

Library Collection and the Knowledge Organization of Pirivena Libraries: a Study based on Colombo and Anuradhapura Districts

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Abstract

This research is conducted to identify the library collection and knowledge organization of pirivena libraries on behalf of the current bhikshu education of Sri Lanka. There, Thirty (30) pirivena libraries were randomly selected as the sample of this study from two districts, Colombo and Anuradhapura. Data were obtained from librarians of those pirivena libraries producing them a questionnaire. It was able to identify problems and issues of pirivena libraries by analyzing the data which was gathered from the questionnaires. The research proposal of this study represents basic principles and other relevant information on this research. Literature review of this study examines the development of monastic bhikshu education from Anuradhapura era to Mahanuwara era (Kandian) with details of the syllabus taught, books written and authors of different eras, State supports and analyzes the evolution of pirivena education from the colonial period up to the present. Especially it is studied the history of libraries in Sri Lanka, types of libraries, prevalence of missionary education in Sri Lanka, deterioration of monastic education and the reestablishment of monastic education with the establishment of Rathmalana Parama Dhamma Chethiya Pirivena, history of Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara pirivenas, Buddhist monks who dedicated and committed to develop monastic education, laws, rules, regulations and statutory provisions related to pirivena education were studied in this research.

Keywords: Pirivena libraries, Bhikshu education, Library collection, Knowledge organization, Library resources

Introduction

The most ancient library system of Sri Lanka is with the monastic system. The origin of the monastic library system (Piriven Libraries) has been closely related with Mahavihara, Jethavana, and Abayagiriya. Later it has developed through Astamulayathana, eight main educational centers. Especially, the most significant example for this is the arrival of foreign Buddhist monks like Buddhagosa, Buddhadatta, and Dhammapala for the study of texts at Mahavihara. They composed Pali Commentaries having studied Sinhalese Commentaries and helped immensely the development of the library system of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, there was great respect for the Buddhist monks regarding the composing of books. The many kings contributed greatly to this task. Therefore, until the British Empire established its power in the island, the responsibility was with the Piriven (monastic) library system. After, there was deterioration of monastic education and piriven library system. It developed to a great extent