

New Trends in the Study of Pali Language since the 20th Century, and their Long-term Effects*

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There is no need to underscore the fact that at present Pali language studies in Sri Lanka, when compared to what it was about five to six decades ago, is on the decline. There are many reasons for this. This essay is an attempt to examine two such reasons which the present writer thinks contributed in a considerable measure to this present state of affairs. As the focus of this essay is on two factors, this should not be taken as an exhaustive analysis of the whole issue.

Pali language studies in Sri Lanka has a long history going back to pre-Christian times. Introduction of Pali language to Sri Lanka coincides with the introduction of Buddhism in which Language it was couched. In Sri Lanka the new, committed converts to Buddhism, both bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, had to shoulder two major, urgent responsibilities. These were:

- 1) Preservation of the texts in the oral tradition.
- 2) Spreading and stabilizing the doctrine through preaching and teaching.

* This article is based on the paper read at the Seminar held on 11th December 2005 at the BMICH to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Post-graduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya.