

Prospects for the Integration between Solidarity and Multiculturalism in Thai Society

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Contrast is found not only throughout life but
throughout nature as disclosed by science.

Charles Hartshorne

Introduction

We now live in the age of globalization. We cannot escape from it, so the question now is how we can live with it. The impact of globalization is thus felt in almost (if not all) every corner in the world. What is globalization? Different people talk about it in different ways. To understand it well, we may consider its characteristics. James Beckford describes its characteristics as follows:

- the growing frequency, volume and interconnectedness of movements of ideas, materials, goods, information, pollution, money and people across national boundaries and between different regions of the world
- the growing capacity of information technologies to shorten or even abolish the distance in time and space between events and places in the world
- the diffusion of increasingly standardized practices and protocols for processing global flows of information, goods, money and people
- the emergence of organizations, institutions, and social movements for promoting, monitoring or counteracting global forces, with or without the support of individual nation states¹

¹ James A. Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 118-119.

Thailand, like most other countries in the region, is not free from the impact of globalization. All the four characteristics as mentioned above can be found in Thai society. Among other things, the ideas of democracy, solidarity, and multiculturalism seem to be of much interest in Thai society at the present moment. In fact, the idea of solidarity is not new for Thai society when comparing with the ideas of democracy and multiculturalism. Solidarity has been in and with Thai society since the early period. Solidarity has been considered as one of the strengths of Thai society since the ancient times. However, the concept of solidarity is urgent in Thailand because at present, it is experiencing disharmony in politics.²

Solidarity

H. G. Wells once said, "A downtrodden class...will never be able to make an effective protest until it achieves solidarity." What does it mean by "solidarity"? According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, "solidarity" means "combination or agreement of all elements or individuals, as of a group; complete unity, as of opinion, purpose, interest, or feeling." In the Western world Kurt Bayertz points out that the term "solidarity" has its roots in the Roman law of obligations which was recognized as *obligatio in solidum*. This principle is about the unlimited liability of each individual member within a family or other community to pay common debts. Since the end of the 18th century, this principle of mutual responsibility between the individual and society (where each individual vouches for the community and the community vouches for each individual) has been generalized beyond the law of obligations context and applied to the field of morality, politics and society. Now it is used in the sense of mutual attachment as Kurt Bayertz observes, "'Solidarity' is now comprehended as a mutual attachment between individuals, encompassing two levels: a factual level of actual common ground between the individuals and a normative level of mutual obligations to aid each other, as and when should be necessary."³ Kurt Bayertz further analyzes four uses of solidarity as follows:

² As we all know, the grassroots in general love "true" democracy, like Thaksin Shinawatra administration, disagree with any coup (especially the 19 September Revolution) and would like to bring back the 1997 Constitution whereas the middle-class people in general love "new" politics, hate corruption, agree with the 19 September Revolution, and willingly adopt the present constitution, namely, the 2007 Constitution which is believed to undermine the strength of political parties.

³ Kurt Bayertz, (ed.) *Solidarity*, (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999) p. 3.

1. *Solidarity and morality.*

In its most general and popular use, the term 'solidarity' focuses on the tie which binds all human beings in the world to one big moral community.

In this sense 'solidarity' has the same meaning as 'fraternity.'

2. *Solidarity and society*

In its second use, 'solidarity' does not refer to the tie binding humanity as a whole, but as the inner cement holding together all people in a society or a state in the modern sense.

3. *Solidarity and liberation*

In its third important use, 'solidarity' is to be found wherever and whenever individuals form a group in order to stand up for their common interests.

4. *Solidarity and the welfare state*

In its fourth use in everyday politics, 'solidarity' is usually referred to when a redistribution of financial resources by the state, especially in favor of materially needy individuals or groups, is to be justified. Hence the concept of solidarity serves to legitimate the welfare state.⁴

Kurt Bayertz summarizes,

The concept of solidarity is relative to a concept of community. Its various usages are thus mainly the result of corresponding references to particular communities, through which even mutual duties are defined according to their kind and scope. Every human being is the member of several communities; starting with the entire human community, proceeding to the membership state, one's religion, social class, political party and the family, and ending with the sports club.⁵

All four uses of "solidarity" can be found in Thai society. "Solidarity" is used to justify the redistribution of financial resources especially to the poor provinces in upcountry. "Solidarity" is often used among various groups of interests from sports clubs to international organizations. "Solidarity" is always used at the national level to promote unity among all Thai people. Thailand is a Buddhist country. Thus in terms of morality, "solidarity" as "fraternity" is used to bind not only all human beings but also all other creatures in the world to one big moral community. Buddhism teaches that all creatures are "brothers" in the

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-25.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

cycle of life. According to Buddhism, all human beings and animals are "equal" before moral law.

However, if we emphasize "solidarity" too much, certain problems arise. Since solidarity is based on commonality, then it paves the way for some form of totalitarianism, namely, the tyranny of the majority. How can this form of totalitarianism happen? When a society seeks its identities, it needs to find some commonality among all its members. If an identity is common to all people, then there should be no problem. For example, if a state uses an official language as its identity, and if that official language is the mother tongue of all people, then this identity will pose no problem. But if the official language is not the mother tongue of all people, but just the mother tongue of most people, then this leads to "the tyranny of the majority". Other types of identity such as race, color, tradition, religion, ways of life, and so on, can lead to similar problems. The identities of the minorities are usually considered as inferior or neglected entirely. Thus the minorities will be marginalized, and they will feel humiliated and uncomfortable. In these cases, how can the state achieve solidarity?

In Thailand, Buddhists are the majority. This will cause no problem in so far as the Thai Buddhists are generous and tolerant. Religious pluralism has been adopted and practiced in Thai society. However, recently, some certain groups of Thai people have attempted to fight to make Thailand a Buddhist state, and for Buddhism to be a national religion. In my opinion, their proposal seems to be harmful rather than helpful to the country as a whole.

Multiculturalism

In the Western world the politics of solidarity played an important role in the past, but now there seems to be the turn to the politics of recognition, that is, multiculturalism. What does it mean by "multiculturalism"? According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, "multiculturalism" means "the policy or practice of giving equal attention or representation to the cultural needs and contributions of all the groups in a society: special emphasis may be given to minority groups underrepresented in the past, as through bilingual education." Multiculturalism is based on the politics of recognition of difference. Brian Fay says,

The term 'multiculturalism' has become something of a trendy buzzword. This is because multiculturalism refers to something crucial in the contemporary world: that people importantly different

from one another are in contact with, and must deal with, each other. All multiculturalists focus on understanding and living with cultural and social difference; but beyond this rather anemic commitment the nature of multiculturalism is a hotly debated topic. The most prevalent version is what might be called 'the celebration of difference'; on this view differences among various groups of people should be highlighted and honored.⁶

According to multiculturalism, each culture or society is a single unit which is separated from other units by boundaries that define it partly by distinguishing it from others. Individuals are considered as reflections of the cultural and social units to which they belong. Thus personal identity is formed and determined by the cultural and social units into which their members have been enculturated and socialized. For Charles Taylor, early liberal theorists from John Locke and Thomas Hobbes to more modern liberal theorists like John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin, have neglected the individual's ties to community in their conceptualization of personal identity. Taylor says,

...the question of identity ...is often spontaneously phrased by people in the form: Who am I?...To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand.

People may see their identity as defined partly by some moral or spiritual commitment, say, as a Catholic, or an anarchist. Or they may define it in part by the nation or tradition they belong to, as an Armenian, say, or a Québécois. What they are saying by this is not just that they are strongly attached to this spiritual view or background; rather it is that this provides the frame within which they can determine where they stand on questions of what is good, or admirable, or of value. Put counterfactually, they are saying that were they to lose this commitment or identification, they would be at sea, as it were; they wouldn't know anymore, for an important range of questions, what the significance of things was for them.⁷

⁶ Brian Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science: A Multicultural Approach*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) pp. 3-4.

⁷ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994) p. 27.

Since these cultural and social units are different, they often conflict with one another. This is because stronger units try to undermine, dominate, and overwhelm weaker ones, and finally seek to make the weaker units just like them. If the stronger units are successful, they can annihilate the differences between the groups. The stronger units seem to have a natural impetus to erase differences. It is the multiculturalists who have challenged and responded to this natural impetus by celebrating differences.

Thus understanding others becomes the main theme of contemporary philosophy of social science as Brian Fay puts it, "...the basic question of philosophy of social science today ought not to be whether social inquiry is scientific; rather, it ought to be whether understanding others – particularly others who are different – is possible, and if so, what such understanding involves."⁸ Otherness and difference are emphasized among different schools of contemporary philosophy in the Western world.

Thailand is a country that promotes religious pluralism. However, this does not mean that we have no problem about personal identity and diversity. Some people may say, "An authentic Thai must be a Buddhist." This statement reflects something about the attitude towards personal and national identity. It implies the lack of recognition of diversity, especially about the rights of minorities. Anyway, the social unrest in Southern Thailand seems to be turning people's interests towards multiculturalism.

If we emphasize multiculturalism too much, what will happen? We will overlook solidarity which is necessary for all social and cultural units. We will see only differences among different groups of people without seeing likeness in those differences. Moreover, if multiculturalism is the answer, then what was the question? Brian Barry says,

The error that I have in mind, which underlies the multiculturalist diagnosis and therefore invalidates its proposed cures, is the endemic tendency to assume that distinctive cultural attributes are the defining features of all groups. This assumption leads to the conclusion that whatever problems a group may face are bound to arise in some way from its distinctive cultural attributes. The consequence of this 'culturalization' of group identities is the systematic neglect of alternative causes of group disadvantage. Thus, the members of a

⁸ Brian Fay, *loc. cit.*, p. 5.

group may suffer not because they have distinctive culturally derived goals but because they do poorly in achieving generally shared objectives such as a good education, desirable and well-paid jobs (or perhaps any job at all), a safe and salubrious neighborhood in which to live and enough income to enable them to be adequately housed, clothed and fed and to participate in the social, economic and political life of their society.⁹

The Integration between Solidarity and Multiculturalism

Solidarity and multiculturalism appear to be in conflict. However, it is not a matter of "either/or" between solidarity and multiculturalism. In fact, these opposites always need to relate together in a harmonious way. A magnet cannot become a magnet without both positive and negative poles. Moreover, the existence of one thing presupposes the necessary existence of its opposite or contrast. For example, a man cannot be a husband if he has no wife. Thus the question is not whether we can get rid of one side of the two, but how can we harmonize the two opposites as nature does. Harmony is thus necessary and should be understood in an appropriate way. What is harmony? Hartshorne says,

It would be probably agreed that it is a kind of relation between things such that though they are felt to be different from each other, they are yet felt to be not merely different. Otherness is not the only relation between them...In fact, there is no case of harmony that is a clear exception to the principle of likeness in difference, similarity in the midst of contrast. If this principle is sound, there are only two ways of failing to achieve harmony – by too little contrast ('insipidity,' 'monotony'), and too little similarity ('discord,' 'incoherence,' and 'chaos').¹⁰

If Hartshorne is correct, there are only two ways of failing to achieve harmony between multiculturalism and solidarity, namely, by too little contrast and too little similarity. On the one hand, if we emphasize solidarity too much, we will have too little contrast. It will follow that we will face monotony. On the other

⁹ Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) p. 305.

¹⁰ Charles Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971) p. 46.

hand, if we care for multiculturalism too much, we will have too little similarity. And it will follow that we will confront with discord or chaos. Therefore, we need to balance between solidarity and multiculturalism. For solidarity, on the one hand, we should seek the common good. What I hereby mean by "the common good" may be divided into three main things as follows:

1. *Find the common grounds.* There are at least three things that can be considered as the common grounds. First, we live our lives on the same earth, although we also inhabit particular cultures. Second, we are supposed to be equal before law. Positive laws require all people to observe them equally. Third, before morality or moral law, all of us are treated equally. In a Christian term, we all are "children" of God. In a Buddhist term, we all are in the life cycle under the law of Karma.

2. *Establish the common targets.* Another way to find similarity among us all is to adopt and share the common goals. For example, if one of our goals is peaceful existence, we all should be prepared for peace, not for war or violence. It will be hypocritical if we say we love peace yet we collect weapons.

3. *Find the common basic ethical principles to reach the common targets or goals.* It is true that every social and cultural unit has its own system of ethics. But without a world ethic how we can peacefully live with one another and how the world can be in order. Hans Küng says,

Certainly all the states of the world have an economic and legal order, but this will not function in any state in the world without an ethical consensus, an ethic of its citizens on the basis of which democratic constitutions can function. Certainly the international community of states has also created trans-national, trans-cultural and trans-religious legal structures...but what is a world order without a binding and obligatory ethic for the whole of humankind...i.e. without a world ethic? Not least, the world market calls for a world ethic. The world economy can less than ever tolerate areas with utterly different ethics or even ethics which are contradictory on central points. What is the use of prohibitions with an ethical foundation in one country...if they can be got round by going to other countries? If ethics is to function for the wellbeing of all, it must be indivisible. The undivided world increasingly needs an undivided ethic. Postmodern men and women need common values, goals, ideals, visions.¹¹

¹¹ Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*, (London: SCM Press, 1990) pp. 34-35.

For multiculturalism, on the other hand, we are required to follow a politics of recognition. We need to recognize and respect otherness especially those who are marginalized. This is necessary for the self-esteem of the minority cultures. Recognition of and respect for otherness may be shown as the following.

1. *Recognize the presence of the others.* We cannot deny the existence of otherness. We are not the only people who live in the world. The world was created not only for all human beings but also for all other creatures.

2. *Recognize diversity and plurality of the others* in terms of their languages, religions, traditions, cultures, and different ways of life.

3. *Recognize the rights of the others, especially the rights of the minorities and the disadvantaged.*¹² If we do not recognize their rights, it will be very difficult for them to recognize our rights.

Brian Fay says, "In relating to others the choice is not difference or similarity; it is difference and similarity."¹³ How can we make a bridge between difference and similarity? In other words, how can we relate multiculturalism to solidarity? I think we need at least three basic things to integrate multiculturalism with solidarity.

1. We need to have social justice. Social justice as right relationships is a necessary condition for peace. The Catholic Church holds that justice is particularly important in the present-day context. It defines justice as,

...a value that accompanies the exercise of the corresponding cardinal moral virtue. According to its most classic formulation, it "consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor". From a subjective point of view, justice is translated into behavior that is *based on the will to recognize the other as a person*, while, from an objective point of view, it constitutes *the decisive criteria of morality in the intersubjective and social sphere*.

The Church's social *Magisterium* constantly calls for the most classical forms of justice to be respected: *commutative, distributive and legal justice*. Ever greater importance has been given to social justice, which represents a real development in *general justice*, the

¹² John Rawls recognizes this very well in his book, *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹³ Brian Fay., loc. cit., p. 90.

justice that regulates social relationships according to the criterion of observance of the *law*. *Social justice*, a requirement related to the *social question* which today is worldwide in scope, concerns the social, political and economic aspects and, above all, the structural dimension of problems and their respective solutions.¹⁴

In summary, Catholic social teaching understands justice more broadly than simply in juridical terms as Daniel Groody puts it,

Because unjust laws that benefit the powerful and exclude the weak can become legalized in a disordered world, Catholic social teaching makes certain distinctions when speaking about social justice. Drawing on a rich intellectual tradition, especially that of St. Thomas Aquinas and later philosophical reflection, Catholic social teaching distinguishes three primary dimensions of social justice: commutative justice, contributive justice, and distributive justice.¹⁵

Commutative or contractual justice deals with relationships between individuals, groups, and classes. It deals with how individuals get into relationship and agreements with one another. Commutative justice seeks to guarantee that human dignity and social responsibility are the basis of all economic transactions, contracts, and promises, recognizing that employers have an obligation to pay fair wages and provide humane working conditions for their workers, and workers owe their employers conscientious and diligent work in exchange for these fair wages.¹⁶

While commutative justice deals with the relationship of individuals with each other, contributive justice deals with individuals' relationship to society as a whole. It recognizes the responsibility of individuals to the common good. This means that individuals have a duty to take care not only of their own welfare but also of the welfare of others. Paying taxes and voting are included to fulfill this obligation of contributive justice. Contributive justice also "challenges those who take unfair advantage of a system in the name of claiming their rights without any reference to their responsibilities to a larger, collective body of society."¹⁷

¹⁴ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005) p. 116-117.

¹⁵ Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2008) p. 99.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

While individuals have a duty to be responsible for the common good, the larger society has a duty to individuals and groups too. Distributive justice¹⁸ deals with the society's obligation to the individual. The relationship of this kind is from the whole to the parts. Distributive justice seeks to provide the minimum resources which are necessary for individuals to have a dignified life. As members of a society, all individuals have a right to have their basic needs met. "Distributive justice seeks the well-being of all members of a community, which means one's basic rights must be safeguarded and protected. It also puts special emphasis on protecting society's weaker members, advocating a greater solidarity with the poor."¹⁹

Bringing commutative, contributive, and distributive justice together into one conceptual model, we will discover that social justice deals with how a society is organized and how its individuals and institutions are ordered and interact with one another. Social justice as right relationships may be shown in the following figure.

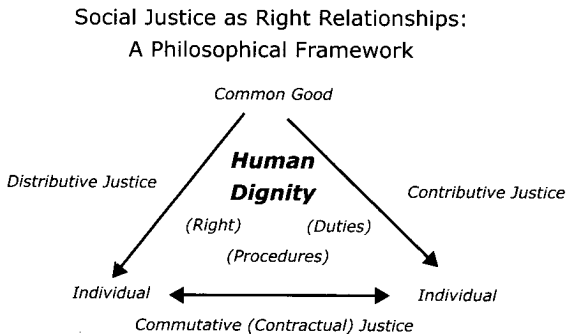


Figure 1: Taken from Daniel G. Groody in *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, p. 99

2. We need to have compassion as cement to integrate between solidarity and multiculturalism. Compassion or love will lead us to forgiveness. As we well know, to err is human. Thus mutual forgiveness is necessary for

¹⁸ Many philosophers talk about theories of distributive justice. Among them are Aristotle, Hume, Marx, Rawls, Nozick, and Dworkin. Recently, Amartya Sen has talked about freedom as an instrument of development which is somehow relevant to distributive justice. Sen classifies instrumental freedoms into five categories: political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparent guarantees, and protective security. See more details in Vicente Navarro, (ed.) *The Political Economy of Social Inequalities*, (Amityville: Baywood Publishing Company, 2002) p. 461-474.

¹⁹ See Daniel Groody, *ibid.*, p. 100.

life. Religion will play an important part. Some people may say that religion is obsolete. This is not true. Religion never dies from human civilizations. Today religion has still been one of the most influencing forces in what Giddens calls 'life politics' as Beckford puts it,

...the heavy investment of religious values and meanings in campaigns for human rights and pro-life and pro-choice mobilizations is further evidence that religion continues to inform lifestyle politics in the Western democracies. Religious voices are also central to public debates about continuous issues ranging from policies on cross-national migration and asylum seeking to the ethics of genetic engineering and new reproductive technologies...It is therefore misleading to talk of the 'remoralising of social life' following the 'repression' of moral and existential questions by the core institutions of modernity. The fact is that religion was used as a continuous source of normative guidance throughout the modern period but was often in conflict with more powerful interests in politics and business. It is a high modernist intellectual and ethnocentric conceit to believe that moral, spiritual or religious questions have only recently forced themselves back on to the public or private agenda. If these questions were invisible in modern social theory, it was because of the short-sightedness of the theorists.²⁰

3. Understanding is the third thing to be used as cement to integrate between solidarity and multiculturalism. Mutual understanding will lead us to appreciate both similarity and difference. Human sciences, social sciences, and the civil society will play an important part in the promotion of mutual understanding. Politicians, civil servants, academicians, mass media, NGO's, local wisdom, and people in general should not overlook the importance of mutual understanding.

To see how social justice, compassion, and understanding integrate between solidarity and multiculturalism, the following figure is given.

²⁰ James A. Beckford. *Loc.cit.* P. 200.



Figure 2: The integration between solidarity and multiculturalism

The Case of Thailand

Thai society has been familiar with both solidarity and multiculturalism before the introduction of the Western concept of multiculturalism and solidarity. In fact, we have lived with otherness and diversity since the early period. We have also recognized the importance of solidarity since the very beginning of the country. One main distinction between Western and Eastern civilizations is that while Western civilizations appear to see duality in reality, Eastern civilizations seem to see unity in reality. If reality is diversity, then Western people can see duality in diversity while Eastern people can see unity in diversity. Thai culture has been influenced by Eastern civilizations especially Indian civilization. Therefore, it is common for Thai people to recognize and appreciate unity in diversity.

Before Thai culture has adopted Indian civilization through Hinduism and Buddhism, local people have already adopted animism. This is the reason why Thai culture is a mixture of animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Buddhism is very successful in terms of inculturation. This is another reason why Thai people in general are very tolerant.

However, at present moment the degree of tolerance in Thai society seems to be less and less especially among groups of people who have different thought in politics. It seems to me that the degree of the four sublime states

of mind²¹ seems to be less and less in Thai society. It is surprising that while Thai people are very tolerant in religious pluralism, they seem to be very intolerant of different opinions in politics. Different groups of people usually consider those who have different opinions in politics as their enemies. What is so troubling is that those who are powerful or in power and some groups of people often attempt to establish certain "myths" and use them as a justification for destroying, hurting, or even killing other groups of people. It is a pity that even though Thai people are friendly and generous to expatriates, nevertheless they are often unfriendly and intolerant toward Thai people themselves. While diversity in religions causes no problem, diversity in politics causes a great deal of disharmony to Thai society, or even to a family. How can this problem be solved? I am convinced that the answer is the integration between solidarity and multiculturalism through the cement of social justice, compassion, and understanding.

In terms of solidarity, it is not difficult for Thai people to find the common good in Thai society. The common good can be discovered in terms of common grounds, common goals, and common values. Similarity or commonality itself seems to be no problem for Thai people. The problem is how we can convince Thai people to recognize, respect and love the common good in the same way as they love their private welfare. The answer is in education and training especially for children and young people. In a company, its administrators and staff members must share the common vision, mission, philosophy, and values for the sake of survival, growth, and quality of life. In a similar way, the Thai government and Thai citizens should recognize, respect, and love the common good of the country for the same reason.

Thailand, like most other countries, has problems with minorities. More dominant units have the natural impetus to look down upon the differences of the weaker units. It is not difficult to observe this kind of contempt in Thai society. Many people from different parts of Thailand feel ashamed and dare not speak their own dialects in public places because they can feel the sense of contempt from the more dominant units. They feel humiliated to speak their dialects or even to continue their traditional ways of life. Even though some agencies have attempted to launch a campaign for ego-tourism which promotes traditional ways of life of the minorities or weaker units, they could not have prevented them from neglecting their old ways of life. Many groups

²¹ *The four sublime states of mind (Brahmavihāra) include (1) Mettā loving-kindness, friendliness, (2) Karunā compassion, (3) Muditā sympathetic joy, altruistic joy, and (4) Upekkhā equanimity, neutrality.*

of the minorities have thrown away their ways of life and adopted those of the stronger units instead. Fortunately, we still have some hill-tribes who have still preserved their old ways of life. However, there is another problem with the hill-tribes and some other minorities. Many of these minorities suffer from having no national status. Their children were born without national status. No local government agencies have ever given national status to them. Thus these people have no basic rights to live their lives in a dignified and humane way. If this problem is still not solved, how can we expect from them a sense of solidarity with the country?

Problems of multiculturalism must be successfully solved if we want a just and peaceful society. Surely, we cannot deny the existence of the minorities and the weaker units. But to recognize their presence is not enough. We need to recognize and respect their different ways of life. More than anything else, their basic rights must be given, recognized, and respected in the same way as we do with those of the majorities.

To integrate solidarity with multiculturalism in Thai society, we need to have social justice, compassion and understanding as their cement. If social justice deals with how a society is organized and how its individuals and institutions are ordered and interact with one another, then all government employees, individuals and institutions are requested to have right relationships with each other in terms of commutative, contributive, and distributive justice. Without social justice, peace will be far out of reach in Thai society. To promote distributive justice, the philosophy of sufficiency economy of His Majesty the King is a good fit for Thai society.

The second kind of cement, namely, compassion is very necessary and urgent in the present-day context. As I mentioned above, the presence of *Brahmavihāra* seems to be less in Thai society today. This is not a good sign for the society as a whole. As we well know, all of us are usually imperfect in our deeds. We always do both right and wrong, good and bad in our lives. Nobody is perfect. Therefore, we must learn how to forgive each other. Without love or compassion, reconciliation is impossible. "Reconciliation" is spoken and heard everywhere in Thai society, yet it seems to be merely lip-service.

Last but not least, we need to learn how to understand each other. Understanding others is urgently needed in our society. To solve problems in Southern Thailand, His Majesty the King once said, "Understanding, reaching, and developing". This can be applied not only to Southern Thailand but also to all groups of the minorities. Since religion is the basis for our identity,

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's three missions should be recognized and practiced in Thai society, namely:

1. Attempt to understand the doctrine of one's own religion.
2. Have interfaith dialogue with believers in other religions.
3. Get together in fighting against materialism and all evils.²²

Conclusion

Every family is composed of both similarity and difference. To borrow Hartshorne's words, all family members can see and recognize "likeness in difference". They can live together peacefully and happily through right relationships, love and understanding. In a similar way, a society is composed of both solidarity and diversity. Its members should be able to see and recognize solidarity in diversity through right relationships, compassion, and understanding. If they succeed in doing so, they will have peaceful co-existence. If Thai society seeks justice and peace, it needs to integrate between solidarity and multiculturalism through social justice, compassion, and understanding. Surely, it is not easy to reach such an ideal society. It may take years, decades, or even generations to reach that dream. However, we have to start now before it is too late. Education is the final answer to all social, economic, and political problems, especially education for children and young people. Therefore, homes, temples, mosques, churches, holy places, schools, and educational institutions are still very important for Thai society both in a short and long term. As the political crisis which we are facing now, what Anthony Giddens calls "dialogic democracy" (cultural cosmopolitanism), which promotes social solidarity, may be an answer for Thai society.²³

²² See 3 (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *The Three Missions*, Bangkok: Dhammasabha Press, 2537/1994)

²³ Dialogic democracy is not the same as Habermas' ideal speech situation. First, it is not linked to a transcendental theorem. Second, it is not oriented to the achieving of consensus, but it is considered as a means of living along with each other in a relation of mutual tolerance. See Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) pp. 112-133.