

Social and Moral Guidance of Balinese Life in Kakawin Niti Sastra

Ida Bagus Putra Setiawan

ABSTRACT

Estimated to be written in 350 B.C. In the Magada Kingdom of India, Niti Sastra is one of the knowledge references that gives readers an overview of leadership and management. In Bali, the script is better known as Kakawin Niti Sastra. Kakawin is poetry written in the Kawi language, an extinct old Javanese language. Niti Sastra is the Sanskrit term for "science of morality," and it refers to the study of how to uphold Dharma or morality in one's conduct and in all of life. Politics and leadership are generally discussed in academia, as per Niti Sastra. After that, it gives a general summary of how the teachings of the Niti Sastra relate to those of other Hindu texts and goes on to describe the Ramayana and Mahabharata Epics in more detail. However, a closer look reveals that Niti Sastra also further documents and outlines social communication processes. Ideas given in the Kakawin Niti Sastra, particularly those pertaining to the arena of social life, have universal values, as evidenced by the presentation of several examples, even in a nation that no longer has a feudal administration system and its socioeconomic conditions. These principles, which are founded on Hinduism, still hold true. Thus, the Niti Sastra Book might be a good resource for academics looking to gain a deeper understanding, particularly about the application of moral principles to daily life.

Keywords: Niti Sastra, Social, Moral.

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*Sanur Village Community;
ibsetiawan@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Estimated to be written in 350 B.C. In the Magada Kingdom of India, Niti Sastra is one of the knowledge references that gives readers an overview of leadership and management. In Bali, the script is better known as *Kakawin Niti Sastra*. Kakawin is poetry written in the Kawi language, an extinct old Javanese language.¹ According to Surada (2012:127), Kakawin Niti Sastra was composed at the end of the Majapahit era; this literary work was a collection of didactic verses and was not narrative in nature.² The ideas and suggestions written in Niti Sastra are arranged in simple sentences but have a profound interpretation when discussed further. Several elements in this literary book provide suggestions on how one should behave, lead and manage groups. The work was strongly influenced by Hinduism, especially in the feudalism era. Several things are discussed in this script, such as social taboos and how to speak on one occasion. The existence of this ancient literary work in the present further confirms that its content is relevant to the

life of Balinese society nowadays.

Out of many views regarding Niti Sastra, it can be concluded that Niti Sastra means the science of morality, which teaches how to educate, guide, lead, behave and live a life based on *Dharma* or truth.³ In general, academics discuss politics and leadership, as stated in Niti Sastra. Then, it provides an overview of the interrelationships of the Niti Sastra teachings with other Hindu books and further explains the stories in the Ramayana and Mahabharata Epics. However, when examined closely, Niti Sastra also further records and describes communication phenomena that occur in society. Especially when viewed from the time the book was written, until now, the understanding and strategy of communication contained in Niti Sastra show that even though times and times have changed, fundamentally, the art of speech has not drastically changed.

Community's Code of Ethics in Niti Sastra

Kekawin Niti Sastra, which was composed based on the contents of the Niti Sastra Book during the development of Hinduism



Figure 1.⁴ Kakawin Niti Sastra shows the nature of how a human being must act in his social life.

in Indonesia, was written from the first-person perspective. The content of this kakawin is like a speech or advice from an advisor to its readers. The kakawin is divided into fifteen *sargahs*, with varying numbers of verses in them. In the first to fourth *sargah*, Kakawin Niti Sastra shows the nature of how a human being must act in his social life. In the philosophical literature, the verse emphasizes how one

should think and what to think about. Because thoughts can affect what one might do. Many people say that positive thinking will result positively, yet not many people can stay to think about positive thoughts. There is even a difference between his thoughts and actions.⁵

In Sargah V, verse 2 in Kekawin Niti Sastra, the phenomenon of communication is written as follows:

"Dhana phalaning mona tan angucap wwang. Ikang agalak ring waca nêmu duhka.

Ikang umênêng lyab dhana ya matumpuk. Damar uga himpêrnîkang açabda."

Translation:

Wealth is the fruit of silence, not talking. Whoever is too great in speech will be grieved. A quiet nature will get treasures piled up. He who does not like to talk is a lamp.

Then in paragraph 3, it is written as follows:

"Waşita nimittanta manêmu laksmi. Waşita nimittanta pati kapangguh.

Waşita nimittanta manêmu duhka. Waşita nimittanta manêmu mitra."

Translation:

By words, you will find happiness. By words, you will be in trouble. By words, you will be in trouble. By words, you will find friends.

Maintaining integrity, choosing the right female figure, as well as the code of ethics in society were the main topics in the initial sargah. Then, entering sargah five to fifteen, the phenomenon of communication, especially how the application of communication strategies to get personal benefits, becomes commonplace.

Moral of The Speech

In the two verses at the initial of Sargah V, it is suggested that the reader understand that a communication process involving speaking in it should be done mindfully.⁶ This argument stems from the idea that a message conveyed by a communicator to his audience can result in advantages and disadvantages for the communicator. In addition, no answer can also be interpreted as a form of symbolic communication. Silence can give the communicant an ambiguous understanding of the thoughts

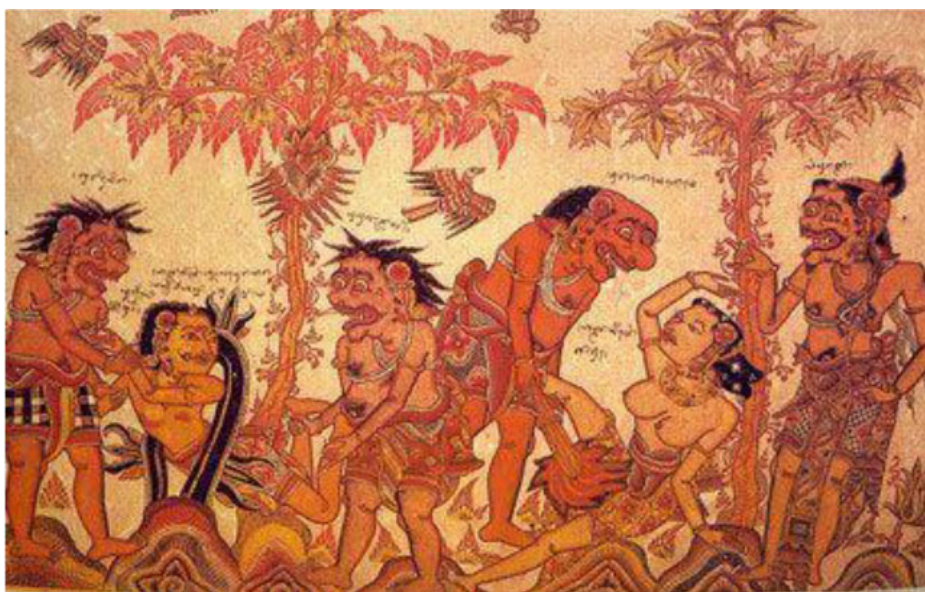


Figure 2.⁹ Illustration of Hell's torture as depicted on Kamasan style painting on the ceiling of Kertagosa, Klungkung.

of the communicator symbol.⁷ In political communication, this attitude can be a form of response in which a strategy is hidden to get what you want.

Apart from that, flattery and respectful treatment of someone is also mandatory to maintain a warm climate of communication, as described in the following article IX:

"Kretu panca yajna gawayenta panahura hutangta ring widhi. Sahuren n upadhyaya samasta hutang ira ri sang rescicwara.

Wara gorawe sira sang abhyagata taman ayogya sambhraman. Iti casaneng dumadi tan pale-paleha ri dharma sang wiku." (Niti Sastra, IX : 3)

Translation :

Five kinds of sacrifices had to be made to atone for sins against the Almighty. Sins against saints have to atone for by "Upadhyaya" *). Respectful words should be used for guests who don't have to be entertained.

Messages in communication are important things that must be considered by a communicator. In the SOR communication model, a message is a stimulus that will be responded to by the organism.⁸ If the contents of the message are misleading and detrimental to the point where it gives the communicant a difficult situation, a resistance response can arise, which can then harm the communicator. However, there are also several social

agreements, which in the end, provide an excuse if the misleading message is conveyed and even become something that is seen as entertaining. This phenomenon is written in the following verses:

"Mrêsa kita ring triyak daçani warşa pāpa linakonta kâjaring aji. Sama-sama mânuşeka çata warsa durgati bhinukti yan mrêsa kita.

Yadi kita mithya ring widhi sahasra warşa lawasing kapātaka kita. Guru lininok-linok tan ana hinangning tahun ananta-pāpa katêmu." (Niti Sastra, VI : 3)

Translation:

If you lie to animals, you will be punished for ten years; that's what the textbook says. If you lie to fellow human beings, you will be tortured for a hundred years in hell. If you lie to the Almighty, you will be punished with a thousand years. If you lie to the teacher, the torment for you will be endless.

"Lima wilanging mreseka gawayen taman pamuhareka papa wangunen. Ri sedeng angutasawathawa wiwaha-kala ri karaksaning wijuga.

Athawa muwah karaksani hurip nanarma masiwo-siwo mrese kita. Lyana saka ring limeka kawaweng kawah kita tekapning acwalalita." (Niti Sastra, VI : 4)

Translation:

Five kinds of lies can be perpetrated with no penalty; at parties, at bridal

meetings (when the bride and groom meet for the first time), to guard property, to protect lives and when joking. You will be taken to the crater (hell) outside of these five types.

Communication as an individual's way of conveying his wishes, both the content of the message and the method of delivery, in Niti Sastra, is said to be used to measure the quality of the individual.¹⁰ In this case, the reader is given instructions on how to behave when dealing with the communicator:

"Nang wadwa tan kaparêking nagarâryakênta. Wwang bwat maçabda lêmêhan mapi-tuwi langguk.

Nityeki yan pamêng-amêng manutindriyanya. Buddhinya ñurjana katungka papâ nicâra." (Niti Sastra, XV : 4)

Translation:

King's servant who does not love his country must be removed. Likewise, those who talk a lot are disobedient or arrogant who are always having fun and doing their own thing. Likewise, those whose temperament is evil, presumptuous, humble and uncivilized. *"Krureka tan hana kasomyanika wuwusnya. Tan hantuşa ng kêdi-kêdik ya 'ti-moha garwa*

Tan bhakti matwang i tuhan titir sampe sênghit. Yeku ng balâcêmer ulahnya ya dohakênta." (Niti Sastra, XV:5)

Translation :

Likewise, those who are savage, and who are not subtle in their words, who are not compassionate, who are arrogant and who are rude. Who is disrespectful and loves his master, who likes to insult and hurt others. They are servants whose behavior is very bad; they must be removed.

"Lawan malih wwang angupêt ri tuhanya nitya. Dudwâti-mûrka kuhakânika göng sadarpa.

Çabdanya tan rahayu nityaca wâkparusnya. Tan yukti karyanêniradhipati ng swa-sena." (Niti Sastra, XV:7)

Translation:

Furthermore, those who always curse their master, who are greedy, stupid, cunning and showy, whose words are unkind and heart-piercing. Such a servant does not deserve to be appointed as a military leader.

From the presentation of several examples of ideas offered in Kekawin Niti Sastra, especially those related to the realm of social life, have universal values.¹¹ Even in the social conditions of a society that is no longer in a feudal system of government based on Hinduism, these values can still be applied. Thus, a conclusion can be drawn that Niti Sastra Book can be a quality reference for an academic if they want to add deeper insights, especially those related to the application of moral values in everyday life.

CONCLUSION

Niti Sastra is the Sanskrit term for "science of morality," and it refers to the study of how to uphold Dharma or morality in one's conduct and in all of life.³ Politics and leadership are generally discussed in academia, as per Niti Sastra. After that, it gives a general summary of how the teachings of the Niti Sastra relate to those of other Hindu texts and goes on to describe the Ramayana and Mahabharata Epics in more detail. However, a closer look reveals that Niti Sastra also further documents and outlines social communication processes. Ideas given in the Kekawin Niti Sastra, particularly those pertaining to the arena of social life, have universal values, as evidenced by the presentation of several examples, even in a nation that no longer has a feudal administration

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