

Culture and Mon Aesthetic Literature

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Abstract

This paper presents the nature of culture from Myanmar point of view. Although culture has been changing throughout the history, it is still alive. It can be said that culture exists as long as living human beings exist in the world. Since the historic time, there has been standard to evaluate culture. The standards for today is 38 Mingalar Dhama, Thein Gar Law Warda Sutta, Tin Ga Ha Dhama, A Pari Yarni etc. The standard method to evaluate culture is produced by the combination of pre- historic standard and today's standard. Mon literature compiled by Sayar Gyi U Lu Phay win is chosen as study field. This thesis is edited by Ah Shin War Ya Ma and published by Myanmar Research Association in 1958.

Since there are many things to study concerning with the nature of culture, we neglect the product section. The cultural standard of Mon ethnic group can be guessed through studying the cultural norm that keeps with the facts from Mon Aesthetic Literature Anthology. It can be seen that there are plethora of facts to extract for each and every standard norm. Mon Aesthetic Literature Anthology proofs Mon ethnic group's valuable culture. As we can see the custom, dignity, belief and valuable culture from this study, there can be fruitful result of understanding between two ethnic groups and strengthens the unity. Moreover, from this research, there is a possibility of emerging a route to excavate all literary sectors.

Introduction

Each and every nationality has its own custom. They are trying to innovate the nature to be more civilized. This can be seen in their things, their governance, custom and literature. Mon Aesthetic Literature Anthology that reflects the culture of Mon ethnic group is defined as study field in this paper. Most of the essays are based on 550 Jartaka.

The culture of Mon ethnic group can be seen in Mon aesthetic literature. Aesthetic literature can give moral lessons. The new generation is expected to be good citizens who can build the foundation of cultural building of the country.

Each and every essay guides the youths to avoid bad deeds such as cruelty and inhumanity, and to do good deeds. These essays guide it is necessary to know which manner and custom is called culture. As the higher cultural standard of all youths is a good result for the country and we can take action to raise the

higher cultural standard.

U Lu Phay Win (compiler) (1262-1344)

U Lu Phay Win was the son of U Yan Win and Daw Mi Mi. He was born in Mawlamyine on 9th waxing day of Na Yone (20th June, 1900). He passed the matriculation examination from Government High School in 1917. He continued college education at Yangon College.

He went to Calcutta to take the exam in Pale as a private scholar. He stood first at first class honors class. He was awarded Honorary Gold Medal. He got degree from Calcutta University.

U Lu Phay Win had served for as a senior officer of Stone Inscription department of Myanmar for many years from 1936 to 1957. He was entitled Thiri Pyan Chi in 1949. He got retired as a senior officer of Archaeology Department in 1957.

U Lu Phay Win died on 9th Waxing Day of Na Yone 1344 (31st May, 1982) while he was compiling Buddha literature in English.

Nature of Culture

The meaning of culture includes the essence of gentleness. The nature of cruelty, rudeness is automatically got rid of. Human beings are caged in the darkness of anger, silliness and pride that is the cause of impoliteness. Impoliteness can be got rid of by Sila.

“ Culture is descending wisdom, knowledge, philosophy and creation of a particular society that has innovated the environment suits to their life, and developed principles, laws, custom and behavior to get on well with each other in society.”

According to anthropologists, culture of a particular ethnic group is the things they used from cradle to grave, the language they speak, their dressing system, traditional customs philosophy, handy craft, art and music.”

According to Myanmar, culture is defined as gentleness in both mind(attitude) and body (behavior).

Training for gentle mind comes before training for gentle behavior. In the Myanmar dictionary ‘polite’ is defined as follows:

- Gentle behavior, smoothness
- Admirable
- Reaching for high living standard

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Culture is defined as follows:

- Smooth and cleverness
- Developing living standard
- Traditionally preserving customs

Referring to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, culture is defined as:

- (1) advanced development of the human power development of body, mind and spirit by training and experience.
- (2) Evidence of intellectual development of arts and sciences in human society
- (3) State of intellectual development among people.

There is, however, a clear cut between civilization and culture in English, we use culture only in Myanmar. According to Dagon U Hla Bay, " Culture means culture. This word, culture is very meaningful. To say clearly, culture is not rudeness, and rudeness is the opposite of culture."

"Culture relates to the movement and acting of the people from full of world's surface. Thus, culture can be excerpted from all movement, appearance, concept, philosophy, and attitude of human beings. Culture is divided into three main factors such as products, behavior and value system. All these three factors – products, behavior and value system change according to time.

Each and every factor is critically changing. In value system, behavior is changing based on the fact of praising for bravery, longing for peace, goodness of tolerance, bitterness of greed, goodness of avoiding bad deeds, goodness of knowing gratitude and taking responsibility, goodness of sympathy and goodness unity and loyalty. The appropriate products are going to be consumed for this change.

Like the unseparable words such as darkness and light, hot and cold, rudeness and politeness are also unseparable.

It is light if it isn't darkness, and it is darkness if it isn't light. Similarly, it is human nature of unseparateable from politeness and rudeness, many people stuck to one thing. That is why human beings should avoid from penetrating of rudeness. The nature of rudeness is originally rude. The nature of politeness is not natural phenomenon. It is artifact. This means that we should make clear of two words (NATURE) and (CULTURE). To say frankly in Myanmar, culture is cleverness.

So, the youths can be changed to be clever, smart and polite. By doing so, the behavior and manner will be smarter and more polite.

There are two kinds of culture-customary culture and ethical culture.

Way of paying respect from senior to junior, ways of showing loving kindness between one another, ways of celebrating wedding ceremony and noviciation ceremony are different according to the commitment of

different people.

There is no definite principles. The right principle and the wrong principle can be defined according to the public's perception.

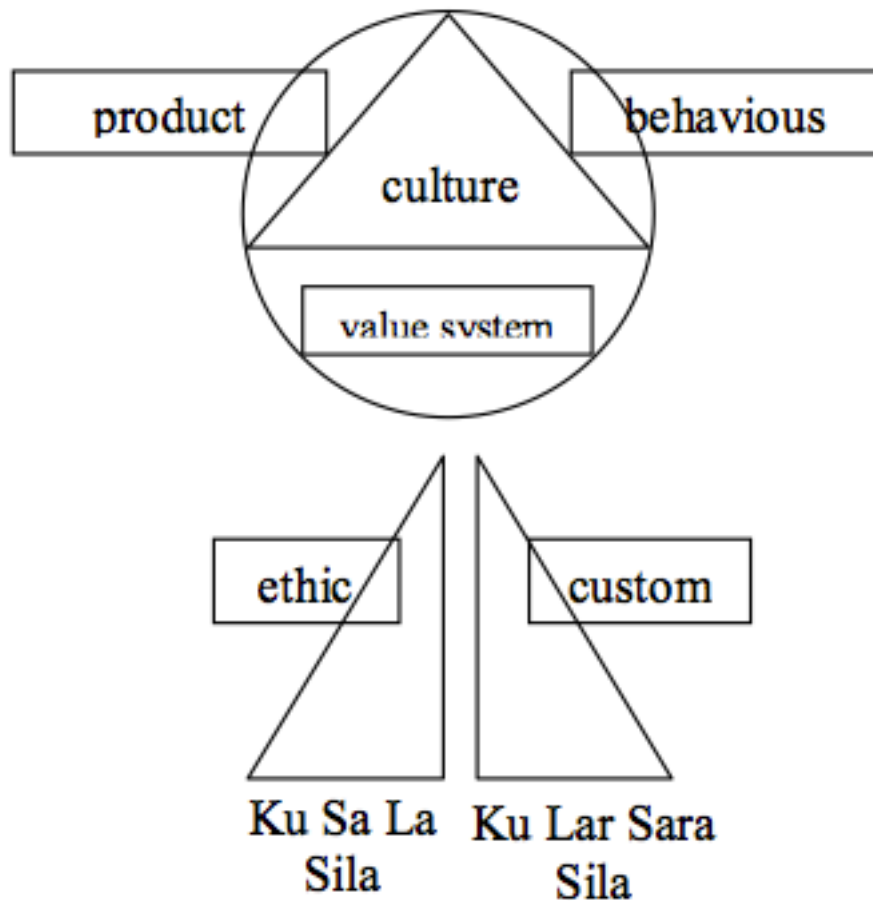
As ethical culture is related to the whole human society, there is definite rules and regulation to it.
There is truth at anywhere and in any country.

We can't consider that ethical culture and customary culture are the same.

Because as mentioned above, the ethic and Sila that makes politeness has two things such as Kusala Sila (good deeds ethic).

There is not only goodness and virtue but also bad deeds and wrong things in Kular Sara.

Kusala Sila is always right and relates directly to ethical culture. This relationship can be seen at the following diagram.



"Sila is practicing". On the other hand the things to practice until they become habits.

The repetition practice to become something or practicing to quit a particular habit or not to become is called Sila.

There is an interrelationship between Sila and ethic, and they help each other.

"It is impossible for a misbehave student to become a degree holder or an educated one".

He can be an educated person only if he has suitable ethical behavior.

It is impossible for him to be skillful at respective academic field if he addicts to drugs, alcohol and gambling; and vice visa an educated person doesn't dare to misbehave as gipsys in the streets. He doesn't dare to commit smuggling or he doesn't dare to commit theft for the sake of his own status.

When educated people quarrel with each other, they don't dare to shout at or say rubbish words like fishmongers.

This is the way supports Sila. Just with Sila, there may be brighter wisdom.

With brighter wisdom, we can determine what is right and what is wrong very clearly. Thus, we can build justice and implement.

The youths are those who will construct culture in future. They have to keep good deeds (sila) throughout their life.

So, it can be said that literature is very effective in creating a situation and environment to guide aesthetic cultural practice.

Mon ethnic group should have relied on Mon aesthetic literature to produce smarter youths at information and communication Technology age.

Culture and Mon Aesthetic Literature

Literature is treasure for men, the essence of men, the valuable jewel that men keep with reverence and esteem, the bank building to men for general consuming.

The Culture of a particular nationality can be found in their literature. Literature is the best area to excavate culture. The nationality that has built the ivory tower of literary work of classical standard can evaluate their characters and life situation such as the status of kingship, the class of noblemen, the classification of higher rank and lower rank, the increasing and decreasing situation of religion, and the politeness through aesthetic literature.

The culture of Mon nationality can be seen at Mon aesthetic literature.

Pyu region and Mon region in Myanmar had been dominated by Subordinate of Nan Saw tribe since 832-835 A.D.

Since then, the Pyus and the Mons had already established built the foundation of cultural building.

The King of Bagan dynasty, King Anaw Ra Htar had invaded Tha Htone and brought pitakas (the three repositories of Buddhist scriptures), religion and culture to Bagan. So, we see that the culture of Mon had grown together with the Buddhist religion since early years.

Due to the devotion of Buddhist, the Mons had got a chance to learn the teaching of Buddhist. All

historians have confessed that the human society and culture have developed because of religion. Human beings gave up sacrificing due to the preaching to Gaw Da Ma (Lord Buddha).

Lord Buddha changed the era of arising the four cardinal virtues or sublime states of mind loving kindness, compassion, sympathy etc in all beings, human beings, celestial beings and brahmas.

The teachings of Lord Buddha can be studied in 550 jartaka, Buddha's life stories. There are many essays based on 550 jartaka in Mon aesthetic literature. That is why Mon aesthetic literature not only shows Mon culture but also guides the Mon nationality to be smarter.

There should be a value system to certify what is culture. The product is not included in this paper. Behaviour, concept of ethic and the tasks based on these two facts are coordinated.

A cultural evaluate system of historic era is considered bravery on generosity, hospitality, achieving peace, loving kindness, forgiveness, awareness of gratitude, taking responsibility, modesty, sympathy, unity and loyalty.

A standard value is prescribed with the combination of the facts mentioned above, the Four Thin Ga Ha Dharma (practice for Layman), Thein Gar Law War Da Sutta and 38 blessings Dhama.

- Believe in three noble gems of Buddhist
- Cooperation
- Serving for others selflessly
- Brave for responsibility
- Associate with wise noble men
- Awareness of gratitude and pay for it
- Speak politely
- Living with the practice of this system is called culture.

Belief in three noble gems of Buddha

Because of the two traders brothers Ta Paw and Ta Paung, the Shwe Da Gon pagoda was built on the hill of Thein Goke Ta Ra. The victorious religious flag could be flown. In the essay of Ta Paw, Ta Paung and the history of Shaw Da Gon Pagoda, the two brothers brought the secret hair back to their native land, the country Okkalapa. When they arrived back, they built the pagoda on Thein Goke Ta Ra hill. The pagoda was named Kyaik La Gon in Mon language.

One reason why the Mons are proud of themselves is that they are the pioneers to meet and pay respect to Lord Buddha.

Another reason is the ability in building Shwe Da Gon Pagoda Proudly. Shwe Da Gon Pagoda, the great landmark of the union, is cultural building of the union. These are excavation of religion and documentary of religion.

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Shin Saw Pu (Mon Queen) and King Dhamma Seti innovated the Shwe Da Gon pagoda. They are religious culture. Lord Buddha is a human being. Although, he can perform unbelievable things. Lord Buddha can inspire the mind and spirit of human beings. That is why human beings follow the teaching of Lord Buddha.

Because of strong belief, human beings renovate the religious buildings and resign their effort to keep the religion.

The world will get peace only if the religion is alive. These are the description of religious culture. In the story of King Dhamma Seti, he was a great king because of his religious belief and his performance for Buddhist.

There was no king in Mon dynasty who was as strongly believe in religion as King Dhamma Seti. I would like to give some examples that showed King Dhamma Seti's strong devotion in Buddhism. He built Kyaik Pon pagoda. He asked to translate War Ri Ru Code of Laws.

He wrote the decision of Dhamma Zeti. There was not religious thesis written in Mon or Myanmar earlier than King Dhamma Zeti time. He also wrote code of Laws and named Dhamma Zeti precedent.

King Dhamma Zeti who was a monk, when he was young, became hero in region when he was crowned. Paying respect to three precious gems and Buddha is called culture.

In the story of Good result for unision essay, the essay in which the guardian spirit of the tree asked the junior gurdian spirits of trees not to live separately and to live together. Only then they can endure the strong wind and heavy rain.

"When the storm became, the isolated trees in the village and the field was devastated from root. The trees in forest which attached each other with boughs and vine didn't fall down.

The trees in the forest became powerful and could endure the strong wind and the heavy rain. This is the result of unity. Unision can practise yourself or by relying on the Unity.

In the story which explains spoilt because of Lack of unision, the Leader of quail (Buddha-to-be) preached his followers to live in unision. All his followers were freed from being caught by the haunter when they followed their Leader's advice.

This is also culture. The unision of quails can be said culture. In human society, if we live in unity, we can endure any kind of enemies. It is important for nationalities to understand each other's custom. Myanmar got independence because of the unity of the nationalities. The greatest symbol of culture for nationalities of Myanmar.

Serving for others selflessly

In the story of "mercy on others" the animals were suffered from Lack of water in summer because of furious heat. A hermit dug a hole in the ground and filled water in it without finding fruits for himself. He filled the bellies of the animals. He got tired because of starvation. The animals that were saved from starvation found fruits and saved his life. The fruits were enough for all hermits and they all could practice meditation.

Mercy makes goodness. Rudeness gives suffering. So mercy is a symbol of culture. Mercy arouses the attitude towards serving for others. The person who serves for others lessens his ego and gets peace.

Brave for responsibility

Only with duty-minded attitude, dutiful strategies can be found out. There may be many difficulties. We can face these difficulties with wisdom, discipline and bravery.

In Karka jartaka, all crows faced with death because of the hatred of brahmin. Neglecting his life, the leader of crow marched to battle alone.

There was nobody to get rid of the enemy of my relatives except me. He flew fast in the sky, entered through the open window and sat at the bottom of the King's throne. The king's followers tried to catch him. The brave king of crows didn't afraid of dying in the hands of the king's men. The noble valuable sacrificing spirit of the king of crows is also culture. It is priceless spirit of heroes.

In Su La Nan Di Ya Jartaka, the monkey brothers gave up their status as Leaders of mokeys and took after their old mother who was blind. This is taking responsibility for their mother. A person who takes responsibility is highly impressed in human society. When the hunter first aimed at the mother monkey, the elder brother sacrificed his life to save his mother. When the hunter aimed at the mother the second time, the younger brother also sacrificed his life to save his mother. The story of two dutiful brothers is also a standard symbol of culture.

In the story of king of the monkeys, who served for his followers, whose action of saving his followers from the king's men and hunters who chased them by tracing a ripen mango in Gin Ga river is also standardized:

"His majesty, I became a king to save my monkeys. I'm not satisfy just with serving for others, and sacrificing my life for others. I became a king not to harm my men but to save them. I became a king not to torture the others but to give them peaceful life."

Like these stories, within the family, we need to take responsibility for our parents and our spouses like the monkey brothers.

In our country, the event of general Aung San and other Leaders who sacrificed their lives for our country's independence is also a symbol of culture.

Associate with wise men

In the story of wise leader of cart trader and silly leader cart trader, because of the wise leader cart of trader who knew the trick of the giants, his followers were save. Because of the silly leader of card trader, however, his fellow men were eaten by giants.

"The wise cart trader knows the giants at first sight. There is no water in this desert. It is called Ni Ru Da desert. There is no sign of fearness in the face of the man. He also has red eyes. He doesn't have shadow."

The Leader who was wise enough to guess the giant had a chance to get safe life. A wise Leader can bring life security for his followers.

In the story of Great Za Na Ka, he didn't cry out loud like others when the ship was sunk. He didn't waste time by praying for Nat. Instead of doing that, he filled his belly with milk, butter, and suger. He wore oily longyi in his waist firmly and dived into the water from the sail pole. He swam day and night keeping sabbath. With diligence, sila and wisdom, Great Za Na Ka could save his life.

Being wise, accompanying with wise men and trying to be wise are also symbol of culture.

Awareness of Gratitude and pay for it

In the story of mercy to others, the hermit didn't care for himself". He supported water to the animals. To pay for it, the animals supplied enough fruits not only for the hermit but also for other hermits. In this way, all hermit didn't need to worry about their food. Human beings should know gratitude, human beings should have awareness of gratitude and pay for it.

In the story of Gottala harpist, a pupil made a challenge with his teacher who taught all he knew to him. Then the teacher worried about losing his own pupil and tried to suicide himself. The celesial beings helped the teacher and the teacher won. It is a proof that the celesial beings don't like those who don't know the gratitude of others and they will be in trouble.

In the story of competition with teacher, a student wanted to compete with his own teacher who taught him how to train the elephants. The teacher had to prepare for the strategy within a night to defeat his student. Fortunately, teacher won the competition.

In the story of a prince who stole sesame, a young prince stole sesame to eat when he was young. His teacher beat him with a cane. From that day onwards, he wanted to revenge his teacher. When he became a king in his adulthood, he sentenced his teacher death. When the teacher found out the reason of his punishment, he replied that 'If I did not punish you when you committed theft, you would not become a king today!

People should know the gratitude of the teachers and try to pay for it. Trying to pay for gratitude is

keeping culture. Lack of awareness in paying gratitude can't get peace in human society. The culture will be in danger of being got rid of.

Speaking Politely

In Pottaw War Da preaching Verse, it says, Be mindful not, to speak impolitely to each other. This verse is written with the purpose of guiding the youths to speak politely.

In the story of Great Clever Cow, a cow wanted to pay for his master's gratitude. His master fed him since he was young and he wanted to pay for his master's gratitude towards him. He asked his master to beg money in pulling a hundred carts.

On the day of Competition, his master said, 'Stupid Cow pull the Cart with all your effort!

The cow didn't like those words and so he didn't pull the carts. The master lost the money. The next time, the master said, 'My Clever boy, pull the carts with all your effort'! At that time the cow ran very fast. It can be said that not only human beings but also animals like polite words. It is very important for human society.

In the story of Greedy jewel businessman and wise jewel businessman, the wicked man and the honest man spoke differently. The wicked jewel businessman didn't want to give his bright gem but he wanted to get golden bow free. Because of his greed, he treathened impolitely. He didn't hesitate to be rude because of his wicked plan. In contrary, the honest and wise jewel businessman told the truth politely. He didn't behave with anger and spoke sweetly.

Behaviour of A person with impure mind, anger, greed and silliness is rude, however, a person of good-nature and pure mind speak and behave politely. Rudeness comes together with anger, greed and silliness, and politeness come together with good manner and behaviour.

In producing smarter youths, we should ask the youths to avoid bad deeds and perform good deeds. Although youths will be more knowledgeable, concept is just concept, not ethic. Awareness lack of practice can't bear fruitful result. The youths should be clear what is good deed and what is bad deed.

It will be better for the youths if they have religious awareness. The youths should be taught these awareness since their childhood. ' Give your children before they are seven'. If the children are exposed religious awareness, we don't need to worry about their future. That is why the youths should be familiarized with 550 Jartaka. The preaching of Lord Buddha can give good deeds.

Saya Gyi Mg Khin Min says, "The youths should be closed to 550 Jar ta ka to motivate Practicing themselves!"

We can find peace if we live with the standard of culture mentioned above. All ethnic groups in Myanmar long for peace. The statue of Law Ka Nat (celestial being noted for peacemaking) that is placed next to

Thihar Ta Na Throne is the symbol of peace. Law Ka Nat stopped the fight between flying Elephant and Flying lion who wanted to eat cloud by using his music. According to this belief, the statue of Law Ka Nat is used as a symbol of peace. We have to live with standard value for culture to process peaceful human society.

Overview

The Mon aesthetic Literature Anthology that is compiled by U Lu Phay Win and edited by Shin War Ya Ma is written in Mon language. In translating to Myanmar, the different sentence structure of Mon Language and Myanmar language makes some difficulties. This difficulty is overcome with the edition of Ashin Badanta Wei Ponla. The aim is to preach the youths to be good in characters and to distinguish what are good deeds and what are bad deeds. To be able to do so they should have religious concept.

The youths can broaden their horizon through reading Jartaka. The stories or essays in Mon Aesthetic literature Anthology are based on 550 Jartaka. The aim is to produce smarter youths.

Considering the high standard Landmark of cultures standard for prehistoric era till now, we can see that every nationality is trying to uplift their culture. This can be seen in their literature. The verse included in this paper are also aesthetic literature. It can be said as Landmark of literary culture.

As the human resources of all youths mainly depend on good cultural background, it is necessary for youths to train to be able to build civilized human society.

As this paper is based on Mon Aesthetic literature Anthology, we can't describe the real cultural factors of Mon ethnic groups. Mon aesthetic literature Anthology however, assists that Mon nationality is the one that tries to claim 'Mon is culture'.

Conclusion

Mon nationality uses Buddha preaching to teach to their new generation to be cleverer, smarter and wiser. However, it is inconvenient to present the outstanding writing style. Anyhow, this paper can partially reveal respectable cultural sector.

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