



Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism

For Prelims: Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism, Reincarnation in Buddhism

For Mains: India's Tibet Policy, India China Relations.

Why in News?

The [Dalai Lama](#) has named a **US-born Mongolian boy** as the **10th Khalkha Jetsun Dhampa**, the head of the **Janang tradition of Tibetan Buddhism** and the **Buddhist spiritual head of Mongolia**.

- This announcement has brought attention back to the larger question of the **Dalai Lama's own reincarnation**, which is a civilizational struggle between China and Tibetans over who controls **Tibetan Buddhism**.

What is the Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism?

- **Buddhism Schools in Tibet:**
 - **Buddhism** became the **predominant religion in Tibet by the 9th century AD**. Tibetan Buddhism has four major schools: **Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug**.
 - The **Janang school is one of the smaller schools** that grew as an offshoot of the Sakya school. The **Dalai Lama belongs to the Gelug school**.
- **History of Reincarnation:**
 - The **cycle of birth, death and rebirth** is one of Buddhism's key beliefs, although early Buddhism did not organise itself based on this **belief in reincarnation**.
 - However, **Tibet's hierarchical system seemingly emerged in the 13th century**, and the first instances of formally recognizing the reincarnations of lamas can be found at this time.
 - The **Gelug school developed a strong hierarchy and instituted the tradition of succession through reincarnation**, with the **5th grand lama of the school being conferred the title of Dalai Lama**.
- **Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism:**
 - According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the **spirit of a deceased lama** is reborn in a child, which secures a continuous line of succession through **successive re-embodiments**.
 - Several procedures are followed to recognize '**Tulkus**' (recognised reincarnations), including the **predecessor leaving guidance regarding his reincarnation**, the **prospective child undergoing multiple 'tests'**, and other **oracles and lamas with the power of divination being consulted** before the final proclamation is made.
 - There are also procedures to iron out disputes, such as making the final decision by **divination employing the dough-ball method before a sacred image**.

What About India's Association with the Dalai Lama?

- India and the Dalai Lama have had a **long-standing relationship dating back to 1959** when

the **Dalai Lama fled Tibet and sought [refuge in India](#).**

- India has since been the home to the **Dalai Lama and the [Tibetan government-in-exile](#)**, providing them with **political asylum**, and has **supported the Tibetan cause for autonomy from China**.
- Over the years, India has taken a **diplomatic stance on the Tibetan issue**. India has also refused to **endorse China's position on the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama**, insisting that it is a **religious matter that should be decided by the Tibetan people themselves**.
- In recent years, **[India-China relations](#) have been strained**, and the Dalai Lama's presence in India has become a contentious issue for China.

Who is Dalai Lama?

- Dalai Lama is a title given by the Tibetan people for the foremost spiritual leader of the Gelug or "**Yellow Hat**" **school of Tibetan Buddhism**, the newest of the classical schools of Tibetan Buddhism.
 - The **14th and current Dalai Lama is Tenzin Gyatso**.
- The Dalai Lamas are believed to be **manifestations of 'Avalokiteshvara' or Chenrezig**, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet.
- **Bodhisattvas** are realized beings inspired by a wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, who have vowed to be reborn in the world to help humanity.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q1. With reference to Indian history, who among the following is a future Buddha, yet to come to save the world? (2018)

- (a) Avalokiteshvara
- (b) Lokeshvara
- (c) Maitreya
- (d) Padmapani

Ans: (c)

Q2. The painting of Bodhisattva Padmapani is one of the most famous and oft-illustrated paintings at (2017)

- (a) Ajanta
- (b) Badami
- (c) Bagh
- (d) Ellora

Ans: (a)

[Source: IE](#)