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Message

As a Buddhist myself, I deem it an honour to write this message to the souvenir to be published to mark the 10th United Nations Day of Vesak – 2013/2556 under the theme "Education and Global Citizenship : A Buddhist Perspective".

There is many a debate as to the definition of Global Citizenship. Broadly it can mean that every human being is a citizen of the world. Oxfam Education further describes Global Citizenship as enabling our younger generations with core competencies to engage with the world and treat the world more than just as a place to live in. The concept of Global Citizenship is fast invading the education sector, whereby students are encouraged to look at the concept as a way of thinking, an outlook on life, a belief that a difference can be made.

Historical events of the world have been paving the way to the expansion of globalisation in the present day and age. Starting from the "Silk Route" which connected Asia, Africa and Europe, we have not only been bartering spices, gems, gold & silk, but also philosophies, ideas, religions, art and culture as well. With the constant development of technology, sharing of ideas, gathering of information and being connected to people around the world is just a click away. Education systems all over the world are equipping young minds with the tools they will need to travel and live beyond the geographical boundaries. The world is slowly but surely becoming local. Many of us are at present active citizens of countries other than which we were born in. 'Active citizen' being a key word, it is imperative to go back to the concept of 'self'. Each person's action is a manifestation of their self and their conception of right and wrong. Therefore, if the world is fast becoming localised, and if geographical circumstances are no more a hindrance to mankind, then the present moment could not have been a more apt and to reflect on the values, education and the humaneness of one's self, in order to ensure that all citizens of the world will be united and transcend constraints of religion, race, sex, colour, language, political affiliation etc. Education and awareness are key factors in achieving this.

Article 1 of the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "All human beings are born free and are equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". I couldn't think of a better message to reflect on in this significant month of May, when Buddhists globally celebrate with reverence the birth, enlightenment and the entry into Nirvana of Lord Buddha. It is a time where many Buddhists reaffirm their faith in the preachings of Lord Buddha, known as the 'Dharma', a time where people take a moment to reflect on their lives and remember the noble truth and persevere to lead a noble life. To many, Buddhism has become a way of life, a philosophy more than a religion. Followers of Buddhism are not restricted in any way.

In a nutshell, Buddhism teaches us to lead a morally fulfilling life, it teaches us to be mindful of our thoughts and actions and it helps us to develop the mind and equip us with a deeper understanding of life and reality. Buddhism appeals to many due to its straightforward and practical nature. Buddhism is built on the basic principles that nothing is fixed or permanent, every action has a consequence & change is possible. Hence Buddhism reaches out to people irrespective of race, colour, gender, nationality or caste and enables people with practical knowledge to lead a noble and moral life mindful and respectful of others around you.

From the perspective of a Buddhist, it is of my opinion that the values, principles, and guidance that can be imparted from Buddhism will further enhance the process of becoming a global citizen. Many have identified the teachings of Lord Buddha as being pertaining to modern day life, which has most resulted in its popularity in the western world. As Buddhists while we take the time to reflect and awaken our minds to the teachings of Lord Buddha, it is not in vain to hope for a world where citizens, although will preserve the culture and traditions they grew up with, will also be united in the oneness of spirit and brotherhood, without disparity or enmity towards each other.

May the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be upon all !

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