

DIMENSIONS AND REFLECTIONS TO THE ENHANCEMENT OF BUDDHISM THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Buddhism is a religion to about 300 million people around the world. The word comes from 'budhi', 'to awaken'. It has its origins about 2,500 years ago when Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, was himself awakened (enlightened) at the age of 35. To many, Buddhism goes beyond religion and is more of a philosophy or 'way of life'. It is a philosophy because philosophy 'means love of wisdom' and the Buddhist path is essence the sine qua non of our survival in this life and beyond. Buddhism explains a purpose to life, it explains apparent injustice and inequality around the world, and it provides a code of practice or way of life that leads to true happiness. Buddhism is becoming popular in western countries for a number of reasons. The first good reason is Buddhism has answers to many of the problems in modern materialistic societies. It also includes (for those who are interested) a deep understanding of the human mind (and natural therapies) which prominent psychologists around the world are now discovering to be both very advanced and effective.

Unfortunately there are many obstacles to the enhancement of pure Buddhism for several reasons. To enhance or propagate any religion, philosophy or concept, the language as an agent of propagation is a crucial factor. Today there are about 6,000 languages in the world, and half of the world's population speaks only 10 of them. English is the single most dominant of these 10. British colonialism initiated the spread of English across the globe; it has been spoken nearly everywhere and has become even more prevalent since World war (Christine Kenneall *The First Word*. Viking, 2007). "There are now estimated to be 1.5 billion English speakers globally: 375 million who speak English as their first language, 375 million as a

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second language and 750 million who speak English as a foreign language. "English has official or special status in at least 75 countries with a combined population of two billion people. It is estimated that one out of four people worldwide speak English with some degree of competence."

This clearly shows us that English plays a significant role in the enhancement of Buddhism. But the major problem is that Buddhist monks compared to other religious leaders are reluctant to master this prime agent of language, the best element to propagate any religion as English widely used in the world. This is mostly evident when it comes to Christian religion. It was widely spread throughout the world due to English. This situation with regard to Buddhism is likely to be otherwise as the knowledge of English of most Buddhist monks are not in a satisfactory state.

Research Methodology and Findings

For this, the researcher made a research to find out the root causes for monks poor English knowledge and thereby to make suggestions to improve their English knowledge to suit the world necessity today. In this research, the researcher inquired why English knowledge of most monks is poor. For this purpose, thirty Piriven institutions situated in the North Western province were taken into consideration. There, the researcher used questionnaires and open interviews as methodologies. This research revealed many factors hidden but have been affecting the propagation of Buddhism. According to the research, it was revealed that monks have completely abandoned English in Pirivena as most teachers teaching accounted for 78% tend to stay behind without teaching them. Another issue seriously addressed is that about 85% teacher teaching English are not qualified enough to teach English as a second language. 96% of them have not undergone relevant training courses under the direction of the ministry. Another big issue revealed was that the lack of supervision of education authorities concerned. Unlike schools, it is likely that Pirivens are not subject to the supervision of authorities. 97% of teachers are of the view that they are not properly guided to rectify their errors and mistakes. Another fact psychologically affected

was that monks have deviated from English since most of their time is spent within the scope of religious spheres. So the framework of time allocated for English should be revised, so that they are able to immerse in more in English.

Suggestions made through the research

In conclusion, until and unless these obstacles are released and rectified, the enhancement of Buddhism will be out of the question in Sri Lankan context and outside. As such the researcher makes several suggestions in the light of the enhancement of Buddhism in the world. One such suggestion is that priority should be given to English in Piriven education including curriculum evaluation and allocating more time for this, making English subject compulsory.

Another fact is that proper guidance and supervision should be made compulsory as the grass root level has to be perfect from which everything is evolved.

In addition, English medium education needs initiating even in Piriven education so as to face the future challenges. There monks need to be trained to deliver sermon in English, which provides the basic foundation for the enhancement for Buddhism throughout the world. So innovative curriculum development awaits Piriven education with more streams of English.

The major contributory factor to this confused state of affairs is the lack of a coherent national policy on English education, the unfortunate consequence of which is the absence of a clear cut education sector study covering all aspects of language education in our system.

Another factor is that the examinations design does not allow assessment of speaking, listening and thinking skills, then the whole gamut of communicative values inherent in the learning materials will naturally come to naught. This simple truth should be well understood and digested by all bent on improving English language teaching and learning standard in our Pirivens, fostering teacher support services ,Task –Based Teaching methods

plus Communicative Language teaching while maintaining continuing education.

Keywords: English, Buddhism, Enhancement, Reflections, Dimension

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