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## STUDYING ABOUT THE CULTURE AND IMPACT OF BUDDHISM IN HIMALAYAN REGION

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### ABSTRACT

Finding out how Buddhist culture is changing in the Himalayan region of India is the primary motivation for the proposed study. The political and social background of Ladakh is discussed as well, as is the region's geography, economy, administration, and religious make-up. This analysis investigates the myriad domestic and external factors that have shaped Ladakh's political and social development over time. Because of these people's travels to and work in Ladakh, a wealth of previously unavailable information and publications about the region became available. To far, there has been no published historical research on this topic. As no such all-encompassing study exists in the existing literature, the current investigation seeks to remedy this oversight.

**Keywords:** - Buddhist, Society, Life, India, Buddha

### I. INTRODUCTION THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY TO THE BUDDHIST REVIVAL IN INDIA

The Maha Bodhi Association is sometimes credited for helping to spark what is known as a "Buddhist resurgence" in India. In 1891, Buddha Gaya was the site of the Maha Bodhi Society's first mission. According to Angarika Dharmapala, "what is now called the Buddhist revival dates to the year 1880," when Colonel Olcott and the late Mme. Blavatsky first visited Ceylon and the former delivered a series of addresses to the Sinhalese people on the subject of their religion that profoundly moved their hearts and awakened their enthusiasm. On May 25th, 1880, while visiting Ceylon, Mme. H.P. Blavatsky and Col. Henry Steel Olcott took the Buddhist ordination ceremony known as the Panca-sila at the Vijnananda Vihara. They had already identified as Buddhists before making the 1879 trip to India. Mme.

Blavatsky unequivocally said, "I myself are a Buddhist for many years, and Col. Olcott has likewise been for some years," in the Bombay Gazette on April 3, 1882. Olcott's claim that their Buddhism "was that of the Master-Adept Gautam Buddha, which was exactly the wisdom religion of the Aryan Upanishads, and the spirit of the ancient world-faiths," is supported by statements like these. In a nutshell, our kind of Buddhism was a way of life, not a set of dogmas.

Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, a poetry retelling of the life of the Buddha that was to be a key way of promoting Buddhism, was reviewed extensively in the inaugural issue of *The Theosophist*, published in October 1879. The name of Gautam Buddha, a Sakya Muni, can speak of a daily and hourly self-abnegation through a period of about eighty years, has gained favor with everyone who has studied his biography," Blavatsky says. One need go no further than this Buddha's

life when searching the world's religious history for the purest, greatest ideal of a religious reformer. Buddha surpasses other heights in knowledge, enthusiasm, humility, purity of life and mind, for the sake of mankind, in inciting good acts, tolerance, generosity, and tenderness.

The theosophical portrayal of Buddhism captured the imagination because it operated on a symbolic level, above and above the petty disagreements that often divide followers of the religion. This method was demonstrated by an event that Olcott described as "of which the like has not been seen in India for two thousand years, an incident which proves more clearly and eloquently than words that our Society is, in fact, as in name, a Universal Brotherhood" in his Presidential Report for the year 1881. I refer to the day when five thousand high-caste Hindu idolaters cheered wildly when a committee of our Buddhist members planted a king coconut in the inner enclosure of the old temple of the Hindu gods in Colombo, Ceylon.

On the sixty-year anniversary of Olcott's death, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake said, "At a time when Buddhism was on the wane in Ceylon, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott came to Ceylon in May 1880 and awakened its people to fight to regain their Buddhist heritage....Colonel Olcott can be considered one of the heroes in the struggle of our independence and a pioneer of the present religious, national, and cultural revival." Colonel Olcott's trip to Ceylon was a watershed moment in the spread of Buddhism there. 24 With his success in reviving Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Olcott set out to eliminate the gulf that existed between Buddhism and

Hinduism. He brought four Ceylonese Buddhists with him when he was invited to Tinnevely to start a chapter of the Theosophical Society there.

## II. BUDDHIST SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN INDIAN HIMALAYAN REGION

The second council, which took place around a century after Buddha's death, saw a major schism develop between two groups of monks, eventually giving rise to the Mahasanghika or Achariyavada and Theravada schools of Buddhism. There are now seven sub-sects within the Mahasanghika and eleven under the Theravada. The Mahasanghika group's Saila school contributed certain novel ideas, such as the Buddha's deification and the Bodhisattva notion, that fueled the development of the later Mahayana school. The Buddhist Church and its essential teachings finally separated during the Fourth Council of Jalandhara, called by King Kanishka in the first century A.D., giving rise to the Mahayana school of Buddhism.

The first school, represented by the Arhat ideal, places a premium on personal redemption. Therefore it became known as Hinayana, or the Little Vehicle, in contrast to the other school, Mahayana, or the Big Vehicle, whose stated goal is the liberation of all sentient beings.

Nagarjuna, the foremost proponent of Mahayana thought in the second century A.D., developed the idea of voidness to explain the non-reality of sensory things in addition to the non-existence of a soul (shunyata).

### Religion and Faith

The bulk of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh adhere to their own unique set of

traditional beliefs. The Monpas, Membas, etc. of Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang and West Kameng District are Buddhists. Khamptis and Singphos adhere to Buddhism as their faith of choice. Animism, the worship of nature gods and spirits, is by far the most widespread belief system. Very widespread is the practice of ritual sacrifice, with the mithun holding a particularly high status as a sacrificial offering. Certain ethnic groups in the area along the Myanmar–Tibetan border practice a kind of Buddhism known as Hinayana, while others follow the Tibetan school of Buddhism. 1 The Monpas practice Buddhism. They practice a kind of Buddhism that has its origins in Tibetan Mahayana. The people of this area practiced a shamanic religion called Bon before the arrival of Buddhism.

### III. IMPACT OF BUDDHISM CULTURE ON STATES UNDER HIMALAYAN REGION

#### ARUNACHAL PRADESH

More than 20 main scheduled tribes and countless smaller sub-tribes with their own languages and dialects make up this state's diverse tribal population. Adi, Nishi, Apatani, Tagin, Mishmi, Khampti, Nocte, Wancho, tangsha, Singpho, etc. are just a few of the most common. The patriarchal society is headed by a Chief and operates without a caste system. The elders hold all the power in this situation. Polygamy is legal and accepted in their culture. They have a long history of supporting the performing arts. The locals are deeply religious, devout, and god-fearing, and they have faith in a wide variety of gods and spirits. Over the course of celebrations, several religious ceremonies

take place. Their culture revolves heavily around festivals and fairs. The religious beliefs and practices of the surrounding communities have had an impact on the tribal people, and some of them have been adopted to meet the needs of the tribe.

#### SIKKIM

All the Himalayan republics have comparable geographical features and similar flora and wildlife, which has led to a shared way of thinking and cultural traits. To the west, however, from Kashmir to Nepal, India exerted considerable cultural sway. Nepal's primary cultural ethos, Hinduism, originated in India, and Buddhism was introduced to Nepal from China via Tibet. Nevertheless, the eastern Himalayan area, where the countries of Bhutan and Sikkim are located, remained mostly untouched by southern cultural trends. The Mahayana school of thought influenced both Bhutan and Sikkim. The eighth century was pivotal in the cultural history of these two Himalayan realms since it was in the eighth century that the Guru Padma Sambhava, also known as the Guru Rimpoche, introduced Buddhism to these states from Tibet. The term Sikkimese simply refers to a person who lives in Sikkim; it has no linguistic or cultural connotations. Modern-day Sikkimese may trace their lineage back to a wide range of Asians, including Mongolians, Indians, and Caucasians, as well as other Asians like the Lepchas, Indians, and Nepalis.

#### JAMMU & KASHMIR

Kashmir, a state on India's western border, has always been a melting pot where influences from all over the world have converged and reshaped one another. This is especially evident in the region's rich

artistic expression, which is a tapestry of diverse traditions that reflects the strange interplay of Gandhara, Gupta, Indian, Greco-Roman, Scythian, Sassanian, Chinese, and other indigenous threads. In ancient times, when the provinces of Kashmir and Gandhara were culturally and politically united as one of the 16 Mahajanpadas, the artifacts from both regions show clear signs of Gandharan influence. The Buddhist faith is widely practiced in Ladakh, and its influence has been positive on the local culture. Buddhism has not only influenced ways of living but also the physical landscape through the ages, leaving traces of its everlasting influence. Chortens, Gompas, and Mane Ringmos are all religious structures that attest to the area's Buddhist population's unique identity.

## **HIMACHAL PRADESH**

Several distinct hill tribes call Himachal Pradesh home, and they each have their own distinct languages. The Kinners or Kinnaure, Lahules, Spitiens, Pangwalas, Gaddis, and Gujjars are all members of the tribal community. They perform their own unique dances and listen to their own unique music. The people that live in Lahaul are referred to as Lahule. The indigenous Lahaules are a stratified society comprised of members of both the native Munda tribe and the racially mixed Tibetans. Brahmins and Thakurs make up their upper classes. Lohars, Dagis, and Buddhists make up the majority of the population. Each affluent household maintains its own Buddha shrine, while Trilokinath serves as the community's central Buddhist temple. A lady might have several husbands from within her same tribe. Culturally, the regions of

Kinnaur (known as Khunu in neighboring Tibet) and Spiti (known as Piti by locals, as well as the people of Ladakh and Tibet) are two distinct but adjacent regions.

## **UTTARAKHAND**

The terrain and environment of Uttarakhand have had significant cultural impacts. Many rituals, fairs, and festivals are integral to Uttarakhand's cultural history. In the state of Uttarakhand, Hinduism predominates. People in this area also practice Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The locals are holding a fair or celebration to mark the occasion. Every country in the area celebrates Diwali. Magh is celebrated in the late winter, at the time when the winter crops have been planted. The Yamuna River valley is where this celebration is at its largest. Traditionally, the Basant Panchami celebration takes place in the middle of the month of February. Mother Earth and agriculture are both revered. Most people have at least one item of yellow clothing in their closets. The end of spring is celebrated with Bissu. Preparations for the harvest are being made.

## **IV. JUSTIFICATION AND LIKELY BENEFITS**

Culture and civilisation are shaped in large part by social and religious institutions. The Buddhist teachings have seeped deeply into the blood of the Ladakhi people, allowing for the creation of a civilization that has survived mostly unaltered. The inhabitants of Ladakh's social and religious life have been profoundly impacted by Buddhism, among other societal influences. The purpose of this study is to learn about Buddhist cultural practices in Ladakh throughout the

nineteenth and twentieth century. Changes in the socio-religious life of Buddhists and the elements of continuity in their life during the period under study have been analyzed, with a focus on the role of religious institutions, especially Buddhist monasteries, local beliefs and practices, external and internal forces, and the question of Buddhist identity. Although much of the available material on Ladakhi history has focused on the country's political past, this might provide a fresh perspective on the region's past that hasn't been studied before.

Religion is an integral part of social life and should be examined in tandem with socioeconomic factors rather than in isolation. The Buddhists of Ladakh's social and religious beliefs, rites, rituals, celebrations, and festivals all have their origins in the sacraments of birth, marriage, and death. Looking at society as a whole, one can see that many rituals and traditions are upheld because they have religious backing. Despite the widespread influence of modern science and technology, rural Ladakhi believers continue to put their trust in time-honored religious rituals. Without a shadow of a doubt, the socio-religious factors are potent enough to determine the social structure of a given location.

## V. CONCLUSION

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