལྷ་འི་ རོ་སྒྲི་ད་ མདོར་བསྐྱུས་ཅིག་ ལྷ་ན། རང་གི་ རིགས་གཞུང་ དང་ བྱགས་སྲོལ་ཚུ་ གསོན་པོ་ བཞག་གི་དེ་ རོན་ལོ་ གཞུང་
ལྷ་ཚུ་དེ་ གཡོག་འགན་ སྲོལ་པོ་ ཡོད་ཤིང་ ཡིན། འདི་ཚུ་ ར་ཅའི་ བྱལ་བཞག་ དང་ རིགས་བརྒྱད་ལོ་ འབྲེལ་བ་ དམ་འགས་ བཅོ་
བཞག་ཤིང་ ཡིན། དུས་ཆོད་ དང་ བསྐྱུན་སྡེ་ བོ་རིམ་ ལྷ་ཀྱི་ སྤྱི་ཆོགས་ཀྱི་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་ གསུང་ དང་ མེམས་སྐྱུལ་ཚུ་ ཁེ་ལས་ གང་པོ་
གཞུང་ལྷ་ འདི་དེ་ སྲོལ་རྒྱུན་ འདི་ཚུ་ མི་རབས་ གཅིག་གི་ ཁ་ལས་ རྒྱབས་སྟེ་ གཅིག་ལོ་ བརྒྱད་སྟེ་ འོང་བོ་ལས་ སྤང་སྤྱོད་པས་ འཕོན་
ཚུགས་ཤིང་ ཡིན། གཞུང་ལྷ་ཚུ་ གཅོ་པོ་ ས་ཆ་ གཅིག་ལོ་ སྤྱོད་ ཡོད་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ ཚུ་གིས་ རང་གི་ གསོ་སྦྱོར་ བྱ་ས་ཐབས་ དང་
འདི་ལས་ དགའ་སྟོན་ གོམས་གཤེས་ དང་ འཐབ་ཅོད་ཚུ་གིས་ ཐོག་ལོ་ ཡོད་ཤིང་ ཡིན། འདི་ན་ མི་ རང་རང་ སོ་སའི་ མི་ཆེ་དེ་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་
བྱམས་བཅེ་ དང་ དཔལ་པོ་ སྤྲོད་གསུང་ཅན་ ཚུ་གིས་ ལོ་རྒྱུས་ཚུ་ བཤུད་ ཡོད་ཤིང་ཡིན། རས་ ཞིབ་དབྱད་འདི་ གཅོ་པོ་ ལྷོ་ དང་
ལུབ་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ རྒྱལ་ཞིང་ དང་ བཀྱ་གིས་སྤིངས་ ལུལ་མཆོ་ དང་ ལྷོ་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ར་ལང་ ལུལ་མཆོ་ལོ་ ཡོད་པའི་ ལྷོ་པའི་
མི་རིགས་ཚུ་དེ་ ལྷ་ ཞབས་ཤོ་ དང་ བྱགས་སྲོལ་ སྤང་བཅེ་ བྱ་ས་སྤངས་ སྐྱར་ལོ་ དམིགས་གསལ་གྱི་ བྱ་ཡོད་པོ་ ཡིན། གཅོ་པོ་འདི་
འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ལྷོ་པའི་ གཞུང་ལྷ་འི་ སྐྱར་ལོ་ བྱི་ ཡོད་པའི་ དེབ་ཚུ་ གཞི་བཞག་སྟེ་ འདི་དེ་ སྤྱོད་ལོ་ ཞིབ་དབྱད་ བྱ་ས་ཡོད་པོ་ ཡིན།

འདི་ལས་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ལྷོ་པའི་ ལྷ་འི་ ལྷ་ཁག་ མ་འདྲ་བོ་ གེས་པོ་ཅིག་ ཡོད་ འདི་ཚུ་ནི། གཞུང་ལྷ་, སྤྱོས་ལྷ་, སྤོད་ལྷ་, ཆོགས་
ལྷ་, མགྱར་ལྷ་, ལྷ་ཤག་, རྒྱལ་ལྷ་, བསྟོད་ལྷ་, ཆོམ་ལྷ་, ལྷ་འགོ་ ལྷ་ཁང་ ལྷ་ལོ་ གཞས་འགོ་ ཤུན་དགའ་ར་པོ་ ལ་སོགས་པོ་
འདི་ཚུ་ འདེམ་ ལྷ་ཡི་ ལྷ་ཁག་ མ་འདྲ་བོ་ གེས་པོ་ཅིག་ ར་ཅའི་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ཨ་ཀུ་ ལྷོ་པོ་ ཚུ་ལོ་ ཡོད་པོ་ ཡིན།

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་པོ་ ལྷོ་པའི་ སྐྱར་ལོ་ བྱལ་ཅིག་ ལྷ་ན་ སྤོན་དུས་རབས་ བརྒྱད་པོ་ལས་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ རང་ལོ་ ལྷོ་པོ་ཚུས་ གཞི་
ཆགས་ ཡོད་པོ་ དང་ ཡང་ལས་ནི་ བཤུད་ཚུལ་ གཞན་ཚུ་ན་ འདི་དེ་ སྤོན་ལས་རང་ གཞི་ཆགས་ ཡོད་པའི་ ར་ཅག་ ལྷོ་པའི་ མི་
རིགས་ཅིག་ ཡིན། འདི་ལོ་ ར་ཅག་ རང་གི་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་པོ་ ཨ་ཀུ་ ལྷོ་པོ་ ཁ་མདོར་ དཀར་པོ་སེ་ ལམ་ཉི་ སྤྲད། འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ རང་
ར་ཅག་ལོ་ མི་རིགས་ གཞན་ཚུ་གིས་ (Sikkimese Bhutia) ལབ་སྟེ་ རོ་ཤེས་ ཚུགས་པོ་ ཡོད། ལྷོ་པོ་ མི་རིགས་ཚུ་ མང་ཆེ་
ཤོས་ རང་ཆོས་ལོ་ ཡིད་ཆེས་ བྱ་ས་མཁན་ མི་རིགས་ཅིག་ ཡིན། འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ན་ ལྷོ་པོ་ཚུ་ རང་གི་ རིགས་གཞུང་ བྱགས་སྲོལ་
ལེབ་སྟེ་རང་ ལྷ་ཀུ་ ཡོད་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ཅིག་ ཡིན། འདི་ན་ལས་ ལྷོ་པོ་ཚུ་ རང་གི་ བྱགས་སྲོལ་ ཚུ་ལས་ རང་གི་ ལྷ་ དང་ ཞབས་ཤོ་དེ་

རིགས་ མང་དགས་ཅིག་ ཡོད་པོ་ལས་ གཞུང་ལྷན་གྱི་ གཅིག་གྱི་ མཚོ་བསམ་བཏང་ན་ རིགས་ མ་འདྲ་པོ་ བཅོ་བརྒྱད་ དང་ འདི་ལས་
ལྷག་ཆོད་ ཡོད་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ཅིག་ ཡིན།

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ལྷོ་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ ཚུ་གིས་ སྦྱིར་བཏང་གི་ དམངས་གཞས་ཀྱི་ རིགས་ ཁ་ཤས་ཅིག་

གཞུང་ལྷན་། སྦྱིར་བཏང་གི་ ང་ཅག་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ལྷོ་པའི་ མི་རིགས་ཚུ་ རང་རང་ མོ་མོའི་ གཉེན་གྱི་ ཉེན་འབྲེལ་ དང་ གཞན་ དགའ་
སྦྱིད་ བཏང་བའི་ སྐབས་ལོ་ ལྷག་ཞས་ཚུ་ རྒྱུ་ལྷན་གྱི་ སྦྱིད་པོ་ བཏང་བའི་ ལུགས་སྒོལ་ བཟང་པོ་ ཡོད་པོ་ ཡིན། འདི་འདྲི་ སྐབས་ལོ་
མི་རིགས་ འདི་ཚུ་གི་ གོང་ལོ་ བཤད་པོ་ ལྷན་ དུས་ལྷན་ དང་ བསྐྱེད་ཀྱི་ ལྷག་ཞས་ཚུ་ རྒྱུ་ལྷན་གྱི་ ཡིན། འདི་ལས་ ལྷག་འདི་ཚུ་ ཁྱིམ་
གསར་ བགྱིས་ བྱ་ས་རྒྱུལ་ དང་ དགའ་ལས་ བཟང་ལས་ཀྱི་ གཤེད་ཚུ་ན་ ལྷག་ཞས་ འདི་ཚུ་ ལུ་འབྱུང་སྟེ་ རྒྱུ་ལྷན་ དང་ རྒྱུ་ལྷན་བཞིན་
པོ་ ཡོད་པོ་ ཡིན། གཞུང་ལྷན་ ལྷན་ཐང་ བཅོ་བརྒྱད་པོ་ དང་ འདི་ལས་ ལྷག་ཆོད་ ཡོད་པའི་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ལྷོ་པའི་ ལྷག་ཞས་ ཁེ་ལས་
རྒྱུ་ལྷན་པའི་ ལུགས་སྒོལ་ ཡོད་པོ་ ཡིན།

སྒྲོ་སྒྲུ་ Nepali ལས་ འདི་ལོ་juwari ༼འདི་ལོ་ ལྷག་བཤག་ ཡང་ ལྷག་ལྷན་ལྷན་ ཡིན། ལྷག་འདི་ན་ མི་ མི་ཆོགས་ ཤོ་ཁག་ གཉིས་
ཡང་ན་ གཉིས་ལས་ ལྷག་ཆོད་ ཡོད་པོ་ཚུ་ བར་ན་ རྒྱུ་ལྷན་མཁན་ ལྷག་ཅིག་ ཡིན། ལྷག་འདི་ཚུ་ ག་ས་ ག་ན་ལོ་ རྒྱུ་ལྷན་ཆོག་ཡིན་ འདི་
ལོ་ དེས་བར་ལོ་ གཉེན་ཆང་འབྱུང་ དང་ གཞན་ དུས་ལྷན་ཚུ་ ཅི་ཀྱུ་ན་ མན་པོ་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ རང་འདོད་ལྷན་གྱི་ རྒྱུ་ལྷན་ཆོག་ ཡིན། དཔེ་
ན་ ལྷག་འདི་ཚུ་ ཨ་ཅ་ཆོ་ སྒྲོལ་མ། ཨེ་མ་ལེན་ཅིག་ གསུང་དང་ ལའ་མཁན་ ལྷག་ཚུ་ ལས་ འགོ་གཙུགས་སྟེ་ རང་གི་ སྒྲོལ་ས་ སྒྲོལ་སྟེ་
རྒྱུ་ལྷན་མཁན་ལོ་ སྒྲོ་སྒྲུ་མེ་ ལའ་ལྷན་ ཡིན།

རྩ་ལྷན་ བཏངས་སྒྲུ་ ལྷག་འདི་ གཉེན་ཆང་འབྱུང་ ཁྱིམ་གསར་ བགྱིས་ འདི་ལས་ དགའ་ལས་ བཟང་ལས་ཀྱི་ གཤེད་གཤིག་ སྐབས་ལོ་ མཆོད་
བཤགས་ན་ འགོ་ དང་པོ་ བཅོན་ལྷན་ ལྷན་། དགོན་མགོན་ དཔོན་པོ་ ཡལ་ཆེན་ ཨ་པོ་ ལུ་མ་ཆེན་ ཨ་མ། ལྷག་ཤར་ གཞོན་པོ་ མན་
ཤར་ས་ གཞོན་པོ་ ཚུ་ལོ་ རྩ་ལྷན་ ལུ་ལོ་འདི་ ལུགས་སྒོལ་ ཡོད་པོ་ སྤང་། འདི་ཚུ་ ལྷག་ཆོག་ལོ་།

ཨེ་ལ་ སངས་རི་ལ་ ཐང་གཅིག་ བརྒྱའི་ ཐང་གི་ སྤྲོ།

===== ཐང་ལྷན་ རི་པོང་ འདྲ་སྟེ་ སྦྱིབ་གསུམ་ བཙུགས།

===== མེ་ལྷན་ རི་མེ་ ཡིན་ཟེ་ འགྲིགས་ཅན་ ལུ།

===== ཤིང་ལྷན་ ཅན་དན་ ཡིན་ཟེ་ འགྲིགས་ཅན་ བཙུགས།

===== རྩ་ལྷན་ བཤེལ་ལེ་ གཡང་ཆགས་ རྟོག་ཅན་ སྤྲེལ།

===== རྩ་ལྷན་ རི་ཆུ་ ཡིན་ཟེ་ འགྲིགས་ཅན་ ལུགས།

===== རྩ་ལྷན་ རྩ་ལྷན་ ཡིན་ཟེ་ འགྲིགས་ཅན་ ལུགས།

===== མང་ལྷན་ རི་མང་ ཡིན་ཟེ་ འགྲིགས་ཅན་ བཏངས།

===== ཚེ་རྒྱུ་ཚེ་མིན་ཟེ་ འབྲིགས་ཅམ་ བཏབ།

===== ར་ དང་པོ་ མཚན་ལྡན་ ལྷ་མར་ བྲས།

===== ཚོས་ དང་ ཡིག་རྩལ་ གནང་དགོས་ བྲས་པོ་ མིན། ལབ་སྟེ་ གོ་རིམ་ ལྟར་གྱི་ ར་པོ་ བྲས་པོའི་ སྟོལ་ ཡོད་
པོ་ མིན། འདས་ར་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ མགྲོན་མགྲོན་ དཔོན་པོ། ཡབ་ཆེན་ ཨ་པོ། ཡུམ་ཆེན་ ཨ་མ། སྟག་ཤར་དམན་ཤར་མ་ ཁེ་ལས་ལོ་ ར་
པོད་ སྤུལ་ཤད་ མིན།

སྟོད་སྒྲ། མང་ཆེ་ཤོས་ སྟོད་སྒྲ་འདི་ ཡང་ གཉེན་ ཆང་འབྱུང་ དང་ དགའ་སྦྱིད་ བཏང་བའི་ ཉེན་ལོ་ རྒྱབས་པའི་ སྤྲུགས་སྟོལ་ ཡོད་
པོ་ མིན། སྟོད་སྒྲ་འདི་ན་ ཞབས་བློ་ རྒྱབས་པའི་ སྤྲུགས་སྟོལ་ མེད་ དཔེ་ ཆ་བཞག་ན་ དགའ་སྦྱིད་ ཉེན་ལོ་ མཚོད་བཤམ་ན་ སྒྲ་འགོ་
སྒྲ་ཁང་ ལྷ་མོ་ ལས་ གཞས་འགོ་ ཤར་སྟོགས་ ཀུན་དགའ་ར་པོ་ ལས་ འགོ་གཙུགས་སྟེ་ གཞུང་སྒྲ་ ཞབས་བློ་ རྒྱབས་སྟེ་ ལེབ་སྟེ་ ཐང་
ཆད་པའི་ བར་རྒྱབས་ལོ་ ཉལ་གསོ་ སྟོད་པའི་ གང་ ཞབས་བློ་ མེད་པོ་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ རྒྱབས་མཁན་ སྒྲ་ལོ་ སྟོད་སྒྲ་ ལབ་ཏོ་ མིན། འདི་
ལས་ ད་རུང་ སྒྲ་ དང་ ཞབས་བློ་ ཁེ་ལས་ རྒྱབས་སྟེ་ སྟོང་རབ་ འཛོན་འགྲུ་རུང་ ལུང་རུག་ དང་ གནང་རི་ འབབ་འོང་ཤད་ མེད་ན་
མཚུགས་ལོ་ སྒྲ་རྒྱབས་ཤད་ ཡོད་པོ་ མིན། འདི་ན་ སྒྲ་འདི།

དགའ་ལ་ཏོ་ དགའ་མོ་ལ་ ལུང་ལ་ཞེ།

སྦྱིད་ལ་ཏོ་ སྦྱིད་མོ་ལ་ ལུང་ལ་ཞེ།

དགའ་སྦྱིད་ སུན་སུམ་ཆོགས་པའི་ ཡ་ལ།

བཟ་ཤིས་ སྟོན་ལམ་ ལུས་ལ་ ཡོད།

དགུང་ལོ་ ཡར་ལོ་ བཟེས་ཤོག།

ཀྲང་ཀམ་ ཡོད་ན་ འབྲིག་ཤོག།

ཅེབ་ཅེབ་ སྟོ་ལོ་ མི་འགྲུ།

འི་ཀ་ ཡོད་ན་ འབག་ཤོག། གསོལ་ཆང་ སྟོ་ལོ་ མིན་ འདུག། ལུང་རུག་ ཡོད་ན་ འབྲིག་ཤོག། སྒྲ་རྒྱབས་སྟེ་ ལུང་རུག་ དང་
གནང་རི་ཚུ་ བཀུག་ཐབས་ བྱ་ས་ཤད་ མིན།

ཆོགས་སྒྲ། སྦྱིར་ འཛམ་བུ་སྦྱིར་ གེ་བག་ འབས་ལྗོངས་ཀྱི་ དགོན་སྡེ་ཁག་ དང་ ཆོས་རྒྱན་ རང་རང་ སོ་སོའི་ དགོན་པོ་ མ་ཅིག་གོ་
ཚུ་ན་ ལོ་ལྟར་ སྒྲུབ་ཆེན་ སྒྲུབ་མཚོད་ དང་ གཞན་ འདི་ལས་ ཉེན་ གཉིས་ གསུམ་རིང་གི་ ཆོགས་པོ་ སྟོང་པའི་ རེས་ལོ་ ཆོགས་སྒྲ་
རྒྱབས་པའི་ སྟོལ་འདུག། གསང་སྤྲུགས་ སྒྲ་འགྲུར་ ཉིང་མ་ རང་ལས་ སྟོང་ཆེན་ སྦྱིང་ཐིག་ལས་ ཀུན་མཁན་ རིག་འཛིན་ འདིག་མེད་
སྦྱིང་པའི་ གསུང་། དཔེར་ན་ ལས་སྟོན་ ཉེན་འབྲེལ་ དཔག་བསམ་གྱི་ སྟོན་ཤིང་གི་ སྦྱིང་དུ། རྒྱ་གར་ ཤར་གྱི་ མ་བུ་ གཞོན་ཏུ་ཡང་
ཕེབས་བྱུང་། ལབ་སྟེ་ ཆོགས་སྒྲ་ རྒྱབས་པའི་ སྤྲུགས་སྟོལ་ཚུ་ ཡང་ འདུག། འདི་ཚུ་ ཐམས་ཅད་ཚུ་ སྦྱིའི་ བྲས་ཅིག་ མིན། ཆོགས་སྒྲ་
འདི་ཚུ་ ཡང་ གདངས་དབྱངས་ སྟན་འགས་ཀྱི་ ཐོག་ལས་ ཐེངས་སྟོལ་ ཡོད།

བྱམ་པོའི་བརྟོད་མུ། མུ་འདི་དགའ་སྤྱིད་ཉེས་གཉེན་ཆང་འཕྱང་ཁྱིམ་གསར་བའིས་བྱ་ས་སྤེལ་དང་གཞན་དགའ་ལས་བཟང་ལས་གན་བྱ་ས་རྒྱང་ལོ་དང་པོ་མཆོད་བཤམ་ལོ་མུ་ལོ་ལྷི་གད་ཀྱི་ལུགས་སྒོལ་བཟང་པོ་ཅིག་འགྲུ་སྤྱོད་ས་སྤོ་པོ་ཅུ་པོ་ཡོད་པོ་ཡིན། འདི་ནང་ལས་བྱམ་པོའི་བརྟོད་མུ་འདི་ཡང་མུ་ལོ་སྤོ་པོའི་རྗེས་ལོ་བྱམ་པོའི་བཤད་པོ་རྒྱལ་ལོ་ཡིན། མུ་ཆོག་ཅི།

མ་བརྩུང་རྒྱལ་ལི་འོ་ག།
བརྩུང་མྱི་གསེར་གྱི་བྱམ་པོ།
འདི་ནི་མཆན་ལྟན་ལྷ་མའི།
ཁྱེས་ཀྱི་ཁྱེས་བྱམ་ཅིག་ལུལ་ཏེ།

འདི་ འཕྲལ་གྱི་སྒྲིབ་པ་ གཏིང་གི་ བཅའ་དང་ རྒྱ་གར་ འཕྲལ་གྱི་ རྒྱུ་ རྒྱ་གར་ གཏིང་ལས་ མ་ལྷ་ རྒྱུ་མཛོད་སྒྲིབ་ ལའ་ལྷི་ ལྷ་ས་
པོའི་ བཅའ་པོ་ ཡང་ལས་ལྷི་ བཅོད་པོ་ མ་ཆང་ཅིག་ བཏོན་ཤིང་ ཡོད་པོ་ ཞིག་

བདུད་ཅི་ ཡར་མཆོད།

བདུད་ཅི་ ཡར་མཆོད་ཀྱི་ ཟླ་འདི་ ཡང་ ཟླེང་ཁ་ བཤད་པོ་ འདྲ་པོ་ འགོ་ དང་པོ་ མཆོན་ལྷན་ ཟླ་ལ། འགྲོན་མགྲོན་ དཔོན་པོ། ཡབ་ཆེན་
ཡུམ་ཆེན་ དང་ རྟག་ཤར་ དཔན་ཤར་ ལྷ་ལོ་ བདུད་ཅི་ མཆོད་ལྟེ་ ཞལ་ལོ་ བཞེས་ རྟག་གོང་ ལུགས་སྒོ་ལ། འདི་ལྷ་ ཡང་ གཉེན་
ཆང་འཕྱང་ འདི་ལས་ ཁྲིམ་གསར་བགྱིས་ཀྱི་ དུས་སྟོན་ ལྷ་ན་ རྟེན་འབྲེལ་ ཅི་ཚུལ་ ཡོད་པོ་ ཡིན།

གཞུང་ལུ་ ལུ་ཐང་ བཅོ་བརྒྱད་ཀྱི་ རིགས་ བ་ལྟ་པོ་ ཙུ་ བཤམ་གསལ་ལྟར།
ལྟམ་ལྟོངས་ ཆགས་རབས།

ལྷན་བཞུགས།

མེད་དགུ་ ཡོན་ཏན་ འཛེན་སྤྱ།

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་གནས་བཤད།

གནས་བཟང་འདི་རུ་མངལ།

བསྐྱོར་ར་ ལས་བསྐྱོར།

ལམ་མའི་ ས་ལོ།

གང་སང་ཕྱི་ལོ་ ལྷག་ས་རི།

གྲང་སང་ མཐོན་པོ་ ཨོ་ལོ་ སྐྱེ་སའི་ བ་ཡུལ།

གྲང་སང་ལ་ ལྷགས་པའི།

ཕྱི་རི་ རི་མོ་ ལེགས་ལ་བ།

བཟ་ཤིས་ གཡང་ཆགས།

མྱིང་དགུ་ བཟ་ཤིས་ གཡང་ཆགས།

སྤས་ཡུལ་ གནས་སྤྱིད།

གཞོན་པོ་ ང་ཚོ་ མྱིང་དགུ་ བསྐྱོར་ནས་ འགྲོ།

ཡུལ་དགུ་ ཨོ་ལོ་ སངས་རི།

གྲང་སང་ དཀར་པོ།

པ་རི་ ལ་སོགས་སྤང་གི་ མེ་ཉོག་ བཤད་ཚུལ་ ལྷར་ ཨིན་ན་ གཞུང་སྤྱི་ སྤྱི་ཐང་ བཙུ་བརྒྱུད་ བཤད་སྒོལ་ ཡོད་ཅུང་
ཡང་ ང་ཚོའི་ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ ལྷོ་པོའི་ སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ན་ གཞུང་སྤྱི་ འདི་ལས་ གྲང་ ལྷག་ཚོད་ འདུག། གྲང་སང་ མཐོན་
པོ་ ལྷ་རང་ ཅི་ཀྱ་ལོ་ ཡང་ སྤྱི་ཐང་ ༡༣ འདི་ཅིག་ སྤྱི་ཞབས་ ལྷའི་ཅུང་ ཆེ་བཅུ་ དར་པོའི་ དེབ་ རང་ལོ་ གསལ་བླགས་
འདུག།

སྤང་ཁ་ བཤད་ཡོད་པའི་ གཞུང་སྤྱི་ མ་འདྲ་པོ་ བཙུ་བརྒྱུད་ ལཔ་པོ་ འདྲ་པོ་ གྲང་སང་ མཐོན་ ལྷ་རང་ཅིག་ཀྱི་ ལོ་ ཡང་ བལ་ཆེར་ སྤྱི་
ཐང་ བཙུ་བརྒྱུད་ འདི་ཚོད་ ཡོད་སྤྱིད། འག་ལོ་ གྱི་ན་ཡོད་པོ་ཚུས་ གྲང་སང་ མཐོན་པོ་ སྤྱི་ཐང་ བཙུ་གསུམ་གྱི་ མཐོ།

1. མྱིང་དགུ་ ཡོན་ཏན་ འཕེན་སྤྱི།
2. གནས་བཟང་ འདི་རུ་ མཇུག།
3. བསྐྱོར་བ་ ལས་གྱི་ བསྐྱོར།
4. ཨོ་ལོའི་ དུང་སོ་ དཀར་བས།
5. ལམ་མོའི་ བ་ལོ།
6. གྲང་སང་ ཕྱི་རི་ ལྷགས་རི།
7. གྲང་སང་ མཐོན་པོ་ ཨོ་ལོ་ སྐྱེ་སའི་ བ་ཡུལ།
8. ཕྱི་རི་ རི་མོ་ལེགས་ལ་བ།

9. བཟ་ཤིས་གཡང་ཆགས།
10. སྤིང་དགུ་བཟ་ཤིས་གཡང་ཆགས།
11. གཞོན་པོ་ང་ཚོ་སྤིང་དགུ་བསྐྱོར་ནས་འགོ།
12. དུལ་དགུ་ཨེ་ལ་སང་རེ།
13. གྲང་སང་དཀར་པོ། སྤྱ་ཞབས་ཆེ་བཅུ་དང་པོ་དང་པོ་ཉི་ཤུ་མཚོ་མཚོག་གཉིས་ཀྱི་དེབ་ལོ་བཞོད་མེད་པོ་ངས་
 ཁྱོད་ན་སྤོན་མཁ་གན་པོ་ཚུ་གིས་གསུང་སྤྱ་བཞོན་བཞེན་ཡོད་པའི་གྲང་སང་ཡོད་པའི་གསུང་སྤྱ་གཉིས་ཡོད་པོ་འདི་
 བསྐྱོར་སྤྱི་གྲང་སང་ཡོད་པའི་གསུང་སྤྱ་བཅོ་ལྔ་འདི་ཚོད་འདུག། འདི་གཉིས་པོ་གན་པོ་ལྷན་གྱི་གྲང་སང་ལ་བཞུགས་
 པའི་ཁྱི་གདུགས་ལ་ཉི་མ། ཁྱི་གདུགས་སྤིང་བཞི་ངོས་བཞེན་གཟེས་མོ་གཟེས་ལ་ཁྱོན། དང་གཞན་བཟ་ཤིས་བཟ་
 ཤིས་ཡ་ལ་ཤོག། གྲང་སང་ཁྱི་གདུགས་ཉི་མའི་བཟ་ཤིས་ཡ་ལ་ཤོག་གཉིས་འདུག། བཟ་ཤིས་སྤྱི་འདི་ལོ་རྒྱུ་མ་
 འབྲེལ་གཉིས་འདུག།

འདི་ཚུ་ལས་སྤྱ་བར་གྱི་གྲང་སང་མཐོན་པོ་ལོ་ཁྱད་ཚོད་ཁྱད་པར་ཅན་ཅིག་འདུག། འདི་ཚུ་གན་ཨིན་ལྷན་དཔེ་ཆ་
 བཞག་ན་གྲང་སང་མཐོན་པོ་ཆེག་ཁྱ་རང་ཅིག་གུ་གིས་སྤྱ་གདངས་དབྱངས་མ་འབྲེལ་ཐོག་ལས་དོན་འགྲུར་འབྲེལ་
 འབྲེལ་བོ་བསྐྱོར་ཚུགས་པས། འདི་ལས་གྲང་སང་མཐོན་པོ་སྤྱི་འདིའི་གོ་རིམ་ལོ་གཅིག་གཟེས་པར་ཅན་ང་ཅའི་སྤྱ་
 འདི་ཚུ་སྤོད་བཅུད་འབྱུང་ཁམས་ཡང་ན་Ecology མཉམ་ཅིག་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡོད་པོ་འདུག། གྲང་སང་གནས་སྤོན་
 པོ་ལོ་ཁྱི་གདུགས་ཉི་མ། འོག་སྤྱི་གདངས་སྤོད་གདངས་རིན་སེལ་དཀར་པོ་འདི་ལས་ཐག་སྤོད་བྱ་རྒྱལ་ཚོད་པོ་སྤང་
 སྤོད་ལ་བ་རྩ་བཅུ་ནགས་སྤོད་སྤྱ་ལོ་མཚོ་སྤོད་གསེར་མིག་ཉི་མོ་ལྷང་སྤིང་གྱི་བ་འཛོལ་ལོ་རྩ་རྒྱ་ཚོད་རྒྱལ་པོ་
 གཞུང་ལུལ་ཐོན་གཞན་མོ་གཞོན། འདི་སྤྱི་གོ་རིམ་གནས་ལས་འོག་སྤྱི་ས་གཞི་ཟང་སྤྱི་སྤྱི་འདི་ན་བསྐྱོན་ཡོད་པོ་སྤྱ།
 ད་གྲང་སང་མཐོན་པོའི་སྤྱ་ཚུའི་སྤྱང་ཁ་བཞད་པོ་འབྲེལ་པོ་ཁ་ཤེས་ཅིག་གི་བཞད་པོ་རྒྱབས་ན།

1. གྲང་སང་མཐོན་པོ་ཁྱོན་པ་ལེགས་གསའི་གསུང་སྤྱ། འདི་ན་ཆེག་སྤྱོད་ཁྱ་རང་གྲང་སང་མཐོན་པོ་ཐོག་ལས་སྤྱི་འདི་
 ན་དུས་སྤོན་ཁྱད་པར་ཅན་ཚུ་ན་མི་དམངས་ཁེས་ལོ་འགོ་དང་པོ་ཁྱོན་པ་ལེགས་གསའི་ལུལ་པོའི་སྤྱ་ཅིག་ཨིན། སྤྱ་
 ཆེག་ཚུས།
 ཕྱིའི་རི་མོ་ལེགས་བ་བས་གནས་བཟང་པོ་འདི་ན་ལ། གྲང་སངས་ཁྱི་གདུགས་ཉི་མ་མོ་ཞབས་གཞས་ལོ་ཁྱོན། ཁྱི་
 གདུགས་སྤིང་བཞི་ངོས་ལ་བཞེན་ཞབས་གཞས་ལ་ཁྱོན།

འདས་བྱ་ས་སྤྱི་གདངས་སྤོད། ཐག་སྤོད། བར་སྤོད། སྤང་སྤོད། མཚོ་སྤོད། ལྷང་སྤོད། རྩ་བ། སྤྱ་གཤར་དམན་གཤམ་ལས་
 སྤྱི་གྲང་སང་གི་ཆེག་འདི་བེད་སྤྱོད་བྱ་ས་སྤྱི་སྤྱ་རྒྱབས་སྤོལ་ཡོད་པོ་ཨིན།

2. གྲུང་སང་ མཐོན་པོ་ རང་གི་ མཐོན་བསམ་ལས་ མ་བཏང་བའི་ རང་གི་ རྟོགས་ཀྱི་ རྟོགས་མོ་ ཉུང་ གཉིན་ཚན་ཙུ་ ཀ་ར་ ཨིན་
རུང་ ཏུས་ཚོད་ ཡུང་རིང་ མ་མཇུག་བ་ ད་རིང་ ཉང་ཐོག་ གནས་བཟང་ འདི་ལོ་ མཇུག་བས་ཀྱི་ ལེབ་སྟེ་ དགའ་བྲགས་སྟེ་
རྒྱབས་པའི་ སྤྱི་ཅིག་ ཨིན།

ཁྱོད་རྣམས་པ་ གྲུང་སང་གི་ མཐོན་པོ། རང་རྣམས་པ་ ཁྱི་གདུགས་གི་ ཉི་མ།
མཇུག་ཡོང་ བསམ་པ་ སྤང་བའི་ ཡུལ་ལ་ མ་བྱུང་ལ། གནས་བཟང་པོ་ འདི་རུ་ལ་ མཇུག་བྱང་། སེ་ ལབ་སྟེ་ ལ་སོགས་
གངས་སྟོད་སོགས་ སྤྱད།

3. གྲུང་སང་ མཐོན་པོ་ ཆོག་འདི་ར་ བེད་སྟོད་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ གདངས་དབྱངས་ དང་ ཆོག་ཁ་ཤེས་ ཁ་ལྟུང་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ འོན་ལྟར་
བསྟོན་ཡོད་པོ་ ཨིན། སྤྱི་འདི་ན་ ཨེ་ལ་ སངས་རི་ལ། ཡ་གི་ གྲུང་སང་ མཐོན་པོ་ སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས། ཁྱི་གདུགས་ ཉི་མ་
ཨིན་སེ་ སྤྱིང་བཞི་ བསྟོན། ཨེ་ལ་ སངས་རི་ལ། ར་སོ་ གཞོན་ ཏུས་ སྤྱིང་བཞི་ མ་བསྟོར་ན། རྒྱབ་ལོ་ དེ་ན་ ཉི་མའི་ གཟུང་
འཛིན་ ཡོད། འདི་ར་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ གོ་རིམ་ ལྟར་གྱི་ སྤྱི་རྒྱབས་སྟོན་ ཡོད། གཙོ་བོ་ སྤྱི་འདི་ གན་ བསྟོན་ཡོད་པོ་ ལྷན་ ད་ལྟ་
རང་གོ་ དབང་ཆ་ ཡོད་པའི་ ཀླུ་ས་ལོ་ དབང་ཆ་ འདི་ཙུ་ བེད་སྟོད་ བྱ་ས་ མ་ཚུགས་ན་ རེས་མ་ འབྱོད་པོ་ སྤྱི་ས་སྟེ་ བན་
ཏོག་ མེད་སེ་ འདི་ལས་ གཞན་ ད་ལྟ་ རང་གོ་ དབང་ཆ་ ཡོད་ཏུས་ལོ་ དབང་ཆ་ འདི་ལོ་ བེད་སྟོད་ བྱ་ས་ཚུགས་པོ་ དང་
ལག་ལེན་ ཐབས་ཚུགས་པོ་ དགོས་པའི་ ལྷ་དོན་ འདུག །

4. འདི་ར་ བྱ་ས་སྟེ་ གྲུང་སང་ མཐོན་པོའི་ སྤྱི་གཞན་ཅིག་ན་ བྱམས་བཅིའི་ སྤྱི་དབྱངས་ དཔེ་ན་ རང་གི་ སྤྱིང་སྤྱག་ མཉམ་ཅིག་
བྱོད་མ་ཐོབ་པའི་ རང་གི་ སེམས་ཀྱི་ སྤྱི་གཞན་ཙུ་ དངོས་སུ་ བཤད་མ་ཚུགས་རུང་ སེམས་ཀྱི་ གཏམ་ཙུ་ སྤྱི་ཆོག་གི་
ཐོག་ བཤད་ ཡོད་པའི་ གྲུང་སང་ མཐོན་པོའི་ སྤྱི་ཆོག་ཙུ།

གྲུང་སང་ མཐོན་པོ་ ལ་སོའི་ ལ་སོ་ སོའོ་ ཡ་ལ། ཁྱི་གདུགས་ ཉི་མ་ ལས་སོའི་ ཚུར་ལོ་ སོའོ་ ཡ་ལ།
ལོ་འདི་ ར་ཉིང་ མཇུག་ཡོང་ བསམ་ཞེ་ སོའོ་ ཡ་ལ། པ་ཡུལ་ ས་ཐག་ འགྲངས་སྟེ་ ལུས་སོང་ སོའོ་ ཡ་ལ།
ལོ་འདི་ ད་ལོ་ མཇུག་ཡོང་ བསམ་ཞེ་ སོའོ་ ཡ་ལ། ཡབ་ཡུམ་ བཀའ་བཀྲོན་ ཆོས་སྟེ་ ལུས་སོང་ སོའོ་ ཡ་ལ། འདི་བྱ་ས་ཉི་
རང་གི་ སེམས་ཀྱི་ གཏམ་ཙུ་ སྤྱི་ཆོག་གི་ ཐོག་ལོ་ བསྟོན་པོ་ དང་ མཉམ་ཅིག་ འདི་ ཡང་ གྲུང་སང་ མཐོན་པོའི་ སྤྱིའི་ བྲས་
ཅིག་ ཨིན་ འདུག།

5. གྲུང་སང་ མཐོན་པོ་ བཀ་ཤེས་ སྤྱི་ ཡང་ན་ ལྷན་ མཁྱེན་ མ་ཡ་གི་ སྤྱི་ཡང་ རྒྱབས་ཚུགས་པོ་ ཡོད། སྤྱི་ཆོག་ཙུ།

སོའོ་ ཡ་གི་ གྲུང་སངས་ མཐོན་པོའི་ རྟོགས་སུ། ཁྱི་གདུགས་ལ་ བརྒྱ་ དང་ ཅ་བརྒྱད་ལ། ཁྱི་གདུགས་ལ་ བརྒྱ་ དང་ ཅ་
བརྒྱད་ སྤྱིང་བཞི་ལ་ བརྒྱ་ འདབ་ བརྒྱད། སོའོ་ བཀ་ལ་ ཤེས་པ་ ཤོག། གཡང་ལ་ ཆགས་པ་ ཤོག །

འདི་བྱ་ས་སྟེ་སྟེང་ཁ་བཤད་ཡོད་པའི་གྲངས་པ་མཐོན་པོ་ཁྱ་རང་ཅིག་ཀྱང་ཆོག་སྟེར་མེད་སྟེར་བྱ་ས་སྟེ་དོན་དག་བསྟན་ཡོད་པོ་འདི་མཐོ་བསམ་བཏང་ན་ར་ཅའི་སྟོང་པའི་རིགས་གཞུང་གི་སྤྱད་བྱངས་ཚུ་ལེབ་སྟེ་རང་སྤྱ་གོ་ཡོད་པོ་ར་ཅག་གི་ཉ་གོ་ཚུགས་པད་སེ་ཁྱ་ཤད་ཨིན།

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་སྟོང་པའི་གསུང་སྤྱ་འདི་ཚུ་གོ་རིམ་ལྟར་གྱི་གསྟེ་རྒྱལ་ས་དགོས་པོ་སྟོར་ལོ་ཤུལ་ཅིག་ཁྱ་ན། འགོ་དང་པོ་གཉེན་ཆང་འབྲས་དང་ཁྱིམ་གསར་བཟ་ཤིས་དང་གཞན་དགའ་སྦྱིད་ཉེན་ལོ་སྤྱ་གཞས་རྒྱལ་ས་སྟེ་གོ་རིམ་ཡོད་པོ་སྤྱ། འགོ་དང་པོ་མཆོད་བཤམ་ན་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་འགྲིགས་ཤད་ཡོད་པོ་ཨིན། སྟོན་མ་ཨིན་སྤྱ་འདི་ཚུ་ཁྱིམ་ན་རྒྱལ་ས་སྟེ་སྤྱ་འགོ་འབྲུག་ཤུལ་དོ་སྤྱ། ཨིན་ན་ཡང་ད་དེང་སང་གཉེན་གྱི་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་ཉེན་ན་སྤྱ་མཐོན་སྟོན་རྒྱས་ཚུ་ཚུ་བཞུགས་མ་ཚུགས་པའི་རྒྱུ་གྱི་སྤྱ་འགོ་ཡང་ན་སྤྱ་ཉེན་འབྲེལ་མཆོད་བཤམ་ན་དུས་ཆོད་ཨ་ཙི་ཅིག་སྟོན་ལས་སྤྱ་ར་པའི་ཤུགས་སྟོལ་ཡོད་པོ་སྤྱ། ད་མཆོད་བཤམ་ན་སྤྱ་ཉེན་འབྲེལ་གན་འགྲིགས་ཏེ་ཁྱ་ན། འགོ་དང་པོ་སྤྱ་འགོ་སྤྱ་ཁང་སྟེ་མེ་མོ་མི་བཞེངས་སྤྱ་ཁང་སྟེ་མེ་མོ་བཞེངས་ཡོད། སྤྱ་འདི་རྒྱལ་ས་དགོས་སྤྱ་འགོ་ཕྱི་སྤྱ་ར་པའི་རྩེ་མོ་ཤུམ་པའི་བསྟོད་སྤྱ་འདི་ལས་སྤྱ་གར་གྱི་མཆོད་པོ་ལས་སྟེ་སྤྱ་མ་ལ་འབྲུལ་ལོ་སངས་རྒྱས་ལ་འབྲུལ་ལོ་སྤྱ་དང་གར་གྱི་མཆོད་པོ་འདི་ནི་མཆོན་ལྷན་སྤྱ་མ་ལ་འབྲུལ་ལོ་འདི་འདྲེ་རྩེ་མོ་བཟ་ཤིས་སྤྱ་མ་ཡང་ན་གཡང་བཀྲུག་སྤྱ་མ་གྱི་གསུང་མགྲར་མོ་ཐངས་དགོས། འདི་ལས་ཨ་སྤྱ་མའི་བྱ་མའི་བྱ་མཚོ་ད་བྱ་འབྲིང། འདི་ལས་བདུད་རྩི་ཡར་མཆོད་ཡང་ལས་ར་ཤུད་བྲངས་སྤྱ་རྒྱལ་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ཤུལ་མཆོ་ཁ་ཤིས་ན་འབྲངས་གསུམ་འབྲངས་ལས་ཡང་རྒྱལ་ས་བཞེན་འབྲུག། འདི་ལས་སྤྱ་འགོ་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་སྤྱ་ར་པོ་ལས་ཏེ་དངས་ར་སྟོམ་པོ་ཡོད་སང་མི་དམངས་ཁེ་ལས་གཞས་བསྟོར་རྒྱལ་ས་སྟེ་འགོ་ཤར་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱང་དགའ་ར་ལ་བ་ཡི། ལས་འགོ་བཙུགས་སྟེ་འབྲུག་བཟ་ཤིས་ཟང་སྟེ་སྤྱ་རྒྱལ་ས་པའི་ཤུགས་སྟོལ་བཟང་པོ་ཡོད་པོ་ཨིན།

འབྲུག་མཐའ་ན་གྲངས་པ་མཐོན་པོ་དམངས་སྤྱ་ཡང་ན་གཞུང་སྤྱ་སྟེ་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་སྟོང་པའི་སྤྱ་ཆོགས་གྱི་དོན་ལོ་སྟོན་མོངས་མ་ཡིན་པའི་སྤྱ་ཅིག་ཨིན། འདི་གིས་སྤྱ་ར་ཉི་མ་ལའི་རིགས་དང་ཁྱེ་བག་ལོ་སྤྱས་ཤུལ་འབྲས་མོ་སྤྱ་ར་དང་འདི་ལས་འཛིག་རྟེན་ཆགས་སྟངས་གྱི་སྟོར་ལོ་གཞི་བཞག་སྟེ་སྤྱ་ཆོག་ཚུ་ཆོམ་འབྲུག། གྲངས་པ་མཐོན་པོ་སྤྱ་འདི་ན་སྟོང་པའི་སྤྱ་ཆོགས་གྱི་ཚུ་གིས་སྟོད་བརྟུང་གཉིས་གྱི་འཛིག་རྟེན་ཆགས་སྟངས་ལོ་གཞི་བཞག་སྟེ་སྤྱ་ཆོག་ཚུ་ཆོམ་ཡོད་ཤད་བྱ་ས་སྟེ་འདི་གཉིས་བར་གྱི་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡང་གསལ་བྲགས་བསྟོན་ཡོད་པོ་སྤྱ། གྲངས་པ་མཐོན་པོ་སྤྱ་ཐང་བཙོ་བརྟུད་ཡོད་པོ་སྟོན་མའི་ཆན་པོ་ཚུ་གིས་གསུང་རུང་དེ་ཟང་སྤྱ་ཞབས་ཆེ་བཙུ་དར་པོ་དང་P.T Gyamtso མཆོག་གི་གསུང་སྤྱ་དེབ་ན་གྲངས་པ་མཐོན་པོ་བཙོ་བརྟུད་པོ་ཆ་ཆང་ཅིག་ཏེ་མིན་འབྲུག། ཨིན་ན་ཡང་སྤྱ་ཞབས་ཆེ་བཙུ་དར་པོ་དེབ་ནང་ལོ་༡༣ འདི་ཅིག་དང་གཞན་དེབ་ཚུ་བཙུག་ཅིག་དེ་ཆོད་ཅིག་འབྲུག། འདི་འདྲེ་སྟེང་ར་གི་ར་ཅའི་གྲོང་ན་རྒྱལ་ས་བཞེན་ཡོད་པའི་གྲངས་པ་མཐོན་པའི་སྤྱ་གཉིས་བསྟོན་སྟེ་གྲངས་པ་མཐོན་པོ་སྤྱ་བཙོ་ལུ་ཆོད་ད་ལྟ་རས་གིས་ཞིབ་དབྱུང་འདི་ན་ཐོབ་ཚུགས་ཅེ་ཁྱ་ཤད་ཨིན། ར་ཅའི་སྤྱ་གཞས་ཚུ་འདེམ་ཟང་སྟེ་སྤྱ་ཀྱང་དང་གིས་པོ་ཅིག་ཡོད་རུང་དེ་ཟང་ད་ལྟའི་གནས་སྤྱལས་ན་འདི་ཨ་ཙི་ཅིག་འབྲུང་པའི་ཉན་ཁ་ཡང་ཡོད་

པའི་རྒྱུ་གྱི་འདི་ལོ་སྤང་སྤྱོད་པ་འོང་མཁན་ན་གཞོན་པོ་མོ་ཚུ་གིས་བྱ་ས་བར་ཅེན་མན་རུ་རང་ང་ཅའི་རིགས་གཞུང་ལུགས་སོལ་སྤྱ་གནས་ཚུ་མི་ཉམས་གོང་འཕེལ་མཉམ་ཅིག་མ་འོང་བོན་གསོན་པོ་ཡང་བཞག་ཤི་དོན་ང་ཅག་སྣོ་པོ་ཁེ་ལས་གང་བོས་གཡས་རུབ་གཡན་རུབ་བྱ་ས་སྟེ་བདག་ཀྱ་རྒྱབས་ན་ཉིན་ཅིག་གཏན་གཏན་འདི་གི་མན་ཐོག་སྟོམ་པོ་འབྱུང་ཤད་ཨིན།

ཁུངས་གཞུགས་ཕྱག་དཔེ་ཚུའི་མོ།

Bhutia, P. (2004). *Bhutia-English Dictionary*. Gangtok.

Bhutia, J. W. (2018). *The Sikkimese Bhutia Language and Literature: History and its Authenticity, Indian Languages and Cultures. A Debate*. Visva-Bharati.

Gyamtso, P.T. (2009). *Traditional Sikkimese Folk Songs. Sikkim Culture and Heritage Foundation*.

Gyamtso, P.T. (1969). *An Introduction to Sikkimese Songs*.

Namgyal, T. C., & Yishey Doma. (2003). *Denjong Gyalrab*. Tsuklakhang Trust, Gangtok.

Rinzing, P. (2005). *Sum Tak dang Dri Tshom*.

Shor, T. (2017). *A Step Away from Paradise*. City Lion Press.

Takchungdarpa, P. R. (2013). *Denjong lhopei keyig tshek zod*. Kwaliti Stores, Gangtok.

Tsechudarpa, B. (2004). *Sikkimese songs*.

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་སུ་གྲུབ་ཆེན་ལྷགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་སངས་རྒྱལ་བ་སྐྱེས་པ་ཕྱག་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་མཛད་ཚུལ།

Thupten Palzang Bhutia

༩ ལོ་རྒྱུས་ཚད་ལྡན་ནང་ཐོས་པ། གང་ཡོད་ཡི་གེའི་རིས་སུ་བྲིས།

བོད་ལྗོངས་ཁམས་ཕྱོགས་མགོ་ལོག་གི། རྒྱལ་བརྒྱུད་ཡིན་ཟེར་ཡིག་ཁྲངས་དཔེན།¹ ཞེས་གསུངས།

མཁས་གྲུབ་ནལ་འབྱོར་ཆེན་པོ་གྲུབ་ཆེན་ལྷགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་མཆོག་ནི་སྤྲས་ཡུལ་འབྲས་མོ་ལྗོངས་སུ་བོད་ཡུལ་ཁམས་གོ་ལོག་
ཕྱོགས་ནས་བྱེ་ལོ་ཆེག་སྟོང་བརྒྱད་རྒྱ་བདུན་ཅུའི་ལོ་ལ་ཞབས་མཐེལ་གསེར་གྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་གནས་འདིར་བཀོད། དེ་སྐབས་གྲུབ་ཆེན་
མཆོག་དགྲུང་ལོ་ཉི་ལུ་ཟླ་བ། གྲུབ་ཆེན་ནལ་འབྱོར་པ་ཆེན་པོ་སྤྲས་ཡུལ་འབྲས་མོ་ལྗོངས་སུ་ཐེབས་ནས་ཁོང་གི་ས་གནས་ནམས་སུ་
སེམས་ཅན་ནམས་ལ་རྒྱུན་དུ་འཆེ་བའི་འདྲེ་སྤྱོད་འདིགས་སུ་རུང་བ་ནམས་མེག་མེད་དུ་དམ་ལ་བཏགས་ནས་ས་གནས་དེ་དག་ནམས་
སུ་བྱིན་རྒྱབས་དང་བཀའ་བསྟོད་མ་སྤྲུགས་དང་འབྲེལ་འདྲེ་སྤྱོད་དེ་དག་གི་རྒྱ་ལམ་བཅད། དུས་གསུམ་ཡེ་ཤེས་རྒྱུན་གྱིས་མ་སྤྱི་བ་
གསལ་ལེར་མངོན་པར་གཟིགས་ཏེ་ད་དུང་འདྲེ་སྤྱོད་དམ་རིགས་རྒྱ་བའི་ས་དམིགས་གཉན་པར་ཁོང་གི་མཆོད་རྟེན་དང་མན་ལྷང་གངས་
ལས་འདས་པ་མང་པོ་བཞེངས་གནང་མཛད་ཡོད། ཁོང་གི་བཞེངས་གནང་མཛད་པའི་སྤྱགས་རྟེན་གྱི་རིགས་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་མངའ་ཁུལ་
དང་། རྒྱབ་རྟེན་ལྷ་ལ་ཀ་མོན་ཕུག་༽སོགས་སུ་ད་ལྟོ་མཛུལ་རྒྱ་ཡོད། དེ་ཡང་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་མངའ་ཁུལ་དུ་བཞུགས་ཡོད་པ་ནི། རུབ་
འབྲས་ལྗོངས་སུ་བཞུགས་ཡོད་པ་ཡུལ་ཕྱོགས་བཟ་ཤིས་སྤྱིངས་དགོན་དང་། ཟེལ་གཞོན་དགོན་པོ་དང་། ས་གནས་རུབ་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་
རྒྱལ་ཞིང་ཁྲོམ་དང་། ཁོང་གི་གདན་ས་རུབ་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ས་གནས་སྤང་རྒྱལ་མང་ཐེ་ཡང་ཕྱོགས་སུ་སྤྲུག་པར་མང་པོ་བཞུགས་ཡོད།
བྱང་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་སུ་པོ་ལྷང་ཕྱོགས་སུ་འདྲེ་བཞུགས། བཟ་ཤིས་སྤྱིངས་སྤང་རྒྱལ་ས་གནས་སུ་ཁོང་གི་རྩ་འབྲུལ་གྱིས་གྲུབ་ཆུ་བཏོན་
ནས་དེར་གནས་གདུལ་བྱ་སེམས་ཅན་ནམས་ཀྱི་ཐུང་རྒྱུའི་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་ཐམས་ཅད་ཞི་བར་མཛད་ནས་སྤྲུག་པར་གྲུབ་ཆུ་དེ་ཉིད་ཐུང་བ་
ཅ་མ་གྱི་པན་ཡོན་ནི་ནད་རིམ་སོགས་ལ་པན་པར་གསུངས། གདུལ་བྱ་སེམས་ཅན་ནམས་ལ་དེ་དང་དེ་ལྟ་བུའི་ཆོས་འཁོར་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོ་
དུས་རྟག་དུ་འགྲོ་དོན་བྱམས་དང་སྤྱིང་རྒྱུ་ལ་སྤྱིང་དང་སྤྱིང་བཞེན་པ་དང་། སྐབས་སུ་སེམས་ཅན་ནམས་ཀྱི་དོན་དུ་གཏེར་དང་། རང་
ཕྱོན་སོགས་མང་པོ་གཏེར་ནས་བཞེས་ཏེ་འགྲོ་དོན་དཔག་མེད་མཛད། ཁོང་ཅ་རྒྱུད་གཏུམ་མོ་དང་། རྒྱུང་སྒྲོམ་སོགས་ན་རོ་ཆོས་དུག་
གི་སྒྲོམ་པ་ཉམས་ལེན་དང་རྗེ་ཆེ་གཙོད་པ་སོགས་གཙོ་བོར་མཛད། རྩ་འབྲུལ་གྱི་རུས་པས་ནམ་མཁའ་ལ་བྱ་ལྟར་སྤར་ནས་མི་མེད་ལུང་
སྟོང་སོགས་ལ་ཕྱོན་པའི་མཛད་པ་ནམ་དུ་ལྟ་ཡང་དད་ལྡན་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་པ་མི་མང་ནམས་ཀྱི་སྤྱིང་བ་དང་ཡིད་ལ་བྲན་བཞེན་ཡོད།

1 དཔལ་རྒྱལ་བ་མངའ་བདག་པའི་གདན་འདྲི་ནི་མིང་གིས་སྤྱིད་པ་མཁན་ལྟ་མིང་པས་སོ།

ནམ་སྐུལ་ནི།² དང་པོ་རྒྱ་གར་ཡུལ་གྱི་བྱུང་ཆེན་བརྒྱུད་ཅུའི་ནང་ནས་སྐུགས་ཀྱི་སྐུལ་པ་ས་ར་ཏ་ཞེས་པར་བྱོན། གཉིས་པ་བོད་དུ་གསུང་གི་སྐུལ་པ་མ་རྩ་གྲུ་བ་བོད་ནམས་རིན་ཆེན་ནམ་གྱུ་ཆེན་ཐང་སྟོང་རྒྱལ་པོར་བྱོན། དེ་ནས་ཁམས་བྱང་ཤར་མཆོམས་སུ་སྐྱེའི་སྐུལ་པ་ཁམས་གསུམ་ཞོར་བྱ་དག་འདུལ་སྐྱར་བཞེངས་ནས་བོད་ཀྱི་མཐའ་མག་རྩལ་དུ་བརྒྱགས་ནས་སངས་རྒྱུས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་ཉི་མ་ཤར་བ་ལྟ་བུ་མཛད། དེ་ནས་གནས་ཆེན་བཞིའི་ཡི་གཙུག་པོ་སྐུལ་ཡུལ་འབྲས་མོ་གཤོངས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་འདིར་གདུལ་བྱ་དུས་སྟོགས་མའི་སེམས་ཅན་ནམས་ལ་དགོངས་ཏེ་འགྲོ་བའི་དོན་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོ་མཛད་པའི་དུས་ལ་བབས་ཏེ་གནས་འདིར་ཞབས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་བཀོད་དེ་འགྲོ་འདོན་དཔག་མེད་མཛད། ཁོང་གི་མཆོན་པ་འཕྲུལ་འཕྲོའམ་ཡང་ན་པ་བྱུང་བའི་ལྷགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་ཞེས་ཞུ། འཕྲུགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་མཆོན་ཐོག་དོན་ནི་ཁོང་གི་སྐུ་གཟུགས་ཐོག་དུ་རིན་ཆེན་རིགས་སྤྲོའོགས་ལས་བྱུང་བའི་ལྷགས་ཐག་གི་རྒྱ་ཆ་ལྡིང་ཆད་ཀྱི་ལོ་ཉི་བརྒྱ་བཞི་བརྒྱུག་ཙམ་སྐུ་གཟུགས་དུ་གསོལ་བས་འཕྲུགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཞེས་མཆོན་གསོལ། ཁོང་གི་སྐུ་གཟུགས་ལ་བཞེས་པའི་རིན་ཆེན་རིགས་ལས་བྱུང་བའི་ལྷགས་ཐག་དེ་ནམས་ད་ལྟའང་མཛད་རྒྱུ་ཡོད། ད་དུང་ཉེ་རུ་ཀའི་ཆས་རུས་རྒྱ་ཆད་དང་། ཁ་ཤིང་ག་གཟིག་བགས་དང་། བྱག་གཡས་སུ་གྱིུ་ཆུང་དང་། ཏ་མ་རུ་བྱག་གཡོན་པའི་ནང་ཁ་ཤིང་ག་གཟིག་ཡང་སྐུ་གཟུགས་སུ་འཆང་བ་གྱི་ཆེན་དཔལ་སྟངས་དང་། མི་ཤར་སྤྱིང་བྱ་སོགས་བརྒྱུད་དུ་བཞེས་པར་མཛད། ཁོང་གཏུལ་བྱ་སེམས་ཅན་ནམས་ཀྱི་འགྲོ་བའི་དོན་ལ་ཞབས་སོར་བཀོད་པའི་སྐབས་སུ་ལས་ཅན་གདུལ་བྱའི་འགྲོ་བ་ནམས་ཀྱི་ན་བར་རིན་ཆེན་རིགས་ལས་བྱུང་བའི་བྱིན་ཅན་ལྷགས་ཐག་སོགས་སྐྱ་སེལ་སེལ་སྐོས་པ་ཙམ་གྱིས་རང་དབང་མེད་པར་དང་ཅིང་གྲུས་པས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཞབས་ལ་བརྟུས། ཉམས་ཆུང་མགོན་མེད་འགྲོ་བ་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་གང་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས་པ་ཙམ་གྱི་གནང་བར་མཛད། བྱ་འདོད་པ་ལ་བྱ་དང་། རོར་འདོད་པ་ལ་རོར་། ཆོས་འདོད་པ་ལ་ཆོས་། མདོར་ན་བྱུང་བའི་ཁོང་ལ་གང་གསོལ་བ་བཏབ་པ་ཙམ་གྱིས་མི་འདོད་སྐྱུག་བསྐྱེད་ཐམས་ཅད་ཞི་ནས་འདོད་དོན་ཡིད་བཞིན་དུ་འབྱུང་བར་བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབས་པ་དང་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་སུ་སངས་རྒྱུས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་བྱུག་ཤེས་བཟང་པོ་ནི་སྤོས་མེད་ལགས་སོ།

བྱུང་ཆེན་ལྷགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་བྱུག་ཤེས་ནི།

སྟོན་དུས་སུ་རྒྱལ་ཞིང་སྤྱང་བརྒྱུད་ནས་འདྲེ་གདོན་སོགས་ཀྱི་རྒྱགས་ལམ་དང་འཇུག་ཆེན་པོས་གྲོང་པན་ཅུན་དུ་གཞོད་པ་དང་། ག་ཆ་སོགས་མང་ནས་མི་དམངས་ཀྱིས་ལྷགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་གདན་འདྲེས་ཏེ་ཞབས་བརྟན་མཛད། རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ལས་སྐུགས་རྟགས་ཞུས་

2 Chakthag Palchen Dorjee. The Miraculous life of Drupchen Chakthag Rinpoche. p.101

དེའི་མཛད་ནམས་སྟོར་ལ་ཞེས་དབྱེད་སྐབས་སུ་བྱུག་དཔེ་ཤིན་ཏུ་དཀོན་པར་འདུག་པས། སྐབས་གཅིག་ན་ཁོང་དང་འབྲེལ་བའི་བྱུག་དཔེ་ཁག་འཛོལ་སྐབས་དབྱ་ཅན་ཡི་གེ་རུ་ཡོད་པའི་ཤོག་གངས་གཉིས་ཡོད་པ་ཞིག་ཆེད་སོན་བྱུང་། བྱུག་དཔེ་འདི་ནང་དུ་“ལྷགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྟོང་མ་བུ་སྤྱིང་དུ་འགྲོ་དོན་བྱོན་ཆར་འདུག་དང་པོ་རྒྱ་གར་ཡུལ་གྱི་བྱུང་ཆེན་བརྒྱུད་ཅུའི་ནང་ནས་སྐུགས་ཀྱི་སྐུལ་པ་ས་ར་ཏ་ཞེས་པ་བྱོན། གཉིས་པ་བོད་དུ་གསུང་གི་སྐུལ་པ་མ་རྩ་གྲུ་བ་བོད་ནམས་རིན་ཆེན་ཁམས་གསུམ་ཞོར་བྱ་དག་འདུལ་སྐྱར་བཞེངས་ནས་བོད་ཀྱི་མཐའ་མག་རྩལ་དུ་བརྒྱགས་ནས་སངས་རྒྱུས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་ཉི་མ་ཤར་བ་ལྟ་བུ་མཛད། དེ་ནས་གནས་ཆེན་བཞི་ཡི་གཙུག་པོ་སྐུལ་ཡུལ་འབྲས་མོ་གཤོངས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་འདིར་བྱུང་བ་དུས་དུས་སྟོགས་མའི་སེམས་ཅན་ལ་ཐན་ཐོག་དགོངས་ནས་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་འདིར་མཐའ་དམག་དུས་འཁྲུག་གི་སྐུགས་ནད་རྒྱུ་ཆད་དེ་འགྲོ་བའི་དོན་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོར་མཛད་ནས་མཆོན་པ་འཕྲུལ་འཕྲོའམ་ཞེས་གསོལ། གང་ཞིག་དེའི་མཆོན་ཙམ་སུས་འཛིན་པ། ཆེ་འདིར་ཆེ་རིང་ནད་མེད་མེད་སྤྱིད་ལྟ། མཐའ་དམག་དུས་འཁྲུག་འཐབ་ཅོད་མ་ལུས་ཞི། བྱི་མ་པདེ་ཆེན་ཞིང་དུ་ངེས་པར་འདྲེན།” ལུས་སྐུས་རྣམས་ལ། ད་སྐབས་འདི་ཙམ་མཛུལ་མེད་པར་ཤེས་སུ་དབྱེད་ཞིབ་ཞུ།

པས་རིན་པོ་ཆེས་མཆོད་རྟེན་གཅིག་བཞེངས་དགོས་སོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་བཞིན་མཆོད་རྟེན་བཞེངས། དེ་ལས་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་མཉམ་ལྗང་
ཞིག་གསོ་གནང་བ་དང་། ལྷས་གསོལ་རབ་གནས་སོགས་རྒྱས་པར་མཛད་པ་ནས་བཟུངས་ད་ལྟ་བར་འདྲེ་གཏོན་གྱི་གཞོན་པ་ཅ་བ་
ནས་ཞི་བའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་མཆིས།

དེ་བཞིན་དུ་ཡ་ལྷུགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་བཞུགས་སའི་ཁང་པའི་ཐག་ཉར་མང་ཐེ་ཡང་ཞེས་པའི་ས་ཆར་
མཆོད་རྟེན་བརྒྱད་བཞེངས་ཡོད་པར་མཛད། མཆོད་རྟེན་བརྒྱད་བཞེངས་པ་འདི་བཅོ་དབྱིབས་མཆོད་རྟེན་འབྲེ་བ་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་དུ་
གཅིག་ནི་རྡོའི་མཉམ་ལྗང་ཡང་ཁང་བྱ་བཅེག་པའི་མཆོད་རྟེན་གྱི་བཅོ་དབྱིབས་བཀོད་ཡོད་པ་བཅས་བསྐྱམས་ནས་མཆོད་རྟེན་བརྒྱད་
བཞེངས་ཡོད། དེ་ཡང་རིན་པོ་ཆེས་ཡུལ་དེར་འདྲེ་སྤྱོད་གྱིས་གཞོན་པ་ཆེ་བས་མེ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་དེའི་རྒྱུ་བརྒྱུག་ཕྱིར་མཆོད་རྟེན་བཞེངས་
པ་དང་། མཆོད་རྟེན་བཞེངས་པའི་དུས་སུ་མི་བཞན་གྱི་རོགས་རམ་མེད་པར་མཆོད་མོར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་གཅིག་བྱར་བཞེངས། དེ་ནས་
མཆོད་རྟེན་བརྒྱད་ནང་ནས་དཔལ་ལ་འབྱུང་ཞེས་པའི་མཆོད་རྟེན་འདི་ཁྱད་པར་ཅན་གཅིག་ཡིན། སྟོན་ལམ་གང་སྟབས་བྱུང་བའི་
མཆོད་རྟེན་ཞིག་ཡིན་ཐོས། དེ་ནས་ས་ཕྱོགས་འདིར་འདྲེ་གཏོན་ཞི་བ་དང་། ད་ལྟ་བར་མོན་རིག་གི་ཁང་པ་དང་། རྗེ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གཟིམ་མུང་
ཡང་མཛུལ་རྒྱ་ཡོད།

དེ་བཞིན་དུ་ལྷུགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་མཆོག་གིས་ཟེལ་གཞོན་ཞེས་པའི་ས་ཆར་སྤྱོད་འཛོམས་ཞེས་པ་འདིར་ལུང་བ་དེའི་སྤྱོད་མོ་རྣམས་
འཛོམས་ཉེ་ལུང་པའི་བྱིས་པ་དང་། བ་ལྷུགས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཆེ་སྟོག་ལ་གཞོན་པ་བྱས་པའམ་སྟོག་ལེན་པ་རྣམས་དམ་ལ་བཏགས་པའི་
ལོ་རྒྱུས་འདུག ཉན་ཞིག་རྣལ་འབྱོར་བ་ལྷུགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེས་ལུང་བ་དེའི་འདྲེ་སྤྱོད་རྣམས་འཛོམས་པའི་ས་ཆ་འདིར་བྱོན་ནས་དེ་
རྣམས་ལ་ཆར་གཅོད་པའི་ས་ཆ་འདི་ད་ལྟ་ཡང་མཛུལ་རྒྱ་ཡོད།

དེ་བཞིན་དུ་ས་གནས་དེར་ཟེལ་གཞོན་དགོན་གྱི་གཡོན་ཕྱོགས་སུ་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་གྱི་རྡོའི་བཞུགས་ཁྱི་གསུམ་བཞེངས་ཡོད། སྤྱིར་ཁ་
རྒྱན་ལྷར་ན་བཞུགས་ཁྱི་གསུམ་བཞེངས་དགོས་དོན་ནི་ཟེལ་གཞོན་དགོན་དུ་སྐྱེ་མ་གསུམ་འཛོམས་པའི་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་དུ་གཟིགས་ཞེས་
གསུངས་སྟོལ་ཡོད། ཡིན་ན་ཡང་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་ལོག་པའི་རྒྱུ་གྱིས་བཞུགས་ཁྱི་གསུམ་བཞེངས་ཡོད་ཅུང་སྐྱེ་མ་རྣམས་ཞལ་འཛོམས་
མ་བྱུང་། བཞུགས་ཁྱི་དང་པོའི་སྤྱིང་ན་ལྷུགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ཅ་བའི་སྐྱེ་མ་མ་ཉི་བ་བསོད་ནམས་རིན་ཆེན་གྱི་སྐུ་བརྙན་མཛུལ་
རྒྱ་ཡོད། བཞུགས་ཁྱི་གཉིས་པར་ཨོ་ཨྱ་རྩྱུ་གི་ཡིག་འབྲུགས་ལ་ཡོད། གསུམ་པར་མཁའ་འགྲོའི་རང་བྱོན་དང་བྱུང་ཆེན་ཁོང་གི་ཕྱག་
རྒྱའི་བཟང་པོ་ད་ལྟའི་བར་དུ་མཛུལ་རྒྱ་ཡོད། ད་ལྟའི་སྐབས་སུ་གདུང་འཛིན་དང་སྐྱེ་སྲས་ཀྱི་ཡངས་སྤྱོད་ར་ལང་དཔལ་ཆེན་ཆོས་སྤྱིང་
དགོན་དུ་བཞུགས་ཡོད་པོ་ཡིན།

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ལྷུགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་ཆར་གཞི་ཆོགས་པ།

འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ལྷུགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་པ་མེས་ནས་བརྒྱད་པའི་གཅིས་ནོར་སྤྱང་སྟོབ་ཆར་གཞི་ཆོགས་པ་ཡང་ན་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ལྷུགས་
ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་ཆར་གཞི་ཆོགས་པ་དེ་ཉིད་སྤྱོད་དོན་དང་འབྲེལ་བ་ཅ་བ་ཉིད་ནས་མེད། དེ་ནས་ཆོས་དང་སྤྱི་ཆོགས་ཆོགས་སྡེ་ཡིན། དེ་

ཡང་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་གཞུང་གི་ཁྲིམས་ཁང་ཙ་ཁྲིམས་ནང་ལ་ཐོ་འཁོད་ཚུད་ཡོད། མང་གཞི་ཚོགས་པའི་དམིགས་ཡུལ་གཙོ་བོ་ནི་ལྷགས་
 ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆའི་རྩ་ཆེན་ཚོས་དང་པ་མེས་ནས་བརྒྱུད་རིག་གཞུང་སྤངས་སྐྱོབ་ཀྱི་དོན་ལ་མང་གཞི་ཚོགས་པ་གཙུགས་པ་ཡིན། ཚོགས་
 པ་འདིའི་མི་མང་ཉམས་རྒྱུ་དང་ནད་པ་གཉའ་གཞོན་སྤྱོད་མཁན་རྣམས་ལ་རོགས་རམ་སོགས་བྱེད་བཞིན་པ་ཡིན། མང་གཞི་ཚོགས་
 པས་ད་ལྟ་བཙ་ཤིས་སྤྱིངས་སྤང་རྒྱུ་པ་གནས་ཀྱི་འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ལྷགས་ཐག་ལྷ་ཁང་གསར་བཞེངས་གནང་དང་གནང་ཐུས་ཡིན། ལྷ་
 ཁང་དེ་ཡང་ཁོང་དང་ཁོང་གི་མཁའ་འགྲོ་དང་སྤྲས་ཆེ་བ་བཅས་ཀྱི་སྐུ་གདུང་མཆོད་རྟེན་གྱི་ཉི་འགམ་འདུན་དུ་བཞེངས་བཞིན་པ་དང་
 ། ཚོགས་པས་ལྷ་ཁང་དེ་ཉིད་བཞེངས་མཆར་བའི་རྗེས་སུ་དད་ལྡན་ཚོས་སློ་ལྡན་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དོན་དུ་གྲུབ་ཆེན་ཁོང་དང་ཁོང་གི་མཁའ་
 འགྲོའི་གཏེར་དང་རང་བྱེད་སོགས་ངོ་མཆར་བ་མང་པོ་བཞུགས་ཡོད་པ་རྣམས་ལོ་རེ་བཞིན་མི་མང་རྣམས་ལ་མཇལ་ཁ་གནང་རྒྱུ་གཞི་
 ཡོད་པ་དང་། དེ་དང་འབྲེལ་སྤྱིར་ཁམས་གསུམ་འགྲོ་བ་རིགས་དུག་སེམས་ཅན་རྣམས་འཁོར་བའི་སྐྱག་བསྐུལ་ལས་ཕྱོལ་སྟེ་རྣམ་མཁྱེན་
 སངས་རྒྱུ་ཀྱི་གོ་འཕང་ཐོབ་ཆེད་དང་། སློས་ས་སྟེང་འཛུལ་བུ་གླིང་འདིའི་ནང་མི་འདོད་པའི་ནད་ཐུག་འཐབ་ཚོད་སྐྱག་བསྐུལ་རྣམས་ཞི་
 རས་པན་ཚུན་གཅིག་གི་གཅིག་ལ་མཇུག་བཅེ་སེམས་དུ་གནས་ཆེད་དང་། ཡང་སློས་སུ་སྤྲས་ཡུལ་འབྲས་མོ་ལྗོངས་སུ་བདེ་སྤྱིད་
 ཐུན་སུམ་ཚོགས་པ་། ཐ་མག་ནད་འབྱུག་འཐབ་ཚོད་སོགས་ཞི་བ། ཉིང་སློས་སུ་འགྲུབ་ཆེན་ལྷགས་ཐག་རིན་པོ་ཆའི་ཚོས་རྒྱན་བསྟན་
 པ་མི་ཉམས་པའི་ཆེད་ལོ་ལྟར་སློན་ལམ་རྒྱན་ལྡན་ཚོགས་བཞིན་དུ་ཡོད་པ་དང་གདུང་རྒྱུད་འཛིན་པ³་སོགས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པའི་འཛིན་སྤྱོད་
 ཐེལ་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་བཟང་པོར་ཡོད་པར་ཁུས། །

Reference:

Bulletin of Tibetology, Volume 42. 2006

Chakthang, Palchen Dorjee (2001), *The Miraculous Life of Drubchen Chakthang Rinpoche*.

Bhutia, Hissay Wangchuk (2016). *An account of the Sacred Site of Sikkim: Excellent Path of Liberation at sight*.

Khenpo Lha Tshering (2023). *Emanated Chronicles from Darkar Tashiding-The Sanctum of Transcendent Sikkim and Denjong Ngagyur Sheda Thubten Dongag Choling: A Pristine Unadorned Straight-Line Mirror of Brilliant Clarity*.

3 H.H the 17th Karmapa recognizing the 1st Dhungzin Chaktha Rinpoche.2017

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM IN SIKKIM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SIKKIMESE CULTURE AND RELIGION

Tashi Pintso Lepcha

Sikkim, known as *Bayul Demojong*, means “hidden valley of sacred treasures”. It was blessed by Guru Padmasambhava in the 8th century and is located in the North Himalayan region of India, below Mount Khangchendzonga, the third-highest peak in the world. Sikkim shares its borders with Nepal in the west, Bhutan in the east, Tibet in the north, and the Indian state of West Bengal in the south. Before becoming the 22nd state of India on May 16, 1975, Sikkim was an independent Buddhist Himalayan kingdom. According to the 2011 Census, Sikkim had a population of 6,07,688.

This article explores the development of Buddhism in Sikkim, which can be divided into three phases: the early phase, the medieval phase, and the modern phase. It also discusses Buddhism’s influence on the culture and religion of the Sikkimese people.

Early Phase of Buddhism in Sikkim

In the 8th century CE, Guru Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, visited Sikkim and declared it a sacred land, comparing it to the paradise of *Zangdopalri* (a mythical Buddhist heaven). He named the land *Demojong*.

During his stay, he identified several holy sites and subdued the local guardian deities, making them promise to protect the hidden spiritual treasures of the land. One of the most important sacred sites he marked was Tashiding, which became a religious centre. He also blessed four great caves located in the four cardinal directions, followed by nine sub caves and sixteen sub ordinary caves and 109 lakes along the borders, which contain natural images of the Buddha, mystical symbols, and sacred texts.

Mount Khangchendzonga, also called the *Five Treasures of Eternal Snow*, stands tall like a mighty king sitting on his throne. The surrounding landscape is rich in natural beauty, resembling a collection of precious gems. The hills and valleys are covered with diverse flora and fauna, and the region is blessed with medicinal plants and hot springs. Sikkim has many natural resources, and these are believed to be a result of Guru Rinpoche’s blessings.

It is said that selected saints and scholars from Tibet and India, led by Guru Rinpoche, gathered at Tashiding Hill. While addressing them, the Guru declared: *“This holy place is the refuge of lamas, guardian deities, and celestial beings. The mountains, sacred lakes, caves, and trees are natural abodes of divine beings, and the rocks and caves contain natural images of deities.”* He further added, *“This sacred land is, in reality, the Blissful Heaven of Dewachen Zhik-Kham.”* This statement emphasises that Sikkim is not just a physical place but a divine and spiritual sanctuary, comparable to the heavenly realms in Buddhist tradition.

Medieval Phase of Buddhism in Sikkim

During the medieval period, Rigdzin Godemchen came to Sikkim and discovered many sacred places. He revealed hidden treasures, Guru Dragpo and Thing Kha, from Mount Khanchendzonga. He spent a long time praying and blessed the land.

Around the same time, Gye Bumsa, a prince from the Minyak kingdom, came to Sikkim. He made a peace treaty with the Lepcha people, the original inhabitants of Sikkim. This friendship led to the creation of the Namgyal dynasty, which later ruled Sikkim.

Between the 13th and 16th centuries, many important Buddhist teachers visited Sikkim. One of them was Rigdzin Legdenze, the reincarnation of Rigzin Godemchen. Along with Sakya lamas, they built places for meditation and spread Buddhism in the region.

Modern Phase of Buddhism in Sikkim

In 1642 AD, four holy yogi brothers arrived in Sikkim and gathered at Yoksum Norbu Gang. They built the first Chorten (stupa) in Sikkim, called Chorten Tashi Hobar (Fortune That Flourishes). This stupa was made using rocks and soil from different parts of Sikkim as a symbol of their religious mission. During its consecration, many good omens appeared, such as a rainbow circle in the sky and five-colored rays from Mount Khangchendzonga, which touched Tashiding hill, confirming it as a sacred site. After this, Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo discovered several holy places and made local deities promise to protect them. He established Dubde Monastery and laid the foundation for Sang-Ngag Chholing and Pemayangtse monasteries.

Another saint, Nga-dag Sempa Chenpo, first built a small hermitage called Lha-gang Marpo in Yoksum and later established Tashi Galeg Monastery in Tashiding. The third saint, Kathog Rigzin Chenpo, also built a hermitage in Yoksum and miraculously created Kathog Lake, which still exists today.

The visit of these four yogis led to the widespread growth of Buddhism in Sikkim. Many religious texts describe Sikkim as a holy land, where anyone born or arriving here will attain spiritual salvation. Monasteries were gradually built, following the Samye Monastery system

of Tibet. Lhatsun Chenpo introduced Dzogchen teachings of Guru Padmasambhava, and most rituals practised in Sikkim come from Guru Rinpoche's teachings. This led to the development of a unique religious culture in Sikkim.

Learning the Tibetan language and practising ritualistic sadhanas (spiritual practices) became an age-old tradition. Important teachings such as Rigdzin Sokdrup and Dorjee Nyingpo are still practised at monasteries like Pemayangtse, Sang-Ngag Chholing, and Phensang. Other teachings of Terton Guru Chokyi Lingpa are also preserved in Sikkim.

Unique Cultural Contribution- Sikkimese culture also developed distinct traditions. Chogyal Chagdor Namgyal introduced the Pangtoed Dance (Warrior Dance) which is unique to Sikkim. The Pang Lhabso means annual festival worshipping Mount Khangchendzonga, performed by highly skilled Buddhist monks. These traditions continue to be deeply rooted in the hearts of the Sikkimese people today.

Buddhism's Influence on Sikkimese People

Buddhism began influencing Sikkim from the early period. Guru Padmasambhava met Thekong Mensalong at Phomrang, blessed him with long life, and made him a Dharma protector. This was the first sign of Buddhism's impact on the Lepcha people, who originally followed the Bon religion and worshipped nature.

During the medieval period, Rigdzin Godemchen found sacred places in Sikkim and meditated there. At the same time, Gye Bumsa, a Tibetan prince, came to Sikkim and formed a blood brotherhood with the Lepcha chief, Thekong-Tek. This brought the Lepcha and Bhutia people closer. During this time, the Bhutia people played a big role in spreading Buddhism in Sikkim.

In the modern period, the three yogis introduced Buddhism by establishing monasteries from three Nyingma lineages: Mindroling, Dorje Drag, and Kathog.

Reforms in Monasteries

Over time, many Rinpoches helped Buddhism grow in Sikkim. The Sixteenth Karmapa was the first to stop Bon rituals like animal sacrifices. He introduced the Gutor ritual at Ralong Monastery and asked people to follow new Buddhist practices. Monasteries were also told to follow strict Vinaya rules, and the three-month summer retreat (Yarnay) was revived.

Changes in the Last 50 Years

After China invaded Tibet, many Tibetan Buddhist masters came to Sikkim. Spiritual leaders like Gyalwa Karmapa, Dodrubchen Rinpoche, and Yangthang Rinpoche stopped Shamanistic rituals

like animal sacrifices. Over time, Lepcha ritual specialists (Mun and Bongthing) declined, and Buddhist customs became more common, especially in funeral rites. Buddhism teaches that the soul wanders for 49 days before rebirth, but older Lepcha beliefs had different ideas about the afterlife. Today, most funeral rituals follow Buddhist traditions, with Bon practices playing a minor role.

Coexistence of Buddhism and Indigenous Beliefs

Before Buddhism, the Lepchas had a Shamanistic religion, where priests worshipped spirits and healed people. Even today, in places like Rinchenpong, Dzongu, and Yuksam, some Lepcha priests still practice their traditions. Buddhism in Sikkim absorbed many Lepcha traditions, creating a unique version of the religion. For example, Mount Khangchendzonga, once a sacred place for Lepchas, became a Buddhist guardian deity.

The Lepchas, originally nature worshippers, now follow both Bon and Buddhist rituals. The Bhutias are mainly Tibetan Buddhists but also respect their local deities. Sherpas, Tamangs, and Gurungs follow mixed traditions but later became mostly Buddhist. In Sikkim, every Bhutia and Lepcha family traditionally sends one son to a monastery. Buddhism influences every stage of life, from birth to death. However, it is important to balance rituals with Buddhist philosophy. Sheda institutes help people understand Buddhist teachings better and keep traditions alive. Buddhism continues to shape Sikkim's culture and identity, ensuring a strong spiritual connection among its people.

Reference:

Khenpo, L. Tshering. (2002) *A Saga of Sikkim's Supreme revered four Pioneer Nyingmapa reincarnated and their torchbearers*. Self-published. Gangtok. Sikkim.

Namgyal, C. T., & Dolma, G. Y. (1908) "*The Royal History of Sikkim: A Chronicle of the House of Namgyal*". Self-Published Gangtok, Sikkim. (It was commissioned by Maharaja Thutob Namgyal and Maharani Yeshay Dolma of Sikkim in 1908 and translated by Dawa Samdup from Tibetan to English.)

Bhutia, H. W. (2016) *An account of the sacred site of Sikkim: Excellent path of liberation at sight*. Self-published. Ref. Gangtok. Sikkim.

Bentley, J. (2007) '*Vanishing Lepcha*' *Change and cultural revival in a mountain community in Sikkim*. Bulletin of Tibetology, 43(1–2).

Acharya, Tsultsem. (2005) *A short Biography of Four Tibetan Lamas and their activities in Sikkim*. Bulletin of Tibetology, 41(2).

A STUDY ON THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF SIKKIM MAHINDA THERO TO THE INDEPENDENCE OF SRI LANKANS DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Meedeniye Dhammawansa

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the unique contributions of the Most Venerable Sikkim Mahinda Thero, a prominent Theravāda Buddhist monk, to Sri Lanka's independence movement during the colonial period. Because of his integral role in the colonial period, he is one of Sri Lanka's national heroes. In such a situation, even after his death, he will inevitably be talked about among the common people. This study highlights how he used poetry to achieve his goals, as the composition of poetry is shown to be a prominent phenomenon in his life.

This paper covers the role of Buddhism in the Colonial Period in Sri Lanka, Sikkim Mahinda Thero's efforts to revive Buddhist education, the Temperance Movement, Economic Resistance, and Political Mobilisation. This paper argues that Sikkim Mahinda Thero's contributions were pivotal in shaping the socio-political landscape of colonial Sri Lanka.

The struggle for Sri Lanka's independence from colonial rule was a multifaceted movement involving political, social, educational, and cultural dimensions. Sikkim Mahinda Thero emerged as a key figure in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, using his religious and educational influence to galvanise Sri Lankans against colonial oppression. The uniqueness of the role played by Sikkim Mahinda Thero during the colonial period to get independence for Sri Lanka is the research problem, and it is demonstrated through this article.

Sikkim Mahinda Thero, born Pemba Thondup in 1901 in Gangtok, Sikkim,¹ was a distinguished Buddhist monk, poet, and author who played a pivotal role in the Buddhist revival and the independence movement of Sri Lanka. His journey from Sikkim to Sri Lanka and his subsequent contributions underscore the profound impact of Sikkimese individuals on the cultural and political landscapes of the region. This paper examines his unique contributions to the independence of Sri Lanka.

At the age of 12, he left Sikkim to pursue Buddhist studies in Sri Lanka, initially staying at a hermitage in *Polgasdūwa*, North Province, where he learned Buddhism under the German monk *Nyāṇātiloka*. Here, he studied the Sinhala and Pali languages, as well as Buddhism.² His entire life was spent in the *Sri Sudharmārāma* monastery in *Mahabellana*.

1 Wangchuk Dorjee, P. (2008). *S. Mahinda Thero: The Sikkimese who Gave Lankans Their Freedom Song*. 139.

2 Kamalasiri Himi, Missaka. *Tibet Jātika Sikkim Mahinda Himi*. [Sikkim Mahinda Thero, who was a Tibet national] 57, 64.

Research Methodology:

In this qualitative research, historical records, speeches, and writings were used as data collection methods. The content analysis method was used to analyse the data collected through the above methods.

Findings:

In this study, it was discovered that Sikkim Mahinda Thero's service during the colonial period of Sri Lanka was not limited to one end, i.e., religion, but also included cultural, educational, political, and social aspects, which is a unique quality found in him among other Sri Lankan national heroes.

The Role of Buddhism in the Colonial Period in Sri Lanka

Buddhism has been an integral part of Sri Lankan culture and identity since its introduction. However, during the colonial period, spanning the Portuguese, Dutch, and British rules, Buddhism not only faced significant challenges but also played a crucial role in the preservation of Sri Lankan identity and resistance to foreign domination.

The Portuguese, who ruled Sri Lanka from 1505 to 1658, were the first colonial power to suppress Buddhism. They sought to convert the local population to Christianity and targeted Buddhist institutions. Buddhist temples were destroyed, and monks were persecuted, significantly weakening the influence of Buddhism. The Portuguese also banned Buddhist practices and attempted to replace local religious customs with Catholicism.³

The Dutch, who succeeded the Portuguese, adopted a more tolerant approach to Buddhism, allowing the religion to be practised but still supporting Protestant Christianity. While the Dutch did not actively persecute Buddhists, they marginalised Buddhist institutions by undermining their economic resources and limiting their political power.⁴ However, the Buddhist monks continued to maintain cultural and religious practices in rural areas, even as the colonial authorities remained focused on trade and governance.

The most significant developments in the role of Buddhism occurred during British colonial rule (1796–1948). In that time, they converted the local population to Christianity, Buddhist temples were destroyed, and monks were persecuted. Initially indifferent to religion, the British established an educational system that largely ignored Buddhism and promoted Christianity and Western ideals. This caused the decline of Buddhist education and the weakening of the relationship between the monastery and lay people.⁵

3 De Silva, K.M. (1981). *A History of Sri Lanka*. University of California Press. 123.

4 Wickramasinghe, N. (2006). *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities*. 89.

5 Harris, Elizabeth J. (2006). *Theravāda Buddhism and the British Encounter: Religious, Missionary, and Colonial Experience in Nineteenth-Century Sri Lanka*. London: Routledge. 101 - 112.

However, in response to these challenges, a Buddhist revival movement emerged in the 19th century, spearheaded by figures such as *Anagārika Dharmapāla*⁶ and other leaders sought to restore Buddhist education and promote a sense of national identity rooted in Buddhism.⁷

This revival movement was not only a religious effort but also a political one. Buddhist leaders linked the preservation of Buddhism with the broader struggle for national independence. The Buddhist monks became active in advocating for the rights of the Sinhalese people, and Buddhism became a symbol of resistance against colonial rule. The Buddhist revival ultimately contributed to the nationalist movement that led to Sri Lanka's independence in 1948.⁸

According to this, Buddhism played a pivotal role in maintaining Sri Lanka's cultural and national identity during the colonial period. Despite facing suppression and marginalisation, the religion served as a unifying force for resistance, contributing significantly to the nation's eventual independence.

In this context, Sikkim Mahinda Thero emerged as a beacon of resistance, leveraging his religious authority to challenge colonial dominance. His work was instrumental in reasserting the importance of Buddhism in Sri Lankan identity, which became a cornerstone of the independence movement.

His Role in the Revival of Buddhist Education

One of Sikkim Mahinda Thero's most significant contributions was his role in reviving Buddhist education. During the colonial period, Christian missionary schools dominated the educational landscape, often undermining local traditions and values. Recognising the importance of education in shaping national consciousness, Sikkim Mahinda Thero joined Buddhist schools and promoted the study of Pali and Buddhism.⁹ He worked as a teacher in the College of *Ānanda* in Colombo from 1934 to 1936.¹⁰ This is one of the key Buddhist schools in Sri Lanka. He was always keen on Dharma studies and started a Dharma school called *Navalamkā* in his monastery.¹¹ Buddhism and Buddhist ethics were taught in this Dharma school. These institutions not only provided an alternative to missionary education but also instilled a sense of pride in Sri Lankan heritage among students. His efforts laid the groundwork for a generation of educated Sri Lankans who would later play key roles in the independence struggle.¹²

6 Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864–1933) was a pioneering Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist who played an integral role in the resurgence of the Sinhalese nation and Buddhism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

7 Kamalasiri Himi, Missaka. *Tibet Jātika Sikkim Mahinda Himi*. [Sikkim Mahinda Thero, who is a Tibet national] 92.

8 *ibid.*

9 Kamalasiri Himi, Missaka. *Tibet Jātika Sikkim Mahinda Himi*. [Sikkim Mahinda Thero, who is a Tibet national] 74, 75.

10 *ibid.* 74.

11 *Ibid.* 80, 81.

12 De Silva, K. (1981). *A History of Sri Lanka*. 345.

His Literary Contributions

Central to his revival efforts was his literary output. Authoring over 40 works, including patriotic poems like *Ovā Mutu Dama*, *Sinhala Jātiya*, *Jātika Tortilla*, *Nidahas Dāhāna* and *Lankā Māṭā*. Mahinda Thero used Sinhala literature to rekindle pride in Sri Lanka's Buddhist heritage and galvanise resistance against British colonialism. His writings often juxtaposed the island's ancient glory with the moral decline under colonial rule, urging citizens to reclaim their cultural identity through Buddhist ethics. For instance, his children's books, such as *Lama Kawu Kalamba*, subtly instilled values of duty and resilience, merging education with nationalist ideology.

Sikkim Mahinda Thero's legacy lies in his synthesis of education, literature, and nationalism. By revitalizing Buddhist institutions, championing Sinhala literacy, and inspiring a generation through his writings, he not only preserved Sri Lanka's spiritual heritage but also laid the intellectual groundwork for its independence. His work remains a testament to the power of education in cultural and political revival.

Going by this, he was a staunch advocate for the preservation of Sri Lanka's cultural identity. He organized public lectures, wrote extensively on Buddhist philosophy, and encouraged the celebration of traditional festivals. By emphasizing the richness of Sri Lankan culture, he countered the colonial narrative that portrayed local traditions as inferior. His writings and speeches often drew parallels between the decline of Buddhism and the loss of national sovereignty, inspiring many to view cultural preservation as integral to the fight for independence.¹³

The poems were written by S. Mahinda Thero and are still used by Sri Lankan Buddhist monks in revolutionary politics as slogans. A well-known poem for that is given below.

“Sahana läbena turu lankā dīpayāṭa

Gahana gāhili hamuvehi siha vesin siṭa

Nahana rupun nahamin yami idiriyāṭa

Mahanakamat baṇa dahamat eyayi maṭa”¹⁴

“Until Sri Lanka gets its freedom, I will continue to face any challenge bravely as a lion and destroy the things that need to be destroyed. That is my ordination.” (Dhammawansa, M.)

As Buddhist monks, they try to follow the instructions given by the Buddha and achieve liberation. In that time, that was also the objective of S. Mahinda Thero. However, he decided to stand up for the Sri Lankan nation, putting aside his own objectives. Also, he used poetry as a weapon to destroy the apathy of Sri Lankans and resistance for the British rulers.

13 Guruge, Ananda. (1984), *From the Living Fountains of Buddhism*. 212.

14 Kamalasiri Himi, Missaka. Tibet Jātika Sikkim Mahinda Himi.[Sikkim Mahinda Thero, who is a Tibet national]
15.

Moreover, the poems composed by the Thero have also been of great help in pleasing the hearts of several generations of Sri Lankan children. Such as;

“Samanpicca mal ihiruṇa

Nil taṇakoḷa piṭṭaniyak

Vageyi ahasa anna balanu

Koccara lassanada rāṭa”¹⁵

“Look at how beautiful the sky is at night, like a ground of blue grass covered with jasmine flowers.” (Dhammawansa, M.)

This shows that the touch of S. Mahinda Thero is essential for a Sri Lankan from childhood to the last days of life. He is deeply connected to the lives of Sri Lankans.

His Influence on the Temperance Movement and Economic Resistance

S. Mahinda Thero played a significant role in the Temperance Movement and economic resistance against British colonial rule in Sri Lanka. The Temperance Movement was a significant anti-colonial effort that sought to reduce alcohol consumption, which was seen as a tool of British oppression. The British colonial government relied heavily on revenue from taverns, which were widespread across the island. By promoting temperance, the movement aimed to weaken the economic foundation of colonial rule while fostering national unity and moral integrity among Sri Lankans. S. Mahinda Thero was an active participant in this movement.¹⁶ His literary works, particularly his patriotic poems, inspired people to reject alcoholism and embrace a life of discipline and self-respect. His writings often highlighted the moral decay caused by alcohol and urged Sri Lankans to reclaim their cultural and spiritual heritage. This alignment with the Temperance Movement made him a key figure in the broader struggle for independence.

S. Mahinda Thero’s involvement in the Temperance Movement and his efforts to promote economic resistance were integral to the broader Sri Lankan independence movement. His literary works not only inspired patriotism but also provided a moral and economic framework for resisting colonial rule.

His Political Mobilisation

Although he was not a politician, he played a major role in politics in Sri Lanka. This influence was mainly through his literature because Sri Lankans had embraced his ideologies with great

¹⁵ ibid.14.

¹⁶ Kamalasiri Himi, Missaka. *Tibet Jātika Sikīm Mahinda Himi*. [Sikkim Mahinda Thero, who is a Tibet national] 93, 94.

love. He also maintained contacts with major politicians in Sri Lanka, such as J. R. Jayewardene.¹⁷ Post-independence, his educational institutions continued to shape Sri Lanka's intellectual landscape. It is also said that he was a very talented preacher, and it can be thought that he used this talent to give his political ideologies to Sri Lankans.¹⁸ Since he was a Buddhist monk, he was able to change people's hearts and had a great ability to do so. This is the message he is giving to the Buddhist monks: that politics done while sitting in the role of a monk is more useful without entering into professional politics. In this case, Buddhist monks can lead common people as well as politicians for good purposes.

One of the most significant aspects of Sikkim Mahinda Thero's political mobilisation was his literary influence. He was an exceptional poet whose works were deeply nationalistic and motivational. His poetry resonated with the masses, instilling a sense of patriotism and resistance against British rule. His poems, often recited in schools and public gatherings, played a crucial role in inspiring young minds to join the freedom movement. His famous poem *Nidahase Mantraya* (The Mantra of Freedom) became a rallying cry for independence activists.

Conclusion

Sikkim Mahinda Thero's contributions to Sri Lanka's independence movement were unique and multifaceted. Through his work in reviving Buddhism, promoting education, inspiring national consciousness, and preserving cultural heritage, he laid the ideological foundation for the island's struggle against colonial rule. While his efforts were often overshadowed by those of political leaders, his influence on the masses and his ability to connect religion with nationalism were indispensable. This study highlights the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the roles played by religious figures in anti-colonial movements, particularly in the context of Sri Lanka. It is truly amazing that his service was not limited to one end but transcended all ends, such as religious, educational, etc. The character of S. Mahinda Thero is ideal for all the people of the world, who clearly show that it is the absolute duty of man to stand up for the needs of the time, and there is no discrimination for that.

17 Kamalasiri Himi, Missaka. *Tibet Jātika Sikīm Mahinda Himi*. [Sikkim Mahinda Thero, who is a Tibet national] 100.

18 Ibid. 64

References

Primary sources

Kamalasiri Himi, Missaka. *Tibet Jātika Sikīm Mahinda Himi*. [Sikkim Mahinda Thero, who is a Tibet national] Colombo: S.Godage and Brothers (Pvt) Ltd.

Secondary sources

Arasaratnam, S. (1996). *Ceylon and the Dutch, 1600–1800*. Vijitha Yapa Publications.

De Silva K. (1981). *A History of Sri Lanka*. California: University of California Press.

Guruge, Ananda. (1984), *From the Living Fountains of Buddhism*. Sri Lanka: Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

Harris, Elizabeth J. (2006). *Theravāda Buddhism and the British Encounter: Religious, Missionary, and Colonial Experience in Nineteenth-Century Sri Lanka*. London: Routledge.

Jayawardena, Kumari. (2000) *Nobodies to Somebodies: The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka*. Social Scientists' Association.

Wangchuk Dorjee, P. (2008). *S. Mahinda Thero: The Sikkimese who gave Lankans Their Freedom Song*. Bulletin of Tibetology, vol. 44, Gangtok: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology.

Wickramasinghe, N. (2006). *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities*. University of Hawai'i Press.

Understanding the Historical and Cultural Development of Thangka Painting: With Special Reference to Peaceful Deities in Sikkim

Sapana Rai

Introduction

Thangka¹ Painting generally means a painting drawn on a flat surface depicting various deities, Buddha, Mandalas, and other subjects important to the Buddhist religion. They are known for their rich colours, intricate details, and spiritual symbolism. It has a long and rich history of spreading the Dharma (Buddha's teachings) worldwide, and over a hundred years of Thangka Art tradition, which has evolved into its contemporary forms. This tradition really took off in the 11th and 12th centuries, spreading across Tibet, Nepal, parts of India, and even into Mongolia (Carrithers, 2001). Back then, they were a way to bring Buddhist teachings to people who couldn't read, similar to picture books, sharing stories and ideas related to Buddhist philosophy.

Thangka painting, a traditional form of Tibetan Buddhist art, serves as a profound medium through which spiritual teachings were visually expressed. Accordingly, it offers both a devotional tool and an artistic representation of key Buddhist concepts (Woodward, 2007). Among the most powerful and recurring themes depicted in Thangka are representations of compassion, one of the core virtues in Buddhist philosophy. Compassion in Buddhism is often linked to the ideal of the Bodhisattva, beings who have vowed to attain enlightenment not just for themselves but for the benefit of all sentient beings (Karandavyuha Sutra). Central to these Bodhisattvas is the manifestation of peace, love, and compassion, which are portrayed through the peaceful deities in Tibetan iconography. It is not simply a reflection of devotion to Buddhist teachings, nor is it merely an illustration of sacred text; rather, it embodies the whole symbolism of Buddhism and the wisdom of the Buddha, expressed by images. This makes Tibetan Thangka art not only an object of religious worship but an invaluable part of the Buddhist practice of meditation and awareness. It is often seen how Buddhist practitioners revered the Thangka paintings as one of the mediums to contemplate the teachings, while lay practitioners worship them as the ideal representation of various Buddhas.

Types of Thangka Painting

Thangka is far more nuanced than a mere collection of images; each stroke, each colour, and indeed, each *type* of Thangka carries profound symbolic and spiritual weight. Stepping into the

1 Thangka- is a Tibetan word meaning 'painting on a flat surface'. "thang" means 'a flat plain' with the specifying suffix "ka". In Vajrayana Buddhism these images are known as 'sku' or 'bodily form' in the sacred round.

world of **Thangka painting** feels like journeying through time. This isn't just an ancient Tibetan art form; it's a vibrant, breathing tradition that continues to flourish and transform today. The amount of dedication and painstaking care that goes into each of these scrolls, meticulously crafted with natural pigments on cotton or silk - every brushstroke a testament to centuries of artistic devotion. This shows a truly remarkable art tradition deeply rooted in ancient practices, which isn't confined to monastery walls. Instead, many institutions are passionately keeping it alive, teaching new generations and ensuring its continuity.

The Norbulingka Institute is one of the many such schools; it's a living canvas where traditional methods meet contemporary expression. This school presents the breathtaking diversity of Thangka art. There are the intense **black backgrounds Thangkas (Tbi. Nag-tang)** where wrathful deities seem to leap from the dark, their potent energies amplified by the void. Another form is the serene **red background Thangkas (Tbi. Mar-tang)**, glowing with a vibrant vermilion that whispers of vitality and long life, often depicting peaceful deities. And finally, the awe-inspiring **gold background Thangkas**, where images outlined in pure gold against a gilded field evoke a profound sense of purity and divine essence, are typically reserved for the most enlightened Buddhas.

Thanks to the tireless dedication of these institutions and the artists who pour their hearts into this work, the ancient art of Thangka painting isn't just surviving—it's thriving, a dynamic and evolving thread in the rich tapestry of contemporary Tibetan art, ensuring its beauty and wisdom reach future generations.

A similar example can be drawn from Sikkim, where Art and Culture are the heritage that highlights its potential for its future development in Tibetan Art. Institutions such as the Directorate of Handicraft and Handloom, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok and the Buddhist Art School, Lumsey play a significant role in preserving this ancient Art tradition in the State.

Beyond painted forms, there are **Applique Thangkas (Tbi. Dras-drub-ma)**, exquisite creations fashioned from meticulously cut and stitched silk brocade, and **Embroidered Thangkas (Tbi. Tsem-thang)**, both of which offer a tactile and often monumental representation of the sacred. The choice of type is not merely aesthetic; it is a conscious decision by the artist, guided by centuries of iconographic tradition and the specific spiritual purpose the Thangka is intended to serve, whether as a meditation aid, a teaching tool, or a vessel for blessings. Each type, in its unique material and visual language, becomes a sacred gateway to the dharma, a road-map to enlightenment, and a tangible expression of profound Buddhist philosophy. In this paper, special focus is given to Thangka paintings of peaceful deities, such as Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig), Green Tara, and Manjushri, who are the visual representations of compassion. These deities embody the essence of loving-kindness, mercy, and the wish to relieve suffering, often depicted in serene, calm, and compassionate postures. The symbols, colours, and intricate details in Thangka art serve not only to honour these deities but also to provide a direct channel through

which practitioners can connect to their qualities and integrate them into their spiritual practice (Klasanova, 2015).

This preliminary study of the historical aspects of Thangka painting, with a special focus on peaceful deities, offers a unique lens for understanding how meditating on compassion transcends textual teachings and enables one to enter the realm of visual spirituality. Additionally, it will explore how these depictions offer insights into Buddhist teachings, not only on the philosophical concept but also its significance in the cultural and religious sphere. This exploration will illuminate how Thangka paintings serve as vehicles for both spiritual devotion and personal transformation, helping practitioners cultivate a heart of compassion on the path toward enlightenment.

Historical Background of Thangka Paintings Tradition

A Thangka possesses inherent sacredness, equivalent to that of an image as a whole, regardless of its material composition, whether wood, stone, or metal. Hence, its significance extends beyond its decorative value in a monastery, temple, or affluent household, where it may be perceived as secondary to icons on altars and in niches. By the middle of the 3rd century BCE, Buddhism had gained the favour of a Mauryan king, Ashoka, who had established an empire that extended from the Himalayas in the north to almost as far as Sri Lanka in the south (Kitagawa & Lopez, 2025). However, a significant change is at full potential to be altered when the development of Thangka paintings is carried by Chinese pilgrims who travelled to India between the 5th and 7th centuries BCE, including Faxian and Xuanzang (Hieun Tsang), as they documented a shift in Indian Buddhism. They observed a weakening of Buddhist institutions and the beginnings of its integration into Hinduism, even though the Gupta period initially supported the secular religion. With the rise of the Huns, the royal races were wiped out, and Buddhist monasteries were deserted and turned into ruins. Xuanzang, particularly, reported the widespread destruction of Buddhist monasteries in northwestern India by the Huns. This led to the dissemination of remnants of Buddhist Art (Bapat, 2023)

Shina (1989) also explains the variegated aesthetic of Thangka art influenced by various regions from India and Nepal. The pictorial arts were exhibited on all kinds of flat surfaces-whether it is on drawing paper, on cloth and silk or even mural, all were the amalgamation of developing Buddhist Thangka art. Especially, the traditional cloth paintings have been highlighted in the ancient Indian art known as “Pata” (portrait on cloth or paper). Their artistic triumphs were eye-witnessed by the 7th-century Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang in Nalanda (Beal, 1911). Further, Shina (1989) explains that above all, the Chinese aesthetic made a lasting effect on portraits on textiles, silk or murals. The Chinese style is mostly felt in depicting various landscapes and environments, the Mongoloid facial features being the prominent aspect of the Thangka art, also elaborating the presence of Confucian heritage and the motifs mainly presenting the blend of Sinic and Iranian style (Sinha, 1989).

Early Tibetan historians suggest that it was through contact with India during the 7th and 8th centuries that Tibetans first learned of Buddhist painting. Tibetans commissioned works in eastern India, which they brought back to Tibet. This is discreetly explained in an account of the life of the Indian Buddhist teacher Atisha (982-1054), written by the Tibetan historian Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa (1504 -1566). (Kossak and Singer,1998)

Another accordance can be understood through Hiram Woodward's work (2007), "*The Karandavyuha Sutra and Buddhist Art in 10th Century Cambodia*," which examines the influence of the Karandavyuha Sutra, a Mahayana Buddhist text, on the art of 10th-century Cambodia. This sutra is significant for its emphasis on the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and his role in guiding beings to enlightenment (The Heart Sutra). It includes narratives and descriptions that can be visually represented. This exhibits how Buddhist Art has reached the far corners of Southeast Asia, influencing their native art and culture across different plains.

By the 13th century A.D., Buddhism had become the most influential religion across the continents and started to change the way orthodox culture was diversified all across the Southeastern part of Asia, and it had long since spread to Tibet, Central Asia, China, Korea, Japan, and Sri Lanka (Carrithers, 2001)

By the middle of the 15th Century, Tibet had gained an international reputation as the Buddhist Holy Land, having superseded India in this respect after the late 12th-century Muslim invasions of northern India. Throughout this period, Tibetans commissioned and created paintings of exquisite splendour; they mastered ancient painting traditions from abroad and transformed them to express their sacred visions (Kossak & Singer, 1998).

Most of the symbols that arise in Tibetan Art are of Indian Buddhist origin, and many of them predate Buddhism itself in ancient India. While it has earlier roots in India, the development of the Thangka painting continues to spread throughout the Eastern Himalayan Regions and Central Asia. The idea of representing images of Buddhist deities and their relevant Jatakas tales was easier to convey in a two-dimensional visual form than in written form. By the 8th Century A.D., Buddhism began to flourish in Tibet, leading to the introduction of Vajrayana Symbolism in the form of Buddhist Art. Over time, many masters emerged with their unique art styles and techniques. Among them, the 18th-century scholar-painter Situ Panchen Chokyi Junge (Born in January 1700 A.D. in Derge) played a significant role in revitalising and popularising the Karma Gardri style. This type of Thangka painting style is very prominent in contemporary Buddhist art schools such as the Enlightenment Thangka Art Studio.

The style was established by the Tibetan painter Namkha Tashi² in the court of the Ninth

2 Namkha Tashi, born in Upper Yarlung in 1500 A.D. established the Karma Gardri Style (also known as the Encampment style). He based his painted figures on Indian figural models but placed them in Chinese-inspired landscapes. David P. Jackson; Karl Debreczeny; Rubin Museum of Art, Patron and Painter: Situ Panchen and

Karmapa (1555–1603). The Karma Gardri style of painting (also known as the Encampment style). This term translates to “camp style.” It originates from the customs of the Karmapa hierarchy, who historically traveled with large followings. The Encampment style represents a fusion of Tibetan, Indian, and Chinese artistic influences (Jackson & Debreczeny, 2009).

One of the prominent Thangka paintings well presented on the entrance facade of every monastery and dharma institution is “The Twelve Links of dependent Origination”, which depicts the genesis of “Law of Cause and Effect” through Dependent Origination (Skt. Pratityasamutpada) (Salistamba Sutra). As narrated by Geshe Dorji Damdul during his teaching at Deer Park Institute (2024), he explained the genesis of prime Buddhist philosophical art. In the ancient kingdom of Magadha, a dilemma unfolded for King Bimbisara, a fervent supporter of the Buddha. Having received a magnificent jewel from his distant royal contemporary, King Udayana of Vatsa, Bimbisara found himself pondering a gift of equal meaning. Rather than suggesting another material possession, the Buddha offered a profound alternative: a painting. This wasn’t just any painting; it was to be a depiction of the Buddha himself, encircled by the profound concept of the twelve links of dependent origination. Buddhist scriptures, notably the *Salistamba Sutra* (or Rice Seedling Sutra), even suggest a miraculous intervention by the Buddha, whose form was reportedly projected onto the canvas, ensuring a truly authentic representation. Surrounding this central figure, artists meticulously rendered the twelve links—a visual roadmap of existence and suffering driven by ignorance—through powerful symbolic imagery: a blind figure for ignorance, a potter for formations, and a restless monkey for consciousness, among others. Upon receiving this extraordinary gift, King Udayana’s diligent study of the painting and its accompanying explanatory verses led him to a transformative understanding of the Dharma, underscoring the remarkable power of visual art to convey the deepest Buddhist teachings.

Rooted in the teachings of the Buddha, who lived in ancient northern India, Buddhism is both a religion and a philosophy. Its influence has been widespread throughout Asia, shaping the spiritual, cultural, and social landscapes, and has also extended to the West within a few centuries.

The Significance of Thangka Painting

The significance of Thangka paintings within Buddhism is multifaceted. They serve as crucial educational instruments, illustrating the life of the Buddha, the lineage of influential lamas, and the pantheon of deities and Bodhisattvas. Furthermore, they are integral to personal meditative practices and the instruction of monastic students. During Buddhist rituals and ceremonies, Thangkas act as focal points for devotion and as conduits through which prayers are offered. They are highly regarded as meditation aids, providing a visually and mentally engaging representation of the divine. Often stated by many venerated meditation masters, Thangkas are sometimes

viewed as a “road-map to enlightenment,” guiding practitioners towards a state of complete spiritual awakening. There is a prevalent belief that if these paintings are created with precision and beauty, adhering to strict iconographic rules and proportions, one can become abodes for the spirits of the depicted deities. Representing the enlightened mind and the phenomena of the universe. Thangkas depicting peaceful deities hold particular importance within this rich artistic and spiritual tradition. These figures represent the gentle, approachable, and benevolent aspects of the divine realm, offering a contrast to more formidable representations. They embody the virtues that are fundamental to Buddhist teachings, aiding individuals in their journey to overcome suffering and attain a deeper understanding of reality.

In the same context, Robert Beer (1999) also explained the madness of divinity in the creation of a Thangka not merely as an artistic endeavour but as a sacred act, deeply intertwined with Buddhist practice. The belief that deities will only reside within aesthetically excellent Thangka underscores the importance of artistic mastery in fulfilling the spiritual purpose of these paintings. This connection between artistic skill and spiritual efficacy suggests that the visual appeal is not simply ornamental but an essential component for the Thangka to serve its intended function. Moreover, the ease with which Thangka can be transported highlights the adaptable nature of Buddhist teachings. The historical use of these scrolls by traveling monks to impart knowledge in various, often remote, locations demonstrates a deliberate strategy for the widespread dissemination and preservation of Buddhist doctrines within a mobile society.

The vast and intricate pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism encompasses a multitude of deities, categorised broadly into peaceful and wrathful forms. The existence of both peaceful and wrathful deities within the Buddhist pantheon reveals a sophisticated understanding of compassion and the journey toward enlightenment. Despite their formidable appearance, wrathful deities often embody a fierce compassion aimed at overcoming negative forces and inner demons. This suggests that the Buddhist approach to spiritual development encompasses a wide spectrum of energies and methodologies, extending beyond mere gentleness and incorporating powerful transformative forces. Furthermore, the idea that peaceful deities embody specific enlightened qualities of the Buddha indicates that these figures serve as vital role models or archetypes for practitioners. By engaging in meditation and contemplation focused on these deities, individuals can aspire to internalise and cultivate these desirable traits within their being, fostering personal and spiritual growth.

Thangka Paintings of Peaceful Deities in Sikkim

Sikkim was a Buddhist kingdom for a very long time; historically, this place was blessed by Guru Padmasambhava in the 8th Century. After that, many Buddhist masters, particularly from the Tibetan Buddhism, such as Rigdzin Godemchen (1337-1409), Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé (c. 1597-1653), Kathok Kuntu Sangpo (around 1641-1642 AD), Ngadag Sempa Chenpo (Kazi Dawasamdup,

1908), and historical figures like 16th Karmapa and Drodupchen Rinpoche made a significant contribution in the field of development and expansion of Buddhist teaching and particularly Tibetan Buddhism. In this process, there is no doubt that numerous Tibetan Thangka, architects, painters and experts came to Sikkim and built many monasteries in the Tibetan traditional style, which is evident till the present day. Such as Pema Yangtse Monastery (Tbi. Sangchen Pema Yangtsen), Tashiding Monastery (Tbi. Tashi Gaylek), Rumtek Monastery (Tbi. Karma Thupden Chokdor), Tsuklakhang Monastery (Tbi. Phodrang Tsuk Lakhang), Enchey Monastery (Tbi. Sanga Rabtenling), etc. In these monasteries, there are many murals, thangka paintings, and wooden carved paintings in the Tibetan Art Style. This study specifically focuses on the thangka and murals of peaceful deities, particularly Chenrizig, Vajrasattva, Green Tara, and Manjushri.

The murals and Thangka paintings presented at these monasteries are a testimony of old advent of Vajrayana Symbolism. Apart from thangka and murals of many deities and spiritual figures, both Indian and Tibetan masters contributed to the development of peaceful deities, beautifully enshrined and painted on the walls of the monasteries.

Peaceful deities serve as guides and protectors for those traversing the path to enlightenment. This category includes Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, revered teachers, and high-ranking monks. These figures embody the serene and benevolent dimensions of the divine. They are seen as representing the inherent purity of the fundamental elements of existence, including consciousness, physical and mental aggregates, elemental properties, and sensory and cognitive processes. Peaceful deities are characterised by their tranquillity, compassion, and harmonious nature. They function as symbols of serenity and spiritual awakening, offering solace and inspiration to devotees. These deities embody the qualities of the Buddha, such as wisdom, compassion, patience, and truthfulness, providing practitioners with ideals.

In contrast, wrathful deities, while appearing fierce, utilise their power to safeguard Buddhism and to eradicate obstacles to enlightenment, such as anger, greed, and ignorance. It is also understood that peaceful deities can manifest in wrathful forms, and vice versa, reflecting the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the divine. Within Tibetan Buddhism, the concept of the “Forty-two peaceful deities”³ is particularly significant. These divine figures are said to have been

3 1. **Samantabhadra** and 2. **Samantabhadri**: The primordial Buddha and his consort, representing the totality of reality.

The Five Male Buddhas of the Five Families: 1. Vairochana (buddha family), 2. Akshobhya (vajra family), 3. Ratnasambhava (Ratna family), 4. Amitabha (Padma family), and 5. Amoghasiddhi (karma family).

The Five Female Buddhas of the Five Families: 1. Dhatvishvari (consort of Vairochana), 2. Buddhachana (consort of Akshobhya), 3. Mamaki (consort of Ratnasambhava), 4. Pandaravasini (consort of Amitabha), and 5. Samayatara (consort of Amoghasiddhi).

The Eight Male Bodhisattvas: 1. Manjushri, 2. Avalokiteshvara, 3. Vajrapani, 4. Maitreya, 5. Kshitigarbha,

revealed in visions, representing the harmonious and benevolent aspects of the sacred realm.

The Tsuglakhang Monastery (Tib. Phodrang Tsuk Lakhang):

The Tsuglakhang Monastery, the revered royal chapel of the Chogyals in Gangtok, holds significant importance as a pivotal Buddhist site in Sikkim, established in 1898. Its strategic location atop a hill, offering panoramic views of Mount Kanchenjunga and the surrounding meadows, perfectly suited its historical role as a venue for coronations, royal marriages, and victory celebrations for the Sikkimese monarchy.

The monastery itself is a testament to the rich artistic traditions of Buddhism, adorned with intricate iconography and profound symbolism. The main entrance, a grand tripartite design, features a central door leading directly into the main prayer hall, flanked by two side entrances. Notably, the portico above the left-hand door showcases **three wrathful deities**, while the right-hand doorhead is graced with exquisite paintings of **three peaceful deities**: Manjushri, Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara), and the peaceful form of Vajrapani.

Within the main prayer hall, the central focus is a majestic statue of **Guru Padmasambhava**, accompanied by a beautifully adorned statue of **Tara Devi**. The ceiling is a gallery of twenty-two **Thangka paintings** of diverse styles, some intricately embroidered, others meticulously hand-painted. The walls are a canvas of vibrant Buddhist mural art, depicting themes such as the **eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche** and various forms of the Buddha. While the traditional presentation often omits identifying labels, making precise distinctions challenging, there are intriguing and distinct representations of peaceful deities above the inner chamber's door head.

Intriguingly, the East and South walls of the main hall are veiled by curtains, concealing mural art depicting Secret Tantra, an artistic choice often deemed unconventional for those unfamiliar with esoteric Buddhist practices. Ascending to the second floor, one finds further significant mural art, primarily featuring peaceful deities and narratives such as the twelve deeds of Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Enchey Monastery (Tib. Sanga Rabtenling):

Enchey Monastery, nestled beautifully on a hill ridge, offers breathtaking panoramic views of Gangtok city and the magnificent Kanchenjunga Mountain range. Its architecture is a unique fusion of Tibetan and Sikkimese styles, easily recognisable by its distinctive pagoda-style roof

6. Akashagarbha, 7. Sarvanivaranavishkambhin and 8. Samantabhadra

The Eight Female Bodhisattvas: 1. Goddess of Beauty (Skt. *Lāsyā*), 2. Goddess of Garlands (Skt. *Mālā*), 3. Goddess of Song (Skt. *Gītā*), 4. Goddess of Dance (Skt. *Nṛtyā*), 5. Goddess of Flowers (Skt. *Puṣpā*), 6. Goddess of Incense (Skt. *Dhūpā*), 7. Goddess of Light (Skt. *Ālokā*), 8. Goddess of Perfume (Skt. *Gandhā*)

The Six Munis: 1. Indra Kaushika, 2. Vemacitra, 3. Shakyamuni, 4. Shravasingha, 5. Jvalamukhadev, and 6. Dharmaraja.

The Four Male Gate Keepers: 1. Achala, 2. Yamantaka, 3. Hayagriva, 4. Amritakundali.

The Four Female Gatekeepers: 1. Ankusha, 2. Pasha, 3. Shrinkhala, 4. Ghanta. (Source: Rigpawiki.org)

topped with a gleaming golden cupola. The building itself is quite sturdy, constructed with thick stone walls and timber frames, adorned with intricately carved pillars and ornate windows.

Within the monastery's large prayer hall, known as the Dukhang or Lakhang, is a showcase of vibrant Buddhist artistry. Its walls are completely covered with stunning paintings and murals depicting a rich array of Mahayana Buddhist deities, including four religious kings and deities representing the four cardinal directions, all as described in ancient scriptures. On the East side of the Lakhang lies the representation of Sikkim protector deities known as Dzog-chen, while on the West side, there lies the magnificent illustration of wrathful deities such as Guru Dragpur, a wrathful form of Guru Padmasambhava. The back side of the front wall features Green Tara in her twenty-one forms. you'll also find revered images of the Buddha, Loki Sharia, and Guru Padmasambhava with his two female disciples, Yeshe Tsogyal and Mandarava, housed within this sacred space.

Similar to other Nyingmapa Gompas, the entrance is adorned with both peaceful and wrathful deities, which represent the transcendental threshold to witness reality and purify all negative afflictions through the practice of active compassion and meditation on the virtuous deeds.

Conclusion

Historically and culturally, Buddhist art, including Thangka paintings, reflects the spiritual journeys of its creators and serves to inspire future practitioners. The vast array of artistic expressions, from sculptures to temples, and the visual representation of variant artistic devotions is a testament to the enduring influence of Buddhist philosophy on cultural production, leading to its development through different aesthetic values. The beauty of Thangka painting art is that it continued to spread despite the rigorous process of creating a piece, and over time, the steps were further upgraded to its present form.

In examining the profound legacy of Thangka painting, it becomes clear that its role in safeguarding Buddhist teachings is both undeniable and remarkably intricate. These aren't merely exquisite works of art; they are, in essence, painstakingly crafted visual compendiums of the Dharma. Throughout history, Thangkas have demonstrated a remarkable capacity for evolution, gracefully integrating diverse artistic currents while steadfastly adhering to the precise iconographic dictates that are crucial to both scriptural accuracy and spiritual efficacy. Culturally, their integration into the very fabric of Tibetan Buddhist existence is absolute. Beyond their role as cherished devotional objects, they serve as indispensable instruments for meditation, ritual practice, and the transmission of complex philosophical concepts. Through their rich symbolism and evocative narratives, Thangkas have ensured that the nuanced doctrines of Buddhism—ranging from the life stories of enlightened beings to the profound tenets of dependent origination

and emptiness—are not only meticulously preserved but also actively conveyed and grasped across generations, often effortlessly bridging barriers of literacy and language.

Yet, sustaining these vital Thangka painting traditions in our modern era presents considerable hurdles. A pressing concern is the diminishing pool of highly accomplished masters, individuals who embody a rare synthesis of intricate artistic technique and deep Buddhist philosophical understanding. The traditional monastic training system, historically the crucible for these specialised skills, now contends with the allure of modern education and the pressures of economic realities. This can lead to a fragmentation of artistic lineages and an erosion of invaluable, specialised knowledge. Moreover, the creation of a Thangka demands an extraordinary commitment of time, unwavering discipline, and profound spiritual dedication—qualities that prove increasingly challenging to cultivate and maintain within today’s accelerated, commercialised landscape.

References

- Bapat, P. V. (2023). 2500 Years of Buddhism. Thirteenth Reprint. Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, pp. 214-231
- Beer, R. (1999). The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs. 1st ed., Shambala Pub., Boston
- Beal, S. (1911). The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang. first ed. Pub. Location – London, pp. 85-127
- Chandra, L. (2008). Tibetan Art: The Land of Space and Silence. pub. Niyogi BKlasanova, L.M. (2015). Traditions and Innovations in the Creation of Thangka Painting
- Carrithers, M. (2001). A very short Introduction. pub. Oxford University Press Inc., New York Buddha
- Geshe Dorji Damdul. Emptiness and Dependent Origination based on Rice Seedling Sutra and The Three Principal Aspects of Path **(October 6-13, 2024)**
- <https://deerpark.in/events/buddhist-teaching-led-by-geshe-dorji-damdul/>
- Jackson, D.P. and Jackson. (1984). Tibetan Thangka Painting Methods and Materials - Illustration by Robert Beer. II ed., Serindia Pub., 10 Park Field Pub., London
- Kitagawa, J. M. & Lopez, D. S. (2025). The Encyclopedia Britannica: Buddhism

Kossak, S. M. & Jane C. Singer, J.C. (1998). Sacred Visions: Early Paintings from Central Tibet, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, pp.3-24

Raj, R. (2018). Buddhism in Sikkim: A Study in Cultural Syncretism. pp.290., New Delhi

Shina, N.C. (1989). Tales The Thangka Cell: An Introduction to Tibetan scroll Portraits. Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok.

Stoddard, H. (1996). Early Tibetan Paintings: Sources and Style (11th-14th A.D.)Archives of Asian Art, pp. 26-50

Woodward, H. (2007). The Karandavyuha Sutra and Buddhist Art in 10th-century Cambodia. VOL. 58 No. 3 Marg Pub.,pg. 70-83

12th Zurmang Gharwang Rinpoche (Zurmang lineage) (2014). A Meditation Manual: Samatha and Vipasyana in the Mahayana Tradition

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JIGMEE WANGCHUK BHUTIA is a Resource Person at the District Education Office, Pakyong, and an Executive Member of Sangchen Pemayangtse Monastery. His areas of specialization include Nyingma Buddhist Philosophy and the teachings of Lhatsun Chenpo. He holds a Ph.D. from Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan and has earned two Master's degrees with a Gold Medal. Dr Bhutia has authored several books on Sikkimese language, literature, and history and has published numerous articles on language, literature, and Buddhism.

SONAM ZANGPO is an Assistant Professor, Dept. of Indo-Tibetan Studies, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan.

ANDREA LOSERIES studied Tibetology and Ethnology in Paris, India, and Vienna. Her research focuses on cultural history, particularly in regard to Tibetan tantric traditions. She has numerous publications which include *Tibetan Manayoga Tantra: An Ethno-Historical Study of Skulls, Bones and Relics*, New Delhi, 2008. She has taught at the University of Graz, the Academy of Buddhist Studies in Salzburg, Austria, and at Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, where she served as Head of the Department of Indo-Tibetan Studies and as Director of the Centre for Buddhist Studies.

JIGME YESHE LAMA is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta. In 2018, he was awarded a PhD from the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His thesis explored the modes of garnering legitimacy by the Chinese state in Tibet and the challenges faced by this project. He has published articles and chapters in books and journals, and also attended several international and national conferences and seminars. His research interest lies in the state-society interactions in the Himalayas with a focus on the role of Tibet and Tibetans.

DIPTANGSHU DUTTA GUPTA is a Post-graduate student of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India.

NEYDUP BHUTIA is an Assistant Professor, Head of Department and Dean at the Department of Buddhist Philosophy, Sikkim Government Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (SGIHNS). He completed his Ph.D on *The Contribution of Terchen Sangay Lingpa in The Field of Terma Literature*. He is also a Member, Board of Studies, Bhutia Department, Sikkim University.

YESHEY NAMGYAL BHUTIA is an Assistant Professor, Department of Bhutia, Sikkim University. He holds a double MA in Buddhist Philosophy and Bhutia and a Ph.D. on the topic *Bhutia Oral Narratives of Sikkim: An Ecocritical Study*. He is a Member, UG Syllabus Drafting Committee (Bhutia), Sikkim University.

THUPTEN PALZANG BHUTIA is an Assistant Professor, Sanchaman Limboo Government Degree College, Gyalshing, in the Department of Bhutia and he is also Dean of Student Affairs. He completed his Acharya degree from Sikkim Government Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (SGIHNS) and his Ph.D. from Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan in 2023.

TASHI PINTSO LEPCHA is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Buddhist & Tibetan Studies, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. He completed his Shastri from Sikkim Government Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (SGIHNS), and holds a double MA in Buddhist Philosophy and Indian Philosophy & Religion. He also holds a Ph.D. from Banaras Hindu University on *Language and Culture of Bhutia Tribe: A Philosophical Study*. He has published articles on history and culture of Sikkim. He is a Member, PG Syllabus Drafting Committee (Buddhist Studies), Sikkim University.

MEEDENIYE DHAMMAWANSABA (Hons) is Kel'ya, Royal Pandit (OSSSL), Rajamaha Viharaya, Makooru, Hettimulla, Kegalle, Sri Lanka who is currently pursuing M.A. in Buddhist and Tibetan Studies in the Department of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies affiliated to Sikkim University.

SAPNA RAI holds a Master's degree in Zoology (2021) and a Master's degree in Buddhist Studies (2025) from Sikkim University. Her academic interests lie in Buddhist art history and cultural transformation, with particular emphasis on Tibetan Thangka painting. Her work seeks to contribute to the preservation and critical study of Himalayan heritage, especially the historical evolution of Tibetan Thangka painting in the Eastern Himalayas.

