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The Concept of Gratitude in Myanmar Ethical Thought

Lay Nwe¹

Abstract

The word 'gratitude' means the awareness of one's obligation to another person who has previously done some act of kindness towards one. From the Buddhist point of view the *Pāli* word *kataññuta* is gratitude. The word *kanññuta* consists of two parts: *kata* means that which has been especially done to one or to oneself; and *ahnuta* means knowing or recognizing what has been done to one for one's benefit. In common sense, if a person does and repays gratitude to others, he would be regarded as a morally good person. In this paper, gratitude will be discussed as a moral concept of Myanmar Buddhist society. Especially, the focal point of this paper is that the concept of gratitude plays as an essential role not only in Myanmar Buddhist society but also in every society in the world.

Key words: gratitude, *kataññuta*, *aññula*.

Introduction

The word gratitude is frequently used among people in the world. There are many definitions of gratitude. In daily life, the word gratitude can directly be defined as "thanks". From the Buddhist point of view the *Pāli* word *kataññuta* is gratitude. The word *kataññuta* consists of two parts: *kata*, which means it has been done, especially to one or to oneself, and *aññuta*, which means knowing or recognizing what has been done for one's benefit. Gratitude means the awareness of one's obligation to another person who has previously done some act of kindness towards one. Most people accept that sense of gratitude is one of the characteristics of a good person. With no one to practice gratitude the situation in a society will be chaotic. Since man is a social animal, gratitude is very important for social relationship.

Most Myanmar people are *Theravāda* Buddhists and Buddhist teachings can be considered as Myanmar way of living. Myanmar people are serious about gratitude because they have been brought up by the Buddhist teaching since they were young. In Buddhist philosophy gratitude is one of the most important concepts. The Buddha explained not only gratitude is important but the sense of gratitude is also important. The gratitude practiced by Myanmar people trains them to be cultured and guides them how to live harmoniously in the society. It can be said that the concept of gratitude plays an essential role in Myanmar Buddhist society.

Myanmar Thought on Gratitude in Myanmar Poems

It can be studied that most ancient Myanmar poems are admonitions. Among ancient Myanmar scholars, Shin Mahā Ratthasara, Kandaw Min Kyaung Sayādaw, Nyaungpinthar U Pon Nya, Thingazar Sayādaw and so on are popular in ancient Myanmar society and nowadays as well. Nyaungpinthar U Pon Nya wrote many poems concerning gratitude. Among them, one of the famous poems is;

"Ten kinds of *khinpoon* who should not be wronged
 One who wronged them will get ten kinds of sufferings
 One knowing the gratitude to *khinpoon* tastes higher
 happiness."²

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² ပန်းတိုင်ဦးသန်းမောင် (၂၀၀၁) လောကရေးရာဆုံးမစာပျို့ကဗျာများ၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ပန်းတိုင်စာပေ၊ စာ-၁၁၅။

This poem said that there are ten kinds of *Khinpoongyi* (great benefactors) whom should not be wrong, If one wronged them he may be faced with ten sufferings. If one knows and practices gratitude to one's benefactors he will get a great deal of happiness both physically and mentally.

According to Buddhist teachings, there are ten great benefactors. They are (1) Buddha (2) personal Enlightened One (3) *Arahat*, venerable monk (4) the chief disciples of Buddha (5) one's mother (6) one's Father (7) an honorable person (8) one's mentor (9) preacher of the Buddha's teachings and (10) one's benefactor.

Among *ten* great benefactors, the Buddha is the greatest benefactor because Buddha has supreme compassion and wisdom for the sake of liberating from *samsarā* (round of rebirth). He guided living beings who have a lot of desires of lust, hatred, delusion, etc. And He taught the Noble way of liberation leading to *Nibbāna*.

The personal Enlightenment Ones are great benefactors because they gave human, gods and higher gods to a sort of reward wishing them to be fulfilled what they want to attain. All the *arahats* (Noble One) are also benefactors because they are the example masters of later generations who will enter the teachings of the Buddha.

The chief disciples of Buddha preached the *Dhamma* to living beings on behalf of the Buddha. So they are the first teachers because they give good advice to the people to live in the world. So they are the benefactors. An honorable person, one's mentor and preacher of the Buddhist teachings guide the people to think correctly. So they are considered as great benefactors.

Most Myanmar Buddhist people believe that those who know gratitude and practice as they know for ten great benefactors will receive good results both in this present life and next life of existence.

"Pay homage to the parents benefactors, as a pagoda with love and respect, cherish the senior relatives respectfully and venerate them for peace."¹

This poem is extracted from *Lawkathāra Pyo* written by Kandaw Min Kyaung Sayādaw. Myanmar people believe that one pay homage to parents and benefactors as a pagoda because pagoda is one of sacred shrines that should be paid homage in Buddhism. They can give help and guidance the present life and hereafter. Moreover Myanmar people think that one should venerate and cherish to the senior relatives respectfully for peace as well because supporting relatives is one of the obligations in Myanmar society. One has to support his relatives in a suitable way. Myanmar Buddhist people are encouraged by *Mangala Sutta* to support their relatives. If one repays the debt of gratitude to his parents and benefactors, then he is considered as a good person. Another famous poem is one of the poems of Ledi Panita U Maung Gyi,

"Feeling bad with old parents
Paying no attention to them though they were brought up
If no cherishing and feeding them back. It is called a bad person"²

Although a person can support his parents, he actually avoid supporting and paying

¹ ဦးမြင့်ကြည် (တည်းဖြတ်) (၁၉၉၁) *မြန်မာစာညွန့်ပေါင်းကျမ်း* (ပထမတွဲ)၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ စာပေဗိမာန်အဖွဲ့၊ စာ-၁၄။
² ဦးသိန်းမော် (တည်းဖြတ်) (၁၉၅၃) *သုံးဆယ့်ရှစ်ဖြာမင်္ဂလာပေါင်းချုပ်* (ပထမတွဲ)၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ဟံသာဝတီ ပိဋကတ်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ စာ-၂၃၉။

attention to his parents. This one is regarded as a bad one by Myanmar society.

It is possible that one will provide his parents worthily when he becomes rich but at that time, his parents may have probably died. One is not necessary to be very rich for repaying one's debt of gratitude to one parents but he offers whatever thing to one's parents. He or she is regarded as a good offspring in Myanmar society.

The poem of five duties of offspring was written by *Thingaza Sayādaw*. In this poem, duties to be followed by every offspring are mentioned. In Myanmar society, it is accepted that every offspring ought to do this duties in relation to their parents. This poem is;

"To support one's aged parents.

To manage family business

To behave as worthy son and daughter deserve inheritance

To offer alms and sharing merit in memory of dead person

To maintain the honour and. tradition of the family"¹

This poem means that one should support, to his parents. While parents are still living, offspring should perform their duties such as providing their parents with food, clothing and shelter, cherishing them tenderly and affectionately. By paying homage to parents and taking care of them respectfully, members of family can possess the peaceful and happy life.

One manages not only family's business but also other affairs such as health, education, social affairs etc. It is accepted that one should perform all affairs to become better than the status of parents. At the time of parents, what they were unable to be successful in some affairs the offspring try to behave these affairs. These offspring are called the persons who deserved inheritance.

Myanmar people usually accept that the worthy offspring offer alms and sharing merit in memory of the departed. One should marry another one who is similar to one's own family background such as culture, religious faith and so on in order to keep the values of family and generations.

Just as the gratitude one owes to his parents is infinite, also the gratitude he owes to his teachers is infinite as well In this world, the most important thing for all human beings is wisdom. Wisdom is first acquired from parents. It is not, however, enough for one. One also has to learn from teachers. So the teacher must have duties as a teacher, and the pupil also must be dutiful as a pupil. There is also a poem which is closely connected with the duties of the pupils;

"To be always on the alert and to live in harmony with each other

To obey the teacher's word of advice

To pay respect and welcome the teacher anytime and anywhere

To be of service to the teacher

To learn, to think, to recite and to read what the teacher hastaught²

This poem was written by *Thingaza Sayādaw*. The poem is widely accepted by Myanmar people. This poem encourages all of Myanmar Buddhist people to keep good

¹ ဦးအောင်သိန်း (တည်းဖြတ်) (၉၁၉၆၀) *ဟံသာဝတီဆုံးမစာပေါင်းချုပ်ကြီး*၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ဟံသာဝတီ ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ စာ-၃၆၃။

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relation between teachers and pupils.

A pupil in former days had to serve as close attended to his teacher for three years at least to gain knowledge. However in the present days, a pupil learns knowledge from primary school and then colleges and universities. There are a great deal of gratitude done by the teacher to pupils. According to Myanmar tradition it is accepted that if one gives a single knowledge to another, he is regarded as a teacher. So Myanmar people pay attention to the teacher.

Another one is;

"by deeds of loving kindness; by word of loving kindness; by thought of loving kindness; by keeping the house open to them; by supplying them with material needs (such as alms-food)."¹

The monks exhort people to do good deeds and to restrain from evil. Moreover they give how to live in a peaceful life. So people are grateful to monks.

There are another noteworthy poem was written by Nyaungpinthar U Pon Nya for suggesting the concept of gratitude as follows;

"Repay the debt of gratitude specially

Appreciation can make both benefactor and beneficiary live happy.

Ingratitude makes one pain and poor.

Gratitude makes one wealthy like to be full moon."²

This poem suggests that there may be a man who has become a leader, or a man who has become a rich man, or a man who has claimed the social ladder, each of them is under obligation to such benefactors like parents, brothers and sisters, teachers, friends etc. to whom they owe a debt of gratitude which must be paid for some people realize gratitude to their benefactors but they have no chance to repay their debt of gratitude. In Myanmar philosophical point of view, one who realizes the gratitude of others can experience happiness in both lives here and there after.

It is believed that one who just forgets the debt of gratitude can experience unsatisfactory conditions. It will be worse for those who destroy the gratitude to their benefactors. Talking about gratitude is easier but hard to practice it even property. According to Myanmar Buddhism, everybody should try to repay what they have owed as much as they can. Generally most Myanmar people believe that those who repay the debt of gratitude will bear good fruits in many rebirth of the future till the day realized *Nibbāna*.

Myanmar Thought on Gratitude in Myanmar Proverbs

Proverbs are usually introduced in written or spoken language by words "like as" and "as it were." They are essentially similes and it is probable. Proverbs are at least as old as the spoken language and almost certainly older than the written language. Myanmar have enriched and embellished the literary as well as the everyday styles. Many Myanmar people, still use proverbs frequently, whether in formal speech or in daily conversation.

Most Myanmar proverbs express human characteristics, human behavior and human relationship. In Myanmar proverbs, the concept of gratitude can be found as a Myanmar thought. In Myanmar culture gratitude plays a very important role in moral conducts of social relationships. Myanmar people accept that anyone who should follow to repay the debt of

¹ Burma Pitika association (1948), *Digha Nikāya*. Rangoon: Burma pitika association, p.444.

² မာဏဝ (တည်းဖြတ်) (၁၉၈၅) ဆုံးမစာပေါင်းချုပ်ကြီး၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ နှလုံးလှစာပေဖြန့်ချိရေး၊ စာ-၉၅။

gratitude and must refrain from ingratitude to their benefactors.

In one of the famous proverbs, "*Kataññuta Katavedi* (ကတညုတ ကတဝေဒီ) "means that a person who knows gratitude and practices as he knows, it is preached by the Buddha as one of the highest Blessings.

Besides the another proverb, "Feeding is reciprocated by feeds, tending by tending. (ကျွေးတုံကျွေးလှည့်၊ မွေးတုံမွေးလှည့်) suggests the traditional belief of Myanmar people who believe that offsprings should repay their debt to their parents in the latter's old age. In addition, there are some famous proverbs mentioned the great gratitude of parents as follows;

"The gratitude of parents is greater than Mount *Meru*".

(မိဘကျေးဇူး မြင့်မိုရ်ဦး)

"Great is the gratitude of the parents."

(ကျေးဇူးကြီးလှ မိန့်ငံ့ဖ)

The gratitude of parents to their offspring is greater than Mount *Meru* that is accepted by Myanmar ontology. Myanmar people sincerely perform the responsibility to repay their debt of gratitude to their parents.

According to Myanmar thought, every man is indebted to the parents because the parents have done a lot for him since he was young. Parents in any background and in any religion may do the same thing to their offspring.

Furthermore, the proverb, "One must be brave when one is fed. (သူ့ဆန်စားရဲမှ) shows that if one is fed by parents, teachers and employers etc, one should be brave for them who are the benefactors. There are such people who feed other people by good will without thinking any benefit the themselves. If we are fed by those people, even though one takes a bit of rice, one must be brave for them regardless of life as for practicing sense of gratitude.

In addition, "Even for a mouthful of food eaten, one owes gratitude to the food giver." (တလုပ်စားဖူး သူ့ကျေးဇူး) is a well-known proverb that means even that if one takes a bit of meal from, anyone, one should be grateful. However, if one is fed by greed, hate and ignorance for persuading to do what they wanted, one will not feel grateful. When one is fed by a good will, one will feel whole heartedly grateful. Then they willingly repay the debt of gratitude.

However, most people try to forget what they have done for others by patiently. Dishonesty, crookedness and betrayal of trust are bad traits of human nature, but ingratitude is considered as one of the characters of a bad person in Myanmar Buddhist society. Contrast to above mentioned proverbs of gratitude, there are also the proverbs concerning 'ingratitude' as follow;

"Taking shelter in the shade, breaking off branches,"

(အရိပ်နေနေ၊ အခက်ချိုးချိုး)

"It sleeps on leather and gnaws the edges."

(သားရေးပေါ်အိပ် သားရေးနားစား)

These mean that a person makes to be aggrieved to his benefactor when he is staying with him. In this world, there are a lot of benefactors, some are animates but some are inanimates. Among them, building is one of the benefactors. The buildings give the shelter and safe of the human beings. They support to health as well. Moreover they protect human beings from bad climate. So the buildings are inanimate; even so, which are benefactors. There are a

lot of benefactors such inanimate matter in the world. Some people who stay in the buildings owned by the state destroy those buildings. Myanmar people say that if one takes shelter in the shade he should not break off branches. Most Myanmar people accept that although one took shelter in the shade of a tree in a few moments he should understand the sense of gratitude of the tree.

"Where there owes gratitude, then there is only alternate way to be ungrateful." (ကျေးဇူးရှိမှ ကျေးစွပ်)

"An ungrateful person loses his way." (ကျေးဇူးကန့် လမ်းပျောက်)

It means that if a person is ungrateful to his benefactor then he will lose his ambitions. According to Myanmar Buddhists, a person does wrong physically, mentally and verbally by any way, he will face a lot of sufferings; moreover he will lose ambitions in his life.

These proverbs express that one should not do the behavior of ingratitude. So the concept of gratitude, plays an essential role in Myanmar thought and it can be decisive factor to a person who is good or bad.

The Concept of Gratitude in *Lokaniti* and *Dhammaniti*

The *Pāli* word *Niti* is equivalent to 'conduct' in its abstract, and 'guide' in its concrete signification. Treatises of *Niti* are popular in all ages, and serve as a most effective medium of instruction. The term *Niti* in Myanmar is found connected with the following works: the *Lokaniti*, the *Dhammaniti* and the *Rājaniti*. In this paper, it will be focused on the first two treatises in order to achieve the aim of research.

The Concept of Gratitude in *Lokaniti*

The *Lokaniti* is the literature in which there is so much advice for the world. It gives broad minded knowledge for the whole world.

According to *Lokaniti*

"To dwell in a foul and cramped place is unpleasant. More unpleasant than this is to dwell with a hated enemy; most unpleasant of all is to dwell with one who knows not gratitude."¹

In this sense living with one ungrateful is a greater hardship still because ungrateful person is most of the time careless for other's gratitude or other qualities of anyone. Actually, gratitude is closely connected with other qualities. However, people are more serious gratitude for those who are in good qualities such as morality and who give advice such as teachers. According to Buddhism, gratitude is like precious jewels. Every jewel can be worn by anyone who makes physically beautiful, but the jewel of gratitude can make everyone mentally beautiful when it is practiced with heart.

According to Buddhism, we should not destroy not only animate gratitude but also the gratitude of inanimate. Therefore, one should not destroy even the branches of the tree under which once one took a rest because he had much greater hardship in his life. The ungrateful person can easily break the gratitude of animate and inanimate. So, he is considered as a bad person.

The man who knows the gratitude is considered as a good man. And the man who does not know the gratitude is considered as a bad man.

¹ U Sein Tun (1962). *The Lokaniti*. Mandalay University research council publication. p.129.

"A person grieves not at all, having put aside anger; the sage praises the abandonment or'hypocrisy; bear with the harsh language of all: the righteous say that this forbearance is excellent."¹

Generally good people have a characteristic remembering gratitude of the others. Particularly, when they are angry with one who is their benefactor, they are not happy to be angry with such persons. Even when they are angry with them, they try to remember their gratitude to get rid of the anger with them. According to Myanmar Buddhist culture, remembering gratitude of others is one of the ways to get rid of anger. In *Lokakiti*, it can be seen that getting rid of the anger, remembering gratitude of others and a character of a good person are closely connected with one another.

The Concept of Gratitude in *Dhammaniti*

The *Dhammaniti* gives all good spiritual values of human being. If one follows the instructions of *Dhammaniti*, one will be a good person, praised by the wise, and will be in success without any interference.

One of the well-known verses in *Dhammaniti* is;

"That wise man, certainly, who is imbued with gratitude and knows how to perform a grateful act is a good friend, a devoted and a staunch one; he does zealously what is necessary for one in distress: people in this world say that one of such a nature is a good man."²

Actually in daily life, everyone must accompany with one or more friends. It is necessary to find good friends. According to *Dhammaniti*, one who knows a sense of gratitude is called a good friend and a wise man. Therefore, gratitude is an'important factor to find a good friend. The Buddha is not only a teacher to guide people to *Nibbana* but also social teacher who shows us how to find a good friend. The other verses in *Dhammaniti* are,

"A wise man should spurn one who is avaricious irritable, proud, arrogant, idle, and covetous; he should spurn also one who is remiss, addicted to drink, slothful, hypocritical, and niggardly."³

"One given to sleep, one discontented, one ungrateful, and one without confidence in himself - these are four never able to acquire good behavior."⁴

In this world, one who neglects gratitude is included in those who should not accompany, according to *Dhammaniti*. In Myanmar culture, most Myanmar people understand the gratitude of parents. They try to help the parents' activity as-much as > they can for the debt of gratitude to the parents because they are well-nourished and brought up by the parents in different ways' when they were young. The Buddha preached the gratitude of the parents. According to *Dhammaniti*,

"Compare with a mother's love, the earth is like a bamboo-leaf, a *Cakkavdla* like a needle's eye, Mount *Meru* an anthill, the ocean a water-bowl."⁵

Dhammaniti, we can see how much the Buddha was serious about the mother love. The Buddha sometimes gave example the mother's love as Mount Meru, sometimes as *Cakkavdla*, sometimes as earth and sometime as ocean. When compared the mother's love with Mount

¹ James Gary (1886) *The Niti Literature of Burma*, London: Trubner Co.p.13.

² James Gary (1886) *The Niti Literature of Burma*, London: Trubner & Co.p.13.

³ Ibid., p.42.

⁴ Ibid. p.107.

⁵ Ibid.. p.115.

Meru, is as small as ant-hill; *Cakkavdla* is as small as a needle's eye, the ocean is as small as a water-bowl and the earth is as small as a bamboo-leaf.

Another verse of *Dhammaniti* also mentions the gratitude of parents in another point of view as follow:

"Parents are the first teachers of their offspring: they are spoken of as *Brahmas*, and are worthy of reverence."¹

In this verse, the parents are the first teachers because all the children in the world were closely taught by the parents when they were young before they attended the school. *All* the children have to learn at home what they should do or should not do things right or wrong, good or bad, correct or incorrect by the parents.

The Buddha compared the parents with *Brahmas* which is known as God. In the Buddhist point of view, *Brahma* is a highest spiritual being imbued with loving-kindness (*Mettā*), compassion (*Karunā*), appreciative joy (*Muditā*), equanimity (*Upekkhā*). The parents are also imbued with loving-kindness (*Mettā*), compassion (*Karunā*), appreciative joy (*Muditā*), equanimity (*Upekkhā*) for the children. So the Buddha compared the parents with the *Brahmas*.

Another verse of *Dhammaniti* is:

"Therefore should they reverence them: they should honour them by food and by drink, by appeal and by bedding"²

"By anointing and by bathing, by washing the feet, by attending to their wants and by waiting upon them, should a wise man cherish his parents: people will praise him in this existence; in the next he will find delight in heaven."³

Because of such highest and profound gratitude of the parents, Myanmar people believe that offspring's should reverence and honor them, by supporting whatever they need such as food, clothing and so on. Those kinds of offspring who provide the parents their necessities will be praised by the wise and they will experience good rebirth hereafter. Therefore Myanmar people accept that every offspring should respect and honor to the parents and take care them as much as they can for repaying the debt of gratitude they owed.

In *Dhammaniti*, ten persons are those whom we should not do wrong and ungrateful behaviors. If one does wrong and he is ungrateful behavior for them, one will experience bad result in *samsara*, The following statement shows this conception.

"Buddha a *Paccekkabuddha*, an *Arahat*, a chief disciple, a mother, a father, one worthy of reverence, a teacher, a benefactor, a preacher-these ten by the wise should be known as rion offenders."⁴

As the time went on, the way of thinking, the way of behaving and the way they define such social values are also changed through the development. In these days cherishing the parents or taking care of them is not a really essential role for getting a good position of one's job but the one's skill on his job, education and experience are more important than fulfilling social duties in the ancient time. However, this sense and practice of gratitude is still in the heart of the Myanmar people.

¹ Ibid., 116.

² Ibid., 116.

³ Ibid., 116.

⁴ Ibid., p.104.

The Significant Role of Gratitude in Solving the Ethical Problems

Ethics is one of the branches of philosophy. It is an attempt to clarify how people ought to live. It elucidates the nature of a, good person and good life, telling us how to flourish or live well and it characterizes the obligations we have, enabling us to identify what we must do. Ethics is the wide ranging study of right and wrong, as well as good and bad, insofar as these pertain to conduct and character. In this respect, there are five categories of the concept of gratitude can be defined from the viewpoint of ethics.

The Gratitude as the principle of "Ought"

There may be three ways concerning gratitude: doing gratitude. repaying gratitude and doing ingratitude. They exist as the "is", However doing and repaying gratitude exist as the "ought". So, it can be said that gratitude is the principle of ought.

The Gratitude as the Deontological Principle

A person who keeps promise and knows gratitude on the state is prescribed by the constitution of a particular country. The country may be difficult to be governed without the sense of gratitude. If the people are ungrateful, the country may be in chaos and irrespective of time or era. If people lack a mutual sense of gratitude towards one another, there would be something unwanted like a disaster. A person who knows gratitude to the state is a good citizen.

Myanmar people accept that there are clear obligations they have as human beings, such as the duty to thank those who helped them. The Myanmar philosophical thoughts of duties are found in the verse of *Thingazā Sayādaw*. In Myanmar society, most people do their duties in relation to others such as repaying debt of gratitude. Most Myanmar people follow these rules of duties. According to Myanmar Buddhist tradition, if they perform these duties, they are morally good. In Myanmar society, if a person neglects the gratitude of others, he can be regarded as a bad man. While a person supports and ministers one's parents, he should not expect such good consequences as obtaining inheritance, and achieving great praise. In the case of repaying and doing gratitude one should do by good *cetanā*. So it can be said that gratitude is the deontological principle.

The Gratitude as the Principle of Universalistic View

Everyone ought to act his or her interest but their motives are to bring about good results to human society. For example, Mother Teresa did what she wanted (i.e. helping others). According to Buddhist philosophy, one should not do anything in extreme way. The Buddha preached that there are three kinds of man who work for the benefits: the first one is working for oneself alone, the second one is working for the others only, the third one is working for both oneself and others fairly. However the Buddha praised the third one who is working for both oneself and others fairly. If one does an action, he needs to consider the balance between altruism and egoism. The practice of doing and repaying gratitude is concerned with the relationship of both one's member of family and others in society. And there should be benefactors who are grateful. Only then will a particular society be at peace and convenience. So gratitude is considered as the principle of universalistic view which is to work for all including oneself.

Egoism is original in man's nature, while altruism is connected with learning or being encouraged by personality. So one should serve a beneficial work for people including oneself. Thus it can be said that gratitude is the principle of universalistic view.

Gratitude as the Absolute and Repaying Gratitude as the Relative

According to Myanmar Buddhist tradition, every offspring must repay the debt of gratitude to their parents. They should not be ungrateful to their parents under any circumstance. This doctrine should be accepted as the absolute. But some ideas cannot be considered as an absolute truth. For example, people repay the debt of gratitude to their benefactors who either are good or immoral persons by proper and improper means. One needs to think critically to do repaying gratitude. If one does not have true knowledge, one may practice gratitude in a wrong way. In the case of repaying gratitude, one should notice one's own benefactor who is either morally good or bad and should he try to help his benefactor to be a good person. And he chooses a means of repaying gratitude. In Buddhist philosophy one must do everything with wise attention.

There is the gratitude in the world certainly. But there may be various means to repaying gratitude; or there may be many ungrateful people in the world. So it can be said that gratitude is the absolute; while repaying gratitude is the relative.

Doing Gratitude as the Principle of Keeping Balance between "Subjective" and "Objective"

People made to fulfill the aims of themselves and human society in which they live. This is a form of ethical objective. If one does for what all human beings need, what makes them beneficial and for fulfilling their aims, it is called objective. A person does gratitude to one as family or relatives or race or country and repays gratitude to his or her benefactors. On the other hand, one may do gratitude to all human beings or to *loka* (world). So, doing and repaying gratitude is objective in one ethical aspect and it is subjective in another aspect. So it can be said that doing gratitude is the principle of keeping balance between subjective and objective.

Conclusion

In Myanmar society, a person who knows gratitude can be regarded as a good person. According to Buddhism, there are five characters of a good person. Among them, understanding gratitude of others and repaying the debt of gratitude to the benefactors are essential characters of a good person. The disposition of the ungrateful man, who does not bear in mind any good rendered to him, is the character of the wicked person. Knowing and practicing gratitude is one of the characters of a good man in Myanmar society.

Most Myanmar people believe that those who know gratitude and practice for ten great benefactors will receive good result both in this present life and the next life of existence. Moreover their repaying debt of gratitude is one of the highest blessings. If a person does not know and neglect gratitude to others or he is ingratitude, he can be regarded as a bail man.

In Myanmar Buddhist society, there may be two aspects in practicing gratitude. They are Act and Agent. In the aspect of Act, there are two parts, namely, the characteristics of the Act itself and the consequences. The Act itself must be good physical deeds, good verbal deeds and good mental deeds. It means that the act itself must not be morally bad.

The consequences of Act may be good either person concerned or all human beings. In the aspect of Agent, there are two parts, namely, intention and wisdom (*ñāṇa*). The Agent has to do with good intention (good *cetanā*) and he or she to do with wise attention.,

In practicing gratitude, one does not violate rights and laws. In Buddhist philosophy, one must do everything with wise attention and *hiri-ottapa* (moral shame and moral dread). In

the case of repaying gratitude one should notice one's benefactor who is morally good or bad. If a benefactor told him/ her to do something for repaying the debt of gratitude, one should think that it is good or bad. If it is hard to refuse his authority, he should do with careful consideration. If one's benefactor is a bad person or immoral person, he should guide a right way to his benefactor. This is a good man repaying the debt of gratitude. When a person does or repays gratitude, he or she should do to get good consequences for one's family or relatives or race or country. At the same time, one may do gratitude for welfare of all human beings or for *loka* (world).

In society when one does gratitude to others; or one repays gratitude to one's benefactors, one should not expect anything for one's. Everyone ought to do gratitude by good will (*cetanā*) and to have good results to human society.

The concept of gratitude as an ethical principle is based on the Buddhist teachings that indicates how should one practice to be a good person. Therefore the concept of gratitude plays an essential role in Myanmar thought and it can be a decisive factor to a person who is good or bad.

The Basic Education syllabus should invariably be drawn up lessons on gratitude of animal world as well as of natural world. Then the youths will realize the essential role of appreciation gratitude and they would be practiced how to do for the benefits of their surroundings. If people lack a mutual sense of gratitude towards one another, whatever plans and programs are set up for their country and whatever is done, will come to nothing. That is why *kataññuta Mangala* is essential in human society. So, gratitude still plays an active role in every society. Nevertheless it should be considered as a crucial factor for promoting personal virtue as well as common moral conscience of public sector in order to sustain the development of social relationship of local and global welfare in the Age of Knowledge.

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ကြည်ရှင်၊ မောင်။ (တည်းဖြတ်) (၁၉၇၃)။ *ဓမ္မနိတိ*၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ညွန့်ညွန့်နှင့်မောင်များ။

ခင်မောင်ကြီး၊ ဦး။ (၁၉၉၉)။ *စာဏကျနိတိ၊ လောကနိတိ*၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ အောင်မြင့်ထွန်း ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

ချမ်းဟန်၊ အမ်အေ။ (၂၀၀၈)။ *ဗုဒ္ဓစာပေလာမြန်မာ့ရိုးရာ စကားပုံများ*၊ မန္တလေးမြို့၊ သာသနာတော် ထွန်းကားပြန့်ပွားရေးဦးစီးဌာန။

ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင် (၁၃၆၆)။ *သူတော်ကောင်း လက္ခဏာတရားတော်*၊ အမရပူရမြို့၊ နယူးဘာမား အော့ဖ်ဆက် ပိဋကပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

တိုးလှ (၂၀၀၅)၊ **မြန်မာ့ကျင့်ဝတ်သိက္ခာနှင့် လူမှုတန်ဖိုး**၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ နဝရတ်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

မာဏဝ (တည်းဖြတ်) (၁၉၈၅)၊ **ဆုံးမစာပေါင်းချုပ်ကြီး**၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ နှလုံးလှစာပေဖြန့်ချိရေး။

မြင့်ကြည်၊ ဦး၊ (တည်းဖြတ်) (၁၉၉၁)၊ **မြန်မာစာညွန့်ပေါင်းကျမ်း** (ပထမတွဲ) ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ စာပေဗိမာန် အဖွဲ့။

သုခ (၂၀၀၇)၊ **လောကနီတိ**၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ပါရမီစာပေ။

သန်းမောင်ဦး၊ (ပန်းတိုင်) (၂၀၀၁)၊ **လောကရေးရာဆုံးမစာ ပျို့ကဗျာများ**၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ပန်းတိုင်စာပေ။

သိန်းမော်ဦး၊ (၁၉၅၃)၊ **သုံးဆယ့်ရှစ်ဖြာမင်္ဂလာပေါင်းချုပ်ကျမ်း** (ပထမတွဲ)၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ဟံသာဝတီ ပိဋကတ်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

အောင်သိန်းဦး၊ (တည်းဖြတ်) (၁၉၆၀)၊ **ဟံသာဝတီဆုံးမစာပေါင်းချုပ်**၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ဟံသာဝတီ ပိဋကတ်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။