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Symposium Session 1:

Education and Global Citizenship:
A Buddhist Perspective
Speaker

Brief Bio-data

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When Buddhism meets Cosmopolitanism: an Education for Global Citizenship

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Introduction

The emerging concern for providing a global education is apparent in many parts of the world. A global education may prepare students better to meet challenges of globalization. There is a growing interest now to transform traditional methods of education. The traditional education system that meant for inculcating values, habits and ethos required by citizens of a particular nation-state is often criticized today for its limitations in the curriculum. Increasingly critiques have shown ways of upgrading traditional education by lifting it into a new level of global outlook. The aspiration for a global outlook aims at enabling students to become more aware of challenges of global issues and concerns; they need to be equipped to meet new challenges successfully.

Today in the beginning of the twenty-first century we live an increasingly interconnected world. Our businesses, economic transactions and even our internal political affairs are increasingly connected to external worlds and events; as a result, they may impact the wellbeing of others in the rest of the world.

We cannot ignore anymore this interdependent and interconnected nature of our internal and external affairs. Business, politics and religious affairs of Buddhist societies in Asia are now facing new global challenges, which may require Buddhist responses.

How can Buddhism be used effectively in meeting global challenges? How can Buddhist societies better prepare their citizens through educational reforms to meet anticipated global challenges? Is there any particular role that Buddhists and Buddhism can assume in meeting novel global challenges? How can Buddhist teachings and practices elevate the traditional educational systems meant for nation building of particular nation-states in order to meet the needs of an emerging global vision? How can Buddhist teachings such as the *Metta Sutta* that teaches the importance of cultivating a boundless heart towards all beings be effectively used in enhancing aims of a global educational provision? This paper examines the possibility of designing an education system for global citizenship in Buddhist societies on the basis of values, ideals and lifestyles cultivated along the Buddha's teachings expressed in the *Metta Sutta*.

(I) Implications of the Very Idea of Global Citizenship

The idea of preparing students for global citizenship is gradually emerging as a prominent theme today in a variety of discourses. The concept of 'global citizen' is, nevertheless, an ancient concept. Like most Western ideals of flourished human life (e.g. 'democracy'), the notion of global citizen also has its origins in ancient Greece. In rudimentary form the seeds of the notion of global citizen can be found in the Greek philosophical school of Cynicism.[1]

The Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (*c*. 412 or 404-323 BCE) is considered to be the founder of the philosophical school of 'Cynicism.' Most importantly, Diogenes is credited as the first person in human history to coin the notion of 'a citizen of the cosmos' (Greek: *kosmopolitês*).[2] He seems to have held an attitude and lifestyle that characterized qualities of a global citizen. By that expression, Diogenes claimed to be a member of a shared humanity.

In Greek, the phrase *kosmopolitês* (*kosmos* 'world' + *politês* 'citizen') conveyed the idea of a 'citizen of the world.' Today scholars consider the widely used English terms 'cosmopolitan' and 'cosmopolitanism' derive from *kosmopolitês*.[3]

Diogenes identified himself as a 'citizen of the world.' Diogenes' usage of this phrase, however, communicated very much a metaphoric meaning. In using that phrase as an identification of his lifestyle, Diogenes neither attempted to substantiate this new identity in concrete terms nor anticipated a new "world (or global) citizenship" in political terms beyond his political identity as a Greek. Obvious reason for this metaphoric use was (is) that in practical terms there were (are) no world state—no *kosmopolis*—in which Diogenes or someone else could (can) become a citizen of. In reality, human beings can

become citizens of only one particular nation-state or several states (e.g. dual citizenship) but not citizens of 'world nation-states.'

Though Diogenes considered himself as a citizen of the world it is clear that he was in no way in support of establishing a single world government. This is very much clear in his refusal of Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE).[4] Diogenes did not express any desire to become part of such a world government. In Diogenes' metaphoric use of the notion of global citizenship, there was neither an assumption of a vision of an emergence of nor an aspiration for a world government.

By imagining as citizens of the world, what Diogenes highlighted was that as humans we should care about the fate of our fellow human beings. We should not limit our caring attitudes only to those who live within our own political community. Instead we must strive constantly to go beyond immediate concerns of the local community in which we live, which might limit our perspectives. By presenting a broader worldview, Diogenes challenged us to expand our limited notions of fellow citizens in order to embrace all human beings in the world.

Diogenes was a strong believer that we should be ready to borrow good ideas from others. When we listen to fellow human beings, they can potentially teach us many things useful to us. Being open to each other and becoming receptive to a variety of points of view we enable ourselves to cultivate values and virtues. We acquire skills that enable us care for global concerns. We prepare ourselves better for genuine yet imaginary and metaphoric global citizenship.

(II) Demanding Needs of an Education that Prepares for Global Citizenship

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle (384–322 BCE) emphasized the importance of education as a fundamental requirement for the cultivation of good habits. In *The Politics of Aristotle*, Aristotle wrote:

> For the attainment of well-being, or felicity, it is necessary to know the right end as well as to choose the right means.…There are three means by which the members of a state may achieve goodness—natural endowment, habit and rational principle.[5]

The process of facilitating young children to become responsible and well-behaved adults is an important one that has greater social implications. One can establish a strong link between knowledge and skills acquired in the formal education as children and subsequent development of appropriate beheviours that support good citizenship. Thus today most developed societies consider education as one of the most effective means of educating persons for good citizenship.

Highlighting the crucial significance of education for human flourishing and development, John Dewey (1859–1952), a pioneering American educational philosopher, asserted:

> We are born organic beings associated with others, but we are not born members of a community. The young have to be brought within the traditions, outlook and interests which characterize a community by means of education: by unremitting instruction and by learning in connection with the phenomena of overt association. Everything which is distinctly human is learned.[6]

All around the world contemporary trends demand redesigning of the traditional education systems in order to make them more effective in developing skills for global citizenship. These trends, however, are largely modern and primarily Western.

Throughout history, intellectuals have noted the significance of education as a powerful source of social change and transformation. It is not surprising to anyone that education still remains to be a privilege in many societies. Moreover, many societies see education largely as an investment in persons on an individual basis. Education is thus a deliberate process of empowering younger generations to meet the challenges of an unborn and uncertain future.

Today worldwide at least primary education reaches to a wider segment of human civilization. Though there are serious problems in providing an education to all, there are nevertheless attempts to make primary education universal.

It has been noted that there were 69 million children worldwide out of school in 2008.[7] More than half of the out-of-school children live in just fifteen countries. Three countries in which Buddhists form either the majority (Thailand 0.6 million) or minority (India 5.6 millions and Bangladesh 2.0 millions)[8] are included in this category of out-of-school children. According to the UNESCO, only "52 countries out of 152 with data had achieved universal primary enrolment."[9]

The millennium development goals highlight the significance of education in eliminating poverty as well as gender inequalities. Inequalities in accessing to educational resources and learning achievements are considered as primary barriers in providing an education to all.

World poverty still remains a significant point in making people disadvantageous worldwide. Across the world poverty still remains the major marker of disadvantage. It has been noted that more than 55% of out-of-school children are girls and "two out of three countries in the world face gender disparities in primary and secondary education."[10] According to the UNESCO, poorer countries require annual aids of US $16 billion to reach the target of education for all goals.[11]

Tertiary education is, however, still limited to a privileged segment of humanity. A recent report in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* states:

> In the world of higher education there is good news and some not so good. First the good: Practically all forecast analyses made by experts, from UNESCO to OECD, and also at the national level in most countries, predict that, during the coming decade, worldwide enrollment in higher education will continue to increase, thus benefiting more people than ever. The not so good news is that although the number of higher-education students will increase, unfortunately, it looks as though higher education will remain primarily elitist as it is today.[12]

In particular, in developing nations, only a tiny fragment of primary education receivers enters into higher education.

In general, education has potential to elevate humans from their impoverished political, social, cultural and religious conditions of their environment to a higher level of understanding, comprehension and appreciation.

On the personal level, education is an important process of character formation and giving a vision of the future and a sense of individual responsibility in carving out one's path for the benefit of oneself as well as that of others.

Education enables humans to realize and become fully human. It can ensure lifelong happiness of learners. Education can be instrumental in creating a peaceful and just society in global scale when education generates a sense of a global community.

In every respect, education is crucial and fundamental in creating a profound sense of respect for the sanctity of life that can prevent horrible crimes related to war and violence. The task of education remains the knowledge acquired in the process must enhance human happiness and well being of all including plants and the earth.

Our world, linked by the Internet, social media, worldwide travels and multilingual proficiency, directs us to a global community. We are pushed increasingly to accept the fact that our affairs are not local but global and whatever we say and do may have impacts beyond our local communities and may have implications globally.

Due to increasingly expanding notion of globally connected community time has come to look beyond the very concept of the nation-state; thus a twentieth century need to think beyond particular nation-states that we are citizens of.

The concept of the nation-state, formally and legally we are bound by the fact of our birth or later adoption due to immigration (thus holding citizenships and passports) is limiting in many ways; it might restrict us reaching to a genuine global community.

A 'citizen of the world imagined' must look beyond the limits of the particular nation-state that one lives in and belongs to. A global citizen must aspire a common human community that lies beyond. In this process, one must embrace an attitude of global citizenship that includes an appreciation of lifestyles, values and customs beyond the limits of the nation-state. One must cultivate respect towards them in the same manner as one respects to those of one's particular nation-state.

Specifics such as the citizenship of a particular nation-state, the number of languages that one can use proficiently and the number of countries that one has travelled and lived in are not necessarily restricting or limiting one's ability to cultivate a sense of global citizenship.

The seeds of global citizenship might include the presence of following human characteristics: inner nobility, dignity and self-esteem of each individual citizen. Ordinary citizens of particular nation-states, who live locally and act locally, can and should be able to develop an attitude of global citizen by appreciating all-benefitting peace, working for the well-being and happiness of all, and actively promoting prosperity and longevity of the rest of the world.

An educational provision aimed at global citizenship must include the cultivation of an attitude that as humans we belong to the same planet. We share many things in common, which may determine our human destiny. No matter how local we are and how rooted our actions in the local community, they might matter in significant ways in the generation of wellbeing of all other inhabitants of the planet.

Several important issues are at stake in developing an education system that enhances qualities, attitudes and characteristics required for successful global citizenship: how do we relate to each other as humans? How do we treat each other worldwide? How do we use resources with some shared responsibility? How can we ensure equity and fair distribution of resources? How can we ensure dignity, safety and rights of all? These questions need urgent attention today.

(III) Insights from the *Metta Sutta* in Designing an Educational Programme for Global Citizenship

The *Metta Sutta* (Discourse on the Loving-kindness) is an unusual popular Theravāda Buddhist scripture. It is found in the discourse (*sutta*) section of the Pāli canon (*tipiṭaka*). It belongs to the archaic collection of the *Suttanipāta*.[13] The Theravāda tradition recognizes it as an ancient Buddhist scripture.

This scripture forms an essential part of the daily repertoire of the average lay Buddhist. In Sri Lanka, in particular, the *Metta Sutta* is recited daily in a variety of styles in regular temple worship services as well as in lay spiritual practices at homes. Most lay

people know the *Metta Sutta* (in Pāli) by heart and are able to recite it alone in private or as a group in Buddhist liturgies. Its simplicity in style, clarity in content, heightened awareness with a global vision and the empowering language suggest that the *Metta Sutta* is more likely to be the original *buddhavacana* (word) of the Buddha.

The subject of focus in the *Metta Sutta* is loving-kindness (*mettā*). In both lay and monastic contexts in Theravāda societies, the *Metta Sutta* is widely used today for two purposes: (i) as an aid for loving-kindness meditation and (ii) as an essential segment of Theravāda liturgies such as the *paritta* (protection) chanting across South and Southeast Asian Theravāda world. This discourse teaches to develop loving-kindness towards all living beings without any exception.

Doctrinally, philosophically and practically, the *Metta Sutta* cultivates in Buddhist practitioners key fundamental virtues. As illustrated below in detail, this ancient discourse can help in developing an education system that reflects the global worldview of Buddhists. Educators can use the method of practice and the development of loving-kindness beginning from each person and extending to all sentient beings of the entire cosmos as a foundation in designing an educational programme that support a broader worldview required today for global citizenship.

The *Metta Sutta* provides a holistic vision that transcends ethno-centric boundaries that humans place against other humans to set them apart and limit their vision of the world narrowly toward themselves by excluding other inhabitants of the planet.

The Content of the Metta Sutta

The Pāli text of the *Metta Sutta* is rather short. The entire text contains only ten verses of four lines composed in Old Aryā metre.[14] There are several popular English translations of this discourse.[15]

The first verse of the *Metta Sutta* outlines noble qualities of a virtuous character. According to it, a flourishing person is 'skillful (*kusala*) in [one's] welfare' (*attha*). Such a flourishing person, who is endowed with a noble vision of self-improvement and desires of attaining *nirvāna* (*santaṃ*), must develop specific wholesome character traits. They are: one's capability (*sakko*), straightforwardness (*uju*), uprightness (*sūju*), soft-spokenness (*suvaca*), gentleness (*mudu*) and humility (*anatimāni*).

The second verse discusses virtues that the flourishing person should cultivate to flourish. The successful person maintains a 'content' (*santussako*) and easy-to-support (*subharo*) lifestyle; that person has 'few duties' (*appakicco*) and leads a frugal way of life (*sallahuka-vutti*). That person is committed to discipline one's senses (*santindriyo*), discreet (*nipako*), not impudent (*appagabbho*) and "unattached to families" (*kulesu ananugiddho*). Here the virtue of being "unattached to families" must be understood in a broader sense. That person is unbiased towards others; that person's familiarity and closeness to his or her

own family members, friends, etc. do not obstruct or prevent that person from committing fully to the welfare of others.

The flourishing person is concerned with one's wholesome lifestyle. That person does not want to leave space open for criticism from the wise and elders; that person might not do any slightest wrong that may draw criticism from the wise.

The last two lines of the third verse introduce the practice of the cultivation of *mettā*: May all beings become happy and secure (*sukhino vā khemino hontu*)! May all beings have happy personalities (*sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā*)!

The extension of the flourishing person's caring and compassionate thoughts towards a variety of living organisms begins in the verses four and five.

> Whatever living beings there may be, feeble or strong, without exception, long (*dīghā*), stout (*mahantā*), medium (*majjhimā*), short (*rassā*), subtle (*kānuka*), gross (*thūlā*), visible (*diṭṭhā*) or invisible (*adiṭṭhā*), living far (*dūre*) or near (*avidūre*), born (*bhūtā*) or coming to birth (*sambhavesī*), may all beings have happy personalities (*sukhitattā*)!

In this cultivation of *mettā* towards all living beings, none of the sentient beings are excluded from the introspection. The desire of extending positive and other regarding thoughts to all living organisms is taken into consideration in the development of loving-kindness.

The verse six introduces further virtues that one should incorporate into one's righteous lifestyle:

> Let none deceive another, nor despise any person whatsoever in any place. Neither in anger nor ill-will should anyone wish harm to another.

The verse seven takes an extreme example to illustrate the importance of the cultivation of *mettā*.

> Just as a mother would protect her only child
> at the risk of her own life,
> even so towards all beings one should cultivate a boundless heart (*mānasaṃ aparimānaṃ*).

The verse eight presents an inclusive cosmic perspective in the cultivation of *mettā*:

> One should cultivate boundless loving thoughts for the whole world: above, below and across without any obstruction (*asambādhaṃ*),without any hatred (*averaṃ*), without any enmity (*asapattaṃ*).

By recommending a fully inclusive practice, the verse nine creates a heavenly lifestyle on earth. It is considered as the "divine dwelling" (*brahmaṃ vihāraṃ*):

> Whether standing, walking, or sitting, lying down or whenever awake, that person should develop this mindfulness (*sati*).This is called the noblest living (divine dwelling—*brahmaṃ vihāraṃ*) here.[16]

The verse ten sums up the noble soteriological vision of Buddhism achieved through the cultivation of *mettā*:

> Not falling into erroneous views, but virtuous and endowed with vision, removing desire for sensual pleasures, he comes never again to birth in the womb.

The Importance of the Metta Sutta for Global Citizenship

My contention is that the *Metta Sutta* provides necessary basic ingredients for designing a global vision. The *Metta Sutta*'s global vision is inclusive of all living organisms. Its message encourages people to become proactive in seeking welfare of all beings. By cultivating loving-kindness towards all, on an individual basis humans can ensure the wellbeing of all.

In the increasingly globalized world today all religious communities in general, but multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies in particular, are challenged more in public debates and daily encounters to find creative ways that foster positive attitudes towards others. As people who share the resources of the same planet, all humans are forced to work with each other for the common good. Having shared virtues such as the cultivation of compassionate and caring thoughts enables us relate and communicate with each other more effectively.

In Theravāda Buddhist societies, Buddhists can use meditative practices such as the loving-kindness and a variety of Buddhist scriptures that encourage other-regarding virtues to create a positive psychological framework for healthy human relationships. Positive mental attitudes generated through the practice of loving-kindness meditation and non-discriminated and unbiased inclusivity proposed towards all sentient beings in the *Metta Sutta* are very much valuable today than any time in the human history.

Functionally, positive scriptural insights such as that of the *Metta Sutta* were not limited to a few limited religious seekers who were living in the Buddhist monasteries. Friendly thoughts cultivated towards all beings became an important part in dealing with the 'other' in pre-modern Buddhist societies such as Sri Lanka.[17] Living in a predominantly Buddhist social environment, Buddhists tried to deal with the 'difference' that they witnessed in the midst of colonialism and political invasions without compromising their commitment to the adherence of the Buddha's teachings, in particular, the notion of loving-kindness. They translated those noble virtues into their public policies to make

the stranger and the other happier since 'suffering' is not just a problem that only Buddhists face in this world but also a real and an existential problem for the entire humanity.

Conclusions

This paper, which discusses the importance of an educational provision for global citizenship, has taken into account the fact that Buddhism and Buddhist societies are increasingly encountering challenges of growing cosmopolitanism that requires the development of a global vision. This pushes Buddhist thinkers to reflect upon the development of a global education that prepares citizens of nation-states to adopt a global vision. In preparing citizens for challenges of the global citizenship, the necessity arises to transform the traditional methods of education to a global one. By overcoming the limitations of the traditional curriculum and generating a new global outlook in the educational provisions, citizens can be prepared and equipped better to meet the challenges of global issues and concerns. Recognizing our interconnectedness in business, economic transactions, politics and religious affairs, we could use some Buddhist global visions such as the one found in the *Metta Sutta* (the idea of cultivating boundless heart) in transforming the vision of the educational system. This may be one way that Buddhists and Buddhist societies can better prepare citizens of particular nation-state to meet global challenges.

Endnotes

[1] **Endnotes**

As a philosophical school, Cynicism, which derives from Greek *kyon* (cynic) meaning 'dog', held radical perspectives such as the rejection of tradition and local loyalty. In *The Cynic Enlightenment: Diogenes in the Salon* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, p. 1), Louisa Shea wrote: "Cynics could be encountered on street corners throughout the eastern Mediterranean and the Italian peninsula…They were generally a rather dirty lot…Their physical appearance mirrored their philosophical stance: the rejection of all that society considered acceptable or right." They challenged the traditional conceptions of 'civilized behavior.'

[2] Louisa Shea, *The Cynic Enlightenment: Diogenes in the Salon* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, p. 16).

[3] Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Chapter 6: Education for Global Citizenship," *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 107 (2008): 85.

[4] See Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Chapter 6: Education for Global Citizenship," *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 107 (2008): 86 for Diogenes' encounter with Alexander the Great.

[5] *The Politics of Aristotle*, edited and translated by Ernest Barker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 311.

[6] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Athens: Swallow Press and Ohio University Press, 1954), p. 154.

[7] "UN Resources for Speakers on Global Issues: Education for All," http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/efa/vitalstats.shtml (accessed on 21st April 2013).

[8] "Education for All Global Monitoring Report," UNESCO (www.efareport.unesco.org), p. 3.

[9] "Education for All Global Monitoring Report," UNESCO (www.efareport.unesco.org), p. 2.

[10] "UN Resources for Speakers on Global Issues: Education for All," http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/efa/vitalstats.shtml (accessed on 21st April 2013).

[11] "Education for All Global Monitoring Report," UNESCO (www.efareport.unesco.org), p. 6.

[12] Francisco Marmolejo, "Access, Retention, and Success in Higher Education Around the World," 22 November 2010
http://chronicle.com/blogs/worldwise/access-retention-and-success-in-higher-education-around-the-world-are-we-widening-or-narrowing-the-gaps/27599 (accessed 5th May 2013).

[13] *Metta Sutta* is the eighth *sutta* of the *Uragavagga* ("The Snake Chapter," vv. 143-152) of the *Sutta-nipāta*, ed. Dines Andersen and Helmer Smith (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1990), pp. 25-26. For an English translation of the *Metta Sutta* see *The Group of Discourses (Sutta-nipāta)*, vol. II, trans. K.R. Norman (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1992), pp. 16-17.

[14] *The Group of Discourses (Sutta-nipāta)*, vol. II, trans. K.R. Norman (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1992), p. 176.

[15] For a collection of seventeen English translations of the *Metta Sutta* see http://www.leighb.com/mettasuttas.htm

[16] http://www.leighb.com/mettasuttas.htm

[17] See Mahinda Deegalle, "Creating Space for the Non-Buddhists in Sri Lanka: A Buddhist Perspective on the Other," *Hermeneutical Exploration in Dialogue: Essays in Honour of Hans Ucko's 60th Birthday*, ed. A. Rambachan et al (Delhi: ISPCK, 2007), pp. 114–27 for cases where Buddhists took care of both Catholics and Muslims when their existence was threatened under colonial persecution.