

The Contemporary Relevance of Buddha

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The great poet and novelist Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) once remarked that he was extremely sad that he was not alive when Gautama Buddha was still around. Tagore very much wished he could have had conversations with Buddha. I share that sentiment, but, like Rabindranath, I am also immensely grateful that, even now, we can enjoy—and learn from—the ideas and arguments that Buddha gave us twenty-five hundred years ago. Our world may be very different from what Buddha faced in the sixth century BCE, but we can still benefit greatly from the reasoned approach to ethics, politics, and social relations that Gautama Buddha brought to the world of human understanding.

I have often wondered why I have been so deeply moved and influenced by Buddha, right from the time I first encountered his thoughts—when my grandfather gave me a short book on Gautama. I must have been about eleven or twelve then, and I remember that I was completely bowled over. Buddha remains, in some basic sense, very contemporary, and it is that aspect of the heritage of Buddha that is the subject of this essay.

When young Gautama left his princely home in the foothills of the Himalayas in search of enlightenment, he was moved specifically by the sight of mortality, morbidity, and disability, each of which agitated him greatly. He was also distressed by the ignorance he saw around him. It is easy to understand the sources of Gautama Buddha's agony, particularly the deprivations and insecurities of human life. Anchored in the “here-and-now,” Buddha's thinking proceeded also toward more transcendental reflections—toward a metaphysical understanding

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of the world. I shall not, however, go into that aspect of Buddha's thoughts here, and will concentrate instead on his reasoned approach to worldly problems. Since Buddhism is often taken to be a very unworldly religion, what I am trying to present here is an account and analysis of "another Buddha"—one who is no less real than the person who has been revered (and sometimes deified) by the dominant schools of Buddhist religion for over two thousand years.

Buddha's ideas—and the person behind those ideas—have a remarkable approachability that is quite striking. Why does he seem so approachable? One reason it is easier to draw on Buddha's ideas than those of many other religious leaders is that the story of his life makes it clear that he was concerned about problems that move all ordinary human beings: fear of mortality, the tragedy of old age and disability, the terrible impact of disease on human life. And we too see the dangers of ignorance and of badly organized societies, to which Buddha would give much thought as his own enlightenment proceeded. There is a basic humanity in the story of Buddha's life that is easy to access and absorb in our own lives.

This feature of "ordinariness" also gives Buddha an extraordinary relevance in the political and social pursuit of a better world. That immediacy became very clear to me when the so-called "human development" approach emerged as a powerful line of analysis in the 1990s. I remember thinking immediately of Buddha in 1989 when my friend, the visionary thinker Mahbub ul Haq, wanted me to join him in initiating his great brain child, the *Human Development Report*, which became an annual publication of the United Nations from 1990 onward. The "human development index" (HDI) has become perhaps the most widely used social indicator in the world today of the comparative developmental progress of different groups of people—nations as well as regions. In developing the index, Mahbub ul Haq wanted to change the concentration of development studies in general, and development economics in particular, away from such distant indicators of good living as the gross domestic product and toward more direct indicators of the quality of individual human lives, and of the substantive freedoms that people can enjoy to lead the kinds of lives they have reason to value. The human development approach concentrates on such indicators as longevity, education, removal of abject poverty, and other concerns that have an uncanny closeness to the problems that had engaged the attention of young Buddha twenty-five hundred years earlier.

Buddha was not, of course, unique among religious leaders in having these concerns. The "human predicament" has been an important influence, for example, in

the development of Christian thought, and it figures in different ways in other religions as well. There is, however, not only a temporal priority in Buddha's addressing these issues in the sixth century BCE (his main competition could be seen as coming from Mahavir Jain in India and Confucius in China), but also that Buddha's life story itself, including his renunciation of a princely life, brings out the centrality of these concerns in a very communicable way.

Buddha's communicability can perhaps be better understood by looking at a point made by Ludwig Wittgenstein, talking not about Buddha and Buddhism, but about Christianity. Wittgenstein remarked that he was much more absorbed in the Gospels than in the intellectual height of the Epistles of St. Paul:

In the Gospels—as it seems to me—everything is *less pretentious*, humbler, simpler. There you find huts; in Paul a church. There all men are equal and God himself is a man; in Paul there is already something of a hierarchy; honours and official positions.¹

Buddha's deep and abiding humanity is, I would argue, quite central to the continued relevance and appreciation of his ideas over the centuries, indeed the millennia. In this sense, the rich treasure house of stories and anecdotes in the Buddhist literature is not only a source of illustrations and explications, it also plays a big part in making Buddha come closer to us as ordinary human beings.



A second reason for considering Buddha's thoughts on the "here-and-now" without invoking the fuller picture of his religious views relates to the particular nature of his religious ideas. Even though many Buddhists attribute divinity to Buddha himself, that was not a claim he ever made, and it is clear enough that he would have strongly disputed any such claim. Indeed, Buddha remained skeptical of the very existence of God, and it is important to note that Buddhism is the only world religion that is basically agnostic. And yet this did not prevent Buddha from exploring ideas that take us beyond the observed universe and from assessing moral codes with normative force, without having to invoke God. As an intellectual exercise, there is something quite remarkable not only in the epistemology that Buddha pursued but also in his devotion to practical reason, which flowered into reflections on morality and ethics—again without invoking any divinity.

The first issue—that of epistemology—was of great importance in the distinction between Buddha's own approach and that of the intellectually powerful agnostic and atheistic thinkers in India of his time. Indian materialist thinking,

which would flower into well-developed systems of thought, advanced in particular by the Lokayata approach and the Carvaka School, does have a long and strong tradition.² There is evidence in the nature of the arguments that Buddha presented that he took the intellectual challenges coming from the materialists at least as seriously as those coming from the established religions of India of his time—earlier versions of what would much later come to be called Hinduism. Indeed, an entire chapter of the classic fourteenth-century *Sarvadarsanasamgraha* (“The Collection of All Philosophies”), by Madhavacarya, is devoted to Buddhism, which was seen primarily by the author as a challenge to the materialists of Lokayata and the Carvaka School.³

Turning now to practical reason, the widespread conviction—common in the past and often invoked even today—that you cannot have a well-grounded morality if you do not somehow invoke God was firmly repudiated by Buddha. Indeed, Buddha’s demonstration that moral ideas need not originate in any specific invoking of divinity remains extremely important today. This is not just because there are many nonbelievers in the world, but also because people belonging to different faiths and distinct religions can still find agreement on moral codes of conduct if morality is not seen as entirely parasitic on a particular view of divinity. Buddha was a great believer in the importance of talking with others, going across belief systems, and it is worth noting here that his approach to morality and ethics allowed him to do this with coherence and cogency, since the particularities of faiths in divinity, in different forms, could be transcended in moral discourse. This issue is of considerable significance in understanding the intellectual positions that energized the morals and politics of Buddhist rulers, including the Emperor Ashoka in the third century BCE. And the importance of that perspective is still quite remarkable, especially in the divisive world in which we live today.



I will now move to the substantive contents of a number of Buddha’s worldly thoughts that remain particularly relevant today, and will concentrate in particular on: (1) the importance of enlightenment, communication, and public reasoning; (2) the significance of human values for decent governance and public politics; (3) the need to go beyond contractarian modes of political and moral reasoning, championed by the “social contract” tradition, and much used in contemporary political and moral theory; and (4) the need for a global rather than a parochial way of understanding the demands of fairness and justice.

I begin with reasoning and communication. Even though in Western discussions it is often assumed that a distinctively reason-based approach to solving problems is a special contribution of the European Enlightenment, reliance on reasoning has been invoked, in various forms, over a long period of human history. Buddha relied on reasoning, rather than on blind faith, throughout his life, and this applies also to his experimentations, early in his life, with various ways of resolving his existential dilemma. It is perhaps worth recollecting here that even the name “Buddha” is derived from the Sanskrit equivalent of “enlightenment.”

However, enlightenment, in Buddha’s perspective, is not a matter only of individual pursuit but also one of communicative interaction. And the journey cannot but take the form of a joint quest. The Buddhist tradition, which has always emphasized the importance of public deliberation for individual enlightenment as well as social progress, not only led to extensive institutional developments for communication and joint action (Buddhist *sanghas* were particularly important in this) but also produced some of the earliest open general meetings in the world. The so-called “Buddhist councils,” which aimed at settling disputes between different points of view, drew delegates from various schools of thought from various parts of the world. The first of these great councils was held in Rajagriha (not far from the site of the great Buddhist university, Nalanda, to be established a few hundred years later), shortly after Gautama Buddha’s death. The second council was about a century later in Vaisali, and the very last of the famous meetings occurred in Kashmir in the second century CE. But the largest and most well-known of these councils was the third, which took place in the third century BCE and was hosted by the Emperor Ashoka in Pataliputra (now called Patna), then the capital of India.

Even though these councils were primarily concerned with resolving differences in religious principles and practices, they clearly did address the demands of social and civic duties as well. Furthermore, they helped, in a general way, to consolidate and promote the tradition of open discussion on contentious issues. The third council fit in well with Emperor Ashoka’s general belief in social deliberation in an atmosphere of mutual respect. This priority is reflected in the inscriptions he had placed on specially mounted stone pillars across India (some were set up outside India as well). The edict at Erragudi puts the issue forcefully:

The growth of essentials of Dharma [proper conduct] is possible in many ways. But its root lies in restraint in regard to speech, so that there should be no extolment of one’s

own sect or disparagement of other sects on inappropriate occasions, and it should be moderate even in appropriate occasions. On the contrary, other sects should be duly honoured in every way on all occasions. . . . If a person acts otherwise, he not only injures his own sect but also harms other sects. Truly, if a person extols his own sect and disparages other sects with a view to glorifying his own sect owing merely to his attachment to it, he injures his own sect very severely by acting in that way.

The importance of such interactive and respectful deliberation is also well recognized in Buddhist writings in Thailand, China, Korea, and Japan. Sometimes they are reflected in principles of governance as well. The need for public consultation and the legitimacy of different and contrary perspectives are emphasized, for example, by the Buddhist Prince Shotoku of Japan, who, as regent to his mother, Empress Suiko, introduced a remarkably liberal constitution or *kempo* (known as “the constitution of seventeen articles”) in 604 CE. It insisted, in a way comparable with the *Magna Carta* (to be signed six centuries later, in 1215 CE), that “decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone. They should be discussed with many.” It went on to elaborate: “Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong.” Some scholars, such as Nakamura Hajime, see in the Buddhist constitution of seventeen articles Japan’s “first step of gradual development toward democracy.”⁴ More generally, the Buddhist contribution to the development of democratic public reasoning is an important subject that deserves more acknowledgement than it tends to get in the history of ideas.



It is not altogether clear to what extent the Chinese tradition of public reasoning was enriched by Buddhist influences, because the Confucian heritage had already done much to emphasize the role of open discussion in Chinese public life. Nevertheless, the arrival of Buddhism added substantially to Chinese heterodoxy, and this certainly contributed to the reach of public debate in China.

A particularly important effect of the Buddhist focus on learning and communication was its impact on the development of printing—the first in the world. In fact, nearly every attempt at early printing in the world—in China, in Korea, and in Japan—was undertaken by Buddhist technologists with an interest in expanding public communication. As it happens, the first printed book in the world (or, rather, the first printed book that is actually dated) was the Chinese

translation, done by Kumarajiva in 402 CE, of an Indian Buddhist treatise known as “the Diamond Sutra” (*Vajracchedikaprajnaparamita*, in Sanskrit), which was printed in China four centuries later, in 868 CE. In fact, the book was translated into Chinese about a dozen times, but it is the early-fifth-century translation by Kumarajiva that has the remarkable distinction of being the first printed book in the world. The motivation for this innovative departure is described in the tail-piece of that pioneering printed volume as “reverently made for *universal free distribution* by Wang Jie on behalf of his two parents.” That commitment in the path-breaking enterprise of printing is a huge tribute to the importance attached to communication and to the joint quest for learning in Buddhist thinking.

The importance of communication and public discussion in the world in which we live today cannot be overemphasized. The far-reaching social implications of the recent economic crisis, for instance, demand much more global discussion. For example, the adoption of under-discussed and under-scrutinized programs of “austerity” in Europe has been fairly disastrous.⁵ More generally, the benefits from, and the difficulties with, globalization call for more interactive global scrutiny. Indeed, some of the greatest international policy disasters we have recently witnessed, such as the ill-considered 2003 invasion of Iraq by a U.S.-dominated coalition, have offered a clear lesson on the penalty of shunning the well-trying path of multilateral discussion and interactive understanding. Indeed, in thousands of ways, public reasoning can contribute richly to making the world a safer as well as a more just place. In the development of the historically rich tradition of communication and interactive public reasoning, it is hugely important to recognize and appreciate the contribution of Buddha’s ideas and of the Buddhist tradition.



I turn now to the task of governance. Buddha was born a prince, but he did not want to rule any country or kingdom. However, kings and emperors inspired by Buddhist thought did govern in a number of countries in the world. Perhaps the most famous of the Buddhist rulers is Emperor Ashoka, to whom I referred earlier, who ruled over much of India in the third century BCE. Interesting aspects of Ashoka’s thinking, including his defense of freedom of speech and of the importance of the pursuit of social justice through advancing the welfare and freedom of people in general, derived from his analysis of the important role that both the state and the individual play in society. The public provision of care and services that Ashoka initiated would profoundly change India, and it attracted the

attention of foreign scholars, for example of Faxian, the great Chinese scholar, who came to India in the early fifth century. It is interesting that many centuries after Ashoka (third century BCE), Faxian could still find (in the fifth century CE) the continuation of social arrangements carried on in Ashoka's tradition, most notably the existence of efficient and humane public hospitals in Pataliputra, which were accessible to the general public at no charge. Since free or easily affordable medical care is still largely a lacuna even today in India, not to mention, at least until recently, in the superrich economy of the United States, the lessons to draw here can well be quite important.

If these positive moves involve values that Buddha had done much to advance, there were also restraints in the governance of Ashoka's large empire that reflected Buddhist priorities. Ashoka had considerable sympathy for the belief that social goals can be achieved through the voluntary good behavior of citizens themselves, without being compelled by force. Indeed, Ashoka spent a good bit of his life trying to promote spontaneously friendly behavior of people toward each other, and this effort was reflected *inter alia* in the inscriptions on the famous Pillars of Ashoka that he erected across the country.

In contrast with Ashoka's focus on human behavior, Kautilya—who was the principal advisor to Ashoka's grandfather, Chandragupta (the Mauryan emperor who was the first king to rule over nearly all of India), and who was also the author of the celebrated fourth-century-BCE treatise *Arthashastra* (translatable as "Political Economy")—emphasized the building up and use of social institutions to advance justice, rather than relying on the cultivation of deontological values. Kautilya's political economy was based on his understanding that efficient institutions were key to successful politics and economic performance; and he saw institutional features, including rewards, restrictions, prohibitions, and punishments, as major contributors to good conduct and necessary restraints on human behavior. His is clearly a no-nonsense institutional view of advancing justice, with very little concession made to people's capacity for doing good things voluntarily. Kautilya's diagnosis of human nature as venal, shared by many economists today, contrasts sharply with Ashoka's optimism about making people behave significantly better through persuading them to reflect more, and through encouraging them to understand that dumb thoughts yield coarse behavior, with terrible consequences for all.

Nevertheless, Ashoka almost certainly overestimated what can be done through behavioral reform alone. He had started as a severe and stern emperor, but

underwent a major moral and political conversion when he became revolted by the barbarity he saw in his own victorious war against Kalinga (known today as the Indian state of Orissa or Odisha). He changed his moral and political priorities, embraced the nonviolent teachings of Gautama Buddha, gradually disbanded his army, went about liberating the slaves and indentured laborers, and took on the role of a moral teacher rather than that of a stern emperor. As it happened, sadly, Ashoka's vast empire dissolved into fragments of fractured territory not long after his death. There is some evidence that this did not happen during his own lifetime partly because of the awe in which he was held by the people at large. But it was also because (as has been argued by Bruce Rich) Ashoka had not, in fact, fully dismantled the Kautilyan administrative system of disciplined rule that he had inherited from his forefathers—despite his growing conviction that good reflection would yield good conduct spontaneously, without enforcement through punitive means.⁶

My point here is not that the modern world can manage to do without restraints and enforcement, but only that the attempt at implementation through values rather than through punitive actions has practical relevance as well. A variety of social controls that are needed today, from those aimed at generating environment-friendly lifestyles to those aimed at the cultivation of peace and security in the relations between different people, can be helped a great deal by social education and public discussion. While Ashoka was evidently not quite justified in his optimism about the domain and reach of moral behavior, was Kautilya correct in being so skeptical of the feasibility of having good results through social ethics? It seems plausible to argue that the perspectives of both Ashoka and Kautilya were incomplete in themselves, and that both need our attention when we think of ways and means of advancing justice in society.



The third subject I want to comment on concerns political and moral priorities that may move us to do something for others. There is an interesting contrast here. Following the development of ethical reasoning based on a “social contract,” initiated by Thomas Hobbes in the sixteenth century and pursued further by other great scholars such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and—in our time—John Rawls, the focus in modern moral and political philosophy has tended to be on the mutuality of our obligations to each other, and on the importance of reciprocity in advancing social help and assistance. To put it crudely (and at

the risk of some oversimplification), since we both gain from cooperation, it is what we *should* each do individually.

And yet this is not the only possible approach to social obligations. An alternative perspective on obligations—linked not with reciprocity and mutuality but with the holding of power, which could be unilateral—was presented forcefully by Gautama Buddha in *Sutta Nipata*. In this work, Buddha argued that because we humans are enormously more powerful than other species, we have great responsibility toward those other species—precisely because of this asymmetry of power.

Buddha went on to illustrate the point by an analogy with the responsibility of the mother toward her child, which she has not because she has given birth to the child (that connection is not invoked in this particular argument, though there is room for it elsewhere), but because she can do things to influence the child's life that the child itself cannot do. The mother's reason for helping the child, in this line of thinking, is not guided by the rewards of cooperation or from any social contract, but precisely by her recognition that she can, asymmetrically, do things for the child that will make a huge difference to the child's life and that the child itself cannot do. The mother does not have to seek any mutual benefit, real or imagined, or seek any "as if" contract to understand her obligation to the child. There is a big contrast between this unilateral obligation and duties based on mutually beneficial contractual reasoning that are commonly invoked in contemporary moral and political philosophy.

The justification here takes the form of arguing that (1) if some action that can be freely undertaken is open to a person (thereby making it feasible), and (2) if the person assesses that the undertaking of that action will create a more just situation in the world, then that is argument enough for the person to think seriously on what he or she should do. The basic point to consider here is the existence of different approaches to the pursuit of reasonable behavior, not all of which need be dependent on the ultimately advantage-based reasoning of mutually beneficial cooperation. Indeed, as I have argued in my book *The Idea of Justice*, the understanding of obligations related to the human rights approach cannot be fully understood without bringing in the obligation of power—an approach that can be associated with Buddha's thoughts in quite a precise way.⁷



I turn, finally, to the contribution of Buddhism in bringing different people together through intellectual and cultural interactions, powered by a nonsectarian view of human beings. Buddhism spread from India to distant places, through different routes—some across the high seas and others over land. At one level, this spread of Buddhism could be seen as a missionary activity, such as the spread of Christianity, and there is certainly a general universalism in the spread of all religions, which deserves greater recognition than it often gets. What particularly distinguishes Buddhism, it can be argued, is its focus on advancing intellectual connections, which stems from Buddha's own focus on enlightenment as a central feature of human flourishing.

That outlook has had a remarkable effect on the relations between countries, including very large ones, such as China and India. Contact between the two countries, which began because of mutual religious interests, extended from the seventh to the twelfth century to science, mathematics, literature, linguistics, architecture, medicine, and music. We know from the elaborate accounts left by a number of Chinese visitors to India, such as Faxian in the fifth century and Xuanzang and Yijing in the seventh, that their interest was by no means restricted to scriptural matters. Similarly, the Indian scholars who went to China, especially in the seventh and eighth centuries, might have been Buddhist in religion, but their fields of activity went far beyond that. In China, several Indian mathematicians and astronomers held high positions in that country's scientific establishment, and an Indian scientist called Gautama Siddha (Qutan Xida, in Chinese) even became the president of the official Board of Astronomy in China in the eighth century. Even though Chinese civilization is often thought to be somewhat insular, the remarkable openness that made such appointments possible reflected a strong intellectual universalism, one to which Buddhism was particularly committed.

I will take the liberty of mentioning here the special role of Nalanda University, in Bihar. Nalanda was an institution of higher learning that established its far-reaching educational programs in the fifth century and flourished until the twelfth century (it was destroyed by a foreign invasion from Afghanistan just after Oxford University was founded and just before Cambridge University would be born). It had many distinguished foreign students, particularly from China, but also from Korea, Japan, and elsewhere, studying not just religion, literature, language, and culture but also medicine, public health, and astronomy.⁸ Even though Nalanda University was never confined to the study of Buddhism only, there is something

of Buddha's intellectual universalism that is richly reflected in Nalanda's seven hundred years of academic pursuit *sans frontiers*.

Advancing global intellectual interrelations is of course an area in which Europe and North America have done a huge amount in recent times. What is remarkable about Nalanda, and more generally about the Buddhism-inspired intellectual relations across borders, is the early lead that Buddha's ideas provided in this direction, even compared with the oldest European university, Bologna. Nalanda was, in fact, more than six hundred years old when Bologna University was founded. Had it managed to survive to our time, Nalanda would be, by a long margin, the oldest university in the world. Another distinguished university that likewise did not stay in existence continuously was Al-Azhar University in Cairo (with which Nalanda is sometimes compared), established at a time when Nalanda was already more than five hundred years old. In the modern world, in which education is even more important than it was in the fifth century, there is still something to be learned from the ease with which distinct and distant countries were able to come close together, inspired by an idea, in the pursuit of human knowledge and learning.



I end by briefly recollecting an anecdote concerning one of Nalanda's most distinguished students, Xuanzang, from China in the seventh century. The account concerns Xuanzang's decision to return from India to China at the end of his studies. The Nalanda establishment greatly admired Xuanzang and wanted him to stay on as a member of the academic faculty, and offered him a leading teaching position at the university. Hui-Li, in his biography of Xuanzang, reports their attempt to give a plethora of reasons to persuade Xuanzang to make India his home. They argued that India was a nicer country to live in than China, but proceeded to dwell on India's privilege of being the country of Buddha himself:

The monks of Nalanda, when they heard of [Xuanzang's plan to return to China], begged him to remain, saying: "India is the land of Buddha's birth, and though he has left the world, there are many traces of him. . . . Why then do you wish to leave having come so far?"

To this, Xuanzang replied by pointing out what a nice country China was—leading to a bit of intellectual nationalism in the debate between the two sides. But Xuanzang's clinching argument was that the monks in Nalanda would be entirely

misunderstanding Buddha's message if they wanted educated and enlightened people to stay on in Buddha's own land rather than share what they had learned with others elsewhere. As he put it: "Buddha established his doctrine so that it might be diffused to all lands. Who would wish to enjoy it alone, and to forget those who are not yet enlightened?" Xuanzang won the argument precisely because he had captured Buddha's commitment to communication and the spread of enlightenment (going across arbitrary national borders) much better than his Indian teachers and friends had.

To conclude, I have tried to discuss how Buddha's focus on a number of critically important issues remains relevant today. This includes his analysis of the role of public reasoning, of the importance of education and communication (motivating, in particular, the earliest pursuits of printing), of the need for inclusive values, of the obligation of power, and of the importance of intellectual universalism. Buddha's path-breaking thoughts can continue to contribute to our understanding of the nature and the demands of the world in which we live. One does not have to be a Buddhist, or doctrinaire, or religious, to be informed, inspired, and enlightened—even after twenty-five hundred years—by the ideas and reasoning of this greatest of human beings.

NOTES

- ¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 30.
- ² Latika Chattopadhyaya has a very interesting book on the subject, originally in Bengali, but now available in English: *Scepticism in Indian Thought: Carvaka Philosophy Reexamined* (Kolkata: New Age, 2013).
- ³ I will not go further into this aspect of Buddha's thought in this essay (nor am I assessing the force of Buddha's counterarguments against the materialists). But I note here that there is need for more work in the literatures on both epistemology and ethics in Buddha's disputation of materialism without the hypothesis of the existence of an almighty God. As an intellectual exercise this can be a hugely interesting philosophical inquiry into our understanding of the nature and demands of the world around us. Madhavacarya has given us several very important leads in that comparative study.
- ⁴ See Nakamura Hajime, "Basic Features of the Legal, Political, and Economic Thought of Japan," in Charles A. Moore, ed., *The Japanese Mind: Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1973), p. 144. See also my *The Argumentative Indian* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).
- ⁵ On this, see my "The Crisis of European Democracy," *New York Times*, May 22, 2012; and "What Happened to Europe?" *New Republic*, August 2, 2012.
- ⁶ Bruce Rich, *To Uphold the World: The Message of Ashoka and Kautilya for the 21st Century* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008).
- ⁷ I have discussed this issue more fully in *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), chapters 8 ("Rationality and Other People") and 9 ("Plurality of Impartial Reasons").
- ⁸ In a visionary initiative undertaken by the East-Asia Summit, the old Nalanda University is now being reestablished through a multi-country initiative—an effort that includes India, China, Japan, Singapore, Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia, among other Asian countries.