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THE INTRODUCTION OF INDO-TIBETAN STUDIES DURING THE LATER SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN TIBET

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As a result of long period of Indo-Tibetan translation project that begin in the early 7th century AD, and lasted till 13th century, over five thousand Sanskrit classics such as Mahāyāna Buddhist *Tantra* and *Sūtra* literature, logic and epistemology, Sanskrit poetry and rhetoric, *Avadāna* literature, *Ayurvedic* medical texts, Sanskrit grammar, astronomy, lexicography, Drama etc. were translated into Tibetan which were later compiled and grouped into two sections popularly known as *Kangyur* and *Tangyur*. These two collections of canonical literature were completed under two phases namely “Early and Later Spread of Buddhism in Tibet” (Wylie: *bsTan-pa snga dar* and *phyi dar*). *Kangyur* (lit. the translation of Buddha’s word in Tibetan) consists of works about 108 volumes. *Tangyur* (refer to the translation of treatises by Indian Pandits from Sanskrit into Tibetan) consists of 224 or 225 volumes. The volumes and the number of texts vary according to the different editions such as Derge, Cone, Narthang and Peking etc.

After the assassination of anti-Buddhist king Lang Darma alias Hudum Tsanpo, the Buddha’s teaching was once again revived in the 11th century AD from the Eastern and Western part of Tibet. This marked the beginning of “*Later Spread of Buddhism in Tibet*” (Wylie: *bsTan pa phyi dar*).

The King Hudum Tsanpo was assassinated by a hermit named Lhalung Palgyi Dorje with a motivation of prevent the further destruction of Buddhism. The demise of Hudum Tsanpo was followed by civil war and termination of the Tibetan kingdom led to the “Split Period or Era of Fragmentation” (Wylie: *Sil bu’i dus rabs*) as recorded in the Tibetan historical accounts.

One of the descendants of the King Hudum Tsanpo was Lha Lama Yeshe Hö (Wylie: *Lha bla ma ye shes ’od*), who ruled the Guge kingdom in the western part of Tibet. The *Later Spread of Buddhism in Tibet* is chiefly attributed to Lha Lama Yeshe Hö. He selected twenty one young novices and dispatched them to India for the pursuit of learning Buddhist philosophy. But except Lochen Rinchen Zangpo (Wylie: *Lo chen rin chen bzang po*, 958-1055) and Ngog Legpae Sherab (Wylie: *rNgog Legs pa’i shes rab*), all of them died from the weather of north Indian plain.

Rinchen Zangpo became well-versed in all the branches of Buddhist *tantric* and philosophy. He invited Indian Paṇḍitas namely Paṇḍita Śankaravarma, Padmākara Gupta, Buddhaśrīśānti, Buddhapāla,

Kamalagupta and so forth. And in collaboration with them, he translated the great deal of *sūtra* part of the canonical texts and all the four sets of *tantra* (Wylie: *rGyud sde bzhi*).¹

With a revitalization of Buddhism, Lha Lama Yeshe Hö built the monastery in Thoding (Wylie: *mTho lding*) and sponsored many Indian Paṇḍitas and Tibetan Lotsava. Rinchen Zangpo after returning to Tibet, informed about the Atiśa's fame.

Paṇḍita Smṛti Jñānakirti (Wylie: *Dran pa'i ye shes grags pa*) and Paṇḍita Sūkṣmadīrgha (Wylie: *Phra la ring ba*) were invited to Tibet during the time of Lha Lama Yeshe Hö. Paṇḍita Smṛti Jñānakirti was well known for his Tibetan grammatical work *sMra sgo msthon cha* which is incorporated in *Tangyur*.

Jangchub Hö (Wylie: *Byang chub 'od*), the nephew of Lha Lama Yeshe Hö, sent five emissaries including Nagtso Tsultrim Gyalwa (Wylie: *Nag tsho tshul khirms rgyal ba*) with gold and assigned Lotsava Gya Tsondue Senge (Wylie: *rGya brtson 'grus senge*) as the team leader, asked them to invite an erudite scholar from India. Accordingly, they invited Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (982-1054) from Vikramśīla monastery in India to Tibet. While travelling towards western Tibet through Nepal, Atiśa met Marpa Lotsava on his way to Purang. Atiśa spent three years in Purang and composed his most influential classical work *Bodhipathpradīpa* (Wylie: *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma, Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*). This sixty seven verses text lays out the entire Buddhist teachings and served as the model for *Lamrim* text. Apart from this text, there are several other notable works of Atiśa that were incorporated in *Tangyur*.

Later on, gradually Atiśa travelled throughout the central Tibet and taught extensively to his three chief disciples Khu, Ngog, and Drom.² He founded the school known as Kadampa which was disseminated by his disciples particularly by Dromton Gyalwai Jungney. Dromtonpa built the first Kadampa monastery known as Radreng (Wylie: *Rwa sgreng*) monastery in Lhasa in 1056.

According to Jamgon Kongtrul, when Atiśa discovered the store of Sanskrit texts at Pekar Kordzoling, the library of Samye, "he said that the degree to which the *vajrayāna* had spread in Tibet was unparalleled, even in India. After saying this, he reverently folded his hands and praised the great dharma kings, translators, and Paṇḍitas of the previous centuries."³

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Subsequently, the Tibetan kings continued to invite Indian Paṇḍitas to Tibet and sponsored Tibetan Lotsavas to carry out the translation of Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Tibetan. During the 11th century AD,

¹ Drup, Bu-ston Rinchen, (ed.) Dorjay Gyalpo, *Bu-ston chos 'byung gsung rab rin po che'i mdzod*, Xinhua: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, Pp. 200-201, 1988.

² Khu represents Khuton Sherab Tsondue (Wylie: *Khu ston shes rab brston 'grus*), Ngog stands for Ngog Loden Sherab (Wylie: *rNgog blo ldan shes rab*), and Drom represents Dromton Gyalwai Jungney (Wylie: *'Brom ston rgyal ba'i 'byung nas*).

³ Tulku, Ringu & Helm, Ann. *The Ri-Me Philosophy of Jamgon Kongtrul the Great: A Study of the Buddhist Lineages in Tibet*, Boston: Shambala, 2006, p. 74.

some of the major logical treatises namely the logic work of Ācārya Śāntarakṣita, *Pramāṇaviniścaya* and its commentary, *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, *Pramāṇavārtika Alamkāra* etc. were translated.

It was in the 11th century AD that Patsab Nyima Drag (Wylie: *Pa tshab nyi ma brag*) translated *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* of Nāgārjuna, *Catuḥśataka* (Wylie: *bZhi brgya pa*) of Āryadeva, *Madhyamakāvātāra* of Candrakīrti. Drokmi Lotsava Sakya Yeshe invited Paṇḍita Gayadhara, offered him 500 golden coins and translated mother class *tantra* such as *Hevajra pañjara* (Wylie: *Kye rdo rje gur*), *Samputa*, *Rali*, *Arali* and so forth.

Kālacakra Tantra was also translated by Lotsava Gyi-jo Dawai Hoser (Wylie: *Gyi jo zla ba'i 'od zer*) in the 11th century. During this century, the great Marpa Choekyi Lodoe (Wylie: *Mar pa Chos kyi blo 'gros*) was appeared and travelled India three times where he received teachings *Guhyasamāja*, (Wylie: *gSang ba 'dus pa*) *Cakrasaṃvara*, (Wylie: *'Khor lo bde mchog*) *Hevajra* (Wylie: *Kye rdo rje*) and so forth from Mahāsiddha Naropa, Maitripa etc., Followed by this, a great deal of *Tantrik* literature were translated during this period. Lokya Sherab Tseg (Wylie: *Glog skya sges rab brtsegs*) translated the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (Wylie: *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod*), *Madhyamakāvātāra* etc. Similarly, Bareg Thoepa Ga, Tshur Lotsava studied with the Indian Paṇḍita Vajrapāṇi and translated the *Mahāmudrāsiddhi* (Wylie: *Phyag rgya chen po grub pa'i skor*), *the Three Cycles of Doha*, (Wylie: *Do ha skor gsum*), the *Dohakosa* (Wylie: *Do ha mdzod*) etc.

Then the Kashmiri Paṇḍita Śākyaśrībhadrā (1127-1225) was invited to Tibet by Trophu Lotsava Jampae Pal (Wylie: *Khro phu lo tsa ba byams pa dpal*) and spent about ten years in imparting the Buddhist teachings in Tibet. He gave the full ordination to the Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen (Wylie: *Sa skya paṇḍita kun dga' rgyal mtshan*, 1182-1251) and taught him the five sciences of knowledge. Sakya Paṇḍita became proficient not only in Buddhist philosophical studies but he was instrumental in introducing the Indian tradition of five major and five minor sciences⁴ of knowledge in Tibet. He with no arrogance, straightforwardly proclaimed himself as one of the eminent experts in his time who excels in all the five major and minor sciences of knowledge.⁵ This is reflected in his writings on all the branches of knowledge. Hence, Sakya Paṇḍita period can be regarded as the *Renaissance* of Tibetan literature.

As a result of continuous effort of translating a vast Sanskrit Buddhist literature into Tibetan over several centuries, the Tibetan literature became one of the profound and richest literatures of Asia.⁶

Drogon Chogyal Phagpa (Wylie: *'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa*, 1235-1280), the disciple and nephew of Sakya Paṇḍita took initiative in advancing and popularizing the other non-philosophical literature in Tibet in compliance with the wish of Sakya Paṇḍita, gave moral and royal support to Shongton Lotsava Dorjay Gyaltsen (Wylie: *Shong ston lo tsa' ba rdo rje rgyal mtshan*) to visit Nepal and India for the sake of learning Tantra, Buddhist philosophy, Sanskrit language and grammar, poetry, lexicography etc.

⁴ Five major sciences of knowledge (Wylie: *Rig gnas che ba lnga*) are namely i) Grammar (sGra rig pa), ii) Logic & Epistemology (Tshad ma rig pa), iii) Arts & Crafts (bZo rig pa), iv) Science of Healing (gSo ba rig pa), & v) Philosophy/Inner Science (Nang don rig pa). Five minor sciences of knowledge (Wylie: *Rig gnas chung ba lnga*) are namely i) Poetry (sNyan ngag), ii) Rhetoric/Prosody (sDeb sbyor), iii) Dance & Drama (Zlos gar), iv) Lexicography (mNgon brjod), and v) Astronomy/astronomy (sKar rtsis).

⁵ Gyaltsen, Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga, "Nga brgyad ma'i 'grel pa bzhugs so", *Sa paṇ kun dga' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*, Xinhua: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe mnying dpe skrun khang, Gangs can rig mdzod, 23, Vol. I, 1992, Pp. 683-710.

⁶ Prof. Lokesh Chandra, *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary*, New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1959, p. 9

After his returning back to Sakya, at the command of Chogyal Phagpa, he along with Pandita Laksmikara translated *Kāvyaḍarśa* (*sNyan ngag me long*) of Ācārya Daṇḍi, *Bodhisattva Avadānakalpalatā* (*rTogs brjod dpag bsam 'khri shing*) of Kṣemendra (*dGe dbang*), *Nāgānandanātaka* (*Klu kun tu dga' ba'i zlos gar*) of Harśadeva, *Amarkośa* (*mNgon brjod 'chi med mdzod*) of Amar Sinha (*'Chi med senge*) etc. into Tibetan at the great Sakya monastery in central Tibet.

The period of Indo-Tibetan cultural contact ended as a result of the collapse of Nālandā University. In fact, during the reign and under the patronage of great 5th Dalai Lama (1617-1682), Darpa Lotsava Ngawang Phuntsok travelled India for the pursuit of learning Sanskrit grammar under the guidance of Mahāpaṇḍita Balabhadra and Gokulnāth Mīśra of Kuruksetra. He translated *Prakriyā Kaumudī* of Rāmacandra into Tibetan.

The recent translation work on *Dhammapada* was done by erudite scholar Ven. Gedun Chopel (1903-1951) from Pali version under the spiritual guidance of Maha Thera Dhamma Ānanda of Ceylon during his nearly one year stay in Sri Lanka. He also translated the first chapter of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* (Tib. *Bya len ma mngon par shes pa*) of Kālidāsa (Tib. *Nag po'i 'khol*) into Tibetan which is incorporated in his collection of works in three volumes published from Tibet.

Since the beginning of Indo-Tibetan cultural relationship from the 7th century until 13th century, the Sanskrit Buddhist texts that were rendered by the Indian Pandits and Tibetan Lotsavas run into more than four thousand five hundred texts. According to Sangdag, during these period, more than 2000 Indian Pandits including some Chinese and Nepalese scholars visited Tibet.⁷ According to latest Nyingma edition of *Kangyur* and *Tangyur*, 253 Indian, Nepalese and Chinese scholars had involved in the translation of *Kangyur* and 1,200 were involved in the translation of *Tangyur*⁸.

Ninety three Indian Paṇḍits are enumerated by Bu-ston (1290-1364) in his work who were responsible for the dissemination of Buddha's teaching in Tibet. (This number is till up to Bu-ston's period i.e. till 14th century). The total number of 192 Tibetan Lotsava names are enlisted in the 3rd chapter of Bu-ston's work.⁹

Dungkar Lobsang Trinley mentioned in his work entitled *Bod kyi skad yig 'phel rgyas gtong phyogs skor gyi thog ma'i bsam tshul*, 167 Tibetan Lotsava were appeared from the time of Lotsava Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) in the late 10th century till the period of Zhalu Lotsava Choekyong Zangpo (1441-1527) in the middle of 15th century, i.e. a period of more than 470 years¹⁰ whereas in his later work *Dung dkar tsig mdzod chen mo*,¹¹ he mentioned that there appeared more than 700 Lotsava in total that began with great Lotsava Thonmi Sambhota in the early 7th century till Lotsava Gedun Chopel in the 20th century.

⁷Sangdag, "Ta la'i lo mar bris pa'i samskrita'i yi ge dang bod kyi shes rig skor gleng ba", *dpyad rtsom 'dems bsgrigs*, Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1996, p. 47

⁸Nyingma edition of *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue, set no. 34, USA: Dharma Publishing Centre, Dharma Press, 1981
⁹*Op cit.*, Pp. 206-211

¹⁰Lobsang Trinley, Dungkar, "Bod kyi skad yig 'phel rgyas gtong phyogs skor gyi thog ma'i bsam tshul", *Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las kyi gsung rtsom phyogs bsgrigs*, Xinhua: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1997, p. 310.

¹¹Lobsang Trinley, Dungkar, *Dung dkar tsig mdzod chen mo*, Dharamsaa: Sherig Parkhang, 2004, p. 1973.

Indo-Tibetan Studies is not only confine to Buddhist philosophy and logical studies but it also covers many non-philosophical subject, such as *Āyurvedic* medicine, Indian astrology, Sanskrit poetry, Sanskrit grammar, Sanskrit lexicography, Sanskrit metrical science, Sanskrit drama, Sanskrit *Nītiśāstra*, Sanskrit *Avadāna* literature which are all incorporated in *Tangyur*.

Nearly five thousand Sanskrit Buddhist texts of Nālandā University that were disappeared as a direct consequence of destruction of Nālandā University are still preserved in Tibetan translation which is here refer to as Indo-Tibetan literature. With regard to the Tibetan translation method, the Indian Pandit and Tibetan Lotsava has employed a word for word translation and done a faithful translation. Hence, there is a high possibility of restore the lost Sanskrit texts into its original version. Therefore, the bottom line is that the lost treasure of ancient Indian cultural heritage can be restored through the Indo-Tibetan canonical texts.

The tradition of learning Sanskrit grammar especially *Sarasvati Vyākaraṇa* through the medium of its Tibetan translation is still exists in certain Tibetan monasteries in Amdo province of Tibet. In the Tibetan monasteries, Sanskrit grammars are taught through the Tibetan translation and transliteration but interestingly, the instructors are not able to read *Devanāgarī* script. The *sutras* of the grammar are transliterated in Tibetan script and they are memorized through the Tibetan transliteration.

The Tibetan translation works is not only confine with the Buddhist theme. Recently the fragments of Tibetan version of *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* were discovered from Tunhuang caves in China. Since the date of this fragment is 8th century AD, the Tibetan translation of *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* may probably the first translation in the world.

Curriculum of study in the Tibetan Buddhist monastic colleges:

Tibetan monastic curriculum framed its syllabus on the basis of *Tangyur* works and the indigenous Tibetan commentaries to Sanskrit root texts. Each sects of Tibetan Buddhism have framed their own syllabus within the framework of Indian root texts incorporated in *Tangyur* with the additional manual of learning from their own tradition. But basically all these subjects are covered within the five major philosophical and logical texts called *Zhung chen ka poe nga* (Wylie: *gZhung chen bka' pod lnga*).¹² For example, in the Nyingma (one of the four major sects of Tibetan Buddhism) monastic colleges, the thirteen major philosophical treatises known as *Zhung chen cu sum* (Wylie: *gZhung chen bcu gsum*)¹³ are taught.

¹² The five major philosophical texts of monastic syllabi are 1) Logic and Epistemology (Tshad ma rig pa) 2) Prajñāpāramitā (Sher phyin) 3) Mādhyamaka (dBu ma) 4) Vinaya ('Dul ba) 5) Abidharmakośa (mNgon pa mdzod)

¹³ I. VINAYA (MONASTIC DISCIPLINE):

- 1) Prātimokṣa sūtra (so so thar pa'i mdo)
- 2) Vinaya sūtra ('dul ba mdo rtsa ba) of Guṇaprabha

II. ABHIDHARMA:

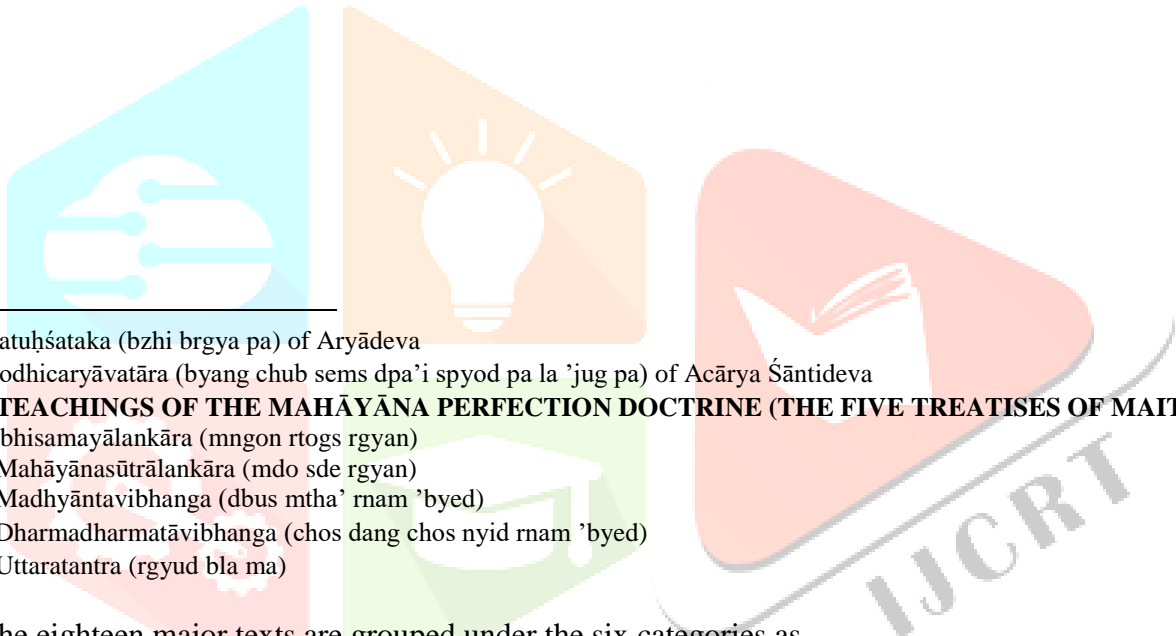
- 3) Abhidharmasamuccaya (Chos mngon pa kun btus) of Asaṅga
- 4) Abhidharmakośa (Chos mngon pa mdzod) of Vasubandhu

III. MĀDHYAMAKA PHILOSOPHY:

- 5) Mūla Mādhyamaka Kārikā (dbu ma rtsa ba shes rab) of Nāgārjuna
- 6) Madhyamakāvatāra (dbu ma 'jug pa) of Candrakīrti

Similarly in the Sakya (one of the four major sects of Tibetan Buddhism) monastic colleges, the eighteen major philosophical texts known as Drag chen cob gyay (Wylie: *Grags chen bco brgyad*)¹⁴ which consists of sixteen Indian root texts and the two Tibetan texts authored by Sakya Pandita are taught. These Indian root texts along with their Indian commentaries incorporated in *Tangyur* and their native Tibetan commentaries are thoroughly studied. In Gelugpa (one of the four major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism) monastic universities, the five major philosophical texts called Zhung chen ka poe nga (Wylie: *gZhung chen bka' pod lnga*) are thoroughly studied for ten to fifteen years in pursuit of highest degree called Geshe equals to Doctorate degree.

Apart from the above philosophical texts, the other branches of learning including Tantric philosophy, Tibetan classical grammar, Tibetan poetical literatures, rituals, Tibetan calligraphy etc. are taught.



7) Catuḥśataka (bzhi brgya pa) of Aryādeva

8) Bodhicaryāvatāra (byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa) of Acārya Śāntideva

IV. TEACHINGS OF THE MAHĀYĀNA PERFECTION DOCTRINE (THE FIVE TREATISES OF MAITREYA):

9) Abhisamayāṅkāra (mngon rtogs rgyan)

10) Mahāyānasūtrāṅkāra (mdo sde rgyan)

11) Madhyāntavibhanga (dbus mtha' rnam 'byed)

12) Dharmadharmatāvibhanga (chos dang chos nyid rnam 'byed)

13) Uttaratantra (rgyud bla ma)

¹⁴ The eighteen major texts are grouped under the six categories as

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II. MONASTIC DISCIPLINE:

7) Prātimokṣa sūtra (so so thar pa'i mdo)

8) Vinaya sūtra ('dul ba mdo rtsa ba) of Guṇaprabha

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12) Abhidharmasamuccaya (Chos mngon pa kun btus) of Asaṅga

13) Abhidharmakośa (Chos mngon pa mdzod) of Vasubandhu

V. LOGIC & EPISTEMOLOGY:

14) Pramāṇasamuccaya (tshad ma kun btus) of Dignāga

15) Pramāṇavārttika (tsad ma rnam 'grel) of Dharmakīrti

16) Pramāṇaviniścaya (tsad ma rnam nges) of Dharmakīrti

17) Pramāṇayuktinidhi (tsad ma rigs gter) of Sakya Pandita

VI. RIGHT PRACTICE OF THE VOWS:

18) Trisamvarapravedha (sdom gsum rab dbye) of Sakya Pandita

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