

**The Practice of Paritta Chanting and Its Importance
as a Buddhist Ritual**

**Thesis submitted to the Postgraduate Institute of Pali and
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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to explore and examine the paritta-chanting ritual in its various facets including its origin, its place in early Buddhism, the developments it underwent in India and specially in Sri Lanka, the gradual expansion of its purpose, scope and nature of the ritual etc..

In the process of the research certain issues received special focus. One such issue is whether it is or is not an integral part of the Buddhist practice, whether it could find a place in a teaching like Buddhism which aims at the cessation of *dukkha*. Another issue that has been dealt with is whether paritta-chanting ritual is due to Mahāyāna influences.

While tracing the development of this ritual as a consequence of the accommodation of a pre-Buddhist belief, the thesis attempts to show how the popularization of Buddhism by reaching out to masses, this ritual gradually became a prominent practice.

This thesis also attempts to show how this ritual started as therapeutic and a prophylactic device gradually turned out to be the most popular benedictory ritual among Sri Lankan Buddhists.

The study deals also with such importance issues as the derivation of the terms '*paritta*', '*Catubhāṇavārapāli*'. An attempt is also made to explain anew the symbolism behind the special pavilion (*maṇḍapa*) erected to perform this ritual when it is held in an elaborate manner.

A detailed examination is made about the various developments the ritual underwent in Sri Lanka making it a unique ceremony turning it into a benedictory ritual of national importance.

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