



at

**India International Centre, New Delhi**

Organised by

**Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal**

and

**Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh**

Buddhism has an ancient history that goes back to 2,500 years. During all this time, Buddhism has grown from a small religious fraternity in Northern India into a movement that is spread over the globe today. The remarkable vitality and adaptability of Buddhism has transformed the civilizations of India, South East Asia, Tibet, China, Korea and Japan.

Buddhism has slowly started making its presence felt in the exclusive European, Australian and the American cultures. Buddhism takes a very straight forward look at our human conditions. It profoundly influenced the philosophy and religion of India and specially of Western Himalaya. Culturally the Western Himalayas today is an amalgam of the Indo-Tibetan high religions of Buddhism and Hinduism, blended with unique forms of animism and local spirit beliefs. Here one may find the most ancient seat of Tibetan Buddhism existing in its original form (Tabo monastery). Tibet emerged as an important center of Buddhism in the Himalayas. The major influence of Tibet on Ladakh's religious culture is evident from the fact that Ladakh is part of the great Tibetan plateau and cut off from India by the formidable barrier of the great Himalayan ranges. Buddhism is the dominant form of the religion in Ladakh with a mixture of the animistic Bon faith and ancient Hindu practices.

Since last millennium Tantric cult has become dominant not only in Buddhism but also in all type of religions. This was the period of 84 Siddhas and Naths and also the reason for extensive impact of it in these areas. Tantric cult strengthened the ancient belief in gods and goddesses prevalent in this area and also played an important role in the assimilation and continuity of Buddhist culture. The Tantric tradition of Buddhism gave rise to unique art

and aesthetic sense in Tibet, Mangolia, China, Japan and Korea etc. a glimpse of which can be seen in the monastries in the form of ancient scriptures, wall paintings, depiction of different Mudras in paintings and various pots used in the rituals. All these attract tourists in large numbers.

The most attractive feature of the landscape of the Himalayas are the Buddhist gompas. These aesthetically pleasing and architecturally interesting gompas provide the focus for the faith of the highly religious Buddhist people. They are the places of worship, isolated meditation and religious instructions for the young. Beautiful paintings of the Buddha, Boddhisatvas, Dishapals, Dharmchakras and Mandals adorn the walls and the inner chambers of these exclusive gompas.

The importance as a religion lies primarily in its concept of kindness, humanity and equality. After four or five Hundred years of comparative stagnation, the present century is witnessing a resurgence of Buddhism in many parts of Asia. Brief mention must therefore be made of the stimulus which Buddhism has given to culture in certain Buddhist countries. After the decline of Buddhism in Tibet the Buddhist tradition of Himalaya is attracting scholars, researchers and students from all over the world. The people of this bordering area must also feel honoured that they are the cultural bearers of unique tradition of Indian culture. Keeping in view the important points and in order to address the various issues related to Buddhism Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal and Central Institute of Buddhist Studeis, Leh are jointly organising a national seminar entitled 'Buddhism in Western Himalaya' at India International Centre, New Delhi on September 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010. The major themes of the seminar will be as follows:

1. Geographical extension of Buddhism in Western Himalayas
2. Theoretical/ Philosophical basis of Buddhism in Western Himalayas
3. Buddhism in Himachal Pradesh
4. Buddhism in Ladakh
5. Tradition of Buddhist worship in Western Himalayan region
6. Problems and prospects in the continuity of Buddhism in Western Himalaya.
7. Characteristic features of Monasteries in Western Himalayas
8. Importance of Buddhist festivals in Western Himalayan region.

The last date for receiving abstract is 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 and for full length paper is 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2010. The email address is **buddhisminhimalaya@gmail.com**. This information can also be downloaded from this Sangrahalayas website, **www.igrms.com**.