

# AN INTEGRATION OF BUDDHIST MORAL CODES PROMOTING BEHAVIORAL AND COGNITIVE TRANSFORMATIONS AMONGST INDUSTRIAL ENTREPRENEURS

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## Abstract

The purposes of this study are to investigate the factors and related elements that promote behavioral and cognitive transformations amongst industrial entrepreneurs on a personal level; to ascertain the Buddhist moral codes that promote such transformations; to study the integration of Buddhist moral codes that promote changes on a corporate level; and to develop a model integrating Buddhist moral codes for overall change.

Thirty in-depth semi-structured interviews amongst industrial entrepreneurs were undertaken in order to explore their behaviors, thoughts, and experiences related to Buddhism and the integration of Buddhist moral codes promoting changes on a corporate level. The combination of analytical qualitative and quantitative techniques was used to eliminate the disadvantages of each technique and to increase the reliability and validity of the research findings. Regression analysis was used to statistically predict the four studied factors influencing changes on personal and corporate levels. Descriptive statistics were used to quantitatively describe the basic features of data and to support the qualitative results in order to make the research findings more elaborate and precise.

Regarding personal transformations, spiritual experiences through samadhi were the most influential factors promoting such changes, followed by dhamma experiences through reading books and listening to dhamma speeches, personal backgrounds, and business conditions respectively. The discovered top-five personal changes were to: (1) exhibit

greater loving-kindness; (2) be more generous; (3) attend dhamma retreats more; (4) be willing to share Buddhist moral codes with employees; and (5) become extensive dhamma readers and gain better understanding of dhamma.

Amongst the eleven favorite Buddhist moral codes influencing personal transformations, the top-five included: (1) the Four Sublime States; (2) Gratitude and Gratefulness; (3) the Three Basic Facts of Existence; (4) the Law of Karma; and (5) the Four Noble Truths and the Four Successful Paths.

In terms of corporate transformations, spiritual experiences still remained the most influential factor, followed by business conditions. Making employees become good, kind, and happy persons was the utmost inspiration regarding this matter. Various types and methods of activities were designed to serve as tools for the integration of Buddhist moral codes. The outcomes mainly were divided into two aspects, employees and overall business. Due to the positive effects on employees, they (1) became happier; (2) had better relationships with executives; (3) became more helpful and generous with each other; (4) showed more willingness to work without conditions; and (5) showed better manners towards others as well as showed more willingness to help executives solve problems. The contributions to overall business were to: (1) gain more trust between executives and employees; (2) have less conflict amongst employees; (3) increase work efficiency; (4) solve problems more carefully; (5) and have higher business turnover.

A model integrating Buddhist moral codes for overall change (at both personal and corporate levels) was fully developed by providing details and a rich picture in order to enhance the ease of implementation. The model began with classifying industrial entrepreneurs into four groups. The first group was set as successful examples. The second and third groups were considered to be individuals that demonstrated a potential for devel-

opment, whereas the fourth group was not taken into account due to due to the individuals' demonstrated lack of potentiality for development. Network building allowed the target groups to get together and share experiences. Regarding the second and third groups, their interests needed to be stimulated concerning the integration of Buddhist moral codes for overall change. Three channels of stimulation were to: (1) learn from the experiences of the first group; (2) gain confidence through research findings; and (3) cultivate themselves through accepting problems, knowing the causes of problems, picturing a company where problems were completely solved, and finding solutions to problems. After personal transformations, they would seriously put the integration of Buddhist moral codes into action. Four suggested guidelines were to: (1) directly focus on Buddhist ways; (2) apply activities associated with focused Buddhist moral codes to fit the lifestyles of employees; (3) improve the quality of employees' lives; and (4) create a workplace environment to support the changes.

The contributions of this study to the body of knowledge are comprised not only of the combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses but also the factors promoting overall change, Buddhist moral codes, and various activities as tools for integrating Buddhist moral codes. Moreover, the development of a model as a guideline for further integrating Buddhist moral codes to promote overall change consequently became a strong contribution of the study.

**Keywords:** Empirical study on Buddhist studies, Buddhist moral codes, integrating Buddhist moral codes, Behavioral and cognitive transformations

## **Introduction**

The purposes of this study are to investigate the factors and related-elements that promote cognitive and behavioral transformations amongst

industrial entrepreneurs on a personal level; to ascertain the Buddhist moral codes that promote such transformations; to study the integration of Buddhist moral codes that promote changes on a corporate level; and to develop a model integrating Buddhist moral codes for overall change.

There were reasons for using industrial entrepreneurs as the key actors for this study. Firstly, they are chief executives of organizations that are fully in charge of making decisions and setting directions for business growth. Secondly, good exemplars would inspire other entrepreneurs to follow their paths. If industrial entrepreneurs run their business with good values such as ethics, morality/virtue, and honesty towards all stakeholders, the mutual benefits for employees, overall business, society, and the economic growth of the nation will consequently be fruitful. On the other hand, the results of running a business with greed and selfishness will definitely be the opposite. Finally, having one good industrial entrepreneur could create a number of good employees along with their family members. Based on the Pitakas, there are two excellent examples that illustrate the great impact of changing only the chief (Mahachulalongkornrajaviyala, 1995). The first example concerns Uruvela Kassapa, the older brother of the three Jatila. After the Buddha used three thousand five-hundred miracles of various kinds to defeat Uruvela Kassapa's ego, the Buddha finally decided to startle him by declaring that he was not an arahant, neither did the way he follow lead to arahantship. Upon Uruvela Kassapa's owned defeat, he reverently asked for ordination to become the Buddha's disciple. As a result, his two younger brothers, Nadi Kassapa and Gaya Kassapa, along with the thousand pupils, decided to follow Uruvela Kassapa by asking the Buddha for ordination. When all of the Jatila monks gathered together, the Buddha preached a sermon on "the Ādittapariyāya Sutta" (sermon on the lessons to be drawn from fire). Eventually all of them attained arahantship. The second example is related to King Bimbisāra of the Magadha Kingdom. After listening to the Buddha's sermon on "Anubuppikathā,"

the king reached the first stage of awakening. Out of gratitude for all the spiritualism which was taught by the Buddha, the king not only gifted the Buddha a park with bamboo groves to become the first Buddhist temple in Buddhusim, but also was the Buddha's first royal patron. As result, the city of Rājagaha became the city of Buddhism.

According to the literature review, it is noticeable that studies dealing with Buddhism and Buddhist moral codes mainly tend to use the Pita-kas as the source of evidence, while international studies tend to focus on ethics as a part of morality/virtue. In general, people do not perceive ethics as a core part of religion like Buddhism. Instead, ethics intentionally are designed to serve purposes of the organization or society. Regarding professional ethics, group members are expected to conduct themselves properly and have righteous manners based on ethical principles set by their professional communities. For society, morality/virtue and ethics also can discipline the people and make them live together with harmony. Therefore, ethics are like a self-warning device that guides one to behave properly and righteously with loving-kindness (Intasara, 1995). Ethics are the foundation of justice and according to which there is an obligation to give all human beings equality without any conflict (Kohlberg, 1976). The following examples are empirical studies on ethics in various aspects, mainly for work performance improvement. Brown et al. (2005) conducted an empirical study entitled "Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing" and found that ethical leaders set themselves as good exemplars in order to build greater trust through honesty, justice, and integrative abilities. They also stated that ethical leaders not only make good decisions, but also encourage staff to report problems without hesitation. Liu et al. (2013) wrote an article entitled "Ethical leadership and job performance in China: The roles of workplace friendships and traditionality" and found that there were positive relations between ethical leaders and corporate performance, as well as individual perfor-

mance. Moreover, the relationship between supervisors and subordinates became stronger. Based on the study entitled “Linking ethical leadership to employee creativity: knowledge sharing and self-efficacy as mediators”, findings showed that there were positive relationships between the ethical leaders and the staff’s creativity through their exchanging knowledge and respecting self-ability (Ma et al., 2013). Weaver et al. (2005) studied ethical role models in organizations and found that the characteristics of favorite and desirable ethical models were honesty, trustworthiness, integrity, humanity, high standards for self, public-private ethical consistency, self-sacrifice, taking responsibility for one’s own failings, fairness with others, accepting and soliciting input from others, treating others with respect, communicating high standards, consistent ethical vision, and putting ethics ahead of interests. Resick et al. (2013) conducted a study entitled “Ethical leadership, moral equity judgments, and discretionary workplace behavior” and found that a staff working with ethical leaders tended to have better judgment. Conflicts amongst the staff members decreased and their social participation increased. Based on the findings of a study entitled “An improved measure of ethical leadership”, ethical leaders could significantly create positive changes within work units as a result of their managerial efficiency (Yukl et al., 2013).

Compared to Buddhism, ethical objectives superficially focus on actions to serve particular purposes such as professional or community purposes. On the other hand, Buddhist moral codes aim to penetrate deeply into one’s way of life without time or status limits. They are neither superficial nor forceful codes of conduct. Rather, they are insightful and meaningful by going to the vast depth of the mind. Without obligation or compulsion, those that take Buddhist moral codes into their ways of life will act and think carefully with compassion for the sake of peace through individual commitment and self-control, dialogue, and the creation of cultures of peace.

Therefore, an integration of Buddhist moral codes promoting behavioral and cognitive transformations amongst industrial entrepreneurs is an empirical study that made efforts to discover the sophisticated process of transformations, from personal to corporate changes. It seems to be a long process before the integration of Buddhist moral codes for corporate changes take place. For industrial entrepreneurs with greed and selfishness, integration will be complicated and difficult. It is considered pointless to change from business persons to philanthropists. Regarding profit-making aspects, having loving-kindness, being self-sacrificing, honest, trustworthy, respecting others, even employees, and putting morals ahead of interests require outrageous investment. In contrast, there are some industrial entrepreneurs that have seriously integrated Buddhist moral codes for corporate changes after their personal behaviors and thought transformations. Along the process of complex changes, questions were raised: what made them change in the first place; what happened to them after their personal behavior and cognition transformation; what made them become interested in integrating Buddhist moral codes for corporate changes; and what were the outcomes? Therefore, the study aimed to focus on the integration of Buddhist moral codes promoting both personal and corporate transformations.

## **Methods**

Thirty in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Thai industrial entrepreneurs were undertaken in order to explore their behaviors, thoughts, and experiences related to Buddhism and the integration of Buddhist moral codes promoting changes on a corporate level. Thai industrial entrepreneurs that have been integrating Buddhist moral codes for promoting corporate changes were qualified to be samples for this study.

The combination of analytical qualitative and quantitative techniques was used to eliminate the disadvantages of each technique and to increase the reliability and validity of the research findings. Regression

analysis was used to statistically predict the four studied factors influencing changes on personal and corporate levels. The four factors were personal backgrounds, business conditions, dhamma experiences through reading books and listening to dhamma speeches, and spiritual experiences through samadhi. Moreover, descriptive statistics were used to quantitatively describe the basic features of data and to support the qualitative results in order to make the research findings more precise.

## Results

According to the demographic distribution, the industrial entrepreneurs consisted of 60% males and 40% females. The data collection generated up to 32 industrial types from heavy to light industries. Most of the participants (76.67%) were older than 50 years, while 23.33% were aged between 36-50 years.

In terms of the factors promoting personal behavioral and cognitive transformations, the results of multiple regression analysis showed that all four studied factors had positive relationships with such changes under different degrees of influence (see Table 1). Spiritual experiences through samadhi ( $R=.835$ ;  $R^2=.697$ ) were the most influential that promoted such changes, followed by dhamma experiences ( $R=.554$ ;  $R^2=.307$ ) through reading books and listening to dhamma speeches, personal backgrounds ( $R=.298$ ;  $R^2=.089$ ), and business conditions ( $R=.232$ ;  $R^2=.054$ ). The findings reflected that dhamma experiences could gradually encourage the participants to gain a better understanding of Buddhism.

Through the process of personal transformations, the research findings showed that nearly 50% of the participants were not seriously interested in Buddhism in the first place. Some studied the history of Buddhism in elementary school but discontinued their study due to other distractions along the growing process. Some even opposed Buddhist monks and



temples. One day, after having chances to conduct meditation, they became so peaceful and found special happiness that differed from earthly happiness. Their world views and behaviors automatically changed towards the Buddhist path. After seriously taking Buddhism into their way of life, the research found a total of 333 indicators of changed features,, which were divided into two groups: 51.97% indicating mind features and 48.03% indicating body features (see Figure 1).

Moreover, the discovered top-five personal changes (see Table 2) were: (1) to exhibit greater loving-kindness (100%); (2) to be more generous (93.33%); (3) to attend dhamma retreats more often (90.00%); (4) to be willing to share Buddhist moral codes with employees (86.67%); and (5) to become extensive dhamma readers and gain a better understanding of dhamma (83.33%).

In terms of Buddhist moral codes promoting personal changes, there was a total of eleven sets of favorite Buddhist moral codes influencing personal transformations. Each participant had an average of seven sets. The discovered top-five Buddhist moral codes included: (1) the Four Sublime States; (2) Gratitude and Gratefulness; (3) the Three Basic Facts of Existence; (4) the Law of Karma; and (5) the Four Noble Truths and the Four Successful Paths. The research findings also illustrated that ten out of eleven sets of Buddhist moral codes referred to corporate benefits when integrating Buddhist moral codes for corporate changes. Only six Buddhist moral codes were held for personal interests for transcendental objectives or Lokuttara (see Figure 2).

After the personal behaviors and cognitive transformations towards Buddhism, the participants moved forward to integrating Buddhist moral codes for corporate changes. Their utmost inspirations were to make their employees be good, kind, and happy persons.

According to the results of the multiple regression analysis, the four studied factors had positive relationships with the integration of Buddhist moral codes for corporate changes under different degrees of influence (see Table 3). Spiritual experiences through samadhi ( $R=.701$ ;  $R^2=.491$ ) was the most influential, followed by business conditions ( $R=.475$ ;  $R^2=.226$ ), dhamma experiences ( $R=.441$ ;  $R^2=.195$ ), and personal backgrounds ( $R=.283$ ;  $R^2=.080$ ).

Various types and methods of activities were designed to serve as tools for the integration of Buddhist moral codes. Four main types of activities were: (1) to directly focus on Buddhist ways; (2) to apply activities associated with focused Buddhist moral codes to fit the lifestyles of employees; (3) to improve the quality of employees' lives; and (4) to create a workplace environment to support the changes. The outcomes mainly were divided into two aspects, employees and overall business. Due to the positive effects on employees, they became happier (83.33%); had better relationships with executives (76.67%); became more helpful and generous with each other (70.00%); showed more willingness to work without conditions (60%); and (5) showed better manners towards others, as well as showed more willingness to help executives solve problems (56.67% each). The contributions to overall business were to gain more trust between executives and employees (86.67%); have less conflict amongst employees (83.33%); increase work efficiency (76.67%); and solve problems more carefully and have higher business turnover (66.67% each).

A model integrating Buddhist moral codes for overall change (at both personal and corporate levels) was fully developed by providing details and a rich picture in order to enhance the ease of implementation. The model began with classifying industrial entrepreneurs into four groups. The first group was set as successful examples. The second and third groups were considered to be potential groups for development, whereas the fourth group was not taken into account due to the lack of potentiality

for development. Network building allowed the target groups to get together and share experiences. For the second and third groups, their interests needed to be stimulated concerning the integration of Buddhist moral codes for overall change. Three channels of stimulation were: (1) to learn from the experiences of the first group; (2) to gain confidence through the research findings; and (3) to cultivate themselves through accepting problems, knowing the causes of problems, picturing a company where problems were completely solved, and finding solutions to problems. After their personal transformations, they would seriously put the integration of Buddhist moral codes into action (see Figure 3).

## **Discussion**

Based on the research findings, it was found that the Buddhist moral codes could actually promote overall change. The study found that not everyone grew up with an interest and faith in Buddhism. Some identified themselves as Buddhists only in a birth certificate and household registration book. Some people took half of their lives before changing their behaviors and thoughts in the way of Buddhism. After having spiritual experiences and achieving a peaceful mind, they became faithful to Buddhism and took Buddhism for their way of lives. Without samadhi and vipassanā, personal transformations would probably be impossible.

The research findings showed that spiritual experiences through Samadhi created the feeling of mindfulness, peacefulness, and happiness. All of the participants agreed that they became more compassionate, loving and kind, and generous. Definitely, the desire of conducting meritorious matters rose and the understating of Buddhist moral codes increased. The integration of Buddhist moral codes for corporate changes began. Regarding dhamma experiences, reading dhamma books and listening to dhamma speeches would help people, especially beginners, gain knowledge and understanding of Buddhism. In this sense, dhamma experiences

were considered a great supportive factor promoting behavior and cognitive transformation.

Based on the research findings, nearly 50% of opposite participants were changed to become good Buddhists after conducting meditation. Then, they humbly accepted Buddhist moral codes. Therefore, it is true to say that Buddhist moral codes can promote behavioral and cognitive transformations. For example, in the Buddha's period, the behavior and beliefs amongst Pañcavaggiya, Yasakulaputta, Bhaddavāggyā, and the three Jātīla brothers and their pupils were changed after listening to the sermons of the Buddha. At the end of a sermon they realized the truth and asked the Buddha to ordain them. Afterwards, all of them attained arahantship. Although the Buddha attained Parinibbāna 2,560 years ago, the Buddhist moral codes have remained completely perfect. One that sees the dhamma is one that sees the Buddha. To see the dhamma, one has to gain spiritual experiences through meditation.

In the modern world, talking about social or professional ethics is sound sensible. However, there is no guarantee that senses of social responsibility and ethics will be activated at all the times. As far as people always look for earthly pleasures and desires, unwholesome actions such as selfishness, greed, anger, destroy what might happen for the sake of their own interests. In Buddhism, one that seriously takes the dhamma into his or her ways of life especially having spiritual experiences tends to act and think carefully. In terms of Buddhist moral codes, Hiri (moral shame) and Oattappa (fearing the consequences of evil) will automatically occur in their mind as a warning device. Additionally, the understanding the Law of Karma (Kamma) also reminds one about the consequences of one's actions. Moreover, the Five Precepts (Pañca-sīla) will be used to monitor one's actions in order to prevent a person from any wrongdoing. Without any command, these people are willing to take no harmful actions. Exhibiting loving-kindness will make one do good things for other people as

well as the society. Although Buddhist moral codes might play significant roles covering different contexts for all walks of life, the integration of Buddhist moral codes can contribute to greater outcomes.

The contributions of this study to the body of knowledge are comprised not only of the combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses but also the factors promoting overall change, Buddhist moral codes, and various activities as tools for integrating Buddhist moral codes. Finally, a model was developed as a guideline for further integrating Buddhist moral codes to promote overall change.

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Table 1: Factors promoting personal transformations:  
results of the multiple regression analysis

Independent Variables (Factors)	Relationships between dependent and independent variables	Ranking Influence
Spiritual experiences	$R=.835$ ; $R^2=.697$ ; $S_e=10.911$ ; $\beta=.835$ ; $t=8.018$ ; $Sig.=.000$ ; $\alpha=0.05$	1
Dhamma experiences	$R=.554$ ; $R^2=.307$ ; $S_e=16.496$ ; $\beta=.554$ ; $t=3.518$ ; $Sig.=.002$ ; $\alpha=0.05$	2
Personal backgrounds	$R=.298$ ; $R^2=.089$ ; $S_e=18.908$ ; $\beta=.298$ ; $t=1.653$ ; $Sig.=.110$ ; $\alpha=0.05$	3
Business conditions	$R=.232$ ; $R^2=.054$ ; $S_e=19.267$ ; $\beta=.232$ ; $t=1.263$ ; $Sig.=.217$ ; $\alpha=0.05$	4

Dependent variable = Personal transformations

Table 2: Personal transformations

Personal transformations	Numbers of response	percentages of responses (N=30)
Exhibited greater loving-kindness	30	100.00%
Was more generous	28	93.33%
Attended dhamma retreats more often	27	90.00%
Was willing to share Buddhist moral codes with employees	26	86.67%
Became extensive dhamma readers and gained better understanding of dhamma	25	83.33%
Became extensive dhamma listeners and gained better understanding of dhamma	24	80.00%
Was happy when discussing dhamma with others	24	80.00%
Conducted chanting more often at home	23	76.67%
Meditated more often	21	70.00%
Absorbed dhamma into mind regularly	21	70.00%
Asked after employee's health and welfare	21	70.00%
Monitored the perfection of the Five precepts of their own	16	53.33%
The total of responses	286	953.33
The average of responses = 9.53		

Table 3: Factors promoting the integration of Buddhist moral codes for corporate changes: results of the multiple regression analysis

Independent Variables (Factors)	Relationships between dependent and independent variables	Ranking Influence
Spiritual experiences	$R=.701$ ; $R^2=.491$ ; $S_e=29.173$ ; $\beta =.701$ ; $t=5.196$ ; $Sig.=.000$ ; $\alpha=0.05$	1
Business conditions	$R=.475$ ; $R^2=.226$ ; $S_e=35.975$ ; $\beta =.475$ ; $t=2.857$ ; $Sig.=.008$ ; $\alpha=0.05$	2
Dhamma experiences	$R=.441$ ; $R^2=.195$ ; $S_e=36.685$ ; $\beta =.441$ ; $t=2.603$ ; $Sig.=.015$ ; $\alpha=0.05$	3
Personal backgrounds	$R=.283$ ; $R^2=.080$ ; $S_e=39.214$ ; $\beta =.283$ ; $t=1.561$ ; $Sig.=.130$ ; $\alpha=0.05$	4

Dependent variable = the integration of Buddhist moral codes for corporate changes



### Figure legends

Figure1: Changed features indicating serious interest in Buddhism

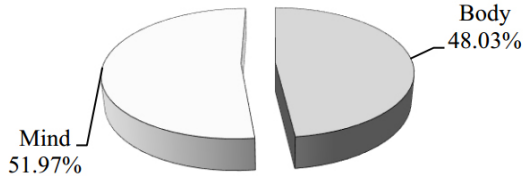


Figure 2: Favorite Buddhist moral codes promoting behavioral and cognition transformations amongst industrial entrepreneurs

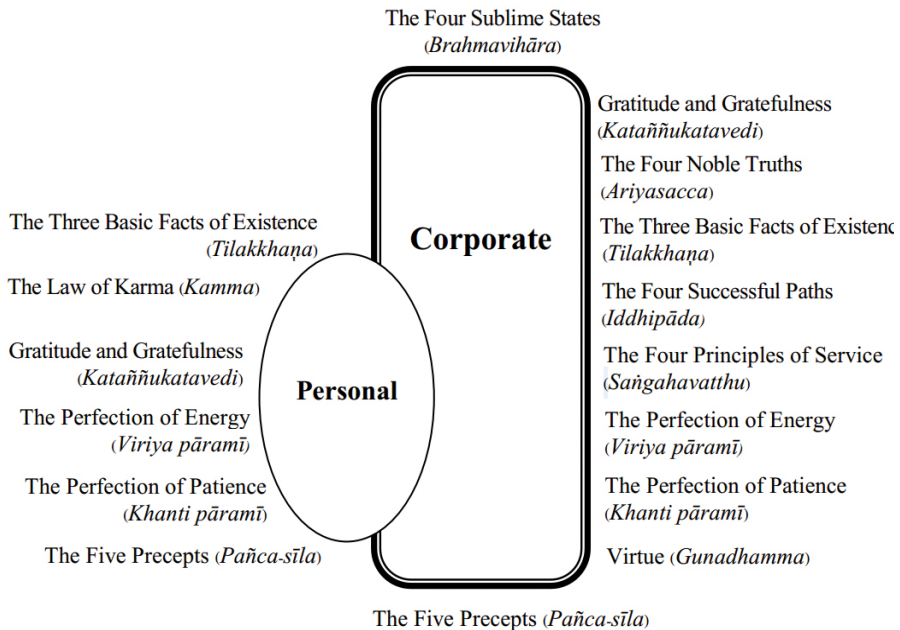


Figure 3: A model integrating Buddhist moral codes for overall change

