

Contribution of the Preaching Hall towards the development of listening tradition in Sri Lanka.

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The present study is an attempt to assess the foremost contribution of the religious institute **Dharmashala**, also known as **Bana Maduwa** in the development of the listening tradition in Sri Lanka. It is common knowledge throughout the world that there had been an oral and a listening tradition in the ancient Sri Lankan society, before the invention of writing system and the resulting written tradition. And, there are lots of evidences have found out which are relevant to the above matter from the traditional literature regards to the Sri Lankan culture. The main instrument in the human communication is the language. Because, the human wanted to share his or her thoughts, feelings, experiences, findings and their day to day requirements with one another. For that, they have used multiple methods which are expressed mostly through the symbols that can be used easily. They have improved this further by imitating different sounds from the Mother Nature and that was developed with practical usage of their daily life. Also, the human began to draw symbols when they cannot express something only with the sounds. Those drawings were related to the live or exiting things of the nature at most of the time. Therefore, it is clear that, the language has born and developed in the different part of the world with a number of similarities to each other and Sri Lanka also has been able to be gifted a higher version of it. Language, the fore runner of the writing, was an oral system of the transmission of human knowledge at the earlier time period. Oral system of communication or oral system of knowledge transmission is

inevitably linked to the listening or listening tradition. Because, without listening, there would be no pronouncing method can be born. It is common knowledge that even the babies imitate the sounds they hear from the outer world and there they begin to pronounce the words. So, this simple experience can be added for understanding the theory of developing an oral tradition. But, there is another major point which expresses that the listening tradition was handed under a person who can express his or her ideas in a better way to an audience. Basically, that person should be more accurate than the others and cleverer than them as well. Because, the audience is ready to follow and understand what they hear and a generation under their existence will be transmitted the same knowledge continuously.

Even after the spread of writing tradition, the listening tradition did not fade away. Instead, it became stronger pattern of communication. Because, listening is an interesting way which does not require knowledge of writing and also it can be used as an easy method of sharing the wisdom. Nobody has to use anything for noting down what they hear and instead of that they keep this information in their minds for transmitting to the younger generations with more improvements. This can specially be seen in oriental countries. Because, they have a rare opportunity to be mixed with other cultures comparing to the other countries which have wide areas to be gathered for improving their cultures. Therefore, in such countries, the grand generation began to have small gatherings at a particular time of the day and started to teach their younger generation on what they have been taught by their elders. The information can be true or false; but the listening tradition was spread as a popular and easy way of communicating and teaching people. The folk tales of different kinds stand for this

argument. Since the importance of listening tradition people in different cultures invented different instruments in order to sustain it. It is hypothesized here that the Buddhist religious/ social institute Dharmashala has been one of the main instruments in Sri Lanka in the development of listening tradition in the country. Studies on the transmission of knowledge is one of the key research areas in the field of library and information science.

The selection of the sample involved in the selection of 10 Buddhist temples in Kurunegala district and the selection of devotees and chief priest in those temples. Due to time and other constraints it was necessary to limit the sample for 10 temples in one district. Based on devotee lists maintained by these temples, in order to give a fair chance to all, using simple random sampling method 05 devotees were selected to administer the questionnaire 1. The second questionnaire was administered among the chief priest of each temple. The names of the ten temples which were considered as major information centers are "Athkanda Raja Maha Wihara", "Padeniya Raja Maha Wihara", "Sumanarama temple-Ikiriwatta", "Rambadagalle Raja Maha Wihara", "Monaragala temple", "Kandayaya Purana Pothgul Raja Maha Wihara", "Saragama temple", "Ridee wihara", "Kumburulene Raja Maha Wihara" and the "Buddha Jayanthi Wihara" at Wegama. Except from three temples in the above list, started years are not mentioned in the record books belong to the temples. But, the initial time periods are given by the chief monks of these temples. The questionnaire which was used to gather data for the analysis was carried out with the participation of the monks and also the hosting parties of the temples which were created by the villagers. The hosting parties were contained mostly with male members and it can be guessed that the participation for the temple-related work

is done by the male-parties of villages at most of the time. The percentage of the male participation for hosting parties is 66% and the percentage of the female participation is 34%. But, when considering the actual practice which happens with regards to this matter, it was understood that the female participation also not in a lack level and they cover even their husbands' and other male family members' participation for the hosting gatherings of the temples.

The data gathering was carried out at the living places of these hosting parties at most of the time. Because, the male parties stay at their homes while working for their daily earnings and only the female parties could be found at the temple who were cleaning and arranging the daily requirements of the temple. Apart from the consideration of the partnership for the hosting party of the temple, there were some more important facts were considered for identifying the education level and the writing and reading skill of the hosting members of the temple. They are included here with the relevant percentages which were counted according to the gathered data.

1. Ability of reading and the writing – 14%
2. Disability of reading and the writing – 8%
3. Attended for school/ obtained the school level knowledge – 20%
4. Passed G. C. E. O/L – 26%
5. Passed G. C. E. A/L – 18%
6. Obtained a university degree – 12%
7. Higher educational levels than the university education – 2%

According to the data analysis which was done according to the results were taken from the above facts, it is clear that the majority from the hosting parties belong to the "G. C. E. O/L passed" category which has marked as 26% among the other categories. Therefore, it is clear that the hosting parties of the present Buddhist temple are rich with a considerable educational level. For a better understanding of something which was heard, it is an essential fact to have a better knowledge to tally with the fact. Apart from that, being in a matured mindset also is important to continue the listening tradition. The "Dharmashala" spread the knowledge for everyone in a unique level; but it is important to have a good understanding on what a listener hear. Except from the preaching time, the listeners are used to stay at the "Dharmashala" and have used to read religious books which contain the related facts to the preaching.

From the analysis, it was given a higher consideration for measuring the method of improving the knowledge of the hostesses. There, the below facts were taken to the consideration and the percentage relevant to them also are included here.

1. Listening – 18%
2. Reading – 2%
3. Life experiences – 6%
4. Media exposure – 8%
5. All of the above facts – 62%
6. None of the above facts but some another – 4%

Therefore, it is clear that "listening" is the most popular method which has used by the hostesses when considering all the singular facts separately. But, as a multiple fact "all the facts together" have been used by most of them. As another way of improving the

religious knowledge, it has been revealed that “exploring the internet” also a method of widening the levels of knowledge.

Apart from the above facts, it was explored that the way of having the knowledge on Buddhism. There, the below paths were revealed; the percentages also are included here.

1. From the school and the dharma school by learning the Buddhism – 44%
2. From families – 50%
3. From the religious knowledge which was gained from the temple – 6%

From that it is clear that, the majority belongs to the category of the hostesses who has gained their knowledge from the families.

Considering all the fact relevant to the data analysis of the questionnaire, it is clear that the analysis part for the question which was targeted to find out whether the mass media has over gone the traditional preaching hall by the different types of religious programs in the day to day life. There, 28% of hostesses have agreed that mass media has taken the popularity by casting religious programs. But, 72% hostesses have disagreed for the above comment and they agree for the fact that Dharmashala still takes the priority in casting the religion. Therefore, it is clear that Dharmashala still perform the major role as a social centre which can promote the listening tradition in Sri Lanka further. However, it is a common knowledge that the mass media has the power of attracting the listeners by providing various facilities in listening the same religious facts in an easy way with the developing world with modernity. It will be a preferred choice to be at their own homes and listening to the radio or television at any circumstance. Apart from that, the addiction for the mass media has improved since the distance of the preaching time periods and this will be

like once a month or once a six months. But, the radio and the television provide the benefit of listening the religious programs in all twenty four hours. Also, there are few channels has programmed to telecast only the religious programs every day. Therefore, it is clear that mass media also takes a major responsibility in improving the listening tradition. The hostesses of the temple have answered for the question which was aimed gather information on the reasons for the preference of listening to religious programs on radio or TV. There, 42.85% of hostesses have agreed to the fact that the continuous casting of religious programs which schedule by TV and the radio has become a bigger reason. 7.14% have agreed to the fact that, it is easy to be at home and listen to the religious programs more than going out of the home. Another major reason for the radio and TV preference is the fact that, the hostesses can listens to various types of preachers through them. People always like to experience the changing and they would be preferred to listen different types of religious preaching. There are 35.71% of the hostesses have agreed for the above reason. Apart from that, 14.28% hostesses have agreed to the fact that, they would be preferred listen to the TV or radio because of the tight time schedules which has planned according to their earning paths and daily life works. There, they can listen to the preaching while working as well.

Considering all the above facts, it is clear that Dharmashala perform a vital role in the Sri Lankan society by spreading religious facts to the listeners for the improvement of their knowledge.

The analysis of data revealed the following major findings:

- Dharmashala has been playing a vital role in the promotion of listening tradition in Sri Lanka.

- In spite of the development of modern communication technologies it still successfully plays its historical role as a center of knowledge transmission
- Dharmashala had always been a strong social institute in the Sinhala society that helped the social equity among people.
- Dharmashala was not only for the propagation of religious knowledge, it supported the propagation of common knowledge and social ethics for the wellbeing of people'
- The impact of listening tradition is still visible in the Sri Lankan society. Such an impact can be clearly seen in the unsatisfactory levels of reading habit and information searching among Sri Lankans.

The above findings prove that, Dharmashala is the base level of traditional Sri Lankan education system which was targeted to improve the religious knowledge of the Buddhists by making spaces for learning through listening. This was expanded until the spreading of knowledge by reaching higher levels of Buddhist's education. Therefore, it can be considered that the Dharmashala is the symbol of the ancient Sri Lankan education which should be taken for the consideration of every parties of the society who has the vision of protecting the traditional heritage.

Keywords: Library and information science, Oral Tradition, Dharmashala, Buddhist temples, Knowledge

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35. දීඝනිකාය 1(1962)බෞද්ධසංස්කෘතිකමධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල
36. දීඝනිකාය2(1976)බෞද්ධසංස්කෘතිකමධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල
37. ධම්මානන්ද හිමි, තලල්ලේ(1980)ත්‍රිපිටකයේසංස්කෘතික ලක්ෂණ, සමයවර්ධන, කොළඹ
38. ධම්මිස්සර හිමි, මාදුරු ඔයේ(1990)බෞද්ධසන්නිවේදනය, උයදපබ්ලිකේෂන්, කොළඹ
39. නෙත්තිප්පකරණය(1980)පරි.ලබුගම ලංකානන්දහිමි, බෞද්ධසංස්කෘතික මධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල
40. පඤ්ඤාලෝක හිමි, මීගොඩ(1979)බුදු සමයසහජන ජීවිතය, කපිල, නුගේගොඩ
41. පන්සිය පනස් ජාතකය(1995)බෞද්ධසංස්කෘතිකමධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල
42. පල්ලියගුරු, වන්දසිරි(1996)සිංහල බුදුසමයෙහිඉතිහාසයබෞද්ධසංස්කෘතිකමධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල
43. ප්‍රවසති. අලගියවන්ත(2004)සංස්කෘත සිංහලශබ්දකෝෂය, සූරියප්‍රකාශන, මරදාන
44. පූජාවලිය(2011)සංස්. කීර්ති නාරම්පනාවබෞද්ධසංස්කෘතිකමධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල
45. ප්‍රේමවත්තු ප්‍රකරණය(1999)සංස්. නන්දසේන, මුදියන්සේ, ගොඩගේ, කොළඹ
46. බුද්ධ දත්ත හිමි, පොල්වත්තේ(1950)පාලි සිංහල අකාරාදිය, බෞද්ධසංස්කෘතිකමධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල
47. ධර්මපාල රාජා, ඔණමඩුවෙන්ප්‍රභවයවූසන්නිවේදනය(1992) ධර්මශාලා පුරාණය2(1)පි.65-73
48. මජ්ඣිම නිකාය1(1971)බෞද්ධසංස්කෘතිකමධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල

49. මජ්ඣිම නිකාය3(1974)බෞද්ධසංස්කෘතිකමධ්‍යස්ථානය,දෙහිවල
51. රණසිංහ.ආර්.එස්.අයි(2006)පැරණි ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේපොත්ගල් සම්ප්‍රදාය,කර්තෘ, කැලණිය
52. රාහුල හිමි,වල්පොල(1964)බුදුන්වදාළබුද්ධ ධර්මය, බෞද්ධ සංස්කෘතික මධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල
53. රාහුල හිමි,වල්පොල(1962) ලක්දිවබුදුසමයෙහිඉතිහාසය, බෞද්ධ සංස්කෘතික මධ්‍යස්ථානය, දෙහිවල
54. වික්‍රමසිංහ,කේ.ඩී.පී(1973)සම්බුදුසිරිත, කර්තෘ, කොළඹ
55. වික්‍රමසිංහ,මාර්ටින්(1962)සිංහල සකස්කඩ,සමන්,මහරගම
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