



Bodhi Vihara – Buddhistisches Kloster Freising

Domberg 10, 85354 Freising, Germany

1<sup>st</sup> of May 2556 (2013)

### **Education and Global Citizenship: A Buddhist Perspective**

One question frequently encountered in Germany is the matter of how to classify Buddhism. Is it a religion, is it a philosophy or maybe a way of life? Any of these answers would be correct, yet the most precise response might be that it is an education system. This teaching of Gotama Buddha, whose birth, going forth, awakening, and passing away we now commemorate on the Day of Vesak, focuses on making the universal truths of nature - the Dhamma - accessible to the student. Just as education aims at benefitting anybody receptive to it, the Buddhist teaching awaits every person on this globe interested in gaining knowledge about the physical and mental laws of nature while increasing one's practical understanding of the essential conditions of existence. An unshakeable optimism generally harbored by educators is the prerequisite for any form of education and lies in the conviction that mankind is able to solve its problems by selecting the right means and methods. Buddhists equally believe in this possibility of human progress and reform. This conviction gets even widened in Buddhism to the scope of embracing all sentient beings on this planet, irrespective of their individual differences and free from any form of illegitimate discrimination. At the same time, the focus is put on the spiritual and mental aspects which lie at the core of all our activities.

According to the truth discovered by the Buddha, all beings are equally subject to the laws of impermanence, suffering and non-self. Thus all beings equally partake in a global community of students bound to the way towards liberation from all oppressing circumstances through fully understanding the principles of existence. The identity of global citizenship, brought about through this incredibly tightly woven net of karmic interdependence of beings, can only be ignored by those who have not been able to obtain the information needed to achieve to a correct understanding of what the world is really like. We observe that the dispelling of ignorance and the bringing of light is the common principle that education is based on, be it academic or spiritual. For this reason, education is globally treasured by the whole world community.

Now, on the other side, education and citizenship do not only come along with privileges yet also rightfully with duties. Therefore, on this auspicious occasion I would like to point out the immense need for the traditionally Buddhist nations to reinforce their dedication to share the teachings, to educate those willing to train, and to promote the awareness of being a role model to the rest of the world community in regard to Dhamma practice. As a delegate from a country where Buddhist education is still hardly available and even the basic facilities for monastic life and communal activities are not sufficiently established, I would like to appeal to our venerable Dhamma brothers and sisters from the Buddhist homelands to increasingly focus on the importance of supporting Buddhist structure building and to continue to improve dhammaduta efforts in a global approach. Anukampam upadaya!

With deep gratitude to the venerable Sangha's efforts, the Royal blessings, the just Government's protection and all the well wishings from the divine guardians, I thank you for this supreme honor and opportunity bestowed on us delegates from Germany to join in the celebrations of the UN Day of Vesak.

With anjali,

*Thitadhammo*

Thitadhammo Bhikkhu

*spiritual director*

