

## Acknowledgments

On October 3, 1967, the National Archives of Nepal was established in Kathmandu, and all Nepal's official books, documents and manuscripts from ancient times were transferred from the Bir or Durbar Library to the Archives building. Today the Archives has a collection of 35,000 volumes of manuscripts written on palm leaves, birch bark, paper, canvas and cloth, as well as other sorts of official document.

As such, amongst all the countries in the South and Southeast Asia region, Nepal is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and treasures in its custody. However, it was as late as the middle of the nineteenth century that scholars and researchers realized the importance of the manuscripts housed in Nepal. The academic world first gained access to the inventory of one of the Himalayan country's main libraries only in 1905 when Haraprasad Shastri (1853-1931) compiled *A Catalogue of Palm-leaf and Selected Paper Manuscripts belonging to the Durbar Library, Nepal* (which, as mentioned earlier, was merged into the National Archives in 1967).

All the staff of the National Archives are honored to be able to make humble but indispensable efforts to preserve the country's cultural and textual assets, thus promoting and supporting studies in Indology and Buddhology by scholars and specialists around the world. I am very grateful to Yasuo Morita, chairman of the board of trustees of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy (IOP), Tokyo, who led his institution to prepare the publication of the facsimile edition and romanized text of the Lotus Sutra manuscript (no. 4-21) which has been preserved in the National Archives of Nepal along with other important manuscripts, and I hope its publication will make a solid contribution to Buddhist study and research.

On behalf of the National Archives, I would like to thank Prof. Hirofumi Toda of the University of Tokushima, Japan, who has made a valuable contribution to Buddhist textual studies through his long painstaking efforts to transliterate Lotus Sutra manuscripts into Roman script. I am looking forward to seeing Professor Toda's romanized text of the Lotus Sutra manuscript, the first half of which will be published in the spring of 1999.

In principle, both the present facsimile edition and the romanized text will be available only for research purpose and are not for sale.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Soka Gakkai International (SGI) President Daisaku Ikeda, who is also the founder of the IOP, Soka Gakkai President Einosuke Akiya, the publisher of this volume, and all those who were involved directly and indirectly in the publication of this valuable contribution to the

study of Buddhist texts. Last but not least, I greatly appreciate the meticulous efforts of Shoichi Matsuoka, which made this marvelous facsimile edition possible.

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Chief of the National Archives of Nepal  
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