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## The Confluence of Ideas: Buddhism and Cosmopolitanism in the Quest for Perpetual Peace

**Manas Kandi and Dhananjay Rai**

***Abstract:** This article examines the fascinating intersection of two important philosophical traditions—Buddhism and Cosmopolitanism—as they come together to pursue the same goal of enduring peace. With its origins in ancient India, Buddhism presents a comprehensive worldview based on compassion, mindfulness, and the reduction of suffering. Contrarily, cosmopolitanism is a contemporary ethical and political philosophy that upholds the moral equality of all people and promotes the unification of humanity across national boundaries. The objective is to surpass the boundaries of the Western ethical framework and develop a connection between two intellectual ideologies in order to propose a moral alternative. This article will assess the prospects of engaged Buddhism, a major non-Western cosmopolitan philosophy. Buddhism provides a vision of universal empathy and moral responsibility that has informed influential worldwide advocacy initiatives and can reach a considerable segment of the global community. However, in an age of globalisation, the Buddhist ethos has served as both a source of and a challenge to state power and nationalist identity but has not rejected the idea of nationalism and nationalist identity altogether like cosmopolitanism.*

**Keywords:** Buddhism, Cosmopolitanism, Confluence, Perpetual Peace, Harmony

### 1. Introduction

To better understand how these two philosophical perspectives interact, this study highlights any areas where they might work together to promote world peace and harmony. It dives into Buddhism's essential teachings, highlighting its adherence to nonviolence, interdependence, and belief in the interconnection of all creatures' ethical precepts. It also looks at how the Buddhist ideas of universal compassion and rejecting dividing identities correlate with cosmopolitanism, with its emphasis on the acknowledgment of shared humanity. The article looks at historical examples of Buddhism and cosmopolitanism coming together with current initiatives for peacemaking and world collaboration. The article makes the case that these intersections provide a favorable environment for the growth of cosmopolitan ethics rooted in Buddhist wisdom and able to solve important global issues like conflict, inequality, and environmental degradation.

The article also explores the difficulties and conflicts that can develop in combining these two philosophical systems because they emerged out of different philosophical, historical, cultural, and religious circumstances. It advocates for a nuanced conversation that seeks common ground for the advancement of peace and justice on a global scale while respecting the diversity of ideas within both Buddhism and cosmopolitanism.

### 2. Methodology of the Study

This study follows the concepts of the history of ideas. This strategy attempts to evaluate and understand historical ideas to identify generalizations. This aids in understanding the growth of ideas throughout history as well as their modern significance. The descriptive approach is used to describe emerging practices, beliefs, points of view, or trends. This is normative and analytic. The current study is qualitative, and the philosophical technique is critical to the

investigation. It will examine literature and commentary on cosmopolitanism and Buddhism from a broad philosophical perspective. It draws heavily on the traditions of the history of ideas established by Quentin Skinner and others (Skinner, 1969).

### 3. Cosmopolitanism's Quest for Perpetual Peace

This concept does not flourish solely in the Western way of thinking. In the East, particularly in India and China, the concept evolved as a matter of all lives (Heater, 1996, p. X). Plato and Aristotle's political culture was not cosmopolitan since people in this culture identified with a specific 'polis' or city. Individuals must work for the improvement of city institutions; the common good for them is the good of city dwellers. The concept of cosmopolitanism finds its roots in ancient civilizations. It is more likely in civilizations founded on universalistic concepts. Greek, Chinese, Hindu, Islamic, and Christian civilizations are based on an inclusive vision of human society (Delanty, 2009, p. 20).

There is no broad agreement on the origins and meaning of the notion of cosmopolitanism. Naturally, cosmopolitanism is a contested subject, with no one agreed-upon definition in the ever-growing corpus of scholarly research. Furthermore, there is no universal agreement on the role of cosmopolitanism in social scientific theory.

Cosmopolitanism is a philosophical and ethical standpoint that emphasizes the notion that all individuals are members of a unified global society, surpassing cultural, national, and geographical limitations. This phenomenon fosters a perception of connectivity and interdependence among individuals hailing from various cultural and societal contexts. Advocates of cosmopolitanism frequently espouse the endorsement of universal values, human rights, and a moral need to uphold and safeguard the welfare of all individuals, irrespective of their backgrounds.

The term 'cosmopolitanism' is most often linked with political and moral philosophy. The human and social sciences have seen a substantial growth in interest in cosmopolitanism during the last two

decades. It evolved into an interdisciplinary field of research for the human and social sciences. Cosmopolitan thinkers contended that the concept predated the concept of nationalism. Cosmopolitanism, according to Kant, is a reasonable necessity and a precondition for connecting nations (Kant, 1991). Numerous significant contributions in the realm of political philosophy revolve around the philosophical concepts of Immanuel Kant, particularly his thoughts on cosmopolitanism and its correlation with the advancement of peace.

Immanuel Kant is widely recognized for his extensive examination of the concept of 'perpetual peace' in his renowned essay entitled *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795). According to Daniele Archibugi and David Held, there exists a profound interconnection between Kant's cosmopolitanism and his conception of permanent peace. One could argue that by the adoption of a cosmopolitan perspective, both individuals and nations can enhance their comprehension of their collective humanity and interconnectivity. Consequently, this can result in the endeavor to establish harmonious relationships and resolve problems by employing ethical and legal approaches rather than resorting to violence (Archibugi & Held, 2011).

Today we are living in a world of interconnectedness that very much inclining towards the idea of cosmopolitanism. Nowadays injustice anywhere is the injustice to everywhere. According to Ulrich Beck, the 'cosmopolitanization of reality' means that humanity faces common global risks (Beck, 2006). Kwame Anthony Appiah argued for the ethical implication of cosmopolitanism. One of the notable aspects of this phenomenon is its capacity to foster peace, harmony, and mutual comprehension within heterogeneous societies (Appiah, 2015). Appiah describes cosmopolitanism as a commitment to other, accommodating the other, and hospitality (Appiah, 2005). Carl Schmitt vehemently criticized Kant's notion of cosmopolitan peace. Schmitt delved into the realms of political theory and international relations, specifically exploring the notions of cosmopolitanism and peace (Benhabib, 2012). Schmitt's conceptual framework regarding these subjects was significantly influenced by the volatile political

environment of his era, which encompassed the aftermath of World War I and the emergence of totalitarian governments.

Schmitt had a negative stance towards cosmopolitanism, perceiving it as a perspective that diminishes or dismisses the importance of the nation-state while prioritizing universal principles and human rights. According to Schmitt, the presence of the political domain is contingent upon the acknowledgment of an enemy or an alternative entity, against which a community establishes its identity. According to Schmitt, cosmopolitanism challenged the clear differentiation between states and undermined their ability to exercise sovereignty. Schmitt's perspective on peace was additionally influenced by his critical analysis of cosmopolitanism. The individual held the viewpoint that the notion of achieving permanent peace, as espoused by certain Enlightenment intellectuals and proponents of internationalism, was both impractical and fraught with potential risks. According to Schmitt, the pursuit of peace should not be regarded as an absolute or abstract objective that is detached from the practicalities of international politics.

Schmitt's perspective embraced a pragmatic understanding of peace as a condition of relative equilibrium and organization within a global context marked by inherent possibilities of discord (Schmitt, 1996). He perceived the capacity of nation-states to exercise authority in determining matters about conflict and harmony as an essential component of their sovereignty. Schmitt's conceptualizations about cosmopolitanism and peace have engendered considerable controversy and have been the topic of much scholarly discourse and critical analysis.

### **The fundamental tenets of cosmopolitanism encompass:**

#### **Moral universalism**

Moral universalism refers to the philosophical stance that posits the existence of universally applicable moral principles that are appropriate to all individuals, irrespective of their cultural or societal background. The acknowledgment of the inherent value and

entitlements of each person, regardless of their circumstances, is essential. In *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Kwame Anthony Appiah provides a contemporary analysis of cosmopolitanism, exploring the concept of a universal ethical framework that surpasses cultural limitations (Appiah, 2015). Nussbaum also argued that the cosmopolitan tradition explores the historical development of cosmopolitan thinking and its ethical ramifications (Nussbaum, 2019).

### **Tolerance and pluralism**

Tolerance and pluralism encompass the acceptance and appreciation of difference, as well as the promotion of communication and comprehension between other cultures and their respective worldviews. Tolerance and pluralism are integral components of cosmopolitanism, which emphasizes the recognition and valuation of many cultural, religious, and ideological perspectives. Cosmopolitanism advocates for the notion that individuals originating from diverse backgrounds possess the capacity to peacefully and collaboratively coexist within a globalized society. Appiah undertakes an examination of the significance of tolerance and reverence for diversity within the context of a globalized society. He advocates for the merits of ‘rooted cosmopolitanism,’ (Appiah, 2015) a framework wherein individuals preserve their cultural identities while actively participating in the wider global community. In their scholarly work, Bas van der Vossen and Jason Brennan delve into the ethical underpinnings of openness and tolerance within the framework of cosmopolitanism. The argument posits that adopting an open and tolerant stance towards global issues has the potential to result in enhanced levels of social justice and human welfare (Vossen & Brennan, 2018).

### **Hospitality**

The entire idea of cosmopolitanism is based on the concept of hospitality. The relationship between cosmopolitanism and hospitality is closely interconnected as proponents of cosmopolitanism assert that in an era characterized by growing interactions among individuals

from many origins, adopting a hospitable stance becomes imperative to cultivate comprehension, collaboration, and harmonious cohabitation. Through the cultivation and use of hospitality, both individuals and society can progress toward the attainment of the cosmopolitan ideal, which envisions a worldwide community that is more inclusive and characterized by harmonious coexistence (Anderson, 2011).

According to Martha Nussbaum (1998), practicing hospitality is a fundamental civic and moral virtue in the process of growing humanity to achieve world citizenship. She writes:

One might of course come to accept religious beliefs, in particular Buddhist beliefs, that do hold that people aren't really separate individuals at all and the whole idea that objects and people are different from one another is an illusion...Buddhism [however], self-consciously portrays itself as a radical critique of ordinary practices...So a political focus on the individual is not insulting or unfair even to Buddhists, since it is meant to supply a basis for politics in the daily world, not in the world of enlightened meditation and reflection (Nussbaum, 2000, p.58).

Several essential components are associated with the concept of hospitality:

- **Warm Welcome:** Providing a cordial and inclusive demeanor towards individuals who are new to a particular setting, thereby fostering a sense of appreciation and belonging.
- **Cultural exchange** initiatives aim to facilitate contacts that foster the exchange of cultural, culinary, and intellectual traditions among individuals or groups.
- **Mutual Learning:** Acknowledging the potential for reciprocal benefits in cross-cultural interactions and experiences for both hosts and guests.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the implementation of these principles may exhibit variability across diverse environments

and may encounter ethical and pragmatic obstacles. However, these concepts continue to hold significant value in fostering cohesion, reverence, and collaboration within an ever more interlinked global context.

#### 4. The intersection of Buddhism and Cosmopolitanism

Although Buddhism and cosmopolitanism originate from distinct cultural and historical backgrounds, it is possible to identify areas of convergence and mutual reinforcement between the two. Cosmopolitanism has re-emerged as a political and philosophical word in the West in recent decades, particularly in light of Europe's recent immigration crisis. The philosophy of 'hospitality,' as well as the Kantian concept of a cosmopolitan right' (Kant, 1991) beyond national borders, have been enthusiastically embraced and critically re-explored in political and ethical discussions, as seen in the work of contemporary French philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, and British sociologist Gerard Delanty in his reworking of critical theory, which argues that cosmopolitanism arises with the transformation of collectiveness (Derrida, 2000; Shepherd & Clarke, 2014).

The phenomenon of globalisation has led to an unprecedented increase in the movement of individuals and ideas across international boundaries in recent times. Consequently, this has drawn attention to the escalating levels of cultural diversity, so prompting worries regarding the potential for cultural exchange as well as conflicts. The anti-cosmopolitan perspective posits that cosmopolitanism is associated with the dissemination of a specific set of moral principles (such as rights and justice) on a global scale, which gives rise to several concerns. These concerns encompass conflicts between the global and local spheres, tensions between cosmopolitan and national identities, as well as disparities between imagined ideals and abstract concepts.

Concepts like interconnection, similarity, and reciprocal inclusivity in Buddhism reflect a universalistic attitude based on shared human experience and morality. However, the concept of 'Buddhist

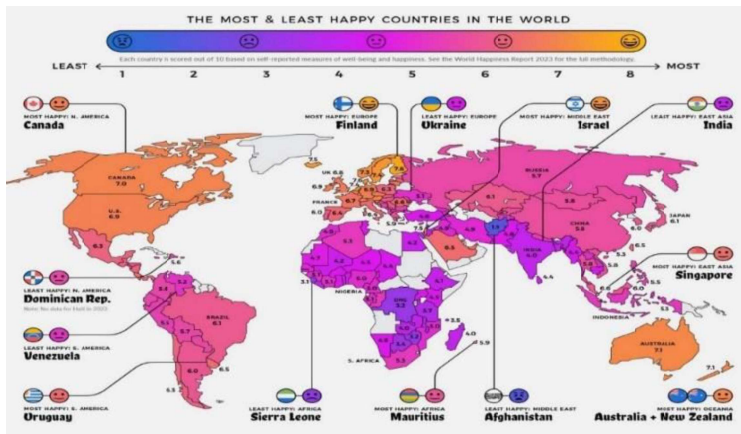
cosmopolitanism' remains strange because Buddhism is often viewed as a religion that focuses on a soteriological concern (i.e., a personal or spiritual development that focuses on liberation from suffering/*dukkha*) rather than achieving a specific socio-political order (Zhang, 2021). Several scholars including Andrew Linklater and Eilis Ward claim that there is 'an emancipatory intent' in both Buddhism and current cosmopolitanism and that there are 'basic considerations of humanity' in both (Linklater, 2007, p. 135). Linklater argues that the concept of common humanity, exemplified by the recognition of human sensitivity to mental and physiological pain as emphasized in Buddhist doctrine, serves as a fundamental basis for achieving harmonious oneness. This notion of harmonious oneness is of utmost importance in the context of the cosmopolitanism argument.

Buddhism presents a perspective on cosmopolitanism, a framework for justice, and a calling for active involvement. Recent scholars in the field have identified a connection between Buddhist teachings and the concept of human rights. This connection is established via the examination of reciprocal obligations, the promotion of egalitarianism through critiquing caste systems, and the recognition of the universal potential for individuals to achieve self-realization and complete their inherent human goodness (Keown, 1998, pp.15-18). The parts of Buddhist thought that align with Western cosmopolitanism encompass the concept of shared human suffering stemming from shared vulnerabilities, as well as a universal ethical framework centered around compassion and solidarity.

According to Pradeep Kumar Giri, the literature of Buddha's thought is global. Buddhists reject the concept of a personal creator God. In this way, Buddhism is more than a religion; it is not solely concerned with the relationship between mankind and a supreme being. Buddhism is a philosophical tradition that emphasizes and promotes human spiritual growth. Both Buddhism and cosmopolitanism affirm the dignity of all human beings; both ideals seek to improve the quality of life. Philanthropy, empathy, and compassion are synonyms for Buddhism and cosmopolitanism. Humanity is fundamentally

considered in both Buddhist and cosmopolitan philosophy (Giri, 2020). Buddhist social thinking contributes to cosmopolitan ethics in such a way that cosmopolitanism's objective to improve 'human connection' is beneficial in reducing human suffering.

**Figure 1: Global Happiness Index, 2023**



Note: From "Mapped: The World's Happiest Countries in 2023" by Avery Koop.

Buddhism, emphasizes oneness and the interdependence of all beings. Buddhism is based on happiness. The Buddhist virtue of compassion, as embodied through pictures of *Bodhisattvas* in the *Mahayana* tradition, focuses on group experience and shared social duty. The term "social responsibility" has gained prominence within the realm of Buddhism in recent years, particularly with the emergence of a movement known as 'socially engaged Buddhism.' Socially engaged Buddhism emphasizes at least two aspects: (1) this worldliness and social responsibility, and (2) collectivity and solidarity, both of which are articulated in reaction to outsider criticism (i.e., seeing Buddhism as passive, quietist, otherworldly, and escapist) (Zhang, 2021).

Compassion's emphasis on universal care blurs the distinction between proximity and distance. The essential reason for compassion is the Buddhist idea of world interconnection or interdependent origination, which is also the key argument for *anatman* or non-self.

The Buddhist idea of 'unconditional compassion' is used to express the Buddhist concept of de-territorialization.

However, it remains unclear how we can translate the Buddhist vision of cosmopolitanism into a workable ethical and political order characterized by common identities that involve the acknowledgment of other. In contrast to Buddhism, the Confucian concept of interconnectivity is more family-oriented, with a cosmopolitan spirit based on the question of whether 'the other' can be recognized, and whether human kindness can be extended from insiders to outsiders (Chen, 2020). The concept of 'one world' in Buddhism, in relation to political sovereignty, is notably absent. The interconnectedness emphasized in Buddhism does not contribute to the establishment of a cohesive region or the integration of its inhabitants. The main criticism came from Evan Thompson, who argued in favor of classical Buddhism and classical Buddhist texts. In the context of 'cosmopolitanism,' we consider whether taking a profound historicist and contextual approach to reading traditional Buddhist texts and traditions is the only way for Buddhism to meet Thompson's demand for truly cosmopolitan Buddhism (Thompson 2020, pp. 165-89).

Thompson criticizes Buddhist modernism for undermining Buddhism's potential contributions to a broader cosmopolitan culture. He took those two key terms- 'Buddhist modernism' and 'cosmopolitanism'—in reverse order. What exactly is cosmopolitanism, and why does Buddhist modernity fail to contribute to it adequately? In the above view, Thompson mostly followed Kwame Anthony Appiah in articulating the notion of cosmopolitanism which is based on the conversation between the forms of life (Hominah& Nguyen, 2022, pp. 140-42). Thompson's cosmopolitanism directly contrasts with the firmly universalist European views championed by thinkers such as Hugo Grotius in his book 'On the Law of War and Peace' (1625) and Immanuel Kant in his book 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' (1795).

The emergence of Engaged Buddhist doctrine can be traced back to the efforts of B. R. Ambedkar during India's independence era. This

doctrine was further developed by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk from the subsequent generation. Thai theologians SulakSivaraksa and SanehChamarik played a significant role in expanding and refining this doctrine. Moreover, the Dalai Lama of Tibet has contributed to its comprehensive articulation by incorporating liberal human rights principles. The Buddhist perspective, which is actively involved in philosophical development, is observed across several Asian countries, encompassing both the Mahayana and Theravada branches of Buddhism. However, it has had challenges in gaining acceptance within the hierarchical and collectivist Theravada civilizations of Burma and Thailand (Brysk, 2019). In the late twentieth century, a global movement of actively involved Buddhist practitioners emerged with the aim of critiquing capitalism, advocating for conflict resolution, and bearing attention to political transgressions against ethical treatment across various regimes.

Buddhism holds a prominent and distinctive position within the context of cosmopolitanism by its philosophical and ethical tenets that are in harmony with numerous cosmopolitan values. Buddhism, as a prominent global philosophical system, provides significant perspectives and contributions to the ongoing discussion on cosmopolitanism through various means:

### **Universal Compassion and Non-Violence**

Buddhism focuses significant stress on the ethical ideals of compassion (*karuna*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*). These values are under cosmopolitan principles that emphasize the need to uphold the welfare and rights of every individual, irrespective of their circumstances. The concept of *Metta* in Buddhism encompasses the practice of extending benevolence and empathy towards all entities that possess consciousness, hence exemplifying a comprehensive and inclusive outlook (Ricard, 2015).

### **Interconnectedness and Dependent Origination**

Buddhists espouse the belief in the interdependence of all life forms and place significant emphasis on the notion of dependent origination (*pratīyasamutpāda*), which posits that all phenomena are intricately intertwined. This viewpoint aligns with the principles of cosmopolitanism, which places importance on acknowledging the interdependence of all individuals and the necessity for worldwide collaboration and mutual comprehension (Bodhi, 2005). Dependent Origination is a significant doctrine within the Buddhist tradition, which provides a comprehensive explanation of the interconnected series of causes and conditions that lead to the experience of suffering and the perpetual cycle of birth and death, also referred to as *samsara*. The composition comprises a series of twelve interrelated connections, which serve to depict the causal relationship between ignorance and suffering, as well as elucidate the transformative potential of comprehending this dynamic in attaining liberation, sometimes referred to as *nirvana*.

### **Ethical Framework**

Buddhism offers a complete ethical framework that advocates for the cultivation of moral virtues, including but not limited to honesty, generosity, and selflessness. These principles possess a universal nature, devoid of any specific cultural or national constraints, hence fostering a global perspective that surpasses geographical bounds. Damien Keown provides a comprehensive analysis of Buddhist ethics. His scholarly work delves into the fundamental ethical concepts that underpin Buddhism. One such principle is the Five Precepts, known as *Pancasila*, which function as a set of instructions for individuals to adhere to to maintain ethical behavior (Keown, 2005). Additionally, Keown explores the intricate aspects of Buddhist moral philosophy, analyzing subjects such as *karma*, the essence of morality, and the development of virtuous qualities.

**Accommodating Pluralism**

Throughout history, Buddhism has demonstrated a noteworthy degree of tolerance and acceptance for many belief systems and philosophical perspectives. The inclination towards embracing a range of viewpoints is consistent with the principles of cosmopolitanism, which advocates for the acceptance of differing beliefs and the coexistence of multiple perspectives. Ajahn Brahm expounds about the capacity of Buddhism to accommodate diverse perspectives and beliefs, while concurrently emphasizing the shared objective of attaining enduring happiness and freedom. The Brahm provides valuable perspectives on how individuals practicing Buddhism can effectively navigate pluralistic environments with compassion and an open-minded approach (Brahm, 2011). Rita M. Gross, a distinguished scholar in the field of Buddhist feminism, examines the points of convergence between Buddhism and various other religious traditions, employing the framework of interfaith dialogue. Her literary work explores the ways in which individuals who identify as Buddhists can actively participate in meaningful and productive exchanges with those who hold different religious beliefs and philosophical perspectives. The primary objective is to cultivate an atmosphere of inclusiveness and mutual comprehension (Gross & Ruether, 2018).

**Global Spread and Cultural Exchange**

The historical dissemination of Buddhism from its origins in India to other regions across Asia facilitated significant cultural interchange and the amalgamation of many cultural components. The aforementioned phenomenon of cross-cultural engagement and exchange serves as a prime illustration of the cosmopolitan ethos, which entails the acceptance and appreciation of diversity, as well as the acquisition of knowledge from other cultural backgrounds. In his analysis, Edwin Ng explores the intersection of Buddhism and cosmopolitanism, shedding light on the reciprocal relationship between Buddhism and various cultural contexts, emphasizing both the influence exerted by Buddhism and the impact it has received

from these distinct cultural environments. The author's academic research explores the intricacies of cultural interchange and the influence of Buddhism on the formation of global perspectives (Ng, 2016).

**Peace and Inner Harmony**

The emphasis placed by Buddhism on cultivating inner peace, engaging in meditation practices, and cultivating mindfulness has the potential to facilitate the development of personal well-being. This, in turn, can extend to a broader context, creating a more peaceful and harmonious cohabitation at the global level. The aforementioned introspective concentration aligns harmoniously with the cosmopolitan objective of establishing a world characterized by tranquility and fairness. Nhat Hanh examines fundamental Buddhist doctrines such as the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, elucidating their potential to engender inner tranquility, happiness, and emancipation from affliction (Hanh, 1999). The concepts of peace and inner harmony hold significant importance in the context of Buddhism, as this philosophical tradition provides fundamental perspectives on attaining a state of tranquility and equilibrium within one's existence.

The similarities between Buddhism and cosmopolitanism should be acknowledged, but it is crucial to acknowledge the diversity in interpretations and practices of Buddhism across many traditions and geographical areas. Certain adherents of Buddhism may place a heightened focus on global principles, whereas others may prioritize localized or traditional beliefs and practices. In essence, Buddhism's role within cosmopolitanism can be defined by its advocacy for universal compassion, interconnectedness, ethical principles, and receptiveness to a wide range of viewpoints. The concepts and values presented herein provide a significant and noteworthy addition to the wider discourse surrounding the establishment of a more inclusive and cohesive global society.

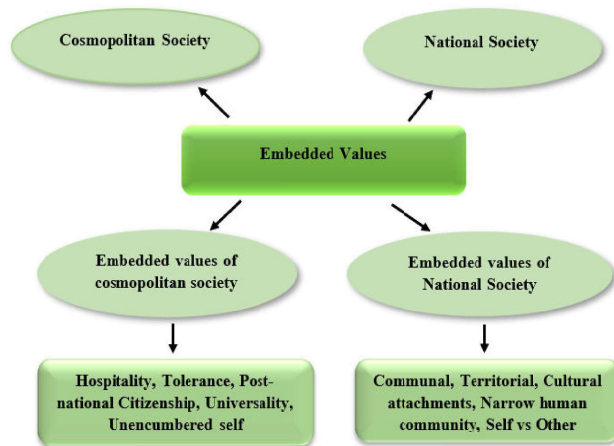


### 5. Quest for Perpetual Peace

Buddhist political thought commences with a state of harmony, where people live in desireless of any kind of boundary. The notion of *dharma* and *jati* and any other societal division has no relevance in Buddhism. Many scholars consider it a truly cosmopolitan philosophy. According to Buddhist philosophy, peace is an inner state and spreads outward. This paper deals with the Buddhist idea of cosmopolitanism and peace.

In Buddhism, the idea of interconnectedness, inclusiveness, and commonality is based on common morality and shared experience. Earlier the notion of ‘Buddhist cosmopolitanism’ sounds odd because as a religion it emphasizes primarily the spiritual development of a person and liberation from all forms of suffering. It was not intended to establish a particular social order. But the scholars like Andrew Linklater in his work *Human Interconnectedness* explored some commonalities between Buddhism and the discourse of cosmopolitanism (Linklater, 2009). In both of them, the basic consideration is humanity.

**Figure 2: Cosmopolitan Division of Society**



*Note: It explores the idea of a cosmopolitan society which is the primary focus of Buddhist philosophy*

The Buddhist social philosophy offers cosmopolitan solidarity. It established a deep relation between self and solidarity. Buddhism rejects the notion that the “self as autonomous and separate from others, mitigates categories of exclusion and offers a robust account of the possibility of solidarity with strangers” (Ward, 2013, p.136). In this regard, cosmopolitanism has two different dimensions “the emphasis on diversity, and the relationship with the ‘Other’ (typified by hospitality to the ‘stranger’)” (Smith, Munt & Yip, 2016, p.223).

Alison Brysk in his work *Engaged Buddhism as Human Rights Ethos: the Constructivist Quest for Cosmopolitanism* argued that Buddhism is nothing but a constructive quest for cosmopolitanism. Among the leading non-Western cosmopolitan ideas, Buddhism stands for universal compassion. Brysk also argues that the “Buddhist ethos has functioned as both a source of and a challenge to state power and nationalist identity in an era of globalisation” (Brysk, 2019, p.1). Buddhism was resistant to state power and ‘nationalist identity politics.’ If we look at Buddhism through the prism of human rights it looks like a form of resistance to the hegemonic idea that human right belongs to a particular land. Buddhism focuses on social justice and this form of Buddhism is called engaged Buddhism which offers a vision of cosmopolitanism. Brysk stated that:

*The elements of the Buddhist belief that parallel Western cosmopolitanism include a notion of common human suffering based on common vulnerabilities, a global ethics of compassion and solidarity, and an argument of interdependent logic of consequence—i.e., karma. Accordingly, by the late twentieth century, a worldwide movement of engaged Buddhist activists arose to critique capitalism, push for conflict resolution, and stand witness against political violations of ethical treatment under all types of regimes (Brysk, 2019, p.5).*

Later the idea engaged Buddhism was presaged by B. R. Ambedkar in his social philosophy. But cosmopolitanism was not sufficient, Buddhism should engage with the emerging political engagements.

Engaged Buddhism has changed its orientation from individual renunciation of worldly life to universalism.

P. K. Giri, in his work *Buddhist Literature: A Cosmopolitan Philosophy* The commonality between Buddhism and cosmopolitanism is based on the idea of the development of humanity. The basic consideration among them is humanity. The dignity of a human being plays a great role in both Buddhism and cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan thought offers something Buddhist social thought desires ‘*human interconnectedness*’ (emphasis added). Common humanity can establish a harmonious and peaceful society (Giri, 2020). Buddhist philosophy teaches individual human beings to become world citizens. Buddhism has created a new culture in India that connected India with Asia and ultimately with the world.

SarvaniGooptu in her work *Knowing Asia, Being Asian: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in Bengali Periodicals, 1860–1940*, argued that in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when Buddhism was rediscovered in India “had created for the Bengalis an imaginative space outside the reality of their degraded existence under colonialism which belonged to a glorious past where India’s contribution to the Asiatic religious world was at par with any world power” (Gooptu, 2021, p. xx).

Indian intellectuals traveled throughout the world to analyze the tenets of Buddhism. Among them, Rabindranath Tagore is notable, for instance, his visit to Burma, Thailand, China, and Japan. In India, many Buddhist associations were established to spread the philosophy throughout the world. Among them the Buddhist associations of Darjeeling and Kalimpong are important.

K. D. Bhutia, in his research *View of local agency in global movements: Negotiating forms of Buddhist cosmopolitanism in the young men’s Buddhist associations of Darjeeling and Kalimpong* argued that “these associations represent the abundance of global interactions and the diversity of forms of Buddhist cosmopolitanism” (Bhutia, n.d.). Over time a series of events; the decolonization

movement throughout South Asia, the triumph of nationalism, and the rise of Chinese communism have affected the forms of Buddhist cosmopolitanism. With the advent of globalisation, different Buddhist traditions and cultures became globalized (Bhutia, n.d.). The hybridity disappeared which facilitates inter-traditional and inter-cultural exchanges. In this regard, the ‘Young Men’s Buddhist Association’ (YMBA) of Darjeeling and Kalimpong played an important role in reviving the cosmopolitan vision of Buddhism. They proliferate the idea of shared identity. In the history of modern Buddhism YMBA intended to create “translocal, inter-traditional identities and forms of Buddhist cosmopolitanism were part of multiple intellectual networks and projects” (Bhutia, n.d.).

The Buddhist philosophy emphasizes peace and happiness for everyone. It invokes peace, prosperity, and happiness for all. It accentuated the preeminence of cosmopolitan ethics. Buddhism rejected the existence of *Atman* (supreme self) or ultimate reality. They believe in decentralization and consensual practices. However, the *Vedic* societies were based on the *varna* system. Sudarshan Padmanabhan, in his paper *Unity in Diversity The Indian cosmopolitan idea* argued that the Buddhist system was based on *gana-sanghas* or *Gana-rajyas* and is more egalitarian than the *varna* system (Padmanabhan, 2012).

Romila Thapar, in her research titled *Asokan India and the Guptan Age* stated that Buddhist political thought begins with peace and harmony (Thapar, 1999). There is no place for *jati* and *dharma* in Buddhist philosophy. As a cosmopolitan philosophy, it emphasized reason and questioned prejudicial beliefs. Romila Thapar considers *dhamma* as a cosmopolitan ethic that holds the empires together.

## 6. Exploring the Concept of Self and Other in Buddhism in A Cosmopolitan Way

Hegel’s formulation was “human being counts as such because he is a human being, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc.” (Hegel, 1991, p. 240). However, the duality of identity that is self and other is built on private property, market, and

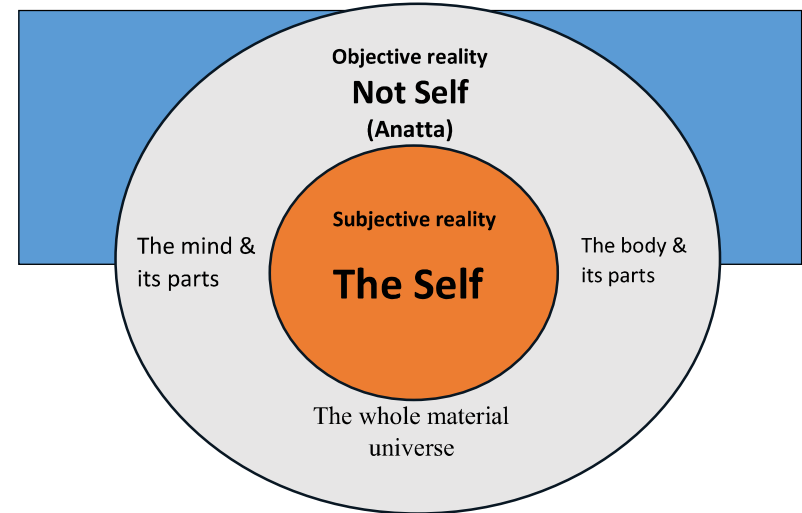
individual rights. There can be no identity without a corresponding other. Many Eastern intellectuals have claimed that the concept of freedom in the West is a 'zero-sum.' Because freedom for the self involves the loss of freedom for the other, it is impossible to obtain freedom for the self without subjecting the other. The modern nation-state is primarily responsible for propagating this type of divided identity. However, Hegel's concept of cosmopolitanism resolved the dual identity conundrum. On the one hand, they have a national identity or self, and on the other, they have an identity that does not oppose the other; it is founded on shared meanings (Jha, 2014).

The investigation of the concepts of self and other in the context of Buddhism and cosmopolitanism entails a scholarly examination of two separate philosophical and cultural lineages. Each of these traditions offers unique viewpoints regarding the essence of the self, the dynamics between individuals and other, and the ethical consequences stemming from these underlying convictions. In this discussion, we will examine these topics individually before exploring potential areas of convergence. Central to Buddhist thought are concepts related to the self and other:

### ***Anatta* (Not-Self)**

The idea of *anatta*, a fundamental tenet of Buddhism, posits the absence of a permanent and unchanging self or soul (*atman*). On the contrary, the self is perceived as an assemblage of perpetually fluctuating physical and cognitive constituents. This viewpoint presents a critique of the prevailing notion of a stable and timeless individual identity (Rahula, 2007).

**Figure 3: The Two realities of existence**



*Note: "Buddhism - The Concept of Anatta or Not Self," Jayaram V (n.d.).*

### **Interconnectedness:**

The concept of interconnectedness holds significant importance in cosmopolitanism as it underscores the inherent interdependence of all sentient beings and phenomena. Thich Nhat Hanh expounds upon the concept of interconnectedness within the Buddhist tradition, underscoring the significance of comprehending our profound interdependence with all sentient creatures (Hanh, 1999). The notion of 'dependent origination' (*pratītyasamutpāda*) frequently represents the interconnection observed in diverse phenomena, indicating that their emergence is contingent upon the interplay and influences of multiple causes. In his discourse, Stephen Batchelor delves into the contemporary understanding of Buddhist doctrines, particularly the concept of interconnectedness, and its pertinence to the present-day human experience (Batchelor, 1998).

### **Compassion and Altruism**

Buddhism advocates for compassion and altruism because of its acknowledgment of the interdependence of all sentient beings and the

absence of an inherent, unchanging self. In the book *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill* authored by Matthieu Ricard, an examination is conducted on the significance of compassion and altruism within the context of Buddhism, and their respective contributions to individual and collective welfare (Ricard, 2015). The interconnectedness between the well-being of individuals and the well-being of others is widely recognized. Both Buddhism and cosmopolitanism place significant emphasis on the value of compassion and empathy towards fellow beings. The focus placed by Buddhism on interconnectivity is per the notion of shared humanity within the framework of cosmopolitanism.

### Universal Morality

The concept of Buddhism and Cosmopolitanism posits the presence of a moral framework that is universally applicable to humans, irrespective of their cultural or national affiliations. The moral framework frequently encompasses ideals such as human rights, fairness, and equality. Both of these traditions espouse the importance of a universal ethical framework. Buddhism's ethical framework is rooted in fundamental principles such as nonviolence (*ahimsa*) and the Eightfold Path, whereas cosmopolitanism espouses values centered around justice and human rights (Ward, 2013). The ethical underpinnings discussed can be perceived as mutually reinforcing in their efforts to advance a more inclusive and equitable global society.

### Recognition of the Other

Cosmopolitanism promotes the acknowledgment of the shared humanity and intrinsic value of persons hailing from diverse cultural and societal origins. The concept under consideration stands in opposition to ethnocentrism and xenophobia, placing significant emphasis on the value of empathy and understanding. The concept of acknowledging the Other in Buddhism is intricately connected to the teachings on compassion, kindness, and the *bodhisattva* ideal. *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* by Thich Nhat Hanh is an invaluable scholarly resource that offers a comprehensive examination of this

notion and its pragmatic applications within the context of Buddhist practice and everyday existence (Hanh, 1999).

The examination of the concepts of self and other within the context of Buddhism and cosmopolitanism elucidates a range of divergent and intersecting viewpoints. Both of these cultural practices provide essential perspectives on how individuals establish connections with themselves and others. Furthermore, there exists the possibility of engaging in discourse and merging different worldviews to foster compassion, connectivity, and a sense of global ethical responsibility.

### Conclusion

Buddhism critically examines the notion of cosmopolitanism by introducing the concept of engaged Buddhism, which extends beyond human boundaries. This thought poses a challenge to individuals, urging them to recognize the *Bodhisattva* nature inherent in all beings. Currently, there is a resurgence of cosmopolitanism evident in both scholarly discussions and applications.

It is argued that cosmopolitanism is not enough for the practice of Buddhism and vice-versa. The presence of cosmopolitanism in Buddhism is essential, yet it alone is not enough. While the rise of universalist and modernizing forces within Buddhism is important, it must be accompanied by a commitment to actively participate in critical political discourse. Additionally, the ability to exercise a cosmopolitan conscience and assert one's rights requires a certain level of independence from both state and clerical establishments. Alongside the theoretical deliberations undertaken by religious reformers, the cosmopolitan characteristics and political orientations of worldwide religions evolve as a result of the religious community's evolving experiences with diaspora, persecution, the establishment of clerical institutions, and their interactions with state authority.

It is worth mentioning here that Buddhism for its liberal assumptions became preferred by different strands of cosmopolitanism. Buddhism has high compatibility in modern times because of its empiricism, rationalism, philosophical tradition, and democratic tendencies.

Though the Buddhist philosophy was adopted by both nationalists and cosmopolitans, modern Buddhism is persuaded by more on cosmopolitanism and against the nationalistic project by dividing humanity on various grounds. In conclusion, the fusion of Buddhism and cosmopolitanism offers a promising path toward the pursuit of enduring peace. This investigation offers fresh perspectives on how humanity might get past its divisions and move towards a more peaceful and interconnected world by fusing the timeless wisdom of Buddhism with the modern desire for cosmopolitan ethics.

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