

Pāli and Myanmar People

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As we know there are many different literatures and languages in the world. Most of the citizens or people of a country use their mother language in their daily life but they also use the foreign language for their social communication. For example, the people of Philippine use English as second language. Similarly we, people of Myanmar use English nowadays as school language. Here, I especially want to describe that Myanmar people have been using Pāli for many years since 11 century A.D.

According to the historical records and research papers, Myanmar people had used their mother language for many years but their language could not be confirmed as a believable guaranteed language. Meanwhile, the Theravada Buddhism was delivered in Myanmar in 11 century A.D. It was in Pagan dynasty. Shin Arahā, the noble missionary monk carried the Buddhism to Myanmar. King Anawrathā, one of the kings of Pagan dynasty could sponsor and manage to settle the Buddhism in Myanmar. King Anawrathā (A.D. 1144-1077) propagated and promoted the Buddhism as much as he could.

On account of his gratitude and volition, Myanmar people could taste the Pāli language through the religious doctrines and the teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, they were familiar with Pāli language and they had idea to use Pāli language with their mother language in their daily life. By this way, Myanmar people used the Pāli words very broadly.

According to the research papers and historical records, we can see the ancient Myanmar people used Pāli words to record their merits. The inscribed marble slates, palm leaves, etc. showed that the ancient Myanmar had used the bilingual: Myanmar and Pāli. Gradually, the use of Pāli had become broader and broader and it was regarded as an essential language for Myanmar people. Moreover, the Myanmar language had been nearly overwhelmed by Pāli. Therefore, we can see the Pāli usages in Myanmar language till nowadays.

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We see that Myanmar people adopted the words from other languages such as Chinese, India, English, etc. However, they adopted Pāli more than these because the Buddhism was spread out among Myanmar ancient people and they were fond of using the Pāli words in their daily life. Therefore, from the previous days to the present days, Myanmar people carry on using the Pāli words devotedly.

The Myanmar people use Pāli words in the following ways.

1. Using the Pāli words directly
2. Using the Pāli words associating with Myanmar meaning words
3. Using the Pāli words as their mother language adopting them by changing into Myanmar style

(1) Using the Pāli words directly

As being mentioned above, the ancient Myanmar people were familiar with Pāli words through the doctrines and Buddha's teachings. Thus, they picked out some common Pāli words to use for their daily speech. By using these words again and again, they became familiar with these Pāli words and their meanings in Myanmar. And so they used the common Pāli words directly in writing and speaking.

For example:- Dukkha (suffering), Sukha (happiness), Mettā (loving-kindness), Dāna (charity), Dhamma (Truth), Bala(strength), Gita(song), Pārami (perfection), etc.

(2) Using the Pāli words associating with Myanmar meanings

The Myanmar people used the Pāli words in their daily life broadly but sometimes they doubt whether the listeners understood these words or not. And so, they had an idea to use the Pāli words with the same meanings of Myanmar. On account of their gratitude, we can easily understand the Myanmar meanings of Pāli words till nowadays.

For example:-

	Pāli Term + Myanmar meaning	English meaning
(1)	Dukkha Sinyae	Suffering
(2)	Sukha Chanthar	happiness
(3)	Sanda Lamin	moom
(4)	Spriya Naymin	sun
(5)	Ācariya sayæ	teacher
(6)	Mælæ Pan	flower
(7)	Søla akyint	conduct
(8)	Bala Kunaa	strength

(9) Ñāti	Swemyo	relatives
(10) Mætæ	mikhin	mother

(3) Using the Pāli words as their mother language adopting them by changing into Myanmar style

As we know some people from other countries adopted the other languages to enrich their vocabularies. Similarly, the people of Myanmar adopted other languages to enrich their vocabularies. Some might be from Tibet, Chinese, English, Pāli, etc. They adopted Pāli words in their mother language by altering the origin words in Myanmar spelling rules. Because of this case, most of the Myanmar people regarded these altered words as real Myanmar words and these words have been used broadly till now.

For example:-

Pāli word	Altered Myanmar Word	English Meaning
Samsāra (oḥm&)	samsaræ (oḥm&)	Circling world
Kusala (ubv)	Kusol (ublv)	Merit, good action
Magga (r*ḡ)	Mag (r*ḡ)	path, road, way
Parikkhāra (y&ḡm&)	parikkharæ (y&ḡm&)	supporting things
Sara (p&)	saraik (p&ḡ)	conduct, behaviour
Cetiya (apwḡ)	cetḡ (apwḡ)	pagoda
citta (pḡvḡ)	cit (pḡvḡ)	mind
gana (*P)	gang (*Pḡ)	gang, crowd
Māna (rme)	Man (rme)	pride, conceit
Kāya (um,)	Ko (uḡ)	body
Ratha (&x)	Rathar (&xm;)	chariot
Sirā (oḡḡ)	Sḡri (oḡḡ)	grace

According to the second fact Myanmar people use the Pāli word and Myanmar meaning vice versa. Sometimes Myanmar meaning comes first and Pāli word comes last. So also, sometimes Pāli word comes first and Myanmar meaning comes last.

For example:-
 Sila Akyint (conduct) = Akyint Sila (conduct)
 Bayæ Bay (danger) = Bay Bayæ (danger)
 Ñāti Swemyo (relatives) = Swemyo Ñāti (relatives)

As I described the facts, Myanmar people devotedly use the Pāli words broadly though they cannot speak in Pāli fluently. It shows that Myanmar people and Pāli are in a cluster and they cannot be divided. Nowadays, they carry on using the Pāli words and keeping them not to disappear.

Forefathers kept the Pāli words as inscriptions on marble slades. And then, they recorded the Pāli words on palm leaves, copper plates, etc. Nowadays, Myanmar people keep them on paper and in discs. Anyway, anyhow, it is very clear that the Myanmar people with serious faith in Buddhism will carry on using Pāli terms in their language as much as they can. It is because of their patriotic and religious spirits. Therefore, according to this paper we should have an idea to keep our races, languages and literature not to disappear by the direct ways or indirect ways.

May the Buddhism of the Buddha last forever and ever!

Buddha sāsanaṃ ciraṃ tiṅghatu!
Buddha sāsanaṃ ciraṃ tiṅghatu!
Buddha sāsanaṃ ciraṃ tiṅghatu!