



Buddhism, Politics and Globalisation

Buddhist traditions are now responding to pressures generated by globalisation towards developing global forms of Buddhist traditions. Buddhist traditions were not only soteriological doctrines, but also integral elements in the social and political cultures of many Asian countries. During the colonialist era in Asia Buddhist traditions were incorporated into freedom movements and developed nationalist versions of their traditions. However, Buddhist traditions, I argue, have always seen themselves as global traditions. *Sutta* teachings on the ideal of a state ruled by a *Cakkavatti* (Universal Monarch) provide a Buddhist model for governance in an era of globalisation. Further, the tradition of the interchange of monks and nuns in Asia provides a trans-national model for the actions of the *Sangha*. Chinese and Japanese monks have travelled back and forth from their homes to India in earlier times and in the twentieth century, in efforts to create a pure *dhamma* unrelated to national cultures and in counterpoint to the development of nationalisms in East Asian cultures. The development of the contemporary *dharma* scene in Western countries, it is also argued, is part of a developing transnational form of Buddhism that it is possible to see as a Global Buddhist response to cultural and economic globalisation.

Biography: After living in India from 1977 to 1983 studying Hindi language and Indian culture and religion I then studied Hindi language and literature and South Asian religious traditions at The School of Oriental and African Studies in London from 1983 to 1991. Since 1996 I have been working at La Trobe University where I teach Hindi language and Buddhist studies units. On the one hand I have experience of Insight meditation, having sat retreats in the UK and in India, and on the other I am interested in the academic study of Buddhist traditions. In particular I am interested in the relationship between pre-modern Buddhist traditions and modern Buddhism.