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# Fostering a Collective Spirit for Unconditional Peace: Building Bridges in Multicultural Societies

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## Abstract

This research explores the potential of cultivating a shared mental space, referred to as a "collective spirit," within multicultural societies to pave the way for unconditional peace. The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, observations from multiple case studies, focus group discussions, and public hearings. Action research was further utilized by organizing public benefit activities like assisting flood victims and engaging in community charities within Nakhon Si Thammarat province, Thailand. Additionally, the "After Action Review (AAR)" technique was implemented for reflection and improvement.

The research yielded two key findings:

**Developing a Collective Spirit:** The study identified several aspects crucial for fostering a collective spirit:

**Mutual Support and Collaboration:** This involves individuals within the community offering assistance and support to one another during times of difficulty.

**Collaborative Community Development:** This entails working together to achieve progress across various aspects of the community, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and ownership.

**Expanding Connections:** This involves building bridges with broader communities and networks, fostering inclusivity and collaboration beyond immediate boundaries.

**Compassion as the Cornerstone:** The research underscores the significance of compassion, rooted in religious understanding, as a driving force for volunteerism and public service. This sense of compassion fosters a shared humanity and transcends religious differences, paving the way for peaceful coexistence.

By nurturing a collective spirit grounded in compassion, this research suggests that multicultural societies can cultivate a foundation for unconditional peace, fostering collaboration, empathy, and mutual support across diverse groups.

**Keywords:** Multicultural Societies, Collective Spirit, Unconditional Peace, Compassion, Volunteerism, Community Development, Interfaith Collaboration

## Introduction

Currently, the word “multicultural society” is discussed a lot in academic studies or social sciences, especially linking multicultural society with conflict issues which academics social scientist or even the government sector sees that conflicts arise from a lack of understanding of differences and diversity in religious beliefs, cultures, or values. Until causing conflict phenomena to be seen in the news in Thai society. Day by day, different religious beliefs are used as a point of conflict, causing division in the community although conflicts from the perspective of academics view them as a natural and normal phenomenon that occurs in every society [1]. However, the traditional past of Thai society, despite the diversity of cultures and beliefs as can be seen from each region having its own identity, they can live together happily.

In the coexistence of a group of people with various differences, sometimes, it can lead to misunderstandings. This may be related to the behavior or actions of individuals [2] or it may be a competition of beliefs and values to gain status, power, or limited resources [3] and may aim to the point where must compete to get these things [4]. The above problem is considered a failure that occurs when people have to make decisions [5]. At the same time, it is also a catalyst for the antagonism that arises from desire that are inconsistent [6]. This is because a natural between people who have different goals and objectives which may eventually lead to conflict [7]. As for the causes and factors that will lead to a misunderstanding of each other, John McConnell, Christopher Moore and Wanchai Wattanasap, [8 ] the types and causes of misunderstandings have been separated from 5 important points: 1) having inconsistent information (Data Conflict), 2) having irrational interests (interest conflict), 3) having distant relationships (Relationship Conflict), 4) Structure not in line with needs (Structural conflict) and, 5) Values not in the same direction (Value conflict) from various differences in beliefs, customs, traditions and cultures above. The research team will research and develop it into a prototype community area that is a multicultural society with seamless religious boundaries and will produce a set of knowledge that can be applied to solve spatial problems in cases where there will be religious and cultural conflicts in other areas of the country in order for Thai society to be a truly peaceful society, and Thai people are able to move beyond the use of religious principles as a point of conflict. It also creates love and unity in communities, localities, and Thai society, and will allow Thailand to move forward with stability, prosperity, and sustainability.

## Research questions

How does create a network of public consciousness in a multicultural society and develop into a seamless city of peace will be driven and developed into a model community and a network to create love, unity, peace, and mutual assistance in a multicultural society?

## Research objectives

3.1 To develop of public mental network in multicultural society and development towards unconditional peace

3.2 To create of public mental network in multicultural society and development towards unconditional peace.

## Scope of Research

This research is Qualitative Research and Action Research. The research team has determined the scope of the research as follows:

### 4.1 Scope of Content

Focuses on studying the context and elements of living together in a multicultural society, paradigm development peacemaking, nonviolent theory conflict resolution, participation building public consciousness, creating networks, and related research.

### 4.2 Scope of key information providers and target groups:

1) key informants of community scholars, local scholars, academics, religious leaders and people representing various beliefs, values, customs, traditions, and cultures participated in the dialogue forum in the target area, numbering 50 key informants.

2) Experts in Focus Group Discussion, who are involved in a variety of differences to extract lessons in building public mental network in multicultural society and development towards unconditional peace that will create stability and sustainability, number of 10 experts.

### 4.3 Scope of Area:

The research area for this time is Nakhon Si Thammarat province.

### 4.4 Scope of Time:

This research study took place from March 2020 to 30 September 2020, a total of 7 months.

## Research Method

This research was qualitative research for in-depth interview and observation form multiple cases study, focus group discussion and public hearing. Action research was to organizing public benefit activities by visiting areas to help flood victims and other public charities in Nakhon Si Thammarat province and After Action Review (AAR) technique.

## Research Results

The research team will discuss important issues that contribute to the creation of public consciousness networks in a multicultural society and the development of a seamless city of peace through the process findings of each step and each objective. They are summarized in order as follows:

### 1. Develop of public mental network in multicultural society and development towards unconditional peace

Result of the development of public mental network in multicultural society and development towards unconditional peace from the social context where there was an area study of qualitative data from all 5 model communities, it was found that in issues related to volunteerism and public spirit in a multicultural society and development into a seamless city of peace, most of them come from the way of life and behavior, working together sacrificing one's own well-being to support fellow community members or those who are experiencing difficulties in that community. And in many communities, there are opinions or paradigms on

how to live life together based on various differences that there must be cooperation in 3 important aspects:

**1.1** Support and help each other in the community.

**1.2** Working together to develop communities in various dimensions.

**1.3** Joining forces with other communities or networks that expand more widely

At the same time, in creating a network of public consciousness in a multicultural society that will develop into a seamless city of peace, there must be promotion and support for all sectors in the community and society to participate in various activities together as follows:

A. Participation in studying community problems, both formally and informally through the process of discussion or there are community meetings both within the community and with the network. This is so that everyone and all parties can work together to find the real problem including finding the cause of the problem, and finding solutions to community's problems in that matter.

B. Participation in planning community activities is carried out in cyclical steps, that is, the project is defined making project details, project evaluation, approval implementation and implementation of the project and project evaluation. After that, new projects were determined to ensure the continuation of community projects.

C. Participation in driving community activities whether it is supporting labor, materials, equipment, funding, coordination, and managing resources available in the community for maximum benefit both in the dimension where people in the community do it themselves. People in the community work together with the network operated by external agencies or organizations or receiving support from outside.

D. Participation in receiving benefits, the division of benefits must be based on culture and equality of individuals and society. Benefits arising from community activities. It must be at both the individual and social levels. Covers economic, social, and environmental aspects in a balanced manner. The important benefits are pride. This creates motivation from within the individual and can be used to continue working for the community.

E. Participation in evaluating community activities, people in the community, community leaders, and people outside the community can jointly evaluate the results. Evaluation is divided into evaluation before implementation, periodic sub-evaluation during operation, total evaluation after completing the activity. Evaluation must be based on important principles, namely creating awareness among people in the community of the importance of joint evaluation and not adhering to the standards of any one person or party. The joint evaluation must be viewed as a joint learning process rather than pointing out right and wrong.

From visiting the area to do joint activities of community representatives from various differences in the characteristics of a multicultural society in Nakhon Si Thammarat province, both driving volunteer activities and public spirit, which from reviewing and analyzing causes and factors network formation and creativity and development to be strong and sustainable by extracting lessons from successes and obstacles in driving volunteer activities. Public

consciousness has worked together in the past time, come to brainstorm ideas for developing or improving work, reflection on the results of the volunteer group public consciousness and participation to create an exchange of knowledge through the After Action Review (AAR) technique and found the following:

1. Aspects of success that occurred, results from driving the activities can lead to the cooperation of volunteer groups and public spirits in a multicultural society with many differences in religions and beliefs which everyone and all parties have cooperated in a better direction in addition, the activities have been developed to be continuous and consistent with the conditions or context of the community. It is also in accordance with the context of the way of life or lifestyle of the people in the area, causing many driving activities to receive good response and cooperation from all sectors.
2. Limitations and solutions in driving activities from the time analysis of volunteer and public spirit groups in a multicultural society with many differences in religions and beliefs. Its part is a group of volunteers in the urban community while another part is a group of community volunteers who work in agriculture and fishing. Therefore, the limitations that occur before, during, and after driving the activity are the time and convenience of participating in the activity. Therefore, it is necessary to design and schedule each activity to suit the context of the volunteer group, public consciousness in each area as well.
3. The goals and shared values of the public spirit volunteer group are considered as an exchange of knowledge together under the driving force of network partners that come from the diversity of beliefs and religions in the community and the multicultural society that arises from join together and leads to building strength in driving various activities. At the same time, there is an opportunity for all age groups to participate in the activities to build familiarity, create participation and a feeling of love, cherish, conserve, continue, preserve and build on the sustainability of the network.
4. Success factors for the elements that are success factors in driving volunteer activities, public consciousness above from the evaluation and analysis, it was found as the following factors.
  - 1) Spiritual leadership of each religion by being driven in activities that show or reflect the volunteer dimension, public consciousness, as a whole, mostly requires time and the creation of mutual understanding, especially in the matter of spiritual leadership of each religion, it is considered an important part that makes people in the community and society together, they expressed their sacrifice, generosity mutual assistance which is a symbol of endless kindness and dharma towards society. Along with being committed, determined and based on the common good, it is the location of the spiritual leaders of each religion. Therefore, causing volunteer activities, public consciousness arises in communities and society continuously.
  - 2) Community agreement in the context of living together based on differences in beliefs and religions. When everyone and every party has an agreement and has set goals to drive volunteer activities. The public mind is together. There will be knowledge creation, mutual understanding through meeting activities public relations, and in

some activities, there will be brainstorming, and find additional agreements in the community. This is to create a supportive working atmosphere. We talk together and solidarity.

3) Volunteer leaders, public spirits in multicultural communities, most of them are quality leaders is a volunteer group that arises from the voluntary nature of have a common goal, has the same unity, dare to think, dare to act, dare to improve and change when limitations or problems arise. This creates a driving force that is so powerful that we are able to mobilize more and more help from people in the community who dare to participate and sacrifice their own interests for the common good.

4) Improving the drive for volunteer activities continuous public consciousness to make the work process or drive more clear and efficient. As a result, work time can be reduced, it also provides an opportunity for community leaders, volunteer leaders, and public spirits to come up with initiatives to develop activities and sacrifice for the community and society in new and more innovative ways. 5) Creating a learning community is considered to be building and expanding the base to drive volunteer activities, public consciousness to other network partners including among children and youth living in the community. This is to raise awareness and pass on volunteer activities for them to participate in, and absorption leading to the transfer, inheritance, and exchange of knowledge for development and adaptation to the era, way of life, culture, including dimensions of religion and beliefs.

## **2. Create of public mental network in multicultural society and development towards unconditional peace.**

From organizing information return activities and creating volunteer networks, public consciousness with the group of leaders and those involved in driving volunteer activities, public consciousness from communities and societies that are multicultural with many differences in beliefs, religions, and cultures in Nakhon Si Thammarat province, totaling 39 people (monks and laymen), found that in creating a network of public consciousness in a multicultural society and developing towards that seamless city of peace. There are 4 important components:

1. Paradigms of community include the thoughts and feelings of people in the community. That feels like we're not separated from each other. There is a sense of unity, not divided into parties, not divided into religions, leading to normal and happy life. People in the community adhere to the principles and teachings of their religion have love for each other as neighbors in the community. And the most important thing is to not be selfish. There is generosity towards one another, therefore, causing the group to come together as a group of volunteers and public spirit.

2. Community leaders, religious leaders and community scholars (Leader and local intellectual scholars), who are both formal and natural leaders. In many communities, they are considered visionaries and have morality etc. that is good for the community and from proactive work to build relationships between people in the community based on various differences in beliefs and religions. It has led to creativity

and the exchange of knowledge between each other. Finally, when there is strength, there will be participation of people in the community to behave and treat others with kindness and morality. And it is pure and clean, consistent with the teachings of each religion.

3. Activities and lifestyles create regular volunteer activities for the community in various forms, such as jointly developing community areas to be livable, joint cleaning planting trees helping each other on important events or days participating in fundraising donations to assist in volunteer activities, various public events scheduled to be held in their own communities or neighboring communities.

4. Problems and problem solving in the community when people in the community have love and unity. There is equality, it has respect for rights honor and maintaining and following the rules and regulations that the community, has laid down taking into account the general interest, contributes to support and promote awareness, volunteerism and public spirit which is reflected in the perseverance, diligence and diligence in working together to carry out charitable activities for the public.

At the same time in driving volunteer activities, that public mind an important element in the collaboration of people from diverse beliefs and religions is inclusive processes. That must be driven and carried out together in the following matters.

1. Participation in thinking, planning, and decision-making by jointly exchanging knowledge on information and facts in order to find common conclusions.
2. Participation in activities by creating awareness among leaders and members through communication in various channels in order for everyone, every party, to participate in the activities as much as possible.
3. Participation in receiving benefits when everyone and every party participates in the activity, there will be understanding, feels satisfied, sees the value or benefits that arises from participating in activities.
4. Participation in evaluation when presenting information, facts for decision making. The results will be processed and analyzed in order to reflect or evaluate them for completeness, ready to create awareness of upcoming changes in volunteer activities, public consciousness in the future.

In this regard, creating a network of public consciousness in a multicultural society and developing into a seamless city of peace is even though the social context of the people in the community is different in terms of gender, age, education, and way of living including beliefs and religion, whether it is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam or others, things that are quite clearly different include: Rituals of each religion, each of them must agree on the above issues, and should not interfere or criticize each other's religions. As the saying goes, "Your religion is for you. Our religion is for us." But what is the same or similar is the doctrine of every religion that aims for all people to be good. The religious leaders of each religion will be the ones to educate, teach, guide and encourage everyone to behave accordingly so that everyone can live together in peace and harmony.



Meanwhile, in the teachings of major religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam by all intents and purposes, every religion aims to promote and encourage love among all its members, good wishes help and support and there was unity or by implication, aiming to promote and support everyone to have “compassion” towards each other, as in the principles of Islam that appear in the Quran: “...I have not sent you for any other purpose but I sent you out of mercy for the universe, and send kindness to people all over the world, every race, every religion, every language, every skin color...” Meanwhile, Christianity focuses on seeing people love each other and be kind to each other as the saying goes. “...Love God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself, or if you love yourself, love your neighbor like that...”. For Buddhism, it is considered a religion that focuses on “Compassion supports the world” is already important. And if one considers the three principles of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, it becomes clear that the concept of living together should be...1) learn and understand one’s own religion, 2) must study the principles and main teachings. Other religions to understand accept differences and live together peacefully and 3) pull yourself out of the materialistic world or the world of competition in order to live together generously helping and supporting the world so that there will be peace.

When every religious person has an understanding of religious doctrine and has compassion as a basis to be born in the matter of volunteerism or public spirit, the important thing is the lifestyle and paradigm of the community, “To what extent is there support, assistance, generosity, sharing, or the spirit of volunteering or volunteering to help with community and social activities?” This is if the community and society have a paradigm for cultivating the matter of sacrificing personal benefits, for the benefit of the public, solidarity, unity, and having volunteers who are volunteer groups and have public spirit to work together to develop communities, societies, villages, sub-districts, districts, or provinces to be better or prosperous. Everyone who has a clear mind for the public benefit above will join together in the dimensions of joint thinking, joint decision making, joint planning, and joint action, participate in evaluation and share in the benefits, which means peace or prosperity that will occur. At the same time, whether the community or society is in a state of happiness, everyone and every party filled with volunteer spirit and public spirit will come out to help and support each other. For example, during the time of the flood problem, there are many families who have suffered, and received damage to property, belongings, or agricultural crops. Everyone will come out and mobilize their strength to give up their wealth and physical and mental strength to free them from suffering. It is considered to be the most prominent drive for community and social development based on kindness and dharma. This is because “kindness” can happen to people of all religions. Therefore, living together on the basis of the principle of kindness can make many people or everyone develop volunteer spirit, public spirit, and is an important force that will create coexistence in a multicultural society by supporting, helping, and generosity, connect and what everyone and all parties agree on in creating a volunteer network. Public consciousness begins with a compassionate heart. This is because kindness is considered a way of living together in a seamless, peaceful way that is reflected in the way of living together as a way of people who can access the religious essence of both their own and other religions.

## Discussion

Discussion of the findings of this study will discuss guidelines for building a network. The researcher will discuss important and interesting issues and discuss the results of creating a

public consciousness network in a multicultural society and developing into a seamless city of peace, based on understanding of religious doctrine and having compassion which arises in the matter of volunteerism or public spirit. The important thing is the lifestyle and paradigm of the community that has support, assistance, generosity, sharing, or has the heart to volunteer or be a volunteer to help with community and social activities. However, if the community and society have a paradigm to cultivate in terms of sacrificing personal interests for the welfare of the whole. Solidarity, unity, and having volunteers are volunteer groups and have public spirit to work together to develop communities, societies, villages, sub-districts, districts, or provinces to be better or prosperous. Everyone who has a clear mind for the public benefit above will join together in the dimensions of joint thinking, joint decision making, joint planning, and joint action, participate in evaluation and share in the benefits, which means peace or prosperity that will occur. At the same time, whether the community or society is in a state of happiness or happiness, everyone and every party filled with volunteer spirit and public spirit will come out to help and support each other, for example, during the time of the flood problem. There are many families who have suffered and received damage to property, belongings, or agricultural crops.

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The research findings are similar to the findings of the research study “The Coexistence of People in a Multicultural Society in Thailand, a Case Study of a Multicultural Society in Mueang district, Chiang Mai Province” which Phramaha Mongkolkan Thitadhammo et al. [9] studied and found that 1) The principle of coexistence is based on understanding and accepting differences in cultural concepts and traditions and differences in race, language, religion, creed and belief. 2) The principle of coexistence of each religion must not create division, make yourself useful equally open and; 3) The coexistence of people in a multicultural society must promote acceptance of differences in ideas as well as a good attitude towards living together. This will result in living together in a diverse community effectively. At the same time, from the study “Coexistence of People in a Multicultural Society: a Case Study of the Bang Rak District Community. Bangkok” at Phramaha Napadon Puñsuvaṭṭhako [10] studied and found that 1) understanding and accepting differences in race, language, religion, and creed; 2) living together requires giving or sacrifice, eloquent speech, make yourself useful equal openness and having everyone in society turn to understand differences and be interested in learning about differences with existing knowledge; and 3) promoting morality, ethics, and promoting orderliness, and behave according to religious principles seriously.

At the same time, it is also consistent with education “Multicultural Religion and the Ways of Coexistence of China and Malays: A Case Study of Brunei” that Lampong Klomkul [11] studied and found that religious differences Brunei’s ethnicity and beliefs result in tolerance in living with appropriate management and administration to create a mechanism for living together under the religious multiculturalism that must include learning, understanding and adapting with religious principles adhering to tolerance. Be tolerant of differences. Respect and honor the differences of fellow members of society considering humanity as a nation. It is a guideline or system of thinking for coexistence in a religiously pluralistic society between the Chinese and Brunei Malays that has been practiced and applied to coexist in different ways as shown today while “Coexistence in Sustainable Peace in a Multicultural Society, a Case Study of Krado Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Yarang District, Pattani Province” that Wasana Phithaktham and others [12] have studied and found that all religions teach to be fair and not offend and harm others including accepting other religions. If a person has corrected religious knowledge there are strong community leaders being fair governance and having a kinship relationship. Although there are differences in language and culture can live together, cooperation among people between religions is important in maintaining relations between Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims, bringing about lasting peace.

Results from a research study on the development of a paradigm for peaceful coexistence in a multicultural society. It is also consistent with education. “Community Coexistence in a Multicultural Society, a Case Study of Sai Khao Subdistrict, Khok Pho District Pattani Province” which Suriyawani and Maroning Salaming [13] studied and found that leadership natural resource capital, strong communities and fair governance systems Kinship relations and common language communication. It is a factor that facilitates the normal and happy coexistence of Thai Buddhists and Malays. At the same time, it is also consistent with “Forms of Coexistence of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam in Phra Pradaeng, Samut Prakan Province” that Chakraphong Piammetta and others [14] studied and found that promoting the behavior of religious people to act as good, cultured people and be accepted as a common good having love for fellow human beings, being grateful, and knowing how to forgive are basic principles for living together in a multicultural society which may be different from education “Coexistence of Cultural Diversity within a Multicultural Organization with Linguistic Diversity: A Case Study of MAP Foundation” that Preechapak Teekasuk [15] studied and found that collaboration based on cultural and linguistic diversity is possible by means of “Live together as rivals-competitors” without the need to swallow each other up or have anyone’s identity dissolve.

## **Recommendations**

Research results on “Creating a network of public consciousness in a multicultural society and developing into a seamless city of peace,” the research team would like to recommend as follows:

### **A. Recommendations for Policy**

Creating a network of public consciousness in a multicultural society and developing into a seamless city of peace. In terms of policy, religious organizations, agencies at the local, local, regional and central government administration levels, there must be support, promotion, and participation in strengthening the public consciousness network in a multicultural society and developing into a seamless city of peace in the following issues:

1. Everyone, every department and network partner must contribute, promote the concept of community paradigm Both aspects of thinking, the sense of togetherness of people in the community to create a feeling of not being divided or different, give a multicultural society a sense of unity. There is no division into parties, no division of religion. Researchers encourage normal and happy living. And let everyone adhere to the principles and teachings of their religion, have love for each other as neighbors in the community. And the most important thing is to not be selfish. There is generosity towards one another.
2. Everyone, every department and network partners especially community, religious leader and community's wisemen must have a vision and be a good role model for the people or religious people. There is proactive work to build relationships between people in the community based on differences in beliefs and religions, create and develop the exchange of knowledge between each other. Finally, there is participation of each other in the community and be a model in how to treat others or other religions with kindness and morality and is pure and clean.
3. Everyone, every department and network partner must participate in activities and be a part of the lives of people in the community including jointly creating volunteer activities for the community in various forms, such as jointly developing community areas to be livable, joint cleaning planting trees helping each other on important events or days, participating in fundraising donations to assist in volunteer activities, various public events scheduled to be held in their own communities or neighboring communities.
4. Everyone, every party and network partners must participate in solving problems that occur in the community encourage everyone in the community to have love and unity. There is equality, has respect for rights. Be respectful, maintain and follow the rules and regulations that the community has laid down, taking into account the general interest. At the same time, it must support and promote awareness, volunteerism, and public spirit that will be reflected from perseverance, diligence and diligence in working together to carry out charitable activities for the public.

## **B. Recommendations for Practice**

In driving volunteer activities that public mind in working together, people from different beliefs or religions must rely on a participatory process to drive and act together in the following matters.

1. Everyone, every party and network partners must work together to think, plan and decide by jointly exchanging knowledge on information and facts in order to find common and consistent conclusions.
2. Everyone, every department and network partner must participate in project activities by creating awareness among leaders and members through communication in various channels in order for everyone, every party, to participate in the activities as much as possible.

3. Everyone, every party and network partner must participate in the benefits that arise from feelings of satisfaction, pride, and happiness in seeing the value or benefits that arise from participating in the activity.
4. Everyone, every department and network partners must participate in the inspection, monitoring, evaluation, and analysis of results in order to find guidelines or methods to develop perfection or change in a better direction and grow in next time

## Conclusion

This paper studied on “The creating a public mental network in multicultural society and development towards an unconditional peace”. Results showed that the developed of public mental network in multicultural society and development towards unconditional peace, cooperation, self-sacrifice to support fellow community members or those who are facing difficulties of people in communities and other as follows: 1) supporting and helping each other in the community, and collaboration in developing communities in various dimensions. For collaboration with more broader communities or networks, and it must include: spiritual leadership of each religion, community agreements, volunteer leaders, improvement of driving volunteer activities, and building a learning community. The creating of public mental network in multicultural society and development towards unconditional peace, based on an understanding of religious doctrine and compassion which gives rise to volunteerism or public spirit on the way of life and the community paradigm, that support, help, empathize, caring, sharing and assisting the activities of the community and society on the basis of, because compassion can happen to people of all religions and that compassion is a path of seamless peace coexistence, that is reflected in the subtlety of one's own religion and other religions.

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