

Speech by H.E. Ambassador Sibi George at event commemorating
“Conferment of Classical Language Status to Pali Language” on 21 November 2024

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Buddhist Monks, Dignitaries, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I am honored to speak about a language that has left an indelible mark on history, philosophy, and human thought-**Pali**. While Pali is not widely spoken today, its legacy endures through the profound wisdom it carries and the cultures it has shaped.

Pali is an ancient Middle Indo-Aryan language that became the linguistic foundation of Theravada Buddhism. It is the language in which the “**Tripitaka**”, the sacred texts of Buddhism, were composed. These texts offer not only spiritual guidance but also insights into ethics, human nature, and governance.

Despite its origins in ancient India, Pali transcended national boundaries and became the unifying medium for Buddhist philosophy across countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia. Its role in spreading the message of peace, compassion, and enlightenment is unparalleled.

Pali Language was recently granted Classical Language status by the Indian Government. Recognizing Pali as a ‘**Classical Language**’ is not merely about honoring the past; it is about acknowledging the principles and values it has preserved for humanity. Classical status is granted to languages with an enduring heritage, a rich body of ancient literature, and a profound influence on subsequent cultures and languages. Pali fulfills all these criteria.

India and Japan share deep historical and cultural ties, particularly through their shared Buddhist heritage. Pali, as the liturgical language of Theravada

Buddhism, holds a unique place in fostering this connection. Pali serves as a cultural and historical touch-point in India-Japan relations, reinforcing their shared Buddhist heritage.

Buddhism traveled from India to Japan via China and Korea, carrying with it teachings often preserved in Pali and Sanskrit texts. Japan, though primarily influenced by Mahayana Buddhism, acknowledges the significance of Pali as the language of the original Buddhist scriptures (Tipiṭaka). The cultural transmission of Buddhist values has strengthened mutual respect and goodwill between the two nations.

Granting Pali the status of a classical language would reaffirm its global importance. It would promote deeper research into ancient texts, help preserve Buddhist heritage, and encourage younger generations to explore this treasure trove of knowledge.

In conclusion, as we celebrate the timeless wisdom of Pali, let us remember that languages like it are not just communication tools but vessels of human civilization's collective memory. Recognizing its classical status is not just a tribute to a language; it is a tribute to the ideals of humanity itself.

Thank you.

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