

BUDDHIST CONTRIBUTION TO BUILDING A COLLECTIVE SENTIMENT OF UNITY AMONG THE ASEAN COMMUNITY

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Introduction

Regional integration arrangements have been a trend during post-war years. It replaces the conceptualizing of the world order of sovereign states brought into being by the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The concept of nation-state sovereignty is losing its meaning and power over the economy of nations. The developing crisis of the world order is leading to new global regional structures vis-à-vis sovereign states.

ASEAN is one such regional entity created out of necessity. Established in August 1967, the Association of South East nations (ASEAN) comprise the ten member states of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The stated goal of this regional grouping of states is, “to enhance regional peace, stability and security; facilitate economic integration; and improve well-being and livelihoods for the peoples of ASEAN.” This is to be achieved by building the ASEAN community around “three pillars of collaboration,”¹ namely, the Political Security Community, the Economic Community and the Socio-Cultural Community.

The success of these lofty pillars of ASEAN would entirely depend on the prevalence of a social consciousness of collective identity among member states. In an article published in *Fennia-International Journal of Geography* Anssi Paasi² points out a three-stage process in the formation of a regional entity. First, is the adoption of a territorial shape. Second, the establishment of a conceptual shape and third, the establishment as an entity in the regional system and social consciousness of society. This paper relates to the third stage of Anssi Paasi where ASEAN is now in being, having passed the first two stages. There has got to be a development of social consciousness and sentiment of unity among member nations, which alone can establish ASEAN as a sustainable reality. The enormity of this challenge would be realized when one considers the extreme plurality and looseness of the structure of the organization.

The ten member states are so very different in ethnic and cultural composition, in the spoken languages, in political nature, and in cultural and historical background. What is more, within each state itself one observes an intensely heterogeneous structure. Currently, what ties together this diversity is the common regional habitat of member states and the expectancy of economic, political and social benefits out of the collective enterprise. This platform is not enough. So long as feelings of separate identities remain strong enough to divide, conflicts become inevitable and the development of a cohesive social consciousness impeded.

The creation of a real sense of commonality would fundamentally depend on the psychic expansion of narrow identities to approximate the wider entity that is ASEAN. Says Michael E Jones³, “ASEAN as a whole will have to construct bonds that were once national but now must be regional.” This is virtually a paradigmatic shift for the member states, requiring action on many fronts. A key front would be the creation of a dominant ideology that fosters the consciousness of the region’s common being. Complementing and consequential to such an ideology there is need for the acceptance

¹ Roadmap for ASEAN Community (2009). Declaration of ASEAN Concord II

² Professor Anssi Paasi, *Fennia-International Journal of Geography* Vol 164 (1968)

³ Michael E Jones, Indiana University. “Forging an ASEAN Identity.” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*.

and internalization of certain interrelated social values that can guide the relationships among member states. These include the acceptance of heterogeneity or pluralism, tolerance, feelings of friendship and compassion.

It would be argued in this piece that Buddhism provides a convincing conceptual and philosophical framework both for the required new ideology and the complementing social values.

Two pathways would constitute this argumentation. Firstly, there is the wide consideration that Buddhist philosophy is perfectly consistent with modern scientific findings which confirm in unmistakable terms the biological equality and oneness of mankind. The theory of evolution by natural selection and the modern findings in genetic science which explains in natural terms how humanity emerged and expanded just from probably one single cellular structure into the amazing diversity of life we observe in the planet. The apparent diversity took place primarily due to environmental changes which accompanied the migration of humans out of their initial habit in Africa. The labelling of man into categories has been more of a social construction based on superficial factors. Racial, ethnic, caste, tribe, linguistic and religious identities are social constructs which could be similarly deconstructed or diluted via socialization.

The second pathway would be to cite from the Pāli Buddhist cannon and from the work of scholars, the teaching of the Buddha that bolster the above ideology of the biological unity and equality of mankind. An attempt will also be made to show how Buddhism supports the complementary social values integral to cohesion, peace and cooperation that support the practice of the ideology.

The Challenge of Political Diversity

To be sure, ASEAN unity is threatened partly by political factors. The saliency and strength of national identity is one such factor that erodes the idea of regional affiliation and unity. The differences of forms of government do also have a dampening effect. Member states are divided into liberal democracies and authoritarian ones. Indonesia brought in a proposal that would require all member states to provide some sort of democratic mechanisms in their governance. But other member states who questioned this pointed out “the possible damage that such a democracy agenda might be to the cardinal principle of non-interference in the affairs of other states. “ASEAN has already witnessed unprecedented political divisions, which were well documented last year [2013] when Cambodia as the annual chair of ASEAN ignored regional responsibilities and sided with China over its stand on negotiations involving territorial claims in the South China Sea.”⁴

The Deeper Challenge of Multiple Identities

On the other hand, a deeper differentiation prevails within the broad ASEAN community based on different identity markers such as ethnicity, language, religion, caste and tribe. “Religious and ethnic animosities are more deeply rooted and pose the biggest obstacles to lowering the barriers for a 500-million strong population who will begin moving across borders in search of work and mingling like never before, once the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) becomes a reality.”⁵ Such identity clashes tend to be deep-rooted and emotional thereby inducing potential violence. The simple sociological principle underlying intergroup relationships arising out of these kinds of differences is the phenomenon of in-group-out-group hostility. Such identity markers create human clusters defined by a strong psychic bond among shared members that

⁴ Luke Hunt. Religion, Race and Politics: ASEAN’s Gordon Knot. The Diplomat March 26 2013

⁵ Luke Hunt. Religion, Race and Politics: ASEAN’s Gordon Knot. The Diplomat March 26 2013

tend to narrow their outlook and incapacitate the entities from expanding a narrow psychic identity into a broader one of a regional identity.

Congeaed as they are over centuries of shared experience such identity markers have, therefore, a potential to unsettle the smooth functioning of an overarching ASEAN identity in two ways. Firstly, many of these identities tend to create internal friction and domestic instability, as we shall see. Secondly, these narrow identities tend to drag their feet when it comes to embracing a wider geopolitical identity such as the ASEAN.

Among all these identities the religious divide can, in particular, spread across member states in addition to causing friction within a given state. Within the collective body that is ASEAN there are predominantly Muslim states, Buddhist states, Hindu states and Christian states. Religious loyalties are emotionally strung and tied to bigotry.

The Diverse Landscape that is ASEAN

Cambodia is perhaps the least pluralistic of ASEAN member states as 90 per cent of its population who historically came from the lower Mekong valley. There are over 300 ethnic groups in Indonesia. The major group are the Javanese but they have not more than 42 per cent of the population. This factor increases the plural nature of the demographics of this vast archipelago. Other ethnic groups include the Sundanese, Malay, Madurese, Batak, Acehnese, Banjarese and Sasak. Islam has the most following while other religions like Christianity, Hinduism, and Confucianism also hold sway. Like neighboring countries, Brunei is a Malay-dominated country. Many cultural and linguistic differences make Brunei Malays distinct from the larger Malay populations in nearby Malaysia and Indonesia even though they are ethnically related and share the Muslim religion.

In Myanmar there are more than 135 different ethnic groups, each with its own history, culture and language. The majority Myanmar (Bamar) ethnic group makes up about two-thirds of the population and controls the military and the government. In the case of Thailand we see a more homogenous population of 65.5 million where 90% are Thai and Thai Chinese. Several minorities comprise the balance of 10%. Singapore is a multiracial and multicultural country with a majority population of Chinese (74.2% of the resident population), with substantial Malay (13.2%) and Indian minorities (9.2%).^[2] The Malays are recognized as the indigenous community although most are the descendants of post-1945 immigrants from Indonesia and Malaysia.

In the case of Laos, the demographic makeup of the population is uncertain as the government divides the people into three groups according to the altitude at which they live, rather than according to ethnic origin. The lowland Lao (Lao Laum) account for 68%, upland Lao (Lao Theung) for 22%, and the highland Lao (Lao Soung), including the Hmong and Yao for 9%. Ethnic Vietnamese constitutes about 2% of the population.

Malaysia has been marked by ongoing enmity between the Chinese and Malay groups. While Malays form the major group (58%) the Chinese form a considerable minority primarily concentrated in urban and mining areas. Indians also form another minority comprising 8% of the population.

Thus the populations of ASEAN member countries are highly diverse and are characterized by numerous identity markers. Identity markers in the context we are discussing can be at a group or national level. They can be language-based, ethnic – based, caste-based, tribe –based or nation-based. At any level conflict can surface if the particular group perceives a threat by another to its existence or self-respect. They can engage strong passions and be very intractable and even dangerous.

Divisive Potential of Religion

Even a cursory glance at what is happening around the world today would give us the truth that of all the pluralities referred to above which characterize ASEAN member states religion, as practiced today, does have a specific potential for disruption and violence. Especially in the contemporary context of religious terrorism such potentialities have more likelihood of maturing and manifesting. We make here a distinction between religion as originally preached by its founder and religion as practiced by the multitudes of men and women. The practice has often manifested itself in an extremism, an absolutism and a fundamentalism that can occupy the dangerous slippery slope to disunity, disharmony or even violence.

Richard Dawkins, in his best-selling book, "The God Delusion,"⁶ makes the following observation: "It might be said that there is nothing special about religious faith here. Patriotic love of country or ethnic group can also make the world safe for its own version of extremism...But religious faith is an especially potent silencer of rational calculation. Which usually seems to trump all others."

One can retort that what has happened with the faiths in action in most cases is a perversion of faith than an inherent fault with faith itself. The world has witnessed religions living side by side for decades and decades without any eruption into violence. On the other hand, in today's world gory stories of religious violence have occupied headlines. More than being the 'potential silencer of rational calculation' that Dawkins refers to, each person's religious faith has become a particularly strong identity marker accompanied by deeply set emotions.

ASEAN member states are dominantly Muslim, Hindu, Christian or Buddhist-not to mention smaller sects. The recent spread of extremist Jihadist forms of Islam has compounded the threat of religious tension. Says Anssi Paasi, "Not only can terrorism cost lives and properties, it could also cost regional identity by offering alternative conceptualizations of a Southeast Asian identity with Jemmah Islamiah's (JI) goals of a pan-Southeast Asian Muslim State."

ASEAN'S Clarion Call for Regional Identity

Such a dominantly pluralistic demography presents a serious challenge to ASEAN'S call for member states to look beyond their national identities and work towards a common regional identity. As Michael E Jones puts it, "ASEAN as a whole will have to enhance peoples' capacity to construct bonds that were once national, but now regional." In our view this would require that citizens would first have to be socialized to go beyond narrow immediate identities like language, religion, tribe and caste to reach first the state of national identity and only thereafter arrive at a participatory ASEAN regional identity.

At its annual summit held as far back as December 1957 in Kuala Lumpur ASEAN released its document, VISION 2020.⁷ The document said: "We envision the entire South East Asia to be by 2020 an ASEAN community conscious of its ties of history, aware of its cultural heritage and bound by a common regional identity." Under the heading, "A country of Caring Societies," Vision emphasizes that the region will be one in which "all people enjoy equitable access to opportunities for total human development."

In other words, as Michael Jones⁸ says, what is required is that all citizens should re-conceptualize how they think of themselves as citizens, to what country they

⁶ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*. Bantam Books (2006)

⁷ Kuala Lumpur. Policy Report from the 1997 ASEAN summit

⁸ referred to above

belong, and how they relate to the wider set of communities regionally. In other words, member states will have to adapt to a 'regional existence.' Says Acharya, "it must be underscored that ASEAN identity is never a *fait accompli*, but a quest or "identity in the making."⁹

This 'identity in the making' would involve in essence a transformation of the psyche of persons. Of course educational programs will have to play a vital role. The media, too, must come and a whole host of other supports and policy inputs in each member state should be made to play a role in effecting this vital transition.

Two Pegs for Fostering ASEAN Unity

In order to counter potential divisiveness and foster the valued unity under a regional identity two factors must come into play- a dominant ideology promoting unity and a complementary group of social values which help the smooth functioning of the regional entity as a united and harmonious whole. The ideology must be derived from the biological unity of mankind. We would describe the functioning social values as those including tolerance, pluralism (that includes religious pluralism), peaceful disposition and compassion.

Paradigmatic Shift and the Role of Ideology

The process of reconceptualization as mentioned by Michael Jones would entail a paradigmatic shift in the consciousness of people. A proper dominant ideological basis would considerably assist the socialization process that would bring about such a broad shift. Man's unity in biological terms should be a pivotal element in the development of such a dominant ideology. This 'non-diversity' has been explained and established in the theory of evolution by natural selection and in the findings of modern genetic science. While the theory of evolution demonstrates the common ancestry of all human beings findings in modern genetic science have proved that in DNA terms there is no difference among humans.

The essential biological sameness of man would constitute the decisive core of such an ideology. The understanding of this reality has not been sufficiently realized and disseminated to the populations of the world. Religions have paid lip service to it and the practice of religion has ignored this stark truth. In the crystallization of this truth and its wide dissemination lies the future peace and prosperity of the world of men and women.

Dominant ideology in any society is hugely influential. "The *dominant ideology* [hegemony] means the values, beliefs, and morals shared by the social majority, which frames how most of the populace think about their society."¹⁰ The Marxian and neo-Marxian (Gramsci) view of dominant ideology gives a specific twist to this ordinary notion by associating it with the exploitation of the ruling class.

In the case of the simple truth of biological unity such a twist would not apply. The concept is significant to us from the impact point of view. Ideas tend to trickle down to the masses from the ruling classes. In *The German Ideology* (1845), Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels said that "The ideas of the ruling class are, in any age, the ruling ideas." The idea of the biological sameness of man should be part of the world view of the ruling classes in the ASEAN region. Those who internalize within themselves the scientific truth of the biological unity of mankind will find little internal resistance in coalescing themselves with wider identities.

⁹ Acharya, Amitav. Reconceptualizing Southeast Asia. *Southeast Journal of Social Science* (27)

¹⁰ Abercombie, Nicholas; Turner, Bryan S (1978). *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*. *The British Journal of Sociology*. September 2012

Buddhism's Relevance to the ASEAN Challenge

Buddhism is ASEAN -friendly in two principal ways. Firstly, it does offer, support to the desired dominant ideology of the equality and oneness of man discussed above. Secondly, Buddhism supports the key social values that facilitate the cooperative working and sustenance of such an identity.

In the first place, Buddhism is consistent with the scientific advances in evolution and genetics that predicate the equality and oneness of man and the dissolution of hardline categories that separate man from man.” Eminent Buddhist scholar Professor KN Jayatilleka observes that “there is no theory of biological evolution as such mentioned in Buddhist texts but man and society as well as worlds are pictured as changing and evolving in accordance with causal laws.”¹¹

The theory of evolution by natural selection brings out the common ancestry of human beings and presents the observed diversities as superficial. Modern advances in genetics have been complementary to the evolutionary explanation.

Roger Highfield, Science Editor of The Telegraph¹² sums up the results of a study in DNA of diverse populations conducted way back in 2002: “Whether you hail from Surbiton, Ulan Bator or Nairobi, your genetic make-up is strikingly similar to that of every other person on Earth, an analysis concludes today. Although scientists have long recognized that, despite physical differences, all human populations are genetically similar, the new work concludes that populations from different parts of the world share even more genetic similarities than previously assumed.

All humans are 99.9 per cent identical and, of that tiny 0.1 per cent difference, 94 per cent of the variation is among individuals from the same populations and only six per cent between individuals from different populations.” This position remains confirmed among scientific circles today.

The Buddha avoided going into details about issues like the origin of the universe and of man. In the well-known parable of the poisoned arrow the Buddha makes it clear that the focus of his teaching is not on abstract issues such as the origin of the universe, whether the cosmos is eternal, whether the cosmos is finite or whether the soul and the body are the same, and so on. The Buddha regards such subjects as “undeclared by me,” because “they are not connected with the goal, are not fundamental to the holy life. They do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding.”¹³

The doctrine of creationism, as followed by Christianity, Islam and the Jewish faiths, states that the world and its creatures had been the outcome of an act of one-off creation by a supreme God. This belief closes the door to the modern scientific findings about evolution and genetics.

Evolution theory disregards creationism by pointing out that different species evolved over millennia to be what they are today through the process of natural selection. Buddhism becomes consistent with the evolution theory by rejecting creationism because there is no place for a creator God Buddhism. The Buddha disregarded a creator God and with that stance Buddhism leaves itself open for accepting scientific findings as to how humans, together with other forms of life, had emerged. Says Professor KN Jayatilleka: “The Buddha is an atheist and Buddhism in both its Theravāda and Mahayana forms is atheism.”¹⁴ Jayatilleka points out how the Buddha had denounced Makkhali Gosala's religion and philosophy of theism or *Issara nimma vadin*.

¹¹ Professor KN. Jayatilleka. Facets of Buddhist Thought. Buddhist Publications Institute, Colombo

¹² The Telegraph 24 January 2015. DNA Survey finds that all Humans are 99.9 per cent same.

¹³ Cula-Malunkkyovada Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya.

¹⁴ KN Jayatilleka, Facets of Buddhist Thought, Buddhist Publication Society 2010 page 78

Buddhism and the Biological Oneness of Man

Buddhist texts emphasize the biological unity of man and in this regard contrasts man's unity with that of the plant and animal kingdoms.

In a discourse with Bharadvaja¹⁵, meant as a critical response to proponents of caste differences in his time, the Buddha expounded his classic stand on the unity of man. The Buddha points out that there are no distinguishing characteristics of genus and species among men, unlike in the case of grasses, trees, worms, moths, fishes, beasts, birds etc. The Buddha emphasized that the differences observable among men are superficial or nominal.

Jayatilleka cites Chalmers here: "Herein Gotama was in accord with the conclusion of modern biologists that 'the Anthropidae are represented by the single genus and species, Man' - a conclusion which is the more remarkable inasmuch as the accident of color did not mislead Gotama. Buddha's point was that the apparent divisions between men are not due to biological factors but are merely "conventional classifications" *samanna*).

In this way, the seemingly 'different' populations of the member states of ASEAN: the Thais, Malaysians, Burmese, Singaporeans, Indians, Filipinos and Vietnamese are, in biological terms, not really different at all. "Difference there is in beings endowed with bodies, but amongst men this is not the case, the difference amongst men are nominal (only)."¹⁶ In other words the different classifications are mere social constructs or *samanna*. Given that they are constructed socially they can also be deconstructed socially.

Relationship Values that Make for Smooth Functioning of ASEAN.

The mere objective truth of the biological unity of man will not suffice in helping to expand our consciousness or psyche to accept a consciousness of a wider regional identity. There are consequential social values that must be ingrained in people if the regional entity that is ASEAN is to smoothly function. These include the values of tolerance and pluralism, peaceful demeanor, compassion and compromise that are crucial to working among diverse individuals.

Pluralism and Tolerance

Pluralism is a concept different from tolerance of 'the other.' It travels further than that towards positive acceptance of 'the others' right to be. Tolerance is the mere absence of being persecuted because one is different. Pluralism is acceptance of the difference and even celebration of it. In short pluralism is 'respecting the otherness of others.' In other words, pluralism is tolerance plus.

In Buddhism, as we shall see, pluralism is enthroned. This can be demonstrated in relation to religion.

Buddhism and the Values of Religious Tolerance and Plurality

We have seen how religion, carried to extremes, can become a divisive force that can hinder the advance of man from a narrow identity to a broader, more encompassing or inclusive one, such as is required for the goals of ASEAN.

The basic position is that Buddhism is not a 'revealed' religion; revealed by a claimed divine source. It is, therefore, not absolutist or exclusive as far as the claimed truth is concerned. This alone helps make Buddhism coexist amicably in a religiously pluralistic society. Buddhism is a product of an enlightened mind that kept working on

¹⁵ Vaseththa Sutta. SN

¹⁶ 3.9 Vaseththa Sutta, SN

reality in order to try and fathom it. Buddha's approach to the search for truth was rather scientific. In fact, he enjoined his followers to check his doctrine or Dhamma as a goldsmith tests gold with fire and then accept it if he/she likes. "The peak of tolerance," said Alexander Chase "is most readily achieved by those who are not burdened with convictions." The good Buddhist is someone never burdened with bigoted convictions. Hence fundamentalism is difficult to emerge out of Buddhism.

At the same time, the Buddha had a missionary zeal and he wanted his followers to go all over and spread the word. The combination of tolerance and a missionary goal was amazing. J.B Pratt, said¹⁷, "Buddhism's transplanting to new lands has been accomplished never through conquest or through migration but solely by the spread of ideas. Yet, almost everywhere it has gone it has completely adapted itself to the new people and the new lands to become practically a national religion. This has been partly due to the tolerance and liberality of its thought."... Pratt adds, "Buddhism has had no heresy trial and has carried on no persecutions."¹⁸

One of the first missionary advances was carried out by King Ashoka, a convert to Buddhism, who was Emperor in India from 168 BCE to 305 BCE. King Ashoka asked his missionaries not to condemn or run down other religions while going round explaining the Dhamma.

This advice was engraved in the famous Ashokan rock pillars.¹⁹ Some examples are given below:

"All religions should reside everywhere, for all of them desire self-control and purity of heart."²⁰

"Contact (between religions) is good. One should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others. Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, desires that all should be well-learned in the good doctrines of other religions."²¹

In another rock pillar the following is stated:

One should not honor only one's own religion and condemn the religion of others, but one should honor others' religions for this or for that reason. In so doing one helps one's own religion to grow and renders service to the religion of others."

This is an outstanding example of practiced religious tolerance and pluralism.

Friendliness and Compassion

The social values of tolerance and plurality stem from a deeper value that is at the heart of the Buddhist religion. This value is called *mettā*. This word is the abstract noun derived from the word *mitra* which means a friend. *Mettā* in Buddhism is, however, not just friendliness but is something akin to positive affection. We call it 'loving kindness.' Buddhists are enjoined to extend *mettā* to all living beings. Compassion or *Karuna* is an application of *mettā* as it involves our empathy for the plight of others. The twin values form the centerpiece of Buddhist behavior. Mahavamsa texts refer to the Buddha as *maha karunika* or the Great Compassionate one. The good Buddhist is, therefore, a very amiable, empathetic, congenial and large-hearted person who treats others with love and care. This social value therefore promotes happy and collaborative interaction. It is an attitude opposed to confrontation in dealing with others. The good Buddhist will always be willing to accommodate and compromise. One can imagine how supportive such social values are in a scenario of collective decision making such as in ASEAN.

¹⁷ JB Pratt. The Pilgrimage of Buddhism (1928)

¹⁸ JB Pratt. The Pilgrimage of Buddhism (1928)

¹⁹ The Pillars of Ashoka. Ven. S Dhammika. Buddhist Publications Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka

²⁰ Rock Edict Nb7 (S. Dhammika)

²¹ Rock Edict Nb12 (S. Dhammika)

When Ananda, Buddha's chief disciple, commented once that half of the religion of the Buddha is about the practice of friendliness the Buddha replied that it was not half but the whole of the religion. It was because of the exemplary power of friendliness and compassion that Buddha's disciples were able to disseminate the teachings of the Master all over the greater part of Asia without resorting to any military or political power.

The classic practical illustration of the message of *mettā and karuna* was observed in the reign of the Buddhist King Ashoka. As HG Wells stated²² King Ashoka stands "alone, a star" in world history for his compassionate administration.

The King had the habit of planting rock pillars with counselling words for his citizens. In one such rock edict King Ashoka states thus: "All men are my children. Just as much as I desire for my children welfare and happiness in this world and the next, so do I desire for all men."

Essentially related to *mettā*, non-violence or *ahimsa* becomes an art in the hands of a practicing Buddhist when he deals with other parties. On one occasion, the Buddha personally intervened in order to prevent a war between two tribes-the Sakyas and Koliyas. These two tribes lived on either side of a river and were quarrelling over the distribution of water. They were at each other's throats when the Buddha intervened and arranged a settlement by peaceful means. The Buddha asked the two tribe leaders to reflect on the subject of their dispute. Which is more important, the Buddha asked. Is it water or human lives?

Application to Conflict Resolution

The above social values of tolerance, pluralism, friendliness, and compassion deep-rooted in Buddhism are reflected in the Buddhist attitude to conflict resolution. In organizational life conflict is inevitable. This would be particularly so with ASEAN as it is such a diverse amalgam. An excellent illustration is available in a much-quoted inspirational stanza in the Dhammapada²³

"Victory breeds hatred
For the conquered sleep in sorrow;
Casting aside victory and defeat, the peaceful one dwells at ease."

The Buddhist attitude toward conflict resolution suggested in this stanza is in line with the "Win-Win" model. This means that in the event of conflicts of different interests and agendas the practicing Buddhist would prefer not to confront but to resolve in a way that both feuding parties feel they have won something substantial.

Conclusion

ASEAN can deliver innumerable benefits to its ten-member collective, given that it can sustain itself as a new regional identity. We have referred to Anssi Paasi's model of regional entity formation that sets out three principal shapes a given regional identity should take. The central challenge of ASEAN is to reach the third shape referred to in this model, namely to establish an entity with a collective social consciousness as an entity. The impediments present themselves in many forms out of which the prevalence of multi-identities are one. To conquer such obstacles and achieve the third stage action must be taken on two pegs. One, is in developing the dominant ideology of equality and oneness of man as a factual base. The second, is to develop

²² HG Wells, History of the World. Penguin

²³ Dhammapada, Sukkhavaggo (5)

attendant social values of tolerance, plurality, compassion and peaceful disposition which would help sustain a diverse collective working together in harmony for the common good. As seen, Buddhism provides considerable conceptual and inspirational support for both these pegs.