

# RE-ORIENTING LEADERS IN BUSINESS FOR SUSTAINABLE GLOBALISATION-A CONSIDERATION OF PERSPECTIVES FROM BUDDHIST APPLIED ETHICS

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## ABSTRACT

*The phenomenon of globalisation is growing at exponential speed thereby integrating trade, finance, people, and ideas in individual countries into one global marketplace. While cross-border international flows define it, modern technological advances in communications and information technology, also generated at an unbelievable rate, have expedited the volume, speed and capacity of globalisation.*

*At bottom, it is corporate business that provides the motivational impetus to drive the forces of globalisation. It is a near economic law that businesses seek to expand in reaching markets outside their traditional domestic boundaries. This urge for extended reach constitutes the spur for globalisation.*

*Largely inspired by globalised possibilities, corporate businesses have uplifted fivefold the material lives of most people around the world. At the same time, expanding businesses are threatening our very sustenance, undermining our social values, polluting our environment and have contributed to adverse trends in climate change. Clearly, the challenge and dilemma for humanity today is to encourage the productivity that globalisation brings in its wake while restraining and averting its potential threats.*

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*Many levels of global leadership can be recognised but this paper will confine discourse to business or corporate leadership for the valid reason that the latter are prime movers in globalisation.*

*The traditional view that the purpose of business is to do business, and not be focused on ethical aims (Friedman, 1970) is now being discredited. In today's context, a company is regarded as an organ of the wider society and thus it is reasonable that companies should approach productivity in ways that foster society's sustainability.*

*The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an outcome of this changing attitude.*

*This paper points out that CSR has to flow naturally from a company-wide ethical disposition and that this requires a re-educational and re-orienting program applied across all levels of management. Deeply entrenched, outmoded and selfish ways of thinking that are destructive must give way to new ways of thinking that make our societies sustainable. Besides, it is argued that such new ways can indeed be channelled into improving businesses' productivity and profitability. The ethical demands should not be perceived as an external restraint. On the contrary, the incorporation of ethical values can more fully and meaningfully enrich business. In this sense, business leaders at all levels must willingly internalise the new attitudes. If this be done, we could see a new and constructive force for good in globalisation. The need is for a changed spirit in business.*

*This process of internalisation essentially involves applied ethics.*

*It is the thesis of this paper that Buddhist ethical philosophy can provide a central insight for any program of business leadership reorientation or re-education. In this context, a brief survey of three main approaches to ethical theory are examined—deontological approach, consequential approach and virtues approach. With reference to classical Buddhist texts and research papers it is argued that the Buddha had emphasised the development of the virtuous man as the ultimate end of ethical effort. He also deals a lot with consequential approaches that relate to karmic effects in a chain of cause and effect. Buddhist texts refer, in a modified manner, to deontological approaches, too, where the five precepts and Noble Eightfold Path stand. However, the latter represents a formal set of rules of behaviour that reflect the outcome of*

*the other two approaches. This brings us to the view that Buddhist ethics is holistic, namely, aimed at a comprehensive effort in bringing out the virtuous man.*

*The virtuous man as applied to business leader education would be likened to the new corporate leader with the changed dispositions that reflect the sense of corporate social responsibility which is vital for the new aspirations of sustainable globalisation. It is the “changed spirit,” of corporate behaviour that is desired.*

## INTRODUCTION

The new globalised order demands a ‘new corporate man’ or business leader to replace the traditional one perceived as being greedy, ruthless, and selfish and concerned only with earning profits for shareholders. The changed expectations of societies and their governments over the last several decades have led to new demands on business leaders. There is evidence already of some manifest attempts toward a change of heart on the part of some big corporate bodies.

The time has come to expand this awareness and build a new, socially concerned, and ethical corporate man who has the inbuilt attitudinal mindset to navigate through the globalisation forces in order to ensure not only the profitability of his undertakings but the sustainability of societies supporting them.

It is the view of this paper that applied Buddhist normative ethics offers an insightful perspective for a reorientation program to transform the mindset of business leaders.

The alternative terms given in italics and placed within parentheses are in the Pali language.

## THE PHENOMENON OF GLOBALISATION

The term, ‘globalisation,’ has been given different meanings. However, in a fundamental sense it can be said to describe the alteration of humanity’s experiences of space and time in a period where the importance of global and even national boundaries have been undermined. This is a process that has entered our awareness particularly over the last three decades where technological

development has contributed to make human contact with any party in any distant part of the world so easy, fast, and even instantaneous despite spatial distance; where even physical distances have been virtually shortened by rapid and cheap transportation and communication. In other words, the world of humanity and of human activity has been effectively shortened and constricted in both a temporal and a spatial sense.

As succinctly put by Martin Heidegger (1950), 'all distances in time and space are shrinking.' This phenomenon has far reaching implications for virtually every facet of life. Thus we talk of globalisation of ideas; globalisation of cultures and so on.

### BUSINESS AS THE DRIVING FORCE

It is arguable that the main dynamic in this globalisation revolution has been business economics. It has been the search for overseas markets by businesses, multi-national companies and body corporates looking to expand in order gain more customers and take advantage of economic opportunities overseas. Domestic businesses can have extended sales in overseas markets. Multinational firms like McDonalds or Starbuck may have brands that appeal a lot to foreign markets. Outsourcing of business functions to countries with cheaper labour or cheaper material access may cut manufacturing costs. The reasons are varied. However, it is happening on a large scale and it is transforming the world.

Global arrangements for the lifting of trade barriers have occurred thus easing further the free flow of men, capital and material. Even the technological innovations referred to have been provoked by business companies. Land, air and sea travel, computers and the internet, digitalisation and so forth are largely the outcome of business initiative.

Karl Marx (1848), socialist theorist, recorded his vision of this oncoming force when he argued that the imperatives of capitalist production inevitably drove the bourgeoisie to 'nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, and establish connections everywhere.'

The growth of Multinational and transnational companies

(MNCs and TNCs) and the rise in the significance of global brands such as Microsoft, Apple, Google, Sony, and McDonalds, is the visible manifestation of globalisation. The important thing is that domestic governments appear to be having slender control over the operations of these companies.

### THE CHALLENGE TO BUSINESS LEADERS

Globalisation has, in overall terms, brought in increased wealth to countries-both in the developed world and the emerging economies. World trade in manufactured goods has increased over 100 times; over the last 50 years since 1955, an increase from \$95 billion to \$12 trillion has been recorded. Since 1960, increased trade has been made easier by international agreements to lower tariff and non-tariff barriers on the export of manufactured goods especially to rich countries.

While the process has encountered many severe problems like increasing inequality in some sectors, it is believed that those countries that have not been that successful will eventually be compelled to measure up to the levels of their successful counterparts.

Having said all that, we have to point out to the many crisis-causing pitfalls that business expansion without social concern and ethical direction could fall into. The conventional view has been that profit maximisation is the reason for a business to exist. On the other hand, profits should not supersede the needs of people. Michael Moore's (2007) film *Sicko*, for example attacks the healthcare industry for its alleged emphasis on profits at the expense of patients. Moore adds:

“We should have no talk of profit when it comes to helping those who are sick ... It is not fair for insurance companies because they have a fiduciary responsibility to make as much money as they can for their shareholders. Well, the way they make more money is to deny claims or to kick people off the rolls or to not even let people on the rolls because they have a pre-existing condition. You know, all that is wrong.”

Globalisation creates powerful multinational companies. Power

tends to be abused. One observes some of these big corporate bodies interfering with the democratic politics of countries. This leads to an unhealthy and dangerous threat.

Third, there is the tendency for businesses to acquiesce in bad labour practises. In poor countries where a lot of outsourcing is being done, big businesses turn a blind eye to child labour practises or the exploitation of women labour or to the underpayment of women workers.

Fourth, there is the ever present threat to the environment by big businesses driven by greed. Environmental pollution, global warming, and indiscriminate destruction of forest cover, ocean resources, bird and animal life are some of the growing worldwide concerns.

Fifth, businesses have shown a proclivity toward bad advertising practises that run counter to the ethical mores of the countries in which they operate.

Sixth, there are other business practices like abuse in pricing and in payment for procurement of supplies especially from poorer countries.

Seventh, globalisation has led to a massive shift of refugee labour from poorer countries to rich countries giving rise to a myriad of problems and threats to the living standards of such workers.

## **BUSINESS ETHICS AND THE CONCEPT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

It is no mere coincidence that the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) came into vogue over such negative experiences of rising globalisation. Briefly, CSR is a manifestation of business ethics—the idea that businesses must conduct themselves ethically at all times and with a sense of responsibility and accountability to society. This is a sharp departure from the earlier conservative view that ‘the social responsibility of business is to shareholders,’ Milton Friedman (2006). Societies all over the world have come to look at business differently and many countries have brought in laws to check the overpowering influence of oligopolies and monopolies. The new perception is that any business firm has a responsibility

to the local and external community. A business cannot grow and enrich itself regardless of the welfare of the community and without taking cognisance of community needs and aspirations. A firm belongs to the community and is, in effect, an organ of society.

In fact, the new thinking is that it would benefit a business and probably increase profits if it were to embed within its philosophy the need to be acceptable to the community.

The concept of CSR has taken a further step by even reckoning that a firm must take affirmative steps to assist in community projects and helping to alleviate national and social distress.

### **Broader View of Sustainability**

Consistent with the growth of CSR in the collective consciousness of business managers and the community, is the development of a broader view of sustainability. The term, 'sustainability,' doesn't mean sustainability within the internal operations of a business only. The broader interpretation is that this term applies to mean sustainability of the surrounding society—either within domestic boundaries or, in the case of a global entity or multinational company, all stake-holding consumer bases domestic and overseas. For instance, environmental issues like climate change involve global-level commitments. So are issues pertaining to human rights? A business must be sustainable in this broader sense.

### **DESIRED MINDSET OF NEW BUSINESS LEADERS OR THE 'NEW CORPORATE MAN.'**

By 'business leaders,' we mean the owners, boards and managers of a firm or business corporate. They constitute, to varying degrees, the key decision makers that move the firm along. With globalisation, the nature and quality of doing business has changed dramatically, requiring a radical shift in the mindset of the business leader of the globalising era. Trading and manufacturing are now increasingly being done across domestic borders spreading into different countries with different cultures. In a different culture, people look at the same thing differently. It is important, therefore, for the new corporate man to possess a strong cross-cultural intelligence. He must be able to attune his product or service offering, to different

societies. His interaction styles will have to change according to the changing cultural environment. While keeping to the basic corporate values in a uniform way, the new manager must adjust its local implementation. This is one of the principal components of the global leadership mindset.

The other component is the integration of CSR into corporate thinking, behaviour and delivery. While one component is cross-cultural intelligence the other is CSR. The two aspects make up the mindset of the new corporate man.

This paper will consider the ethical component of the desired global leadership mindset and would argue that Buddhist normative ethical thinking offers a valuable perspective toward building the new corporate man.

#### MAJOR FRAMEWORKS IN NORMATIVE ETHICAL THEORY

What framework or model shall we use to re-orient the business leader? The whole issue as to what constitutes an ethical conduct has been full of contention. How do we define a good act? What are the norms of ethical conduct?

Three basic approaches to normative ethical theory have been expounded by philosophers over the ages. They are consequentialist, deontological and virtues ethics approaches. Consequentialism is the view that we must assess the rightness or wrongness of our conduct by taking a look at the consequences/potential consequences of the act concerned. An act that would produce a good outcome is a right act and vice versa. Utilitarianism is the classic manifestation of the consequentialist approach to ethical conduct. The term 'utility,' is understood to mean whatever leads to happiness, and sometimes happiness itself.

This stand seems intuitively appropriate in assessing conduct. Hence, it is the most popular theory today despite numerous thorny issues that arise in the calculus of measuring happiness.

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) are the authors of utilitarianism. The influence of this framework of conduct has extended to contemporary times where we have an Australian philosopher named Peter Singer (2017), advancing



his own variation of consequentialism. Peter Singer extends the application of consequences even to the animal kingdom.

(b) the Deontological Approach argues that the rightness or wrongness of a proposed conduct is something we feel inherent in our consciousness as a kind of inbuilt law or command. For instance, although we often utter lies we are aware that it is not the done thing to do. Likewise, it is not right to kill and so on. The word, 'deon,' means "one must." It is a feeling of inner compulsion.

Immanuel Kant (1998) the German philosopher expresses the deontological framework in its classic form. Kant argued that we have within us a "Categorical Imperative," which commands us:

"Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it shall become a universal law." Kant regarded that the prevalence of this imperative for us to act as being one of nature's wonders. Kant was impressed by "The starry skies above and the moral law within."

A maxim to be morally acceptable must pass this universalising test. This test harmonises with the common cry, 'what if everyone behaved that way?' Let us give an example: I borrow money from X explicitly promising to pay it back but with no intention of doing so. How if everybody does so? Can I rationally will that a state of affairs exists where nobody honours promises? In such a state of affairs it would be irrational to accept promises. The institution of promising could not exist.

(C) Virtues Ethics. As a formalised doctrine, virtues ethics appears to have originated in Ancient Greece where Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and the Stoics had espoused it. As an influential idea, it seems to have later waned in influence. However, partly due to exasperation over perceived inadequacies in consequentialist and deontology theories, virtues ethics has been revived in contemporary ethical discourse.

Virtues Ethics is a totally different approach to ethics. Both consequentialists and deontologists attribute goodness or rightness to specific actions or conducts. In the case of virtues ethics proponents, they shift the characteristic of morality to the individual character of the person and not to any specific act.

Contemporary ethicists like G.E.M Amscombe and Alasdair MacIntyre\* frustrated by the imprecise nature of action-based ethics in the consequentialist and deontological approaches and their attendant problems have found in virtues ethics a more satisfactory and more fundamental framework.

Virtues ethics have been rather superficially defined in many texts. A better definition is given by Rosalind Hursthouse (1997):

“A virtue [Greek, ‘arete,’] such as honesty or generosity is not just a tendency to do what is honest or generous, nor is it to be helpfully specified as a ‘desirable’ or ‘morally valuable’ character trait. It is, indeed a character trait—that is, a disposition which is well entrenched in its possessor, something that, as we say, “Goes all the way down,” unlike a habit such as being a tea-drinker—but the disposition in question, far from being a single track disposition to do honest actions, or even honest actions for certain reasons, is multi-track. It is concerned with many other actions as well, with emotions and emotional reactions, choices, values, desires, perceptions, attitudes, interests, expectations and sensibilities. To possess a virtue is to be a certain sort of person with a certain complex mindset. (Hence, the extreme recklessness of attributing a virtue on the basis of a single action.)”

A virtue is, therefore, an outcome of a wholly total character or lifestyle rather than particular episodes or actions. It is a trait that cannot be trained in isolation of the whole. It amounts to the building of a total mindset or the building of a virtuous man. Specifically, a virtue is a positive trait that makes its possessor a good human being. A virtue is thus to be distinguished from single actions or feelings.

The way to build a good society is, thus, to help its members be good people. Thus, an action is right if and only if it is an action that a virtuous person would do in the same circumstances. Right actions essentially flow from virtuous people in a given situation. At this point, virtue ethicists introduce the notion of practical or moral wisdom (Greek ‘phronesis.’)\* To assess a moral situation practical wisdom becomes necessarily attached to the virtue.

As regards determining the list of virtues there has been much

disagreement. Getting over a possible controversy here, Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) argues that any account of the virtues must indeed be generated out of the community in which those virtues are to be practiced: the very word *ethics* implies 'ethos.' That is to say that the virtues are, and necessarily must be, grounded in a particular time and place. What counts as virtue in 4th-century Athens would be a ludicrous guide to proper behaviour in 21st-century Toronto.

### ETHICAL THEORY IN BUDDHISM?

Buddhism is rich in ethical teachings—*sila*, the five precepts, the Puranas, the Vinaya, wholesome and unwholesome mental factors in the Abhidamma, Brahma Viharas and so on. Buddhist insights are scattered here and there, prompting different scholars to give emphasis on their chosen concepts. On the other hand, there have been hardly any attempts to tie up the insights in order to build a composite and meaningful body of ethical theory. Professor Damien Keown (1992), has pioneered attempts in a specialist approach toward Buddhist ethics. Over and over again, we come across the problem that the Buddha never put down his teachings in writing thus leaving it open to scholars to attempt at interpretations. In particular, Buddhist ethical theory has become an open field.

This paper will be a humble attempt to join the gathering stream of scholarship in a theory-building effort at Buddhist Ethics.

Damien Keown has taken up the position that the Buddha had really had in mind a kind of virtues ethics. This paper agrees with that position.

### THE BUDDHA GOAL WAS VIRTUES ETHICS

The common belief is that Buddhist ethics is about the five precepts (*pancaseela*), and the Noble Eightfold Path. This view is akin to the deontological view of ethics as a system of rules or internal commands. There is, no doubt, a deontological aspect in the Buddhist teachings. However, this can be attributed to the Buddha's goal of making ordinary people grasp the essence of his teachings in the form of rules. The general spirit of the Buddha's approach as gleaned from the Pali Nikayas can be interpreted as one that goes deeper to the heart of change in behaviour. The

Buddha could not have been a mere rule-layer like the God of Christianity. His teachings can be interpreted as aimed at going to source, by transforming the mindset (*santana*) of people so that the new mindset could naturally flow with wholesome acts (*kusaladhamma*). There are several references in the Dhammapada cited below where the Buddha emphasises how skilled performances would naturally flow from a trained horse, carpenter, engineer etc. In like manner, a person whose mindset is geared by training in basic virtuous dispositions will be naturally prone to virtuous or wholesome conduct.

### BRAHMA VIHARAS AS THE MODEL

There is a pointed reference to *loba* (greed), *dosa* (hatred) and *moha* (delusion) as the basic roots of the unwholesome states of mind. The term, 'wholesome,' maybe interchanged with the Western concept of 'virtue.' The Buddha pointed out that once these roots are purified into their opposites our mental stream or *santana* will flow with virtuous behaviour, which alone can take us to the summum bonum that is nirvana. This becomes, therefore, a possible option for a virtues ethics model in Buddhism. In fact, Damien Keown picked *loba*, *dosa* and *moha* as the defining set of virtues for a virtues model.

On the other hand, there are practical difficulties in Keown's proposal.

We take the view that, while avoiding contradiction with the set of virtues *loba*, *dosa* and *moha*, and acknowledging their value in Buddhist thinking, the Buddha's inculcation of the four sublime emotional states or mental dispositions of the *brahma viharas* can be picked as the more concrete and practical approach to changing our mindsets toward good or wholesome conduct in daily life. These four states are *metta* (goodwill), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic joy) and *upekkha* (equanimity, even-mindedness).

The reasons for this preference is as follows: (a) to a modern mind, the terms can be subject to disputation due to their open-ended nature. For example, one may ask, "What, really, is greed? What is the precise intensity- measure of an act that should qualify it as greed and not mere, 'liking,?'" (b) implementation of the

opposites of greed, hate and delusion becomes difficult to ordinary human nature and so would become a hard, though desired, battle. On the other hand, the interrelated states of the brahma viharas can be developed more comfortably while we participate in the pragmatic world. We shall get back to this thesis shortly, after a diversion.

### METAPHYSICAL BASIS OF BUDDHIST ETHICS

That diversion is into the subject of metaphysics. In Buddhist thinking ethical propositions are not mere exhortation to behave. Such propositions receive justification by their link with metaphysics. 'Metaphysics,' is used here in the Aristotelian sense. The term used was not used by Aristotle himself but it was attributed to what the Greek philosopher called 'first philosophy.' For Aristotle (384-322B.C) first philosophy referred to issues that deal with the fundamental causes and principles that underlie existent things. Thus the metaphysics of Aristotle had nothing to do with something transcending experience as in Plato, Kant, and even Hegel.

Applying the same usage to Buddhism it can be argued that Buddhist ethical exhortations in the five precepts and elsewhere and ethical dispositions are founded on the 'first principles' of nature and the universe (*dhamma*). Buddhists believe that their ethics is, therefore, strongly validated.

All this means is that how one ought to conduct oneself is at least suggested by objective fact. The "ought," follows from the "is." In this way, the particular ethical proposition becomes the significant or 'sensible,' way to conduct oneself. "Is," refers to the inherent fundamental nature of things.

Santideva (8th century A.D) Indian Buddhist monk and Madhyamika scholar was one of the first to show how Buddhist ethics follows from metaphysical premises. Amod Lele (2007) has dealt at length on Santideva's thinking. Santideva has argued on the following lines: According to Buddhism:

(a) actions are determined by their causes, and therefore, anger is not justified. One who knows dependent origination can become more patient with others' wrongdoing and will avoid blaming others. This was referred to as "dhammic patience." (b) the body is

reducible to its component parts, and, therefore, we must not lust; (c) the self is an illusion and is unreal; hence. it makes no sense to protect only oneself from the suffering shared by others; we must be altruistic; (d) all phenomena are empty and therefore we should avoid attachment. It is possible to expand on this thesis of Santideva, as follows: (e) “All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death. Likening others to oneself, one should neither slay nor cause to slay,” [Dhammapada] (f) “some do not know that we must all come to an end here; those who know this, their dissensions cease at once by their knowledge.” [Dhammapada]

### BRIDGING THE ‘OUGHT,’ AND ‘IS,’ IN ETHICS

The school of analytic philosophy that came into vogue in the West during the 20th century denied this possibility of linking an ‘ought,’ to an ‘is.’ It has been pointed out by some Western philosophers that normative ethical rules and obligations are not in the realm of fact; and that they are purely subjective or emotional guidelines that many try to adhere to. Analytic philosophers like AJ Ayer (1958) in fact asserted that, ‘the exhortations to moral virtue are not propositions at all, but ejaculations or commands which are designed to provoke the reader to action of a certain sort.’

On the other hand, as pointed out by Santideva, the Buddhist linkage between the nature of reality and the ethical responses to such a reality appears as a foreshadowed reaction to contemporary analytic philosophy. In Buddhism, we observe a visible bridge between the “is” and the “ought.” At least one can argue that the Buddhist normative ethic gets as close as one could get to bridge that gap. This feature invests Buddhist normative ethical propositions with a compelling character.

### CENTRALITY OF VIRTUES ETHICS IN BUDDHISM

Consequentialist and deontological criteria are not denied by Buddhism. However, the Buddha seems to focus on one central goal as far as ethical development is concerned, namely, to create a virtuous person from whom alone wholesome conduct (*kusal*) will follow rather effortlessly and unwholesome conduct (*akusal*) avoided.

“Is there in the world any man so restrained in modesty that

he avoids censure as well as a trained horse avoids the whip?" [*Dhammapada*]. In other words, the trained horse naturally behaves to avoid a reminder of the whip. "Like a well trained horse when touched by a whip be strenuous and swift, you will, by faith, by virtue, by energy, by meditation, by discernment of the law, put aside this great sorrow [of earthly existence], endowed with knowledge and [good] behaviour and mindfulness." [*Dhammapada*] Finally, "Engineers [who build canals and aqueducts] lead the water (where they like); fletchers make the arrow straight; carpenters carve the wood; virtuous people fashion (discipline) themselves" [*Dhammapada*]

The assumption above that the virtuous person can be trained by cognitive realisation, by meditation and so on. As in the last verse, just as engineers and carpenters are trained to perform their skills. Once trained, the engineer will perform right. So, will the virtuous person.

Virtues ethics go to the heart and mind of the doer. It is tackling at the source.

## THE BRAHMA VIHARA MODEL OF THE VIRTUOUS PERSON

The brahma viharas we referred to previously are fundamental character dispositions or virtues, that can turn an individual to act virtuously in dealing with others. One of the earliest records of this concept comes in the *Suba Sutta* (DN).<sup>\*</sup> The virtues are detailed in the *Visuddhimagga* (c.5th century BC)

"*Brahma*," means divine or noble and '*vihara*,' means abiding and living. Those who practice the Brahma Viharas are said to be abiding or living in the noble or the divine. They are also described as being *apramana* (immeasurable in impact) when done to perfection. Buddhism invokes us to develop these four fundamental virtues that can lead us to be naturally virtuous men and women.

These are: loving kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*) equanimity, even-mindedness (*upekkha*).

There are associated meditation practices set out to train a person toward the perfection of these emotional dispositions. The basic idea is get an individual to open his mind and his awareness

towards a friendly disposition to others; towards recognising and empathising with the suffering of others; towards sharing the joy or success of another; and toward developing a balanced, unruffled and detached state of mind (upon the realisation that all beings will reap the results of their good and bad actions).

We might imagine the *brahma viharas* works this way: we keep developing *metta* toward others displaying simple and sincere goodwill; when another is afflicted by disease, injury or other difficulty we extend our *metta* by actually intervening and going to his aid. This is *karuna*. *Metta* could be extended further when another experiences a successful moment. We do so by identifying and sharing that joy with the other person. This is *mudita*. The first mental states are, therefore, different shades of each other; they can be perfectly integrated in one character.

The state of *upekkha* stands alone, and it serves to help us develop an even-mindedness over events where we cannot intervene.

The meditator commences by practising the virtue on oneself (which is easy); next, on to his close circles; and from their right up to those may be hostile. In this way, the impact of the emotion of love swells immeasurably to cover everyone who comes our way.

These four sublime ethical dispositions are founded on the nature of reality or metaphysics: Our interconnectedness, the littleness of life on earth, the swift passing away of all phenomena, the emptiness (*sunya*) of phenomena, the *dukkha* and anguish that is everyone's lot to experience as humanity's existential predicament. In the circumstances of the nature of things, the need to develop *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita* and *upekkha* appears to be a functional course of action in our dealings with others. The peace that is generated by that development and the improvement of our living ambience is amazing. The meditator has to reflect on such given realities.

## SOCIAL CONCERNS IN THE BRAHMA VIHARA MODEL AND RELEVANCE FOR BUSINESS

What has been presented is a brief picture of the Brahma Vihara virtues model that can be garnered and reconstructed from the teachings of the Buddha. The virtues model is meant to apply



commonly to all individuals. The question arises how this model can help develop social concern in the mindset of the new corporate leader. The traditional model of business, as we have noted, was lacking in this dimension. The demand for a business ethic that incorporates broad social concern and social responsibility (CSR) in the business agenda has grown with the new power of companies that globalisation gave birth to.

This is precisely where the *brahma viharas* can come in on behalf of the CSR goal: The *brahma viharas* are a composite set of mental dispositions that make up our attitude to others and our broader concern for society. They are, fundamentally, relationship-values or stances. Even without formal meditation we can reach adequate levels of these attitudes by developing awareness. We will note below how we humans are born with the potential toward metta and karuna and this serves us well in consciously orienting our lives towards some level of the *brahma viharas*. The practice of the *brahma viharas*, may thus be regarded not merely as useful for the individual's daily living; it can help build business's call for social concern, altruism, and accountability.

The business leader faced with the ethical challenges of globalisation represented by the CSR obligation can incorporate into his style of management a strong empathetic awareness and concern for the wider society and community at large. Special Features that make *Brahma Viharas*.

#### FUR SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS FOR A BUSINESS LEADER-ORIENTATION PROGRAM

There are two special features of these virtues that make them further attractive for inclusion in a learning program for corporations. The first, is that there are no sectarian religious linkages in the *brahma viharas*. Rather, they are compatible with any faith since they represent universal values.

The second feature is that this is an ethic that realistically recognises and builds on the human being's powerful emotional repertoire and tempers that with our reasoning ability.

In his seminal and best selling book entitled, "Emotional

Intelligence,” Daniel Goleman, (1996) explains the power of human emotions based on recent research. “A view of human nature that ignores the power of emotions is sadly shortsighted,” remarks Goleman (p4). It logically follows that that an ethic that ignores this factor is also shortsighted. The ethical orientation for business leaders that this paper proposes stands comfortably with this truth.

Goleman points out how modern brain imaging techniques developed by science have enabled us to gain access to a lot of information today about this non-rational side of man’s nature and the enormous power emotions hold in our thinking and decisions. Says Goleman: “There is evidence to suggest that fundamental ethical stances arise from underlying emotional capacities.” Goleman, further states, that, “Empathy is the ability to read emotions in others...lacking a sense of another’s need or despair means no caring.”

Goleman explains how the neocortex sections of the human brain (thinking brain) arose from the emotion stem centres millions of years later. Until then, for over 500 generations of homo sapiens, our emotional repertoire were our sole guides.

The practice of the *brahma viharas* both acknowledge the power of our emotional centres and also appeals to our neocortex (reasoning) stems at the same time. *Metta* is an extension of the natural instinct of friendly emotions that Homo sapiens developed due to their intrinsic social nature. “*Metta* is a basic goodwill that wishes wellbeing for others. When the suffering of persons we love moves us, *karuna* is the wish for that suffering to end. When their joy delights us, *mudita* is the wish for their joy to continue. And in the particular circumstances, when we have no role in the welfare of others, *upekkha* is the wish that we ourselves not become agitated while keeping our hearts open and responsive, perhaps available for when we can.”

Our thinking brain is employed both to restrain any excesses of emotions like cruelty and selfishness by making us reckon the reality or the nature of existential life (dhamma) we all face. There are two moral stances that our globalised society call for: Self restraint and

compassion. Emotion and reason have to play this dual role. There is a fine and subtle play between reason and emotion (or head and heart) in the approach of the *brahma viharas*.

#### APPLICATION OF THE MODEL AT BUSINESS LEVEL

There is an interesting article by Bhikku P.A. Payutto (1994), appearing in the online blog, [urbandharma.org](http://urbandharma.org). Bhikku Payutto (1994) is a Thai scholar-monk who has researched and written extensively on Buddhism.

Bhikku Payutto proposes that the *brahma viharas*, being as it is at mental-dipsosition level, has to be applied at the practical social level. This can be done, states the Bhikku, in three ways. The classification of these ways is instructive to post-globalisation corporate leadership:

The first is giving generously (*Dana*). This is based on *metta* as goodwill; on *Karuna* as an intervention in times of disaster; or on *mudita* as a giving to encourage.

The next way, is by kindly speech (*piyavaca*). In the business context, this can apply to courteous and helpful communication with customers, other stakeholders and the public. Kindly speech based on *metta* would be a basic attitude of goodwill in everyday situations; based on *karuna*, in times of difficulty; based on *mudita*, it would be congratulatory speech. However, when confronted with crisis-laden social situations kindly speech can be expressed as impartial and just speech; this is the *upekkha* way.

The third Buddhist way of implementation suggested by Bhikku Payutto is by useful conduct (*atthacariya*). This is the offer of physical effort in the form of helpful conduct. Based on *metta*, it can be at the level of friendly gesture; in times of tragedy it can be based on *karuna* or compassion. Based on *mudita* help can be offered as an encouragement.

The final way of *brahma vihara* implementation is *samanattata* (making oneself accessible or equal). It means sharing and living in harmony and cooperation with others on an equal basis. This is an attitude of humility.

## CONCLUSION

Globalisation is transforming the world. Businesses have been one of the primary movers in globalisation. This puts leaders in business in a specially influential position in the affairs of men. Globalisation has hugely increased the wealth of many countries and the standard of living of millions of people. At the same time, the juggernaut that is globalisation poses many serious challenges for the future. This has given rise to new social expectations of the role of business. The public and social collective consciousness has come around to believe that, along with the power of corporate bodies and multinationals proliferating all over the world, comes new and hitherto unrecognised social responsibilities. This expectation is a departure from the conventional which believed that the goal of business is to bring profit to shareholders; there prevailed an ethical underpinning of greed and self interest among companies.

It is now being realised that this cannot happen in the new era any more. The growing belief now is that while leaders in business should continue to work to bring profit and efficiency, they have at the same time got to navigate optimally in the new world to address wider social concerns and social welfare issues. Corporate social responsibility or CSR has ethical undertones and assumptions and it entrust the new global leadership mindset with an ethical obligation.

In other words, a new corporate man must be constructed with a mindset that incorporates in balance both the conventional profit motives and the new ethical dimension. Toward this end, we have attempted to bring in as inspiration a model of orientation based on a perspective drawn from applied normative Buddhist ethics. This is a virtues model of Buddhist ethics that aims at total character building of an individual. It is based on four stable mental, emotional or attitudinal dispositions. We pick a model based on the four Brahma Viharas and argue that a business leader who could change his attitudes and mind-states in line with these four stable character dispositions would be sensitised to respond to social concerns.

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