



50 years

NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY

Gangtok-Sikkim



1958
2008



NAMGYAL INSTITUTE
OF TIBETOLOGY
Golden Jubilee Souvenir 1958-2008





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FOREWORD

The fiftieth year of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology is an important milestone for us here at the Institute, as well as for the field of Buddhist studies to which we have dedicated ourselves all these years.

It has been a great pleasure to produce this souvenir to commemorate fifty years of a unique existence. The souvenir encapsulates our history and background, our current orientations and our aspirations for the future in a nutshell.

I hope that a perusal of the souvenir will acquaint you with all that the Institute represents.

Tashi Densapa
Director



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Introduction

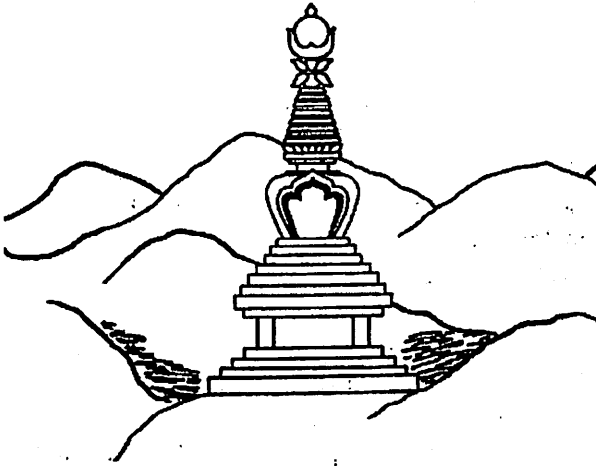
NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY GOLDEN JUBILEE SOUVENIR 1958-2008

The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT) completes fifty years of existence in October this year. Envisioned as a storehouse of the collective wisdom of all the sects of Mahayana Buddhism, and established by Royal Charter half a decade ago, during the reign of Chogyal Tashi Namgyal, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., the NIT has carved out a unique niche for itself both in the Institute's native Sikkim and outside of it.

While not losing sight of its main goals to study and promote the doctrines of all the Sects and Schools of Mahayana Buddhism, the NIT has concurrently been able to reinvent itself in recent years to emerge as a consummate renaissance hub for Sikkim-centric research and studies.

Concomitant with our Golden Jubilee Celebrations this October, we have had the pleasure of compiling a souvenir to commemorate the journey of the Institute over fifty years. It is a journey worth recounting and reliving as we look forward to the challenges of a new half decade.

His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama did us the honor of laying the foundation stone of the Institute on 10th February, 1957. We have been



most fortunate in once again receiving His Holiness' blessings in our Golden Jubilee year.

Chogyal Tashi Namgyal, who donated the land on which the Institute stands, Gyelse (Crown Prince) Palden Thondup Namgyal, the driving force and first President of the General Council of the NIT, and former Indian Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru who inaugurated the Institute on 1st October, 1958 have all passed away. We would perhaps not be guilty of a malapropism in hoping that had they been with us today, they would have been happy to see their fledgling Institute emerge from the cocoon of possibilities and spread its wings in flight.

Of our 24 Founder Members, today we have among us only one Founder Member, the still incisive Princess P.T. Yabshi-Pheunkhang Lhacham who graciously consented to recount her thoughts on our 50th year.

The NIT and its activities has always been a critical draw for all kinds of people, from the serious scholar to the VVIP to the casual tourist who would know more about Buddhism. While we do have important data about the Institute, it is not in a single source. We have old charters, speeches, booklets, pamphlets, visitors' books and photographs but not in a readily accessible centralized form.

The souvenir has thus been a truly golden opportunity, in more ways than one, to effectively condense the entire history, background and works of the Institute into one single comprehensive source of information, a ready to refer guide to the NIT.

To augment the written word, we have traced and included some rare archival photographs in the souvenir. Photographs are silent poetry and poetry is a speaking picture.

The generous help of and inputs from several people enriched the souvenir. We would like to thank:

- ~ His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama for his kind blessings;
- ~ The Office of HH the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, in particular Kugno Tenzin Gesheyla;
- ~ Mr. T.T. Lingsang for being our relay station in Dharamsala;
- ~ Princess P.T. Yabshi-Pheunkhang Lhacham for making time for her recollections and for lending us her photographs;
- ~ Sem Tinley Ongmu Tashi for generously sharing rare photographs from her personal collection and for being a patient sounding board;
- ~ Yap Tashi Tobden for access to his late father, Libing Athing's personal papers, a treasure trove of much

- information;
- ~ Chum R.D. Rechung for contributing negatives of photographs taken by her late father Yap Tse Ten Tashi;
 - ~ Former Deputy Director, Lama Kunga Yonten Hochotsang for locating old documents and many critical nuggets of information;
 - ~ Families of Founder Members for graciously contributing to the Founder Members' photo gallery;
 - ~ Mynak Tulku for sending photographs all the way from Bhutan;
 - ~ Our Director, Mr. Tashi Densapa for green lighting the project and his constant encouragement;
 - ~ Administrative Officer, Ms. Kelsang Choden, a walking encyclopedia on the NIT for her insights and hands on help in locating various elusive documents;
 - ~ Dr. Anna Balikci-Denjongpa for her inputs on various projects and the new series of the Bulletin of Tibetology;
 - ~ Mr. Thupten Tenzing for his input on the Museum;
 - ~ Mr. Tenzin Samphel for his input on the General Library and digitization project;
 - ~ Mr. Sonam Thinlay for his input on the Tibetan Library;
 - ~ Tsultsem Gyatso Acharya for his help with transcribing prayers;
 - ~ Mrs. Tashi Chuki and Mr. Tashi Wangyal for administrative help;
 - ~ Mrs. Priscilla G. Bhutia for typing old documents;
 - ~ Mr. Pema Wangchuk for his photography, behind the scenes support and for designing the souvenir.
 - ~ Finally, Dr. Alex McKay for vetting the pre-print copy and a number of pragmatic suggestions.

Fifty autumns after a unique beginning, may the blessings of the Triple Gem continue to shower on us all!

Tenzin C. Tashi,
Editor



THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

I am happy to learn that the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Sikkim, is completing fifty years of its inception this coming October. Since the establishment of the Institute it has made good contribution in promoting and undertaking research work on the religion, history, language, and culture of Tibet which is deeply rooted in the Buddhist tradition that came from India and flourished in Tibet since over a thousand years ago. It is a cultural heritage shared by the whole Himalayan region from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, including Sikkim. This therefore underscores the great importance of the work being done by the Institute.

It is an irony of circumstances that since the exodus of the Tibetans in 1959 into India and its neighbouring countries that the Tibetans have been able to contribute towards the revival of the Himalayan cultural heritage while much of it is being lost in our own country. And for us Tibetans we not only consider this an obligation but a source of great satisfaction.

As I had the privilege of laying the foundation stone of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in 1957 it gives me great pleasure in sending my very good wishes and prayers to the Institute and the members of its staff.

29 July 2008

Founder Patron



Chogyal TASHI NAMGYAL, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.

Our Founder Members came from diverse backgrounds but were united in their common aspiration for an Institute of excellence in Buddhist studies.

FOUNDER MEMBERS OF NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY

From the original list at the N.I.T.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ~ Maharajkumar Palden Thondup Namgyal (President). | ~ Bhikshu Sangharakshita, Kalimpong. |
| ~ Rani Chosnyi Dorji of Bhutan. | ~ Se Kusho Yabshi-Pheunkhang Gompo Tsering. |
| ~ Sri Nari Kaikhosru Rustomji, I.C.S., Dewan of Sikkim. | ~ Athing Sonam Dahdul of Rhenock. |
| ~ Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, now resident of Sikkim. | ~ Athing Tashi Dahdul Densapa of Barmiok. |
| ~ Tenzing Gyaltzen Rimpoche of Himachal Pradesh, now at Sarnath. | ~ Sri Martam Tobden, Gangtok. |
| ~ Dudjom Dorji, Dorji Lopen of Pemiongtse. | ~ Sri Motichand Pradhan, Sikkim. |
| ~ Gnawang Trakpa, Lingdok Lama of Penlong. | ~ Yapa Sherab Gyaltsen, Sikkim. |
| ~ Karma Dorji, Dorji Lopen of Rumtek. | ~ Sri Maniharsha Jyoti of Kathmandu, now resident at Calcutta. |
| ~ Gomchen Pema Tamang, Lama of Namchi. | ~ Rai Saheb Bhim Bahadur Pradhan, Gangtok. |
| ~ Yabshi-Pheunkhang Lhacham (Maharajkumari Pema Tsedeun). | ~ Sri G. Tharchin, Tibet Mirror Press, Kalimpong. |
| ~ Yapshi-Yuthok Lhacham (Maharajkumari Pema Choki). | ~ Athing Sonam Tobden, I.F.S., Gangtok. |
| | ~ Yapa Dorji Dahdul, Sikkim. |
| | ~ Sri Nirmal C. Sinha. |

If the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology was able to fulfill even a fraction of its aspirations, it was largely due to the untiring efforts of and serious slogging by our Founder Members who steered the Institute through its teething troubles with great dedication and unwavering faith. Our Founder Members gave generously of their time, abilities and wise counsel to painstakingly nurture the Institute. They also made personal gifts to the Institute's museum and library and helped make the fledging publications programme a reality.

Sadly, in the half decade since the inception of the Institute, all but one of our Founder Members- Princess Pema Tsedeun Yabshi-Pheunkhang Lhacham- have passed away. We are pleased to carry a special message from Princess Pema Tsedeun Yabshi-Pheunkhang Lhacham on the occasion of our Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Two Founder Members Prof. Nirmal C. Sinha and Yapa Sherab Gyaltshen served as the Director of the Institute. Interestingly, some of the descendents of the Founder Members have wound up at the Institute their ancestors helped found.

Our Director, Mr. Tashi Densapa is the son of Athing Tashi Dahdul Densapa of Barmiok.
Former Director, Mr. Tashi Tobden is the son of Athing Sonam Tobden, i.f.s.
Tenzin C. Tashi, Historic Photo Researcher and Editor of the souvenir is the great-granddaughter of Athing Sonam Dahdul of Rhenock.



Maharajkumar **PALDEN THONDUP NAMGYAL**
FOUNDER PRESIDENT



Rani **CHOSNYI DORJI**

NARI KAIKHOSRU RUSTOMJI



JAM'YANG **KHYENTSE RIMPOCHE**



TENZING **GYALTSEN** RIMPOCHE



Gomchen **PEMA** TAMANG

Lama of Namchi

DUDJOM **DORJI**

Dorjee Lopen of Pemiongtsé



Spellings as per family preference.

Yabshi-**Pheunkhang** Lhacham
Maharajkumari **PEMA** TSEDEUN



Yapshi-**Yuthok** Lhacham
Maharajkumari **PEMA** CHOKI

Bhikshu **SANGHARAKSHITA**





Athing **SONAM** DAHDUL
of Rhenock

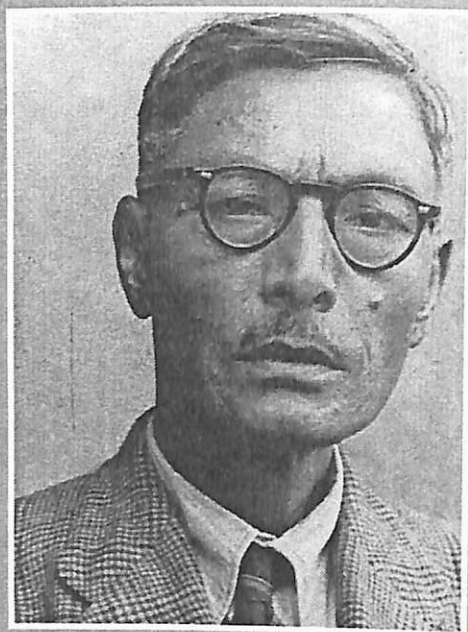


Athing **TASHI** DAHDUL **DENSAPA**
of Bermiok

Se Kusho **Yabshi**-Pheunkhang
GOMPO TSERING



Sri **MARTAM** TOPDEN



Yapa **SHERAB** GYALTSHEN

Sri **MOTICHAND** PRADHAN





Rai **Sahib**

BHIM BAHADUR PRADHAN

Sri **MANIHARSHA JYOTI**



Sri **G THARCHIN**



Athing **SONAM** TOBDEN, I.F.S.



Yapa **DORJI** DAHDUL



Sri **NIRMAL C SINHA**



*Yabshi-Pheunkhang
Frodkhang
Gangtok
Sikkim*

MESSAGE

Fifty years ago my father the Chogyal Tashi Namgyal and especially his son the *Gelyse* (Crown Prince) Palden Thondup Namgyal with associates of like mind embarked on the venture of housing manuscripts of all branches of Buddhism under one roof which developed into the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology.

We were especially fortunate when *Gelyse* Palden Thondup Namgyal visited Tibet in search of manuscripts and was presented with a collection from Talung Rimpoche with a promise of more. Unfortunately the library of Talung monastery was destroyed by fire a few months later.

As a Founder Member, I have taken a keen personal interest in the Institute from its inception.

Among our other presentations to the Institute, I have presented a manuscript from the legendary epic of King Gesar of Ling and also the naughty version of the biography of the Great Sage Drukpa Kunley. I was happy to note that the visitors to the reading room increased after this.

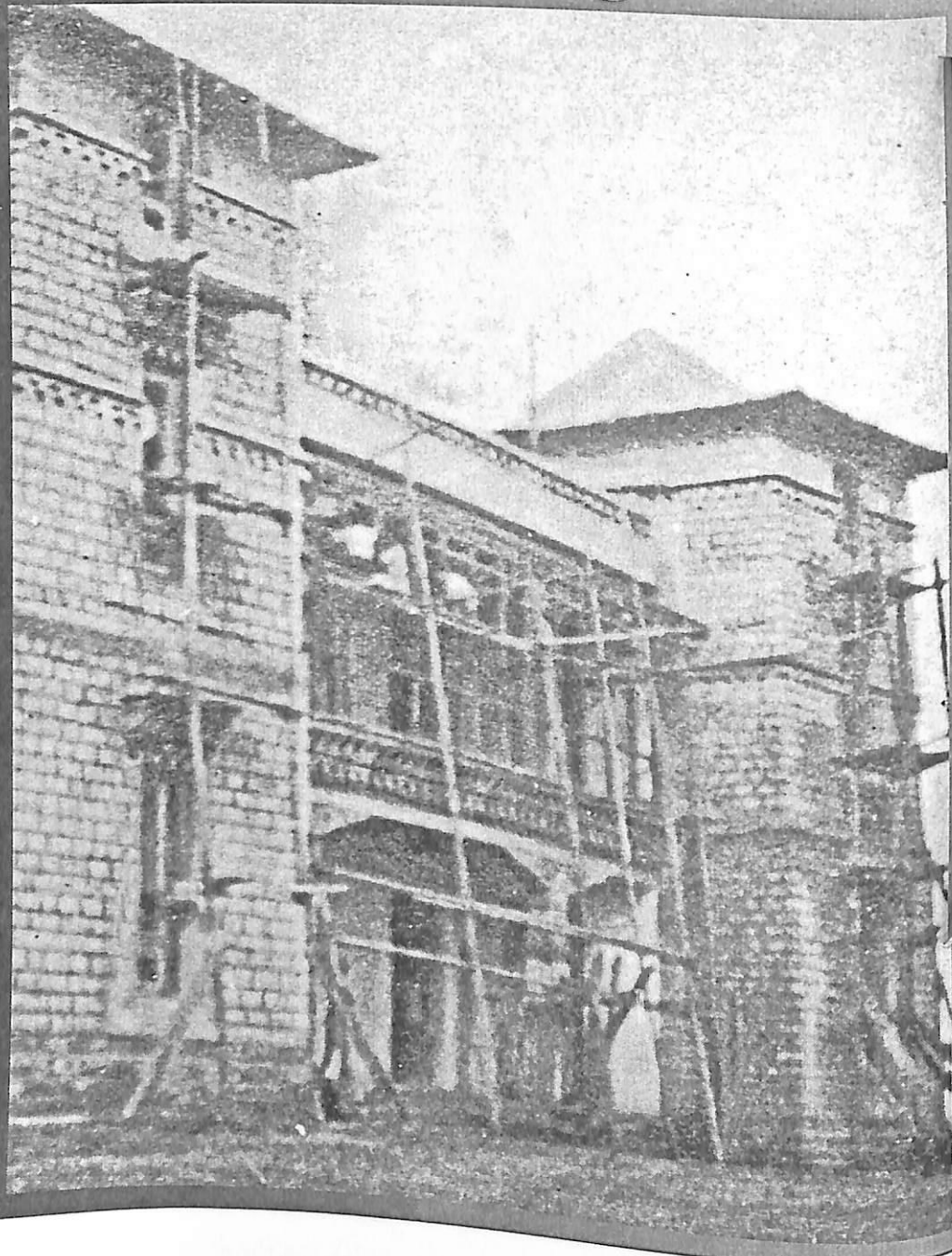
When in London while researching with the help and guidance of Mr. Laithwaite, Foreign Secretary, C.R.O. the loss of manuscripts during the time of Mr. Waddell from Changlo Phodrang (South Willow Palace), Gyantse, the residence of the Yabshi-Pheunkhang family, which was destroyed, I came across a rare Lepcha manuscript that had come from Sikkim. I was presented with a beautiful photocopy, which in turn I presented to the Institute. I am happy to say it was much appreciated by our Lepcha kinsmen of Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong and received letters of appreciation for bringing the manuscript home.

It gives me great pleasure that the Institute has gained worldwide recognition and I offer my best wishes to the Director Yap Tashi Densapa and all members of the staff on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations.

Pema Tsedeun Yabshi-Pheunkhang

Princess Pema Tsedeun Yabshi-Pheunkhang Lhacham

In the Beginning...



This section contains some of the important speeches which present the origins of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. These are reproduced verbatim from a booklet titled 'Establishment of Namgyal Institute of Tibetology: Documents and Speeches' first published in 1961.

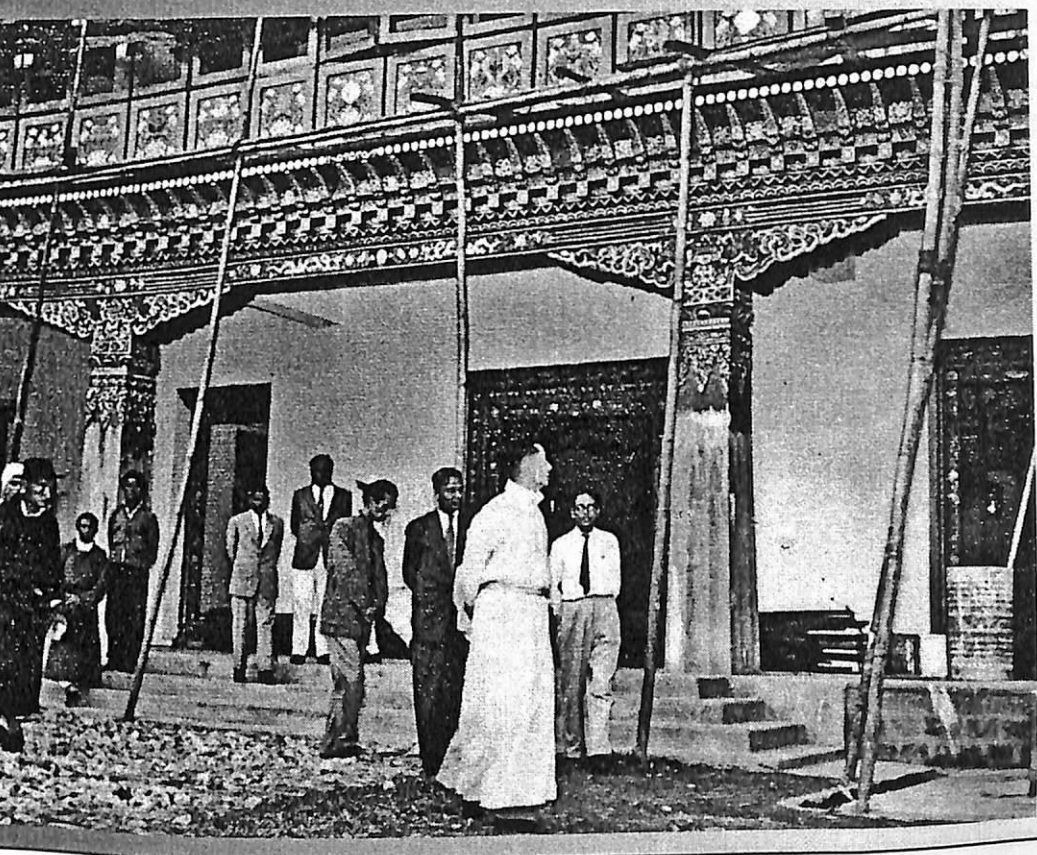
There are four speeches:

- The address of the then Maharajkumar Palden Thondup Namgyal and
- HH the Dalai Lama on the occasion of the foundation stone laying of the Institute on 10th February, 1957.
- The address of Maharajku-

mar Palden Thondup Namgyal and
□ His Excellency Shri Jawaharlal Nehru at the inauguration of the Institute on 1st October, 1958.

These speeches encapsulate, in the words of the eminent personalities themselves, the great hopes harboured so many years ago that the lofty ambitions of the Institute be realized.

Fifty years down the line, the world's intrinsic need for the blessings of the Buddha and the Dharma and the ideals of peace and understanding still hold true.





Gyelse Palden Thondup Namgyal reading out his address requesting HH the XIVth Dalai Lama to lay the Corner-Stone of the Institute, 10th February, 1957.

Seated (left to right):
 Political Officer Shri Apa Saheb Pant, Chogyal Tashi Namgyal, HH the XIVth Dalai Lama, Yongzin Ling Rimpoche, Senior Tutor to HH the Dalai Lama.

photo: Yap Tse Ten Tashi

PREVIOUS PAGE:
 Founder President, Gyelse Palden Thondup Namgyal inspects the progress of construction work at the Institute. He was keenly involved in all aspects from construction to collection.

PAGE 24
 Probably the oldest known photograph of the NIT, this shows the scaffolded facade with the two front towers 1957-58.



Groomed by History & Tradition to Carry the Faith

For the people of Sikkim, this day will be remembered as amongst the most glorious of her history. Sikkim has embarked upon a mighty venture, the establishing of a Library and Culture Institute for Tibetan studies. That this venture should today be blessed, in the auspicious year of the Buddha Jayanti, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the supreme guardian of the Buddhist faith and re-incarnate of Chinrezi, was a thought beyond our expectation, but is realized before us all today to our unbounded happiness. Sikkim has, from her earliest history, occupied a special position in relation to her great neighbors, Tibet and India, on her Northern and Southern frontiers. Caravans in their continuous procession have, in more recent years, traversed the highways of Sik-

Address of Maharajkumar Palden Thondup Namgyal requesting His Holiness the Dalai Lama to lay the Corner-Stone of the Institute 10th of February, 1957

kim in their traffic of trade between India and Tibet. But these same highways have served, from earliest times, to carry more than articles of trade and commerce, they have served to carry also the more precious things of the spirit, the religious teachings of Saints and Sages, that will live after earthly things have long perished. Many are the sacred places of Sikkim that bear witness, to this day, to the sojourn of the blessed Padma Sambhava, Messenger and Carrier of the faith from its birthplace in India to the remotest fastnesses of Tibet. And many are the tales of Saints and Pilgrims who received shelter in this sacred land while pursuing their mission to spread the Faith. Sikkim's pride has been not in strength of arms or prowess in field of battle. The hearts of her people have been set ever on thoughts of religion, peace and gentleness, and it has been to the study and practice of the Faith that her greatest sons have devoted themselves. She is, therefore, by her history and her traditions, a fitting centre for studies and researches that call for an atmosphere of concentration and peaceful quiet.

The aims and objectives of the Library and Cultural Institute for Tibetan studies are already well known and require no detailed description at this time. There have been examples in history of great and splendid cultures disintegrating and dissolving for want of sustained and inspired leadership. Ideals and religious beliefs that have been the very life-blood of a people can lose their power for good through lack of true understanding of their essential value and meaning. And so also in the practice of our Faith in Sikkim, we find that the clear springs of the Master's teaching may be clouded and defiled through ignorance and apathy. It is that the essential Truth and practice of the revered Lord Buddha's teaching may be brought to light once more in their pristine purity that this Institute has been planned—that the Doctrine may be rediscovered in its purest essence for the Enlightenment and Liberation of the human spirit.

The story of the carrying of the Faith from Nalanda and the renowned centre of India through a chain of Scholars and Saints to the remotest retreats of Tibet has been traced as yet only in part and remains to be fully explored. It is fortunate indeed that Tibetan translations of ancient Sanskrit Manuscripts, whose originals have vanished for ever, are preserved to this day for posterity. The collection and study of such manuscripts, scattered far and wide throughout the Monasteries of Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan, will throw fuller light on the origins of Mahayana Buddhism and will help in the understanding of the essentials of the Doctrine.

In an age in which material things are often accorded more importance



Gyelse Palden Thondup Namgyal showing HH the Dalai Lama the blueprint of the proposed Institute. Standing next to him in white turban is Chief Engineer F.C. Jali. Rudramani Pradhan [first from left], the architect-cum-engineer, unscrolls the blueprint. Rinchen Lepcha, with camera in hand, was Sikkim's first trained native dark-room technician.

Photo: Yap Tse Ten Tashi

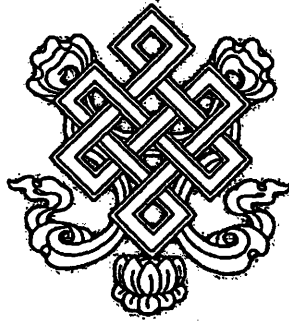


than things of the spirit, it is proper that Government should give due encouragement to Institutions devoted to studies for the enrichment of the human spirit. The Institute that is being established in Sikkim will make available ancient texts and manuscripts for scholars to study, and will also provide a forum for discussion of every aspect of the Doctrine amongst scholars from all countries of the world. For it is through personal contacts and the stimulus of personal discussions as much as through the study of texts that the truth can best be discovered and it is to this end that Seminars will be organized periodically to which scholars of Buddhism and Tibetology will be invited to propound their views and to make available for the common pool of knowledge the results of their individual researches.

The Sikkim Government has plans also for propagating the activities of the Institute through the publication of journals, and in course of time, through broadcasts on the radio, so that participation in this venture should not be restricted only to the countries neighbouring Sikkim but may extend even farther afield amongst all peoples for whom the study of Buddhism and Tibetology are of vital interest.

I have made mention of the carrying of the faith from its original fountain head in India to the remote retreats of Tibet and Sikkim. Sikkim is grateful to India for the assistance she has rendered in the shape both of finance and encouragement in the establishing of this Institute. To Shri Apa Sahab Pant in particular we feel a sense of gratitude for his sincere and helpful guidance. It is indeed in the fitness of things that India should, at this time of need, come forward to nourish and give fresh life to the faith that was the child of her flesh, and we are confident that the closer cultural contacts that will develop as between India, Sikkim and Tibet through the establishing of this Institute will enrich the lives of all their peoples alike, that the child will give support to the mother that brought it to light and that, in the course of time, the reunion will give birth to a newer life wherein the spirit will be purged of evil and be helped in its path to the great Parinirvana that we celebrate this year.

We shall be glad if His Holiness will bestow His Blessings upon this Institute. His Holiness has already indicated His interest in this venture by granting a set of valuable books and texts to form the nucleus of the Institute's Library. For this we shall ever be grateful. And our gratitude will be the deeper when this venture has been fulfilled and His Holiness will retrace His steps once more to our land, to see the tree that has grown from the precious seed that is being sown this blessed day and to taste its fruit that it is good.



This Initiative Excels all Others

*Your Highness, Political Officer in Sikkim,
leading officers and friends,*

While returning from India after having attended the Buddha Jayanti Celebration, I feel it a great honor and privilege to have been asked to lay the foundation of a new Library and Cultural Institute of Tibetology at this lovely spot in Sikkim. For this I am very grateful. As the sole aim and object, I have understood, of this Institute is to study and propagate the serene truth of Dhamma the world over, I offer my hearty congratulations. Sikkim, known as "Bay Yul Demo Jong" or the "Hidden Valley of Rice," has been a country where the Great Guru Padma Sambhava had sojourned and

Address delivered by His Holiness the Dalai Lama while laying the Corner Stone
of the Institute on the 10th of February, 1957

manism rendered much greater service towards appreciation of the philosophy of Buddhism than all the tomes of two generations of scholars, Asian and European. While the monumental findings of scholars could not go beyond academic circles, your summing up of Mahayana in a matter of a few paragraphs arrested the attention of modern mind in both the hemispheres. Thus, in your words "the Mahayana spread out in every direction, tolerating almost everything and adapting itself to each country's distinctive outlook".

Permit me, Your Excellency, to quote your words about Nagarjuna. "The power and daring of Nagarjuna's thoughts are remarkable and he is not afraid of arriving at conclusions which to most people must have appeared as scandalous and shocking. With a ruthless logic he pursues his argument till it leads him to deny even what he believed in. Thought cannot know itself and cannot go outside itself or know another. There is no God apart from the universe and no universe apart from God, as both are equally appearances. And so he goes on till there is nothing left, no distinction between truth and error, no possibility of understanding or of misunderstanding anything, for how can anyone misunderstand the unreal? Nothing is real. The world has only a phenomenal existence; it is just an ideal system of qualities and relations, in which we believe but which we cannot intelligibly explain. Yet behind all this experience Nagarjuna hints at something—the Absolute—which is beyond the capacity of our thinking, for in the very process of thought it becomes something relative" (The Discovery of India, Chapter V: Sec. X).

To you Hegel, Kant and Bradley had their precursors in the rGyan-Drug or six ornaments of Mahayana, namely, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dignaga and Dharmakirti. You told an astonished Western world that though "the approach was wholly different" Mahayana envisaged quite a few of the materialist doctrine of today, that some of the fundamentals of Marx, Freud and Einstein were not unknown to the master minds of Mahayana. You were not content, however, with an academic analysis of the intellectual heights of Buddhism. You laid equal emphasis on the Humanism of the Buddha and those Masters who trod the Path of the Enlightenment. For a world stunned under the impact of nuclear explosions, you drew a message of hope from tenets of the Buddha. For you the tenets of the Buddha

Previous Page:

Gyelse Palden Thondup Namgyal escorting Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru around the Institute under construction. Panditji was on his way to Bhutan via Sikkim, 1957.

L-R: Anon, Nakul Pradhan, Sonam Tsering, Kashiraj Pradhan, N.K.Rustomji (Dewan of Sikkim), Yap Tse Ten Tashi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Apa Saheb Pant (Political Officer), Rudramani Pradhan and Gyelse P.T. Namgyal.

are not so much for individual salvation as for the collective salvation of all. Tolerance, co-existence and way of peace enshrined in Panch Sila are the eternal tenets of Buddhism. At Sanchi in November 1952 and at Amritsar in February 1956 you drew the notice of the world to these eternal tenets. In 1956 November/December India under your leadership celebrated 2500 Buddha Jayanti-an event which will go down the history as Your Excellency's answer to Hiroshima, Bikini and all that.

Confident of Your Excellency's interest in Buddhist studies we here framed in 1955 a plan for an Institute on Mahayana culture and all arts and sciences associated with Mahayana and approached you for your blessings and patronage. You readily lent your moral support and recommended to the Indian Ministry of Education our request for an initial grant. Accordingly we received Rs. 2 lakhs towards the cost of the main building of the Institute and for purchase manuscripts and xylographs from Tibet. This grant was indeed as generous as it was prompt.

It has been our privilege to start the Tibetan collection with a handsome gift from His Holiness the Dalai Lama when he visited Sikkim en route to pilgrimage in India in 1956-57. These books are worth nearly Rs.40,000. When all our present orders for Tibetan books have been complied with, books costing about Rs.5 Lakhs will be in our stock. I do not want to tire Your Excellency with an enumeration of treasures of Tibetan literature and we will simply draw your notice to the little handout specially prepared for Your Excellency's kind perusal.

Besides all known Tibetan books - xylograph, manuscript of photographic copies - we intend to keep printed works in Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi, Bengali, English and other languages on the subjects of our interest. This we consider necessary for supplementing and checking up the informations available in the Tibetan books. Since our resources are small we have assigned low priority for the purchase of non-Tibetan books. In this connexion we are happy to tell Your Excellency that some academic organizations in India and other countries have informally expressed their desire to donate some of their publications. Visva- Bharati, of which Your Excellency is the distinguished Chancellor, is among these. It is pleasant to recall that under Tagore's guidance Visva- Bharati pioneered Mahayana studies in modern India. Indian Ministry of Education may also present this Institute with all Indian publications bearing on Indology and Tibetology. We received from the Political Officer in Sikkim a gift of books on the occasion of Saga Dawa (Buddha Purnima). The consignment though small was indeed the first such donation and marked a happy beginning. We have also promises from individu-

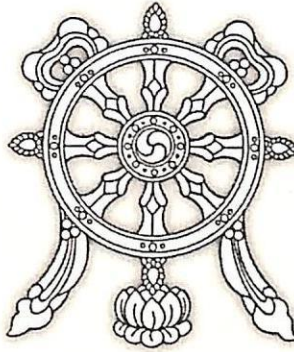
als. Our Dewan, Shri Rustomji, is also collecting editions of Avesta and standard works on Zoroastrianism for purpose of presentation.

We are given to understand that Indian merchants in Sikkim propose to make monetary contributions for the Institute.

It will be a grave dereliction of duty if we do not mention His Highness's interest in this Institute. Without encouragement and inspiration from His Highness, a devout follower of the Great Path of Enlightenment, a patron of arts and letters, our project could not have materialized in any way. His Highness has not only ordered for a provision of Rs.50,000 per year and made provision of capital expenditure to the tune of Rs. 2 1/2 lakhs but has also decided to make a gift in perpetuity of lands which contain the campus of this Institute. I have the permission of His Highness to announce that His Highness desires that the Institute being an academic and cultural organization should function as an autonomous body. A Charter to this effect will be promulgated on the Occasion of His Highness's forthcoming Birthday.

It gives us pleasure to tell Your Excellency that our project for study of *Mahayana culture and all arts and sciences* associated with Mahayana has *evoked wide and deep interest* in academic organizations in Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist countries. We have been promised, though informally, all aids in the form of books, loan of scholars and stipends or fellowship endowments. We thus look forward to building up a world centre of Mahayana studies under Your Excellency's patronage and His Highness's enlightened and benevolent guidance.

It has been extremely kind of Your Excellency to offer to open the Institute at this stage. As we have offered to open the Institute at this stage. As we *have informed Your Excellency, our target for completion of construction in hand and installation of Tibetan collection is towards the end of this month.* According to our *present schedule, language classes in Tibetan and Sanskrit* for non-Tibetan speaking and Tibetan speaking scholars respectively will be started this winter. The different items on our programme are undoubtedly ambitious. We most respectfully appreciate your kind sentiment in offering to open it now but do hope that you will come in the near future to see and encourage us when the Institute actually goes into functioning. We shall be in a position on that occasion to demonstrate that the initial grant of Government of India has been fruitfully invested. We shall also show Your Excellency the building complete with all murals and sculptures and stacks and other necessary fixtures-a testimony to skill and devotion of our masons, carpenters painters and craftsmen besides our engineers and architects. With these words I request Your Excellency to declare the Institute open and bless us with word of encouragement and advice.



Help Understand the Deeper Meaning of Things

FRIENDS,

You may remember that I came here about nine months ago, and saw this building in the course of construction.

At that time you asked me to come for the inauguration ceremony, and I gladly agreed to do so, because I consider it an honour and a privilege for me to be associated with this ceremony of inauguration of this Institute, which I entirely agree with you Maharajkumar, has a great future before it.

Then two or three weeks ago, when I was passing through Gangtok on my way to Bhutan you expressed some doubts, as to whether, this Institute will be completely

Address of His Excellency Shri Jawaharlal Nehru Prime Minister of India declaring the Institute open on the 1st of October, 1958

ready for the inauguration ceremony of this occasion. I am afraid, I pressed you to get it ready. And in any event an Institute of this kind, an institute of learning and research, is never finalised, it is a growing institute as knowledge grows; so waiting for it to be finished completely seemed to me not necessary. The real fact of the matter was that I was exceedingly anxious that I should perform this inauguration ceremony. And I did not know when it may be my good fortune to come here again. I am grateful to you for having, therefore, hastened and expedited this process and the ceremony.

Why, so anxious to be associated with this institute?

You have yourself indicated in your remarks, opening remarks, the interest I have had for a long time in the approach of Buddhism to many problems. You know well, that I am no scholar and I am only as a student, as an inquisitive person, trying with all humility to understand the problems of the age and seek to find some answers. Now what struck me, above all in the approach of the Buddha, is how eminently scientific-rationalistic it was. In this age that we live in today Science plays a dominant role, and no man may deny Science. And if he does so, he shows, if I may say so with all respect, his ignorance of the physical world. The physical world may not, be all, is not all, there are other worlds, or other realms of thought or whatever they might be but the physical and the phenomenal world we live in is there, and if we do not even seek to understand that, how will we jump over things and understand the deeper things of the spirit.

However that may be, the approach of the Buddha, as if I may say so, the old approach of the Vedanta was rationalistic and scientific and it called upon the people not to believe because they are told to believe but to experiment, to experience, to go through the path of learning, and thus understand the and realize for themselves what the truth of reality was. Thus Science today, in spite of the many difficulties, that its application has created in the many difficulties, that its application has created in the world-Science and the method of Science is the method of discovering truth, which naturally is limited largely to the physical world we live in. And yet even so, today Science stands on the verge of something, which is not perhaps of physical world. Indeed one cannot draw these lines today when matter and spirit become almost convertible terms: matter and energy. No man knows where matter ends and what is spirit. The old days of a limited Science are no longer there if that is so. What attracted me to Buddhism was this eminently reasonable logical scientific approach, not only to the things which we see and feel normally but the

Gyelse Palden Thondup Namgyal and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at a reception at New Delhi, Jan 26, 1960 to mark the tenth anniversary of the Republic.



Another handshake of an earlier time sealed the deal and made the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology possible. Panditji, himself a keen student of Buddhism, promised that the Government of India would match the grant of the Government of Sikkim to the Institute.

things of the spirit. Now at any time that would be a very interesting and important study. But more so I think today, when this very science, which I have praised before you has been exploited for evil ends, and may be exploited still more, and instead of being a benefit to humanity may well become a curse to humanity. Because Science is not human nor is it inhuman. It just sees things as they are. If the persons who use that Science for evil ends, well, it is a fault of those persons, not of Science. Just as the people who have used the name of Religion for evil ends and for exploitation and even for the shedding of blood have been at fault, not the truth that was embodied in that religion.

So, now in the world today, we stand at some kind of cross-roads, where perhaps in order to find a solution to the problems that the advance of Science and Technology has given rise to, we have to go somewhat apart from the normal approaches of the physical world. We have to go to some other realm, call it whatever you like, call it humanistic realm, call it realm of the spirit. We have to go to some other dimension of thinking, the third dimensional lines, we have perhaps to go to the fourth dimension. Already forces, enormous forces, have been released by Science which seem to go beyond the third dimension, and if man is to control them, or to understand them properly, then he must also begin thinking in other realms, in the fourth dimension or call it what you will. These are difficult problems and I am only a person struggling with great humility and difficulty at the threshold of these problems. It is something at least to realize that they are problems, most of us perhaps do not even realize that, and go on along the same route even though they know that path leads only to disaster. Therefore, in the world today, more perhaps than at any previous stage there is need for the message of the Buddha, for the scientific spirit of the Buddha and a scientific spirit allied to humanism, to compassion, allied to compassion and to love and not to those things which today appear to overwhelm the world, those passions, fear and hatred. It is right that we should remember that message today, it is right that we should study it fully in all its implications, and that we should have scholars sitting here in this Institute to do this work, and thus spread a greater understanding of that message.

May the blessings of the "Enlightened One" rest on this Institute and all of us, and lead us to the path of peace, and understanding.



The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

An oasis of learning, looming large on the map of Buddhist Studies—the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in 2008.

It's early morning and the bi-cable jig-back ropeway, grandiose name and all, is all set to swing over the rooftops of Deorali in Gangtok. Once sleepy old Dho-tapu, today Deorali is a bustling little settlement that is also home to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. Sequestered in serene natural environs, the Institute radiates an air of tranquility that belies its standing as a world-renowned repository of the collective knowledge of the four Sects of Mahayana Buddhism.

The NIT is a major draw for both scholars and tourists alike, espe-



cially since it boasts the lone proper museum in Gangtok. Built in traditional Sikkimese style with four towers, the Institute sports an almost monastic architecture reinforced by the predominantly brown and white hues that characterise most monasteries in Sikkim. The façade of the building has an old world charm that in fact wears the rather formidable reputation of the Institute with an easy nonchalance.

The ground floor of the Institute houses the museum, the entrance to which is liberally decorated with religious frescoes in vivid hues and flowing lines. Camera-toting enthusiasts will be sorely disappointed that photography is not permitted inside the museum. However, shutterbugs are welcome to pose in front of the Institute proper, while the nearby statue of Guru Rinpoche gazes outward from its elevated glass enclosure complete with pond and bridge.

The museum recently underwent a thorough overhauling for conservation purposes. It boasts an eclectic collection of ritual and art objects, rare manuscripts, thankas and icons that have already been researched and documented for posterity. A magnificent statue of Manjushri dominates the museum.

One flight up brings you to the Tibetan library where rows and rows of old manuscripts and pechas, religious texts, line the many wooden shelves, a treasure trove in entirety of the Buddha's teachings. In 1969, an American philanthropist donated a microfilming unit. An expert from the Library of Congress came all the way to the Institute to install the unit and teach Institute staff the essential fundamentals of microfilming. This much-coveted machine allowed the Institute to embark on the ambitious venture of microfilming its entire Tibetan collection, with the ultimate aim of not only preserving the entire collection in microfilm format but also making it possible for monks and scholars to be able to access any pecha or manuscript at very reasonable rates.

The NIT has also been able to acquire several rare xylographs from Tibetan monasteries and reproduce xylograph books

Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi offering a khada to the image of Manjushri in the museum. Silver Jubilee Celebrations, Gangtok 1983.

from blocks preserved in the Institute. A large selection of path breaking publications are available for sale at nominal rates in the Publication Sales Room on the ground floor.

The top floor of the Institute houses the

Ajanta Hall, which is where meetings and conferences take place. The Ajanta Hall is currently hosting the Institute's third historical photo exhibition. There are three tower rooms used for research purposes.

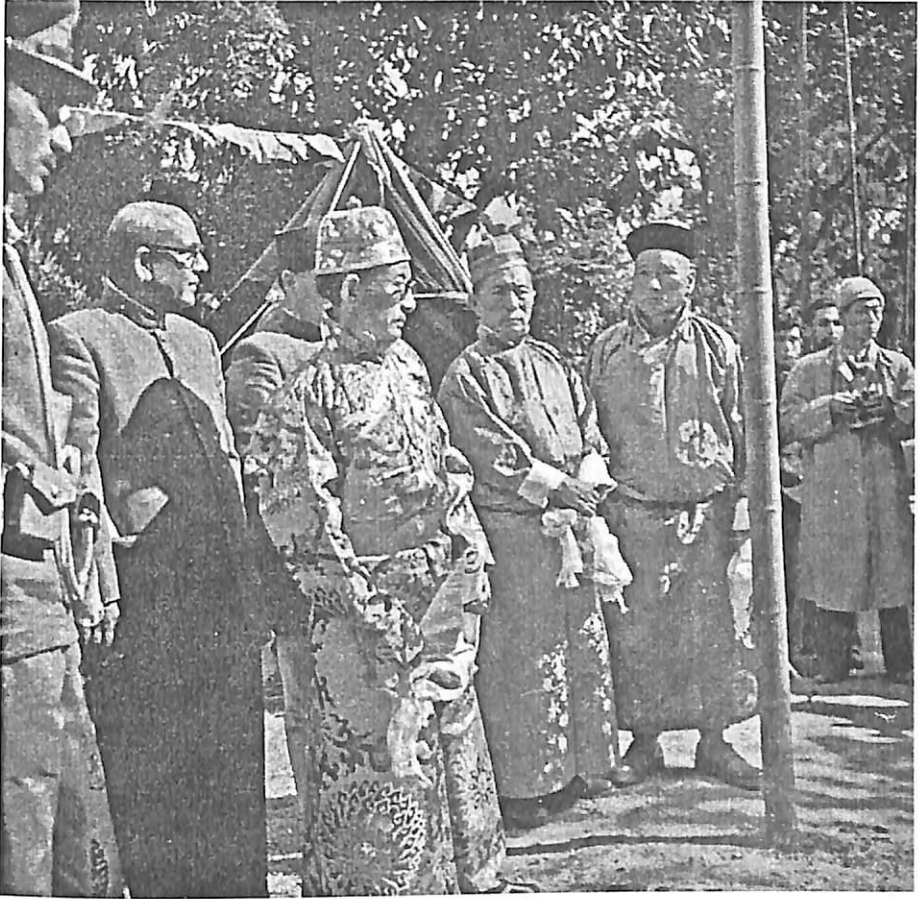
The General Library located elsewhere boasts of a large number of non-Tibetan books on various subjects of interest to scholars, researchers and other visitors in languages like English, Sanskrit, Pali, Burmese and Chinese. There are several books on the history, culture and religion of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim as well as journals and publications from several academic bodies and institutions.

The Founder Patron of the NIT, Chogyal Tashi Namgyal donated the land on which the Institute stands. He granted the Royal Charter of Incorporation, dated 28th October, 1958 whereby the Institute enjoys the status of an autonomous academic body with a General Council and an Executive Board as its governing bodies. The Institute is financed by the Central Government and the State Government on a matching basis. The Governor of Sikkim is the current President of the Institute.

While the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology was built during Sir Tashi Namgyal's reign and under his auspices, the catalytic driving force behind the Institute was actually his son Gyelse (Crown Prince) Palden Thondup Namgyal who felt the need for a central repository of the collective teachings of all the four sects of Buddhism, viz, Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug.

It must be remembered that most Mahayana monasteries and educational establishments belong to a particular sect of Buddhism and are wont to exclusively collect the teachings and literature pertinent to that sect only. Gyelse Palden Thondup Namgyal realized the inherent pitfall of such an exclusive system.

In his 12th August, 1960 address at the XXV International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow, he summed up the problem succinctly- *"As a result of this tradition, nowhere in Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet or Mongolia there is a single repository of literature pertaining to all sects and schools. Scholars of the outside world who spend a few months or at best a couple of years in a Mahayana monastery will form somewhat incomplete notions of Mahayana. This is neither conducive to acquirement of correct knowledge of Mahayana, nor in final analysis is in true interest*



of any particular Sect."

When he first broached the concept of a Library and Cultural Institute for Tibetan studies to his father Chogyal Tashi Namgyal, the Chogyal though a staunch Nyingmapa himself, readily consented to empower the proposed Institute to cover the study of the doctrines of all the associated Sects and Schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

The Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology thus came into existence with a unique aim to serve as a central repository of the literature of all the Schools and Sects of Mahayana Buddhism. His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso laid the foundation stone of the Institute on February 10, 1957. Twenty months later, on October 1, 1958 the then Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru declared the Institute open. Later the Royal Charter of Incorporation was amended to change the name of the Institute to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology.

Chogyal Tashi Namgyal at the foundation stone laying at the Institute. Also seen are Sonam Tsering and Rhelon Sonam Dahdul.

Photo: Yap Tse Ten Tashi

Interestingly, the Institute was not completely ready for its proposed inauguration. However, Nehru insisted on inaugurating it anyway arguing that he considered it a privilege to be associated with such an Institute and he was anxious to do the honours as he was not sure when he would be able to visit Sikkim again. The building was half complete, with only two front towers ready and the books purchased and gifted had not even been unpacked yet from the felt and yak hide containers. Yet Nehru delivered an impassioned inaugural speech and invoked the blessings of the Enlightened One on the Institute.

Gyelse Palden Thondup Namgyal was the Founder-President of the General Council. Under his able leadership and deep commitment to the cause of propagation of the Chhos, Chogyal Tashi Namgyal's patronage, the untiring efforts of others associated with the Institute and with Nehru's unstinted generosity, the Institute managed to overcome all teething troubles and establish itself as a centre of excellence for Buddhist studies.

In spite of a paucity of both financial resources and manpower to achieve the lofty ambitions it had set itself, the NIT was still able to build up one of the then three largest collections of Tibetan manuscripts and xylographs in the world, the other two repositories being the Institute of Peoples of Asia (Leningrad, Moscow and Ulan Ude) and the Toyo Bunko in Tokyo. The Institute benefited tremendously from the generosity of individuals and groups who gifted it books and artifacts. It also started a very successful publications programme and introduced some firsts to the publishing world.

Tibetology essentially pertains to the study of the 'Chhos' (Dharma) and the culture, arts and sciences associated with the Chhos. Previously the general notion subscribed to by most people was that Tibetan literature was almost entirely centered on Dharma, Tantra and Yoga- religion, magic and mysticism. The Institute's internationally circulated journal, the *Bulletin of Tibetology* contributed substantially to the outside world's understanding of Tibetology. Apart from removing the misconception that Tibetan literature is only or mostly religious, the *Bulletin* went one step further in revealing that Tibetology is, in fact, rich in other social sciences and covers an astonishing range of subjects of secular or material



interest. An eminent panel of scholars and researchers from all over the world contributed articles and insights to the *Bulletin of Tibetology* making it a respected publication in peer circles, a tradition that continues even today.

Physically too the Institute grew. The construction of the two rear towers with six rooms commenced in 1971 and was completed in the latter part of 1972, adding much needed space for the growing Institute. Staff quarters were also constructed on the premises especially for the lower grade staff. The Sikkim PWD was asked to construct one Class IV quarter, one Class III quarter and one Class II quarter during 1973-74, the idea being to work it up gradually.

The Institute had also built up a fairly representative collection of Mahayana iconography and art forms which led to the genesis of Sikkim's first and to date, only museum. Several scholars and researchers arrived from all over the world to study the Institute's collection of books and art objects and conduct research work in consultation with the Lamas of the Institute. They also helped the fledgling Institute with valuable guidance and suggestions. The Institute arranged language lessons for both Tibetan and non-Tibetan speaking

The triumvirate of Chogyal Tashi Namgyal, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Gyelse Palden Thondup Namgyal who were the three bulwarks of the Institute circa 1957.

