

# Myanmar Proverb and Their Ethical Foundations of Myanmar's Way of Living

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## ABSTRACT

A society grows through a network of relationship , which is mutually intertwined and interdependent. Moral conduct is important for good social relationship. Every race or nationality must obey their respective disciplines, moral laws and moral duties. The moral laws and duties point out the difference between the evil deeds and good deeds or vice and virtue. It also suggests that each person should do good things and avoid evil things. It is morality and moral behaviour that maintains peace, stability and harmony in society. Myanmar Proverbs exphasize on the ethical culture of philosophy. In other words, Myanmar ethical foundation is based on the ethical principle of "Reciprocity". This foundational principle is the most important aspect in Myanmar moral thought.

**Key Words:** Moral conduct, Moral law, Moral Dutie, Warmony, Ethical Foundation:

## INTRODUCTION

Everybody needs to take into consideration the welfare of the others who belong to the group. That is why, there are laws governing the society. But more than that, there are more or moral rules that guide and control each person's behavior which are more fundamental than the stated earlier. Hence, there is a great need for the understanding of these moral rules and guidelines and the underlying concepts and their terms.

Morality in general and moral rules and conduct were founded upon moral terms and they are the essence of cultural and moral life. They clarify the ethical values. Moral conduct is the principle of human behavior that promotes and orderly peaceful existence in a community. Rules of moral conduct are found every society.

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## THE ROLE OF PROVERB IN MYANMAR TRADITION

Myanmar literature has historically been a very important aspect of Myanmar life. The Myanmar culture has been heavily influenced by Buddhism. Historically, Myanmar culture was based on Buddhist religious norms and Buddhist ethics.

Throughout the age's philosophers, religious leaders, visionaries and others of influence have left their mark on the world. Many have provided us with inspiration and words of wisdom. Some of these words of wisdom are in the form of proverbs. Proverbs are timeless saying that make us ponder life, the universe, human life and the many wonders of the world.

The word " proverbs" mean in Myanmar "*sagabaunj*". It means " similar saying". A proverb may have more than one implication, depending on the circumstances in which it is used. A proverb is a short pithy saying in general use, stating a general truth or piece of advice. This short listing features most of the famous proverbs in Myanmar culture. Myanmar proverbs are essentially similes or parables, are unique. Some Myanmar proverbs are influenced by the very rich cultural values and the strong belief of Buddhism. Myanmar still use these sayings frequently, whether in formal speech or in daily conversation. Myanmar proverbs express the views of man about their fellow men and about human life in its various aspects. A Myanmar proverb throws light on diverse' characteristics of human beings. Myanmar proverbs reveal the human character, human behavior, and human relationships. They also refer to the moral essence in Myanmar ethical thought.

### The Proverbs Concerning "Evil Deeds"

There are various usages of moral terms in Myanmar proverb. The moral term in Myanmar proverb represents Myanmar ethical norms and Myanmar cultural values. The following Myanmar proverbs are concerned with the Myanmar moral manner.

For example,

1. To shave off a spot on the already bald head.
2. One usually feels jealous upon the other who out scores.
3. One cannot see the exudation of his own eyes, but he can see that of others.

The above Myanmar proverbs are concerned with the ethical concepts of "evil deeds" of "*ducaritas*" , "*labha*" or " greed" and "*dosa*" or " anger" . These concepts are opposites of "*Mettā*" , "*Karunā*" and "*Khanti*".

These proverbs give three principal moral lessons

1. Myanmar ethics is not concerned with the egoistic outlook.
2. Myanmar ethics is concerned with the optimism.
3. Myanmar ethics is also practical in their outlook.

Thus "*Mettā*" , "*Karunā*" and "*Khanti*" are key terms for Myanmar ethical foundations.

### The Proverbs Concerning "The Role of Verbal Action in Myanmar Life"

In Myanmar ethical life, verbal action is also important. So some Myanmar proverbs refer to this ethical idea. The following are concerned with the role of verbal action in Myanmar ethical life.

For example,

1. If one talks a lot, some words may disclose the true mentality of the speaker.
2. Making too serious a promise, one may become a slave.
3. Eat up all the rice, but not speak out all to say.

The above proverbs can explain the morality of verbal action in Myanmar life. These proverbs suggest not to speak too much and to control speech.

### The Proverbs Concerning " Good Deeds"

In Myanmar social and cultural tradition, " Good Deed" is the essential moral conduct for Myanmar's life. The following Myanmar proverbs are expressing the Myanmar ways of life.

For example,

1. The existence of a small midriver island depends on the net work of roots of the reeds, and the everlasting growth of the reeds depends on the firm existence of the island mass.
2. A deed, both subsistent and meritorious.
3. If the crow shows respect to the crow-pheasant, then the latter will do the same to the crow.
4. Behave modestly and keep higher ambitions.
5. Behave like a banyan tree, as well as like a cat.
6. Don't let the wet hand become dry.  
Don't turn your friends into foes.
7. One may be killed if he creeps underneath an old tree.  
But, one may never be killed if he succumbs to a person.

These selected Myanmar proverbs represent " Morally good person". According to Myanmar tradition, by willing moral good a person becomes good. As for Myanmar tradition, to strive for the moral good is life's purpose and our obligation. These Myanmar proverbs provide the following ethical principles.

In the above proverbs, Good Deed (okp&dwf) is to make a goodness or to guide every person ways of life. Good Deed (okp&dwf) is reflects the *Mettā*Spirit, *Karunā*Spirit. These terms makes pay respect for Myanmar social life. To makes "gentleness" for Myanmar personality. "Harmony", "Unity" and " Sympathy" are the basic social reality for Myanmar ethical life. This moral term gives harmony and unity for human life. So Good Deed (okp&dwf) is guiding principle for Myanmar peoples.

### The Proverbs Concerning "The Value of *Khanti* in Myanmar Life"

In *Theravāda* Buddhist tradition, "*Khanti Pārami*" is also important. As for Myanmar cultural life, "*Khanti*" minded is very important in our daily life. The following Myanmar proverbs refer to the concept of "*Khanti*".

For example,

1. If one accepts the law of Karma, one can easily dispell one's fury."
- 2.If one entertains fury or begins with fury, he will make mistakes.
3. The fury of a wise man does not peep out.
4. Tolerance leads to *Nirvana*.
5. The rudeness should be conquered by gentleness.

The following moral lessons can infer from the above Myanmar proverbs.

1. For Myanmar, the concept "*Khanti*" is not only Buddhist term but also the key term of Myanmar moral conduct.
2. The "*Khanti* practice" is to support the ultimate aim of "*Nivana*" for all Buddhist.
3. The moral concept "*khanti*" can produce the other moral concepts" kindness", "gentle", "sympathy". So the concept "*khanti*" is a key term for Myanmar moral thought.

### The Proverbs Concerning " The law of *Kamma* in Myanmar Life"

The Law of *Kamma* is important in *Theravada* Buddhism. *Theravada* Buddhism is the basic foundation for Myanmar Ethics. In Myanmar Buddhist tradition, physical action, verbal action and mental action are three main actions in human life.

The Following Myanmar proverbs are concerned with the law of *Kamma*.

For example,

1. The result or Karmic effects of one's own deeds.
2. Do the injustice, comes the unhappy end.

The following principles are deduced from the above Myanmar proverbs.

- 1.The Law of *Kamma* is important in *Theravada* Buddhism and Buddhist Ethics.
2. In this human world everyone can create his own karma just as he pleases.
3. Every human perform these *Kamma* or three actions at all waking hours.
4. The law of *Kamma* is a moral law in Myanmar society.

### The Proverbs Concerning "Human Nature"

Some of the Myanmar proverbs explain the human conduct and their ethical life.

For example,

1. The value of a flower plant is the blossom.  
The value of a person is the character.

2. The son of a fool behaves haughtily.  
The son of a wise person behaves politely.  
The behaviour of a person reflects on his off springs.
3. The person who really endears you is your relatives.  
The dish which savours well is a best dish.

These proverbs express the social reality in Myanmar ways of life.

The following moral lessons come from the above Myanmar proverbs.

1. The environment condition is important for Myanmar ethics.
2. These proverbs represent the " good man" , bad man", "good deed", evil deed" and the idea of " what ought to be done".

### **The Proverbs Concerning " The Value of Gratitude"**

In Myanmar cultural tradition, the concept of "Gratitude" is very important for all human beings. The following proverbs show the power of gratitude.

For example,

1. If one wishes to beat the watch-dog, he should take into consideration of its master's favour.
2. Even for a mouthful of food eaten, one owes gratitude to the host.

These Myanmar proverbs are influenced by the very rich cultural values and the strong belief of Buddhism. English word gratitude in pāli in Katannuta.

The word Katannuta consists of two parts: "kata" and " annuta" . Katannuta means knowing or recognizing what has been done to one , that is to say knowing and recognizing what has been done to one for one's benefit. Gratitude is rather more emotional but the connotation of katannuata is rather more intellectual, more cognitive. It makes it clear that what is called gratitude involves an element of knowledge-knowledge of what has been done to one or for one for benefit. If a person does not know that something has been beneficial there will be no gratitude.

The above proverbs give the following principles.

1. The moral concept " Gratitude" is important for social life.
2. The concept means in Myanmar "Gratitude" is a positive emotion or attitude in acknowledgment of a benefit that one has received or will receive.
3. To know gratitude is value of human being.

Thus the term "Gratitude "(aus;Zl;w&m;)is important for Myanmar society.

The above selected Myanmar proverbs show that Myanmar personality, Myanmar national spirit, and Myanmar culture and Myanmar philosophical thought. So Myanmar proverbs may be regarded as the moral criteria for Myanmar moral thought.

### **CONCLUSION**

Myanmar proverbs contribute to spiritual development for Myanmar people. They can give guidance on how man should live socially, morally and spiritually to strengthen harmony in society. Illustrations of some Myanmar proverbs have the ethical principles they give. For instance, the their Myanmar moral concepts "Mettā" and " Khanti" are essentially useful principles in a Myanmar Buddhis's life. Because they provide him/her certain

guidelines to be a useful member of the social group with its code of moral conduct. In other words "Loving-Kindness or Mettā" and " Patience of Khanti " provides some guidelines on how to be a morally good person and good member of society.

Another moral term "Sympathy" , " Gatitude" , "Compassion or Karuna" , " Care" can build up the Myanmar ethical foundation. They make effective principles for Myanmar moral life. These principles guide a man as an end in himself and the need to do one's duty which can be found as the basic principle of conduct in Myanmar society.

Thus, Myanmar moral terms, "Loving-kindness or Mattā (arwÅm) " , " Patience or Khant (onf;cHrI)", " Sympathy (pmemrI)", "Gratitude (aus;Zl;w&m;)", " Compassion or Karuna(u½kPm)", and " Care (umuG,fapmifha&Smufjcf;)", had focused on the value of life.

In this way, Myanmar proverbs stand as the building bricks of the foundation of Myanmar moral thought. It may be concluded that the study of Myanmar proverbs leads to the sound understanding of the ethical foundations of morality in Myanmar culture and society.

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