

PREFACE

Unlike any other hilly place in India, Sikkim, the cosy erstwhile Kingdom and presently a constituent State of the Indian Union, on the mountain top of the Himalayas, appears at the very first glance as a Buddhist country with close resemblance to Tibetan Polity. More than hundred monasteries and Chortens all over the State, the white lines of sanctified prayer flags flapping in the wind on the mountain ridges, pagoda-shaped architecture of the buildings with turquoise blue roofs and paintings of eight symbols of Vajrayana Buddhism on the pillars and walls, Lamas in red robes walking through the roads with prayer wheels in their hands and chanting hymns from Kangyur or Tangyur, and most of all, the pious and peace-loving people observing numberless religious festivals every now and then in the traditional Buddhist way with songs, dances and typical musical instruments, mark the Buddhist identity of the State. Legend says that Guru Padma Sambhava, the founder of Buddhism in Tibet, first discovered this place and admired it as Paradise or a supernatural place most suitable for meditation. It is said that Sikkim is one of the best sacred places of pilgrimage, blessed and sanctified by Avalokiteswar, the omniscient Guru Padma Sambhava, other Jinas and Jinaputras and many Avatars or Incarnates. Sikkim emerged as a Buddhist Kingdom established by the Lamas from Tibet and Buddhism was the main feature in the socio-political life of Sikkim. The Rulers were the Dharmaraja - both spiritual and

temporal head and the Lamas were not only the spiritual upholders, but also the guards and guides for the administration of the Kingdom. The religious efficacies, which marked the Buddhist character of Sikkim, are still flowing through all its veins of socio-political life.

Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, known as Vajrayana Buddhism, had played a great productive role in the socio-political development of Sikkim. That Lamaist Traditionalism is still continuing to play an important part in the political process of modern Sikkim, - in the functioning of the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, in the formulation and implementation of the Governmental Policies, in decision-making, in the electoral process and in other socio-political matters even to-day. The interaction of Religion and Politics has given Sikkim a special character even after its inclusion in the Indian Union.

When the author happened to be the resident of Sikkim during the Seventies, immediately after its merger in the Indian Union, she was immensely attracted by that Buddhist character of the place and was deeply interested to study about the unique religious tradition which had shaped the socio-political history of Sikkim. And the Institute of Tibetology at Gangtok, a store-house of knowledge with a vast collections of Books and Scriptures, Icons and Thankas, and many other objects of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, inspired her to take up a project on this rather delicate theme.

The author was a Lecturer in Political Science in the Government College at Gangtok and was associated with various social and cultural

organizations of Sikkim. All these connections provided her with extensive opportunities to make an in-depth study of the Social and Cultural heritage of Sikkim and its Religio-political infra structure.

Dr. Samirendra Nath Ray, Professor in the Department of Political Science of the North Bengal University and at present the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, was kind enough to appreciate that project and to agree to be the guide of her work. From helping in preparing the synopsis and schemes of the project to arranging the selected Bibliography at the end of the work, Dr. Ray has, with his usual personal attention and care, ably guided her with proper advice, instruction, suggestion and correction at every step. Any amount of formal acknowledgement of gratitude would be too insufficient to repay the debt the author owes to him.

Some of the topics and chapters of this dissertation have already been published as articles in various periodicals and newspapers. The author presented papers on Sikkim twice in the Seminars organized by the North East India Council for Social Science Research at Shillong, Meghalaya, and also a paper "Religion and Communal Harmony in Sikkim" in a Seminar organized by the Centre for Himalayan Studies at the North Bengal University. The author has also written a book on Sikkim which is under publication by the National Book Trust of India, New Delhi.

It should be confessed frankly that the English spelling of the Tibetan or Sikkimese words, used in the dissertation, may not be as

proper as it should be. Especially, those words are found to be spelt in different ways in different books; for example, Namgyal - Namgye, Jelepa-la - DZelep-la, Kongra-la - Chongra-la, Tenging - Tenzying, Nying-ma - Rnin-Ma, Gelug-pa - Dge-lugs-pa, Yoksum-Yuksum etc. As there is no standard form, the Tibetan or Sikkimese words have been written in English script according to pronunciation in a simple way. A glossary of those words has been given at the end of the book.

The author expresses her gratitude to late Raibahadur T.D.Densapa, who used to be regarded as the moving encyclopaedia of Sikkim, for helping her every now and then with information about various past events and in finding out the facts from different sources, inspite of his illness and ailments. Raibahadur Densapa, known as Barmiok Kazi, was closely associated with the administration of Sikkim as Private Secretary to the Maharaja and as Chief Secretary of Sikkim and Adviser to the Governments of Sikkim and Bhutan. He was also a great scholar in Tibetan Language and Literature and in Mahayana Buddhism. Yapa D. Dadul, the former Chief Secretary of Sikkim, has also helped the author in various ways, especially in tracing out the system of religion-oriented society of Sikkim and the administrative pattern prevalent there. The author acknowledges the generosity of Yapa Dadul for allowing her to use the book titled "The Hidden Land of Eice" written by him which is yet to be published.

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