



## Research Article

Volume-02|Issue-03|2022

## The Importance of Pali and Sanskrit in Buddhism

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## Article History

Received: 15.05.2022

Accepted: 01.06.2022

Published: 29.06.2022

## Citation

Tangkasikit, C. (2022). The Importance of Pali and Sanskrit in Buddhism. *Indiana Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(3), 18-21.**Abstract:** Pali and Sanskrit are ancient languages that influenced Indian religion and culture. While Sanskrit is revered as a sacred language, Pali is often used to refer to the Theravada canon, and both were fashioned throughout many Buddhist territories in ancient times.

After the 3rd Buddhist council, King Ashoka sent Buddhist missionaries to propagate Buddha's teachings. The missionaries were in nine groups assigned to nine different regions (Dīpavaṃsa Chapter VIII). One of the destinations was Suvāṇṇabhūmi in Pali, and in Sanskrit it is Suvāṇṇabhūmi by Theras Sona and Uttara. This region is mentioned for countries in Southeast Asia mainland. Therefore, it is reasonable that from this period, Indian civilization was widely spread into all the Buddhist kingdoms in Southeast Asia, which are now known as Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

Buddhism firmly settled in this territory around the 11th to 12th BCE. Pali and Sanskrit have appeared in all types of ancient documents, such as Buddhist canons, scriptures, inscriptions, etc. During this period, the main written characters used in the inscriptions were the Pallava script, which is considered to be the oldest script found in Southeast Asia countries. Pallava is the name of a dynasty that once flourished in southern India. The letters used in the reign of this dynasty are called Pallava scripts.

**Keywords:** GSM, GPS, ESP, Mobile Communicative Prototype etc.

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## INTRODUCTION

The importance of Pali and Sanskrit in terms of historical artifacts and Theravada Buddhist scripture in Thailand:

In Thailand, we found many objects that preserved the teachings of Lord Buddha in Pali and Sanskrit, and many of them are in the form of inscriptions. These inscriptions reflect the condition of living, belief, culture, trade, and religious activities along with the propagation of Theravada Buddhism in this region.

The Ye Dhamma Gatha appears in the history of Sariputra Thera, one of the chief male disciples of the Lord Buddha. It is said that the Theras who came to Suvāṇṇabhūmi were Sona Thera and Uttara Thera, but the centre of Suvāṇṇabhūmi is still debatable where it is in the Southeast. After Buddha attained enlightenment and preached Dharma, once, he came to Rajagaha. One day, Assaji Thera, who was one of the first five Bhikkhu of the Lord Buddha, went on an alms round in Rajagaha. Upatissa saw Assaji Thera having calm and respectful behavior, so he wanted to know who his teacher was. Then Thera informed him that his teacher was the son of the Sakaya family and that he was showing the abbreviated dharma of the Lord Buddha, which is known as the Ye Dhamma stanza. After that, Upatissa returned to tell the story of the meeting with Assaji Thera to Kolita or later Maha Moggallana Thera. They went to see the Lord Buddha for ordination. In this stanza, causing the Buddha to have important

disciples, Moggallana and Sariputta became the left and right apostles. Buddhists therefore regard the Ye Dhamma as a magic stanza. They also considered it a miracle for changing and gaining the respect of those who had not yet heard of the Buddha's teachings, and they popularly inscribed it to proclaim and spread Buddhism.

**Ye Thamma Inscription 3 (In Front of the Shrine)**

The inscription is found at the shrine in front of the Ubosot next to Phra Pathom Chedi Wat Phra Pathom Chedi Phra Pathom Chedi Subdistrict, Mueang District, Nakhon Pathom Province in Thailand. Copies of this inscription are kept at the National Library. The inscription is written in Pallava script, in the Pali language. It contains four lines of writing, as follows:

*ye dhammā hetuppabhavā  
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato ā  
ha tesañca yo nirodho  
evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇoti*

**Ye Dhamma Inscription on Mueang Yarang Raw Clay Amulet Type**

This amulet is one of many antiques. A piece obtained from the excavation of the ancient city of Yarang, Yarang District, Pattani Province, Thailand. The raw clay was popularly built to contain the relics of a Thera monk who was a teacher when he died and was cremated, then pounded the relics with clay, printed Buddha images or stupa. The creation of such raw clay tablets was intended only for the benefit of the deceased; it was not created for the succession of

Buddhism. The condition of this item is damaged. Some of the top soil is missing, but it still has traces of a picture of a stupa. This inscription is written in Pallava script, in the Sanskrit language. It has 1 face; it contains 4 lines of writing in the form of a raw clay amulet with an imprinted picture of a stupa. The verses written on this inscription are as follows:

*ye dharmā hetuprabhavā  
... tuṃ tathāgato  
..... nirodho  
e.... hāsamaṇo*

The four lines of Ye Dhamma stanza can be translated as follows:

The states arisen from a cause  
Their cause the Tathāgata proclaims,  
As well as their cessation  
This is the teaching of the Great Ascetic

The essential features of the Ye Dhamma Hetu stanza can be summarised as; whatever proceeds from a cause, thereof, the Tathāgato has explained the cause; its cessation has also been explained. This is the teaching of the Supreme Sage. This Ye Dhammā stanza is considered to be at the heart of Buddhism, extracted from the Mahāvagga in the Mahākhandhaka which forms part of the Vinaya Piṭaka, at the moment when Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna ordained.

### Dharmachakra Inscription

The Dharmachakra inscription is a pedestal and pillar that represents the prosperity of Theravada Buddhism in this region. It comes with a rectangular supporting base and an eight-edged pillar. Its spokes are cut through, and its base depicts the figure of a bloomed lotus flower. On the top is a carved bunch of flowers, while the lower part is carved in the image of lotus flowers and swans within the rectangular frame. The inscription on the base of the Wheel of Dharma can readily be called "Description of the Four Noble Truths".

### Thammachak (Nakhon Pathom) Inscription

The inscription is inscribed in the Pallava script, Pali language, around the 12th Buddhist century. The details of the inscription are as follows: Scripts at 2 hobs of the wheel

*“saccakicca kataññāṇaṃ  
catudhā catudhākkataṃ  
tivattaṃ dvādasākāraṃ  
dhammacakkaṃ mahesino”  
“dhammacakkaṃ pavattitaṃ  
tiparivattaṃ dvādasākāraṃ”*

Scripts at a rim (outside)

*“saccaññāṇaṃ  
kiccāññāṇaṃ  
kataññāṇaṃ”*

Scripts at 15 bars

*“1) dukkhasacca 2) dukkhasacca pariññeyya 3) dukkhasacca pariññātaṃ 4) samudayasacca 5) samudayasacca pahātabba 6) samudayasacca pahina 7) nirodhasacca 8) nirodhasacca sachikātabba 9) nirodhasacca sacchikata 10) maggasacca 11) maggasacca bhāvetabba 12) maggasacca bhāvita 13) niyānika hetudassanā 14) dhipateyya eta maggasacca 15) niyānika hetudassanā”*

Thai scholars suggest that the text from this inscription refers to the Dhammacakkappavattanasutta. The mentioned sections of the Sutra are as follows:

*Yāvakīvañca me, bhikkhave, imesu catūsu ariyasaccesu evaṃ tiparivattaṃ dvādasākāraṃ yathābhūtaṃ nānadassanaṃ na suvisuddhaṃ ahoṣi, neva tāvāhaṃ, bhikkhave, sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya ‘anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho’ ti paccaññāsim.*

*Yato ca kho me, bhikkhave, imesu catūsu ariyasaccesu evaṃ tiparivattaṃ dvādasākāraṃ yathābhūtaṃ nānadassanaṃ suvisuddhaṃ ahoṣi, athāhaṃ, bhikkhave, sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya ‘anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho’ ti paccaññāsim.*

*Nāṇaṇca pana me dassanaṃ udapādi: ‘akuppā me vimutti, ayamantimā jāti, natthi dāni punabbhavoti.*

The Gatha determines that this Dhamma-wheel belongs to the Lord Buddha and depicts the four Noble Truths, and that once the Dharmachakra has been turned 3 times, 12 forms of knowledge, through hearing, understanding, and internalizing, will arise. In the Book of Discipline, when the Lord Buddha rolled the Dhamma-wheel, the earth devas made sounds. Thus, the Dhamma-wheel rolled by the Lord Buddha in the forest of Isipatana, Varanasi, the roll of the Dhamma-wheel cannot be rolled back by any ascetics or brahmins or devas or Mara or anyone else in the world.

### The Importance of Pali and Sanskrit in terms of Local Engagement and Rituals

In Theravada Buddhist tradition, all Buddhist rituals must use the Pali language for the sacrament to be accomplished. For example, when a man is ordained as a monk, every step of the ordination ceremony has to use the Pali language. Without the Pali language, the ordination of monks and novices would not be completed. Even in the Phatthasima ceremony (where the monks set the boundaries with a stone to mark the binding), the Pali language must be used. Thus, it can be said that all the rituals of Theravada Buddhism require the Pali language to be completed.

By adopting Buddhism and the teachings of the Buddha as supreme practice in Thailand. Thus, many traditions concerning the ruler also incorporated the use of Pali and Sanskrit words. Although the

language family of Thai is different from Pali and Sanskrit, a number of the words have been adopted into our language. However, when it is used in Thai, there is a change in form, sound, and meaning, which is known as language mutations. We are closely attached to Buddhism in almost every dimension, from birth to death. We, therefore, make merit on various occasions, such as: birthdays, building temples, and anniversaries of different ages, wedding ceremonies, naming, and all rituals concerned with the Pali and Sanskrit languages for the completion of a ritual ceremony.

### The Importance of Pali and Sanskrit in terms of Practitioner

The teachings of the Buddha are extremely compatible with all systems and social environments. It is the system that supports the development of human potential to obtain the highest goal of the value of life and truly understand life and the world. All the original Buddha teachings are preserved in Pali and Sanskrit. Therefore, the Theravada tradition still maintains the system of Pali study for all Buddhist practitioners. On a daily basis, practitioners who are conscious of reaching the Dharma must perform a routine consisting of prayers in Pali language, such as:

- 1) Salutation to the Triple Gem and Homage to the Buddha.

*Namô Tassa Bhagavatô Arahâtô Sammâ-Sambuddhassa*

(Repeat three times)

- 2) The Three Refuges usually recited prior the Five Precepts.

*Buddham Saranam Gacchāmi.*

(I go to the Buddha for refuge)

*Dhammam Saranam Gacchāmi.*

(I go to the Dhamma for refuge)

*Sangham Saranam Gacchāmi.*

(I go to the Sangha for refuge).

- 3) Request for the Five Precepts which are.

*Pānātipātā veramanī sikkhā-padam samādiyāmi*

(To abstain from destroying living beings)

*Adinnādānā veramanī sikkhā-padam samādiyāmi*

(To abstain from taking things not given)

*Kāmesu micchācārā veramanī sikkhā-padam samādiyāmi*

(To abstain from sexual misconduct)

*Musāvādā veramanī sikkhā-padam samādiyāmi*

(To abstain from false speech)

*Surā-meraya-majja-pamādatthānā*

*veramanī sikkhā-padam samādiyāmi*

(To abstain from liquor causing intoxication and heedlessness)

In addition, there are also other chants such as Morning–Evening Chanting, Itipiso, Recollection of the Doctrine (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha), Patti Dāna (Transference of Merits), Mettā bhāvanā (spreading

loving kindness), loving kindness to oneself, Giving the merits, etc. When practitioners pray in the Pali language, they are learning and understanding the teachings of the Lord Buddha, and this will be beneficial to their further practice.

## CONCLUSION

Tipitaka is the collection of the teachings of the Buddha that were originally reserved in Pali language in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. Many Buddhist practitioners have translated it into their own languages for the purpose of making it easier to learn and pray. Today, the study of Pali and Sanskrit is limited to those who wish to understand the chant, and the use of these languages is considered less and less on a daily basis. When no one learned the original language of the Tipitaka, it later gradually disappeared, leaving no evidence to trace the discipline and the Dhamma in those countries. However, in Theravada Buddhist countries, which include Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka, they thought that if the Tipitaka was translated into another language by discarding the original, the Dhamma and Discipline would be inaccurate. For this reason, the Tipitaka was kept in the Pali language, and one first had to learn the Pali language to be understood and then to study the Dhamma and Vinaya in the Tipitaka. Thus, Buddhism in these countries is able to maintain their doctrines in accordance with the principles of Dhamma and lasting discipline. In addition to being a study of principles and teachings, it is also the successor to the revival of Buddhism, especially the study of Pali and Sanskrit languages, because if we don't know these languages, no one will be able to know and understand the words of the Lord Buddha. If there is a lack of knowledge in Buddhism, the religion will also become extinct.

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