

## The Pāli Commentaries as Source-material for Buddhist Studies\*

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A pioneering work on the sources of the Pāli commentaries was undertaken and published by Dr. E.W. Adikaram under the title *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon* in 1946. It was hailed or at least hoped at that time to usher in the beginning of the study of Pāli *Aṭṭhakathā* as source-material for the study of Buddhism in general and of Theravāda Buddhism in particular. Since his work was published, though it took a long time for the publication, many scholars including Ven. Walpola Rahula [*History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, 1956] relied heavily upon this work for the discussions on the Pāli Commentarial Literature. It is in this sense that Adikaram's work bore witness to a new frontier of research on the Pāli *Aṭṭhakathā* as source-material for Buddhist Studies.

Researches on Pāli Buddhism in areas such as its doctrine, history, culture, and many more disciplines may be undertaken utilizing the Pāli commentaries. Even today, however, the misconception that anything found in the Pāli commentaries belongs to the times of their commentators, Buddhaghosa or whosoever, still persists among the general public. This popular misconception is certainly untenable for the simple reason that the Pāli commentaries are the rearrangements and translations of the earlier sources known as the *Sihala-aṭṭhakathā*.

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