THE PRESENT POSITION OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE IN SRI LANKA

INTRODUCTION :

The Coastal areas of Sri Lanka came under European rule from 1505 – 1658 under the Portuguese. The Dutch ousted the Portuguese and took control of the very same regions and administered them from 1658 – 1796. Finally the British ousted the Dutch and took over the regions under Dutch rulership and consolidated their rulership from 1796 – 1815. In 1815, under the mutually agreed convention, the Kandyan kingdom which remained under the indigenous rulers was taken over by the British. Consequently the entire island of Sri Lanka came under British rule in 1815.

During the rulership of the British various progressive changes took place within politics, economics and education and various other fields of activity. These changes were subject to the requirements of the British empire. These British rulers dispensed with the indigenous traditional economy and substituted it with commerce based exports. In order to facilitate this drastic change the Britishers promoted a local elitist group to assist them in their commercial enterprises from the indigenous aristocracy and this group was appointed as administrators.

EDUCATION

In the field of education, the indigenous system of educations based with Buddhist Viharas, where in Buddhist culture was promoted, were done away with and the entire educational system was substituted with Christian missionary schools headed by Christian ecclesiastics and also to supply English
educated group among the local people to serve the British administrative setup. With this drastic change the local Buddhist culture degenerated and a foreign Christianity based culture came into being in Sri Lanka. The Buddhists lost the freedom to practice their own religion. Consequently, the local culture that was primarily based on the teaching and study of Buddhist (Theravada) Tripitaka, Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhalese language progressively degenerated and became non-existent. The assistance granted by the local governments from the promotion of the local culture came to be abolished.

The decline of the local systems of education that was based on Buddhism and Sinhala language, was greatly felt by the people and in order to maintain their cultural identity, Buddhist monks and local leaders, engaged themselves in agitations against the British. These two sections made efforts to lay the foundations to foster the traditional culture. The scholars at the time, mainly Buddhist monks, such as Venerables Bulathgama Dharmalankara, Sri Sumanatissa, Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala and Migettuwatte Gunanada, and from the laymen George Parsons, clergyman of the Anglican Church and under his command a group was formed to represent Christianity and the Buddhist monks too grouped themselves and entered into public debates. Thus public debates come into existence. The popular Buddhist – Christian debates viz Baddegama Debate (1865), Udanvita Debate (1866), Gampla Debate (1871), and Panadure Debate (1873) deserve mention here. A report of these debates by J.M. Peoples with an introduction by him was published in an American newspaper. The American national Colonel (retired) H.S. Alcott having read
this report visited Sri Lanka. Firstly four schools were set up Koratota, Homagama, Handapangoda and Walahapitiya under Colonel Olcott's chairmanship in Colombo in 1880 was funded the Paramavignartha Samagama (Society). This society then established Buddhist schools throughout the island. Consequently by the end of the nineteenth century, there were 142 Buddhist schools recovering a grant-in-aid from the British government. Of these schools Ananda College, Colombo, Dharmaraja College, Kandy had the teaching of Buddhism and other languages in their curricula. It is recorded that these colleges had students of high quality who had studied Sanskrit language as well.

In the mean time the resurgence of Hinduism set in motion by scholar Arumugam Navalar resulted in the establishment of Hindi schools. The first Hindu English school that was set up at Vannapunnai in Jaffna peninsula (northern Province of Sri Lanka). With his demise this movement lost vigor to a certain extent. This movement of setting up indigenous schools under various subjects of studies, including schools, local language schools, Colombo Technical College, Colombo Academy (later ranked Royal College) came into existence. This first Muslim school, established during this period of educational reforms, was in Kandy, in the early stages of the nineteenth century. During this period separate Schools for Buddhist monks calles Pirivenas were established. Kelaniya Vidyalankara Pirivena in 1876 and Vidyodaya Pirivena established in 1893 deserve mention. The establishment of these two Pirivenas gave a new avenue for the progress of the teaching and
study of Pali and Sanskrit which were in abeyance by then. The Buddhist education of the laity and the Pirivenas for monks the study of languages progressed under a wide scope of study structures. The production of a scholars among the laymen and the Maha Sangha became a necessity.

The Vidyodaya Pirivena which was a well organized government recognized educational institution, earned a grant-in-aid from the government as an institution committed to the teaching of Asian (Prachina) languages. Thereby this Pirivena rendered an immeasurable impact on the development of the teaching of Sanskrit language, In the examination of the present standard of Sanskrit works in Sri Lanka, the Vidyodaya Pirivena was in the forefront and later this Pirivena in recognition of the contributions to the progress of Buddhist education both Pali and Sanskrit, was raised up to the status of a full-fledged university by the government under the University Grants Commission (UGC). The oriental languages teaching and study that had totally declined during the foreign (European) rule and the renaissance brought about in the study of oriental languages could be directly, subjectively and objectively attributed to the Vidyodaya Pirivena. The main Pirivena the modern period.

4.1. **The main pirivenas in the Modern Period:**

The Buddha Sasana (bhikkhu, bhikkhuni, upasaka and upasika) was at a low ebb in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. A reformist movement developed within the Order, largely through the initiative of a single individual, Velivita Saranankara. Born in 1698, Saranankata joined the order at the age of sixteen as a pupil of Ven. Suriyagoda Rajasundera, who had received upasampada
Saranankara's teacher exercised considerable influence within the Kandyan kingdom and enjoyed for some time, the favor of the king, Sri Vira Parakrama Narendrasimha (1701-59), however, he was executed on a charge of treason. Thus left on his own, young Saranankara resorted to the mountain areas of Alagalla, Kadugannawa, the most inaccessible region then as now, a few miles away from Kandy city. He devoted these early years to the task of learning the Pali language, which is the scriptural language of Theravada Buddhism, against Sanskrit language the scriptural language of Mahayana Buddhism, since 5th century BC. In order to read and understand the Tripitaka which was in the form of palm leaf inscription since the first century BC, kept in Sri Lnaka at matale Alulen Vihara. Saranankara's tutor in Pali, in these early days was a nobleman by the name of Levke Ralahami, who had been imprisoned by the king of Kandyan kingdom in a village close to Alagalla. Saranankara formed an organization called Silvat Samagama. Previously in 1697, an upasampada ceremony had been conducted at Peradeniya by visiting Burmese Chapter of highly ordained monks. This ceremony had failed to stabilize Buddhism, as there was local Samaneras (new monks) trained in Pali and Buddhism. Saranankara was meditating with the king of Kandy, firstly with Sri Vijaya Rajasinghe (1739-47) and later his successor King Kirti Rajasinghe (1747-82). The later effort being successful in obtaining a chapter of highly ordained monks from Siam (Thailand) led by Most Venerable Upali and the Siamese sect of Sri Lanka with two chapters, Malwatte and Asgiriya founded.
Saranankara being aware of the failure of the higher ordination ceremony held in 1697 was due to the absence of learned Samaneras in Pali and Tripitaka organized a Pirvena at Niyamakanda, near Handessa city, Kandy district, where resident student Samaneras were given instructions in Pali grammar, prosody, literature and Buddhist texts. In a few years, this Niyamakanda institution turned out to be the progenitor of a renaissance in Sinhalese and Pali literature in the country. In the wake of this movement, monastic educational institutions were founded such as Parama Dhamma Cetiya Pirivena at Ratmalana by Ven. Valane Siddhartha Maha Thera in 1845. This was establishment of followed by two daughter colleges.

Vidyodaya Pirivena at Maligakanda, Colombo by Most Venerable Hikkadiwe Sumangala Maha Nayaka Thero in 1873 and Vidyalankara Ox Pirivena at Peliyagoda Kelaniya by Vene. Ratmalane Dhammaloka Maha Thera in 1875.
4.2. The Scholars Produced by Vidyodaya Pirivena:

A pupil of Most Venerable Welivita Sarankara Sangharaja of his lineage Ven. Galle Medhankara Maha Thera established the Pirivena at Pelmadulla (Ratnapura district) Vihara, and the brightest product of this Pirivena was Ven. Valane Siddhartha Maha Thera. He is the brightest light in the recent Buddhist Dhamma educational firmament. Having completed his studies thereafter in 1838 he established the monastic training institute at Walane Siddhartha (Panadura)⁹. In 1841 at the invitation of the Buddhist laity supporters, Ven. Valane Siddhartha Nayaka Thero, came over to Ratmalane Parama Dhamma Cetiya Vihara and founded an educational institute and contributed largely to promote Buddhist monastic education. Among his scholar monks, pupils were Venerables Hikkaduwe Sumangala, Ratmalane Dhammaloka, Suriyagoda Sonuttara, Weligama Sri Sumangala. There were five lay scholars too. Venerable Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala and Ratmalane Dhammaloka were the brightest scholars. Having realized his future responsibility Ven. Sumangala Thera, gained erudition in Sinhala, Sanskrit grammar prosody and Dharma Vinaya.

1. Rev. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero:

With the victory gained in 1873 Panadure Debate¹⁰ there was an upsurge of enthusiasm aiming the Buddhist leaders congregated around Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala maha Nayaka Thera. This resulted at the request of lay devotees to come over to Colombo and in 1873 to establish the Vidyodaya
Pirivena in the mansion called Palm House at Maligakanda. This project was supported by 13 lay devotees of whom the lessers were Don Andrayas Perera Dharma Gunawardena Muhandiram, Don Philip de Silva and Epa Appuhamy. This group in order to maintain and promote the educational institution a society called Vidyadhara Sabha was initiated. This society was established at the end of the 19th century when there was a demand for promoting the teaching and study of oriental languages in Sri Lanka. Thus the first Oriental languages educational institution came to be reckoned as the first institute of this nature in the island.

In order to gain public support and acceptance for the promotion of Buddhist education in view of the fact that the central authority the British government was only supportive of missionary schools and colleges. Two prominent Buddhist laymen in Colombo, Don Philip de Silva Epa Appuhamy and Don Velen Vikramatilaka in a letter to the editor of the Sinhala newspaper suggested the establishment of a college of Buddhist studies. This paper was published at Colombo Lakminipahana, which was later published in the issue of 14 December 1861. The letter read in Sinhala and the English transcription of it is as follows: “Buddhism was introduced to Ceylon 2,200 years ago. From that time until the end of the Sinhalese kingdom fifty years hence, the kings of Ceylon took the initiative in maintaining Buddhism.

The citizens of the country followed the leadership of their kings, it was not their practice to have organizations of their own for the maintenance of Buddhism. For this reason, it is difficult nowadays to organize Buddhists for
the purpose of maintaining their religion.

In the days when Buddhism was receiving the patronage of kings, there were ample opportunities for the pursuit of Buddhistic studies. The kings appointed learned bhikkhus to the incumbencies of important temples, and made generous endowments for the benefit of both teachers and pupils alike. But now, because of the absence of a Buddhist king and the lack of experience among the Buddhists in organizing their religious affairs in all branches of Buddhist studies, there is a decline in Buddhist education. Therefore this would result in the ignorance of the public. It is the duty of all Sinhalese — not merely Buddhists — to take measures to avert this prospect.

The main aim is to establish a Buddhist College, for the benefit of all Ceylonese — for the purpose of teaching subjects such as Pali, Sinhalese and Sanskrit, Buddhist texts, history, logic, medicine and astrology with this view in mind. The following proposals were put forth:

(1) A capital fund of not less than L10,000 must be raised.

(2) The Society or Committee of trustees which raises the fund must deposit it in a bank and administer the interest.

(3) A sum of not more than L200 should be spent on building the college (a hall and residential quarters consisting of about twenty rooms) in a place not far removed from any part of the country.

(4) About three or four teachers must be appointed in the College. Lay teachers (non monks) must be paid with moderate salaries. In the case of clerical teachers maintenance allowance must be handed to their
kapakaru (i.e. helpers).

(5) Students between fifteen and thirty years, who already have some previous education, will be admitted to the College.

(6) The number of students to be given admission at any time will depend on the interest due on the capital fund.

(7) In the case of meritorious students an allowance for the supply of their meals (only) will be handed over to a kapakaruva. Lay students will be expected to provide for themselves, they shall not be required to make tutorial gifts (gurupanduru) to their teachers at the conclusion of their courses of study.

(8) A special official should be appointed by the Society (which will manage the institution) to be the in charge of the monthly payments to teachers and clerical students.

(9) The teachers appointed should prepare courses of instruction; remove students from the institution whose general performances do not reach the required standards; and make arrangements to award small prizes to the students who perform well at the annual examinations.

(10) The prior consent of the Government should be obtained to the effect that the government would take charge of the fund and use it to promote the teaching of Sinhalese – in the event of the failure of the College to continue its teaching function”(10) This letter published in Sinhala clearly elucidates the concern and anxiety of the lay Buddhists to promote education in Sri Lanka, by producing efficient monk and lay
teachers through a training institute. The contributions were slow to filter in, and in 1873, with seven students, the College commenced functioning under the names Vidhyodhaya Sastraslya / Oriental Sastralya and later properly named as Vudyodhaya Pirivena, reactivating the name Pirivena in moder times.

(11) Students both monks and laymen gained admission to the Pirivena from various regions of Sri Lanka and the institution grew steadily. A few years after founding the Pirivena the student population grew up to a few hundred. However, in these formative years the teacher who was capable of teaching Sanskrit and Pali was Sumangala Thero. There is a situation wherein there is proof of the institution producing few scholars with the passing of time. These comments were made in the 1885 report of the Director of Education and it also records that there was a steady growth in the teaching and study of oriental languages. The steady growth of the Pirivena was solely due to the dedication, scholarship, and management skills of the first Pirivenadhipathi, Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Maha Mayaka Thero (1826-1911). He was a scholar of Tripitaka Dhamma, Sinhala, Pali, Sanskrit, Prakrit, English, Hindi, Burmese languages and was also a scholar of logic, grammar and prosody. He also had a deep insight into Sanskrit literature, as well as Vedic texts too. This scholar monks had knowledge of Sanskrit poetical works equivalent to the standard of Vanabhatta, knowledge of Sanskrit prosody equal to the knowledge of Dandin and he was also able to
converse very correctly in Sanskrit. These observations had been made by the contemporary scholars of a lesser degree. Professor Satischandra Vidyabhushana of the Calcutta University having gained a scholarship came over Sumangala Maha Nakaya Thero to study Pali and Buddhism under him. During this time Sanskrit works in Nagari script were obtained from the Calcutta and had them reedited by Prof. Satischandra Vidyabhushana and had them published in print for the use of Vidyadhaya students. This professor on several instances had discussions with Sumangala Thero with regard to Panini's chief grammatical works and Sanskrit literature. This is one of the many instances this professor applauded the Sanskrit language erudition of this Maha Thero. One such instance he wrote: “Girvānaākshhu paramāmagaman pratista: Bhashasu saugathamukhābj viniksrutāsu...”

(12) “It is indeed surprising that an Indian Brahmin, stating a national of another country, other than India had reached the same perfection in the knowledge of a practice of Sanskrit language and literature of yore of India.”

Pandit Sṛī Sarveshvara Garman Brahmin was a well known scholar of Sanskrit grammatical knowledge, who found Venerable Sumangala Maha Thero to be equally brilliant in these subjects and composing a Sanskrit work called Shrī Sumangalamahimadvipa, a felicitation volume records as regards Sumangala Thero's erudition as follows:

“Vakyana or examination of grammar which is called harahari
vakyapadiya the great language is understood. Sumangala Maha Thero knows all that. There is no doubt about it. He is an expert of Kannada (Karnataka State of India) rishis' vayisheshika philosophy and also the language as well as grammar of Panini and thus be his a bright star in the firmament of literature”.

Sumangala Thero was interested in Sanskrit grammar. He studied Panini's grammar, Sarasvatha grammar and authored a Sanskrit grammatical work called 'Sandhi Grantha'. The erudition he displayed in the field of Sanskrit poetry is borne by the first page of his

‘सन्धि ग्रन्थः’.

“जगत्रयाछर्य मवर्य विक्रमम्,
सुसम्हितान्ग्नम् भवसन्धिविदिनाम्।
पुरन्दरा दय्यरपि वन्दितम् जिनम्,
नममि भक्त्यस्यस्यद्विदिनाम सिद्धि”।

Sumangala Thero also composed in Sinhala language 'Brahmana Dharma – Anusasana Sangraha' with the inclusion of a large number of advisory stanzas of the Sanskrit literature and also rendered an explanation of the terms and words in it in Sinhala.

After three years of the founding of Vidyodhaya Pirivena, the Governor Henry William Gregory sanctioned an annual grant-in-aid of Rs 600 to the Pirivena. His successor, Governor Arthur Gordon increased the grant to Rs 1000. This Governor citing the reasons for this increase recorded:

“The only institution of higher education in orienta languages is the Vidyodhaya Pirivena under the principal ship of Sumangala Nayaka Thero.
Mainly this is a monastic institution for the teaching and study of the members of the Maha Sangha. In case this Pirivena is not in existence in Sri Lanka there would be no scholars well verses in oriental languages. In order to save the institution from decay this annual grant of Rs 1000 is being paid”.

In the formative period in addition to the principals, Venerable Mulleriyawa Gunaratana, Mabotuwana Siddhartha, Heyyantuduwe Devamitta, Mahagoda Gnanesvara were on the tutorial staff. The primary objective of the founding of this educational institution, as recorded earlier and also in the deed of the property was to provide an education both for the monastic order as well as the Buddhism and also other subjects related to Buddhism. In course of time. This objective was broadened and provided facilities for the local as well as foreign students both of the monastic order and the laity to study Buddhism and other inter-related subjects. In the beginning the monastic students facilities were provided to study Pali Theravada Tripitaka and Sinhala languages and for lay students Sanskrit and Ayurveda medical sciences. By the year 1890 Vedyodhaya taught Tripitaka Pali of Theravada Buddhism, Pali, Sanskrit, and Sinhala languages and these had wide curricula. For Sanskrit the curriculum was as follows:

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<th>Subject</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mahakavya</td>
<td>Raghuvamsa Mahakavya with the commentaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chandas</td>
<td>Vruttaratnākara with the commentaries</td>
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<td>Vyakarana</td>
<td>Mugdhabhodha and Sārasvataya</td>
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<td>Kastha Sahitya</td>
<td>Hitopadesha</td>
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<td>Vayidyagrantha</td>
<td>Sushrutaya</td>
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In 1891 the curricula was further broadened. In respect of Sanskrit prosody the text called 'Kavyadarsha' was sanctioned. According to the fiftieth summarized report of Vidyodhaya Pirivena, in order to widen the scholastic knowledge of bhikkhus and as Sanskrit grammar was an essential ingredient, teaching of Sanskrit grammar was introduced\(^\text{14}\). By the year 1917 the student bhikkhus were provided with the study of Pali language with grammar, Sinhala, Sanskrit language, Dharma Vinaya (Vinaya Pitika) prosody and history and to lay students Sinhala language with grammar and Ayurvedic medicinal studies with Sanskrit, prosody. With these subjects of studies the entire education structure was modified. While Sanskrit language, literature, grammar and prosody was taught both to the bhikkhus and lay students and the teaching of Ayurveda to lay students. This is due to reason that the lay students who opt for Ayurveda must have a good knowledge of Sanskrit.

In 1852 the educational structure of Vidyodhaya Pirivena was subjected to special variations. A post of Superintendent of Education was created and Venerable Velivitiye Soratha was appointed therein. The new appointee in 1953 instated a scheme of widening the scope of teaching and studies and developed the entire education structure. Consequently the curriculum expanded to 19 subjects. The specific characteristic was the grammar of three languages (Pali, Sanskrit, and Sinhala), literature, prosody and composition and under these heads the curriculum was grouped. In addition the subjects like history, archaeology, epigraphy, logic were included in the syllabi. In the study of these subjects the prescribed texts and sources enabled the students to widen
their knowledge of Sanskrit.

It is seen Venerable Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Maha Nayaka Thero, examined the ancient Buddhist education systems of the 3rd century B.C., Mahavihara at Anuradhapura was established by Mahinda Thero, who introduced Buddhism to Srilanka. Therefore Saranankara Sangharaja developed a system of studies appropriate for the twentieth century centered on Vidyodaya Pirivena. This new syllabi was geared up to build a clear and complete understanding of Dharma Vinaya among the bhikkhu students and to develop the knowledge of Dharma along with the study of Oriental languages. The subjects like Ayurveda were of the highest standard and through this syllabus to promote education as well as good behavior in society among the lay students were the primary objectives.

It became necessary to select Tripitaka Dharma and the three languages for the study of the subjects and introduce them to the students. It became important to make available for the study from the primary sections to the highest standards. Even the other teachers were advised to follow this system of imparting knowledge. Thus the students were able to gain complete understanding of the subjects they were studying.

Venerable Kirivattuduwe Pannasara says that this new system of education departing from the traditional lectures or taking down notes, aims at the tradition of the students to becomes good scholars with a deep understanding and comprehension of the subjects they study. The monk students having completed their studies returned to their villages and in order to
maintain the new system of education commenced setting up branch Pirivenas. This move resulted in the creation of studentship with a deep knowledge of Dharma Vinaya and the three languages. Most of the poets of the twentieth century were set up according to the Vidyodhaya Pirivena educational structure.

Several lay pandits who had studied oriental languages, engaged themselves in Ayurvedic medicinal practices, pastorally and rendered a yeoman service to the society and community at large. Some of them engaged themselves in authorship while some other’s authored grammatical works to Pali and Sanskrit texts, commentaries to them, translations of them, descriptive renditions and also revised some of these texts. Weragama Punchibandara, an alumni of the Vidyodhaya Pirivena was one of the 19th century erudite scholar, who was highly popular among the contemporary oriental languages pandit, of the highest accomplishments. He authored in Sanskrit Vaidyajeevani, Varahamihira and Rutusamhara. U.G. Ekanayake composed Sanskrit declension (Sanskrit Varanegilla). Pandit G.P.Wikramarachchi, J.S. Jayasundera Vedārachchi, B.L.S. Silva, J.B. Jayatilaka, M.S.P. SamarakSinghe and W.A. Samarasekera, the laymen who were well versed in Sanskrit language, Ayurveda and astrology rendered their services to the promotion of Sanskrit language.

2. **Ven. Khave Ratnasara Thero**:  
Venerable Kahawe Ratnasara Thero, who was appointed as a teacher of the Pirivena in 1901 engaged himself in the teaching of the bhikkhu
students. The Sanskrit language which was declining in the country, in order to stabilize Sanskrit took several necessary steps to stabilize it. He directed Kahawe Ratnasara Thero to facilitate the study of Sanskrit among the novices, clarifying the misunderstood sections, authored a commentary, a highly valuable and clear commentary to the Sarasvatha. This composition made this highly erudite knowledge of Sanskrit in the entire island. 'Sanskrit Pravesaya' (Introduction to Sanskrit) is a text in Sinhala by Kahawe Thero, in order to systematize the study of Sanskrit. This text enabled the grasping of the grammatical norms of Sanskrit and helping the students to engage in Sanskrit compositions and essays.

3. Rev. Mahagoda Ganeswara Thero :

A pupil of Sumangala Nayaka Thero, and Vice-Principal of Vidyodhaya Pirivena, Mahagoda Gneswara Nayaka Thero, was an erudite scholar in Sanskrit language. He was of great assistance to Sumangala Thero for the functioning of the Pirivena. The knowledge of Sanskrit he possessed is evidenced by the Sanskrit address he made when Pandit Satischandra Vidyabhumshana was accorded a farewell when he was returning to his homeland. An account of the farewell ceremony and the address made by Gneswara Thero was published in the Sanskrit newspaper of India viz. 'Sunyatavadi', which had a wide circulation in India. In a statement made by Pandit Vidhyabhumshana being overjoyed over the extensive knowledge of Sanskrit of Gneswara Thero, elucidates the high standard of knowledge of Sanskrit Gneswara Thero had. “Not from you, your pupil and my brethren
Gnanesvara not of any other thing, but I have to learn my own language Sanskrit from him. After my demise my countrymen will naturally understand that there are teachers – pupils of the highest attainment are in Sri Lanka” said pandit Vidhyabhushana a great revelation at the time.

4. Rev. Baddegama Piyaratna Thero :

Velivitiya Devananda Thero was also a teacher of Vidya dayaPirivena. After the passing away of Velivitiya Devananda Thero in terms of a decision taken unanimously in 1924, Baddegama Piyaratana Thero, who was a Sanskrit leading scholar and devotee of contemporary languages was appointed as the Vice Principal of Vidyodhaya Pirivena. He authored two Sanskrit texts namely, ‘Sarasvatha Vyakya’ and ‘Sarasvata Padasadhana’. It is recorded by the contemporary teachers and students that he was well accomplished and that he could even defeat the Indian scholars too in his knowledge of Sanskrit still continue to echo in the ears of Indian Brahmin Pandits. He was an expert in Sanskrit poetry. His comprehension of Sanskrit grammar can be appreciated through the works Sarasvata Vyakarana and Sarasvata Vyakhya. His work composed of Sanskrit stanzas in memory of Hikkaduwe Sumangala Maha thero's demise elucidates his ability to compose simple poetry and his insight into formation of sentences, his exceptional ability in poetical literature17.

5. Rev. Velivitiye Soratha Thero :

In 1922 Velivitiye Soratha Nayaka Thero was appointed as a teacher of Vidyodhaya Pirivena. In the finals of the Prachina examination conducted by
the Prachina Bhasophakara Society, he gained honor pass and won the gold medal too. He was appointed as the Vice Principal of Vidyodhaya Pirivena and in 1957 to the post of Principal of the Pirivena. Two years later in the newly established Vidyodhaya University he was honored as the Chancellor of this University. He had an outstanding erudition in Sinhala, Pali, Sanskrit languages as well as Dharma Vinaya, and gained honors from all scholars.

Soratha Thero studied all Sanskrit traditions. He read all the ancient Sanskrit poetical works of India. He further gained a wide knowledge of Sanskrit works on prosody, Ayurveda and astrology texts of old and also works in Sanskrit on a wide variety of subjects. This proficiency enabled him to impart knowledge on the subjects under study to the students so that they could assimilate them easily\(^\text{18}\). Among the works authored in Sanskrit by Velivitiye Soratha Thera, Sinhala Dasakumara Charita, Vruttaratnakara Sarala Vyakhya, Saundarananda Kavya, Kalpalatha Vyakhya, are the main works. Kalpalatha Vyakhya composed by Ven. Soratha on Saundarananda Mahakavya of Aswaghosha manifests his Sanskrit readership, Sanskrit grammar, his extensive knowledge of contemporary erudition as well as philosophical accomplishments\(^\text{19}\).

Velivita Soratha Thero, as the chief and in association with Venerable Kalukondayaye Pannasekera, Dehigaspe Punnasara, Palannoruwe Wimaladharma all of the tutorial staff of Vidyodhaya Pirivena, in 1929 composed an encyclopedia i.e. Kosa that would suffice to at least a certain extent the love of Sanskrit of the Sinhala people and this work in Sinhala
characters filled the paucity. This encyclopaedia was composed in order to facilitate students the study of Sanskrit language, to comprehend the meaning of Sanskrit words in Sinhala and as there were a large number of Sanskrit words in Sinhala texts this encyclopaedia helped even the students of Sinhala language. In the composition of this work, Sanskrit encyclopedias like Sabdakalpadruma, Vacaspatya, Vaidyakasabdhasindhu, Saligramanigandhu, et al, the Sanskrit encyclopaedias and Sanskrit – English encyclopedias too have been used to a great extent in the compilation. Herein only nouns and adverbs only are covered. It was not possible for the author to complete his work. In the first part the terms are collected in the work in alphabetical order from 'a' to 'dha'.

Kathatarangani is a collection of stories of the Sanskrit work, Katasaritsāgara and through it for Sinhala readership this text is one having written the stories in the Sinhala language. Katamruta is one that is authored in Sinhala having translated the stories in the Sanskrit work Panchatantra into Sinhala language for the Sinhala readers. In addition to these, this Maha Thera a large number of letters were written by him regarding Sanskrit language. Among these features are Maha Shabdha (Anandodaya 1924 April). Pavacanada/Pavachnada (Pracheena Bhashopakara Annual Literary Magazine 1942), Saundarananda Kavya (Vidyodhaya 1945) and Buddhist Sanskrit Texts (Vidyodhaya 1945).

6. Rev. Dehigaspe Pannasara Thero :

Dehigaspe Pannasara Thero, entered the class of Mahalagama
Chandjothi Thero in 1916 and studied under him. Further he progressed with his Sanskrit studies under Mahagoda Gnesvara Thero, Baddegama Piyaratana Thero, and Kahave Ratnasara Thero. In 1924 he was successful in the Pandit examination conducted by the Prachena Bhasophakara Society in 1924 and was awarded Samaradivakara Sanskrit Prize. Having joined as the tutorial staff in 1925 he was engaged in the teaching of Sanskrit and Pali languages. With his deep interest in Sanskrit literature in 1939 he entered the London University and graduated. In 1942 having followed Sri Lanka University lectures and secured the Honors degree of the London University. During the years 1951-1954 he worked for his Doctorate under Professor O.H. De A. Wijesekera of the Sri Lanka University and Doctoral Thesis was 'Sanskrit Literature – Extant among Sinhalese and the influence of Sanskrit on Sinhalese' and he obtained his degree. Thereafter this work was later published. History of Sanskrit Literature and Sanskrit Literature's impact on Sinhala Language Literature, which was a highly critical work.

Dehigaspe Pannasara Thero also authored on the lines of Sriharsha’s Ratnavali. Sinhala Ratnavali Nataka, Raghuvamsa Subhodhani Vyakya, Sanskrit phonetics. His work Sanskrit Phonetics, based on Sarasvatha Grammar and MacDonald Sanskrit Grammar enables a student to gain knowledge of Sanskrit language in three months. Herein he has quoted form the Sanskrit works of the highest quality in order to generate a broad understanding of Sanskrit language. This concludes with a dictionary for easy reference to the reader or the student. Following are the articles he published in various literary
magazines:

a) 'The manner in which Sanskrit has an impact on Sinhala Grammar' (Vidyalankara, Kelaniya, 1956).

b) 'Vedic traditions among Buddhists' (Dinamina Vesak Annual 1953).

c) 'Sri Lanka Ayurvedic Sanskrit Literature' (Samachara, I Volume IV, 1953).

d) 'Ramayana Harata' (Sinhala Buddhaya Vesak Volume, 1946).

e) 'Sanskrit Nataka' – Ranavali Nataka (1953).

f) 'Instructive Literature' (Sinhala Bauddhaya Vesak Volume, 1944).

g) 'Various customs of household life' (Gruhaya Sutra, 1947).

Pannasara Maha Thero was appointed as the head of the Arabhadha Ratmalane Parivenacharya Training College in 1956. This school was set up with the sponsorship of the Sri Lanka government with the objective of providing a proficiency in education for bhikkhus. Pannasara Maha Thero committed himself to generate the physical as well as human in-and-outs of the institution. He being committed to upgrade the contemporary bhikkhu education system in a progressive manner, assisted Venerable Sri Sobhita Maha Thero to draft the government bill for setting up Vidyodhaya and Vidyalankara Universities. In the formative years of Vidhyodhaya University he acted as the visiting lecturer for a period of one year. He was of a mindset to see to it that the bhikkhus well qualified in oriental languages and graduating from the university engaged in the Dharmasastra services in various parts of Sri Lanka.

7. Rev. Heagoda Dhamminda Thero:
Venerable Hegoda Dhammananda Thero was another lover of Sanskrit language produced by Vidyodhaya Pirivena in 1929 and studied under the tutelage of Ven. Kahave Sri Sumangala, head of the Pirivena. In 1935, having studied in the standard-wise system he was successful in the Final Examination of the Pirivena and also in the Final of the Prachina Examination. He joined the tutorial staff of the Pirivena in 1938 and in the very same year he was appointed as the Vice Principal. In addition to serving as a lecturer in several overseas universities he authored several works. His works are as follows: (20)

1) The 4th Volume of Sarasvatha Commentary:

Kahawe Ratnasara Thero (vide supra... P.) authored Sarasvatha Vyakarana Akyata Part up to Hvadi section of composed of three parts Vyakhana. The balance part of writing and completing the work was entrusted to Baddegama Piyaratana Thero. As Baddegama Piyaratna Thero could not completed the task it was entrusted to Dhamminda Thero, who completed the task.

2) Sarasvata Krudantha Volume.

Sarasvata Krudanta Volume is a text which meeting the requirements of Prachana Pandit degree. This is published under Sanskrit literature chronicle (vamsa). This text deals with male female order (bhikkhu and bhikkhuni) and details pertaining to sacred relics and it is composed of a secondary text with the importance of scripts and it also has Sutra Suchi, Gana Suchi, Dathu Suci. (i.e. Index of Sutras, Ganas and Dhatus)
3) Sanskrit Vyakarana Tharangani.

This work comprises of five parts viz.

1. Sanjna – Sandhi – Nama Taranga
2. Karaka Samasa Taranga
3. Tadditha Taranga
4. Krudantha Taranga,
5. Kriya Taranga

and it is a text meant for those studying Sanskrit language as novices to acquire up to date systematic learning of Sanskrit. This is a complete grammatical work, based after studying several Indian grammarians and grammatical works.

4) Sanskrit Patavali – First Volume.

This is the first text of a series of texts composed for the easy study of Sanskrit language and its grammar. The second and third of this volume was not composed. In the first volume there are 25 lessons. Herein it is planned to teach Svarantha Sabda and Sankhya Shabda, Sarvanama (pronouns) and Akyata Vibhakti. However, examples were not given for every grammatical form.

5) Bhakthi Sataka with descriptions.

This authored during the Kotte period by Pandit Sri Ramachandra Kavibhrathi having examined several manuscripts of Bhakthi Sataka and having removed printing errors and published with a descriptive account.
6) Nalopakhyana

This text was authored by Radelle Pannaloka Thero as a supplementary to Mahabharata epic's Nalopakyayanaya 6-10 sections. This manuscript Latu Dhamminda Thero arrange and published it. This leading scholar monk Dhamminda Thero authored several texts in Sinhala and Pali languages. Among them were Sararthavahini, Siyabaslakara commentary, Guttila Kavya, Samyutta Nikaya, Cullavagga re-edition, Payasirajagngna Sutta, and Bavuddhaya.

8. Rev. Dawuldena Gnaneswara Thero :

Hundreds of both members and lay students were produced by Vidhyodaya Pirivena. Some of these monk scholars set up Pirivenas in various regions of Sri Lanka and commenced the teaching among the monks and say students oriental languages. Some lay and monk Pandits produced works in the three languages Sinhala, Pali, and Sanskrit. Venerable Dawuldena Gnaneswara Thero, who studied languages at the Vidyodhaya Pirivena and later served in the tutorial staff of the same institution and in modern times he was one who mastered Sanskrit literature extensively. He composed several Sanskrit works covering different branched extensively.

1) Maranganavijayam.

Dawuldena Thero's First work is one based on traditional Buddha's biography dealing with the defeat of the Mara's daughters, giving the traditional story a new meaning. This work published in 1971 has 50 stanzas. Later it was re-edited and the number of stanzas increased to 100 was published in
1983 as an epic poetical work. This work comprises of ears exhilarating stories as is with Jayadeva's Gitagovina reminiscing with stories from Sruṇgara, Vasantatilaka, Shārdulavikrīdita.

2) Dharma Chinta.

This being a poetical work on Dharma was accorded the Presidential Award in 1985. It has 125 stanzas. This is an attempt to present in simple language and form Four Noble Truths (Chaturārya Satya), Noble Eight-Fold Path (Āryāstanga Marga). Four Streams of Life and Four Results. This work also presents all stages of life of a human being from conception in the mother's womb to final death analyzed systematically. Though there is a sense of serenity and ultimate happiness invoked in the reader. In the compilation of this work the author had utilized Samyutta Nikaya, the Pali Dhammapada of the Khuddakha, Tera Gatha and their Gathas as well.

3) Ashikh pusphamanjari.

This work has followed the Pali Pirivena text's Jayamangala stanzas and composed in Sanskrit is done as a felicitation to Damunumeye Piyaratana Maha Thera. The work commences with an adoration of the three Ratnas, namely Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The work explains the biography of Buddha viz. Birth, Period of Self Mortification, Ascetic Life, Completion of Paramitas, Attaining Buddhahood and thereafter the control of Alavaka, Nalagiri elephant, Angulimala, Vingnach, Saccaka, Nandopananda, Baka and the Buddha controlling them with his accomplishments of Dana, Prajna, Virya,
Shanti, Adhistana, Maitreya. The author wishes that every stanza would bring about serenity to one's life. This being a Bhakti Kavya, ear-exhilerating poetical Srgdhara meter had been utilized in composing the 16 stanzas. The opening three stanzas, scripted in the Padhyakvatra Vruta and the other stanzas, elucidate the author's mastery over the language, his devotion and his excellent ability in the field of poetry.

(4) Vyiragyachinta.

This work composed in order to redeem the mind from sensuality, this work is also Dharma Kavya and an Athma Kavya. His personal experiences as regards sensuality has been rendered poetically in these 181 stanzas. The Prachina Bhashapokara Society, hailing his work awarded Grantha Visaradha title to this poet in 1981. This has three chapters. The first is a self appreciation. The second is the degeneration of one's life analysis very graphically. The third is an explanation of the adoration of the Buddha. This work could be hailed as a guide to the understanding of Kayanupassana Meditation and as one that promotes adoration to the Buddha.

(5) Yatidhutam.

This is the first emissary poetical work (Dhatu Kavya) in Sri Lanka. Very Logically the work is named so as the three Haraka, Sandesha prehaka and Grahaka are great rashes. This is an emissary sent to Venerable Akuretiye Amaravamsa Maha Thera, requesting him to conduct a week-long Pirit Chanting transferring merit to Brahma, Sakra gods and plead to redeem the Sinhala race, Buddha Sasana (Bhikkhu, Bhikkhuni, upasaka and upasika)
from the terrorism that engulfed the north and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka since 1980. This work consisting of 228 stanzas has taken the path followed by Sanskrit and Sinhala poets who scripted emissary poetical works and has kept in tune with emphasized by descriptive poets and has all the ingredients of a Dhatu kavya, deviating in some instances to meet with contemporary needs. The emissary commencing his long journey from naturally beautiful environs of Sapugolla Tapodharama reaches Colombo Maligakanda Vidhyodhaya Pirivena. The emissary rides a modern Jaguar motor vehicle, first he reaches Kandy and resides at Asgiri Maha Vihara. On the second day the emissary is able to complete his long journey. In order to generate a sense of serenity, compassion and fearful mindsets and this work is themed according to the Sanskrit poetical works such as Sugdhara, Vasantatilaka, Mandakrantā, Dhodhaka, Shardulavikriditha, Indravajrā, Malani and Mattavilasini Vruta have been utilized.

(6) Svānastavakāvyām.

This poetical work scripted in 1997 with 57 stanzas in the first section, is done the poet having observed that the societal objectives degenerate due to the economic factors that are instrumental to it. This poetical work in later times grew into a Sataka Kavya. This work presents that the dog is much more higher than Musila who opposed his own teacher and those who oppose one's parents are much more inimical than Musila who opposed his own teacher and those who display virtues that are non-existent in oneself and profound them. This this work hails he virtues of the dog and gives thanks to this dog.
Although the title of the work is not grammatical, the contents of which are in the theme of a comparative blame the entire work is of an advisory nature. This work is in a simple language. The sources he had used such as works themed on Vruta such as Indravajra, Mandakranta, Vasantatilaka, Svanastavakavya was one that became popular with the readership of the world. Venerable scripted hundreds of Prassati Kavyas. Few of them are as follows:

Sri Jagannatha Prasasti.

Sri Sumangala Prasasti.

Hammala Saddhatissa Svamindra Prasasti.

Ananda Mayitriya Mahanayaka Svamindra Prasasti.

Prityā Vihatu Satavarshametitatya Kalam.

Vidurapola Priyatisya Mahanayaka Samindra Gunanusmruti.

Kamburupitiye Vanaratana Mahanayaka Samindra Prasasti.

Madihe Pannasiha Mahanayaka Samindra Gunanusmruti.

Kosgoda Dhammavamsa Nayaka Svamindra Prasasti.

Teipeha Somananda Nayaka Svindra Prasasti.

Kirinde Darmananda Nayaka Svamindra Prasasti.

Bellana Gnavimala Nayaka Svamindra Prasasti.

Ahungalle Vimalananditisya Mahanayaka Svamindra Prasasti.

9. Rev. Bellana Gnanavimala Thero:

Bellana Gnanavimala Maha Thero joined the Vidyodhaya Pirivena as a teacher in 1976 and having served for 34 years he retired from the college as the Vive Principal. He was ordained in May 1939 as a pupil of Bellana
Dharmapala Pirivena Principal, Rattotuwila Sobhita Thero who completed his education at the Pirivena and obtained the degree of Prachina Pandit. He obtained his Masters degree. From the time of composing commentaries, he eventually became the Principal of Bellana Pirivena. Thereafter in 1960 he joined the Vidyodhaya University as an external lecturer and served in that capacity for many years. His broad accomplishments in the Sanskrit language and literature had its beginning during his teaching career whilst he joined the Vidyodhaya Pirivena as a teacher. He instructed thousands of pupil monks, the composition of Sanskrit poetical works. Some under his guidance became very skilled writers.

He composed Sanskrit poetical works and these works were be published. For the benefit of students he translated into Sinhala some of the high quality Sanskrit works. Among them were, Abhignanashakuntala, Jatakamala, Ratnavali. He also wrote and published with a descriptive renderings to Alahabhad Prasasti. The immense services rendered by this scholar monk and his greatest achievement was the completion of an Encyclopedia of Sanskrit words and terms.

However, prior to the completion and publication of the encyclopedia, Velivitiye Soratha Nayaka Thero passed away. The Prachina Bhashopakara Society, under the scheme of the publication of quality Sanskrit texts, the completion of this encyclopedia was entrusted to Bellana Thero. Beginning with the letters 'na' and 'ha', comprising of 7411 words he completed his second section and it was published in 1996. Nagoda Ariyadasa
Seneviratna, was one of the most popular teachers of the Vidyodhaya Pirivena in modern times in the field of Sanskrit. His erudition to impart knowledge in a very heart rendering fashion, a natural talent he had, the students gravitated to the study of Sanskrit. He taught Sanskrit to thousands of students. In order to facilitate the students to study Sanskrit he translated several Sanskrit texts into Sinhala. Among these translations were, Buddhacharita Mahakavya, Sorsta Vyakhya, Saundarananda Maha Kavya, Sri Paknasara Vyakhya (4,5,6 Sarga), Kadambari Shri Piratana Vyakhya (First Section). Gradually Vidyodhaya and Vidyalankata Pirivenas progressed and the scholars produced were widespread in Sri Lanka. In order to propagate education they set up various institutions in the island. Presently the number of Pirivenas in Sri Lanka number more than 630. They are classified as Primary Pirivenas, Maha Pirivenas and Vidyayatana Pirivenas. Presently there are 430 Primary Pirivenas, 160 Maha Pirivenas, and 40 Vidyayatana Pirivenas. Roughly the student population at these institutions both lay and monk aggregate to 20,000 or more. The majority are bhikkhus. The teachers are more than 6,000. These institutions are found island wide. The Syllabi are primarily designed to the teaching and study of Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhala languages. The year of commencement is 1902, namely July 24th 1902, with the founding of Prachina Bhashopakara Society in the beginning of the 20th century. Later on a decision taken at the general meeting the society was renamed as Sri Lanka Prachina Bhashopakara Society and thus it became a government approved society. This society presently provides avenues for many students to qualify in oriental
languages.

4.3. Services of the Sri Lanka Prachina Bhashopakara Society in brief:

It is necessary to examine briefly the services rendered by this society. In Sri Lanka in the field of Sanskrit education among the institutions the Prachina Bhashopakara Society occupies a special place. Hence it is necessary to examine the services rendered by it. There were several societies in Sri Lanka in order to promote and conserve education. However, with the founding of the society until today a society that continues to exist, it is Sri Lanka Prachina Bhashopakara Society and this society that was organized for the promotion and conservation of the three languages, Sanskrit, Pali, and Sinhala. The first president was the founder of the society E.M. Bares. He was the Director of Education appointed by the British government. In the inaugural session of the society he had declared that the society was founded for the utilization of Sanskrit, Pali, and Sinhala studying personnel. In the first Committee of Management comprised of Maha Nayaka Theros and Principals of Vidyodhaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas, including Bares and both lay and monastic representatives functioned as partners. The Governor, later President of Sri Lanka became the ex-official patron. The society functioned under a government approved constitution.
Among the services that glorified education, the main aspect was the conduct of an examination structure annually. The examinations were structured as Primary, Middle and Final. Those who qualify at the final are conferred the highest standard of erudition with the title of 'Pandit'. Thus, gaining this highest qualification Pandit degree holders are the flag bearers, custodians and preservers of oriental languages. It is indeed appreciable that these Pandits earned the respect and honor of the populace until recent times. These Pandits organized Pirivenas in villages and townships and imparted the knowledge of oriental languages. In case these Pandit failed to organize such Pirivenas by now the oriental languages would have had a natural death. Presently there are no scholars who speak of Sanskrit literature and language and there is no room for conversation in Sanskrit. The texts authored and published by these scholars shed a bright light on Sanskrit subjects.

In addition to the conferment of Pandit title, Honorary Pandit Degree, Grantha Visaradha degrees too were conferred on the successful scholars. According to a resolution adopted by the society at its annual conference, those scholars in the fields of Sri Lanka History, Archaeology and culture are conferred by the Committee of Management at the annual awards ceremony are conferred the title/degree of Honorary Pandit. These Pandits are those who had rendered immense services in the field of Sanskrit language and literature. Some of these outstanding scholars were Baddegama Sri Piyaratana Maha Thera, Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Maha Nayaka Thero, Professor Senerath Paranavitana (the greatest archaeologist of Sri Lanka with numerous works on
archaeology to his credit). A member of this society or a certificated Pandit who presents new opinions and giving reasons to justify them and such works after being presented to Society's Text Committee, same is carefully examined and in case it is acceptable he or she is conferred the title 'Granta Visaradha'. Scholars who were conferred the title – Grantha Visarada. Of these scholars who were honored were Moratuwe Sasuralatana Thero, Kotmale Amaravamsa Thero, Kekunawela Piyaratana Thero, Davuldena Gnanesvara thero and Ayurvedic Physician Aryadasa Kumarasinghe.

The degree awarding ceremony i.e. Convocation is conducted by this society once in five years and by now 15 such award ceremonies have been held for the remarkable services rendered by this society. The literary journal Prachina Sangraha published by the society takes pride of place. This journal comprising of scholars' contributions indicates true to the meaning it is a literary journal. Since 1908-2011 this journal is published in volumes. Among the contributions of the first journal there are a large number of Samstrut articles. These contributions have helped greatly in the propagation of Sanskrit language. The scholars, and their contributions of works covering Sanskrit language and literature are listed with great pleasure as follows:

a) Prachina Sangara (A Journal):

**First Volume,**

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<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Title of the Article</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pali Vyakaranaya</td>
<td>Mahagida Sri Gnanesvara Nayaka Thero and Kahave Ratnasara Thero</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Pali-Sanskrit Bhasha Sammayaya</td>
<td>Pandit Yagirala Pannananda Thero</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Charita Sanhita</td>
<td>Kaviraj D.D.W. Pratiraja Yoga Visarada</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Prachina Bhasha</td>
<td>Mudliyar A. Mendis Gunasekera</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Purana</td>
<td>Yagirala Pannananda Thero</td>
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**Second Volume:**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Surabhakti</td>
<td>Telwatte Amaravamsa Thero.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Janakiharana Palamu Sargaya</td>
<td>Prof. Senarath Paranavithana</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nyaya Darshana</td>
<td>Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Thero</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Misra Kavya</td>
<td>Pandit Kahadamodera Soratha Thero</td>
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**Third Volume:**

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vakyopadesa</td>
<td>Pandit Weragoda Amaramoli Thero</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yaralalava</td>
<td>Velivitiye Pemaratana Thero</td>
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**Fourth Volume:**

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<th>Title of the Article</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Devanampriya</td>
<td>Pandit Yagirala Pannananda Thero</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vacya Lakshana</td>
<td>Vanidhyata Sadhavanita Arthatrikaya – Moratuwe Vijithananda Thero.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Fifth Volume :**

| S.No | Title of the Article                          | Author                                      |
If there is any literary magazine that is being published in continuity for a country it is the magazine that is being published by this society. Its significance cannot be surmised by us. This magazine enables one to Sanskrit language comprehend and gain a knowledge of scientific subjects. The letters published in this magazine are very remarkable. The letters published in this magazine regarding Sanskrit language and literature are immense and these quoted letters are the chief letters. These research letters in the magazine and the services rendered by the society viz. high quality texts, re-editing projects are of immense service. The services of this society without any division had been assistance to both lay and monastic’s. to sum up, the services rendered by the Prachina Bhashopakara Society are very much significant and
commendable.

4.4. Establishment of Universities in Sri Lanka:

A) The Impact on Sri Lankan Culture

The Sri Lanka educational structure that was born through Buddhist temples, reaches its zenith with the establishment of universities and educational institutions. Presently there are around 20 universities and higher educational institutions in Sri Lanka. These function as government institutions and non-government institutions. The free education commenced in Sri Lanka in 1943. In this scenario a large number of central schools and universities came into existence. The medium of instruction was English language exclusively. The opportunity for Sinhala qualified students was denied. A committee called Mettananda Committee was constituted in order to provide university education to students who are qualified in Sinhala Language. By this recommendation of this committee in 1956 and by way of an interim report the committee represented matters to the government to upgrade Vidyodhaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas to university status. This recommendation was
approved and the two Pirivenas were ultimately raised to university status and thereby the two newly created universities became the epicenters for the promotion of oriental languages. (23-24) Presently in Sri Lanka there are a few institutions for the teaching and study of Sanskrit Language. Although universities there are namely 20, only 8 universities have facilities for the study of languages.

4.5. Presently, Universities and Institutes for the Sanskrit Studies in Sri Lanka:

(1) Peradeniya University – Classical Languages Study Department.

(2) Kelaniya University, Department of Sanskrit Education.

(3) Sri Jayewardenena University – Languages and Culture Education Department.

(4) Jaffna University Sanskrit Education Department.

(5) Budhist and Pali University Sanskrit Language Department.

(6) Buddhhasravaka Bhikkshu University, Sanskrit Language Department.

(7) Gampaha Wikramarachchi Ayurveda Institute, Sanskrit Department.

(8) Colombo Indigenous Medicine Institute, Colombo University, Nawala Rajagiri.

Among these universities, Vidyodhaya, Vidyalankara, the Sri Jayewardenena University, Kelaniya University, and Peradeniya University are the chief institutions in the teaching of Sanskrit. Sanskrit Department of the Peradeniya University deserves special mention. The Peradeniya University
was formerly known as University of Sri Lanka. In 1943 the oriental languages department was divided into four sections: Sinhala, Tamil, Pali, and Sanskrit. This was continued as a Faculty of Oriental Studies for several years. In 1972 the Faculty of Oriental Studies and the Faculty of Arts were combined and a new Faculty of Arts was established. During 1988, through the efforts of the scholars at that period who were interested in Sanskrit, the Peradeniya Sri Lanka University Sanskrit Language and Western Classical Culture Departments were amalgamated and a new department was established called the Department of Classical Languages. In this department there was progress in Sanskrit Studies and there were several Eastern and Western scholars who contributed their expertise. The following are the names of some of the professors who served in the Peradeniya University Sanskrit Department.

- Betty Hayman
- O.H. De A. Wijesekera
- Jayadeva Tilakasiri
- Ratna Handurukanda
- Ven. Waragoda Pemaratana Nayaka Thero

The present head of this department is Dr. W.M.S.K. Wijesundera. Degrees are conferred both Special and General. The number of students following these degree studies are around 20. Additionally M.A. and M.Phil and Post Graduate degrees and Certificate courses are conducted. The Distance and Continuing Education Centre is affiliated to the University to conduct B.A. degrees for Sanskrit studies. The number of undergraduates in these sections
are very few. However, it needs to be emphasized that in comparison to the 1950, 1960 and 1970 decades Peradeniya University Sanskrit language has met with degeneration.

Presently although the undergraduates following studies in Sanskrit at Kelaniya and Sri Jayewardenena Universities has a limited number, in the examination of the history of the universities the present situation is not satisfactory. These two Pirivenas were upgraded to university status with the desire that language studies would be developed. The main objectives were promotion of the studies in Buddhist culture, Pali, and Sanskrit, with these subjects as the main themes. With this view only Vidyodhaya of the Sri Jayewardenapura University had five faculties of which the Language Department is our focus. Within it, the Sanskrit language had a separate department and Pali, Prakrit, Logic, Tamil, and English had facilities within it. This department had separate sections for the teaching of Ayurveda, astrology, and mathematics. Subjects like Ayurveda and astrology are Sanskrit based, thus these helped for the growth of Sanskrit language. The undergraduates there were subsidiary subjects and those who followed science subjects also chose Sanskrit as a subject. This is evident from the university reports. These courses promoted the study of Sanskrit to a great extent.

The syllabi of the universities are very vast. There were close inter-university relationships regarding the preparation of the syllabi, the entrance examination, and preparation of questions for papers etc. The scheme of studies was so composed to include Sanskrit, Sanskrit grammar, Sanskrit literature,
Prosody, Philosophy, and Analysis. In the first degree there were two sections viz. special and ordinary. The ordinary degree was a three year course of study. The special degree was a four year study program. The undergraduate on the completion of the four years according to his own choice has to present a dissertation. In the first stage, having completed one year of studies and at the end of the year the students are subjected to a test. Presently this first year end test is done away with and instead there will be only one subject covering the dissertations. The tests are conducted twice at the end of the years.

4.6. The number of students in Universities and institutes Special Degree Ordinary Degree:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of the University</th>
<th>Special Degree</th>
<th>Ordinary Degree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Peradeniya</td>
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<td>Sri Jayewardenapura</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Buddha and Pali</td>
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Although there is an increase and decrease in the study of Sanskrit at these universities, in the past there is evidence that a large number of local foreign students studied Sanskrit at these universities. The entry to the universities in the past was very rigid. Presently the students could qualify at the university entrance examination and thereafter prior to registration in the university, the students following the languages have to submit a three question paper examination. An interview too is held in addition to the subjects
recommended. There are several other subjects also. Finally a dissertation has to be submitted. The standard of studies in languages was so well developed that foreign students and academics too have come studied or taught the subjects. Various societies and organizations came into existence for the development of Sanskrit language; and in Vidyodhaya and Vidyalankara Universities a research section was established exclusively for Sanskrit. Consequently dissertation papers, Doctoral theses, translations, texts, and re- editions were also brought out. In these days there was a scheme to provide overseas scholarships to local undergraduates who had completed their degrees. In 1972, the Sirimavo Bandaranayake (Premier) period, the then Education Minister, Austin Jayaratna Committee proposed a scheme for the reorganization of universities. In it oriental languages were curbed. Sri Lanka University, Vidyodhaya University, Vidyalankara University, and Colombo University were organized as one university and the rest were made bodies of this sole university. It is observed government due to some. The language departments of all the universities as well as faculty received a death blow and became nonentities. There were five faculties in the Vidyodhaya University for the study of languages, these faculties were moved to two faculties named Arts and Applied. Buddhist Philosophy, which was a main subject, also disappeared and there was not even faculty for this subject. All the faculties were amalgamated. A Language and Culture Faculty was instituted in its place.

There was a youth insurrection in Sri Lanka. In 1977, a large number of graduates lost their lives. There was a point where universities had to be
closed down. In all universities, Sanskrit Departments were closed and a
Department of Sanskrit Studies functioned only at the Kelaniya University.
However, among these problematic times, in 1978, under the Bill No.18
of the government adopted by the parliament, all the bodies that existed
independently were done away with. Universities were re-established as
independent organizations under the Universities Grants Commission.

In 1980, these departments of Sanskrit Studies became independent
departments. The oriental languages study and teaching had completely broken
down. Consequently there was a downfall in the Pirivenas too. The Pirivena
students realized that there was no future for them in the study of oriental
languages and shifted themselves to other subjects. As the universities failed
to produce erudite teachers in the Pirivenas, the number of students studying
languages and capable teachers was at a problematic shortage. It is not a secret
that in the university structure and Pirivena units, certain one-sided decisions
contributed to this plight. In a world that moves forward with sciences every
one should gear up for meeting this trend. In the developed world today,
various visual devices are used to motivate students. What we see today in the
languages sector its that the traditional structures that continue from ancient
times are in existence. Modern class room teaching techniques are not applied
even the traditional education structure appears to be mixed with certain
modern techniques. The students who study languages primary stages has
no set of books in the traditional education system. The students are not in a
position to face either materially nor in a limited scope. Therefore, the students
are disgusted with this subject. There is no system of teaching which inspires the students and this too has contributed largely to the degeneration of the study of languages.

In the 1950's and 1960's the study of Sanskrit was in a very high standard. The old universities and Pirivenas then were filled with erudite and skillful teachers. On the contrary, presently there is a paucity of such teachers both in the universities and Pirivenas. Among the problems that arise contributing to the degeneration of standards of Sanskrit learning and teaching, the shortage of erudite teachers and students.

It is main cause observed that politicalization of the field of education had a drastic impact on the study and teaching of oriental languages. Even universities and also in the Pirivenas the heads of sections are don’t have qualifications but political patronage. They have no idea of the subjects under them. Among these heads there are not scholars who are capable of having a clear insight into the subjects or even prepare syllabi for the students. Thus there is no healthy relation between the students and teachers. Even society has no honor or regard for them. One example is the interactive sessions that are held annually between students and teachers. It is doubted whether such directors are capable of bringing about a close liaison between teachers and students.

As pointed out, there is a fall in the promotion of personality and there is also setback in the honor accorded to the teachers. In the Sinhala speaking areas this situation is seen but there is complete reversal in the
Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka among the Tamil speaking people. This is seen from the Central Schools and Vidyalayas functioning in Northern and Eastern provinces. Even in the Southern regions and in the capital of Sri Lanka, Colombo, and other main cities schools do not impart Sanskrit or Pali. Several decades ago in all schools on the island the teaching and study of oriental languages was prevalent. Although there is no teaching of Sanskrit in Colombo, which is a very sad scenario, in Jaffna in the main schools (Northern and Eastern provinces included) Sanskrit is being taught as a main subject. Hinduism is embedded in Sanskrit and the main Hindu scripture, Rig Veda, comprising of 1029 stanzas, datable to 3000 BC, was the oldest religious text in the world. Two or three centuries later other scriptures viz. Atharva Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Puranas, Upanishads come into existance. For the continuation of Hinduism, Sanskrit is the only scriptural language. Hinduism is wide-spread both in the Northern and eastern provinces and Hindu followers, Tamils aggregate to around 99 percent in these regions. Hence Sanskrit & Hinduism are inseparable. In the temples of Hinduism in India, the motherland of Hinduism, and in all Hindu temples in Sri Lanka and even in foreign countries where there is a Hindu Diaspora, the Hindu priests, Brahmins from the highest caste in the Indian hierarchical caste system, chant incantations to gods in Sanskrit, thus preserving and conversing Sanskrit scripted Hinduism.

In this situation in the Northern and Eastern Provinces with Tamil-Hindu largest population, Sanskrit is taught as a main subject in schools. It is
regarded as a compulsory subject to study Sanskrit language and Sanskrit in the two provinces. Some of the schools in the North/East provinces where Sanskrit is taught as a main subject are listed below:

4.7. **Name of the Schools in the North / East Provinces where Sanskrit as a main Subject:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ramanathan College</td>
<td>Jaffna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Jaffna Central College</td>
<td>Jaffna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Jaffna Hindu College</td>
<td>Jaffna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vembadi High College</td>
<td>Jaffna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Jaffna College</td>
<td>Jaffna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Vadamarachchi Hindu College</td>
<td>Jaffna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these schools Sanskrit language was taught as a main subject and teachers, Sinhala, Tamil, and Indian who were qualified teachers of Sanskrit were in the tutorial staffs of these schools. Bala Subramaniyam, taught at Jaffna College and other Indians who taught in these schools are (Sanskrit) Ram
Ayiyar and Ananda Ayiyar (Ramanathan College), Rameswari Ayiyar (Jaffna Central College). There are also some other Indian teachers who promoted Sanskrit studies in Sri Lanka. They taught the students and teachers the correct system of pronunciation or Sanskrit words as per the original system in India. The students who came under their tutelage became exemplary teachers and promoters of Sanskrit language in Sri Lanka.

There is a fairly large number of Jaffna born and bred Sanskrit educated Tamil scholars. Among them R. Subramaniam is one who was a product of Jaffna College, a Sanskrit scholar of great repute. S. Kandar Ayiyar had his education at Manipay Ladies College is also another leading Sanskrit scholar. Further some Hindu organizations of India conducted various study programs relating to Sanskrit. These programs contributed largely to direct the people of North and East Provinces to the study of Sanskrit, as it was their Hindu scriptural language and regarded as sacred to all Hindus world over.

The institutions that came to be established under this impetus were Chunnakam Oriental School, Tirukesvaram All Ceylon Hindu Congress. These institutions commenced under the Indian Hindu organizations. Annual examinations were held in Sanskrit. The successful candidates were awarded degrees. The degrees were: Pravesha Pandit, Bala Pandit and Pandit in order to train young priests for Hindu temples. Hindu Society Religious foundation was the degree awarding organization. These were all based in Jaffna.

In the Jaffna peninsula the training camps were organized for young to be Hindu priests. In these institutions local Tamil scholars and those from India
were engaged by these organizations. The brightest students of Jaffna College and Parameshvara College were granted scholarships to pursue their education in Sanskrit as external candidates. Whatever subject they studied, Sanskrit language and Sanskrit literature were interlinked with their religion (Hinduism) and culture. A large number of students gravitated to study these subjects.

The Sanskrit organizations functioning in Jaffna conduct annual conferences which has had a great impact on the promotion of Sanskrit language and Sanskrit literature. In the 19th and 20th centuries the Jaffna Vedic Foundation commenced a scheme to set up schools. The main objective was to train young Brahmin priests in Jaffna and the neighboring regions to serve the Hindu population as custodians of Hindu temples. However, with the implementation of “Sinhala Only” by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party headed by Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, displaced the study of English and Tamil in 1985. “Sinhala Only” being the State Language, the Tamil speaking people of the North and East of Sri Lanka lost all avenues of gainful employment in the government establishments and also Tamil language was reduced to nothing. Thus the exclusively Tamil settlements of North and East of Sri Lanka became marginalized and naturally an urge for separatism arose. This resulted in a war between the government and the Tamil people that lasted 30 long years, making life impossible for the people of North and East, the Tamils. In order to seek greener pastures even the Sanskrit Tamil scholars sought refuge in India and other foreign countries. This was the main cause for the degeneration of the study of Sanskrit in Jaffna peninsula. The most
outstanding Sanskrit scholars that were produced by the Jaffna University were S. Kanduah, K. Kanapathipillai, K. Kailasanatha Kurukkal, Ayur. Balasubramaniam, and A. Sathasivam.

It is relevant at this juncture to state that with the winning of independence, India in its new constitution provided for Hindi as the State Language and the principal language of the majority in the States to be language of the State and English was continued for 15 years from 1947 and in 1962 made English too as the main language. In fact in India in the Audio and video channels in the morning, the programs start with a short program called 'Samachar'. Greetings to the nation and thereafter news is regarded in Sanskrit for five minutes and followed by news in the local languages and English. Thus there is no dispute in India as regards the usage of language with by giving equal importance to all languages.

The establishment of the Sri Lanka University College Jaffna Mandapa (1906) helped to promote Sanskrit language. In it among the Arts Faculty Sanskrit language section is one of the chief ones. In this regard the Tamil Education Minister's (Sri Ramanathan) is most significant in view of the services rendered by him. The books and magazines authored by Tamil Sanskrit scholars and their publication contributed immensely for the promotion of Sanskrit language and Sanskrit literature. In context the Rama Krishna Project, Hari Krishna Project, Divya Sabhava ans Sathya Sai Baba Sabha, these organizational works emerged as path finders for the promotion, conservation and preservation of age old Sanskrit language and Sanskrit
literature, both in Sri Lanka and in foreign lands.
REFERENCES


2. Names of the few bhikkhus who rose against the British imperial rule at the sacrifice of their lives for the sake of indigenous identity.

3. The famous religious debates conducted between the British missionaries and their clients by Sinhala Buddhist bhikkhus.

4. Henry Steel Olcott 'For the sake of Sri Lanka's Buddhist revival' He was an American and rendered a yeoman service for Buddhism having arrived in 1880.

5. H. S. Olcott's 1880 organized society for the promotion of Buddhist education.

6. The present Kelaniya University is a Buddhist institute set up in 1876.

7. A famous Buddhist educational institute established in 1873, presently known as Sri Jayewardenapura University.

8. Pirivenas are Buddhist educational institutions established centered on Buddhist Viharas for the education of bhikkhus and laity.

9. Velivita Sri Sangharaja Saranankara was the main revivalist of Buddhism when Buddhism was at the lowest ebb during the period of Kandyan Kingdom.

10. This is one of the chief debates that was conducted between the Buddhist bhikkhus and Christian missionaries and their followers.
11. Pirivena is a word derived from Pali language to Sinhala language Buddhist educational institution centered on a Buddhist Vihara. There is a classification of these institutions as chief Maha Pirivena, Vidyayathana Pirivena, Maha Pirivena, and Primary Pirivena.

12. Professor Satischandra Vidyabhushana 'Sri Sumangala Yatisvara Varnana' third stanza.

13. Professor Sarischandra Vidyabhushana 'Sandhi Grantha – Sri Sumangala Yatisvara' page one, second stanza


15. Vide item 09 above.

16. A newspaper that had been published in India monthly.

17. An erudite scholar of India whose name appears frequently in Sanskrit literature. He lived during the reign of king Kanishka, he authored Buddha Charita, Saundarananda epics as well as several works in Sanskrit.

18. The first complete Encyclopedia composed in Sinhala; Sinhala – Sanskrit

19. This is a work of an advisory nature based on Sanskrit Panchatantra. This comprises of jungle stories based on the lives of animals.

20. The first writer in Sri Lanka who had conducted a complete research into Sanskrit literature in Sri Lanka and published as a text.

22. The main governmental organization that represents for the promotion of Oriental Studies in Sri Lanka.

23. The Prachina Bhashopakara Society conducts three examinations annually to gauge the standard of knowledge of the candidates in oriental languages, the examinations are: Primary, Middle, and Final.

24. The degree of Pandit could be secured by successfully completing the three examinations conducted by the Prachina Bhashopakara Society. This degree is equivalent to the B. A. Degree of a University.