



Pāli
PRIMER

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Dedicated
to the memory of my revered Guru
the late Mr. Julius Berugoda
who paved the path
to my academic career

PREFACE

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This is a book long overdue, as my first Pāli teacher, the late Mr. Julius Berugoda wished me to compile such a one, or translate the work he did into English, many years ago. I am sorry I was not able to bring forth this Pāli Primer during his lifetime, but I feel I am discharging a great obligation even at this late stage.

I take no credit for the method used in this book as it was thought out by my revered Guru. When I first met him in 1949, I asked him how many cases there are in Pāli, as I feared that I would have to memorise declensions as in Latin. He very tactfully said that there are no cases. I was surprised and curious, and requested him to start lessons immediately. Straight away we got down to making sentences which, lesson after lesson, became longer, more interesting and complex. These exercises were such fun that I thoroughly enjoyed learning Pāli. Mr. Berugoda compiled a Pāli Grammar in Sinhala called Pāli Subodhinī, to teach me and it was later published in the early 1950's. It has long been out of print and even I do not possess a copy.

In the early 1980s Mr. Berugoda compiled another Pāli Grammar in Sinhala which he said was an improvement on Pāli Subodhinī, and wished me to translate it into English. Though it was translated with the help of Prof. P.B. Meegaskumbura of the Department of Sinhala, I was not satisfied with the arrangement of the lessons. I felt that the improvements he made in his enthusiasm were counter-productive, but I did not have the heart to tell him my frank opinion. The book however could not be published for lack of funds.

The present work is an entirely new effort based on the same principle of teaching grammar through composition, using a gradually expanding controlled vocabulary, selected on the

basis of types frequently occurring in the language. Cases are introduced one by one using only masculine nouns ending in *-a* at the beginning, with exercises in sentence formation with present tense, third person, singular and plural verbs whose bases end in *-a*. Grammatical forms such as the gerund / absolutive and the infinitive, which are very frequent in the language, are soon introduced to enable the student to form longer and more complex sentences. Once the student has mastered the basic structure, other grammatical and syntactical forms are taught one by one, following the principle of introducing forms which bear a similarity / affinity in morphology to those already learnt. Translations from and into Pāli form an integral part of each lesson.

This book is meant for beginners and gives only an introduction to Pāli grammar. It is designed as a convenient stepping stone to more advanced works such as A.K. Warder's Introduction to Pāli.

I have freely drawn from the vocabulary collected by Ven. A.P. Buddhadatta in The New Pāli Course Part I, for which I acknowledge my indebtedness.

I place on record my sincere thanks to my University Guru Prof. N.A. Jayawickrema for going through the first draft of this text with meticulous care and making valuable suggestions.

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