

# Buddhist Heritage sites and Development of Tibetan Buddhism in Nubra Valley of Ladakh

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## Abstract

Nubra Valley is a sub-division of Ladakh that is located in north side of Leh. in the eastern side of Nubra is located Uigur Xianjiang, in the western is Gilgit Baltistan and in Northern side Central Asian Countries. the valley is 3000 meters above the sea level and surrounded by Karakoram ranges. Nubra was a separate kingdom from the rest of Ladakh until the 16th century, Due to several invasions from the Hor Uigur Xianjiang side, it was combined with Leh Ladakh during the reign of Tashi Namgyal in 16th Century and Kharpochey Khar was palace of nubra's king Tsewang Stanba and Later Ladakh's King Nima namgyal in 17-18th century. People in Nubra speak a dialect that is similar to Main Tibetan Language. Buddhist people practice Tibetan Buddhism which brought to the valley from Tibet. There are three larger monasteries in valley: the Disket Monastery, founded in the 15th century and dedicated to the Gelugpa Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, Samtanling Monastery, founded in the 19th century also dedicated to Gelugpa Tradition, and the Yarma Monastery is the Drukpa Kargyud pa Tradition. there are also lots of small monastery in the valley the mountainside that faces Panamik village is Antsa Gonpa Antsa means for isolated place is same age as Disket Monastery. There are numerous petroglyphs found in the valley depicting animals, humans hunting, and Buddhas. Deer, horses, and camels as well as various Buddha's sculptures and inscription on rock such as Mitreya Buddha, Wisdom Buddha, goddess Tara, vajrapani and various Stupa specially (kaganik Chorten) those rock inscription petroglyphs also found near by Places and Courtiers are sign of trade route and symbolize the practice of Tibetan Buddhism in early days.

There is two name for the Valley one is Nubra (ལུབ་ར་) in tibetan it means western Fence but it is not clear fence for which direction in the histories and other second name is Ldumra (ལུམ་ར་) means for garden which use in poetic to describe the valley as follower of the garden due to the more Vegetation and Flowers compare to rest of the Ladakh Nubra is sub division of Ladakh it has located 120 km from Leh and have to cross the Khardong La (pass) to enter the valley it is consider to be world highest motorable road it has 18380 ft from sea level. The valley is located in north side of Leh. in the eastern side of valley is located Uigur Xianjiang, Changthang, in the western is Gilgit Baltistan and in Northern side Central Asian Countries. the valley is situated 3000 meters above the sea level and surrounded by Karakoram ranges. There is two main river Nubra river which orginate from Siachen Glacier and second Shayok river confluence at Disket and continuously follow toward Gilgit Pakistan side later join to Arabian Sea.

The Petroglyphs found in the valley claim date to the bronze age (Quentin 2021) and also some like a foot print on the rock claim to the evidence of flying Monk Arhat Dajompa Nima Gung Pa who believe

to be arrived to the valley in 1-2 A.D from the Kashmir. There is also some rock curving of compassion, future. wisdom and power Buddha and some kind of stupas found in the valley.

Nubra was a separate kingdom from the rest of Ladakh until the 16th century, Due to several invasions from the Hor Ugur Xiangjang side, it was combined with Leh Ladakh during the reign of Tashi Namgyal in 16<sup>th</sup> Century (blo bzang bzod pa 1982)

The recorded earlier king of valley is Nima Dakpa whose reign is 15 century the king help to Stot Sherab Zangpo to introduce Gelug Pa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism to the Valley.<sup>1</sup>

Kharpochey Khar was palace of nubra's king Tsewang Stanba and Later it invaded by Ladakh's King Nima Namgyal in 17-18th century. King Tsewang Stanba also lived at Disket Palace which is still exist upside of Disket monastery now it turn to the residence of Disket monastery's abbot. The king Nima Namgyal keep different name to each household of Charasa and chamshen village according to their work and duty in Palace and for king such as Stavo was gatekeeper of Palace and Sang Thak Pa was wheat and barley flour maker for the Palace and Chebspon Pa was horseman of the King. People in Nubra speak a dialect is similar to Ladakh Language and it is part of Main Tibeto-Burmese Language family and Metok Ltanmo is main folk song singing during the flower blossoming in the valley.

Inception of buddhism to Ladakh generally start from 11 century onward when Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo came to western Tibet he built hundred of monasteries and translated lots of Sanskrit text into Tibetan.

The inception of Buddhism in the valley is difficult to trace and available record but there are some rock art of Buddhas in the valley those date and year are not available in the histories. The archeology survey of Nubra region dated the Buddhs rock curve form 8<sup>th</sup> century onward to 13th century.<sup>2</sup>

Among the Tibetan Buddhism Gelug Pa school of Tibetan Buddhism which is founded by Rje Tsong Kha Pa (1357–1419) and school is based on his teaching. Tsong Kha pa had three close disciple and other hundred of disciples expert in different fields among the disciple Stot Sherab Bzangpo was one of the tsonk Kha pa disciple who visited to the Nubra Valley in 15<sup>th</sup> Century and he introduce the basic foundation of the monastery (Bze Sum) in the valley with the help of Nubra King Nima Dakpa. The local historian claim that Disket and Antsa monastery laid foundation by Stot Shesrab Zangpo in 15<sup>th</sup> century.

And later one another monastery of Gelug Pa founded by Lama Tsultrim Nima in the valley in 19<sup>th</sup> century the monastery is situated upside of Kyagar village.

There is one another monastery is Yarma Gonbo monastery which is belong to Druk Pa Kargyud Pa school of Tibetan buddhism.

### **Disket monastery**

founded by Stot Sherab Zangpo in 1433<sup>3</sup> now follow the rituas, prayers and mask dance style of Tashi Lhunpo monastery of Tibet which is founded by 1<sup>st</sup> Dalai Lama. Before the 1959 when Tibet was freedom country monks of Disket monastery were go to Tashi Lhunpo monastery to study Buddhist Philosophy. Nubra's monk such as Panchen Lhatsun become the 6<sup>th</sup> abbot of Tashi Lhunpo monastery after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dalia Lama Gedun Gyatso. The monastery also has primary school up to class 5<sup>th</sup> after that monks go to south Indian monasteries to study Buddhist philosophy. The monastery has around 300

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid

<sup>2</sup> Quentin, et al, loc. Cit.

monks and three main Temple one is prayer hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> is temple for deities the main protector in the temple is (Palden Lhamo) and 3<sup>rd</sup> one temple has kept the Scriptures of Buddhism called Stangyur Lhakhang. down side of the monasteries there is huge statue of Future Mitreya Buddha it has around 106 ft.

### **Samtanling Monastery**

later in 19<sup>th</sup> century Lama tsultrim Nima founded another Gelug Pa monatory in Nubra Valley now it called Samtanling monastery the monk strictly follow the rule and regulation of Monks (Dulwa (Vinaya) such as not eating food after the noon etc. many Gelug pa Scholars visit to the valley which impact the Gelug Pa teaching in the valley Such as Dalai Lama visits six times to the Valley and Tashi Lunpo's Kachen Zodpa has given Kalachakra in 1970 in the Nubra valley. The monastery also primary school later monk goes to south Indian monasteries to study Buddhism. the founder of monastery has now 4<sup>th</sup> incarnation and his son's Sras Rinpochey 3<sup>rd</sup> incarnation was 102 Galden tri Pa throne holder who recently passed away in Ladakh.

### **Antsa monastery**

There is also one small monastery on the mountainside that faces Panamik village is called Antsa Gonpa, Antsa means for isolated place beside the temple the monastery has grown small forest and trees due to the existence of spring water. The monastery is same old as Disket Monastery of 14<sup>th</sup> century it's believe to be founded the Bze Sum (which is basic foundation of monastery) by Chang Sem Shesrab Zangpo. Later Ldanma Tulku and his wife who came to valley from Tibet expand the temples. Every spring at the monastery celebrate flower blossom festival called (Metok Ltanmo). One monk of the Disket monastery usually stays there to do day to day ritual and prayer and look after the monastery. Few monks from the Disket's monastery stay at the monastery for summer retreat and prayer and there was Mask dance perform during the Ldanma Tulku<sup>4</sup>. The nearby Panamik's villager financially support and help during the special prayer of the monastery and villagers also do labor work if there is some maintenance at the monasteriey.

### **Yarma Gonbo Monastery**

Gonbo monastery follow the Drugpa Kargyud Pa Tradtion the monastery is founded by Lama Perang Raschen who is born in Nubra Donsa and studied at Tibet later he return to the valley and founded the Yarma monastery<sup>5</sup>. monastery is branch of Main monastery of the DrugPa Kargyud Hemis monastery.

### **Charung Gonpa**

Once there was pandemic and lots bad luck occurred in the village when villager ask the 7<sup>th</sup> Panchen Rinpochey he recommend to built a monastery upside of the village for auspicious and to bring good luck thus monastery name become (Charung) <sup>6</sup>translate as can do or can built monastery. Inside the temple there is main statue of Tsongkha Pa and his close disciples.

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<sup>4</sup> Kachen zodpa

<sup>5</sup> Lamas and hermits born in Nubra valley | Onpo Urgyan Rigzin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI4LDXF9Jpw>

<sup>6</sup> Kachen zodpa

### **Charasa's Palace**

The palace was originally belong to Nubra Tsewang Stanba and later Ladakh King Nima Namgyal invade the nubra and make the palace his residence. there is also one relic of Nubra Panchen Lhatsun inside the one temple Palace. Panchen Lhatsun who studies in Tibet Tashi Lhunpo monastery and later become abbot of Tashi Lhunpo for 22 years after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dalai Lama (Lo Rgyus Rtsom Bri Tsoks Chung 2016) as mentioned above.

### **Snongtar Chamba and Lhang Kar Mar**

The two storey Mitreya future Buddha was built during the 6<sup>th</sup> Panchen Palden Yeshe (1738–1780) in Tibet the statue built with help of hunder villager and Disket monastery monk. Upside of the hill near the Mitreya Buddha there are two temple it called Lhakang Kar Mar in English white and red temple inside the Lhakang marpo there is three big statue of wisdom, compassion and future Buddha. In white temple there is big statue of Buddha.

### **Petroglyph**

The first is petroglyphs of Buddhas curve on rock at Digar village of Nubra is Manjusri (wisdom) buddha Vajrapani (power) buddha and and third one is Padmapani mention in the archaeological survey of the Nubra Region<sup>7</sup> but my understanding is that third buddha on rock curve is compassion Buddha (Avaloketesvara) because these three are mostly written or keep together in Buddhist monument called it (Rigsum Gonbo) and on left side of Buddha. there is lotus flower on the left side of compassion Buddha mostly therefore it is Compassion Buddha (Avaloketesvara).

And at the Tirit village inside the ruined wall house there is rock curve of future Buddha (Maitreya) , wisom Buddha (Manjursri) and Buddha and Bodhisattav identified by archeology survey of Nubra region<sup>8</sup>.

The Buddha on rock curve also found at Disket, Hunder dok and at Antsa Gompa these are rock arts similar to Tirit village and Digra rock curve.

And other petroglyphs found in the valley are stupa, hunting scene, deer, ibex, yak. Camel horse and human fighting each with archeries those are similar petroglyphs which are found around the central asian countries, and places like Xianjian, Baltistan and Tibet this petroglyphs show that there was good connection of cultural and trade with these places and countries in those early days.

### **Tibetan Buddhist spiritual Teachers visited and their teaching to the valley**

Stot Shesrab Zangpo Was first one who visited Nubra valley in 15<sup>th</sup> century and he introduce Gelug Pa school of Tibetan buddhism to the valley with the help of Nubra king Nima Dakpa. then Panchen Lhatsun who born in Nubra valley and studied at the Tashi Lhunpo monastery he was abbot of the Tashi Lhunpo for 22 years after 2<sup>nd</sup> Dalai Lama he was also appointed as abbot of Jalu monastery later he came to valley to preach the Dhamma now his relic is at Charasa Palace. It's claim that Lama peran Pa born in nubra and studied in Tibet later he back to valley and founded Yarma Gonbo monastery now it belong to Drug Pa Kargyud Pa school of Tibetan buddhism. Then in 4<sup>th</sup> abbot of thiksay monastery visited to the valley and built monastery of eight pillar with the help of Nubra king Tsewang Stanba.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Quentin, et. al. op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> Quentin, et. al. op. cit., pp. 33-32.

<sup>9</sup> blo bzang bzod pa, op.cit.. pp. 37-41

Nubra Pa Chospel Gyaltsan was born in Jasang family in Disket village of Nubra and he studied at Tashi Lhunpo monastery in Tibet and he became the abbot of Kilkang college of Tashi Lhupo later he returned to the valley and most of time in Nubra he was on retreat at Disket monastery in which period he was lived and his contribution to valley is not clear in the histories. Then Nubra Pa Kachen Lobzang Stodus also studied at Tashi Lhunpo in Tibet and later he returned to the valley and his time Snongtar Mitreya big statue was built<sup>10</sup> he lived during the Ladakh king Tsewang Namgyal (1753–1782) and 6<sup>th</sup> Panchen Rinpochey Palden Yeshe (1738–1780)

and in 18<sup>th</sup> century Lama Tsutrim Nima who established the Samtanling monastery with the help of Ka Jordan who belongs to ministry family in Kyagar village of Nubra valley. Then Kachen Zodpa visited to valley who preached Kalachakra in 1870 in Nubra he also introduced Morning Prayer at Disket Monastery.<sup>11</sup>

102 Golden throne holder Srang Rinpochey who 3 years and 3 months retreat at Samtanling monastery of Nubra and he orally transmitted to Dalai Lama.

Dalai Lama visited seven times to the valley first time visited in 1970 and last one visited in 2018 and he taught lots of teaching of Buddhism such as empowerment of compassion god Avaloktesvara, three principal aspects of path of Tsong Kha Pa, the foundation of all good qualities written by composed by Tsong kha Pa, The Thirty-seven Practices of Bodhisattvas eight verses of mind Training and Golden Lha Rgya Ma, praise to the Dependent origination of Tsong Kha pa and long life empowerment in the valley.

Those valuable and depth teaching of Buddhism impact to the way of thinking of the people in the valley such as Dalai Lama always advice to the people to be good and compassionate human being and have to be kind to all living beings and his teachings of secular ethics. As the result of those teaching people in valley help each other and there is no news of murder, stealing and robbing. People do fast and prayer and also believe in precious Buddhist teaching and remember those valuable advices of Buddhism. The older people always recite the mantra of Compassion god Om Mani Padmi Hung with the rosary and small prayer wheel in the hands to bring positive energy and compassion to mind and also pray to all living beings free from suffering as the result of the practice of Buddhist values and teaching people get peace, contentment and happiness. The individual mind's peace and happiness is depend on their practice of Buddhist teaching values. Individually people do meditation at their home but till now there is no mediation centre in the valley. Meditation centre or retreat centre have to open so the general public can practice mediation.

## Bibliography

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<sup>10</sup> blo bzang bzod pa, op.cit.. pp. 42-44

<sup>11</sup> blo bzang bzod pa, op.cit.. p. 47-49

4. Lamas and hermits born in Nubra valley | Onpo Urgyan Rigzin  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI4LDXF9Jpw>