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Abstract	The aim of this paper is to express the Myanmar's ethical concepts dealing with business activities. In Myanmar, business activities are based on the ethical concepts such as honesty, diligence and knowledge. In order to form the business ethical principle based on these three factors, it can be found that the most suitable principle is the principle of social responsibility for successful business. This paper intent to show that Myanmar business ethics is based on <i>Theravada Buddhism</i> and its principle is the principle of social responsibility. It should be followed by Myanmar businessman and every business person.
Keywords	Business, Business Ethics, Diligence, Wisdom.
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Ethics in Myanmar Business

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss the Myanmar ethical thoughts dealing with business activities. In Myanmar, business activities are based on the ethical concepts such as honesty, diligence and knowledge. In order to form the business ethical principle based on these three factors, it can be found that the most suitable principle is the principle of social responsibility. This paper intent to show that Myanmar business ethics is based on the socio-economic teachings of Buddha and its principle is the principle of social responsibility. It should be followed by Myanmar businessman as well as every business person.

Key words – Business, Honesty, Diligence and Wisdom

Introduction

The ethical norms and values that guide Myanmar business circles are related social welfare and that social welfare in turn promotes successful business. In Myanmar, business ethics is based on the moral concepts such as the concept of Justice, good will, obligation, trust, honesty, diligence and wisdom. These moral concepts are concerned with right speech, right conduct and right livelihood. They are foundations of moral value in Myanmar culture and are therefore also guides to morality in trade and business. All these moral concepts are have been largely assimilated from Buddhist ethics, since the majority of Myanmar are Buddhists and Myanmar culture itself is based on Theravada Buddhist Teachings.

Morality (*Sila*) is the vital for and the Buddha in his first sermon taught that one must earn a right livelihood, that is one which does not harm others. And this is the ethical foundation of business and commerce in Myanmar. According to Buddha, one should follow the Eight Fold Noble Part to Nibbana or Liberation from suffering. Of these eight factors of the Noble Eight fold Path, Right speech, Right action and right livelihood are concerned with “*AJivatthamaka Sila* ”. *Sila* here means morality and that to be a moral person and lead a good life a person must lives by doing good deeds. This means that one should also earn a livelihood that is good that is a right livelihood.

Buddha taught the Four Endowments (*Sampadā*), with the intention of benefitting and endowing the whole mankind with the much longed for material wealth and temporal welfare. These four endowments can be called Myanmar *Tharavāda* Buddhist ethical rules in business. The four endowments (*Sampadā*) are referring to the moral rules or moral concepts such as honesty, good will, Justice, diligence and wisdom for success in Business.

The moral principles that guide Myanmar Business are the principles of Buddhist Culture and it is believed that to be successful in business in any place in any time one must adhere to these moral principles. This paper tries to point out the ethical concepts of Myanmar Business ethics.

The Concept of Honesty in Business

Honesty means truthful or able to be trusted by customers and other traders. This means abstaining from stealing, cheating or lying. Honesty in business means right action. As a business person, telling the truth in agreeing to render and pay for services and products; not lying in employer-employee relations. In other words to keep one word, that is telling the truth in business is important. That means right speech that leads to right action; and, conversely basically, this means that one must be of good moral character and avoid doing wrong. This way he will be trusted by the people he has to deal with and his business will be successful.

Myanmar people believe that honesty means abstaining from taking what is not given by the owner, not lying to other people, right speech, right conduct, being justice and having good will.

Well-known and successful business person carry out their business based on honesty. If they are not honest in their business, their business will not develop and success in the long run. For business to prosper, business people must accept and follow the moral concept of honesty. Some business people who wish to make a quick and large profit may think that honesty is an obstruction to be successful in their business. But in actual fact, only honest businessmen who are honest and loyal are more successful. Therefore, for a businessman, honesty is compulsory in providing services or goods.

Most of Myanmar business people whether small shopkeepers, merchants or traders understand honesty is a moral rule to be followed in doing business and in daily life. For the majority of Myanmar people who are Buddhist it is one of the Five Precepts. If they are not honest, not only will their business will decline but they will also be breaking the moral code. The concept of honesty is a moral value for personal as well as business conduct. But it is necessary together with wisdom and diligence in doing business. An business person will be protected from swindlers and because of good business practices will win in competition with others. If there is honesty together with wisdom, then it can be successful in business. Kaung Thant, Myanmar writer, says that

"I think that honesty is not doing the things like cheating others or telling falsehood just for one's own benefit and which causes harm to others."

As they say "honesty is the best policy". So, honesty is extremely important in any moral relationship between two or more human beings in Business activities.

U Kyaw Kyaw Hlaing (Chairman, Smart Group of Companies) said that

"Honesty is said to be the mark of a good moral person, but in my opinion, for this to be meaningful, one must also be a person of righteousness. If a man is honest (1) he loves truth, tells the truth (2) keeps promises and leads a blameless by (3) avoiding evil deed in any situation".

Honesty means fairness or rightness in the treatment of other people. Business person should treat other human beings fairly and justify in distributing good services for payment. He must give what is due.

The concept of justice and the concept of good is imply in the concept of honesty. Myanmar people accept the concept of justice and the concept of good will as moral principles. They disapprove of people who are unfair and injustice in relation with others. So, if a person who is in commerce and trade sells commodities at a fair and just in his dealings with others and will have a good reputation in business circles. More over he must take into consideration his employee's dignity and see that they

are paid fairly for their work. A good business person must therefore be honest in his relations with his customers as well as his employees.

In addition as stated above a good moral business person must understand the following rules of conduct:-

- (1) Having good will is the first requirement
- (2) For only with good will there will follow good consequences
- (3) Personal benefit can be obtained only by serving others
- (4) Lack of moral means loss of wealth
- (5) There must be a fair balance between benefit for self and benefit for others. Do not give in to extreme greed.

These above sayings highlight the fact that obligation, honesty, righteousness and good will are the important factor in business activities. The above sayings are moral guidelines for good business activities. Unfair business enterprise is small, medium or large.

Most of Myanmar are of the view that business or economics is part of the social order and that for society to thrive business persons must not look upon others as victims to be exploited but to whom respect is due; they are the source of income. In business activities, there must be profit and personal benefit but one must do business with probity. Therefore, honesty is an important principle in Myanmar society and the concepts of fairness, goodwill, trust and obligation are implied in the concept of honesty.

The Concepts of Wisdom and Diligence in Business

Having Wisdom and diligence are also necessary in business and economic activities. Honesty as shown above is an important moral concepts but unless Wisdom and diligence, there can be no success in business. As a trader or merchant, needs to study and evaluate conditions of place, situation, environment needs of the region and the likes dislikes of the people and so on. He must have knowledge of the region or location chosen for his trade and must have business acumen. Must also have the following skills-

- (1) Skilled in good social relation
- (2) Skilled in commerce and trade
- (3) Interpersonal skills to please customers

(4) Knowledge the economic market conditions

Such person will be successful in his business. Therefore, to be able to observe carefully and make critical evaluation are also important factors. But as stated above, if a business person has all these capabilities but is not diligent and hard-working will not succeed.

Verse No.(3) of the *Lokaniti* says,

“How can there be proficiency for one who is indolent, wealth for one without proficiency, friendship for one without wealth, happiness for the friendless, merit for the unhappy, and Nibban for the unmeritorious person?”

Verse No.(4),

Wealth is not equal in value to learning. Thieves do not take away learning: it is friendship in this world, and the bearer of happiness in the next.

Verse No,(6)

One should despise neither science nor art, saying to himself _
“It is of little consequence:” even one learnt to perfection is a suitable means of livelihood.

These verses refer to the wisdom and diligence as the necessary factor for success in one's profession and in life.

There are other Myanmar sayings to show the necessity of diligence and wisdom in business activities. They are

- (1) Make hay while the sunshine
- (2) Not to be lazy if you crave wealth
- (3) Rely on only one self
- (4) Earnestness is the means to success
- (5) You yourself must strive for what you want
- (6) Material wealth is built on wisdom
- (7) Be thrifty and save to become to a wealthy person
- (8) Prosperity will come only of one is careful

- (9) Perseverance leads to prosperity and progress
- (10) The incoming flow of water is collected by the dike

The above sayings show that in addition to honesty, diligence, thrift, knowledge and the ability to critically assess the business environment and good interpersonal relations are part of Business ethics in Myanmar tradition.

Social Responsibility in Myanmar Business Ethics

Social responsibility is an obligation of Business person in the Myanmar tradition. A good and successful business person has to take into consideration the progress of the welfare of society together with their own interests. There must be aware that business decision can affect social environment, employees, consumers, community and etc. Business activities and society are interdependent and interrelated. Thus, it is well known that business decisions must be made not only to make profit for self. Profit at all cost is not approved of in the Myanmar tradition. This abides by the guideline of Right Livelihood taught by the Buddha in his First Sermon the *Dhammacakka pavuttana*.

In Myanmar, the social responsibility of business involves concepts such as honesty, wisdom and diligence. These ethical concepts that promote moral responsibility. Now a day, The Excellence Award are conferred on those who have contributed to respective sectors of the economy for the development of the country and social-economic status of its people. This award is intended to encourage and motivate able citizens in the economic and social sectors and to encourage the development of private sector in accord with the market economy.

Excellence awards are conferred on entrepreneurs in livestock breeding, agriculture and export sectors, entrepreneurs who have dutifully paid taxes as well as others who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the public and outstanding athletes. U Aung Ko Win, top taxpayer award winner, said

"We paid more than six **billion in kyat as tax in 2011-2012, 2013-2014** The amount that affords me the honour represents tax paid from our banking sector alone."

He had paid more than 17 billion in kyat as tax in advance for 2013-2014 fiscal years. He has also donated more than kyat **24 billion towards Religion, Education, Social and Sports since late April, 2011.**

In the Myanmar tradition it is a long-term belief that to success in business in the long-run, it must respond to society's needs and give society what it wants. So, trade and business is not just to make a profit for oneself but to dutifully carry out a moral responsibility to society. Business person must avoid improper practices that damage the welfare of society.

U Khin Hlaing, a Myanmar Businessman, produces and sells the high quality monk's robes to his customers for their satisfaction. The aim of his business is to the greatest satisfaction for the greatest number. His business is to the benefit of himself and of the customers. So, his business has succeeded.

To develop of a nation, there must have strong foundation of morality. Morality is a part of prosperity and development of a nation. Morality is necessary to achieve a sustainable development of a nation. In the same way morality is a vital part of business activities. Honesty, diligence and wisdom are moral concepts of Myanmar business. Living with morality contributes to the economy and thus to the welfare of the nation. All business persons must keep these moral principles in mind and put them to practice diligently.

In Myanmar society, morality or *Sila* means as purity of thought, word and deed. Most Myanmar values the dignity of man and in Myanmar society a human being must never be used as a means but always as an end. This is a norm that applies equally to all activities whether social, economic or political. Hence, Myanmar business ethics emphasizes moral values and moral rules and it is not enough to know these rules but must be put to practice in daily life. Having a good moral reputation is very much valued in Myanmar society and virtues such as honesty, knowledge and diligence are highly valued.

Nowadays, it can be seen that business with good service in social responsibility are more successful in the long run. To be a successful businessman, one must be upright, knowledge, diligence and fair. It means that he must avoid bodily, verbally and mental immoral actions, and keep his activities to fairly and to social welfares. So, these above three principles are called moral rules or social rules in business.

The Principles of Business in Buddhist Literature

The Buddha preached the Eight Fold Noble Path in his first Sermon the *Dhammacakka pavuttana*. In the eight factors of this Noble Path, Right speech, Right action, and Right livelihood are grouped under the heading of morality (*Sila*). Any action or deed in Buddhist terminology means bodily action, speech or thought. Moral duties of conduct laid down are all concerned with verbal, physical and mental deeds. Buddha disclosed the classification of deeds in the following way.

Human beings are always doing one thing or another mentally, verbally or physically and each action yields consequences that are either good or bad depending on the action. According to the Law of *Kamma* which is the basic moral principle in Buddhism, good consequences follow from good deeds and bad consequences from doing evil. Moreover the motive or will behind the action is very important. This is the basic moral principle which applies to all kinds of behavior including the deeds carried out in business activities.

Of the eight factors of the Eight Fold Noble Path, Right speech, Right action, Right livelihood as stated above come under Morality (*Sila*). Morality (*Sila*) is not only for the first stage on this path to Nibbana but also moral guideline to success in our daily life.

Right speech is the prerequisite of the spiritual aspirant. Speech is the expression of the intention of the speaker and the person is bound to be effected pleasantly or unpleasantly by it. Right speech consists of four rules. They are as followed.

- (1) One must not tell lies.
- (2) One must not utter Slander or False statement, which is intended to damage a person's reputation.
- (3) One must not say bad, unkind or cruel things about person.
- (4) One must not utter frivolous speech.

Right action means unselfish action. It is the outcome of right knowledge, right resolve and right speech. Right action consists of three rules. They are as followed.

- (1) One must avoid killing any sentient being.
- (2) One must avoid stealing things not giving.
- (3) One must avoid taking intoxicants that dull the mind.

Right livelihood means maintaining life by honest means. One must earn one's living by good means. One must not trade in weapons, poison, intoxicants, slaves, human beings. Right speech, Right action and Right livelihood are concerned with “*Ajivatthamaka Sila*”.

These Sila or moral guidelines are not only for monks but also for lay men and women. The “*Ājivatthamaka Sila*” means a set of precepts in which right livelihood is included as the eight precept.

- (1) To refrain from killing.
- (2) To refrain from stealing.
- (3) To refrain from abusing.
- (4) To refrain from telling lies.
- (5) To refrain from playing mischief.
- (6) To refrain from speaking ill of others.
- (7) To refrain from swearing at others.
- (8) To refrain from earning one's living by evil means.

Livelihood can be divided into two kinds. These are Ajiva and Micchajiva. Working at a job or making effort to get food, clothing and shelter is called Ajiva. Making a livelihood by unfair means is Micchajiva. Any person must perform and obey the Ajivatthamaka Sila in his life. So, his livelihood must be called true livelihood or *Sammāājiva*.

So, These *Sila* points out that a person must lived with honesty, justice, and right livelihood. Any person must perform and obey these *Sila* in his life. So, his livelihood must be called true livelihood or *Sammāājiva*. Therefore, the terms of justice, honesty, good will, knowledge and wisdom consist in “*Ājivatthamaka Sila*” and may be called the principles of social responsibilities in business.

Buddha also taught the four endowments (*Sampadā*) with the intention of benefitting and endowing the whole mankind. The four endowments are (1) Being diligent and alert in business undertaking (*Uṭṭhana sampadā*) (2) Being able to have a good management of what one has earned (*Ārakkha sampadā*) (3) Having a wide circle of good friends (*Kalyanamitta sampadā*) and (4) Living within one's means (*Samajivita sampadā*). So, the four endowments (*Sampadā*) are referring to the moral rules or moral concepts such as honesty, good will, Justice, diligence and wisdom in Business for success.

In Buddhist tradition, it is not the large amount of capital investment or advanced technology that leads to success in business. Ethical person and good characters play an

important role in successful business. Myanmar business ethics it can be seen is largely influenced by Buddhist ethics.

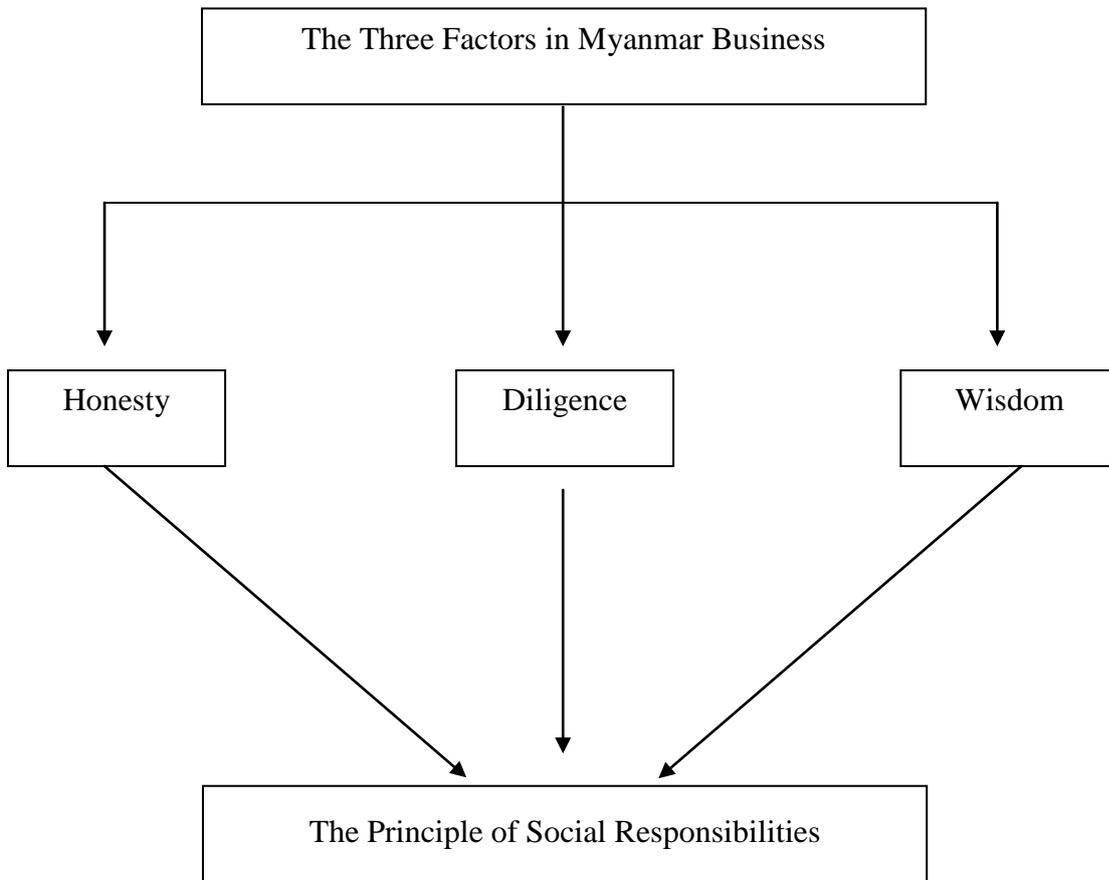
Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to point out the ethics that govern Myanmar business practices in the past as well as in the present. It can be seen that the primary factors of the moral rules are honesty, diligence and wisdom. These three factors are regarded as the foundation of a successful business. In order to form an ethical principle based on these three factors, it can be found that the most suitable principle is the principle of social responsibility for successful business. This principle of social responsibility is a vital role in Myanmar Business activities.

To sum up, it can be seen that although capital, technique, and other material things are required in business, moral rules are essential for successful business. The principle of social responsibilities is considered to be very important in Myanmar business activities. It can therefore be said that Myanmar Business Ethics is based on *Theravāda* Buddhist of Sila or moral integrity and avoidance of self-centredness. It in fact emphasizes social responsibilities. For Myanmar which is in the early stages of democratization and development it is imperative for business persons to abide by these age-old guidelines which will benefit not only those in business but the people as well.

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References

၁။	အရှင်ဇနကာဘိဝံသ	(၂၀၀၆)	ကိုယ်ကျင့်အဘိဓမ္မာ၊ အမရပူရမြို့၊ နယူးဘားမား ပိဋကတ် ပုံနှိပ်တိုက် ။
၂။	သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန	(၁၉၉၈)	အင်္ဂုတ္တိုရ်ပါဠိတော် (မြန်မာပြန်)၊ တတိယတွဲ၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။
၃။	ညောင်ကန်ဆရာတော် ဘုရားကြီး	(၁၃၂၄)	ငါးရာငါးဆယ်ဇာတ်ဝတ္ထု၊ ဒုတိယတွဲ၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ သုမ္မာဝတီ ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။
၄။	မြိုင်ကြီးငူဆရာတော်	(၂၀၀၄)	ဓမ္မပဒဝတ္ထုတော်၊ ဒုတိယတွဲ၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။
၅။	ကလောင်စုံ	(၂၀၀၉)	လှေကားထစ်များရာဇဝင်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ စိတ်ကူးချိုချိုစာပေ။
၆။		(၁၉၆၃)	မြန်မာ့စွယ်စုံကျမ်း၊ အတွဲ ၈၊ ပထမအကြိမ်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ စာပေဗိမာန်စာအုပ်တိုက်။
၇။	ကလောင်စုံ	(၂၀၁၂)	လူငယ်တွေ စီးပွားရေး ဘယ်လိုလုပ်ကြမလဲ၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ The Book house စာပေ။
၈။	ပဉ္စဂံစာတည်းအဖွဲ့	(၂၀၁၃)	လောကနီတိ၊ မန္တလေး၊ ပဉ္စဂံစာပေ။