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Contribution of Sri Lankan Buddhist Literature for the Development of Ethnic Identity of Sinhalese

Abstract

The objective of this research is to examine the Contribution of Sri Lankan Buddhist Literature for the Development of Ethnic Identity of Sinhala. Efforts made pay to expose the historical facts which formed the specific identity of Sinhalese from the 3rd century B.C. to the 10th century A . D.

Sinhalese ethnic identity could not be exposed looking at the physical type (anatomy) or lineament, but only in cultural trait and social norms found in literature. In sense of socio-anthropology, literature is thought of as which people shared and consumed the ideas in a specific society. Viewed in that light, Buddhist literature having a long history are human issues that can be under taken to study the Sinhalese ethnic identity.

Remarkably, without concerning the Buddhist literature no one could expose the historical source of the Sinhalese ethnic identity. The literature used by Sinhalese, handed from generation to generation are the records consisting of their common attitudes, experiences, pattern of behavior etc. They conform their unbroken identity. Behind all the distinctive characters, customs and material culture belong to them reflect the coherence of the Buddha's teaching and institutional behavior of the Sinhala bhikkhus who provided the mirror towards the ordinary people at the settlements around the monasteries.

The social norms which we have considered in each chapter are the factors continuing Sinhalese identity even today. In concretizing people of the Island Buddhist literature forced as a source of cultural tie forming an ethnic identity. They appeared in Significant identity with Buddhism was introduced to the Island by Mahinda Thero. Within the period mentioned people were concretized under spreading of a trait of culture Island wide. Many accounts of tales such as Sihlavattupakaranaya, chronicles as Mahavamsa

and material culture of early Sinhalese reflect the contribution of Buddhism which confirm the ethnic identity. We could not speak about Sinhalese identity alone, excluding Buddhism. Generally it says that Sinhalese are attached to Buddhism as tree to bark and vice-versa.

In briefly, the Buddhist settlements, conceptualization, moral issues, characters and material culture of early Sinhalese which we examine under the particular chapters have been formed Sinhalese identity so as to consequence of internalization of Buddha's teaching deeply as part of their soul. And the identity of Sinhalese has been conformed within a cultural web created by Buddhism.