

The Role of Mutual Understanding in Myanmar Educational Society

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Abstract

Society from all over the world is a particular community or group of people who share the same customs, law, rules, duties, responsibilities etc. Different societies have different customs, law, etc because their cultural and religious backgrounds are not the same. Myanmar society has also to share its customs, law, rules, duties and responsibilities in its major concerns. This research presents the role of duties and responsibilities based on mutual understanding in an educational society of Myanmar. The problem in this research is why mutual understanding between teacher and their students is necessary. In this paper, descriptive method and evaluative method are used. It is challenged that there is less mutual understanding between teacher and their students in Myanmar educational society nowadays. This research can contribute to people to be aware of the primacy of mutual understanding in educational society.

Key words: Mutual understanding, Educational society, Responsibilities

Introduction

Society in the world is a group of people in a country who join together for a particular purpose. Every society has its respective laws, conventional laws, customary laws, traditional admonitions and social principles which are concerned with the doctrines from their religion, their traditional belief and their morality. It is to develop man's ability to gain a synoptic view of himself and his activity in his society by using the method of analysis. All kinds of synoptic views and activities are based on their own knowledge of mutual understanding or mutual respect. Myanmar society has also its respective laws, conventional laws, customary laws, traditional admonition and social principles based on duties and responsibilities. In this research paper, the Buddhist Text *Singalovada Sutta* will be referred to as a special reference, because it can be found out that duties and responsibilities which have been based on mutualism, are initiative in this *Sutta*. The problem in this research is why mutual understanding becomes necessary between teacher and their students or teaching and learning. Mutual understanding of their interaction is one of the most important things that leads to the improvement of teaching learning process.

In order to gain satisfactory answer about the mutual understanding of the teacher and their students, this paper makes an attempt to discuss sociological ethics in philosophy. If an individual is able to put (mutual understanding) into concurrence or into harmonious position, there is the possibility of apprehending mutualism. Only when this challenge is solved, will there also be a developed society in the world.

In the field of educational sociology, it is found that the nature of educational sociology, the difference between educational sociology and sociology of education, the importance of educational sociology, the scope of educational sociology and the specific aims of educational sociology have been based on the concept of socio-ethics. In this research, socio-ethics concerned with Myanmar traditional admonitions have been presented, especially in the responsibilities of teacher and their students with special reference to *Singalovada Sutta*. It may be said that the interaction or interrelation between teacher and their students is clearly connected with the mutual understanding. In Myanmar culture and Myanmar way of thinking

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they are interrelated to or concerned with one another. In fact, if one does not understand the concept of mutual understanding about responsibility in socio-ethics, one will not achieve what he or she wants in their society.

In the field of Myanmar educational society, socio-ethics is very important because it is based on social responsibilities. An educational society is a group or institution where people of different ages gain an education, including preschools, childcare, primary-elementary school, secondary-high schools, and universities. Members of Myanmar educational society are parents, teachers, students, policy makers and other stakeholders. Among them, responsibilities of teachers and of their students in this research have been discussed in detail. In the educational society of Myanmar, the role of mutual understanding is very important because it is necessary condition in this time. The problem in this paper is why mutual understanding becomes necessary condition between teacher and their students. This research paper does not focus on other responsibilities except the responsibilities of teacher and their students in Myanmar Society.

Mutualism

Mutualism is defined as interactions between organisms of two different species, in which each organism benefits from the interaction in some way. These types of interaction are common and ubiquitous throughout all ecosystems, and scientists are increasingly recognizing the important role that they play in ecology. Mutualism therefore is a common type of ecological interaction and it is a less artificially contrived word because it is a relationship between two species of organism in which both benefit from the association. The term mutualism in this paper has been used as an approach focusing on the study of mutualistic forms of cooperation and relevance to fairness-based morality. In order to understand the basic concept of mutualism, it is presented about egoism and altruism based on the possible motives of human conduct.

“The terms egoistic and altruistic, though they are used loosely in common conversation, and are difficult if not impossible to define with precision, are still useful and even indispensable in describing the dominate attitude that guides a man or one of his actions”¹.

In moral philosophy and socio-ethics, the term egoism has been defined as the doctrine that one seek only his enlightened self-interest and that all one’s desires are self-referential. Ethical theorists compare the word egoism with the word altruism that is briefly defined as living for others. Altruism is a social instinct or impulse, and it is evidenced in kindness, veneration, and affection. Altruism is not the exclusive possession of humanity, but is seen among some other animals.

Indeed, egoism and altruism are neither mutually exclusive nor do they exhaust the possible motives of human conduct. There is a twilight zone between them. It can be adjusted by mutualism.

Mutualism in the Foundations of Morality

Neither a society in which everybody acted on purely egoistic motives, nor one in which everybody acted on purely altruistic motives would be workable because society is a group of people in a country who joy together. A society in which each worked exclusively for his own interest would be a society of constant collisions and conflicts. A society in which

¹ Henry Hazlitt (1964). "The foundations of morality". Albama: P.102.

each worked exclusively for the good of others would be an absurdity. The developed society and the most successful society is one in which each worked primarily for his own good while always considering the good of others whenever he suspected any incompatibility between the two.

Considering both of self and others in any action or rule of action is mutualism. It has the advantage of already existing, though as a technical word in biology, meaning a condition of symbiosis in which two associated organisms contribute mutually to the well being of each other. The word can with great advantage be taken over by moral philosophy. If two people act on the principle of mutualism, and each considers the interests of both, they will necessarily act in harmony. In fact, this is the attitude of harmonious societies or families in which husband and wife, parents and son, teachers and their students etc. And mutualism becomes the sentiment or principle of justice.

Mutual Understanding in Moral Rule of Responsibility

In Myanmar educational society, the role of responsibilities is very important because it is an essential team of human conducts. In this case, the primary of teacher's and their student's mutual responsibilities have been presented. Teacher's responsibilities are: a teacher must teach his pupils properly, must advise them on all matter, must live nothing untaught to pupils, must protect them from every possible danger and must refer them to suitable person for further study. So, in order to teach properly, the students must be always alert and live in harmony with one another. In order to advise on all matter, the student must obey the teacher's words of advice. In order to live or teach nothing untaught, students must pay respect to and welcome their teachers. In order to protect from every possible danger, the student must be of service to the teacher. And in order to refer to suitable person for further study, the student must learn, must think, must recite and must read what the teacher has taught. It is the responsibilities of the student.

According to mutualism, the student who is always on the alert and lives in harmony with each other has been taught properly by the teacher. The student who obeys the teacher's words of advice has been taught or given any advice on all matter by the teacher. The student, who pays respect to and welcomes the teacher, has been taught. The student who is of service to the teacher has been protected from every possible danger by the teacher. And the student who is learning, thinking, reciting and reading what the teacher has taught has been referred to suitable person for further study by the teacher. In this way, mutual understanding of the responsibilities of teachers and their students in Myanmar society lead to develop society in life.

Responsibility in Myanmar Educational Society

The concept of responsibility is the basic concept in ethical theories. In Myanmar society, responsibilities are expounded as moral imperative in *Mangala Sutta*, *Singalovada Sutta* and *Dhammapada* found in Buddhist literature. There are many responsibilities which human beings should perform according to the advice given by the Buddha in the *Singalovada Sutta* (discourse). In this *Sutta*, the Buddha gave socio-ethical guide for mankind. The Buddha lays down guidelines for each and every person in the form of personal and social responsibilities. Everybody should possess perfect responsibilities and moral responsibilities by observing the noblest responsibilities of human being. In order to be a good person, one must observe responsibilities of human beings. A good person has a good character because he

can control his bodily, verbal and mental actions from committing bad deeds. Therefore responsibilities necessitate living a morally good life and are guidelines to moral conduct.

In this case, the fundamental responsibilities of teacher and their students have been presented in Myanmar educational society. Socio-ethics have to guide good living for all people and responsibilities show the moral and social sense. And they are the great value of importance to the majority of mankind. According to Thingaza Sayadaw, there are five responsibilities to be mutual understanding by teacher in relation to their students.

Teacher's Responsibility

A teacher is a person whose job is teaching, especially in a school or a university. A teacher in Myanmar cultural society has responsibilities towards his students. Human life in fact requires guide-lines of teachers in various fields. The basic responsibility of a teacher is to develop his students into morally good persons with good characters. Teacher treats as the parents in school. Therefore a noble teacher is one of the five greatest persons in Myanmar society because there are five kinds of duty or responsibility which teachers have to follow in relation to their students. It has been presented in *Singalovada Sutta* as follow.

1. To teach the pupils properly.
2. To advise the pupils on all matters.
3. To teach them everything he knows
4. To protect the pupils from every possible danger.
5. To refer the pupils to suitable person for further study.

According to *Diga-Nikaya*, No.31 cited by Walpola Rahula (1959), the responsibilities of teacher in *Sigalovada Sutta* have been expressed as follows:

"Teachers, thus ministered to as the southern quarter by their pupil, show their love for their pupil in five ways: they train him well; they make him grasp what he has learnt; they instruct him thoroughly in the lore of every art; they introduce him to their friends and companions; they provide for his security everywhere."²

It means that a teacher must teach his students especially in order to understand arts and science, and he must advise his students on all matters, in order to live nothing untaught to students from (the teacher's or) his store of knowledge, in order to protect the student from every possible danger, and in order to refer the students to suitable person for further study.

The students who have been taught by the teacher will be complete with knowledge. As the main responsibility or duty of the teacher is to share his knowledge and experience to his students, the teacher must be respected by the students. The development and survival of the students depend on the teacher because he is the cultivator of the moral character of the students. Therefore the teacher is worthy of honors by all students. The duties or responsibilities of the teachers are to teach students how to behave, how to speak politely and how to live in their life. And the teacher ought to teach his students to be able to distinguish the right from the wrong, the good from the bad, the just from the unjust of an action. The teacher ought to protect his students' unethical behaviors. Apart from importing knowledge, the teacher is also expected to guide the student in his behavior morally and ethically. The teacher's duties or responsibilities are based on the concept of loving kindness and compassion.

² Walpola Rahula (1959). What the Buddha Taught, Bedford: The Gordon Fraser Gallery Limited. P. 123

Students' Responsibility

In Myanmar educational sociology and educational society, the fundamental responsibilities are derived from the teachings of Buddha especially found in *Singalovada Sutta* by Thingaza Sayadaw. According to Sayadaw, there are five responsibilities to be followed by students or pupils in relation to their teacher. They are as follow:

1. To be always on the alert and to live in harmony with each other.
2. To obey the teacher's words of advice.
3. To pay respect to and welcome the teacher at anytime and anywhere.
4. To be of service to the teachers.
5. To learn, to think, to recite and to read what the teacher has taught.

According to *Diga-Nikaya*, No.31 cited by Walpola Rahula (1959), the responsibilities of students or pupils in *Sigalovada Sutta* have been expressed as follows:

"A pupil should minister to his teachers as the southern quarter in five ways: by rising (from his seat, to salute them); by waiting upon them; by his eagerness to learn; by personal service; and by respectfully accepting their teaching."³

It means that only if a student follows these five responsibilities he will be able to achieve any general knowledge from the teacher. A teacher cannot teach a student properly if the latter does not pay respect and attention to the former. Therefore paying respect to the teacher is the primacy of students' responsibilities in Myanmar educational sociology based on socio-ethics.

Conclusion

In this research, society from all over the world has its respective laws, conventional laws, customary laws, traditional admonitions and social principles which are concerned with the doctrines from their religion, their traditional belief and their moral philosophy. In order to pay respect to these laws and admonitions, it is necessary to know mutual understanding about their responsibilities. It is concerned with the aim of being able to apprehend the concept of mutualism in Myanmar educational sociology or educational society which has been especially concerned with mutual understanding of teacher and their students. So mutual understanding is very necessary for the development of the present as well as future life.

In Myanmar educational society, teachers and their students have their own responsibilities which have been based on socio-ethics. In *Singalovada Sutta* written by Thingazar Sayadaw, there are five kinds of responsibility to be mutually followed by teacher and students in Myanmar educational society. By observing mutual respect to each other (teacher and student), society will be in progress in the world.

Therefore the more one obeys the concept of mutual understanding; the more one sees how careful one should be of the acts, words and thoughts. If one works with the guidance of mutual understanding, no harm can come to him or her. It is the protector for him anywhere at any time. And mutual understanding guides one with such great self-reliance that one can be fully confident in his life. It will restrain one from wrong doing for the sake of others as well as his or her. Therefore the more one observes mutual understanding; the more one sees how careful one must be of one's actions. This action is a good action that can lead a student to the development of society in Myanmar.

³ Walpola Rahula (1959). What the Buddha Taught, Bedford: The Gordon Fraser Gallery Limited. P. 123.

Different domains should be examined for further researches on mutual understanding. It may be interesting to find out the concept of mutualism in other society or educational sociology. Mutual understanding can be gained through a twilight zone between egoism and altruism in the foundation of morality. Hopefully, some people who take interest in search for mutual understanding of the responsibilities of teachers and of their students in Myanmar society may benefit from this research. They can solve the challenge of teachers and their students in Myanmar educational Society.

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