

Study on Origins of the Lokanīti

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Abstract

Lokanīti means guiding principles for mankind or as a guide to dealing with Worldly social affairs. At the outset of cultural history of Myanmar, the nīti such as lokanīti, Dhammanīti, Rajanīti and Mahārahaniti fulfill the instructions for the three aeras of knowledge related to loka, Rāja and Dhamma. Rājanīti is the instruction for kings, administrators and the rest three nīti texts give the instructions for the levels to become good individual in education, economics and social dealings. The same verses spread in these three texts are very closed. Lokanīti can be found in English translations, Myanmar nissaya, Myanmar prose and pyo. The lokanīti has been studied in Myanmar in the 14th AD as it was written by the minister eaturaṅgabala during the time of King Kyaw Swar (AD 1343 – 1350) and King Thi Ha Thu (AD 1350 – 1359). He was well – versed in pāli, Sanskrit and Buddhist literature. These instructions of lokanīti Contribute to the Myanmar culture in all aspects.

Key words : Loka , nīti , well-being , social being

Introduction

‘Lokanīti’ is a word made of ‘Loka’ and ‘nīti’. ‘Loka’ means secular world and ‘nīti’ means directive. Therefore, ‘Lokanīti’ means rules of conduct, the guidance for the improvement of the secular world. Actually, lokanīti treatise is Buddhist instructions in ethics. They are thoughts of Myanmar Society, practice of our ancestors and also secret to achieve success in life. “Those who are lazy cannot acquire any skill; Those who are not skillful cannot create wealth; Those who lack wealth cannot have any friends; Those who have no friends cannot be happy; Those who are unhappy cannot do good deeds; Those who have no good deeds cannot attain Nirvana.” They are true at anywhere, at any time.

Nīti Text

In the history of Pāli literature of Myanmar, Nīti literature has emerged since Pinya Age. Dhamma Nīti Lokanīti, Mahārahan īti and Rājanīti are the well-known ones. Among them, Lokanīti treatise penetrated Myanmar society as the most famous of widely known treatise. Traditionally, it is assumed that Lokanīti treatise was written by the high official Caturaṅgabala of Pinya Age.

Lokanīti Text

The Lokanīti is a compiled text extracted the verses from the Buddhist literature and Sanskrit literature. The author used the Aṅguttara Nikāya, Itivuttaka, Jātaka, Theragāhā, Suttanipāta,³ Mahābhārata and Hitopadesa. The author was the minister Caturaṅgabala during the time of King Kyaw Swar (AD 1143-1350). He was well-versed in Pāli and Sanskrit.

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The Lokanīti gives instructions for the youth and elder, the king and the Brahmin and the businessmen etc. it guides the one how to learn knowledge, what are the text, and the importance of learning. It guides the one how to associate with the friends, the kings, the wives, monks and Brahmins. It gives the instructions for the trading so on.

In the ancient days, the youth are to learn the Lokanīti in the monastic schools. They have to learn them by heart. So they are well-trained and tamed. So the Myanmar becomes the well-beings, well-wishes and sociable beings.¹ They learn the Pāli, Sanskrit, Wisdom texts, Mathematic and other worldly texts.² They have good character and temperament. There are the contributions of the Lokanīti to the Myanmar Culture.

Lokanīti was compiled based on the authoritative sayings from Sanskrit of Brahmaṇa literature and treatises of Buddhist literature. Professor James Gray stated in this "Myanmar Naing-Ngan Nīti Sarpaysumyar" that there were 109 verses in Sanskrit Lokanīti. Thus, Pāli Lokanīti has 58 verses more.

Lokanīti comprises guidance for people on education, economic, social affairs, morals and so on to become exceptionally gifted persons or persons of good characters. They can be abided by all nationalities and religions. Thus not only Myanmar scholars but also foreign learned persons appreciated and translated them into English.

Lokanīti treatise was translated by Nyaungkan Sayadaw Ven. U Both, about AD. 1880 U Shin Kalay, an amanuensis of the royal court, composed of Lokanīti Pyone in open form epic. Shwe Hinthar-Tawya Sayadaw and his disciple Ven-Bhaddanta Jota also wrote Lokanīti with elaborated version in three volumes. Moreover, in 1870, a praise namely Saṅgāmano and Sir G Scott translated some verse of Lokanīti into English. In 1962, Dr Sein Tu, Professor of Department of Psychology, University of Mandalay translated it into English. In 1992, Maung Lwin Yee (Arts and Science) wrote "Nīti Kyay-Hmone" and Lokanīti in Myanmar and English. These verses passed many years, many historical period and many ages. They are thoughts of Myanmar society, practice of our ancestors and also secret to achieve success in life.

It is believed that the Lokanīti was compiled by the minister Caturaṅgabala in the Pinya period. According to the Myanmar tradition, the author of the Lokanīti is the minister, Caturaṅgabala in the 1350 AD. He was a Buddhist who was well-versed in Sanskrit and Pāli. He could translate the Nīti books into Pāli from Sanskrit language such as Hitopadesa Vanthu. Therefore it can be said that he was able to compose the Lokanīti extracted from the Brahmaṇa and Buddhist literature. Professor James Grey translated into English.

Lokanīti Nissaya compiled by the Sayadaw U Bodh in (1787-1829A.D). His name was Shin Jambudhaja well known as Sayadaw U Both according to his childhood name Maung Bodh. In the 1830 AD, King Bagyidaw and the queen Menu offered him the Mahā Aung Mye Būmi Ook kyaung , monastery together with the title "Cakkindābhisirī Saddhammadhaja Mahādhammarājādhirājaguru". He had compiled over sixty texts including Lokanīti Dhammanītim Rājan and Mahārahanīti.

The Origins of the Lokanīti contains 167 verses. Verses No.1 is belong to paying homage by the author and from No.2 to 167 verse are the main text. In the version of the text as mentioned together with the nissaya, 168 verses in the conclusion and 169 concluded verse by the sayardaw. In all versions, there includes only 166 verses. In English translation books,

¹ They follow the admonition of the Lokanīti

² They have straight and virtuous practices

Professor James Gray (1886 A.D) and Professor Dr. Sein Tu(1962 A.D),there mentioned 167 verse according to Pāli vesion. There are two more verses composed in conclusion.

Structure of the Lokanīti Text

It is believed that the lokanīti was compiled by the Minister Caturaṅgabaḷa in the Piṅya period. According to the Myanmar tradition, the author of the lokanīti is the Minister Caturaṅgabaḷa who appeared in 1350 AD. He was a Buddhist and well – versed in Sanskrit and Pāli. He translated the nīti literature into Pāli from the Sanskrit language such as Hitopadesa Vatthu. Therefore it can be said that he was able to compose the lokanīti extracted from the Brahmaṇas and Buddhist literatures. Professor Games Grey translated into English.

Lokanīti treatise written by in Pāli consists of 167 verses. According to subject matters, they are divided into seven sections as follows.

1. Paṇḍita Kaṇḍa (about learned persons)
2. Sujana Kaṇḍa (about virtuous persons)
3. Mitta Kaṇḍa (about friends)
4. Bālādujjana Kaṇḍa (about unscrupulous persons)
5. Itthi Kaṇḍa (about women)
6. Rāja Kaṇḍa (about Kings)
7. Pakimnaka Kaṇḍa(miscellaneous)

The Lokanīti is the most well- known text in Myanmar. It is a wisdom text which contains 167 verses, introduction one verse and others 166 verses are classified into seven chapters. The first chapter contains 39 verses about the wise (Paṇḍita Kaṇḍa), the second chapter contains 27 verses about the good (sujana Kaṇḍa 41-67); the third chapter contains 15 verses about the friend (Mittaka Kaṇḍa 79-93); the fourth chapter contain 11 verses about the evil (Dujjana Kaṇḍa 68-78); the fifth chapter contain 18 verses about the women (Itthi Kaṇḍa 94-111); the sixth chapter contains 26 verses about the kin (Rāja Kaṇḍa 112-137); and the seventh chapter contains 30 verses about the miscellaneous (pakimnaka Kaṇḍa 138-167)

Translators of the Lokanīti

The Lokanīti texts are also finding in derivatives with the now of English translation, Myanmar nissayas and poetries. In other editions, only 166 verses based on Pāli, version. They are;

- (1) Translation of a Burmese version of the Nīti Kyan,a code ethics in Pāli , by E Fowte (1860 A.D),JRAS 17,PP,252-256.
- (2) The Lokanīti translated from the Burmese paraphrase, JASB 47PP,239-252 by Richard C Temple ,1878 A.D.
- (3) In the introduction of Dr. Berehert,it is said that 18 verses were translated by the Italian Scholar Inīloteja (1879 A.D).
- (4) The Master piece by Professor James Gray was compared in 1886A.D.He had translated the four texts Lokanīti, Dhammanīti, Rājanīti and Sudavaḍḍhananīti and published there by the name of "Ancient proverbs and maxims from Burmese soures,the Nīti literature of Burma (reprint) Rangoon.
- (5) The Lokanīti, Mandalay by Dr.Sein Tu,1962.

- (6) Vineetius Sangermano (1787-1806A.D) has translated some verses of Lokanīti on his book, "A description of the Burmese empire (reprint, Rangoon,1924, 1966).
- (7) Translation of Myanmar proverbs and sayings by Shwe Yo(preud), the Burma,his life and notions, New York,1963.
- (8) The 4 chapters of the Lokanītiwere exposed by the Shwe Hinsatora Sirimahāmaṅgalā monestry Sankyaung Sayadaw Aggamahāpaṇḍita.The next 3chapters were exposed by his closed pupil Bhaddanta Jota. They were published from the Hamsāvati pressw in 1927 and 1957 AD in three version twice by the name of "avmueDwdtzGifhtus,fvufpGJusrf;"(The Elaborate Exposition of Lokanīti).
- (9) Sayagi U San Myat also composed the Lokanīti together with the Cāṇakyanīti by the name of "eDwdusrf;ausmfa'G;eSpfazmf" the two famous Nītis in 1954 AD.
- (10) Sayagi U Thaw Zin also composed the book "eDwdpG,fpHk" (complete Nīti).He translated the Mahāraha and Lokanīti into Myanmar prose and published with Manunīti and Navarat Nīti.
- (11) Ven Sīlācāra composed the Lokanīti in Myanmar nissaya, English translation, Myanmar prose, Myanmar poerty and English vocabularies.They are the same to the English translation by Games Gray.It is by the name of "urḶmha&GStdk;" (edrd*Dwdum)– "World gold pot"(Nīdhigītikā).
- (12) The great author U Sukha wrote the book "Lokanīti". The English translation of Jame Gray and nissaya of Bodh wwere taken.The explanation and modernized.
- (13) "pG,fpHkedwduxm"(complete Nīti) is the master piece of Chaung Oo Maung Candā. It appeared in 1984 AD. He had explained the difficult words translated by the Sayadaw U Bodh.
- (14) In 1984 AD, "od*Fgavm0g'qHk;rpmrsm;eSifhhavmueDwd"(Singālovādā admonitions and Lokanīti) by the Ven, Kumuda from the Jetavana monastery Partain Old City.He use the version of Sayadaw U Bodh.
- (15) Lokanīti pyo by U Shin Ga Lay ,besides these books ,there would be other Nīti texts in the past, present and future .

Discussion

In Lokanīti, the duties and disciplines of human society are thoroughly expressed. The guidance of Lokanīti is concerned with everyone who belongs to different races, different cultures, different religions or different ages. Each section is concerned with contents. The Lokanīti is the most well-known text in Myanmar and it is derived from Sanskrit through Brahmana, Parohita and the believers of Buddhism.The Lokanīti is translated into both in English and in Myanmar.

Conclusion

Most of the guidance's of Lokanīti are accepted by everyone who is not the same religions, cultures or races. The instructions of Lokanīti can also be known as the heritage of Myanmar people and community. Lokanīti is accepted and followed by other countries and some societies.

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