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DEPARTMENT OF PALI

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Date :

University of Mumbai

Department of Pali

ROLE OF THE DEPARTEMNT OF PALI IN THE CONSERVATION OF ANCIENT HERITAGE OF INDIA

Pali is one of the ancient languages of India and is considered to be the original sources for writing history and culture of ancient India. *Buddhavacana* that is the words of the Buddha—the greatest teacher of the world, is preserved in Pali language and is studied all over the academic world, and thus Pali today is an international language.

The period of almost 1200 years (6th BCE to 6th CE) is called Buddhist India and not only the language, but the scripts and the texts- that is literature, social and religious life, educational and learning systems of universities(Takkasila, Nalanda), beliefs and customs, economy, trade and commerce and political and administrative systems, and art and architecture, thus in short the Buddhist culture dominated India.

Unfortunately in 12th CE India lost Buddhism and subsequently we forgot the language, script, the texts and the universities, the kings like Emperor Asoka and even the Buddha.

In the 18th-19th CE the western scholars, archaeologists re-introduced Buddha and his teachings in Pali to the entire world. The academic study of Pali language started in 1912-13 at Calcutta University and in 1913-14 in Bombay University by Prof. Dharmanand Kosambi.

Though Pali studies had closed down in the interim years at the University of Mumbai, a new phase began in June 2007 when the independent Department of Pali was established in the University of Mumbai and the legacy of Pali studies is carried forward.

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Department of Pali celebrated the 100 years of Pali learning in the University of Mumbai in 2014-15 and is carry forwarding the legacy of the Pali-Text Series Bombay University Publication started by veteran scholars of Pali Prof. N K Bhagwat in 1935 by reprinting the Pali texts. Till date the Department has re-printed Pali Texts like *Milindapanha* (2011), *Mahavamsa* (2013), *Nidanakatha* (2014), *Therigatha* (2016), *Theragatha* (2018)and *DighaNikaya* (in press) and are incorporated in the syllabus for the benefit of the students. Also the Lecture Series like the 'Prof. N K Bhagwat lecture Series', 'Sir Alexander Cunningham Lecture series' are started by the Department to commemorate the "10 years of Pali Department" at the University of Mumbai.

Department of Pali introduces to the students the lost culture and heritage of India with the practical learning, which is also the learning methodology, taught by the Buddha--*Pariyatti*, *Patipatti* and *Pativedhana*. 98% of the students of the Department of Pali are *Vipassana* mediators, actually practicing the *dhamma*. One hour meditation with Pali *dhatu puja* recitation is conducted on every full moon day of the month alongwith one hour meditation on every Sunday.

The practical learning is also emphasized by taking the *ajjhayana-carika*- the study tours to the different Buddhist archaeological sites of Maharashtra and also India, specially the 28 days dhamma tour to the places associated with the life of the Buddha. The students are taught to understand and subsequently study further the art, architecture, archaeology and numismatics on the sites by training them through workshops on "Pali language and Brahmi script" 'Pali and Tibetan Language', 'Abhidhamma studies in Pali literature' 'Pali language and Buddhist Art' and so on.

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The revival of Buddhist culture and heritage is emphasized through exhibitions and celebrations like the Guru Poornima, Buddha Poornima in a traditional way, by reviving the tradition through *Palisuttas* and *gathas*.

The students Department of Pali, expresses their gratitude to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on 6th December by propagating Pali language at the *Chaityabhoomi*, on 14th October by poster presentations on the books of Dr. Ambedkar and on 14th April by studying for 12 hours at the Department.

Alongwith the efforts of reviving the ancient tradition of India, the Department of Pali is, at par with the modern scholarship of Pali learning and is known to the academic world of Pali not only in India but in countries like Srilanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, China, Australia, Thailand, USA and England. Scholars and students from different parts of the world visit the Department and have also signed MOU for collaborative learning with the Department. The Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies- Oxford, and DIRI- Australia are connected to the Department through e-learning.

Students and Faculties also have attended and presented many National and International Seminars and conferences and have published research papers in the standard Journals.

All these extra curriculum activities is done alongwith the University syllabus for the different courses, which are designed taking into consideration the traditional as well as the modern learning methodology. The results are satisfactory and the Department is working towards excellence.

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The increasing number of students in the increasing number of courses is the strength of the Pali Department which propagates the Pali learning from 10th -12th standard to PhD in Pali. The Oxford trained faculties and the zeal of the students to learn Pali and initiate indepth researches in Pali studies is the asset of the Department of Pali. The only regret being the lack of facilities, inadequate infrastructure like the classrooms, adequate space for library and conference and workshops.

Inspite of all odds, the Department of Pali moves with the inspiration of the Buddha- for the benefit of all- for the happiness of all- *bahujanahitaya, bahujanasukhaya....*

Bhavatusabbamangalam

May all beings be happy...

Dr. Yojana Bhagat

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