

Pali and Buddhist Studies : Local and Global Needs and Challenges*

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There is no doubt that as citizens of Sri Lanka we can legitimately be proud of this day on which the Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies has been ceremonially declared open. It is our duty and an obligation we owe to the unborn generations of Sri Lanka to make this event not second in significance to the arrival of Thera Mahinda in this country. It is we, as the residents of Sri Lanka, who inherited the teachings of the Buddha within the first two hundred years before its original identity began to disappear in India, in the land where the birth, attainment of enlightenment and final passing away took place.

By the time of Emperor Asoka, Buddhism in India had already split up into different sects on account of doctrinal differences. It is also true that the original standards of the prestigious order of monks were somewhat on the decline. Nevertheless, the great elders who counselled the Emperor, on account of their profound scholarship and scrupulous academic soundness, transformed the existing version of Buddhism to approach as near as possible to the original teachings of the Buddha, before it was dispatched to the world outside. In consequence of this, the Pali Tripitaka which was brought to Sri Lanka by the Elder Mahinda and was subsequently committed to writing in

* Inaugural oration by Prof. Jotiya Dhirasekara - Editor-in-Chief of Encyclopedia of Buddhism (presently Ven. Prof. Dhammavithari) at the opening of Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies at Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall.