

## THE ORIGINS AND INFLUENCE OF LOKANĪTI

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### ABSTRACT

Lokanīti stands as the primary text which provides essential ethical guidance about human behavior together with social direction. The cultural history of Myanmar demonstrates how four nīti texts known for their influence on governance (Rāja), ethical conduct (Dhamma), and worldly affairs (Loka) include Lokanīti, Dhammanīti, Rājanīti, and Mahārahanīti. Rulers and administrators receive instructions from Rājanīti while the other nīti texts supply ethic and practical guidance to individuals concerning education, economics and social exchanges. These texts share intellectual roots that appear structurally and thematically because they belong to the same intellectual heritage. Lokanīti exists in multiple forms such as English translations in addition to Myanmar nissaya with commentary and Myanmar prose as well as traditional pyo verse forms. Lokanīti entered the teaching circle of Myanmar in the 14th century CE under the guidance of minister Eaturaingabala who served King Kyaw Swar and later King Thi Ha Thu from 1343 to 1350 CE through 1359 CE. Through being a master of Pāli, Sanskrit and Buddhist scholarship Eaturaingabala led the way in spreading and adapting Lokanīti throughout history. Social harmony and moral values in Myanmar derive substantial benefit from the ethical and didactic principles found in Lokanīti which strengthens the nation's intellectual and cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Loka, Nīti, Well-Being, Social Ethics, Myanmar Cultural History.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The composition Lokanīti originates in Loka which means secular world joined with Nīti that signifies ethical directive. The teachings of Lokanīti function as both ethical standards and functional guidelines to improve practical matters of this world. As a Buddhist ethical work Lokanīti presents ethical practices for behaving well and shows the religious and social conventions of Myanmar culture. The knowledge passed down by ancestors has established itself as a journey toward reaching life success.

Lokanīti presents the key ethical principle about how: A person who lacks drive cannot learn any useful skill. A person without skills will never generate wealth. A lack of wealth stands as an obstacle to forming friends so does poverty block the path to acquiring friendship. Someone who lacks friendships cannot experience happiness. People who are not content with their lives will fail to perform beneficial acts. Spiritual enlightenment at Nirvana is unreachable for people who fail to generate good deeds.

Buddhist philosophy deeply embedded this moral teaching in its foundation which continues to maintain worldwide relevance throughout various cultural settings throughout time. The moral teaching demonstrates that diligent conduct ultimately leads to prosperity while fostering social relationships which brings spiritual progress because ethical conduct leads to enlightenment. The ethical directives from Lokāni located in Magwe District guide current moral thinking and social interactions in Myanmar by promoting values essential to personal and collective well-being.

### 2. LITERATURE SURVEY

**The history of Pāli literature in Myanmar includes various Nīti texts.**

History documents how Nīti literature began in Myanmar under the Pinya period which established itself as a vital period in Pāli literary history throughout the region. Educational Nīti texts centered on morality provide people with guidelines affecting how they should govern and live socially and develop themselves as individuals. The Nīti literary tradition in Myanmar produced four essential works that included Dhamma Nīti and Lokanīti along with Mahārahanīti and Rājanīti. These literary works have occupied an essential role in developing Myanmar's intellectual beliefs and cultural norms.

Among the literary works Lokanīti gained the most fame and has become the most widely recognized work. The practical guidance from this moral and ethical text fully penetrated the ethical awareness of Myanmar people thus enabling them to handle social interactions properly and abide by ethical principles. These teachings reach beyond

religious scholars and show monks because they redefine what society believes to be important ethical matters in addition to moral decision-making for regular people in daily life.

Studies have traditionally identified Caturaṅgabala as the author of *Lokanīti* while he was serving as a high official under Pinya phase rule. Caturaṅgabala maintained vital significance in spreading and adapting *Lokanīti*'s ethical teachings because he had deep knowledge of Pāli and Sanskrit alongside Buddhist literature. Modern society acknowledges the timeless value of *Lokanīti* because it formed Myanmar's moral backbone that continues to direct ethical choices and social interactions of its people.

### **Lokanīti Text**

The text called *Lokanīti* uses its verses by collecting them from Buddhist as well as Sanskrit literary resources. The author gathered his material from several classical bodies of work such as the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, *Itivuttaka*, *Jātaka*, *Theragāhā* alongside *Suttanipāta*, *Mahābhārata* and *Hitopadesa*. Miller Caturaṅgabala was traditionally recognized as the author because he served as a minister for King Kyaw Swar during the time period of 1143–1350 AD. As a Pāli and Sanskrit scholar Minister Caturaṅgabala functioned as the central figure behind ethical teachings transformations that led to a practical guide for moral and social conduct.

*Lokanīti* delivers moral education that addresses each social group starting from young people and ending with elderly people and rulers and Brahmins and merchants. The instruction encompasses learning strategies coupled with text selection guidance and it illuminates educational value to learners. This guide offers social behavior guidelines which specify correct modes of friendship along with relationships with rulers and married life partnerships and interactions with monks and Brahmins. The treatise provides an extensive ethical framework for individual and social progress because it extends its principles to trade practices.

Young students in ancient Myanmar were required to learn *Lokanīti* in monastic schools for their education by memorizing the text. Through demanding educational requirements students learned self-control and ethics and social manners which produced a regular and peaceful social environment. The monastic educational curriculum consisted of Pāli and Sanskrit as well as philosophical wisdom texts together with mathematics and other subjects of the world that developed students into disciplined and composed individuals. *Lokanīti* extended its reach to guide Myanmar's cultural development as well as intellectual evolution.

Both the authoritative Sanskrit literature of Brahmanic traditions and Buddhist treatises contributed to compile the text of *Lokanīti*. Professor James Gray documented in his book *Myanmar Naing-Ngan Nīti Sarpaysumyar* that the Sanskrit *Lokanīti* included 109 original verses but the Pāli version expanded its content with further 58 verses to reach 167 in total. Through its diverse content of educational and economic methods with social standards and moral practices *Lokanīti* teaches individuals methods to acquire wisdom along with virtuous behavior. *Lokanīti* applies to individuals regardless of their religious affiliation or nationality so it receives wide respect internationally beyond Myanmar.

Throughout the centuries *Lokanīti* has gained such importance that authors created numerous adaptations of it. The exceptional scholar Nyaungkan Sayadaw along with Ven. U Bodh made the Burmese translation of *Lokanīti* around 1880 AD. The royal court scribe U Shin Kalay created *Lokanīti* Pyone through an open-form epic structure together with his written translation of the text. The three-volume expanded edition of *Lokanīti* came forth when Sayadaw Shwe Hintha-Tawya collaborated with his student Ven. Bhaddanta Jota. During 1870 *Saṅgāmano* together with Sir G. Scott released an English version of specific *Lokanīti* verses. In 1962 the academic researcher Dr. Sein Tu finished his English translation work after receiving his appointment as professor at Mandalay University Psychology Department. The scholar Maung Lwin Yee (Arts and Science) published *Nīti Kyay-Hmone* in 1992 containing *Lokanīti* presented in Myanmar and English versions.

The ethical and intellectual traditions of Myanmar show *Lokanīti* as a cornerstone that survived through different historical periods spanning centuries. *Lokanīti* provides teachings derived from Myanmar social mentality that guide people to lifelong success throughout all times. Historians believe that Buddhist scholar Minister Caturaṅgabala drafted *Lokanīti* in 1350 AD during the Pinya period as a result of his mastery over Sanskrit and Pāli. His extensive knowledge of *Nīti* texts together with his skill at translating *Hitopadesa* Vanthu from Sanskrit to Pāli led him to consolidate elements from Brahmanic and Buddhist literature thus assembling *Lokanīti*.

The influence of *Lokanīti* grew stronger through English translator James Gray who worked with Nissaya commentary compiler Sayadaw U Bodh (1787–1829 AD). The late Sayadaw U Bodh received his birth name Shin Jambudhaja but gained fame throughout his life as Sayadaw U Both after his common name Maung Bodh. The couple of King Bagyidaw and Queen Me Nu presented Mahā Aung Mye Būmi Ook Kyaung monastery together with the eminent title "Cakkindābhisisirī Saddhammadhaja Mahādhammarājādhirājaguru" when King Bagyidaw honored Sayadaw U Bodh in

1830 AD. Through his work he amassed sixty spiritual documents that included Lokanīti among other texts such as Dhammanīti and Rājanīti and Mahārahanīti.

The primary text of Lokanīti starts with the author's dedication verse (1) while the main content extends from verse (2) to verse (167). In particular versions of Lokanīti additional verses serve as the 168th and 169th verses written by its author. Most traditional texts of this work include 166 verses. In English translations, both James Gray (1886 AD) and Professor Dr. Sein Tu (1962 AD) reference 167 verses in accordance with the Pāli version.

Lokanīti remains crucial to Myanmar's cultural ethics because it provides moral teachings that guide Myanmar's ethical standards. The text continues to hold great respect which has influenced scholars as well as monks and the broader population of Myanmar for many centuries.

### Structure of the Lokanīti Text

Minister Caturaṅgabala attributed Lokanīti to him based on traditional beliefs although scholars confirmed its compilation during the Piinya period in 14th century AD. Sources from Myanmar suggest that Caturaṅgabala who served as a minister from 1350 AD was both a devout Buddhist and an expert in Sanskrit and Pāli. Because of his proficiency in Sanskrit and Pāli languages he translated Nīti literature from Sanskrit to Pāli and specifically covered Hitopadesa Vatthu. Due to his comprehensive understanding of Brahmanic and Buddhist religious texts he likely assembled Lokanīti through compiling teachings from these two spiritual traditions. The esteemed translation of Lokanīti into English was accomplished by Professor James Gray which successfully expanded its global reader base.

The author composed Lokanīti through Pāli verses that reach a total of 167 segments. Lokanīti groups its 167 verses into seven thematic divisions which explain multiple parts of ethical conduct for human beings. The arrangement of Lokanīti divides its content according to its subject matter into seven organizational sections. The Pañdita Kaṇḍa (On Learned Persons) part contains 39 verses devoted to describing the important traits of wise and knowledgeable individuals and their intellectual discipline. The text describes what defines a knowledgeable person while stressed the need for education along with moral uprightness.

A total of 27 verses (verses 41–67) make up Sujana Kaṇḍa (On Virtuous Persons) where it presents the characteristics of morally upright individuals. The section teaches about righteousness as well as ethical conduct and needed virtues to attain an honorable life.

The 15 verses of Mitta Kaṇḍa (On Friends) offer instructions about friendship relationships starting from verse 79 through verse 93. The text presents essential characteristics of real friends and explains why loyal bonds matter alongside showing how to identify fact from fake companionships.

Bāladujjana Kaṇḍa (On Unscrupulous Persons) consists of 11 verses (verses 68–78) in which it becomes essential to stay away from immoral and treacherous persons. This text demonstrates the dangerous outcomes which result from creating relationships with untrustworthy people who do not uphold ethical guidelines.

Itthi Kaṇḍa (On Women) provides eighteen verses (94 through 111) dedicated to feminine roles and societal traits. This section of the work identifies standard feminine qualities and attributes along with unfavorable traits before offering instructions about male-female conduct.

The section Rāja Kaṇḍa (On Kings) extends through 26 verses (verses 112–137) to explore the moral duties which kings must execute. The chapter outlines proper royal leadership combined with necessary principles for maintaining rule for creating a prosperous nation.

Pakimnnaka Kaṇḍa (Miscellaneous Topics) concludes the book as it presents 30 verses (verses 138–167) about topics outside previous divisions. This section contains three main parts which discuss moral performance as well as practical intelligence and ethical aspects relevant to daily life.

In Myanmar's literary and ethical tradition Lokanīti stands out as one of the best-known wisdom texts. The structured teaching of morality together with its extensive coverage of human life has kept Lokanīti relevant throughout different generations. Students in monastic schools thoroughly studied Lokanīti through rote memorization thus they strengthened moral discipline alongside social values within Myanmar society.

Lokanīti presents a functional ethical guide by grouping moral instructions into seven clear categories that offer wise counsel. The extended influence of Lokanīti demonstrates its foundational role in ethical philosophy since it guides both personal character development and public cultural values in Myanmar and other regions.

### Translators of the Lokanīti

Translation of Lokanīti text has spread widely across various forms which extend from English versions to Myanmar Nissaya annotated translations and poetic versions. Multiple scholars in addition to translators have safeguarded the text so it remains accessible over time. Different editions of Pāli Lokanīti contain 166 verses yet their numbers

sometimes differ. Through history different translators adapted Lokanīti with three main versions including English translations and Myanmar nissaya (annotated translations) with poetic renditions during different times as follows:

In 1860 AD E. Fowle performed an early English translation of Nīti Kyan as presented in a Burmese version. The article appeared in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS) Volume 17 starting from page 252 through page 256. The translation primarily studied Pāli tradition ethical instruction.

Richard C. Temple carried out the translation of Lokanīti by following a Burmese interpretation which appeared in 1878 AD. The JASB published his work in Volume 47 starting from pages 239 through 252.

Dr. Berehert mentions in his introduction that Italian scholar Inīloteja completed a translation of 18 verses from Lokanīti in 1879 AD which marked early engagement between European scholars and the text.

Professor James Gray accomplished one of the most complete undertakings of Lokanīti translation and analysis in his work from 1886 AD. He released his research on four Nīti texts titled Ancient Proverbs and Maxims from Burmese Sources: The Nīti Literature of Burma (reprint, Rangoon) by publishing the translations of Lokanīti and Dhammanīti along with Rājanīti and Sudavaḍḍhananīti. His research on Lokanīti holds a prominent position as one of the most important English studies of this subject.

The translation of Lokanīti into English appeared in Mandalay in 1962 AD due to the work of Dr. Sein Tu who served as a professor at the University of Mandalay. Vineetius Sangermano (1787–1806 AD) selected Lokanīti verses for translation and placed them in his book A Description of the Burmese Empire before Rangoon issued its two reprints during 1924 and 1966. Shwe Yo published Myanmar Proverbs and Sayings (1963 AD) in The Burma: His Life and Notions which included numerous variants derived from Lokanīti in the New York edition.

Two Buddhist scholars shared the responsibility for explaining Lokanīti in separate publications – Aggamahāpāṇḍita Sankyaung Sayadaw Aggamahāpāṇḍita from Shwe Hinsatora Sirimahāmaṅgalā Monastery and Bhaddanta Jota who served as his disciple both contributed to the expositions which appeared in three versions from Hamsāvati Press in 1927 and 1957. Three published versions of these writings emerged from Hamsāvati printing press in 1927 and again in 1957.

U San Myat assembled Lokanīti together with Cāṇakyanīti under the book title The Two Famous Nītis during 1954. The author Sayagyi U Thaw Zin issued Complete Nīti in 1954 AD through his Myanmar prose work by joining Lokanīti with Mahārahananīti. The book appeared with Manunīti and Navarat Nīti in its publication. Ven. Sīlācāra created various versions of Lokanīti from Annotated Myanmar translation through English to Myanmar prose and verse as well as English vocabulary under his authorship. The author published his work after James Gray's translation as World Gold Pot (Nīdhigītikā).

U Sukha modernized Lokanīti by combining English translation from James Gray with the nissaya compiled by Sayadaw U Bodh. The author used traditional Buddhist philosophy to present modern-day explanations about the text and updated interpretations of its content. The author Chaung Oo Maung Candā produced Complete Nīti in 1984 AD by analyzing the difficult words found in Sayadaw U Bodh's translation to ease readers' understanding of the text. Ven. Kumuda of Jetavana Monastery assembled Singālovādā Admonitions and Lokanīti (1984 AD) by drawing from the translation of U Bodh.

U Shin Ga Lay produced Lokanīti Pyo which he created as a poetic version of the text. Other recognized publications exist alongside Lokanīti but numerous specific translations and interpretation versions of this work probably flourished previously and persist to the present day. The widespread adaptations and translations of Lokanīti highlight its enduring value in Burmese literature alongside global literary traditions. Academics from Myanmar and international scholars have acknowledged Lokanīti's ethical value and philosophical content thus preserving its study and application for modern times.

### 3. DISCUSSION

As an extensive ethical framework Lokanīti shows readers how they should fulfill their moral obligations and respects social duties while practicing fundamental ethical virtues for creating effective social systems. The comprehensive guide offers fundamental ethical instructions which serve people from multiple backgrounds consisting of ethnic diversity as well as cultural differences and religious differences and different age demographics. Its moral principles operate as an international framework which extends across societal and cultural limits thus remaining applicable for both past and present society.

Lokanīti presents its teachings through specific structures within each section which properly address multiple face of human existence. The text contains instructions about personal values along with guidance for relationships as well as governance rules and educational standards and commercial practices and social behavior guidelines thus creating a

comprehensive guidebook for ethical conduct. Lokanīti establishes its complete social outreach through its moral teachings designed for all societal classes including rulers and scholars and merchants and laypeople.

Myanmar's population widely recognizes Lokanīti as their most important wisdom text which formed key elements in developing their ethical and philosophical history. The manual derives its roots from Buddhist philosophy yet acquires its elements through Sanskrit literary sources which primarily originate from Brahmanic and Parohita traditions. Lokanīti contains both Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings to form an inclusive ethical framework that would benefit the community.

Lokanīti received substantial weight from the author so he had it translated into multiple languages including English and Myanmar to expand its readership. English translations of Lokanīti allow worldwide scholars to study its moral teachings while examining these teachings against other classical ethical compositions. Different translations of Lokanīti including nissaya (annotated translations) and prose and poetic versions have secured its position as an essential text in Myanmar educational and religious institutions.

Lokanīti demonstrates lasting value because it provides solutions to vital issues regarding human social activities and community cohesion. The text maintains its significance through enduring ethical guidelines which guide people who want to embody wisdom and integrity on their path to righteousness. Learning from Lokanīti continues to be important throughout Myanmar separate from holding vital importance in scholarly and philosophical ethical studies.

Among all literary and cultural works of Myanmar history Lokanīti holds the title of the most important ethical and philosophical text. Lokanīti created an organized system of moral guidance which has affected human conduct as well as social relations and administrative structures and intellectual practices throughout numerous centuries. The text emerged when Sanskrit Brahmanic literature united with Buddhist teachings to become an essential guide for behavioral ethics in all parts of society. Those didactic verses of Lokanīti present permanent knowledge that applies to both past and current times to bolster core values including diligence along with honesty and justice and wisdom.

The key value of Lokanīti lies in its educational function to train people in moral matters. Within Myanmar's monastic educational system the text holds an important place because students learned its verses both intellectually and morally during their education. Through its systematic teaching scheme the text made people learn ethical living principles thereby building societies which prioritized both ethical conduct and wisdom. Through its widespread influence Lokanīti modified the moral values of Myanmar society at both institutional and communal levels despite operating primarily within monastic settings. Lokanīti has evolved into an important system that shapes individual values and maintains social harmony because it teaches about both knowledge acquisition and righteousness along with personal discipline.

Lokanīti presents complete guidance about governance to rulers thus becoming essential material for administrators and leaders. The text gives direction to leadership quality while describing royal responsibilities and moral standards toward subjects. Righteous rule stands important in this text which specifies that wise and compassionate kingship demands fairness in governance. The Buddhist perspective of political philosophy supports ethical administration because this approach delivers social wellness for the community. Lokanīti shaped Myanmar's historical kingdoms' administrative and legal frameworks through its integration of justice principles and diplomatic practices and moral obligation which enabled the development of ethical governance systems.

Everyday life receives practical guidance from Lokanīti in addition to its governance and educational influences. The text discusses moral principles of human relations starting from friendships through family connections to business transactions and spiritual interactions. The text provides instructions about identifying trustworthy connections as well as keeping peaceful relationships and it explains how to maintain ethical conduct in all social and business situations. Through Lokanīti's principles people develop essential character traits including patience together with generosity and sincerity that create harmony in both society and personal achievements. Through its inclusive ethical framework Lokanīti remains relevant for different aspects of daily activities.

The knowledge of Lokanīti continues to persist because researchers and translators actively pursue its academic study and interpretation. Multiple scholars and translators throughout centuries have dedicated their efforts to protect this knowledge through its dissemination. English versions of Lokanīti enable global scholars to study its moral principles through comparison with other traditional ethical texts. Translators in Myanmar produced various versions of Lokanīti through nissaya versions and prose adaptations and poetic renderings which enabled readers from different generations to access the text. Lokanīti demonstrates worldwide acceptability through its extensive transmission process along with multicultural adaptability to provide ethical direction to diverse readers.

Thanks to its thematic section organization Lokanīti offers improved teaching benefits to its readers. Lokanīti arranges ethical teachings within separate domains which include wisdom guidance and friendship development and

governance principles and social ethical standards to offer students systematic moral education frameworks. The book divides its teachings into specific sections so readers can understand distinct human conduct aspects which enables practical application of its teachings. Through its organized structure Lokanīti serves as both a guide for moral ethics and a training resource for ethical philosophy study as well as social responsibility understanding.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Modern society can benefit from Lokanīti's teachings which stem from historical times. The core values of Lokanīti about ethical leadership alongside education importance and interpersonal value and moral integrity maintain their relevance through present times. These moral times necessitate Lokanīti which provides indispensable guidelines for facing intricate moral choices that society faces. Through its philosophy Lokanīti teaches members to maintain equilibrium in life through the development of wisdom and integrity together with professional compassion.

Further to its original time Lokanīti presents principles of moral conduct that contribute to modern ethical analysis of social obligations. The globalized world witnesses frequent encounters between cultural and ethical values so the Lokanīti teachings supply essential guidelines to basic moral standards which can be applied universally. Modern ethical leadership programs find harmony with Lokanīti views about justice and honesty together with their principles for respecting others. Through its connection between ancient wisdom and modern ethical discourse Lokanīti serves as a useful resource for academic researchers as well as educators and policymakers and all those who aim to develop moral clarity.

Lokanīti functions as a treasured element of Myanmar's intellectual and moral historical collection. The book functions as a vital moral source by bringing together Buddhist ethical principles with universal rules and it serves as an essential guide for personal and societal growth. The text displays transformative significance since it impacts education alongside governance functions as well as daily practices despite crossing historical and geographical barriers. The ongoing academic analysis and linguistic translation of Lokanīti enables future individuals to access its ethical wisdom which assures its timeless status as a guidance resource. When people use its teachings both from preservation efforts and applications they gain access to the deep ethical wisdom embedded inside this respected text.

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