Global spirituality – local development

*Studying the dynamics between spirituality and sustainable development in modern India*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamics between spirituality and development. The point of departure for the study took place in Rishikesh and Dharamsala, in India. Our main object was to examine the role of the Divine Life Society (DLS), in Rishikesh and the Tibetan government in exile, in Dharamsala, in terms of local development. To achieve a solid platform regarding the theoretical framework, relevant studies were made in Hinduism and Buddhism. The study shows that there is a connection between religion and development. Nevertheless, this connection is not unequivocal, hence, in comparison, the results shows differences between the two objects studied. The conclusion of this study is that although there is a connection between spirituality and local development, spirituality in itself doesn’t mean development.

Keywords: Dalai Lama, religion, development, Divine Life Society, fieldwork, India, local development, spirituality, Sivananda, Tibet, Tibetan government in exile, yoga,
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India is by many reasons a country with a strong force of attraction for future teachers in religious science. With its pluralistic cultural tendencies and its numerous religious expressions, the Indian subcontinent plays an essential role in the religious legacy of the world. Despite India’s richness regarding this, the nation is suffering. Colonialism has made a big impact on a sociopolitical level and this among other factors such as religion have contributed to distinctive class differences and a great need of tools to overcome poverty and inequality in the Indian society. Consequently, it has been of major interest to be part of a project examining the dynamics between religion and local development. Furthermore, without the help from others, the execution of this thesis would be impossible.

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Notes

The reader should be aware that certain terms in Sanskrit, Pali and Tibetan will appear in the text. Those terms which are not explained in the text will be clarified in the footnotes.

Glossary

Asana – posture, position/Patanjali’s 3rd stage
Asramas – the four life stages
Astanga yoga – the 8-stage yoga
Atman – soul, self

Bharatavarsha – India
Bon religion – Shamanistic worship of spirits in Tibet
Brahmachari – person who takes the vow of Brahmacharya (celibacy)
Brahman – the universal soul/spirit
Brahman II – the highest priestly caste

Crore – unit in a traditional Indian system of measurement, equivalent to 10 million, most commonly applied on rupees

Darsanas – philosophy, school of thought
Dharana – concentration/Patanjali’s 6th stage
Dharma Varnasramadharma – referring to the four life stages (asramas) and class adherence (varnas) of the male individuals which in turn define both his duties and rights.
Dhyana – meditation/Patanjali’s 7th stage

Japa – spiritual discipline involving repetition of mantra or name of God.
-jī – the suffix refers to an honorable person

Karma – means action, and refers to the consequences of actions. Fate, work.
Mahamantra – Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare...

Medicalization – term referring to beneficent health results due to yoga practice. The health aspects are emphasized

Niyama – self purification/Patanjali’s 2nd stage

Pramana – means for true knowledge

Prana – breath, vitality, energy

Pranayama – breathing technique/Patanjali’s 4th stage

Pratyahara – retreat from the senses/Patanjali’s 5th stage

Puja – worship

Raja yoga – “royal” yoga/Patanjali’s 8-stage yoga

Reincarnation – rebirth in the cycle of samsara

Rinpoche – “precious one”, honorable title within Tibetan Buddhism

Sadhana – spiritual practice, quest

Sadhak – spiritual practitioner

Samadhi – highest altered state of conciousness

Samnyasa – renunciation from the world, the ascetic stage in the asrama-system

Samnyasin – ascet

Samsara – cycle of birth and rebirth

Shaktism – worship of Goddess Shakti, the female aspect of the divine realm

Sivaism – worship of Lord Siva

Sramana – term for ascets belonging to the sramana-movement. Influenced the Vedic tradition. Buddhism and Jainism emanates from the sramana-movement.

Sutra – compressed and complex aphorisms intended to be learned by heart

Vaisnavaism – (see Vishuism)

Varnas – classification of the different jatis (casts)

Vishnuism – worship of Lord Vishnu
**Yama** – moral observance/Patanjali’s 1st stage

**Yoga** – means concentration but is mostly translated as “union”

**Yoga Sutra** – Patanjali’s work including astanga yoga, eight-stage yoga. Is the most significant work on yoga
1. Introduction

I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces."

India as we know it today emerged in 1947 as a result of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi’s firm and persistent political struggle. Since its independence, the political system has been targeted with a considerable amount of turbulence, due to the many ethnicities, social classes, religions and other preferences that embody the political structure in the country.

India has one of the world’s fastest growing economies with an ever increasing middle-class. Although this picture may seem bright, the reality shows another side of the coin. The fast economical development is characterized by an unequal distribution of funds between rich and poor states. Out of the 1.2 billion inhabitants, 250 million people constitute the middle-class. These are the ones that have managed to break away from poverty. Nevertheless, half of India’s population lives in the region of the “cow belt” and are considered to be the poorest of the poor with an average of less than USD 2 per day.

As the world’s greatest democracy, today’s India is vastly characterized by the imprint of three world-devouring religions: Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. In terms of development this is of high importance since religion is an authority you cannot neglect in India.

The religion specifies the right way. The religious scriptures are interpreted in different ways, but if the religion has the political authority in a society and the theologians are permitted to construe the religious texts, then these are empowered to decide what the right way is. In that way, religion specifies the framework for the development. Consequently, there is “no need” for other theories regarding development. [Authors translation]

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1 Gandhi Topia: http://www.gandhitopia.org/forum/topics/gandhi-vision-of-development Gandhian Vision of Development.doc 2010-12-06
2 Sida: http://www.sida.se/Svenska/Lander--regioner/Asien/Indien/Utvecklingen-i-Indien/ 20101206
3 Sida: http://www.sida.se/Svenska/Lander--regioner/Asien/Indien/Utvecklingen-i-Indien/ 20101206
4 Sida: http://www.sida.se/Svenska/Lander--regioner/Asien/Indien/Lar-kanna-Indien/ 20101206
Hinduism is a term that does not refer to a homogeneous religious tradition. On the contrary it is more feasible to describe this phenomenon as a pluralistic one. Nevertheless Hinduism, regardless of local or regional traditions, is characterized by a common denominator, namely **Dharma Varnasramadharma**. **Dharma Varnasramadharma** is a central concept in Hinduism, referring to the four life stages (asramas) and class adherence (varnas) of the male individuals which in turn define both his duties and rights. This Asrama-system was designed specifically by and for the Brahmans (the priestly caste) and includes four goals for each stage. The last stage is called the Ascetic stage (samnyasa) where liberation from rebirth (salvation) is focused. In this sense, class and caste are closely interconnected.\(^6\)

In contrast to Hinduism, Buddhism, that also emerged in India, does not embody the caste system at all, nor does it accept the Vedas as means to true knowledge, pramana.

Buddha neglected the high status of the priestly caste and redefined the term Brahman. The way to become a Brahman was through upholding an ethical lifestyle. The status of a human being should not be determined on the basis of inherent ritual status but on basis of her ethical attitude\(^7\).

[Authors translation]

Both Hinduism and Buddhism appear in different cultural expressions, this is explicitly manifested in India. The term “Hinduism” is only a couple of hundred years old compared to thousands of years of religious life on the subcontinent. Today one can find vishnuism (or vaisnavism), shivaism and shaktism among many other forms of worship; and even if one tries to categorize them, there will be further variety depending on different local contexts. In spite of this, we can here speak about several traditions within the same family.

Many of the Hindus who worship Shiva, Vishnu (or Krishna or Rama) or one of the goddesses in Hinduism, don’t think of themselves as shivaits or vishnuits. They don’t perceive their religious praxis different from other Hindus. A Vishnuite and a Shivait temple look mostly the same placed next to each other.\(^8\)

One significant part of the religious praxis in India is yoga. Yoga means “union” and refers to a spiritual practice with the purpose to unite man with God. As in Hinduism, the phenomenon of yoga robes the same pluralistic form. Furthermore, yoga has become one of the most

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significant contributions to the common religious legacy of mankind.\textsuperscript{9} Consisting of subordinate categories such as Asana, Ayurveda and meditation it has been recognized by many in the west as a means to revitalize and strengthen your body and mind.\textsuperscript{10}

Buddhism is derived from an Indian yoga tradition and emerged in the region around present-day Varanasi (Benares) and Patna (today in the state of Bihar) by the Indian-Nepalese border. The origin can be found in \textit{sramana}, an ascetic movement in the area. Adherents to this way of life practiced meditation, yoga and different exercises as means to gain insight, knowledge and mystical experiences.\textsuperscript{11}

As the teachings of Buddha spread, the Buddhism was influenced by the societies it came in contact with and therefore, it became modified due to the specific cultural framework. This was certainly the case when the emperor of Tibet adopted Buddhism. Before, the religious life was dominated by \textit{bon} on the Tibetan plateau. It was based on a shamanistic worship of spirits in nature. Furthermore, the bon-religion became integrated in the Tibetan Buddhism.\textsuperscript{12}

Yoga together with Buddhist meditation has developed into a global, private-religious phenomenon, attractive not least in the Western hemisphere, and ashrams and temples have stimulated what might be labeled a “religious tourism”. The religious situation in India is becoming more complex due to this fact. Hence, global tendencies interact with local religious life in a glocalized fashion.\textsuperscript{13}

One important idea in Indian religiosity is the concept of \textit{karma}. It can be translated to \textit{action} or the \textit{results} of one’s actions. Furthermore, karma lays the foundation for the \textit{reincarnation} (cycle of birth and rebirth) which is based on the law of cause and effect. In short, to every action there is a reaction. It is the karma from the present life that decides the character of the following incarnated life. Actions considered good generates good karma and those considered bad creates bad karma.\textsuperscript{14}

Give up all fruits of work. Do good for its own sake. Then alone will come perfect non-attachment. The bonds of the heart will thus break and we shall reap perfect freedom. This freedom is indeed the goal of karma yoga. \textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. P. 208-209
\textsuperscript{13} Collste Göran (2004 ): Globalisering och global rättvisa. Lund: Studentlitteratur. P 42
Swami Vivekananda (see quote), was an important figure in the familiarization of Hindu philosophy in the west. In Chicago 1893, he held a speech in the ecumenical conference *World parliament of religions* where he emphasized the unity of religions.\(^{16}\)

Karma-yoga is an essential part of the religious life, as it’s regarded as one of the divine paths leading to God. In Buddhism, karma basically plays the same role. Hence, the concept of karma becomes interesting, concerning sustainable development in the republic of India.

Sustainable development is one of our times most crucial issues and due to the altruistic motives behind the spiritual practice (karma work) and the vast religiosity in India, the relationship between religion and development is an aspect that cannot be neglected. Hence, we find it important to illuminate how these interact in local societies in modern India.

Furthermore, religion as a phenomenon is seen by many, not at least in media, as a stagnant factor in the development of today’s societies. Thus, our ambition is to contrast this picture by emphasizing two situations where the opposite predominates.

### 1.1 Purpose

The project plan is to examine the role of spirituality in modern India. It takes its point of departure in Rishikesh and Dharamsala. Both locations are central areas for religious practice of Hinduism and Buddhism. The study will stress two main objects, Sivananda ashram (*Divine Life Society*) located in Rishikesh, district of Uttarakhand and The Tibetan government in exile situated in Mcleod Ganj, Dharamsala, in the district of Himachal Pradesh. In both cases, the main purpose of the study will be to examine the role of religion and its influence upon the local population and its development, from the perspectives of class/caste, gender and ethnicity.

- In what way does Divine Life Society contribute to local development in Rishikesh?
- In what way does the Tibetan government in exile contribute to local development in Dharamsala and Mcleod Ganj?

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In what way do these two phenomena differ in terms of contribution to local development?
2. Background

2.1 Religion and development

Through the course of history religion has filled an oppressive role, not at least in India, where the caste system, designed by the Brahmans, still preserves existing class differences. Although, this empirical fact contradicts the original texts which the religion is based upon, especially the golden rule which appears in scriptures connected to all World religions.

Analects 15:23. Tzu Kung asked, ‘Is there any word which can serve as the guiding principle for conduct throughout life? Confucius said, ‘It is the word altruism (shu). Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.’

This quote from the Analects, an important Confucian scripture, shows the universality of the altruistic ideal in religious scriptures as the golden rule occurs not only in Confucianism but is generally regarded as a fundamental principle in human conduct.

Considering the importance of universal, spiritual values such as justice, mercy, truth, consideration, unselfishness, etc. it is easy to realize that any society, at any moment in time, prospers with these values actualized, both on societal- and individual level.

Despite the abuse committed by religious institutions the World religions’ scriptures are to be considered as pedagogical systems for human development.

Considering the effects of globalization, the population growth on earth, the lack of clean water, epidemics, climate changes etc the world needs new ways of thinking in order to develop a harmonic collective spirit in communities throughout the planet. Here, religion may contribute with positive effects on sustainable development.

17 See above “Introduction”
As mentioned in the introduction, India is a country afflicted by a vast number of issues connected to sustainable development. In the next chapter, yoga and Tibetan Buddhism will be focused as religious expressions in India.

2.1 A brief history on Yoga and Tibetan Buddhism

2.1.1 Yoga

In accordance with Hindu tradition, all living creatures (including plants and minerals) are bound to an eternal cycle of birth- and rebirth (samsara). Through yoga practice, liberation of the self from this cycle can be accomplished (moksha). Originally, yoga is a complex system consisting in physical and mental techniques to achieve salvation, which means avoiding the cycle of rebirth and ascend into the absolute and divine reality.\(^{22}\) Despite yoga’s centrality in ancient Hindu manuscripts, the scientific aspect has been emphasized since the first half of the twentieth century. Yoga is considered to be a science beyond religion and theology.\(^{23}\) The Indologist Joseph Alter states:

There is no theology [in yoga]. No ritual. Gods are disembodied and therefore powerless. The possibility of transcendence is dependent on Life itself, as Life is experienced through the body by a person who practices Yoga.\(^{24}\)

Yoga is one of the six darsanas (philosophical systems) in Hindu thought. It’s based on Yoga Sutra by Patanjali which is constituted by a number of philosophical aphorisms. These aphorisms are impossible to comprehend without commentaries, bhasiya.

The term yoga can be translated as union (from the root yuj “to yoke or join”). Mostly, it refers to the union between the individual spirit, jivatman, with the Universal spirit (Paramatman).\(^{25}\) On the other hand, the meaning of the term yoga, regarding the final goal with the practice, is an object of controversy. According to the most important commentary

on Yogasutra (Samkyapravacana) the term yoga is translated to *concentration* (Yogah Samadhih). Nevertheless, most Hindus preferably use the term “union” as a definition.\(^{26}\)

From a historical perspective, yoga is a relatively new phenomenon among the general public. Before the social changes of the twentieth century, yoga was confined (also in India) to exclusive male participation.\(^{27}\) The phenomenon spread throughout India from the 1930s; one crucial reason was the yogi Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888-1989) who is to be seen as the founder of what we today associate with yoga. During this time he was invited to teach yoga in Sanskrit College, Mysore, and in the following two decades he received support from the Maharaja of Mysore to establish yoga nationally. As a diabetic, the primary interest of the Maharaja was the connection between yoga and health. Therefore, the work of Krishnamacharya was dedicated to strengthen this connection further.\(^{28}\)

It is remarkable that the modernization of yoga took place internally in India during the beginning of the twentieth century. Hindu intellectuals refused to conceive of yoga in terms of religion, but conceptualized it as a strict science of the human body and mind. The purpose was to rationalize and concretize yoga, i.e. demystify the earlier religious ideas.\(^{29}\) This rationalization effectively contributed to its global dissemination, and the Western perception of yoga in terms of an alternative medicine (in certain circles). In short, there has occurred a *medicalization* of yoga. Furthermore, Indian discontentment with national modern healthcare has contributed to strengthening yoga’s position. Unlike the Western conceptualization of yoga in terms of alternative medicine, yoga in India is part and parcel of mainstream healthcare.\(^{30}\) The medicalization and the rationalization were deterrent factors for western intellectuals to be attracted by yoga.\(^{31}\)

Due to its cultural adaptability it is no longer feasible to ascribe any exclusive “ownership” of yoga to any specific culture or national identity. Yoga has made an imprint on cultures outside of India, since it is not perceived of as a threat to the integrity of other national or cultural identities.\(^{32}\) In fact, its cultural openness appears to be consistent with the


\(^{32}\) Chappel, Christoffer Key (June 2008):Modern yoga. Religious studies review. Vol.34 no2. P. 73
development of private religiosity and neospirituality, characteristic for growing crowds in the late modern West, and thus a partial factor behind the global popularity of yoga.\textsuperscript{33} 

The four life stages (as mentioned in the first chapter: \textit{Introduction}) culminates in the ascetic stage, \textit{sannyasin}, where yoga practice plays a central role in terms of salvation. In this stage, the man of the house leaves the family and concentrates on the highest goal in life, namely to unite with the divine, eternal God. 

The notion of asceticism pertains to a devaluation of conventional family life; the family is considered an obstacle for salvation.\textsuperscript{34} One central aspect of the ascetic life is yoga, and it can only reach perfection in this last stage. It should be emphasized that women traditionally are excluded from this spiritual aspect of life, and this affects their possibilities for yoga practice. Due to discontentment with these hierarchical and excluding structures, women have been more prone to take part in the process of modernization in India. Indeed, there are indications that women are departing from traditional notions self-sacrifice and obedience, for the benefit of a modern form of Hinduism which offer “help here-and-now” and gives immediate satisfaction.\textsuperscript{35} 

Concerning the tendency of medicalization in the West, Swami Muktibodhananda states:

\begin{quote}
This is the mistake that most yoga teachers make in the West. They just take a patient with arthritis, rheumatism or insomnia, teach him a few exercises and that is it. Hatha yoga has not been used to treat the total personality. This is why teachers are not able to raise the level of their pupils. Just to improve the physical health is not enough. The mental health must also improve, the nature must change, the personality must change, the psychological and the physical framework also has to change. You should not merely feel freedom from disease, but freedom from bondage and from the vagaries of the mind. Now, the time has come when teachers in every part of the world must understand and transmit the true spirit of hatha yoga.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

An important note about yoga is that the physical aspect has often been emphasized in the West, when yoga in fact is a complete system dealing with all aspects of life. This is particularly shown in Yoga Sutra, where one of the most famous traditions, eight folded yoga (Astanga yoga) is included. Astanga yoga is also stressed by Swami Vivekananda, an essential authority on Indian religion, in his wide spread book \textit{Raja Yoga – conquering the
internal nature. This text has indeed influenced the modern yoga today.\textsuperscript{37} Here, Raja Yoga is corresponding directly to Astanga yoga.

Raja-Yoga is divided into eight steps. The first is Yama – non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving of any gifts. Next is Niyama – cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study, and self-surrender to God. Then comes Asana, or posture; Pranayama, or control of Prana; Pratyahara, or restraint of the senses from their objects; Dharana, or fixing the mind on a spot; Dhyana, or meditation; and Samadhi, or superconsciousness.\textsuperscript{38}

Consequently, Asana (or posture), is but a fraction if one is to consider yoga as a holistic system. The first two steps, Yama and Niyama, precede the physical postures (Asana) and include ethical guidelines both towards the surroundings (Yama), and towards oneself (Niyama).\textsuperscript{39}

### 2.1.2 Tibetan Buddhism and Dalai Lama

The Buddhism is originally a form of Indian yoga. Buddhist yoga and the Hindu yoga that is presented in Yoga Sutra are closely related to each other. Furthermore, according to the Buddhist tradition, Buddha (566 - 486 B.C) was taught by yoga teachers who came to influence his teachings in meditation. The eight folded yoga (Astanga) in Hinduism has parallels with the noble eight fold path in Buddhism. Since Rishi Patanjali lived by estimate around 200 B.C - 300 A.D\textsuperscript{40}, it is plausible that the Yoga Sutra was created to bear a resemblance to the eight fold path in Buddha’s teachings. Yoga Sutra i.e. speaks of ceasing false knowledge (avidya) as the goal for yoga, in the same manner as Buddhism. Moreover, there is also a passage in Samkhyapravacana (a commentary to Yoga Sutra) almost referring to Buddha’s four noble truths:

1. The truth concerning the chain of reincarnation(samsara)
2. The truth concerning the origin of the chain of reincarnation (hetu)
3. The truth concerning freedom from reincarnation

\textsuperscript{38} Vivekananda Swami (2003): Raja Yoga – conquering the internal nature. Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama. P. 19
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid P. 19ff
The truth concerning means for salvation (upaya) 41

The history of Tibetan Buddhism can be traced back to Songtsen Gampo (616-650 A.D.), the ruler of Tibet who married two foreign princesses of political reasons; Belsa, from Nepal and Gyasa, from China. Both of them were Buddhists and they came to influence the religious life in Tibet. Before, the bon-religion had been dominating the area. Bon was based on a shamanistic worship to spirits in nature. Nevertheless, Buddhism came to incorporate already existing religious elements from Bon.

Even more significant was Padmasambhava (The Lotus born), a Buddhist master who travelled to Tibet and founded the first Buddhist monastery, Samye. He was invited by the contemporary monarch in Tibet, Trisong Detsen, the 37th in the lineage of the Yarlung dynasty. The situation became tense after the monarch’s passing, and a coup led by ministers faithful to bon caused the fall of the dynasty. Hence, Tibet was brought into anarchy for more than 400 years. However, as a result of the Buddhist renaissance in the 11th century, Buddhism became the dominating religion in Tibet. The wind of change came from India, and several Buddhist movements were solidified.

In the year of 1247, Mongolian warlords invaded Tibet, a land without central governance. The Mongolians came to influence the Buddhism and in turn, Buddhism was brought to Mongolia by the third incarnated leader of Gelugpa42 (a Buddhist school also known as the Yellow hats), Sonyam Gyatso. The Mongolian Khan was recognized by Gyatso as an incarnation within the great dynasty of Djingis Khan. As the Tibetans kneeled to the Mongolians, new religious bonds were tied and Gyatso got under the patronage of the khan. Hence, he was awarded the title Dalai (Mongolian translation of Gyatso). This was the dawning of the Dalai Lama institution. The previous leaders of Gelugpa posthumously earned the title. The alliance with the Mongolians was further enhanced by the fact that the 4th Dalai Lama was found within the Dynasty of the Mongolian ruler, after the passing of Sonyam Gyatso.

The Mongolian influence also played an essential role as the 5th Dalai Lama was appointed the spiritual and profane chief in Tibet in 1642. This historically significant occurrence implicated that Dalai Lama was in charge of the two highest leaderships in the country, a role that has remained until today.

42 The most significant of the four Buddhist schools in Tibet.
The title Dalai Lama means “ocean of wisdom” and is considered to be an incarnation of one of the most significant Boddhisattvas, Avalokitesvara. In turn a Boddhisattva is a human being that has reached the status of enlightenment but chooses to incarnate in order to help others to merge into Nirvana.

The present Dalai Lama, namely the 14th, was born in 1935 in the village of Tengster in the province of Amdo. As a member of an agricultural family with a fairly good economical status, he was given the name Lhamo Thondup. His brother Thubteb Jigme Norbu, considered being a *tulku*, was a reincarnation of a previous high Lama. After the death of the 13th Dalai Lama, Lhasa was engaged in finding his successor. During the wake the late Dalai Lama had turned his face towards east and hence this was a sign implicating that his successor was to be found in this direction.

Reting Rinpoche, the temporary regent had also received a vision of the house where the newborn Dalai Lama was to be found. Hence the oracle of the Nechung monastery was consulted, which in turn served as a medium to invoke *dharampal*, the guardians of the religion that possessed the power to provide directions of where to search. Thus, the house that was projected in the vision of the regent was found in the province of Amdo and so an entourage from Lhasa was there to visit the house. These are the words of his holiness Dalai Lama 14th:

> I have a very bright memory of this day. I remember many people coming to our place. I recognized many of them although I had never met them before. It is not my intention to make it sound dramatic but it was like I had never been away from that, as if I had seen it for a long, long time. \(^{43}\)

Yet again the emissaries from Lhasa came back to test the child and to see if ye could recognize some belongings of the predecessor. The three year old passed the test and was brought to the temple of *Potala* in Lhasa as the 14th incarnation of the Dalai Lama. At the age of six his education was initiated with reading, writing and grammar. Six years later, religious studies were implemented into his education. Meanwhile, political tensions had increased between Tibet and the great communist China in the east. Inter alia because of the Marxist line of thought that “religion is the opium of the people” and that the Tibetan religious leadership was considered to be corrupt, Tibet’s form of governance was not seen with puny eyes by the leader of the public republic of China, Mao Tse Dong. As a result of the invasion

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of Tibet by the people’s liberation army in 1949, a common symbol to gather around was needed. Hence the fifteen year old Dalai Lama was to become this symbol and Tibet’s political leader as well.

In a country that was threatened to be invaded from a very powerful nation, Dalai Lama was playing the role as the leader of the Buddhist community as well as the state chief. His holiness was obviously in grave danger as the situation in Tibet became aggravated. Thus, there was no other choice for him but to flee the country.

Everyone in the palace said that I must sally immediately. I was not convinced, I wanted to be there for the people and my country. Then they told me that being alive I could still play a vital role.

Approximately 86,000 Tibetans were killed only during a few days after the escape from Lhasa by Dalai Lama and his escort. On the 31st of March in 1959, after two weeks of riding in the barren mountain regions, they reached the Indian border. Dalai Lama and his family were granted refuge by the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that also participated in the Indian independence in 1947 assisting Mahatma Gandhi in the struggle for freedom. Ever since Tenzin Gyatso (Dalai Lama) had heard of him, Gandhi had posed a great ideal.

I deeply wished that I have had the privilege to meet him in life. But while I was standing there I felt as I had come close to him nonetheless. I knew he would have advised me to follow a peaceful path. I had, and still have, a firm belief on the doctrine of non-violence that he preached and practiced. With greater purposefulness I decided to follow his example, whatever difficulties were abiding. I promised to never stand behind any acts of violence.

Dalai Lama felt as he had come closer to Buddha now that he was in the holy land where Buddha was born and later practiced his spiritual path. Finally, Dalai Lama and the rest of the Tibetan entourage settled in Mcleod Ganj, a village situated in northern India, 300 meters above the city of Dharamsala at the foot of the mountain range Dhauladhar in the southwestern region of the Himalayas.

It was a shocking experience to arrive in a totally different environment, not only in terms of acclimatizing geographically but also adapting to new social, emotional, cultural and

46 “the white mountain range”
economical circumstances. Nevertheless there was no time to lament the horrible destiny that had afflicted the Tibetans in exile. In the year 1959, the same year of arrival in India, he sent an appeal to the United Nations, asking them to do a checkup on the situation in Tibet. This led to a UN-resolution urging China to venerate the human rights of the Tibetans and their preferences regarding independence. The aim of Dalai Lama was to democratize the government machine and to make the world-community aware of the problem in Tibet. But first and foremost, the preservation of the Tibetan culture, language and tradition was the prioritized undertaking at the given moment.

Despite the inhumane treatment the Tibetans had to go through, Dalai Lama unrelentingly continued to pursue his non-violence campaign from his exile residence in India against the great power China. Up until today no solution is agreed upon and China continues to withhold their appeal for independence. Because Dalai Lama is the nave in the Tibetan struggle, many believe that the Chinese government is awaiting his death. Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 1989 due to his systematical non-violence campaign. As a spiritual leader he was paid attention from all over the world and expectations on China letting go of its stranglehold on Tibet emerged. Nevertheless China continued to regard him as a separatist and thus they maintained their claim on the territory. Still the world-community observance of his holiness continued to increase and hence his trips abroad intensified after receiving the Nobel Prize.

In this particular context, the advancement of Buddhism in the west is by many reasons worth noticing.

2.2 Spirituality in Rishikesh and Dharamsala

2.2.1 Rishikesh

Rishikesh is located by the holy river Ganges in the district of Dehradun, Uttaranchal, India, within the region of the cow-belt. Rishikesh, also known as “the capital of yoga”, is an object for widespread pilgrimage. Many well-known gurus have resided in Rishikesh which have contributed to the spiritual aura surrounding the town. One crucial mile-stone in the history of modern global yoga is the visit by the popular group The Beatles in Rishikesh 1968,

See Introduction
which brought meditation and yoga-practice to a globally wide audience. Their guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi taught them Transcendental Meditation (T.M.) at his ashram, which made an impact on western open-minded recipients.48

2.2.1.1 Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Sivananda was born as Kuppuswami Iyer in the early hours of the morning on September 8th, 1887. He came from a renowned family of the Brahmin caste in Tamil Nadu, a district in southern India. As a child he distinguished himself through his unique emphatic abilities.49 When he later became a doctor, based on western medical training, he practiced in a pharmacy in Trichinopoly (Thiruchirapalli) for a period of time. There he also initiated a monthly journal called “The Ambrosia”, which was published for four years. Notably, the journal was written in English, the language that had characterized Dr.Kuppuswami’s education.

After an offer from a hospital in Malaysia, the youthful doctor decided to leave the pharmacy and go abroad. In Malaysia, he had a reputation of being a miraculous healer in his practice as he cured several cases which was considered as hopeless. Despite his demanding life as a doctor, he often took time to give charity to Sadhus, Sannyasins and beggars. In this way, he came in contact with his profound spiritual and divine mission.50 It also initiated his deepening in Hindu philosophy, counting Swami Vivekananda as an important inspirer. Through theory came practice and Dr. Kuppuswami approached yoga in his abiding-point in Malaysia. This led him to a crucial decision and after some time he returned to India, with a vision of renunciation from worldly life.51

His quest took its point of departure in Madras (present Chennai), the capital in Tamil Nadu. The first destination was Benares (Varanasi) where he envisioned Lord Vishnavath (an incarnation of Shiva, regarded as the lord of the Universe). In Benares he lived with a postmaster, who suggested Rishikesh for Kuppuswami’s Sadhana.52 So, he immediately got a ticket to Haridwar (approximately 32 kilometers from Rishikesh) and continued his journey

49 http://www.dlshq.org/saints/siva.htm 2010-12-22
50 http://www.dlshq.org/saints/siva.htm 2010-12-22
52 See dictionary above
by foot until he finally arrived in Rishikesh 1924. There he took the vows of *sannyas* in the presence of Sri Swami Visvananda Saraswati who gave him the name Swami Sivananda Saraswati. This event initiated a life devoted to deep meditation and social service.\(^{53}\)

From his dwelling in Rishikesh he had a written correspondence with addressees in Madras, who regularly received spiritual advice and ideas. Consequently, this created a number of disciples who eventually ended up in Rishikesh to live a life in the presence of Sivanandaji.\(^{54}\) Gradually, the number of followers increased to such an extent that Sivananda, in 1936, modified his earlier small ashram into an official group – The Divine Life Society.

### 2.2.1.2 Divine Life Society - Sivananda ashram

Yoga is not one-sided. Yoga is all-inclusive. It comprises physical, mental and moral education and culture in the higher spiritual sense. Yoga is spirituality in practice. Yoga is primarily a way of life, not something which is divorced from life. Yoga is life. Life itself, is Yoga. When thus it is linked to life, it lives. Yoga is not forsaking of action but is efficient performance in the right spirit. Yoga is not running away from home and human habituatic but a process of moulding one’s attitude to home and society with a new understanding.\(^{55}\)

The quote above illustrates Sivananda’s spiritual practice and teachings. He emphasizes the spiritual work – karma yoga (the yoga of action) – which is to be seen as the very foundation for all aspirants of yoga. As mentioned earlier, Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra point out Yama and Niyama as the first two steps in the practice of yoga. These two highlights the actions and the conduct of man. Hence, Sivananda ashram and its activities are based on this essential aspect of yoga.

The Divine Life Society was founded in 1936 (see above) in Rishikesh. Due to growing numbers of devotees coming to Sivananda at *Swar Ashram*, where he resided by the time, the limited space made it impossible to accommodate all seekers coming to Rishikesh. As a result, Sivananda and his procession moved from the eastern to the western side of the holy river Ganges.

\(^{53}\) [http://www.dlshq.org/saints/siva.htm](http://www.dlshq.org/saints/siva.htm) 2010-12-22  
\(^{54}\) See dictionary above  
Given the fact that there was no suitable place to stay and no available resources, Swami Sivananda and the people who followed him took up temporary residence in an abandoned cow shed. Later on, the Maharaja of Tehri would become aware of the struggling group of swamis, and he generously gave a parcel of land on which the Ashram would came to be located.\(^{56}\)

After one of Sivananda’s travels (where he led conferences in devotional singing, *sankirtan*, for example) he followed a suggestion that his rising ashram should get an official character. Consequently, DLS was established.

Today the Sivananda ashrams are to be found in different geographic areas both on the Indian subcontinent and abroad.

### 2.2.2 Dharamsala/Mcleod Ganj

Dharamsala is the residence of His Holiness Dalai Lama 14\(^{th}\) and also the home of The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). The town is situated in the district of Himachal Pradesh in northern India.

Green forests surround the little towns with the snow-covered Dhalaudar Himalayan range towering above. In 1848, Lord David McLeod, the English lieutenant governor of Punjab, founded the town of Mcleod Ganj as a retreat from the heat of the plains. After a catastrophic earthquake in 1905, which rendered the area virtually abandoned, the area was revitalized in 1960 by the arrival of His Holiness Dalai Lama.\(^{57}\)

Ever since Dalai Lama arrived, Dharamsala/Mcleod Ganj has been a trademark for Tibetan Buddhism in India. The fact that Tibetan Buddhism has spread across the world makes this little town in the Himalayas a hot spot for Buddhist pilgrims worldwide.

#### 2.2.2.1 Tibetan Buddhism

Tibetan Buddhism can be perceived as a syncretistic religion constituted of elements from different Buddhist directions such as *Mahayana*, *Vajrayana* and *Theravada*. Simplified, the monastic tradition is taken from *Theravada*, the philosophy and psychology from *Mahayana* and the meditation techniques comes from *Vajrayana*.\(^{58}\) As mentioned before, the pre-Buddhist religious life was dominated by worship of various spirits, gods and goddesses in nature.

\(^{56}\) [http://www.dlshq.org/saints/siva.htm](http://www.dlshq.org/saints/siva.htm) 2010-12-22

\(^{57}\) [http://www.twodhasa.org/about-dhasa](http://www.twodhasa.org/about-dhasa)

The state establishment of heterodox Buddhism in Tibet ensured that the worship of ancient gods and goddesses would gradually be supplanted by a new social and iconographical hierarchy, brought into being by the all-male priesthood of lamas, who soon were to hold political as well as religious power. With the development of various sects, amongst whom both political and spiritual rivalry grew, the monastic hierarchy sought to establish itself alongside the traditions of older beliefs where the lay aspect of religious life was emphasized. Monasticism, however, whilst dominant, never completely replaced these older ways, but was able to coexist alongside secular traditions, so that in Tibetans society both lay and celibate lamas held positions of great authority. In effect, only one out of the four major schools, consisted wholly of a monastic tradition of succession, and it was from this school, the Gelukpa, that the position of Dalai Lama as the political – spiritual leader of the Tibetans, evolved.59

Consequently, Tibetan Buddhism is commonly known as *Lamaism*. To achieve the status of a lama one must fulfill one out of two criterions; either through reincarnation or through many years of dedication to deep studies and meditation practice. A lama in society can be regarded as versatile – one can find parallels between the activities of the lama and those of the *shaman* in the bon-religion in many areas. First and foremost, the lama, as well as the shaman, acts as a link between the divine and the profane world. Furthermore, both have the ability to initiate their adepts into a life of spiritual mysticism and in addition, they possess the power to guide them through the process of reincarnation.60 In practice, the activities of the lama towards the followers could manifest through different services, he could “[distribute] medicines, perform acts of exorcism and divination, recite incantations, and undertake rituals with bone instruments and sacred objects.”61

The Tibetan Buddhism is not homogenous as it contains several various schools. The oldest one is considered to be *Nyingma*, which incorporates elements from the pre-Buddhist bon-religion such as magic features.

Every successor in the lineage of lamas in the Dalai Lama-institution is considered to be an appearance of Avalokitesvara, a significant bodhisattva and the guardian of Tibet. The term bodhisattva refers to a divine person who, instead of entering nirvana, stays in the profane world in order to help others evolve spiritually towards the common goal of bodhisattva-hood.

According to Mahayana (Great vehicle), one of the foundations of Tibetan Buddhism, all living creatures have a bodhicitta (or a “concept of enlightenment”) within, which energy can be resurrected by one and all. Thus, everyone and all are heading towards enlightenment.\textsuperscript{62} Buddha (Siddharta Gautama), the origin of Buddhism, was the highest model in bodhisattvahood. A popular way of portraying the bodhisattva-ideal is by illustrating Buddha’s descent from the Tusita heaven with an image “[…] of the bodhisattva, who full of compassion look down on the world.”\textsuperscript{63}

Since every creature is part of the same reincarnation-wheel, every kind of suffering we observe in others is something we’ve experienced ourselves. Therefore, one shall show compassion to everybody. The most of beings have also sometime during the karmic process of earlier reincarnations been closely related. Every other living being had once been our mother!\textsuperscript{64}

One more important character in Tibetan Buddhism is Tara, a female bodhisattva representing the mother of compassion. She is also known as the daughter to Chenrezig, the god of compassion. The symbolism surrounding Tara corresponds directly to the Tibetan religious practice, where compassion constitutes the very essence of non-violence.\textsuperscript{65} Furthermore, the female bodhisattvas reflect the gender aspect of Buddhism where tolerance towards the opposite sex is included in the idea of compassion. Hence, psychologically and philosophically, compassion lays the very foundation of Buddhist conception of life.

Prior to the Chinese occupation, Tibet was ecologically stable. Environmental conservation through human intervention was never felt before partly due to the sparse human population and partly due to the Tibetan way of life, which has been strongly influenced by spiritual beliefs in the interdependence of both living and non-living elements of the earth. Tibetans strive to live in harmony with nature. These beliefs are strengthened further by the Tibetan Buddhist traditional adherence to the principal of self-contentment: environment should be used to fulfil one’s need and not one’s greed.\textsuperscript{66}

Dalai Lama is seen as the prominent figure in the environmental cause, as well as the political struggle against China, the oppressor of the homeland, Tibet. Hence, there is no separation between the spiritual and worldly (read political) demands on His holiness.

2.2.2.2 The Tibetan government in exile

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has been in Dharamsala since 1960 and is frequently referred to as the Tibetan government in exile. It was established in Mussorie in northern India 1959 by His Holiness Dalai Lama. The current number of refugees in India is estimated to be around 100,000 out of approximately 2.5 million Tibetans in total. Although, Tibetans outside of India, those in Tibet included, regards the CTA as the genuine authority in the Tibetan community.

Right from its inception, the CTA has set itself the twin task of rehabilitating Tibetan refugees and restoring freedom and happiness in Tibet. The rehabilitation agenda includes three important programmes: a) promoting education among the exile population; b) building a firm culture of democracy; and c) paving the way for self-reliance so that the Tibetan people are able to survive with the self-esteem and confidence that flows from not having to depend on external assistance.67

The parliament is constituted by 46 members, 43 are chosen by the Tibetan public and the three remaining by Dalai Lama. The government in exile claims to be a free democratic administration and refers to all the required departments and independent features in their policy. Nevertheless, one must note CTA’s statement of not claiming a future power in Tibet. The highest chief, Dalai Lama, has pointed out that the administration will dissolve as soon as freedom is re-established in Tibet from Chinese oppression. The vision is that the inhabitants who are contemporary dwelling in the land will eventually establish a new government.68

Dalai Lama led the Tibetan Buddhist resistance without violence against the Chinese predomination during the second half of the 20th century. He has particularly accentuated Buddhism as a non-violent religion. It doesn’t mean that the Tibetan civilization has been peaceful as long as it has been Buddhist, but it indicates that Dalai Lama has been successful in elucidating

and bringing a Buddhist message to the fore, about not using violence, and that the thought has functioned as an identity-making strategy during Dalai Lama’s leadership.  

The Buddhist influence upon Tibetan governance is therefore a significant factor as the philosophy of compassion and non-violence is uttered to be a cornerstone in the political principles. Furthermore, the Buddhist view calls for a sentience in the relationship with nature and the ecological environment. Due to practice of meditation, the human being learns that she doesn’t need many things to be happy. Characteristic for Buddhist wisdom is the view on everything as unsatisfying and evanescent. The earth’s resources shows the same evanescence as our desires and with the awareness of the reciprocal movements of all living beings, including the earth, representatives claims Buddhism to be the most environment-friendly among the world religions.

2.3 Previous and further research

There is a large amount of studies made the last century on India and its religious life, especially Hindu- and Buddhist phenomenon. Concerning the relationship between religion and development, authors such as Meera Nanda in her work “The God market” deals with globalization and how religion is used as a tool to achieve wealth. Although the religion claims to be all-embracing, it is only a few people gaining economical benefits. Nanda proclaims that “India has over 2,5 million places of worship but only 1,5 million schools and barely 75,000 hospitals”  

Our project is different in the sense of illuminating the benefits of the local population from religious institutions. Nevertheless, Nanda has contributed to build a comprehension of the religious-economical situation in India today.

In the Buddhist comprehension of reality (see above), compassion is stressed as the highest virtue. This is emphasized in many articles derived from Buddhist authors, both in India and abroad. One example is an article written by Ken Jones named “Buddhism and social action – an exploration”  

The article stresses the social function of Buddhism and how the concept of

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72 http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/jones/wheel285.html#ref 2010-12-20
compassion is incorporated: “[…] Buddhism offers a unique combination of unshakable equanimity and a deeply compassionate practical concern.”

However, we have not encountered any research directly concerning our purpose. This shows that there is a need of exploring this subject further. One interesting and crucial aspect is the spiritual tourism in India of which Meera Nanda mentions in The God Market. How does the tourism connected to spiritual practice affect the local society in terms of sustainable development?

Furthermore, the aspect of health regarding yoga practice is of high interest due to the medical factors which were essential for the emergence of yoga in the West. What role does medicalization play regarding spiritual tourism in Rishikesh?

73 http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/jones/wheel285.html#ref 2010-12-20
3. Methodology

The study included statistic as well as verbal methods; this implied the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Aiming for an understanding of human life expressions, a hermeneutic approach was applied and was put in a holistic perspective. Interviews were made at Sivananda ashram, Rishikesh, and in the departments of the Tibetan government in exile, situated in Dharamsala, India.

The same method of analysis was applied on both locations. The respondents were represented by the administration and representatives from the different departments in Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, and the Tibetan government in exile. Primarily, the main purpose of the interviews and observations regarded the activities connected to contribution to local population in terms of social development.

3.1 Field Method

This study is based on fieldwork in form of interviews and observations together with literature studies. Gathering information in field demands a clear definition of the purpose and flexibility towards circumstances surrounding the methods of research. Here, it's necessary to reckon the cultural context; the researcher must attain open-mindedness in order to avoid pre-conceived conceptualization. Generally, this is of crucial significance while interpreting the collected material. Hence, a phenomenological approach has been an indispensable starting point.

The selection of respondents will be treated in the subtitle Interviews and limitation; selection and research ethics followed by a valuation of the observation method under the title Observations. Finally, the procedure in total will be explained.

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75 Ibid. P. 29
3.1.1 Interviews and limitations; selection and research ethics

The interviews have a semi-structural character where questions regarding our purpose have constituted the basic framework. From this starting point, subsequent questions depending on context and the interviewee’s replies have been chosen. Hence, a low level of standardization in the qualitative enquiries was preferred in order to allow the respondent to express her/himself as freely as possible.78

The dynamics between the interviewer and the respondent is characterized by the respective horizons of understanding; interpretations are made in both directions which may cause a certain degree of misunderstanding. This is an important aspect in the method applied and illustrates the process of understanding within the hermeneutic circle.79

The geographical limits of the project were set to Dharamsala and Rishikesh. Both locations have a religious legacy that has brought crowds of people globally to their attention. In Rishikesh, Sivananda’s charitable work is widespread and it is concerned with development issues in the region. Hence, the limit was set to only involve members of the Divine Life Society in the interviews. In Dharamsala, the Tibetan government in exile, led by highest chief Dalai Lama 14th, was focused since the government is in charge of the sustainable development. Therefore, concerning the subject in Dharamsala, they became the main object.

The selection of participants was based on the purpose of the assignment, and in agreement with the supervisor in India, Sunil Kainthola, Sivananda’s Divine Life Society was an object well fit for our preferences in Rishikesh. The general secretary of the ashram together with other influential characters participated in the interviews. Due to their deep involvement in the organization, they naturally became the primary source of information. In this context, the respondents are not confidential due to their public status as representatives from the Divine Life Society. The respondents are: Swami Vimalananda, general secretary of DLS and Swami Yogaswaroopananda, vice president of DLS.

In Mcleod Ganj (Dharamsala) we had the privilege to meet with Kjell Härenstam, a renowned professor and author concerned with the didactics of religious science at Karlstad

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University in Sweden. Thanks to this valuable source it was possible to carry out interviews within the Tibetan government in exile. As a consequence of the Buddhist background among the Tibetan politicians, the government becomes highly interesting concerning the dynamics between religion and local development in Dharamsala. The respondents are: Tenzin Norbu Norkhang, executive head & Dy. Secretary at the Environment & Development desk, Phuntsok Tsering at the Tibetan Settlement Office (paper recycling workshop), Tashi N. Rikha, Additional Secretary at the Department of Education and Topyal Tsering, Additional Secretary at the Department of Health.

Initially, the purpose and character of the project was presented unto the respondent together with the option of being anonymous. Henceforth, the basic questions were shown with the intention of giving the interviewee a level of preparation. Finally, before the interviews could start, it was necessary to receive the respondent’s permission regarding recording of the conversation. The participants were informed after the interviews about the publication of the thesis and guaranteed a copy send by mail.\(^{80}\) Worth noticing in this context is the verifying letter from SIDA, To Whom It May Concern, which was handed out when required and reassured the participant about the genuine intentions of the project.

The recorded audio files are available, To Whom It May Concern, at the authors’ archive.\(^{81}\)

### 3.1.2 Observations

Participating observation took place at Divine Life Society, both in the religious and the charitable activities. These observations were documented by camera and speech dictation device.

### 3.4 Procedure

The project started in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, with the consultation of supervisor Sunil Kainthola. From there the project headed towards Rishikesh where interviews and observations took place at Divine Life Society. During the assignment in Rishikesh contact was established with Professor Kjell Härenstam in Dharamsala. In Dharamsala interviews

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\(^{81}\) Please contact the authors in order to receive the recorded interview material.
were made at the relevant departments of the Tibetan government in exile. See maps in *appendix 1*. 
4. Results

In this chapter interviews and observations in and outside of Divine Life Society will be presented followed by the interviews made in the Tibetan government in exile.

4.1 Sivananda ashram

4.1.1 Swami Vimalananda

Swami Vimalananda is general secretary at Divine Life Society in Rishikesh. Consequently, he holds the highest position within the Society. He considers himself to be a karma-yogi, following the path karma-yoga. “For me, karma-yoga is my meditation; karma yoga is my japa /.../ all the actions /.../ I offer to thee as I worship”82

Initially, Vimalananda points out that Sivananda’s message weren’t only about meditation but also about the necessary preparation before engaging in spiritual practice. This is constituted by karma-yoga and to see God in every man. “Man is the moving temple of the divine, so, if you cannot see God in a man, you cannot see God anywhere /.../ before you go and offer prayer, first of all you must go and make peace with your brother.”83 The ideal is to always be the giver, not the receiver (Vimalananda shows with hand-gestures) and this statement is strengthened by the fact that Sivananda also was known as “Givananda”.

Henceforth, Vimalananda explains how the leprosy-colonies emerged when Swami Sivananda came to Rishikesh.84 One significant disciple to Sivananda and former general secretary of the Divine Life Society, Swami Chidananda (1916-2008), founded the Swami Chidananda Leprosy Relief Centre which together with Sivananda Home is funded entirely by the Divine Life Society. The leprosy relief center treats patients with leprosy while

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82 Interview with Swami Vimalananda. Divine Life Society, Rishikesh. 2010-03-30
83 Interview with Swami Vimalananda. Divine Life Society, Rishikesh. 2010-03-30
84 Ibid.
Sivananda Home takes care of patients afflicted by various diseases such as T.B. (Tuberculosis), HIV/AIDS and also leprosy.85

During the interview, some people from outside the ashram enter the room and receive lunch-tickets for the daily free food-supply, which occurs twice a day (11 a.m. and 11.30 a.m.).

4.1.2 Observation 1: lunch at Sivananda

“Each day on average 500 persons are fed, including the very poor. On feast days the number may be more than three times that much. Again, no fee is charged for the food service and no one is refused. The Dining Hall at the Ashram may be the only charitable kitchen in northern India providing unlimited food for any person who asks.”86

On the 30th of March the free lunch provided every day at Annapurna Annashetra (the dining hall) was attended. After entering the hall, the participants consisting of Sannyasins, Brahmacharis, Sadhaks, guests and workers took their seat in rows on the floor, with men and women in separate rows. Each participant was provided a thali (steel plate), with a cup for water and a bowl for dhal (lentils). Henceforth, the vegetarian meal was served together with chapattis (unleavened flatbread) while chanting the Mahamantra87 together with the 15th chapter from Bhagavadgita. The lunch is regarded as a holy activity which demands silence and reverence in every attendant, the only restriction is that you should not waste food. After eating, each one goes to wash their plates and thus makes place for following lunch-guests.88

86 http://www.sivanandaonline.org/graphics/information/sivanand_ashram/organisation.html 2010-12-21
87 See notes
88 Observation at the Divine Life Society 2010-03-30
4.1.3 Observation 2: Puja and Hanuman birthday celebration

During the visit on 30th of March a celebration of Hanuman’s birthday was held in the Sivananda Music Hall. A musical group from Tanjore Chennai, in the district of Tamil Nadu in southern India, was participating, playing to honor the god of Hanuman. “*The worship of Hanuman is a token of adoration to the principles of self-sacrifice and service, devotion and dedication, and absolute impersonal selflessness.*” In addition, throughout the day, several *pujas* were held at the ashram where people from the local area attended. The participation was free of charge and after the puja before noon the visitors received a small bowl of banana, raisin, chutney – stew together with an equal amount of basmati rice, also free of charge.

4.1.4 Swami Yogaswaroopananda, Vice president of the Divine Life Society

“*Mental freedom, voluntary service*”

Initially, Swami Yogaswaroopananda speaks about the significance of the river Ganges, both historically and to H.H. Swami Sivananda. But he also mentions the sanitary problems regarding the holy river: “/.../ because population increase and in upper streams all these things... So much pollutions, even in Gangotri, tourists become many, and they’re not keeping it clean. Population is too much, and sanitation become very less. Sanitation is not proper.”

However, efforts are made on a governmental level to clean the water from pollution in the *Ganga action plan*, but the problems regarding sanitation still remains.

Spiritually, Ganges is surrounded by mysticism, and Yogaswaroopananda put emphasis on the fact that the river has no beginning, no middle and no end. “*Yes, no one can discover where it starts, where it ends, and there’s no middle. And it is called Jnana Ganga wisdom.*” The river is also object for daily worship as in the *Ganga aarti*-program, where people gather to sing praises unto the goddess Ma Ganga (mother Ganges).

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90 Observation at the Divine Life Society 2010-03-30
91 Interview with Swami Yogaswaroopananda 2010-04-01
92 Ibid.
94 Interview with Swami Yogaswaroopananda 2010-04-01
Swami Yogaswaroopananda continues to explain how the Divine Life Society provided help for those afflicted in the earthquake 1991 in the region of Uttarkashi in northern India. DLS contributed with lodging and medicines for the affected people after the disastrous earthquake. Regarding the development of the local population, Yogaswaroopananda states:

Everything is free. And Swami Sivananda, his intention is: food, shelter and clothing is very, very important for all spiritual aspects. And that should be given to all. And local people when they come, in those days, there’s no hospital at all. He stayed [at the] other side [of Ganges] and being a doctor he can not sit in pose and meditate when the neighbour is suffering, and the pilgrims are suffering. And so, if you see the photographs, he used to carry the persons also and give medicines to them. And, then Swami Sivananda is known as Give-ananda! Because, he wanted to give /…/ not to /…/ but also for the mind. And [the] spiritual aspect also. And so, we give medical aid, educational aid, and also help the sick, poor and needy people. And also persons /…/ who come /…/ in the ashram, the speciality of this ashram: [there is] no charges for boding and lodging. And voluntary donations are accepted /…/ no charge at all.95

According to Yogaswaroopananda, 600 people come daily for the free food distribution, including beggars. Moreover, the Sivananda hospital provides medical aid to an average of 120 persons a day (depending on season) where the summer is the most intense period. There are four doctors working at the Sivananda hospital and an eye-specialist who comes twice a week and operates. Furthermore, an educational programme for boys exists within the DLS, where food, lodging, and fees are provided for. This is a chance for children born in poverty to receive education. All of the above is funded totally on donations.96

Finally, Yogaswaroopananda highlights the tolerance of Swami Sivanda towards other religions and women, as he was the first who allowed foreigners and women to take part in the spiritual practice in Rishikesh and thus set an example for other ashrams. “/…/ he saw divinity in everyone. That is the speciality of Swami Sivanda”97

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
4.1.5 The aims of the Divine Life Society

On the homepage of DLS one can read the aims of their activities. Direct quote:

I. To Disseminate Spiritual Knowledge

(a) By publication of books, pamphlets and magazines dealing with ancient, oriental and occidental philosophy, religion and medicine in the modern scientific manner, and their distribution on such terms as may appear expedient to the Board of Trustees;

(b) By propagating the Name of the Lord, and by holding and arranging spiritual discourses and conferences and frequent Sankirtans (singing the Lords name) or spiritual gathering for singing and glorifying the Name of the Lord;

(c) By establishing training centres or societies for the practice of Yoga, for moral and spiritual Sadhanas (spiritual practices) and the revival of true culture, to enable aspirants to achieve regeneration through worship, devotion, wisdom, right action and higher meditation with systematic training in asanas (postures), pranayama (breathing exercise), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (superconscious state); and

(d) By doing all such acts and things as may be necessary and conducive to the moral, spiritual and cultural uplift of mankind in general and to the attainment of the above-mentioned objects in Bharatavarsha (India) in particular;

II. To Establish and Run Educational Institutions

On modern lines and on right basic principles and to help deserving students by granting them refundable and non-refundable scholarships for doing research work in the various branches of existing scriptures and comparative religion, as also to train them to disseminate spiritual knowledge in the most effective manner;

III. To Help Deserving Orphans and Destitutes

By rendering them such assistance as the Society may deem proper, whether in any individual case or in any particular class of cases;

IV. To establish and Run Medical Organizations

Or any other medical institutions and hospitals or dispensaries for the treatment of diseases and dispensing medicines and performing surgical operations, etc., to the poor in particular and to the other public in general, on such terms and in such manner as may be deemed expedient by the Board of Trustees;
V. To Take Such Other Steps from Time to Time

As may be necessary for effecting a quick and effective moral and spiritual regeneration in the world and in Bharatavarsha in particular.

The Society was registered as a Trust in the year 1936 and has been actively functioning since then to fulfill the above aims and objects in the world. \(^{98}\)

4.1.6 Summary of the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh

The study shows that the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh is involved in numerous forms of projects connected to local development. In this context, DLS shows that their activities in Rishikesh have a unique character as the organization is run entirely by donations where all the funds go directly to charity in form of medical care, education, lodging, food, leper colonies and environmental projects.

Spiritually, the aim is to disseminate spiritual knowledge, based on Sivananda’s teachings. In this particular context, there are no restrictions regarding the applicant’s background, everybody is welcome regardless of gender, age, creed, social status, cultural- and ethnic heritage.

In conclusion, the activities of the DLS synchronize with their aims.

\(^{98}\) http://sivanandaonline.org/html/dls/dls/aims.shtm 2010-12-19
4.2 The Tibetan government in exile, Mcleod Ganj, Dharamsala

Here, the interviews with representatives from the different departments within the Tibetan government in exile will be presented.

4.2.1 Department of environment & development

Our desk, we have three main objectives, the former two objectives that /…/ for the past two years we are focusing much more, or giving attention much more /…/. And these are the environmental changes conditions inside Tibet, and second is development projects and development issues inside Tibet and the third is the environment conditions inside exile community, but that third topic we’ve been out of touch for a couple of years. We are focusing more on environmental factors inside of Tibet. Like environment changes inside Tibet, the conditions of the nomads inside of Tibet…things like that. 99

Norbu states early in the interview that the Environment and development desk deals exclusively with issues inside of Tibet.

What are the environmental goals?

/…/we have specifically last two years we’ve focusing on the climate change inside Tibet, the impacts of climate change on the Tibetan plateau. And in fact we have came out with one report and we participated in the COP15-meeting in Copenhagen. So myself and my colleague here, we went to Copenhagen-meeting. Not as a party-member, but we just stood under one NGO. So we were able to go there. /…/

Looking at the significance of Tibet’s environment, and these days it’s becoming very important to preserve the Tibetan environment. Not only due to the hydration of almost ten rivers, major Asian rivers starts from Tibet. And also because the Tibetan plateau is so high that it also effects the summer Indian monsoon in a way./…/So, all these development issues inside Tibet, especially the 2006, the construction of the railway from the China/…/So all this have drastic impacts on the cultural heritage of Tibetan people by inequity. Because they’ve been using this railway specifically of two main issues, one is they’re saying [China]it’s for tourism and development

99 Interview Tenzin Norbu Norkhang. Executive head & Dy. Secretary. Environment & development desk – Central Tibetan Administration
projects, but on the other side, all Tibetan communities are being marginalized, already they are very few people. And this railway somehow encourages the mass-migration of Chinese inside Tibet. And, looking at the technical aspects, railway is constructed more on like 70% on permafrost areas /.../ it’s a huge investment, without any proper future goal.¹⁰⁰

So how is this related to the Buddhist religion?

/.../ we are saying in Buddhism, we have this compassion /.../. So, if I may go back to your previous question when you’re saying “environment and the Buddhism”. You see, it’s all interdependent. Like /.../ it’s living or non living, this connection. So, it depends on you whether how to consider whether to respect that connection or not. Somehow, if you just take one step higher; we have this food chain and the food web you know, it’s all interrelated. So, if one connection is lost it will affect the entire system. In Buddhism we believe it’s more like a state of...you should live in the state in which you respect the other organisms whether it’s a human being or a small insect. Because, they have their own role; whether it’s big or small.¹⁰¹

What is the role of His Holiness Dalai Lama?

He always reminds us that he’s always there; it’s always good to keep His picture there. Cause he’s the head of the state. So, this day, or years, he’s been saying that he’s semi-retired, but [we] still respect him.¹⁰²

Norbu explains how the Tibetan government has put emphasis on the climate changes inside of Tibet and on the Tibetan plateau in recent years. Furthermore, he also mentions China as a political obstacle. Regarding the connection between the climate work and Buddhism, he refers to the philosophy of compassion within the Buddhist conception of life as a determent motivational factor. Hence, Dalai Lama is an important figure as he gives spiritual support in their day-to-day work.

4.2.2 Tibetan settlement office

This is our workshop where it starts, where it starts of recycling paper. So, the aims and objectives of the setup of this workshop is to clean Upper Dharamsala, to make it clean and more green /.../. So, it was actually, it was started in 1994 and undertaken by the Tibetan settlement office, which was under the Department of Home and at the central administrations. So, it was set up in 1994

¹⁰⁰ Interview Tenzin Norbu Norkhang. Executive head & Dy. Secretary. Environment & development desk– Central Tibetan administration 2010-04-07
¹⁰¹ Ibid.
¹⁰² Interview Tenzin Norbu Norkhang. Executive head & Dy. Secretary. Environment & development desk– Central Tibetan administration 2010-04-07
with the aims of…to give more awareness on the environment, and to save environment, and to reduce [the] cutting [of] trees, and to disseminate the knowledge of /…/our recycling project to the other Tibetan settlements and to maximize the recycling program. So, this was our…one of the aims…and second aim /…/ is to give a job employment to the Tibetans. Because there is so many Tibetans who arrive from Tibet, escaped from Tibet and they’re jobless. So we giving some special preference for the jobless, and we give a job to them in the workshop. /…/ we have ten workers in this workshop and all of them /…/ came from Tibet. There isn’t any persons who are born in India. So, all came from Tibet but, nowadays we are very hard to recruit the workers in the workshop due to some fluctuate in our salary /…/ some kinds of financial problems. /…/ because whatever income we generate here, it’s just direct goes to the salary for the workers. /…/ the workshop was started as a non-profit organization to save the environments. But to sustain this project we need /…/ some market to generate the income that we could distribute the salary for the workers. 103

Are the workers taught up here or do they have the proper education for doing this before they come?

/…/ in 1994 it was some like that…all our workers are uneducated. So, that time there isn’t any such a…kind of machines like that. This all were with the kind…and with the help of the IM (Individuell Människohjälp) from Sweden. You may /…/ know about IM. So, IM is our…second kidney /…/ they were very helpful for us, without their help we are not /…/ able to do /…/ these things and continue with this project. /…/. Today we are able to make seventy to eighty sheets per day, but at that time (1994) /…/ two or three sheets taken one day. So, it’s a very great change. So, that time there isn’t any such knowledge /…/ that time some of the workers were send to the training to how to make the paper /…/. So they’re uneducated but they’re very skilful minds. 104

We have been seeing a lot of garbage here in Mcleod Ganj, Dharamsala. In what way is this of concern for you?

/…/ if you see, if you look back in the past, like in /…/ late 80s the Mcleod Ganj is look very beautiful. The all are green, there isn’t any tourists much /…/. It is also the one of the exile home for His Holiness Dalai Lama, so /…/ many foreigners who visit here, and many Indian tourists were visit here and so many different kinds of people visit here. So, in a early 80s and if you look to 2000, there is a big change of populations, residents. There were more and more people came and settled down. Due to population, there’s more garbage. /…/ There’s more guesthouses, more restaurants, more shops. All this happens due to rising population. 105

103 Interview: Phuntsok Tsering. Tibetan Settlement Office, Paper recycling workshop 2010-04-08
104 Ibid.
105 Interview: Phuntsok Tsering. Tibetan Settlement Office, Paper recycling workshop 2010-04-08
Now, recently, in October 2, the Himachal Pradesh state governments have announced and have declared that now plastic is banned in Himachal Pradesh. If there is any person who find a plastic, they will going to fine and punish like that.

In our Green-shop we have a hundred percent boiled and filtered water where we are able to make the reduce of bottles, mineral bottles. People come and reuse the same bottle./…/ If you go to market /…/ mineral water you will be charged 20 rs. Like in our shop we are only charging 5 rs that we have boiled and filtered. This is also very good and reduces the mineral bottles. /…/ the aim of making the filtered water is not to make profit, just for to /…/ reduce the mineral bottles.106

Are you a Buddhist?

Yeah, totally!

OK, how does your faith relate to your aim of keeping the streets clean?

/…/ as a Buddhist, we have love and compassion /…/ on the street there’s so many /…/ garbage and plastics whatever you know. It’s all about the /…/ responsibility. In every religion may have this responsibility is important you know. First you think yourself, then you can do something for others. If you don’t take such a responsibility, then how are you going to point out other persons? If you do responsibility /…/ your problem, then you can able to make something for the world, for the environment, for other individuals you know; because the individual can make the difference. /…/ If individual persons take responsibility of…taking care of the garbage, taking care of the littering /…/, then something can /…/ happen, something can be changed.107

Is the Dalai Lama, His Holiness, related to this work?

Yeah /…/ even this project was a setup under the guidance of His Holiness Dalai Lama. His Holiness always says about the environment, saving environment, making clean environment, making it more green you know./…/ His Holiness always advice about the environment, saving environment. So, that’s our responsibility you know. Even /…/ our office, the Tibetan settlement office take the responsibility /…/. When His Holiness gives advice about environment, if there isn’t any organization who are going to do practical, then it is useless /…/ So, he give advice /…/ and Tibetan settlement office initiate /…/ this project.108

Phuntsok Tsering clarifies the recycling project in Mcleod Ganj and how it is designed towards enhancing the climate awareness within the Tibetan community. Furthermore, he accentuates the crucial support the project received from the Swedish organization IM

106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Interview: Phuntsok Tsering. Tibetan Settlement Office, Paper recycling workshop 2010-04-08
(Individuell Människohjälp) in the initial stage and how skillful Tibetan workers have carried out the work through the years.

The population growth, partly caused by the tourist influx, has also increased the environmental pollution. Consequently, the use of plastic is forbidden in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Therefore, shopkeepers give the customers their articles wrapped in newspaper instead of plastic bags. The Tibetan Settlement office also provide with filtered water as an attempt to constrain further environmental pollution. On the question regarding the Buddhist influence he also refers to the compassion aspect and the guidance of the Dalai Lama.

4.2.3 Department of education

What is your conception of the education level in Dharamsala/Mcleod Ganj?

I can speak for the Tibetans, I don’t know about the Indian children. Now, Dharamsala is the headquarters of the Tibetan exile community and majority of the Tibetans they don’t live here, they live in the different Tibetan settlements spread across India and some are in Nepal and Bhutan. Now, in Dharamsala, we do have a Tibetan community here, but most of the people living here are officials who work in the different departments here in the Tibetan exile government as well as we have schools here and other institutes and monasteries. So the people here are actually based in these settlements but they come to work here. So what we have here is generally officials and some local community Tibetan. So the majority of the people who are here are well educated. The Tibetans in Dharamsala, in comparative to some other Tibetans, are well educated. So, if you are talking about the education level, I must say it’s quite good here in Dharamsala. And we have schools here, a lot of number of schools here for both school children as well as colleges for grown up youth. So, in general, the Tibetans living in Dharamsala are very well educated.

How about the Gender equity, how do you approach this issue in terms of education?

This is one issue that we have recently come to our fore front. I must tell you that in the Tibetan community, since we came in to exile here in 1959/…/the question about male-female was never an issue because it was only Tibetan children. We did not make a difference between a male child and a female child. So all efforts for education was for Tibetan children. Today, this concept of gender is very good but I must tell you that we have been thinking of this much, much before. So we have never made a distinction between a male and a female. A child is a child whether its sex, it doesn’t matter. So all schools are co-educational. There are no schools only for boys or only for girls. We have only schools for children. So today, all children are admitted in to schools. For
further education, after they complete school it is upon whoever performs better that gets scholarships to go to further studies. So it is merit wise, it has nothing to do with gender.\textsuperscript{109}

Could you say that this philosophy is related to the Buddhism philosophy?

Yes, I think so, very much so. Because all human beings are the same.

In terms of higher education, are there more men than women who goes on to higher education?

At the moment, in our schools also, there are more girls than boys because girls seems to study better and there are less dropouts. Boys, somehow after a few years in school they would like to drop out and go to armed military or whatever. So, we have more girls graduating school every year. That directly impacts on the number of children going to higher studies.

We are wondering about the environmental education, is this a great issue among the teachers in terms of teaching the children about keeping the environment clean?

This is a very, very big issue now, even earlier also. For many years now, since we have come to India, there is a big effort to create eveners about health, environment, keeping the environment clean, even your own house clean. These are sort of things that, earlier, people were not too aware about but in recent years there is a strong movement regarding environment eveners in the Tibetan community. This, I also think applies to the other communities. And though the people, we do live in very congested areas in Mcleod Ganj and this is because the situation here, we are all refugees here. We don’t have ownership property of land where we can have our own land and build houses. So we don’t have any other alternative in these special circumstances. General eveners of environment regarding polluting the environment, growing trees and garbage disposal and less burning of wood/…/ that has come down tremendously…so this pollution, what it was 20-30 years ago and now, there is a very big, big difference. Even Dharamsala, this town here, what it used to be 20 to 30 years ago and what it is now…if the same thing happened…if the efforts were not made, today it would be almost impossible to live here because of the increased population and increasing motor vehicles. But today, even with the increasing population and recent motor vehicles, the situation is not bad because of the effort put almost 20-30 years ago. And today, people can still enjoy Dharamsala. Otherwise it would not have been possible.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{109} Interview: Tashi N. Rikha – Additional Secretary. Department of Education. Central Tibetan Administration. Dharamsala. 2010-04-11

\textsuperscript{110} Interview: Tashi N. Rikha – Additional Secretary. Department of Education. Central Tibetan Administration. Dharamsala. 2010-04-11
Do you think that tourism is a big problem regarding this environmental issue?

Not exactly, I think they’re more awake, there is something that /…/ India economically, really, improved, made big advances. So, more and more people are able to afford cars and…so, more and more tourists, who would once use the public transportation to come to Dharamsala, today have their own private transportation. And so, we have never had a traffic jam before, but today we have almost every second day /…/ everyday almost there’s a traffic jam in Dharamsala. So, that is something we’ve…something that is beyond our control. Everyone wants a car /…/ But even with that situation, I think Dharamsala is still a good place to be in, which would not have been possible if there was not this awareness movement created almost 20-30 years ago. That awareness is getting stronger and stronger, and more and more funds are being allocated for garbage disposal or for /…/ stop using polytene. Now, /…/polytene is banned in Dharamsala. You will not find many plastics here. So, they’ve banned plastics here. Even if you go to the stores, they will not give you plastics…to buy your groceries. So, this is one…it has had real good impact on the natural environment here. So, even in our education, though they have a subject called “Environmental studies”, Social studies /…/ Even beyond the day to day awareness which is very /…/ strong, and we have our health department here. And even in our schools and monasteries there is a strong effort…awareness being promoted to keep the environment clean.

What is the relationship between your philosophy on education and the Buddhist philosophy?

/…/. Our philosophy is generally to make a very good person. Education, the role of education, is to make the person a good human being, you know. So, the focus of education is not competition. It is not for the person…to find employment. Our education is not provide exquisite skills so that he can be ready to join a multinational company, that is not the focus of our education, our focus of education, whether you look at it spiritually or not, but, is to make a good human being. /…/good for himself and also good for the community where he lives, whether in India or whether in the Tibetan community /…/ or in a foreign community. So he would be a good human being that will contribute to the welfare of that community. So, the purpose of education is purely that. /…/ for that he needs communication skills /…/ not only /…/ verbally, but by writing and also he will be able to have other things like mathematics. So that he can be a good contributing member of the society. But not purely for cutthroat competition and in the process…harming other people has not purpose of education. So /…/ that could be also one of the effects orders for our religion, on the education.111

111 Interview: Tashi N. Rikha – Additional Secretary. Department of Education. Central Tibetan Administration. Dharamsala. 2010-04-11
Do the children get Buddhist education also in school?

Yes, there’s some aspects of that also given in the schools. Even during the regular school hours and after school…/

How about the religious studies in school, do they teach other religions as well?

Yes, our children are introduced to Christianity, to Islamic studies…so the children know a little bit of every other religion. Judaism, and in Christianity you have Protestants and Catholics. So, the introduction is there. So, that the student will have an idea of what Christianity is about, how it began and where it has been practiced, and likewise Islam, Judaism, and among Hindus also there’s something called Jainism here.¹¹²

The majority of Tibetans in Dharamsala are well educated, much due to the presence of the Tibetan government in this area. Regarding the gender aspect, Rikha neglects the differences among children, and explains that there is no division between boys and girls. All people are the same regardless of sex and gender. Nonetheless, he declares that more girls are advancing for higher studies than boys.

Concerning environmental studies, he states that there are some aspects of that and that the awareness is growing. He also mentions how tourism has brought more cars and transports to Mcleod Ganj and has caused traffic jams in the town. Consequently, the pollutants have increased.

4.2.4 Department of health

Can you tell us about your conception of health in general here in Dharamsala?

Well, see, this is the department of health. We are part of the central Tibetan administration. His holiness the Dalai Lama. He is one of the seven ministering departments. In Dharamsala we have this office and our health services are almost scattered in all the Tibetan settlements in India and also in Bhutan and also in Nepal. Here in Dharamsala we have one elevated hospital which Is Delek¹¹³ hospital just on the other side of the road. So this is one of the allocated hospitals in India. We have about eight hospitals and four family health centers. So, out of these twelve we have, in Dharamsala, the Delek hospital. Mainly, the health services includes quite a range of services…/.

¹¹² Interview: Tashi N. Rikha – Additional Secretary. Department of Education. Central Tibetan Administration. Dharamsala. 2010-04-11
¹¹³ http://www.delekhospital.org/ 2011-01-02
We also provide maternity healthcare, mother and child healthcare, and besides this we have also some programs for the disabled children as well as disabled people within our own community. And then we have this T.B control program which is also administered of/…/it has been managed side by side according to this Indian National Tuberculosis Control Program. We have some prevented measures also, not only for the T.B but also for the AIDS and then also for sexually transmitted diseases.114

What help can you provide in case of emergency?

Well, see, in emergency, our hospitals are out of Dharamsala, only the Delek hospital is here. We have the major hospitals in major settlements in south India. So we provide sort of first aid emergency treatments medical treatments but due to the manpower resources within our own community we have had some difficulties to have all the surgical services in all the hospitals but here in Delek hospital they also have, but not the major surgical departments are here within our own community. So all this we have to refer to Indian hospitals nearby.115

Can you tell us about the medical staff resources?

Medical staff resources means the medical doctors. It is very difficult to find a number of medical doctors within the Tibetan community because the medical doctors line itself is very competitive and on the other hand we have very limited seats which are reserved for the Tibetans within the Indian colleges. We have only 2 or 3 seats for the medical doctors. Because of this we have problem about Tibetan medical doctors. But though we can find Indian medical doctors /…/ to work within the Tibetan community. Then, we normally prefer a Tibetan doctor within our own community, you know.

What is your conception of medical development since 1959 up until now?

In the initial stages in the Tibetan settlements when the first /…/when the Tibetan refugees were working on the roadsides, on the road construction, in the very initial stage. That is from 1959 to -63,-65, like that. /…/Road Construction from Dharamsala /…/ up to the Manali, and Rohtang pass . then also in Sikkim, then also in Dalhousie, and Shimla /…/ During those times we also had tented camps /…/ they lived in the tents and tented camps. And during those times also that, the Tibetan administration has requested the Indian government for medical help. So, then, between two or three camps /…/of about 300 to 400 people in a camp. So, we have one medical camp. And during those times most of the medical personal are Indians, you know. That is being held by the

Indian government. And there have been some foreigners also, voluntarily worked for the Tibetan refugees. Then, slowly, in the late 60s and 70s then all the major Tibetan settlements come up. So, during those times /.../ in the settlements scheme, we have the provision of this school, also the hospital, and then also monasteries like this /.../ So, all this have been well schemed, projected in the /.../ resettlement-programs. So, during those times also /.../ in the initial stage most of the help starts, either by volunteers from outside of India or from /.../ the Indian community itself. So /.../ till the late 80s /.../ that has worked in that way. And after that /.../ in the early 80s, then the Tibetan /.../ our generation have come up from the schools, and then we got more medical staff, our own medical staffs. And then, those who have got general Gymnasium education /.../. They developed to a very good position now. /.../ till early 80s, there’s not any health department. So, the public health department is also looked after by the Home department and also the respective settlements. And later on /.../ in 1981 so, the administration has felt the need of a separate office or department, who’d look after the health of the Tibetan refugees. So, this department has come up in 1981, the youngest department you know.116

You’re providing help for the Tibetan refugees, are the Indians also welcome at your hospital?

Indians, and also if there is any foreigner, whoever comes there…everybody is welcome. Like here in Delek hospital, a lot of tourist from outside also comes here.

So, this is the only hospital in the region?

Yeah, in Dharamsala there are other hospitals bigger than this which is run by the local government, but this is the only Tibetan hospital, elevated hospital here, and its branch at Mcleod Ganj.

Is the health care you are providing connected to the karma-work and Buddhism?

Yes, it all depends upon the individual. Individual capacity as well as an individual society also. Ours as in Buddhist society naturally that is connected with that, and we have our own system, the Tibetan medical system. You might have heard about the Tibetan medical institution /.../ that is traditional Tibetan system. Tibetan medical institute over here… So, this is one of the earliest medical treatment process[es] which [were] started in the exile community. The Tibetan medical institution is being set off in the 1960s, I think /.../ early 60s. -60 or -61 it was started by His Holiness Dalai Lama, and then slowly it has developed and now at this stage, we have about 59 Tibetan medical branches, throughout India, Nepal and also Bhutan. /.../ In metro cities like Bombay, we have two Tibetan medical clinics. One is recently started, and then in Delhi also w have, then in Bangalore we have, then in Calcutta we have, then in Orissa there is one metro city

Bhubneswar. And in Nepal we have, in Katmandu. So, we have this Tibetan system which is /…/ getting more attractions from the western countries also. Our doctors, the Tibetan doctors they also visit Europe and also America and other countries.\textsuperscript{117}

You mentioned Dalai Lama, what role does he play in terms of health here in Dharamsala?

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the only person who could lead the Tibetans inside and also outside, you know. He is the religious- and also the political leader. So he remains /…/ on the top but he is not very much involved the health activities, in a day to day activity. But since he is the head of the institution, then all the advice and also guidance are given by him.

Can you tell us about the water and sanitation program?

Water and sanitation in almost all the Tibetan settlements we have water and sanitation programs. Now, these days in almost all the areas the water scarcity or the shortage of the water is being felt, throughout India. And also in Nepal and Bhutan…and maybe in Europe also, I think, because of the ecological changes. So, we are facing more and more challenges on this very particular…

Regarding success and failure, Topgyal Tsering, asserts that the projects initiated in India have been successful.

Like here in Dharamsala, we had this big water problem last year which was worse than this year. This year we have less problem, because you can see the snows on the mountain. Because of these glaciers we get during this, the worst season in Dharamsala is from February 2 to the mid of June. So, in the middle of June, then the raining season monsoon starts. Once the monsoon is started, then again we have water. And during this period about /…/ three, four months is the worst period in Dharamsala. /…/ so it all depends upon that. And in Dharamsala, we cannot expect any underground water /…/. There is no problem in getting water, the problem is sustainability. So, after two, three years it will automatically dry /…/ This is the only source, the surface water source which is from the glaciers. /…/ If the weather remains good then this is the only lasting source for water in Dharamsala.

\textsuperscript{117} Interview: Topgyal Tsering - Additional secretary. Department of Health. Central Tibetan Administration. Dharamsala. 2010-04-14

\textsuperscript{118} Interview: Topgyal Tsering - Additional secretary. Department of Health. Central Tibetan Administration. Dharamsala. 2010-04-14
Those who cannot afford any kind of treatment by their own, by themselves - that’s been looked by the Tibetan administration unit. And, /…/ if the local Indians also come to our hospital… there are few formalities to be done, like say that one has to certify here in Dharamsala. If a Tibetan who is not able to afford his medical expenses. Then the settlement officer here or the Tibetan Welfare Office, they have to certify the genuineness of the case. And then if it’s been approved, they will get free medical treatment.119

The Health department is also a part of the Tibetan government and governs health institutions within the Tibetan settlements throughout India. In Dharamsala, due to shortage of doctors, the Tibetans must sometime go to Indian doctors. Tsering also underlines the problem of getting Tibetan doctors. The Delek hospital is the only Tibetan hospital in the region which also receives Indian patients. The poorest of the poor are also included, where the genuineness of case to case is considered.

Concerning Buddhist influence upon the health department, Tsering mentions the ancient Tibetan medical system which is based on Buddhist thoughts. This is an important part of Tibetan healthcare today. The Dalai Lama gives guidance and advice concerning health as he is the leader of the Tibetan people.

Water and sanitation goes hand in hand, where there is shortage of water, there is also sanitation problems. The Tibetans are dependent on the climate conditions since the water is received from the mountains.

4.2.5 Interview Prime minister120

How has the Buddhist influence affected the local development in Dharamsala in terms of employment and standard of living (among Tibetans as well as Indians)?

Rinpoche: There is no direct employment and particular rise in the standard of living in the people of Dharamsala as result of Buddhist presence in Dharamshala.

What is your conception of development in Dharamsala (in general) since 1959 up until now?
– Was there any Buddhist influence before?

119 Ibid.
120 Interview (correspondence by mail): Kalon Tripa, Prime minister, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala. 2010-05-02
Rinpoche: In my view there is no single development in Dharamshala (McLeod Ganj) since 1959. There has been increase of population, increase in vehicles, increase of multi-storey buildings, and encroachment of unauthorised land. This is definitely a growth, but growth doesn't necessarily mean development.

Is social alienation a factor among Tibetans here in Dharamsala (Mcleod). In what way?

Rinpoche: I personally do not find or feel social alienation. But I have not surveyed or studied this matter so I am not competent to respond to your question.

What is your conception of other exile settlements in India (in comparison to Dharamsala) in terms of local development?

Rinpoche: All the Tibetan settlements in India established by Central Tibetan Administration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (CTA) were well planned and developed during last 50 years. Now the Settlements were self-sufficient and self-reliant. These Settlements cannot be compared with Dharamshala because Dharamshala is not a settlement camp. Unorganised individuals came and settled in Dharamshala on their own.

What role does His Holiness Dalai Lama XIV play in development issues in exile?

Rinpoche: His Holiness always inspires all the people in exile to contribute in their own development and he encourages donor agencies to help the Tibetan refugees. It is his vision and guidance through which CTA adopt four parameters for all the development projects in all the Settlements. The four criterion are:- All the development projects should be in adherence to 1. Non-violence 2. Eco-friendly 3. Sustainable 4. Benefiting/reaching out to the poorest of the poor. Thus he is source of inspiration for planning, development and financial resources.

What is your outlook in the future regarding employment and social development in Dharamsala?

Rinpoche: I have no outlook. Dharamshala in general and McLeod Ganj in particular is unmanageable. We cannot think anything to improve it. Regarding employment, I personally do not encourage anyone to find employer or seek employment. People must be self-supportive and self-sufficient.

What is your conception of the cooperation between the Tibetan government in exile and the Indian government, in terms of development?
Rinpoche: Until now, the entire development of Tibetan Settlements in India was being carried out with cooperation, collaboration and support of Government of India (GoI). Now gradually, these Settlements are becoming self-reliant so GoI financial and administrative support is phasing out almost entirely. As far as Dharamshala is concerned, neither CTA and GoI have any plan - individually or collaboratively - because Dharamshala is not a settlement camp organised by GoI, nor CTA gives any support to people directly in Dharamshala. They are on their own accord.

4.2.6 Summary of the Tibetan government in exile (CTA), Dharamsala

In the Tibetan Central Administration, the respective departments plans and implements various projects regarding local development, i.e. water and sanitation programs, medical care in Delek hospital, free medical care for the poorest of the poor, education and environment.

Furthermore, the study shows that there is an indirect connection between the Buddhist religion and political stance. The majority of the respondents affirm that there has been a development since 1959 up until now. However, the Prime Minister, Kalon Tripa, had a different view on the matter. Where the other respondents see development, the Prime Minister perceives growth, but not necessarily development: “There has been increase of population, increase in vehicles, increase of multi-storey buildings, and encroachment of unauthorised land. This is definitely a growth, but growth doesn't necessarily mean development.”

Nonetheless, the Prime Minister as well as the other respondents asserts that His Holiness Dalai Lama 14th plays a significant role as an inspirer and guide, both spiritually and politically, in their daily work. On all the locations where interviews have taken place, there has been a portrait of His Holiness hanging above your head. Thus, religion and politics correlates directly within the Central Tibetan Administration.

121 Interview (correspondence by mail): Kalon Tripa, Prime minister, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala. 2010-05-02
5. Discussion and conclusion

Undeniably, India is one of the poorest countries in the world and despite the independence 1947 it has severely suffered from the aftermath of British colonialism. Nevertheless, despite the poverty, India’s cultural and spiritual richness is manifested e.g. in the diverse religious expressions that have come to influence the religiosity in the world generally. This is apparent in, for example, the spreading of yoga philosophy (often as a way to reduce stress and calming the mind) and the attractiveness of His Holiness Dalai Lama in western societies. While writing, we are expecting His Holiness in Lund in April this year 2011. The bond between Tibetans and Sweden was created much thanks to I.M.’s (Individuell Människohjälp) aid during Chinese aggression in the 1950s. Ever since, the Dalai Lama has visited Sweden on various occasions.

5.1 Method discussion

In the process of the fieldwork, we encountered some dilemmas regarding the implementation of our interviews and the methods in general. Aspects such as cultural differences, the traveling between the locations, financial conditions and not at least the heat in the Indian subcontinent, forced us to make important decisions while carrying out the work. The decisions dealt with limitations among other things, due to the religious pluralism in India. For instance, we chose to only illuminate Divine Life Society’s beneficial work in Rishikesh and the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala/Mcleod Ganj. Divine Life Society has several ashrams across India, one of them situated in Kerala in the southern part of the subcontinent. Due to our economical premises, and the extreme weather conditions in Kerala during our visit, it became impossible to carry out well balanced interviews in that geographical area. Nevertheless, according to our own judgment, the interviews at Divine Life Society can be seen as authoritative, and thus representative for all Sivananda’s ashrams.

Due to our hermeneutic approach, enquiries of a quantitative character were excluded. The qualitative method was preferred as we were focusing on human life experiences. Consequently, interviews and participating observations turned out to be the most effective way in order to carry out the study.
5.2 Results discussion

- In what way does Divine Life Society contribute to local development in Rishikesh?
- In what way does the Tibetan government in exile contribute to local development in Dharamsala and Mcleod Ganj?
- In what way do these two phenomena differ in terms of contribution to local development?¹²²

Regarding the questions formulated in the purpose section above, the result shows that both Sivananda ashram and the Tibetan government in exile contribute to the local development. Nevertheless, there are some differences between the two locations, regarding the character of the beneficent work.

The Tibetan exile societies are unified by the common Buddhist legacy and the leadership of His Holiness Dalai Lama. So, the development issues in these communities do not only concern global warming, poverty etc. but also the preservation of the common Tibetan cultural heritage.

On the other hand, the Divine life society is providing classical aid for the poorest of the poor such as sustentation in form of food, lodging, medical care and education (including spiritual education).

However, a common denominator can be found the environmental aspects. In Divine Life Society we were guided through the entire process of book pressing in the printing shop. In a self-sufficient way, every single book was materialized here. Hence, transports issues and environmental pollutions are of no concern regarding the production of books. In the same manner, there was awareness in the ashrams urging the visitors to respect importance of maintaining a sustainable environment. This was manifested for example in waste containers all over Rishikesh town. Parallels can be drawn to the environmental work of the Tibetan government in exile due to the Buddhist conception of nature and thus sustainable development.

¹²² See Introduction
5.3 Final discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship and the dynamics between spirituality and sustainable development at two locations in northern India.

Religion, as a phenomenon, can be expressed in various ways. Recently, the debate in the West has focused destructive forces as a result of religious expressions. Violence, for example, is motivated by all World religions. In the fifth book of Moses, in both the Christian and Judean Bible, violence occurs explicitly as an ordinance from Jehovah and the Israelites is demanded to fight and slaughter the unrighteous for the one true God. Here is an example:

20:16 But of the cities of these peoples, that Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth; 20:17 but thou shalt utterly destroy them: the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; as Jehovah thy God hath commanded thee; 20:18 that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so would ye sin against Jehovah your God.125

In contrast, there is an aspect of religion which is rarely emphasized in media, namely religion and its influence on local development.

Rishikesh and Dharamsala are two locations with an immense influx of tourists due to religious attractions such as: yoga in Rishikesh and Dalai Lama (and Tibetan Buddhism) in Dharamsala. In spite of tourist business, the acute situation regarding development in India makes no exception for these two cities.

Unfortunately, though riding high on economic growth, India remains largely an unhygienic state plagued by tropical diseases and unsanitary conditions. Some 110 million households remain without access to toilets or with no safe way to dispose of human waste and many defecate in the open fields or near the water sources where they draw water.124

The quote above illustrates characteristic problems for India in general, where Rishikesh and Dharamsala are included. The article also highlights a report from the UN which proclaims the ironical fact that India has more cell phones than toilets. The sanitation issue is of concern for both the Divine Life Society and the Tibetan government in exile.

124 Chief Conservator of Forests, Punjab. The Tribune, Jalandhar, Wednesday, April 21, 2010
But in reality, spirituality doesn’t automatically mean development. Rishikesh i.e. is a city with great abundance of ashrams, whereby the Divine Life Society is the only organization we could find that provides an ashram true to its name, helping the poorest of the poor without gaining any profits. A local inhabitant in Rishikesh is very impressed by the activities of the Divine Life Society but is troubled by the business of other ashrams: “/…/if they’re charging for the yoga, I’m not very happy with this concept. Ashrams shouldn’t charge any money.”

Furthermore, he also confirms, through his own personal experience, that the Divine Life Society focuses primarily on the poorest of the poor, as his wife was refused medical health due to his economical status.

Still, spirituality has a determinant function in local development, in the sense of motivating good actions (karma work) which is applicable on both Hinduism and Buddhism. This is explicitly shown in the charitable activities of the Divine Life Society and implicitly in the work of the Central Tibetan Administration. However, the success from altruistic activities is in small proportion compared to India’s severe wounds from colonialism and today’s process of globalization. This doesn’t mean that this work is useless; on the contrary, it’s more crucial than ever.

In Dharamsala, the Buddhist influence is obvious and Dalai Lama is the nave that maintains the Tibetan communion both here and in Tibet. He is also the one who gives advices and guidance in development issues. Although he is an engine in terms of the development process in Dharamsala and other Tibetan communities, China’s oppression makes up an obstacle. It becomes apparent that this also constitutes an energy guzzler and thus the development issues don’t receive the attention it deserves.

Our own experiences in India confirm the fact that every help is needed, and the western tourist have a responsibility, not only towards the country and its culture, but also in terms of sustainability. This is can be illustrated by the Nongovernmental organizations in Mcleod Ganj where tourist and other organized volunteers have the possibility of contributing to educational activities such as teaching English to local inhabitants in the area. Regarding tourism and development, it’s a highly significant and relevant area where further research should be done. Does tourism contribute to local development or does it fuel the process of stratification in communities such as Rishikesh and Dharamsala?

However, the caste system in India, which is based on Varnasramadharma, was created with religious hierarchical motives. In other words, it was created by the

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125 Interview: Omprakash Nautiyal, local inhabitant Rishikesh 2010-03-30
126 See chapter 2: Yoga
Brahmans *for* the Brahmans. Hence, here we have a religious factor that contradicts the compassionate philosophy among religious practitioners and consolidates already existing social structures. On the other hand, the Sramana movement,\(^\text{127}\) which was the foundation for both yoga and Buddhism, turned away from this system created by the Brahmans. Here, it is necessary to make a distinction between religion and politics.

”/…/ if you cannot see God in a man, you cannot see God anywhere”\(^\text{128}\). This quote from Swami Vimalananda shows the essential view of man in Sivananda’s teachings. Divinity is within everyone. This is also naturally implemented in the Indian culture and the Hindi-language, where the most common phrase used to express greetings is “Namaste!” which means: “I bow to the divine potential within you”

\(^{127}\) See chapter 2: Buddhism

\(^{128}\) Interview with Swami Vimalananda. Divine Life Society, Rishikesh. 2010-03-30
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6.4 Interviews

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Interview (correspondence by mail): Kalon Tripa, Prime minister, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala. 2010-05-02
6.5 Observations

Observation 1: Lunch at Sivananda, Divine Life Society 2010-03-30
Observation 2: Puja and Hanuman birthday celebration at Sivananda, Divine Life Society 2010-03-30
Appendix

Map of India, Rishikesh and Dharamsala together with the participating observations in the Divine Life Society