The Religiously Pluralistic Harmony is the Necessary Condition for Sustainable Peace: a Thai Buddhist Perspective

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An Abstract

Mere Reconciliation is not enough for solving the conflict in the world especially in the Deep South of Thailand between Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims, because reconciliation aims at doing a compromise, which has its limitation only on some particular purposes, whereas the harmony has more scope than the reconciliation. We can say that the religiously pluralistic harmony of Buddhists and Muslims in the southern part of Thailand is the necessary condition for the ever lasting peace, for it is based on the mutual respect for the diversity of pluralistic harmony between two religions. Non-attachment is the essential condition of harmony in Buddhism,

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while justice based on forgiveness is in Islam. Non-attachment and forgiveness as the essence of sustainable harmony can be conducted through the method of inter-religious dialogue of life, action, religious doctrine, and religious experience. To solve the problem in the Deep South of Thailand, both Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims, who have been living there in the three provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, for many decades, will have to build their trust through their religious doctrine of harmony based on non-violence, forgiveness and justice, etc. Besides, harmony between people of the two nations, Thailand and Malaysia, should be planted through mutual collaboration in different social and political projects to help solve the conflicts in the Deep South of Thailand. If the Buddhists both from inside and outside the three provinces as well as the Thai Muslims inside and outside the South could practice the principle of harmony as such, sustainable peace will be definitely guaranteed not only to Thailand but to the world at large.

I. Introduction

My attempt in this paper is to explore the role of harmony in pacifying all types of conflict happening in the world in order to express the spirit of Buddhism in supporting peace throughout the world. My main purpose is to strengthen the relationships between Buddhists and Muslims in the world at large and in Thailand in particular. This paper is not intended to discuss elaborately the details of the conflicts between the Buddhists and Muslims in the deep southernmost provinces of Thailand, but just wants to propose the religious and philosophical solution to the problem. However, to fulfill the objectives of this paper, some necessary information on the nature and structure of the political conflict and violence must be given so that clear connection of the two aspects of religious doctrine and political conflict can be properly understood.

As we have already known that Thailand has been experiencing unprecedented escalation of political unrest in its three Malay-Muslim-dominated provinces, namely Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, where 80 percent of the total Thai Muslim population today about 5-7 million are dwelling amidst the differences of ethnic, lingual, cultural and political factors among them. The political unrest, which has started since the 4th January 2004 with the attack on the 4th Development Division in the military camp of Joh-I-Rong district, up until now, has given rise to the death of both Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims numbering more than 2,500 persons with 5,000 wounded.[1] And most of the demised persons are Thai Buddhists. Prof. Imtiyaz Yusuf is right in saying thus: "The unrest in Thailand is rooted in historical grievances and the rise of the ideology of Malay ethno-religious nationalism leading to the rise of mass-based insurgency," (2006, p. 189).

Prof. Gothom Arya, Director, Research Center for Peace Building, Mahidol University, Thailand, and the former member of the National Reconciliation Commission, called the Muslim insurgency as "Local Patriotism", which has operated their functions and ideology as the militant group, that may lead to separatism if not properly handled, (2006, p. 24). He further opined that as Islam being known "the religion of peace", and the freedom of religious belief and practice being guaranteed in the Thai constitution, so there is no religious conflict in the South. "However, being Malay is identical to being Muslim and Malay groups in their militancy do not hesitate to use religious sentiment to win over local population to their cause", (2006, p. 24).

However, Gothom accepted that the following Muslim militant groups existed to call for "local autonomy within the unitary state", but not for a separate

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[1] http://thestar.com.my/news/story 13.06.07

state as assumed by the Thai government. The so-called Muslim militant groups are: (1) KAMPAR or Kumpulan Melayu Raya, which was established a few years after the Second World War and led by Tengku Muhiyyidin, who is a descendant of the Sultan of Pattani, whose aim is to fight against Bangkok authority and restore the Pattani Sultanate. (2) BRN or Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Pattani, which was established on the 13th of March 1960. (3) PULO or the Pattani United Liberation Organization, which was established on the 22th of Murch 1969. (4) BERSATU or Barisan Bersatu Kemerdekaan, which was set up on 1989. And GMIP or Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Pattani, which was set up on the 16th of September 1985, to establish the state of Pattani Darussalam. "The platforms of these organizations were clearly Malay patriotism. The following story serves as an example of the on-going movement of militant groups, the way how they developed their groups and their activities. Supalak Ganjanakhundee (The Nation, April 21, 2007) reported that: "key member of the separatist group Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), who recently surrendered to the authorities, says support for the movement has declined and many members want to put down their arms and return to their families. "Life in the struggle is not fun at all," said Sahari Dahong, a former BRN field commander. "I had to move around a lot and look over my shoulder all the time. I ate only instant noodles for years." He joined the movement in 1989 after government officials accused him of involvement in several crimes, which he denied. A BRN contact, who he met by accident in a rubber plantation, offered him a position if the group succeeded in its mission to gain independence for Pattani. Sahari was trained for 40 days before being assigned to lead a 15 man group operating in Narathiwat. In 15 years, his group launched about 20 assaults against security forces in which two of his comrades were killed. In that time, one comrade surrendered and one was captured. He also admitted extorting money from businessmen, whom he said had discredited the movement. He surrendered when Fourth Army Region commander Lt General Pisarn Wattanawongkiri guaranteed his safety".

More recent organizations started to use religion in their struggle. Most of these groups and their factions are still actively operating in the South among them one strong faction called BRN-Coordinate also includes a strong youth wing-Pemuda", (2006, pp. 23-24). Their demands are similar to Haji Sulong bin Abdul Kadir, a highly respected religious leader, and the President of the Provincial Council for Islamic Affairs of Pattani, to the Thai government in April 1947, who demanded the seven conditions, summarized as follows: (1) A single Malay Governor for the existing Malay provinces; and (2) this Malay Governor can issue regulation on Islam and Islamic tradition; (3) 80 percent of officials should be Muslim; (4) Malay should be given equal status with Thai and (5) should be introduced into primary schools; (6) Islamic law be administered in separate courts, not from within the Thai legal system; (7) Revenues raised in the region kept for the welfare and development of the region, (2006, pp. 26 and 203). W.K. Che Man, in his book, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malys of Southern Thailand,* justified the separatist insurgency standpoint thus: "Although all the above organizations were different from one another and existed at different times and under separate leadership they were invariably united by the common goal of seeking either greater autonomy or independence from Thailand", (1990, pp. 98-112 as quoted in Omar Farouk, 2006, pp. 202-203).

With those Muslim militant groups in mind, Prof. Omar Farouk Bajunid, Faculty of International Studies, Hiroshima City University, Japan, had called them "the Muslim separatist insurgency" and with his having somewhat clear details of this Muslim separatist insurgency, had concluded comparatively thus: "There has always been a mix of separatist insurgency, local banditry, criminal activities, lawlessness and political violence in the Deep South for decades. The problematic situation has, in turn, been compounded by endemic corruption, ethnic prejudices, bureaucratic tyranny and bad governance. There has always been an uncomfortable level of

mutual suspicion and distrust between the government, represented by its various organs and officials and the local population in the South which is overwhelmingly Muslim". He furthered his reasons thus: "The arms of government have always been dominated by the Thai-Buddhists who are often from the other provinces of Thailand and who are unfamiliar with the local history, customs, culture, language and sensitivities of the Malay-Muslims of the Deep South. On their part, the Muslims in this region tend to cling to their traditional Malay-Muslim identity in a manner that time and again raises official anxieties about their political loyalty to Thailand. The Malay-Muslims, in particular, who constitute the majority population in the southernmost provinces of the new territorial frontiers of modern Thailand, appear to cherish their separate Malay identity and culture and maintain extensive kin-networks as well as overlapping contacts with neighboring Malaysia", (2006, pp. 194-195).

To the opinions of almost all Thai people, this unrest situation has been escalated ever before due to many incidental conflicts happen during the former prime minister, Thaksin's regime that deserved to be mentioned here for more clear understanding the real situation. The first start of the clash was on 4 January 2004, l8 schools in the southern provinces were torched, an army depot was raided by 50 armed men resulting in the death of four Thai soldiers and 300 weapons stolen. The incident had a new feature of religious overtone; Buddhist soldiers were separated from their Muslim colleagues and executed. This event was followed by a spate of events such as assassinations of police, civil servants (both Muslim and non-Muslim) and Buddhist monks using knives and machetes. As a result, the government installed martial law in the South.

Following by another accidental conflict on 28 April 2004, with attacks on 15 security posts and police stations in Yala, Songkhla and Pattani, it resulted in the death of 107 Muslim militants and the arrest of five security personnel. And the 37 Muslim

militants were killed in the blockade of the Krue Se mosque with shoot-to-kill order. Those holding out in the mosques are reported to have engaged in mystical religious prayer services comprising recitation of sacred verses and drinking of holy water after the evening prayers. The militants were led into believing that these rituals would make them invisible to the police and make them invulnerable to bullets fired at them.

The situation was peaked in the Takbai Incident on 25th October 2004, a total of 86 Muslims died as a result of demonstration against the jailing of some local Muslim.Six persons died on the scene when soldiers and police moved against the rioters, while 78 died of suffocation as they were put on trucks piled one upon another and transported to a military camp. This incident became a major point of controversy about the methods used in dealing with the situation. There were charges of excessive use of force, harsh methods and neglect of human rights in dealing with the situation. The government set up an independent fact finding commission to find out how the protestors died. In its findings the Commission criticized the disorganized method of transporting the demonstrators supervised by inexperienced, low-ranking personnel as being the reason behind the 78 deaths; it did not find that the deaths had been caused intentionally. It also found some senior security officials at fault and suggested that compensation be paid to the families of those who died, were injured or missing, (Yusuf, 2006, pp.11-12). Later on minor iccidental conflicts were followed up by the Muslim Militants to revenge against the government. On 16 October 2005, Promprasit temple in Pattani was attacked and torched. One monk was killed, as were two young men. The incident destroyed the traditionally good relationship between Buddhists and Muslims in the area. Local Buddhists residents were shocked by the crime, while most local Muslims insist that the acts could not have been carried out by true Muslims. One more accident is on 19 May 2006, two school teachers viz., Juling Pangamoon, 24, and Sirinart Thavornsuk, 30 at Kuching Reupoh elementary school in Rangae

district - were taken hostage and beaten by villagers demanding the release of two men arrested earlier on the same day. Juling was beaten particularly badly and remains in a coma (Yusuf, 2006, pp.13-14).

The Chularajmontri, the Muslim spiritual leader in Thailand, like Gothom Arya, disagreed with the term "Muslim separatists" given to the Muslim militant groups, who have been generating insurgency in the Deep South and has objected the use of force to solve the problem. "It needs a gentle approach, understanding, and [the exercise] of reason. The more force [is] used, the more violent the problem will become". He further pleaded to the Thai public, "The Muslims in the South also love the country. Don't stereotype them as separatists. Regard them in a just way". (Bangkok Post, Feb.5, 2005). Actually, Thai people in general would prefer calling 'Malay Muslims' in the South as 'Thai Muslims', because they are all Thai citizen and living in Thailand.

The Chularajmontri believes that the causes of violence in the South remain unclear, because the problems are complex and cumulative. The Chularajmontri's caution of the complexity of the Deep South unrest is quite reasonable, when considering from the more recent demands found in one of the research works, for which Gothom Arya summarized thus: "In an opinion survey of 2,730 persons, as well as from group interviews conducted in 2005, researchers concluded that the 'real' needs of the people in the three southern border provinces were centered on 'people's participation, acceptance of cultural diversity, justice and equity, and respect of local identity", (2006, pp. 26-27).

II. Reconciliation as the First Step of Thai Government's Initiative to Solve the Conflict In The Deep Southernmost Provinces   of Thailand

As it has already known that on 28 March 2005, the Thaksin government instituted National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) as a civil initiative to restore peace in deep southernmost provinces. The NRC was headed by former Thai Prime Minister M. Anand Panyarachun. One third of members of the Commission are Muslim representatives from the South. It's also consisted of Buddhist monks and social activists (Yusuf, 2006, p. 12). The NRC submitted its report to the then government on 5 June 2006. It advocated resolving of the conflict through building multi-cultural understanding. Its main concern is to set up the Southern Border Provinces Development Council through which the locals could manage their own affairs; introduction of Islamic law and the ethnic Pattani-Malay language as a working language in the region, (Yusuf, 2006, p. 13). This policy is actually launched in response to the non-violence rendered by the resurgence and the recent research results done in support of the government's quest for the causes of unrest in the South.

It is to be observed that the NRC's proposal and plan for the reconciliation was based on His Majesty King Bhomiphol's advocacy for solving the conflict through the 3 inter-connected steps of "Understanding, Participating and Developing", which for my view, are actually founded in the Buddhist doctrines of "Charity" *(dana),* "Morality" *(sila)* and "mental development" *(bhavana),* that being equivalent to the aspect of the King's three dimensions of Development, Participation and Understanding respectively.

Ian Mcintyre has recently reported from Malay that the Governor, Karan Supakitwilekakarn, of Narathiwat Province in Thailand thus: Thailand will stick to peaceful means to quell unrest in the south. Karan said the civilian authorities in the provinces of Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani and Songkhla have pledged to uphold civil rights besides law and order despite the almost daily bloodshed there.[2]

One observation brought into public notice is that although the Thai government in particular and Thai people in general is ready to consent to what the separatist insurgency wants according to what we have discussed so far, then why the situation of political violence has not become less at all. The number of killings and attempted assassinations has not gone down. Teachers are being killed and schools have been set on fire time and again. I could say that during the year 2006 and 2007, the situation in the three provinces are worse than what Gothom Arya had estimated the situation the previous two years of 2004 and 2005 thus: "During the decade preceding that event, the average level of violence had been 74 incidents a year, but this figure soared to 1843 and 1703 incidents in the year 2004 and 2005 respectively. This means that the average level of violence during the past two years was 4.9 incidents a day, and was dubbed by the media as 'daily killing', (2006, p. 19). Nakarin Shinworakomol and Charoon Thongnual recently reported that nearly 100 Buddhists from three villages in Yala's Than To and Bannang Sata districts have fled their homes and sought refuge at a temple in a nearby district amid growing fears of more insurgent violence, officials said. They left late on Wednesday evening amid rumors that suspected militants were planning to attack their homes, said Phongsak Ying-chomcharoen, chairman of Yala municipality", (The Nation).

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[2]   http://thestar.com.my/news/story 13.06.07

And recently, on June 16, 2007, the Security officials arrested seven suspected militants and seized an automatic weapon believed to have been used in attacks in the region. Task Force 15 soldiers and police raided a Muang district house rented by the group. The weapon seized was an AK47 with 30 rounds of ammunition. Eight mobile phones, nine photographs of public places and buildings in Yala municipality, five motorcycles and one car are found. Four of the suspects" are Yala residents and the others are from Pattani. One person has connection with the murders of a school director and a woman in Yala in December last year. It's reported that one suspect was wanted for murder of school director, (The Nation, June 16, 2006). The Bangkok Post quoting the Ministry of Health Affairs reported thus: "A total of 193 persons were killed and 1,056 wounded by militants in five southern provinces between January and May this year, said Public Health Minister Mongkol Na Songkhla today." (The Bangkok Post, 6 August 2007). The militants have been trying to worsen the situation by killing the innocent Muslims villagers and pushed aside the responsibility to the government officers, their purposes are to create misunderstanding between the local Muslims and the state men. It was reported that the on-going violence in the South has left the number of widows and orphans rise to 919 and 1,740 respectlively in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla provinces, (The Nation, June 5th, 2007). The question being asked by the public is thus: "Why can't this escalation of violence be solved by the present government, which has been ruled by the Council for National Security, headed by Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratkarin, the Junta leader and a Muslim, and the interim government, headed by Gen. Sarayud Chulanont, Prime Minister and a Buddhist?".

This paper has no intention to dig deep into the politics as such, but to propose the religiously pluralistic harmony as the necessary condition to cure the conflict not only in the Deep South of Thailand but also in the world at large. G. F. McLean remarked: "Today the horizon is no longer particular, but universal and all

encompassing, due in part to the development beyond the cold war of a unipolar and all-inclusive economy, to the emergence of a series of interlocking regional and world wide organizations such as the United Nations, to the promotion of world wide standards and cooperation in the fields of the environment, health and education. And perhaps most of all is due to the present flow of information. All of these constitute a new global whole in which the issue of culture of how to cultivate the soul becomes the basic human issue," (2003a, p. 119). Buddhists also need to cultivate their minds to attain the final truth and live their lives peacefully with others in the global age.

III. Harmony as a Powerful Tool to Secure the Sustainable Peace in the Deep Southernmost Provinces of Thailand

My idea is that the scope of the NRC's reconciliation plan is quite limited to only two sides between the Thai government and the separatist insurgency and not covering the whole activities of the global concerns and context. The word 'harmony', which is equivalent to the Buddhist Pali term of "samaggi" seems to be more appropriate term than the 'reconciliation', for the reconciliation is a part of the 'harmony'. We can say that for the global meaning of harmony, we have been trying to participate in this conference, for which I myself personally feel very grateful to the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (CRVP), the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., for their great and invaluable sacrifice in organizing this seminar, which shows their responsible concerns about how to restoring global peace in general and the urgent-needed peace in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand.

Harmony covers the aspects of getting helps from outside Thailand. I do really agree with Prof. Omar Farouk Bajunid, who appeals for Malaysia's harmony-oriented support for sustainable peace with his assumption that: "Historically the problem of Malay-Muslim separatism has involved Malaysia as much as it has involved Thailand. The Malay-Muslims appear to be convinced that "because of the factor of their common culture, religion ethnic background and past history with the Malays in Malaya, their ethnic brethren would readily come to their rescue", (2006, p. 217). He further said: "There are at least eight major factors that need to be considered in evaluating the role of Malaysia and these are: geo-political, historical, demographic, ethno-cultural, educational, economic, religious and diplomatic", (2006, p. 218). Firstly, in the geo-political aspect, he said, the porous border between Malaysia and Thailand also makes it easy for the Malay-Muslims to move back and forth between Thailand and Malaysia. The existence of a very large number of Malay-Muslims holding dual Thai-Malaysian citizenship, estimated to be between 50,000 to 100,000 has also given political leverage to the Malay-Muslims across both sides of the border. Secondly, in the historical aspect, an Anglo-Siamese Treaty signed in 1909 gave Britain control of the Malay Sultanates of Terengganu, Kelantan, and Kedah, where left the control of the Pattani Sultanateto Siam. Thirdly, in the demographic, with a population of over two million people, the Maly-Muslims in Thailand represent a sizeable, which can choose to separate or integrate with Thailand. Fourthly, in the Ethno-cultural aspect, essentially the Malay-Muslims speak Malay rather than Thai and practice Malay culture which makes them culturally distinguishable from the Thais. Fifthly, in the educational aspect, there is a large contingent of Malay-Muslim students from Thailand in all of Malaysia's institutions of higher learning. Sixthly, in the economic aspect, operators have also reinforced their economic dependence on Malaysia. On the other hand, the presence of a large number of Malay-Muslims from Thailand in Malaysia as migrant laborers as well as

restaurant the growing number of Malaysian tourists visiting South Thailand for business, tourism, and pleasure has also significantly contributed to support the economic development o that region. Seventhly, in the religious aspect, Malaysia tries to promote itself as a model Islamic state, because Islam is the state religion, however other religions may be practiced freely. Eighthly, as the present chairman of the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) the country has to be seen sensitively to protect the interests of Muslims all over the world, (2006, pp. 216-224). Based on the above mentioned issues, both Thailand and Malaysia can collaborate with one another to solve the conflicts in the deep southernmost provinces of Thailand. Omar Farouk Bajunid concluded that directly or indirectly Malaysia is involved in the southern crisis although the nature of its involvement seems to be passive as an onlooker. There are many things that Malaysia could probably do to help but because of the complex nature of the problem, it can only step in after a certain condition is met, such as the help should be openly solicited by the Thai authorities and a clear frame of reference of its involvement spelled out, (2006, pp. 234-235). The following evidence serves as an effort that the Malay counterpart has been trying to help Thai government to solve the problem. It was reported in the Nation published on Feb 01, 2007, quoting Mahthir̃s saying, "Talk with exiled South leaders - They could provide a breakthrough with militants". Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad urged the Thai government to resume dialogue with exiled leaders from the Malay-speaking region in the country's deep South, saying any breakthrough could pave the way for the new generation of militants to follow them. Mahathir had helped facilitate a series of meetings between the old guard and senior Thai officials on the island of Langkawi from October 2005 to February 2006. "I never thought this was going to be easy. But it is not entirely impossible to resolve this provided there is willingness on both sides to see the other side's viewpoint," Mahathir said, adding he would be willing to assist in future dialogue if asked, but stated he has no initiative in the pipeline at the moment.

Thai people and their government at present might not be able to follow Mahathir's suggestions on the point of dialogue between Thai government and the militant groups, which should be initiated by the Thai government, with the reason that to talk with the militant groups is to recognize their identities. Thai people recently welcome the visit to the South of an Islamic Leader, who is the secretary general of the Muslim World League called on Muslims in the restive region to reject all forms of violence. Saudi-based Abdullah bin Abdul Mohsin Al-Turki delivered a speech on "Muslim duties in a multicultural society" at the Pattani campus of Yala Islamic University.

He called on local Muslims not to get involved in any kind of anti-governmental or anti-social behaviour. Dr Abdullah advised his listeners to maintain a balance between observing Muslim values, keeping their Muslim identity and living within multicultural societies - such as in Thailand - with understanding. Yala Islamic University, founded by funds mostly from Saudi Arabia presented the MWL secretary general with an honorary doctorate degree in Islamic law because he has played a pivotal role in expressing his thinking in regard to contemporary Muslim issues. He has also assisted Muslims around the world in his humanitarian missions. Dr Abdullah also traveled to the central mosques in Pattani and Yala to meet with religious leaders and local Muslim residents. In his message Dr Abdullah told them that under such complicated circumstances, religious leaders must use their utmost capability to find the best way to build positive connections in a multicultural society, through their wisdom and affability. He met the governor of Yala and local religious leaders on Wednesday to discuss the ongoing violence in the three southern border provinces and to get first hand experience (TheNation.29.06.07).

For our information on the mutual collaboration between Malay and Thai governments, the following details of their working together for solving the unrest in the South should be brought into focus as follows: "To develop the Thai-Malay

border in the 5 border provinces of Thailand and in the 4 northern states of Malaysia in order to increase economic capacities, employment opportunity, and uplift the living quality of people the those areas, the present Ministers of Foreign Affairs of two countries agreed with each other on the 10th meeting for mutual collaboration to coordinate in the following 9 areas of development, namely, (1) that of the public consumption and transportation link; (2) of natural resources and education; (3) of tourism; (4) of culture; (5) of trading and investment; (6) of agriculture, including fishing, cattle, and water; (7) of funds and finance; (8) of energy and (9) of the release of public insecurity, (Daily News, 31 June 2007, 3). The Daily News also reported that the Prime Ministers of the two countries between Thailand and Malaysia will meet each other very soon to seek for peace in the southernmost provinces of Thailand, (Daily News, 2 July 2007).

Beyond all dimensions as said so far, mutual understanding and trust between two countries must be built first, because trust is the essential feature of harmony. As Prof. Warayuth Sriwarakuel, Dean of the Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion, Assumption University of Thailand, put it thus, "Lack of trust leads to disharmony; Disharmony leads to hatred; Hatred leads to anger; and Anger leads to violence and war", (2006, p. 85).

IV. Religiously Pluralistic Harmony Based on Non-Attachment and Forgiveness is the Path towards Sustainable Peace in the Deep Southernmost Provinces of Thailand

Harmony in the light of material help and collaboration is not sufficient to help solve the global conflict; it must be supplemented by the harmony of the spiritual aspect. Before an exposition of the religious aspect of Buddhist harmony is being done, a comparative introduction of Islamic concept of harmony based on justice rooted in forgiveness should be brought into discussion first, so that the real sense of harmony will come into play.

4.1. Islamic Harmony based on Forgiveness and Pluralistic Attitude towards Peace

The Islamic concept of harmony and that of Pluralism can be understood in the following explanation of Prof. Chaiwat Satha-Anand, Director, Peace Information Center, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand, and Former member of National Reconciliation Commission. He has proposed a path towards harmony, which is quite in line with that of Buddhism. His harmonious process of creating peace without violence consisted of steps one after another leading to peace, can be summarized as follows: "Working towards reconciliation in any society will be difficult if there is no place for **forgiveness.** But forgiveness does not come with mere words, propaganda urging victims to forget pains, and letting go of past injustices. An important condition for realizing forgiveness is to preserve the **memory** in an effort to free oneself from the chain of the past. Such liberating force will be possible under the circumstances of fighting to alter power relations with **nonviolent actions.**" One of the crucial conditions for the success of nonviolent transformation especially in the context of conflicts between peoples of ethnic and religious differences is **dialogue**." Although memory and nonviolence are important conditions for reconciliation, they are not sufficient because **justice** is necessary for people to continue to live in the same political society with some levels of trust in its legal and political institutions." But justice will be less likely if a society with past traumas refuses to confront its pasts with "**truth**". "Truth(s)" is important not only to enable the justice system to work effectively, but also because "truth(s)" could heal a society that has buried its traumatic past and has so far agonized in silence. When "truth" reappears, those who have committed violence need to be held **accountable** so that confidence in the justice system of a given society could be restored. Moreover, since the justice system is a part of the political power which forms/controls human relationship in a society,

imagining different political formations, in some cases within a socially acceptable framework, could be continuation of existing, and at times less than imaginative, power relations." All this is not possible without understanding that walking the path towards reconciliation is to take a **risk.** Risk taking is an important and a most realistic part of reconciliation because it is in fact the litmus test of the degree to which ordinary people's trust in a political society meaningfully exists", (2006, pp. 62-67).

Chaiwat's main idea of forgiveness as the foundation of peace is in line with what Pope John Paul II said that 'there will be no peace without justice, and there will be no justice without forgiveness'. The Muslims's meaningful justice rooted in forgiveness is drawn from the Islamic golden rule thus: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself". There is no superiority over any group of people except for those who are the most righteous and pious. As it is said: "O people, verily your Lord is one. All of you belong to Adam and he was made of clay. There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab or for a non-Arab over an Arab; or for a white-colored over a black-colored or a black-skinned over a white-skinned except in piety. Verily the noblest among you is he who is the most pious, (Maududi, 1989, p. 102). If God had willed to create all human beings alike in every way they would have followed the same religion and evolved an identical pattern of life and conduct. But God did not do so; it was not his purpose. As it is mentioned in the Qur'an thus: "If your Lord so willed, He would have made mankind one community, but they continue to remain divided", (11.118). For which it can be explained further that they have different ways of life but they can live with one another in a spirit of tolerance and compete with one another in doing good deeds. The afore-said process of Chaiwat' Reconciliation leading to Harmony can be properly understood by tracing deeply into the teaching of Qur'an.

Sustainable peace and harmony among all religions are to be achieved through Islamic doctrines. The Qur'an proclaims the unity of religions. The truth of religion is not the exclusive monopoly of any one religious group but was shown to all. Qur'an claims the salvation is the result of devotion to God and righteous living. It does not depend on any race, notion, and group. This principle has opened the door for harmony and pluralism to every human being and ended the monopoly of any particular religion as the Qur'an states thus: "Jews and Christians will never be pleased with you (O Muhammad!),unless you follow their religion (s); say (to them): the guidance of God (not of Jews or Christians) is the guidance," (2:120). Harmony has to be grounded on forgiveness and forgiveness has to depend on non-violence.

Forgiveness based on Non-Violence: Just as it is important to believe in the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, it is also necessary to base human relations on forgiveness. We cannot expect Allah's forgiveness unless we also forgive those who do wrong to us. Forgiving each other, even forgiving one's enemies is one of the most important Islamic teachings. In the Qur'an Allah has described the Believers as "those who avoid major sins and acts of indecencies and when they are angry they forgive," (al-Shura 42:37). Later the same Surah Allah says, "The reward of the evil is the evil thereof, but whosoever forgives and makes amends, his reward is upon Allah", (al-Shura 42:40). In another place the Qur'an says, "If you punish, then punish with the like of that wherewith you were afflicted. But if you endure patiently, indeed it is better for the patient. Endure you patiently. Your patience is not except through the help of Allah", (al-Nahl 16:126-127). Forgiveness is never rendered possible without non-violence practice that makes Islam widely known as the religion of peace, because non-violence teaching is also taken as the cornerstone for Muslims to live their lives with other fellow beings. So a verse of non-violence doctrine deserves to be

mentioned thus: "Whosoever slays a soul, not to retaliate for a soul slain nor for corruption done in the land, should be as if he had slain all mankind. And whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind," (S?rahal Ma'idah 5.32). Also such a non-violence has been echoed in S?rah al Añ?m 6.151: "Do not take any human being's life (the life) which God has declared to be sacred -- other than in (the pursuit of) justice: this has He enjoined upon you so that you might use your reason." Islam also ascertains the principle of non-violence through this verse in S?rah al Isr? 17.33: Nor take life - which Allah has made sacred - except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority (to demand qisas or to forgive): but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life for he is helped (by the Law). We can say that finally the forgiveness as based on non-violence can be successfully achieved, because the Muslims have in their minds the character of Tolerance as it is put in the Qur'an thus: "And tell my servants that they should speak in a most kindly manner (unto those who do not share their beliefs). Verily, Satan is always ready to stir up discord between men; for verily; Satan is mans foe.... Hence, we have not sent you (Unto men O Prophet) with power to determine their Faith," (17:53, 54).

Justice is the truth of the Islamic Middle Way: The doctrine of Middle Way is said to exist not only in one but in all religions especially in Islam. To understand justice quite clearly, a verse in Surah an Nisa' (4.135) must be closely studied: "O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (the truth) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do." The Muslims have always been giving the justice to all things not only to human being but to the nature

and environment. So Islam is also known as the religion of the Middle Way. To have a proper understanding of the Middle Way we have to read the well-known verse no. 143 of the Sura Al-Bacarah (the Cow), in which the Almighty says: "And thus have we willed you to be a community of the middle way." It is this God-ordained 'middle way' that we Muslims have lost. And we must find it in harmony with today and tomorrow's hope for moderation and a better quality of life for us all. A man of dialogue must possess the moderation in one's nature. The moderate manner is the character of religious person. The inter-religious dialogue is possible if and only if it is done by the moderately religious person in all religions.

Interfaith Dialogue: With regards to interfaith dialogue, Qur'an invites Muslim to establish contact with other religions and there is no sign of opposition to it. To confirm this point, one has to look upon this "Call all mankind unto your Sustainer's path with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner", (16: 125; 29:46). Muslims cannot rest until all human beings have achieved the Divine Will to the full extent of their personal abilities, until every creature has been transformed by his and her efforts into the fullest possible actualization of the Divine pattern. Thus, every Muslim is a world missionary. Muslims not only call all human beings to God but also carry them to salvation and achievement.

4.2. Buddhist Harmony based on Non-Attachment of the Self and Pluralistic Attitude towards Peace

4.2.1. Buddhist Harmony: The term harmony (samaggi) has both negative and positive meanings. In its negative sense harmony is an absence of conflict. In its positive sense harmony means a presence of unity, loving-kindness, peace, freedom, and justice. Buddhism stands for uniting people in the realization of thought and reflex ion. It is through the unity of mind that people can understand

one another and serve one another. In the present day world crisis, all loving people, no matter what their political or religious identity may be, should strive to create an atmosphere of harmony and an environment of co-existence.[3]

The idea of harmony appears in the word 'sangha'. As we have already known, Sangha is usually associated with the Bhikkhu Sangha and Ariya Sangha, especially in the Theravadin Countries. But in an ethnic or cultural sense, Sangha means all those who appreciate and support the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. In the real sense, Sangha is most generally understood as a fellowship of people committed to the effective practice of the Dhamma. As the Buddha said : "The harmony of Sangha brings happiness."

It is said that to establish harmony amongst the people of the world, the four principles of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathy and equanimity must be put into practice as the prerequisites. Because they help create awareness which accepts that we are all alike. According to Buddhism, it is not the balance of power which keeps society together, but it is the harmony and self-sacrifice for the sake of well-being of the whole of mankind.

It is also said that the way that the Buddha set forth the teaching of harmony can be seen from the fourth truth which is known as the Middle way (majjimapatipada) because it avoids the two extremes of sensual indulgence and of self-mortification. Therefore, we can say that the doctrine of harmony or the four Noble Truths were discovered by the Buddha at the time of his enlightenment. It is said that at the time of Enlightenment there must be the harmony among the paths and fruitions. Because the time between the path and fruit is reckoned

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[3] Phra Debvedi (Prayuth Payutto), *Helping yourself to Help Others,* (Bangkok: Buddhadhamm Foundation, 199O), pp. 3, 24.

a s 'a single consciousness-moment' the paths perform their duties by a single-consciousness moment giving rise to the desirable fruits *(Dhammasamangi)'.*
The Dhammasamangi is nothing but 'the enlightenment *(bodhi).*[4]

4.2.2. Buddhist Non-Attachment: What is Non-Attachment? It is possible to understand non-attachment in relation to attachment. Generally speaking, attachment to someone or something is a feeling of affection that one has for them. In other words, attachment to a particular cause or ideal is a strong feeling of belief in and loyalty to it.[5] Therefore, non-attachment can be best understood under the rejection of a permanent self or the ego-belief through an analysis of the psycho-physical combination of human life.

Buddhism does not accept the autonomous self of Hinduism or the Upanisadic thinkers, who say that the self is the inner controller of mind and body or in totality a person (Brh. Up. III, 7. 16-22). According to Buddhism, the concept of person, when analyzed, is found to consist of five aggregates of materiality, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness, which are changing, subject to suffering and not able to be grasped as a self (S. XXII. 59). Hence the so-called person is a mere *collection of the five aggregates* or in short known a the psycho-physical combination. This can be explained in the following metaphorical form : "just as it is by the condition precedent of the co-existence of its various parts that the word chariot is used, just so is it that

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[4] Veerachart Nimanong, *A Study of the Theravada Buddhist Concepts of Man and Karma.* (Madras: Madras university, 1991), pp. 339-400.

[5] Particularly in Buddhism the idea of attachment means clinging to or grasping after, and is classified as of four kinds, namely (1) attachment to sensuality or sense desire, (2) to views or dogmatic opinions, (3) to mere rule and ritual or belief in the efficacy of rites and rituals, and (4) to ego-belief (D.III. 230). The last is more essential than the first three aspects.

when the five aggregates are there we talk of a 'living-being' (jivatman)," (Vism. Ch. XVIII. p. 593-94).

According to Buddhism, all phenomena are subject to the laws of causation.[6] There is nothing haphazard or predetermined. Every element, though appearing only for a single moment, is a dependently-originating-ceasing element because it depends for its arising and ceasing on what has gone before it. "Dependent Origination-cessation (causation) is said to have the characteristics of objectivity, necessity, invariability and conditionality," (S.XII.20). Therefore, the doctrine of 'Dependent Origination' and 'Dependent Cessation' and the analysis of the five aggregates support the non-self doctrine.

4.2.3. Thai Buddhist Understanding of Non-Attachment: Thailand is the land of the yellow robe, because in 2002 A.D. Thailand had 36,117 Buddhist temples and 405,476 monks and novices. Buddhism in Thailand is known as Theravada Buddhism, "which can be traced back to the eighteen schools of early Buddhism in the time of the Emperor Asoka, who supported the third Buddhist Council in India," (Bapat, 1987, p. 98). Thailand, known in the past as Siam, is a small country with an area of approximately 200,000 square miles and a population of 63,000,000 million, out of which the Buddhists are 95 percent. The King, although a protector of all religions, namely Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism, is a Buddhist, and he is the ultimate reference in administrative matters pertaining to the Buddhist Monastic Order.

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[6] This causal law can be expressed by a formula : "when this is, that is; this arising, that arises. When this is not, that is not; this ceasing, that ceases." (M.III.63).

[7] Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's Royal Ecclesiastical name is Dhammaghosacariya and he was born in 1906 in the Southern Province of Thailand and he went forth as a monk in 1926. He established the Forest Dhamma Center in order to practice Insight Meditation in 1932 and passed away in 1989.

At present in Thailand, there is a prominent Buddhist scholar monk named Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu[7], to whom Thai Buddhists revere and listen.

Let us turn our attention to Buddhadasa's understanding of non-attachment. According to Buddhadasa, the fundamental problem of human existence is attachment, which leads to pride, selfishness, and egoism. Since religions' basic concern is with human existence, it must aim to solve the problem of human attachment. Buddhadasa is convinced that it is necessary to dismantle the gap between the layman life and the monastic life. According to him, monkhood can be cultivated while one remains in his life as layman. Buddhadasa sees kamma, merit, rebirth, Nibbana as things of the present, as concrete not abstract. Moreover, because of his unsatisfaction with the traditional interpretation of the scripture, he developed an alternative hermeneutics or interpretative approach to the canonical scriptures, which was called by him 'everyday language-dhamma language' *(phasakhon-phasatham),* (1974, p. 1).[8] Human language is used and understood by a worldly person, but dhamma language is used and understood by a religious person. In fact, it can be found in every religion, although many people do not notice because it is expressed in dhamma language. Its meaning is profound, difficult to see, and usually misunderstood.

The ultimate mission in Buddhadasa's life can be summed up in his Three Resolutions, posted at the entrance of Forest Meditation Center. They are: (1) to help everyone to realize the essence of their own religion; (2) to help develop mutual

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8 Buddhadasa distinguishes two hermeneutic levels of the Buddha's words in 'the Buddha's discourses' (Suttapitaka), calling these two levels "human language-dhamma language". He gives the following definitions: Everyday language is worldly language, the language of people who do not know dhamma. Dhamma language is the language spoken by people who have gained a deep insight into the truth or dhamma.

understanding between all religions;   and   (3) to help to lift the world out of materialism. Indeed, this is an authentic dialogue in a global age.

Like the Nagarjuna's dialectic of negation, the position adopted by Buddhadasa is middle way for the conflicting truth claims of existence and non-existence.

> The ordinary, ignorant worldling is under the impression that there are many religions and that they are all different to the extent of being hostile and opposed. Thus one considers Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism as incompatible and even bitter enemies. Such is the conception of the common person who speaks according to the impressions held by common people. If, however, a person has penetrated to the fundamental nature (dhamma) of religion, he will regard all religions as essentially similar. Although he may say there is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on, he will also say that essentially they are all the same. If he should go to a deeper understanding of dhamma until finally he realizes the absolute truth, he would discover that there is no such thing called religion, that there is no Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam. (Me and Mine,1989, p.146)

From the above quotation, we can see that three levels of conflicting truth claims are outlined by Buddhadasa, namely: (1) conventional distinctions; (2) shared essence; and (3) emptiness. The traditional Buddhist hermeneutics of *non-attachment* rooted deeply on *non-self* eliminates the conflicting truth claims by going beyond religions, as in the Buddhadasa's third point.

4.2.4. **Buddhist Pluralistic Culture:** This cultural aspect of Buddhism has had deep influence in the Thai arts, traditions, learning and on the character of the people, whose manner of thinking and acting it has molded. In short, it has become an integral part of Thai life, (Payutto, 1990, p.11). According to Buddhism,

the Middle Way is actually taken as the foundation of Buddhist culture and values and it is taken as a sustainable path for all activities. The middle way consists of eight principles of practice called the Eightfold Noble Way (D.III.312). The eight ways or paths are numbered as right understanding, right though, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right concentration and right mindfulness. All the eight paths will have to be put into practice as the whole, and the center of which is founded on the 'Non-Attachment of the Self'. However, all the eight paths can be classified into three groups, namely the group of moral conduct, the group of meditation and the group of wisdom. According to Piyasilo Bhikkhu, the middle way is expressed in contemporary language as ecoculture, autoculture and metaculture. They are explained as follows: (1) ecoculture is moral conduct, consisting of right speech, right action and right livelihood; (2) autoculture is meditation, consisting of right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration; and (3) metaculture is wisdom, consisting of right understanding and right thought, (1988, p. 12). Ecoculture is to preserve the nature, autoculture is to strengthen one's mind, and metaculture is to cultivate one's wisdom and co-exit with others peacefully.

Eventually, Theravada Buddhist culture must be cultivated step by step, known as the gradual path of Buddhism. Nibbana is attainable not only in theory, but also in practice, to attain which; one has to follow the way of life conducive to the cessation of suffering. This way of life is governed by the standards of moral conducts generally regarded as Buddhist ethics. This is known as the 'Middle Way' *(Majjhima-patipada)* because it avoids two extremes : one bein gindulgence in sensual pleasure, the other being the self-mortification (S.LVI.11).

Hence the Buddhist culture is in conformity with the meaning of culture as defined by Prof. McLean: "Culture is derived from values and virtues of a people that set the pattern of social life through which freedom is developed and

exercised towards the realization of civil society," (2003, p.15).[9] This term is further explained by Professor Kwame Gyekye,[10] according to whom, "culture is an enactment of a community of people, not of an individual, created in the attempt to negotiate the problems that arise in the context of a people's particular situation" (1999, p. 20). It is a value conducive to the well-being of humans: "all other values are reducible ultimately to the value of well-being," (Gyekye, 1999, p. 26).

Gyekye encourages the people in any society to step beyond the wall of culture through "common human understanding,"[11] which corresponds to the idea of 'right understanding' (*sammaditthi*) in Buddhism (D. II. 312). *Common human understanding* can be obtained through reflection upon what Gyekye called *value and disvalue* in the course of daily life experience. The value and disvalue experiences of human beings, which are known in Buddhism as 'worldly conditions' (*lokadhamma*)[12] generate common human understanding or right understanding in the Buddhist context. There are two levels of common human understanding, one concerns *a specific human society,* and plays its role at the very base of an organized and functioning human society and culture; the other is *transcultural or intercultural conversations* beyond cultures.

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[9] On the other hand, the term is derived from the Latin word for tilling or cultivating the land. Cicero and other Latin authors used it for the cultivation of the soul or mind.

[10] Professor Kwame Gyekye is an erudite African philosopher at the University of Ghana, who belonged to Ghana Academy of Arts and Academy established nearly forty years ago on the initiative of the then Prime Minister, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, its first Chairman.

[11] According to Gyekye, this is what Immanuel Kant called *sensus communis* (1999, p. 31).

[12] The worldly conditions according to Buddhism are 8 factors in number, namely, gain and loss, fame and obscurity, blame and praise, and happiness and suffering (A. IV. 157).

Transcultural or intercultural conversations helps human beings in different societies or followers from different religions to understand each other. At this stage the transformation of cultures or what is called by Gyekye *cultural borrowing* or *cultural appropriation* with mutual understanding is possible. In order to attain the stage of beyond-culture, Gyekye proposed many approaches, such as a critical approach against cultural relativism, the incommensurability thesis and ethnocentrism in support of cultural universalism, the common good, cultural borrowing and real options in order to achieve humanistic morality and globalization.

These unique characteristics of Thai cultures can be traced back to cultural Buddhism, in other words, to popular Buddhism, which is different from genuine, doctrinal or intellectual Buddhism. Cultural Buddhism is usually associated with some basic moral rules, observance of rituals and participation in religious ceremonies and worship. But Buddhism of the intellectuals offers a unique system of psychology and philosophy (Payutto, 1990, p.13). The Buddhists nowadays will have to admit mindfully the cultural aspect of Buddhism as a way leading to liberation.

Actually Buddhism does manifest a pluralistic view by proposing that all religions are equal in respect of making common reference to one single ultimate truth, which the Buddha had discovered. The Buddha as the discoverer of the truth has opened the possibility for others to discover the truth for themselves. Thus other religions are equal in respect of offering means to truth, liberation or salvation. This idea paves the way for religious pluralism.

Pluralism[13] is the middle way beyond Exclusivism and Inclusivism. Hick, the eminent pluralist, considers exclusive and inclusive ways of regarding religions

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[13] Pluralism is the view that the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality centeredness is taking place in different ways within the contexts of all the great religious traditions (Whaling, 1986, p. 153).

as no longer practical and indeed impossible. He supports pluralism. According to him all religions accept "the Ultimate Reality", as one, (Hick, 1990, p.115).

4.2.5. Non-Attachment of Culture or Culture-beyond as Harmony for Sustainable Peace:

On the level of what Buddhadasa calls 'language of truth' (phasatham) or 'Dhamma Language', there are many similarities among all religious adherents. Once Buddhadasa remarks:

> The problem with most people who profess to be religious is their limited degree of real understanding; hence they think and talk on the level of 'language of people' (phasakhon), which never goes beyond appearances to the higher truth of faith. Christians, for example, must understand that the idea of God is a concept essentially beyond the understanding of men and, therefore, transcends our usual distinctions between good and evil, personal and impersonal. (Buddhadasa, 1967, pp. 35-37)

To say this is to accept the unity in diversity. But, for the Buddhist, to see unity in diversity is not sufficient to solve the conflicting religious truth claims. To put in Dhamma language theory, we have to step beyond the one and many. That is to say we have to go beyond Hick's theory of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. To go beyond is the middle way of pluralism. This distinction between human language and dhamma language provides an interesting approach to inter-religious understanding or interfaith dialogue.

A close reading of Buddhadasa's works reveals the operation of some implicit criteria. These are sociological in that he bases judgements of the inaccuracy of traditional readings of the scriptures and of the accuracy of his Dhamma

language readings on the social and religious consequences of those respective interpretations. He is concerned to end social problems that hinder improvements   in human well-being as fundamentally a religious matter, saying that:

> The true objective of the founders of all religions with regard to the completion or perfection of what is most useful and needful for humanity is not being achieved, because the followers of the respective religions interpret the languages of dhamma wrongly, having preserved wrong interpretations and preached wrongly to such an extent that the world has been facing turmoil and problems created by the conflicts among religions.

> According to Buddhadasa, the anthropomorphized concept of God in Christianity is only one rendering of ultimate reality on the level of human language. In the Dhamma language, God is transcends our usual distinctions between good and evil, personal and impersonal. To know God is to know things as they really are or from the perspective of the divine (1967, p.63).

4.2.6. *Buddhist Culture and Gyekye's Culture Compared:* The way Gyekye divided cultures into two levels of reality corresponds to that of Buddhism. In Thailand, Buddhism is divided into two kinds, namely cultural and doctrinal Buddhism just like the Buddha's discourses or dhammas, which also are divided into two levels, as discussed above. This is comparable to the hermeneutic circle, in which knowledge of the whole depends upon knowledge of the parts, and vice versa. The relationship between morality and culture could be understood better in the hermeneutics of "*Beyond Cultures*": "our shared humanity would prescribe a morality that stresses responsibilities and obligations towards others, whether as members of our own local community, or as members of the extensive human family," (Gyekye, 1999, p. 57). We need to apply the ethics of shared humanity, which is a base of civilization, not only within our family, but globally.

Factually speaking, this ethics of shared responsibility must prevail in every culture in the world, and notably in Arab culture as well. It appears that, "although a united Arab world no longer exist, the system of Arab nations still behaves like a family even without a supranational authority," (Qing, 2003, p.7). In supporting cultural universalism, Gyekye encourages us to challenge the theses of normative cultural relativism, cultural incommensurability, and ethnocentrism. The sense of non-attachment is intelligible in Gyekye's 'aspectual character of cultural achievement' thus, "Recognizing the limitations of human culture can be a way to overcoming ethnocentrism," (Gyekye, 1999, p. 43). The concept of mutual understanding and collaboration and all could be perceived from Gyekye's theory *of aspectuality and cultural whole,* (Ibid., p.46).

Buddhism accepts both the social self (everyday ritual) and the social non-self (beyond everyday ritual); there are two sorts of truth in Buddhism, namely conventional truth (indirect meaning) and ultimate truth (direct meaning) with special emphasis on the latter. To say that Buddhism pays more attention to the ultimate truth or social non-self is not to mean that Buddhists ignore the social self. This social self is known in Buddhism as a social ethic elucidated in the Buddhist text (Sn. 259-268). The social non-self is a sense of forgiveness, love, non-attachment, which transcend any expectation of the consequences of our actions. Self-identity in the light of right understanding through self awareness or heedfulness must be cultivated in order to solve the problem of conflict occurring all over the world. McLean's sense of Heidegger's Dasein or Buddhism's Heedfulness *(appamada)* is that, "Done well this can be a historic step ahead for humanity; done poorly it can produce a new round of human conflict and misery".

5. Concluding Remarks

The highest aim of Buddhism is peace as the Buddha said: "Not any other bliss higher than peace (*natthi santi param sukham*)." Likewise peace is the highest aim of all religions and philosophical theories, so religions and philosophies are for peace; that is the implication of "diversity in unity". To present the idea of non-attachment as based on the doctrine of non-self does not mean intentionally to object the idea of detachment as based on new subjectivity, but to supplement it. Rather, both perspectives depend on and supplement one another; self is non-self and non-self is self. In the terminology of the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination-cessation, it is because of self that the non-self arises and because of the cessation of self that non-self arises and vice versa. The doctrine of dependent origination-and-cessation or interrelatedness in Buddhism is comparable to both the dialectic of horizons or the hermeneutical circle and question-and-answer in the hermeneutical philosophy of Heidegger and Gadamer, and to the dialectic of "thick and thin", and "sacred and the profane" of Michael Walzer and Mircea Eliade respectively.

Buddhism teaches its followers to discover themselves and to cultivate unlimited the harmony of wisdom, purity and compassion in order to have great respect for human beings and nature for the purpose of their harmonious and peaceful coexistence with each other. The story of quails in the Jakata can be the best example of harmony. In the Sammodamana Jakata story of the Theravada Buddhist cannon, there is an episode of a large flock of quails living in a forest in India in the time of King Brahmadatta. Our Buddha at that time was born as the leader of a flock of quails who regularly admonished his subjects in the way of Right Livelihood. At the time many of the quails fell victim to a fowler and his net. The Buddha warned the flock that in case of being trapped under the net, "Let each quail put his head through the mesh and then all of you must fly away

with the net to such a place as you please - there let the net down on a thorn-bush; this done, you can all escape underneath from your several meshe's. Following the Buddha's advice and working in harmony, the fowler could no longer harm the flock. This strategy was successful and used time and again to evade the fowler (who wasted his whole day disentangling his net from the thorn-bush!). Not long after this, one of the quails alighting on the feeding ground, trod by accident on another's head. Since the injured bird was very egoistic, it was displeased and started a quarrel which spread divisions of opinion throughout the flock. Now, because the birds had started to quarrel amongst themselves the strategy taught by the Buddha could no longer work. Instead of flying away together when the net fell, they wasted time bickering, giving the fowler's time to gather the net. Because of their disharmony the whole flock fell victim to the fowler.

This simple Jataka story reveals a truth about the pluralistic nature of human beings. This parable also expresses the reason why people of different faiths in the society have to work together in harmony, otherwise they will subject to the destruction. Finally, the religiously pluralistic harmony as based on the Buddhist concept of Detachment of the Self *(anatta)* and Islamic concept of justice as forgiveness conducted through interfaith dialogue will lead to sustainable peace.

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