

The Philosophical Study of Moral –based Education in Myanmar Society

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to focus the beneficial and precious value of moral based education in Myanmar society. The research question is "why is moral-based education important for the philosophy of education"? The research finding is that Myanmar educational thought, consists of various kinds of learning materials, teaching methods, higher level in curriculum, valuable Admonitions, treaties, moral guidelines, and Nitis. The contribution of this research is that moral-based education is important for new generation in Myanmar Society as well as for other societies.

Key words: Admonitions, treaties and Nitis

Introduction

There are various tasks in education. It is needed to train not only brain but also mind. Motivation also takes place an important role. Although these tasks are conducted at school, the main issue to focus is "culture". What is the difference between rudeness and politeness? How did human being escape from rudeness? Is it because of invention or of the action of engineer or chemist? The rise of the role of culture is not because of these. If the economy, science and technology are said to be the essential skills of culture, it can be assumed that in Germany, American and England, culture is very developed. The more science is developed, the much work can be done. Similarly, much crime can also be encountered. Today age is very dangerous.

Education guides the right way. Besides, it also needs to build the strong mind to face the problems encountered every day. These tasks should be done at state schools and universities. Endeavour these tasks at schools and universities is the most difficult but essential one. The main problem is to create good society. Without simplicity, happiness and success cannot be obtained. It's the main issue that we can read in some magazines of some culture intimidation despite the knowledgeable awareness. So moral lessons should be developed equally with knowledge. Education makes people know everything and guides the right way. The goal of education is training to behave morally. The goal can be reached with the three sides as physicality, intelligence and morality.

Without training, a child can't reach the morality goal. Parents should not teach their children to be greedy, cruel, selfish, bad and, to tell lie. Both parents and teachers should prevent the children from being bad and train their children to the right way.

The philosopher, John Locke (1632-1704) said that parents and teachers should train their children to develop in physical, mental and intellectual skills since their childhood. According to France philosopher Rousseau (1712- 1778) did not accept that idea. He said to give a chance to think freely so that

children can develop their thinking skill and broaden their mind. There are many guidelines,

proverbs and sayings in Myanmar to behave morally and to describe the value of education.

Relation between Education and Morality

Education and morality are closely related to each other. Education can be regarded as a moral enterprise. Education can guide the students what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Education can improve individual and social behavior. The questions of education are concerned with ethical attitude. Sometimes the problems of education can be solved by the study of morality. Morality is the study of the values of human conduct. Morality attempts to determine what conduct is good or bad, what ought to be approved, and what disapproved. In every area of life, the most intelligent principle of behavior is necessary to study morality.

Education is the cure for many problems and social life. Education can lead people to be developed. The important thing is not just education but the methods. In this sense, Harold H. Titus (1957) says that,

"Education can train people to face the future with vision, to be broad and tolerant in outlook, to be seekers after peace, and to consider the right of others. Mere education or mere teaching is not enough. Teachers are responsible, at least in part, for the kind of education which exists and for the individual and social attitudes which arise from the educative process."

According to Titus, it is very important to help the right kind of education, since education can train the people for the good lives. The children can know the knowledge of morals. Moral value can be known by education. By education the students can know what is right and what is wrong, what are the causes of right and wrong and lastly, he comes to know what he ought to do. Education means to make the value of student's development. Morality is essentially the knowledge of knowing what is right and what is wrong. In this way morality and education are related in some way.

Similarly, Myanmar educational thoughts are rooted in Theravada Buddhism. Buddha claimed that the children are very important and they are the treasure of mankind. Buddha also claimed that the children should seek knowledge to earn good livelihood. The teacher must teach them to lead a good life, to become a dutiful person and to have a moral education. Then the elders should also give sympathy, kindness, and their rights. In Buddhist view of education, both the role of the parents, teachers and student are very important. Thus Buddha had expounded on the duties and responsibilities of the elders, parents, teachers, and children. In Buddhism, the importance of education depends on the discipline and the children should know to protect the social illness. Therefore, it may be said that Buddhist view is not a formal education, but it is a comprehensive view. There are many examples of various kinds of Nitis and Admotions which had formulated monks and scholars.

Myanmar Educational Thought in Thirty-Eight Blessing

Sub-categories in Thirty-Eight Blessings, there are three types of social dealing, three types of actions and behavior, four types of good education, four types of obligation and responsibilities, four types of obligation, three types of restraint, four types of purification, five kinds of forbearance, four types of practices, four kinds of firming of mind.

Among the thirty eight points enumerated in the *Maṅgala Sutta*, four are directly related to learning and may be termed learning *maṅgalas*.

“1. *Bāhusiṅcaca*

Possessing a wide range of secular and religious knowledge

2. *sippañca*

Possessing mechanical and handicraft skills

3. *vinayoca susikkhito*

Learning the proper human conduct that teaches one to be civilized in manners and in thought

4. *subhāsītā ca yāvācā*

Speaking well to benefit and speaking politely and nicely”

Bāhusiṅcaca or Vast Learning

Many people understand that vast learning is needed to get knowledge. This wealth of knowledge is based on its own interests, other interests and carrying the interests of many helps greatly.

The more knowledgeable the task, the more effective it will be. An experienced person who has the knowledge to handle any problem with the matter can easily and conveniently make appropriate plans in this regard.

Therefore, every country has its economy, its health and care in addition to current activities for

expansion, research centers have been opened up to new ideas and opinion and they are working to gain new perspectives.

The primary training of children depends on wise parents and guardians. They should give suitable moral lessons and general knowledge to their children. These lessons are essential for their moral and mental uplift. The progress of children is affected by their environment. So parents should bring up their children by setting a good example and avoiding the bad ones.

The secondary stage of training is at their school life. Thus good educational institutions should be selected to get good education, moral teaching, good discipline and good manners. Further study in a University or College is also important because they enable them to undertake greater responsibilities in life.

A wise person cannot be misled by wicked people and can gain good fortune and wealth, respect and fame. Therefore Lord of Buddha expounded his thirty eight noble blessings to have the vast learning.

Sippañca or Importance of arts, science and handicrafts

In *Sippañca* Mangalar, the profession is the arts of skills and training. Arts, sciences and handicrafts are important to a man to get success in the worldly life. There are many in academic field who find it difficult to earn their livelihood to get knowledge of other arts, sciences and handicrafts.

People should learn arts, sciences and handicrafts which are congenial to them and blameless. Such blameless arts, sciences and handicrafts can easily find ways and means to earn good livelihood. Thus they can enjoy prosperity, happiness and peace of life. The value of the blameless arts and sciences is priceless and cannot be stolen by thieves and robbers. It is a real friend and can give happiness.

If one does not acquire education in the first stage of life, wealth in the second stage and righteousness in the third stage, what can he acquire in the last stage of life? In the world those who possess any skills of, handicraft or a verbal skill, are in demand wherever they go and opportunities arise for them with the result of living well in society.

Therefore the man who is proficient in any one of these sciences, can easily find material possessions of his own. Charity can be built on the well-being of the people and can contribute to the development of the country.

Vinayoca Susikkhito or Discipline

Discipline means rules laid down for the performance of one's duties towards one's nation, family, employers, organization or one's neighbors etc. Obeying discipline is a polite manner and a good character. A good character means avoiding evil deeds

and doing good deeds. Thus everyone should always observe discipline and perform perfectly all duties required of human beings.

Discipline is important in every society. At home, parents should teach discipline to their children and teacher should teach in schools. Good discipline results in the formation of good habits.

Everyone has the responsibilities to abide by the Constitution, rules and regulations of the country: how to sit, how to respect. We also have to follow the way of giving up our behavior. Some of these ethics have been learned from scholars and some have been learned from relatives.

And also, everyone should not throw away the rubbish carelessly. Most of the people who live in temporary shelters and near drinking water pots should value cultural practices.

***Subhāsītā ca yāvācā* or Pleasant Speech**

Good word means good communication. Swearing, lying and making mischief should be avoided. Everyone should speak nice words. People love a person who speak nice words. Thus there is a saying, "A good tongue is a good weapon".

For example, in Nadivīsālā caste, it is stated that not only people but also animals don't like rude words and they appreciate polite words.

In addition, Buddha taught people to be in the clouds: (a) thundering but not rained, (b) rained but not thundering, (c) not thundering nor rained, (d)thundering and also rained.

There are four types of person who speak but does not work, work and does not speak, Not speak nor work and speak and also work. The man who does not speak and does nothing for the city and the country not praying to Buddha and does not obey Dhamma is the man like the rain, not thundering nor rained. The person who really does what he says in the audience is the man like the rain, thundering and also rained.

The words of a pleasant speech are as good as the words of the speaker, for they are expected to bring forth the brightest results of those who hear them. In other words, "six words in a person take away of four points and put on the two words." According to these Buddha saying that:

- 1.No purpose words that are not to be desired, 2. right and no purpose words that are not to be desired,
3. right and useful words that are not to be desired, 4. right and no purpose but a favorite word, 5. not true no purpose but favorite words and 6. right useful and a favorite word.

This culture and manner are for the young people who have been disciplined by their behavior. They will be a valuable treasure both to themselves and to the country. Every pleasant word has its value and power which can influence other people. People should choose right, fine, polite and sweet words in the right places. Such kind of people is loved, respected and admired everywhere.

Many people possess speech with fine and sweet words as a special gift. If their fine and sweet words are not uttered in truth, sincerity and honesty, these words have no power to attract the attention of other people. Thus the words should be uttered in truth and justice, sincerity and honesty, in the right place, to the right person in the right manner. Thus they can get a deep impression of the minds of the listeners. The words must come from the heart.

This is the reason for forming debating societies in every school, college and university all over the world where many fine speakers are produced. These speakers become famous. Thus, everyone should earn to speak pleasantly and truthfully.

Pleasant words should be spoken and be kind to all beings. Respect and politeness should be showed to all people in consonance with their dignity. Speaking more than necessary must be avoided.

Characteristics of the Sage in *Loka Nīti*

Concerning the education and morality of Myanmar, another treatise to point out is *Loka Nīti* which was written by Minister Caturaṅgabala. It is supposed that treatise is a collection of inferences of so many written works. The importance of the morality and education was described as follow. Parents send their children to the schools to become polite and clever students. Thus long long age the monks and scholars taught the children Buddhism and moral rules to be polite and clever students . It can be said that politeness is emphasized in Myanmar society. Ethics and morality are the priority in education. Myanmar people recognized politeness, ethic and morality as a model in Myanmar. In the history of Myanmar literature, there were many sayings and guidance to be polite and clever. In his 1886 translation of *Loka Nīti*, Mr. James Gray wrote-

"In this world, one can know the shallowness or the depth of water by looking at *Kumudrā* lotus. Noble- birth or low-birth can be discerned by that person's mode of conduct. A person's wisdom or ignorance can be inferred from his words. The quality of soil can be gauged from the weak or strong growth of grass."

According to the above reference, the water-lily's stem is long if the water is deep, short if it is shallow. A saying goes that high water makes the lotus beautiful (with long stem) whether a man's birth is noble or mean can be determined by his behavior. A man's knowledge and ignorance can be judged by the words he utters. The quality of soil of a plot of land can be assessed by looking at the strength or weakness of the growth of grass.

Being Over Confidence

Knowledge is wide, like a sea and deep as an ocean. Learning isn't stopping. Today is an age for lifelong learning. Thus everything cannot be learnt

easily. Greek Philosopher, Socrates (470-399) BC said "Know Thyself". Myanmar Scholars described the examples of being over confidence in Loka Nīti.

"In this world, the person who has little knowledge thinks much of it and has pride for it. How is it so? It is like the frog who has never seen the ocean thinks and much of the water in the hole it lives in."

It means that the person with little knowledge is narrow-minded and thinks much of his knowledge, just as the little frog who has never seen the ocean. It thinks much of the water in the hole it lives in the holes. When it rains, there are full of water in their holes and they think that they live in the sea or ocean. Like that kind of frog, some people although they know a little, they think that they know a lot, and they become over-confidence.

"The ugly person is likely to be talkative. The person with little learning usually show off. The pot that is not full makes trembling sound. The milkless cow is apt to kick."

Likewise, an ugly person can speak well. A person who does not know enough think that he knows very well and want to show their skill to other people. They are proud of themselves. Moreover, little frog which can sit like a lion thinks that he is a lion. When a crow is acclaimed, their bad behavior appears. Similarly, a person who does not know enough can't answer anything very well.

"The sage remains silent like a drum if no one puts questions. If someone asks, he acts like the thunder. The foolish person always talks whether he is asked or not."

It means that, the sage speak out only when required, like the drum which gives off sound when it is beaten. The fool is always talkative. A sage man give knowledgeable talk in right situation like a heavy rain but a foolish man talks useless things. In Myanmar, there is a proverb that "No, not at all". It means that everything does not finish without talking anything and anything can't be heard without hitting.

From Learning Method

In Myanmar culture, wisdom and knowledge are superior to wealth and power. There has been a considerably high literacy rate among people. According to Buddha's teaching men should not be ignored the evil. So, everyone should try to acquire knowledge. According to the Buddha knowledge, *Paññā* means wisdom.

Firstly the three kinds of wisdom must be recognized. (1) *Sutamaya* wisdom = the wisdom by seeing. (2) *Cinatāmaya* wisdom = the wisdom of thinking and reasoning (3) *Bhāvānamaya* wisdom = the wisdom which is acquired from thinking (impermanent trouble and endless). So, one who searches *Suta* can get *Sutamaya* wisdom. Next, he thinks what he gets and he will achieve *Cinatāmaya* wisdom. Then, *Bhāvānamaya* wisdom can be

acquired. If one doesn't get '*Suta*' first, the other wisdom can't be achieved. This means that thinking is important.

"The person who tries properly to listen and note is the one who is full of knowledge. He increases his knowledge by means of acquiring knowledge and understanding the meaning. Knowing the meaning brings happiness to him."

According to the concept in Loka Nīti, acquiring knowledge, listening and making mental note are important. If one does so, he will acquire knowledge. By learning through exercise one can increase one's knowledge. One should thus acquire knowledge and understanding the meaning of things one tries to learn. Knowing the meaning will make the learner happy. Likewise, the writer U Shin Galay gives his erudite message in Loka Nīti Pyo:

"Riches and blessings come to him who learns, remember, thinks about, listen to and is rich in and has full comprehension of knowledge."

It is found that this observation encompasses both the learning process and the learning product in a short pithy way. How it encompasses is given in the short and sweet account that follow;

"Listening and remembering lead to knowledge.

Knowledge lead to riches.

Knowledge lead to comprehension.

Comprehension leads to blessing and pleasure."

The learning process consists of paying attention, remembering and comprehension or realization. As a learning product we acquire knowledge, prosperity and all sorts of comforts. We need to understand and follow them. When we are trying to follow them, students should pay attention to them in their daily lives. We shouldn't behave as if we knew something unless we know it really. Wisdoms means trying to know everything clearly. Carefulness is always needed. By doing this, we can apply the knowledge we learnt in good ways.

Importance of Wisdom

In Myanmar Culture, the value of knowledge is high but the value on wisdom is greater. Wisdom arises from the deeper understanding of life through our knowledge. We can get the knowledge of the world and nature. But it can't constitute wisdom. Wisdom encompasses a wide vision of the world and life itself.

"In this world, the son of parents of low birth may become a minister to the king. The son of a fool may become a sage. The son of a poor man may become rich. Therefore, we should not deal with men contemptuously."

It means that, the lineage of parents or their social status or their intellect does not hinder the progress of their sons who may attain a higher status. There are many sons who are superior to their parents.

We should not look down to other people. A poor person can be either a king or a rich man, if he tries hard. So, we should not look down a good man. Some leaders and millionaire come from poor society. Youth should try best like those persons. There are some other lessons to be learned from my tradition and cultures, Myanmar people also accepts the ideology of Buddha.

Importance of Admonition

The teachings the Buddha Himself made are now the Dhamma, and his followers, those that up to this day are practising what he taught are the Saṅgha. The gratitude owed to the Saṅgha are indeed great. They deserve the greatest gratitude and we are deeply grateful to them. There has been a continuous uninterrupted line of explanations, reformulations and translations by Saṅgha scholars and lay scholars of the teachings of the Buddha, the teaching of the Dhamma, the teaching of the Saṅgha, constituting a rich cultural heritage of Myanmar society. "Mother and Father are the very first teachers", the gratitude owed to both parents is great indeed for providing guidance not to engage in sinful actions as taught by the Buddha, providing constant admonition and guidance to do good deeds. Hence, the two parents are the first teachers.

Similarly, as the Buddha would have approved, the teachers provide constant guidance to pupils so that they work hard, have knowledge and skills, and are well mannered in accordance with the oft-quoted admonition to the teachers "Teach both skills and manners". Parents and teachers are reliable inexhaustible sources of help and encouragement. The very first teachers, the parents, have duty and have to make efforts to educate their offspring and teach them to be well-mannered since childhood.

Likewise, James Gray (1886) in his translation by Loka Nīti writes as follow;

"The potter strikes the pot not to break it but to make it shapely, so also the master beats his pupils not to let them fall into misery or hell but to let them make progress in their learning."

According to this concept, the potter beats the pot to make it look proportionate, not to break it: so also the teacher beats his pupils to make progress in the learning, not to send them to hell.

There should be understanding between, students, parents and teachers. When King Mindon was young, his teacher asked to keep the dried fish and he lost it. So, he was beaten by his teacher. A person who couldn't keep the dried fish couldn't control a country. He obeyed his teacher. Then, the British philosopher, John Locke (1632-1704) said that parents and teachers should train their children to develop in physical, mental and intellectual skills since their childhood.

In Tilamuni caste from 550 caste, it is described that people should be guided to avoid bad deeds since they were young like a prince who stole the sesame.

Like this prince, if we forgive one time, he will steal other's things easily. So, people should be guided not to do bad things since they are young.

Education based on morality should be right. By this way, people will not be selfish, cruel and will not tell lie and they will know what is right and what is wrong. Some people are not educated but they can think well. A thoughtful person respects to monks, parents and elders.

Conclusion

In Myanmar society, the scholars and the monks had provided the significant educational thought. Through the history of Myanmar education, culture is the main basis of education. To improve culture, there is real education. In Myanmar education system, it is based on Myanmar culture. Myanmar education system started at Theravada Buddhist monasteries. Monastic education has been appropriate for character-building and laying the ground work for Myanmar culture. The monastic education system includes all-round manner of Myanmar society. Myanmar education gives much value and knowledge to learners. At present it is very important to brighten youths to become educated persons. Educated persons should sustain cultural values. And then they have responsibility to pay respect and sustain their own culture and their country. Moreover it is necessary that the educational system should be suitable and appropriate to its cultural values. When we change educational system, we have to emphasize arts, science and technology but we should not neglect our traditional culture.

Students are the future of our country. The future of our country depends on the moral values imparted to them in their student life. Moral lessons should be properly taught among students in school and colleges. It is the duty and responsibility of the teacher to teach the students moral- based values in order to develop moral qualities such as humility, truthfulness, honesty, courtesy, tolerance, sacrifice etc. It will help in developing positive social attitudes in new generation which prompt them to behave against social evils. The harmonious coexistence of different ideologies in society requires respect for moral and ethical values. The education inculcates these virtues in a systematic manner. Morality is essentially the knowledge of knowing what is right and what is wrong. Only with morality we can preserve our sense of humanity and empathy for other's sorrow while at the same time we can retain our sense of altruism for others.

Education is vital for the lives of students. The modernized education have to be learnt. On the other hand, we need to keep our tradition and culture. We also need to value and modify some good points of monastic education. Myanmar tradition and culture should not be neglected. Modern education is more emphasized for the business and careers and not for the training of moral life. Education makes the value

of students develop so that they can decide themselves, they can stand on themselves, and they can create their opportunities. The investment in education was the great aim of human society. In Myanmar educational thought, it consists of various kinds of learning materials, teaching methods, higher level of curriculums, valuable Admonitions, treatises, moral guidelines and Nitis. It may be said that Myanmar educational thoughts are important not only for Myanmar society but also for the philosophy of education. So, its applications are the most vital to be prescribed for Myanmar as well as other societies.

The Thirty- Eight Blessings provide a moral guide for life as well as for future attainment of Nibbana. Of these Mangala blessings constitute a code of conduction mundane life. If followed faithfully it can benefit the individual, the family and the society to which a person belongs. Similarly, if followed Myanmar ethics extracted from Loka Nīti written by the minister **Caturaṅgabala**, if can also benefit to individual, family, society to which a person belongs. Loka Nīti guides the people in the affairs of the world. Thus they may make progress in life. These views are still the guiding principles for contemporary Myanmar people.

When we study education from the philosophical point of view, it is found that education is based on morality. Myanmar education is also based on Buddhist's moral teaching. In other countries, their education is based on their respective religion. From age to age, the philosophers analyzed education and they found that education emphasized on moral education. In education, it includes Education of Hand, Education of Heart and Education of Head. Among them, Education of Heart means behaving morally and ethically. It is also found that there are moral principles not only in curriculum and teaching

method, but also in educational vision. Moral principles are also laid down for every relationship and societies.

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