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EARLY HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN CEYLON
(From Earliest Times up to Mahāsenā)

- BY -

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A B S T R A C T

The traditional history of Ceylon is considered to have started with the advent of Vijaya to Ceylon. The story of education, or that of the activities of Vijaya and his immediate successors during this period is hardly available. A subsequent event, namely the introduction of Buddhism however changed this situation. With the arrival of Mahinda and his sister Sanghamittā in Ceylon, and the consequent spread of Buddhism in the country, a new religion and a new culture took firm root in the Island. Arts and crafts, architecture, education, literature, may all be considered to have sprung from this one single event. Thus the story of education in early Ceylon is in a way the story of the spread of Buddhism in the country. However, this study has been confined mainly to examining the educational aspects of the activities of our early ancestors.

This study may broadly be considered to contain two distinctive sections, the background and the story proper. Chapters one to six are devoted to examining the background, while the rest, chapters seven to eleven, are devoted to examining the effect of such a background. On the whole it may be said that this study has focussed attention on the fact that education has emanated from the religious teacher, starting with Mahinda himself. Even the secular form of

education that may have prevailed in earliest times has also been traced to the vihāras and ārāmas, the residences of the early theras, although we have isolated instances of teachers like Paṇḍula who may be considered to have functioned irrespective of any religious bearing. Paṇḍula however, lived before the advent of Buddhism into the country.

In this survey it has been observed that the practice of keeping 'historical records', and the custom of maintaining the system of bhāṇakas kept alive the tradition of literary activity and study in the country. The building of religious edifices, and secular buildings, like thūpas and palaces etc., and the incising of inscriptions etc. on hard granite and the like kept alive the art of the craftsman and the artist.

P.S. References made in this study to the Mahāvamsa and its translation are to those of Geiger unless otherwise stated. **And Ns. references are to that of Kumaranatunṅa unless otherwise stated.**
