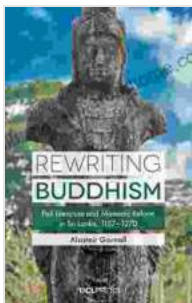


# Pali Literature and Monastic Reform in Sri Lanka, 1157-1270



## Rewriting Buddhism: Pali Literature and Monastic Reform in Sri Lanka, 1157-1270 by Alastair Gornall

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 1847 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting: Enabled  
Print length : 286 pages

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Journey back in time to the vibrant era of Sri Lankan history, from 1157 to 1270, when Pali literature flourished and monastic reform swept across the island. This transformative period witnessed a profound resurgence of Buddhism, leaving an indelible mark on the nation's spiritual and cultural fabric.

## **A Literary Legacy: The Power of Pali**

Pali, an ancient Indo-Aryan language, served as the vehicle for preserving and transmitting the teachings of the Buddha. During this period, Sri Lankan scholars and monks made significant contributions to Pali literature, producing a wealth of texts that illuminated the doctrines and practices of Buddhism.

Prominent among these literary endeavors was the creation of commentaries and sub-commentaries on the Pali canon, known as the Tipitaka. These works expounded on the Buddha's teachings, providing deeper insights and interpretations. The renowned scholar Buddhaghosa, who lived during this period, played a pivotal role in preserving and systematizing the Pali canon. His influential commentaries, such as the Visuddhimagga, remain essential texts for Buddhist practitioners today.

## **Monastic Renewal: A Quest for Purity**

Alongside the literary revival, monastic reform emerged as a driving force in Sri Lankan Buddhism. Several monastic Free Downloads arose, each advocating for a return to the original teachings of the Buddha and a stricter adherence to monastic discipline.

One of the most influential reform movements was the Mahavihara tradition, based at the ancient Mahavihara monastery in Anuradhapura. The Mahavihara monks emphasized the importance of meditation, scriptural study, and a rigorous monastic lifestyle. They believed that monastic purity was essential for preserving the authentic teachings of the Buddha.

Another significant reform movement was the Dhammayuttika Nikaya, founded by King Parakramabahu I. This Free Download aimed to revive the ascetic practices of early Buddhism, promoting the renunciation of worldly possessions and the pursuit of spiritual liberation.

### **Transformative Teachings: Wisdom and Insight**

The Pali literature produced during this period is a rich source of wisdom and insight into the nature of reality, the path to enlightenment, and the workings of the human mind. Key teachings include:

- **The Three Characteristics of Existence:** Dukkha (suffering), Anicca (impermanence), and Anatta (non-self).
- **The Four Noble Truths:** The truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering.
- **The Eightfold Path:** A practical guide to ethical conduct, mental cultivation, and wisdom.

### **Influential Figures: Guiding Lights**

Several charismatic and influential figures played key roles in shaping this era of Pali literature and monastic reform. Notable among them were:

- **Buddhaghosa:** A renowned scholar and commentator on the Pali canon.
- **King Parakramabahu I:** A patron of Buddhism and founder of the Dhammayuttika Nikaya.
- **Mahanama Thera:** A chronicler who documented the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in his famous work, the Mahavamsa.

### **Captivating Stories: Legends and Folklore**

Beyond the doctrinal teachings, Pali literature also contains a wealth of captivating stories and legends that illustrate the principles of Buddhism and reflect the cultural beliefs and practices of the time. These narratives include:

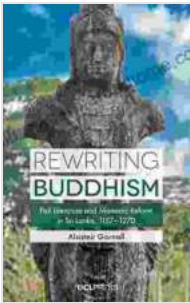
- **The Jataka Tales:** Stories of the Buddha's previous lives, showcasing his virtues and qualities.
- **The Apadana:** Stories of the disciples of the Buddha, highlighting their spiritual journeys.
- **The Niddesa:** Commentaries on the Sutta Pitaka, providing deeper insights into the Buddha's teachings.

### **: A Timeless Legacy**

The period from 1157 to 1270 in Sri Lanka was a golden age of Pali literature and monastic reform. The literary output of this era, combined

with the transformative teachings and influential figures, had a profound impact on the island's spiritual landscape and continues to inspire and guide practitioners around the world.

By immersing ourselves in the rich tapestry of Pali literature, we gain valuable insights into the nature of reality, the path to enlightenment, and the challenges of human existence. The stories and teachings contained within these texts offer timeless wisdom and guidance, inviting us to embark on our own journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening.



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