

## NOTES & TOPICS

### IN MEMORIAM

Ven Rigzing Lharipa whose exquisite workmanship decorates the premises of the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology passed away in April last. Mr. Motichand Pradhan, a Founder Member of this Institute, passed away in May last. Obituary notices will be published in the next number of this *Bulletin*.

Professor Nalinaksha Dutt passed away in November 1973. It is regretted that no notice of this was made in the *Bulletin*. A notice is made now.

### PROFESSOR NALINAKSHA DUTT

Born on 4 December 1893 Nalinaksha Dutt passed away on 27 November 1973, that is, a week prior to his 80th birth anniversary. His was a life full of years and full of honours.

As an undergraduate student (Chittagong College and Presidency College: Bengal) young Nalinaksha Dutt had changed his interest from Mathematics and Physics to Pali and Sanskrit and when he graduated M.A. with a First Class First his talents were noticed by educationists like Sir Asutosh Mukherjee and specialist scholars like Mahamahopadhyaya Satish Chandra Vidyabhusan. Nalinaksha Dutt had taken a post in Judson College, Rangoon for teaching Pali and Sanskrit there. Asutosh Mukherjee persuaded him to return to Calcutta University and ordered relaxation of the Lecturer's routine to enable Dutt to pursue his studies in Buddhism. Dutt, now introduced to Sarat Chandra Das and Kazi Dawa Samdup, delved deeper into Sanskrit Buddhism since most of the Sanskrit Buddhist literature could be read in Tibetan translation only.

In appreciation of Dutt's researches in both the Schools of Buddhism, Calcutta University awarded him the Premchand Roychand Scholarship and the Doctor's degree. When Dutt sought admission to London School of Oriental Studies for D. Litt.—without the preliminary Ph.D.—he was readily admitted. The strict and honest British Orientalists also admitted that at the moment there was no British scholar equally wellread in both Pali and Sanskrit Buddhism and nominated the Belgian scholar Professor Louis de La Valle Poussin to be Dutt's guide. Dutt had to reside in Brussels for a good part of his time to sit with La Valle Poussin. A major part of Dutt's dissertation for D. Litt. (London) came out in 1930 as *Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism and its Relation to Hinayana*. This was a monumental work in the sense that the book set right the record of split in Buddhism—in both historical and philosophical sequence.

In preparing this book, *Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism*, Dutt had to defend his own readings and conclusions before a good number of Western scholars: R. L. Turner, L. D. Barnett, E. D. Ross, E. J. Thomas, Max Walleser, La Vallee Poussin and Th. Stcherbatsky. The last two, the greatest Western Buddhist scholars of the day, unreservedly admitted that Nalinaksha Dutt had rectified much of the Western notions about Eastern concepts and that they had profited from the debates with Dutt.

Nalinaksha Dutt, long before he held the Professorship at Calcutta University, was known as the leading Indian scholar in Buddhism. Among Dutt's later publications were *The Gilgit Manuscripts* (1939-59), *Pañcaviṃśati Prajñāpāramitā* (1934) and *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka* (1952). The value of these works is well-known to students and scholars of Buddhism. A note about *The Gilgit Manuscripts* may be made here. When Western scholars recommended by Sir Aurel Stein were pressing on the Kashmir Darbar for deciphering and editing the Manuscripts, the Dewan of Kashmir (Sir Gopalaswamy Aiyangar) located Nalinaksha Dutt as the most competent for this assignment.

Dutt held many offices with distinction. He was a Fellow of the Asiatic Society, was its Vice-President for several terms and was its President for a term. He was Senior Vice-President of the Mahabodhi Society for many years. He was Vice-President of this Institute from 1959 till 1973.

The Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology owes much to Professor Nalinaksha Dutt. He was not only the principal adviser and guide about our publications, he was an active contributor to *Bulletin of Tibetology*. While he was an MP (Rajya Sabha) he most warmly lent his support to our applications to the Government of India for grants. He is known to have spoken to the then Prime Minister (Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru) and the then Education Minister (Professor Humayun Kabir) recommending our research and publication programmes.

I had known him first while a student at Calcutta University and later more intimately when I took up studies on Inner Asia and Northern Buddhism. It was indeed a proud privilege to sit at the feet of Professor Nalinaksha Dutt and read the story of Dharma in India and abroad.

NIRMAL C. SINHA