

into consideration if we are to understand the Theravada Abhidharma in its proper doctrinal and historical perspective. For we cannot overlook the obvious fact that the various schools of Abhidharma grew, not in comparative isolation, but in interesting and mutually influencing one another.

At least two instances I have cited above should show that if our universities are to serve as international centers of excellence for Theravada Buddhist Studies it is not only desirable but absolutely necessary to broad-base our study programmes to include parallel Buddhist traditions as well. The initial requirement for such a project would be to broaden the linguistic equipment of our students to include not only a knowledge of Pali but a knowledge of other Buddhist scriptural languages, such as Sanskrit (both Classical and Hybrid), Classical Tibetan, and "Buddhist" Chinese.

In concluding these observations on the academic study of Buddhism it is necessary to mention here that the subject of Buddhism occupies a very central place in relation to many other academic disciplines. This is particularly true of all Sri Lankan studies whether they relate to Humanities or Social Sciences. No university in Sri Lanka can afford to dispense with Buddhist Studies if it is to carry on successfully its academic programmes in historical, cultural and sociological studies. This situation is not confined to Sri Lanka but is true of many other Asian countries. For Asian culture is, as a whole, Buddhist culture. In this connection I can do no better than quote D.T. Suzuki, the celebrated Japanese scholar.

"If the East is one, and there is something that differentiates it from the West, the differentiation must be sought in the thought that is embodied in Buddhism. For it is in Buddhist thought and in no other that India, China and Japan representing the East could be united as one. Each nationality has its own characteristic modes of adapting the thought to its environmental needs, but when the East as a unity is made to confront the west, Buddhism supplies the bond"*

*"Japanese Buddhism", Essays in Zen Buddhism (Third Series), London, 1953, p. 348

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