

## **Chattha Sangayana CD ROM Version 3**

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Dear Pali Scholars and friends,

It gives me a great pleasure to be in the company of this scholarly group and to be able to exchange information on the preservation of Pali text in the electronic media. I thank the organisers for inviting me here and giving me this opportunity.

Vipassana Research Institute (VRI), whom I represent, was established for undertaking research into the effects of Vipassana, the quintessence of the Buddha's teachings. The research is based on practice, and supported by theory, as per guidance found in the Pali sources.

For a thorough research we needed all the Pali texts. Tipitaka, the set of volumes containing the Buddha's teachings was published in Devanagari script by the Nalanda University in India; but this edition was mostly unavailable in 1985, the time our Institute started the research work.

Devanagari is the principal script with which the scholars in India are most comfortable. Not having the texts in Devanagari was therefore, a great hindrance. We also discovered that many Pali volumes were not easily available and several were totally out of print. Fortunately, we were able to get the complete set of Pali texts published by the Buddha Sasana Council of Myanmar at the conclusion of the Chattha Sangayana, the Sixth Council. This contained the complete Tipitaka, Atthakathas, Tikas and Anutikas. However this was in Myanmar script. Though we had some scholars who were conversant with Myanmar script, most of our scholars and Vipassana students preferred Devanagari or Roman script.

Hence in 1988, we made a decision to print the Pali texts in Devanagari, so that we could have easy access to the Pali sources. We decided to use the Myanmar publication as this was the most recent complete publication of Pali texts, and the most authentic one, as it was approved by the congregation of Bhikkhus and scholars from several countries. This was also the most complete publication available with us.

For the next 3 years we experimented with various means of entering the voluminous Pali texts into the computers, so that the texts could be printed. The use of Roman script as the means for inputting the texts in the electronic media was ruled out, as typing the Pali Myanmar script into Roman was not practical. Devanagari script was selected because we had an easy availability of typists, proof readers and scholars for this job.

In 1988, the computer technology was not as advanced as today, and the Devanagari fonts available at that time had several drawbacks, which hindered the progress of our work.

We had to overcome many other teething problems in this project. Typists were not conversant with Pali, and initially the typed text contained an unacceptable percentage of errors. This was overcome by typing two sets of the same text, and comparing them electronically with the help of special software developed in-house. The process gave us a text with high degree of accuracy, and this text was further checked manually in three stages by scholars in India and Myanmar to achieve a more perfect reproduction of the text.

Initial difficulties having been overcome, the work of inputting the texts in computers started in earnest in 1991. In 1995 the first 3 sets comprising 34 volumes were published in Devanagari script, and the work was continuing for the remaining volumes. Simultaneously we published two volumes in Roman script also, as these were not printed by the Pali text Society.

Around this time the CD-ROM technology offered the scope for storing large volumes of data in a convenient format. VRI decided to utilize the new technology for making the Pali texts available free of cost to the scholars. The typing of texts and proofreading work continued, while work was started for developing suitable software so that the voluminous texts available in electronic format could be accessed conveniently.

Chattha Sangayana CD-ROM versions 1.0 and 1.1 were released in 1997. This Chattha Sangayana CD was a landmark in the history of Tipitaka publication over the centuries. It gave an easy accessibility of the voluminous text in a compact format and it could be read by scholars in three different scripts. Version 2 containing several extra features was then released in 1998. That version was presented to this scholarly group last year. In that meeting, several useful suggestions were received, for which we are very grateful. We are happy to report that most of these suggestions have been incorporated in the new version.

It gives us great pleasure and satisfaction to present version 3 in the birth centenary year of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, the teacher of our principal teacher Dr. S. N. Goenka.

The present version has following features.

1. It contains many more Pali volumes, the total number being 217, which can now be read in seven scripts. The complete listing of the Pali volumes is available in the file manual.rtf in the root directory of the CD-ROM.
2. Several new books in English are included in the Help option on the Menu Bar. Some of these are:
  - a. Pali Primer and Key to the Pali Primer.
  - b. 'Ashok ke abhilekh', a research publication on the inscriptions on Ashokan Pillars, on which a thorough Research is being done by VRI.
  - c. Information on Vipassana and Vipassana Centres.
  - d. History of the recent chain of teachers of Vipassana, and articles by some of the teachers.
3. The version also has an Install wizard for easy installation.
4. This is a 32-bit version, which runs faster.
5. A new facility has been provided which allows any Sutta to be directly opened from a drop down list of the Suttas.
6. It has a Pali English dictionary, besides the Pali Hindi dictionary.
7. This version works also on the Chinese Windows. This will help many of the Chinese scholars to use this CD-ROM on their regular computers, without having to install the English version of Windows.
8. Saving the text has been made more useful, the features being:
  - a. Large volumes of text can be saved easily. In fact the whole book can be saved at one time.
  - b. The text can be saved in both text and Rtf formats. This makes it easy to save the text and also print it., thus eliminating the printing problems reported in earlier versions.
  - c. It is now possible to copy and paste the text after selecting it on the screen.
9. Variants of the text can now be seen on the footnote window which can be opened or closed as required.
10. Search facility is now much faster.

The aim of VRI has been to provide the entire Pali literature under one source, and in a form which makes it easy to use, and is freely available to all. Our plans for the near future are as follows:

1. We have been working on some palm leaf Pali manuscripts and other texts which have never been printed. We seek assistance from any source who can supply the texts. In the

present version there are several volumes which we have received through the courtesy of Venerable Bhikkhu Mettavihari of Sri Lanka Tipitaka Project.

2. We are working on the Pali Myanmar and Pali Thai dictionaries with the help of scholars from these countries.
3. We are working on a project to put the entire Mula Pali text on our Internet website, so that scholars can access the text conveniently from anywhere in the world.

We have tried to improve the CSCD progressively through the three versions. We hope it will be a great source of inspiration and an important reference cum research tool for Pali scholars in the new millennium. We welcome any further suggestions from the experts in this august gathering, so that we can be of better service to the Pali scholars.