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## A Philosophical Study of Cultivating Union Spirit

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### Abstract

This paper presents union spirit as category-discipline, not union spirit as category-habit. In building a peaceful modern and developed democratic nation with flourishing discipline, possessing modern science and technology is necessary. On the other hand, cultivating union spirit and possessing the ability to practice it in particular are also necessary. However, it is not easy to say that union spirit will necessarily follow from possessing modern science and technology. In fact, union spirit is more or less ingrained in all the nationalities. But it, may sometimes be implicit, and is in *the* form of category-habit that can not keep the smooth running of society and national solidarity. Philosophically, the only category-discipline can rationally benefit the society, and generates national solidarity. Thus, union spirit should be in the form of category-discipline. In short, this paper gives the rational explanation that can replace union spirit as category-habit with union spirit as category-discipline.

**Key words:** (1) Union spirit (2) Category-habit (3) Category-discipline

### Introduction

Now we are building a modern developed nation. Thus, on the one hand it is necessary for us to possess modern science and technology as well as material wealth. On the other hand, possessing modern science and technology should be in concord with our three main national causes as well as national policy. Our national policy is actually to build a modern developed nation as a smoothly running society or a more consolidated union. In other words, national goal of the state is the emergence of a peaceful modern and developed democratic nation with flourishing discipline. Thus, to build such a nation, all that we aspire must be under the umbrella of national policy. Here is to note that there are some modern developed countries that have loss of national solidarity for seeking self-interest alone of small social groups or minorities, for religious reasons and for several causes. In short, there lacks union spirit. So, to perform our activities in accordance with our national policies, union spirit is a must.

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Union spirit involves national solidarity. Union spirit must be involved in implementing national projects. Without union spirit, we are not sure that possessing modern science and technology is in concord with national policy. In other words, it is not easy to say that union spirit will necessarily follow from possessing modern science and technology. Although it can be understood, and acceptable to all the nationalities, we can hardly find rational explanations for repeating or reciting sayings and proverbs relating to union spirit. Moreover, we have a slogan, "It is very important for everyone of the nation wherever he lives to cultivate and possess strong union spirit. Only union spirit is the true patriotism all the nationalities will have to uphold and safeguard". Therefore, some may repeat or recite the slogan. Moreover, there may be some peoples who do not seek national interests. However they have more or less union spirit as category-habit that can not rationally keep national solidarity. Also, there can be some people who do not attempt to understand union spirit because of seeking their survival alone. Here, we have to consider the fact that all the nationalities are able to cultivate union spirit as category-discipline based on rational understanding by mere repeating or reciting the slogan.

From the philosophical point of view, rational explanations for why we should cultivate union spirit and for how we can practice it in particular are essential for union spirit as category-discipline. Such an explanation is very important for us to understand that our three main national causes and union spirit are inseparable and that union spirit originates in good will that seeks common welfare or a smoothly running society. This explanation can make all the nationalities rationally understand that union spirit is good because it can give benefits of all the nationalities. In the dialogue *meno*, Socrates said, "If we really know what is bad, we will not do the bad, those who do not really know what is bad or good may accept the bad as good. But when they realize whatever accepted as good is bad, they can avoid doing the bad. If we really know what is good, we will do the good"<sup>1</sup> If we can explain that union spirit is good, all the nationalities will try to cultivate union spirit.

This paper will make all the nationalities understand that a modern developed nation plus smoothly running society or a more consolidated union can be obtained through union spirit, and understand that union spirit is possible only when all the nationalities realize that one's self-interest and benefits of the society are inseparable. In other words, to cultivate union spirit, we need to balance self-interest against others' benefits. Philosophically, we must first cultivate benevolence, good will that seeks altruism as well as self-interest, and must try to have cultural

consciousness, knowledge of culture so that we can effectively practice benevolence to keep smooth running of society. Such a benevolence is *metta*, loving kindness. It is the most suitable one for national solidarity because "*metta*" is a mental position that can promote friendliness. In *Abhidhama*, *metta* is *Adosa Cetasika*, concomitant of non anger. It seeks benefits of others.<sup>2</sup> It has no cruelty or exploitation. It can help everybody to be happy and healthy and freely progressive. According to Mahasi sayadaw, a meritorious attitude of *metta* can benefit others. For U Shwe Aung *metta* is loving kindness. It is compared with adhesive or gum which can be used when things are joined together. They stick or stay together without breaking apart. In like manner, the *loka* or our society is prevented from breaking up as if it is held together by *metta* (loving kindness).<sup>3</sup>

By cultural consciousness, knowledge of culture, all the nationalities can understand that our society is an organic whole, that individual actions and social needs are inseparable, and that we are members of our society. By this knowledge, we can seek national solidarity. Moreover, whenever we seek national solidarity, we must also keep in our mind that national solidarity depends on understanding the principle of reciprocity. To understand this principle, we need the above cultural consciousness and should not seek self-interest alone. Not to seek self-interest alone, we need the benevolence. Union spirit and national solidarity are, as mentioned above, inseparable. So, it is clear that we need both benevolence and cultural consciousness to cultivate union spirit because benevolence alone cannot keep smooth running of society. By cultural consciousness, we can rationally understand the role of benevolence, and also understand how we can effectively practice it in accordance with national policy.

Here is our philosophical stance or suggested principle for cultivating union spirit. That is *mettā* -cultural consciousness. It means that *mettā* should be practiced with cultural consciousness. By virtue of this principle, we can understand that if we are able to use a proper way of practicing *mettā*, union" spirit has been cultivated already. Although *mettā* -cultural consciousness and union spirit are different words, they are intentionally equivalent. Thus, this principle enlightens all the nationalities to replace category habit of practicing *mettā* that is category-habit of union spirit with category-discipline of practicing *mettā* that is category-discipline of union spirit. When we practice *mettā* as category-discipline, *mettā* -cultural consciousness can be regarded as the union spirit because this can balance individual benefits against our three main national causes, and because we can also attempt to avoid religious extremism, seeking self-

interest alone, domination of fatalism, lack of cooperation, seeking benefits of small social groups or minorities, group prejudice or partiality that contradict the smooth running of society as well as national solidarity. In short, *mettā* cultural consciousness is a form of union spirit.

To cultivate union spirit, on the one hand, we must avoid category-habit of practicing *mettā* because such practice can randomly, emotionally and mentally be performed in accordance with personal satisfaction and because we cannot rationally know how it can benefit the society. On the other hand, we must practice *mettā* cultural consciousness, category-discipline because this involves effective physical action of *mettā*, and because we can rationally understand its usefulness. If all the nationalities clearly see the usefulness of *mettā*-cultural consciousness, we can also have their cooperation that can keep national solidarity that represents union spirit. So, to cultivate union spirit is not to practice category-habit of *mettā* but to practice category-discipline of *mettā*.

### **Union spirit as category-habit**

In fact, union spirit is more or less ingrained in all the nationalities. However, it may be implicit one. In other words, it is a habit, not discipline. Through the habit, men may have good will as well as cultural consciousness. However, we are not sure that the habit can benefit the society in accordance with our three main national causes.

By category-habit in this context we are unable to rationally keep balance between benevolence and cultural consciousness. There are still people whose cultural consciousness is a habit. They may know how to take action for what is required. However, they do not fulfill it although they can be motivated by emotion that includes good will. They may or may not rationally seek the others' benefits due to habit. Thus, such cultural consciousness can be regarded as category-habit. Effective action does not come out of category-habit.

Cultural consciousness as a category-habit can be dominated by emotion or religion. Thus, it is not easy to find rational explanation of why we should do good deeds. In daily life, some values are accepted as good or bad. Men do not examine the values they have already accepted before hand as their cultural consciousness is one attained through habit. They themselves do not know whether their values are rationally or emotionally accepted if a certain value or criterion is emotionally accepted as a category-habit, that it may be benevolence, good will or *metta* may be practiced mentally alone, without any effective physical action of *metta*.

Sometimes, effective action may randomly be performed. Emotionally, one can practice *metta* in the place where he or she wants due to one's personal satisfaction, without seeking national solidarity, or without attempt to keep social harmony. Also one can emotionally or religiously practice *metta* seeking the transcendental rewards. Thus, in doing so, one may not give priority for national solidarity. Such a practice of *metta* can randomly be effective and its usefulness can not rationally be understood. Moreover, even if they do work for both self-interest and public interest, it is not a rational effect.

Religiously, the heart-deliverance of loving kindness is essential.<sup>4</sup> It is the escape from ill-will. Whatever kinds of worldly merit there are, all are not worth one sixteenth part of the heart-deliverance of loving kindness. The heart-deliverance of loving kindness can be taken as a foundation or as one's vehicle. It must also be maintained in beings. If someone expects eleven blessings of *mettā*, one must establish the heart-deliverance of loving kindness, and properly manage it. Without establishing the heart-deliverance of loving kindness, eleven blessings cannot be possible.

Religiously, *mettā* is to be practised with the "Right view"<sup>5</sup>. One may not be free from suffering by *mettā* alone. Practising *metta* alone without insight in the Four Noble truths is not a proper means to attain ultimate welfare of beings. The Ultimate welfare of beings is extinction of craving, which is *Nibbana*. With the help of the Right view, practice of loving kindness can religiously be perfect. It can lead to the true cessation of suffering. True cessation comes with the elimination of deception by wrong view. Elimination of deception is possible only through right view.

In the Buddhist literature, we should practise *mettā* as much as we can.<sup>6</sup> Even if we cannot practise *mettā* towards all creatures, we should attempt to practise it on human beings alone. Otherwise, we can speak of *mettā* after having *upacara* concentration of *Jhana*. But, according to Mahasi sayadaw, even *mettā sutta* can be developed although we can or do not attain *Jhana*. Moreover, *mettā* can religiously be practiced with specified extension because the heart-deliverance of loving kindness can be practiced with unspecified extension or with specified extension, or with directional extension.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, unspecified extension of *mettā* is practised in five ways as follows: May all creatures be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss. May all breathing creatures ... all beings ... all persons ... May all those who are embodied be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss. Specified extension of *mettā* is practised in seven ways as follows: may all

women be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss. May all men ... all noble ones ... all who are not noble ones ... all deities all human beings ... may all those in the states of deprivation be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss.

Directional extension of *mettā* is practised in ten ways as follows: May all creatures in the eastern direction be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety and may they guide themselves to bliss. May all creatures in the western direction ... in the northern direction ... in the southern direction ... in the eastern intermediate direction... in the western intermediate direction ... in the northern intermediate direction ... in the southern intermediate direction... in the downward direction ... may all those in the upward direction be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss.

Whenever we practice *mettā*, we need to balance contemplative concentration with understanding.<sup>8</sup> Concentration alone lacks direction and understanding alone is dry and tiring. According to Mahasi sayadaw, we should attempt to have *mettā citta* which is essential for either religious or social practice.<sup>9</sup> By understanding, we can choose the proper way by which we can socially benefit others or we can religiously practise *mettā*. Mahasi sayadaw said, "there is, in our society, a custom of reciting *mettā sutta* or of developing *metta* as directional extensions. Such activities are regarded as meritorious *mettā citta oparami-mettā*".<sup>10</sup>

As long as we seek the social benefits, of practising *mettā* in the contemporary world, we can, by "the method of replacement analysis", focus on what is socially possible among the above characteristics of practising' *mettā*. Thus, we need to preserve *mettā citta* as well as specified extension of *mettā* to favor human being's welfare alone. It can also be balanced with understanding to rationally secure social benefits as well as national solidarity.

### **Union spirit as category-discipline**

*mettā* -cultural consciousness is the suggested principle, and a form of union spirit. The principle consists of *mettā* and cultural consciousness. On the one hand, cultural consciousness rational enlightens us to effectively practice *mettā* in terms of physical action. On the other hand, cultural consciousness is supplemented by *mettā* to practically keep the smooth running of society. The principle also agrees with human nature, and is practical and much easier for us. Moreover, it is intelligible to us. So, it is a category-discipline.

Cultural consciousness in the principle can be regulated by *mettā*. It means that *mettā* can motivate us to perform actions in accordance with cultural consciousness. Then, one nationality can be free from neglecting the values of others. By the principle, when we fulfill cultural needs, means and ends have to be reviewed to be in concord with the national policy. Moreover, we understand that keeping smooth running of society is also a cultural need. Such a need can be fulfilled respecting others. Smooth running of society depends on fulfilling one's needs and that of others. We need to overcome the extreme selfishness which can not be in concord with the national policy that, is concerned with peace and national solidarity. To do so, cultural consciousness needs to be regulated by *mettā*.

In the principle, *mettā* is reinforced by cultural consciousness in order that one who practises *mettā* can rationally understand the synthesis of self and welfare-of others: The principle is not concerned with the attainment of religiously ultimate welfare in this life. It is concerned with social benefits in the contemporary world. If there is cultural consciousness, we come to understand that *mettā* should not be practised in terms of mental action alone. The principle focuses on physical action and through *mettā* -cultural consciousness *mettā* can reveal its useful results. So we can not be ridiculed. Thus, we can confidently suggest that *mettā* should be practised with cultural consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

The principle is rationally as well as traditionally acceptable to Myanmar society.<sup>12</sup> In the principle, we regard the traditionally accepted value of *mettā* as the driving force. In Myanmar culture, *mettā* is accepted as good. The accepted value can make the principle more acceptable. Thus, men can easily observe *mettā* -cultural consciousness. Moreover, cultural consciousness in the principle can make the value more effective for society. This is why cultural consciousness is a rational explanation for the traditionally accepted value of *mettā*. So, men can understand that the principle is more probable and workable. We can make the traditionally accepted value to be rationally acceptable to society. In society, if a certain principle is rationally or traditionally not accepted, it is not easy to prove its workability. Nevertheless, the principle is more acceptable to our society.

In the principle, *mettā* is, in one way, the basis of moral codes. Although we can not observe all precepts, they are accepted as good *mettā* is also precondition for observing precepts. Without *mettā*, even one single precept can not be observed.<sup>12</sup> Then, the morality of our society will be impossible even theoretically. In other words, if there is no *mettā*, morality is impossible, *mettā* can freely be practiced if we compare it with the five precepts. To freely practise *mettā*, we need to observe the principle. It is

based on what is traditionally as well as rationally acceptable. *Metta* in the principle is also a discipline as it is practised with cultural consciousness. By the principle we can rationally understand *mettā* that is the basis of moral codes.

In suggesting the principle, we can face the situation in which most people traditionally or rationally regard *metta* as not socially workable for society. When we introduce the new criterion which is rationally acceptable, then we shall have to deal with the ingrained traditional beliefs. If the suggested principle is not accepted due to these traditional beliefs, it will not easily be adhered to by the people. For example, in the "*Kalama Sutt*" it says that men should be critical. In daily life, if we are strictly critical, there can be disagreement among us. However, the principle is provided for those who focus on what is the traditionally and rationally acceptable because *metta* is reinforced by cultural consciousness. This means that we partly rely on rational explanation in suggesting *metta*-cultural consciousness.

The principle is based on neither reason alone nor benevolence alone. It is based on the fact that the relation between *metta* and cultural consciousness is reciprocal. Without knowing this relation, a person may cause the development or disintegration of society unwittingly. While building a peaceful modern developed nation rationally, we ourselves may forget human nature, but we need to take care of human nature. Good will and ill-will are part of human nature. In other words in culture, we need to depend on reason as well as on benevolence because the smooth running of society that includes national solidarity does not depend on reason alone.

If we focus on reason alone, some activities which are traditionally emotionally or religiously performed will have to be reviewed. Some portions of these activities may have no role in building a new nation. They cannot rationally support the smooth running of society. Some traditional activities are somehow connected to supernatural beliefs. If we attempt to totally negate these activities by reason, we may face conflicting values.<sup>13</sup> In fact, we, contemporary men are now living in the modern world. However, our activities are not always performed by reason alone. Our emotions or superstitions will also be involved in the activities.<sup>14</sup> Although we can benefit from the development of science and technology, we still perform some activities by emotion. This is why human nature is sometimes involved in whatever we do.

*Mettā* -cultural consciousness is a category-discipline. It can make us understand what is human nature and the cause and effect of an action, the importance of usefulness, the way of avoiding random practice in connection with the practice of *mettā*. Moreover, the principle can yield intelligibility when we practice *mettā*. Intelligibility is the most important

component in formulating a category-discipline.

By *mettā* -cultural consciousness, we clearly distinguish how to religiously practice *mettā* and how to socially practice it. If we focus on the religious practice, what is the transcendental will necessarily be involved. As long as we are engaged with the transcendental, it is not easy for us to live in the temple of reason. If we are unable to live in this temple, it is difficult for us even to speak of "intelligibility". Thus, if we really want intelligibility for both the doer and the audience or society, we should appeal to reason for most of our actions. To do so, the principle can help us to replace the category-habit or what is transcendental with category-discipline in practicing *mettā*.

By the principle, we can also advocate for *mettā*. In the principle, what is advocated is cultural consciousness rather than religious consciousness. One of the components of cultural consciousness in the principle is to have the "right view" of what society is and what needs it has to fulfill for the smooth running of society. It is not the kind of "Right view" of Buddhism whose ultimate goal is the achievement of *Nibbana*. The right view of the principle is secular and not religious for its goal is the smooth running of society based on national solidarity. The "Right view" of Buddhism that will lead us to the attainment of *magga, phala* and *Nibbana* would be out of context in the principle which is concerned entirely with the social milieu. By cultural consciousness, we will not undertake to do what can not rationally be understood and what is not workable. Then, we can practise *mettā* without being in opposition to religion. Such practice is not to attain the religiously ultimate welfare in this life but to benefit society in order that our society is a consolidated union. Also, we can understand the archetype of union spirit, "the ministry for progress of border areas and national races and development affairs aims at the achievement of equitable development throughout the nation. With the border areas and national races development projects, the 24 special development zones project and five rural development tasks project, measures are under way to bridge the development gaps between the border and interior areas between urban and rural areas and between one region and the other to ensure equitable development in all regions, and to build a more consolidated union.

### Conclusion

The suggested principle is more functional in the age of globalization because national affairs may vary due to globalization. By this principle, we can take care of what can contradict ensuring our three main

national causes. Today, the global context does not allow men to be onlookers. Thus, the countries in the world community should give as much assistance as possible to each other. We cannot live in the global context without 'helping one another especially when one's interests are involved. One's suffering is sometimes not his alone, it involves others. The global context includes regional and national affairs. By this principle, we can balance the impact of the globalization against ensuring our three main national causes. To do so, we need union spirit and nationally solidarity. To cultivate union spirit and to have national solidarity, this principle enlightens all the nationalities to emphasize common welfare in which inclusion of benefits of each and every nationality is rationally understood, and can practically be shared in the short term as well as in the long run.

To cultivate union spirit, this principle also enlightens us to know what contradicts union spirit and national solidarity and to avoid them. By this principle, we come to know that we should not neglect the sufferings of others, that we should take care of unnecessary consequences of practicing *metta*, that we should attempt to overcome the extreme selfishness, religious extremism, group prejudice or partiality and domination of fatalism that we should avoid some activities that will leave an unpleasant historical record, and that law enforcement and cooperation are necessary.

Finally, we would like to describe some salient features of this paper. They are what union spirit is, the suggested principle of cultivating union spirit and the levels of union spirit. Thus, Union Spirit is the spirit that includes two components such as benevolence that is *mettā* and cultural consciousness that is knowledge of culture whereby one component can reinforce or supplement the other. In other words, they are in reciprocity. On the other hand, union spirit is the spirit that wants to balance emotional, volitional and even intellectual actions against national solidarity so that our activities are in concord with national policy. Union spirit is possible only when category-discipline of practicing *mettā* replaces category-habit of practicing *mettā*. Thus, to cultivate union spirit, we all the nationalities should be able to replace category-habit of practicing *mettā* with category-discipline of practicing *mettā*. Union Spirit can be described as national, as regional and as global concern. This paper deals with national concern.

### Acknowledgement

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Notes

Jowett, B., M.A, 1937 *The Dialogues of Plato*, in Four Volumes. New York. Radon House, pp. 349-380.

မဟာစည်ဆရာတော်၊ ၁၉၉၄၊ ဗြဟ္မာဝိဟာရတရားတော်၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ စာပေပေါင်းကူးပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။ စာ၊ ၄။

Shwe Aung. U Trans. U Hla Maung 1995 *The Buddha, Peerless Benefactor of Humanity*. Yangon:Myawaddy Press.p-273.

Nanamoli. Bhikkhu 1958 *The Practice of Loving Kindness (metta)* Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, pp. 8-9.

Ibid. p.14.

စစ်ထွန်းမှတ်ဝင်း၊ ၁၉၈၃၊ လူမှုရေးရာမေတ္တာမဏ္ဍိုင် မေတ္တာသုတ်အဖွင့်ကျမ်း၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန။ စာ၊ ၁

Nanamoli, Bhikkhu 1958 *The Practice of Loving Kindness (mettā)* Ceylon; Buddhist Publication Society. p, 12.

Ibid p.vi.

မဟာစည်ဆရာတော်၊ ၁၉၉၄၊ ဗြဟ္မာဝိဟာရတရားတော်၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ စာပေပေါင်းကူးပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။ စာ၊ ၁၈-၄၁

ယင်းစာ၊ ၁၈-၄၁။

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နန္ဒာသိန်းဇ၊ ၂၀၀၂၊ ပြောရင်းပြောနေမည့် ချစ်ခြင်းမေတ္တာ၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ လှိုင်းသစ်စာပေ။ စာ၊ ၁၅၉-၁၆၂။

မောင်အံ့၊ မဟာဝိဇ္ဇာ (ဘုံဘေ) ၂၀၀၃၊ ဗုဒ္ဓ၏လူမှုရေးလမ်းညွှန်ချက်များ၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ နှလုံးလှစာပေ။ စာ၊၂၀၄-၂၁၅။

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ခင်မောင်ဝင်း၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ (ဒဿနဗေဒ)၊ ၂၀၀၃၊ ဒဿနကို ချစ်မြတ်နိုးခြင်း၊  
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ခင်မောင်ဝင်း၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ (ဒဿနဗေဒ) ၂၀၀၃၊ ဒဿနကို ချစ်မြတ်နိုးခြင်း၊  
ရန်ကုန်၊ ယုံကြည် စာပေ။

စစ်ထွန်းမှတ်ဝင်း၊ ၁၉၈၃၊ လူမှုရေးရာမေတ္တာမဏ္ဍိုင် မေတ္တာသုတအဖွင့်ကျမ်း၊  
ရန်ကုန်၊ သာသနာ ရေးဦးစီးဌာန။

နန္ဒာသိန်းဇံ၊ ၂၀၀၂၊ ပြောရင်းနေပြောနေမည့် ချစ်ခြင်းမေတ္တာ၊ ရန်ကုန်၊  
လှိုင်းသစ်စာပေ။

မဟာစည်ဆရာတော်၊ ၁၉၉၄၊ ဗြဟ္မာဝိဟာရတရားတော်၊ ရန်ကုန်၊  
စာပေပေါင်းကူးပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

မောင်အံ့၊ မဟာဝိဇ္ဇာ (ဘုံဘေ) ၂၀၀၃၊ ဗုဒ္ဓ၏ လူမှုရေးလမ်းညွှန်ချက်များ၊  
ရန်ကုန်၊ နှလုံးလှစာပေ။