

Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Multicultural Societies: Buddhist Response and Recommendation of a Buddhist Model of Global Citizenship

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Multiculturalism has emerged as a prominent ideology of modern political thought and is still in the process of formation as every now and then it has been facing new challenges and is being modified accordingly. Multiculturalism, in general is defined as a policy for managing the relations of different ethnic groups, protecting the identity of diverse cultures and propagating the idea of peaceful and harmonious co-existence within the boundaries of a nation. Still there is lots of conceptual confusion and the topic remains open for debate and discussion. However, the proclaimed objectives of multicultural policy are to respect cultural distinctions and to encourage their preservation, to develop tolerance for each other and to encourage mutual borrowings. The idea was first suggested by Harace Kallen in 1915 in term of cultural pluralism. The large scale migrations after Second World War and Civil Rights Movement

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emphasized the need to address the problem of ethnic and cultural diversity and from here the idea of multiculturalism consolidated as a political system. Even after being in practice as part of official policy of many countries for more than half century, the multicultural societies have not been able to attain the goal of peaceful co-existence and harmonious living among the people representing diverse cultures. Unfortunately, they remain perpetually plagued by ethnic conflict religious unrest and issues of human rights.

Such problems are not confined to a particular part of the world but are encountered globally, hence require a globally admissible solution. Probably the concept of global citizenship one of the United Nations millennium development goals may fulfill this objective.

Global citizenship as envisaged by United Nations upholds the principles of cross-cultural unity, respect and sensitive handling of sensitive matter such as religion, language and identity. Creation of global citizenship is in itself an arduous pursuit, however, Buddhism could be of immense help in growth and strengthening of the ideal of global citizenship. Historically speaking the challenge is not new and its remedy certainly not an utopian dream. The oasis states and trade colonies dotting the trans-continental silk route in the early centuries of Christian era had demographic constitution comprising multitude of races and ethnic group with diverse cultures. Bound together by Buddhism as a faith and as a way of life, they thrived peacefully for a long period of time and their art legacies at Turpan, Qizil and Dunhuang are still treasured by the world.

Multiculturalism apparently is an all inclusive policy that recognizes plurality of cultures with the claim of providing the space to each of them. Such societies continuously attempt to bring forth a common identity and consensual citizenship, at the same time it is strongly presumed that to reach a consensus among the diverse religions would be hardly possible. The issue has been dealt in two contradictory ways. It is believed that it is completely futile, even harmful exercise to find out normative characteristic of all religions, instead, it is argued that all should be taken seriously as far as possible in their own terms (Cobb, 1984: 172). This generosity may not be possible in multicultural societies

as it would lead to anarchy, rather giving a solution this approach would aggravate the problem.

It has also been suggested that each of the religion should be allowed to challenge our beliefs and assumptions (*Ibid*). In the specific context of multiculturalism it would encourage ‘ethnocentrism’ resulting in sharp edged religious groups with sympathy for in group people and hostility for outsider. This way religious identity will become the dominant identity, something which not even liberal democracies would appreciate. Some believe that the values of different cultural groups are incompatible and that separation has many positive features (Young, 1995: 163). Accepting pluralism is one thing but a categorical denial of there being any common denominator among the cultures, particularly in religious beliefs is too pessimistic.

The affirmative school emphasizes the need to pursue the quest to find out a basis common to all religions and traditions, otherwise it would be like diversity without unity which may have negative consequences (Abe, 1995:46). The subject of identity and individual in multicultural setup have been overworked by anthropologists, sociologists, philosopher, political thinker and economists, suggesting multiple identities and many sets of their hierarchy. The outcome is completely entangled and may be confusing so much that eminent scholar like Amartya Sen has commented that its underlying values are not altogether clear (2006:114). The possible way to deal with multiplicity of identities could be going back to basics and figuring out something to which humanity responds in a similar way across the world. Studies emphasize that religion, among all cultural traits has the highest potential to yield shared values which bind people together, may also give rise to consciousness of the whole. Hocking feels that religion is universal and inherent in all humankind because all religions have a passion for righteousness (1940: 26). Despite distances and differences in time and space the inter-relatedness and continuity of the history of religions cannot be disregarded. It is felt that a universalist faith and a new unity among all religions (Smith, 1981: 175) may effectively eliminate many points of conflict among the multicultural societies.

Nevertheless, skepticism prevails in some spheres about giving too much importance to religion in multicultural societies, relegating other identities into background (Sen, 2006: 118). Religious classifications are held responsible for dividing societies into watertight compartments which make intercultural dialogue difficult. It is also felt that it undermines plurality, acknowledgement of which is crucial for the survival of multicultural societies. There is a very thin line between religion and sectarianism, fanaticism or parochialism. Religion needs to be understood in proper perspective. Besides preeminence of religion in a society is considered to curtail the freedom of choice and fosters blinkered vision (*Ibid*). Secularism is practiced by multicultural societies and liberal democracies as an instrument to minimize the role of religion. Secularism is basically a philosophy of exclusion of religious identity from the public sphere. Though the propounder of the policy George Jacob Holyoake only suggested separation of social order from religion, modern thinkers question the validity of religions as indispensable for man. By fencing out religion from public domain a vacuum is created in social life of people which may result in various types of deviant behaviour. Secularism actually drastically limits the scope of communication between different cultural groups hampering mutual borrowings and sense of mutual appreciation, so very important for harmonious living. Even more alarmingly it severes an effective link of trust building among the various cultures. What is needed in particularly multicultural societies is not secularism but as Rawls puts it is religious liberty (Rawls, 1993: 28) and Sen views it as cultural freedom (Sen, 2006: 116). This helps religions to reevaluate and revise their doctrine and come out of the traditional framework. It is absolutely necessary to make religions contextually relevant. It gives an opportunity to the adherents to improvise their traditions and rituals which are pertinent to their present needs. We should look into the possibilities of religion acting as an adhesive force rather than a divisive force.

Various models of multiculturalism have been adopted and experimented in the different parts of the world. ‘Melting pot’ model also defined as pluralistic multiculturalism, recognizes different cultural identities at the institutional level. The immigrant cultures are encouraged to adopt the ways of recipient culture. It operates with the assimilation of

immigrant cultures in the recipient culture as the ultimate goal leading to the genesis of a common national culture. This model is adopted by United States of America. This model invites cultures to make their contribution for formation of a common culture with which they all identify as their own. The other model is known as ‘Salad Bowl’ model. As in salad, many ingredients are tossed together in a bowl but all retain their own unique flavour. Similarly, the principles of ‘Salad bowl’ model, known as particularist multiculturalism, expects that all constituent cultures preserve their cultural specifications and maintain their separate cultural identity. It visualizes society as cultural mosaic rather than an amalgamation of cultures. Both these models not only recognize diversity at the state level but also function with it in perspective. French model of multiculturalism is different in the sense that it does recognize plurality of cultures but is not much concerned about its management. It allows immigrant cultures to maintain their separate identity at the same time if the native population is not interested in assimilation of immigrant culture they are not forced for interaction. This has been termed as ‘politics of recognition with vengeance’. What is common to all these models is that they all keep religion at bay. Anything but fostering of religion and religious institutions is appreciated by multicultural states. Though it is being increasingly felt that with economic development and modernization manifest in social changes have created a crisis of identity and religion could be a source of identity well defined (Hersh, 2000: 204). There is still suspicions and indeed some measure of hostility (Nye, 2001: 278) towards religiously identified groups. But what is not realized is that religion could also be the source of creation of a global culture and global citizenship. West has identified some religions and in their bit to accommodate religion, have perceived a category of ‘new religions’ that are not ethnically constituted courses on new religions have been introduced in educational institution. Here also the procedure followed is that of selective inclusion.

Two significant points come out of this discussion. One that multicultural societies are the most fertile grounds to sow in the seeds of global citizenship as they are a world within themselves. Second, that the reinstatement of altruistic values inherent in generally all the religions might provide us with building blocks for a coherent idea of

global citizenship. The idea of a broader citizenship is already being discussed in terms of intercultural citizenship shared citizenship and world citizenship. These are purely political expression but UN agenda of global citizenship has moral and spiritual connotation to it. In modern political terminology citizenship means to be a member of the state, so that entitlement to citizenship is entitlement to membership of the state (Gilbert, 2000: 148). This involves mutual obligation on part of both the parties. It implies endorsement of the state policy by the citizen and interest of the citizen being looked after by the state. This obligation part is main obstacle in understanding of world citizenship, and as such, to some extent for global citizenship. Thinkers promoting cosmopolitanism propose that the obligation to the state should be determined only on utilitarian grounds (Goodin, 1987-8: 668). They feel that confinement of loyalty to a single state or commitment to fellow members will seriously subvert the rights and obligations of world citizenship that relates to human society as a whole.

The most remarkable feature of the cosmopolitan is that it makes collective identities that individuals have beyond their mere humanity, irrelevant (Gilbert, Ibid: 150). In fact, the field of protection of rights of an individual is overcrowded with ism i.e., pluralism, liberalism, proceduralism, tolerism and many more. All are unduly embroiled with various forms of identities not realizing that cultural, ethnic or national identities are secondary formations and social constructs. The basic and natural identity is that of a human. The vision of global citizenship is built upon the human identity of man whom Kant has described as ‘rational being’ (IV, 81) and Jacques Maritain designates as having ‘spiritual super existence’ and being a ‘microcosmos’ in himself (1944: 6). The global citizenship evolves into a canopy identity symbolizing just being human, rest of the identities subsumed beneath it. This might have remained a distant dream to be attained through ‘melting pot’ and ‘Salad bowl’ models, it may be possible to realize it through ‘compassion model’ proposed here. Compassion or *Karunā* is the key sentiment of Buddhist doctrine and Buddha is also known as *Mahākārunik* the embodiment of Karuna.

It has been derived from Buddhism, maintaining the fact that all religions have passion for righteousness, it is emphasized that probably no other religion delves in the sufferings of man in such a comprehensive manner as Buddhism does. It first ascertains the cause of suffering then suggests the path for its removal. Compassion model, transcending all the subsets of identities, beliefs, ways of life, directly addresses to the basic human values of the ‘rational being’. These basic human values are presented in form of divine abiding or *Brahmavihāra*, four in number, namely *Metta*, *Karunā*, *Mudita* and *Upekkhā*. They are all interconnected, dependent on each other and emanate from one another, so present us with a compact and consolidated scheme of shaping of selfless, tolerant, socially concerned and morally responsible person deserving to qualify as global citizen. Inculcation of these simple virtues of friendliness, joyfulness, compassion and equanimity empowers a person to face the challenges of the modern world and gradually weed out the causes of violence, greed, disregard for each other’s interest and most importantly segregational tendencies. Buddhist concepts and practices of human relations clearly envisages a global kinship.

Before elaborating upon the practice and perfection of these virtues, it would be relevant to discuss the salient features of Buddhist philosophy that contribute to the value of this model. Negation of self or personhood might be one of the issues of higher philosophy but at the rudimentary level Buddhism celebrates the individuality of man. Buddha’s exposition to Kalāms of Keshputta’s is treated as the Magnakarta of freedom of thought (Anguttar, III, 65.14). Buddha says that one should not believe in something just because that has been a tradition, that it is according to the scriptures, that it has been preached by the great people that it is logical, it has been investigated by others. One should first experience, investigate and then only accept or disregard something. This is a bold proclamation of sovereignty of a man. This self enlightened individual plays the role of messenger of peace and harmony. Buddha outlines a beautiful relationship between ‘self’ and the ‘other’ through the delineation of *Brahmavihāras*. It has a non-dualistic approach affirming that the ‘self’ is not separate from the ‘other’. What one wishes for self wishes for other as well. One would never wish bad for self and neither for the others (Visudhimogga,

IX. 10). The practice of the *Brahmavihāras* is prescribed in a dialectical method. First the practitioner meditates upon the disadvantages of not having the virtue then progresses to concentrate upon the advantages of having the virtue. This is a rational and somewhat scientific way of bringing home the worth of the idea. By practice of virtues feelings are developed for all sentient beings in variable of caste, creed or colour (*Dighanikāya*, II, iii, 110). This idea of human relations clearly envisages a global kinship. Practice of *Brahmavihāras* lays great stress on understanding. It is through understanding that one understands the sufferings of others (*Viśuddhimagga* VIII, 32) and through compassion endeavours to remove them.

Loving kindness or *metta* is the first virtue. It is prescribed that one who embarks upon practice of this virtue first of all should develop it for himself by doing it thus may “I be happy and free from suffering or may I keep myself free from enmity, affliction and anxiety (*Visuddhimagga*, IX. 8). It is explained that one who lives himself will never harm another (*Samyuttanikaya*, I, 75). Love for others is inherent in love for self. A person with heart filled with loving kindness and mind calmed by loving kindness realizes the truth that self is likewise to every other dear; who loves himself wishes well for other too (*Ibid*). Thus enlightened ‘self’ becomes induced with the feeling of a mother and the ‘other’ is felt as child whom the mother protects at the risk of her life. Loving kindness prepares a selfless person with a broader vision and generous outlook.

The second divine abiding is compassion the practice begins with first looking into the dangers and disadvantages of not having it. After this he starts eternalizing compassion. It is noteworthy that the compassion is to be directed towards the four categories of people, representing the four extreme of beings, i.e., the dear one, the unfortunate one, the hostile one and the neutral one (*Ibid*, 77-79). The order of the object of practice is also important. According to Vibhang, first he develops compassion towards an unfortunate person and according to Anguttar nikaya it has to be first directed toward a hostile person (*Ibid*, 68, 83). Anyways, the compassion is first developed towards the most deserving but most difficult person, so his compassion is all pervading. If thus a person is

compassionate towards all, there would be no sign of enmity, spite or anger, will be naturally inclined to peaceful living with concern for wellbeing of others. Compassion is understood as being non-cruel (*Ibid*, IX. 93) in contemporary sense being non-violent.

The next virtue to be perfected is sympathetic joy (*Muditā*). This virtue is expressed as gladness at others success and its function is being unenvious (*Ibid* 95). Envy and insecurity are the two major reasons behind conflict. It would be easiest to resolve conflict by taking pride in success of others and feeling joyful for others. There would be no feeling of being marginalized or being deprived among the various groups of people – ethnic, cultural or religious.

Equanimity is the highest divine abiding and its characteristic feature is neutrality (*Ibid* 96). Equanimity is practiced as a feeling of equality and alikeness for all sentient beings. It is seen as perfected when the feeling of resentment and approval is not arisen in the practitioner.

Indeed, these four divine abiding or sublime attitudes have the power of transforming the personality and thought of a person. It purifies the psychology and resultant reflections. It produces an individual who is invariable affectionate, free of anger or envy, sensitive and respecting towards fellow beings with aversion for any kind of cruelty mental or physical. This is the idea being to be designated as global citizen.

Incorporation of these values in school curriculum help in restricting mad rush for material gains spirit of cut throat competition and correct the wrong view of individuality and develop indiscriminate compassion for all. Gradually with wider acceptance the virtues of *Metta*, *Karunā*, *Mudita* and *Upekkhā* will get established social values. In multicultural societies, people irrespective of their culture, religion or ethnicity, strive to confirm to the socially standardized values, to become part of mainstream of the society. It has been observed that impact of social standardization is so deep that it seeps even into unconscious fantasies of man (Honigmann, 1967: 3). This way the hybridity of the population could be managed in a most effective manner. Buddha, in his discourse summarizes the results of the practice of these values. Buddha was once visiting the monastery of

Gosanga and asked about the well-being of the monks staying there and how they live peacefully in each others company. The monks replied like ‘mixture of milk and water’ (*Majjima Nikāya*, I, 205-207). It is elaborated that by loving mind, loving physical, mental and verbal activities they live like mixture of milk and water. The underlying sentiment of their actions is the ‘will to loose for others’ not ‘forced to loose’ like in modern societies.

It may be concluded that the compassion model of multiculturalism may be most suited one as it would reach beyond the goal of overlapping consensus as a condition for global citizenship but may be able to generate a universal consensus. It will help us to rationally evaluate the deep rooted flaws of present multicultural patterns such as cultural relativism, value-judgment of cultural trait and social Darwinism.

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