A Study of Gelugpa sect with comparison to Nyingma Pa sect of Buddhism in Tibet

Abstract
Short synopsis and layout of Chapters of the thesis entitled, “A study of Gelugpa sect with comparison to Nyingma Pa sect of Buddhism in Tibet” Around 2500 years ago, a prince of Sākya clan rose against the anguish of life & death and determined to find out the way through which these torments end. That prince was Siddhartha; and whole world came to know him by his enlightened name; Buddha; his path became famous after his name Buddhism. Centuries gone, millennium changed its numbers; still the path showed by the Sākya prince is guiding us towards every solution of problem. Today, according to latest sources, nearly 18 countries are more or less Buddhist countries and every fourth person of the world is Buddhist by faith. In past 2500 years, Buddhism crossed all geographical boundaries, spread over continents, touches every sphere of our lives, enjoyed royal patronage as well as sometimes-lethal disservice. However, one thing that makes it above all is that it served the goods. Everywhere it went, it acquired local colours, amalgamated with the local beliefs and reached the culmination theory of the master, Lord Buddha. Nevertheless, some countries were destined to play a little more than merely following the Buddhist rites and rituals. Tibet is one among these countries. Though Tibetan Buddhism is being studied all over, the world at research level but very few research works are being done at home (India). Tibetan has lost their homeland and in India, the Sthaviravādina, the orthodox school of thought was/is in vogue with the exception of the Himalayan region where the Mahayana is being practised since long. So many research works have been done by the scholars from United States and other countries, but most of them are limited to the translation works of the Tibetan Lamas visiting to States or elsewhere. Jeffery Hopkins, Alex Wayman, Michael Rosh is some of the names which have already gain popularity in this regard. It is noteworthy that Buddha taught everyone who came and asked for it. He never attempted to attract people into his new order or he never
tried to formulate a new religion. As A K Warder has noted, “It is most characteristic of Buddha that he always adopts his talk to the person is conversing with. His courtesy in argument result from this: it is certainly not his way to denounce the opinions, practice of another to his face, and challenge him to justify them. His method rather is to seem to adopt the other’s point of view and than by question and answer to improve it until a position, compatible with his own has been arrived at. Thus, he leads his partner in discussion towards the truth as he has discovered it, but so that the partner seems himself to continue his own quest, in whatever form he had taken, and to arrive at higher truth he had previously been aware of, or more convincing moral ideas. Buddhism is the third largest religious system of the world (beside Christianity and Islam at the first two places) and it is the only religious system, which originated in Indian sub-continent and spread all over the world. To know the social, political and economic history of India during the time of Buddha i.e. 6th century BC, there are several sources. However, either to know the ideas and philosophical order of that time, we have to rely upon the testament within the said system and the literature or that of archaeological remains that tell many ideas that can be decipher to date. Both left the scope of interpretation and speculation, which is although, needed to some extent; sometimes portray a shadow over the crux of the systems of ancient era. Nevertheless, I have chosen to discuss about the two religious order of Buddhism of Tibet. The idea itself seems to be very delightful but in the presence of meagre resource materials often discourages a fruitful research and applying the modern research methodology. However, research methodology is not only to solve the problem but quite often to raise a problem instead solving them is also a method to invite further research and hence itself is called an independent research.Tibet, one of the highest countries in the world had received Buddhism from India in 7th century AD when Padmasambhava established the monastic order there. That branch of Buddhism was known as Nyingma or the Red Hats. That was under the reign of King SrongTsan Gampo and the source of establishing the Buddhism was the Indian schools. Besides that, the Chinese school of sudden enlightenment, which was somewhat different from the gradual school of Indian Buddhism, also tried to establish its firm feet in the land of snow. However, the Indian Buddhist pundit defeated the Hashang, Chinese teacher of Buddhism and it was a landmark in the history of Buddhism in Tibet because this decided the way in which Tibet would follow the Buddhism in future. However, this is not highlighted in the historical record of Tibet, but this does not undermine its importance.Centuries passed and the Buddhism after one persecution by the Lang dharma, revived. The newer sects came up with fresh ideas, but the older sect (Nyingma) continued to influence not only the folk wisdom, but the aristocrats too were the followers of Nyingma sect at the time of the introduction of the Gelug sect or the Yellow Hat sect by Tsongkhapa. In my present thesis, I have tried an attempt to described both Nyingma and Gelug through the eyes of modern research methodology. Side by side, I kept the descriptive ideas of the sects where it was needed to highlight the ideas of the Buddhism in the said context. But the presence of different practices itself show the comparison. At that juncture, I have only taken the task of illustrating the facts. However, I have tried to describe Buddhism in general and the two sects in particular in their full length.In the first chapter, I have dealt with the History of Buddhism in India which in my opinion needed more than ever because either the material available now days gives one only an idea about how a prince of Sakya clan achieved enlightenment nearly 26 centuries ago. Or it describes the Buddhist philosophy with all of its technicalities and that too in extol and worshiping manner. Surprisingly sometimes, this attracts even the scholars from not only the non-Buddhist fields, but from the discipline itself. I have tried to be cautious while describing the ideas of the sects and therefore, I have tried to put the historical Buddha and his teaching in one chapter in a simplest possible manner. That will create an interest in both the mind of the Buddhist scholars and show the Buddha from the Tibetan point of view that is scarcely done with the use of research methodology. For this, I have started with the life sketch of the prince Siddharta from his birth to enlightenment and then the important happenings in the life of Lord Buddha. Writing this, I tried to clarified who whom do we are calling Buddha? A Sakya prince or the emanation of supreme God: one is historical personality, who through his penances and mortification got the way to salvation, the other one who out of his great compassion toward humanity emanates himself for the benefit of sentient beings to show them the path of freedom from all sufferings. In my opinion, here lies the difference between Mahayana and Sthaviravada school of Buddhism. The former claims to be the original successor of Buddhism from 6th century BC and asserts that the way prince Siddharta got enlightenment; everybody can get it and become Arhat. On the other hand, the highest goal of Mahayana is Buddhahood and the supreme Buddha post is not achievable by a human being. The list of Pāli canons is also given in this chapter and the name of six contemporary thinkers of Buddha is listed with their respective philosophies. Renunciation, Bodhicitta and the Right view, these 3 are the base of Mahayana theory of Śunyavāda or the theory of Void, which originated though in India, found its firm feet in the land of snow. These points have been dealt in such a manner that while the research methodology was justified, the traditional Buddhist belief was also taken care of and even a common reader can infer the same conclusion that a Buddhist practitioner found after practicing it for a long duration.In the second chapter, I have put forth the History of Buddhism in Tibet with the background of the subject matter of my thesis. This chapter covers the inception of Buddhism in Tibet during 7th century and; from the first dissemination of it up to the establishment of the Gelugpa School by Je Tsonghkapa. In addition, I have given a short description of the history of Buddhism up to the present time for the continuity of the subject matter. The contents of this chapter cover the history of Buddhism chronologically. In the land of snow, it was really a Herculean task for Padmasambhava to establish Buddhism. This work can only be done by the assimilation of the local beliefs and their gods in Buddhism and Padmasambhava has successfully done so with the help of his other Indian companions like Kamalshela and others along with the royal patronage of King SrongTsan Gampo. A country following Shamanist practices has seen first time the logic-based religion that was most powerful and widespread at that time all over the Asia and its fragrance was crossed the globe. No wonder Padmasambhava is considered as second Buddha among Tibetans. The introduction of Buddhism in Tibet is linked closely with the introduction of literature as the work was got started in the country by the minister of SrongTsan Gampo, the great Thonmi Sambhota. So, a brief history of the Tibetan language & literature was inevitable. Therefore, I have given the Tibetan Alphabets and their Sanskrit and Roman equivalent for the record along with the historical background of the Tibetan language. Here one point I want to be noted. While writing this thesis, I face two major difficulties. One was the fact that the Tibetan U-Chan language was not grammatical and hence, I have given a short description of the history of the Tibetan language. But the presence of meagre resource materials often discourages a fruitful research and applying the modern research methodology. However, research methodology is not only to solve the problem but quite often to raise a problem instead solving them is also a method to invite further research and hence itself is called an independent research.
Buddhism. For example, I have given a very brief account of the translation work of the Tibetan literature in Tibet and after 1959, in India and abroad. In the sixth chapter, namely ‘TsongkhāPā and the Gelugpā school of Tibet’, I have given the salient features and practices of the sect. Why the actual need to establish this sect was felt by its founder TsongkhāPā when he was already mastered all the then time philosophies through other prevalent sects. The role of Rendāwā in the educational and philosophical life of TsongkhāPā is evident in all the literature, which TsongkhāPā wrote. In fact when we go through the ascetic life of TsongkhāPā, he seems to be much more powerful than his settled life when his name became famous than himself. Wandering in the search of knowledge through debates, asking every established master to impart knowledge, doing penances, these all create a gamut around TsongkhāPā’s personality that every researcher inspire for. This is more relevant today when we see the education has become a means nothing more than for earning the bread. Also, the followers of TsongkhāPā (with due respect) have indulged themselves in the very politics, which TsongkhāPā had forbid in his lifetime. The content of the Gelugpā School needed more elaborate study to discuss, so I divided it into two chapters and the chapter-VIIth in its succession, I have tried to highlight the philosophy and ethics of Gelugpā’s, which they are famous for. I named this chapter ‘The stages of path and other teachings of Gelugpā’. The biggest contribution in this regard by the founder of this sect, TsongkhāPā was the Lam Rim teachings. TsongkhāPā during his study time engaged in debate with almost all the teacher of prevalent school of Buddhism in Tibet, and found that debates are the best way to develop the intellect of a person. So he stressed very much on study of the books in his Order and hence started the tradition of Lam-Rim teachings. He himself wrote a big volume named Lam-rim Chen-Mo ( ) and tried to put all the philosophical teachings of Buddha that were required to lead a sanctimonious and virtuous life according to Vinaya. When he found the book to be too voluminous to remember, he prepared a précis form of the book and named it Lam-Tso Nam Sum ( ) which became so famous that the Gelugpa or the yellow hats were sometime called the followers of Lam Tso Nam Sum. I have tried to brief the teaching content of Lam Tso Nam Sum in this chapter. In addition, I have given at the end of this chapter, why the Prāsāṅgika Mādhyamika ( ) has an upper hand not only over the other three main school of Buddhism but over the Svatāntrika Mādhyamika ( ) too. The eighth and the final chapter is conclusion where the findings of the research work have been stated.I have chosen some colour plates to illustrate what is being said in the test of the chapter. I have also taken care of that the entire collection must represent different traditional source and of different type. This I have done to acquaint my thesis with the different architectural and archaeological remains, which though is not part of my thesis, elucidate Buddhism in much exemplified way. At the end, I have added some photographs that will be of helping material and show the historic and religious personalities in visual.Finally, I want to quote averse from the Dhammapada which describes the Buddha’sāsana or the law of Buddha, with the presupposition that if this verse is being taken care of, be it any sect of sub-sect of Buddhism any where at the globe, Buddhism will succeed in achieving its goal.

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