

HIMALAYAN BUDDHISM TRAVELS WEST

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ABSTRACT

This is the sixth 500-year period for almost two generations now from Shakyamuni Buddha's time. If one looks back over the past five decades, one can certainly see that the Himalayan lamas have come out very strong in terms of international activity, in fact stronger than any other form of Buddhism. One of the reasons for this is their numbers. Although Tibet did not have a large population, it had nourished an enthusiasm for enlightenment. These lamas have not only transplanted Himalayan Buddhism onto western culture, but also actively engaged in rebuilding the institutions back in Tibet. The Chinese communists destroyed Tibet's 6,500 temples and monasteries during "The Cultural Revolution." When Mao died, not a single Himalayan monastery or temple was open and active in Tibet. Now, three decades into the Chinese government policy of liberation, more than 500 of the 6,500 complexes have been rebuilt to some degree. Two-pronged activities – the spread of Himalayan Buddhism around the world and the rebuilding of Himalayan Buddhism within Tibet – are both very auspicious signs for the success of the next 500 years of Buddhism in the world. The paper looks at the enormous efforts made by the Himalayan Buddhist lamas in rebuilding their variant of Buddhism from the scratch through multi-dimensional efforts.

Keywords: *bindu, Gelukpa, Hinayana, kusha grass, Lankavatara Sutra, Mahayana, Mongol, Prajnaparamita Sutra, psycho-neuro-immunology synchronicity, transmission, Vajrayana, Zen.*

A. THE BACKGROUND

The great Western scientist Albert Einstein wrote, "The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism."

In this way Albert Einstein endorsed Buddhism as the only religion he had encountered that seemed to be in harmony with the attitudes and disciplines of modern science.¹

Indeed, his sentiment on the subject seems to be finding a fertile field in the Western world today. When he wrote this opinion half a century ago, there were perhaps a couple of dozen Buddhist temples in the West, and most of these were ethnic. By this I mean that they were founded by and dedicated to the service of Asian immigrant communities, and also that their activities were largely conducted in an Asian language rather than in English. In other words, they served more as spiritual community centers for first and second generation Asian minorities than as institutions for enlightenment study and practice.

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Today, there are thousands of Buddhist centers in North America, with well over a thousand of them dedicated to the training of Occidental North Americans, that is to say, white English-speaking people. The transformation has been dramatic. The largest number of these focuses on Himalayan Buddhism.

B. PROPHECIES BY THE BUDDHA

The Buddha prophesied that his teaching would last for 5,000 years, with ten distinct periods of 500 years each. By international academic calculation, 1956 marked the halfway point of the 5,000 -year cycle.

In commemoration of this monumental occasion, Prime Minister Nehru, a closet Buddhist and the then leader of India, organized what can rightly be called the first truly international Buddhist conference. Great masters came from more than a dozen different countries, from China and Japan to Sri Lanka and Thailand. Even the Dalai Lama of Tibet came as one of the many guests of honor.²

This event, we can say, marked the pivotal point when Buddhism entered its sixth 500 year cycle. For me it is a very important date. I was born in 1949 in a small town in Eastern Canada, and was only seven years old at the time. Little did my parents know that, as an adult, I would dedicate twenty years of my adult life to the study and practice of Buddhism, and then dedicate the remainder to writing about Buddhism and teaching it around the world. I regard it as a great honor to be born in this time, when Buddhism is in the amazingly dramatic period of transformation characterized by the transition from one 500 year period to another.

At the 1956 conference, Nehru challenged Buddhist leaders from around the world to take up the important task of rebuilding the Buddhist sites in India, beginning with Bodhi Gaya and Sarnath, the places respectively where Buddha attained enlightenment and gave his first teaching. These sacred sites had become almost lost in the sands of time. The Muslim invasions and conquest of India had almost ended international pilgrimage to them, and little remained to mark them as places that had inspired a spiritual movement that had come to pervade almost half of the world.

If we look back over the previous 2,500 years and the five cycles of 500 years each that lead up to 1956, we can see distinct transitions at the end of each of the 500 year periods. Of course historians might debate the significance of the transitions, and also debate specific details and implications of them. Theravadins, Chinese Buddhists and Himalayan lamas, for example, might take varying interpretations. My reading is from the perspective of a modern Western Buddhist and historian.

I would say that the first 500- year period was characterized by what is often termed in Indian Mahayana literature as the Shravaka doctrines. "Shravaka" is a term often used by early Indian Buddhist masters such as Nagarjuna to refer to the early monkhood, such as Ananda and Mahakashyapa, who memorized some of the public discourses of the Buddha and transmitted them orally. Later under Emperor Ashoka these were compiled and systemized into what today is often referred to as "Early Buddhism." Ashoka presided over the Third Council and decided on what would and what would not be included. This movement could more accurately be referred to as the brand of Buddhism endorsed and promoted by Emperor Ashoka.³

The second 500-year period opens with the appearance of the great Indian master Nagarjuna. Himalayan Buddhists quote the *Lankavatara Sutra*⁴ in which Buddha prophesied about Arya Nagarjuna's birth. The passage states, "450 years after my passing, a great being will come from the land of Kusha grass. His name will be *Naga*, and he will accomplish (*juna*) great deeds for the spread of my doctrine."

Whether or not one accepts this passage as authentic, there is no question over the matter of Nagarjuna's importance in opening the door to the second 500 year cycle. By the age of fifty he had mastered all lineages of Buddhism. He then became the first important figure to step out of the model promoted by Emperor Ashoka, and to challenge Ashoka's conservative and rigid approach to the Buddha's teachings. Nagarjuna then went on to endorse several dozen sutras that had not been included in the Third Council in India, and therefore did not become part of King Ashoka's canon of Buddhist literature. Most important are the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*. Nagarjuna propagated these sutras widely, and wrote numerous commentaries to them. The Himalayan *Tengyur*, or compilation of translated *shastras* from India, contains over 150 treatises written by Nagarjuna. The most important of these is a set of six texts known as *Rig Druk* in Tibetan, or "Six Treatises on the Reasoning (of Enlightenment)." The most famous of these is his *Madhyamaka-karika-shastra*, or "Verses on the Middle View," that became the basis of all Mahayana schools in India. Nagarjuna is often referred to as the "Father of Mahayana Buddhism" because of this work of stepping outside the mold created by Ashoka.

The third 500- year period comes with the public emergence of the Buddhist tantras. Lineage holders of the Buddhist

tantras claim that these sublime teachings had been passed by oral tradition from the time of the Buddha to small groups of advanced practitioners, much in the same way that the Mahayana Sutras had been passed. They remained underground to the public until the times were ripe for their wider dissemination. Be this as it may, the third 500 year cycle of Buddhism in India is characterized by the vast propagation and widespread popularity of this third aspect of Buddhism.⁵

The fourth 500- year period is marked by the demise of Buddhism in India, largely as a result of the Muslim invasions. It is also marked by solidification of Buddhism in other Asian countries. Although many countries have played their particular roles, it is generally true to say that three main forms of Buddhism emerged during this period, based on different cultural and linguistic environments: the Shravaka lineages from Emperor Ashoka's councils, that were preserved in Pali, a form of easy Sanskrit, and survived most strongly in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma; the Chinese lineages, based on transmissions and translations into the Chinese language, and then from China travelled to other Asian countries, including Korea and Japanese and the Himalayan lineages, where in the seventh century King Songtsen Gampo made Buddhism the national religion, and had his Buddhist scholars create a special script, Bhoti, based on Sanskrit, with a view for easy and accurate translation of Indian Buddhist literature into Tibetan. Tibetan later became the linguistic and literary foundations of the forms of Buddhism that spread over the vast region stretching from the southern Himalayas to the snowscapes of the Mongol territories of eastern Russia, including Siberia. The Tibetan script and language is still used in monasteries and temples throughout lands as far-flung as Bhutan, Ladakh, Mongolia and Buryatia. Monks from the Indian Himalayas to Siberia still chant all their sutras, tantras and prayers in Tibetan.

The fifth cycle of 500- year was marked by the emergence of various national Buddhist cultures. That is to say, with India, Buddhism no longer present to serve as a unifying and balancing force, each form of Buddhism more or less became a world unto itself, with very little intercourse with lineages from other countries. On the positive side, Buddhism was preserved in numerous diverse forms; on the negative side, most of these forms were linguistically and culturally bound to the forms of its home country, and generally tended to regard Buddhism in other countries as very different and therefore as less pure. I witnessed this phenomenon rather clearly in the late 1980s, when I helped curate an exhibition of Buddhist art in Atlanta. The exhibition included Buddhist statues and paintings from a dozen Buddhist countries. One day a group of Thai monks came to the museum. Whenever they stepped in front of a Thai statue of the Buddha they would fold their hands together in prayer, and their faces would shine with devotion. In contrast, when in front of a Tibetan, Chinese or Korean statue of the Buddha, their body language would be altogether different. Here the devotion and respect was completely gone, and they looked at the image more like it was a piece of secular art. The same behavior was exhibited by monks from other traditions. Chinese monks tended to be very devotional and respectful when in the presence of a Chinese statue, but to be much more secularized when in the presence of a Buddha image from another country.

This brings us to 1956, and Prime Minister Nehru's gala in celebration of the day marking the beginning of the sixth 500 year cycle.

This event was very important in that it did two things. The first of these was positive, in that the conference brought together for the first time in history a large number of Buddhist masters from all the different Buddhist countries, from Sri Lanka to Tibet, Mongolia, China and Japan. The strength of Buddhism as a living tradition made a strong statement.

A second quality demonstrated at the gathering was less positive. The degree of sectarian snobbery and nationalistic pride was obvious. The Sri Lankans showed very little respect for monks from the Mahayana movements. They seemed to regard their tradition as "original Buddhism," and the Mahayanists as having been somehow corrupted by history. The Chinese and Japanese looked with disdain on the "Hinayanist" Sri Lankan and Thai Buddhists, regarding them as "mere nirvana seekers." The Tibetans looked with dismay on both Theravadin and Mahayana groups, for they seemed to lack the Buddhist Tantras, the aspect of Indian Buddhism that Central Asians regard as being the highest teachings of the Buddha. The Chan, Zen and Seon Buddhists similarly seemed to look down on the other schools as somehow inferior to themselves. This element of Asian Buddhism still continues to some extent today, but it is on the wane.

The 1956 conference, that officially launched the beginning of the sixth 500 year cycles, thus showed both the strength and the weakness of Buddhism at the time.

The Himalayans like to quote a passage from one of the many editions of the *Lankavatara Sutra*, in which the Buddha says, "2,500 after my passing, my Dharma will go to the land of the Red Man." Most Himalayans today interpret "The Land of the Red Man" to refer to North America.

A similar prophecy is made in a treasure text attributed to Padmasambhava, the eighth century Indian master who taught in Tibet for fifty-six years and played such an important role in giving Himalayan Buddhism the character that

it assumed from his time until today. In that prophecy Padmasambhava writes, "When iron birds fly and horses run on wheels, my Dharma will go to the Land of the Red Man." Himalayans today assume that the expression "iron birds" refers to airplanes, and "horses on wheels" refers to automobiles. Again, the Land of the Red Man refers to North America, the land of the "Red Indian."

C. THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECIES

Some years ago a great British Indologist, Prof A. L. Basham, wrote a foreword to one of my books.⁶ In it he stated that the Chinese invasion of Tibet in the 1950s and the ensuing destruction of Tibet's 6,500 monasteries and temples, with the scattering of Tibetan refugee lamas around the world, could be compared to the destruction of the Byzantine Empire and the scattering of that empire's great artists, mystics and philosophers. And just as the scattering of Byzantine masters of culture brought about a great cultural transformation and renaissance in Europe, who had most benefitted from the tragedy, similarly the West was seeing a cultural and spiritual quantum leap forward because of the many hundreds of Himalayan lamas who had been cast on the seas of statelessness, and washed up on the shores of many foreign lands.

When the Dalai Lama evaded Chinese assassination in 1959 and escaped to India, he was followed by several thousand monks and intellectuals, and tens of thousands of faithful followers. At that time there was not a single Himalayan Buddhist center in Europe or America. Today there are well over a thousand such centers in both Europe and America. Himalayan Buddhism is now a dominant force in the West. Every American city now has at least three or four Himalayan Buddhist centers, and some have as many as a dozen.

Some years ago, when I was on a lecture tour of Spain in connection with the release of one of my books in Spanish translation, I spent a week with a Tibetan lama living and teaching in Madrid. The year was 1990. One day the lama told me a story. "Back in 1963," he said, "The Dalai Lama gave a public discourse at our monastery. At the end of the discourse he mentioned that we should all make an attempt to learn English, because soon Buddhism would be spreading to the West, and our services as Dharma teachers would be required. At the time, his words seemed impossible to us. We could not imagine how our ancient Buddhist tradition could be useful to modern Western life, with its airplanes, supermarkets and high tech gizmos. We knew how beneficial the Buddhist Dharma was for us, but we could not imagine Westerners taking an interest in it. But now, thirty years later, there are perhaps two or three thousand Himalayan Buddhist centers in Europe and America. The Dalai Lama was right. It seems that the Dalai Lama's words have come true."

On another occasion I took ten Himalayan monks on a tour of 100 US cities, to perform Buddhist temple music and dance for world peace, as a way of spreading knowledge of Himalayan Buddhism through its art forms.⁷ One of the young monks was wonderful at the temple chants and dances. I once commented to one of the older monks on the talents of the young protégée; the old lama replied that indeed the fellow was talented in Buddhist arts, but was a poor student of Buddhism in general, and put very little effort into his studies or meditations. Our tour continued for over a year, and at the end of it the ten monks returned to their monastery in South India. Amazingly, the young monk then threw himself into his studies with gusto. He went from being one of the worst students in his class, to being the best. Some years later he graduated from the monastery with a Geshe Lharam Degree, the highest academic and spiritual honor awarded by the Himalayan monastic system. Later I asked him how he had managed such a turnaround. He laughed and replied, "My parents put me in the monastery when I was just a boy, and I took things for granted. Being a monk was just a lifestyle, not a passion. But then when I toured North America with you for a year, I saw how much interest the West has in our spiritual culture. I thought that I should investigate why. I then noticed how deep and vast our Buddhist tradition is. That realization inspired me to try and master it." He concluded by saying, "I went to America as a Buddhist monk artist. I came back determined to find Buddhist enlightenment."

After completing his studies he was sent to America for five years by the elders of his monastery, to teach in a Buddhist center in New York City. The center that he established is thriving.

D. BLOSSOMING LOTUSES IN THE GARDEN OF BLISS

I began this paper by mentioning how the Chinese invasion of Tibet brought about great spiritual benefits for the West. In fact this phenomenon was not limited to the China-Tibet conflict alone.

Himalayan Buddhism had spread through the Mongol regions from the earliest days. The first Himalayan monastery was built in Mongolia in the ninth century A.D., and in the thirteenth century Emperor Kublai Khan made Himalayan Buddhism the national religion of his empire.⁸ Kublai's empire spread north through a dozen Mongolian kingdoms, into Buryatia and Siberia of what today is Eastern Russia. The Tibetan language has been used in monasteries and temples throughout the Mongol lands from that time until today.⁹

The Stalinist purges of the 1920s and 1930s brought great cultural upheaval, Monasteries and temples were destroyed, and lamas were killed or imprisoned. Some, however, managed to escape the disaster, and flee to the West. This occurred two and more decades before the tragedy that befell Tibet in the 1950s.

Thus the birth of Himalayan Buddhism in America was initiated not by Tibetan lamas fleeing from the mass murder Chairman Mao, but by Mongol lamas fleeing the murderous Stalin.

Two names here loom large. The first is that of the Telopa Khutaght, or Mongolian lama regarded as being the reincarnation of the tenth century Indian master Tilopa. The Telopa Khutaght was arrested by the Communists in the late 1920s, but managed to escape into self-imposed exile. Eventually he ended up in New York City, where he lived until his death in 1967.

He thus can be regarded as the first qualified lama to live and teach in America. Although he was somewhat reclusive and did not teach widely, the small number of students that he produced proved to be very important. Perhaps the most important of these was Gene Smith, who later created the Tibetan Buddhist Research Center. That center has gathered and preserved thousands of Buddhist books written in Tibetan, and has scanned more than twenty million pages of Tibeto-Mongolian literature. Although I knew Gene in India when he was working for the American government under its PL480 program of publishing endangered Himalayan literature, I had not known of his connection with the Telopa Khutaght until a few years ago, when I assisted in a publication of the Telopa's autobiography and gave Gene a copy. Gene smiled and thanked me. "My first teacher," he said. "The lama who inspired me to give my life to Himalayan Buddhism."

The Telopa Lama was instrumental in bringing over the second lama to take up residence and teach in the US. He was the late great Geshey Wangyal, a Kalmyk Mongol. Like the Telopa Lama he did not accept a large number of students, but the ones he accepted tended to have a large impact on the development of Himalayan Buddhism in America. Perhaps the most famous of these is Prof Robert Thurman, who has written over twenty books on Himalayan Buddhism, and produced a dozen students with doctorates in Himalayan Buddhism. Thurman became a monk for some years, and in fact was the first Westerner to be ordained by the Dalai Lama. Some years ago *Time Magazine* named him as one of the twenty-five most influential Americans of the year, because of his work with Richard Gere in establishing Tibet House in New York and forcing the US Congress to bring pressure on China for their abysmal human rights record in Tibet. Thurman's most important book, *Inner Revolution*, has become a mandatory read on Himalayan Buddhism.

Geshey Wangyal's other very important student was Jeffrey Hopkins, who has translated several dozen Himalayan Buddhist classics. Jeffrey's books are used as textbooks in classes on Himalayan Buddhism in dozens of American universities. Jeffrey in turn produced several dozen graduate students, including Donald Lopez and Dan Perdue, and many of them have become important professors of Himalayan Buddhist studies in America and abroad. Both Telopa Lama and Geshey Wangyal chose to teach to small groups of select students, and did not produce many Dharma Centers. In fact, both created just one each.¹⁰

Both of the above Mongolian lamas – Telopa Khutaght and Geshey Wangyal – belonged to the Gelukpa School of Himalayan Buddhism. This is the same school as that of all Fourteen Dalai Lamas. The Geluk has remained the largest school of Himalayan Buddhism in Central Asia ever since the time of the Third Dalai Lama, whose charismatic presence so widely popularized it in the sixteenth century. The Geluk School is the most intellectual and highly educated of the Himalayan sects. In pre-Communist Tibet, a monk seeking a Gelukpa *geshey lharam* degree would have to study for more than twenty years, and then would have to stand for open tests in front of a gathering of more than 20,000 of the best trained monks in the country; any one of those 20,000 monks would be allowed to present questions to the contestant.

The Gelukpa lama to have the greatest effect in terms of popularizing Buddhism and creating a large number of centers in west was still to come. This awaited the appearance of Lama Thubten Yeshe(1935-1984) and his star disciple, Lama Zopa Rinpoche(1946-). These two opened centers wherever they went. Their first US trip came in the mid 1970s. Together they created a hundred and fifty Gelukpa centers worldwide. Although Lama Yeshe passed away many years ago, his legacy lives on through Lama Zopa and several dozen of his other disciples. Their movement, known as the *Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition* (FPMT) continues to grow in leaps and bounds. They brought several dozen other Himalayan lamas to live and teach in their Western centers, thus creating what seems to be an ever increasing wave of Dharma activity in more than thirty Western countries.

It is often said that Himalayan Buddhism is comprised of four great traditions: Nyingma, Sakya, Kargyu and Gelukpa. The Kargyu in turn had numerous sub-sects. Traditional histories list twelve Kargyu Schools. One of these, the Karma Kargyu, was not especially large in Tibet in terms of numbers of monasteries and temples in Tibet, but maintained

a strong practice tradition over the centuries. The next big movement in American Buddhism came with the arrival of Chogyam Trungpa, a lama of the Karma Kargyu sect. After training as a teenager in Tibet and then as a refugee in India he arrived in England, and studied psychology in Oxford. Later he established several Buddhist centers in the UK, including Samye Ling in Scotland, before moving to America. Here his wild personality and charismatic manner attracted thousands of disciples. He first established *Tail of the Tiger Buddhist Center* in Vermont, and then the Naropa Institute in Colorado. He then allowed students to open study and practice centers across the country, first under the name Dharmadhatu Center (and over a hundred of these sprung up in the matter of a few years), and then, for general training with less of a distinctly Buddhist jargon, the Shambhala network of centers. Trungpa drank heavily and made love with hundreds of his female students, but this only seemed to add to his charm and popularity. Although he passed away many years ago, his centers continue to thrive under the watchful care of one of his sons.

Another Karma Kargyu Lama had similar success in the 1970s. This is the late great Kalu Rinpoche. Kalu Rinpoche held the Karma Kargyu lineages of the eleventh century master Khyunpo Naljor, who's Shangpa Sect had disappeared as a separate entity and become absorbed by the bigger schools, especially the Karma Kargyu and Geluk. Kalu Rinpoche set up two centers in America and one in Europe for the three year retreat, and thus produced the first crop of Westerners trained in that way. In the Kargyu School one receives the title "lama" by completing this three year retreat. Kalu Rinpoche therefore produced the first Westerners to receive this title in that way. He also brought numerous of his Himalayan lama disciples to the West to teach in his various centers.

The Nyingma School came to the West with Tartang Tulku, a highly trained Nyingma lama sent to California by the Dalai Lama, again in the early 1970s. Tartang Tulku established the Nyingma Institute shortly after his arrival, and it soon began publishing numerous books of his teachings, as well as translations of Himalayan classics. He also facilitated visits to America by numerous other great Nyingma lamas, including Dujom Tulku, the then head of the Nyingma Sect, as well as Dilgo Khyentse, who after Dujom's passing was appointed as the Nyingma head lama. Tartang Tulku opened the door for several dozen other, younger Nyingma lamas who now live and teach in the West.

Another Himalayan lama has proved almost as important. Namkha Norbu had been sent to Italy in the late 1960s by the Dalai Lama, to assist the great Italian academic Prof G. Tucci in his work on Himalayan manuscripts. Namkha Norbu soon went independent, and began teaching Dzogchen around the world. He once said, "It is neither Bon School nor Nyingma School. It is simply Dzogchen." In this way he set himself half way between Bon and Nyingma Schools, both of which teach Dzogchen. He has risen to become one of the most influential Himalayan teachers in the West. Here it might be useful to note that the Bonpo is sometimes called a pre-Buddhist Himalayan school, and also sometimes referred to as a fifth Buddhist school.

The Sakya School, that had played a very important role in Asia for almost a thousand years, was slower than the above three schools in terms of Western activity. The main reason was that fewer of their great lamas managed to escape from Tibet, and therefore they could not spare the monk power for teaching activity in West. However, they quickly established strong training programs in India, and in the past decade the young crop of lamas graduating from their institutions have begun to make a strong impact. Kublai Khan in the thirteenth century had made the Sakya brand of Buddhism the formal religion of the Mongol aristocracy, and this remained the case until the Mongols switched to the Gelukpa School in the late sixteenth century. There are now something like a hundred Sakya centers in North America.

Something should also be said about the Himalayan Buddhist publishing houses that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, and that played an important role in popularizing Himalayan Buddhism in the West. Four are especially important: Dharma Publishing, inspired by Tartang Tulku; Shambhala, inspired by Chogyam Trungpa; Snow Lion, inspired by the Dalai Lama; and Wisdom Publications, inspired by Lama Thubten Yeshe. Numerous others also appeared, but the above four both printed a larger number of titles, and also achieved wider readerships.¹¹

E. THE DALAI LAMA BECOMES "LAMA TO THE WORLD"

The biggest breakthrough for Himalayan Buddhism came with the amazing popularity received by the present Dalai Lama. The simplicity of his presence, combined with the sharpness of his intelligence and quickness of his wit, have won hearts and minds around the world. From kings and presidents to monks and nuns, and to ordinary lay people everywhere, it seems that everyone loves the Dalai Lama. A *Newsweek* poll some years ago listed him as one of the three most popular citizens on the planet, along with Nelson Mandela of South Africa and former President Bill Clinton. When the Dalai Lama travels and teaches, he fills football stadiums and civic centers. No matter how large the venue, tickets to his events sell out weeks before his arrival. He has become something of a *de facto* international and interdenominational ambas-

sador of Buddhism in general and Himalayan Buddhism in particular.

It was not always that way, and the Dalai Lama has earned the public acclaim that he has received through his consistent message of compassion, wisdom, tolerance and non-violence. Thousands of monks from China, Vietnam, Cambodia and other Asian countries fled Communism and arrived in the West, yet none have achieved even a fraction of the popularity as has the Dalai Lama.

One of the reasons for this is the Dalai Lama's amazing ability to maintain a purity of tradition while projecting an openness to everything and anything, and a complete humility in the face of the amazing attention that he receives.

I remember one instance of this in India. The Dalai Lama was speaking in Delhi University. At the end he invited questions from the audience. After a half hour of this Q and A, a young student asked a somewhat embarrassingly silly question. The professors on the stage beside the Dalai Lama squirmed, and one of them grabbed the microphone. "The Dalai Lama has a meeting with the President of India, so we should cut the discussion here and leave," he said. The bodyguards and security people began to rise from their seats.

The Dalai Lama gently took the microphone from the professor and spoke. "My problem is that the name 'Dalai Lama' has a traditional meaning. In brief, if I think of the President of the country as being more important than this young student, and if I give more importance in my mind to a meeting with the President than I do to answering this young man's question, then I should give back my title of Dalai Lama. I would not be worthy to carry it." He then went on to speak to the young student's question for fifteen minutes or so, with complete humility and respect. As he concluded, the entire student body erupted in applause.

The Dalai Lama has gone on to win more than a hundred international humanitarian awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize and the Albert Schweitzer Award, to list but two of them. Several dozen books have been compiled and edited from his public teachings, several of which have gained listings on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Last year he won the prestigious Templeton Award for contributions to science and religion.

Several hundred other Himalayan lamas now live and teach in the West. The above account is intended to document the pioneers in the work

F. THE FOUR GREAT SCHOOLS OF HIMALAYAN BUDDHISM IN THE WEST

Although Himalayan lamas teaching in the West tend to emphasize the specialties of their personal sect, in fact all Himalayan schools of Buddhism are 99 % similar in terms of content and philosophy, and only differ 1 % from one another in content. All combine the Three Yanas in their training regimes.

That is to say, all Himalayan schools make the Hinayana teachings of the Buddha their basis. They all teach the doctrines of the four noble truths, the noble eightfold path, the three higher trainings, and the twelve links of dependent origination. They also include trainings in the four mindfulness and five clairvoyances.

On that foundation, they all then introduce the Mahayana teachings descending from Buddha through Indian masters such as Nagarjuna, Asanga, Aryadeva, Dignaga, Chandrakirti, Dharmakirti, Shantideva, and Kamalshila. They then introduce the tantric lineages from the Indian greats such as Indrabodhi, Ghantapada, Luipada, Tilopa, Naropa, and so forth. Each, however, does have its own approach to personal training, its own sense of the balance between study and retreat, and something of its own linguistic.

Himalayans themselves generally divide all Himalayan schools into two, based on the period of government. They call these *Nga-gyur*, or "Early Transmissions" and *Chi-gyur*, or "Later Transmissions." The meaning is that the early schools follow the linguistic approach to Buddhist language that was used prior to the eleventh century A.D. The latter follows the linguistic approach developed by the great renaissance masters of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. All of the early schools are referred to as Nyingma, even though during those centuries many hundreds of trends and lineages developed; these days all are generally lumped together as though they were a single school.

The latter, or "Later Transmissions," are referred to as the *Sarma*, or "New Schools." This group includes all later movements, such as the Sakya, the Kadampa, the Kargyu, the Zhijey, the Zhalu, the Raluk, and so forth.

Two centuries later a great lama from northeast Tibet, Lama Tsongkhapa by name, united all the *Sarma* or New Transmission Schools into one, which has become renowned as the Geluk. The Geluk eventually became larger than all other schools of Early and New Transmission periods combined. Its chief proponents have been the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. It continues today as the largest of all the Himalayan schools, probably due to the fact that Lama Tsongkhapa

managed to create a movement that did not give advantage to the aristocracy. Most high lamas in the other Himalayan schools are chosen from aristocratic backgrounds.

G. SOME CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

We live in a most exciting era. Ours is the good fortune to experience and participate in the opening chapter of the sixth 500- year cycle of Buddha Shakyamuni's legacy on this earth. And we are not mere witnesses sitting idly on the side, like spectators at a sports event. Those of us who chose to do so can become active participants in the shape that Buddhism will take over the decades and centuries to follow. We can not only observe history, but can directly contribute to its unfoldment.

We have been in this sixth 500- year period for almost two generations now. If we look back over the past five decades, we can certainly see that the Himalayan lamas have come out very strong in terms of international activity, in fact stronger than any other form of Buddhism.

One of the reasons for this is numbers. Although Tibet did not have a large population, it had nourished an enthusiasm for enlightenment perhaps unequalled in any other nation. Every family hoped to produce at least one monk, nun or tantric priest, and many families produced several. Tibet, with a population of only six million people, maintained a sangha that was an estimated quarter of a million people strong. Many monasteries had five or six thousand members. A monastery with only a thousand monks or nuns would be considered somewhat small and provincial. This was not the case in other Asian countries, where a monastery of a few hundred monks or nuns would be considered large. And with such a large talent pool to draw from, it is not surprising that Tibet and the surrounding regions where Himalayan Buddhism thrived and produced hundreds of great Buddhist scholars and mystics.

This sheer volume of numbers has given Himalayan Buddhism an advantage in modern times in terms of its ability to spread carry its message around the world. There are well over a thousand Himalayan lamas teaching around the world today. No other Asian countries have anything like this number of monks and teachers serving as active ambassadors of the Buddha Dharma.

A second factor is the unique quality of Himalayan Buddhism. Because Tibet was located to the immediate north of North India, where Buddha Shakyamuni lived and taught from the time of his enlightenment until his passing into *mahaparinirvana* almost five decades later. Tibet shared a land border of several thousand miles with Buddhist India from ancient times, and it could safely be said that the Himalayans in essence became an Indian cultural satellite¹² from prehistoric days until the Chinese Communist invasion of 1951.¹³ These many centuries of continued and sustained interaction with India have provided Tibet with a unique window into the rich and vast nature of Indian Buddhism. The Himalayan *Kangyur*, or "Translated Words of the Buddha," contain over a thousand texts, including Hinayana Sutras, Mahayana Sutras and Vajrayana Tantras, all of which are attributed to the Buddha. The Himalayan *Tengyur*, or "Translated Words by Later Indian Masters," contain almost 5,000 texts by Indian Buddhist masters.

This threefold approach to study and practice – Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana – is another of the factors that has led to the amazing popularity of Himalayan Buddhism in the West. The Hinayana aspect appeals to Westerners in search of a simple approach to the spiritual life, and they find this in three higher trainings of the doctrines of the Hinayana: discipline, meditation and wisdom/philosophy.

Alternatively, many Westerners connect with Himalayan Buddhism because of the Mahayana sutra tradition of great compassion combined with meditation and wisdom trainings, and supplemented by the intellectual richness of the Indian treatises by great masters such as Nagarjuna, Asanga, Dharmakirti, Shantideva, and so forth.

Thirdly, many Westerners instead take an interest in Himalayan Buddhism because of the Vajrayana or Tantra field of study and training. Whereas Hinayana and Mahayana work on the basis of conventional appearances -- cause and effect, and so forth -- the Tantra aspect of Buddhism jumps into an entirely higher world view, utilizing the language and imagery of sex and violence to transport the practitioner beyond ordinariness into the sublime field of immediate enlightenment.¹⁴ The language of the Buddhist Tantras is much more in line with that of modern psychology, as evidenced by a reading of works by Western masters such as Freud, Jung and Adler. This synchronicity of Buddhist Tantra and Western mind science make the tantric approach very appealing to Westerners of a psychological background and training.

Another aspect of Tantric Buddhism that has attracted great interest in the West has to do with what Tantric Buddhists call "the completion stage yoga." This refers to the process of gaining control over the subtle body chemistry, and thus has a direct relevance to the Western science of psycho-neuro immunology. In Buddhism, this is also discussed in terms of the

yogas of chakras, nadis and *bindus*, or “energy centers,” energy pathways,” and “subtle drops.” The Buddhist teaching here is that the methods of breath control, directed by deep samadhi or meditation power, can very profoundly transform the workings of the subtle bodily chemistry that supports consciousness. The implication is that the tantric yogas can be used to create a more effective body base, to create a bodily support of consciousness that is more effective as a vehicle of the enlightenment. Buddhist Tantras state that a human body transformed by means of tantric yoga creates an environment in which one day of meditation is as powerful as a hundred years of meditation on the basis of ordinary physicality. In recent years, many American universities have initiated research into this “psycho-neuro immunology” manipulation by means of tantric application. Their interest, of course, is not in the traditional Buddhist quest for enlightenment, but rather in how the yogas can be used for stress reduction, pain management, and improvement of the immunity system for disease control. Nonetheless this facet of the tantric yogas has brought further interest in Himalayan Buddhism, because the Himalayans are the principal holders of the Buddhist Tantras today.¹⁵

A fourth factor should be mentioned in regard to Himalayan Buddhism and its amazing success in the West in the past few decades. This is the factor of enlightenment as a living visionary tradition. Here the Tibetans have a saying, “Every lama is his own school of Buddhism.” This openness toward teaching in the Himalayan Buddhist world essentially allows a lama to teach in whatever manner he wishes. There is very little emphasis upon formula or specific structure. The individual can teach his or her disciples in whatever manner seems most effective.

There is a popular saying, “Every cloud has a silver lining.” The Chinese invasion and destruction of the enlightenment tradition in Tibet was indeed a dark cloud. The silver lining is that the Himalayan masters were thrown like seeds upon the fertile soil of the international community. The result is a bountiful crop of Himalayan Dharma centers around the world. Sixty years ago there was not a single such center. Today there are several thousand.

While the lamas have been busy in this way around the world, they have also been very active back in Tibet. The Chinese Communists might have destroyed Tibet’s 6,500 temples and monasteries during the terrible years of “The Cultural Revolution.” The lamas have been busy rebuilding many of these ever since the death of the evil dictator and mass murderer Chairman Mao ushered in a more gentle and lenient regime. When Mao died, not a single Himalayan monastery or temple was open and active in Tibet. All but a half dozen had been razed to the very foundations. Now, three decades into the Chinese Communist policy of liberation, more than 500 of the 6,500 have been rebuilt to some degree.

These two activities – the spread of Himalayan Buddhism around the world, and the rebuilding of Himalayan Buddhism within Tibet – are both very auspicious signs for the success of the next 500 years of Buddhism in the world.

REFERENCES

1. Albert Einstein is famous for several statements that he made in support of Buddhism. Some people feel that he was attracted to Buddhism because of the Buddhist doctrine of relativity, or “dependent origination,” something he emphasized in his own theories of relativity in which he dethroned the concept of Absoluteness from the cosmos. There are many critics who claim this quote as spurious, Einstein did talk about ‘cosmic religion’ occasionally between 1930-1954, in letters, private talks, interviews and two of his articles. The statement appears to be valid by taking into account his assertions at different times. See, Dokovic, V. and P. Grujic, Albert Einstein, Cosmos and Religion, *Serbia Astrono J. No. 174* (2007), 61-72.
2. This was the Dalai Lama’s first international appearance, and achieved international attention. The photo spread in *Life Magazine* brought instant fame to the Dalai Lama’s unique character.
3. The role of Emperor Ashoka in the formation of this early canon has tended to escape critical analysis.
4. Numerous editions of the *Lankavatara Sutra* exist. One reason for this is that India did not use woodblock printing. Instead, all books were hand copied. This led to numerous editions coming into vogue. Later Indian editions have passages not present in early editions.
5. Some Mahayanists question the authenticity of the Buddhist tantras. However, the reasoning often used could just as easily be applied to the Mahayana sutras themselves. If one accepts the premise of the validity of the Mahayana sutras, the same reasoning can easily be used to support the validity of the Buddhist tantras.
6. *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama II* (1986). Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.

7. The tour featured ten monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery. It coincided with the Dalai Lama winning the Nobel Peace Prize.
8. Koreans will be well aware of Kublai Khan, because he brought about the cultural flowering in Korea known as the Gorea Period. In fact because of Kublai Khan, Korea today is known to the world as "Korea," a name inspired by "Gorea."
9. The Communists who took over these Mongol lands outlawed the use of Tibetan in the 1930s, but it remained alive and well as an underground force. The fall of Soviet Communism in 1989 and 1990 saw an instant revival of the use of Tibetan in the hundreds of Buddhist monasteries in Russia and Mongolia that were re-established in the 1990s.
10. Geshey Wangyal brought over numerous other Tibetan and Mongolian lamas, who also taught widely. Perhaps the most well known is Geshey Sopa, who created the Deer Park Buddhist Center in Madison Wisconsin.
11. I personally published over a dozen titles with Snow Lion Publications.
12. The first recorded Tibetan king, Nyatri Tsenpo, who was enthroned in the Second Century B.C. and went on to unite Central Tibet under his rule, is often said to have been an Indian prince fleeing with his army from civil wars in India. His name literally means "Carried on a Palanquin," because the Tibetans were so impressed by him on their first encounter with him that they put him on a palanquin and carried him to their capital city, which at the time was Tsetang in the Yarlung Valley. He is often referred to in Tibetan literature as the First King in the Yarlung Dynasty. Tsetang remained the capital city of the Yarlung Kings until Emperor Songtsen Gampo, often referred to as the thirty-third king in the Yarlung Dynasty, moved the capital to Lhasa, where he created the Potala as his new castle. Tibetan histories emphasize the Indian cultural connection of all thirty-three of these kings. This was natural geographically, because the trade routes from Tsetang and Lhasa flowing south to India and Nepal were much shorter, safer and easily navigated than were the trade routes to any other of Tibet's neighbors.
13. In the 630s A.D., Emperor Songtsen Gampo had a script created from Indian Sanskrit that became the basis of all Tibetan literature from then until today. Sanskrit has fifty consonants and sixteen vowels; the Tibetans formulated their script into thirty consonants and five vowels. A century and a half later, the Chinese script was banned from Tibet. It remained a script *non-grata* for the twelve centuries to follow, until the Chinese Communist invasion of Tibet in the 1950s.
14. The Buddhist *Abhidharma* literature claims that the death of an individual is followed by a "hereafter" process of seven times seven phases, marked in many Buddhist countries as "forty-nine days." At the end of the process, the individual takes rebirth. Tibetan spiritual texts such as the *Bardo Todol*, or "Liberation by Listening When in the Bardo," which has become famous in English translation as the "Tibetan Book of the Dead," speak in depth of these seven times seven phases. According to this work, a being can achieve immediate enlightenment during any of the forty-nine transitions, merely by recognizing the true nature of his own mind. However, if he fails to do so, then the time for rebirth soon looms. When this occurs, the being starts to notice couples making love. He floats between the various love/sex scenes of many dozens of couples, until eventually he chooses one for his rebirth. He then develops strong sexual passion for the person having the opposite sex to what he will become, and also develops strong anger toward the person of the same sex of the one he will become. Desire and anger well up within him. Eventually the anger develops into a powerful instinct of violence, and the urge becomes so intense that it kills his bardo body. He then plunges into the sperm/ovum mixture of the copulating couple, and enters the womb of the mother-to-be. This Buddhist presentation fits very well with Freudism, and has attracted immense interest in Western psychological circles. In Buddhist thinking, we are always driven by these two instincts: attraction and aversion. On a primal level, they become the instincts to copulate, and the instincts to express violence. Tantra states that quick and easy enlightenment is attained NOT by avoiding them, as is so often done on the two *Sutra* paths, but by directly working with them, as in done on the Tantra path.
15. Some of the Buddhist Tantras also travelled to China, and from China to Korea and Japan. However, the Chinese emphasis upon simplicity and minimalism as inherited from the Daoist tradition, and on social conformity as pressed by Confucianism, meant that the Chinese mind did not prove to be fertile ground for the radical Tantric doctrines. The Chinese were more interested in Buddhism's social doctrines and general meditation techniques.