



*Exhibition on
Life and Legacy of*

Atiśa

Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna

अतीश दीपंकर श्रीज्ञान

ཨ་མོ་ཤེ་དཔལ་ལྷན་ཨ་ཉི་ལ་

21-30 November 2025



*All the good things that exist
In this world and beyond
Arise from the powers of practice.
The wise who make practice their principal activity
Know happiness here and hereafter.
What sage would doubt this?
Thus it is appropriate for sensitive people
To engage in the essence of practice.*

- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path



Exhibition on

Life and Legacy of

Atiśa

Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna

अतीश दीपंकर श्रीज्ञान

ཇོ་བོ་ཇེ་དཔལ་ལྷན་ཨ་ཏི་ཤ་

21–30 November 2025

Art Gallery,
Kamaladevi Complex, India International Centre,
40 Max Mueller Road, New Delhi, India

Organised by
India International Centre, Center for Escalation of Peace,
Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Pallavan Learning Systems, and Ritinjali



Front Cover Image

Courtesy and Copyright © Himalayan Art Museum, Dharamsala, India

This brochure has been produced by the Centre for Escalation of Peace in collaboration with the India International Centre, the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Pallavan Learning Systems, and Ritinjali.

Disclaimer

The material contained in this catalogue is intended to provide information on the artworks displayed at the exhibition, “Life and Legacy of Atiśa Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna”, held at the India International Centre, New Delhi. Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information; however, none of the organisations listed above can accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Published in 2025

Printed in New Delhi

Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna



Thangka image courtesy of the Himalayan Art Museum, Dharamsala, India.
With special thanks to Sarika and Lochoe for their generous contribution to this conference and exhibition.



*Spiritually immature people, through
Constant obsession with sensual objects,
Destroy themselves. One should know
That attachment brings every fault.*

- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path





Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (982–1054 CE) remains one of the most influential figures in Buddhist history—revered as a scholar, teacher and reformer whose life and teachings continue to inspire across Asia. Born in Bikrampur (present-day Bangladesh), he studied in India’s great Buddhist institutions—Odantapuri, Vikramaśīla and Nālandā—mastering Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions, as well as logic, philosophy and tantra. His quest for deeper understanding led him on a perilous journey to Sumatra to receive instruction in bodhicitta from Lama Serlingpa, and later to Tibet, where he revitalised monastic discipline, advocated mind-training (lojong), and wrote his seminal *Bodhipathapradīpa* (“Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment”).

This exhibition presents rare treasures connected with his life and legacy. It features relics from Dzongkar Choede Monastery, Hunsur, South India; photographic documentation from Bangladesh by Nazneen Haque Mimi, Hasan Saifuddin Chandan and Tamim Sujat; and manuscripts of the *Bodhipathapradīpa* from the Dharmarajika Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha, Dhaka, Bangladesh. This exhibition also pays tribute to the pioneering research of Prof. Shashibala, who has traced Atīśa’s journeys and influence through her photographic documentation of monuments and iconography across India, Indonesia, and Tibet. It also displays a series of cover images of books related to Atīśa, contributed by the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala, India—each cover representing a publication that has helped carry Atīśa’s teachings into the modern era.

Together, these manuscripts, relics and images trace Atīśa’s extraordinary journey—from his homeland in Bengal, through India and across the Himalayas—and offer visitors a contemplative experience of one of Asia’s greatest torchbearers of wisdom and compassion.





*Attachment harms us in all lifetimes
It did so in past lives,
Will do so in the future
And even now is harming us.*

- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path





With grateful thanks to

Dzongkar Chödhe Monastery, Hunsur, South India

Nazneen Haque Mimi, Hasan Saifuddin Chandan and Tamim Sujat, Bangladesh

Dharmarajika Bauddha Kristi Prachar Sangha, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Prof. Dr Shashibala, New Delhi, India

Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, India

Tibet House – Cultural Centre of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, New Delhi, India





*A dewdrop on a blade of grass will not remain for long.
Therefore the wise never generate
Evil deeds for the benefit of this one short life;
For evil produces the miseries
Of rebirth in the lower realms.*

- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path





THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Srijnana is one of the influential figures in the history of Buddhism, particularly in Tibet. In the eleventh century, Tibet's Gugé King, Lha Lama Yeshe Ō, made unsuccessful efforts at great length to invite Atiśa to Tibet, even to the extent of sacrificing his life after being captured for ransom. His nephew, Jangchup Ō, continued the efforts until Atiśa accepted the invitation.

Atiśa spent seventeen years of his life in Tibet, reviving and revitalizing the Buddha Dharma, and eventually passing away there. Atiśa and his main Tibetan disciple, Gyalwa Dromtonpa established the tradition that came to be known as Kadampa. Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug Buddhist tradition in Tibet, faithfully followed the teachings of Atiśa; and the first Dalai Lama, one of the main disciples of Tsongkhapa, was recognized as the reincarnation of Gyalwa Dromtonpa. Similarly, most great masters of the Buddhist traditions in Tibet followed Atiśa's teachings. From among his various compositions, the most notable was probably *The Lamp of Path to Enlightenment*. Tsongkhapa wrote his extensive commentary, *The Great Treatises on the Stages of Path to Enlightenment* based upon this work of Atiśa, and various commentaries to it have been written by numerous Tibetan masters.

Atiśa visited Tibet at a time when monastic discipline and tantric practice were often regarded as being in opposition to each other, with one trying to destroy the other. Atiśa's clarifications and extensive teachings helped Tibetans to see these two systems as complementing each other. Although he gave tantric teachings to those who were suitable, to the public his main emphasis was on the law of karma and taking refuge in the Three Jewels. He composed many texts intended for traditional followers of the Buddha Dharma and also taught extensively Bhāvaviveka's Tarkajvālā (*Blaze of Reasoning*).

I am happy to learn that the India International Centre, in collaboration with three other respected organisations, is organising a conference on Atiśa Dīpaṃkara. He was the foremost Indian scholar of his time to have visited Tibet. His legacy and teachings are very much alive among many followers of Tibetan Buddhist tradition. I hope this conference will generate a genuine interest in Atiśa's teachings and bring them back into focus.

I wish to express my greetings to the participants and deep appreciation to all those connected with this wonderful endeavour.

With my prayers and good wishes,

15 October 2025



*Those wishing to enter into Mahayana practice
Should strive to generate the bodhimind,
Even if an aeon of lifetimes is required;
For the bodhimind is like the sun and moon
In clearing darkness and soothing pain.
Firstly generate the bodhimind,
Then cultivate it, making it firm as Mount Meru itself.*

- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path



Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna: The Lamp That Still Shines



Every day, whether through news channels, online feeds, or social media, one can sense a quiet restlessness across the world—nations striving for progress yet struggling for peace, societies advancing in knowledge yet longing for understanding. Within our own country too, challenges often test the strength of our communities and the patience of our families. Beneath these layers of uncertainty lies a question older than history itself: why do we lose sight of kindness just when we need it the most?

Perhaps the answer lies not outside but within. A thousand years ago, a gentle monk from Bengal named Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna lit a lamp that still burns today. Born a prince, he renounced privilege to seek a truth that could guide humanity beyond its own confusion. Through his journeys from India to Indonesia and Tibet, he carried no treasures—only a simple message: that compassion is the light that never fades. His life reminds us that wisdom begins with a warm heart and that, even in uncertain times, one clear flame can still show the way.

Early Life and Renunciation

Atiśa was born around 982 CE into a royal household at Vikramapura, in what is now Munshiganj, Bangladesh. As a young boy, known by the name Candragarbha, he was marked by an unusual calmness and a quiet concern for the suffering of others. Tales from his early years speak of gentle visions—of the goddess Tārā appearing in radiant form and of a blue utpala flower manifesting as if from the air — subtle signs that his path would reach beyond the walls of royalty.

Although raised amidst luxury and destined for leadership, Atiśa felt a growing sense of emptiness amid the splendour that surrounded him. With his parents' consent, he chose a different path—one of contemplation and service. At 29, he left the palace behind and received ordination under the revered master Śīlarakṣita, taking the name Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna, meaning “Lamp of Supreme Wisdom.” In time, this lamp would illuminate not only the lands he travelled through, but also countless hearts that still draw warmth from its light today.



Travels and Quest for Wisdom

Atiśa's search for knowledge and understanding took him far beyond the palace gates. Across the Indian subcontinent, he studied with great masters such as Jetari, Bodhibhadra, and Avadhūtpa, training at the famed centres of learning—Nālandā, Odantapuri, Vikramaśīla, and Somapura. In his early thirties, he embarked on a perilous sea journey to Sumatra—then known as Śrīvijaya—to study under the revered teacher Suvarṇadvīpa Dharmarakṣita, called Serlingpa in Tibetan sources. There, over 12 devoted years, Atiśa immersed himself in the living experience of Bodhicitta—the deep wish to awaken oneself in order to benefit all beings.

When he returned to India, Atiśa became a leading scholar at Vikramaśīla, admired for his clarity in debate and his gentle reform of monastic discipline. Some accounts suggest that his travels also led him through the ancient valleys of Gandhāra and Swat, once vibrant centres of Buddhist learning. Through these journeys—from India to Sumatra and later to Tibet—Atiśa built unseen bridges of wisdom, friendship, and compassion that continue to link these lands and hearts even today.

Arrival in Tibet and the Revival of Dharma

The renewal of Buddhism in Tibet owes much to Atiśa's quiet courage and steadfast compassion. The Tibetan king, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, had long dreamt of restoring the purity of the Dharma in his land. Captured and dying in captivity, he could not see that vision fulfilled. His nephew, Jangchub Ö, took up the cause and sent the translator Nagtso Lotsawa to India to invite Atiśa. Though aware of his advancing years and the dangers of such a journey, Atiśa hesitated only until a series of visions of the goddess Tārā assured him that his coming to Tibet would benefit countless beings.

He left India around 1040 and, after a long and arduous crossing of the Himalayas, arrived in western Tibet. Settling first in Tolung (Purang), he spent three fruitful years teaching and composed his renowned *Bodhipathapradīpa*—"The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment". Later, he travelled through central Tibet, spending his final years in Nyetang, near Lhasa, where he passed away in 1052 at the age of 72. His foremost disciple, Dromtön, later founded Reting Monastery in his honour, giving rise to the Kadam tradition.



Teachings: The Lamp for the Path

Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*—"The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment"—is a brief work of sixty-seven verses that distills the vastness of Buddhist thought into simple, practical guidance. It presents a path grounded in ethics and illuminated by Bodhicitta, the awakened heart of compassion. Though concise in form, it carries profound depth and became the model for the later Lamrim—the "stages of the path" teachings that continue to guide spiritual practice across generations.

Atiśa also systematised the early methods of lojong or mind training, revitalised the discipline of the Vinaya, and strengthened the sacred bond between teacher and disciple. Tibetan accounts credit him with seventy-nine texts, many composed or compiled during his years in Tibet. His teachings were never detached abstractions; they were a way to live with clarity, gentleness, and responsibility. For Atiśa, true wisdom was measured not by learning alone, but by the warmth it brought to the heart—a lesson that feels as vital today as it did a millennium ago.

Atiśa's Lamp in Our Age: Rekindling the Light

The world today dazzles with progress yet hungers for peace. We have learnt to command the elements, decode the brain, and explore the distant planets, yet we still struggle to live gently on this one. Innovation has made life faster, but not necessarily wiser. We scroll endlessly, speak instantly, and travel farther than ever—yet loneliness and anxiety often keep pace with us.

What we need is not more information but deeper insight—a way to see clearly without losing tenderness. This is where Atiśa's lamp still shines. Atiśa's teachings were never cloistered; they were meant for those seeking stillness amid the world's motion. His Bodhicitta—the awakening of a compassionate heart—offers a timeless blueprint for being fully human: alert, open, and kind in thought, word, and deed.

In classrooms, boardrooms, and family homes alike, Atiśa's wisdom reminds us that true intelligence includes empathy, and that real success lies in the calm one brings to others. Compassion is not weakness but strength—quiet, steady, and sustaining. His life also speaks to the challenges of our global age.



Born in Bengal, trained in India, enlightened in Sumatra, and teaching in Tibet, Atiśa was a bridge across cultures and minds. He travelled not to conquer but to connect, showing that understanding grows from humility, not pride. His legacy invites us to look beyond difference, to recognise our shared humanity as one vast mandala of interdependence.

He wrote in *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*:

When you see that all beings are equal in their wish for happiness and freedom from suffering, cherish them as you do yourself—this is the heart of awakening.

A thousand years later, these words still reach us like a quiet reminder. The lamp he lit was not for shrines alone, but for every heart that forgets its light and longs to see again.

Thupten Tsewang

References:

- Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna. *Bodhipathapradīpa* ["Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment"].
- Chattopadhyaya, A. (1999). *Atiśa and Tibet: Life and Works of Dipamkara Śrījñāna*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Dalai Lama, H.H. (1984). *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight*, Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications.
- Dalai Lama, H.H. (1999). *Ethics for the New Millennium*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Jinpa, T. (2015). *A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives*. New York: Hudson Street Press.
- Ricard, M. (2015). *Altruism: The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and the World*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Shakabpa, T.W.D. (1967). *Tibet: A Political History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Tucci, G. (1988). *The Religions of Tibet*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Wallace, B.A. (2006). *The Attention Revolution: Unlocking the Power of the Focused Mind*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.





From the collection of
Dzongkar Chödhe Monastery
Hunsur, South India





Sacred Pills and Relic Fragment of Jowo Je

The large and small tsatsas (sacred pills) of Jowo Je, together with one relic fragment, are listed as Item Number 10 in the monastery's inventory. These were received in 2006 (the Fire Pig Year), when senior officials of Dzongkar Chödhe Monastery visited His Holiness the Dalai Lama's private quarters in Dharamshala. On that occasion, His Holiness graciously offered the monastery a sacred pill of Shakyamuni Buddha, a finger-sized pill of Jowo Je, a two-finger-sized sacred pill of Tara, one relic fragment of Jowo Je, and one personal sacred object from His Holiness himself.

Within the reliquary box containing Tara's sacred pill, a handwritten note by His Holiness reads:

"One relic fragment taken from the reliquary stupa of Jowo Je at Nyethang, and one blessed sacred pill are contained herein."

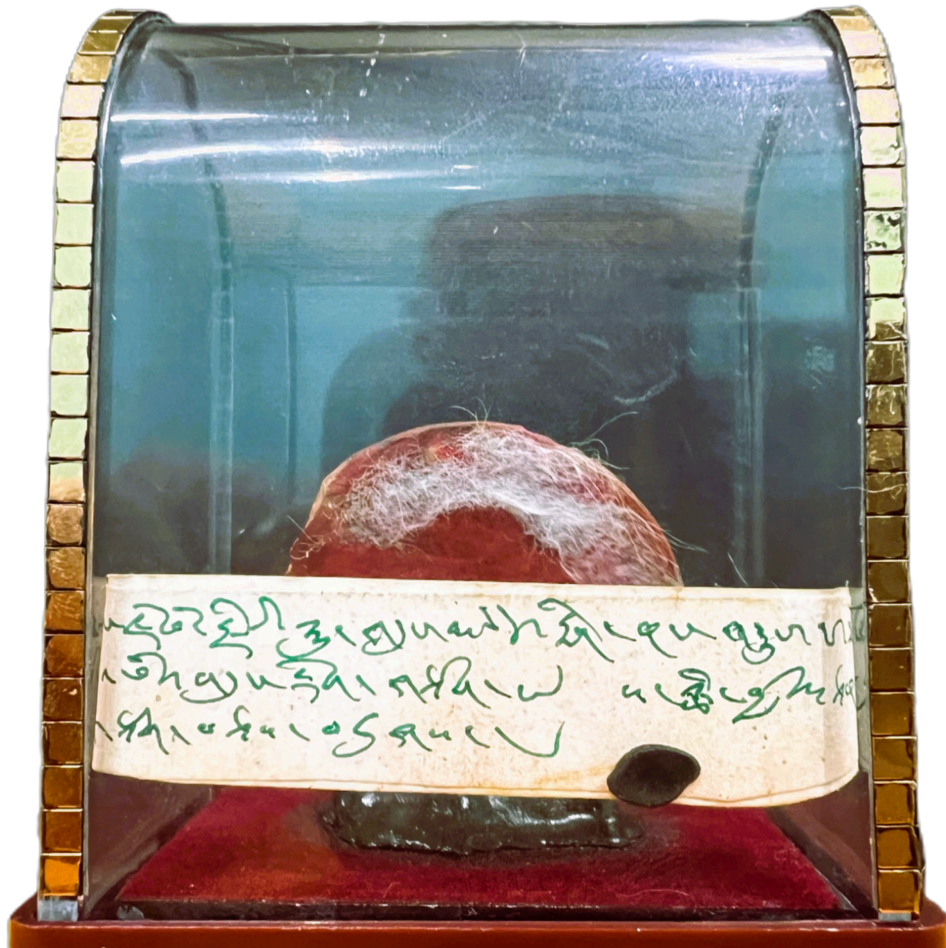
These sacred objects—the handprint, relic fragment, and blessed pills—stand as rare and revered embodiments of the spiritual legacy of Jowo Je Palden Atiśa, reflecting both the continuity of faith and the sacred custodianship of Dzongkar Chödhe Monastery.





Atiśa's Tara clay miniature





Back side of Atiśa's Tara clay miniature
with handwritten note from His Holiness the Dalai Lama





Atiśa's hand-made clay miniature of stupa





Handprint of Atiśa Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna





Bottom side of the handprint of Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna





Relics of Atiśa Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna





*Like parents care for an only child,
Like a person with one eye guards that eye carefully,
Like travellers look after their guide
And like the fruit of a medicine tree,
Guard the mind with vigilance.*

- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path





The Birthplace
BIKRAMPUR
Bangladesh

Curated from the article by
Nazneen Haque Mimi
Photographs by
Hasan Saifuddin Chandan
Tamim Sujat



The Birthplace of Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna

Bikrampur, an ancient capital of Bengal, holds a place of great historical and cultural importance as the birthplace of Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna—one of the most revered masters of Buddhist philosophy and practice. From the beginning of the 10th century to the early 13th century, Bikrampur served as the capital city of the Chandra, Barman, and Sena dynasties, flourishing as a centre of political power and intellectual activity. The name of Bikrampur continued to endure even during the Mughal period, recorded as a pargana, preserving its legacy as a significant seat of history.

The tranquil landscape of Bikrampur, now in modern-day Bangladesh, was once home to thriving Buddhist monasteries and vihāras, echoing the spiritual and scholarly pursuits that shaped Atiśa's early life. This ancient city, with its rich cultural and architectural heritage, provided the fertile ground from which one of Buddhism's greatest teachers emerged—a thinker who would later travel across Asia, uniting diverse traditions through wisdom and compassion.

Today, the serene fields, rivers, and village settlements of Bikrampur stand as quiet witnesses to a glorious past. The journey through its lush paddy fields and riverbanks—where the Meghna and Dhaleswari converge—offers a glimpse into the enduring harmony between landscape, history, and faith. This birthplace of Atiśa continues to inspire pilgrims and scholars alike, reminding us of the profound legacy that began in this sacred land of Bengal.





Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna



Thousand-year-old Bikrampur Vihar



Ancient Buddhist Vihara found in Bikrampur



Thousand-year-old Buddhist stupas discovered by
archeologists in Nateshwar





Buddhist temple in Nateshwar



Aesthetic Buddhist temple city wall, relic chamber



Bikrmapura Vihara



Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna





Atīśa's
MANUSCRIPTS

From the collection of
Dharmarajika Bouddha
Kristi Prachar Sangha
Dhaka, Bangladesh



बोधिपथप्रदीप
འཛིན་པུ་ཀ་ཤེས་རྒྱལ་མཁན་

A LAMP FOR THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

By Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (982–1054 CE)

Bodhipathapradīpa—“*The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*” is one of the most influential works in the history of Buddhist thought. Composed by the great Indian master Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna at the request of the Tibetan king Jangchub Ö (Wön), this concise yet profound text presents a clear and structured synthesis of the entire Buddhist path.

The opening homage reads:

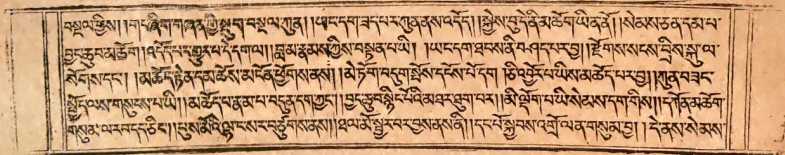
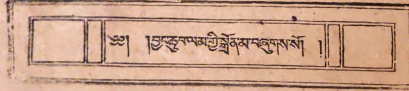
*Homage to the Bodhisattva, the youthful Mañjuśrī.
To the Buddhas of the three times, and their Dharma,
And the assembly of the Saṅgha, I pay homage!
On the request of the esteemed disciple, named Jangchub Woe,
The Lamp of the Path of Enlightenment will be explained.*

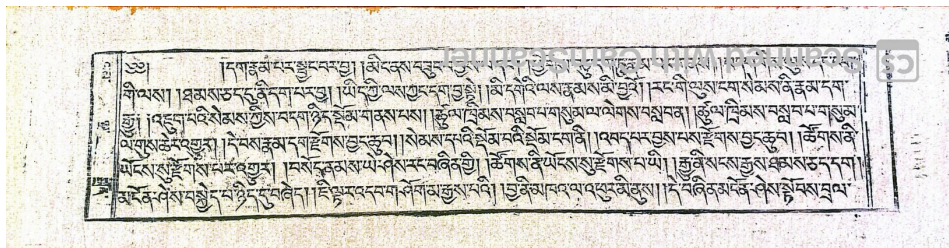
These lines pay tribute to the Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—across past, present, and future, establishing a tone of reverence and reliance upon the enlightened ones and their teachings. Atiśa composed this text as a response to King Jangchub Ö’s request to unify and clarify the diverse Buddhist traditions of Tibet.

With humility and clarity, Atiśa sets forth his intention to provide comprehensive guidance on the Bodhisattva path, integrating the teachings of the Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas into a single, progressive path towards enlightenment.

This text remains foundational across all schools of Tibetan Buddhism and continues to illuminate the way for practitioners and scholars alike.







[illegible]



*Engage vigilance, mindfulness and awareness
To maintain clarity of mind and
To turn back the influence of the delusions
That flow so strongly in one's mindstream.
Spend less time with people having
No interest in spiritual knowledge,
And leave behind worldly ways.
Adopt a quiet life of solitude,
Applying yourself to the various practices
On the basis of serenity and disciplines.
Do not envy the worldly ways of life.*

- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path



“A Prayer Biography of Great Atiśa,”
composed by Dromtönpa

Homage to Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna
Invocation & Praise

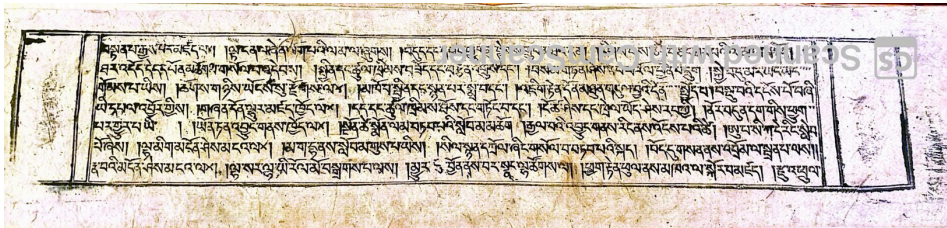
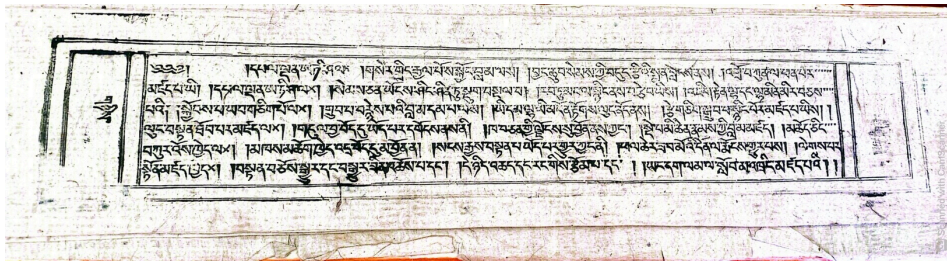
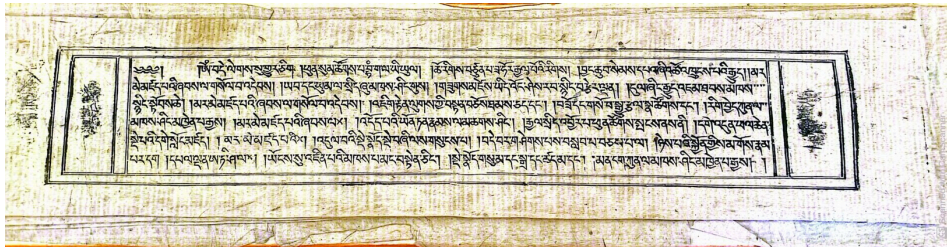
*Om! May all be auspicious!
In the prosperous land of Bengal,
Descended from the royal line of the Zahor King,
Born as the bodhisattva-prince,
To you, the Holder of the Lamp, I pay homage!*

This verse of invocation and praise is attributed to Dromtönpa, the principal disciple of Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (982–1054 CE). It celebrates Atiśa as both a spiritual teacher and a noble-born bodhisattva whose wisdom illuminated the path of awakening.

The “prosperous land of Bengal” refers to Atiśa’s birthplace in Bikrampur, within the Pāla kingdom, while the “royal line of the Zahor King” acknowledges his noble heritage, possibly connected to Zahor or the Pāla dynasty—both steeped in tantric Buddhist learning.

The title “Holder of the Lamp” honours Atiśa’s seminal work, *Bodhipathapradīpa* “The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment”, a concise synthesis of the entire Buddhist path. Through this hymn, Atiśa is revered as a radiant guide whose teachings continue to illuminate the spiritual journey of practitioners across generations.







From the collection of

TIBET HOUSE

*Cultural Centre of His Holiness the Dalai Lama
New Delhi, India*

Curated from the work of

Prof. Shashibala



Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna and Cultural Renaissance

Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna, the spiritual father of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, born in the village Vajrayoginī in the Bikrampur region of Bengal, currently in Bangladesh, in 982 CE, was the last of the great Indian teachers who went abroad for dissemination of knowledge systems. He has been venerated for nearly 1,000 years as an outstanding personality in countries where Buddhism prevails, as a symbol of peace, compassion, self-sacrifice and amity who devoted his energies to the dissemination of Dharma to Odantapurī, Vikramaśīla, Somapurī, Nalanda and most of the other universities and monastic complexes. He played a singular role in infusing wisdom and in the resurgence of Buddhism in all its purity. His preaching electrified monks as well as the common people with a new concept of moral purity, idealism, and revolutionised the lives of the people in Tibet. The people and kings of Tibet made sacrifices to invite him to reform and reinvigorate the prevailing conditions.

At the age of 31, Atiśa set off on a perilous journey to Sumatra in order to study under the reputable Suvarṇadvīpi Dharmakīrti. Goddess Tara was his guiding spirit and continued to be so until the end of his life. He remained there for 12 years. After over a decade of intensive training, he returned to Magadha. Soon he was appointed to the position of steward, or abbot, at the venerable Buddhist university Vikramaśīla, established by the King Dharmapala of Bengal and rose to prominence. In the 11th century, the Tibetan King Byangchub 'Od invited Atiśa when the monastic Buddhist tradition of Tibet had been nearly wiped out after King Lang-dar-ma's reign.



Atiśa has been an important figure for last ten centuries in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition because he revived, refined, systematised, and compiled an innovative and thorough approach to bodhichitta known as “mind training” (Tib. lojong), in such texts as “A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment”, and established its primacy to the Mahayana tradition in Tibet.

Atiśa wrote, edited and translated over 200 books from Sanskrit into Tibetan. He also wrote several books on Buddhist scriptures, medical science and technical science in Tibetan. Several books written by him in Sanskrit are now extant only in Tibetan translations.

Atiśa spent nine years in Nyetang, a town near Lhasa, where he discovered Tibetan libraries with impressive collections in both Sanskrit and Tibetan. He passed away in 1052 at the prophesied age of 72 in a village near Lhasa. He was enshrined near his last permanent home in the town of Nyetang.

Drom-ton-pa, the principal disciple of Atiśa kept alive his legacy, which was later known as the Kadampa tradition of Buddhism. This was afterwards revived by the Tibetan teacher Tsong-Khapa, founder of the Gelug tradition.

These photographs of Tibetan monastic complexes in Samye, Tholing, Labrang and Tashilhunpo, bear witness to Atiśa’s remarkable journey and how his legacy lives on in Tibet.

Prof. Shashibala





Remains of a temple at Muaro Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia. © Atmadi Brahmantyo





Vikramaśīla University where Atiśa worked as rector after coming back from Indonesia and before leaving for Tibet. © CIL_IGNCA





Tham monastery, Nepal, where Atiśa, on his way to Tibet, gave a complete discourse on pāramitās for six days. He received a rousing reception by the King of Nepal, Anantakirti, when he was in Palpa. There the king was inspired to build the Tham Vihara. This is the place where Atiśa wrote *Caryā-saṅgraha-pradīpa* on his request. © Christel Pilz





A view of the Tholing monastery, Western Tibet. It was modeled after Samye monastery, and Atiśa was given the first royal reception here by the then King of Tibet. Among the giant bronze statues of the Buddhas of Three Times, the statue of Śākyamuni contains the sceptre that was thrown by King Ye-shes-'od, into the air to decide the best location for the planned monastery. The ceilings are beautifully painted. © Zhang Jianlin





Lake Manasarovar. The route taken by Atiśa from Kathmandu to Toling remains conjectural. The traditional route from Kathmandu to Manasarovar is via Muktinatha, Kochar, Gumpa and Taklakot. So it may be assumed that Atiśa must have taken this route. © CUI, IGNCA





In this so-called Hidden valley in Upper Mustang the Choedzong cave monastic complex can be found, where Atiśa probably visited on his way to Western Tibet. Mustang, a kingdom in the Himalayas, borders on Tibet and Nepal and was regarded as the forbidden kingdom Lo (Lo Manthang) once, the highest kingdom on the roof of the world, embedded in the mountains of the Himalayas. © Susanne von der Heide





The photo was taken by Susanne von der Heide at the Choedzong cave complex next to Tibetan border. According to her this wall painting is the only remaining painting from the cave temple inside the Choedzong complex with many different cave temple sides that seem to belong to different Buddhist schools. The wall painting shows on the top a Kadampa master, who could be Atiśa. Below him are Avalokiteśvara, Amitāyus and Vajrapāṇi. © Susanne von der Heide





Atiśa from Ratoe Monastery, Central Tibet

Ratoe Monastery is situated about an hour's walk uphill from Drolma Lhakhang at Nyetang. Dromtönpa had urged his disciples to fulfil Atiśa's wish to preserve his teachings by building monasteries for monks. © Christel Pilz





Stupa in which ashes of Ven. Atiśa are kept at Drolma-lakhang, Central Tibet.
© Atmadji Brahmantyo





The hall shown here is the connecting space between the library of
His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the room dedicated to Atiśa, at Drepung monastery, Central Tibet.
© Christel Pitz





Atiśa at Kumbum Gyantse, Central Tibet. © Christel Pilz





Atiśa flanked by his two disciples Drom-ton-pa and Legs-pa'i-ses-rab
at Atisa Lhakhang, Central Tibet. © Christel Filz





Atiśa on the second floor of Shalu monastery, Central Tibet.

Shalu monastery, 22 km south of Shigatse, Tibet, China, the first of the major monasteries built by noble families of the Tsang Dynasty, an important centre of the Sakya tradition, was founded in 1040 AD by Chetsun Sherab Jungnay and extended in the early 14th c., by Kunzang Drakpa Gyaltsen. Ven. Atiśa went there before its construction. He prayed and gave many sermons to the people here for their spiritual upliftment. For centuries it remained a famous centre of scholarly learning and psychic training. The mural paintings there were considered to be the most ancient and outstanding in Tibet. © Christel Pilz





Atiśa at Ganden Monastery, Central Tibet. © Christel Pilz





Back view of the throne of Atiśa at Nyetang monastery, Central Tibet. One can see the holes made by the people who took away pieces as a reflection of their devotion to Atiśa. © Christel Pilz





Drom-ton-pa, the chief disciple of Atiśa, at Ganden monastery, Central Tibet. © Christel Pilz





Green Tara from Kumbum Gyantse, Central Tibet. © Christel Pilz





The rooms near the cave at Drak Yerpa where Ven. Atiśa worked and taught, Central Tibet. © Atmadi Brahmantyo





500 meters across the road today, is Drongtse Lhakhang, the house where Atiśa prayed and worked. There are two stupas covered by tree-raised roots with yellow walls, with a central room where Atiśa worked. He spent five years at Nyetang, in the southern Kyichu valley south of Lhasa. A temple was built there a year after Atiśa's death, where his body was embalmed. The next year, in 1056, Dromton established Reting Monastery (rwa sgren), initiating the Kadampa tradition. © Christel Fitz





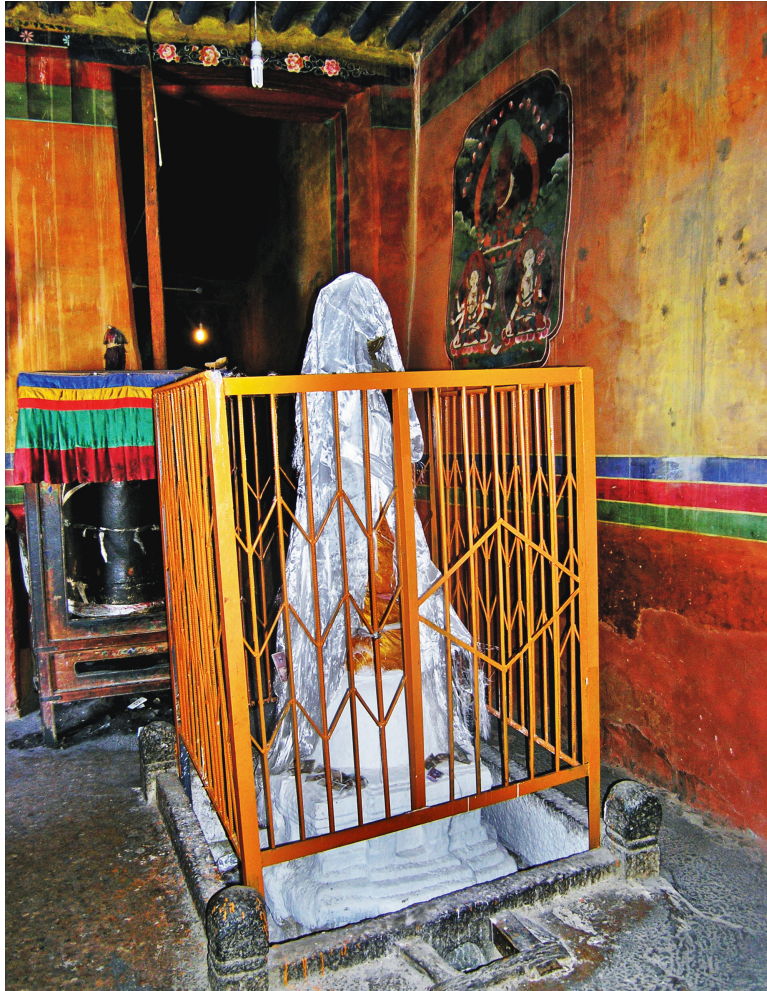
An image of Atiśa sculpted by himself, adored over the centuries by the devotees. The figure of Atiśa in ceremonial dress is enthroned in a shrine in a temple at Nyethang (snye thang sgrol ma lha khang). There are steps leading up to the throne with five bowls of water offerings on the topmost one. There is a gilded roof immediately above his head and a ceremonial umbrella above that. There are typical temple decorations in the background. © Christel Pilz





Nyethang Monastery, where Atiśa entered into nirvana in AD 1054. The monastery is in good condition and contains three temples. In the first is a large stupa that contains certain possessions of Atiśa. On the other side of it is the stupa of Drom-ton-pa. The second is a temple dedicated to 21 Taras, containing almost life-size, identical statues of Tara on three tiers along three walls. The third hall contains a small (16") statue of Atiśa that the monk in residence said had been sculpted by Atiśa himself. There were also three Buddha images, approximately 15 feet in height, the central figure is of Maitreya and as reported by a monk in residence, also have been made by Atiśa. That statue is flanked by images of the Buddhas Kasyapa and Sakyamuni. There were also standing images of the eight Bodhisattvas. © Christel Pilz





This stupa sits on the front porch of the Drolma Lakhang (Nyethang) monastery. As the monks inform, this stupa contains personal belongings of Atiśa. It sits in a basin, which in ancient days was filled with water coming from a spring on the mountains behind the monastery. But the spring dried up when the people lost their pure faith. © Christel Pilz





Ven. Atiśa with his teacher in Indonesia, Serlingpa and his chief disciple
Drom-ton-pa, from Nyetang Monastery, Central Tibet. © Christel Pilz





Atiśa went to this place called Atiśa Lhakhang to meditate. One can see the precious relic 'the carrying stick of Atiśa kept carefully by the monks for almost one thousand years. © Christel Pilz





*The effort to cultivate one's mindstream
Is praised as most wondrous in the Sutras.
Hold the difficult- to-tame mind
From wandering into distraction.*

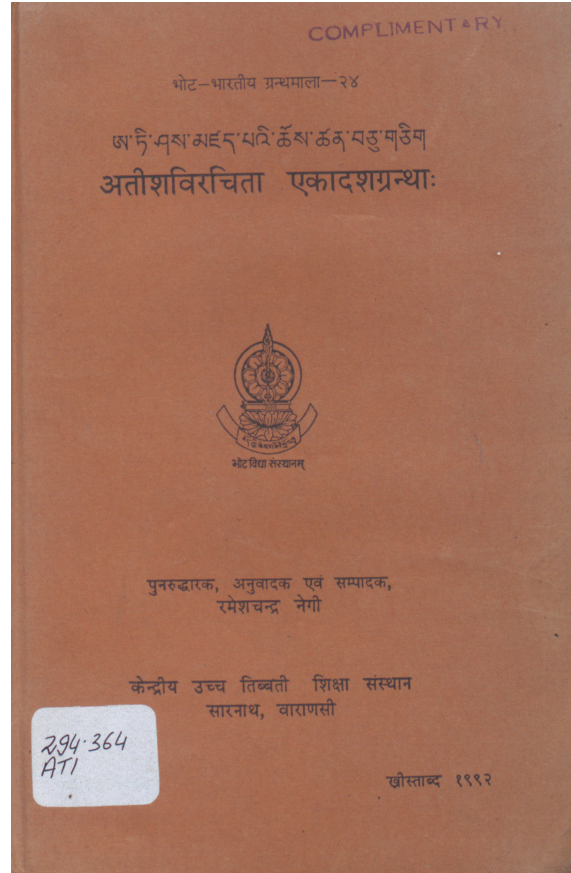
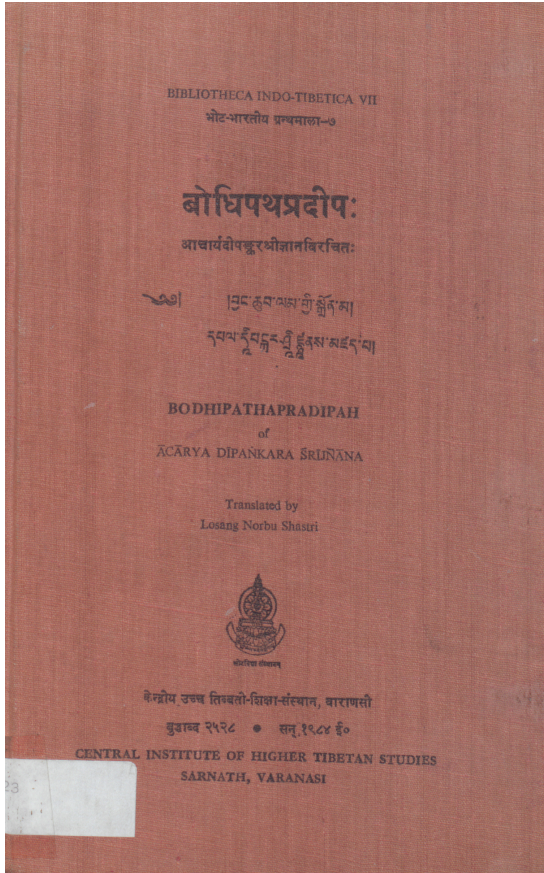
- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path

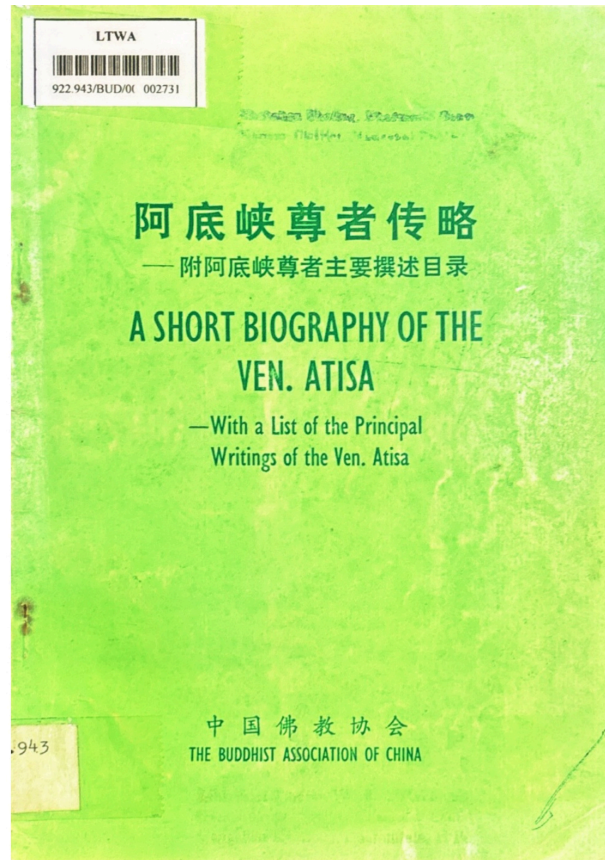
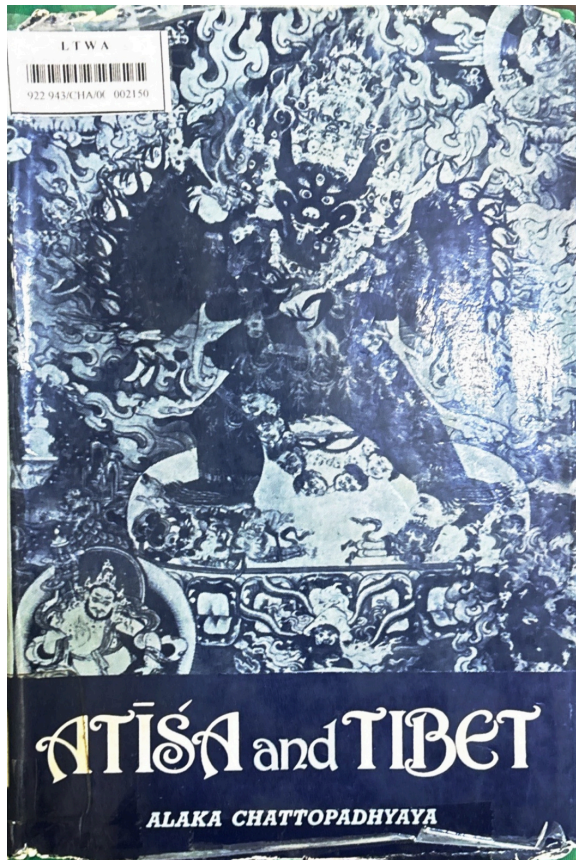


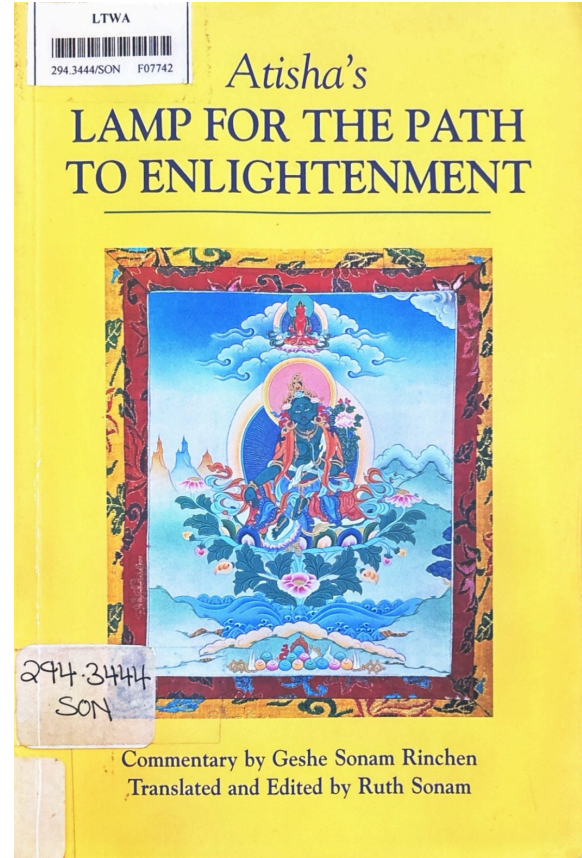
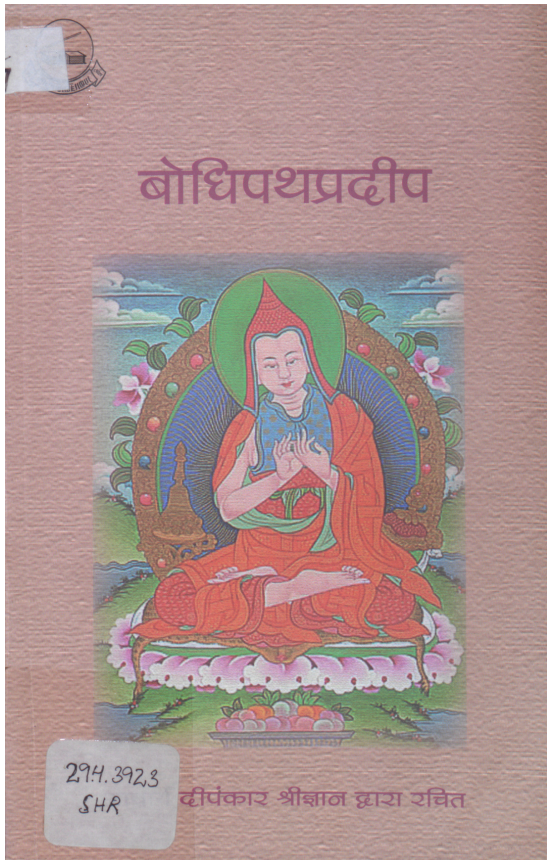


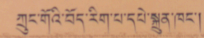
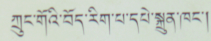
From the collection of
LIBRARY OF TIBETAN
WORKS AND ARCHIVES
Dharamsala, India

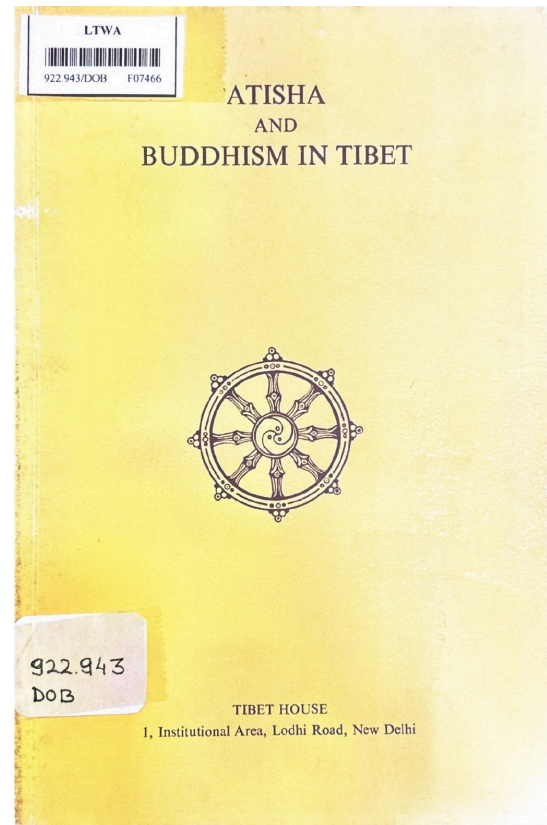
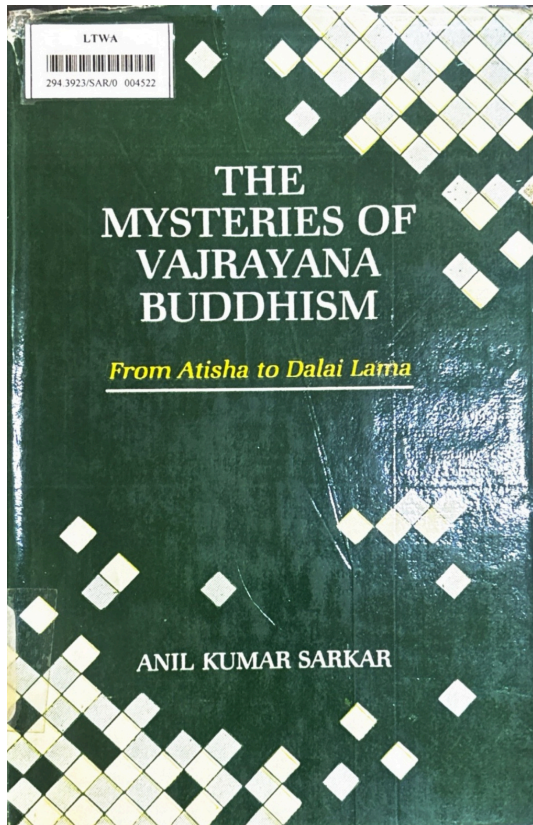


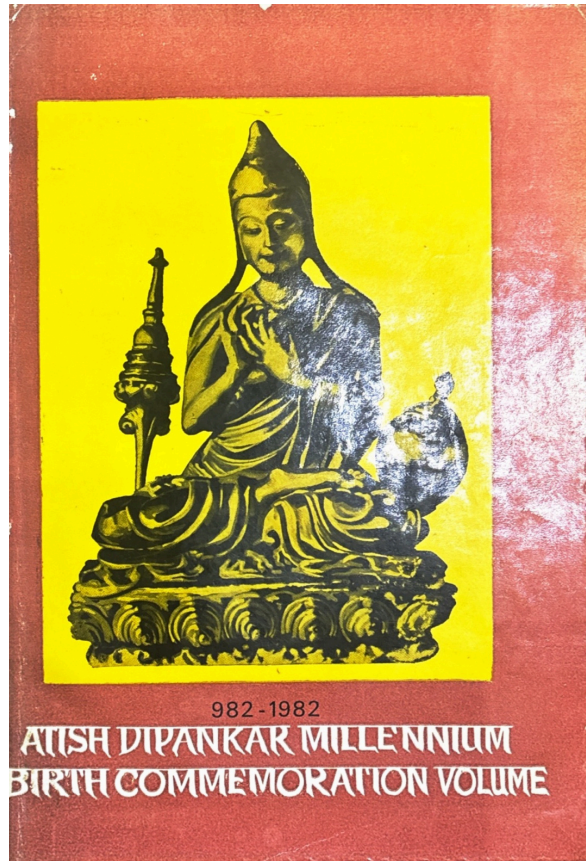
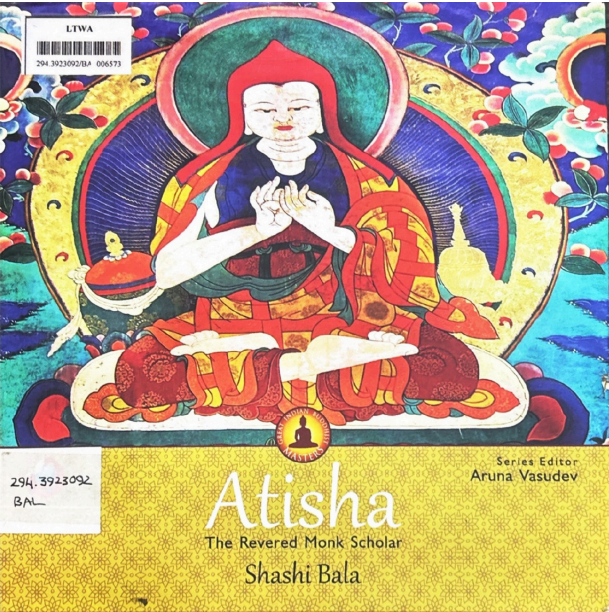














*Otherwise, even if one studies day and night,
It is all lost to worldly concerns, such as personal esteem,
And ends only as fuel for conflict.
Direct all study and learning
To the essence of Dharma realization.*

- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path





*Life is easily lost to meaninglessness
And one's spiritual progress degenerates.
Then when the lord of death strikes
One's mindstream will be pained with regret.*

- Atisha, A Summary of the Means for Accomplishing the Mahayana Path



Atiśa

Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna
अतीश दीपकर श्रीज्ञान
ཇཾ་མི་རྟེ་དཔལ་ལྷན་མ་རྟེ་ལོ་



INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
www.iicdelhi.nic.in

CENTER FOR ESCALATION OF PEACE
www.cepeace.org

LIBRARY OF TIBETAN WORKS AND ARCHIVES
www.tibetanlibrary.org

PALLAVAN LEARNING SYSTEMS
www.pallavanlearningsystems.com

RITINJALI
www.ritinjali.org