



ASIAN LEGACY LIBRARY

Snow on the Mountain

Newsletter

October 2023



John Brady locating
new collections in
Mongolia.

Imagine a Library as a Garden

We are building a library to preserve the wisdom literature of Asian cultures for the benefit of future generations. In a rapidly changing world exposed to globalization, the roots of traditional cultures can be easily severed. While we welcome the advancements and affluence that technology can offer, we understand that for societies to flourish in an authentic manner they need a strong connection to their heritage. This heritage is like the enriched soil where new generations can grow and apply new styles and ideas.

Imagine a library as a garden where the human spirit can find its own deepest treasures, a carefully curated space where we can engage in dialogue with the most brilliant minds of history. One strolls through a grove of fragrant flowers or ancient fruit trees and finds there, even now, Buddha Shakyamuni, Zhuangzi, or perhaps Shankaracharya teaching to a crowd of eager listeners.

It is only because people have maintained libraries in the past that the possibility that wisdom offers—to achieve our highest potential—is presently available.

This is why we take our job very seriously. ALL is an expansive digital repository that facilitates scholarly inquiry and practical application of South and East Asian literary gems. We are committed to rendering these texts to be accessible in contemporary formats and to supplying tools that facilitate their study. Our true accomplishment lies in the transmission of the wisdom and values encapsulated within these texts.





John Brady meeting with Otgonbayr Otgoo, a master woodcarver and friend of Baasaa Lama, the abbot of Erdene Zuu Monastery, Mongolia. April, 2023.

Our task faces great challenges. Our process begins with locating rare texts housed in ancient monasteries or remote collections worldwide. These texts are then cataloged, digitized, translated, and made available through a network of alliances with local communities, scholars, and tech professionals. Although this requires a great deployment of resources, it allows us to make a positive impact on the communities that have long been the custodians of this priceless wisdom. We take pride in having imparted technological and linguistic knowledge to hundreds of individuals, a significant number of whom are women.

Creating a library is akin to cultivating a garden: it requires diligent effort, but it is also a joyous and meritorious act. For knowledge, once unlocked and shared, becomes our collective wealth. We rejoice in being able to help keep wisdom alive during these trying times, and we share any merit that might be accumulated with all of you.

John Brady
Executive Director



ALL Projects

The Asian Legacy Library (ALL) operates globally, and is in partnership with seven preservation centers.

We employ 74 people worldwide

85% of whom are women.

We collaborate with the following preservation centers in Asia:



In Mongolia:

The Erdene Zuu Monastery Library, the Ganden Monastery Library, and the National Library of Mongolia (NLM).



In Nepal:

The Nagarjuna Institute of Buddhist Studies (NIBS).



In India:

The Varanasi Preservation Center, the Hunsor Preservation Center, the Bylakuppe Preservation Center, Tenzin Dickyi Larsoe (TDL) Preservation Center, and the Kerala Preservation Center.



With team members based around the globe, ALL's home office is located in Sedona, Arizona.

These multi-disciplinary teams contribute diverse skills to the preservation process, including scanning, inputting, cataloging, and making accessible preserved materials. Each project embodies a distinct cultural identity that deserves to be understood and honored.

Rediscovered Buddhist Heritage at Forefront of Cultural Renaissance

ALL is honored to partner with Erdene Zuu Monastery in a historic initiative to preserve the precious literary heritage of Mongolia. Our collaboration safeguards important texts and empowers local communities by granting them access to their rich literary tradition.

Mongolia is experiencing a fresh wave of optimism as communities reconnect with their spiritual roots, finding solace and guidance in ancient teachings. The nation's social fabric is mending, and there's a palpable sense of a cultural renaissance underway. At the heart of this reawakening is Mongolia's rich Buddhist heritage, epitomized by Erdene Zuu Monastery, a testament to perseverance, faith, and resilience.

Erdene Zuu, or Hundred Treasures, was founded in 1589. Located in Mongolia's southern province of Övörkhangai, it is the oldest surviving Buddhist monastery in Mongolia. While possession of Buddhist books posed great danger in the twentieth century, as an act of devotion, monks and local people secretly protected the books they could manage to hide. This library collection was consolidated in 1990 after the fall of communism.



Lama Gongor, Head Librarian of Erdene Zuu Monastery, working with manuscripts.





In 2023, ALL initiated a partnership with Erdene Zuu Monastery to digitally archive its entire collection and to create a network for preserving local texts. ALL provides training, support, and tools for Erdene Zuu's team to digitize their collection and safeguard books in remote family homes and small monastic libraries across the country.

During a recent visit to Mongolia, the ALL team joined dozens of people from across Övörkhangai Province who had gathered to circumambulate the temple with the library's books cinched to their backs or held against their chests. This act honors the books and their contents, and also brings the community into contact with the holiness of the books as objects.

Under the leadership of its brilliant director, Abbot Baasansuren Khadsuren Lama (Baasa Lama), Erdene Zuu Monastery has become a pivotal community hub, an ideal center for digital text preservation in Mongolia.





Through digitizing, cataloging, and archiving key materials, a richer comprehension of Buddhism in Mongolia will unfold, shedding light on texts that have been untouched for centuries. Our efforts help ensure their availability for future generations, fortifying a cultural legacy crucial to the nation's evolving identity. Such efforts not only protect historical treasures but also impact the unity and material well-being of local communities.

Je Tsongkhapa's *Aspiration for the Stages of the Path*:

། ཇོ་སངས་རྒྱལ་པོ་རྒྱུ་འབྲས་ལས་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་མི་རྒོམ། ། མཁའ་ལྷ་རྩེ་ཡངས་པ་གང་ཞིག་བསགས་པ་དེ་ས།
 །
 བཤེད་མེད་མེད་མེད་གཤིས་ལྷོངས་འགྲོ་བ་ཀུན། །
 རྣམས་འདྲེན་ན་རྒྱལ་བའི་དབང་བོ་རྩེ་བྱེད་གཤིས་ལྷུ་རྩེ་ཅིག །

*Dir ni ring du be le tsoknyi ni. Katar yangpa gangshik dakpa de.
 Lomik marikgi dong drowa kun. Namdren drelway wangbor dag gyur chik.*

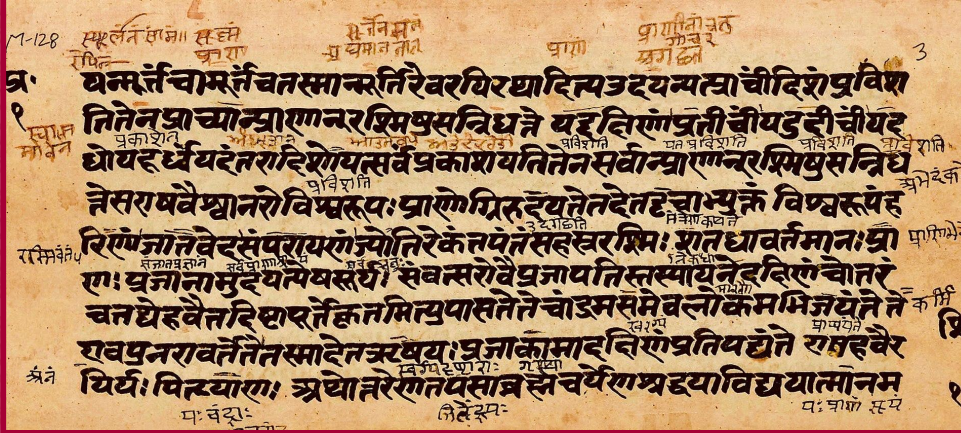
Through my diligent efforts to gather the two accumulations (merit and wisdom), vast like the sky, may I become a Buddha, a guide for all beings whose minds are obscured by ignorance.





Lineage of Wisdom in Nepal

Nepal stands out as a singular place for the study of Buddhism as it is home to the most important collection of Buddhist Sanskrit texts in the world. Ancient Nepalese lore speaks of the Kathmandu Valley as a sacred site engineered by Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom. And still today, the city is understood as being a divine mandala. Kathmandu is a vibrant center where ancient scriptures are not only recited but performed and practiced every day in some of its myriad temples. It has been said that Nepalese Buddhism, having developed in close connection to Hindu traditions for over 1,500 years, offers a unique window to what Mahayana Buddhism might have been in Medieval India.





In the heart of Lalitpur, one of three sacred cities of the Kathmandu Valley, we are honored to partner with the Nagarjuna Institute of Buddhist Studies (NIBS).

NIBS was founded in 1980 by the late Min Bahadur Shakya, one of the premier modern scholars and preservationists of Newar Buddhism. Throughout his life, he was committed to preserving ancient texts and facilitating inter-tradition dialogue, carrying out extensive work in Tibetan Buddhism, and having a keen interest in Theravāda. His commitment to non-sectarianism reflects the Nepalese ethos of embracing diverse traditions with honor and respect.

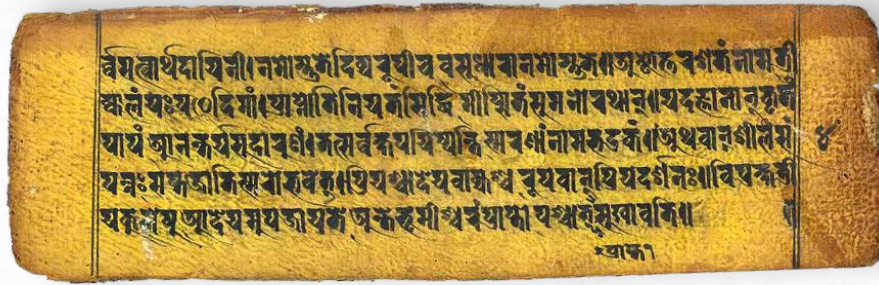
The torch of his legacy is carried forward by his sons: NIBS Director, Dr. Miroj Shakya, associate professor at the University of the West, California, and NIBS Managing Director, Milan Shakya. Both stand out as accomplished scholars in their own right. Also on board are female members of the Shakya family, including the promising Diya Shakya. Together, we fortify this rich preservationist lineage, ensuring that wisdom thrives.



At NIBS, ALL employs seven full-time professionals, including experts in ancient Nepalese scripts. They meticulously scan and input manuscripts, primarily sourced from Kathmandu's libraries and private collections. To date, they have completed the preservation of over 140 manuscripts, in scripts such as Ranjana, Prachalit, and Bhujimol.

The damage of the 2015 earthquake, combined with insufficient institutional funding and a waning interest in younger generations, amplifies the urgency of our preservation mission. Thanks to our generous donors, we've been able to sustainably support NIBS, and we hope to continue doing so in the future.





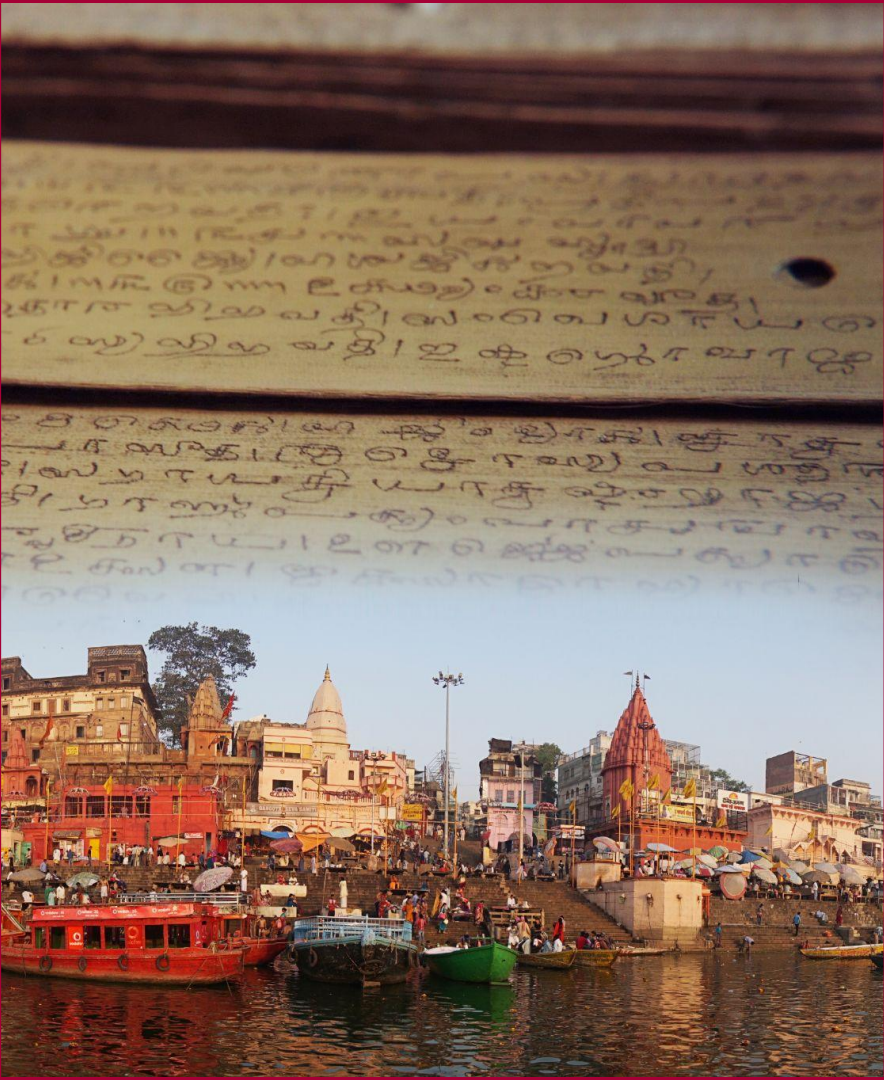
Dedication of merit from Arya Nagarjuna's Praise to Ultimate Reality:

तेन पुण्येन लोको ऽयं व्रजतां सौगतीं गतिम् ॥

tena puṇyena loko "yaṃ vrajatāṃ saugatīṃ gatim ॥

By this merit may the world reach the path of the Buddha.





Keeping the Light Burning in the Ancient City of Learning

In the heart of Varanasi, India's ancient city of "learning and burning," the ALL Varanasi Center has thrived with activity this summer. Nestled in the city also revered as Kashi, the "City of Lights," the center has conducted numerous training sessions, workshops, and activities to nurture the academic pursuit of *sanātana* dharma, "the eternal dharma," of students and staff.

While our main focus at this hub is Indology, our commitment extends to preserving both Hindu and Buddhist Sanskrit materials from northern India. ALL's founder, Geshe Michael Roach, has developed a particular interest in some of the Sanskrit texts preserved at this center. We look forward to seeing what comes out of this research!



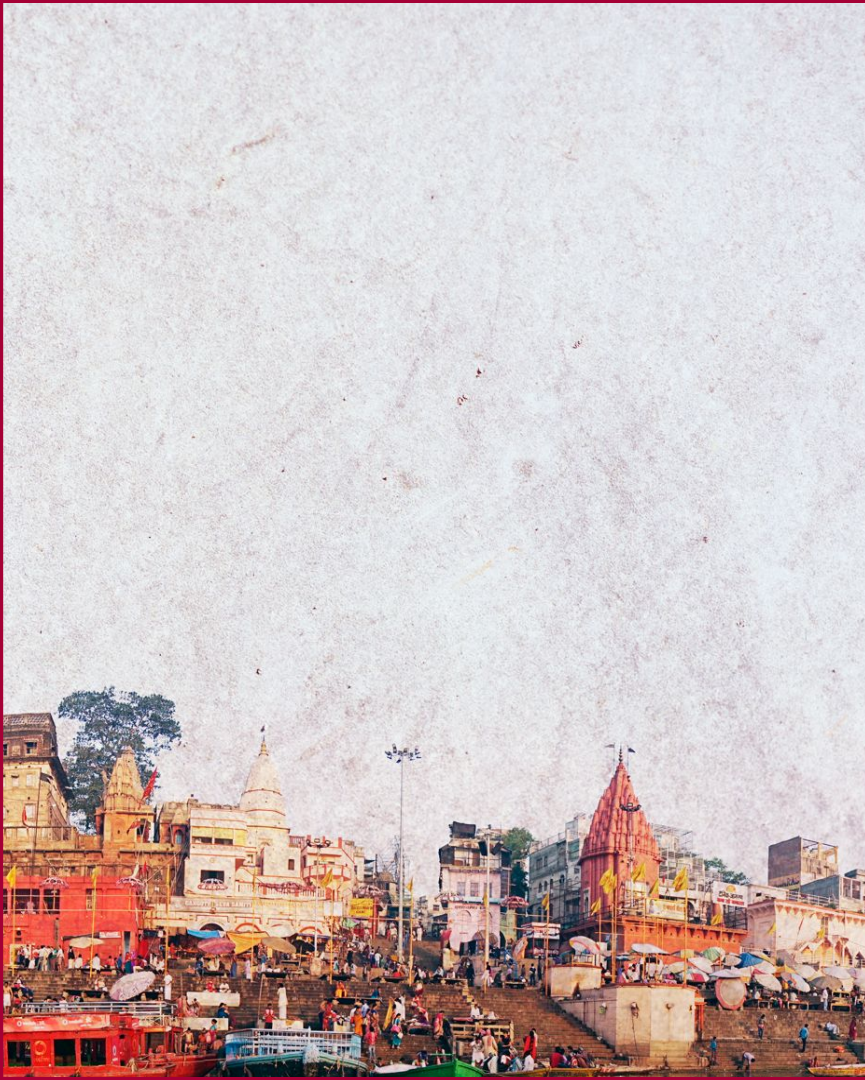


This July, the Banaras Hindu University's Heritage Management students were trained at the ALL Varanasi Center by the director Dr. Santosh Dwivedi. Their training encompassed transliterating Devanagari and Old Devanagari scripts into the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST). Further, they familiarized themselves with tools such as KEYMAN and learned digitization techniques for various manuscripts. A visit to the Tibetan University's Multimedia Department and Restoration Wing provided insight into the preservation of the Old Rahul Sankrityayan collection.

Santosh shared that, inspired by his father, he continues working on the *Shabdakalpadruma*. This encyclopedic dictionary of Sanskrit words, drawing from a plethora of authoritative sources such as the Vedas and Upanishads, remains a testament to the timeless nature of Indian dharmic culture. He has also completed work on the beautiful and profound hymns of Arya Nagarjuna.

Reflecting on his mission, Santosh commented: "With the aspiration to infuse our endeavors with new perspectives and techniques, we foresee expanding these efforts in the future." Echoing this sentiment, ALL is steadfast in its mission to further preservation efforts in Varanasi. With your support, we aspire to contribute to this grand lineage of transmission, ensuring that the profound wisdom of this ancient seat of learning continues to flourish





These lines from the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (2.2.2) have been recited before study sessions in India for millennia.

ओं सह नव् अवतु, सह नौ भुनक्तु, सह वीर्यं करवावहै, तेजस्वि नव् अधीतम् अस्तु, मा विद्विषावहै । ओम् शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

om saha nav avatu, saha nau bhunaktu, saha vīryam karavāvahai, tejasvi nav adhītam astu, mā vidviṣāvahai | om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||

Om! May he protect us both (student and teacher), may he nourish us both, may we work together with great energy. May our study be bright and without animosity. Om, Peace! Peace! Peace!





Profile Story

Sonam Lhamo: **Impacting Communities through** **Passion and Effort**

For over thirty years, Sonam Lhamo has led ALL's three centers in southern India. With a team consisting primarily of women, many of whom have been with her for over two decades, Sonam is devoted to digitizing and transcribing ancient manuscripts written by both Indian and Tibetan scholars for the benefit of current and future generations.





Sonam Lhamo is welcomed with a white katak, near by one of the ALL South India preservation centers.

As a result of this work and its ramifications, Sonam's team and their families, all members of the Tibetan diaspora, have been able to endure hardships with a positive outlook. Not only have they obtained sustainable livelihoods, but they have also found a way to live in accordance with Buddhist principles, such as generosity and accumulation of merit. Through their diligent efforts, they're not only preserving sacred texts but also furthering their spiritual paths and enriching the lives of countless others.

"Since I started working in ALL," Sonam shared in a recent conversation, "I've come to realize how important our rich culture and religion is ... by preserving these texts, we are extending wisdom and compassion throughout the world. Sometimes I can't believe the impact that ALL has had; it has made my life so meaningful by preserving our Buddhist manuscripts. I'm so proud to be part of ALL!"

In addition to her direct contributions to cultural preservation, Sonam is also mindful of passing on her role to the next generation and is already training her successors. "Due to ALL, we've gained community respect and people recognize us. Our work will have a lasting impact for many more generations to come," she adds. With her leadership and the community's ongoing support, Sonam Lhamo continues to make an indelible impact on cultural preservation.





At Bylakuppe Preservation Center.



At Hunsur Preservation Center.



At TDL Preservation Center.

We rejoice in the lasting success of our partnerships with the preservation centers in South India. The three centers—TDL, Hunsur, and Bylakuppe,—are working on texts from the Narthang Tengyur, one of the major editions of the commentarial literature (*shastras*) preserved in the Tibetan canon. In the past few months alone they have made great progress, completing over 17 volumes, or over 5,000 pages.

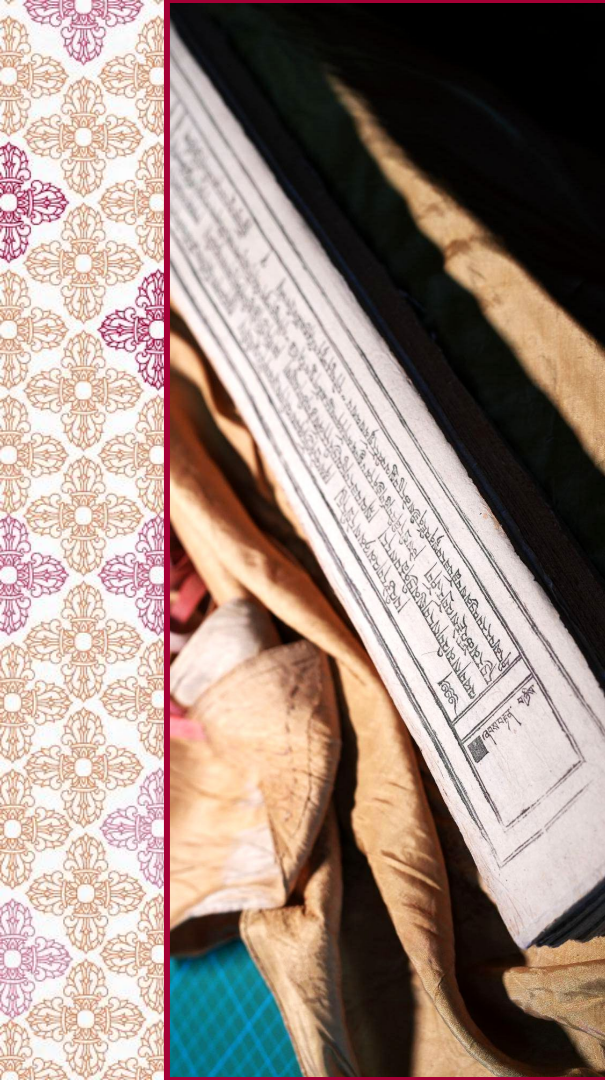
Tibetan dedication of merit:

བདག་གི་བསོད་ནམས་འདྲི་ཡམས་ཀྱི།
སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་མ་ལུས་པ།
སྤྱི་གུ་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤྲེལ་ནས་ནི།
རྟག་ཏུ་དག་འབྲུ་དེ་པར་གོ།

*Daggi sonam diyi ni. Semchen thamche malü pa.
Digpa thamche pagne ni. Tagtu gewa jepar shog.*

By the merit I have accumulated, may every living being without exception be freed from negative deeds, and always engage in virtue.





Upcoming Events & Work in Progress

ALL Team Visits Nepal and Lady Niguma Yoga Training

This October, members of the ALL team—John Brady, Emma Lewis, Vimala Sperber, Osiris Luciano and Joel Crawford —will visit NIBS in Nepal, joining a three-day fundraising event organized by Raw Diamonds' Jasmine Yao. Over 200 students participating in a Yoga Studies Institute (YSI) Lady Niguma Yoga teacher training will explore NIBS and, the Asha Archives Library, and immerse themselves in Nepalese heritage.

The Lady Niguma Yoga series was discovered by the ALL team in the St. Petersburg Library in 1999. Notably, it traces its lineage back to Nepal and is connected to Mahasiddha Naropa. Emphasizing the importance of preservation, traditional Nepalese rituals such as mandala creations and pujas (rituals invoking deities' blessings) will be celebrated.™

A historic puja will feature a large-scale Five Wisdom Family sand mandala alongside a Pancharaksha (five protectors) mandala. These two colorful and intricate sacred circles will reflect the multidimensional connection between the five male buddhas and their divine female Pancharaksha emanations. By partaking in these ceremonies, we realize how the outer world reflects our body, speech, and mind.

ALL Team Visits India Centers

The ALL team is pleased to announce an upcoming visit to our preservation centers in India. This visit will strengthen our centers by providing essential equipment, such as hard drives and scanners, and offering training to ensure the continuity of their invaluable work and the proper management of data preserved through the projects.. All of this is made possible due to the great generosity of our sponsors.

During this visit, the ALL team will have the opportunity to visit the esteemed Sera Mey Monastery, which is home to our Bylakuppe center. This trip also presents a valuable opportunity for ALL to document the work of cultural heritage preservation through photos and videos, which will be shared with our community. This direct engagement ensures that the significant impact of this work can be more fully known and understood worldwide.





The Powerful Merit Obtained by Preserving Literary Traditions

In this edition of *Snow on the Mountain*, we wish to spotlight one of the most important concepts of Buddhist practice: the gathering of merit (Sanskrit: *punya*). In Buddhism, merit is the store of good karma that establishes positive inertia, that ultimately paves the way for attaining wisdom.

One of the principal forms in which lay people are said to accumulate merit is through the practice of “dana,” or generosity. Mahayana sutras suggest that the supreme form of practicing generosity and accumulating merit is to recite, learn, and copy sutras.

The Buddha tells Subhuti in the *Diamond Cutter Sutra* that “the piece of ground where one might do no more than recite or teach just one verse” of the text becomes immediately a “chaitya,” a shrine that embodies the enlightened mind of the Buddha.





Translator Adam Andrade's hand,
so close to thousands of manuscripts
at National Library of Mongolia. June, 2018

The *Lotus Sutra* prophesied that in the future, great challenges would arise to preserve the teachings, but still, "we will have beings write out this Dharma teaching, recite it, contemplate it, and teach it... and the Blessed One will protect us."

The text adds in the sixteenth chapter: "That noble man or noble woman who possesses this Dharma teaching and reads it, teaches it, writes it, or has someone write it, accumulates an infinite, countless, innumerable aggregation of merit for the wisdom of Buddhahood."

This aligns seamlessly with the ethos of our project: to facilitate the transmission of timeless wisdom while also benefiting many individuals providing the means for right livelihood. Our online library serves scholars, academics, practitioners, and other interested people by offering access to more than 600,000 pages of searchable Buddhist literature, as well as to other works in Sanskrit, Nepalese, and Tibetan.

By engaging in the preservation of these texts, we can joyously say that we are part of an unbroken tradition which values texts as precious transformative objects. It is only through your gracious support that we can all gather merit and disseminate virtue throughout the world.





ASIAN LEGACY LIBRARY



**We thank you wholeheartedly
for all of your support.**

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emma.lewis@asianlegacylibrary.org

Erdene Zuu Monastery, Mongolia